

North Richland Hills, Texas

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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 North Richland Hills adopted the [Town Center zoning district](#) in 1998. The zoning regulations for the Town Center district are [form-based](#), meaning the development in the district addresses the relationships between the buildings and the public realm in order to foster a pedestrian-friendly community area.

The Town Center district contains four subzones: neighborhood edge, neighborhood general, neighborhood center, and neighborhood core, each allowing increased development density.

The Town Center district includes the [Home Town development](#), a sustainable, high quality, mixed-use community that was inspired by a [New Urbanist](#) approach to city planning which champions walkable and compact development. The development includes over 1,000 multi-family residential units, 100,000 square feet of retail, as well as several recreational amenities.

Starting in the 1990s, the Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) network presented plans to expand into North Richland Hills. Responding to these plans, North Richland Hills adopted a [Transit Oriented Development Code](#) in 2009. The city has implemented two Transit Oriented Development districts: the [Iron Horse Station Area](#) and the [Smithfield Station Area](#) which seek to encourage non-automobile transit and the construction of mixed-use, high-density developments. The Smithfield Station provides a mixed-use, walkable urban neighborhood surrounding the rail stop. The Iron Horse Station Area serves a major regional employment center and provides retail and residential uses in close proximity to transit. Both stations opened in January of 2019.

In 2015, the Iron Horse Transit-Oriented Development project was announced for the Iron Horse Station Area. The project aims to



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construct mixed-use developments and alternative housing options such as moderate-density townhomes, cottage homes, and multifamily apartments. The goal of this project is to develop a neighborhood that does not require a car to access the daily necessities of life such as a grocery store, restaurants, and retail needs.

Within each of these pedestrian-oriented zones, there are specific pedestrian requirements such as sidewalk connectivity, bike-pedestrian trails, and bike parking.

The Catalyst for Adopting Zoning Changes

North Richland Hills sought to spark redevelopment to define and enhance the city's downtown which led to the development of the Town Center zoning district. Additionally, North Richland Hills had a targeted goal to expand the city's network of alternative transit, including increased access to the Dallas Area Rapid Transit rail line, and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. The Transit-Oriented Development districts were created to achieve those goals.

Perceived Impacts Since Implementing Zoning Changes

Increased Pedestrian-Oriented Development

Since the adoption of the Transit-Oriented Development Code which responded to the DART expansion plan, there has been an uptick in pedestrian-oriented development interest as seen in the Iron Horse Village project.

Increased Walkability

Key-informants credit the pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use design of the Town Center's Home Town Development as a facilitator in the city's higher rates of walk-ing in the district.

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	
Total Population	69,039
Median Household Income	\$65,340
Median Age	37.8
% Households with related children <18	32.4%
% White (non-Hispanic)	82.3%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	5.5%
% Hispanic	17.3%
Average Temperature December/July	47/81°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 North Richland Hills 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.

IMPLEMENTATION TAKES TIME

In order to successfully implement pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions, planning officials explained that communities should expect to have a twenty to thirty year timeline of completion. In addition, it is important to be realistic and respond to a changing market as exogenous factors, such as periods of slowed real estate development, may require planning flexibility.

WALKABILITY CAN SERVE AS A CO-BENEFIT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

The main catalyst for North Richland Hills to adopt pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions was to stimulate development and focus on the expansion of the DART rail system. While economic development and transit connectivity were priority items for the city, the adopted zoning changes in North Richland Hills have facilitated the development of vibrant pedestrian districts that have led to increased walking rates.

PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ZONING IN UNDERUTILIZED COMMUNITY AREAS

Implementing pedestrian-oriented zoning is easier to achieve in areas of the community that are underdeveloped. The Home Town development, located within the Town Center zoning district, was formerly an undeveloped parcel of land. Similarly, the Iron Horse Transit Station Area was originally located on a greenfield development. Implementing zoning changes in built-out sections of the community is certainly encouraged, as seen in the plans for the Smithfield Station Area, however, underutilized community areas have increased development flexibility. Planners also noted that as a result of targeting undeveloped land, they have not experienced significant gentrification or displacement.

Resources for Further Information

City of North Richland Hills, Code of Ordinances, Transit-Oriented Development Code

https://library.municode.com/tx/north_richland_hills/codes/building_and_land_use_regulations?nodet=PTIICOOR_CH118ZO_ARTIVDI_DIV15TRORDECO

Form-based Codes Defined, Form-Based Codes Institute

<https://formbasedcodes.org/definition/>

Home Town Development, Arcadia Realty

<http://arcadiarealtycorp.com/portfolio/hometown-nrh-north-richland-hills-tx>

Urban Regulations, Architectural Standards, and The SmartCode, DPZ Partners

<https://www.dpz.com/Initiatives/SmartCode>

What is New Urbanism? Congress for the New Urbanism

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

SUGGESTED CITATION

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