



Form-Based Codes Defined

Form-Based Code /fôrm-bāsed kōd/ *noun*

1. A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law. A form-based code offers a powerful alternative to conventional zoning regulation.

Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types.

This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on the micromanagement and segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through abstract and uncoordinated parameters (e.g., FAR, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios, traffic LOS), to the neglect of an integrated built form. Not to be confused with design guidelines or general statements of policy, form-based codes are regulatory, not advisory. They are drafted to implement a community plan. They try to achieve a community vision based on time-tested forms of urbanism. Ultimately, a form-based code is a tool; the quality of development outcomes depends on the quality and objectives of the community plan that a code implements.

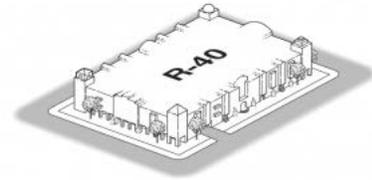
Conventional Zoning

Density use, FAR (floor area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building heights specified



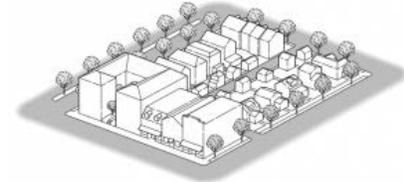
Zoning Design Guidelines

Conventional zoning requirements, plus frequency of openings and surface articulation specified



Form-Based Codes

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.

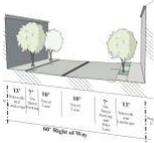


Five Main Elements of Form-Based Codes

1. Regulating Plan

A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply.

2. Public Standards



Specifies elements in the public realm: sidewalk, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees and furniture, etc.

3. Building Standards



Regulations controlling the features, configurations, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.

4. Administration



A clearly defined and streamlined application and project review process.

5. Definitions

Building Elements	
Encroachments	
Front, Areas II, III, IV	To ROW
Front, Areas V, VI	10' beyond
Front, recessed	3'
Side	3'

Notes
Bay windows, balconies, stoops and the encroachment areas.

A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.