

## Form-Based Code (FBC) Information and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Form-based codes are a relatively new method to regulate the development of buildings and streets to be more consistent with what the community desires.

*It should be noted that any changes to Exeter's Zoning Ordinance or Site and Subdivision Regulations require at least one public meeting with the Planning Board and in the case of zoning changes, also go through a Planning Board public hearing process and then are part of the annual town warrant voted on in March.*

### GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### What are Form-Based Codes (FBCs)?

Form-based codes are development regulations used by local government agencies that emphasize the physical character of development and de-emphasize the regulation of land use. They provide greater predictability about the look and feel of development and offer developers a clearer understanding of what the community seeks. In return, FBCs can make it easier for citizens to help create the physical development they want, which will more likely lead to their acceptance of development and street designs in their community.

#### How do FBCs differ from conventional zoning codes?

Most local governments use conventional zoning codes as the tool to regulate land use and development. Because the original purpose of zoning was to prevent incompatible uses from moving into the neighborhood, conventional zoning regulations are often reactive, focusing on what is not allowed. They generally have very specific setbacks and a variety of do's and don'ts from which a proposal must fit. Form-based codes as an alternative use visual illustrations and extensive public involvement to create a regulatory plan from which to negotiate and work with the development team to create a proposal.

Form-based codes differ from conventional zoning because they:

- Are the result of a public design process, which creates a clear and articulate vision for a defined district or neighborhood.
- Pay greater attention to the design of the public realm and the importance that streetscape design and individual building character have in defining public spaces and a special sense of place.
- Emphasize site design and building form over density and use regulations. Form-based codes pay more attention to the buildings, which will last many years, instead of uses that change over time.
- Encourage a mix of uses and housing types to reduce the need to travel as part of one's daily routine.
- Make much greater use of illustrations to explain important design elements, rather than relying on numeric standards and text.

#### What are the advantages of an FBC?

The primary advantages of the form-based code approach include:

- Encouraging active public participation in creating the regulating plan and related design elements. This public participation and consensus building at the beginning increases public understanding of the plan and its desired results, thereby reducing misunderstanding and conflict during implementation.
- Focusing on what the community wants and likes. This attention to what is desired makes it much easier for developers, citizens, and decision-makers to be "on the same page" when individual development projects are proposed.
- Tailoring the requirements to fit a specific place or neighborhood by reflecting its architecture and overall character.

## **QUESTIONS REGARDING PORTSMOUTH AVE BUSINESSES AND PROPERTIES**

**Will a change to FBC require me to make upgrades to my property in any way, including signage?**

No, changes to the regulations will not require a business or property to make changes. If the property owner wants to make changes and if FBC are developed, go through a public approval process and are adopted, than the property owner could take advantage of the incentives provided by FBC.

**Is my business “grand fathered” if Exeter elects to change zoning to FBC.**

Yes, the business would be “grandfathered” regardless of the zoning changes.

**Are other areas in Exeter being considered for FBC regulations?**

Not at the present, however, if there is interest in other areas of town or a need for change is determined, than a new process lending itself to other areas would be considered.

**Is this a “done deal” and have all the decisions been made?**

Not at all, the process is still in the beginning stages of process development. Any changes to zoning undergo a public process with the Planning Board and are voted on as part of the annual March warrant.

**How will this affect my property/business?**

It’s a bit early to tell at this point but it is likely that the limits of development that now restrict your property, such as yard setback requirements may be replaced with new regulations based on building form and site design.

**If I am interested, can I attend the meetings of the FBC subcommittee?**

Yes, the meetings are posted and open to the public.