

# Form Ithaca: Zoning Reform



## Project Overview

Form Ithaca is an initiative to help support the ongoing efforts of the City and Town of Ithaca, New York to update the land use regulations to meet the goals and objectives of their comprehensive plans.

The project supports a full range of housing and lifestyle options within a framework that facilitates transportation choice, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and a strong economy for the region.

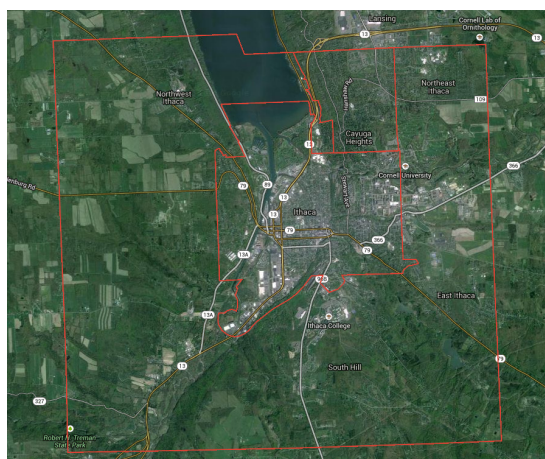
The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority is funding Form Ithaca with matching resources from the Park Foundation, the city and the town.

The City and Town of Ithaca planning departments will oversee the work of the consulting team, including:

Better! Cities & Towns – Rob Steuteville CNU, Lead Consultant

Randall + West Planners – CJ Randall LEED AP and David West LEED AP, Land Use

STREAM Collaborative – Noah Demarest RA RLA LEED AP, Design



# **Fi** Form Ithaca FAQ

**What is a form-based code?** A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and seeks to create a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. It is an alternative to conventional zoning regulations.

**Where else have form-based codes been adopted?** As of 2013, 279 form-based codes were adopted and working in cities and towns of all sizes across the US and Canada, from Miami, Denver, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia on one end of the spectrum to Addison, Texas, and Bourne, Massachusetts, on the other. More than 200 are in the process of adoption in other municipalities.

**How did the Form Ithaca Zoning Reform project start?** Better Cities & Towns, STREAM Collaborative and Randall + West collaborated with City and Town leadership and won a NYSERDA grant to help implement the municipalities' comprehensive plans. Both municipalities recognize that achieving their collective vision will require updating outdated zoning and leaders have called for "Form-Based Codes" to improve and simplify the outdated existing codes.

**The city's comprehensive plan is not done yet; are we putting the cart before the horse?** While the town has completed their comprehensive plan, the city is still working on theirs. Updating the zoning code is how the comprehensive plan is implemented, so it cannot be finalized until the comprehensive plan has been completed. However, the availability of outside funding makes it possible to start the work of zoning reform based on the priorities of the draft comprehensive plan which has been in process for many years and is well on its way to completion. The city's part of the project will remain flexible for adaptation until the comprehensive plan process is completed.

**How are the City and Town involved in this process? Who is paying for the consultant work?** The City and Town of Ithaca Planning Departments are key players in the zoning reform project. Joint monthly meetings between the full staff of both departments are building stronger relationships and keeping everyone up to date and involved. Each department has dedicated significant staff time to guiding this project: Assistant Director of Planning Dan Tasman of the Town as well as Sustainability Coordinator Nick Goldsmith and Economic Development Planner Jennifer Kuszniir from the City of Ithaca are the primary staff contact people. While the City and Town are guiding the project, the consultant team, lead by Better Cities & Towns, has procured outside funding for their involvement by winning grants from NYSERDA and the Park Foundation.

## **How can zoning reform fit into current and future efforts of the city and town?**

- Zoning reform is needed to implement the recently adopted comprehensive plan of the town.
- Zoning reform will dovetail with the work that has been done so far on the city's comprehensive plan and provide a tool to implement that plan after it is adopted.
- Zoning reform will assist the town and city in their efforts to preserve the countryside – including natural areas and farms.
- Zoning reform will expand upon the city's current effort to update its zoning language to make it easier to understand.
- Zoning reform will legalize parts of the city that citizens like.
- Zoning reform will seek to accommodate growth where it is desired in the city and town and meet market demand for living in Ithaca in a wide range of housing types.
- Zoning reform is a tool to steer growth into centers and corridors that are compact, walkable, connected to transit, and contribute to the economic vitality of the area.
- Zoning reform will help to meet environmental goals, such as reducing GHG emissions.
- Zoning reform will look at ways to meet the need for affordable housing and reduce household costs, particularly in transportation.
- Better zoning will look at ways to meet the need for affordable housing and reduce household costs, particularly in transportation.