The background image shows a street scene with a central fountain. The fountain has a white, ornate metal structure with a pointed top. To the right of the fountain is a building with a dark awning that says "Mexican Restaurant EL PUERTO Mexican Restaurant". Several cars are parked on the street to the left of the fountain. The scene is set against a backdrop of green trees.

# Introduction to Form-Based Codes *Overview and Opportunities*

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*City of Edmonds Planning Board  
Edmonds, Washington June 27th, 2012*

# Form-Based Codes and Comprehensive Planning

- Development regulations include, among other things, zoning codes
- Form-Based Codes are zoning codes
- Therefore, Form-Based Codes implement the comprehensive plan, and must meet the two requirements of Washington law

# Form-Based Codes and GMA Public Participation

- Form-Based Codes typically require considerable up-front visioning and public involvement because of the nature of the process
- Important in Growth Management Act context given need for consistency with public participation goal

# Are Form-Based Codes Legal?

- Yes, if implemented with purpose and reflection, context and clarity
- Local governments have police power to regulate in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare
- Growth Management Act encourages innovative “land management”

# Form-Based Codes

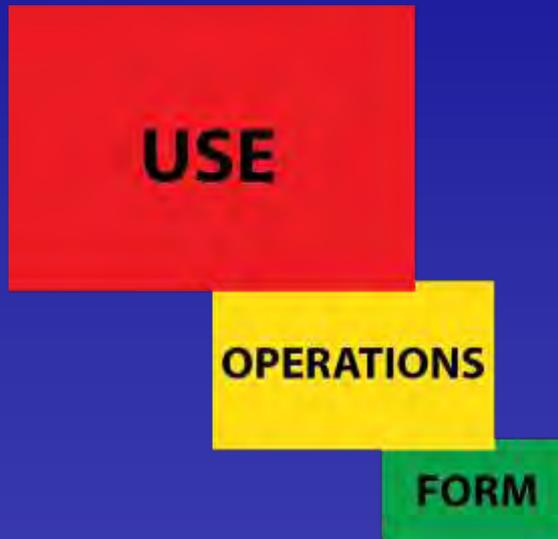
- Placed-based approach: focus is on physical environment, character and quality of public space
- Emphasize mixed-use, walkability, and compact development
- Based on spatial organizing principles that identify and reinforce an urban hierarchy
- Prescriptive regulations describe what is required, but are flexible to accommodate change

# Form-Based Codes

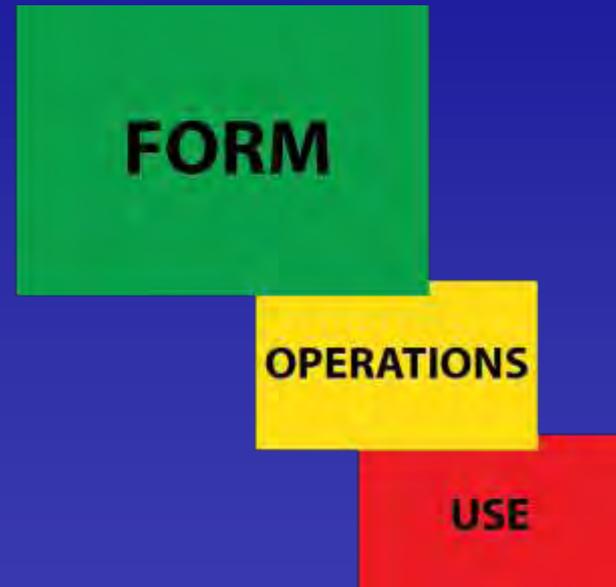
- Tailored to each unique place and situation through charrettes with the community, professionals, city staff, elected officials...
- Intent is to have a holistic vision to integrate infrastructure, buildings, space, and design to boost the economic, social, and physical health of a community

# Form-Based Codes vs. Conventional Planning and Zoning Codes

## Conventional Codes



## Form-Based Codes

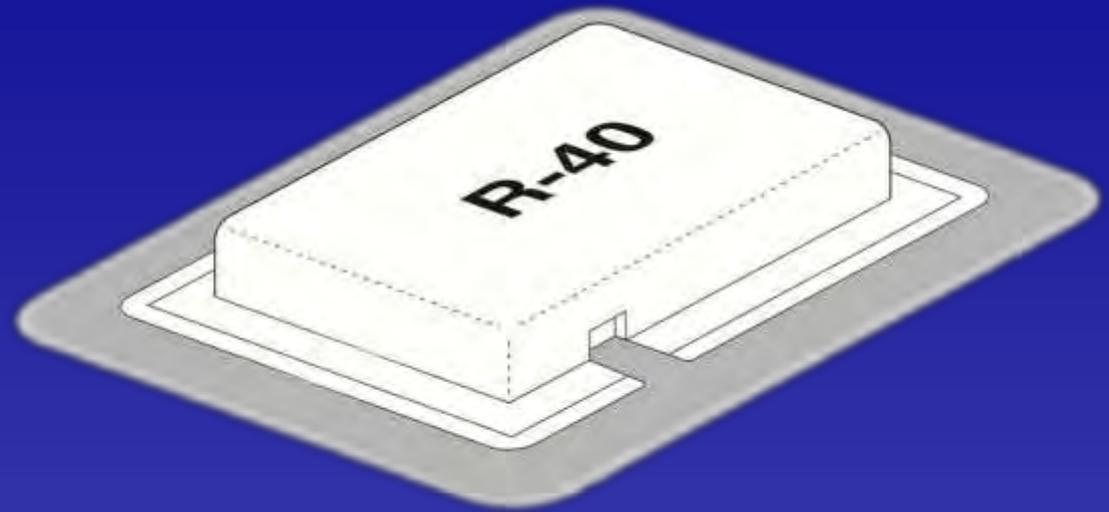


Form-Based Codes regulate the same elements as conventional zoning codes, but give higher priority to the form of buildings and streets, whereas zoning codes place higher priority on land use elements.

# Land Use v. Form

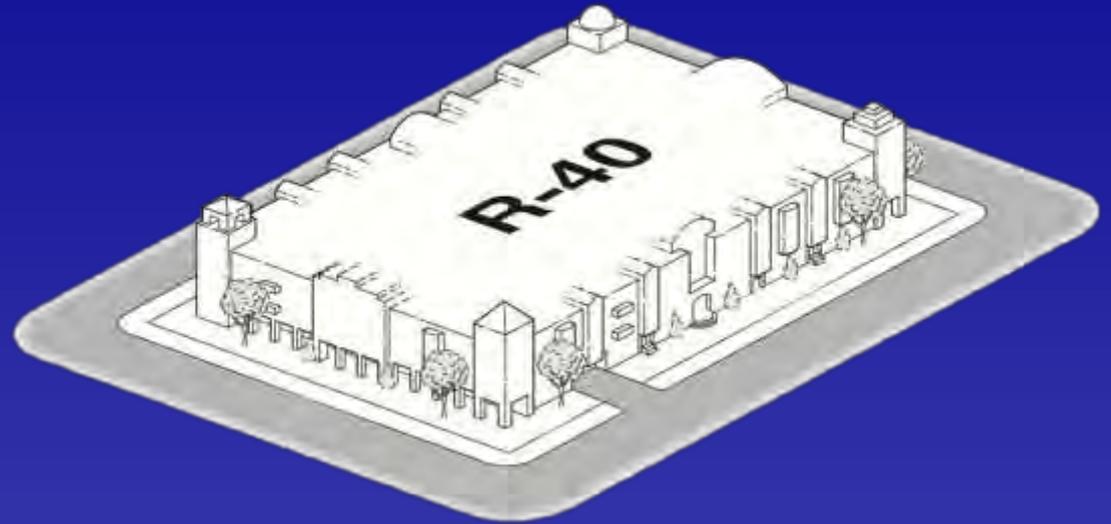
- Both *form priority* and *land use priority* codes are land development regulations consistent with the U.S. Constitution and the Standard State Zoning Enabling Act.
- Most land development codes include graphics that display features such as land use districts (“zoning map”). Form-Based Codes tend to use more graphics to more clearly convey intent.

# How Zoning Defines a One-Block Parcel



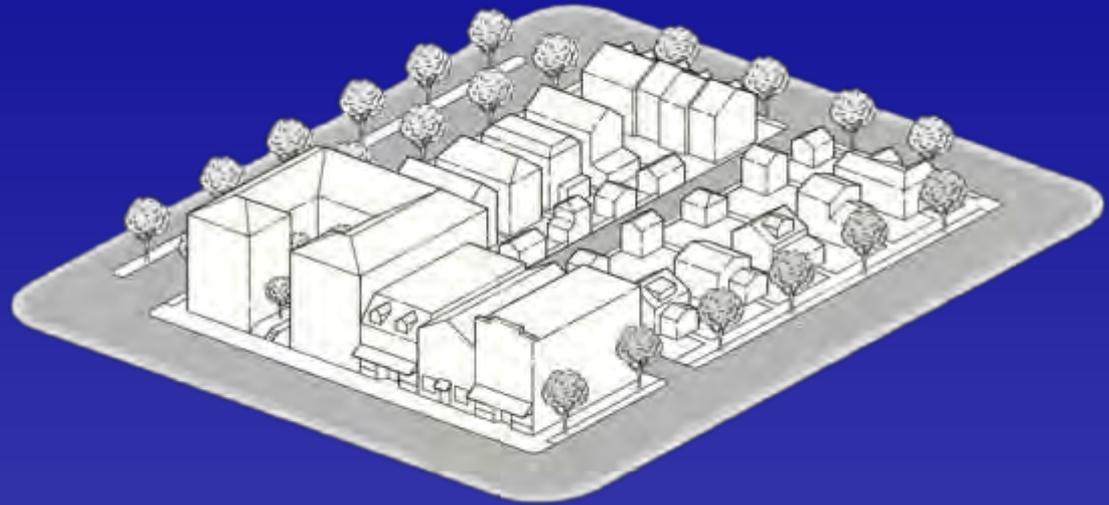
Density, use, FAR (floor-area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, and maximum building height(s) specified.

# How Design Guidelines Define a One-Block Parcel



Density, use, FAR (floor-area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building height(s), frequency of openings, and surface articulation specified.

# How Form-Based Codes Define a One-Block Parcel



Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.

# Required Components of FBCs

- Regulating Plan
- Public Space Standards
- Building Form Standards
- Administration
- Definitions

**Park Street Districts Regulating Code**  
City of Alameda, California

**T**HE PARK STREET DISTRICTS REGULATING CODE ESTABLISHES FORM-BASED DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND DESIGN GUIDELINES TO IMPLEMENT THE LAND USE AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES DEVELOPED AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY VISIONING PROCESS.

IN ADDITION TO SITE DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, THE PLAN INCLUDES DETAILED ARCHITECTURAL STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES TO ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENT BUILDS ON THE HIGH LEVEL OF CRAFT AND CHARACTER FOUND IN ALAMEDA'S RICH HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL STYLES.

**FORM-BASED DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

- Site Development
- Building Height
- Building Placement
- Building Types
- Frontage Types & coverage requirements
- Architecture Design Standards
- Architecture Style Guidelines
- Guidelines for Rehabilitation and Restoration

**LAND-USE REGULATIONS**

- District Zone Land Use Categories
- District Zone Land Use Relationships
- Definitions for Permitted and Conditional Use Categories

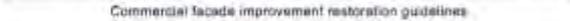
**SPECIAL CONDITION REGULATIONS**

- Fuel Station form-based regulations
- Waterfront District infill development concepts
- Pedestrian Promenade
- Landscape and Open Spaces
- Parking Provisions
- Stormwater Managements

**Existing conditions**



**Commercial facade improvement restoration guidelines**



**Regulating Plan - Park Street North District Zones**



**Neoclassical**



**Early 20th Century Commercial**



**Streamlined Moderne**



**Pedestrian promenade - residential frontage**



**Spanish Mediterranean**



**Infill development concept - Waterfront District**

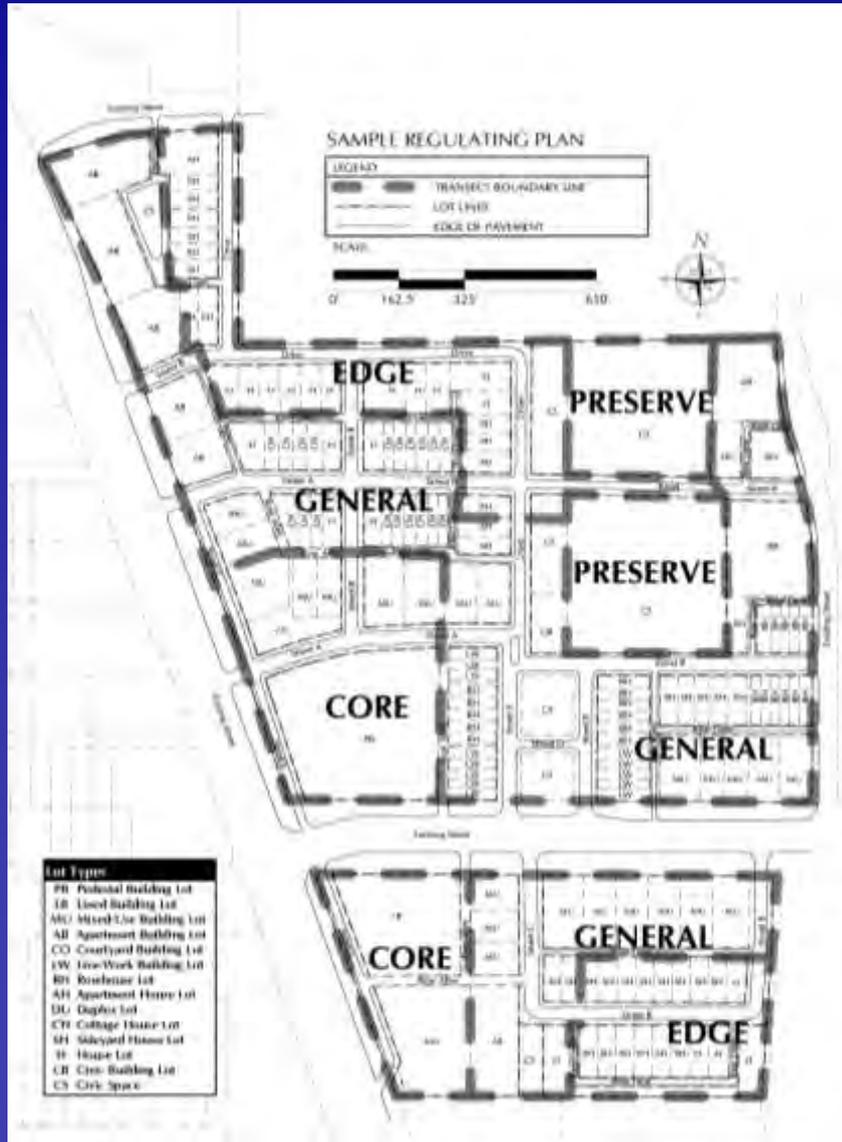


**Modern**



Contact:  
Mr. Andrew Thomas  
Planning Services Manager  
(510) 747-8881

# Regulating and Illustrative Plans



# Optional Components of FBCs

- Architectural Standards
- Landscaping Standards
- Signage Standards
- Environmental Resource Standards
- Annotation

# Hybrid Codes

- Intent is to integrate Form-Based Codes with traditional Euclidean zoning
- Typically, hybrids are standard zoning codes combined with graphic urban design standards, but can be ineffective if not clear and fully developed
- Usually do not address public space as comprehensively as a full FBC
- Can allow for flexibility and choice

# Hybrid Codes

## Possible solutions

- Adopt a complete and comprehensive FBC for a specific planning area such as a neighborhood or district – this FBC would reside in the structural and legal framework of a conventional code
- Make the FBC framework the rule, and conventional zoning the exception

# Hybrid Codes

## Things to keep in mind:

- Determine the community's objectives
- Choose a “workable” regulatory approach, paying attention to the review process and staff requirements
- Involve the full range of community stakeholders
- Make sure your participants fully understand the implications of various options and alternatives – both in developing and finalizing the code
- Stay focused on the issues

# Hybrid Codes

Pay special attention to:

- Work with experienced professionals who understand how to integrate a FBC into the existing system
- Being strategic about resources while maintaining a comprehensive view of the code development process
- Educating and informing staff who will be responsible for developing and enforcing the code

See Bengford, “A Hybrid Approach to Form-Based Codes in the Northwest,” January 2010, and Eastman, Parolek, and Wise, “Going Hybrid,” in *Planning*, February 2012

# Example: Flagstaff, AZ

- Existing code was piecemeal, had multiple conflicting zoning methodologies, and the public blamed it for high cost of development and failure of big projects and economic development opportunities
- Needed to update the code with special attention given to walkable, urban neighborhoods differentiated from suburban areas

# Procedural Due Process: Public Process

- Because Form-Based Codes are place-based, more front-end visioning is required
- Growth Management Act requirements
- Many areas have undergone this process in some form, i.e. comprehensive plan adoptions
- Individual notice not required for legislative acts, but adequate general notice is required

# Incentives

- Incentives may catalyze acceptance
- Administrative or streamlined review
- Optional or floating Form-Based Code district
- GMA/SEPA Planned Actions
- Development Agreements
- Allocation of environmental risk in select geographic areas

# Localities Embracing Form-Based Codes

Approach partially adopted and touted:

- Clark County Highway 99 Code
- Chelan Downtown Master Plan
- Mountlake Terrace Town Center Code
- Bothell Downtown Subarea Plan
- King County Form-Based Code Pilot Project
- Sammamish Town Center Plan and Code
- Spokane Valley – Sprague & Appleway Corridor Subarea Plan Development Regulations
- Langley – Wharf Street Overlay District Code
- Tukwila – Southcenter Plan Development Code

# Example: Downtown Bothell

## Bothell Downtown Subarea Plan and Regulations



# Bothell Today

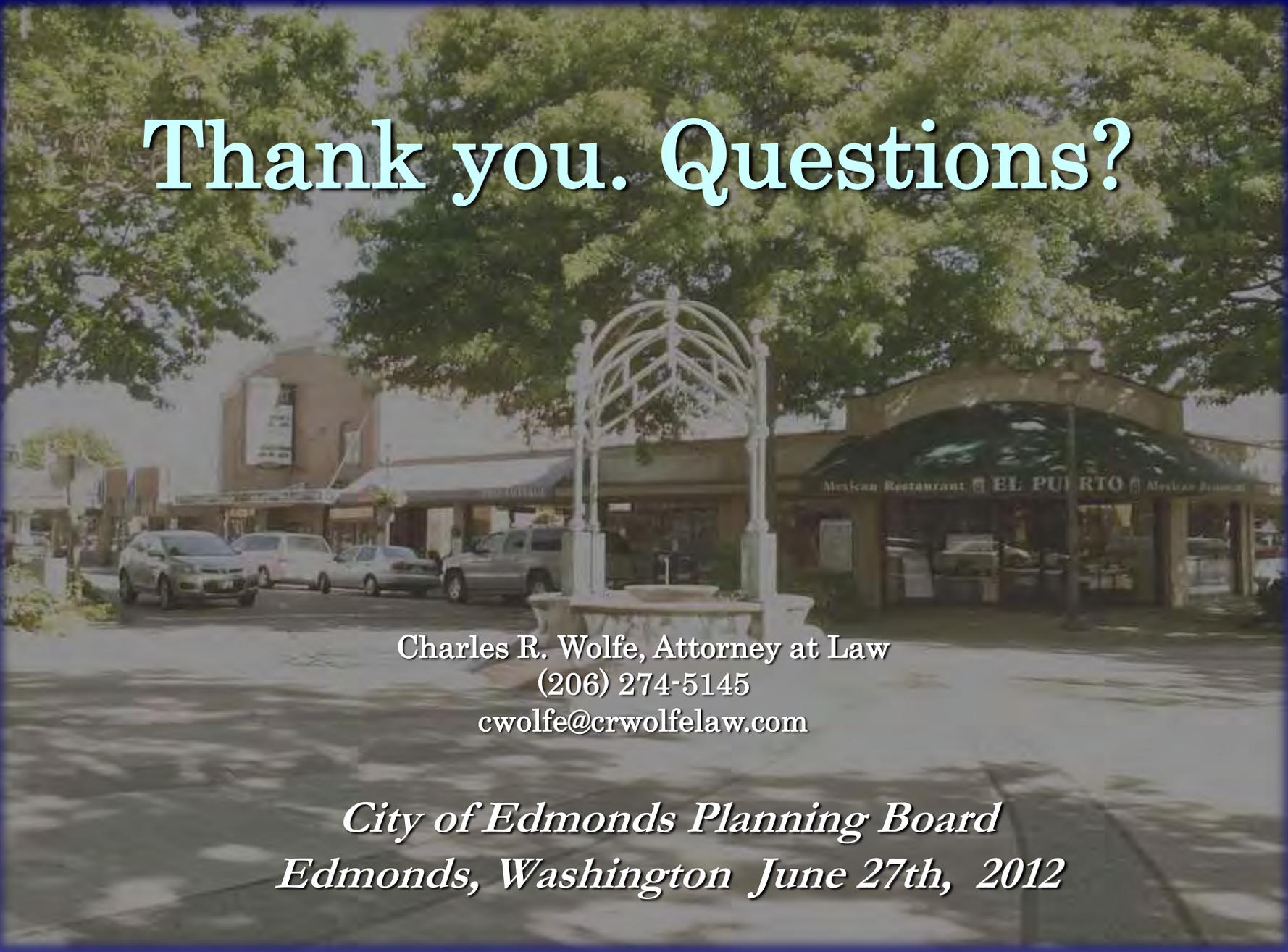


# Example: Downtown Bothell Public Participation

- In 2006, Bothell began community planning process for Downtown Revitalization Plan
- February 2009: Conceptual design phase
- Throughout 2009: Public outreach to include citizen feedback into design

# Example: Downtown Bothell Incentives

- Bothell passed an ordinance obviating additional review under SEPA for specific development projects determined to be consistent with the city's prior findings
- Ordinance allows projects that reflect city's vision to use streamlined development process



# Thank you. Questions?

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