

# Bowie, Maryland

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Communities across the country have opted to introduce pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions into their zoning and land use regulations to foster increased community walkability. This study identifies best practices and lessons learned in adopting and implementing New Urbanist and pedestrian-oriented zoning. Information for each community was gleaned through key informant interviews with planning officials and documentary/Internet research. Fifteen communities across the United States were selected as case studies for this project from a larger, nationwide study of pedestrian-oriented zoning; profiles were developed for 13 out of the 15 communities and are presented herein.

## Current Pedestrian-Oriented Zoning Provisions

The City of Bowie is one of twenty-seven municipalities in Prince George's County, Maryland. The [Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission](#) is a bi-county agency that controls land use planning and zoning in Prince George's County and neighboring Montgomery County. While zoning and land use is managed by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the City of Bowie has its own [planning department](#) which works to advise county-level planners on future development and zoning initiatives.

From the county level, there have been major steps to transform bike and pedestrian uses from simply a recreational activity to a health and transportation-based initiative. In 2012, the county updated its [Transportation Review Guidelines](#) to include an evaluation of adequacy of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Centers and Corridors. A Bicycle and Pedestrian Impact Statement (BPIS) is required to address existing and proposed facilities within one-half mile, up to a cost capped at \$0.35 per commercial square foot or \$300.00 per residential unit. This ordinance has resulted in bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements for the City of Bowie.

The Planning Department in Bowie has been a fervent advocate of bike and pedestrian-oriented development as reflected in continuous efforts to promote pedestrian safety and connectivity. In 2002, the city adopted a Trails Master Plan and, in 2008, the [Bowie Heritage Trail Master Plan](#). The Heritage Trail seeks to connect Old Town Bowie, the Bowie MARC commuter train station, and Bowie State University with a continuous pedestrian and bike trail. Bowie has also taken steps to reconfigure old, unused public rights-of-way into the city's extensive trail network, as well as create bike and pedestrian paths along major roads.

Two types of pedestrian-oriented zoning districts have been implemented in Bowie: [Mixed-Use Community and Mixed-Use Transportation Oriented](#). The Mixed-Use Community District is the zoning designation for the [Fairwood Community](#) master planned neighborhood which contains extensive parks and pedestrian pathways. The Mixed-Use Transportation Oriented District is home to the [Melford Town Center](#), a higher intensity mixed-use development that also emphasizes pedestrian connectivity. The Melford Town Center will provide 5% of multi-family rental units as affordable.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE BOWIE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

## The Catalyst for Adopting Zoning Changes

Prince George's County and the City of Bowie's Planning Department sought to develop and adopt pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions to prioritize pedestrian and bike connectivity, and encourage future multi-modal development. In addition, the city wanted to capitalize on opportunities for mixed-use and higher density development presented at the convergence of major highways in Bowie, the location of the two mixed-use zoning districts.

## Perceived Impacts Since Implementing Zoning Changes

### Increased Pedestrian-Oriented Streets

Some suburban, auto-oriented streets in Bowie have been retrofitted in an urban design pattern to create wider sidewalks and on-road bike facilities to foster more pedestrian-friendly corridors.

### Increased Pedestrian Infrastructure and Connectivity

Within the Mixed-Use Community and Mixed-Use Transportation Oriented zoning districts, residents benefit from increased pedestrian connectivity due to the construction of sidewalks, trails, and bike paths. Additionally, the city helped to fund construction of a large pedestrian bridge over a major state road, linking a hotel, movie theater, restaurants and residential neighborhoods to the Bowie Town Center Mall. The implementation of the Bowie Heritage Trail Master Plan has also resulted in a network of bike paths throughout the older neighborhoods of the city.

BOWIE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	
Total Population	58,290
Median Household Income	\$108,637
Median Age	41.4
% Households with related children <18	32.8%
% White (non-Hispanic)	36.3%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	53.2%
% Hispanic	6.9%
% Workers taking public transit	10.6%
Average Temperature December/July	36/77°F

Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2013-2017); The Weather Channel, 2019

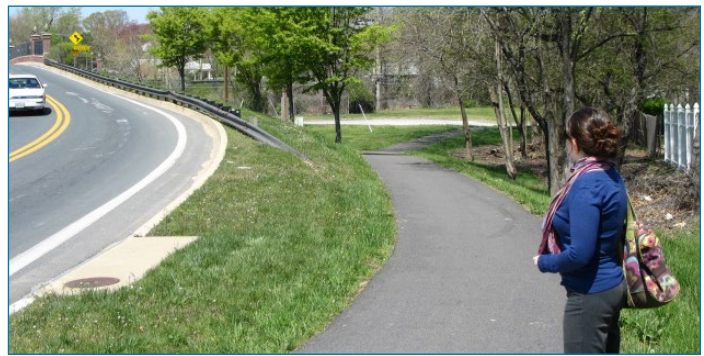


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## Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Planning officials in the City of Bowie identified key lessons learned in the process of adopting and implementing pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions, as well as overarching recommendations for other communities who may wish to explore similar zoning provisions.

### CROSS-COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Bowie has successfully partnered with a variety of stakeholders during the process of implementing pedestrian-oriented provisions. The Environmental Advisory Committee and the Green Team Executive Committee are two citizen advisory groups that are helping to encourage elements of the city's planning and zoning changes.

### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY-FOCUSED ANGLE ASSISTS IN GARNERING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Pedestrian-oriented zoning in Bowie and other municipalities under the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission jurisdiction is in response to a growing desire to foster active, pedestrian-friendly communities. Key informants noted that framing zoning and planning initiatives as a tool to enhance the livability and health of the community is often met with support from community members and city officials.

### CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THEM

While the pedestrian-oriented zoning districts in Bowie are internally connected with sidewalks, bike lanes, and pedestrian paths, there is a lack of external connectivity that links the pedestrian-oriented districts to each other. Key informants noted, however, that the continued development of the Heritage Trail and Trails Master Plan concepts will alleviate this challenge.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

A Reimann and JF Chriqui. Pedestrian-oriented Zoning in Action: A Community Snapshot-Bowie, Maryland. Chicago, IL: Illinois Prevention Research Center, 2019. Available: <https://go.uic.edu/zoning-for-walkability-profile-Bowie>.

## Resources for Further Information

### CITY OF BOWIE:

**City of Bowie, Bowie Heritage Trail Master Plan, 2002**  
<https://www.cityofbowie.org/DocumentCenter/View/258/2007-Trails-Master-Plan>

**City of Bowie, Planning & Community Development Department**  
<https://www.cityofbowie.org/149/Planning-Community-Development>

**Fairwood Community, Master Planned Community**  
<https://fairwoodcommunity.org/>

**Melford Town Center, Master Planned Community**  
<http://www.melfordtowncenter.com/>

### PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY:

**Prince George's County Planning Department, Adequate Public Facilities**  
<http://www.pgparcs.com/1673/Adequate-Public-Facilities>

**The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission**  
<http://www.mncppc.org/>

**Prince George's County, Planning Department, Mixed-Use and Planned Community Zoning**  
<http://www.pgparcs.com/835/Mixed-Use-Planned-Community>