New Urbanism 202:

Form-Based Codes:
Alternative Typologies & Techniques

CNU XVI AUSTIN TEXAS — NEW URBANISM AND THE BOOMING METROPOLIS — APRIL 3 THROUGH 6, 2008

April 3, 2008

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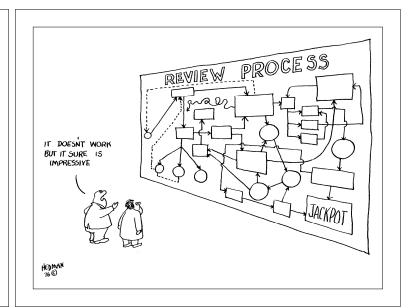---

Purpose of a form-based code:

To carry out a physical plan for a place

START WITH:
- an elegant urban design plan

CREATE:
- An easily understood code, customized for the community's idiosyncratic review process

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Form-based code:		Conventional code:
• Regulating plan	?	• Zoning districts.
• Building form standards		• Variances
• Public space standards		• Subdivision regulations
		• Sign regulations

WHEN DOES CODE-WRITING BEGIN?

- Sometimes months or even years after completion of the physical plan

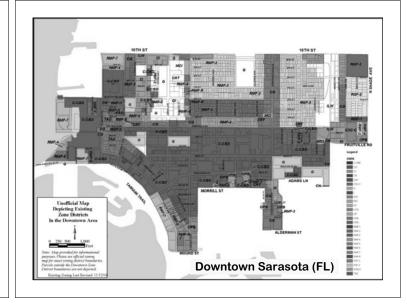- But ideally it begins while the plan is still being prepared

THE BAD NEWS:

To reform the existing code, SOMEONE has to thoroughly understand the existing regulatory scheme…
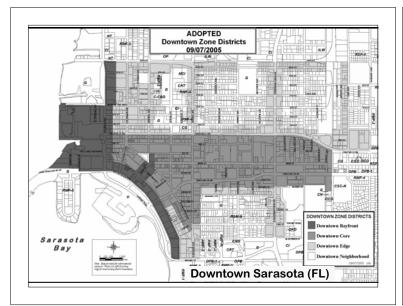

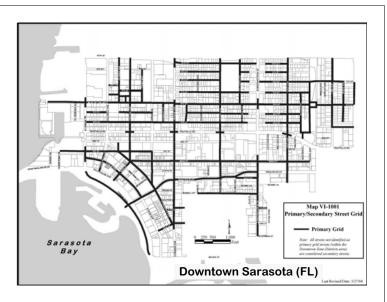Types of links between form-based codes and conventional codes:

1. **Mandatory form-based code**

2. **Optional (parallel) form-based code**

3. **Floating-zone form-based code**
   (Planned Development / Planned Unit Development)
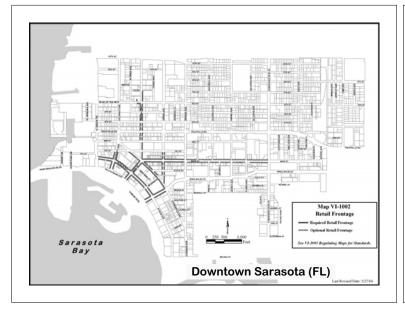
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1. **Mandatory** codes:

- Compliance is **never voluntary**!

- **Replaces** many aspects of the previous code

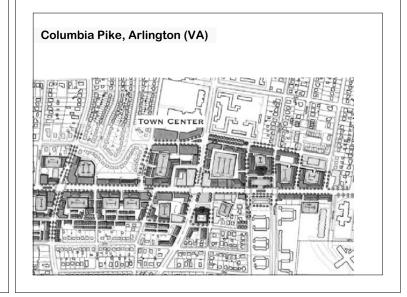- May replace existing zoning, or may span existing zoning districts

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Downtown Sarasota (FL)

Downtown Sarasota (FL)

Downtown Sarasota (FL)

Downtown Sarasota (FL)

Map VI-1002
Retail Frontage
—— Required Retail Frontage
······ Optional Retail Frontage

See VI-1003 Regulating Maps for Standards.

Sarasota Bay

0 250 500 1,000 Feet

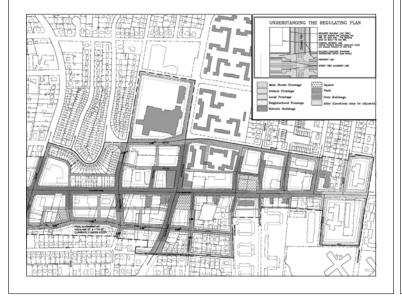Last Revised Date: 5/27/04

1. __Mandatory__ codes:

GENERALLY THE BEST TYPE OF CODE, but it requires:

- **A clear sense of urban design direction**

- **Thorough mapping so that the right standards apply in the right places**

- **Strong political will!**

- **(can be applied to a subset of jurisdiction)**

2. Optional (parallel) codes:

- **Compliance is __always voluntary__**

- **__Supplements__, but does not replace any aspects of the previous code**

- **May replace existing zoning or span existing zoning districts**

Columbia Pike, Arlington (VA)

TOWN CENTER

UNDERSTANDING THE REGULATING PLAN

- Adopted as a optional (parallel) "overlay zone"

- Use of this code is encouraged by density bonuses

- Additional incentive: a streamlined approval process
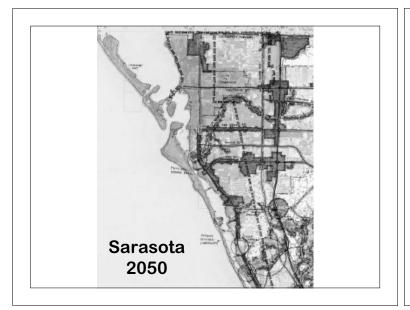
Columbia Pike, Arlington (VA)
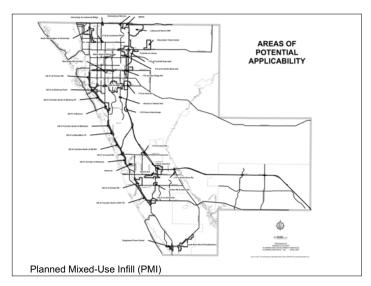
2. Optional (parallel) codes:

RELATIVELY UNCOMMON,
   but may be useful in these situations:

- **Weak political will…**

- **Gridlocked approval process (…anything would be better than this!)**

- **Unnecessarily strict regulations that can be waived as a strong incentive to use the optional code**

3. Floating-zone codes:

- **Compliance is usually voluntary**

- **Supplements, but does not replace any aspects of the previous code**

- **Always replaces existing zoning, but only on request of the landowner AND with consent of elected officials**

Sarasota 2050

AREAS OF POTENTIAL APPLICABILITY

Planned Mixed-Use Infill (PMI)

example site

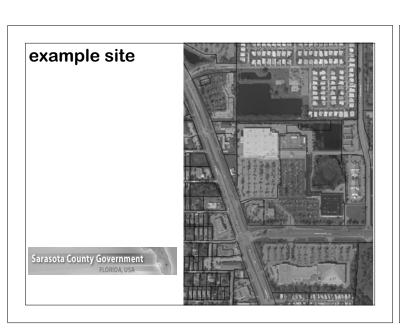Sarasota County Government
FLORIDA, USA

key principles

A densely **interconnected street network**, dispersing traffic and providing convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.
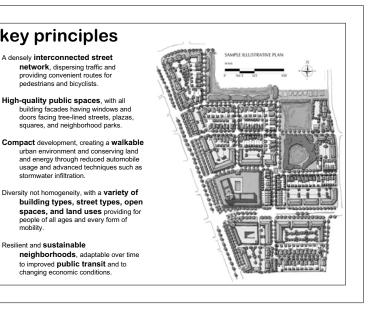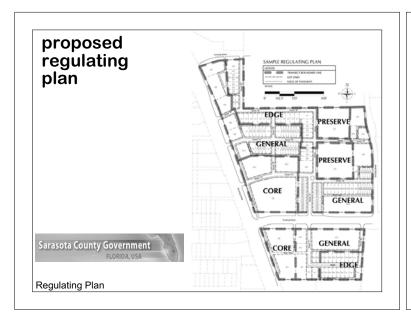
High-quality public spaces, with all building facades having windows and doors facing tree-lined streets, plazas, squares, and neighborhood parks.

Compact development, creating a **walkable** urban environment and conserving land and energy through reduced automobile usage and advanced techniques such as stormwater infiltration.

Diversity not homogeneity, with a **variety of building types, street types, open spaces, and land uses** providing for people of all ages and every form of mobility.

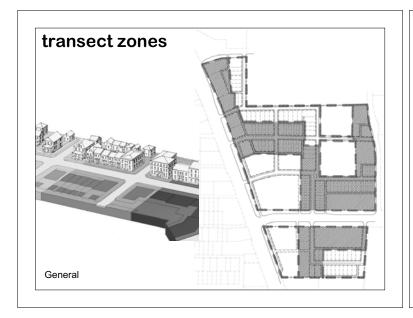Resilient and **sustainable neighborhoods**, adaptable over time to improved **public transit** and to changing economic conditions.

SAMPLE ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

proposed regulating plan

SAMPLE REGULATING PLAN

LEGEND
TRANSECT BOUNDARY LINE
LOT LINES
EDGE OF PAVEMENT

EDGE

PRESERVE

GENERAL

PRESERVE

CORE

GENERAL

CORE

GENERAL

EDGE

Sarasota County Government
FLORIDA, USA

Regulating Plan

transect zones

Core

transect zones

General

transect zones

Edge

transect zones

Preserve

menu of street types

Street A:

| Core |
| General |
| Edge |
| Preserve |

Sidewalk 13' | Parking 7' | Travel Lane 10' | Travel Lane 10' | Parking 7' | Sidewalk 13'

Typical Right of Way: 60'

Movement type: free

menu of street types

Street B:

Core	
General	●
Edge	●
Preserve	

Sidewalk	Planting Strip	Parking	Travel Lane	Travel Lane	Parking	Planting Strip	Sidewalk
6'	6'	7'	9'	9'	7'	6'	6'

Typical Right-of-Way: 56'

Movement type: slow

menu of street types

Drive:

Core	
General	●
Edge	●
Preserve	

Sidewalk	Planting Strip	Parking	Travel Lane	Travel Lane	Planting Strip	Sidewalk
6'	6'	7'	9'	9'	8'	6'

Typical Right-of-Way: 51'

Movement type: slow

menu of street types

Rear Alley:

Core	●
General	●
Edge	●
Preserve	●

Movement type: slow

menu of street types

Rear Lane:

Core	
General	●
Edge	●
Preserve	●

Build-to-Line — 12' max — Build-to-Line

Typical Right-of-Way: 24'

Movement type: yield

menu of lot types

Core	●
General	●
Edge	
Preserve	

Liner Building

menu of lot types

Core	
General	●
Edge	●
Preserve	

Mixed-Use

menu of lot types

Apartment Building

menu of lot types

Courtyard Building

menu of lot types

House

menu of lot types

TABLE 1 — LOT SIZE AND DIMENSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

permitted uses
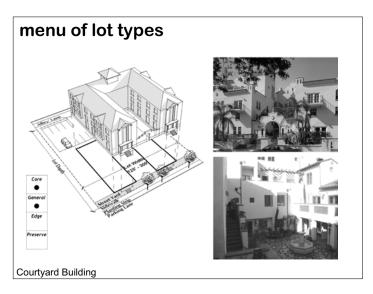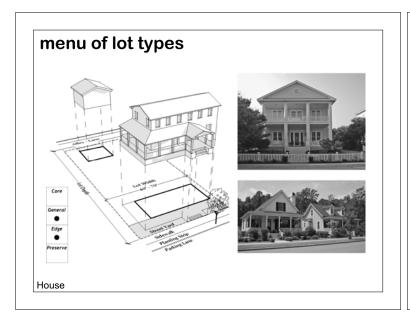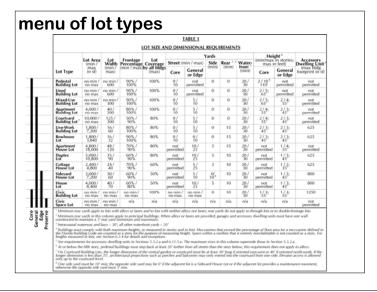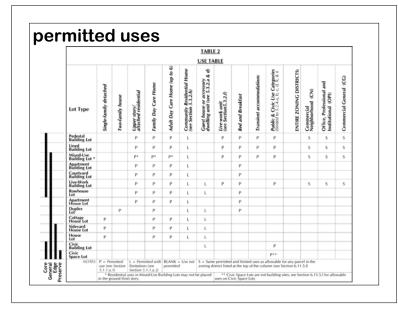

TABLE 2 — USE TABLE

3. <u>Floating-zone</u> codes:

FAIRLY COMMON; may be useful in these situations:

- **A specific urban design plan hasn't been created for the area to be coded**

- **Areas requiring this code share common characteristics but have too many variations for a single code to apply without adjustments**

- **Weak political will (this is the easiest type of code to persuade elected officials to adopt)**

FBC 101: Introduction to Form-Based Coding

A prerequisite for the other two courses, this course covers the principles and components of Form-Based Codes; a brief history of zoning and planning practice; the legal basis for Form-Based Coding; a comparison of the tools available to shape community form and character provided by Euclidean zoning versus Form-Based Codes; a field exercise to increase participant understanding of the components of good urbanism and how they can be incorporated into a Form-Based Code; a review of the kinds of FBCs; FBC case studies; and an introduction to how an FBC is prepared.

- July 15-17, 2008, Ventura, CA REGISTER
- September 26-27, 2008, Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ REGISTER
- November 20-21, 2008, Oak Park, IL

FBC 201: Preparing a Form-Based Code – Design Considerations

This course goes into depth on how to create and use building form and public space standards within a regulating plan in already built-out communities, Greenfield sites, redevelopment sites and regional plans. Architectural standards, imaging techniques for charrettes, and code document design are also covered. The course includes not only lectures presenting design principles and case studies but also hands-on participation creating regulation plans and their components.

- June 12-13, 2008, Fort Worth, TX

FBC 301: Completing, Adopting and Administering the Code

This course covers a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of a Form-Based code, an in-depth look at the advantages, disadvantages, and mechanics of mandatory, parallel and floating-zone forms of FBCs; how to structure the coding process, including what must happen before and after the code is drafted; what to keep and what to discard from an existing conventional code; the legal aspects of adopting a FBC i.e. its consistency with the comprehensive plan, adoption mechanics and insulating against potential challenges; and post-adoption implementation.

- January/February 2009, Phoenix, AZ *(tentative)*

For more information and for on-line registration go to our website at
www.formbasedcodes.org or call Carol Wyant at 312/346-5942.

FBCI Form-Based Codes Institute

Mandatory code:

Downtown Sarasota, Sarasota, FL:
www.sarasotagov.com/Planning/DowntownCode/DowntownCodeHP.html

Optional (parallel) code:

Columbia Pike, Arlington, VA:
www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/forums/columbia/current/CPHDForumsColumbiaCurrentCurrentStatus.aspx#

Floating-zone code:

Sarasota County, FL:

www.spikowski.com/Sarasota.htm

These slides:

www.spikowski.com/AustinNU202.pdf

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