

POST FALLS SMARTCODE INFORMATION

Why is the Post Falls SmartCode added to the Municipal Code?

The SmartCode is a set of regulations designed to produce desired outcomes that have been determined through the SmartCode Charrette held in October of 2006 and also through the visual preference survey and workshops. The SmartCode does this by putting a greater emphasis on the “form” of development and less emphasis on the “use”. Conventional regulations are primarily designed to segregate types of land use.

Administratively, what is different in the Post Falls SmartCode versus our existing zoning ordinance?

The SmartCode is administered largely by a Development Review Committee (DRC), which is comprised of Community Development staff with other members (staff from appropriate jurisdictions, other city departments, etc.) as warranted. The intent of the DRC is to expedite review and approval of SmartCode projects through the committee rather than a multi-stepped process under the existing municipal code. Within the SmartCode there are many more development options by right. This allows developers more flexibility and certainty in creating projects.

Is the SmartCode intended to replace the zoning regulations?

No, the SmartCode will be a parallel code that applies when selected by a property owner meeting the threshold criteria. It would be the mandatory code, along with applicable sections of the municipal code for property being annexed into the community. It may be mandatory within the city center area, depending on the implementation selected by the Planning & Zoning Commission and City Council. There are subjects covered in the existing zoning ordinance that are not currently addressed in the SmartCode (stormwater, infrastructure standards, some landscaping, etc.).

What are the Principles behind SmartCode?

The SmartCode establishes that there are commonly accepted qualities associated with the different areas that make up a community, county or region – from the very rural to the most urban. This is referred to as the **Transect**. Within the six principle zones of the transect, a high quality public realm is the primary objective. Within each transect or “T” zone, there are appropriate levels of development. In rural areas, natural features and low density are dominant. In more urban areas, mixed uses, higher density, and pedestrian facilities are more dominant.

Can the SmartCode be changed to suit needs or issues?

Yes, the SmartCode can be changed as warranted by conditions or new developments (technology, regulations, etc.) There can be modules developed to supplement the code when necessary. The SmartCode is designed to be tailored to each community's desires.

Are there incentives for developers to choose the SmartCode?

The most important incentive is that a development plan, proposed and approved using the SmartCode, may proceed with only administrative approvals (DRC) needed or, in the case of subdivision, approval by the City Council via the consent agenda. There is public process for project approval, but once approved and proceeding according to the Code there is no additional public process. Large commercial, industrial, or highly specialized projects can be approved as special districts and, in a sense; the developer may write their own ticket.

Does the SmartCode address land uses?

Yes, within each of the transect zones, there are certain uses allowed by right and certain uses allowed by special exception. The SmartCode addresses these first by basic categories: residential, lodging, office, retail, and other (agriculture, automotive, support, education, and industry). Each category is then broken down into individual uses. Rather than simply segregating uses, the SmartCode takes the position that, to some extent, most uses may be appropriate within each of the main zones, when their form or design is properly controlled. The code controls the intensity and density of these uses as appropriate with the intended character of each zone.

What are Transect Zones?

Transect Zones are geographic areas within the community for which specific criteria are established for land use diversity, density, and the design of the public realm.

- **T1 - Natural:** areas intended for natural preservation. Black Bay Park and Treaty Rock Park are examples in Post Falls. There is very little T1 in the community.
- **T2 - Rural:** areas intended for natural preservation, agricultural use, low density residential, and controlled lodging, retail, office, civic, or other uses. There are no T2 designations within Post Falls at present. This zone is more appropriate for rural development.
- **T3 - Suburban:** areas intended for residential development with varying density and controlled lodging, retail, office, civic and other uses. This zone compares to the basic residential zone (R1) in the existing ordinance.
- **T4 - General Urban:** areas intended for medium-high density residential development with lodging, retail, office, civic, and other uses. For all intent and purpose this zone is the basic Post Falls commercial area along with some residential use.
- **T5 - Urban Center:** areas intended for high density residential development with lodging, retail, office, civic, and other uses. This represents the future of the Post Falls City Center area. This would probably be the most urban zone in Post Falls for the foreseeable future. Downtown Coeur d'Alene could be an example of T5.
- **T6 - Urban Core:** areas intended for maximum density of residential, lodging, retail, office, civic, and other uses. Does not exist in any form in Post Falls. Downtown Spokane is an example of T6 zoning.

- **SD - Special District:** areas intended to a unique mix (or lack thereof) of land uses which warrant special regulation. Areas that could be considered SD include Riverbend Commerce Park and the area around Cabelas.
- **CZ - Civic Zones:** areas intended for civic buildings and civic spaces, both publicly owned and privately owned. City Hall, Library, Post Office, schools and parks are examples. Private property that is used by the public may also be considered CZ.

In addition to density and mix of uses, transect zones are further regulated by parking ratios, block size, public & private frontage characteristics, civic space types, site layout, and height.

What size lots are permitted in the SmartCode?

Lots are not sized in the usual sense. For example; in the T3 zone, frontage width can be from 50 to 120 feet. When the block length is figured into the mix (maximum perimeter of 3000 feet in T3), you can see that there can be a large variety of sizes. In the typical block (roughly 600' x 250') in the older parts of Post Falls the perimeter is 1700 feet. With a minimum width of 50 feet, lots would be approximately 6000 sq. ft. In the T4 zone the frontage can be from 24' to 96'. This is comparable to many of the existing lots in the city center.

What is the difference between public and private frontages?

Public frontages are those areas between the property line and the edge of the street. Private frontages are the building lines, fences, yards, etc. that form the edge of private property along the public street.

Why is block size regulated and how?

Block size is regulated according to the length of the perimeter of the block. This is measured and regulated to allow larger block sizes in less dense T-zones and to allow smaller block sizes in more dense T-zones. This is intended to encourage development of efficient street and sidewalk networks depending on location within the community.

What are the elements of site design controlled by the SmartCode?

- **Lot Occupation** is the first element and is defined by the size of the lot and the amount of coverage of the lot.
- **Building Setbacks**, as in the existing zoning, affect front, rear, and side yards. In the T3 zone setbacks are established as minimums, in the T4 & T5 zones, the setbacks have both minimums and maximums.
- **Building Disposition** is the location on the site by reference to the location of yards (edge yards, side yards, rear yards, and courtyards). In the lower intensity zones, edge yards or yards surrounding the building are typical. In more intense zones, side and rear yards are the standard.

How is parking regulated?

In the existing zoning code, parking is regulated by use and each land use has a minimum requirement. With the SmartCode, parking is regulated according to the basic land use types (residential, lodging, retail, and office) and according to T-zone. For instance, an office in the T5 zone would require slightly less parking than an office located in a T3 zone.

A user in T5 is more likely to park and walk to multiple locations. The SmartCode also includes a method for calculating shared use parking.

How is signage addressed in the Post Falls SmartCode?

All signage in projects utilizing the SmartCode would be regulated under the existing sign code in Title 18, Zoning. In the future it would be possible for the city to develop a sign code for SmartCode.

How does the SmartCode address open space?

Projects developed under the SmartCode will provide at least 5% of the project site as civic space (parks). The existing code does not require open space except in Planned Unit Developments (10%).

Does the SmartCode regulate aesthetics?

Not necessarily. The SmartCode does include design standards that are becoming more commonplace within development regulations. These standards, however, do not address architectural style. It is anticipated that the community may, at some point, determine that architectural standards may be warranted in certain portions of the city (City Center). Standards could be added to the code through adoption of a design module.

Does the SmartCode create a need for changes? How are requested changes dealt with?

The dimensional requirements for each T-zone are intentionally flexible to reduce the need for requested changes. The SmartCode provides two methods for authorizing change. The warrant is a change that permits a practice not consistent with a specific provision of the code but which is justified by its intent. Warrants are decided administratively by the Development Review Committee. An exception is a change that permits a practice not consistent with a provision or the intent of the code. Exceptions are decided by the Planning & Zoning Commission. To simplify; a warrant is a minor change and an exception is a major change.