

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



FORM-BASED CODE The Form Based Code Institute defines a form-based code as “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.”² The purpose of implementing form-based code is to provide equitable access to housing in walkable neighborhoods by allowing residential uses at a density driven by the form, lot size and configuration of the lot with less minimum road frontage required and shared driveways encouraged. Form-based code regulates the physical form of the built environment using transects, which are the standardized categories that describe the range or continuum of development types; from T-1 Natural Areas to T-6 Urban Core or City Center with an additional category designated for other uses. Form-based code offers an alternative to traditional zoning laws which separate where we live from where we work, learn, shop, play, and gather. By strictly regulating the setbacks and types of housing, units are built further apart resulting in greater reliance on roads. As an alternative, form-based code promotes walkability by reducing the separation between private and public realms of life. Auburn’s form-based code proposes six types of form-based code districts, T-4.1, T-4.2B, T-4.2, T-5.1, T-5.2 and T-6. These districts range from least urban to most urban. T-4.2B is characterized as the Traditional Neighborhood Development District or General Urban Zone.

How would T-4.2B affect my neighborhood?

Building by form as regulated in T-4.2B will differ based on where you live and the existing neighborhood form. Most city lots are small and already built on, likely limiting additional development to infill housing

opportunities and freedom for property owners to add additional units or make improvements to existing homes. Each landowner can decide whether to make changes to their property based on the ordinances and the existing conditions. In general, this zoning opens opportunities for landowners to add value to their property.

Would higher density in the city core make the traffic worse? Adding more housing, though may add more vehicles to the road in the short term, will allow the city to fund projects to improve current road conditions, and invest in improving circulation patterns throughout the city. Increasing density will also make Auburn a more viable location to extend pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, local public transit, and especially commuter transportation to and from nearby metro areas like Boston, Portland, and more.

Form based code encourages building closer to the street, creating the illusion of narrower roadways which are proven to slow down vehicles. This zoning encourages and supports safe pedestrian traffic, over time also decreasing reliance on vehicles.

More units will mean more kids who need education. Will T-4.2B make this worse for already strained educators?

Applying form-based code could improve the state of Auburn's schools. Over the past several years, students enrolled in Auburn public schools have been stagnant and falling. Fairview can absorb another 100 students, Walton can absorb another 150, and East Auburn is close to capacity but could absorb about 20 more students. Altogether, the district could absorb up to 500-600 more students.

A reliable marker for determining enrollment trends in schools is the rate of preschool enrollment. Superintendent, Dr. Connie Brown, noted in 2022 that preschool enrollment has been decreasing over the past several years resulting in needing to close Walton Preschool and reducing the hours of East Auburn preschool. She noted that there are other schools that may need to close if they cannot increase enrollment.

The school district can, and in some cases will need to absorb more students, though it is also struggling with attracting and retaining teachers. The recommended monthly house payment is 28% of a person's income. The entry level pay for a teacher is \$42,000.00, a firefighter starting wage is \$45,000.00 plus average OT is \$10,000 for a total of \$55,000.00, and a police officer with OT is \$65,000.00. The average price of an existing, entry level home is \$267,500.00 and the average cost of a new entry level home is \$318,000. Based on the 28% recommendation, a person would need to make \$87,450.00/ year to afford an existing entry level home, and 104,6000.000/year to afford a new entry-level home. People working the above noted jobs, which are critical to some of the most important city services could not afford to build or purchase a home in the city that they work in. A teacher and fireperson living together still could not afford a single-family home in the city where they work. Dr. Brown stated that her number-one reason for teacher resignations is that they found another job closer to where they live. Housing options need to reflect different families and individuals' lifestyles and incomes.

How might new zoning affect the housing crisis?

In his article, "3 Zoning changes that Make Residential Neighborhoods More Affordable", Founder and Director of the Urban Sustainability Accelerator and Institute for Sustainable Solutions at Portland State University, Robert Liberty, identified eliminating single-family-residential-only zoning as an important factor to make residential neighborhoods more affordable. Multifamily housing is outlawed in about 75% of the country which poses a significant barrier for low to middle income residents by reinforcing housing segregation and increasing reliance on cars.

Form-based code allows mixed uses and businesses among homes. What does this mean?

What can I expect?

T-4.2B will allow uses other than single family including small businesses with a residential unit on the same parcel. Businesses shall not be over 1,500 square feet. Drive-through restaurants are not allowed in T-4.2B and cannabis shops are also prohibited. There are some businesses that

will be prohibited, and most will require Special Exception Approval from the Planning Board, with Public Notice and Hearing, depending on the size and type.

WHY CONSIDER APPLYING FORM BASED CODE TO THESE FIVE AREAS:

1. The proposed zone change will **increase housing opportunity** for more people by lowering barriers to finding housing. Auburn's housing supply is limited and is not increasing fast enough to accommodate both current residents and those who want to call Auburn home. Housing scarcity drives up prices and increasing the supply of housing will lower the cost overtime.
2. The proposed zoning will **allow a wider variety of housing**. Offering choice in housing to residents will allow more residents the freedom to live as they want and not pay more than they can afford. Financial institutions recommend not spending more than 28% of household gross income on housing. Single family homes are outside of the price range and may not meet the lifestyle needs of many people, especially young adults, young families, empty nesters, older adults and many in between. The current zoning essentially renders housing that is not single-family or two-family illegal effectively barring those who cannot afford the high price of a single-family home to live with their neighbors. Allowing mixed use housing gives residents of all backgrounds and financial capacities options and promotes community by allowing neighbors to live close to and among each other.
3. Current traditional zoning laws tend to separate where we live from where we work, learn, and shop and force us to center roads over all other aspects of city design. These roads, as they are today, are dangerous to pedestrians and cyclists. We have an over-reliance on cars and Auburn's form-based code is meant to provide an alternative. T-4.2B **encourages walkability** by allowing uses that are not exclusively residential in moderately dense urban environments. There will not be walkability if there is nowhere to walk to. Encouraging infill and small business growth encourages walkability by giving folks spaces to walk to. Suburban sprawl as it exists limits transportation to folks who have a car and assumes that there will be little to no walking. It champions cars and roads over people and centralized communities.