

STOREFRONT BLOCK FRONTAGE STANDARDS

In downtown Bozeman, Montana

Compiled by Grete Gansauer, Montana State University



Photo: City of Bozeman



Photo: City of Bozeman



Photo: City of Bozeman

Storefront Block Frontage Standards, also referred to here as "storefront design standards" or "storefront design", are form based codes found in chapter 38, section 510 of Bozeman's municipal code. Form based codes guide design decisions made by developers and architects.¹⁴ Bozeman's storefront design standards are used to guide the street-facing form of commercial or mixed use buildings in the most vibrant, high-density commercial districts of the city.¹ The standards encourage walkability, enhance design consistency and aesthetics, build a sense of place, and promote local business.^{4 14} This report will focus on storefront design standards in the Bozeman Downtown Business Improvement District, hereinafter referred to as "downtown Bozeman".



"Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of the city, are its most vital organs."

- Jane Jacobs



KNOW THE CODE

Storefront Block
Frontage Standards
Bozeman Municipal Code
Chapter 38
Section 510.020

Why is Storefront Design Important?

The street-facing presentation of a business is more than a facade, it is a core thread in the cultural and economic fabric of downtown Bozeman. Good storefront design weaves independent businesses together to form a cohesive public realm that is safe, enables freedom of movement, embodies the values of the community, and creates a sense of enjoyment.^{9 10} An attractive public downtown space contributes to the overall social, economic and ecological wellbeing of Bozeman and the region at large.^{9 10 11 13}



Social benefits: Downtown bozeman is a cultural gathering place. Aesthetic design makes Main Street a place people want to visit, meet up with one another, and linger.^{11 13}



Economic benefits: The design standards create a place where people want to walk, stay, and window shop. They facilitate access downtown retail and professional businesses and bolster property values.^{11 13}



Ecological benefits: The design standards enable easy access for people on foot, encouraging pedestrian traffic over automobile uses.

Development & Land Use Regulations in Downtown Bozeman

Storefront Block Frontage Standards are not the only land use regulation to consider in downtown Bozeman, there are also zoning, historic preservation and other requirements. Each code has a distinct purpose, and all interact to create a built environment that honors Bozeman's past and upholds the community's shared vision for the future.

Five provisions essential to downtown development

Downtown B-3 Zoning holds the central business, government and cultural hub of the city. This is a high-density, high-intensity area where design standards are stressed.¹⁶ Key Document: Bozeman Municipal Code, Sec. 38.300

The Neighborhood Conservation District upholds Bozeman's character by preserving historic places. This overlay district stimulates building restoration to contemporary standards in the oldest parts of the city.^{12 17} Key documents: Bozeman Municipal Code, Sec. 38.340; *City of Bozeman Draft NCOD Policy Recommendations* (2018)

The Main Street Historic District preserves the historic commerce center of Bozeman. These regulations are enforced under the Neighborhood Conservation District code.^{8 12} Key documents: Bozeman Municipal Code, Sec. 38.340; *Guidelines for Historic Preservation and the NCOD* (2006).

Other Form Based Codes are used in addition to block frontage standards to guide developers and architects on urban design features that have been prioritized by the community.⁴ Key document: Bozeman Municipal Code, 38.510

The Bozeman Downtown Business Improvement District (BDBID) is a fiscal designation that distributed funds from a voluntary additional tax on businesses within the district. The BDBID finances beautification, preservation, and maintenance projects within the public domain of the district. This is not a land use regulation.^{2 5} Key document: Bozeman Municipal Code, 2.06.1470

Find the complete Bozeman Municipal Code online at library.municode.com/mt/bozeman



Photo: Grete Gansauer

Applicable Plans & Organizations

As the focal point of the City, downtown Bozeman is also the central focus of a local business association and multiple plans to sustain and bolster prosperity in this district. Storefront design standards are part of a larger, multifaceted effort to promote downtown Bozeman as an attractive, vibrant and magnetic central hub. Government, NGOs, private sector partners, and community volunteers band together for the future of this beloved place.⁵

Two key plans with implications for downtown Bozeman:

- Bozeman Community Plan (2009) *currently under revision*³
- Downtown Bozeman Improvement Plan (2019)⁶

Organizations and partnerships dedicated to downtown Bozeman:

- Downtown Bozeman Business Association (downtownbozeman.org)
- Downtown Bozeman Partnership

Storefront Block Frontage Standards: Eight Design Requirements ^{1 4}

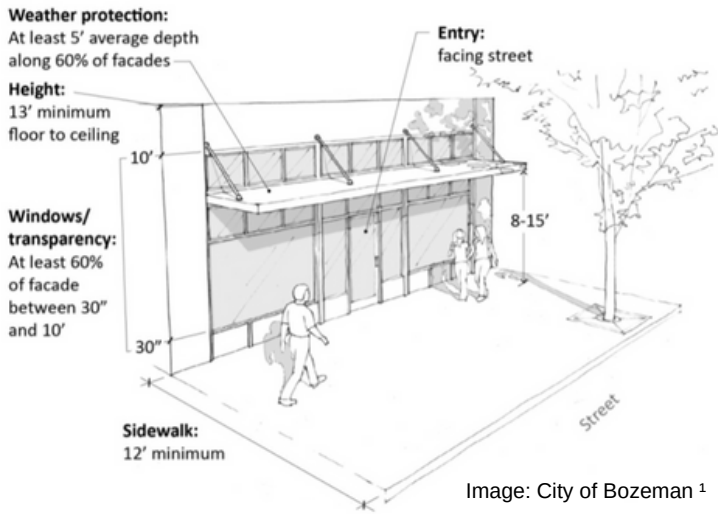


Image: City of Bozeman ¹

Bozeman Municipal Code, Chapter 38 Section 510.020 contains the city's storefront block frontage standards. The code requires eight standards be met, guiding parking location, appropriate use, and street-facing design.

1. **Weather Protection:** Must provide an awning
2. **Parking Location:** Parking must be along the side or in the rear of buildings. Parking lots must have a landscaped buffer.
3. **Sidewalk:** must be at least 12 feet wide
4. **Building Location and Orientation:** Buildings must be placed at the property line or sidewalk line. Entrances must face the primary street.
5. **Building Height:** Ground level must be at least 13 feet in height.
6. **Landscaping:** No landscaping requirements for storefronts. However, landscaped buffers are required around parking lots.
7. **Window Transparency:** Windows Must be transparent, not glazed or obscured. They must comprise the majority of the facade.
8. **Land Use:** Ground level must be for commercial use. Other uses are permissible above.

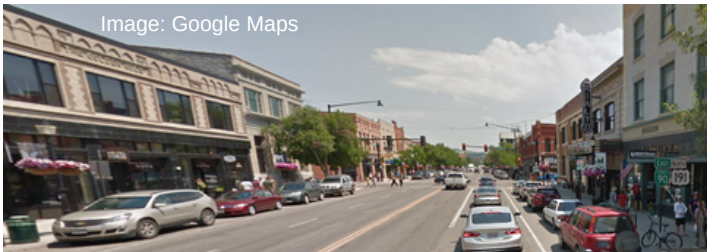


Image: Google Maps

Limiting street parking on Main Street prioritizes land use for commercial purposes and encourages foot traffic. It also makes Main Street feel 'busy' and desirable.

Example of a Main Street Business In Compliance with Storefront Block Frontage Standards

Awning for weather protection (1)

Commercial use at ground level with other uses (residential and professional) above (8)

Sidewalk is wide enough to allow two-way pedestrian traffic (3)



Image: Grete Gansauer

Entrance facing primary street (4)

Appropriate window transparency & window ratio to building facade (7)

Built on property/sidewalk line (4)

Storefront Design and Placemaking

Placemaking is a planning and urban design theory. It aims to create magnetic public spaces that reflect the values and identity of the community.^{11 13}

The diagram at right denotes four key aspects of placemaking: (1) sociability, (2) uses & activities, (3) access & linkages, and (4) comfort & image. Placemaking is a multifaceted approach to urban planning that aims to create spaces that invite interpersonal interaction and create healthy, economically vibrant communities.^{11 13}

Storefront design standards uphold and promote values in each quadrant on the circle above. For example, the standards promote walkability through parking orientation, weather protection and sidewalk design. They create an inviting local and retail business atmosphere that draws people downtown. They contribute to the overall ambiance of Main Street and create a positive impression for first-time visitors and returning locals. Therefore, storefront design standards are an essential element of a successful placemaking effort in downtown Bozeman.

“More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking...[pays] particular attention to the identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.”

-Project for Public Spaces¹³

WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

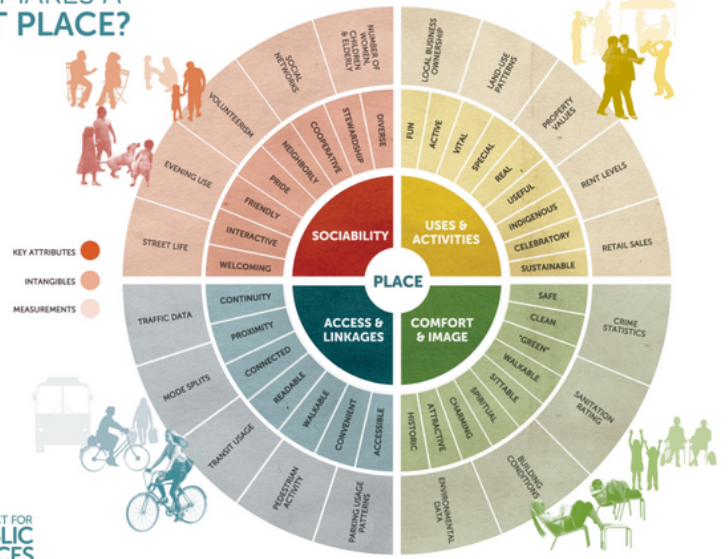
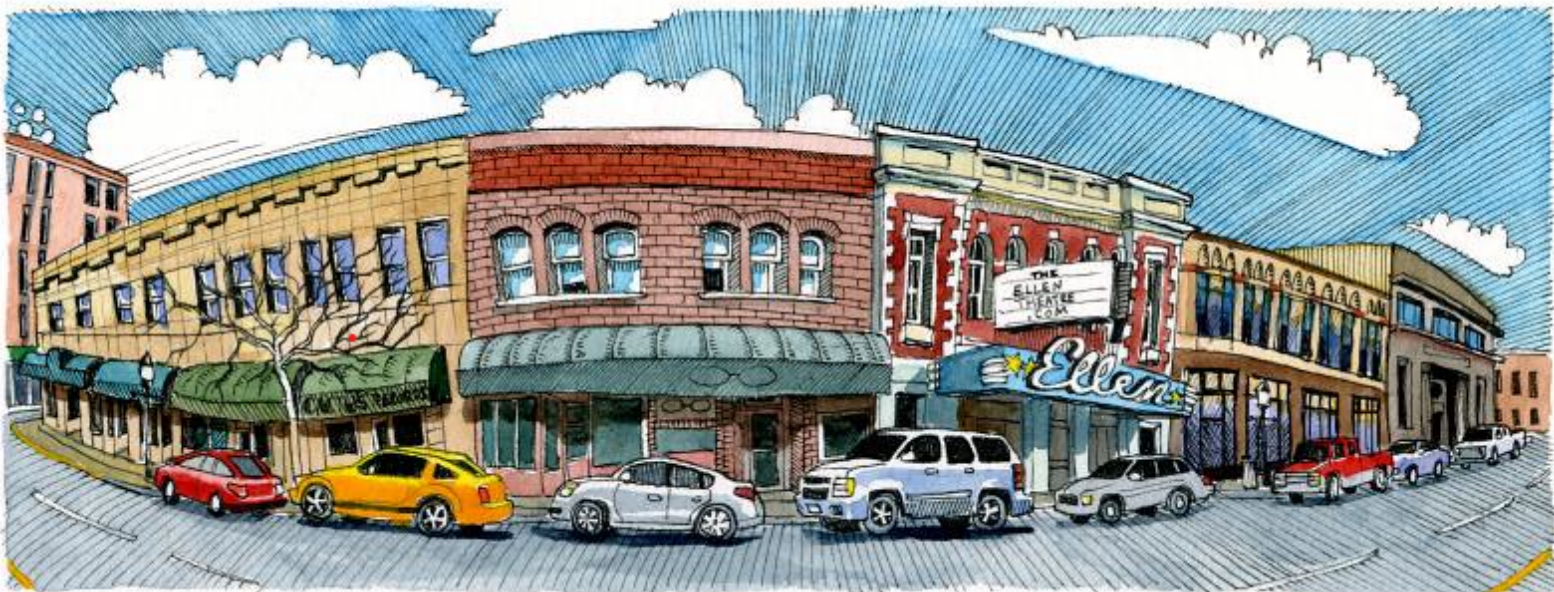


Image: Project for Public Spaces¹³

Using Form Based Codes to Create Great "Places"

Cities of all sizes, in all regions of the country turn to form based codes to influence the urban form.^{11 14} Form based codes provide planners with a tool to 'quantify' a shared vision for the future a communal space.¹¹ They may be written to uphold existing character, or to garner change.^{11 14} For example, following Hurricane Katrina, cities in the South used form based codes on Main Streets to encourage redevelopment that reflected sites that were lost.¹¹ This application of form based codes allowed the cities to carry on their historic identity and rebuild a sanguine space in the wake of tragedy.

Image: Paul Heaston



Departures from the Code

A departure is a request by a developer to deviate from code requirements. New buildings, infill, and remodels must comply with the code, or work with the city planning department to apply for a departure.¹⁸ Departures from the code may be allowable if they serve to enhance sense of place, or the overall aesthetic of downtown.¹³ This is supported by placemaking theory as placemaking emphasizes planning for beloved places over adherence to strict design standards.^{13 10 11}

Historic Character

Downtown Bozeman holds several historic buildings that may not adhere to storefront block frontage standards. These buildings are unique to Bozeman's character and contribute to the region's cultural identity.



Photo: Bozeman Daily Chronicle

Planning theorist Jane Jacobs advocates that 'old buildings' enrich the character of cities.⁷ Historic buildings are not subject to departures, however, they provide an example of a desirable deviance from the code. Therefore, departures are allowable when the alternative serves to enhance sense of place and uphold Bozeman's unique identity.



Photo: Grete Gansauer

Not In Compliance

This building is not in compliance with Block Frontage Standards. The retail entrances do not invite pedestrian traffic, and the parking location causes a break in continuity from the Main Street promenade. This type of departure does not enhance sense of place in downtown Bozeman and therefore should be avoided.



Photo: REBranding 360

An Allowable Departure

This business does not have an awning, and therefore does not comply with at least one requirement of storefront block frontage standards. However, there is shelter provided above the entrance. It is inviting and consistent with other design characteristics of downtown. This is an allowable departure.

Infill vs. Greenfield Development



Photo: Bozeman Community Plan, 2009

After (2008- top) and before (2009 - bottom) panoramas of E. Main Street infill and redevelopment

Before and after: infill development using storefront block frontage standards to enhance the character of downtown.³

Form based codes were originally developed for greenfield development and Planned Unit Developments (PUDs).^{11 14} However, cities across the country now use them for infill, grey and greenfield development, remodels and retrofitting.^{10 11} Since downtown Bozeman is already densely developed, it is unlikely that utilizing storefront block frontage standards will be utilized for greenfield development in the downtown area. Some designers may find it easier to implement block frontage standards given a blank slate on a greenfield site. However, infill and remodel projects within the existing urban form of downtown Bozeman offer a creative canvas for architects to make an artistic contribution that compliments an already-thriving public space.

Regardless of the starting point, the focus is on the end result: creating a desirable public realm at the 'ground floor' of the city.^{11 14}

Photo: Grete Gansauer

References

1. Block frontage standards, Bozeman, MT Municipal Code § 38.510. (2019).
2. Bozeman Downtown Business Improvement District Program, Bozeman, MT Municipal Code §2.06.1470. (2019).
3. Bozeman, MT. (2009). Bozeman Community Plan. [PDF File]. Retrieved from: <https://www.bozeman.net/Home/ShowDocument?id=1074>
4. Community design framework maps and standards, Bozeman, MT Municipal Code § 38.510.020. (2019).
5. Downtown Bozeman Partnership. (2019). Downtown Business Improvement District (BID). Retrieved from: <https://downtownbozeman.org/bid>
6. Downtown Bozeman Partnership & City of Bozeman. (2019). [PDF File]. 2019 Downtown Bozeman Improvement Plan. Retrieved from: https://downtownbozeman.org/uploads/2019_DBIP_Final_Draft_low-res.pdf
7. Jacobs, J. (1961). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. New York, NY: Random House.
8. Johnson, R. (2006) Bozeman Guidelines for Historic Preservation and the Neighborhood Conservation Overlay District. Boulder, CO: Winter & Co.
9. Levy, J. (2017). Contemporary Urban Planning (11 ed.) New York, NY: Routledge.
10. Madden, K. (2011) Companion to Urban Design. New York, NY: Routledge. Chapter 50.
11. Madden, M.E. & Spikowski, B. (2006). Placemaking with Form Based Codes. [PDF File]. Retrieved from: http://www.fltod.com/research/about_form_based_codes/place_making_with_form_based_codes.pdf
12. Overlay District Standards, Bozeman, MT Municipal Code § 38.340. (2019)
13. Project for Public Spaces. (2019). Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places? [PDF File]. Retrieved from: https://assets-global.website-files.com/5810e16f876ce6bcbdb86e/5a6a1c930a6e6500019faf5d_Oct-2016-placemaking-booklet.pdf
14. Rangwala, K. (2012). Form Based Codes. Economic Development Journal, 11(3), 35-40.
15. Ricker, A. (2009, June 4.) Baxter Celebrating 80th Birthday. Bozeman Daily Chronicle. Retrieved from: https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/article_39095a5c-6901-59d898ed-455e274d5f6e.html
16. Zoning Districts and Zoning Map, Bozeman, MT Municipal Code § 38.300 (2019)
17. City of Bozeman. (2018). City of Bozeman Draft NCOD Policy Recommendations. [PDF File]. Retrieved from: <https://www.bozeman.net/home/showdocument?id=8845>
18. Applicability and Compliance. Bozeman, MT Municipal Code § 38.500.020. (2019).

This report compiled by Grete Gansauer, master's student at Montana State University. For inquiries, please contact gretegansauer@montana.edu

Photo: Downtown Bozeman Business Association

