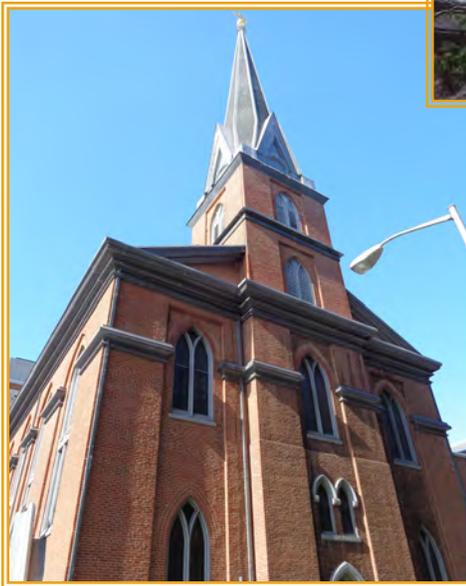


*City of Reading*  
**Comprehensive Plan**

**DRAFT**



*City of Reading*  
**Comprehensive Plan**



This Plan was partially funded by a Municipal Assistance Grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development.

This Plan was adopted by the Reading City Council on



Urban Research & Development Corporation  
Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018

# Draft City of Reading Comprehensive Plan

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## Foreword

Many great things are happening in Reading. Reading continues to have a highly walkable character, with a mixture of uses that allows residents to easily reach everyday goods and services. There is renewed interest throughout the country, particularly among younger persons, in living in interesting historic walkable cities. Reading's fabric of historic streetscapes is intact in most areas of the City, with notable historic architecture. Reading's compact development patterns allow for efficient public transportation. There also is a large supply in Reading of older brick industrial buildings that are prime for redevelopment into new uses.



The Reading Public Schools are showing major progress. Reading benefits from strong institutions, including Albright College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, Reading Health's School of Health Sciences, St. Joseph Health Downtown Campus, and the nearby Reading Health complex. There are fabulous entertainment, cultural and artistic offerings, including at Santander Arena, the Santander Performing Arts Center, the Miller Center for the Arts, the Goggleworks, at each of the colleges, and at smaller venues.

New "Live Work" housing for artists is being developed next to the Goggleworks and adjacent to Penn Square, which will allow persons to create and sell art in the same unit in which they live. The new Doubletree Hotel and Convention Center *has opened* as an anchor in Center City, and a Main Street Program is moving forward to revitalize the downtown.

Mount Penn and the Neversink Mountain provide scenic wooded backdrops to the City, in addition to recreational resources. Recreation trails connect Reading to many surrounding areas, including along the Thun Trail, the Union Canal Towpath and the Schuylkill River Trail.

There are many religious congregations, organizations, foundations and individuals that are highly committed to Reading, and are working hard to improve their community.

Although crime remains a concern, crime has been decreasing by almost every measure over the last several years.

### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is an overall set of policies for the development and preservation of the City. The Plan addresses Land Uses, Housing, Economic Development, Mobility, Environmental Sustainability, Community Facilities and Services, and Ways to Carry Out the Plan. At the same time, a separate plan is being completed to address Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails in Reading.

The Comprehensive Plan coordinates relevant policies in many previous plans that have been completed.

The Plan is not a regulation, but it is intended to provide the basis for an update to the City's development regulations.

A set of background maps and analysis of existing conditions was completed to provide a foundation for this Plan. Interviews of over 40 knowledgeable persons of various interests were conducted. A Steering Committee of over 30 persons provided overall direction for this Plan. An online and a paper survey was distributed to ask hundreds of persons about the aspects of Reading that they liked the most and disliked.

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As part of the process of developing this Plan, a set of four public meetings were held in different areas of Reading to discuss major policies.

The Plan was adopted by City Council after a public hearing, and after a Planning Commission Public Meeting.



## The Overall Direction of This Plan

### Vision and Mission Statements and Goals

The following Vision Statement, Mission Statement and goals are built upon the City of Reading's 2014 Strategic Planning Framework.

#### Vision Statement

The City of Reading will be recognized as a leading model of sustainable urban living and one of the most vibrant, walkable and innovative communities in Pennsylvania. Reading will offer a shared prosperity among all who live, work, learn, and visit through a thriving local economy, social well-being, and a healthy natural environment.



#### Mission Statement

The City of Reading will provide leadership and services that are responsive and proactive to the needs of our community. As part of our commitment to policy innovation and operational excellence, we provide real and lasting value through our public services in ways that promote and enhance our economy, society and environment.

#### Goals

- To provide clean and safe neighborhoods and business areas.
- To continue to provide a wide range of housing choices for households of various needs, while seeking to promote higher rates of homeownership.
- To allow for a range of commercial uses in well-distributed locations that allow access by walking and bicycling from all neighborhoods for everyday needs.
- To promote compatible mixes of land uses, in a way that reduces dependence upon motor vehicles for everyday needs and encourages people to live closer to their work.
  - To provide for compatible transitions between different land uses and different intensities of development.
- To expand employment opportunities, generate higher tax revenues and increase family incomes within Reading, including fostering entrepreneurship by residents.
- To continue to strengthen Center City Reading as a mixed-use urban center that serves the region, with a mix of office, retail, service, civic, arts, cultural, entertainment and residential uses, as well as a variety of events.
- To work cooperatively in partnerships between City officials, *institutions* and residents to proactively address housing, transportation, parking, security and quality of life matters.
- To maintain an attractive and walkable historic character throughout Reading, with new development that is similar in scale and setbacks *from the street* to existing development in historic areas.

- To emphasize historic preservation, building rehabilitation that respects historic features, and suitable adaptive reuses of older buildings.
- *To promote good stewardship of natural resources and environmental sustainability by protecting steeply sloped woods and waterway corridors, encouraging sustainable practices, promoting use of renewable energy, increasing groundwater recharge, expanding community gardens, and increasing the tree canopy throughout the City.*
- To retrofit streets to incorporate "complete streets" principles, which place a priority on pedestrian and bicycle travel, *encourage use of public transit*, address stormwater management, provide room for trees and greenery, and moderate traffic speeds.
  - To make Reading more bicycle and pedestrian-friendly, and seek safe connections to the colleges, Center City, stores, schools, parks and trails within Reading and neighboring municipalities.
  - To promote expanded use of public transit, while also promoting greater use of carpooling.
- To improve the quality of life for residents, including expanding recreation and arts opportunities, *improving access to the waterfront*, and encouraging active and healthier lifestyles.
  - To operate the Reading City Government in an open and transparent manner.
- To continually work to put this Plan into action, through a program of inter-governmental cooperation and updated planning and many short-term actions within a long-range perspective.
  - To promote substantial citizen input, including making sure residents are well-informed about community issues and have plentiful opportunities to provide their opinions on City matters.

## Executive Summary

The following summarizes the major recommendations of this Plan:

- Carry out the policies in the Land Use Plan and Land Use Plan Map. Many of the categories in the Land Use Plan generally correspond to zoning districts. Zoning regulations are the main tool that a City has to guide land use and housing.
- In areas shown on the Land Use Plan as Residential-Light Commercial, promote a mix of housing and low-intensity commercial uses that are compatible with homes. The intent is to make it easier for residents from many parts of the City to walk or bicycle to reach everyday goods and services. To reduce the number of nonconforming existing businesses and to encourage appropriate mixes of uses, this category is proposed to be extended into multiple additional blocks where there is already a wide mix of uses.
- Strictly regulate or prohibit the conversion of existing one-family homes into two or more apartments. Seek to de-convert buildings back into single family homes in overly dense neighborhoods.
- Promote first floor commercial uses with upper story housing. In commercial and mixed commercial-residential zoning districts, place an emphasis on promoting buildings with at least one commercial use along the primary street frontage, and with upper story housing. The goal is to promote an active streetscape, while making best use of the limited buildable land in the City.
- Continue to improve Reading's housing stock, in the most cost-efficient manner. If any CDBG funds can be made available for housing rehabilitation, it would allow a much more flexible housing rehab program that could serve many more residents. An Essential Systems repair program could be established with a much lower cost per housing unit. These types of Essential Systems rehabs could be accomplished while existing residents continue to live in a home.
- Establish a Land Bank to provide additional powers to address blighted and foreclosed properties. A 2013 State law allows the City or the County to establish a "Land Bank" to focus on converting vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent or foreclosed properties into productive uses. One of the main tools available to a Land Bank is to be able to resolve unpaid taxes and tax delinquent liens. The Land Bank process can remove tax liens on abandoned properties. A Land Bank can be provided with certain advantages in purchasing properties at tax foreclosure sales.
- Consider the Market Value Analysis in housing policies. The 2012 Market Value Analysis (MVA) for the City of Reading is a tool developed by the Reinvestment Fund (TRF) to provide assistance in making best use of limited public resources to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods. Because public dollars are scarce, they must be prioritized to provide the most leverage in terms of private investment and spillover activity.
- Develop neighborhood parking lots within the denser neighborhoods. The shortage of parking decreases the livability of many of the denser neighborhoods in Reading. In these areas, the Parking Authority should be encouraged to develop neighborhood parking lots. A modest monthly permit fee would be charged, which would be intended over time to compensate the Parking Authority for the costs of improving and maintaining the parking area.
- Continue to emphasize assertive code enforcement. The City's rental housing inspection program has been a major initiative for several years. There were 8,865 rental housing inspections in 2013, and the goal is to inspect every rental unit every three years.

- *Seek CRIZ Tax Incentives for Center City. Pennsylvania periodically accepts competitive applications for designation under the State's City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) program. Reading applied once, and intends to apply again for designation. The State's application process requires that specific development projects be proposed, with cost and revenue analyses, and with projections of expected employment and new tax revenues.*
- *Seek to gradually reduce tax rates that interfere with economic development. One of the difficulties in attracting new investment into Reading is that two tax rates are much higher than in competing areas. The 3.6 percent local earned income tax rates for Reading residents and the 4 percent local real estate transfer tax rates for property sold in Reading are much higher than what is paid in nearby municipalities. As Reading's financial situation improves, there should be a commitment to gradually reduce the earned income tax and real estate transfer tax rates in phases, so that Reading will be more competitive.*
- *Consider establishing a "land value taxation" system. One option to make up some of the lost revenue from reducing the earned income and real estate transfer tax rates would be to shift towards a land value taxation system. Under this system, the City's annual real estate taxes would be structured so that the value of land is taxed at a higher rate than the value of buildings and improvements. This system is also designed to discourage speculation in vacant or underused land, because it would cost more in taxes to continually hold onto vacant or underused land. This system is also designed to reduce tax disincentives that can increase taxes after investments are made to improve buildings.*
- *Vary parking rates based upon demand. The Parking Authority should be allowed and encouraged to vary parking rates based upon demand in various areas and time of day. For example, it should be cheaper to park in the most underused parking decks. This will provide an alternative for the most price-sensitive persons. Also, it could help to reduce east-west traffic across Center City because the decks with the most unused spaces are closer to the Schuylkill River bridges.*
- *There is a need to improve the attractiveness and functionality of much of Penn Street, starting with Penn Square. The streetscape of Penn Square needs improvements, with additional on-street parking. The existing streetscape of Penn Square was designed primarily to serve public buses, but much of that bus transfer activity has moved to the BARTA Transportation Center. Areas occupied by unneeded bus stops should be redesigned to allow for short-term customer parking, and possibly some space for special events or outdoor cafes.*
- *Use the new Main Street Program to strengthen the Downtown, building upon the work of the Downtown Improvement District, while emphasizing special events. The Main Street Program is part of a nationwide effort that has been successful in many cities and towns. It emphasizes design improvements, economic revitalization, joint promotions, special events, and historic rehabilitation. This type of program works best with a dedicated staff-person to oversee the efforts.*
- *Carry out the recommendations of Greater Reading Tourism Report. In 2015, a report was completed entitled "Destination Research and Recommendations for the Greater Reading Area."*
- *Continue to protect Reading's historic resources with historic districts, as well as demolition controls in additional areas.*
- *Consider requiring approval of demolition of key older buildings in areas that are outside of the currently regulated Historic Districts. It would be desirable to enact a basic set of controls on demolition of the principal buildings within the most important historic blocks of the City, in areas that are not currently protected by the four Local Historic Districts and the Heights Historic Conservation District. These types of controls could also regulate removal of certain architectural features from the front facade, including porches and cornices. This type of limited control of demolition on historic blocks could be added to the City's Zoning Ordinance, without requiring pre-approval by PHMC or the completion of expensive additional studies.*

- *Work with the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) and PennDOT to obtain funding to improve the most crash-prone and congested intersections. Most of the crash-prone intersections involve State highways. State and/or federal funding should be sought through the RATS process (which is staffed by the Berks County Planning Commission) and the PennDOT Transportation Improvement Program to address these intersections.*
- *Work to improve the West Shore Bypass, and reduce congestion at the Lancaster Avenue interchange. There is a study underway that is funded by PennDOT of the West Shore Bypass. It is particularly difficult for traffic to enter onto Route 422 using ramps that enter onto the left lane of the highway. The Lancaster Avenue / Route 422 interchange and adjacent areas include the most congested areas in Reading. However, it is extremely difficult to find solutions because of the constrained land areas next to the river, and because of the proximity of the Route 10 intersection to the ramps.*
- *Implement “Complete Streets” policies, with an initial emphasis on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Center City. Complete Streets involves fully considering all users within a public right-of-way, instead of placing the full emphasis upon moving larger volumes of vehicle traffic at higher speeds. Complete Streets involves full consideration of pedestrians, bicyclists, persons in wheelchairs, and persons using public transit. It also considers users of the public sidewalk, such as for cafes, bicycle parking, street trees and other uses.*
- *Complete the River Road Connection to Schuylkill Avenue. The River Road connection project east of the Schuylkill Avenue bridge is currently funded and is now in final design. This connection is essential to improve truck access to 50 acres of the Riverfront Industrial Park along Opportunity Drive, which is east of the river.*
- *Continue to provide efficient public transportation, and continue Sunday bus service to reach employers.*
- *Over the long-run, seek passenger rail service to Philadelphia. A short-term alternative would be to extend SEPTA rail service from Norristown northwest to Pottstown.*
- *Continue to improve public education in Reading. The health of the City of Reading is extremely interconnected with the quality of the Reading public schools. This is true not only because of the importance of young people having the skills needed by employers, and to make sure students will be ready to succeed in college or technical programs. The quality of the public schools are also important because it affects whether middle-income families with children decide to move into or out of Reading.*
- *Carry out the City’s New Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Issues involving parks, recreation and trails will be addressed in detail in the City’s new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, which is currently being completed.*
- *Improve public access to the Schuylkill River and the Tulpehocken Creek, and complete trail links. There are some missing links in the recreation trail system, and a need for additional trailheads to provide public parking and information to persons using the trails.*
- *Prioritize and schedule needed capital projects in the City. There are extensive capital needs within Reading. For example, many City-owned buildings need major roof repairs or roof replacements, a number of streets are in need of reconstruction, and several fire stations need major repairs or replacement. A comprehensive analysis of these needs and costs should be completed, so that they can be prioritized and scheduled in phases in a Capital Improvements Program (CIP).*

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- *Improve or replace outdated fire stations. The fire apparatus of the City is generally in good shape, but many of the stations are not. It may be possible to reduce the number of stations with one or more properly located new stations. Several fire stations are in need of major repair or replacement.*
- *Continue to aggressively reduce crime. Although Reading still has a crime problem, there has been great progress over the last 8 years in reducing the crime rate. The Police Department maps the locations of crime on a daily basis, to find patterns that can be used to stop future crime.*
- *Seek funding to add Police Officers inside the larger public schools. It would be extremely beneficial to have the specific officers regularly based inside the larger schools to develop relationships with students and to intervene before incidents become more serious.*
- *Increase use of recreational natural areas by City residents. It would be highly desirable to expand use of natural areas along the waterways and mountains by City residents. The Berks Nature organization is expanding programs that are aimed towards encouraging City residents to enjoy the natural environment, through guided hikes and through a new environmental center in Angelica Park.*
- *Carefully manage woodlands on Mount Penn and Neversink Mountain and avoid erosion.*
- *Address compliance with Federal Stormwater Regulations, and promote green methods of managing stormwater, and possible levying of stormwater fees. Like other urban municipalities, Reading faces increasing requirements to comply with Federal Municipal Separate Stormwater Systems (MS4) stormwater requirements. The MS4 program emphasizes reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff. In addition to public education efforts, the program requires instituting pollution control practices in public works operations. The City also is facing expenses to repair old storm sewer systems, and to reduce pollution from those systems.*

## Land Use and Housing Plan

This Plan must be driven by economic development, in order to provide additional tax revenues to the City and School District, and to provide additional close-to-home jobs and higher incomes for residents. These efforts need to involve retaining existing businesses, encouraging the expansion of existing businesses, attracting new businesses, and promoting tourism. These efforts must also include promoting job training and small business entrepreneurship by existing residents, particularly among the City's *minority* residents.



These economic development objectives need to be balanced with providing a high quality of life for residents, in addition to preserving important historic blocks and the urban fabric of the City. The aging of the building stock requires constant efforts to make sure it is properly maintained and is safe for residents.

For the long-term economic health of the City, it is critical to retain existing middle-income households and to attract additional middle-income residents. This effort can be best addressed by reducing severe parking shortages in the denser neighborhoods, by ensuring proper code enforcement to avoid blighted conditions, by avoiding conflicts with homes from nuisances.

Also, new residents can be attracted by encouraging types of businesses, mixed use development, urban amenities and activities that are not available in every other municipality and that help to build a sense of community.

The ability to attract and retain businesses and residents is greatly affected by tax rates. Over time, there is a need to moderate those tax rates (particularly the earned income and real estate transfer taxes) that are uncompetitive with neighboring municipalities.

All aspects of the City are affected by police protection issues. While crime has been reduced substantially over the last decade, there is still more to be done to make residents, students, employees and visitors safer.

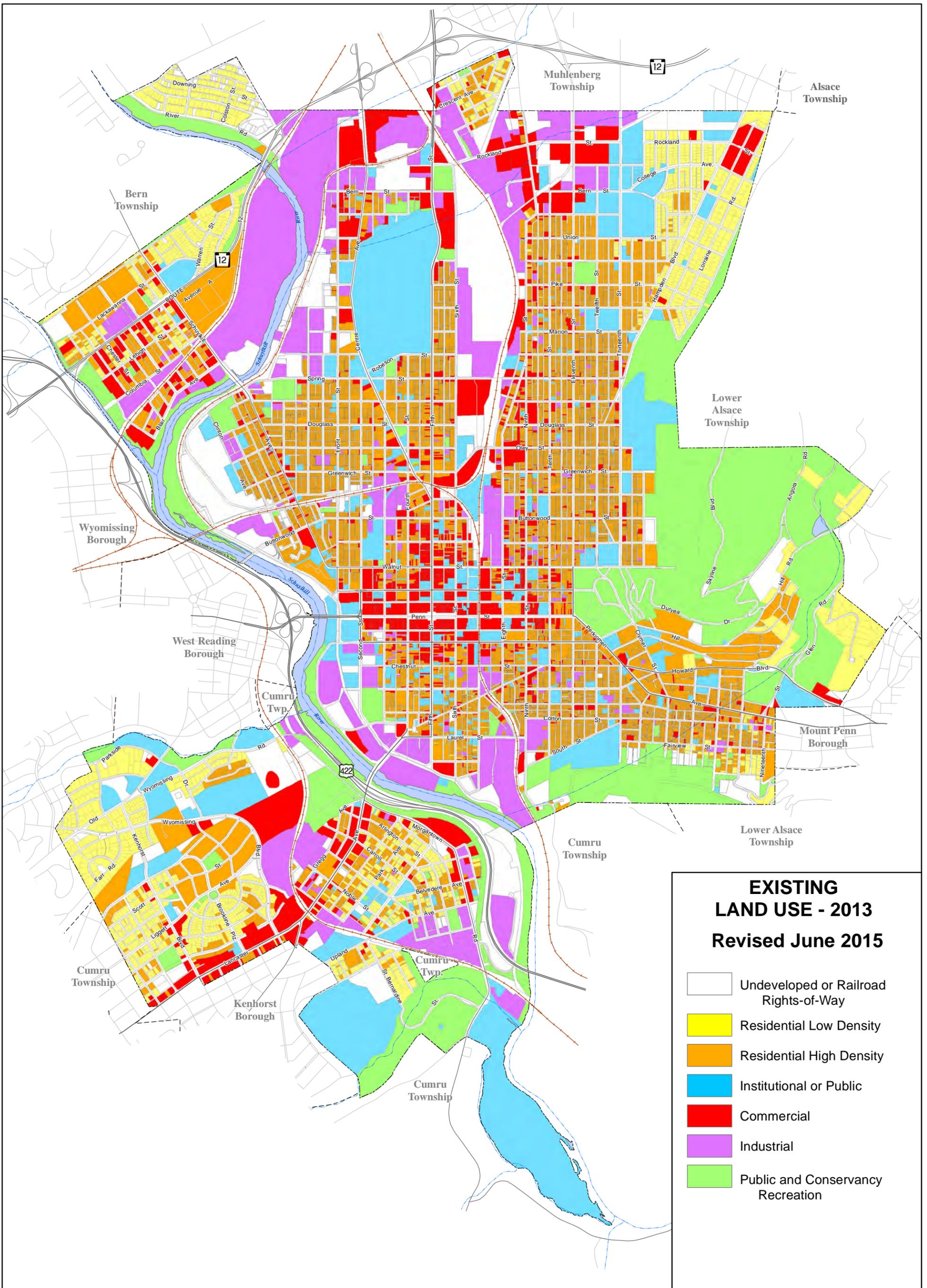
In addition, it is critical to improve the walkability and bike-ability of the City, as well as to avoid traffic safety hazards.

The Plan also needs to protect the important wooded mountainsides and waterways in Reading, and provide greater public access to them.

### **Carry out the policies in the Land Use Plan and Land Use Plan Map.**

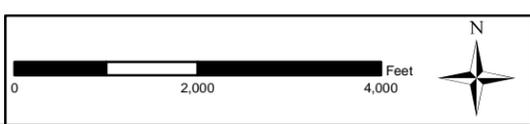
This section describes the major land use policy recommendations, which are illustrated on the Land Use Plan Map.

Many of these categories generally correspond to zoning districts. Zoning regulations are the main tool that a City has to guide land use and housing.

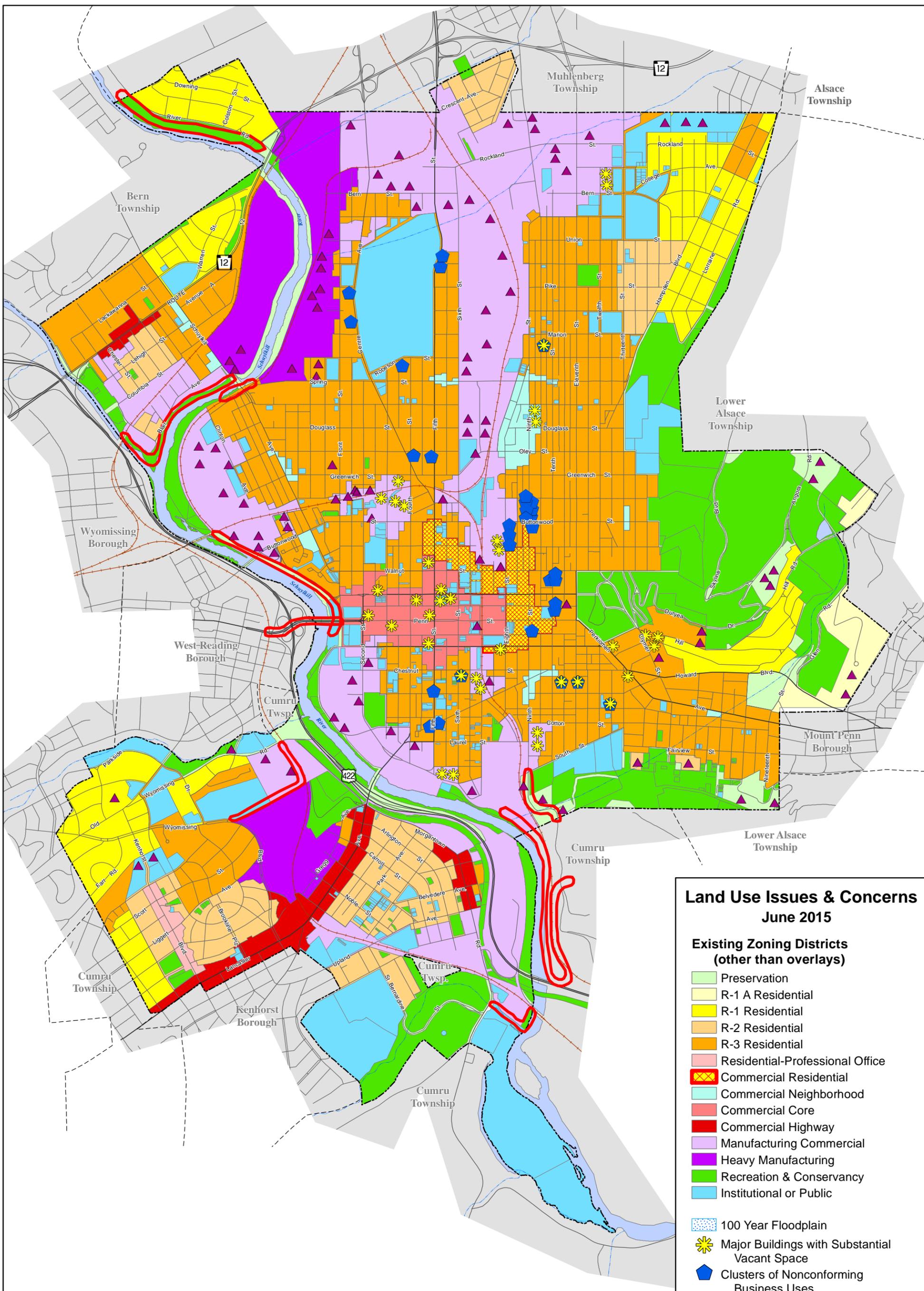


**City of**  
**READING**  
Berks County, Pennsylvania

**SOURCE OF BASE INFORMATION:**  
*Berks County, 2014.*



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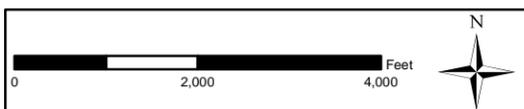


**Land Use Issues & Concerns  
June 2015**

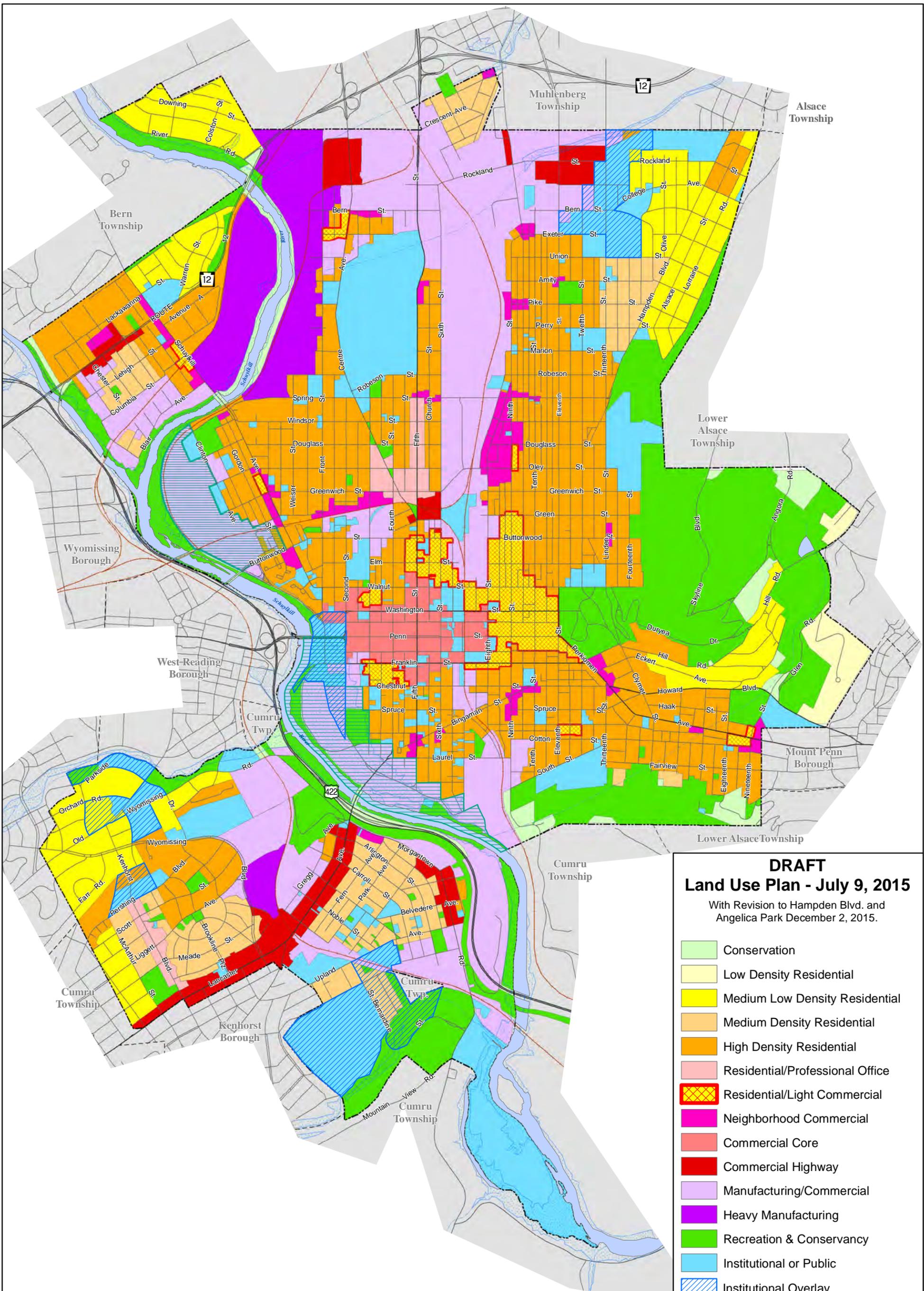
- Existing Zoning Districts (other than overlays)**
- Preservation
  - R-1 A Residential
  - R-1 Residential
  - R-2 Residential
  - R-3 Residential
  - Residential-Professional Office
  - Commercial Residential
  - Commercial Neighborhood
  - Commercial Core
  - Commercial Highway
  - Manufacturing Commercial
  - Heavy Manufacturing
  - Recreation & Conservancy
  - Institutional or Public
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Major Buildings with Substantial Vacant Space
- Clusters of Nonconforming Business Uses
- Major Areas of Undeveloped Land
- Need for Improved Trail Access

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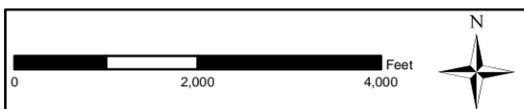


**DRAFT**  
**Land Use Plan - July 9, 2015**  
 With Revision to Hampden Blvd. and  
 Angelica Park December 2, 2015.

- Conservation
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Residential/Professional Office
- Residential/Light Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial
- Commercial Core
- Commercial Highway
- Manufacturing/Commercial
- Heavy Manufacturing
- Recreation & Conservancy
- Institutional or Public
- Institutional Overlay
- Riverfront Redevelopment Overlay
- 100 Year Floodplain

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**SOURCE OF BASE INFORMATION:**  
*Berks County, 2014.*



### Recreation and Conservancy

This category includes lands that are available for public recreation, including City parkland, the County's Stonecliffe Recreation Area and land on Neversink Mountain managed by the Berks Nature.

The City's new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan will include recommendations to further link residents with the river, creeks and mountainsides in Reading, to complete links between existing trails, and to improve existing parks.

### Conservation

This category primarily includes the portions of Mt. Penn and Neversink Mountain that are within the City, as well as the lands along the Schuylkill River, Tulpehocken Creek and Angelica Creek that are not within public recreation lands. Many of these areas are not suitable for development because of proneness to flooding or the steepness of the slopes.

These lands are in the current Preservation zoning district, which does not allow housing and mainly allows *low-intensity* recreational uses. Because some privately owned land is included, this category should allow some housing, but at a very low density that takes into account the natural features. *The minimum lot size should vary with the natural slope of the proposed building site.*

### 100 Year Floodplain

A pattern on the Land Use Plan Map shows the 100 year floodplain, which are areas expected to be flooded during the worst storm in an average 100 period. The City has an ordinance to carry out Federal and State regulations on this matter. That ordinance greatly limits new construction of buildings within flood prone areas, and in some cases requires that new or substantially improved buildings be elevated or flood-proofed.

The City should consider participating in the federal Community Rating System (CRS). That program can result in substantially reduced flood insurance premiums for owners of buildings in the floodplain. It involves the City or County documenting that certain measures have been implemented for flood preparedness. Reductions are also possible for floodplain regulations that are more restrictive than the minimum requirements. Reductions are also possible for requiring sellers of properties to notify buyers that their property is in the floodplain, and for the City's existing stormwater regulations.

### Low Density Residential District (relates to the R-1A district)

This category include privately owned land on the east side of Mt. Penn, and is mainly intended to provide for single family detached houses at an average of 2 homes per acre. Continued efforts are needed to minimize the removal of mature woodlands and limit the intensity of development on very steep areas.

### Medium Low Density Residential District (which relates to the R-1 district)

This category includes areas near the City border in the southwest, northwest and northeast parts of the City, as well *between Hill and Mineral Spring Roads*. This category mainly provides for single family detached houses at an average of 5 homes per acre.

### Medium Density Residential District (relates to the R-2 district)

This category includes areas in the northeast and southwest parts of the City, including areas north and east of Lancaster Avenue. These areas are intended to mainly provide for single family detached houses, side-by-side twins and rowhouses/townhouses at an average of 12 to 20 homes per acre. Because these areas are typically within walking distance of commercial areas, significant new commercial uses are not proposed to be allowed.

High Density Residential District (relates to the R-3 district)

This category includes most of the older residential neighborhoods in Reading, particularly including most of the rowhouse neighborhoods and many existing corner stores. These areas are intended to allow for all types of housing, at an average of 20 to 30 homes per acre. Any mid-rise apartment buildings should be carefully controlled in location and continue to need larger setbacks.

Because these areas are typically within walking distance of existing commercial uses and zoning districts that are proposed to allow commercial uses, significant new commercial uses are not proposed to be allowed where they do not currently exist.

There are a number of older industrial or institutional buildings in these areas that are in need of new uses. In the R-3 and *Commercial-Residential* zoning districts, there *should continue to be* an “adaptive reuse” provision that allows the Zoning Hearing Board to approve the conversion of an existing industrial or institutional building into residential or commercial uses. *Reasonable* flexibility is needed in parking and dimensional standards to make full use of these older buildings.

A maximum building setback should continue to be used in the older areas of the City. The goal is to have most parking placed to the side or rear of buildings, with the building placed close to the street. The goal is to also maintain a consistent streetscape. Where a suitable rear alley or minor street exists or could be extended, it should be used as access for parking and garages. The goal is to keep front sidewalks free of turning vehicles and avoiding the removal of on-street parking spaces for driveway cuts. However, it is recognized that many Reading neighborhoods do not have usable rear alleys.

The shortage of parking in these areas makes it difficult to attract and retain new middle-income residents in many older parts of Reading, and to serve the needs of existing residents and businesses. There is a need for neighborhood parking lots, in cooperation with the Reading Parking Authority and Redevelopment Authority, as discussed later in this chapter.

*The City’s development regulations could prohibit construction of new homes on lots that do not have frontage on a street of at least 20 feet paved width. That change would limit use of vacant lots to parking if the lots are only adjacent to very narrow streets or alleys.*

Institutional or Public Uses

This category mainly includes existing schools, colleges, the fire training academy, and other larger institutional uses.

Institutional Overlay

There are many important institutions in Reading, such as Albright College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, and the Health Sciences building of Reading Health. These institutions should continue to be given reasonable flexibility (such as tall heights and minimal dimensional requirements) in the development of their core campus. These areas are shown as “Institutional Overlay” on the Land Use Plan Map. The intent is that the colleges will make the fullest use of their existing core campuses, by going “upward, and not outward,” instead of expanding outward into stable residential neighborhoods.

This approach is also intended to provide greater predictability to the colleges, and to discourage conversion of taxable land into tax-exempt land. The institutions would still have opportunities to develop uses in other areas, but additional approval process and dimensional restrictions should continue to apply for new institutional uses in residential zoning districts.

Residential Professional Office (relates to the R-PO district, which would become an overlay district)

This category is intended to continue to provide for offices and day care centers, as well as residential uses. This category applies along Kenhorst Boulevard from south of Pershing Boulevard to north of Lancaster Avenue. It is also proposed to be applied to: a) an area in the center of the Centre Park area along Centre Avenue where there is a concentration of offices, and b) along a portion of N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street from Spring Street to south of Greenwich *Street*. This category could also allow for small coffee shops and small bakeries, with Zoning Hearing Board approval.

These areas are intended to allow for a much more limited range of commercial uses than the Residential-Light Commercial or Neighborhood Commercial areas. This category should become an “overlay” zoning district, so that the allowed residential densities can be the same as surrounding areas.

Residential-Light Commercial (relates to the C-R district)

These areas are proposed to be expanded to make it easier for residents from many parts of the City to walk or bicycle to reach everyday goods and services. To reduce the number of non-conforming existing businesses and to encourage appropriate mixes of uses, this category is proposed to be extended into multiple additional blocks where there is already a wide mix of uses.

This category is intended to provide for the same housing as the R-3/High Density Residential category. In addition, this category is intended to provide for a mix of lighter types of commercial uses, including offices, *smaller* retail stores, day care, coffee shops, restaurants, *retail bakeries*, banks and personal services (such as hair salons). *If any drive-throughs are allowed, they should be limited to a bank or a pharmacy.* Restaurant drive-throughs typically generate more conflicts with housing. The types of commercial uses in these areas should be more limited than in the Neighborhood Commercial category. A maximum floor area should be placed upon each restaurants and retail store, such as 5,000 square feet. Also, there should be limits on the ability to convert an existing rowhouse in the middle of adjacent residential rowhomes into a restaurant or other intensive commercial use. Instead, most commercial uses should use existing storefronts or corner properties.

Because this category is proposed to be applied to more land areas that are currently residentially zoned, some tightening of existing zoning standards should occur, such as to not allow new bars, taverns or nightclubs. There also should be limits on late night hours of operation in these areas.

Neighborhood Commercial (relates to the C-N District)

The Neighborhood Commercial areas should mainly allow less intensive types of commercial uses. Many of the Neighborhood Commercial areas are immediately next to residential neighborhoods and/or include a mix of housing and businesses. Therefore, the Neighborhood Commercial areas are not intended to provide for new uses involving auto repair, gas stations, restaurants with drive-through service, and sexually-oriented businesses. The Neighborhood Commercial areas should continue to provide for offices, retail stores, grocery stores, personal services, day care, commercial recreation uses, restaurants without drive-through service, banks, funeral homes, and similar uses, as well as various types of housing. Certain intensive uses, such as taverns, should continue to need approval from City Council. Large nightclubs would not be appropriate in these areas.

The Neighborhood Commercial areas include the former outlet buildings near Oley and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets (many of which have been converted into regular retail stores), as well as smaller and more scattered areas of commercial uses. This category is also proposed to be added to former industrial areas north of the railroad between Front and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets, south of the Centre Park neighborhood. A few smaller Neighborhood Commercial areas are also proposed to be added to allow every neighborhood to be able to walk to reach everyday commercial needs.

This category should allow for the conversion of existing older industrial and institutional buildings into housing as a permitted by right use.

There should be continued limits on the ability of existing rowhomes to be converted to commercial businesses if they are adjacent to existing dwellings. Otherwise, a new restaurant could be developed in the middle of a block of rowhouses.

Highway Commercial (relates to the H-C District)

These areas should continue to provide for a wide range of commercial uses, including along Lancaster Avenue. The allowed uses include auto sales, retail stores, banks, offices, day care, gas stations and motels. Drive-through restaurant uses, gas stations, auto repair and auto sales would be more suitable in these areas than in other commercial areas of the City.

Housing should also be provided, particularly above at least one street-level commercial use.

The appearance and walkability of Lancaster Avenue needs to be improved, including through the planting of additional street trees. Curb extensions would be beneficial to reduce the length of street width that pedestrians must cross. Curb extensions are most effective where there is *existing* on-street parking, *which is present along portions of the south side of Lancaster Avenue*. In addition to serving area residents, some properties closer to Alvernia University should be marketed towards college students.

In some locations where new commercial developments or mixed commercial-residential developments are proposed to be emphasized, the Land Use Plan recommends they be changed from the Manufacturing-Commercial zoning district to the Highway Commercial district. This change would no longer provide for most new industrial uses, but would allow *some* residential uses (*mainly upper story apartments*) to be combined with *street level* commercial uses. These changes include lands: a) directly across Centre Avenue from the First Energy/Phillies Stadium, and b) along parts of Rockland Street west of 13<sup>th</sup> Street. *One goal is to promote restaurants, entertainment uses and other commercial activities that would build upon games and other events at the First Energy Stadium*. The Rockland Street area includes a shopping center that could be redeveloped for *residential uses above or behind street level* commercial uses.

Riverfront Redevelopment Overlay (relates to the RR Overlay District)

This category should continue to allow for intensive mixed use residential/ commercial/ recreational development of areas southwest and south of Center City along the north side of the Schuylkill River. Most of these areas are also in the Manufacturing Commercial district, and are mostly occupied by one story commercial and industrial buildings, plus the tall former Reading Hardware complex on Canal Street. This area extends from south of Penn Avenue, along both sides of 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, along both sides of Canal Street, to east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The current zoning provisions allow up to 75 housing units per acre. The types of commercial uses should continue to include retail sales, hotels, offices, banks and restaurants.

This category should also be offered as an additional mixed use option on the Riverview Industrial Park, which is east of the Schuylkill River, at the west end of River Road, west of Clinton Street and north of the railroad. The former Berkshire Drive through the site has been renamed Opportunity Drive. There is an opportunity for new tall residential buildings that would take advantage of the views of the river, with some first floor commercial uses.

Any new non-industrial development along the Schuylkill River should require the provision of recreational access points to the river, and include construction of adjacent segments of the recreation trail along the river.

Commercial Core District (relates to the C-C District)

This category applies to Center City and immediately adjacent areas, including the area around the Goggle Works. These areas should continue to provide for a mix of commercial, institutional and residential uses. Drive-through restaurants should continue to not be allowed, because they can interfere with a pedestrian orientation. These areas are intended to allow for tall building heights. Most parking needs are intended to be provided by the existing Parking Authority parking structures and lots. There is more discussion of these areas in the “Center City and Economic Development Plan” chapter.

Penn Square (relates to the PS Overlay District)

Within the Commercial Core areas, there should continue to be zoning provisions that limit the use of the street frontage of Penn Square/Penn Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets. The intent is to maintain retail sales, restaurants and similarly active pedestrian-oriented uses fronting along these core blocks. Within these first floor storefronts, day care, dwellings, storage, places of worship, parking and social clubs should continue to not be allowed.

Manufacturing-Commercial (relates to the M-C District)

These areas should continue to provide for a range of commercial and light industrial uses. The heavier types of industrial uses should be limited to the Heavy Manufacturing areas. The more intensive uses should continue to need Zoning Hearing Board approval.

Where an older existing mill building is immediately adjacent to a residential zoning district, there should be zoning provisions allowing it to be converted to housing. However, housing should not be allowed in other areas of this land use category because of potential conflict with current and future industrial uses.

This category should continue to apply to most industrial areas, former railroad lands and areas along Heister Lane/Rockland Street. This category includes 50 acres of the Riverview Industrial Area, which is being offered for sale by the Reading Redevelopment Authority. This category also includes the Norfolk Southern railyards and the former rail car manufacturing buildings of the former Reading Railroad.

The Reading Station complex south of Spring Street has substantial space for new commercial development, including open land. That land also currently allows industrial uses.

Heavy Manufacturing (relates to the H-M District)

This category is proposed to include Carpenter Technologies facilities on both sides of the Schuylkill River, and the Reading Truck Body site east of E. Wyomissing Boulevard. These areas should continue to provide for a wide range of industrial uses, as well as opportunities for commercial uses. For example, commercial recreation uses, banks, and retail stores could be appropriate, particularly around the edges of Heavy Industrial areas, but residential uses should not be allowed.

**Continue to very strictly control conversions of existing one-family homes into two or more units.**

The City should continue its current policy of very strictly controlling and/or prohibiting these types of conversions. Instead, the emphasis should be placed upon converting existing non-residential buildings *that are within residential areas or upper story space in Center City buildings* into dwellings. *It would be desirable to de-convert buildings back into single family homes in overly dense neighborhoods. However, some type of financial subsidy is typically needed to make a de-conversion feasible.*

**Promote first floor commercial uses with upper story housing.**

In commercial and mixed commercial-residential zoning districts, an emphasis *should be placed upon* promoting buildings with at least one commercial use along the primary street frontage, and with upper story housing. The goal is to *maintain* an active streetscape, while making best use of the limited buildable land in the City. *The photo to the right shows an example of this style of development in new construction.*



**Continue to improve Reading’s housing stock, in the most cost-efficient manner.**

The City’s funding for housing and community development programs are severely constrained, particularly because of high needs and decreasing federal and state funding. There are only two main sources of annual federal funding for housing and community development purposes - the CDBG program and the HOME program.

The majority of HOME funds are currently used for comprehensive rehabilitations of existing homes, which typically require a public subsidy of \$50,000 or more per unit. The HOME program requires that any use of the funds must bring a property up to full compliance with all local and state codes. The resulting costs per unit *then exceed the threshold cost where* more extensive federal lead-based paint requirements apply, which further increases costs. As a result, the costs to rehabilitate a home using HOME funds skyrockets, and few homes can be completed per year.

If any CDBG funds can be made available for housing rehabilitation, it would allow a much more flexible housing rehab program that could serve many more residents. An Essential Systems repair program could be established with a much lower cost per housing unit. These types of Essential Systems rehabs could be accomplished while existing residents continue to live in a home. This type of program is emphasized in Philadelphia, among other cities. This type of program involves concentrating on roofing, plumbing, electrical and/or heating systems within homes that are already owned by low-income households. Because the dollar amount of the work is lower, there are *less expensive* federal requirements for lead paint removal. *Because these projects are less expensive, federal regulations mainly require that the work not make the lead paint situation any worse.*

Whenever housing funding can be provided in the form of a loan instead of an outright grant, it will allow funds to be recycled over time for additional housing units to be improved.

With housing rehabilitation programs (other than for small grants), many cities place a lien on the property, which liquidates over time, as long as the same household continues to live in the property. This approach could allow a household to have the lien completely removed if they live in the home for five years. For each year that household lives in the house, 20 percent of the lien is *typically* forgiven. This process allows the City to recapture part of the *funding* if the home is sold within five years. Those funds must then be re-used for new rehabilitation projects.

Another way to increase the cost-effectiveness of housing programs is to promote programs that require a certain amount of “sweat equity” by prospective homebuyers. Habitat for Humanity typically requires a prospective household to complete 400 hours of work, in addition to attending classes on finance and home repair.

**Work with “anchor institutions” to strengthen neighborhoods.**

There are many opportunities to work with the colleges, hospitals, *places of worship*, and other *community* institutions to improve the areas surrounding their facilities *and the community as a whole*. These *institutions* are “anchor institutions” *that* provide a solid anchor that can be built upon. *These institutions are clearly linked to the community and share an interest in the vitality of Reading*. For example, institutions can be encouraged to provide financial incentives (such as assistance with closing costs or renovation costs) if their employees buy a home within selected *neighborhoods*. This type of incentive should be targeted towards geographic areas that are in need of increased stability.

**Establish a Land Bank to provide additional powers to address blighted and foreclosed properties.**

A 2012 State law allows the City or the County to establish a “Land Bank” to focus on converting vacant, abandoned, tax-delinquent or foreclosed properties into productive uses. One of the main tools available to a Land Bank is to be able to resolve unpaid taxes and tax delinquent liens. The Land Bank process can remove tax liens on abandoned properties. A Land Bank can be provided with certain advantages in purchasing properties at tax foreclosure sales.

Many lenders who have properties in default are willing to cooperate with Land Banks in order to avoid the costs of holding and maintaining foreclosed properties. This may involve commercial banks donating foreclosed properties *that have* low current market values to a Land Bank.

A Land Bank has no eminent domain powers, but may own, develop, demolish, rehabilitate, lease or sell property. The Land Bank is given flexibility in reselling and/or demolishing properties, and can also hold onto parcels for land assembly over time.

Once a Land Bank is established, it can complete bulk “quiet title” proceedings for abandoned properties. This makes it possible to acquire title insurance, which makes the property *more* marketable and makes financing much easier to obtain.

A Land Bank may make it easier to address housing needs in a more geographically targeted manner, where public dollars can have the most effect. In the recent past, most publicly funded housing rehabs have involved scattered locations because they were dependent upon houses *being* provided by federal agencies.

**Consider the Market Value Analysis in housing policies.**

The 2012 Market Value Analysis (MVA) for the City of Reading is a tool developed by the Reinvestment Fund (TRF) to provide assistance in making best use of limited public resources to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods. Because public dollars are scarce, they must be prioritized to provide the most leverage in terms of private investment and spillover activity.

Extensive data was collected and analyzed for various neighborhoods in Reading. The intent is that most public dollars should be spent in neighborhoods with the most potential for improvement, including neighborhoods with schools, parks or institutions that provide an anchor for revitalization. The intent of the MVA model is that in areas that are severely distressed, a greater emphasis should be placed upon demolition of deteriorated buildings and long-term site assembly for new development, instead of large public investments to rehabilitate scattered buildings. The MVA model promotes youth programs, social services and job training for residents in deteriorated neighborhoods. In these areas, the MVA recommends “investing in people,” instead of putting large public investments into rehabilitating individual old homes. These areas often have the highest crime rates, which requires concentrated efforts by the Police.

Other neighborhoods are classified as distressed, but not severely distressed. These areas include locations north of the Downtown, including areas between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets north of Chestnut and

south of Greenwich and Oley Streets. In these areas, the MVA recommends a high emphasis on housing rehab, while also placing a medium emphasis upon assembling land for redevelopment.

Transitional neighborhoods are often characterized by a changing population, a high percentage of seniors and some dilapidated structures. In these areas, the MVA model recommends encouraging home ownership through government programs, and dealing promptly with vacant units to maintain the neighborhood. In transitional neighborhoods, such as between Front and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets north of Greenwich Street, the intent is to emphasize rehabilitation of housing. This may require acquiring of homes prior to rehab and resale.

Because transitional neighborhoods are on the edge of either becoming revitalized or becoming more distressed, they deserve the most attention.

In the more stable neighborhoods, such as College Heights in the northeast and much of southwest Reading, the MVA recommends an emphasis upon enforcement actions concerning quality of life offenses (such as trash violations). Public dollars are not proposed to be spent for land assembly in stable neighborhoods, because it is assumed that the private market can function in these areas without large amounts of public intervention.

The MVA model promotes assertive code enforcement. It also promotes streetscape improvements to keep stable neighborhoods stable.

Because public dollars are limited in availability, consideration should be given to spending public dollars in the most visible locations, such as corner properties on heavily traveled streets. The goal is to show progress in prominent locations, where it is mostly likely to create a positive impression on prospective investors and residents.

**Establish a set of neighborhood names for real estate branding and to strengthen neighborhood organizations.**

An effort is needed to establish a set of names for each neighborhood and commercial area in the City. Some areas have commonly-used names, but others do not. These neighborhood names do not need hard boundary lines. These names should then be used for “branding” to market various areas for businesses, investment, real estate purchasers and residents.

Attractive signs can then be used at entranceways to increase the identity of these neighborhoods.

There should also be efforts to build neighborhood organizations in these areas where they do not exist. Parent-Teacher organizations or crime watches may serve as the basis for building these neighborhood organizations.

**Develop neighborhood parking lots within the denser neighborhoods.**

The shortage of parking decreases the livability of many of the denser neighborhoods in Reading. In these areas, the Parking Authority should be encouraged to develop neighborhood parking lots. A modest monthly permit fee would be charged, which would be intended over time to compensate the Parking Authority for the costs of improving and maintaining the parking area. It may also be practical to reserve certain of the spaces for customers and employees of nearby businesses, if the business leased the spaces. Where there are businesses nearby or other demand for short-term parking, some spaces could also be available for payment using a kiosk for persons without a permit.

These lots should be emphasized where there are the most dense concentrations of housing, and consequently the most parking shortages. These parking lots would particularly be useful in the areas shown on the Land Use Plan as High Density Residential and Residential-Light Commercial, such as areas to the northeast of the Downtown. Ideally, these parking lots would be located on the interior of a block or on a side street, *particularly if they are designed to serve nearby residents*. The parking lots

should be located to avoid harming the walkability and streetscape along main streets. Viable buildings with historic architecture should not be removed for these parking lots, but instead the intent is to target sites that are already vacant or that are occupied by deteriorated buildings.

It may be necessary to adjust some City parking standards to allow use of smaller lots for this purpose, such as to reduce driveway entrance widths and to allow fencing in some cases in place of buffer plantings.

**Consider offering a fee-in-lieu of parking option in the Zoning Ordinance.**

The City's Zoning Ordinance requires new or expanding uses *in most cases* to provide off-street parking. Currently, this parking can be provided within walking distance on another lot. The City could offer fee-in-lieu of parking *as another option*. A person proposing a new or expanding use could pay a one-time fee for each parking space that is not provided. This fee would be required to be used by the City or the Parking Authority to provide additional public parking.

However, *if this option is used*, it may be years until the actual parking is developed, and the new parking may not be within a convenient walking distance of every use that paid the fee. *Therefore*, this option could be limited to only being available where there are active plans to develop neighborhood parking lots.

**Explore alternatives to set up Community Benefit Districts.**

Business improvement districts (such as Reading's *Downtown Improvement District*) and neighborhood improvement districts are each authorized under State law and allow an extra real estate tax to be levied on properties with certain areas. The revenues are then controlled by a board, and are intended to be used for services beyond the level that can be provided by the City.

A variation of this concept could involve setting up Community Benefit Districts. Under this alternative, an additional real estate tax would not be used to fund the district.

Instead, a portion of fines or fees generated within the District would be controlled by a local District Board. For example, a portion of fines from parking violations or "Quality of Life" ordinance violations could be set aside for this purpose. This type of program might also be funded by expanding the areas within Neighborhood Permit Parking systems, and selling a parking permit to park in those areas to persons who do not live in the neighborhood. Expanding neighborhood permit parking blocks might also control the problem of unauthorized parking on City streets by vehicle repair businesses.

The volunteer District Board could be appointed by City Council, and would decide how the funds would be spent. For example, the Board may wish that the money be spent on surveillance cameras, cleanups of trash, a playground improvement, street trees, security guards or similar services or projects.

The intent is to promote a higher level of civic engagement through a participatory budget process. One option would be to set up a Community Benefit District in each of the City Council Districts.

**Continue to emphasize assertive code enforcement.**

The City's rental housing inspection program has been a major initiative for several years. There were 8,865 rental housing inspections in 2013, and the goal is to inspect every rental unit every three years.

Owner-occupied homes are currently required to be inspected by the City after closing of the sale. Consideration should be given to *instead require* inspections prior to a settlement, which is the process in most similar cities. Inspections prior to sale allow the buyer to know about defects or code violations before they buy the property, as opposed to be surprised with a large expense after a home purchase. For example, in Allentown, the seller must correct code violations prior to settlement, unless the buyer

in writing agrees to: a) complete the needed improvements within 6 months of settlement, and b) start the repairs within 30 days. Inspections prior to sale may allow a buyer to negotiate a lower price, *which can:* a) free up dollars to correct the defects, and b) increase the likelihood that the costs of the repair can be incorporated into the mortgage amount.

Reading has an ordinance to address vacant housing units, particularly to require notice to the City by banks that a home has become vacant. *This Ordinance also* requires identification of a contact person. It is absolutely essential to have a rapid response to vacant houses so that they are properly secured and therefore can be more easily rehabilitated. Once a house is vandalized, the rehabilitation costs rapidly increase, and the house is more likely to remain vacant or blighted for an even longer period of time.

More of the City's code enforcement procedures should be able to be completed online by applicants. For example, building owners should be encouraged to submit rental licensing information using online forms. This will free more City staff-time to concentrate on problem properties.

*Consideration should be given to enacting a facade inspection program for older taller buildings, such as is used in Philadelphia. This type of program requires an on-site inspection of the exterior walls of buildings by an independent qualified professional. It is designed to identify potential hazards, such as pieces of buildings that may fall to the sidewalk. The City could then require repairs or demolition based upon that inspection report.*

## **Center City and Economic Development Plan**

### **Promote a balanced mix of uses in the Downtown, with an attractive streetscape.**

The Downtown should not target a single market, but instead needs a full mix of uses to provide day-time and evening vibrancy and to make best use of all of the available building space. This should include: a) a mix of smaller and larger office tenants, b) a mix of specialty retail businesses that serve a wider geographic area and retail stores that serve City residents, c) arts, cultural and entertainment uses, d) restaurants that serve downtown employees, City residents and persons



visiting the Downtown for special events, conferences and activities, and persons who are seeking unusual or ethnic foods, and e) residential uses, particularly apartments above street-level stores.

The street frontages of major downtown streets need to be designed with shade from street trees, high levels of nighttime lighting, and active uses that generate interest. Display windows, murals and public art should be used to make people want to continue to walk down the street. If a storefront is vacant, the windows should be filled temporarily with art or displays from nearby stores and restaurants. Outdoor cafes should be promoted where there is sufficient sidewalk width.

### **Seek CRIZ Tax Incentives for Center City.**

Pennsylvania periodically accepts competitive applications for designation under the State's City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) program. Reading applied once, and intends to apply again for designation. The state's application process requires that specific development projects be proposed, with cost and revenue analyses, and with projections of expected employment and new tax revenues. One project that was previously submitted included improvements to the Abraham Lincoln Hotel on N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street.

The program allows most new State and local tax revenues from new businesses that are attracted to a designated land area to be diverted to make payments on bonds. The debt service is for bonds that are taken out to support economic development, including major renovations or new construction of buildings or related infrastructure. The program is unusual because the tax dollars can be used to pay for actual capital costs of a private developer, in addition to related capital costs of the City or an authority.

This type of tax incentive zone can include up to 130 acres, which does not need to be contiguous. There are limitations in the law that do not allow the diversion of state taxes from businesses that relocate within Pennsylvania or that already operate in the zone. Therefore, funding for development projects and infrastructure can mainly be obtained from companies that move into the CRIZ area from outside of Pennsylvania or that are newly established.

### **Develop the Riverfront Industrial Park and the former Glidden Paint Site with modern light industrial uses.**

The Riverfront Industrial Park includes 50 acres of land that is owned by the Reading Redevelopment Authority along Opportunity Drive, east of the Schuylkill River. This former Glidden Paint site is north

of Bern Street and has railroad access. Both should be developed in modern light industrial uses. The “Land Use and Housing Plan” discusses another alternative for the Riverfront site.

**Seek that Norfolk Southern makes excess lands available for redevelopment.**

The rail yards between North 6<sup>th</sup> and North 9<sup>th</sup> streets include some of the largest areas of underused lands in Reading. Efforts are needed to convince Norfolk Southern to make excess lands available for private redevelopment. The former locomotive and rail car buildings that are along the east side of N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street are controlled by a private wholesale business. These lands are proposed to continue to be zoned for a wide range of industrial and commercial uses.

**Seek to gradually reduce tax rates that interfere with economic development.**

One of the difficulties in attracting new investment into Reading is that two tax rates are much higher than in competing areas. The 3.6 percent local earned income tax rates for Reading residents and the 4 percent local real estate transfer tax rates for property sold in Reading are much higher than what is paid in nearby municipalities. These total rates include 1.5 percent earned income tax and 0.5 percent real estate transfer tax that are levied by the School District. There are only a couple of municipalities in Pennsylvania with a higher earned income tax rate than Reading. There are only two other municipalities in the State (Scranton and Philadelphia) with a real estate transfer tax rate of greater than 2 percent. In *comparison*, most of Berks County, there is a 1.0 percent local earned income tax rate and a 1.0 percent local real estate transfer tax rate.

Substantial input was received from realtors that these tax rates are some of the biggest detriments to attracting new residents, home-buyers and investors to Reading.

*The City* and the Reading School District are likely to always need an earned income tax rate that is higher than neighboring municipalities. One of the reasons for Reading’s high earned income tax rate is because local voters approved a referendum for the School District to increase the earned income taxes, in order to reduce reliance upon property taxes. However, the comparative difference in the earned income tax rate *compared to nearby municipalities* needs to be moderated so that the tax rate does not actively discourage middle-income households from living in the City.

The real estate transfer tax rate makes it much more difficult for first-time homebuyers to buy a home in Reading, because it increases the up-front cash needed at the time of settlement. Many households can afford the monthly mortgage, insurance and tax costs that *result* from homeownership, but they have difficulties raising the thousands of dollars of up-front *closing* costs while they are still renting another home. While some closing costs may be able to be amortized into the mortgage, *many other* closing costs cannot, because of limitations *set by* the appraisal. The high real estate transfer tax effectively reduces the purchase prices of buildings in Reading.

As Reading’s financial situation improves, there should be a commitment to gradually reduce the earned income tax and real estate transfer tax rates in phases, so that Reading will be more competitive.

An analysis by the Berks County Planning Commission found that the total annual property tax bill paid by Reading property owners is not higher on average than in similar communities in the surrounding multi-county region. That analysis also found that many school districts in the region have higher real estate tax rates than Reading. Reading’s gross receipts taxes on businesses are also not higher on average than in comparable Pennsylvania cities.

**Consider establishing a “land value taxation” system.**

One option to make up some of the lost revenue from reducing the earned income and real estate transfer tax rates would be to shift towards a land value taxation system. Under this system, the value of land *would be* taxed at a higher rate than the value of buildings and improvements. *As a result*, houses on small lots (such as rowhouses) could see lower real estate taxes. This system is also designed

to discourage speculation in vacant or underused land, because it would cost more in taxes to continually hold onto *those* lands. This system is also designed to *moderate the increases in taxes that results* after investments are made to improve buildings.

This *tax* system is used in a number of Pennsylvania cities, including Allentown.

**Publicize available State tax and rent rebates to make sure all eligible persons receive the benefits.**

Many owner-occupants of homes benefit from reduced school real estate taxes because of funds distributed from State gambling revenues. That tax reduction averaged \$387 in Reading in 2015. Also, households of moderate income headed by persons age 65 or older or persons with disabilities can be eligible for a real estate tax rebate of up to \$650 per year from the State. The availability of these *benefits*, and accompanying State rent rebates for seniors, should be widely publicized to make sure that all eligible residents apply to receive the benefits.

**Consider alternatives regarding tax abatements.**

Reading currently offers a city-wide real estate tax abatement for improvements to business and residential properties and for new construction. This *includes* the Local Economic Development Tax Assistance (LERTA) program *and Residential Tax Abatement (ReTAP) program*. The increase in the real estate taxes that corresponds to the value of new improvements decreases in 10 percent increments, over a 10 year period. As a result, 90 percent of the increase in taxes *not required be paid* in the first year, and the property pays full real estate taxes at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> year. The State law provides a city with the authority to modify those percentages.

Reading officials have discussed the possibility of allowing a 100 percent abatement over the full 10 years, which is based upon a system used in Philadelphia. If that type of more generous system would be used, it should be targeted to those areas of the City that are most in need in investment. That type of dual system is used in some other Pennsylvania cities, with a 10 year phased-in tax abatement for the entire city, and than a more generous tax abatement in geographic areas with the most serious problems. This method of targeting of incentives reduces the potential of giving away tax benefits for improvements that would have happened if the tax benefits had not been offered.

**Vary parking rates based upon demand.**

The Parking Authority should be allowed and encouraged to vary parking rates based upon demand in various areas and time of day. For example, it should be cheaper to park in the most underused parking decks. This will provide an alternative for the most price-sensitive persons. Also, it could help to reduce east-west traffic across Center City because the decks with the most unused spaces are closer to the Schuylkill River bridges.

The Parking Authority is also moving towards replacing parking meters with pay kiosks. This system will also allow parking rates for on-street spaces to be changed based upon demand, or to provide free parking during certain periods (such as Noon to 1 PM to encourage lunch time business). As a result of the removal of parking meters, it would be easier to modify existing parking meter posts to allow for secure locking of bicycles.

Likewise, time limits for on-street parking spaces should vary with demand. In high demand blocks, a one-hour time limit would continue to be appropriate. However, on blocks with lower demand, longer time limits should be allowed (such as a two-hour maximum).

Public parking rates need to be moderated over time to attract and retain Downtown businesses and customers. The costs of Downtown parking, combined with the commuter tax, combined with DID fees, can together have a *negative* effect on location decisions by businesses.

**Seek to add additional on-street parking spaces to support nearby commercial uses.**

There are a few locations where there is an excess number of lanes of traffic for the amount of traffic on that street. The excessive width of a street cartway encourages speeding and makes it hard for pedestrians to cross. One *possible* example is along portions of the north side of Washington Street between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets. Where space is not needed for turn lanes, a set of on-street parking spaces should be *considered to be* added along the north side of Washington Street, possibly with bulb-out curb extensions at corners. Before this type of change would be made, a detailed traffic study would need to be completed, including an analysis of traffic impacts over future years. Convenient on-street parking will help to support nearby commercial businesses and help reduce the amount of illegal parking by delivery vehicles.

**Improve the streetscape of Penn Square, with additional on-street parking.**

There is a need to improve the attractiveness and functionality of Penn Street, including streetscape improvements. *The initial emphasis should be Penn Square.* The existing streetscape of Penn Square was designed primarily to serve public buses, but much of that bus transfer activity has moved to the BARTA Transportation Center. Areas occupied by unneeded bus stops should be redesigned to allow for short-term customer parking, and possibly some space for special events or outdoor cafes. The need for the existing medians in the center of the 400 and 500 blocks of Penn Street should also be re-examined.

The Main Street Design Committee is working on a set of Design Standards for the Downtown. *Whenever streetscape improvements are designed, there should be opportunities for businesses, residents and other organizations to sponsor a particular improvement. For example, a street tree or bench could include a sponsor plaque to recognize an organization that donated towards the cost. Often, donations are made as a memorial to a person.*

*Renewed efforts are also needed to jointly market Penn Street in Reading with Penn Avenue in West Reading.*

**Use the new Main Street Program to strengthen the Downtown, *while* building upon the work of the Downtown Improvement District, *and* emphasizing special events.**

The Main Street Program is part of a nationwide effort that has been successful in many cities and towns. It emphasizes design improvements, economic revitalization, joint promotions, special events, and historic rehabilitation. This type of program *is being coordinated with the* Downtown Improvement District (DID). *The DID* covers the bulk of the Downtown. It generally includes: a) 5<sup>th</sup> Street from Elm to Chestnut Street; b) portions of Washington Street; c) Penn Street from the river to 11<sup>th</sup> Street; and d) most of Cherry and Franklin Streets west of 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The DID is funded with an annual assessment based upon the assessed value of properties. The funding is primarily used to fund a set of Safety Ambassadors and Cleaning Ambassadors.

The Berks County Community Foundation has committed funding to expand special events in the Downtown. Special events are particularly beneficial to encourage persons to see the offerings of downtown businesses, *which will* encourage visitors to make future trips to the downtown. Special events, such as festivals, also provide important cultural and musical offerings and help build a stronger sense of community.

Redesign Reading Community Development Corporation is a new organization that emphasizes Downtown Revitalization. It brings together representatives of various entities, including the DID and the Parking Authority.

The new Doubletree Hotel has direct pedestrian connections to the Doubletree parking deck. The Hotel *opened* in 2015, and has substantial room for conferences and conventions.

A wider variety of restaurants are needed to support conventions, to serve downtown employees, and to take advantage of evening entertainment offerings. People are more likely to visit the Downtown and neighborhood commercial areas if there are restaurants offering *ethnic or other interesting types of foods* that are not commonly found in outlying areas. *In addition, chain and standard types of restaurants are also needed.* The approval process should be streamlined to encourage outdoor dining, particularly where there are wide sidewalks, such as along Penn Square.

Selected evenings should be promoted with special events, and with businesses encouraged to operate during evening hours. For example, many downtowns promote activities and shopping during the first Friday in a month.

There has been a nationwide growth in the number and variety of food trucks. However, care is needed to not allow too many transient food trucks or food carts that *could divert* customers away from tax-paying year-round businesses. Food trucks and carts do not provide customer restrooms, and do not pay fees to support the cleaning and security work of the DID.

The five properties that were owned by the City at the northwest corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Penn Streets are being *redeveloped*. It is expected that one or two buildings may need to be demolished, which could provide additional room for rear parking. It would be desirable to preserve historic front facades as part of any replacement building.

Efforts are needed to attract users of area recreation facilities and persons attending events in the surrounding region to the Downtown. These efforts should include users of the Schuylkill River Trail and the Neversink Mountain trails, and should include online information that is crafted to be found in a web search by those persons.

### **Carry out the recommendations of the Regional Tourism Report.**

In 2015, a report was completed entitled “Destination Research and Recommendations for the Greater Reading Area.” It included the following recommendations that are applicable to Reading:

- Build upon the outdoor murals and public art that already exists, and market it as an Arts Trail;
- Improve directional signage (especially to Antietam Lake and the Pagoda), using a uniform design;
- Promote greater use of Neversink Mountain for mountain-biking and rock climbing;
- Seek expanded hours for interior access to the Pagoda;
- Improve publicity about live music and nightlife offerings;
- *Attract* a commercial outfitter to offer rentals of kayaks, bicycles and other equipment along the Tulpehocken Creek;
- Celebrate the Latino culture of Reading, including publicizing the many Central and South American restaurants;
- Seek to expand offerings marketed to Latinos and LGBT *visitors*;
- Improve the safety and convenience of roads and streets for bicycling; and
- Emphasize festivals, special events, and cultural and entertainment offerings in Downtown Reading.

## Historic Preservation Plan

**Continue to protect Reading's historic resources with historic districts.**

Reading has a full set of historic preservation regulations in effect in four historic districts:

- a) Callowhill, which mainly includes 5<sup>th</sup> Street from south of Buttonwood to Laurel Streets, and which includes Penn Square,
- b) Prince, which mainly includes S. 6<sup>th</sup> Street south of Franklin Street to Canal Street,
- c) Centre Park, which mainly includes an area south of the Charles Evans Cemetery from the east of N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street to west of Centre Avenue, and
- d) Penn's Common, which mainly includes City Park and adjacent blocks, including along Perkiomen Avenue.



*These districts are shown on the Historic Districts Map. Within these areas, any new construction, expansions of buildings, most changes to the exterior of buildings that are visible from a public right-of-way, and any demolition needs approval by the City, after a review by the City's Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). In some, but not all cases, approval is needed from City Council.*

A less restrictive Historic Conservation District is in effect in the Heights neighborhood in northeast Reading. This District generally includes the areas between Robeson Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Street, the City's northern border and Mount Penn, such as areas along Hampden Boulevard. A number of routine building changes are exempted from needing approval. Demolition, new construction and changes to existing buildings that affect the streetscape do need approval under those requirements.

The National Register of Historic Places is a list maintained by the National Park Service that recognizes the most historically and architecturally important structures and areas of the nation. One National Register Historic District in Reading is not regulated by the City. This is the Queen Anne Historic District, which includes land along the Schuylkill Avenue corridor south of the river, and areas west of the Centre Park Historic District north of the railroad, including along N. Front Street.

In addition, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) has determined that many other areas of Reading are eligible for listing on the National Register. These areas include much of the Ricktown neighborhood north of Washington Street, various areas along 9<sup>th</sup> Street, much of S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and areas along Perkiomen Avenue. This eligibility does not regulate activity of private property owners, but can affect projects when federal or state funds are involved.

The boundaries of the Queen Anne District and the other districts that have been determined to be eligible for the National Register are shown on the National Registered Sites Map, which follows the Historic District Map. This second map also shows the locations of individual buildings that have been listed on the National Register.

Great care is needed to make sure that the City does not adopt new historic regulations that would obstruct necessary demolition or that would significantly increase the costs of rehabilitation of older buildings. In particular, extensive new historic regulations should be avoided in blocks with marginal architecture or where there is currently a severely depressed market to invest in the buildings. *The HARB is currently working on a proposed process that would address financial hardships among applicants.*

*There is a need for expanded public education about the historic district process to increase compliance and to promote historic sensitivity when changes are being made. Great efforts are needed to make sure that historic buildings are required to be properly maintained so that they are not allowed to be effectively “demolished by neglect.” Funds should be sought, such as through State grants or revolving loan funds from banks, to maintain a facade rehabilitation program for historic buildings.*

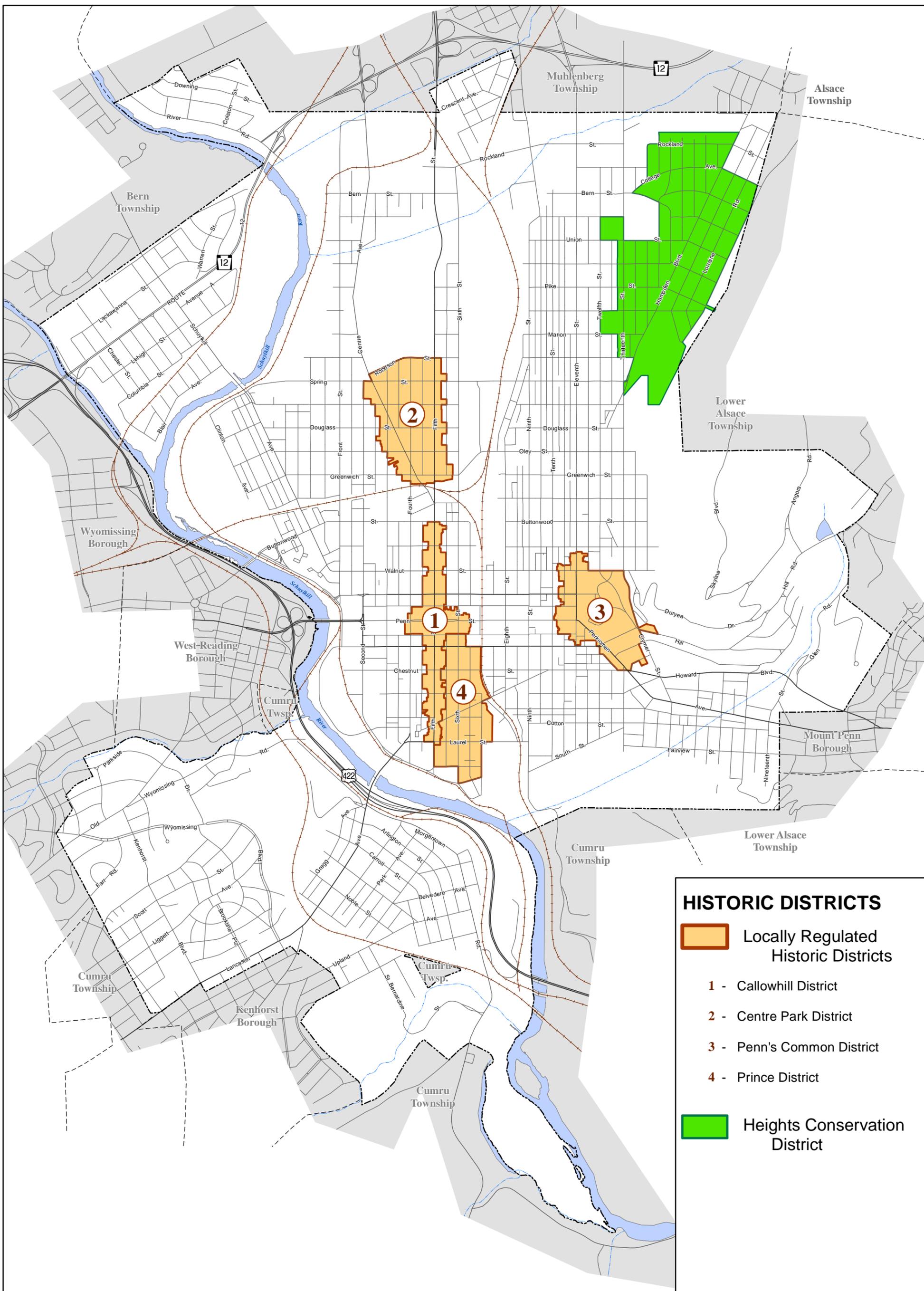
**Consider requiring approval of demolition of key older buildings in areas that are outside of the currently regulated Historic Districts.**

It would be desirable to enact a basic set of controls on demolition of the principal buildings within the most important historic blocks of the City, in areas that are not currently protected by the four existing Historic Districts *that now regulated by the City* and the Heights Historic Conservation District. This *new process of demolition* control could also regulate removal of certain architectural features from the front facade, including porches and cornices. This type of limited control of demolition on historic blocks could be added to the City’s Zoning Ordinance, without requiring pre-approval by PHMC or the completion of expensive additional studies.

The State Municipalities Planning Code provides City Council with the authority to decide which buildings or blocks deserve controls on demolition. The zoning provisions would require an applicant to show that there is a valid reason for the demolition. This type of zoning provision could provide *either* the Zoning Hearing Board *or City Council* with the authority to approve the demolition, after a review by the HARB *or a similar board*.

**Consider providing zoning incentives for rehabilitation of important historic buildings.**

The City’s Zoning Ordinance should include incentives that would promote sensitive rehabilitation of important historic buildings. For example, if a building was built before 1940 and is in a City-regulated or National Register historic district, the Zoning Ordinance could allow the building to be used for certain additional uses. *This process is not intended for use in low or medium density residential areas.* For example, *there could be a process to allow the Zoning Hearing Board to approve the rehabilitation of a large historic home in a high density residential district into an office, funeral home or a bed and breakfast inn, if parking issues would be adequately addressed.*



**HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

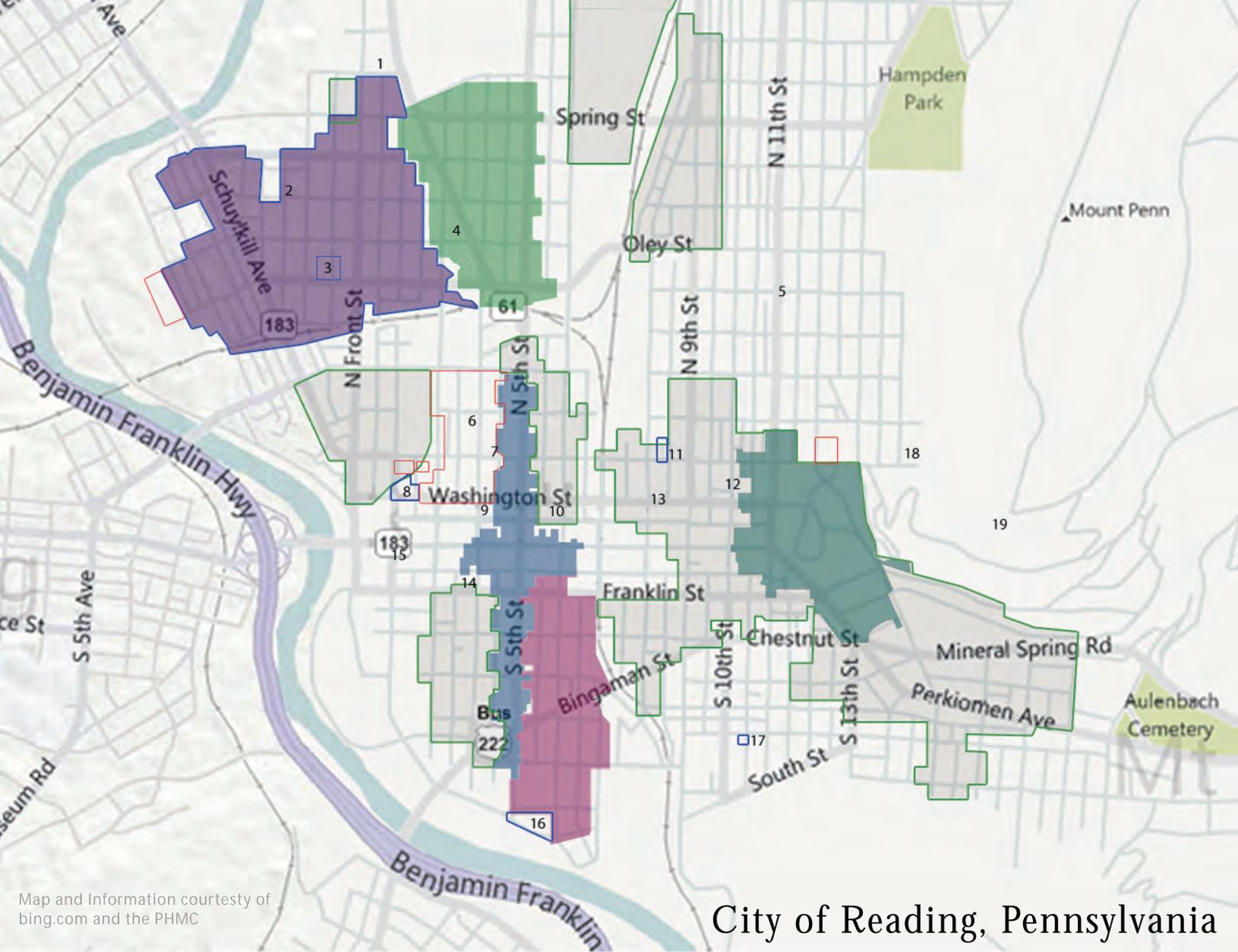
- Locally Regulated Historic Districts
- 1** - Callowhill District
- 2** - Centre Park District
- 3** - Penn's Common District
- 4** - Prince District
- Heights Conservation District

**City of**  
**READING**  
 Berks County, Pennsylvania

**SOURCE:**  
*Berks County, 2014.*



**Urban Research & Development Corporation**  
 28 West Broad Street Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018 610-865-0701



Map and Information courtesy of bing.com and the PHMC

## City of Reading, Pennsylvania

- Queen Anne Nationally Registered Historic District
- Centre Park Historic District
- Callowhill Historic District
- Prince Historic District
- Penn's Common Historic District
- Listed with the National Register
- Sites Eligible for National Registration
- Sites Ineligible for National Registration

### Nationally Registered Sites of Reading, Pennsylvania

1. Stirling Building – 1120 Centre Ave
2. Charles S FOOS Elementary School
3. Meinig Glove Factory – 621-641 McKnight St
4. Wilhelm Mansion and Carriage House – 730 Centre Ave
5. Hampden Firehouse – 1101 Greenwich St
6. Reading Knitting Mills – 350 Elm St
7. Livingood House / Stryker Hospital – 419 Walnut St
8. Willson & Company Building; Goggle Works – 201 Washington St
9. Metropolitan Edison Building – 412 Washington St
10. Trinity Lutheran Church
11. Red Men Hall; Rick, Charles Building – 831-833 Walnut St
12. Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church – 119 N 10th St
13. City Hall (Boy's High School)
14. Log House, Heister House & market Annex – 30 S 4th St
15. Keystone Hook & Ladder Company No. 1 – 200 Penn St
16. Reading Hardware Company; The Hardware
17. Cotton & Maple Street School – 1018 Cotton St
18. Wanner, Peter D., House – 1401 Walnut St
19. Pagoda – 100 Skyline Drive

## **Complete Streets and Mobility Plan**

Recommendations involving bike sharing services and car sharing services are discussed in the Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship Chapter.

### **Schedule work on bridges to maintain sufficient traffic capacity to cross the river.**

Major reconstruction projects are currently being underway or are scheduled for the Schuylkill Avenue, Buttonwood Street, Bingaman Street and Penn Street bridges over the Schuylkill River. The Buttonwood Street Bridge will be completely closed from mid-2015 to mid-2017. The intent is to carefully schedule those improvements so that there remains sufficient traffic capacity across the river during all periods of time.



### **Work with the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) and PennDOT to obtain funding to improve the most crash-prone and congested intersections.**

Most of the crash-prone intersections involve State highways. State and/or federal funding should be sought through the RATS process (which is staffed by the Berks County Planning Commission) and the PennDOT Transportation Improvement Program to address these intersections.

The likelihood of obtaining funding for a street improvement in a timely manner can be greatly increased if: 1) a traffic engineer would be engaged to prepare a detailed analysis and a preliminary design of an improvement, and 2) the City obtains any right-of-way that will be needed. It is often extremely time-consuming for PennDOT to obtain right-of-way.

During 2014, the most crash-prone intersection in the City was at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Penn Streets. The next most crash-prone intersections were: 1) 4<sup>th</sup> and Washington Streets, 2) 2<sup>nd</sup> and Penn Streets, 3) 4<sup>th</sup> and Cherry Streets, 4) Lancaster Avenue and Grace Street, and 5) 9<sup>th</sup> and Spring Streets.

Each crash-prone intersection should be analyzed to identify any low-cost improvements that could be quickly instituted, such as improved or larger signage, revised pavement markings, or reduction of sight distance obstructions.

### **Work to improve the West Shore Bypass, and reduce congestion at the Lancaster Avenue interchange.**

There is a study underway that is funded by PennDOT of the West Shore Bypass. It is particularly difficult for traffic to enter onto Route 422 using ramps that enter onto the left lane of the highway. The Lancaster Avenue/Route 422 interchange and adjacent areas include the most congested areas in Reading. However, it is extremely difficult to find solutions because of the constrained land areas next to the river, and because of the proximity of the Route 10 intersection to the ramps.

The tentative long-term plan is to widen portions of the West Shore Bypass to three lanes of traffic in each direction, and to provide wider and longer ramps and wider traffic lanes for safety purposes.

**Make the Penn Street/Route 422 ramps safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.**

Improvements to this interchange are being considered as part of the West Shore Bypass Study. These ramps are within West Reading Borough, but they affect pedestrian and bicycle access to Center City Reading. If traffic signals would be added to the on-ramps onto Penn Street, it would make it possible to have pedestrian crossing signals. Also, the ramp entrances and exits could be reconfigured to slow traffic speeds.

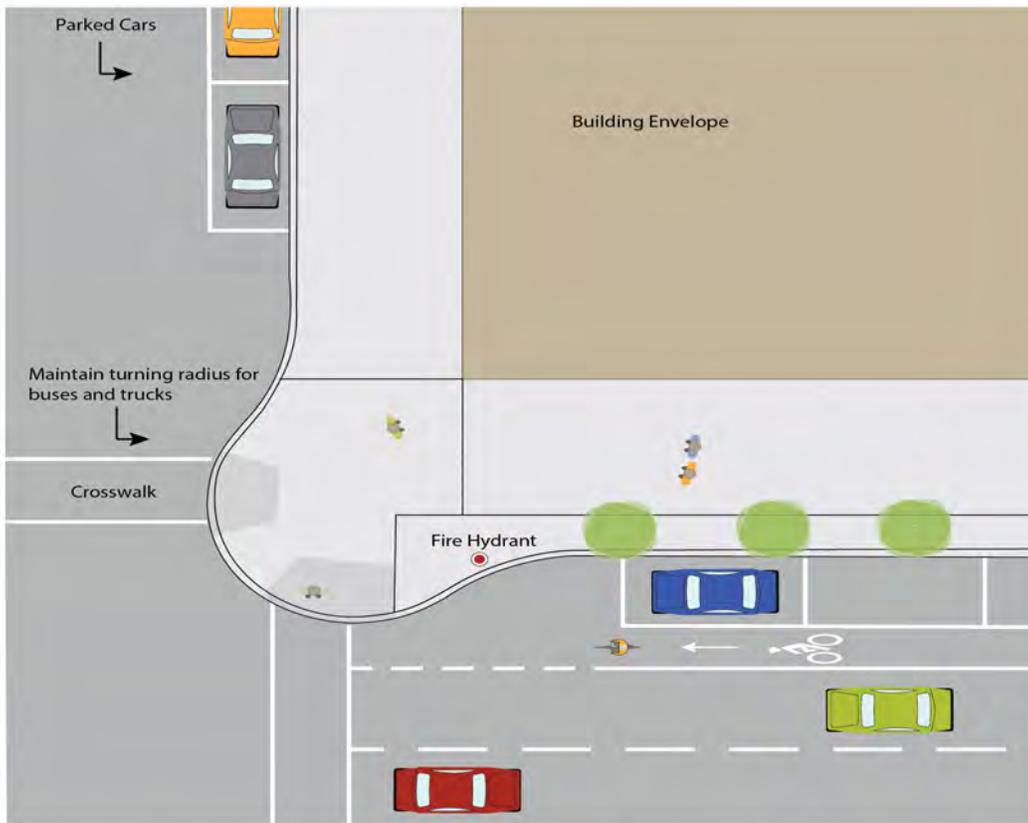
**Implement “Complete Streets” policies, with an initial emphasis on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Center City.**

Complete Streets involves fully considering all users within a public right-of-way, instead of placing the full emphasis upon moving larger volumes of vehicle traffic at higher speeds. Complete Streets involves full consideration of pedestrians, bicyclists, persons in wheelchairs, and persons using public transit. It also considers users of the public sidewalk, such as for cafes, bicycle parking, street trees and other uses.

Complete Streets recommendations may involve reducing the width of lanes or removing a traffic lane in order to provide room for bicyclists and other users. Street trees may be added and amenities provided for pedestrians, such as shelters for bus riders. Also, there is a greater emphasis on pedestrian signals and crosswalks.

Curbs should be extended at corners so pedestrians have less distance of cartway to cross, as seen in the following sketch.

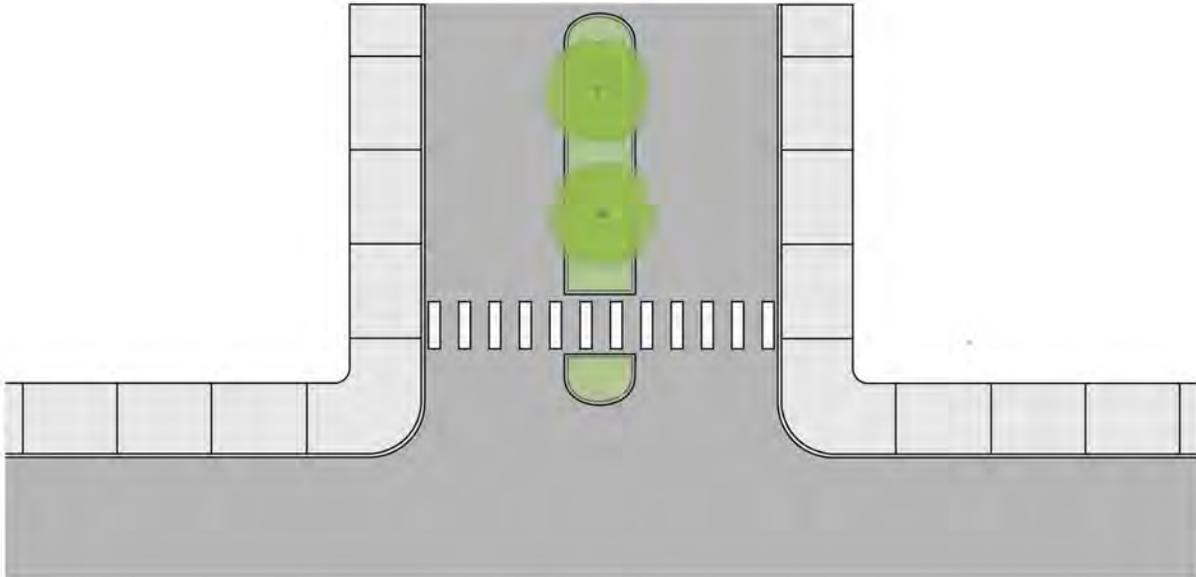
Curb Extensions



Curb extensions reduce the distance of a street that must be crossed by a pedestrian and prevents a right-turning driver from passing on the right along any bikepath. Curb extensions can be designed to avoid the loss of any on-street parking spaces, while also preventing illegal parking near corners and hydrants. Curb extensions also reduce the speeds of turning vehicles which helps avoid hazards to pedestrians.

Center “refuge” islands can be periodically placed along a wide heavily traveled two-way street, so that pedestrians and wheelchairs only need to cross one direction of traffic at a time.

### Street Crossing Refuge Island



Along wide streets, consider construction of a refuge island for bicyclists and pedestrians, so that they do not need to cross all lanes of traffic at one time.

The City can also meet some of the new federal stormwater requirements by adding landscaping, rain gardens and tree trenches that filter pollutants from runoff and allow some runoff to recharge into the groundwater. Those matters are addressed in the Environmental Sustainability and Stewardship Chapter.

The following is an example of a Complete Streets project which was accomplished with limited public expense.



The Comprehensive Plan is not intended to be a traffic engineering study, but instead highlights possible improvements that deserve more detailed analysis by a traffic engineer. The following are examples of some areas where the Complete Streets concepts might be applied:

- a) *A study should be conducted of whether* a traffic lane could be removed from certain streets (such as the third traffic lane on Washington Street east of 2nd Street) to add on-street parking, to make it easier for pedestrians to cross, to promote storefront businesses and to calm traffic.
- b) Two of the adjacent relatively narrow north-south streets that currently have two lanes of one-way traffic (such as 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets) might be converted into each having one lane of traffic with a bike lane. This type of change has been successful in many cities, such as Philadelphia and York. It also reduces speeding and makes it easier for persons to pull into and out of parking spaces, and also provides a wider lane width for buses and para-transit vehicles. Using 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets would serve persons living in some of the denser neighborhoods in the City, and also serve persons visiting the Downtown and students traveling to the High School, the Intermediate School and Albright College.

A new traffic study is also about to begin regarding the intersection of 2nd and Penn Street (which is the most-crash prone in the City) and the stretch of 2nd Street to the Goggle Works. This study could possibly result in 2nd Street being returned to two-way traffic in this stretch.

The speeding on Washington Street harms the pedestrian friendliness of the Entertainment Area. A previous traffic study of the 2nd and Washington Street intersection in the Draft Downtown 2020 Plan recommended returning the intersection to a conventional design, as opposed to the current design that encourages high speed left-turns from westbound Washington to 2nd Streets. The limited sight distances for pedestrians along 2nd Street at Washington Street helps to create a need to slow down traffic that is turning onto 2nd Street from Washington.

Changes are needed to 2nd Street in the vicinity of the un-signalized intersection at Franklin Street, to reduce speeding and promote safer pedestrian crossings. It should be much easier to walk or bicycle to RACC and to the riverfront trail and park. Last year, RACC had asked that Franklin Street west of 2nd Street to Front Street be turned from a wide public street to a more narrow driveway that would mainly serve the college. RACC's intent is to direct traffic to Chestnut Street, but that would require another crossing of the railroad track and an extension of Chestnut Street through the Penske parking lot to reach Riverfront Drive. RACC's intent was to allow a safe pedestrian connection across the current Franklin Street to their future college expansion sites south of Franklin Street. We believe that a traffic signal at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Franklin Streets with pedestrian signals could provide a safer pedestrian crossing without closing Franklin Street or having to build a new street.

If the width of travel lanes along 2nd Street north of Franklin Street is reduced, it could allow the addition of on-street parking. Bulb-out curb extensions should also be added to reduce the width of street that a pedestrian must cross.

*Complete Streets improvements should also be designed to address the stormwater matters discussed in the Environmental Sustainability Plan section and to beautify the City. The on-going repairs and reconstruction of the major Schuylkill River bridges should also be designed to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and convenience.*

### **Complete the River Road Connection to Schuylkill Avenue.**

The River Road connection project east of the Schuylkill Avenue bridge is currently funded and is now in final design. This connection is essential to improve truck access to 50 acres of the Riverfront Industrial Park along Opportunity Drive, which is east of the river. Originally, the intent was to complete an entire length of River Road along the river, and then with a north-south connection through the former Dana lands. Now the intent is to complete a shorter and more targeted improvement. River Road/Spring Street would be improved, and then a new north-south road would be built to connect to

Windsor Street. The intersection of Windsor Street and Schuylkill Avenue would then be improved and realigned.

As a result, traffic from the Riverfront Industrial Park would be able to reach the Schuylkill Avenue bridge, and then continue along Route 183 to reach Route 222. This project would have minimal impact on residential areas, except for homes on W. Windsor Street.

**Continue to provide efficient public transportation, and *continue* Sunday bus service to reach employers.**

The BARTA system has merged with Lancaster's Red Rose Transit. The BARTA serves most areas of Reading, with a Transportation Center at 8<sup>th</sup> and Franklin streets. The system extends to Hamburg, Berks Heim, Womelsdorf, Mohnton, Morgantown, Exeter Square on Route 422, the Deka plant in Lyons Station, and many other destinations. Continued efforts are needed to make sure that there is sufficient service to allow City residents to reach major employers in other parts of Berks County.

BARTA recently started providing limited bus service on Sundays. This service is important to connect the denser residential areas of Reading with the major commercial employment centers.

**Over the long-run, seek passenger rail service to Philadelphia.**

Over the years, studies have been conducted to analyze possible extensions of passenger rail service from Center City Reading to Philadelphia. Passenger rail service would make Reading more attractive to residents and businesses, particularly for people who need to travel to Philadelphia an average of one or two times per week. Passenger rail service also could reduce congestion on the Route 422 corridor. The service would use the renovated historic Franklin Street Station. Previous plans envisioned stops near 6<sup>th</sup> and Oley Streets in Reading and near the VF Outlets in Wyomissing. However, many competing demands for passenger rail funding exist, and currently funding is not available for the capital costs, let alone the annual operating costs.

A short-term alternative would be to extend SEPTA rail service from Norristown northwest to Pottstown. That extension would allow Berks County residents to avoid some of the most congested segments of the drive. That rail extension would also connect to major fast-growing employment centers, including a proposed new light rail extension from Norristown to King of Prussia.

**Seek funding to improve the maintenance and repair of City streets and infrastructure.**

The Community Facilities and Services Plan section discusses the need for additional funding and staffing to improve the condition of City streets and other infrastructure. Only one street (Cotton Street) has been able to be reconstructed in the City in the last decade, and that was mainly achieved because of sharing of the costs with underground utilities. As maintenance is deferred, there will be greater need in the future to complete more expensive reconstruction of streets.

The City is seeking federal funding in partnership with Lower Alasce Township and Berks County to make improvements to roads on Mount Penn. These improvements are also designed to make the roads more suitable for bicyclists.

## Community Facilities and Services Plan

### Continue to improve public education in Reading.

The Reading School District serves 18,500 students, with one high school, one intermediate school, four middle schools and 13 elementary schools. A Career and Technology Center is jointly operated with the Muhlenberg Township School District. There are currently fewer public charter schools in Reading than in many similar cities.



The health of the City of Reading is extremely interconnected with the quality of the Reading public schools. This is true not only because of the importance of young people having the skills needed by employers, and to make sure students will be ready to succeed in college or technical programs. The quality of the public schools are also important because it affects whether middle-income families with children decide to move into or out of Reading. Moreover, the quality of the school district also affects residential property values.

### Carry out the City's New Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.

Issues involving parks, recreation and trails will be addressed in detail in the City's new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, which is currently being completed. The Reading Recreation Commission is responsible for the operation and programming of the City's recreation areas and buildings.

The largest developed parks in Reading include: City Park at 11<sup>th</sup> and Washington streets with 49 acres, Schlegal Park north of Lancaster Avenue with 23 acres, Baer Park at Douglass and George Streets with 9 acres, Pendorf Park at 19<sup>th</sup> and Forest Streets with 6 acres, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Spruce Recreation Center and Park with 8 acres, the 11<sup>th</sup> and Pike Recreation Center and Park with 6 acres, and Egelman Park and Mineral Spring Park off of Hill Road on Mount Penn. Riverfront parks include: Riverside Park southwest of Reading Area Community College (RACC), Dana Memorial Park north of Buttonwood Street along the Schuylkill River, and Heritage Park along the Schuylkill River near Canal Street.

Also, the County's Stonecliffe Recreation Area on Monroe Street includes 15 acres, and connects to the County's 4.5 mile long Tulpehocken Creek Valley Park system. The School District's George Field is on N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Another major provider of recreation is the Olivete Boys and Girls Club.

Neversink Mountain and the Mt. Penn Reserve are described in the "Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability Plan."

### Improve public access to the Schuylkill River and the Tulpehocken Creek, and complete trail links.

There are some missing links in the recreation trail system, and a need for additional trailheads to provide public parking and information to persons using the trails. *Where parkland does not exist along the Schuylkill River or the Tulpehocken Creek, pedestrian access easements should be sought. Where it is not possible to have public access, then conservation easements should be sought, so that the waterfront is maintained as privately-owned vegetated areas.*

The Schuylkill River Trail is a major regional trail along the Schuylkill River, but it has some on-street segments near the Schuylkill Avenue bridge in Reading and on many segments north of Reading. One component of the Schuylkill River Trail system is the Thun Trail. The Thun Trail extends 18 miles from Riverfront Park near RACC, across a bridge to West Reading, and then runs parallel to Route 422, and then continues along the south side of the Schuylkill River to Pottstown. There is an extensive trail

system on Neversink Mountain, including many trails used by mountain-bikers. The County's Union Canal Towpath Trail extends along the Tulpehocken Creek for several miles into northwest Reading.

The removal of the Bushong Dam will now make it easier to improve Confluence Park at the juncture of the north side of the Schuylkill River and the east side of the Tulpehocken Creek and to link that area into the Union Canal trail.

The existing paved area at the north end of River Road near the Buttonwood bridge could be made into a trailhead at little cost.

There is a proposal to relocate the Schuylkill River trail that passes along the bank of the Schuylkill River along RACC's campus, to along Front Street. This plan by RACC would include improvements to emphasize pedestrian and bicycle traffic along Front Street. In any case, the railroad crossing needs to be carefully addressed and trail easements should be obtained to guarantee future use of the Schuylkill River trail where it does not pass along public parkland north of Riverfront Park.

There is a desire to complete a trail extension along the northeast side of the Schuylkill River from Heritage Park to the west side of the Neversink Mountain trail system.

There are also preliminary plans to link parts of southwestern Reading with the Thun Trail, which may pass through the Berks Catholic High School property.

The Angelica Creek Greenway Plan proposes trail connections from Angelica Park southward to Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center and to the Thun Trail.

Volunteer organizations should be engaged to provide a higher level of maintenance along segments of the Schuylkill River trail in Reading, such as north of Buttonwood Street.

**Protect the quality of the water supply, and ensure that the water system is maintained in good repair.**

The water system is under the control of the Reading Area Water Authority (RAWA). The system serves 125,000 people in Reading and adjacent municipalities. The water supply is held within Lake Ontelaunee, which is approximately eight miles north of the City. RAWA operates a water filtration plant with a 40 million gallon per day capacity near the Lake, as well as water storage facilities, the distribution system, and a pumping system.

RAWA has a Source Water Protection Program that: a) guides *initiatives* with upstream landowners to minimize the sediment and nutrients that enters the lake, and b) addresses potential future contamination problems.

Reading's geology is prone to sinkholes. Therefore, a water main break can quickly turn into a major sinkhole that damages streets and buildings. *As a result, regular investments are needed to keep the water distribution in good repair.*

**Prioritize and schedule needed capital projects in the City.**

There are extensive capital needs within Reading. For example, many City-owned buildings need major roof repairs or roof replacements, a number of streets are in need of reconstruction, and several fire stations need major repairs or replacement. A comprehensive analysis of these needs and costs should be completed, so that they can be prioritized and scheduled in phases in a Capital Improvements Program (CIP). A CIP can also assist in timing bond issues to take advantage of low-interest rates. A CIP can also result in more projects being ready for the submittal of applications when state and federal grant opportunities become available.

**Seek to increase the City's Public Works staff and maintenance budget.**

The City's Public Works Department has experienced large reductions in its staffing levels because of budget limitations. At the same time, funding has been extremely limited for street paving and repair, as well as other maintenance and infrastructure needs.

One example of the results of these funding limitations involves the poor condition of some street name signs. Street name signs are intended to be upgraded across the country to be more visible and reflective, although there is no longer a Federally-mandated deadline for compliance.

Some City street lights are controlled by the City staff, while others are controlled by Met Ed. There are needs to address street lights that are not working, and to add street lights where they do not exist.

It would be desirable to increase the visibility of school zones and fire stations with additional markings on the pavement along the approaches to schools and fire stations. PennDOT's new Automated Red Light Grant Program can provide grant funding for improving pavement markings and signs, as well as upgraded traffic signals and other intersection improvements.

**Improve or replace outdated fire stations.**

The densities, narrow streets, types of construction and ages of buildings in Reading create difficult conditions for fire fighting.

The fire apparatus of the City is generally in good shape, but many of the stations are not. It may be possible to reduce the number of stations with one or more properly located new stations. Several fire stations are in need of major repair or replacement. There has been a long-time goal to build a new fire station in the northeast, but a suitable site was never found. A request was included in the Act 47 Recovery Plan for funding for a study of fire and emergency medical station conditions and locations.

Currently, all emergency medical vehicles operate out of a single station next to Saint Josephs Health's Downtown Campus on Walnut Street. As part of the upgrade or replacement of fire stations, consideration should be given to distributing one or more ambulances to other stations, if it would improve response times.

**Work with various agencies and institutions to promote a higher level of health and safety.**

These efforts should include promoting programs involving physical exercise for persons of all ages. Recreational paths often have the highest rates of usage compared to other recreational improvements.

Some communities have organized "walking school buses" in which school students are encouraged to walk together to school along a defined route, with parent supervision.

Reading can promote health by promoting bicycling and walking, including by requiring new larger buildings to include bicycle racks or other secure places to lock bicycles. A commercial vendor could also be encouraged to establish an automated bicycle rental operation, in which bicycles can be obtained and returned at various locations. Those bicycle stands often are allowed where there are wide public sidewalks and on properties that major institutions and agencies allow to be used.

Increased efforts are needed to improve access to affordable healthy foods. This should include seeking supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables for local food banks. A major Farmer's Market is operating at Penn Square. Persons who receive Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits often can receive a bonus from SNAP if they buy fresh produce at Farmer's Markets.

The Berks Nature sponsors 22 community gardens throughout the City, including on portions of Housing Authority properties, to allow residents to grow fresh fruit and vegetables. Additional gardens would also be great interim uses on future development sites.

**Continue to aggressively reduce crime.**

Although Reading still has a major crime problem, there has been great progress over the last 8 years in reducing the crime rate. Generally, the years of 2001 to 2006 were the worst years for crime in Reading. Most types of crime have decreased in frequency, with the biggest decrease occurring in vehicle thefts (a 76% drop from 2006 to 2013). The number of persons shot within the City has decreased from previous years - including from 65 in 2011 to 40 in the first 11 months of 2014. Homicides fell 52% from 2005 to 2013. Total violent crimes fell by 26% from 2006 to 2013. The number of burglaries fell by 31% from 2006 to 2013.

Additional surveillance cameras are being installed, which are regularly monitored by the Police. The Police Department currently monitors 46 remote-controlled cameras and 8 more are being added with the assistance of local fundraising. Exterior cameras operated by colleges and other institutions should be linked so they can also be viewed by the Police.

The Police Department maps the locations of crime on a daily basis, to find patterns that can be used to stop future crime. Much of the crime is concentrated in the older areas of the City, such as areas northeast of the Downtown east of 6<sup>th</sup> Street and south of Spring Street. The lowest crime rates are in the less dense north, northwest, southeast and southwest sides of the City. Perception of crime is also a concern, particularly because it is rare for crime to directly affect downtown office workers, persons using parking decks, or visitors to events in the Downtown.

**Seek funding to add Police Officers inside the larger public schools.**

Most cities have “Community Resource” Police Officers inside junior and senior high schools. Reading currently only has one police officer based inside a school, which is at the Reading Intermediate High School. Other officers regularly operate outside of schools during school days. It would be extremely beneficial to have the *specific* officers regularly based inside the larger schools to develop relationships with students and to intervene before incidents become more serious. In the past, some police officers were based inside schools, but the funding was cut by the School District.

**Complete improvements to the wastewater system to reduce infiltration and meet environmental regulations.**

The City’s Fritz Island Treatment Plant will soon undergo a major reconstruction. The project is estimated to have a cost of over \$110 million. Part of the work involves upgrades of the oldest pump station in the system, at 6<sup>th</sup> and Canal Streets. The upgrade of the treatment plant must be completed by February 2018 under a Federal order.

The plant serves all or portions of fourteen municipalities, including 130,000 residents. The treatment plant is designed to handle a monthly average flow of 27.8 million gallons per day.

The *sewage* collection system *must be* properly maintained to reduce inflow and infiltration of runoff into the pipes and to avoid capacity problems after heavy rains and backups.

**Continue to manage the City’s finances through the Act 47 Financial Recovery Process, as long the process remains available.**

The State’s Act 47 Recovery Process has been extremely useful in managing the City’s revenues and expenses, with the aid of State-funded professional financial and management consultants. A detailed Financial Recovery Plan was adopted and periodically has been revised. The process has allowed the

City to better manage its debt to reduce borrowing costs, and to plan for staffing levels that can be sufficiently funded with forecasted revenues.

A recent change in State law is intended to require most municipalities to leave the process within a few years. One material change to Reading would be that it could no longer use Act 47 to levy its 0.3 percent earned income tax on non-residents who work in the City. However, a different State law allows a municipality to charge a similar tax to address underfunded municipal pensions.

## Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability Plan

### Increase use of recreational natural areas by City residents.

It would be highly desirable to expand use of natural areas along the waterways and mountains by City residents. Berks Nature is expanding programs that are aimed towards encouraging City residents to enjoy the natural environment, through guided hikes and through a new environmental center in Angelica Park. The City's new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan *will* address expanding access to the Schuylkill River, and completing missing links in the trail system.



### Maintain and plant trees, shrubs and thick tall grasses along waterways (“Riparian Buffers”) to avoid erosion and to protect water quality.

Trees and other thick vegetation serve a critical role in filtering *sediment, nutrients and other* pollutants from runoff before they enter waterways. *These Riparian Buffers reduce erosion, slow the velocities of stormwater runoff and provide wildlife habitats. Harmful invasive species should be controlled, and new plantings should use native species.* Mowed lawns are better than pavement, but has much less ability to serve as a filter *than thick vegetation.* On both private and public lands, trees should be maintained and planted, and grass *near waterways* should only be regularly mowed where pedestrian paths or active recreation facilities exist. *The City recently enacted a zoning amendment to address these Riparian Buffers along waterways.*

### Carefully manage woodlands on Mount Penn and Neversink Mountain.

The Berks Nature has prepared a woodlands management plan for the 900 acres of lands that they manage on Neversink Mountain in Reading and adjacent municipalities. The plan is available on their website. It would be desirable to prepare a similar plan for the approximately 900 acres of City-owned lands on Mt. Penn, to make sure that the lands are properly managed for the long-term health of the forests, *to maintain the diversity of species, to control invasive species, to manage pests,* and to avoid erosion. Such an effort could be jointly completed with Berks County, which owns substantial amounts of adjacent lands.

### Promote “Green Infrastructure,” including groundwater recharge and water quality improvements.

*Green Infrastructure means to use natural processes to improve water quality, avoid erosion, and manage stormwater runoff. It can reduce the need for traditional types of expensive infrastructure, such as storm sewers, large detention basins, and flood control systems. The use of Green Infrastructure can not only improve the environment, but it can also beautify areas and reduce public works expenses.*

*Stormwater should be used as a resource. For example, building projects can store a portion of stormwater runoff and use that water to irrigate landscaping during dry periods. There have been multiple efforts to promote rain barrels, which involve persons connecting a drain pipe into a container that allows the water can be reused during dry periods on plants. Green building roofs should be used to absorb runoff. Green islands can be planted within overly wide streets. Where there is insufficient clearance for street trees, planter boxes can be added.*

*The City should promote use of permeable types of paving that allow a portion of stormwater to be absorbed into the ground. Permeable pavers can also be used between the curb and the main tread of sidewalks.*

*The City's Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) is promoting the development of rain gardens, with plantings that allow runoff to be infiltrated into the ground. As seen in the photos below, rain gardens are low-lying areas that are established with substantial amounts of plantings. They serve to collect and slow down runoff, and to promote infiltration of runoff into the groundwater. They also serve to filter out pollutants, as opposed to if polluted runoff would be allowed to flow directly to a waterway.*

*The runoff that is not absorbed by the vegetation or infiltrated into the ground is often funneled through a vegetated swale. The more elaborate rain gardens may include an overflow structure or a drainage pipe under the rain garden. A soil mix is chosen to promote infiltration, which often includes a soil and sand mix over a gravel bed, and sometimes with a geotextile fabric. A rain garden can be placed on the lot of an individual house, can be used within parking areas of a development, or can be installed within part of the public right-of-way that is not needed for vehicles and pedestrians.*



To help comply with federal requirements (as described below), Reading should install vegetated “rain gardens” on public lands to filter pollutants from runoff. These rain gardens can also be added where curbs are extended for pedestrian safety at intersections. Tree trenches (as seen in the photo to the right) could be installed where there are wide sidewalks downtown, to promote use of stormwater to irrigate plantings. Tree trenches involve adjacent street trees connected by an underground stormwater infiltration system.



**Address compliance with Federal Stormwater Regulations, and possible levying of stormwater fees to cover the costs.**

Like other urban municipalities, Reading faces increasing requirements to comply with Federal MS4 stormwater requirements. *The MS4 program emphasizes reducing pollutants in stormwater runoff. In addition to public education efforts, the program requires instituting a full set of pollution control practices in public works operations. The City also is facing expenses to repair old storm sewer systems, and to reduce pollution from those systems. The program also requires stricter controls on stormwater runoff and seeks reductions in the amounts of stormwater runoff.*

Like many municipalities, Reading is analyzing the potential of charging fees based upon the amount of each lot that is covered by buildings, paving and other surfaces that are impervious to absorption of runoff in order to fund compliance. These annual fees can be charged to all non-governmental property-owners, including for properties that are exempt from real estate taxes. Property-owners can be offered opportunities to reduce the fees if they plant trees or install measures to increase infiltration.

**Seek a vendor to provide a bike sharing/rental business, with bikes available at various locations.**

The City should seek a vendor to provide a bicycle sharing/rental business in the Downtown, at the colleges and other major parts of the City. Each person would start their own account, and then be able to borrow a bike from any station in the City and then return it to any other station. This effort would involve identifying sites where there would be the most demand and where there is sufficient room for the bicycle station. Most stations are placed within the public right-of-way, unless a landowner (such as a college) wishes to volunteer use of their space.

The photo to the right is of a typical bike sharing station.

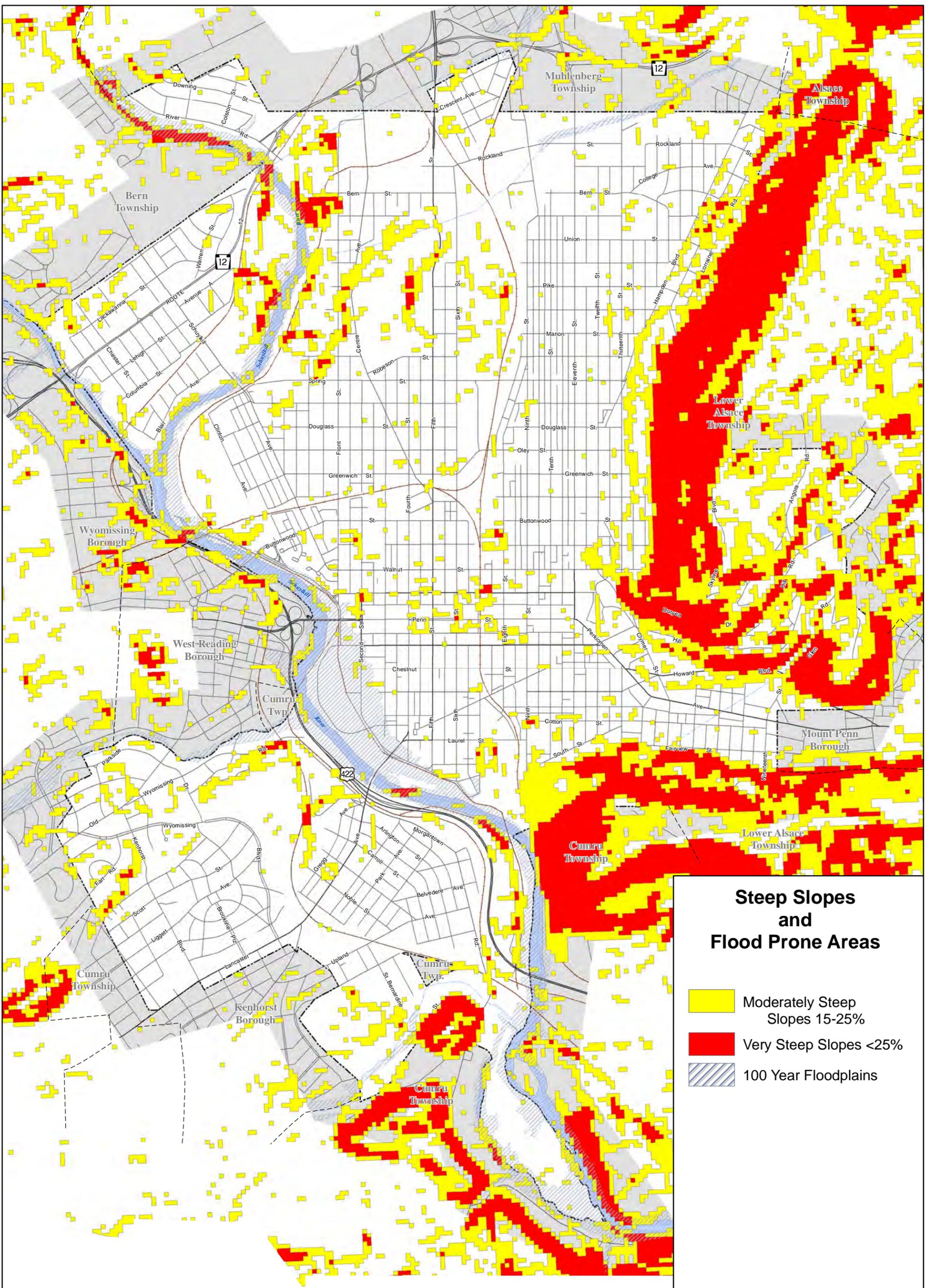


**Promote use of car sharing services.**

The Parking Authority, the colleges and other entities should work with car share services to offer them highly visible and convenient locations for the parking of their vehicles. This convenience will encourage the use of car sharing services, which will reduce the need for each household to maintain multiple vehicles of their own. Car share services also effectively promote use of public transportation, because a household can access a vehicle occasionally when public transit is not convenient.

**Seek to reduce solid waste, increase recycling, and expand composting.**

*The current recycling program should be expanded to include additional items. Increased efforts are needed to collect electronics for safe disposal.* There should be efforts to promote a greater amount of composting by residents and businesses. This can involve selling composting barrels at wholesale prices, as well as providing educational information about the proper ways to compost in order to avoid odors and vectors. Restaurants should also participate in efforts to collect their food waste for composting or other purposes.

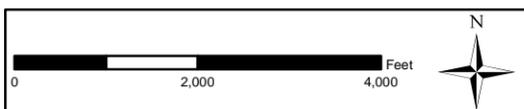


**Steep Slopes and Flood Prone Areas**

- Moderately Steep Slopes 15-25%
- Very Steep Slopes <25%
- 100 Year Floodplains

City of  
**READING**  
Berks County, Pennsylvania

**SOURCE:**  
*Berks County, 2014.*



**Urban Research & Development Corporation**  
28 West Broad Street Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018 610-865-0701

**Increase use of solar energy.**

Solar-powered outdoor lights can be valuable in parks, particularly if they avoid the need for expensive or unattractive electrical wiring. They have been used along trails in Reading, *but they do need periodic replacement of batteries.*



Public agencies should consider the addition of solar panels over the roofs of parking structures (as seen in the photo to the left) and other public buildings.

Buildings should also be encouraged to install light colored roofs, which in the aggregate can reduce the overall heat in the City on hot summer days.

An example of solar panels installed over a parking area.



**Examine opportunities to promote sustainability through the City’s development regulations.**

Reading’s Zoning Ordinance currently requires many new developments to provide locations for bicycle parking. The Ordinance also currently includes zoning incentives to promote use of vegetated “green roofs” and to encourage projects to receive “Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design” (LEED) certification.

*The Zoning Ordinance was recently updated to promote use of wind and solar power. In particular, it is important to make it easy to place solar panels over parking lots and parking decks.* The Historic Architectural Review Board should also establish standards that let property-owners know in advance about acceptable locations for solar panel placement on buildings that are regulated by the Historic District Ordinance.

It may be advisable to *slightly* reduce certain off-street parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance in recognition that a *percentage* of Reading residents typically walk or use public transit. Reduced parking requirements will not only make it easier to reuse older buildings, but also can reduce the amount of surfaces that are impervious, and therefore do not allow stormwater to infiltrate into the ground. *The City should also pre-approve a set of pervious pavement materials for various situations, and consider suitable alternative standards that are proposed in the future by developers.*

***Address the dams that are under the City's jurisdiction.***

*There is a need to seek grant funding to address the existing dams that are under City jurisdiction. Studies that have been completed so far have recommended the removal of the Bushong Dam and possible repairs to two other dams. The removal of the Bushong Dam will open up opportunities to complete the greenway/trail system at Confluence Park, where the Schuylkill River and Tulpehocken Creek meet.*

**Seek continued certifications for Reading's efforts to improve sustainability.**

The City has achieved a Three-Star "Star Communities" designation. It is similar to a LEED designation for a building, but instead certifies that a municipality is following important practices to promote sustainability.

The STAR certification addresses: the built environment, climate change, energy conservation, economy and jobs, education, arts, resident empowerment, health and safety, and the natural environment. As additional measures are put into place to address sustainability in Reading, a higher certification will be possible.

***Work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which primarily can be accomplished through energy efficiency and use of renewable energy.***

*Reading also should participate in international efforts to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. This should include purchasing energy-efficient City vehicles, and increasing insulation and upgrading HVAC systems in City buildings so that they are more efficient.*

## PUTTING THIS PLAN INTO ACTION

This section describes methods that should be used to implement this Plan. There should be continual work by the City Planning Commission and Staff and/or through a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee to assist in carrying out this Plan.



The City of Reading cannot implement this Comprehensive Plan alone. Involvement is needed by municipal officials, residents, organizations, businesses, institutions, foundations, property-owners and many other groups.

The volunteer efforts of local and civic organizations, *organizations of religious faith*, and individuals are essential to further improve the City and to carry out this Plan.

It is essential to keep citizens informed and provide opportunities for meaningful citizen input, while making use of new technologies for communication.

The City should maximize use of the web, email and social media to regularly update residents with information that will help spur public interest, enthusiasm and involvement. Opportunities for citizen involvement should also be highlighted through the newspaper, newsletters, posters and other media.

### **Use a full set of tools to implement this Plan.**

The following major tools are available to help implement this Plan:

- the City Zoning Ordinance,
- the City Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO),
- an Official Map for the City,
- Capital Improvements Planning,
- seeking Federal, State and County grant funds to accomplish important projects, and
- cooperation between municipalities in providing services.

### **Update the Zoning Ordinance.**

The Zoning Ordinance is the primary legal tool to regulate the uses of land and buildings. The Zoning Ordinance includes a Zoning Map that divides the City into different zoning districts. Each district permits a set of activities and establishes a maximum density of development. Zoning also controls the following:

- the heights of buildings,

- the percentage of a lot that may be covered by buildings and paving,
- the minimum distances that buildings may be placed from streets and property lines,
- the minimum size of lots,
- the maximum sizes and heights of signs, and
- the protection of important natural features, such as setbacks from creeks.

The Zoning Ordinance and Map should be updated to be generally consistent with this Comprehensive Plan, to modernize standards and to address public concerns.

### **Update the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO).**

The SALDO mainly regulates the creation of new lots, the construction of new streets by developers, and the site engineering of new multi-family, commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. A final draft of a new SALDO was previously prepared and should be enacted.

### **Continue to emphasize the Property Maintenance Code and Rental Inspection Codes.**

The City's Property Maintenance Code is a valuable tool to make sure that buildings are maintained to a basic minimum level and to avoid blight. The City also enforces an ordinance requiring the licensing and periodic inspections of housing units that are rented. In addition, Reading uses Quality of Life ordinances to issue tickets for common nuisance issues, such as improper storage or disposal of trash.

### **Consider adopting an Official Map.**

The State Municipalities Planning Code provides each municipality with the authority to adopt an "Official Map." An Official Map can designate proposed locations of new streets, street widenings, intersection improvements, municipal uses, and future parks and trails. The Map may cover the entire City or only certain areas. This process may be particularly useful, for example, to reserve right-of-way for a future intersection widening or trail connection. *A draft Official Map was prepared in 2010, but it needs to be updated to reflect changes in street projects before the Map can be adopted.*

Once an Official Map is officially adopted by City Council, then the City is provided with a limited amount of authority to reserve land for the projects on the Map. If the land affected by the proposed project is proposed for development, then the City would have one year to either purchase the land for its fair market value or decide not to go forward with the project. In some cases, a developer can be persuaded to incorporate a project into a development, such as to widen an intersection. This one year period is intended to provide time to raise funds to acquire the land, and avoid lost opportunities. If this one year period is not in effect, a person could obtain a building permit almost immediately in many cases and construct a building that could obstruct an important project. An Official Map also serves to provide notice to property-owners about the City's future plans.

### **Plan for Major Capital Improvements.**

"Capital" improvements are projects involving a substantial expense for the construction or improvement of major public facilities that have a long life span and that are not annual operating expenses. Examples of capital projects include major street improvements, acquisition of parkland, and construction or expansion of buildings.

There needs to be a more systematic identification of needed capital projects in a Capital Improvements Program (CIP), with cost estimates. Projects should then be prioritized, with potential funding sources identified. The projects should then be regularly tied into the annual budgets, borrowing plans and grant applications.

Establishing a schedule of major street, streetscape, building renovation, sanitary sewage, and storm sewer reconstruction projects will help allow coordination with underground construction projects by

the Reading Area Water Authority and other utilities. This coordination minimizes the need to cut into a street after it has been recently repaved.

Through a CIP, many different projects can be combined into a single bond issue, which avoids the high administrative costs of multiple bond issues. A CIP also can make it easier for the City to carefully time any bond issues to take advantage of the lowest interest rates.

### **Seek additional grants to meet community needs.**

The City should continue to identify Federal, State and County grant opportunities to address community needs. This effort should include highlighting grant deadlines for major programs a few months in advance so that there is time to complete a quality grant application. The Appendix of this Plan lists a large number of federal and state grant programs for community and economic development projects and programs. Additional information is available on the website of each agency that sponsors a program.

### **Increase inter-governmental cooperation efforts.**

Inter-governmental cooperation can decrease the costs of many services, while also improving the quality of services. The Pennsylvania Inter-governmental Cooperation Act provides broad and flexible authority to organize joint efforts as municipalities deem appropriate. In general, the Act allows two or more municipalities to jointly accomplish anything that an individual municipality is allowed to do. In most cases, the Act is carried out through the adoption of an ordinance by each municipality to formalize an agreement. One option involves one municipality providing a service to a second municipality through a contract.

Reading participates in the Berks County MS4 Steering Committee, which involves many municipalities working together with the County Planning Commission to jointly meet federal requirements regarding stormwater.

These same concepts can also apply between the City and the School District. For example, the City could agree to plow snow from school parking lots and driveways in return for free municipal use of some school facilities.

The toughest issue in joint municipal services is determining a fair allocation of costs. The State Department of Community and Economic Development has several publications that can assist in these issues.

The following types of inter-governmental cooperation efforts should be considered:

- **Shared Services and Shared Staff-persons** – Shared staff-persons can be particularly beneficial for specialized staff, such as specialized types of construction inspectors. Two or more municipalities could hire the same person to do the same job, with certain hours assigned to each municipality. This allows each municipality to hire a highly qualified person who is working full-time, as opposed to each trying to find a part-time person. This sharing can reduce turnover, which reduces training costs and reduces the potential for mistakes being made by inexperienced staff. In addition, sharing staff makes staff-persons available during more hours of the day, which is beneficial to residents and business-persons. It also provides greater coverage during periods of illness or vacation.
- **Shared Recreation Programs** – When municipalities share and coordinate recreation programs, it greatly increases the types of programs that can be offered. For example, one municipality may offer a gymnastics program, while another municipality offers basketball programs. Residents of each municipality could be allowed to participate in each of those programs at the same cost per person as a municipal resident. There has been great success in parts of Pennsylvania with multi-

municipal recreation programs, where each municipality contributes funds towards one set of programs. These programs are often organized in partnership with a school district.

- **Joint Yard Waste Collection and Composting** – This is a very cost-effective way of handling the disposal of yard waste, which requires significant land and expensive equipment.
- **Joint Purchasing** – Joint purchasing can reduce the costs to each municipality of preparing bid documents and legal ads. It also can result in lower costs because larger volumes are being purchased. This process is particularly useful for annual purchases of standardized materials. The State also has arrangements that allow municipalities to "piggyback" upon State purchases. State law allows a similar process of "piggyback" bids between municipalities and a county. The State Intergovernmental Cooperation Act includes rules for joint municipal purchasing. Under State law, one municipality can be the lead municipality in purchases, without requiring multiple municipalities to seek bids. Municipalities can also join together to jointly purchase insurance, to hire traffic signal maintenance services, or to jointly contract for solid waste collection. Joint auctions can also be used to sell surplus vehicles and equipment.
- **Sharing of Equipment** – This method of sharing is most beneficial for expensive equipment that is needed by each municipality for only portions of the year. The equipment could be jointly owned, or be owned by one municipality and leased to other municipalities. Alternatively, an arrangement could allow trading of equipment.
- **Council of Governments (COG)** -- A COG can promote good communications between municipal officials, provide educational programs, and lobby for State or Federal funding for projects. A COG can also provide municipal services, if authorized by municipalities. A State law also provides that State agencies must treat a Council of Governments in the same manner as a municipality in any funding program.
- **Incentives for Intergovernmental Cooperation in Grants** – Many competitive State grant programs provide preference to projects that involve cooperation between more than one municipality. Therefore, if two similar projects are in competition for a grant, and one involves cooperation between two municipalities, the two municipality project is most likely to be funded.

### **Role of the City Planning Commission**

One of the greatest responsibilities of the City Planning Commission is to oversee the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the preparation of Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance revisions. On a monthly basis, the Planning Commission also reviews proposed developments, *and makes recommendations on proposed conditional use applications under the zoning ordinance*. The Planning Commission also has a role in reviewing proposals of other government agencies.

### **Role of the City Council**

The final decision on nearly all matters affecting the growth and preservation of the City rests with the City Council. Therefore, close communications and cooperation between the City Council, Mayor, the Planning Commission, and the City Staff will be essential in continuing to improve quality of life in Reading.

## ACTION PROGRAM

The following table summarizes the major recommendations of this Plan. Certain items are recommended as high priorities.

The timing of each recommendation is listed. *Short-term generally is intended to mean 2016 to 2018, mid-term generally means 2019 to 2021, and long-term generally means 2021 to 2025.*

A column on the right lists which entities should have the primary responsibilities to carry out the recommendation. *The entity with the lead responsibility is bold-faced.*

Abbreviations for the Prime Responsibilities for each recommended action are listed as follows:

### Abbreviations of Responsible Agencies/Groups:

Adj. Mun.	=	Adjacent Municipalities
Adm. Serv.	=	City Administrative Services Dept. Staff
Anchors	=	Major Anchor Institutions, such as Albright College, Alvernia University, Reading Area Community College, Foundations and/or Reading Health
BARTA	=	Berks Area Rapid Transit Authority/South Central Transit Authority
BCPC	=	Berks County Planning Commission Staff
Berks Nature	=	Berks Nature organization (former Berks Conservancy)
Berks Rec.	=	Berks County Parks and Recreation Department
CD	=	City Community Development Dept. Staff
Chamber	=	Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry
City Council	=	City Council
Con. Dis.	=	Berks County Conservation District
DCED	=	Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development
DID	=	Downtown Improvement District
DVRPC	=	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (in regards to rail service)
EAC	=	Reading Environmental Advisory Council
Fire	=	Fire Department
GBDF	=	Greater Berks Development Fund
GREP	=	Greater Reading Economic Partnership
HARB	=	Historic Architectural Review Board
Housing	=	Local housing organizations, such as the Reading Housing Authority, Our City Reading, Neighborhood Housing Services and Habitat for Humanity
Mayor	=	Mayor of Reading
PC	=	City Planning Commission
Parking	=	Reading Parking Authority
PennDOT	=	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PHFA	=	Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency
PHMC	=	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
Police	=	Police Department
PW	=	City Dept. of Public Works Staff
RATS	=	Reading Area Transportation Study
Recreation	=	Reading Recreation Commission
RRA	=	Reading Redevelopment Authority (and the Berks County Redevelopment Authority as appropriate)
RRCDC	=	ReDesign Reading Community Development Corporation
Staff	=	Misc. City Staff
ZHB	=	Zoning Hearing Board

**LAND USE AND HOUSING PLAN**

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at start of this table)
Update the City’s zoning and subdivision ordinances to carry out the Land Use and Housing Plan. This will involve streamlining the processes to develop desirable uses in appropriate locations. This update should encourage conversion of old brick industrial buildings and new construction of buildings with light commercial uses on the first floor and upper story apartments.	✓	Short-term	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC, <i>EAC</i>
Work with the Berks Nature and Berks County to manage public lands on Mt. Penn and Neversink Mountain as conservation areas. Limit intensive development and clearcutting on very steeply sloped lands that remains in private ownership.	✓	Continuous	<b>Berks Nature</b> , PW, Recreation, Berks Rec., <i>EAC</i>
Maintain flood-prone areas along the Schuylkill River, the Tulpehocken Creek and Angelica Creek as “Conservation” areas that are primarily maintained in thick vegetation, <i>in order to protect water quality. Work to expand public access to the waterways.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PC, Recreation, <i>EAC</i>
Seek federal “Community Rating System” certifications to lower flood insurance costs. Among other matters, flood insurance deductions may be possible if there are early warning systems for floods, requirements that sellers of property notify buyers that a property is in the floodplain, restrictions on fill in the floodplain, and if new buildings are required to be elevated above the flood level by 1.5 or 2 feet.		Short-term	<b>CD</b> , City Council, Mayor, PC
Extend the best features of older development into new development, including extending the grid system of streets and alleys, requiring sidewalks and street trees, requiring small front yard setbacks, promoting new and preserved front porches, <i>and allowing compatible mixtures of uses.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC, HARB, ZHB
Work with the Parking and Redevelopment Authorities to develop neighborhood parking areas in neighborhoods with severe parking shortages. These lots should be emphasized within the interior of blocks or other sites that are not prime for redevelopment, <i>or where undersized homes in poor condition are demolished.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>Parking</b> , City Council, PC, Staff, RRA, <i>RRCDC</i>
Encourage colleges and other major institutional uses to emphasize development of their core campuses, while seeking to minimize: a) expansions into stable residential neighborhoods or b) net increases in tax exempt lands (that are not offset by payments in lieu of taxes). <i>Encourage Albright College to develop additional on-campus housing or housing above new commercial development in order to reduce stress on adjacent neighborhoods.</i>		Short-range	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC, Anchors

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations at start of this table)
Expand the use of a Residential-Light Commercial District to many older areas of the City that are currently residentially zoned, but where there is a predominant mix of commercial and residential uses. Provide for low intensity commercial uses that will be compatible with housing, <i>while establishing</i> limits on late night hours of operation.		Short-range	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC
Establish additional Neighborhood Commercial and Residential-Light Commercial zoned areas to reduce the number of non-conforming uses and to provide well-distributed stores and services that are accessible from all parts by walking or bicycling from all neighborhoods.	✓	Short-range	<b>PC</b> , City Council, CD
Craft cost-effective ways of using available housing dollars, such as: 1) using CDBG funds for critical systems repairs (such as roofing, heating and electrical repairs) at a modest cost per home, and 2) placing liens on rehabbed homes that can allow part of the funding to be recovered if the household lives in the home for less than 5 years.	✓	Continuous	<b>CD</b> , City Council, Housing
Consider the Market Value Analysis in crafting housing policies, particularly to target most public rehab dollars to transitional areas where they can leverage the most private investment, and working to assemble land for <i>longer-range</i> redevelopment in the most severely stressed areas.		Continuous	<b>CD</b> , <i>RRA</i> , City Council, Housing
Establish a County or City Land Bank, which will authorize additional powers to address blighted and foreclosed properties.	✓	Short-term	<b>RRA</b> , City Council, Co. Commissioners, Housing, CD
Help link residents with available resources, including organizations providing housing financing (such as assistance with closing costs), home-buyer counseling assistance, and energy conservation improvements. <i>In particular, the colleges and other anchor institutions should provide incentive programs for their staff for them to purchase homes within selected areas of the City.</i>		<i>Continuous</i>	<b>Housing</b> , <i>CD</i> , <i>PHFA</i> , <i>RRA</i> , <i>Anchors</i> , <i>Berks Community Action Program</i> , <i>RRCDC</i>
<i>Promote use of the “Better Blocks” program to have residents of each neighborhood propose low cost improvements that can improve the quality of life in their neighborhood. This could include periodic closures of a portion of a street for community events and adding plantings.</i>		<i>Continuous</i>	<i>CD</i> , <i>RRCDC</i> , <i>Neighborhood Organizations</i> , <i>Smart Growth Alliance of Berks Co.</i>
Establish a set of recognizable names for various neighborhoods and commercial areas to serve as “brands” to: 1) encourage investment, and 2) serve as the basis of strengthened neighborhood or crime watch organizations. These neighborhoods do not need hard boundaries. <i>The Oakbrook area could be an initial target area.</i>		Short-term	<b>CD</b> , <i>Neighborhood Organizations</i> , <i>RRCDC</i>

**CENTER CITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Seek State CRIZ designation, to offer tax incentives for new investment in Center City.	✓	Short-term	<b>CD, DID, City Council, DCED, RRA, Legislators, CRIZ Authority, GBDF, GREP, RRCDC</b>
<i>Develop the Riverside Industrial Park and the former Glidden Paint site on Bern Street for new modern light industrial uses.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>RRA, CD, GBDF, GREP</b>
Seek that Norfolk-Southern Railroad make excess land available for private redevelopment.	✓	Continuous	<b>CD, RRA</b>
<p>Use the Main Street Program to improve the attractive historic and walkable character of the downtown, and strengthen commercial activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seek State funding and private loan funds to subsidize building facade rehabilitation projects in downtown.</li> <li>- Promote a balanced mix of uses in older commercial areas in the downtown, including street level retail/restaurant/ service businesses. Promote additional market-rate apartments and offices in upper stories.</li> <li>- Continue to emphasize special events to attract visitors, customers and businesses to the downtown.</li> <li>- Stress greater coordination among hours of businesses in the downtown, such as promoting extended hours during certain times of the month when activities are also offered.</li> <li>- Use joint advertising and joint promotions among businesses that are close to each other. These joint promotions are more cost-effective than each business buying its own advertising.</li> </ul>	✓	Continuous	<b>DID, Main St. Board, City Council, PA. DCED, area banks, CD</b>
<i>Carry out recommendations of the “Greater Reading Destination Market Analysis and Brand Positioning Study,” including promoting a public arts and mural trail, seeking to extend hours of the Pagoda and promoting Latino culture and restaurants.</i>		Continuous	<b>Conf. &amp; Visitors Bureau, DID, Chamber</b>

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Properly manage parking to serve different needs, with an emphasis upon making sure the most convenient spaces on key commercial blocks of downtown are available for high turnover by customers parking for less than 2 hours. Vary parking rates based upon demand, including offering lower cost parking in the less popular parking structures. <i>Vary time limits at metered spaces based upon demand, such as allowing two-hour parking where there is less demand. Consider extending the hours of existing residential permit parking from 6 PM to 8 PM in areas of high evening demand, so that spaces continue to be available for residents.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>Parking,</b> City Council, PW, DID
Add additional on-street parking to support adjacent commercial businesses, such as along parts of Washington Street and Penn Square.	✓	Short-term	<b>Parking,</b> City Council, DID, Staff
Consider use of Tax Increment Financing to use new tax revenues from new development to pay the up-front infrastructure costs needed to support new development.		Continuous	<b>City Council,</b> CD, RRA, Co. Commissioners, Mayor, School District
Seek to gradually reduce tax rates that interfere with economic development. Enact a “Land Value Taxation” system to make up for some of the lost revenue, which involves placing a higher real estate tax on land than buildings.	✓	Continuous	<b>Mayor,</b> City Council, Adm. Serv.
Consider alternatives ways of providing tax abatements on new investment, such as providing higher levels of reduction in areas of the City that are most in need of new investment.		Continuous	<b>City Council,</b> Mayor, CD

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Maintain the existing locally-regulated Historic Districts, while fully recognizing market realities and that new types of materials can offer the same appearance as original materials when viewed from the sidewalk.	✓	Continuous	<b>HARB,</b> City Council, CD

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Enact zoning provisions that require approval of demolition of certain important historic buildings in areas that are outside of the locally regulated Historic Districts <i>and the Heights Conservation District</i> . In these areas, the emphasis should be placed upon controlling demolition and the removal of porches and other architectural features, and not upon routine changes to buildings.	✓	Short-term	<b>City Council</b> , Mayor, PC, HARB, Staff
Provide information to owners to older buildings to promote sensitive rehabilitation and to increase their awareness of the significance of their buildings. Promote greater interest in the region's history and historic buildings, such as through historical walking tours and self-guided walking tour maps and mobile apps.		Continuous	<b>CD</b> , HARB, Co. Historical Society, DID
Consider additional zoning incentives to promote the preservation of historic buildings. This could include allowing certain uses within restored historic buildings within a <i>high density residential</i> district that otherwise would not be allowed in that zoning district. For example, a restored historic building in a high density residential district might be allowed to be used as an office or bed and breakfast inn.		Short-range	<b>City Council</b> , Mayor, PC, CD
Publicize the availability of federal tax credits, which are offered for certain types of historic rehabilitation. Seek sources of low-interest loan funding for historic rehabilitation.		Continuous	CD, RRA, DID, DCED, banks, HARB

## ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities
Work with businesses, colleges, and other entities to carry out sustainability initiatives described in this Plan, such as adding solar-powered lighting, and providing convenient parking spaces in parking areas for car sharing services.	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , CD, Anchors, Property-owners, <i>EAC.</i> , <i>RRCDC</i>
<i>Install bicycle racks (which should be required in larger projects). Seek a bicycle sharing vendor and work with institutions and businesses to provide locations for bicycle sharing stations.</i>	✓	Short-term	<b>PW</b> , City Council, Anchors, <i>RRCDC</i>
<i>Expand recycling efforts, reduce solid waste, offer expanded electronics recycling and promote increased composting.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, County, Property-owners, <i>EAC.</i>

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities
<i>Continue the conversion of street lights to LED lighting, which will reduce energy costs to the City.</i>	✓	Short-term	<b>PW</b> , Mayor, City Council
Review City ordinances to make sure the <i>process is as streamlined</i> as possible to install solar panels, particularly over vehicle parking lots and decks. <i>A clear set of guidelines for solar panels should also be established by the HARB.</i>		Short-term	PC, CD, <i>HARB, EAC</i>
Consider offering additional regulatory incentives (such as higher lot coverages) if a project includes a green roof or meets a minimum environmental certification.		Continuous	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC
Strengthen zoning and/or subdivision regulations on important natural features, such as to minimize the disturbance of steeply sloped <i>lands</i> .		Short-term	<b>CD</b> , City Council, PC, <i>EAC</i>
<i>Streamline the process for approval of suitable pervious pavement materials, and use pervious materials in portions along the curb when new sidewalks are installed.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PC, CD, Con. Dis., property-owners, <i>EAC</i>
Carefully manage stormwater to improve water quality, promote groundwater recharge, and comply with Federal MS4 requirements. Encourage landowners to plant and maintain trees, <i>shrubs and thick grasses</i> along waterways. <i>Promote development of rain gardens with plantings that promote infiltration of runoff into the ground. Promote increased use of rain barrels.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PC, CD, Con. Dis., property-owners, <i>EAC</i>
Consider establishing a fee on impervious coverages of each lot to fund needed stormwater improvements, <i>to fund improvements to the City's aging storm sewer system and for other improvements needed to comply with Federal requirements.</i>	✓	Short-term	<b>City Council</b> , Mayor, PW
Manage Reading as an Urban Forest, with an emphasize on tree plantings and preservation. Minimize unnecessary removal of trees during construction, and make sure temporary fencing is used to avoid damage to tree trunks and compaction of root systems during construction.	✓	Continuous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PC, CD
<i>Address the existing dams that are under City jurisdiction, such as the removal of the Bushong Dam and possible repair of other dams. Complete the greenway/trail system at Confluence Park where the Schuylkill River and Tulpehocken Creek meet.</i>		Mid-range	<b>PW</b> , Mayor, City Council, <i>EAC, Recreation</i>
<i>Carry out the follow-up steps listed in the City's STAR certification report to improve sustainability.</i>	✓	Continuous	<b>CD, PW</b> , City Council, <i>EAC, RRDC</i>

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities
Seek continued certifications to recognize Reading’s efforts to improve sustainability, <i>including a higher level of “Star Communities” designation, becoming a “Bike-Friendly Community” and maintaining Reading’s designation as a “Tree City USA.”</i>		Con- tinuous	<b>CD</b> , Mayor

**MOBILITY AND COMPLETE STREETS PLAN**

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Seek State funding to address the most crash-prone and congested locations in the City. Carry out planned improvements to the West Shore Bypass and its interchanges. Reduce congestion and improve safety at the Route 422/Lancaster Avenue interchange. Make the Penn Avenue/Route 422 interchange ( <i>in West Reading</i> ) safer and more convenient for bicyclists and pedestrians.	✓	Contin- uous	<b>RATS</b> , Co. PC, PW, Adj. Mun., PennDOT
Make improvements to the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street and Washington Street corridors in Center City, as described in the Plan, based upon more detailed studies that are underway.	✓	Contin- uous	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PennDOT, Anchors
Complete the River Road extension to Schuylkill Avenue, which will improve truck access to the Riverfront Industrial Site.	✓	Short- term	<b>PW</b> , City Council, PennDOT, Co. PC
Seek improvements to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety and convenience, as described in the Transportation Plan, including through greater use of highly visible crosswalks, “Walk” signals and bulb-out curb extensions.	✓	Contin- uous	<b>PW</b> , PennDOT, Co. PC., City Council
Implement a Complete Streets policy throughout Reading. To start to improve bicycle accessibility, establish a set of bike lanes on two north-south streets that would connect Albright College, the High School, other schools, dense neighborhoods, parks and the Downtown. Where room exists along the shoulders of streets, paint white lines to separate the shoulders to seek room for bicycles. <i>Improve access for persons with disabilities.</i>	✓	Contin- uous	<b>PW</b> , PennDOT, City Council, Adj. Mun., Co. PC, <i>RRCDC</i>
Over the long-run, seek the re-establishment of passenger commuter rail service to Reading. Over the short-run, support the extension of SEPTA rail service to the Pottstown area, with adequate parking or shuttles to it that serve Berks County residents.		Long- term	<b>SEPTA</b> , PennDOT, DVRPC, Co. PC., Legislators, City Council

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Consider adopting an "Official Map" to designate locations where additional land will be needed to improve existing intersections or other improvements. This type of Official Map allows the City to reserve land for potential improvements for up to one year after land is proposed for development.		On-going	<b>CD</b> , City Council, Mayor, PC, PW
Seek federal funds for construction of an additional park and ride lot in the region to promote carpooling.		Continuous	<b>RATS</b> , PennDOT, Co. Com.
<i>Seek funding to provide a higher level of Public Works staffing and to improve the conditions of streets and other infrastructure. Coordinate City projects with projects of utilities, and ensure that utilities adequately restore streets after construction.</i>		Continuous	<b>Mayor</b> , City Council

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES PLAN

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Improve existing parks and recreation facilities and complete trail links to meet a wide variety of recreational needs, as described in the City's new Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.	✓	Continuous	<b>Recreation</b> , City Council, School District, Berks Nature
Improve pedestrian connections to regional trails and promote those connections to encourage residents to make greater use of the riverfront and natural lands.	✓	Continuous	<b>Berks Nature</b> , City Council, PW, Recreation
Prioritize and schedule needed capital improvements, such as to improve or replace those fire and emergency medical buildings that are in poor condition.	✓	Continuous	<b>Adm. Serv.</b> , City Council, Mayor, Fire
Continue to aggressively reduce crime. Seek funding to install additional recorded surveillance cameras in problem areas, and to link outdoor cameras of major institutions into the City system.	✓	Continuous	<b>Police</b> , Mayor, City Council, Neigh. Organs., Anchors
Seek funding to add Police School Resource Officers inside the larger school buildings, to pro-actively reduce problems.	✓	Continuous	<b>Police</b> , Mayor, City Council, Legislators, School District

Recommended Action	High Priority?	Timing	Prime Responsibilities (see abbreviations)
Protect water supplies from contamination and make sure that alternative supplies are available in case a source is no longer suitable.	✓	Continuous	<b>Reading Area Water Auth.,</b> Maidencreek Twp., Con. District, <i>EAC</i>
Seek to reduce crime problems and nuisances by limiting late night hours of operation among new businesses near residential areas.		Continuous	<b>City Council,</b> Mayor, CD, ZHB
Continue efforts to improve the School District, particularly to reduce the drop-out rate, improve security, and make graduates more career or college ready.	✓	Continuous	<b>School District,</b> Anchors, Volunteers
Work with colleges to minimize parking, noise and alcohol problems in neighborhoods. Seek payments in lieu of taxes from major non-profit entities to compensate the City for emergency service costs.		Continuous	<b>Colleges,</b> Other Anchors, City Council, CD

## Appendix A

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF READING

The Reading area was originally inhabited by Native Americans of the Lenni Lenape tribe, who were semi-nomadic. William Penn proceeded to bargain with the native peoples for the right to the property granted to Penn by King Charles II.

The settlement of Reading by European immigrants began in the 1730's, when the area was divided into six tracts of land. These parcels later become part of a plan for the "Towne of Reading", as proposed in 1743 by William Penn's sons Richard and Thomas. The Penn brothers named the town after the city of Reading in Berkshire, England, the ancestral home of the Penn family. Officially laid out in 1748, Reading's original plan featured 520 lots and 204 out lots in a grid pattern, as well as two principal streets.

Penn Street was named for William Penn and incorporated part of the road that connected Philadelphia and Harrisburg. The 400 and 500 blocks of Penn Street were the location of farmers' markets until 1871. Conrad Weiser, a prominent figure in the County's early history, operated the City's first general store in 1749 along Penn Street. Fifth Street was the other original street in Reading.

When the County of Berks was created in 1752, Reading became the County seat. The original Courthouse was erected in 1762 in Penn Square. Reading became a borough in 1783 and a city in 1847. Ferries were used to cross the Schuylkill River until the first bridge was built in 1810. In 1817, the first Penn Street Bridge was built, followed by a bridge at Bingaman Street in 1831. The first major roads to connect Reading with other cities were turnpikes, which provided connections to the north, to the southeast, and to the west. Stage coaches provided early inter-city transportation.

By the late 1820's, two canals served Reading, establishing the City as a halfway point in the system of canals linking the Susquehanna River with the Delaware River. The Schuylkill Navigation Canal, connecting Reading and Philadelphia was completed in 1824. The Union Canal along the Tulpehocken Creek was in operation by 1828.

In the early 1800s, local factories produced beer, cigars, shoes, hats, boots and many other products in the City. Reading developed rapidly between 1825 and 1850, as steam-powered machinery became common and railroads replaced the canal system.

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (later known as the Reading Railroad) constructed their rail line from Reading to Pottstown in 1837. This line was extended to Philadelphia in 1839. The rail line was built to ship coal from Pennsylvania's anthracite region to Philadelphia, and then added passenger service in the 1840's. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad eventually became one of the largest railroads in the nation. The Railroad in 1904 completed construction of its extensive shops along N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, where it built many of its own locomotives, as well as other rolling stock.

Other early industries included the Reading Iron and Nail Works, the Carpenter Steel Mills, hosiery and knitting mills, hardware production, foundries, machine works, flour mills, bricks works, and furniture factories. The Civil War period brought greater demand for goods, causing factories to increase in size as well as number.

The jobs provided by the railroad and the City's many other thriving industries were a powerful attraction to new immigrants seeking work. Reading's original population was largely of German heritage. Then, immigrants from Ireland, Poland, Italy and the Ukraine settled in the southern part of the City, right among the factories where they worked. As the immigrants and laborers settled in the



southern part of the City, the introduction of the trolley in 1874 allowed Reading's more affluent residents to build Victorian large homes along Centre Avenue.

By the late 1860's, the City limits included most of what is now the heart of the City. The Riverdale, Northmont, and Glenside neighborhoods were added in the early 1900's, along with the 18<sup>th</sup> Ward and an area of Mt. Penn. The City achieved its current boundaries in the 1960's.

By 1900, Reading was a major manufacturing center. In 1923, there were 700 manufacturing institutions producing more than 300 different kinds of goods. Reading boasted the largest brick kiln in the country and was an important center for both hosiery manufacture and the production of hardware for building construction. The City also had several large department stores.

Although the economic depression of the 1930's had severe impacts on Reading, jobs in the railroad industry were less adversely affected than many other industries. In 1930, Reading hit its peak population of 111,171, which was almost half of all of the residents of Berks County.

Reading was an important industrial center during World War II. After World War II, federal housing policies, highway construction and the increase in private vehicle ownership caused a nationwide shift of residents and many businesses from cities to suburbs. Reading's population continued to decrease during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. However, portions of that decrease can be attributed to a decrease in overcrowding of housing, a reduction in average household size, and the removal of poor quality housing.

The 1960's and 1970's brought Federal urban renewal programs into the City. Large areas of older development in the downtown was cleared and replaced with new buildings and parking. While some buildings with significant architecture were lost, many outdated and dilapidated buildings were also removed. In 1972, Reading was hit by Hurricane Agnes, which brought the most serious flooding the City had ever experienced. Buildings along the low-lying areas along Riverfront Drive were destroyed, clearing the way for the Reading Area Community College campus, parks and the industrial development that now occupy these lands.

In 1978, the City conducted an historical sites survey of the entire City. It was recognized that preservation of Reading's historic resources was vital in maintaining Reading's heritage and character, and that significant elements of the City's historical integrity were being lost through demolition and inappropriate improvements. The survey identified 23 potential historic districts within the City. In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the first three locally-regulated historic districts were established in Reading: Callowhill, Centre Park, and Prince. To protect these historic resources, a Historic District Ordinance was adopted and a Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB) was established.

A new Home Rule City Charter took effect in 1996, which authorized a "strong Mayor" form of government.

**Appendix B**

**POPULATION, HOUSING AND INCOME OF READING RESIDENTS**

This section summarizes information on City residents, including population changes, housing units, household size, education level, ages, incomes, and employment status. The source for all information is the U.S. Census, unless otherwise stated.

**POPULATION**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the total population of Reading increased by 8.5 percent from 2000 to 2010 (Table B–1). The increase in the City contributed to a 10.1 percent increase for Berks County. By comparison, during the same period, population in the entire state of Pennsylvania increased by only 3.4 percent. Many other Pennsylvania cities (except Allentown) saw decreases in population during this period.

From 2010 to 2013, the Census estimates that Reading experienced a decrease in population of 0.2 percent to 87,893 residents. In comparison, it is estimated that Berks County increased by 0.5 percent during this period.

Table B–1  
**POPULATION, 2000–2013**  
**Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania**

	Estimate	Population		Change, 2000–2010	
	2013	2010	2000	Number	Percent
Reading	87,893	88,082	81,207	6,875	8.5%
Berks County	413,521	411,442	373,638	37,804	10.1%

In the 2010 Census, 13.2 percent of Reading residents reported that they were African-American, and 58.2 percent reported that they were of Latino or Hispanic origin. Those two groups can overlap. In comparison, in 2000, 37.3 percent of City residents reported they were of Latino or Hispanic origin. In 2010, the Asian population was reported to be only 1.2 percent. Six percent of the population reported their background was comprised of two or more racial groups.

In surveys conducted by the Census between 2009 and 2013, 17.9 percent of Reading residents reported that they were born in a foreign country. In those surveys, 49.0 percent of Reading residents reported that they spoke a language other than English at home.

In 2010, persons born in Puerto Rico included 32.0 percent of the population, while persons born in Mexico comprised 9.8 percent of the City’s population.

From 2000 to 2010, five of the City’s 27 census tracts (see map on the following page – tracts 6, 12, 13, 21, and 25) decreased in population (Table B–2). The remaining 22 tracts increased in population.

The term “CT” refers to Census Tracts, which are the various geographic areas within the City that are delineated by the Census.

The following map shows the boundaries of census tracts within the City of Reading.

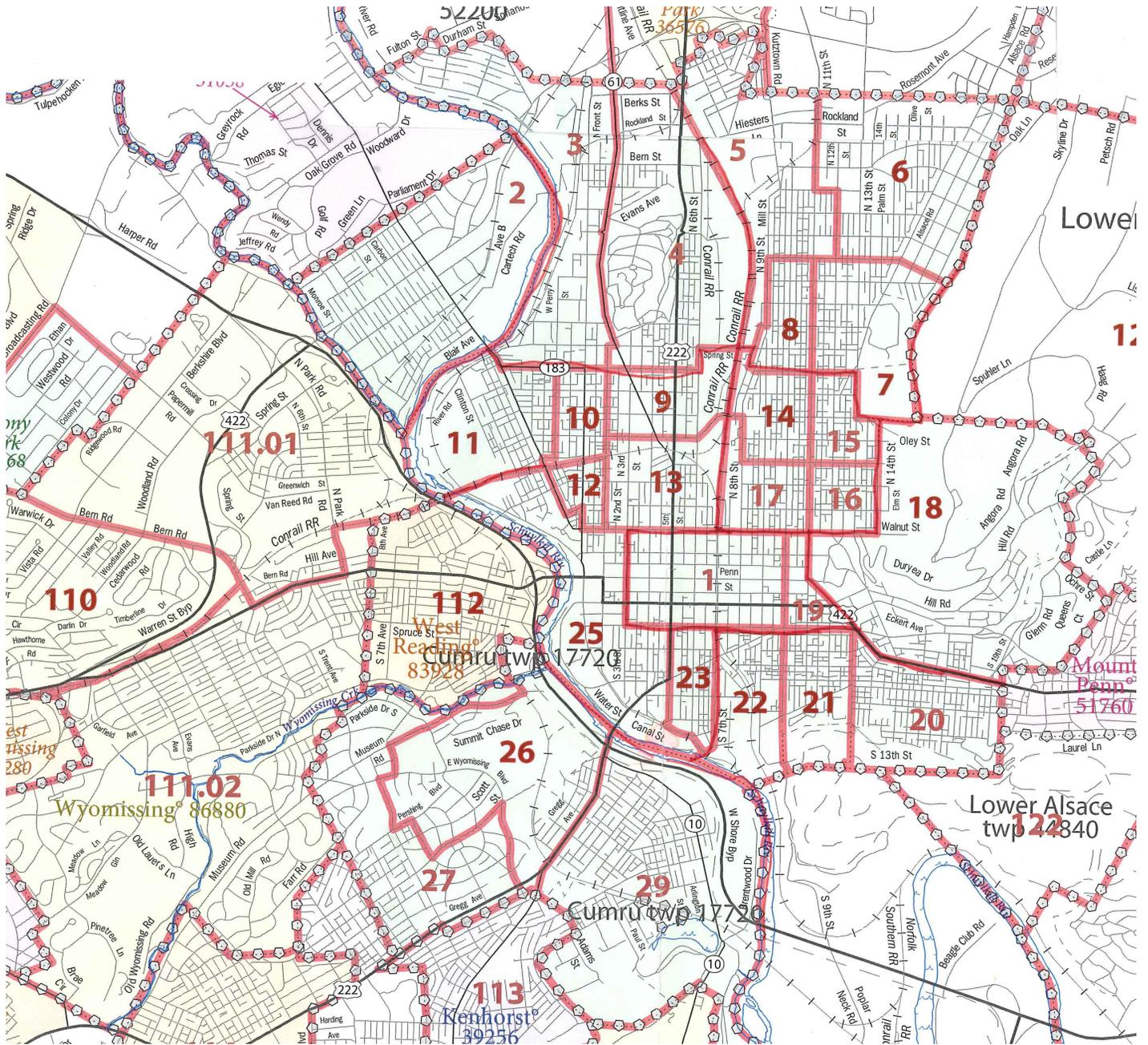


Table B-2  
**Population by Census Tract - City of Reading, 2000–2010**

Census Tract	Population		Change, 2000-2010	
	2010	2000	Number	Percent
1	5,346	5,110	236	4.6%
2	3,970	3,612	358	9.9%
3	2,172	1,915	257	13.4%
4	3,936	3,411	525	15.4%
5	3,554	3,119	435	13.9%
6	3,261	3,370	(109)	(3.2)%
7	4,196	3,602	594	16.5%
8	4,405	3,639	766	21.1%
9	2,696	2,378	318	13.4%
10	3,248	2,982	266	8.9%
11	4,184	3,834	350	9.1%
12	1,741	1,900	(159)	(8.4)%
13	2,970	3,011	(41)	(1.4)%
14	4,494	4,060	434	10.7%
15	3,730	3,080	650	21.1%
16	2,670	2,358	312	13.2%
17	3,224	2,954	270	9.1%
18	2,874	2,597	277	10.7%
19	2,539	2,399	140	5.8%
20	4,181	3,784	397	10.5%
21	2,783	2,745	38	1.4%
22	2,026	2,066	(40)	(1.9)%
23	2,186	2,118	68	3.2%
25	3,201	3,599	(398)	(11.1)%
26	3,330	3,183	147	4.6%
27	2,071	1,928	143	7.4%
29	3,094	2,453	641	26.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88,082</b>	<b>81,207</b>	<b>6,875</b>	<b>8.5%</b>

In 2010, among City residents:

- 9.5 percent were under age 5, which was higher than the Statewide average of 5.7 percent;
- 31.0 percent were under age 18, which was much higher than the Statewide average of 22.0 percent; and
- 9.3 percent were age 65 or older, which was lower than the Statewide average of 15.4 percent.

**Housing**

The City of Reading had a slight decrease in the total number of housing units from 2000 to 2010 (Table B–3). Census tract 29 (southern part of the City) gained the most housing units (104), while census tract 6 (northeast part of the City) lost the most housing units (132). Overall, the City lost 113 units (0.3 percent) from 2000 to 2010.

Table B-3  
**Housing Units by Census Tract, 2000–2010 - City of Reading**

Census Tract	Total Housing Units		Change, 2000-2010	
	2010	2000	Number	Percent
1	3,014	2,766	248	9.0%
2	1,768	1,674	94	5.6%
3	780	765	15	2.0%
4	1,403	1,407	(4)	(0.3)%
5	1,268	1,279	(11)	(0.9)%
6	989	1,121	(132)	(11.8)%
7	1,400	1,403	(3)	(0.2)%
8	1,437	1,444	(7)	(0.5)%
9	1,157	1,184	(27)	(2.3)%
10	1,101	1,129	(28)	(2.5)%
11	1,421	1,442	(21)	(1.5)%
12	584	645	(61)	(9.5)%
13	1,314	1,340	(26)	(1.9)%
14	1,615	1,647	(32)	(1.9)%
15	1,172	1,141	31	2.7%
16	944	939	5	0.5%
17	1,215	1,249	(34)	(2.7)%
18	1,250	1,244	6	0.5%
19	1,266	1,307	(41)	(3.1)%
20	1,693	1,717	(24)	(1.4)%
21	1,111	1,136	(25)	(2.2)%
22	777	807	(30)	(3.7)%
23	908	916	(8)	(0.9)%
25	1,489	1,584	(95)	(6.0)%
26	1,111	1,129	(18)	(1.6)%
27	948	937	11	1.2%
29	1,073	969	104	10.7%
Total	34,208	34,321	(113)	(0.3)%

Households are defined as occupied housing units. The average household size (number of persons per household) in Reading increased from 2000 to 2010 (Table B-4) to 2.85. This was higher than the average for the County and the State.

Table B-4  
Average Household Size, 2000-2010

	Persons Per Household		Change, 2000-2010	
	2010	2000	Number	Percent
Reading	2.85	2.63	0.22	8.4%
Berks County	2.59	2.55	0.04	1.6%
Pennsylvania	2.45	2.48	(0.03)	-1.2%

In Census surveys conducted from 2009 to 2013, 42.4 percent of housing units in Reading were reported to be owner-occupied, compared to the Statewide average of 70 percent. During these years, the median value of owner occupied housing units was reported to be \$68,200, compared to \$164,700 for Pennsylvania as a whole.

In 2010, the Census reported that an unusually high 12.4 percent of housing units in Reading (4,229 units) were vacant. The Great Recession contributed to unusually high vacancy rates that year throughout the U.S. However, the vacancy rate is often over-stated in cities because some residents do not wish to cooperate with the Census. Separate inventories conducted by City Staff have found that vacancy rates have decreased in Reading in recent years. Of this total, the Census reported that approximately 40 percent were listed as “for rent” and approximately 15 percent were listed as “for sale.”

**Incomes of Residents**

Income levels in Reading are markedly lower than the County and state averages (Table B-5). The 2010 median (middle) household income (MHI) in the City is less than half of the County MHI. Furthermore, the difference between the City income levels and those of the County and state increased significantly between 1999 and 2010:

- The State MHI increased by more than \$12,000 (30.3%).
- The County MHI increased by more than \$10,000 (23.1%).
- The City MHI increased by only \$508 (1.9%).

Table B-5  
Median Household Income, 1999-2010

	Median Household Income		Change, 1999-2010	
	2010	1999	Number	Percent
Reading	\$27,206	\$26,698	\$508	1.9%
Berks County	\$55,021	\$44,714	\$10,307	23.1%
Pennsylvania	\$52,267	\$40,106	\$12,161	30.3%

Source: U. S. Census. 2010 is estimated based upon American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

*If the 1999 incomes are converted to equivalent dollars in 2010 after inflation, the 1999 MHI in Reading was equal to \$34,948. This means that actual household incomes among Reading residents fell by 22.2 percent from 1999 to 2010.*

Incomes within the City vary widely by census tract. As of 2010, MHI by census tract (Table B-6) ranged from a high of \$52,875 (CT 27) to a low of \$15,743 (CT 19). Incomes in four tracts (5, 6, 27, and 29) were higher than \$40,000, and incomes in five tracts (1, 12, 19, 25, and 26) were under \$20,000. The largest increases in MHI (greater than \$10,000) occurred in CTs 27 and 29. The largest decreases in MHI (greater than \$3,000) occurred in CTs 11, 12, and 21. Because of inflation over the last decade, the actual incomes in constant dollars fell in most areas of the City. To maintain the same buying power from 1999 to 2010, a household's income would have needed to increase by 28 percent.

Table B-6  
**Median Household Income by Census Tract, 1999–2010**

Census Tract	Median Household Income		Change, 1999-2010	
	2010	1999	Number	Percent
1	\$17,691	\$13,616	\$4,075	29.9%
2	\$21,135	\$20,284	\$851	4.2%
3	\$35,556	\$32,315	\$3,241	10.0%
4	\$32,148	\$33,646	(\$1,498)	(4.5)%
5	\$41,188	\$33,400	\$7,788	23.3%
6	\$52,022	\$51,302	\$720	1.4%
7	\$36,314	\$36,759	(\$445)	(1.2)%
8	\$32,050	\$30,780	\$1,270	4.1%
9	\$37,566	\$31,472	\$6,094	19.4%
10	\$27,109	\$27,902	(\$793)	(2.8)%
11	\$22,159	\$27,743	(\$5,584)	(20.1)%
12	\$19,696	\$24,545	(\$4,849)	(19.8)%
13	\$21,464	\$20,489	\$975	4.8%
14	\$23,412	\$23,750	(\$338)	(1.4)%
15	\$31,917	\$30,660	\$1,257	4.1%
16	\$35,865	\$31,602	\$4,263	13.5%
17	\$24,561	\$25,873	(\$1,312)	(5.1)%
18	\$31,969	\$32,095	(\$126)	(0.4)%
19	\$15,743	\$16,907	(\$1,164)	(6.9)%
20	\$32,419	\$30,515	\$1,904	6.2%
21	\$23,250	\$26,953	(\$3,703)	(13.7)%
22	\$23,393	\$22,995	\$398	1.7%
23	\$22,941	\$21,736	\$1,205	5.5%
25	\$18,078	\$14,759	\$3,319	22.5%
26	\$17,739	\$20,728	(\$2,989)	(14.4)%
27	\$52,875	\$39,545	\$13,330	33.7%
29	\$42,125	\$31,818	\$10,307	32.4%
Total	\$27,206	\$26,698	\$508	1.9%

Source: U. S. Census. 2010 statistics are estimates based upon American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When inflation is considered between 1999 to 2010, the median household incomes in most of Reading actually shrank. The U.S. Consumer Price Index increased by 30.9 percent from 1999 to 2010. One of the exceptions that saw an increase in incomes in constant dollars was census tract 29 which includes areas southeast of Lancaster Avenue.

When considered in terms of persons living in households with incomes below the federally-defined poverty level (Table B-7), the income levels in Reading are low. The percent of persons under the poverty level in the City is more than 2.5 times the percent in Berks County and the State. Furthermore, the percent of individuals in the City living in poverty grew by more than 2.5 times the *rate of* increase in the County from 1999 to 2010 and by more than five times the growth rate in the State.

Table B-7  
**Percent of Individuals with Income Below the Poverty Level, 1999–2010**

	Percent of Individuals		Change, 1999–2010
	2010	1999	
Reading	37.9%	26.1%	11.8%
Berks County	13.5%	9.4%	4.1%
Pennsylvania	13.1%	11.0%	2.1%

Source: U. S. Census. 2010 is an estimate based upon the U. S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The Census mainly counts cash income. In addition, a substantial percentage of Reading residents receive some form of non-cash government benefit, such as rent subsidies. The American Community Survey found that 38.2 percent of City residents received Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) food benefits (formerly known as food stamps), 11.3 percent received governmental cash assistance, and 13.3 percent received Supplemental Social Security income (SSI). SSI is a separate program from regular Social Security.

While employment rates of City residents have increased in recent years, for many years they have averaged two percentage points higher than the average for Berks County.

**Educational Attainment**

On average, Reading residents have lower than average educational attainment levels. In the 2010 census, the share of the City’s population age 25 and over with a high school diploma or above was 65 percent, compared to 88 percent for Pennsylvania as a whole (Table B-8). In comparison, this percentage was 77 percent in Allentown and 76 percent in Lancaster.

Table B-8  
**Educational Attainment, 2000–2010**

	Percent <sup>1</sup> high school graduate or higher			Percent <sup>1</sup> bachelor’s degree or higher		
	2010	2000	Change, 2000–2010	2010	2000	Change, 2000–2010
Reading	64.6%	62.3%	2.3%	9.0%	8.6%	0.4%
Berks County	84.1%	78.0%	6.1%	22.3%	18.5%	3.8%

	Percent <sup>1</sup> high school graduate or higher			Percent <sup>1</sup> bachelor's degree or higher		
	2010	2000	Change, 2000–2010	2010	2000	Change, 2000–2010
Pennsylvania	88.3%	81.9%	6.4%	27.0%	22.4%	4.6%

<sup>1</sup> Percent of population, age 25 and over

Source: U. S. Census. 2010 is based upon American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

When examining educational attainment by census tract (Table B-9), the five census tracts with the largest and smallest average percentage of population age 25 and older who graduated from high school (or a higher education level) from 2008–2012 included:

<u>Largest Percent</u>	<u>Smallest Percent</u>
CT 27 — 88.3%	CT 14 — 40.3%
CT 6 — 85.3%	CT 22 — 48.4%
CT 29 — 80.8%	CT 17 — 48.9%
CT 18 — 76.8%	CT 25 — 50.3%
CT 26 — 75.5%	CT 1 — 54.8%

Similarly, the five census tracts with the largest and smallest average percentage of population age 25 and older who have received a bachelor's degree (or a higher education level) from 2008–2012 are:

<u>Largest Percent</u>	<u>Smallest Percent</u>
CT 6 — 29.4%	CT 5 — 2.6%
CT 27 — 26.7%	CT 22 — 2.6%
CT 29 — 18.8%	CT 14 — 3.3%
CT 18 — 16.0%	CT 17 — 3.3%
CT 11 — 12.2%	CT 23 — 4.5%

Table B-9  
Educational Attainment by Census Tract, 2000–2010 - City of Reading

Census Tract	Percent <sup>1</sup> high school graduate or higher			Percent <sup>1</sup> bachelor's degree or higher		
	2010	2000	Change, 2000-2010	2010	2000	Change, 2000-2010
1	54.8%	40.3%	14.5%	8.1%	2.6%	5.5%
2	63.1%	66.2%	(3.1)%	10.1%	10.1%	0.0%
3	71.8%	65.3%	6.5%	6.9%	9.6%	(2.7)%
4	71.7%	75.0%	(3.3)%	8.2%	10.1%	(1.9)%
5	70.5%	71.2%	(0.7)%	2.6%	6.2%	(3.6)%
6	85.3%	90.1%	(4.8)%	29.4%	35.1%	(5.7)%
7	64.9%	74.4%	(9.5)%	5.5%	11.6%	(6.1)%
8	55.0%	59.6%	(4.6)%	7.3%	3.8%	3.5%
9	68.4%	74.2%	(5.8)%	7.3%	15.4%	(8.1)%
10	67.8%	66.9%	0.9%	8.0%	5.5%	2.5%
11	61.4%	56.8%	4.6%	12.2%	5.8%	6.4%

Census Tract	Percent <sup>1</sup> high school graduate or higher			Percent <sup>1</sup> bachelor's degree or higher		
	2010	2000	Change, 2000-2010	2010	2000	Change, 2000-2010
12	61.6%	51.1%	10.5%	5.7%	7.4%	(1.7)%
13	61.2%	55.4%	5.8%	4.7%	8.6%	(3.9)%
14	40.3%	47.8%	(7.5)%	3.3%	4.2%	(0.9)%
15	61.6%	61.2%	0.4%	4.8%	6.3%	(1.5)%
16	66.9%	64.5%	2.4%	8.8%	4.0%	4.8%
17	48.9%	49.3%	(0.4)%	3.3%	2.4%	0.9%
18	76.8%	76.9%	(0.1)%	16.0%	16.9%	(0.9)%
19	73.2%	49.6%	23.6%	4.8%	4.6%	0.2%
20	70.8%	69.6%	1.2%	8.5%	6.6%	1.9%
21	56.8%	57.5%	(0.7)%	6.2%	6.5%	(0.3)%
22	48.4%	49.7%	(1.3)%	2.6%	5.4%	(2.8)%
23	65.3%	54.7%	10.6%	4.5%	4.0%	0.5%
25	50.3%	46.9%	3.4%	7.5%	4.9%	2.6%
26	75.5%	61.1%	14.4%	9.6%	13.0%	(3.4)%
27	88.3%	81.1%	7.2%	26.7%	16.5%	10.2%
29	80.8%	71.9%	8.9%	18.8%	9.9%	8.9%
Total	64.6%	62.3%	2.3%	9.0%	8.6%	0.4%

Source: U. S. Census. 2010 data is an estimate based upon American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Businesses**

The U.S. Census estimated that 4,568 businesses existed in Reading as of 2007. Of this total, 12.2 percent were estimated to be owned by African-Americans, 27.2 percent by Latinos, and 33.7 percent by women.

In 2007, manufacturing businesses in Reading were estimated to have had \$2.783 billion in shipments, and wholesale businesses were estimated to have \$569 million in sales. In 2007, there were estimated to have been \$733.6 million in retail sales within Reading. This was an average of \$9,055 of sales per resident, compared to the statewide average of \$13,323.

## Appendix C SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

The following table lists various State and federal grant programs that can be used for revitalization, economic development and community development purposes. Funding sources are always changing, with new programs being added and older programs being revised or deleted. *Therefore*, it is important to keep up-to-date with current funding opportunities, the amount of funding available and competitiveness in each program, and the likelihood that a program would fund a particular project.

*While most* programs are administered through departments of the Pennsylvania state government, some others are administered by the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA).

Potential applicants should always contact the regional or central office of the funding source to discuss a project and *to fully understand the program* requirements.

The *websites of the* primary funding programs are:

Center for Rural Pennsylvania (CRP):

<http://www.rural.palegislature.us/resources.html>

PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED):

<http://www.newpa.com/find-and-apply-for-funding/>

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR):

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/>

PA Department of Environmental Resources (DEP):

<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/>

PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC):

<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/>

### Funding Programs for Community and Economic Development

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Alternative and Clean Energy Program (ACE) and Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG)	Grants, Loans & Loan Guarantees	Provides financial assistance to utilize, develop, and construct alternative and clean energy projects in the state. A funding match is required.	DCED and DEP
Alternative Fuel Vehicle Rebate Program (AFVRP)	Grants	Provides rebates for the purchase of new, non-leased, plug-in hybrid, plug-in electric, natural gas, propane and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.	DEP
Automated Red Light Enforcement Grant Program	Grants	Offers grants to improve traffic signals and related electronic systems, to update signal timing, to add turn lanes at intersections to increase capacity, to improve traffic signs and pavement markets (including around school zones), to make pedestrian safety improvements along a road, to install guiderails, and to make drainage improvements that are directly related to a road improvement.	PennDOT

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority (BFTDA) –University Research Commercialization Grant Funding	Grants	Grants to promote stronger synergy between university-based research and development and the transfer of technology as it relates to economic and work force development.	DCED
Building PA	Loans	Provides mezzanine capital for developers for real estate assets in small to mid-sized Pennsylvania communities.	DCED
Business in Our Sites	Grants and Loans	Provides grants and low interest loans to improve ready-to-build business sites. Funds can be used to acquire land, conduct environmental assessment and remediation, perform demolition, install infrastructure, and construct on-site and off-site transportation improvements.	DCED
Business Opportunities Fund (BOF)	Loans	Installment loans, lines of credit and technical assistance for minority business enterprises, women-owned business enterprises and small businesses.	DCED
Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant Program	Grants	Provides funding to municipalities that have been approved as CLGs for many activities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic Preservation Planning</li> <li>• Preparation Design Guidelines Preparation</li> <li>• National Register Nominations/Documentation</li> <li>• Cultural Resource Survey</li> <li>• Revitalization/Reuse Studies</li> <li>• Public Education &amp; Training</li> <li>• Municipal Program Administration</li> <li>• Shared Services/Circuit Rider</li> </ul>	PHMC
Circuit Rider Program (Part of the Community Conservation Partnerships Program - C2P2).	Grants (match required)	Grants to initiate new programs and services for a county, Council of Government, and/or multi-municipal entity that individually does not have the financial resources to hire a professional full-time staff person. Intent is to initiate new programs to increase the ability of the grantee to more efficiently and effectively meet recreation, park, or open space, needs. Grantee is responsible for the long-term financial commitment and maintenance of a professional position.	DCNR
City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ)	Bonds paid off with newly generated state and local tax revenues within the CRIZ	A CRIZ is an area of up to 130 acres, comprised of parcels designated by a contracting authority, which will provide economic development and job creation within a political subdivision. Newly generated state and local taxes collected within the CRIZ will be used to repay debt service to stimulate economic development projects within the CRIZ. Intended to spur new growth, revive downtowns and create jobs.	DCED
Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)	Grants, Technical Assistance	Provides funding for projects that serve households or geographic areas with low to moderate incomes, or that eliminate blight, or that improve access for persons with disabilities. Typical projects include housing rehabilitation, stormwater improvements or construction of ADA ramps at curbs.	DCED and the City

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Community Economic Development Loan Program (CED)	Loans	Low-interest loans for projects in distressed communities.	DCED
Community Recreation and Conservation Program (Part of C2P2).	Grants (match required)	Grants are awarded to municipalities and authorized nonprofit organizations for recreation, park, trail and conservation projects, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for feasibility studies, trail studies, conservation plans</li> <li>• Master site development plans</li> <li>• Comprehensive recreation, park, open space, and greenway plans</li> <li>• Land acquisition for active or passive parks, trails, and conservation purposes</li> <li>• New development and rehab of parks, trails and recreation facilities</li> </ul>	DCNR
Discovered and Developed in PA Program (D2PA)	Grants	Funding to spur creativity and innovation in the provision of economic development services.	DCED
Export Financing Program	Loans	Working capital to acquire inventory, pay direct and indirect costs used for the manufacture or purchase of goods or for the provision of services; support standby letters of credit used as bid bonds, performance bonds or payment guarantees.	DCED
First Industries Fund (FIF)	Loans Grants Guarantees	<i>Funding to</i> strengthen agriculture and tourism industries.	DCED
Global Access Program (GAP)	Expense Reimbursement	<i>Funding to</i> small and mid-sized PA companies to increase export sales.	PA Office of International Business Devel.
Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP)	Grant (match required)	Allocates funds via the CFA from the Marcellus Legacy Fund to plan, acquire, develop, rehabilitate, and repair greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects.	DCED
Growing Greener Plus Continuation of the program is contingent on future funding allocations.	Grants (match required)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watershed Protection Grants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Develop a watershed plan</li> <li>— Education/outreach</li> <li>— Design and/or construction</li> <li>— Operation, maintenance, and replacement</li> <li>— Technical assistance</li> <li>— Evaluation, assessment, or monitoring tools</li> <li>— Watershed group organization/support</li> <li>— Watershed Renaissance Initiative</li> <li>— Healthy Watersheds Initiative</li> <li>— Nonpoint source pollution project</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	DEP
High Performance Building Program (HPB)	Grants Loans Guarantees	Underwrites the cost premiums associated with the design and construction or major renovation of high performance buildings in the state.	DCED and DEP
Historic Marker Nomination Program	Grants	Nominations for state historic markets must be submitted by January 5 <sup>th</sup> of each year.	PHMC

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Historic Preservation Tax Credit (HPTC)	Tax Credits	Offers tax credits to qualified taxpayers who restore a qualified historic structure into an income-producing property. All projects must include a qualified rehabilitation plan approved by the PHMC.	DCED
HOME	Grants Loans Tech. Asst.	Provides federal grant, loan, and technical assistance to municipalities to expand the supply of decent and affordable housing for low- and very low-income Pennsylvanians.	DCED and the City
Household Hazardous Waste Collection Grant Program	Grants (reimbursement — match required)	For registered sponsors of collection programs for household hazardous waste (HHW), electronics, and tires (but not tire pile cleanups). Eligible costs typically include collection, transportation and management of the wastes plus education programs.	DEP
Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania	Tech. Asst.	<i>Provides information at <a href="http://www.housingalliancepa.org">www.housingalliancepa.org</a>, concerning</i> Blight, Land Banks, Homeownership, Homelessness, Affordable rental housing <i>and funding sources.</i>	Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania
Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP)	Grants Loans (match required)	Supports performing environmental site assessment and remediation work at former industrial sites.	DCED
Job Creation Tax Credits (JCTC)	Tax Credits	A \$1,000-per-job tax credit to approved businesses that create new jobs in the state within 3 years.	DCED
Joint Opportunity Business Partnership Fund (JOB Partnership Fund)	Loans	Provides loans to private equity partnerships for investment in Pennsylvania-related companies.	DCED
Keystone Communities Program (KCP)  (The Elm Street Program is currently not separately funded, but that could change in future years).	Grants	Assists PA communities in achieving revitalization. The program designates and funds communities that are implementing Main Street, Elm Street, Enterprise Zone efforts or other community development efforts by supporting physical improvements to designated and/or other communities that are undertaking revitalization activities. Also, provides accessible modifications for the homes of persons with physical disabilities. Components include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pennsylvania Accessible Housing</li> <li>• Housing and Redevelopment Assistance</li> <li>• Keystone Main Streets</li> <li>• Keystone Elm Streets</li> <li>• Keystone Enterprise Zones</li> <li>• Keystone Communities</li> <li>• Keystone Communities Development Projects</li> </ul>	DCED
Keystone HELP Energy Efficiency Program	Loans	Provide low-interest loans for energy efficiency improvements to homes, including the installation of energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems, geothermal systems and insulation.	DEP (partnered with PA Treasury Dept., PHFA, and AFC First Financial)
Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program	Grants	<i>Funding for historic preservation projects.</i>	PHMC

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Keystone Opportunity Zones (KOZs)	Tax credits	Provides certain state and local tax abatement to businesses and residents locating in designated zones.	DCED
Keystone Special Development Zone (KSDZ)	Tax credits	Provides incentives to for-profit businesses that locate and operate in designated geographic zones. Pennsylvania continues to have a surplus of abandoned, deteriorated commercial and industrial sites in need of revitalization. The KSDZ program is an incentive-based program to foster redevelopment of the former industrial and commercial sites.	DCED
Local Government Capital Project Loan Program (LGCPLP)	Loans	Low-interest loans to local government for equipment and facility needs.	DCED
Machinery and Equipment Loan Fund (MELF)	Loans	Low-interest loans <i>for businesses</i> to acquire and install new or used machinery and equipment or to upgrade existing machinery and equipment	DCED
Market Access Grant (MAG)	Grants (match required)	Designed to enhance the capability of small and mid-sized PA companies to increase export sales.	DCED
Marketing to Attract Business (MAB)	Grants	Supports business retention, expansion, and attraction through funding to market the assets of individual regions.	DCED
Marketing to Attract Tourists	Grants	Funding to support and develop heritage assets, enhance outdoor recreation, and support the growth or development of various events.	DCED
Multi-modal Transportation Fund (MTF)	Grants (match required)	Grants to encourage economic development and ensure that a safe and reliable system of transportation is available to the residents of the commonwealth.	DCED and PennDOT
Municipal Assistance Program (MAP)	Grants (match required)	Funding to assist local governments to plan for and efficiently implement services and improvements, and soundly manage development, with an emphasis on intergovernmental approaches. Funding is available for: shared services, community planning and floodplain management.	DCED
Municipal Recycling Program (MRP)	Grants	Grants to assist municipalities and counties in developing and implementing recycling programs.	DEP
Municipal Signal Partnership Program (also known as the “Green Light-Go” Program)	Grants (50% match required)	Grants to improve safety and mobility by reducing congestion and improving efficiency of existing traffic signals on state highways. The program is comprised of the Local Grant Element (Designated only Corridors) and the PennDOT Project Element (Critical Corridors).	PennDOT
Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP)	Tax credits	Program to encourage businesses to <i>contribute towards programs</i> which improve distressed areas, <i>based upon a neighborhood plan</i> .	DCED

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Neighborhood Assistance/Enterprise Zone Tax Credit (NAP/EZP)	Tax credits	Incentive program for private companies investing in rehabilitating, expanding, or improving buildings or land located within designated enterprise zones.	DCED
Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP2)	Grants	Helps communities address the housing foreclosure crisis created by subprime and other problematic mortgage lending.	DCED
New Markets Tax Credits (NMTC)	Tax credits	<i>Federal tax credits</i> administered by the PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA). Individual and corporate taxpayers may receive a credit against federal income taxes for making equity investments in community development <i>projects</i> . The credit provided to the investor totals 39 percent of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year period.	PHFA
New PA Venture Capital Investment Program	Loans	Loans to venture capital partnerships to invest in growth-stage PA companies.	DCED
New PA Venture Guarantee Program	Loan Guarantees	Guarantees to top-tier venture capital partnerships for investments in growth stage PA companies	DCED
Nonpoint Source Implementation Program (Section 319)	Grants	Funding for abandoned mine drainage, agricultural and urban run-off, and natural channel design/streambank stabilization projects.	DEP
Nonpoint Source Pollution Educational Mini-Grants (PACD)	Grants	The program helps County Conservation Districts inform and educate people about the causes, consequences, and clean-up of nonpoint source water pollution.	DEP
PA Housing Finance Agency (PHFA)	Grants Loans Tax credits	PHFA programs <i>include</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Assistance in achieving</i> home ownership.</li> <li>• Homeowners' Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (HEMAP).</li> <li>• Programs to support rental housing, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Low-income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC).</li> <li>– Federal HOME funding.</li> <li>– Allocation of private equity bond cap.</li> <li>– PennVEST Homeowner Septic Program.</li> <li>– Homeownership Choice Program (HCP).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	PHFA
More information is available at <a href="http://www.phfa.org">www.phfa.org</a> .			
Partnerships for Regional Economic Performance (PREP)	Grants to consortia of eligible service providers	The PREP program is designed to encourage regional coordination in economic development efforts. The PREP program integrates <i>services by</i> Industrial Resource Centers (IRCs), Industrial Development Organizations, Local Development Districts (LDDs), <i>and</i> Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs).	DCED
Partnerships Program	Grants (match required)	Part of C2P2 — Grants are awarded to statewide and regional partners who advance DCNR's Strategic Plan, PA's Greenway Plan, PA's Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan, PA's Heritage Areas Program and the Conservation Landscape Program.	DCNR

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Peer-to-Peer Program (Part of C2P2)	Grants (match required)	Peer-to-Peer grants are awarded to help municipalities improve park, recreation, and conservation services through a collaborative process. Projects are accomplished through contracts with experienced park, recreation, and conservation professionals from nearby communities who will work closely with local leaders. Examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Projects that form new intergovernmental recreation and park agencies (which is a high priority for DCNR),</li> <li>• Improving management of a specific facility such as a community center, trail or pool,</li> <li>• Conducting an overall management assessment of an agency's park and recreation services, and</li> <li>• Park and recreation board training/development.</li> </ul>	DCNR
PA Energy Development Authority (PEDA)	Grants Loan guarantees	Provides grants and loan guarantees for alternative energy projects and related research involving: Solar energy, Wind, Low-impact hydropower, Geothermal, Biologically-derived methane gas, Waste coal, Gasification, and Demand management measures.	PEDA
Pennsylvania Capital Access Program (PennCAP)	Loan guarantees	Through participating banks, to support a wide variety of business purposes.	DCED
PA Community Development Bank Loan Program (PCD Bank)	Loans	Debt financing for Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)	DCED
PA Economic Development Financing Authority (PEDFA) Tax- Exempt Bond Program	Bonds	Tax-exempt bonds to be used to finance land, building, equipment, working capital and refinancings.	
PEDFA Taxable Bond Program	Bonds	Taxable bonds to be used to finance land, building, equipment, working capital and refinancings.	DCED
Pennsylvania First (PA First)	Grants Loans Loan Guarantees	Funding to facilitate increased investment and job creation.	DCED
PA Industrial Development Authority (PIDA)	Loans	Financing through Industrial Development Corporations for land and building acquisition, construction, and renovation resulting in the creation or retention of jobs.	DCED
Pennsylvania Infrastructure Bank (PIB)	Loans	For the design, engineering, right-of-way and repair, reconstruction and construction of public highways, bridges, public and private airports and railroads and public transportation systems.	PennDOT
PA Infrastructure Investment Auth. (PennVEST)	Low-interest loans, <i>and limited grants</i>	For design, engineering and construction of publicly- and privately-owned drinking water distribution and treatment facilities, storm water conveyance, and wastewater treatment and collection systems.	PennVEST

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
PA Minority Business Devel. Auth. (PMBDA)	Loans	To businesses owned and operated by ethnic minorities	DCED
PA Natural Gas Energy Development Program	Grants	<i>Funding</i> purchase and conversion costs of heavy-duty natural gas vehicles.	DEP
PA Recreational Trails Program (Part of C2P2)	Grants (match required)	Grants to state agencies, local governments, non-profit and for-profit organizations to assist with the construction, renovation, and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use, and the purchase or lease of equipment for trail maintenance.	DCNR
PA Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)	Loans	Increases access to credit for small businesses, through existing DCED programs to partner organizations and the Machinery and Equipment Loan Fund (MELF).	DCED
Pollution Prevention Assistance Account Program (PPAA)	Loans	Assistance for small businesses to implement pollution prevention and energy-efficiency projects, enabling the businesses to adopt or install equipment or processes that reduce pollution, energy use or raw materials.	DCED
Pollution Prevention Reimbursement Grant Program (Pump and Plug Underground Storage Tank)	Grants	Grants for the reimbursement for costs of pumping and plugging underground storage tanks.	DEP
Public Disaster Assistance Grant Program	Grants	Provides grants to municipalities to recover from floods, major storms, and other natural disasters to replace destroyed infrastructure.	PA Emergency Mgt. Agency (PEMA)
Rail Freight Assistance (RFA)	Grants (match required)	Grants to build or repair rail lines or spurs	PennDOT
Rails-to-Trails Program (Part of C2P2)	Grant (match required)	Awarded to county and municipal governments, prequalified land trusts, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations established to preserve and protect abandoned railroad corridors as trails. Projects can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feasibility, master site development, and special purpose studies,</li> <li>• land acquisition, and</li> <li>• development of railroad rights-of-way for trails, <i>including</i> trail heads, access roads, parking areas, interpretive facilities, comfort facilities and signs.</li> </ul>	DCNR
Regional Investment Marketing (RIM)	Grants (match required)	Supports the marketing initiatives of regional alliances that adopt DCED's industry-focused economic development model.	DCED
Renewable Energy Program (REP)	Grants Loans Loan Guarantees	Provides financial assistance to promote the use of alternative energy (e.g., geothermal and wind).	DCED and DEP under CFA direction

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Overview of Program</b>	<b>Administering Agency(ies)</b>
Research and Development (R&D) Tax Credit	Tax credits	Allows companies holding qualifying R&D tax credits to apply for approval to sell those tax credits and assign them to the buyer(s).	PA Dept. of Revenue
Rivers Conservation Program <i>(Part of C2PC)</i>	Grants (match required)	Funding to municipalities and nonprofit organizations to develop or implement watershed/ river-corridor conservation plans. Priority is given to projects that implement plan recommendations in watersheds that are recorded on the PA Rivers Registry. DCNR will consider early implementation development projects for funding in watersheds not linked to a Rivers Conservation Plan if the project can stand on its own merits and presents a significant and/or unique opportunity.	DCNR
Second Stage Loan Program	Loan guarantees	For working capital for 2–7 year old manufacturing, biotech, and technology-oriented companies	DCED through CFA
Section 108 Program of the <i>Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program</i>	Loan guarantees	Enables local governments participating in the CDBG program to obtain federally guaranteed loans to fund large economic development projects and undertake revitalization activities. The municipality commits the use of future CDBG funds to pay off the loan in case of default.	DCED
Small Business Advantage Grant Program (SBAG)	Grants	Provides 50 percent matching grants, up to a maximum of \$9,500, to enable a PA small business to adopt or acquire energy efficient or pollution prevention equipment or processes.	DEP
Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account (PPAA) Program	Loans	Provides low interest loans to small businesses in undertaking projects that reduce waste, pollution or energy use. Loans will be used to fund 75 percent of the total eligible project cost, up to a maximum of \$100,000.	DEP
Small Business First (SBF)	Loans	Funding for small businesses, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low-interest loan financing for land &amp; building acquisition and construction,</li> <li>• machinery and equipment purchases, <i>and</i></li> <li>• working capital</li> </ul>	Local Area Loan Organizations (ALOs)
Solar Energy Program (SEP)	Grants Loans Loan Guarantees	Provides financial assistance to promote the use of alternative solar energy.	DCED and DEP under CFA direction
Sustainable Energy Fund Program	Loans	Low-interest loans to local governments to complete energy efficiency or renewable energy projects, such as solar photovoltaic and wind energy systems, lighting retrofits, HVAC upgrades, and building envelope enhancements.	Sustainable Energy Fund
Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Guarantee Program	Loan guarantees	Promotes development, redevelopment and revitalization of sites in accordance with the TIF Act. The program provides credit enhancement for TIF projects to improve market access and lower capital costs through the use of guarantees to issuers of bonds or other indebtedness.	DCED

Program Name	Program Type	Overview of Program	Administering Agency(ies)
Technical Evaluation of HSCA Remedial Response	Grants	A Hazardous Sites Cleanup Act (HSCA) host municipality can receive a grant to conduct an independent technical evaluation of a proposed remedial response at a HSCA site. The grant money is locally administered by and available through the county.	DEP and the County
Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)	Grants (match required)	Provides federal grants to enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities, improve access to public transportation, create safe routes to schools, preserve historic transportation structures, provide environmental mitigation, create trails that serve a transportation purpose, and promote safety and mobility.	PennDOT
Water Supply and Wastewater Infrastructure Program (PennWorks)	Grants Loans	Funding to ensure safe water supply and proper wastewater infrastructure. The program is for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water and sewer projects not used solely for residential purposes,</li> <li>• land and building acquisition,</li> <li>• demolition,</li> <li>• water/sewer project construction costs, <i>and</i></li> <li>• project engineering and other fees.</li> </ul>	DCED
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)	Grants	Increases energy efficiency for low-income homeowners by reducing energy costs.	DCED
Workforce and Economic Development Network of Pennsylvania (WEDnetPA) — also referred to as “Guaranteed Free Training Program” (GFT)	Grants	Provides qualified employers training funds for new and existing employees. WEDnetPA is a partnership of community colleges, universities, and other educational institutions working together to be responsive to the needs of PA’s business community. See <a href="http://www.WEDnetPA.com">www.WEDnetPA.com</a> .	DCED

Source: Websites of the various agencies, as accessed December 2014.

## **Appendix D Adjacent Zoning**

This section identifies the major zoning policies in the immediately adjacent portions of municipalities surrounding Reading. Clockwise from the northern border of the city, the adjacent municipalities are:

- Muhlenberg Township
- Lower Alsace Township
- Mount Penn Borough
- Cumru Township
- Kenhorst Borough
- West Reading Borough
- Wyomissing Borough
- Bern Township

This section describes primary permitted uses and key requirements. Multiple notations of the same zoning district indicate multiple occurrences of the zone along the municipal border, moving clockwise. For a complete list of all uses and requirements, please consult the individual municipal zoning ordinance.

### Muhlenberg Township

Reading abuts Muhlenberg Township along the northern city border. From the Schuylkill River eastward, Muhlenberg zones are:

- R-2— Low to Medium Density Residential — mainly allows single-family detached houses at an average of 4 homes per acre.
- I-2 — Limited Industrial — mainly allows manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and office uses.
- C-3— Highway Commercial — allows a wide variety of commercial uses.
- R-4— Medium to High Density Residential — allows single-family detached, single-family semidetached, two-family detached, and townhouses at up to 12 homes per acre.
- I-1 — Limited Industrial — mainly allows manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and office uses.
- R-5— High Density Residential — allows all types of housing including apartments.
- R-2— Low to Medium Density Residential (see above)
- C-1— Village Commercial — allows all the residential uses of the R-4 district plus a variety of commercial uses.
- R-5— High Density Residential (see above)

### Lower Alsace Township & Mount Penn Borough (joint zoning ordinance)

- R-C — Rural Conservation — mainly allows single-family detached dwellings on 5-acre lots, plus a residential cluster design option (to promote land conservation).
- R-2— Low Density Residential — mainly allows for single-family residential houses with minimum lot sizes of 10,000 or 20,000 square feet, depending on the availability of public water and sewer service.
- R-1— Rural Residential — mainly allows for single-family detached houses on lots of two or more acres.
- R-4— High Density Residential — mainly allows for single-family detached houses, single-family semidetached houses, and townhouses at a density of up to 7 to 15 units per acre.
- R-2 — (see above)

- R-1 — (see above)
- R-2 — (see above)
- R-4 — (see above)
- R-C — (see above)

#### Cumru Township

- RC — Rural Conservation — mainly allows for single-family detached dwellings and residential cluster design (to promote land conservation), in addition to some outdoor recreation uses, such as horse stables. Minimum lot sizes range from three to 10 acres.
- GI — General Industrial — allows for a wide range of industrial uses, in addition to offices, commercial recreation uses, construction services, restaurants, retail sales, warehousing, and distribution uses.
- RC — (see above)
- GI — (see above)
- RC — (see above)
- GI — (see above)

#### Kenhorst Borough

- R3 — Urban Residential — mainly allows for single-family detached dwellings and homes.
- C1 — Highway Commercial District — allows for a wide range of commercial uses, plus single-family detached dwellings and rooming boarding houses.
- R1 — Suburban Residential — mainly allows for single-family detached dwellings.

#### West Reading Borough

- C — Conservation — mainly allows for wastewater facilities, governmental uses, and surface parking areas covered with wood chips, loose stones, and other similar materials.

#### Wyomissing Borough

- I-2 — Light Industrial — mainly allows for manufacturing uses (other than heavy industries), offices, warehousing and distribution, banks, hotels, theaters, restaurants, gas stations, retail sales and shopping centers.
- R-3 — Medium Residential — mainly allows for apartments and townhouses.

#### Bern Township

- IR — Institutional/Recreational — mainly allows for hospitals, nursing homes, personal care facilities, golf courses, and day-care centers. (Includes an existing golf course).
- SR — Suburban Residential — mainly allows for single-family detached homes at a low density.

## Appendix E Summary of Citizen Surveys

*During 2015, hundreds of online surveys and paper surveys were completed, with the assistance of students from the I-LEAD Charter School. A particular effort was made to obtain input from Latinos and young persons, who are often under represented in citizen participation efforts. An Excel spreadsheet was prepared that includes all of the results. The following is a summary of common responses. The main questions were:*

- a) What do you like most about the City of Reading?,*
- b) What do you not like about Reading?, and*
- c) What would you like to see improved in Reading, and what ideas do you have for improvements?*

### *What do you like most about Reading?*

*Common responses included the medium size of the City, the availability of quality health care, the parks and trails, the diverse cultures of people, the proximity of family members, the Pagoda, the variety of restaurants, the low cost of living (particularly for housing), the corner stores, the historic character of the City, the colleges, the Reading Museum, entertainment options (including the Santander Arena and movie theaters), and the proximity to Philadelphia and New York City.*

### *What do you not like about Reading?*

*By far, the most comments concerned violent crime. Most complaints involved crime, fights, gangs and drug addiction.*

*There were multiple complaints about trash, and about the physical conditions of streets. There were complaints about overcrowding, poor conditions of housing, abandoned buildings, and irresponsible landlords.*

*There were complaints about the quality of public schools and about bullying.*

*Some concerns were expressed about discrimination against minorities.*

*Many persons commented on poverty and the shortage of good jobs, particularly for younger persons.*

*Some persons were unhappy with the number of parking meters, while others complained about shortages of parking spaces.*

*Some persons complained that there is a “lack of things to do.”*

### *What would you like to see improved in Reading? What ideas do you have for improvements?*

*Most persons responded that they would like to see a reduction in violence and other crimes. Most people felt that was a serious need to improve public safety. There were also many requests for higher quality schools, and for an expanded police presence and additional security staff in schools.*

*Many persons felt that drug addiction needed to be reduced.*

*Many persons desired cleaner streets and sidewalks and for the cleanup of blighted properties. Also, some persons sought a reduction in stray dogs.*

*Many persons wanted to see additional job opportunities, including jobs that could be obtained by teens and persons with a criminal record.*

*Other persons requested more constructive recreation activities for youth.*