



Zoning ordinances are the framework which establish the development patterns of a city. Zoning ordinances regulate the uses and form of property development by assigning properties to distinct zones, with the allowed uses and development forms defined for each zone. As a result, zoning plays a critical role in shaping the patterns of land use across a community as well as the community's function and character.

Conventional zoning emphasizes the regulation of land uses, stipulating which uses are permitted in which zones and generally promoting the strict physical separation of uses. At the same time, conventional zoning typically provides minimal control on the design and form of development, generally only addressing setback minimums and building height restrictions. Conventional zoning also significantly emphasizes parking, usually requiring a minimum amount of on-site parking equivalent to peak utilization. This limits the achievable density on a site and produces an development pattern unfriendly to non-vehicular travel. The City's zoning ordinances adopted in 1926, 1961, 1971, and 1984 were largely conventional in format.

Form-based zoning is a newer approach that emphasizes the character of new development by regulating building form, appearance, and relationship to the street and nearby properties. Form-based zoning provide the tools to produce the desired look and feel of development, in an effort to be sensitive to the surrounding context, rather than focusing heavily on allowed uses. Form-based zoning can create more vibrant places by supporting a variety of transportation options and increasing opportunities for the mixing – rather than the segregation – of land uses. The City had integrated many form-based principles into its prior ordinance over the past decade, primarily through the M-2 redevelopment process and Mission Redevelopment Overlay Zone.

ORDINANCE OBJECTIVES

The form-based zoning ordinance was developed to achieve the following objectives identified by the City Commission:

- Create a strong sense of place.
- Result in development patterns and forms that support and encourage the full range of transportation options.
- Ensure compatibility of new development with surrounding uses in order to create livable and desirable neighborhoods.
- Provide tools to promote mixed-use, multi-modal redevelopment forms.
- Generate environmental and economic sustainability for the City and its residents.
- Deliver a review process that is predictable, fair, and efficient.

A form-based zoning ordinance regulates various components of the built environment, including:

- size, height and placement of buildings;
- design standards for landscape, lighting and signs;
- design standards for parking; and
- land uses permitted.

The Mt. Pleasant zoning ordinance reflects the objectives established at the start of the project, creating opportunity to preserve the most loved areas in the community, retrofit areas ripe for improvement, and transform areas that are not consistent with the community's vision for the future. The new ordinance has streamlined standards and expanded opportunity for expansion, renovation, and redevelopment throughout the community.



CREATING THE ORDINANCE

Recognizing that existing zoning standards were failing to achieve the development outcomes desired by the community, in 2015 the Mt. Pleasant City Commission allocated funds to develop a new form-based zoning ordinance.

In 2016, the City selected Town Planning & Urban Design Collaborative, LLC (TPUDC) to lead the project.

In September 2016, TPUDC held kick-off events which included interviews with members of the Planning Commission and City Commission and a public presentation to introduce the community to the project and invite their participation.



In November 2016, TPUDC and the City hosted the signature event of the project - Planapalooza. This four-day event included a public workshop and four roundtable discussions on topics including downtown, corridors, neighborhoods, and economic and industrial development. Hundreds of community members participated through more than 40 hours of open studio time at City Hall. Planapalooza concluded with a “work-in-progress” presentation to share the outcomes of the collaborative events with the community.

TPUDC prepared a draft ordinance which was unveiled to the public in July 2017. The Planning Commission and City Commission subsequently refined the document, making several amendments to the draft code to reflect feedback from policy makers and the public.

The City Commission adopted the ordinance on January 22, 2018.

Highlights of the form-based zoning ordinance include:

--Basic design standards which reinforce the sense of place in both commercial and residential areas and create predictable expectations for developers and predictable outcomes for the community.

--Tools which facilitate incremental redevelopment of existing properties to achieve the community’s vision for transformed, revitalized corridors and a thriving downtown.

--Consolidated zoning districts (11 versus the previous 18).

--Mixed use development (commercial, office, and/or residential) permitted by right on hundreds of acres of additional land, addressing residents’ desire to be within walking distance of goods and services and a necessary component of vibrant urban places.

--Increased development opportunity by eliminating minimum parking requirements citywide, supporting more walkable development forms and increasing opportunities for expansion and additional tax base.

--Updated use standards which reflect contemporary needs and values.



Learn more and view the form-based zoning ordinance at
WWW.MT-PLEASANT.ORG/PLANNING