
AGENDA

The City of Buchanan Planning Commission, in compliance with Michigan's Open Meetings Act, hereby gives notice of a Planning Commission meeting to be held in the Chamber of City Hall.

** Comments may also be submitted in writing at least 4 hours in advance to the Community Development Director Richard Murphy at rmurphy@cityofbuchanan.com*

** Buchanan City will provide necessary and reasonable auxiliary aide and services to those individuals with disabilities who wish to attend the public meeting upon receiving at least one (1) week's prior notice. Any such individual requiring such aids or services should contact the city in writing or by telephoning: Buchanan City Clerk; 302 North Redbud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107, 269-695-3844.*

I. Regular Meeting - Call to Order**II. Pledge of Allegiance****III. Roll Call****IV. Approve Agenda****V. Public Comments - Agenda Items****VI. Approve Minutes**

A. **Minutes**- Consider approving the Regular Meeting Minutes from May 13th, 2025.

VII. Old Business**VIII. New Business**

A. **Short-term Rental Discussion**- Darwin Watson, City Manager of the City of New Buffalo.

B. Zoning: Use-Based vs. Form-Based, Zoning presentation by Planning Commissioner Vice-Chair, Tony Houser.

C. **Update on Zoning Project**

IX. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only**X. Community Development Director Comments****XI. Commissioner Comments****XII. Adjournment**

Zoning: Use-Based vs. Form-Based Zoning

A Deeper Dive into Structure, Design, and Impact

Introduction to Zoning

- Zoning is essential to city planning.
- It governs land use, design, and development patterns.
- Plays a critical role in economic growth and quality of life.

Historical Background of Zoning

- First zoning laws emerged in early 20th century.
- 1926 Supreme Court case *Euclid v. Ambler* set precedent.
- Urban sprawl and suburban development influenced use-based zoning.

Basic Types of Zoning



- Use-Based
(Euclidean) Zoning



- Form-Based
Zoning



- Performance
Zoning



- Incentive Zoning

Use-Based (Euclidean) Zoning

- The most traditional and widely used form.

- Separates land uses into categories: residential, commercial, industrial.

- Simplifies regulation but can lead to urban sprawl.

- Strict separation can reduce walkability and mixed-use potential.



Form-Based Zoning

- Focuses on the built environment's physical form.
- Encourages mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly communities.
- Designs public spaces and street interactions intentionally.
- Popular in downtown revitalization and historic preservation.



Performance Zoning

- Regulates the effects or impacts of land use rather than the use itself.
- Measures include traffic, noise, and environmental output.
- Allows flexibility as long as performance standards are met.
- Often used in industrial or environmentally sensitive areas.

Incentive Zoning

- Grants developers benefits like increased density or height in exchange for public amenities.
- Incentives can include affordable housing, open space, or infrastructure improvements.
- Balances private development with community benefits.
- Often used in urban areas to encourage desired outcomes.



Use-Based Zoning: How It Works

- Zoning map assigns categories to parcels.
- Each zone has specific permitted and conditional uses.
- Helps prevent land use conflicts but can hinder innovation.

Use-Based Zoning: Pros and Cons

- Pros: Predictability, simplicity, neighborhood protection.
- Cons: Rigid, segregates land uses, discourages mixed-use.



How Form-Based Zoning Works

- Form-based codes use physical form—rather than land use—as the primary organizing principle.
- A regulating plan replaces the zoning map and guides building placement.
- Building form standards control height, frontage, and massing.
- Streetscape standards define sidewalks, lighting, landscaping, and public spaces.
- Focus is on the relationship between buildings and the public realm, not just the building use.
- Promotes mixed-use, walkable neighborhoods with predictable physical outcomes.

Form- Based Zoning: Pros and Cons



Pros:

Urban revitalization,
flexibility, design
consistency.



Cons:

Requires more
planning, complex to
enforce.

Why Communities Shift to Form-Based Codes

Revitalize

Revitalize declining downtowns.

Encourage

Encourage walkable, vibrant urban cores.

Support

Support economic development and sense of place.

Case Study: Downtown Revitalization



MANY SMALL TOWNS AND
CITIES ARE SHIFTING TO
FORM-BASED ZONING.



FOCUS IS ON
REACTIVATING MAIN
STREETS AND IMPROVING
PEDESTRIAN EXPERIENCE.



MIXED-USE BUILDINGS
COMBINE RESIDENTIAL,
RETAIL, AND CIVIC SPACES.

Form- Based in Practice: Key Tools



- Regulating Plan:
replaces zoning map.



- Building Form
Standards: replaces
height/setback tables.



- Street Standards:
integrate design and
transportation.

Use-Based in Practice: Limitations

Hard to adapt to
changing
demographics and
market demands.

Can discourage
investment in older
neighborhoods.

Promotes car
dependency and
infrastructure
sprawl.

Community Involvement in Zoning

- Form-based zoning often involves more public engagement.
- Workshops and visual preference surveys are common.
- Helps tailor codes to local values and identity.

Blended Zoning Approaches

- Many cities adopt hybrid systems.
- Use-based with form-based overlays.
- Allows flexibility while preserving core zoning structure.

Impact on Economic Development



FORM-BASED ZONING
CAN ATTRACT BUSINESSES
TO URBAN CORES.



ENHANCES AESTHETIC
APPEAL AND FOOT
TRAFFIC.



SUPPORTS LOCAL
ECONOMY AND TOURISM.

Local
Example
s of
Form-
Based
Codes –
City of
Niles

NILES CITY ESTABLISHED THE 11TH STREET OVERLAY DISTRICT THAT HAS SOME FORM-BASED ELEMENTS.

THE INTENT OF THAT DISTRICT IS TO:

A. IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICLE TRAFFIC SAFETY, ACCESS, AND CIRCULATION.

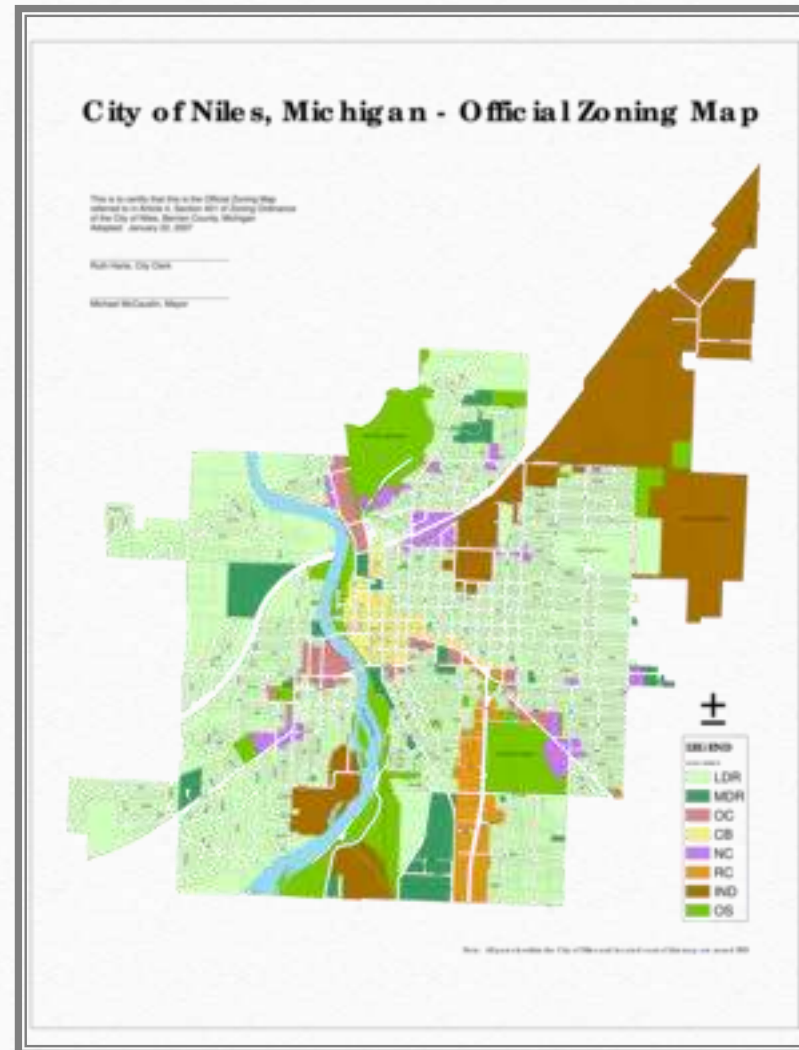
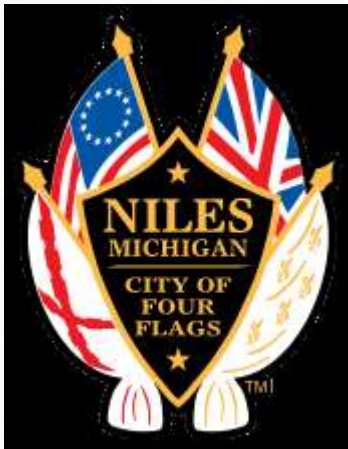
B. ENHANCE THE VISUAL AESTHETICS THROUGH IMPROVED LANDSCAPING, SIGNAGE, AND LIGHTING.

C. ENRICH THE COMMERCIAL CHARACTER OF THE CORRIDOR VIA BUILDING FAÇADE STANDARDS THAT SUPPORT BOTH UNIFORMITY AND CREATIVITY.

D. REDUCE IMPERVIOUS SURFACES AND STORM WATER RUNOFF WHILE IMPROVING THE USAGE AND EFFICIENCY OF PARKING AREAS.”

(CITY OF NILES ZONING ORDINANCE, ARTICLE 511)

Niles, Michigan Zoning Map

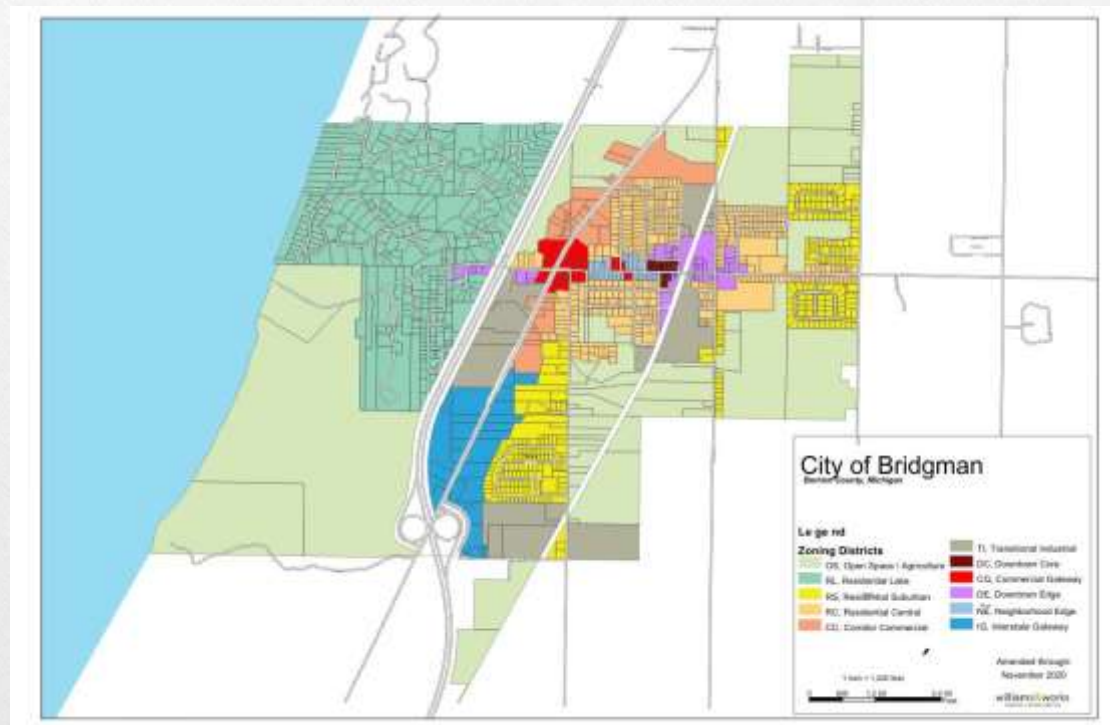


Local Examples of Form-Based Codes – City of Bridgman

Several zoning districts are considered “form generating”

- Downtown Core
- Downtown Edge
- Commercial Gateway
- Neighborhood Edge

City of Bridgman Zoning Map



Local Examples of Form-Based Codes – City of Dowagiac

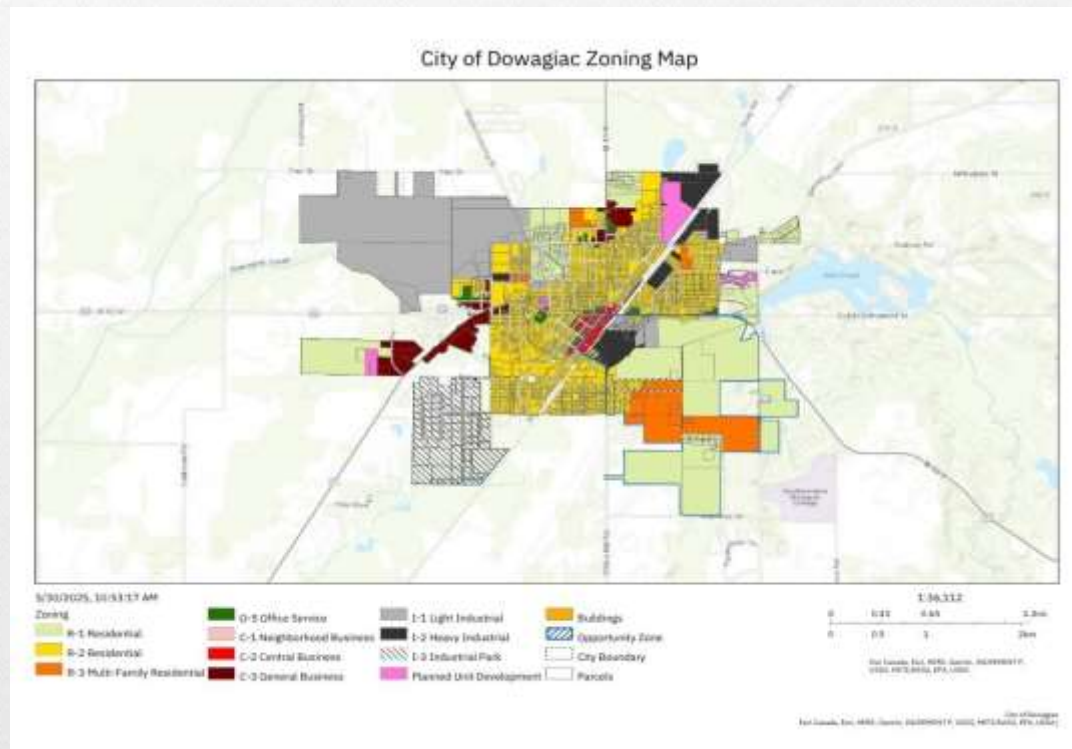
Form-based elements in some districts like the Central Business District

Any side of a building facing a public road shall be:

1. Comprised of at least thirty (30%) percent windows on each floor.
2. Comprised of at least fifty percent (50%) of the following materials for the remaining portions of the building:
 - a. Brick
 - b. Decorative concrete block
 - c. Cut stone
 - d. Horizontal clapboard siding
 - e. Commercial grade horizontal vinyl siding (at least .44 gauge.)
3. In no case shall vertical siding, sheet metal, cement board, or Efface be considered an acceptable building cover.”

City of Dowagiac Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 10

City Of Dowagiac Zoning Map



Key Takeaways

- - Use-Based: Good for managing basic land use.
- - Form-Based: Better for walkable, mixed-use, urban design.
- - Blended approaches are increasingly popular.

Final Thoughts

- Zoning is a powerful tool for shaping community futures.
- Form-based zoning offers tools to rejuvenate downtowns.
- Public participation is critical for successful implementation.

Questions and Discussion

- After a bit more information how do you view the task, we have ahead of us?
- Would form-based zoning and use based zoning hybrid code work best for Buchanan?
- How do we find a happy medium?