



Introducing A Form Based Code: Case Study – Near Southside Fort Worth, Texas

**Driehaus Form Based Code Award
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A Grass Roots Community Effort

- Over a decade of redevelopment work using existing zoning tools
- In 2007, Near Southside, Inc. launched creation of a form-based code
- Developed in-house with support from City preservation and design staff
- No consultants used — a fully grassroots, community-driven effort
- Numerous meetings with the community and property owners to reach consensus



Tim Hursley/Marlon Blackwell Architects

The Importance of Internal & External Consensus

FBCs only work when everyone shares the same expectations.

Internal Consensus

- Unified interpretation across departments
- Coordinated workflows and predictable timelines

External Consensus

- Developers know what's allowed
- Residents trust the outcomes

Community Engagement

- Establishes shared goals
- Builds legitimacy and long-term durability
- **Bottom Line: Consensus is the foundation of a successful FBC**



Photo Source – Desiree Rios

Procedural Coordination

- Planning
- Zoning
- Engineering
- Platting
- Permitting and Building Code
- Urban design & Forestry
- Preservation
- Transportation review
- Landscape review
- Water/Sewer



Consensus-Based By-Right Development

- Building placement
- Height & massing
- Frontage types
- Streetscape standards
- Transparency
- Parking location
- Contextual administrative waivers
- No minimum parking requirements



Responding to Site Context: Waiver Process

Urban Design Commission (UDC) Waivers:

- Architectural compatibility
- Frontage adjustments
- Height transitions
- Contextual refinements

Administrative Waivers:

- Utility conflicts
- Tree placement adjustments
- Pedestrian light relocation
- Minor dimensional shifts



A Catalyst for Redevelopment

- Clear, predictable standards unlocked **major private investment**
- Rapid growth of **mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented projects**
- Surge in **small-scale infill development** and adaptive reuse
- Strong momentum around **South Main Village** and key corridors
- Increased confidence among developers, lenders, and property owners
- Consistent urban design produced a **distinct, competitive district identity**
- Accelerated redevelopment of formerly underutilized industrial parcels
- Value of permitted development since code adoption – Almost **\$4 Billion**



A Community-Led Blueprint for Successful Form-Based Codes

- Grassroots creation led by Near Southside, Inc.
- Community as the primary gatekeeper—not the local government
- Began with key prototype areas to test and refine standards and a criteria for selection
- **Deep community engagement** shaped every element of the code
- Visuals and exemplary images used throughout development
- Objective, specific, and measurable standards
- Consensus built across all City departments
- Streamlined review process that made it easy to “do the right thing”
- Result: predictable, flexible, context-sensitive redevelopment

