

A Delaware Guide to Form-Based Codes

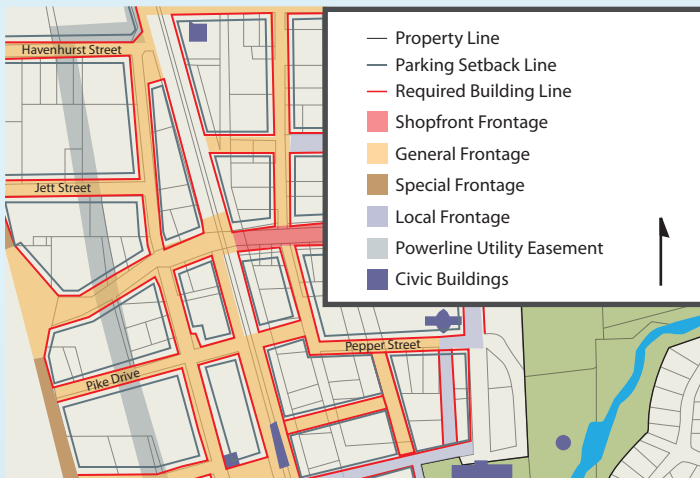
Conventional zoning codes can be notoriously tedious and difficult to understand. Alternatively, Form-Based Codes (FBCs) allow you to use pictures and diagrams to easily describe the types of development, redevelopment, parking, buildings, streets, open space, and so on that are acceptable in your community.

FBCs use simple, everyday language and can cut up to sixty percent out of the length of the code.

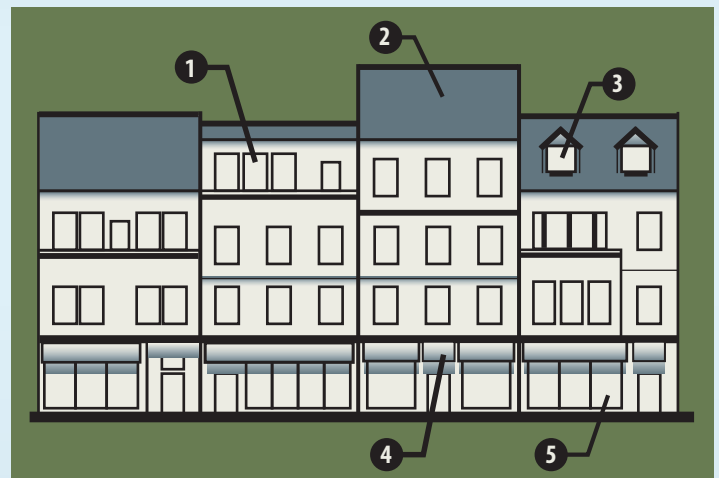
FBCs may vary greatly from town to town, big city to small village. However, all FBCs address, at minimum, four common factors:

1. Regulating plan (zoning map),
2. Building type and location,
3. Open space considerations, and
4. Design and function of streets (thoroughfare standards).

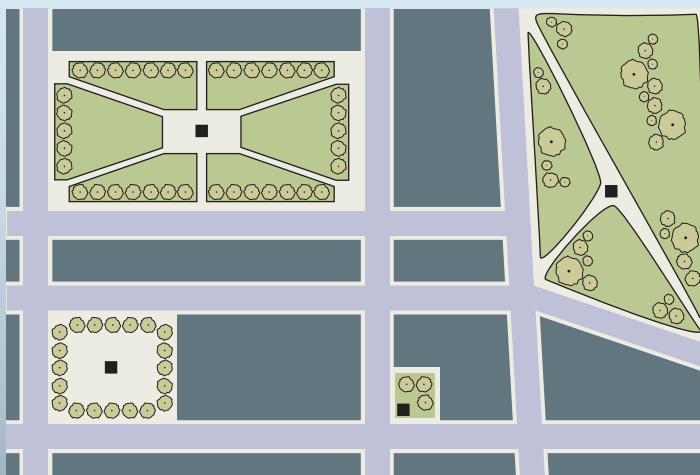
They lay out, in broad strokes, the type, size, and scale of desired development.



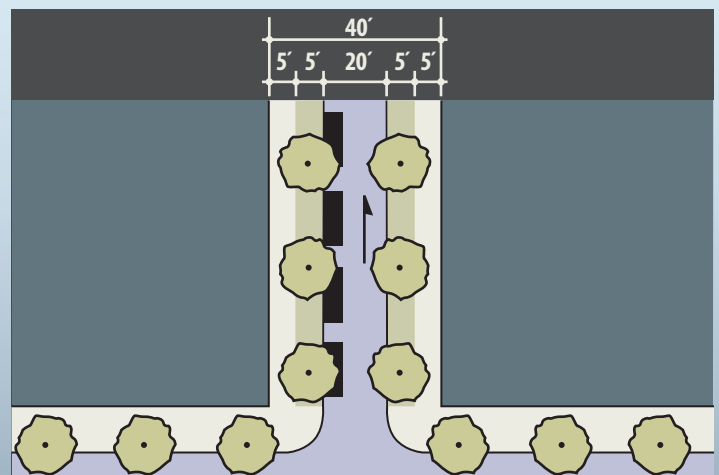
Regulating Plan



Building Form Standards



Open /Public Space Standards



Thoroughfare/Street Standards

1. Regulating Plan

The regulating plan is a FBC's "zoning map" and lays out where each classification will apply. It may categorize areas based upon what type of street they front, or may be based on districts (neighborhood, urban, or urban core). It acts as a key to the code's subsequent regulations. For example, if the parcel you are interested in is classified "neighborhood," you can then determine what types of buildings, uses, open space, and roadway requirements are applicable.

2. Building Form Standards

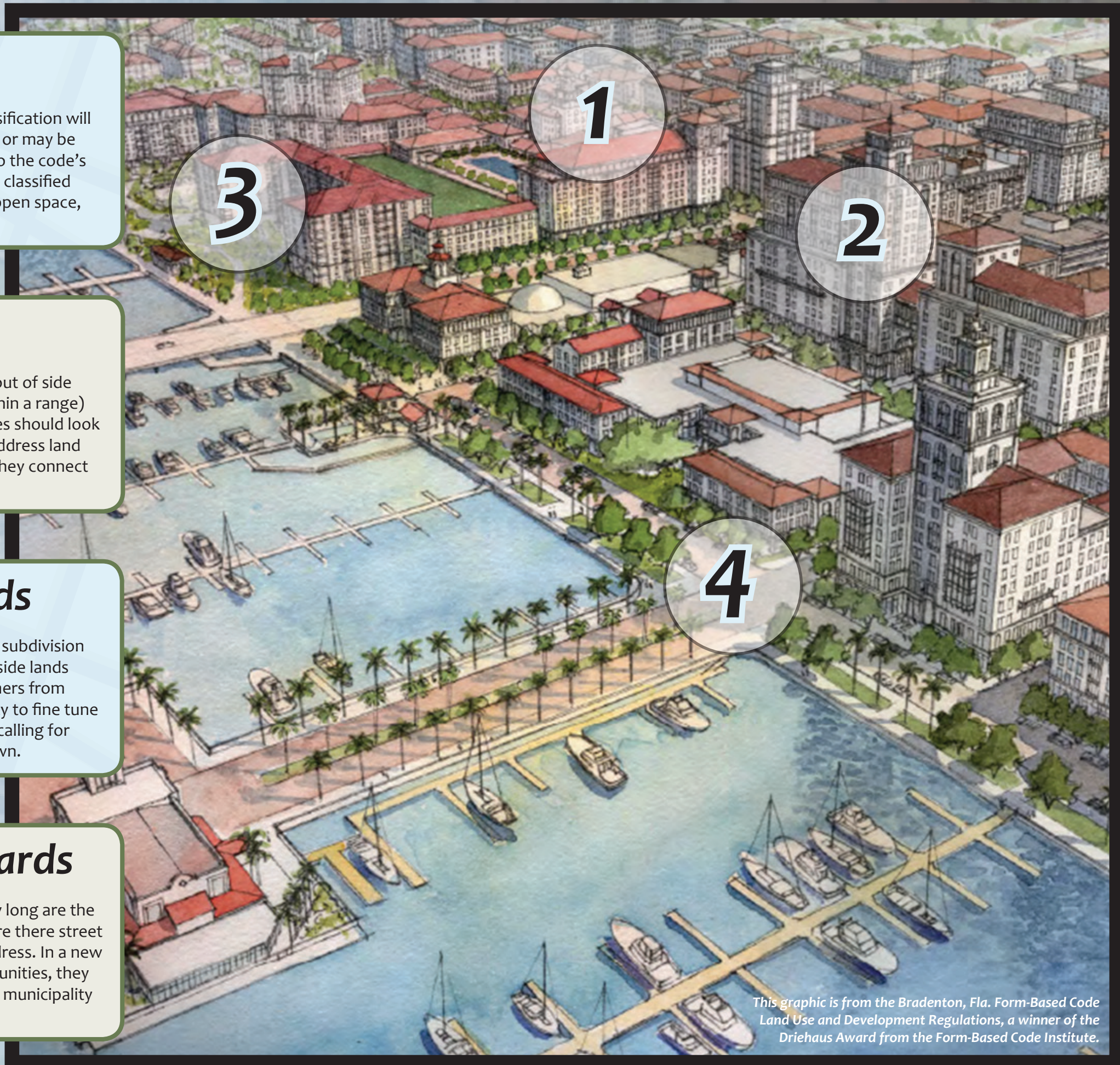
Building form standards regulate the placement of a building and the layout of side yards, setbacks, lot coverage, and parking. They also set down (often within a range) minimum and maximum number of stories. They show what the structures should look like after development or redevelopment. Building form standards also address land use. Generally, FBCs don't have "residential," or "commercial." Instead, they connect allowable uses to appropriate building types.

3. Open/Public Space Standards

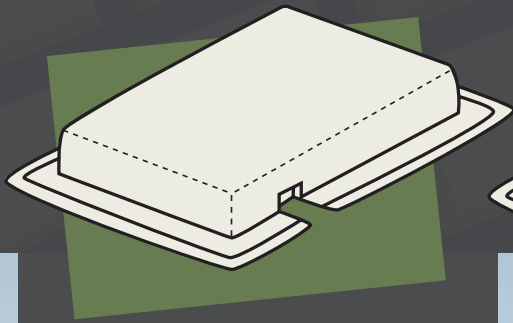
Open/public space standards have long been part of standard zoning and subdivision regulations. When new development occurs, these standards act to set aside lands for parks, trails, etc. In existing, built-up areas, they prevent property owners from encroaching on damaging the public right-of-way. FBCs allow a community to fine tune the open space standards to fit different areas of the town, for example, calling for playgrounds in neighborhoods and for small plazas and benches downtown.

4. Thoroughfare/Street Standards

How wide is a neighborhood street? What should the speed limit be? How long are the blocks and where are the sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks placed? Are there street trees, lighting, or parking? This is what thoroughfare/street standards address. In a new development, they help define the new street network. In existing communities, they most often represent conditions existing on the ground or conditions the municipality would like to see following maintenance or improvements.

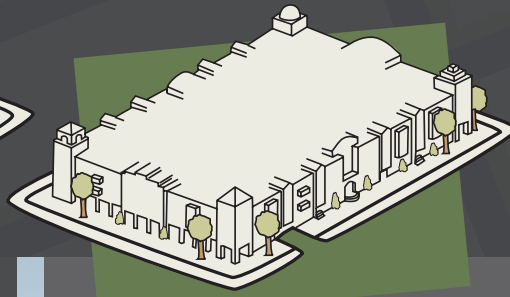


This graphic is from the Bradenton, Fla. Form-Based Code Land Use and Development Regulations, a winner of the Driehaus Award from the Form-Based Code Institute.



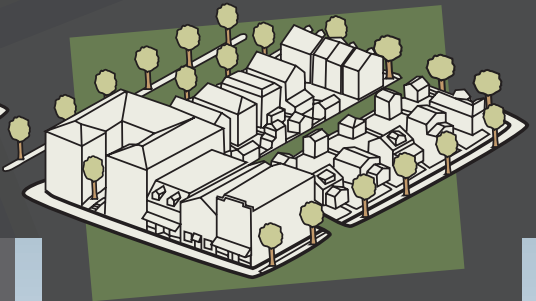
How zoning defines a one-block parcel

Density, use, floor-area ratio (FAR), setbacks, parking requirements, and maximum building heights(s) specified.



How design guidelines define a one-block parcel

Density, use, FAR, setbacks, parking requirements, and maximum building heights(s), frequency of openings, and surface articulation specified.



How form-based codes define a one-block parcel

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.

Adapted from Peter Katz and Steve Price, Urban Advantage

The Benefits of Form-Based Codes

Towns and cities across the country are increasingly looking for simpler, easier to understand ways of regulating growth and development. FBCs provide a template to:

- Identify economic development opportunities,
- Placemaking,
- Redevelop old buildings, and
- Set standards for community scale and character.

If your community has a history of thoughtful planning, creating a FBC is an opportunity to streamline layers of old regulations and overlapping districts.

For newer communities, the process of identifying what you like best about your municipality and distilling the public's vision into simple language, pictures, and diagrams will help your town prepare for future growth and development.

For more information on form-based codes, please visit the Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination's website. This document, as well as a Delaware FBC primer and executive summary, are available there at <http://www.stateplanning.delaware.gov/information/publications.shtml>



Delaware Office of State Planning Coordination

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