

*From Statesman*

# Bastrop Residents Turn Out for Proposed Changes to Zoning Laws

by Debbie Moore | Feb. 12, 2015

About 100 Bastrop property owners heard an explanation of the effects a proposed change in city zoning ordinances may have on their property. Known as form-based codes, the approach would center on the “form” or look of a structure first, rather than “use,” which is currently the case. The bottom line to current property owners in the affected area is that the change would have no effect on their existing homes or their businesses.

There will be no need to alter the way a business operates, and there would be no need to change a structure, based on the proposed changes to the city’s zoning ordinance. If current owners sell a commercial building, and the new owners continue to operate a business in that building, there would be no change. Property taxes would not be affected.

Form-based codes would only affect new construction in the area roughly bounded by Hawthorne Street to the north, Texas 95 to the east, College Street north of Texas 71, and the Colorado River to the west.

City planning director Melissa McCollum and consultants from Gateway Planning, the firm hired to lead the city through this process, began meeting with residents on Feb. 5 at noon to answer one-on-one questions. There was a steady stream of people throughout the afternoon until 5 p.m. At 6 p.m., a general meeting was held in the City Council chambers, where McCollum and the consultants reviewed the changes and their effects. These meetings come after more than a year of meetings and workshops with area residents to get input on how they want Bastrop to look in the future.

McCollum said that 90 percent of the requests for zoning variances to the 13 current classifications are from residents in the old part of town, rather than in the newer subdivisions like Hunters Crossing, Tahitian Village and Riverside Grove. That is because lots in the newer areas are more uniform in size, and restrictions were in place prior to homes being built. That is not the case in the old part of Bastrop.

McCollum said that form-based codes will better address the “funky-sized lots” in town, where a large lot may be next to a small lot, and a large home may be next to a small one. It was repeatedly stressed at the 6 p.m. meeting that this form of zoning will be less restrictive than that which is currently in place.



*From left, Gateway consultants Rob Parsons and Scott Polikov discuss changes to the city’s zoning regulations with Bastrop Planning Director Melissa McCollum, city staff member Vivianna Hamilton and property owner Frank Uffman.*

The plan that was presented is a draft. Adjustments to it, based on property owners' comments, are still being. Before it is finalized, there will be a public hearing at the Planning and Zoning Commission on Feb. 17 at 6 p.m.; a public hearing and first reading before the City Council on March 10 at 6:30 p.m.; and a second reading before final passage on March 24 at 6:30 p.m. All meetings will be in City Hall and are open to the public. Comments will be taken at the Feb. 17 and March 10 public hearings.

For further information, the plan is online at [www.cityofbastrop.org](http://www.cityofbastrop.org). Under the Departments tab, go to Planning and Development, and then click on the Form-Based Code tab. Property owners can also contact McCollum at 512-332-8840.