



## AIA San Antonio

November 29, 2007

### POSITION STATEMENT

#### Proposed CoSA Form-Based Development Zoning District and Use Patterns

AIA San Antonio, a Chapter of The American Institute of Architects, supports the preservation of San Antonio's natural beauty, its ecological and environmental uniqueness and its distinctive, historic character. Toward that goal, AIA San Antonio supports the city's proposed Form-Based Development Zoning District and Use Patterns as posted in draft form (dated November 8 and 15, 2007, respectively) on the city's website at [www.sanantonio.gov/planning](http://www.sanantonio.gov/planning). As synopsized in the preamble to the proposed 'FBZD' Zoning District Regulations:

*The Form Based Zoning District is a special district established to encourage a sustainable pattern of development by concentrating growth in Hamlets, Villages and Regional Centers while preserving and protecting prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas, important natural features and open space. Hamlets, Villages and Regional Centers are compact, pedestrian-oriented and mixed-use with a focus on creating communities where the ordinary activities of daily living occur within walking distance of most dwellings. Lot and building standards including building disposition, building configuration, building function, parking standards, architectural standards, landscape standards and signage standards are governed by Land Use Plans, Development Pattern Plans and Transect Zones.*

#### AIA San Antonio supports this Ordinance for the following reasons:

- The Form-Based Development Zoning District and its concomitant Use Patterns are highly consistent with The American Institute of Architects "Ten Principles for Livable Communities" (which can be viewed at [http://www.aia.org/liv\\_principles](http://www.aia.org/liv_principles))
- The proposed ordinance will be an instrument in support of AIA's Issue Brief "Smart Growth: Building Livable Communities", issued in 2005.
- There now exists over twenty years of history on the viability, applicability, and workability of Form-Based Development to create livable communities. Such notable developments as Seaside, FL and Mashpee Commons, MA (both the work of Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company) have utilized Form-Based Development. It is a tested and workable alternative to traditional development codes and standards.

## **AIA San Antonio prefers the following outcomes:**

- The City of San Antonio should adopt the Form-Based Zoning District Ordinance and its Development Use Patterns as an *optional* development tool for *all* areas within the incorporated City Limits, and not restrict it only to the boundaries of CitySouth, as has been suggested.
- Furthermore, since Form-Based Development allows for a complete spectrum of development from rural, preserved open spaces to urban centers, it is highly appropriate as an *optional* development tool within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction, or ETJ (as is currently noted within the Zoning Ordinance). In fact, it is in such greenfield sites, as exist within the ETJ, that the Form-Based Development could have the most advantageous impact for the livability and sustainability of future city growth. AIA San Antonio supports its applicability to the ETJ.
- The City should continue to explore methods for incentivizing Form-Based Development, particularly in development areas supported by municipal investment, such as TIFs, TIRZs, and MUDs.
- The City should continue to refine the particulars of the Ordinance, particularly its architectural standards, to customize it to the particular traditions, building materials, forms and massing of our regional architecture, as has been done with landscaping and tree requirements. In this matter, AIA San Antonio requests that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Unified Development Code (UDC) and/or the Consolidated Review Committee (CRC) established by the proposed Ordinance seek, within an open, publically-involved process, the advice of AIA San Antonio and/or one of its professional members in reviewing and proposing modifications to all of the architectural standards outlined in the proposed Ordinance. AIA San Antonio does not object to the adoption of the proposed Ordinance without these modifications, but requests that review and any appropriate modifications occur within the first year from the date of adoption.