

City of Auburn, Maine

"Maine's City of Opportunity"

Office of Planning and Development

To: Mayor Jonathan LaBonte and Auburn City Council

From: Ken Bellefleur, Chairman, Auburn Planning Board

Date: January 8, 2016

RE: Planning Board Report to City Council on Proposed Form Based Code

Certain areas in Downtown Auburn and New Auburn are being considered for re-zoning to a new system of development regulation called Form Based Code. If adopted by the City Council, the Form Based Code will replace the traditional zoning currently in place in these areas. On December 8th, the Auburn Planning Board held a public hearing at City Hall to explain the changes and to hear public input. The Planning Board voted unanimously in recommending a favorable motion for a Form Based Code Zoning Map Amendment and an accompanying Zoning Text Amendment for the Form Based Code.

Over the last 2 years, the City of Auburn's Planning Board has been working with staff in developing the Form Based Code based on recommendations from the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan recommends that development regulations in the Great Falls Area, the Downtown Traditional Business area and the New Auburn Village Center area should "encourage new development or modifications to existing buildings to occur in a manner that reflects key elements of the traditional downtown development pattern."¹ Form Based Code was chosen as the best way to achieve this goal. Form Based Codes are being used across the country to help communities bring back traditional development patterns by providing a focus on building placement, safe walkable streets, greater flexibility of land uses and a more simplified development review process for projects that meet the code.

Auburn's proposed Form Based Code Districts specifically targets most of Downtown Auburn, portions of Main Street and the lower portions of New Auburn and will include 5 Districts:

1. T-4.1- Traditional Main Street Neighborhood District
2. T-4.2- Traditional Downtown Neighborhood District
3. T-5.1- Downtown Traditional Center District
4. T-5.2- Downtown City Center District
5. T-6 Great Falls Metropolitan District

¹ Auburn 2010 Comprehensive Plan, pg. 91.

The draft Form Based Code Map and Text Amendment are available at <http://www.auburnmaine.gov/pages/government/form-based-code-info> with information that will help you see how the Form Based Code District will shape future development.

How will this zone change affect affected properties?

These districts are designed to reflect, protect and promote the existing traditional development patterns that have evolved over many years. Here are some basic facts on how the Form Based Code will function.

- More building area is allowed
- Smaller set-backs
- Reduced parking requirements
- Greater flexibility how you can use your property
- New construction will have to follow the Form Based Code
- Additions of less than 50% to existing buildings, exempt from Form Based Code
- Most new development that follows all the Form Based Code requirements² can apply directly for a building permit and not wait for a Planning Board approval

The Form Based Code is one key step in the City’s goal of revitalizing the Downtown and New Auburn urban centers. Form Based Code can do this by making new development easier to permit, creating a more predictable development environment and to encouraging traditional type development that promotes safe, attractive and active streets for people.

The Planning Board discussed and deliberated the Form Based Code at over 7 meetings and are proud to now encourage the City Council to learn about the Form Based Code, provide a public hearing for additional citizen input, ask questions of staff and then consider approving the first downtown Form Based Code in a major city in the State of Maine.

C: Howard Kroll, Auburn City Manager
Eric Cousens, Deputy Director Planning and Development
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² Except projects over 12,000 s.f. or listed as a Special Exception in Use and Parking Matrix