



PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO HARDING AVENUE

ARCHITECTURE & FORM-BASED CODES 2.6

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ARCHITECTURE & FORM-BASED CODES

Observation

Surfside's neighborhood and community fabric is typical of South Florida beach communities of its era, in that its neighborhood structure takes the form of an extruded gradient, with its densest "core," urbanistically speaking, occurring more-or-less adjacent to its beach frontage, and with a rapid digression in scale and intensity as the town moves westward, away from the beach and toward its westernmost residential neighborhoods.

The residential neighborhoods themselves, on the other hand, exhibit a fairly consistent uniform density and building type, throughout. The principal north-south thoroughfares are Harding Avenue -- which passes through and serves the mixed-use commercial center of Surfside, and Collins Avenue -- which provides access and frontage to the large condominium towers lining the beach on the east side of town. At present, Collins and Harding form a one-way couplet, collectively defining the regional arterial highway, A1A, which transits the entire community in a north-south direction, along the eastern edge of the community.

Typologically speaking, the town in general breaks down into three component parts, the beachfront towers east of Collins Avenue, the mixed-use and multifamily building types bordering both sides of Harding Avenue, and the mostly single-family residential house types, west of Abbott.

In terms of both architectural types *and* styles, though Surfside has a reasonably eclectic spectrum of architectural styles represented, it has a fairly limited palette of both house and building types, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

For the most part, however, the overall effect is quite harmonious and pleasing. Consistent with the time frame in which most of Surfside was built out, the most dominant styles are Mi-Mo (Miami Modern), Art Deco, Mediterranean, and Miami Ranch. The prevailing residential building form is a small U-shaped single-family detached house, though in recent years, several new and remodeled houses have been built significantly out of scale with the existing neighborhood context relative to this historical Surfside building type.

The commercial corridor is also composed primarily of period pieces, though for the most part, simply and attractively rendered with the most recent additions to the town taking place primarily along the beachfront in the form of the large condominium buildings, which range from modestly uninspired to "somewhat" aspiring -- if already also somewhat dated -- trendy.



A TYPICAL SMALL SURFSIDE HOUSE IN MODERN STYLE



ANOTHER TYPICAL SURFSIDE HOUSE IN MEDITERRANEAN STYLE



RECENTLY BUILT CONDOS ALONG THE BEACH-FRONT



EXISTING ART DECO APARTMENTS ALONG COLLINS AVENUE

Most of the beachfront, however, is already built out, with only a few viable redevelopment opportunities remaining, which includes, of course, the existing community center, another iconic period piece, which is slated to be rebuilt on its existing site, albeit more-or-less within the existing buildings massing envelop.

As for the remainder of the regulating plan and building types, which includes civic buildings, parks, squares and open space, the town has little in the way of formal open space and/or appropriate settings for civic and cultural amenities, which limits options in that regard.

And the most significant open space asset of is the beach itself, which though obviously well regarded, is still problematic in terms of its current utilization and value, due to its lack of urban integration into the larger community of Surfside.

Discussion

Residents want to keep the existing character of Surfside, while making specific improvements to the master plan, and have expressed concern over new houses being built out of scale and character within the neighborhoods, and/or inappropriately sized relative to the scale of the lots on which they are situated.

Also, there is concern that the condominium “towers” may eventually migrate west and encroach upon the much smaller scale commercial district and adjoining residential neighborhoods, changing the character and overall feel of the town as a whole, while exacerbating existing problems and concerns within the community. In short – the Town wants to create a Form-Based code which will bring predictability and control to its future.

Specific Recommendations

We recommend replacing or supplanting the existing zoning ordinance with a form-based code, as illustrated. This code, when specifically applied through an accompanying Regulating Plan and the Building Types matrix, will dictate maximum building heights and densities, relative to their location in the Master Plan, as well as locations for civic buildings and community amenities, including both formal and informal open spaces, and other considerations critical to the delivery of a high quality built environment. To the extent specific land uses will be considered, those will be coded primarily through building type and location, rather than conventional land use zoning protocols.

Specific Area recommendations are as follows:

Beachfront

The existing 120’ height limitations will remain. Consideration will be given to limited beach-side commercial activity, if associated with the primary on-site use.

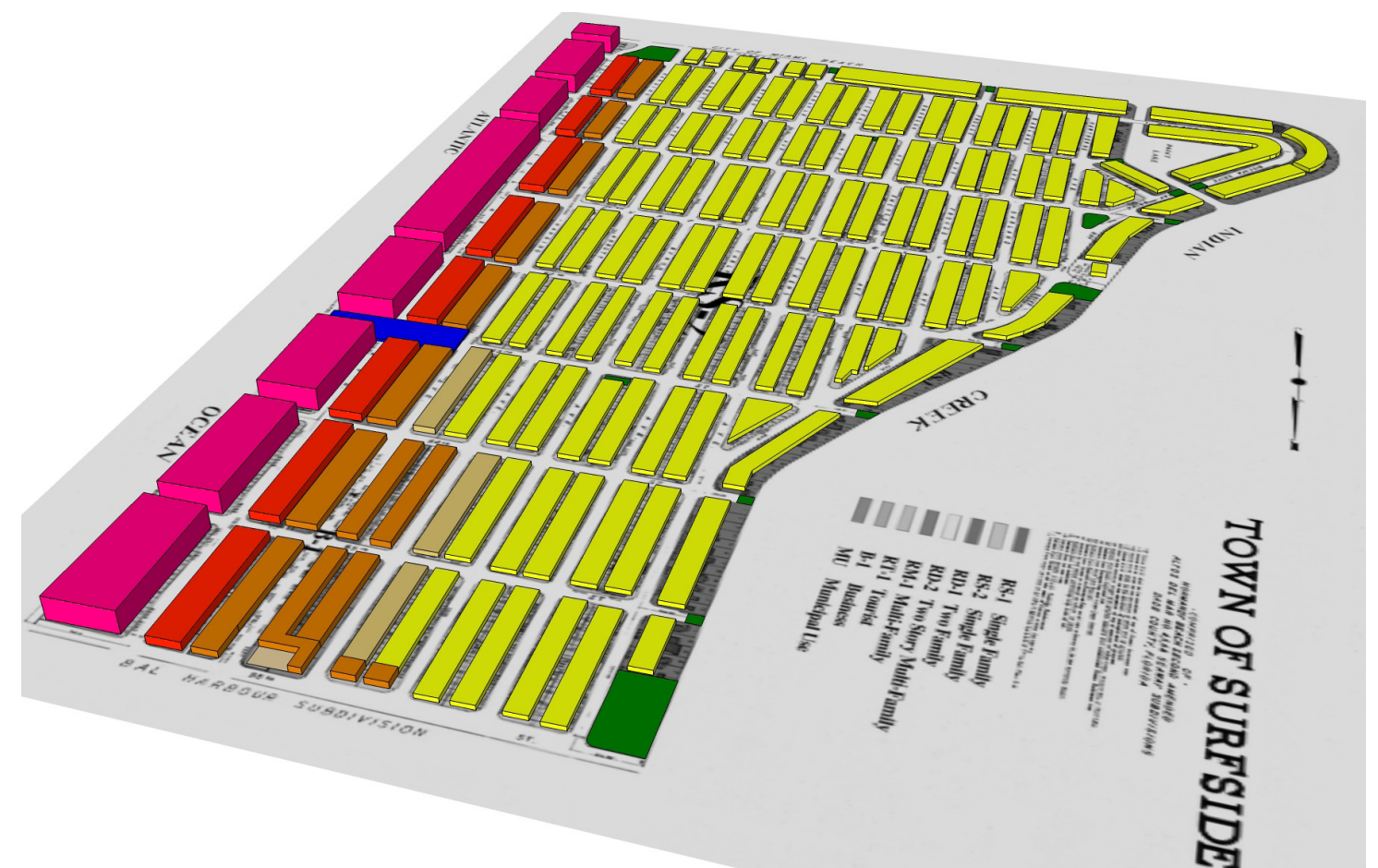
Mixed-Use Commercial District and Tourism Zone

The existing three story height limitations will remain, including the provision of non-retail uses on the upper floors (i.e., residential, hospitality, commercial office), to help offset the economic pressure associated with the value of the underlying real estate. The purpose being to help promote and sustain the viability of non-chain, local and independent retail, to improve the market for retail and consumer purchases, to augment and improve the provision of hotel and hospitality-related services, resulting in an increase in the Town’s tax base, and to provide a more viable level of evening activities and a more attractive and diverse downtown shopping district.

To the extent that property owners avail themselves of this redevelopment incentive, the Form-Based code will modulate upper-story setbacks to help maintain the existing character of Harding Avenue, and to minimize impacts on adjoining neighborhood fabric, and hotel-related activities will only be allowed as part of a comprehensively managed “horizontal” hotel network, ensure effective operation of the system as a whole, and to again, minimize potential impacts on existing residents and citizens.

Residential Neighborhoods

The existing two story height limitations will remain. Apply Form-Based Codes to key building form and massing to specific lot sizes and locations within the overall neighborhood structure. Provide architectural style regulations consistent with said massing and form, above, to help ensure a complementary and harmoniously diverse neighborhood character, overall, with regard to local precedents and community preferences.



Form-based code 3-D massing diagram, to scale, provides illustrative predictability for building heights and form in specifically designated locations within the master plan.

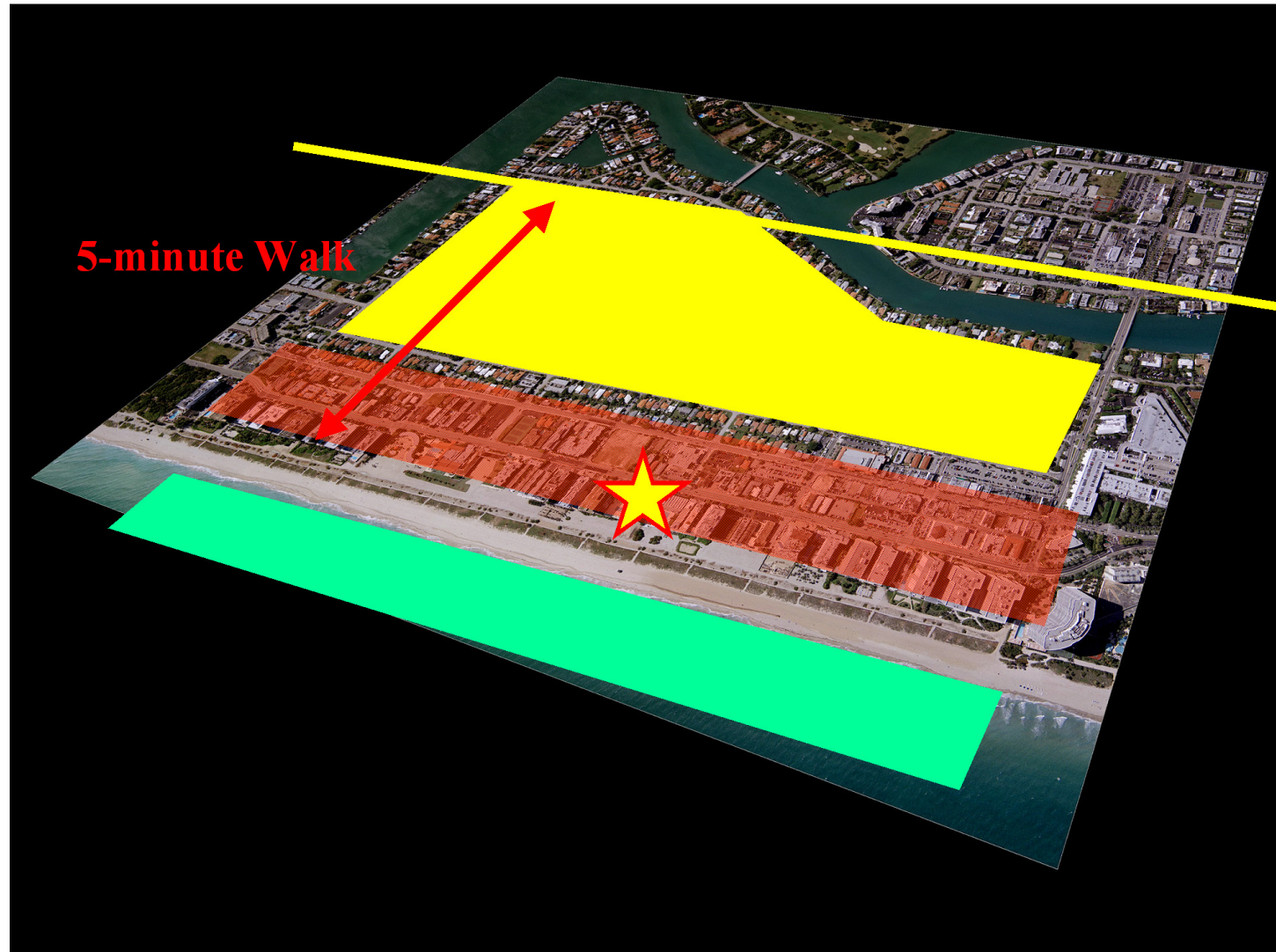
The two images below illustrate how a Form-Based Code can be used to shape two distinctly different town plan formats, utilizing the same basic upon the same urban design principles



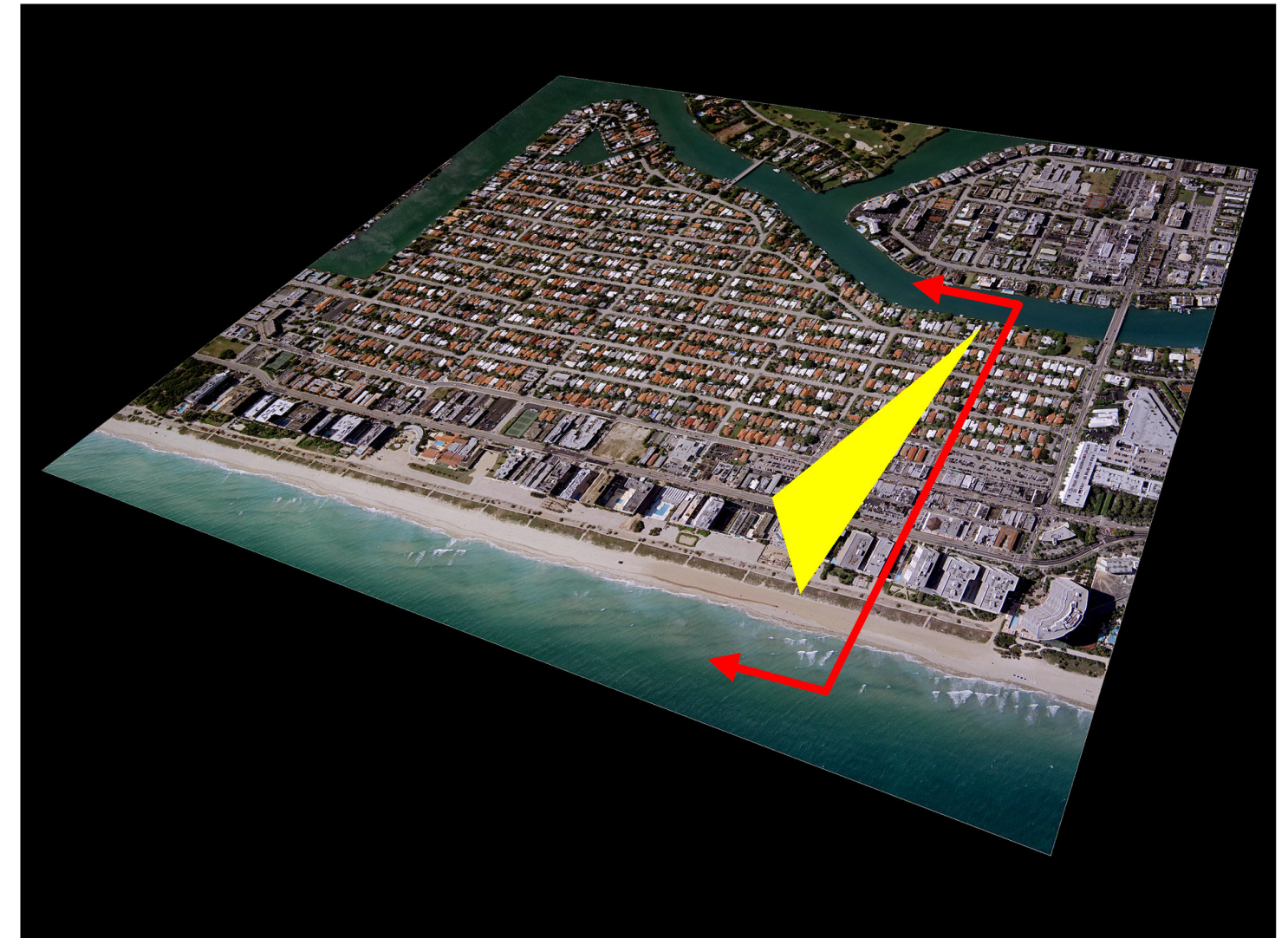
FIVE MINUTE WALK DIAGRAM
 According to the principle of the five minute walk, Surfside could be divided into two neighborhoods, with their own distinct centers, and with the Community Center located in the area where the neighborhoods overlap.



FIVE MINUTE WALK DIAGRAM
 Another way the Town of Surfside could be organized based on the five minute walk, would be to have only one neighborhood center, located at the current Community Center, with points of special activity at the edges.



FIVE MINUTE WALK DIAGRAM
 In reality Surfside follows this more typical beach-front town model, where the five minute walk is stretched out along the coast, which is really the “center” of town. This is the “extruded” five-minute walk model.



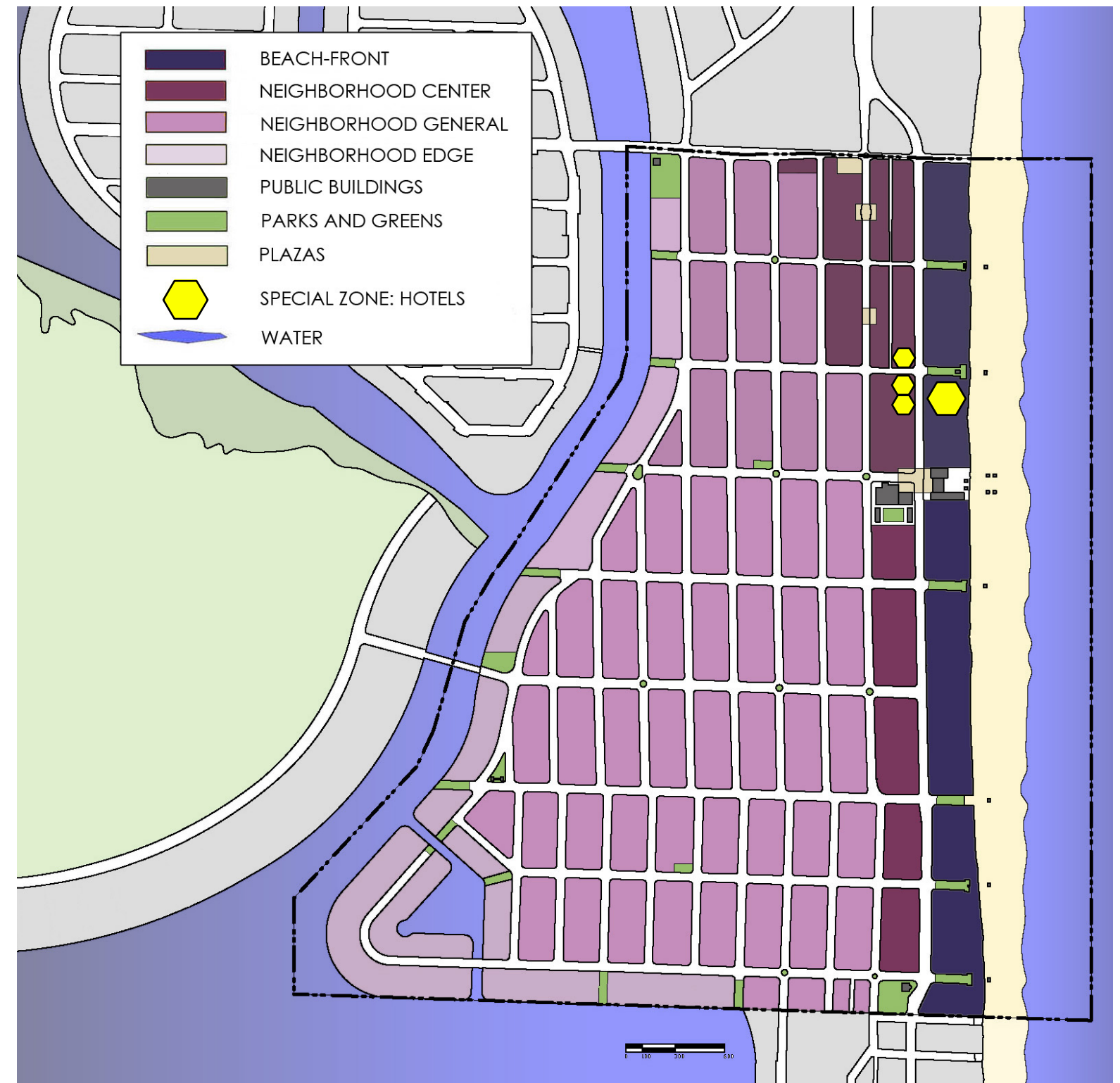
FIVE MINUTE WALK DIAGRAM
 In this case, the blocks closest to the beach naturally become the highest density due to market forces and their higher property values, gradually decreasing toward the western-most edge of town, where values spike again along the bay front, though Form-Based Codes will control use and intensity along this edge. Commercial activity also tends to be more intense toward the beach-front (in this case, along Harding Avenue, due to the mix of uses and higher density).

Urban Regulating Plan

The Urban Regulating Plan works in concert with the Architectural and Urban Codes, as articulated in the Building Type Matrix, to precisely locate specific building types within the Master Plan, as well as on their individual lots, in accordance with the principles of traditional town planning.

That is, building types are situated within the neighborhood structure, in a carefully calibrated gradation from Town Center, on down through Neighborhood Center, Neighborhood General, and ultimately, Neighborhood Edge, such that the most densely active uses are placed in the center of the community, with uses and building types of diminishing proportion and intensity radiating outward in more-or-less concentric circles from that mixed-use core, until the perimeter of a 1/4 mile radius, or five-minute walk, is reached.

Of course, the spectrum of scale that is ultimately coded is completely at the Town's discretion, through their deliberate calibration of the Code. And as much diversity and range of building types as desired can be dialed in with an equal degree of precision and predictability within each increment of neighborhood zone, through the combination of a regulating plan and Form-Based Code.



TYPOLOGY DEFINITION	NEIGHBORHOOD ZONE			
	BEACH-FRONT	NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD GENERAL	NEIGHBORHOOD EDGE
<p>A multi-family type with stacked flats or hotel rooms in the form of a large building block and accessible by a common lobby, elevator and interior corridor. This type of building typically offers its short side to the street or is configured in an “L” shape. Parking is either interior or underground. This type is on lots of 100-205 feet.</p> <p>hotel/condo</p>				
<p>A multi-family type with stacked flats combined in the form of a large building block, and generally accessible by a common lobby, elevator and interior corridor. The ground floor on the street is typically designed as a storefront. Parking is mid-block and accessible off an alley. There is no front or side setback.</p> <p>mixed use</p>				
<p>A single-family attached housing type combining a dwelling with a ground floor storefront space available for flex use as a dwelling, an office, or a retail store. Two types are offered; one with direct access to all units from the street, the other with direct access from the street and a patio partially open to the street. Both types are parked in a garage off an alley, and are built to the lot line.</p> <p>live-work</p>				
<p>The smallest possible detached single-family house type with public rooms facing the street on a 40-55 foot lot. This kind of house is typically configured in a “U” shape and offers its short side to the street.</p> <p>coffage</p>				
<p>A medium detached single-family house type on a 55-75 foot lot with public rooms facing the street, and often a front porch. This kind of house offers its short side to the street.</p> <p>medium house</p>				
<p>A large detached single-family house type on a 75-150 foot lot with public rooms facing the street, and often a front porch. These can have front-loaded garages, so are often used in neighborhood edge settings, where the home backs to nature, though the garage should still be situated behind the front of the primary facade.</p> <p>large house</p>				

“Green” Building and LEED ND

With global warming increasingly becoming an accepted scientific reality, and traditional fossil-fuel based energy resources becoming more problematic economically, politically and environmentally, it simply makes good sense to plan design in a more environmentally conscious way.

The concept of “Green” building is a growing phenomenon, becoming an industry unto itself (see image, right), and there are many facets to emerging discipline which can have relevance even in a visioning process like the one documented in this booklet.

There are a number of highly technical techniques and strategies out there focusing on this challenge, and a number of resources to draw upon in becoming more informed about this issue, all of which would be beyond the scope of this specific exercise. However, there are still a number of fundamental principles which can be outlined here which are entirely in keeping with the level of resolution and focus of this document.

Green Building/Design

Green building design can come in many forms, such as highly energy-efficient lighting and appliances, high-quality windows and insulation, passive solar, etc. Most of these attributes now fall under the purview of LEED (Leadership in Energy Efficient Design), a new industry standard for energy saving buildings.

However, it is important to note that the original techniques for saving energy in building design was to use architecture designed to work well with the local climate, or vernacular architecture. In climates like South Florida, this usually means orienting buildings to catch the prevailing breeze, deep building overhangs to protect the walls for direct sun and blowing rain when the windows are open, large windows and screened porches to maximize natural air flow, etc.

If you go to places like Key West, which were largely built out prior to the advent of mechanical cooling, you’ll see all of these techniques applied to the local “vernacular” housing.

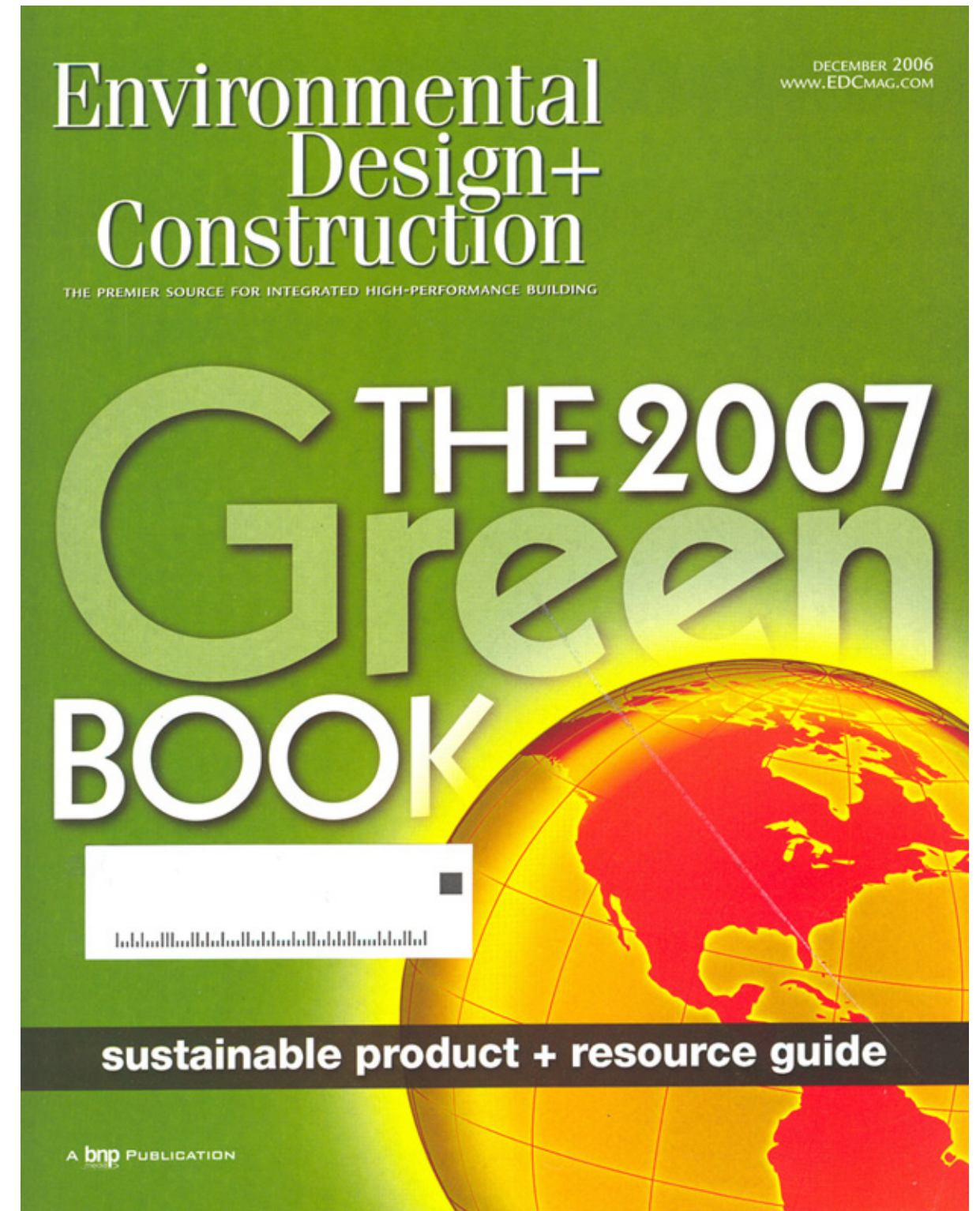
Plant Native Species

One of the most effective things you can do to reduce water consumption (besides using low-flow fixtures) is to plant native species.

Compact, Walkable, Mixed-Use Communities

More than 50% of all fossil fuel use in the United States is attributable to transportation, and the most effective strategy for minimizing VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) is to build and live in compact, walkable, mixed-use communities.

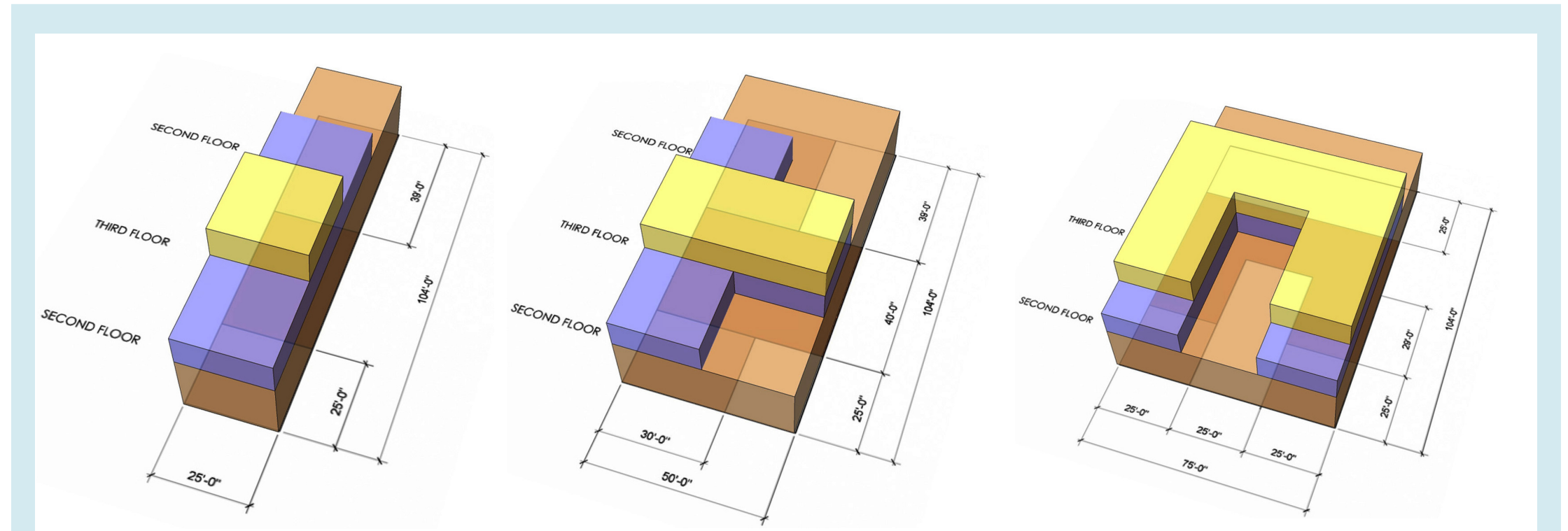
This model of development not only reduces both the amount and length of all vehicle trips generated, it also helps reduce the amount of non-pervious surface area attributed to automobile parking. LEED ND (New Development) was created specifically to encourage this form of community development.



Form-based Codes

Form-Based Codes are a means of regulating development, as to achieve a desired, and highly predictable, physical outcome. The principle components of a Form-Based Code (FBC) are a regulating plan, a building-type matrix, or its equivalent thereof, and a set of architectural and urban regulating codes. The primary difference between conventional zoning codes and a FBC is that conventional zoning focuses almost exclusively on uses and segregation by use, with the physical manifestation of those uses as an almost incidental consideration,, while FBCs focus primarily on the urban form, and physical characteristics of place first, with uses dictated more by building type.

The three-dimensional massing diagrams on the following pages are intended to illustrate how Form-Based Codes can be used to precisely regulate the physical massing and form of any new development in Surfside.



TOWN CENTER MASSING MODULATION: STEP-BACKS & COURTYARDS

Proposed massing of downtown courtyard condo/hotel buildings with a maximum height of three stories on 25, 50, and 75 foot lots. Courtyards can be created by alternating setbacks on the various lots. Upper story setbacks are required to help ensure that new infill development respects the existing character of Harding Avenue.

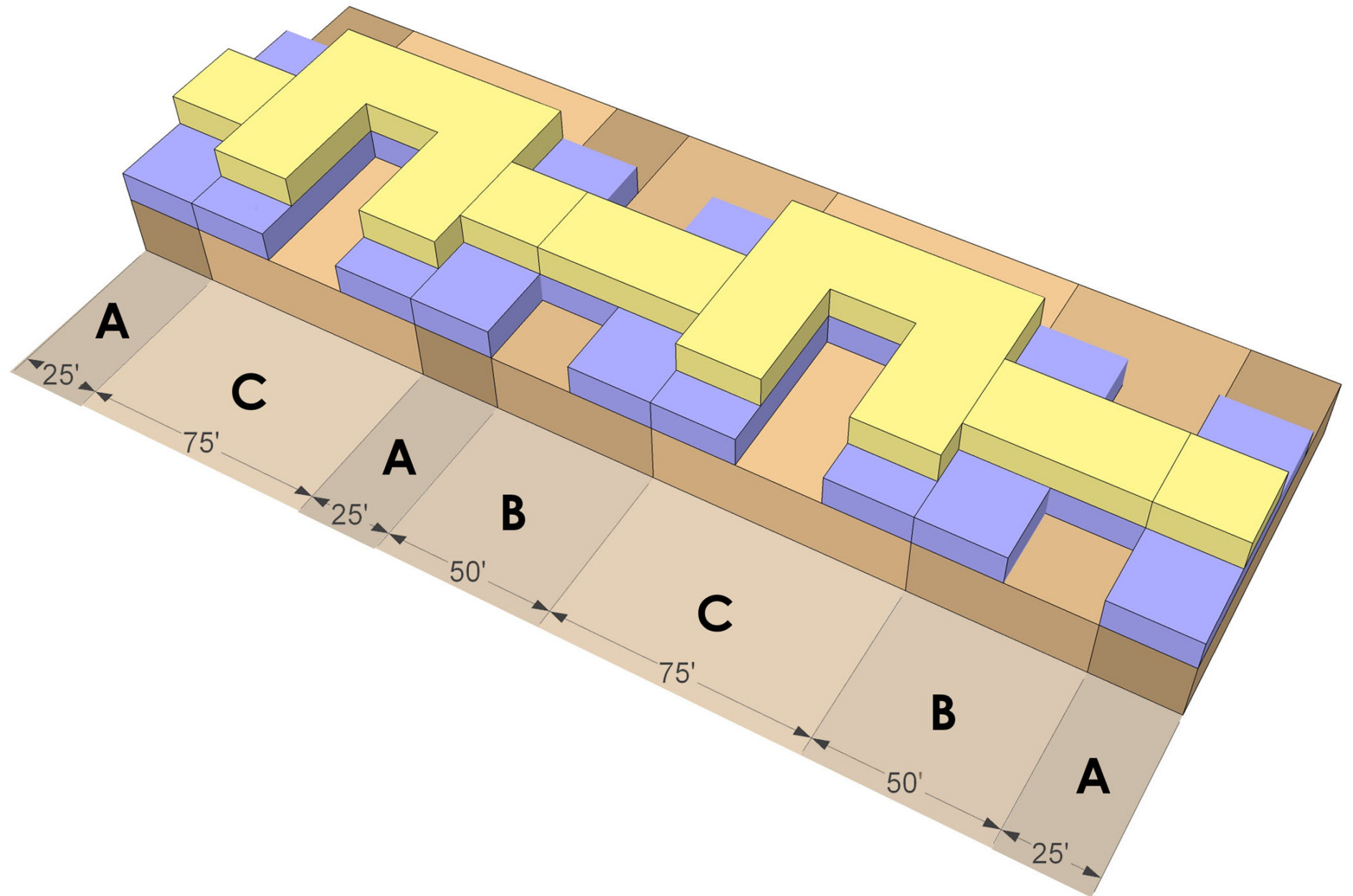


THE COURTYARD BUILDING TYPE

The above model shows in greater detail how the careful manipulation of the building form can create a desirable setting for both businesses and residents. This form could be divided to function as either live/work units, apartment units with ground-floor retail, and/or a horizontal hotel.

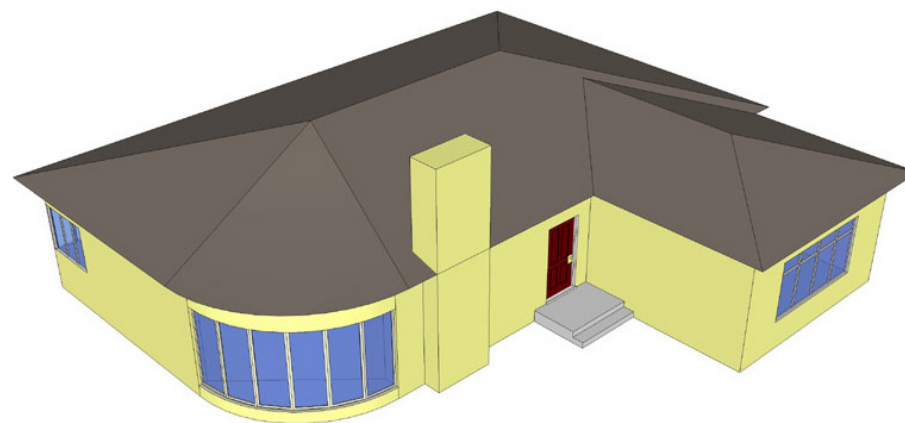
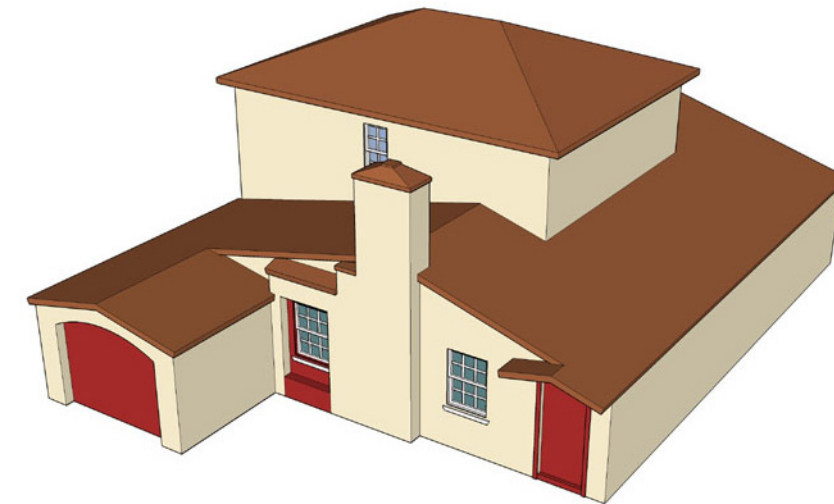
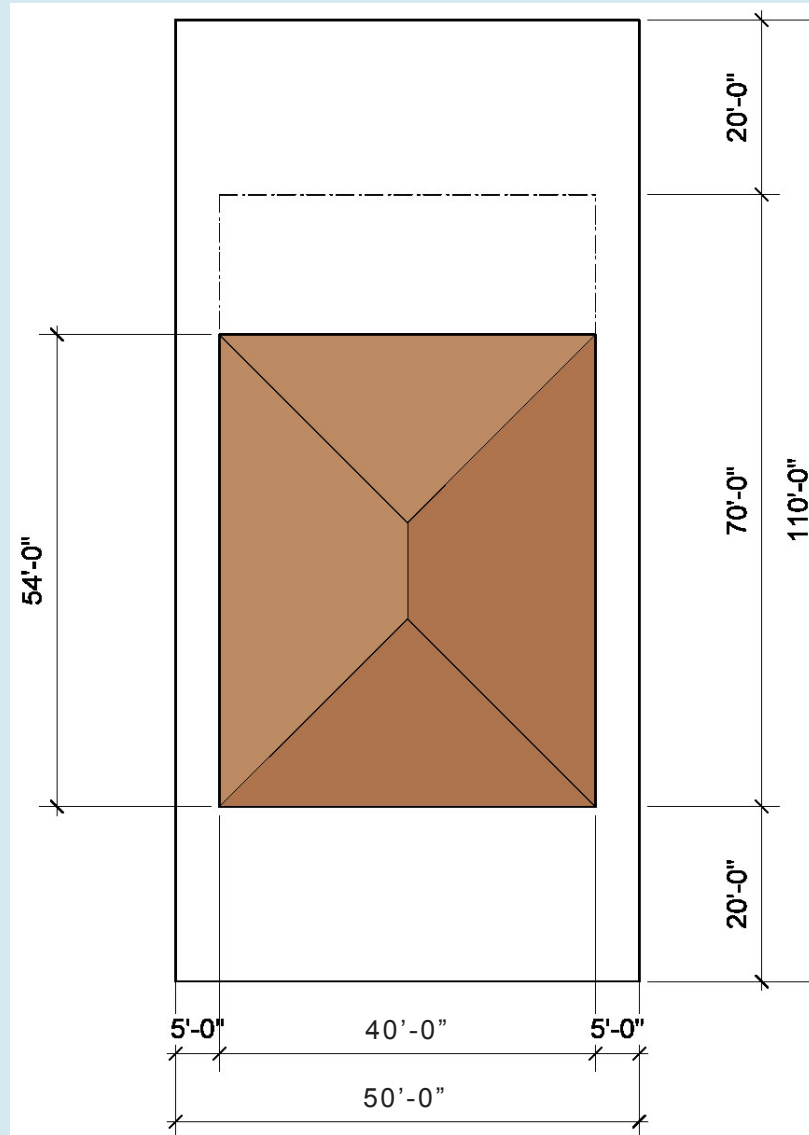


3-D MODEL RENDERING OF HARDING AVENUE SHOWING A MIXED-USE INFILL COURTYARD BUILDING TYPE

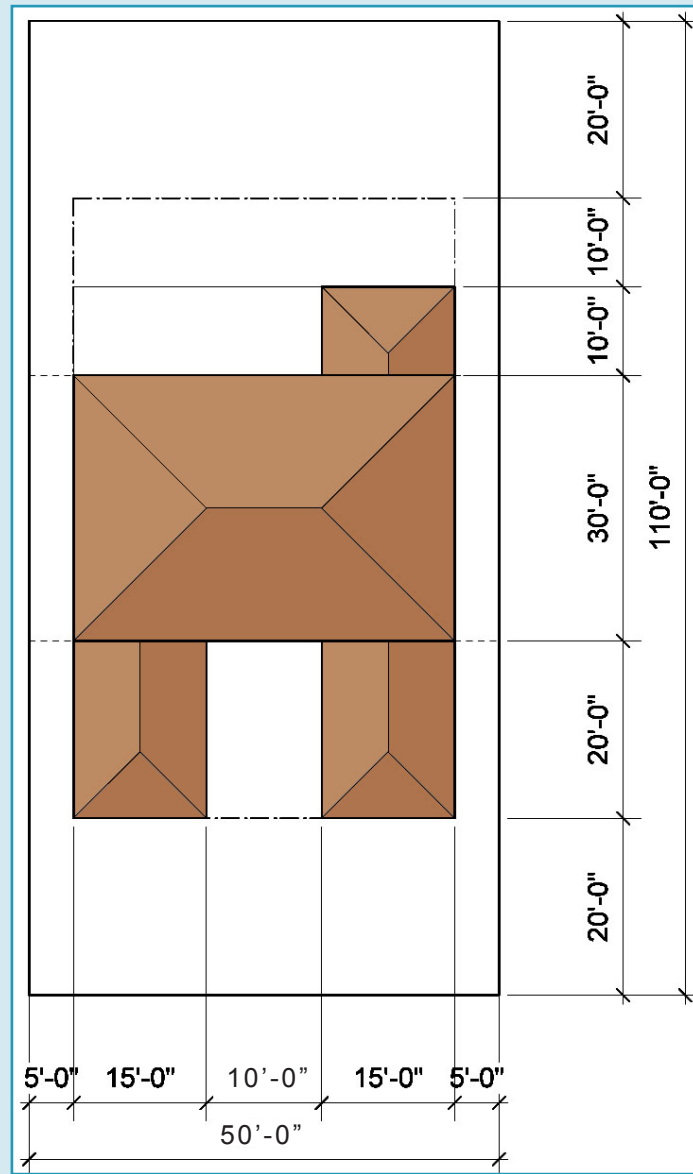


VARYING BUILDING WIDTHS IN A BLOCK

A Form-based code should be designed to encourage the retention of neighborhood character through rhythm and form.



SURFSIDE & THE MC MANSION CHALLENGE:
 Though there are plenty of attractive examples of two story homes in Surfside (right), current regulations also permit builders to fill nearly the entire lot with a large two-story volume, resulting often being houses that are dramatically out of scale with the neighborhood.



REMODELLING THE SURFSIDE U-SHAPED HOUSE WITH IMPROVED REGULATIONS

This addition to a formerly U-shaped residence (right), a common house type in Surfside, suggests a possible set of regulation standards that could apply to future additions within the community. These codes could be put in place to allow appropriate additions to be accommodated without degrading the character of the existing community fabric.

