

# Rock Hill, South 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 Zoning and Planning Provisions

The City of Rock Hill has adopted and implemented an assortment of pedestrian-oriented zoning districts. The [Old Town neighborhood](#) encompasses the city's Downtown zoning district. [Knowledge Park](#) is a community area within Old Town that is an urban, mixed-use business park with an emphasis on pedestrian amenities (e.g. connected bike and walking paths, access to restaurants and retail, and public spaces for events and activities).

In addition, Rock Hill has zoned for a [Master Planned Commercial district](#) which laid the foundation for the [Riverwalk master planned community](#). Riverwalk is a pedestrian-oriented community that provides a mix of housing types, interconnected, multi-modal streets, and access to ample open space. In its earliest stages, Riverwalk was a four-mile trail along the Catawba River but has since bloomed into a growing mixed-use urban area in Rock Hill. The Riverwalk development contains its own pedestrian-friendly town center with retail and commercial uses, as well as recreational amenities like mountain bike trails, kayaking, and athletic fields.

Throughout the city, residents can enjoy an extensive network of bike infrastructure. Rock Hill has developed over forty-four miles of bike paths including twenty-seven miles of greenways and multipurpose trails. The [Connect Rock Hill Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan](#) is the citywide plan for biking and walking that defines route types. The plan seeks to provide pedestrian networks for all ages and physical abilities and elevate bicycling from a recreational activity to a mode of transportation in the city. Illustrating Rock Hill's legacy of bike connectivity, the city was awarded the [Bronze Level](#)



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[Bicycle Friendly Community](#) award by the League of American Bicyclists in 2013 and 2016.

## The Catalyst for Adopting Zoning Changes

Responding to a growing trend towards pedestrian-friendly, walkable communities, Rock Hill sought to develop zoning provisions that would foster pedestrian-oriented environments as well as stimulate the city's economy through the development and redevelopment of sections of the city. In addition, Rock Hill was determined to develop specific provisions in its land use and zoning code that could combat poor health outcomes in the region, such as requiring bike and pedestrian amenities.

## Perceived Impacts Since Implementing Zoning Changes

### Increased Pedestrian Infrastructure and Connectivity

In addition to the growing network of bike paths throughout Rock Hill, the city has benefitted from additional pedestrian infrastructure. In the Knowledge Park community area, the city has constructed 8-10 foot wide sidewalks, on-street parking, bike parking, and street furniture, as well as a pedestrian overpass to extend sidewalk connectivity over a four-lane highway.

### Increased Public Space Activation

New pedestrian-oriented zoning districts have encouraged the development of public spaces for residents to walk, linger, and enjoy the growing restaurant scene in parts of the city.

### Increased Economic Development

Office and commercial tenants have specifically chosen to relocate in the downtown zoning district due to the permissibility of mixed-use developments and the vibrancy and foot traffic they bring.

ROCK HILL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE	
Total Population	70,764
Median Household Income	\$44,296
Median Age	33.5
% Households with related children <18	27.9%
% White (non-Hispanic)	53.6%
% Black (non-Hispanic)	39.0%
% Hispanic	5.1%
Average Temperature December/July	45/81°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 Rock Hill 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.

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A CO-BENEFIT OF PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ZONING PROVISIONS

A primary catalyst in developing pedestrian-oriented zoning in Rock Hill was the understanding that walkable and bikeable communities were leading the real estate market. Since implementing the zoning changes, Rock Hill has benefitted from increased pedestrian-friendly and walkable environments, in addition to a stimulated local economy.

### HEALTH-FOCUSED ANGLE ASSISTS IN GARNERING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The City of Rock Hill included significant health outcomes data in the Focus 2020 Comprehensive Plan. Using youth activity rates and data on active recreational amenity access, the plan demonstrated that South Carolina reported poorer health compared to national averages. Rock Hill sought to employ a health-focused lens in the planning process with a specific focus on increasing walkability and bike infrastructure. Key informants noted that this approach bolstered support from the community and led to a streamlined adoption and implementation process of the pedestrian-oriented zoning provisions.

### CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THEM

While the pedestrian-oriented zoning districts like Old Town, Knowledge Park, and Riverwalk have comprehensive, internal sidewalk connectivity, some of the older parts of the city that were developed prior to the city's sidewalk requirements do not have the same pedestrian infrastructure. To address this, Rock Hill is targeting gaps in sidewalk connectivity to increase the city's overarching walkability.

## Resources for Further Information

**City of Rock Hill, Zoning Ordinance, Master Planned Commercial District, pg. 60**

<https://www.cityofrockhill.com/home/showdocument?id=2065>

**City of Rock Hill, Zoning Ordinance, Downtown, pg. 56**

<https://www.cityofrockhill.com/home/showdocument?id=2065>

**Connect Rock Hill: Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan**

<https://www.cityofrockhill.com/departments/planning-and-development/transportation-long-range-planning/long-range-planning/connect-rock-hill>

**Focus 2020, Rock Hill Comprehensive Plan**

<https://www.cityofrockhill.com/departments/planning-and-development/transportation-long-range-planning/long-range-planning/focus-2020-comprehensive-plan-new>

**League of American Bicyclists**

<https://www.bikeleague.org/community>

**Old Town Rock Hill**

<https://www.onlyintown.com/>

**Riverwalk Master Planned Community**

<http://www.riverwalkcarolinas.com/>

**Rock Hill Economic Development, Knowledge Park**

<http://www.rockhillusa.com/home>

## SUGGESTED CITATION

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



**Illinois Prevention Research Center**