

Myths and Realities about the Form-Based Code (FBC)

Form-Based Code Town Hall with City Councilor Isaac Benton

December 8, 2007

MYTH: The FBC is a replacement for the current zoning code.

REALITY: The current zoning code will remain in place. The FBC represents an *alternative* to the current zoning code. Any public, neighborhood or private entity that wants to use the FBC will need to apply for a zone map amendment and go through the normal public process: going before the Environmental Planning Commission, and, if necessary, going through an appeal process.

MYTH: The FBC is intended to be applied everywhere in the city.

REALITY: There are no restrictions to where the FBC *may* be applied, but it will not be applied in a blanket manner. Already-developed single-family residential areas are unlikely candidates. More likely candidates are “Greenfield” areas where no development has taken place, re-development areas where the value of vacant land exceeds the value of improved land, or vacant property along Transit Corridors.

MYTH: The FBC is highly urban and is inappropriate for a city like Albuquerque.

REALITY: The FBC contains fourteen building forms and six different zones. Some are indeed urban and intended to make our Centers and Transit Corridors work better. Others include single-family dwellings and smaller-scale, lower-profile "villages" that fit into the existing context. Still others are commercial and residential forms that can fit on a struggling shopping center site and help foster self-sufficient neighborhoods with facilities that serve the neighboring residential areas around it. The FBC is not a single character entity. It is, rather, highly flexible and able to be used for a variety of purposes.

MYTH: The FBC is going to be required to be used in every new sector plan and will be used in all the sector plans now in the process of revision.

REALITY: After it is adopted, the FBC – both its Building Forms and its Zones – will be available for consideration for use in sector plans. Sector plans may include the FBC as an overlay for existing zoning, may adopt some of the FBC Zones (with or without modifications), may adopt some of the Building Forms, or ignore the FBC.

Presently, sector plans and zone map amendments are highly unpredictable and contentious processes among neighbors, developers/property owners, and the City. Every new sector plan starts from scratch, yet deals with a common thread of problems: safety, mobility, economic vitality and quality of our public environment. The FBC is an opportunity for neighbors and developers to agree on forms of redevelopment that will not be harmful to residents but rather make for healthier neighborhoods, businesses and quality of life.

MYTH: The FBC is being rammed through the approval process without sufficient public involvement.

REALITY: Albuquerque’s FBC has been “under construction” since 2006. It now enters a series of informational presentations, EPC meetings, LUPZ meetings and City Council meetings which will likely take until May 2008 to complete. We welcome the careful review of and comment on the FBC by interested citizens and groups and hope to gain suggestions from you that will improve the code and help make it work.