

LWC

Innovative Zoning for a More Livable and Equitable DC

Basic Principles

Wednesday, July 15
6:30 – 8:00 pm EDT

Lisa Wise
Lisa Wise Consulting, Inc.



Outline

1. Development Regulations – Out of Balance
2. What is a Form-based Code (FBC)
3. Common Misconceptions

Development Regulations Out of Balance

Development Regulations Out of Balance



Georgetown Waterfront, ~1910.

Separation of Uses

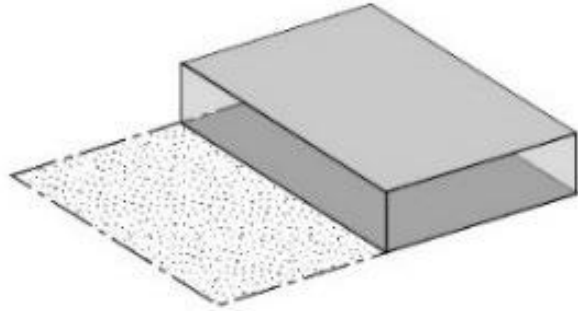


Montgomery Village, MD, 1962.

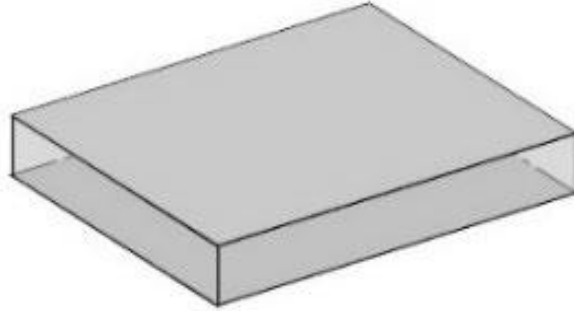
Conventional Zoning



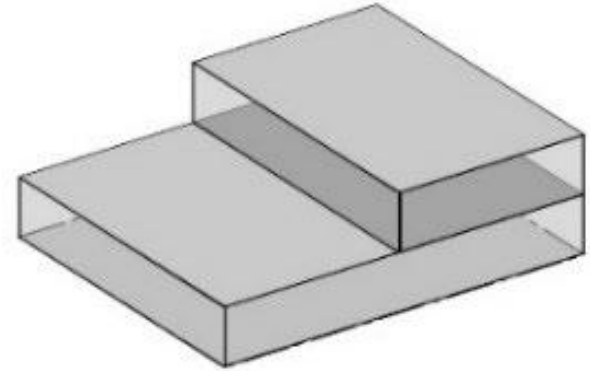
Conventional Zoning – Floor Area Ratio



.5



1.0



1.5

Basic Components of Zoning

Use

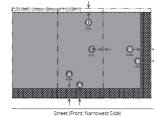
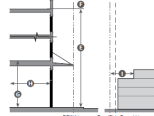
Admin/
Process

Form

E.20.130 Units										
Table E.20.130.A Use Table										
	UGN-1	UGN-2	EMK	UCT	IMA	UCR	UCB-B	NAC	CAC	RAC
Residential										
Dormitory	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Halfway House/ Community Residential Treatment Facility	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	SP*	34.F.60.030.A
Live/Work	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Manufactured Home	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Multiple Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Nursing Home	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	AI	AI
Residential Care Facility	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	AI	AI
Rooming House	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Senior Housing	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	AI	AI
Shared Living Facility	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	AI	AI
Single-Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Single Room Occupancy (SRO)	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Temporary Shelter	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Three-Four-Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Townhouse Dwelling	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	AI*	34.F.50.040
Two-Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Civic, Recreation, Education, and Assembly										
Amusement Park	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	SP*	SP*	34.F.60.040.A
Art or Sales Space	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Cemetery	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP
Colleges and Universities	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
Commercial Recreation Facility, Indoor	A	NA	A	A	A	A	NA	A	A	A
Commercial Recreation Facility, Outdoor	AI*	NA	NA	AI*	NA	AI*	NA	AI*	AI*	34.F.60.040.B
Correctional Facility	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Indoor Firing Range	NA	NA	NA	NA	SP	NA	NA	NA	SP	SP
Library or Museum	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A

*Maximum five nonresidential workers or employees are allowed to occupy the nonresidential area at any one time.
Key: A = Allowed SP = Special Permit AI = Accessory * = See reference for additional use standards NA = Not Allowed



E.20.130 Urban General (UGN-1)		Mixed-Use Districts	
			
Key --- RCP/Parcel Line --- Setback Line --- Facade Line --- Building Area --- Facade Zone		Key --- RCP/Parcel Line --- Setback Line (ft.) --- Building --- Facade Zone	
C. Building Placement Setback Front (Grade Zone) 10' min., 15' max. Side Street (Facade Zone) 10' min., 15' max. Side Abutting Residential Districts 10' min. Abutting All Other Districts 10' min. Rear (No Alley) 10' min. Abutting Residential Districts 10' min. Abutting All Other Districts 10' min. Rear (Abutting on Alley) 10' min.		D. Building Form Height Principal and Secondary Buildings 4 max. Stories 4 max. Height 45' max. Height Allowed with Bonus 100' Roof Access/Escape 10' min. Ground Floor (Floor-to-Floor) 9' min. Residential 12' min. Non-Residential 12' min. Depth, Ground Floor Space 12' min.	
Facade Zone Total Length of Facade Required within an abutting Facade Zone 70% min., 60% min. On-Site Open Space per Unit (Private or Common) 25' min.		Accessory Building Height 20' max. Exception: Accessory Dwelling Units per Section E.20.030 (Accessory Dwelling Units) Agency Requirements for Buildings Abutting a Residential District in a 35' Height District Building Height (measured from finished ground) 35' min. Above 3 stories/35' 35' min.	
*Where applicable, front setbacks may be adjusted to match the average building setback on a block face. See Section E.20.040 (Measuring Commercial Setbacks).		*For the purposes of adjacency, properties across an alley are considered abutting. *See Section E.20.070 (Measuring Adjacency Based Setbacks and Setbacks).	
E.20.130 Urban General (UGN-1) May 2025		City of Columbus Title 34.2024 Zoning Code Article 6 District Regulations	

Basic Components of Zoning - Conventional

Use

**Admin/
Process**

Form

Basic Components of Zoning – Form-base

Use

**Admin/
Process**

Form

What is a FBC?

Definition of a Form-based Code

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.

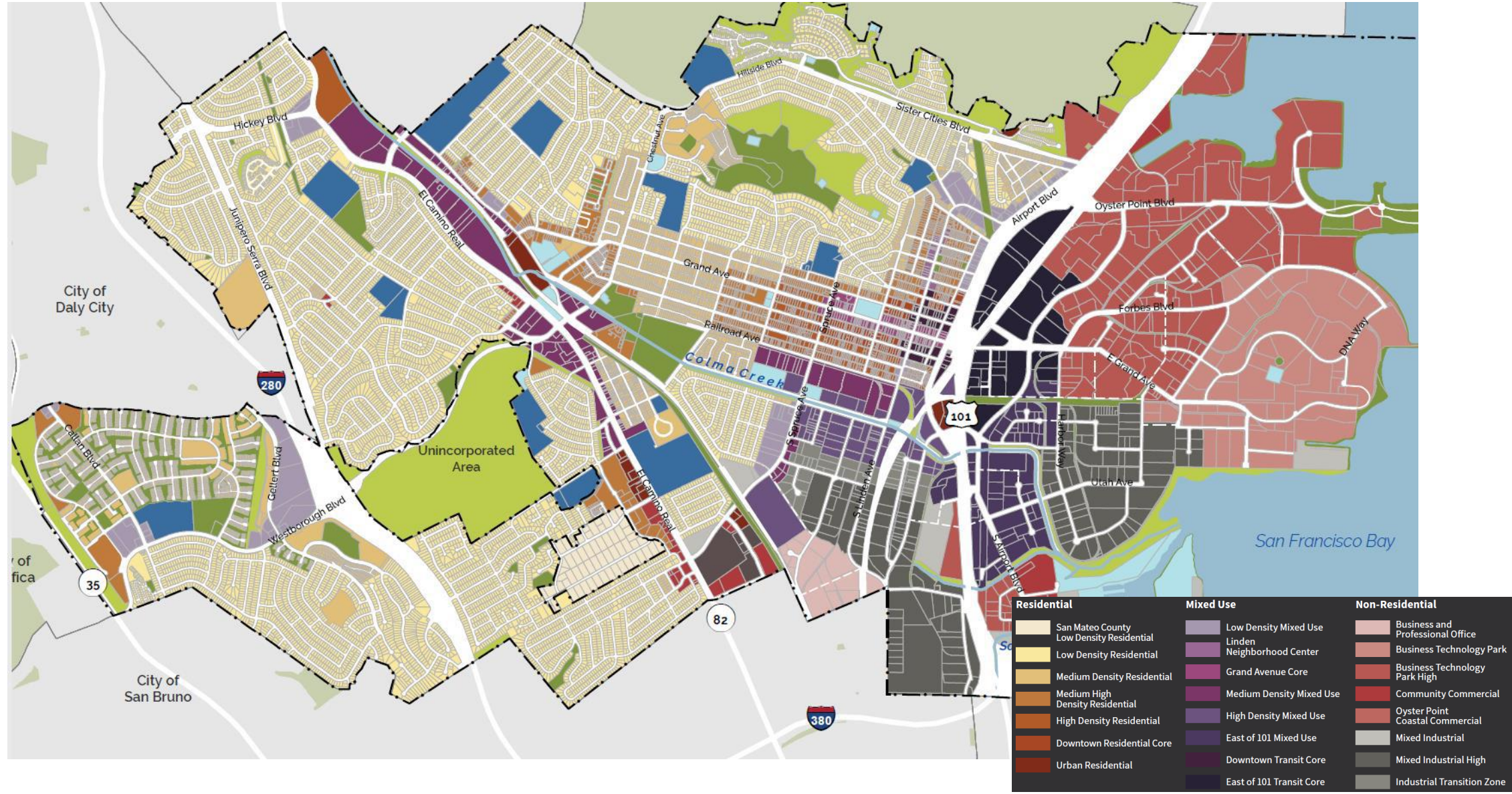


Smart Growth
A M E R I C A

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FBC Regulations – Regulating Plan



FBC Regulations – Building Form Standards

- Building Form (Height, Footprint)
- Number of Parking Spaces
- Encroachments
- Land Use Tables
- *Building Placement*
- *Parking Location*
- *Frontage Types*

Mixed-Use Zoning Districts E.20.050 Urban General 1 (UGN-1)



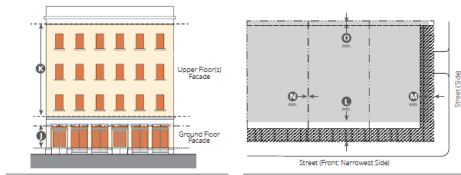
E.20.050 Urban General 1 (UGN-1)

General note: the illustrations above are intended to provide a brief overview of the district and are descriptive in nature.

A. Intent	B. Sub-District(s)
This district is a predominately walkable district comprised of attached and detached buildings, accommodating low and medium rise buildings on smaller blocks and parcels. Typically located between higher intensity centers or functioning as a small mixed-use node at an intersection. These areas provide opportunities for infill development of vacant parcels and parking lots, reuse of older buildings, and some redevelopment at moderate densities. Allows residential, retail, service, and other commercial uses.	N/A

City of Columbus Title 34: 2024 Zoning Code | Article E: District Regulations Phase II Public Review Draft 2 | May 2026 | E.20-15

Mixed-Use Zoning Districts E.20.050 Urban General 1 (UGN-1)



E. Encroachments into Minimum Setback

Encroachment Type	Front	Side St.	Side	Rear
Architectural Feature	X	X	X	2' max.
Stair/Ramp	X	X	X	5' max.
Frontage Type	X	X	X	X
Uncovered Patio/Outdoor Dining	X	X	X	5' max.

G. On-Site Parking

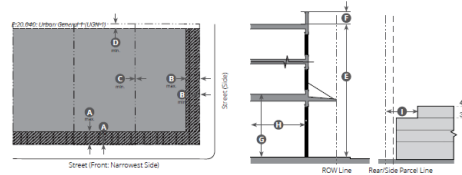
Required Spaces	No Minimum ¹
Vehicular	No Minimum ¹
Bicycle	1 min./2 units
Dwelling Units	1 min./5,000 sf up to 20 spaces
Non-Residential Uses (≥ 4,000 sf)	1 min./5,000 sf up to 20 spaces

H. Additional Standards

See Chapter G.20 (General Site Development Standards).

City of Columbus Title 34: 2024 Zoning Code | Article E: District Regulations Phase II Public Review Draft 2 | May 2026 | E.20-17

Mixed-Use Zoning Districts E.20.050 Urban General 1 (UGN-1)



C. Building Placement

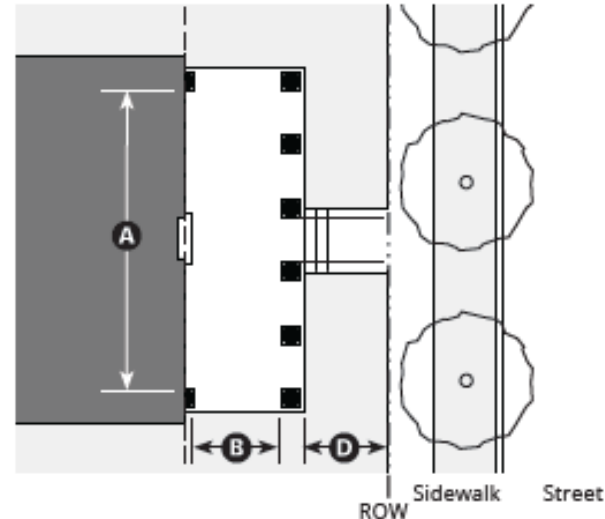
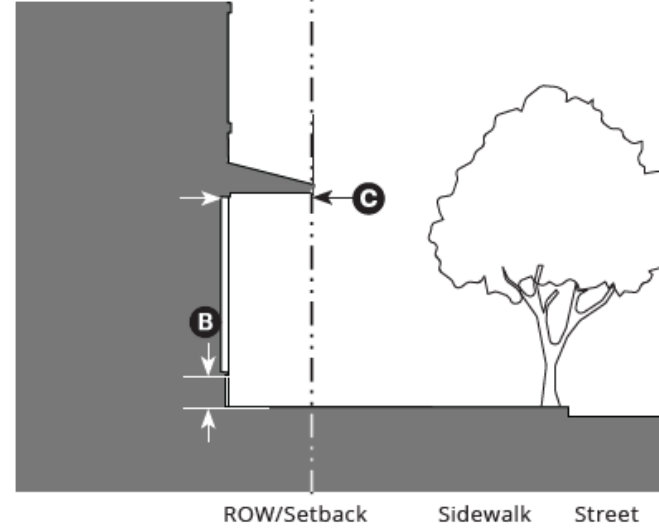
Setback	Front (Facade Zone)	Side Street (Facade Zone)	Side	Rear (No Alley)
Front (Facade Zone)	0' min.; 15' max.	0' min.; 15' max.	0' min.	10' min.
Side Street (Facade Zone)	0' min.; 15' max.	0' min.	5' min.	5' min.
Side	0' min.	0' min.	5' min.	5' min.
Rear (Abutting an Alley)	0' min.	0' min.	5' min.	5' min.

D. Building Form

Height ¹	Principal and Secondary Buildings
Stories	4 max.
Height	45' max.
Height Allowed with Bonus	N/A
Roof Access/Parapet	10' max.
Ground Floor (Floor-to-Floor)	9' min.
Non-Residential	12' min.
Depth, Ground-Floor Space	12' min.
Accessory Building	20' max.
Exception: Accessory Dwelling Units per Section F.50.030 (Accessory Dwelling Unit)	
Adjacency Requirements for Buildings Abutting a Residential District in a 35' Height District ²	
Building Height (stories/feet)	Distance from Rear/Side Parcel Line ³
Above 3 stories/35'	20' min.

City of Columbus Title 34: 2024 Zoning Code | Article E: District Regulations E.20-16 | Phase II Public Review Draft 2 | May 2026

FBC Regulations – Frontage Types



- Shopfront
- Gallery
- Arcade
- Common Entry
- Stoop
- Dooryard
- Courtyard
- Porch
- Lightwell
- Terrace

Common Misconceptions

Common Misconceptions

Form-based Codes do not Regulate Use

- Simplified **categories** of uses
- Allowing a **mix** of uses
- **Reduce** the number of conditional or special uses

E.20.130 Uses											
Table E.20.130.A Use Table											
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Multiple Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Nursing Home	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A ¹	A ¹	
Residential Care Facility	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A ¹	A ¹	
Rooming House	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
Senior Housing	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A ¹	A ¹	
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Single-Unit Dwelling	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	
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Cemetery	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	
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Correctional Facility	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Indoor Firing Range	NA	NA	NA	NA	SP	NA	NA	NA	SP	SP	
Library or Museum	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	

¹ Maximum five nonresidential workers or employees are allowed to occupy the nonresidential area at any one time.

Key A = Allowed SP = Special Permit AU = Accessory * = See reference for additional use standards NA = Not Allowed

Common Misconceptions

Form-based Codes are Too Complicated

- Intended to **implement a City's vision**
- Organize the code and design the layout for **ease of use**
- Provide more **predictable, clear, and objective standards**



GROUND-FLOOR USE	CAFÉ ZONE	PEDESTRIAN ZONE	LANDSCAPE + FURNITURE ZONE	PARKING + PLANTER ZONE	SHARED TRAVEL ZONE
MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL	Not Applicable See Appendix A.5 Private Frontage Guidelines.	6' - 8'	6' - 8' Tree wells; Street furniture to be provided per Section 6;	8' parallel	See Section 3.3 for Street Type Standards.
COMMERCIAL	Where Applicable; 6' - 12' Additionally, See Appendix A.5 Private Frontage Guidelines.	7' - 10'	See Section 3.5 for Street Landscape Standards.	16' - 18' head-in diagonal OR 8' parallel Parking Lane Planters (optional)	

Public Frontage Standards in Palm Desert CA.

Image from Sargent Town Planning

Common Misconceptions

Form-based Codes are Just Guidelines

- Limits use of subjective standards: “**should**”, “**may**”
- Clear regulation: “**shall**”, “**must**”

K. PRINCIPAL ENTRYWAY

See [Figure 70.5.Q-11](#) for examples of defined principal entryways. Principal entrances to all buildings or units shall be clearly delineated through one or more of the following design features:

1. **Roof or Canopy.** The entryway is covered by a roof or canopy differentiating it from the overall building roof type.
2. **Porch.** The entryway is through a porch.
3. **Sidelights and Transom.** Sidelights or transom windows are included around the entryway.
4. **Extended Articulation.** The entryway is included in a separate bay of the building that extends up at least 2 stories.
5. **Other Design.** A design that does not meet the above standards may be approved with a design waiver ([Sec. 70-1.G](#)) if it is determined that the



Images: googlemaps

Common Misconceptions

Form-based Codes Limit Public Input

- It's all about the **timing**
- Codes are developed through public **collaboration**
- By-right may **be locally refined**



Common Misconceptions

Form-based Codes are too Dense

- Illustrate **predictable** density
- Address **design & context issues** associated with density
- Introduce density based on the **community's vision**

