

Dunwoody, Georgia

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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 Planning and Zoning Provisions

In 2011, the [Atlanta Regional Commission's Livable Centers Initiative](#), a grant program that encourages the development of vibrant, walkable communities, identified Dunwoody's Perimeter Center as a district slated for revitalization from a suburban job center to a lively, mixed-use community.

In 2017, based on the Livable Centers Initiative designation and recommendations enumerated in the [2015-2035 Shape Dunwoody Comprehensive Plan](#), Dunwoody adopted the [Perimeter Center Overlay](#). The Overlay is divided into four distinct subareas and seeks to foster a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use urban center. Using a [form-based code](#) approach which focuses on the design and function of buildings rather than specific uses, each subarea of the Perimeter Center Overlay is classified by form and intensity.

PC-1 represents the city's central core and contains the Dunwoody Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit (MARTA) train station, [transit-oriented developments](#), and buildings of the highest density for employment and residential uses. The MARTA transit stop has helped foster higher density developments that would not have been feasible without access to the rail line. PC-2 contains office and residential uses, and limited retail. PC-3 is a smaller scale, less intensive commercial district that permits office buildings and neighborhood shopping. And lastly, PC-4 serves as a transition district between the Perimeter Center Overlay and adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods.

Within the Perimeter Center Overlay, there are various pedestrian-oriented requirements (e.g. street furniture, widened sidewalks, adequate lighting, and bike lanes).

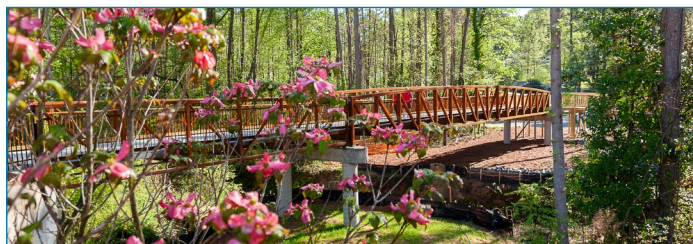


PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF DUNWOODY

In 2018, the city embarked on the process of developing pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions for a new development, [Dunwoody Village](#). Dunwoody Village is currently a commercial district surrounded by neighborhoods of single-family homes. The project is envisioned to be a moderate-density, walkable neighborhood with mixed-use developments. The city has encouraged the participation of its residents through the use of community surveys and public meetings.

The Catalyst for Implementing Zoning Changes

Dunwoody's Perimeter Center is one of the largest job centers in the southeast of the United States with approximately 120,000 employees entering the district on a daily basis. Dunwoody sought to introduce housing to the area to foster a vibrant, mixed-use district for those employees and other residents.

More generally, Dunwoody sought to foster pedestrian-oriented and walkable community areas in response to resident demand for more community gathering opportunities and pedestrian spaces.

Perceived Impacts Since Implementing Zoning Changes

Increased Pedestrian Activity

The Perimeter Center has become a more activated pedestrian environment as seen from increased foot traffic and neighborhood events.

Increased Pedestrian Amenities

As a result of streetscaping efforts in the Perimeter Center Overlay, pedestrians enjoy new amenities such as widened sidewalks, increased lighting, and street furniture.

Increased Connectivity

The city has required that new or existing roads that undergo improvements must provide a bike lane with a grass strip divider and a 12-foot sidewalk, resulting in connected, multimodal streets.

Increased Densities & Mixed-Use

Several new mixed-use and high-density projects have been proposed in Dunwoody such as [High Street](#), an 8-million-square-foot, transit-oriented community slated to house 3,000 residences, 800,000 square feet of office and retail, and a hotel, all along a 10-block pedestrian-friendly street grid adjacent to the MARTA station.

DUNWOODY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Total Population	48,857
Median Household Income	\$87,252
Median Age	37.8
% Households with related children <18	31.3%
% White (non-Hispanic)	67.8%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	13.2%
% Hispanic	9.3%
% Workers taking public transit	5.7%
Average Temperature December/July	41/74°F
Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2013-2017); The Weather Channel, 2019	

Resources for Further Information

Atlanta Regional Commission, Livable Centers Initiative
<https://atlantaregional.org/community-development/livable-centers-initiative>

City of Dunwoody, Dunwoody Village Master Plan
http://dunwoodyga.gov/ckeditorfiles/files/Master_Plans/Dunwoody%20Village%20Master%20Plan/Dunwoody%20Village%20Master%20Plan.pdf

City of Dunwoody, Perimeter Center Overlay
<http://dunwoodyga.gov/ckeditorfiles/files/Projects/Perimeter%20Center%20Zoning/Combined%20Overlay%20%26%20PC%20Districts%20Mar%20202016.pdf>

City of Dunwoody, Shape Dunwoody 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan
http://dunwoodyga.gov/ckeditorfiles/files/Master_Plans/Comprehensive%20Land%20Use%20Plan/2015-10-12%20Dunwoody%20Comprehensive%20Plan.pdf

Form-Based Codes Defined, Form-Based Codes Institute
<https://formbasedcodes.org/definition/>

High Street Atlanta, A Mixed-Use Development in Dunwoody, Atlanta, The Master Plan
<https://highstreetatlanta.com/>

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Planning officials in the City of Dunwoody 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.

PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ZONING CAN CREATIVELY REVIVE UNDERUTILIZED LAND USES

The Perimeter Center Overlay encourages the adaptive reuse of underutilized land uses, such as the mall parking lot and aging office buildings, to create walkable, mixed-use developments and restore community vibrancy.

SUPPORT PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS WITH SELF-TAXING DISTRICTS

The Perimeter Center Overlay utilizes a self-taxing district called the Perimeter Community Improvement District to fund transportation and pedestrian infrastructure improvements like streetscaping and widened sidewalks. These improvements have resulted in more walkable and pedestrian-friendly environments.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the city is in the process of developing new pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions for the Dunwoody Village development project, city officials have hosted several well-attended community meetings and charrettes. In August 2018, the Planning Department received feedback from over 1,800 residents in response to a survey on the preferred architecture and form for the Dunwoody Village. Key informants noted that having an engaged and supportive community facilitates the process of developing and adopting new pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THEM

Because connectivity was historically an afterthought for many communities, including Dunwoody, retrofitting for connected bike and pedestrian paths can be challenging, yet tremendous efforts to prioritize connectivity has led to increased multimodal pathways for pedestrians and cyclists.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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