

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) FORM BASED REGULATIONS



Ministry of Municipality and Environment

Urban Planning Department

Qatar National Master Plan

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Form Based Regulations

Question 1: What are Form Based Regulations?

Answer: Form-based Regulations (FBR) are community-driven design regulations that control the physical form of the built environment to create a certain type of "place", for example, a traditional, pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhood.

Form-based Regulations create that place by using dimensional standards to shape the spaces between buildings and to control how buildings relate to each other, to streets, and to other public spaces. Form-based Regulations allow a community to better shape the look and feel of its built environment. The strength of a Form-based Regulation is its ability to define the character of these particular areas

Question 2: What is the difference between Traditional Regulations and Form Based Regulations

Answer: In simple terms FBRs encourage place making such as street configurations, how buildings relate to each other and should encompass the movement system while traditional codes simply attempt to reduce impacts between uses.

Zones created under an FBR are particular to the place and not generic; they implement the vision for the area, however FBRs Traditional Zoning dictates what uses can go where, it separates most uses one from the other and usually does not dictate what the look and feel of a zone will be.

A good FBC should be easier for non-professionals to understand and use because they are shorter and more concise than conventional zoning documents. The illustrations that are an essential element of a FBC creates a visual accessibility not found with traditional zoning.

In traditional Regulations, it doesn't immediately address small plots or special case plots , however FBR includes small plots which allows more clarity for developers and officers

Question 3: Why not use the latest approved Regular Zoning and apply them on Down Town Doha and other Capital City Centres?

Answer: The nature of Capital City Centres and specifically Down Town, were the Fine Grain composing the Urban Fabric, and the Historic Evolution of the City witnessing this place, requires a very sensitive approach to maintain the character of these areas.

Conventional use-based zoning is not appropriate for Historic Downtowns or new infill development that is frequently being built in Downtown core areas. Many towns and cities over the world are also realizing that their current use-based zoning ordinances would not allow them to rebuild their historic centres and neighbourhoods

Question 4: What are the main features that may describe the Form Based Regulations?

Answer: Four main features:

- **Informative:** Easy to digest & to understand
- **Realistic & workable:** The set building typologies and other aspects to be regulated are developed based on the existing conditions
- **Regulate to individual building & plot:** Clear regulations for each block and plot
- **Ensure the right to develop:** Every land owner has the right to develop based on the condition of the land

Question 5: What are the main differences from the current regulations?

Answer: The FBR provides added value to the diversified economy and business plans, gives clear directions for the selection box of specific uses, and absorbs the market changes. The attributes are:

- Allowable pure commercial-led (souqs)
- Retail and offices are combined, and both are now under the mixed use commercial use category
- Provide detailed list (matrix) of permitted uses for each use type
- Provide greater flexibility for developers to adapt to real estate market & attract wider segments of business
- Less rigid in mixing the use type & easier to understand

Question 6: What is shown in a FBR?

Answer: Form-based Regulations typically contain diagrams and tables and easily-understood language that explains the standards of the regulations:

- **Regulating Plan.** A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply. The regulating plan is based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area. So you will find : Exact Block Location & Its Uses, The Designated Use for the Block

- Use Regulations per Block, where you will find : Allowable Mixed uses, Allowable activities, how to Split the Uses, and directions for "Do and do not"
- Building Form Standards. Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm where you will find: Massing & Building Placement, Building Typology, Heights and FAR, Building Envelope Illustration. Appropriate Building Type, Written Form-related Regulations
- Architectural Standards where they include regulations controlling external architectural quality and character. You will find: Standards for Architectural Theme, Solid to void ration in elevations, Spaces between buildings
- Landscaping Standards. Regulations controlling landscape design on private property as they impact public spaces (e.g. regulations about parking lot screening and shading, maintaining sight lines, insuring unobstructed pedestrian movements, etc.). You will also find: Special treatments like green roofs, active corners
- Annotation. Text and illustrations explaining the intentions of specific regulation provisions
- Definitions. A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.

Question 7: What are the main benefits of Form Based Regulations in these Centers?

Answer: Form-Based Regulations can benefit a community in a wide variety of ways, from increased economic value to easier development approvals. While the code consists of a series of separate components, they are meant to be used together to achieve the highest level of benefit, like:

- Predictable Results: Form-based Regulations define the form and general appearance of buildings as primary concerns and consider land use as a secondary concern. The benefit of placing building form over building use is that the community can control the physical impact development has on a community. This allows for a greater mix of uses, which encourages a more diverse and walkable community. It also makes the development process more streamlined and predictable.
- Highly Illustrated Document: A defining feature of form-based regulations is their "easy to use" illustrative nature; both graphically and straightforward narrative. They streamline information and provisions, placing everything together in one ordinance, resulting in a more concise document
- Place Specific Regulations: Form-based Regulations are tailored and calibrated for their communities, where conventional regulations rely heavily on a development

that is often generic in nature and does not always take into account the character of the existing community.

Form-based regulations take the surrounding neighbourhood context into consideration when assigning Street and Building Types, and when this happens, the existing community characteristics are preserved and encouraged

- Economic Benefits: Form-based codes promote the development of walkable neighbourhoods, which brings economic benefits like higher real estate values and increased occupancy rates.

Homes in walkable communities experienced stable and growing value and rental yields. In addition, the emphasis on permitted uses instead of conditional uses, decreases the amount of time and risk for developers

- Focus on the public realm: Form-based Regulations focus on the way in which buildings interact with the street. They create pedestrian friendly environments by controlling physical elements of buildings such as setbacks and minimum transparency levels. They also use street type requirements that work cooperatively with building type regulations to create an attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment.

Question 8: What are the types of uses that you are allowing in this new regulation?

Answer: We are providing you with a whole list of uses that could be adopted in your plot and their vertical location and this could be read through the excel sheets and a detailed list (matrix) of permitted activities for each use type. The percentages of uses are also stated with their locations.

For example: IF your plot has residential, commercial and hospitality uses; you shall know which type of residential allowed (e.g. flats/apartments). And which type of commercial allowed (e.g. grocery shop, pharmacy, café, real estate services, etc.)

Question 9: What are the minimum plot size requirements for a standard plot?

Answer: The minimum plot size requirements that are applicable on this new regulation differ from one block to another as real cases on site. The regulations specify the minimum plot size that can ideally be developed with these regulations, however whenever the plot is less than the specified size there is also an answer to its development attributes with some sacrifice and down grading.

You will find very common cases where we stated that the minimum plot size is 300 sq. m. and also 400 sq.m.in other cases however we gave the solution to the plots that are less than that size.

Question 10: What if I do not meet the minimum lot size requirements?

Answer: The FBR gave a solution for all plot sizes, however If the plot is undersized and does not meet the provisional regulations, the owner will have two choices: 1- Either to have a compensation with another plot in other areas within the available Government Land Bank.

2- Or to be consolidated with the adjacent plot and have a joint development between them under a business agreement document.

Question 11: In these regulations are you giving any incentives?

Answer: The incentives are already constructed in these new regulations where the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is higher than the current regulations and the owner will have more built up area. We are also giving parking waivers on plots that are at certain distances from the Metro Stations, where we are exempting the owners from applying the full requirements for the parking standards through a percentage that varies according to their distance from the Metro Station as follows:

Within 200 meters from the Metro Station: 25% waiver

From 201 to 400 meters from the Metro Station: 15% waiver

From 401 to 800 meters from the Metro Station: 10% waiver

Moreover; there are further incentives that are given to plots that have public easement as compensation.

Question 12 : Is the value of land going to be as it is , or higher ?

Answer: Definitely it will be higher considering the higher FAR, the better built environment, the spatial relationship with others, better architectural appearance, the contribution to urban spaces& public realm, and the exposure to better micro-climate.

Question 13: How do I guarantee that my relationship with the neighbor is not disturbed?

Answer: The FBR has already considered the relationship between buildings and the development configuration of each plot is being coordinated with the adjacent building. The Architectural Character is also stated to achieve harmony , and the regulations have also given flexibility for privacy issues in the ground floor within the inner space of the block where your plot lies.

Question 14 : Does the Form-Based Code introduce any specific parking regulations?

Answer: The FBR addressed the same parking standards applicable on the current approved regulations, however a more relaxing incentive approach has been introduced compatible with the public realm and TOD policies for encouraging walkable communities and healthier environment by reducing the carbon foot print. A waiver system has been introduced varying from 10% to 25% depending on the distance between the plot and the nearest Metro station.

Question 15: How will this FBR affect current property owners? i.e. What if my property was developed before the current zoning regulations took effect?

Answer: Any uses or structures they have on their property currently can remain as they are today. If your use and development was legal before the activation of the Form Based Regulations, your property may have 'legal non-conforming use' rights. However, there are certain criteria that must be met in order to establish non-conforming use rights

Question16: Where is the destination to apply for my plot development?

Answer: You may go directly to the Building Permit Complex where the regulations shall clearly explained and displayed for your plot development.

Question 17: What if I didn't manage to have a clear answer to my plot development?

Answer: You will be given a time frame between one week and two weeks to receive full reply to your queries through the Building Permit Complex, as we have

established a system to have an internal communication between the Building Permit Complex and Planning Department to resolve these matters.

Question 18: Are we going to have any challenges with the officers responsible for development applications?

Answer: As we explained before the way the Form Based Regulations are constructed, is to mitigating challenges, and elongated discussions with officers in the development application process.