

IN RE: APPEAL OF OUR CITY READING, LLC, RELATIVE TO A PROPERTY LOCATED AT 229, 243 AND 245 WASHINGTON STREET, CITY OF READING, BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	: BEFORE THE ZONING HEARING : BOARD OF THE CITY OF READING, : PENNSYLVANIA : : APPEAL NO. 2507-0023 : : VARIANCE, INTERPRETATION : AND/OR SPECIAL EXCEPTION
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**DECISION OF THE ZONING HEARING
 BOARD OF THE CITY OF READING**

AND NOW, this 10th day of September, 2025, a hearing having been held on August 13, 2025, upon the application of Our City Reading, LLC, notice of such hearing having been first sent and advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the City of Reading Zoning Ordinance, as amended, the Zoning Hearing Board of the City of Reading (hereinafter referred to as the “Zoning Board”) renders the following decision:

FINDINGS OF FACT

The Zoning Board finds the following facts:

1. Applicant is Our City Reading, LLC, a Pennsylvania Limited Liability Company, with a principal address of 2561 Bernville Road, Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania 19605 (hereinafter referred to as the “Applicant”).
2. Applicant is the fee simple owner of property located at 229, 243 and 245 Washington Street, City of Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania (hereinafter referred to as the “Subject Property”).
3. The Subject Property is located in the R-3 Residential and C-C Commercial Core Zoning Districts as those terms and districts are defined by the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Reading, as amended (hereinafter referred to as the “Zoning Ordinance”).

4. Applicant was represented by Scott Esterbrook, Esquire, of Reed Smith, Three Logan Square, Suite 3100, 1717 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103.

5. Applicant is seeking a special exception for adaptive reuse under Section 600-1202.A.(4) for up to 21 residential units at the Subject Property and any other relief required to support the project.

6. Applicant stated the proposed project known as GoggleWorks 2 involves the building addition and redevelopment of the Subject Property at 229 Washington Street and the demolition of the existing structures at 243 and 245 Washington Street.

7. Applicant stated the three tracts of land identified herein as the Subject Property will be merged into a common deed.

8. Applicant stated the prior use of the Subject Property was either residential dwellings (243 and 245 Washington Street) or a commercial/industrial building (229 Washington Street).

9. Applicant stated the Subject Property is being converted in a number of phases to below market residential apartments with the remainder of the building to be occupied by community serving tenants consistent with the building's mission to improve the quality of residents of the City of Reading, particularly the unserved.

10. After submitting the land development plans for the additional phases of the project, Applicant was informed it needed a special exception for the residential apartments and all the other uses were approved.

11. Applicant stated the project is designed to provide quality housing for newly hired teachers, artists and other community members.

12. Applicant stated the project phases are as follows:

- a. Phase 1 (first floor) is a preparation kitchen for Helping Harvest;
- b. Phase 2 (first floor) is for a proposed day school (without a cafeteria) for BCIU;
- c. Phase 3 will consist of a building addition/lobby addition with a total of 11 employees;
- d. Phase 4 (fourth floor) will consist of 7-9 residential apartments;
- e. Phase 5 (third floor) will consist of tenant studios for the GoggleWorks Art Center; and
- f. Phase 6 (second floor) will consist of 12 residential apartments.

13. Applicant stated the total number of associated parking spaces totals 204 spaces and it has a cross agreement with the GoggleWorks for parking for the GoggleWorks 2 Project which includes additional handicap accessible parking spaces adjacent to the building for direct access.

14. Applicant stated the requested special exception use includes commercial, municipal or institutional uses on the first floor or street level, commercial, municipal and/or institutional uses on the upper floors, and specifically residential apartment units on the upper floors per Section 600-1202.A.(4).

15. Testimony was presented that the proposed adaptive reuse:
- a. Will not substantially increase traffic and congestion nor will it create any undo concentration of population;
 - b. Will not impair or create a significant threat to the public health and safety;
 - c. Will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent properties;
 - d. Is not detrimental to the appropriate use of adjacent property and will not

generate significant nuisances or hazards; and

e. Provides adequate provisions, safeguards, plans and/or infrastructure that will mitigate the potential impacts listed in Section 600-1201.A.

16. There were no objections to the requested relief.

DISCUSSION

Applicant is seeking a special exception for adaptive reuse under Section 600-1202.A.(4) for up to 21 residential units at the Subject Property and any other relief required to support the project.

The Zoning Board finds the proposed use will not be a detriment to the health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood and is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Ordinance.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Applicant is Our City Reading, LLC.
2. The Subject Property is located at 229, 243 and 245 Washington Street, Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania.
3. The Subject Property is located in the R-3 C-C Zoning Districts.
4. The Zoning Board is permitted to provide interpretation and grant applications for variances and special exceptions as set forth in the relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance.
5. The Zoning Board incorporates the findings of fact as though fully set forth at length herein.
6. In order to grant the requested relief, the Applicant must show it has satisfied the relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance.
7. After reviewing the Applicant's request in detail, the Zoning Hearing Board enters the following Decision:

a. Applicant is granted relief from all relevant sections of the Zoning Ordinance subject to the following conditions:

(1) Applicant must obtain a Zoning Map Amendment prior to the recording of the Annexation/Land Development Plan for 243 and 245 Washington Street.

(2) Applicant shall comply with all pertinent provisions for Adaptive Reuse considering the Residential Apartment Uses, as prescribed by the Zoning Ordinance.

(3) A Preliminary Land Development Plan, if necessary, shall be prepared to address the provisions required by the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (Chapter 515 of the City of Reading Code).

(4) A Final Land Development Plan, if necessary, shall be prepared for approval by the City of Reading and recorded with the Berks County Recorder of Deeds.

(5) All sanitary sewage disposal issues shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the City of Reading, including the reservation, permitting, installation and connection of the required sanitary sewage disposal improvements.

(6) All water supply issues shall be resolved to the satisfaction of the City of Reading, including the reservation, permitting, installation and connection of the required water supply improvements.

(7) All proposed signs shall be located, designed, permitted and installed in accordance with the provisions specified by the City of Reading.

(8) Applicant shall install appropriate signage in the parking lot reserving parking spaces for the tenants of the residential apartment units.

(9) The appropriate building and zoning permits shall be prepared and submitted to address all building code requirements for the proposed residential apartment units.

(10) The building shall comply with all fire, safety and accessibility

requirements specified by the City of Reading prior to occupancy.

(11) Applicant shall comply with all relevant building and occupancy codes and ordinances as well as the plans and testimony submitted before the Zoning Board.

(12) Applicant may not use, expand, alter or otherwise use the Subject Property inconsistently with the contents of this Decision without making application requesting further relief from the Zoning Board.

(13) Failure to comply with any of the above-referenced conditions shall mean the immediate revocation of the relief granted herein.

The decision of this Board is by a vote of 5 to 0 .

**ZONING HEARING BOARD OF THE
CITY OF READING**

/s/ Philip Rabena

PHILIP RABENA, CHAIRMAN

/s/ Thomas Fox

THOMAS FOX

/s/ Jeffrey Gattone

JEFFREY GATTONE

/s/ Jared Barcz

JARED BARCZ

/s/ Charles Jones

CHARLES JONES