DEFINITION OF A FORM-BASED CODE

A form-based code:

- Is based on a sufficiently detailed physical plan and/or other clear community vision that directs development and aids implementation.
- Is focused primarily on regulating urban form and less focused on land use.
- Is regulatory rather than advisory.
- Emphasizes standards and parameters for form with predictable physical outcomes (build-to lines, frontage type requirements, etc.), rather than relying on numerical parameters (FAR, density, etc.) whose outcomes are often difficult to predict.
- Requires private buildings to shape public space through the use of building form standards with specific requirements for building placement and building frontages.
- Promotes and/or conserves an interconnected street network and pedestrian-scaled blocks.
- Keys regulations and standards to specific locations on a regulating plan.
- Incorporates diagrams that are unambiguous, clearly labeled, and accurate in their presentation of spatial configurations.
- Can be applied in many scales and contexts, from neighborhood to citywide and greenfield to intense urban settings.
To meet FBCI standards, a form-based code should:

**Be enforceable:**

- Is it effectively coordinated with other applicable policies and regulations that control development on the same property?
- Is the code designed, intended, and programmed to be regularly updated?
- Does the code format lend itself to convenient public distribution and use?

**Promote good urbanism:**

- Will the code result in good urban form?
- Will the code shape the public realm to invite pedestrian use and social interaction?
- Will the code produce walkable, identifiable neighborhoods that provide for daily needs?
- Are parking requirements compatible with pedestrian-scaled urbanism?
Be simple and easy to use:

- In its organization/layout:
  - Is it easy to understand the layout in the first few pages or by flipping through it?
  - Can users easily find what is pertinent to their interest?
  - Are the procedures for code administration clearly described?

- With efficiency in the number of steps:
  - Does it have just the right number of steps in the decision tree to define the development opportunity, while still offering options and flexibility?

- With brevity:
  - No more pages than necessary for the scale of the codified area?

- With clear graphics as good communication tools:
  - Are the graphics tidy, concise, and do they convey information in a transparent manner?

- With an understandable, easy to follow, and speedy approval process, and

- With technical terms defined in a clear and understandable manner.

Be written to allow for predictable results without sacrificing variety in the size and shape of urban spaces and the design of buildings:

- Can users readily understand and execute the physical form intended by the code?

- Are the intentions of each regulation clearly described and apparent even to planning staff and citizens who did not participate in its preparation?