Using Form Based Codes to Implement the Regional Vision
Wasatch Choice 2040 maps

Centers
Centers are historical and emerging regional destinations of economic activity. The vision suggests that these centers should expand to provide even-broadening choices for residents to live, work, shop and play; a mix of all of these activities is welcome. Centers should work with the long-term market, helping provide opportunities to residents who want to live close to work, walk or bike to shop, and have both great transit and road access—desperately needed as our population ages, gas prices and congestion increase, and housing prices inch upward.

Metropolitan Center
Downtown Salt Lake City is the metropolitan center, serving as the hub of business and cultural activity in the region. It has the most intense form of development for both employment and housing, with higher development common in the central business district. It will continue to serve as the finance, commerce, government, retail, tourism, arts, and entertainment center for the region. The metropolitan center benefits from pedestrian friendly streetscapes and an urban style grid network. Downtown Salt Lake is the central hub for public transportation in the region. Auto access is prevalent with access to several major highways and thoroughfares.

Urban Center
Urban Centers are the focus of commerce and local government services benefiting a market area of a few hundred thousand people. Urban Centers will be served by high-capacity transit and major streets. They are characterized by two-to four-story employment and housing options.

Town Center
Town centers provide localized services to tens of thousands of people within a two to three mile radius. One- to three-story buildings for employment and housing are characteristic. Town centers have a strong sense of community identity and are well served by transit and streets.

Station Community
Station Communities are geographically small high-intensity centers surrounding high capacity transit stations. Each helps pedestrians and bicyclists access transit without a car. Station Communities vary in their land use; some feature employment, others focus on housing and many will include a variety of shops and services.

Main Street Community
Main Streets are a linear town center. Each has a traditional commercial identity but are on a community scale with a strong sense of the immediate neighborhood. Main streets prioritize pedestrian-friendly features but also benefit from good auto access and often transit.

Boulevard Community
A Boulevard Community is a linear center coupled with a transit route. Unlike a Main Street, a Boulevard Community may not necessarily have a commercial identity, but may have a strong sense of community. They are an effective way to align housing, employment, and retail along any given street. Boulevard Communities create a positive sense of place for adjacent neighborhoods by ensuring that walking and bicycling are safe and comfortable even as traffic flow is maintained.
Wasatch Choice 2040 maps
Our Utah Roots
Zoning Roots
Traditional Zoning

• Good at separating uses through distinct zones
• Uses are listed based on compatibility with the zone and potential impacts
• Permits need to be acquired either over the counter (permitted use) or through a public hearing (conditional use)
• Standards usually cover set backs, height, lot coverage, parking
Traditional Zoning Weaknesses

- Mixing of Uses
- Dealing with Density
- Dealing with Design
- Difficult and lengthy public hearings
- Doesn’t really foster a vision for the built environment
- Not market responsive
- Public input occurs at the end of the process
Form Based Codes

• Intended to promote a vision
• More clarity and a streamlined process
• Focus on the public space from building face to building face
• Emphasis is on how a center functions as a place for people not so much on what the use is within a building
Conventional zoning regulates primarily by Land Use, Density & Lot coverage, Setbacks, and Parking. It assumes that there should be an “appropriate” distance between almost all different use types. Form is minimally addressed.
Form-Based Codes focus on community design relative to a desired outcome. Form-Based Codes establish categories for design, and control the relationship of buildings (or lots) to their streets often with the use of build-to-lines instead of setback lines, and window requirements.
Sketches that show what you want

Courtesy of Placemakers
From this
To this
Community Benefits

- Involving Visioning Process that is implemented through the Code
- Wrestle with Design, Density, and land use issues upfront
- Makes the transit and land use connection
- Promotion of Place, connections, walkability
- Fewer contentious public hearings after adoption
- A better understanding of what will be built
Developer Benefits

• Government usually manages the Code adoption process – owner/developer rezones not required
• Easy to understand what is required
• Expedited processing which saves time and money (most uses are permitted uses)
• Front loaded public process, administrative applications
• The development community helps implement the vision
Regional Benefits

- Land use (jobs and housing) and transit connection
- Compact, Walkable Communities
- Helps address changing housing needs and demands
- Reduced VMT
- Reduced Air Pollution
- More efficient use of existing infrastructure
Group Discussion

- What elements of zoning become barriers?
- What processing changes are needed in zoning?
- How can we reduce the financial gap for developers?
- What would be the biggest barrier to adoption of a form-based code?
- What can cities do to implement the WC 2040?
Open discussion
What are your concerns and issues?
Form Based Code Model and Manual

• FBC responsive to WC 2040 vision
• Model Code – a resource for communities interested in this approach
• Manual – a guide to help the community apply the model code
• Anticipated completion is September 2012