

# Why Consider a Form-Based Code?

## Delivering the Vision through a New Approach to Zoning

Zoning code is the tool to deliver and implement the **Vallco Area Specific Plan** vision. In conventional zoning code, zones primarily differ in the land uses they allow. However, **Form-based codes** differentiate zones based on building intensity and form, as well as features of the public realm, with careful attention toward land uses.

### Form-Based Codes Explained

Form-based codes foster 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. These codes are adopted into city or county law as regulations, not mere guidelines. Form-based codes are an alternative to conventional zoning and they are not merely design guidelines.

The most important aspect of this definition in differentiating FBCs from Euclidean zoning is that the intended physical form replaces use as the organizing principle, or framework, for the overall code. Instead of a zone being labeled "single-family residential," it may be called "traditional neighborhood," and instead of a zone being called "commercial," it may be called "neighborhood main street." The terms "neighborhood" and "main street" tie back into the intended physical form or place, both of which may include a mix of uses and building types to create vibrant walkable urbanism.

The Natural-to-Urban Transect (illustrated on the left) categorizes a spectrum of natural to urban contexts in six Transect zones (from the most rural T1 to the most urban T6) and is a prominent organizing principle within Form-Based Code practice.



Form-Based Codes promote a high-quality public realm by focusing on building form and street scape

### Preparing a Form-Based Code in 3 Steps

There are three important steps in the process of creating a Form-Based Code: Documentation, Visioning, and Assembling.

#### Documentation

The two scales of Documentation are the macro-scale, which establishes a framework of existing neighborhoods, districts, and corridors, and the micro-scale, which documents blocks, lots, building placement, frontage types and other small scale elements that add to the character and quality of the built environment.

#### Visioning

The Visioning phase engages the community and allows them to participate in the creation of a detailed design vision that the Form-Based Code will implement.

#### Assembling

The Assembling phase is the process of compiling the code content into a usable format and structure and plugging it into the existing zoning code if it is not going to completely replace it.

Form-Based Coding Process	Plan	Regulations	Administration
Documenting	<b>Macro Scale</b> 1.1 Existing Framework Plan (N/D/C)	<b>Micro Scale</b> 1.2 Existing Transect Matrix and Micro Element Documentation Sheets	
Visioning	<b>Illustrative Plan and Imagery</b> 2.1 Illustrative Plan	Transect Zone Vision Sheets and Micro Element Type Vision Sheets	
	<b>Regulating Plan and Regulations</b> 2.2 Regulating Plan	Transect Regulation Matrix and Micro Element Regulation Matrices	Development Review Process
Assembling			<b>Splicing</b> 3.1 Additional Code Text
	<b>Formatting</b> 3.2	Form-Based Code	

### Why are Form-Based Codes Needed?

The current zoning system is broken: It has produced auto-dependent development patterns that compromise community character, our nation's health and the environment, leaving communities searching for tools to address these issues. FBCs are an alternative to Euclidian Zoning that focus on the creation, revitalization, and preservation of vibrant, walkable urban places.

As Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk states in the book Form-Based Codes, "as Global Society swings into action to reduce carbon emissions, the data ever more clearly points to the need to reduce dependence on vehicular mobility and to remake the built environment as transit- and pedestrian-friendly places of dense economic and social interaction. Only the Form-Based Code can ensure such an urbanism." Even developers support this push for zoning reform: at the 2009 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Albuquerque, developer Rob Dixon presented "Top 20 Ways to Make a Green, Smart City," and "replace your Euclidean zoning with Form-Based Codes".

For more detail on FBCs see "Form-Based Codes," by Parolek or go to the Form-Based Code Institutes's web site. The SmartCode is a model, Transect-Based, Form-Based Code.

[www.formbasedcodes.org](http://www.formbasedcodes.org).



Illustration of the type of walkable, pedestrian-oriented street made possible with a Form-Based Code



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1. Regulating Plan (which replaces the zoning map)
2. Building Form Standards
3. Thoroughfare Standards
4. Civic Space Standards
5. Frontage Type Standards
6. Subdivision Standards
7. Administration

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**Key**

- RGNVProperty Line

**15.54.30.090 Stoop**

The main focus of the building is over the housing line. The pergola system is designed to be installed on the roof of the building. The pergola system is designed to be installed on the roof of the building. The pergola system is designed to be installed on the roof of the building.

Item	Value
Width, clear	3.00m, 0' 0" max.
Depth, clear	3.00m, 0' 0" max.
Height, clear	2.70m, 9' 0" max.
Height, clear	1.80m, 5' 9" max.
Roof span (depth) maximum	18" max.

**Notes:**

- Roof span may be perpendicular or parallel to the housing line.
- Roof span shall be parallel to fascia.
- The canopy shall be installed or presented to provide shade from the elements.
- Depth of covered area shall be 3' min.
- Grass is not permitted.
- All items must have the correct.

**Other Notes:**

- Stoop single on front elevation with slight recessed canopy and a recessed balcony above the single recessed canopy.

# 5.01.090 Townhouse

General Note: the drawings and photos below are illustrative.

**1.01.010** **3D perspective**

The Townhouse building type consists of structures that contain three or more dwelling units placed side by side. A small unit at the rear shall be provided for each unit at the front. The rear unit type provides a higher density, five-unit type in a more urban form.

**1.01.020** **3D perspective**



Four attached townhouses designed with a single simple plane. Attached corner stoops provide a secondary rhythm along the street.

**1.01.030** **3D perspective**

Four attached townhouses designed with a simple massing with a continuous porch. The dormers and right plane add in the end units help to break down the overall massing.

**1.01.040** **3D perspective**

Three attached townhouses designed with a simple massing, individual porches and public entry on the end units providing the secondary rhythm.

Table 1.2-2: <b>City of Chicago Planting Inventory</b>				
Shape & Spacing	Botanical Name	Common Name	Form Based Zones	
			Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Acacia salicina</i>	Blackthorn	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Redbark / Horned Maple	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Corylus heterophylla</i>	Winged Horsechestnut	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>	Gledits	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Quercus robur</i>	Storck oak	Form 1	Form 2
				
Columnar	20' - 35' d.c.			
	<i>Acer buergerianum</i>	Tsukuba Maple	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Acer japonicum</i>	October Glory Maple	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Common Hackberry	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	China Quince	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Ulmus americana</i>	Swamp Elm	Form 1	Form 2
	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i>	Evergreen Magnolia?	Form 1	Form 2
				
Ball	20' - 30' d.c.			

7.6.180

7.6.170

Wall Mural Sign Type

7.6.180

Window Sign Type

**Description**

Wall Mural Signs—Wall mural signs are the largest and most expensive type of outdoor signage. These signs are typically painted directly on the building's exterior. A combination of wall and mural signs are used.

These signs are intended to be visible from a great distance and are accompanied by other signage for the business (the primary facade of the business). Wall Mural signs also provide an ideal approach for a business that has a large wall space. Wall mural signs are made and installed as separate, adjustable components. There are not standard wall mural sign sizes or are prohibited under the Form-Based Code System.

**Dimensions**

Signage Area	
Area	1000 sq. ft.
Width	40' max.
Height	30' max.
<b>Location</b>	
Height above ground	10' min.
Projection	8" max.
Area can be walking	0' max.

**Windows** Signs—Window signs are professionally designed and fabricated of inflexible material and design, placed on the exterior of the building, and are visible from the inside of a window. Window signs offer a high level of colorfastness and durability, and are often used by retail professional offices.

**Size**

Sign Area For Signposts	10% max.
Width	7' max.
Height	30' max.
<b>Location</b>	
Windows signs shall be placed at or above eye level.	
Windows signs shall be applied directly to the outside of the glass.	

**Placematerials**

Applied plastic or vinyl can materials are strongly discouraged.

Windows signs shall have a dark background.

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