

## Form-Based Codes and Cincinnati

The City of Cincinnati is currently in the process of overhauling its building and zoning regulations. This change includes moving to a Form Based code. A series of city-wide charrettes is planned for five days, from April 28th - May 2nd, bringing professionals and residents together to learn about and comment on details of the new code.

So what is a form based code, and what does it mean for Cincinnati? Essentially, a form based code is a method of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form. It emphasizes form over use, encouraging mixed uses, streetscaping, attention to the public realm and a design-focused public participation process. The goal is not necessarily to regulate architecture, but rather placement and heights.

On March 29th and 30th, myself, along with fellow 2nd Year MCP David Heyburn and 2011 MCP grad Kevin Wright, joined a City of Cincinnati contingency on a trip to Nashville, TN, to explore the ways that that city has implemented Form Based code practices in many of their city neighborhoods. The trip took us



Germantown neighborhood in Nashville, TN

through a variety of urban neighborhoods, including Germantown, The Gulch, Hillsboro Village, West End Park and Hill Center. Here are a few things we learned:

**1) A complete rewrite of the existing zoning code is not necessary.** In Nashville, rather than a

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## Upcoming Events

### April:

**28th** (through May 2nd) - Form Based Code neighborhood charrettes

### May

**19th, 8:30am** - Cincinnati Neighborhood Summit, at School for Creative and Performing Arts.

### June:

**1st, 7pm** - End-of-the-year PGSA party. Location TBD, a good time guaranteed.

**8th**, time/place TBD - SOP Graduate's Reception

**9th, 2pm** - DAAP Graduation Commencement Ceremony.

## SOP Spotlight: Faculty Research

We have classes with School of Planning faculty but oftentimes are not exposed to their own research and work outside the classroom. This is a summary of what a few of our faculty have been up to. It might also give you some ideas for thesis work during the 2012-2013 school year. While the school has been encouraging most students to undertake a capstone, if a particular topic interests you for a thesis, meet with a professor to discuss possibilities!

**Jan Marie Fritz:** Dr. Fritz writes about clinical sociology, mediation, community intervention and the national action plans based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (women, peace and security). She has been awarded a fellowship from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and will be working in Washington, D.C. during the 2012-2013 academic year.

**David Varady:** Currently Dr. Varady is working on a book review of *Staging the New Berlin* by Claire Columb for the journal *Urban Studies*. He is also editing a special issue of *Geography Research Forum* on ethnic minorities in urban housing policy in developed countries.

As Book Review Editor for the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, he is involving a number of exceptionally talented students as book reviewers. This is an option for masters and doctoral students who

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## Faculty Research (continued):

write well in English and who have a particular specialty in planning or urbanism.

**Beth Honadle:** Dr. Honadle is Principal Investigator on the federally-funded research project, 'External Evaluation of the Stronger Economies Together Initiative' of the US Department of Agriculture. Last November she was a consultant at Future University in Egypt in Cairo and in December she presented at Sun Yat-sen University, in Guangzhou, China. Honadle's "Local Government Fiscal Health: An Intergovernmental Perspective" will be published in *Handbook of Fiscal Health* in Spring 2012.

**David J. Edelman:** Dr Edelman's research most recently has been focused on regional (provincial) planning in developing countries with an emphasis on urban environmental management in second order cities and on energy planning for regions and countries, as well as on the accommodation of the immigrant elderly into host country retirement in Europe. He is most concerned with applied research that builds on his professional experience.

**Xinhao Wang:** Dr. Wang approaches two subject areas, environment and planning, using three information technologies: Geographic Information Systems (GIS), analytical and statistical modeling, and visualization. Working with him a student can expect to publish work demonstrating contributions either to technology methodology or to knowledge through a better understanding of human-environment relationships and improved communications.

**Rainer vom Hofe:** Dr. vom Hofe's recent research explores methods of identifying and quantifying the relationship between residential property values and positive amenities (parks, bike trails, etc.) and disamenities (brownfields). His most recent study with Dr. Olivier Parent received an interdisciplinary grant from the University of Cincinnati Research Council. His work on bike trails has seen national attention and has lately been referred to in the *New York Times*.

**Mahyar Arefi:** Dr. Arefi's areas of interest include urban design (theory and practice), place and placemaking, social capital, and international development. He mainly focuses on the interface between urban design, urban planning, and architecture. One of his current focuses is the city of Dubai where he taught and did research for two years. His research focuses on what he calls "Dubai the Elusive City", which has the underlying premise that not everything is what it seems.

## Form-Based Codes (continued):

comprehensive overhaul of their code, they have selectively implemented Urban Design Overlays (UDO's) on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, each one uniquely tailored to existing neighborhood character and based on community input. As developers and communities alike have seen the benefits of UDO's, their popularity is catching on.



The Gulch development in downtown Nashville

**2) Nashville avoids using the term "form-based code."** Perhaps due to the public's wariness of planning jargon, Nashville does not use this term. "UDO", on the other hand, seems to pass the public's test.

**3) A form based approach can be used for both low and high density development.** In Germantown, new mixed-use with ground-floor retail coexists in harmony with historic detached homes. The Gulch, on the other hand, consists of new high-rise towers and active nightlife.

**4) An incremental implementation allows for a "learn as you go" approach.** On our Nashville tour we were shown some building setbacks that didn't quite work in the way the City originally intended. So for future UDOs they adjusted the guidelines.

It is an exciting time to be a planning student in Cincinnati. The City wants to innovate, better positioning us to compete with cities such as Nashville in retaining and attracting residents. Get involved!