

# Greensboro, North Carolina

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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

The City of Greensboro has adopted and implemented an assortment of pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions. [Traditional Neighborhood District](#) zoning is lauded by planning staff as one of the most successful designations for economic development and pedestrian-orientation in Greensboro. The city drew inspiration for the Traditional Neighborhood District zones from the walkable development patterns of pre-automobile cities and neighborhoods to provide residents with vibrant and accessible commercial corridors.

[Southside](#), a Traditional Neighborhood District adopted in 1999, was previously an area of the community that was fraught with crime and drug activity. Since its adoption, it is now seen as the “poster child” for revitalization in the city. Southside is considered one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Greensboro and provides a mix of retail, residential, and commercial uses.

The [Pedestrian Scale Overlay districts](#), adopted in 2002, promote mixed-use developments with [New Urbanist design standards](#) (e.g. moderate-density housing in close proximity to neighborhood shopping, offices, and services), as well as bike and pedestrian connectivity.

The [Downtown Design Overlay](#) and the [Central Business](#) zoning district, both encourage mixed-use developments and pedestrian amenities like bike parking and continuous sidewalk networks. Within the last few years, the city updated their zoning ordinance to permit the development of mixed-use, multi-family projects in commercial zoning districts.

In addition, Greensboro has a strong legacy of providing residents with



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a dense network of trails and bike paths. In 2006, the city adopted a plan to construct a 4-mile paved [Downtown Greenway](#) in celebration of their bicentennial. The greenway is slated for completion in 2020 and will have bike parking, eco-gardens, and street furniture.

## The Catalyst for Adopting Zoning Changes

The City of Greensboro adopted zoning changes in order to spark redevelopment in underutilized parcels of the city and to develop in a manner that encourages compact, mixed-use developments.

## Perceived Impacts Since Implementing Zoning Changes

### Increased Economic Development

Pedestrian-oriented zoning has stimulated economic development in Greensboro. This is illustrated by a resurgence of new retail and restaurant development, and the increased land value of redeveloped properties.

### Increased Development Interest for Pedestrian-Oriented Projects

As a result of the successes of existing pedestrian-oriented projects in the city, Greensboro has seen an increased development interest and community demand for additional mixed-use projects.

### Increased Walkability & Connectivity

Required sidewalk development and provisions for bike infrastructure (e.g. bike lanes, bike parking) has resulted in increased connectivity and walking rates in the city. Many residents (both millennials and seniors) have chosen to move to the Southside neighborhood as they specifically seek walkable and bikeable communities that do not require a reliance on automobiles.

## GREENSBORO DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Total Population	284,816
Median Household Income	\$44,978
Median Age	35
% Households with related children <18	29.5%
% White (non-Hispanic)	48.0%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	41.8%
% Hispanic	7.3%
Average Temperature December/July	44/75°F
Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2013-2017); The Weather Channel, 2019	

## Resources for Further Information

### City of Greensboro Overlay Districts, Plans & Manuals, Pedestrian Scale Overlay Districts and Traditional Neighborhood Districts

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/planning/learn-more-about/zoning-rezoning/land-development-ordinance/special-district-design-standards>

### City of Greensboro Downtown Design Overlay

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/planning/learn-more-about/zoning-rezoning/land-development-ordinance/special-district-design-standards/downtown-design>

### City of Greensboro, Downtown Greenway

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/transportation/gdot-divisions/planning/bicycle-and-pedestrian/greenways/downtown-greenway>

### City of Greensboro, Land Development Ordinance, Article 6: Zoning Districts, Central Business, pg. 166

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/home/showdocument?id=27035>

### New Urbanist Design, Congress for the New Urbanism

<https://www.cnu.org/resources/what-new-urbanism>

### Southside Traditional Neighborhood Plan

<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/departments/planning/learn-more-about/redevelopment/redevelopment/southside>

## Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Planning officials in the City of Greensboro 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.

### PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

To facilitate the smooth adoption and implementation of pedestrian-oriented zoning, Greensboro recommends fostering an open and receptive relationship with the development community. The city hosted a speaker series for developers in the community to learn about New Urbanist development and its benefits for creating vibrant communities. Additionally, the planning department sponsored a “field trip” to visit Traditional Neighborhood Developments in neighboring Chapel Hill, Cary, and Huntersville, North Carolina so planners and developers could see and discuss brick and mortar examples that could work in Greensboro. Providing educational resources allow developers to understand Greensboro’s long-term vision for pedestrian-oriented growth and facilitates an open dialogue amongst stakeholders.

### PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ZONING SERVES AS A TOOL FOR LASTING WALKABILITY

Adopting pedestrian-oriented zoning can serve as a mechanism to establish long-term, predictable outcomes for the design and form of future developments, in addition to instituting a lasting framework to foster a more walkable community.

### CELEBRATE THE SUCCESS STORIES BUT ALSO CONSIDER AFFORDABILITY NEEDS

Development projects within Greensboro’s pedestrian-oriented zoning districts have been positively received by community members and have spurred further demand for additional walkable, compact, and connected developments. Planning officials cite the city’s ability to effectually champion the success of the developments as a generator for community demand.

Additionally, at the very beginning of the Southside Traditional Neighborhood District’s development, when the area was considered crime-ridden and undesirable, planning officials did not anticipate the tremendous success the district would become. While the neighborhood embraces a diverse mix of ages, income levels, and lifestyles, planners recommend that other communities who are interested in adopting pedestrian-oriented zoning changes with intended revitalization goals include specific provisions for affordability to ensure equitable access to housing.

### SUGGESTED CITATION

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