

# DOWNTOWN WEST READING

vision & master plan

DERCK & EDSON  
EST. 1940  
CAMPUSES DOWNTOWNS ATHLETICS

November 30, 2020

prepared for the  
West Reading Community  
Revitalization Foundation



# DOWNTOWN WEST READING

vision & master plan



## On the Cover:

The West Reading Motor Club building is an example of a renovation to a landmark building along Penn Avenue

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## PLANNING TEAM

This plan was prepared by:

Derck & Edson LLC  
33 S. Broad Street  
Lititz, PA 19038  
www.DerckandEdson.com  
(717) 626-2054





# 1

## A Vision for West Reading



After: Potential redevelopment of the West Reading Shopping Center with a plaza at the corner, offices, residences, retail and additional parking facilities to expand retailing storefronts along the north side of Penn Avenue at Sixth Avenue



Before: Penn Avenue at 6th Avenue facing Northeast

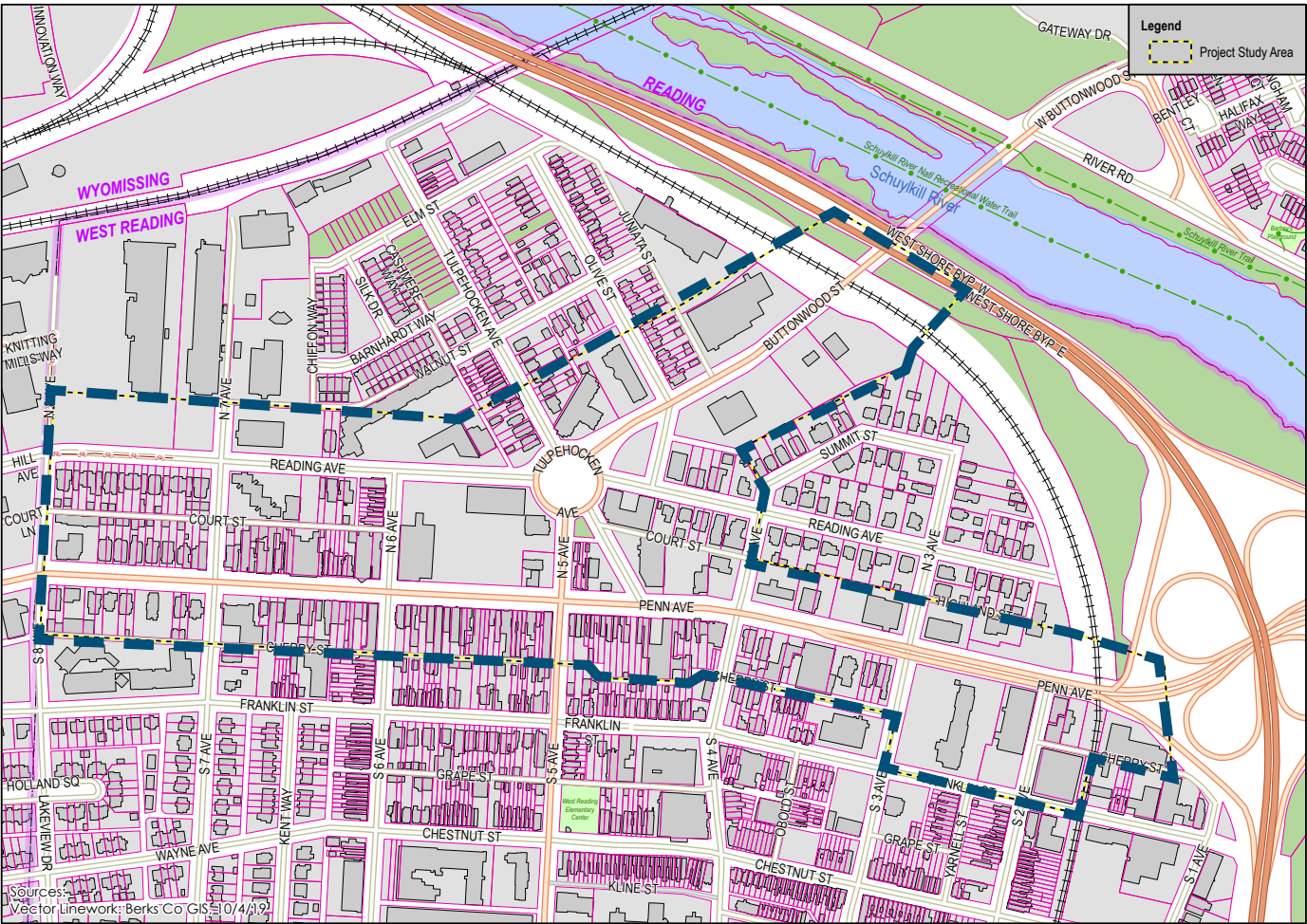
The Downtown West Reading Vision and Master Plan offers a series of planning concepts and renderings designed to inspire community members, business owners, property owners and municipal leaders to envision a renewed focus on a dynamic public realm for the downtown. The plan calls for a new plaza for community events at Sixth and Penn Avenues, new storefronts and restaurants along Reading Avenue, a new civic space at Delaney Circle and new parking areas along Tulpehocken Street, Cherry Street and Court Street. The plan encourages an expanded Mural Arts Walk with better wayfinding signs, lighting and traffic calming to enhance pedestrian safety. At the eastern edge of the downtown, the plan envisions opportunities for Second Avenue and Franklin Avenue to attract new investment to the “Chocolate District”. As industrial and commercial properties evolve and redevelop and traffic patterns change, this district could attract small scale artisan production businesses, fitness studios, restaurants and apartments with enhanced views of and access to the river. As business activity increases, public and private investments to rehabilitate homes and neighborhoods should remain a key focus of the plan.



Study Area

The Project Study Area utilized for this study consists of the properties facing the following streets:

- Penn Avenue from 8th Avenue to the railroad bridge
- Reading Avenue from 8th Avenue to Buttonwood Street
- Buttonwood Street from Reading Avenue to the river
- Franklin Street from 3rd Ave to the railroad overpass
- Additional focus was also given to the alleys of Cherry and Court Streets



West Reading Master Plan Study:  
West Reading Borough, Berks County, Pennsylvania - 10/9/19  
Map of Project Study Area

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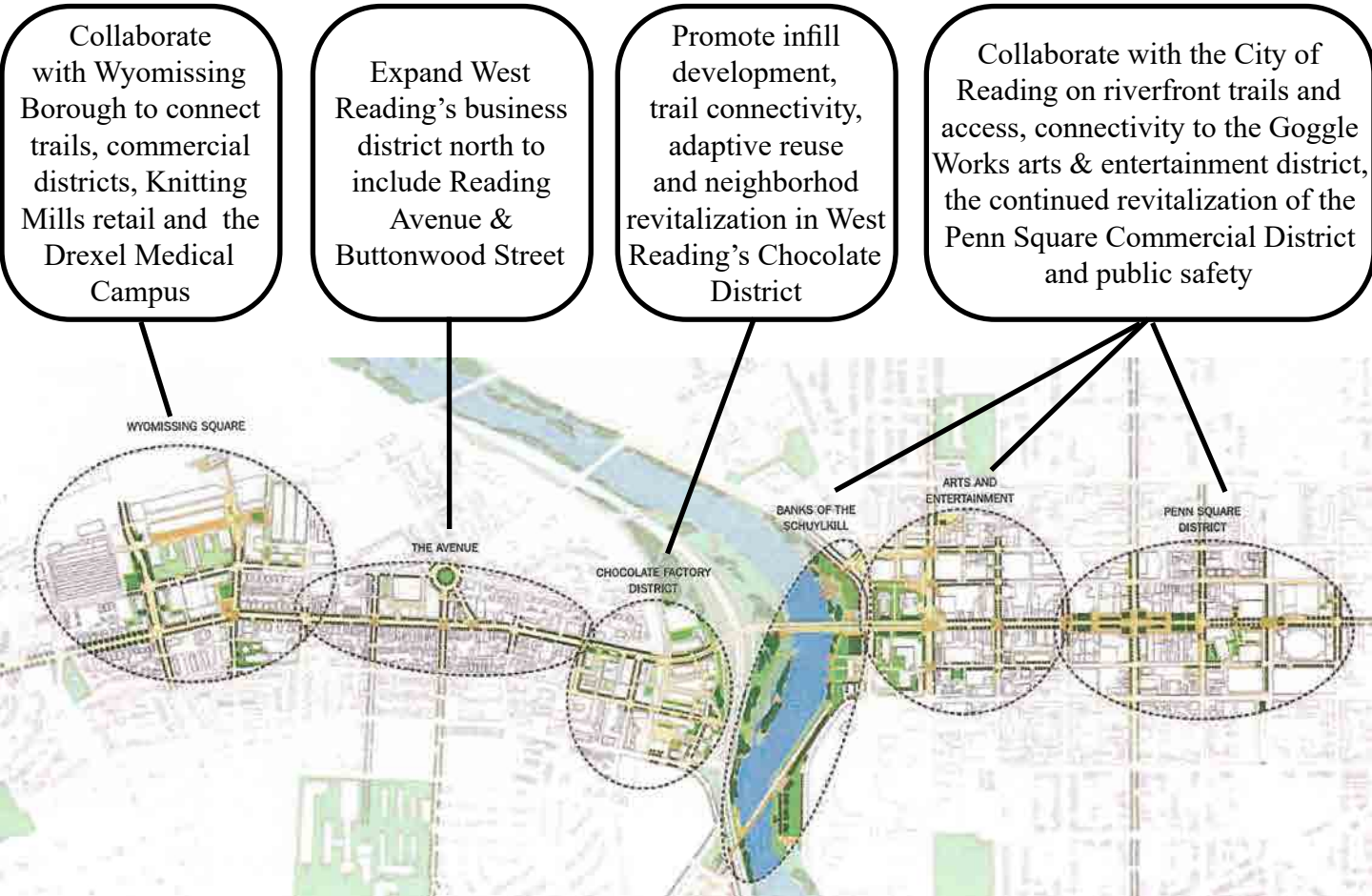
The Challenges

West Reading has a strong foundation for future growth upon which to build including thriving restaurants, small shops, a burgeoning art scene, and historic charm. The main challenge facing West Reading is guiding future growth in a way that builds upon the established character yet is able to provide meaningful innovation. Continued growth requires addressing a number of needs identified by this study and previous studies such as:

- Protect existing historic character
- Parking lots that interrupt the continuity of storefronts and commercial activity along shopping streets
- Address the need for public green space and civic spaces
- Lack of downtown anchors and grocers
- Large, visible sites coming up for redevelopment
- Address the need for municipal and on-street parking
- Address the need for more housing in the downtown
- Connectivity issues to the surrounding rail trails,

- hospital, and adjacent towns of Wyomissing/Reading
- Addressing Cherry and Court streets so they function in a manner more consistent with desired use.
- Promoting the brand of West Reading and defining the character of West Reading for the future
- Ensure the organizational and financial sustainability of the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation
- Update the zoning ordinance standards to better match the desired character of the downtown
- Dealing with the aftermath of COVID-19

Collaborate with Wyomissing & Reading to strengthen the Penn Corridor





The Vision

Downtown West Reading is a bustling place offering a rich array of dining, entertainment, arts, wellness and personal service businesses serving the Greater Reading area, not just the 4,300 residents of the Borough. Although West Reading has many strengths and has high occupancy in its business district, community leaders are well aware that competition from other downtowns and changing consumer preferences require every business district be proactive to build upon areas of strength and overcome weaknesses. The West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation, the Borough of West Reading and many of the area business leaders have been engaged in a planning effort to guide future planning and investments to enhance the downtown and quality of life in the Borough. This Vision and Master Plan seeks to offer a five year plan to guide public and private investments in the downtown district.

The steering committee, representing a broad range of community, business and municipal interests, have established four goals to help guide the enhancement

of the business district:

- **EXPAND THE BUSINESS DISTRICT** physically while attracting businesses to strengthen West Reading’s Arts, Entertainment, Dining & Wellness themes
- Envision ways to **TRANSFORM AGING AND UNDERUTILIZED SITES** and streets into **DYNAMIC PLACES, PARKS AND PARKING**.
- Promote **INFILL DEVELOPMENT & REDEVELOPMENT** to upgrade aging buildings and parking lots into mixed use places that embrace this vision for West Reading.
- Embrace **DESIGN STANDARDS** to ensure that the district continues to provide quality storefronts, attractive streetscapes, plazas and civic spaces and buildings that reflect both the historic character and inspired designs that make West Reading an authentic place.



Proposed rendering of the potential redevelopment of the Delaney Circle area to create a central gathering place surrounded by retail, residential, office and dining choices that can reconnect this treasured park to the downtown by reconfiguring the traffic circle.

The Plan of Action

The action plan for Downtown West Reading includes the following recommendations that fall under each of the four goals:

Expand the Business District

- Expand the Business District to include Reading Avenue
- Attract a food market and grocery to the area
- Expand performing arts/ entertainment uses
- Expand arts-oriented businesses
- Expand clothing, shoe and specialty gift stores

Implement Design Standards

- Promote design standards and greater continuity of storefronts along the sidewalk
- Discourage blank walls and non-retail uses along primary retailing streets

Promote Placemaking on Underutilized Sites

- Create gateway entrance experiences as you arrive in the downtown
- Create a central plaza/ green space for events and community gatherings
- Enhance Cherry and Court Streets as places to walk,

park & experience West Reading’s mural arts walk

Promote Infill & Redevelopment

- Promote mixed use development and reduce the visibility of surface parking lots along primary retailing streets
- Enhance pedestrian and bicycle trail and sidewalk connectivity throughout the area
- Encourage adaptive reuse and redevelopment within the Chocolate District in the vicinity of the Second and Franklin Street area

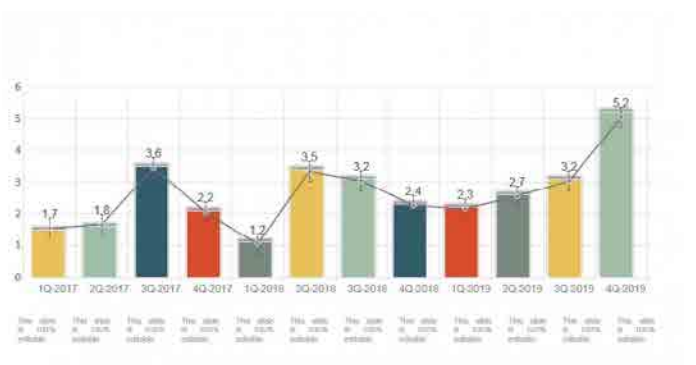
This plan of action will be outlined in greater detail in subsequent chapters and expanded in Chapter 5 - Implementation Strategies.



Proposed rendering of the potential redevelopment of the West Reading Shopping Center with a civic plaza at the corner, offices, residences, retail and additional parking facilities to expand retailing storefronts along the north side of Penn Avenue.



Recommendations for West Reading: *Be Market Responsive*



**UNDERSTAND YOUR MARKET STRENGTHS:**  
Know West Reading’s strengths, have a plan for business attraction, and promote your strong business clusters with media & events



**EXPERIENTIAL RETAIL:**  
Encourage businesses to provide intuitive, engaging, meaningful, immersive, accessible & personalized experiences



**BRANDING, ECOMMERCE & SOCIAL MEDIA:**  
Districts and businesses that offer a clear brand choice as well as in-store customer experiences as well as ecommerce solutions connected to social media are most likely to thrive



**CRAFT A COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY:**  
Prepare a branding, events, business recruitment and capital improvement plan to attract and retain residents, customers & businesses close to your downtown

*Leverage the Power of Place*



**PROMOTE ANCHOR USES:**  
Incentivize downtown West Reading as the hub of activity to generate pedestrian activity, commerce & employment. Recruit anchor uses such as a boutique grocer, food courts, performing arts organizations, an art cinema, outdoor markets, lodging & banquet halls to complement smaller business clusters.



**FORM BASED & FLEXIBLE MUNICIPAL ZONING:**  
To allow businesses to pivot to meet changing market conditions, municipal ordinances should allow flexibility in uses & parking while establishing desirable building forms near streets



**MIXED-USE BUILDINGS:**  
Incentivize mixed-use buildings to promote commerce, 18 hour-a-day activity, residential living choices & economic sustainability



**ACTIVE FRONTAGES:**  
Line commercial streets with storefronts & frequently spaced doors and windows to promote welcoming places with commerce and pedestrian activity



## Recommendations for West Reading: *Provide Civic Infrastructure*



### COMPLETE STREETS:

Establish street design standards that embrace the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles, safety, transit emergency services & the environment



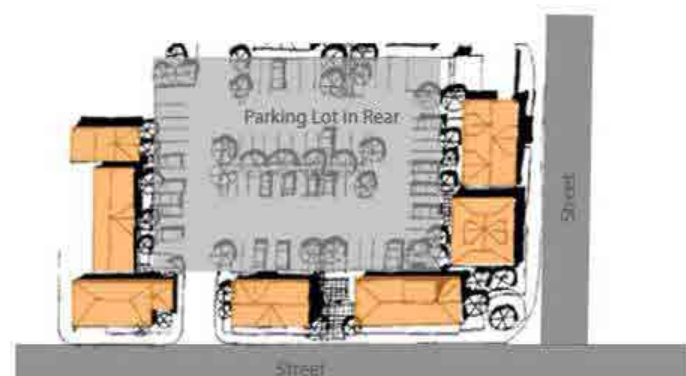
### CIVIC SPACES:

Incentivize and create civic spaces in the downtown core that serve multiple types of events throughout the day, week and year – informal gathering, annual festivals & market days



### CONNECTED PLACES:

Connect West Reading's downtown, community buildings, civic spaces, Schuylkill Riverfront and neighborhoods with a network of streets, sidewalks and trails. Promote traffic calming, mural arts walks, pedestrian safety and parking access along Court and Cherry Streets.



### PARKING PLACEMENT:

Require the location of off-street parking to the rear & side of buildings to maintain continuity of sidewalk and storefront experience

## Be Responsive to the Challenges the Business Community is facing during the Pandemic



### ENGAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS:

Collaborate and form partnerships with the Borough, County economic development organizations, the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation, the Berks County Chamber of Commerce, Drexel University, Reading Area Community College, Alvernia University & Tower Health and neighboring municipalities to better support West Reading's downtown and small businesses.



### RETROFIT STREETS FOR CURBSIDE PICKUP, OUTDOOR DINING, MORE WALKING:

Streets and sidewalks are becoming more important than ever as they need to meet the changing needs of their users. Consider options to allow restaurants and businesses to temporarily increase outdoor dining and reduce parking requirements to permit safe social distancing practices.



### ADAPTIVE REUSE:

As building vacancies increase, promote policies that will allow building owners and businesses to quickly retrofit buildings to respond to the changing demands of workplaces, retail, restaurants and residential living.



### TRANSFORM DOWNTOWN ORGANIZATIONS INTO SERVICE PROVIDERS:

Many small businesses may need a central office to facilitate procurement, branding, marketing, web site design, event management and master tenant leasing. Consider new partnerships, new funding sources and new ways to expand the range of services that business district organizations such as the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation can provide to support the limited capacity of many small businesses.



# 2

## Defining the Issues & Opportunities



### ***A Vibrant District with Many Assets & Opportunities***

Based upon our assessment of a variety of sources, the Downtown West Reading's challenges and potential opportunity sites are outlined in the following chapter. We used a combination of GIS data, ESRI market analysis, in person field assessment, and a character preference survey to identify the key issues facing West Reading.

This chapter studies West Reading's civic space, transportation and connectivity, existing land use and character, building heights, street wall presence, demographics and market opportunities. Lastly, included in this chapter are the results from a character preference survey of businesses, community leaders and key stakeholders to gain feedback of the character and types of spaces desired in the future.



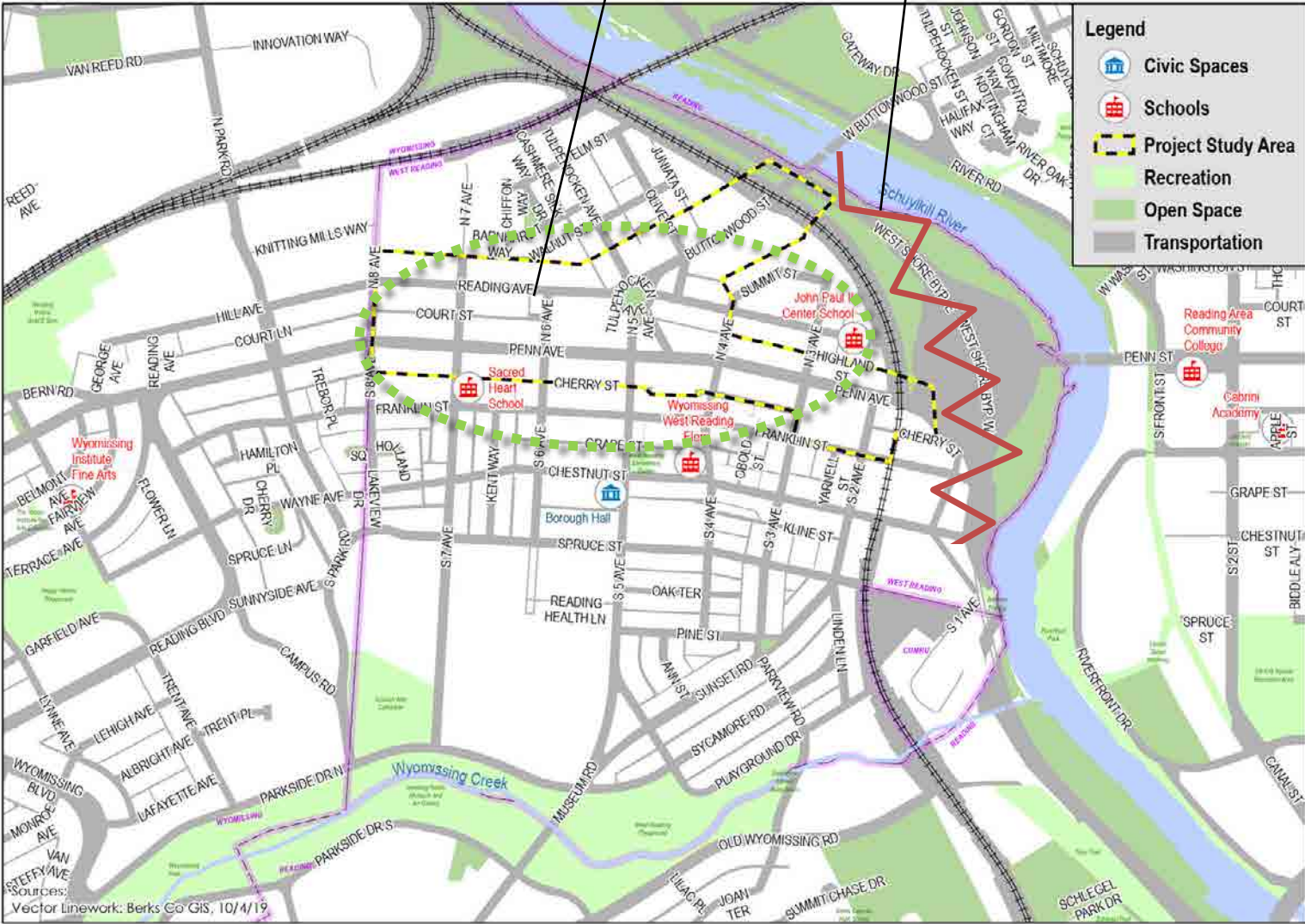
Civic Space

West Reading currently lacks greenspace and civic space in the downtown core. The largest block of greenspace - Delaney Circle - is difficult to access and enjoy because it is surrounded by two lanes of vehicular traffic on all sides. Additionally connection to the Schuylkill River and adjacent trails is made difficult by the Route 422 highway and interchange.

We recommend incentivizing opportunities for public greenspace and civic space in the downtown area while fostering connection to surrounding greenways and natural resources.

As illustrated in the graphic below, West Reading has very few civic, recreation or open space areas (highlighted in green) within the downtown area. Delaney Circle is the most prominent area of civic/open space and should be enhanced and better connected to the downtown.

The red line shown here illustrates the barriers (railroad and highway) to West Reading’s biggest recreation/open space asset - the Schuylkill River and trails. Where possible connections to the river and trails should be fostered.



Map Illustrating Civic and Open Spaces in West Reading (highlighted in green).

Transportation & Connectivity

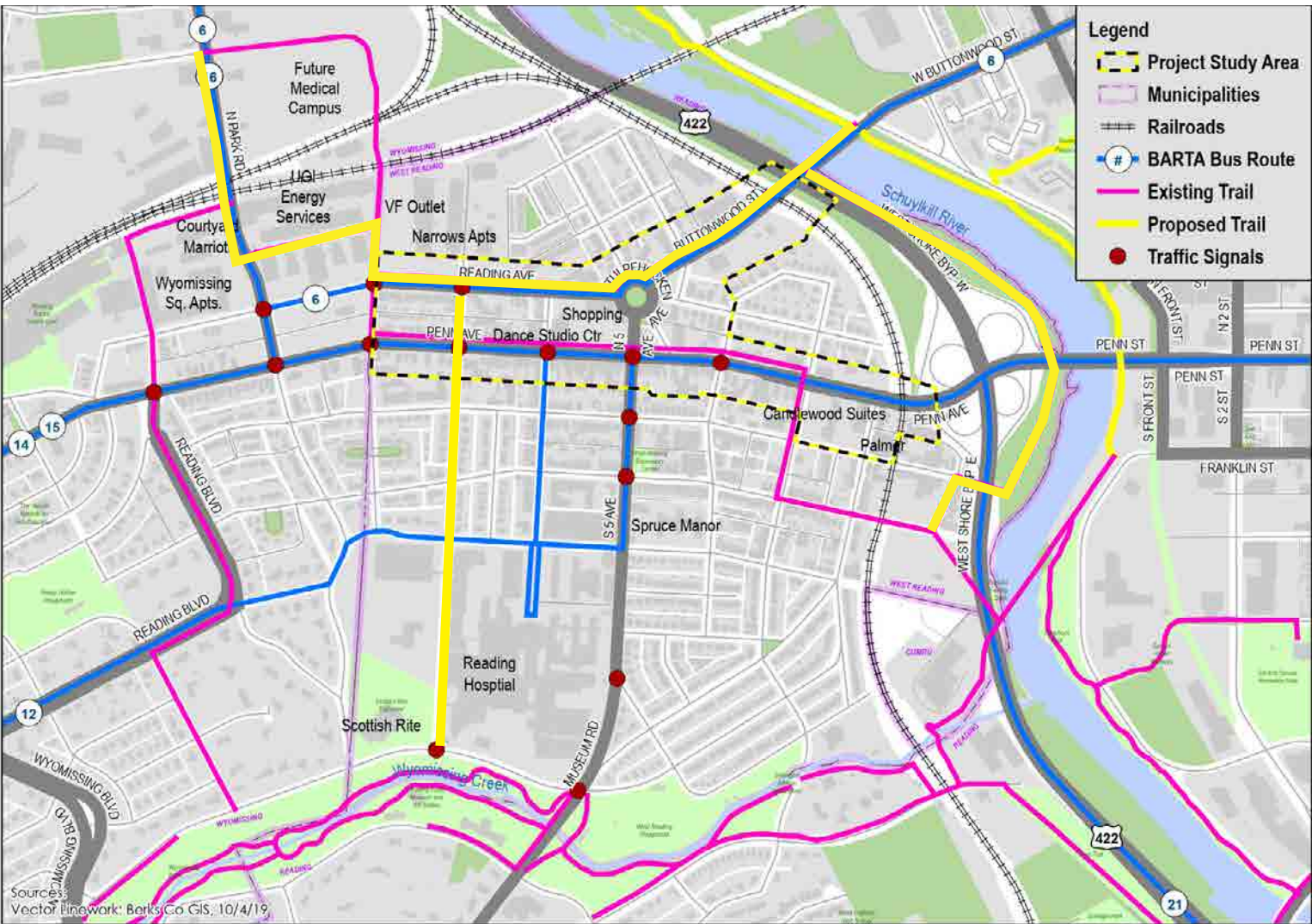
West Reading is well served by public transit routes and easy access to adjacent highways. Public transit should continue to be encouraged and incentivized.

The existing signed bike route along Penn Ave, 4th Ave and Chestnut is well marked with signage, but does not offer a dedicated lane. Connection to the surrounding greenway, Wyomissing, and Reading as well as Reading Hospital should be encouraged.

A bicycle plan is being developed in cooperation with Wyomissing Borough which includes new trails connecting to North Park Avenue, Reading Avenue, 7th Ave and Buttonwood Street. The plan calls for a number of bike share stations to be added to the bike network. Additional study should be given to connect West Reading to the Schuylkill River waterfront between Franklin Street and Buttonwood Street.



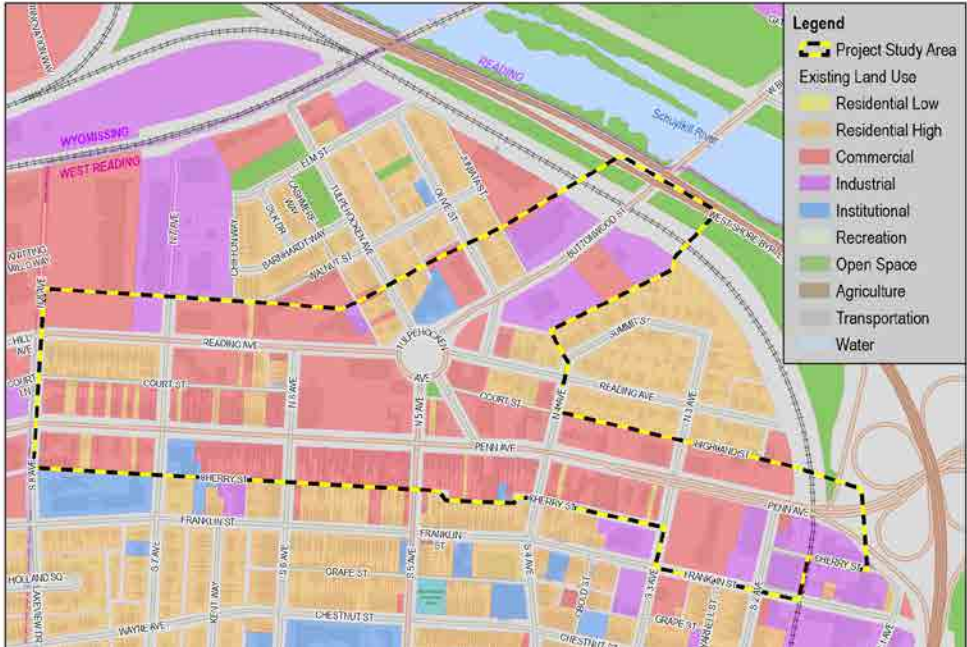
Example of a typical bike share station



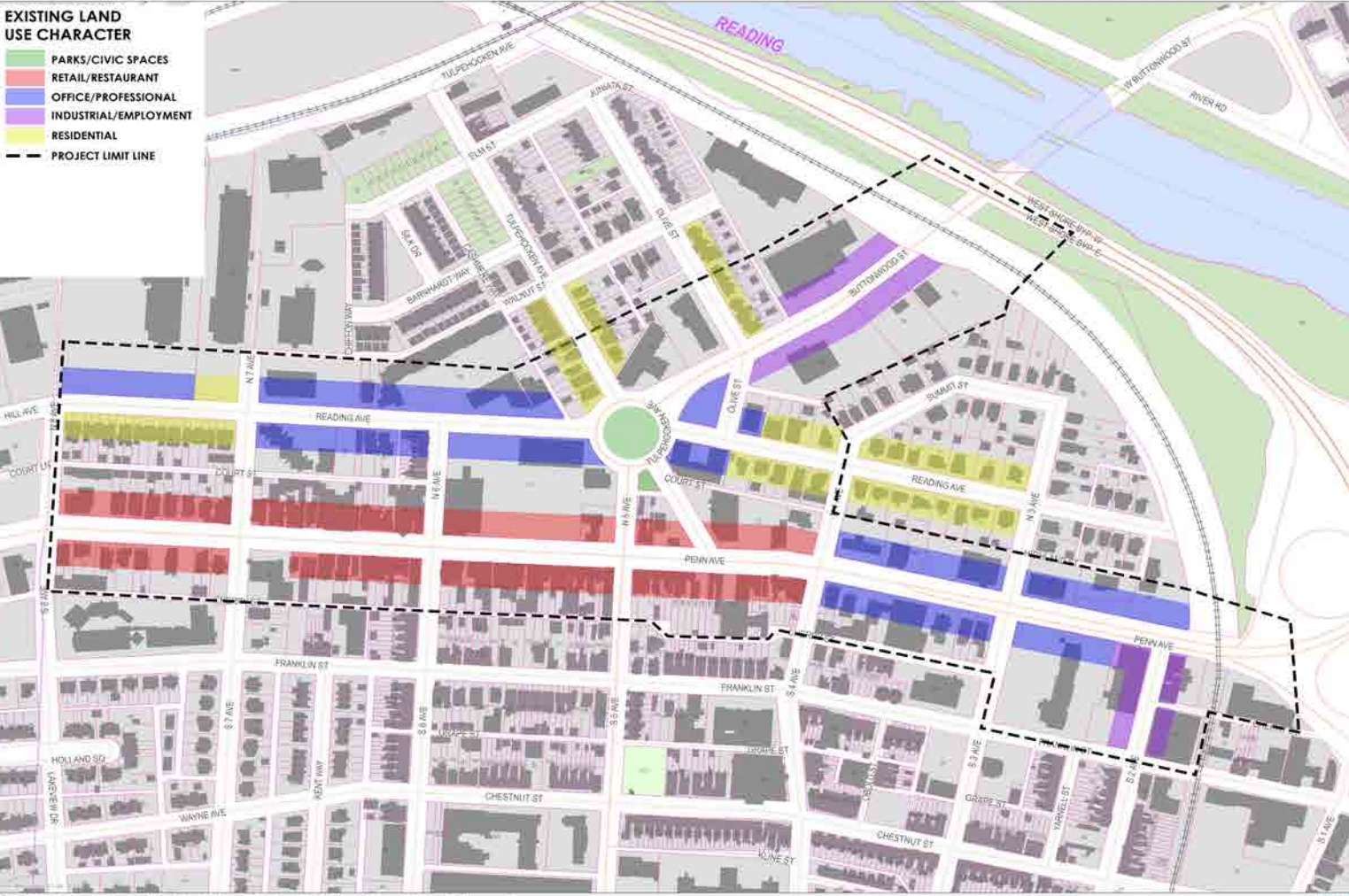


Existing Land Use

Existing land use within the study area is largely commercial, with a smaller mix of residential, institutional, and industrial uses. The map below illustrates that the retail experience is largely confined to Penn Ave. Based upon feedback from the community stakeholders, West Reading should consider expanding the retail experience along portions of Reading Ave, 6th Ave and 5th Ave to meet rising demand for stores. With the recent redevelopment and major employers at the Knitting Mill site and the planned medical school associated with Drexel University on Park Avenue, West Reading should find ways to better serve and connect to these communities.



Existing Land Use.Map by Zoning



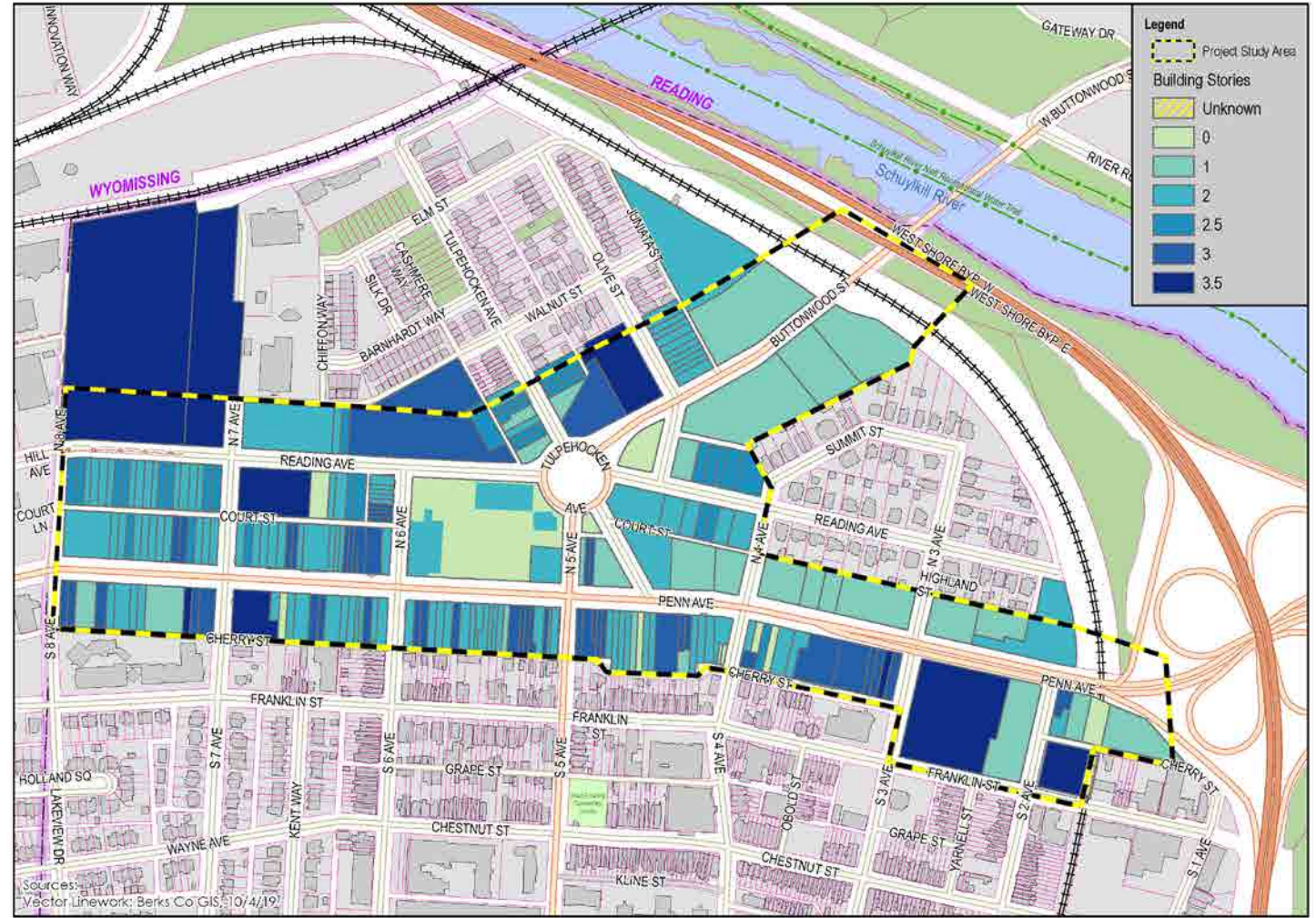
Existing Land Use Character.Map

Building Heights

The traditional pattern for most downtowns follow a transect with taller buildings in the center of a commercial district and lower buildings spaced further apart at the periphery. Although West Reading’s zoning allows 65 foot high buildings in many cases, the large number of one story buildings and lots with parking lots does not create the necessary sense of enclosure required at the core of West Reading’s downtown. The map below highlights the need for storefronts and buildings (rather than parking lots) along the north side of Penn Avenue between 3rd Ave. and 6th Ave.



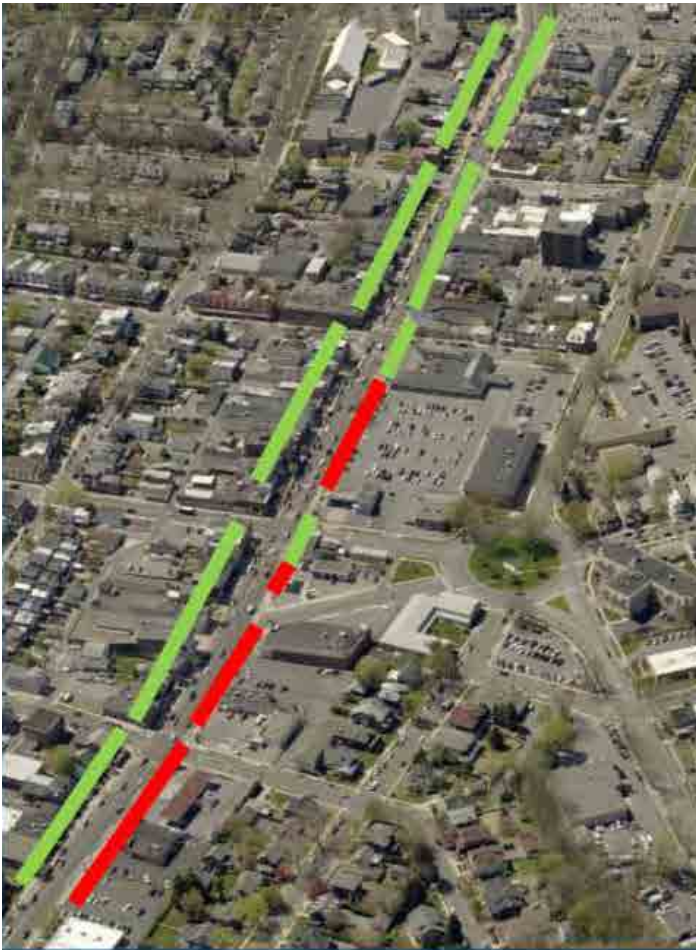
Typical Rural to Urban Transect Diagram showing taller buildings at the downtown core



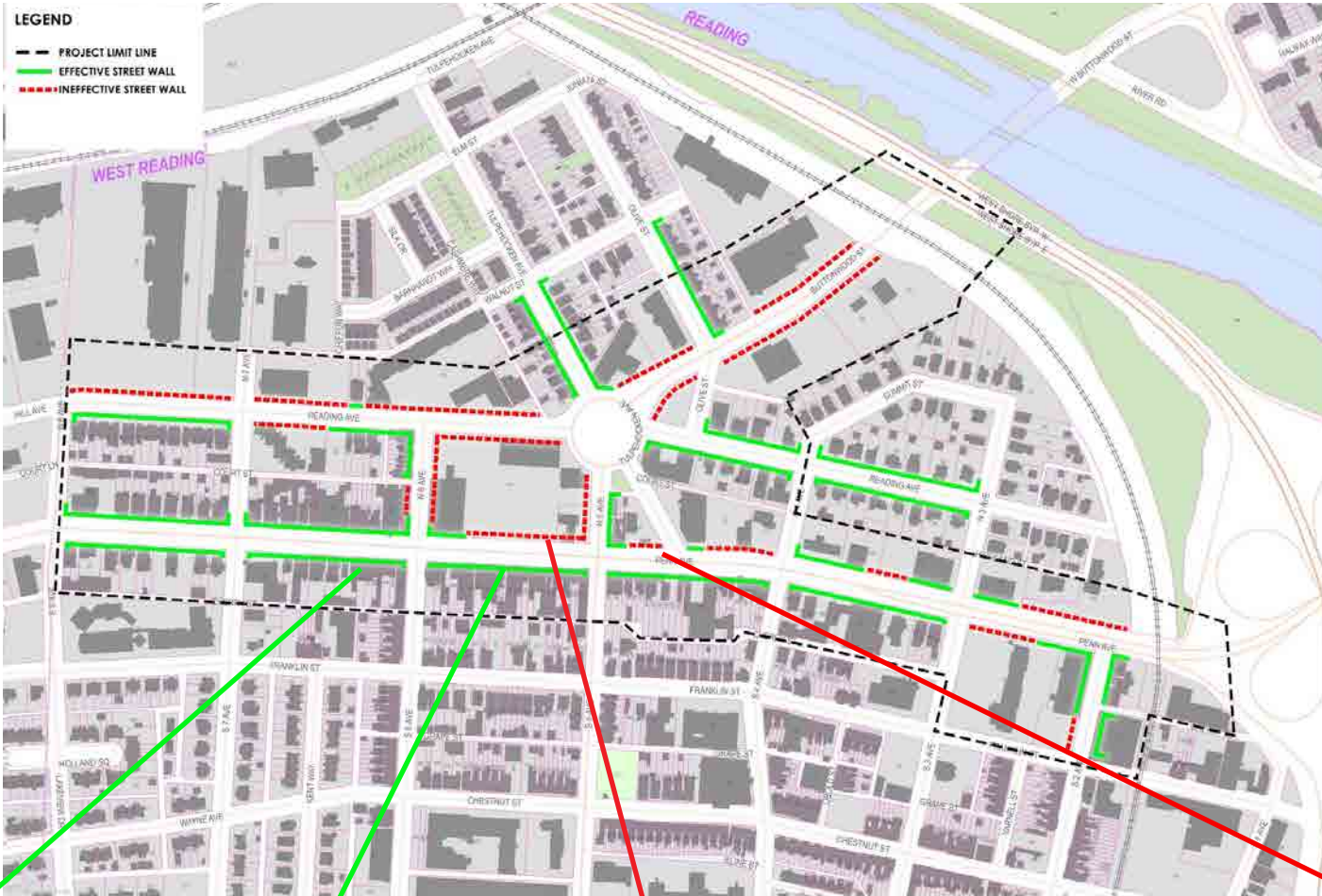
Analysis Map of Building Height



Street Wall Presence



Aerial View showing the quality of the street walls



Map showing the presence of Street Walls

Successful retail districts provide a continuity of Street Wall to define the edges of the public realm with few breaks of greater than 30 feet. The map to the left highlights those street frontages where the Effective Street Walls are shown in green and Ineffective Street walls are shown in red.

**Effective Street Walls:** active storefronts, unenclosed porches, landscaping and gardens with breaks of less than 30 feet

**Ineffective Street Walls:** parking lots, ground floor frontages facing the street with blank walls, infrequent doors, small or no windows, security fences, steep stairs & gaps of greater than 30 ft.

The photos below highlight examples of Effective and Ineffective Street Walls. This plan calls for zoning and landscape standards to promote Effective Street Walls throughout the downtown retail areas.



Ineffective Street Wall at the Schweitzer Service Station



Effective Street Wall on the south side of 600 Block of Penn Ave



Effective Street Wall on the South side of 500 Block of Penn Ave



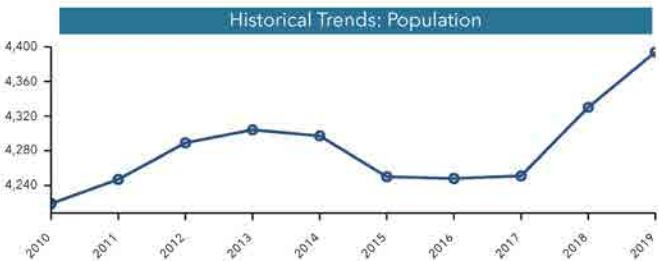
Ineffective Street Wall on the north side of the 500 Block of Penn Ave at the West Reading Shopping Center & Sunoco Gas Station



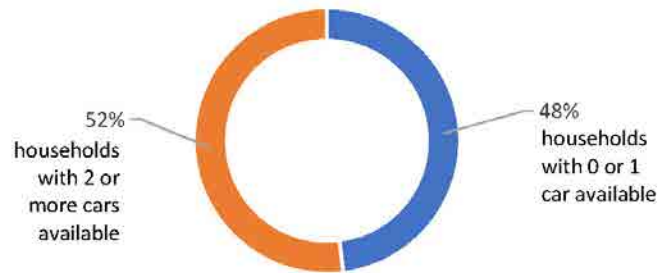
Demographic Profile

This data offers a quantifiable look at West Reading in various demographic categories. The data in this demographic summary paints a very positive picture of the borough. Likewise, the population trends below reveal strong factors, particularly a growing population growth.

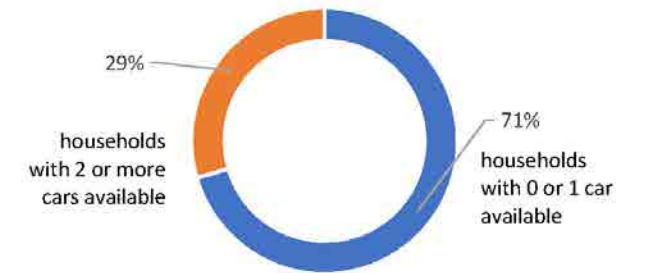
With a high number of households, both owner-occupied and rental, with 1 or fewer cars per household, it suggests that zoning requirements for lower parking standards may be justified.



Cars available per households in West Reading Borough when owner occupied



Cars available per households in West Reading Borough when renter occupied



EDUCATION

8%  
No High School Diploma

41%  
High School Graduate

25%  
Some College

KEY FACTS

4,394  
Population

2.4  
Average Household Size

2016 DAYTIME POPULATION

10,059  
WORKERS

12,361  
TOTAL

EMPLOYMENT

64%  
White Collar

20%  
Blue Collar

15%  
Services

4.6%  
Unemployment Rate

WHERE RESIDENTS WORK

86%  
In-County

14%  
Outside County

0%  
Outside State

COMMUTING

18.7  
Avg. Minutes Commute

6.6%  
Carpooled

6.4%  
Work @ Home

6.0%  
Public Transportation

65.7%  
Drove Alone

25%  
Bachelor's/Grad/Prof Degree

38.9  
Median Age

\$47,803  
Median Household Income

2,302  
RESIDENTS



Market Assessment & Opportunities

Market Strengths

Due to West Reading’s attractive downtown setting, well-promoted and well-attended events and pre-existing brand strengths, for certain commercial categories, West Reading has the potential draw customers from farther than expected resulting in the district’s ability to support more volume and more stores than conventional market analysis would suggest. For example, West Reading offers 39 restaurants with 405 employees, far beyond the number of restaurants typically supported by a Borough of 4,300 residents.

Based upon West Reading’s existing business sector strengths, the following business sectors should become a focus for expansion of existing businesses and business recruitment:

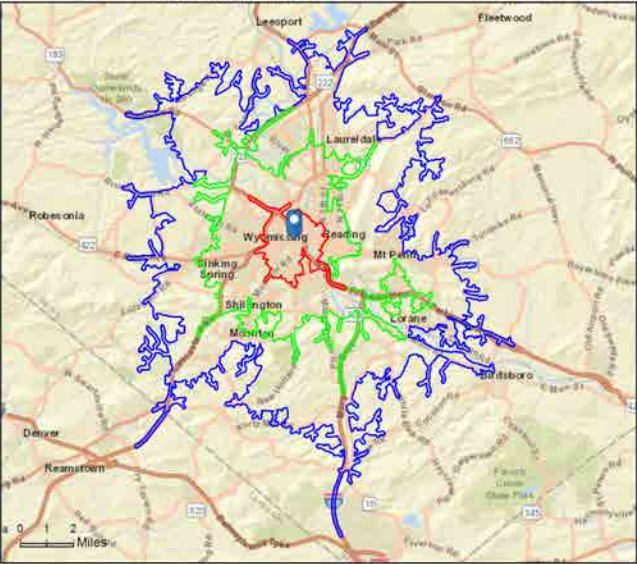
- Arts
- Entertainment
- Dining & Crafted Beverages
- Wellness
- Home & Gifts

Market Opportunities

Based upon the ESRI Business Analyst Retail MarketPlace Profile for 2017, the retail market spending in the following categories exceeded the

supply of local businesses providing these services in the 5, 10 or 15 minute drive area from the downtown center. West Reading’s downtown might consider recruiting new businesses or expanding existing businesses in the following categories:

- Books, Periodicals & Music Stores
- Home Furnishing Stores
- Drinking Places
- Lawn & Garden Equipment & Supply Stores
- Florists



Site\_Map of 5 10 15 minute drive Market Area from Downtown West Reading

ESRI BUSINESS ANALYST - SELECT INDUSTRY GROUPINGS SORTED BY DESCENDING LEAKAGE FACTOR

5 Minute Drive						
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$973,516.00	\$0.00	\$973,516	100.0	0
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$1,076,602.00	\$0.00	\$1,076,602	100.0	0
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$2,153,873.00	\$1,165,186.00	\$988,687	29.8	3
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$26,865,281.00	\$19,942,993.00	\$6,922,288	14.8	5
Special Food Services	7223	\$593,361.00	\$457,285.00	\$136,076	13.0	4
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$961,210.00	\$748,913.00	\$212,297	12.4	5
Furniture Stores	4421	\$4,798,255.00	\$3,786,806.00	\$1,011,449	11.8	4

10 Minute Drive						
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$6,357,760.00	\$1,729,652.00	\$4,628,108	57.2	3
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$5,118,500.00	\$3,232,288.00	\$1,886,212	22.6	14
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$19,924,633.00	\$13,713,082.00	\$6,211,551	18.5	19
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	442	\$45,836,916.00	\$45,476,887.00	\$360,029	0.4	41

15 Minute Drive						
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$13,054,654.00	\$5,850,547.00	\$7,204,107	38.1	11
Home Furnishings Stores	4422	\$39,752,699.00	\$23,473,812.00	\$16,278,887	25.7	33
Florists	4531	\$5,567,441.00	\$4,410,688.00	\$1,156,753	11.6	17
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	7224	\$14,586,827.00	\$12,260,077.00	\$2,326,750	8.7	32
Electronics & Appliance Stores	443	\$83,472,000.00	\$75,068,649.00	\$8,403,351	5.3	51
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	4483	\$24,785,647.00	\$24,555,503.00	\$230,144	0.5	31

Based upon the Retail MarketPlace Profile for 2017, the retail market spending in the following categories exceeded the supply of local businesses providing these services in the Borough of West Reading. West Reading’s downtown might consider recruiting new businesses or expanding existing businesses in the following categories:

- Grocery Store/ Specialty Market
- Specialty Food Stores - Meat/ Fish/ Health
- Building Material/ Garden Equipment & Supply Stores

During our interviews, we learned that many people in the area would like to have a medium format Grocery Market to complement the districts existing strengths while drawing customers to the downtown on a weekly basis. At present, according to a survey of 324 respondents, most visitors coming to dine or shop, suggest they are visiting only once per month.



Site\_Map\_Borough of West Reading Market Area

ESRI BUSINESS ANALYST - SELECT INDUSTRY GROUPINGS SORTED BY DESCENDING LEAKAGE FACTOR

Borough of West Reading						
2017 Industry Group	NAICS	Demand (Retail Potential)	Supply (Retail Sales)	Retail Gap	Leakage/Surplus Factor	Number of Businesses
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	4413	\$717,066.00	\$0.00	\$717,066	100.0	0
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	4512	\$174,546.00	\$0.00	\$174,546	100.0	0
Furniture Stores	4421	\$864,141.00	\$0.00	\$864,141	100.0	0
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	4442	\$198,574.00	\$0.00	\$198,574	100.0	0
Other General Merchandise Stores	4529	\$1,757,205.00	\$0.00	\$1,757,205	100.0	0
Shoe Stores	4482	\$361,631.00	\$0.00	\$361,631	100.0	0
Special Food Services	7223	\$106,674.00	\$0.00	\$106,674	100.0	0
General Merchandise Stores	452	\$6,504,047.00	\$317,869.00	\$6,186,178	90.7	1
Grocery Stores	4451	\$7,395,891.00	\$451,468.00	\$6,944,423	88.5	1
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	4521	\$4,746,842.00	\$317,869.00	\$4,428,973	87.4	1
Food & Beverage Stores	445	\$8,126,882.00	\$1,310,418.00	\$6,816,464	72.2	3
Specialty Food Stores	4452	\$379,617.00	\$104,208.00	\$275,409	56.9	1
Used Merchandise Stores	4533	\$172,700.00	\$74,036.00	\$98,664	40.0	1
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	444	\$2,472,166.00	\$1,459,019.00	\$1,013,147	25.8	2
Bldg Material & Supplies Dealers	4441	\$2,273,592.00	\$1,459,019.00	\$814,573	21.8	2
Florists	4531	\$82,858.00	\$59,167.00	\$23,691	16.7	1



Character Preference Survey

Our team conducted a character preference survey of business owners and community stakeholders to determine the preferred character and types of spaces desired for West Reading’s future. Insights gained from the survey were incorporated into the plan recommendations.

The survey addressed building character for Reading Ave, downtown, traffic calming, gathering spaces, land uses, plazas and pocket parks, and types of public spaces.

Results of the survey shown below are organized such that the two preferred options are larger and the two less preferred options are smaller.

Preferred Character Along the Street Edges of Reading Ave



Preferred Character for Downtown Buildings



Traffic Calming Strategies most useful to enhance pedestrian safety in West Reading





Community Gathering Places most appropriate for West Reading’s Business District



Land uses that should be encouraged in West Reading’s business district

The three categories of land uses that were most desired include:

- Entertainment/ Live Music/ Theater
- Grocery/ Market/ Specialty Food
- Gifts/ Jewelry/ Specialty Shops



Plazas and pocket parks most appropriate for West Reading’s Business District



Preferred public places types most desired in West Reading’s business district

The three categories of land uses that were most desired include:

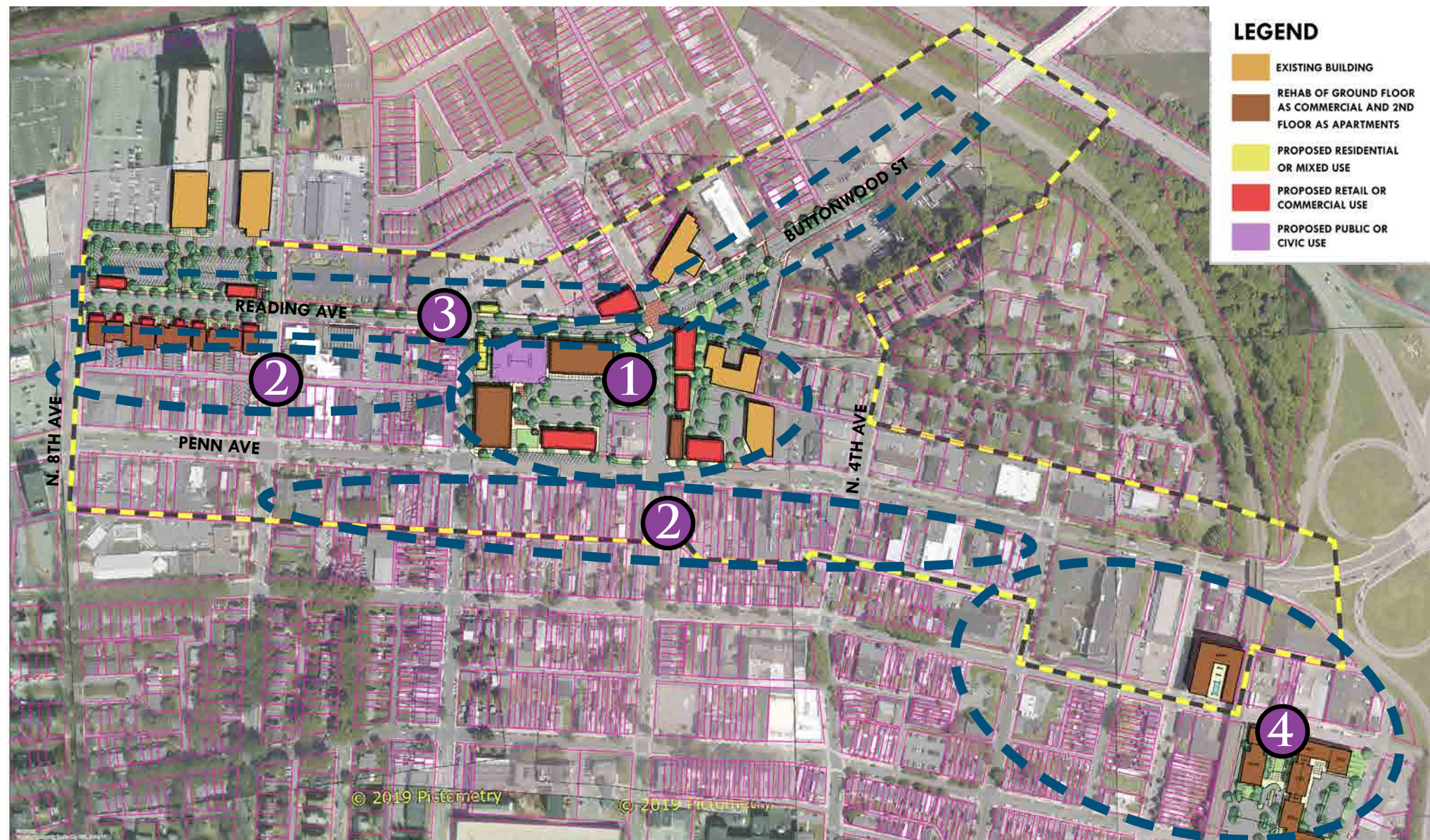
- Pocket Park/Sitting Garden
- Multi-Purpose Plaza/Market Area
- Amphitheater/Stage/Event Space





# 3

## Placemaking & Redevelopment Recommendations



### Priority Areas for Placemaking & Redevelopment of Underutilized Sites

Based upon input from the steering committee and representatives from the business community, we have chosen four areas to incentivize enhancement to the existing streetscape, civic spaces & parking as well as redevelopment of underutilized sites. Priority areas include:

#### 1. 5th Avenue Redevelopment

- Redevelop the West Reading Shopping Center and South Tulpehocken St. at the heart of the downtown to better meet West Reading's future needs.

#### 2. Cherry and Court Streets

- Enhance the mural arts corridor while slowing traffic and increasing pedestrian safety on Cherry Street. Improve function and add parking on Court Street.

#### 3. Reading Avenue & Buttonwood Street

- Expand the downtown business district feel of Penn Ave to include portions of Reading Ave & Buttonwood Street while adding trail connections to downtown and the Schuylkill River greenway and trails.

#### 4. Chocolate District

- Better connect the site to the river and consider adaptive reuse of aging industrial buildings for residential/ commercial or mixed uses.

The recommendations and illustrations in this chapter are designed to help clarify the vision and prioritize public and private investment in the downtown and its businesses. We firmly believe that strategic investment in these sites will contribute to the long term vitality of this district, its businesses and the municipal tax base.



## 5th Avenue Area Redevelopment Opportunities

### Design Principles for Placemaking & Infill Development

#### Promote Active Storefronts & Frontages

- Penn Ave, 5th Ave & 6th Ave to have storefronts along at least 60% of street frontage; entrances every 60 feet or less
- Require parking in the rear of buildings and encourage windows/activity along street frontages

#### Incentivize Mixed Uses

- Promote retail, dining or other active uses on ground floor, with upper floors as office or residential.

#### Conceal Parking Structures Behind Buildings

- Require parking to be placed behind buildings
- Incentivize public private partnerships to build and operate parking serving both public and private purposes

#### Require a Civic Space fronting the sidewalk

- Require a certain percentage of the site to be devoted to civic space (or pay fee in lieu of). Ideally this space would be framed by buildings with storefronts and frequent entrances

#### Promote Streetscape Design Elements

- Encourage better streetscape design through the use of landscaping, furnishings, street trees, curb bump outs, planters, banners, and special paving.

#### Back in Angled Parking along Penn Avenue

- Increase available public parking by adding back in angle spaces along Penn Ave. These types of spaces are more efficient than traditional parallel parking and will help address shortages of public parking noted by recent parking studies.

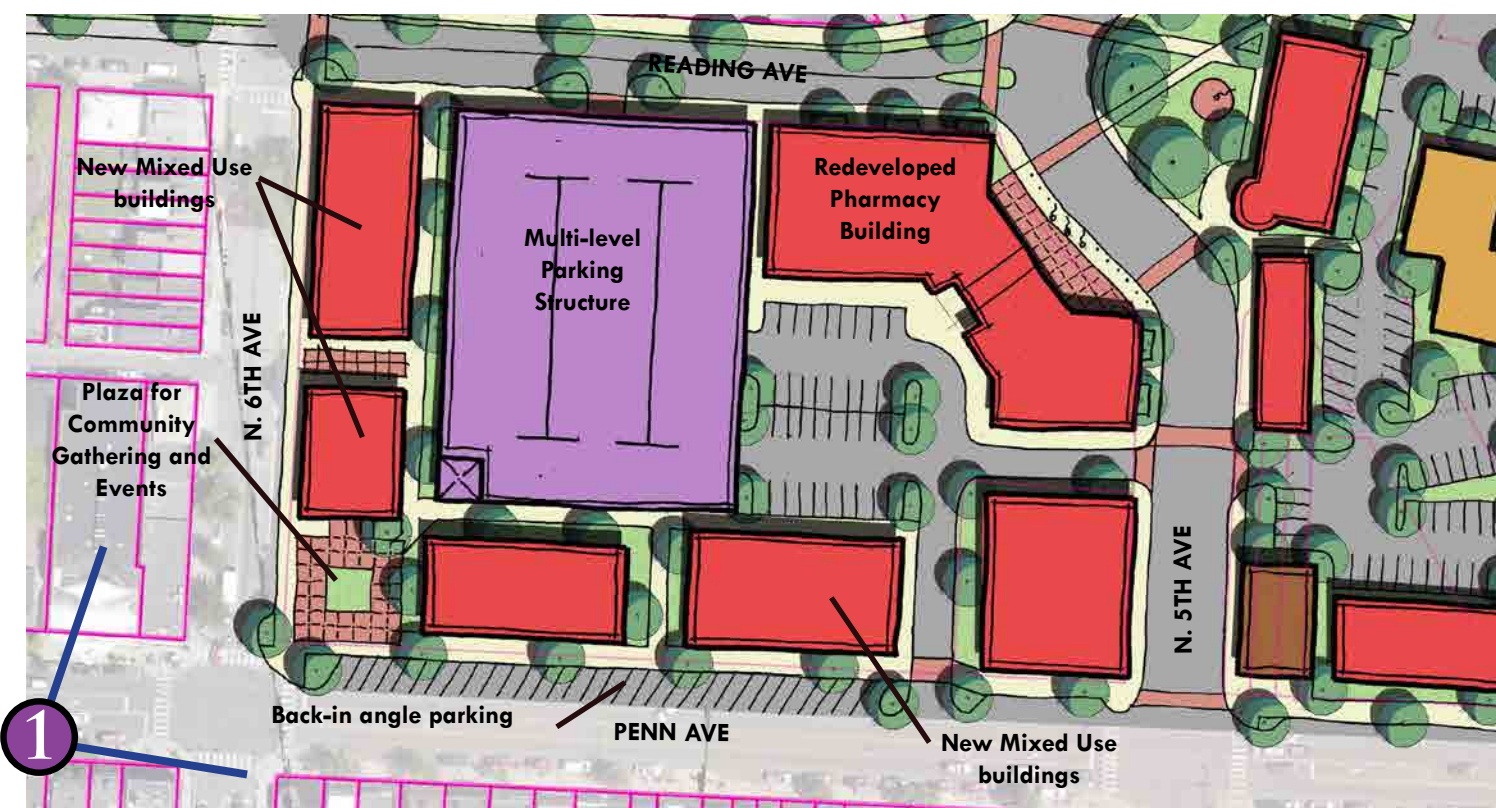


Proposed Streetscape, Landscape and Lighting enhancements along Penn Ave



Enlarged Proposed Rendering of 6th and Penn. Shown here is a new civic space, outdoor seating/dining, new shops along Penn and 6th and new public parking

## 5th & Penn Ave Area Redevelopment - Full Redevelopment Option



Proposed plan view of the West Reading shopping center showing new/renovated mixed use buildings, a new civic space, and parking on the interior with added public parking along Penn Ave.



Existing Street view looking East along Penn Ave at 6th Ave

#### Recommendations

Recommendations for the West Reading shopping include redeveloping the outer edges with 4-5 story mixed use buildings with parking moved the interior (which could include a parking garage). We also recommend adding more public parking along Penn Ave in the form of back-in angle parking and the creation of a new civic space at the corner of 6th and Penn.



Proposed view looking East along Penn Ave at 6th Ave featuring streetscape improvements, a new civic space and new mixed use buildings



5th Avenue Area Redevelopment - Full Redevelopment Option

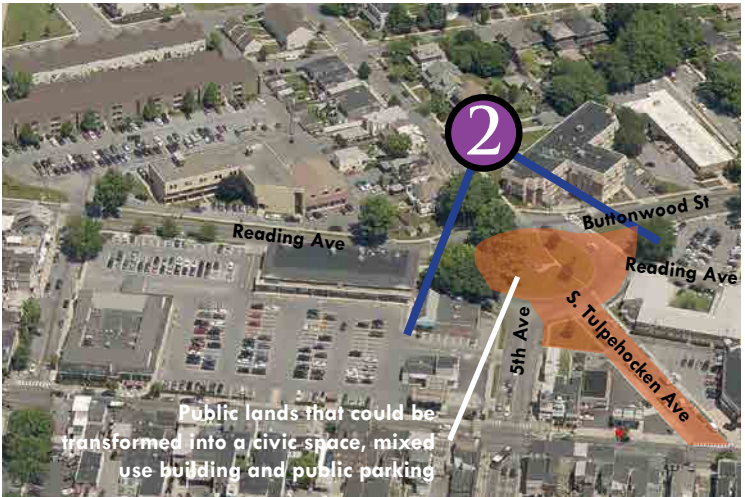


Proposed plan view showing recommended redevelopment of the West Reading Shopping Center/5th Ave/Delaney Circle Area

Recommendations

Although the West Reading Shopping Center provides some important anchor businesses and parking resources for the downtown, this aging center should be encouraged and permitted to redevelop into a mixed use retail, dining, office and/or residential development. This could include outdoor seating and dining in the civic space, a mid-block pedestrian way, shared parking structure serving both the site and nearby businesses. The plan encourages a public private partnership to realize this parking facility.

Although Delaney Circle is an important green space, it is largely inaccessible due to the two lane traffic circle. The proposed reconfiguration of Delaney Circle, as shown at right, recommends vacating the eastern portions of the circle as well as the southern portion of Tulpehocken Ave, and allow development of a new mixed-use building on the former Tulpehocken St. and a portion of the green. This would allow safe pedestrian access to the green while permitting retail stores to have frontage facing the green as well creating a unique sense of place for community events.

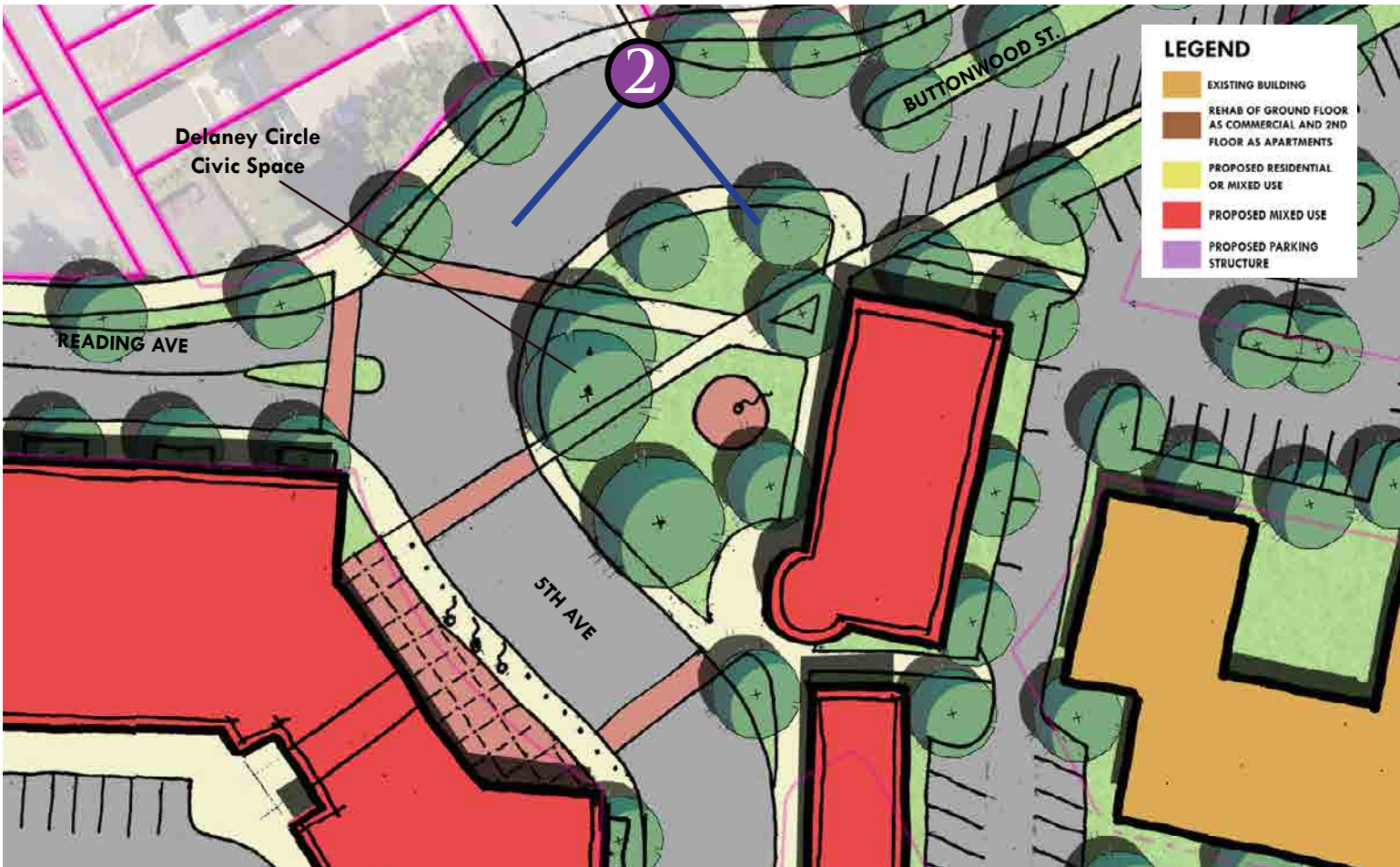


Existing aerial view of the West Reading Shopping Center & Delaney Circle



Existing street view of Delaney Circle looking South toward Penn Ave

Delaney Circle Option



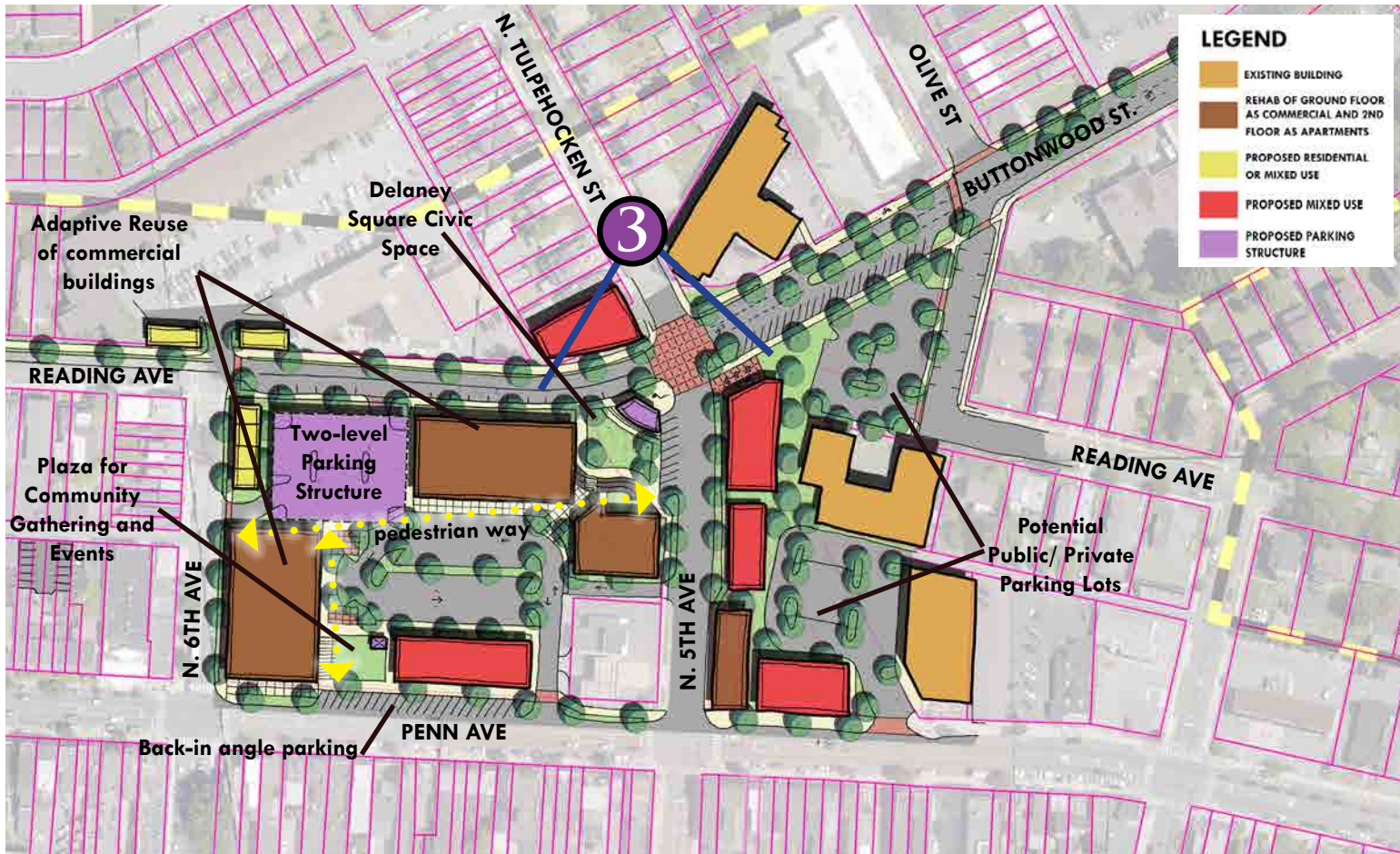
Proposed Enlargement plan of Delaney Circle/5th Ave. This plan shows a portion of Tulpehocken going away allowing for a new mixed use building fronting on Delaney Circle. View below is looking south towards Penn Ave.



Proposed Rendering looking south at the potential redeveloped Delaney circle area. Pictured here is a new mixed use building fronting the green on a portion of Tulpehocken St, the existing edge of the current Delaney circle and at right a potential redevelopment of the existing pharmacy building into a mixed use/office building.



5th Avenue Area Redevelopment - Adaptive Reuse Option



Proposed Plan View of 5th Ave/West Reading Shopping Center. This plan depicts Delaney Circle being replaced by a traditional 4-way intersection

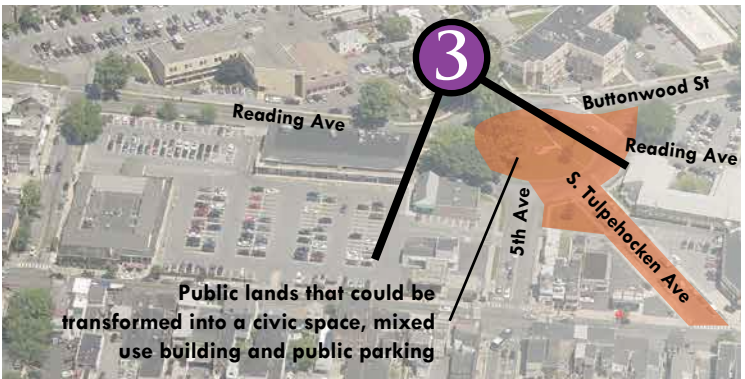
Recommendations

This option seeks to encourage the rehabilitation of the existing buildings at the West Reading Shopping Center (shown in brown) with limited infill of new buildings (shown in red). The rehabilitation should focus on adding storefronts along both 6th Avenue and Penn Ave to create a more welcoming place to shop & stroll, mid-block pedestrian ways and a new two level parking structure serving both the site and nearby businesses. The plan encourages a public private partnership to realize this parking facility.

In this option, Delaney Circle could be relocated southwest to create a pedestrian friendly “Delaney Square” as shown to the right. 5th Avenue is now extended north to N. Tulpehocken Ave to meet Buttonwood St. & Reading Ave. This could be an opportunity for the Borough to sell municipal land for development of a new mixed use building on the vacated Tulpehocken Street and a small parcel owned by the Borough. This would allow safe pedestrian access to a more useful Delaney Square and create a unique sense of place.

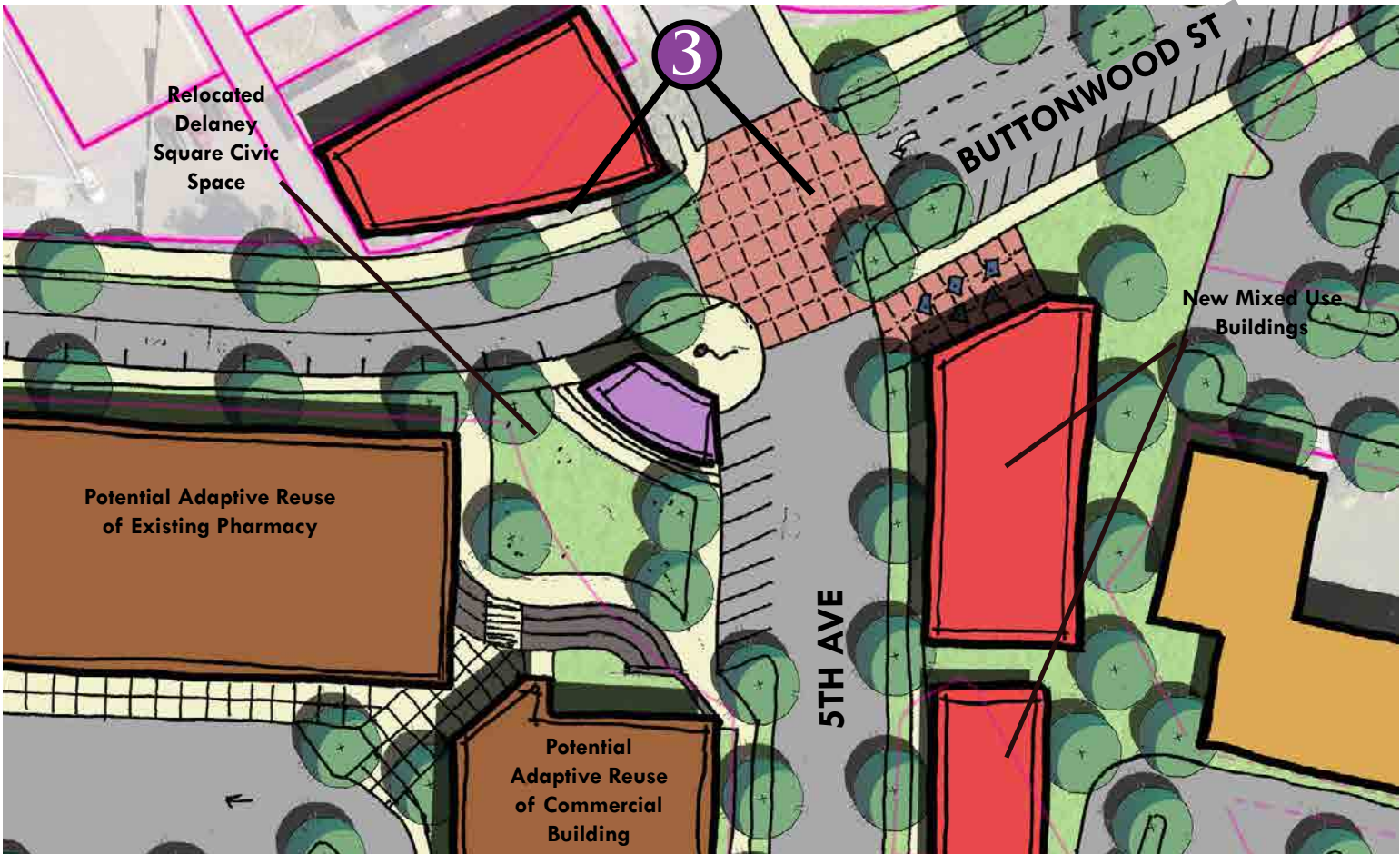


Existing Street view of Delaney Circle Looking South toward Penn Ave



Existing Aerial View of the West Reading Shopping Center & Delaney Circle

Delaney Square Option



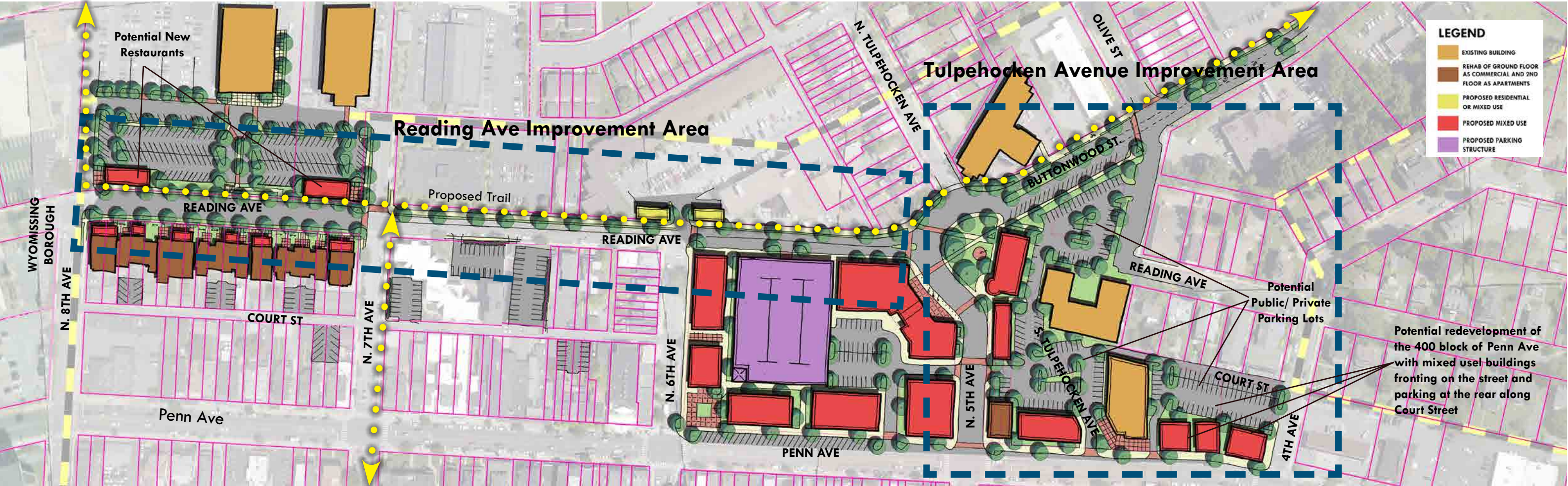
Proposed Enlargement plan of Delaney Circle/5th Ave. This plan shows a Delaney circle being replaced with Delaney square - a traditional 4 way intersection. Vacation of the circle and Tulpehocken could allow for creation of a new civic space and mixed use building.



Proposed rendering looking south at the potential redeveloped Delaney Square area. Pictured here is a new mixed use building fronting on the realigned 5th Ave, a new civic space with a green and an amphitheater, and a potential redevelopment of the pharmacy building.



Reading Ave & Tulpehocken Ave. Opportunities Areas



**Reading Avenue Opportunities**

The community preference survey and discussions with stakeholders revealed a desire to expand the business district and character of Penn Ave to portions of Reading Ave. The 700 block of Reading Ave could be transformed to be similar to the nature of the 700 block of Penn Ave by encouraging business additions to the front of existing residences facing Reading Ave. Additionally, we believe opportunity exists to add a restaurant or two along Reading Ave in front of the Tower Health office building & the Lofts at Narrow. Parking could be shared between the offices and the restaurant as they primarily operate at different times of day. We also recommend reconfiguring the parking lot by rotating the aisles, making them one-way angled parking, to add street trees and pedestrian walkways to improve the user experience. Along the Court Street alley, additional parking spaces could be created by using shared access drives between lots, paving areas of rear yards and restriping existing pavement. Cooperation between property owners should be encouraged.



Reading Avenue facing north toward Tower Health Office Building



Photograph of a restaurant similar to the two that could be developed along the 700 Block of Reading Avenue

**Tulpehocken Avenue Opportunities**

South Tulpehocken Avenue represents an opportunity to become an important asset for the Borough to achieve multiple goals of this master plan. The current diagonal design is inefficient and redundant to the existing street network. Our recommendation would be to eliminate a portion of Tulpehocken between Reading and Penn Ave. This would allow the Borough to expand public parking opportunities if the Schweitzer Service Station parcel and/or the surface parking area of

the GNA Restaurant became available. In addition to the creation of added parking, the elimination of Tulpehocken would allow a direct pedestrian connection to Delaney Circle. This would greatly improve the user experience as in the current configuration pedestrians must cross two lanes of traffic to reach the circle. Direct access to this public space could also allow the creation of up to two new mixed use office/retail building that would directly front on Delway Circle - adding value and improving the user experience.



Existing Aerial View of Reading Avenue and Penn Avenue Corridors



Existing Parking Occupancy

Parking Study Findings

A 2017 Parking Study by Walker consultants (see graphics below) illustrated a shortage of public parking in the Borough and a surplus of private parking. According to Walker this problem will only compound in the future. Some proposed solutions are shown to the right on page 41.

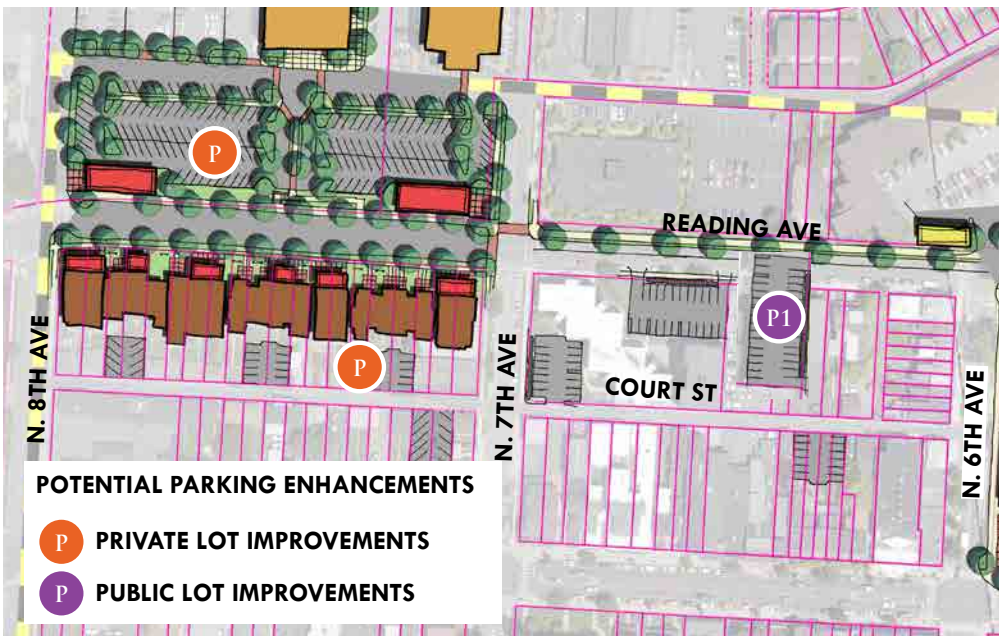


Existing Weekday Public Parking Occupancy - Walker, 2017



Existing Weekday Private Parking Occupancy - Walker, 2017

Proposed Parking Solutions



Proposed plan from 8th to 6th Avenues



Proposed plan from 6th to 4th Avenues

- Court Street and Reading Ave**  
Recommendations for improving parking on Court St and Reading Ave include the following:
- Reconfigure Tower Health office parking lot to improve circulation/pedestrian safety and add landscaping/walkways (Net 0 spaces)
  - Encourage shared parking on Court St. At right is shown potential gain of up to 24 spaces by sharing/reconfiguring existing lawn or paved areas.
  - At P1 add a parking deck between Reading and Court on top of the existing lot accessed from upper level on Reading Ave.

- West Reading Shopping Center, Buttonwood and Penn Ave**  
Recommendations for improving parking in the area between 6th and 4th Avenues include the following:
- At P2 add back in angle parking and a landscape median along Buttonwood
  - At P3 reconfigure triangular lot adjacent to Buttonwood to add some public spaces
  - At P4 consider eliminating a portion of Tulpehocken St. and creating a new shared public lot behind new mixed use buildings
  - At P5 consider adding new mixed use buildings along Penn and 4th with reconfigured rear parking to add street wall presence.
  - At P6 add back-in angle parking along Penn in place of parallel parking at the West Reading Shopping Center.
  - At P7 a multi-level garage will likely be necessary to support any significant redevelopment of the West Reading Shopping Center. The borough should consider partnering with a developer to add one level to the garage dedicated for public use by downtown business district patrons.

Public Parking Opportunities

Lot	Existing	Proposed	Notes
P1	28	56	Add upper level deck accessed from Reading Ave
P2	0	28	Back-in angle parking on Buttonwood
P3	0	18	Reconfigure Reading Ave & private lot - additional public spaces
P4	10	48	Extinguish S. Tulpehocken St., add shared lot
P5	0	10	Reconfigure lot, add buildings fronting on Penn Ave
P6	11	36	Convert parallel to back in angle parking
P7	0	80	1 level of parking garage for public use
Total	49	276	NET ADDITION OF 227 PARKING SPACES



Cherry & Court St. Recommendations

The goals for Cherry and Court Street include slowing traffic, increasing, pedestrian safety and leveraging the Mural Arts Walk as an asset. Recommendations for achieving these goals includes the following:

- Consider traffic calming measures on Cherry and Court Streets, such as traffic tables, speed cushions, and speed humps to reduce traffic speeds.
- Enhance the Mural Arts walk, with better paving, lighting and landscaping.
- Provide better wayfinding directing pedestrians to the Mural Arts walk.
- Consider allowing pedestrian pass throughs from Cherry street to Penn to create connection between the downtown business district and the Mural Arts Walk.
- Encourage private property owners to merge adjacent parking lots to create more efficient parking and support the needs of the business district.
- Promote the installation of signage to help visitors identify businesses associated with each parking lot.

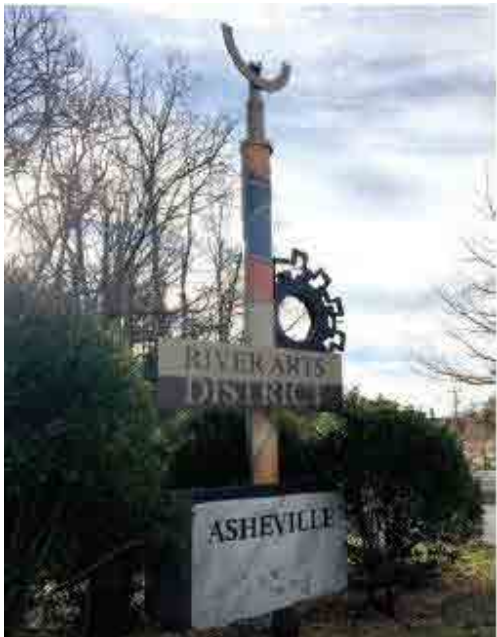
Traffic Calming Strategies



Court Street Existing View



Cherry Street Existing View



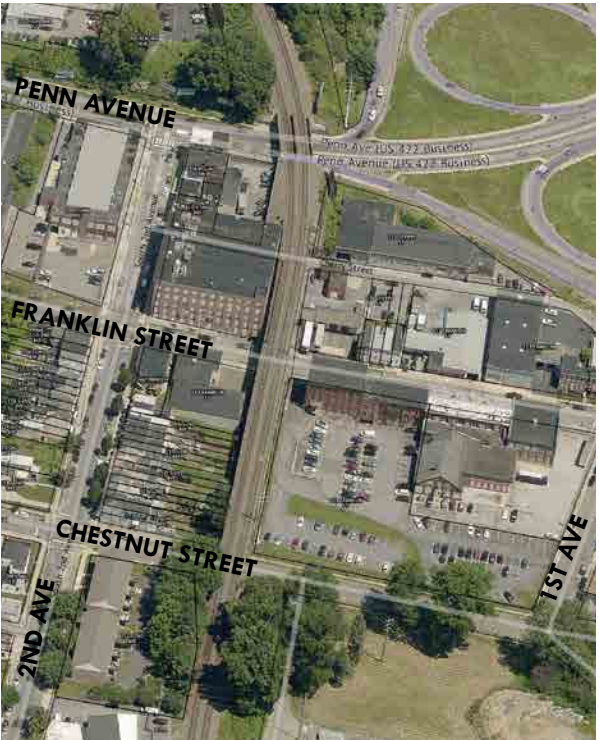
West Reading should commission wayfinding signage to guide visitors to the mural arts walk



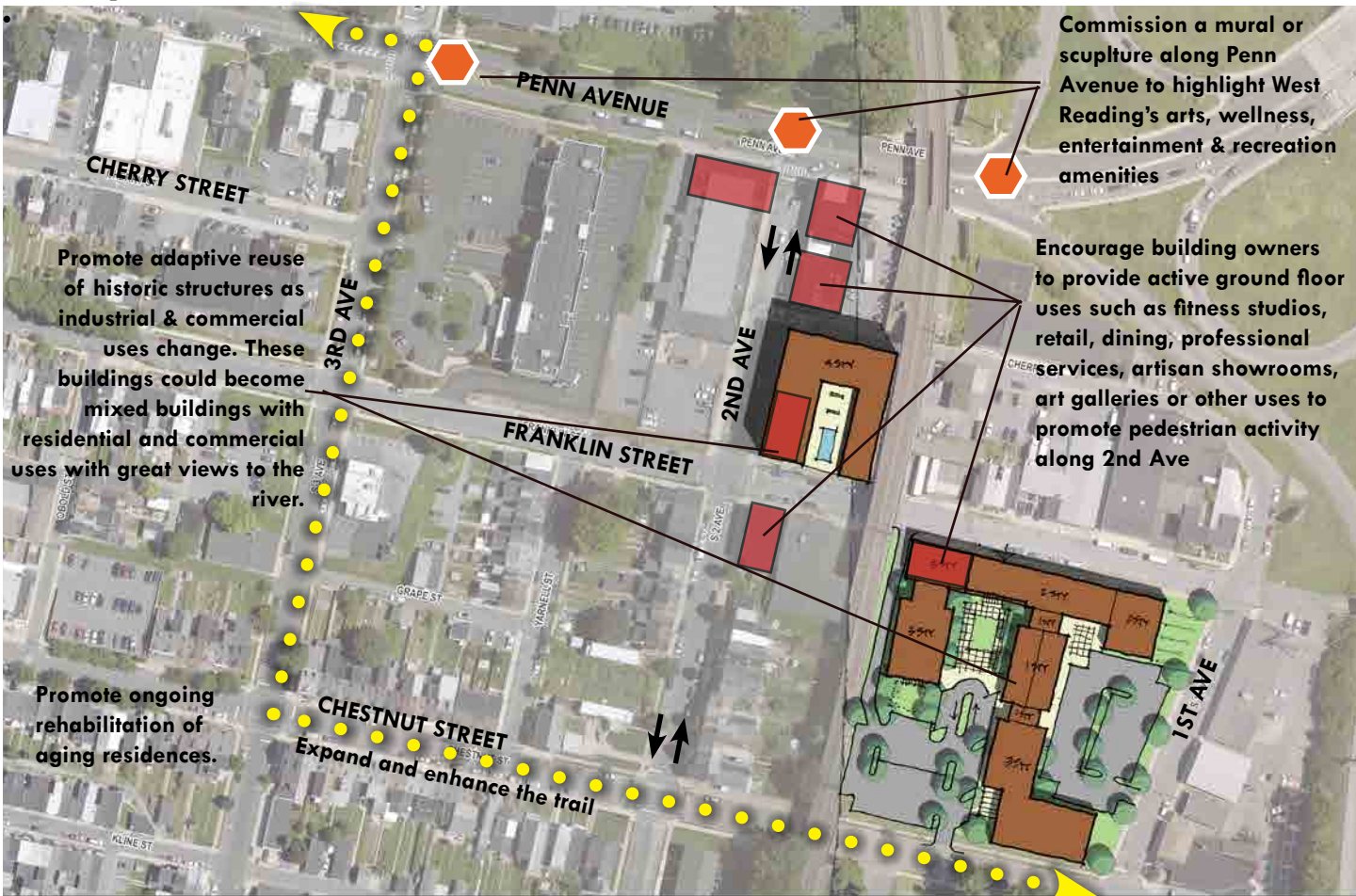
Existing murals on Cherry Street

Chocolate District Recommendations

- Promote ongoing rehabilitation of aging residences.
- Consider making 2nd Ave a two way street with right in and right out only onto Penn to better support commercial/retail uses in this district.
- As industrial uses in the district evolve and change, encourage redevelopment into commercial, small scale artisan production or residential uses. The addition of new residences or apartments in this neighborhood could significantly diversify the community’s housing choices and this location offers great views to the Schuylkill River. Incentivize neighborhood serving uses such as restaurants, art galleries, trail/ recreation oriented businesses, murals along Second Avenue.
- If it becomes available, the four story brick building on 2nd Ave. and Franklin Street could be adaptively reused for a artist studios, restaurant and residential uses with parking beneath.
- The largely vacant industrial building at 118 Franklin Street could be adapted for artist lofts, residential or other commercial uses. This could be done in phases such that a portion of the parking area could remain operational while early phases are developed.
- Promote bike and walking trail connections along Chestnut Street to the Schuylkill River Trail. The site sits in close proximity to the river and as such, views/connection to the river should be fostered where possible.



Existing Aerial view of the Chocolate District



Plan view of potential Chocolate District Redevelopment Opportunities



# 4

## Design Standards



*By recalibrating the design standards and updating the zoning standards, West Reading and its downtown can set a clear vision and standards for the design of the public realm. High quality streets, civic spaces and buildings in scale with their surroundings create places of enduring value and memorable character.*



Recommended Design Standards

The existing zoning standards in the downtown West Reading study area are governed by the following zoning districts: Central Business District, General Business District, General Business District Overlay and Light Industrial and Institutional District as well as two overlay districts. The General Business District Overlay allows additional automobile-oriented uses in the Central Business District while the Commercial & Light Industrial District Overlay is designed to allow mixed use and residential developments throughout most of the commercial districts of the downtown.

Based upon the review of the preferred character survey results and the goal of expanding the pedestrian-oriented retail district north to include areas of Reading Avenue, 5th Street and 6th Street, the plan calls for the following modifications to the existing zoning and land development standards:

1. Eliminate the General Business District Overlay

This overlay was intended to expand the areas designed for certain drive-through restaurants, funeral homes, day care centers, veterinary offices, automobile sales & service facilities and gas stations within the Central Business District. These uses, and in particular, the auto-oriented nature of these businesses, undermines many of the stated goals of this plan to promote pedestrian-oriented shopping areas within the downtown. The plan calls for continuing to permit these uses within the existing General Business District, so that more pedestrian-oriented commercial uses are incentivized within the Central Business District.

2. Modify the Commercial and Light Industrial Redevelopment Overlay

- a. Expand the overlay boundaries north and east by about 100 feet at Delaney Circle to allow mixed use development and a reconfigured civic space along N. 5th Avenue.
- b. Allow mixed use development with residential uses over retail uses facing primary shopping streets such as Penn Avenue, 5th Avenue, 6th Avenue and portions of Reading Avenue within the downtown. In many cases, the limitations of 30%, 60% and 80% cover of upper floors as residential only serves to discourage redevelopment without providing clear policy guidance on where buildings should be placed to achieve quality streets and civic spaces.
- c. Allow residential-only development and

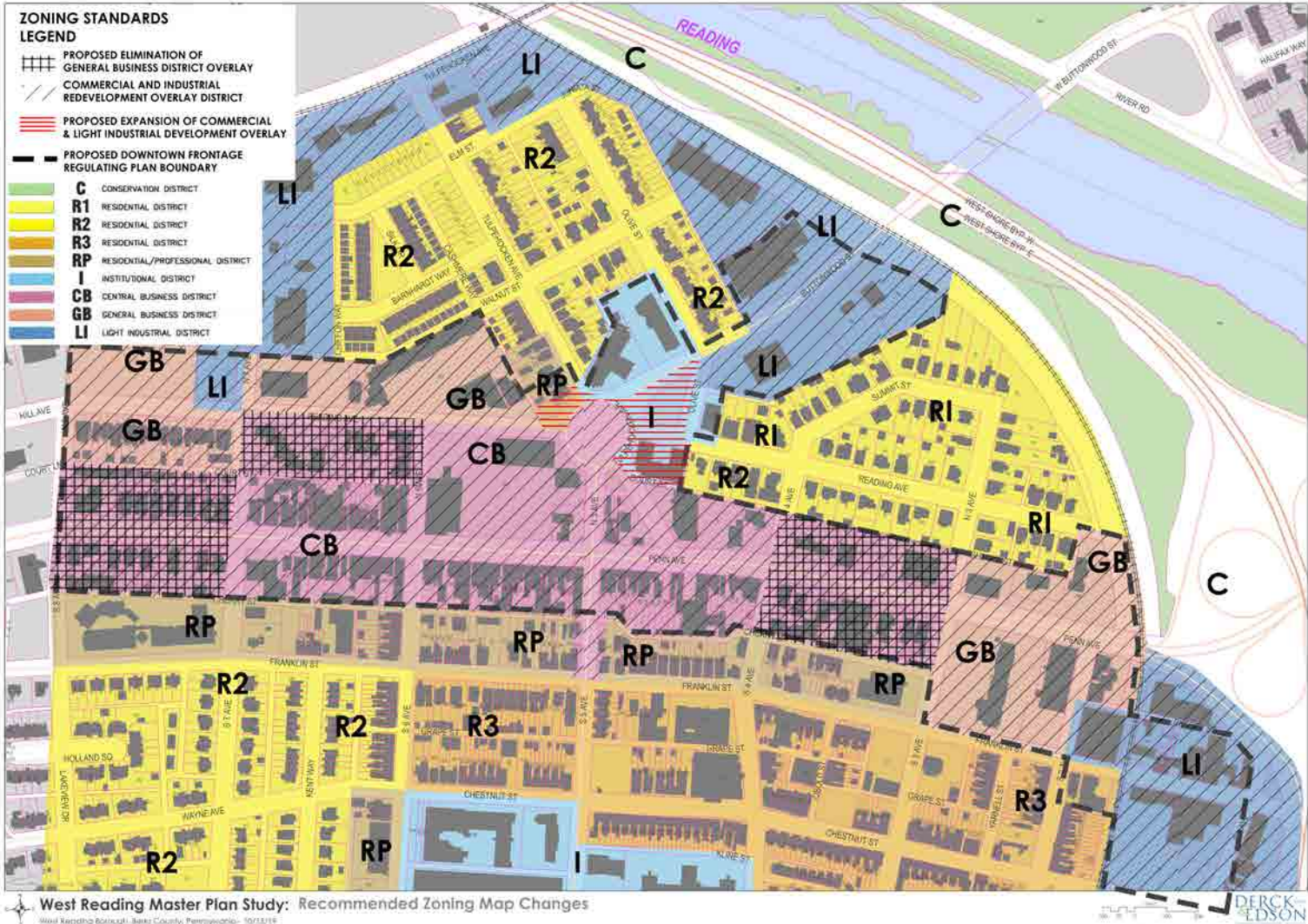
- redevelopment of aging properties to include residential development without requiring ground floor commercial uses at locations that are inappropriate for pedestrian-oriented retail/ service uses.
- c. Permit and incentivize small scale artisan production/ maker space within the upper floors of buildings facing primary shopping streets and on all floors in other commercial/ industrial/ institutional district areas.
- 3. Modify the maximum height of buildings along streets to create more pedestrian-scaled street walls with building heights as tall as 45 feet high along most sidewalks for the 10 feet closest to the street.

3. Adopt a Regulating Plan for the Downtown to designate locations with storefronts, active frontages and civic spaces should be required or incentivized

Throughout the downtown area, the zoning ordinances have limited the placement of offices and other non-retail uses on the ground floors to ensure that more active retail, dining and entertainment uses are the predominant uses in the downtown. However, the current approach to limiting the placement of offices on the ground floors of certain streets is somewhat vague and lacking in clarity as to which streets should require storefronts and which should allow certain professional and office uses along the sidewalk. Within the last fifteen years, many downtowns across the country have updated their zoning ordinances to provide greater emphasis on placemaking, context sensitive design of streets, a stronger emphasis on the way in which active ground floor uses such as storefronts can support the goal of creating more vibrant streets and civic space. These tools are known as form-based codes and a key feature of these zoning ordinances are called a “regulating plan”. This plan can complement and support West Reading’s existing zoning map, and provide further clarity on the locations where storefronts, active frontages (such as frequent entrances, screening of parking lots, buildings close to the sidewalk and large windows facing the street) and civic spaces can energize and better coordinate the public realm and support commerce.

4. Modify Front Yard Standards to Align with Existing Front Yard Conditions

The existing pattern of front building walls the 400 and 500 blocks of Penn Ave is 0 to 10 feet from the



Existing & Proposed Downtown Bulk & Area Standards

The proposed standards highlighted in green identify how the downtown zoning could be simplified and

coordinated with the regulating plan to create high quality streets, civic spaces and building forms while maintaining the scale of downtown buildings.

	Existing			Proposed		Proposed		Proposed					Proposed	Eliminate
Downtown Bulk and Area Standards	CBD - Permitted Use	CBD - Conditional Use	CBD - Special Exception	CBD	CLI Overlay	CLI Overlay	LI	LI	GB - Permitted Uses	GB - Conditional Uses - Schools, B&B's etc.	GB - Other Conditional Uses	GB - Special Exception	GB	GB Overlay of the CBD District
Building Height	65 FT	35 FT	70 FT	65 FT	75 FT	65 FT	65 FT	65 FT	65 FT	65 FT	35 FT	70 FT	65 FT	Same as CBD
Building Stepback				45 FT**		45 FT**		45 FT**						
Reduced Height adjacent to Residential Districts				45 FT***		45 FT***		45 FT***						
Min Lot Area		4,000 FT	10,000 FT		15,000 FT	15,000 FT	10,000 FT				4,000 FT	10,000 FT		
Min Lot Width		50 FT	90 FT		100 FT	100 FT	90 FT				50 FT	90 FT		
Building Coverage, max.					60%									
Lot (impervious) Coverage, max	75%	65%	60%	85%	75%	85%	80%	80%	75%	75%	65%	70%	75%	
Civic Space, min.				10%****	10%	10%****							10%****	
Building Separation					0 FT									
Front Yard Setback, min.	8 FT	8 FT	25 FT	4 FT*	20 FT/ 9 FT	4 FT*	10 FT		8 FT	8 FT	8 FT	25 FT	8 FT	
Build to Zone - Max Setback of Primary Structure				15 FT		15 FT							40 FT	
% of Primary Structure with Build To Zone				60%		40%							40%	
Rear Yard Setback, min.	10 FT	10 FT	20 FT	10 FT	20 FT	10 FT	10 FT		10 FT	10 FT	10 FT	20 FT	10 FT	
Side Yard Setback, min.	3 FT	6 FT	15 FT		20 FT		10 FT		3 FT	3 FT	6 FT	15 FT	3 FT	
Side Yard Aggregate Setback, min.	6 FT	15 FT	35 FT				25 FT		6 FT	6 FT	15 FT	35 FT	10 FT	
Detached accessory: Side Yard Setback min.	2 FT	2 FT	20 FT				8 FT		2 FT	2 FT	2 FT	20 FT	2 FT	
Detached accessory: Rear Yard Setback min.	2 FT	3 FT	20 FT				8 FT		2 FT	2 FT	3 FT	20 FT	2 FT	
* The lesser of 4 FT or the average of adjacent buildings														
** within 10 FT of an A Street														
*** within 30 FT of a Residential District														
**** for sites > 20,000 SF														



front lot line (typically 3 to 4 feet) while on the 600 and 700 blocks of Penn Ave the existing pattern is 5 to 15 feet. The typical zoning standard of a minimum front yard setback of 8 foot is incompatible with both the existing conditions as well as the preferred community character determined during the survey. The precedent has already been set my many properties that have been converted from residential to commercial uses, that storefronts and courtyards maybe placed in the front yard with storefronts as close as 3 to 6 feet from the front property line. This plan recommended typical front yard setbacks of 4 feet or the average of adjacent building setbacks. To best define the front yard conditions, it is recommended that a maximum setback be established to ensure that the front walls properly define the street wall and discourage or prohibit the placement of parking within the front yard along certain streets.

Form Based Code Standards

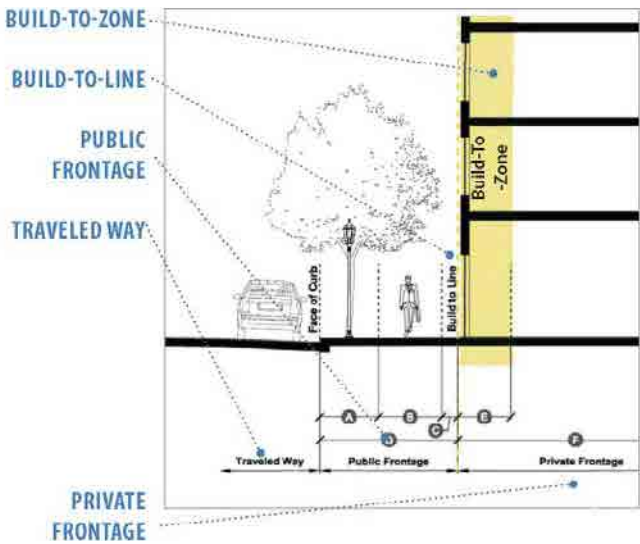
To encourage and permit the expansion of the downtown retail district while continuing to promote the placement of storefronts, active frontages and civic spaces along the main shopping streets in the downtown, this plan calls for the design and adoption of Form Based Code Design Standards to further enhance the existing zoning standards in the downtown. Key principles to be embraced in these standards should include:

Street Wall

Vibrant business district need both active ground floor businesses as well as large windows with excellent visibility by those who are walking the downtown to create the necessary vitality. The street wall should be located 12 to 18 feet from the face of curb and the building walls should be 20 to 45 feet in height to reinforce West Reading’s typical streetscape and sidewalk experience in scale with existing conditions in the downtown. Two to four story buildings should be encouraged along the primary shopping streets.

Build To Zone & Sidewalks

Sidewalks along primary commercial streets should be at least 8 feet in width and a Build-To-Zone should be established that requires a portion of the front building wall to be placed within the Build-To-Zone. Build-To-Zones are typically 5 to 10 feet in



depth to allow for a variety of landscape conditions and stair configurations.

Building Placement and Frontage Occupancy

Building placement standards should reinforce the importance of creating a welcoming pedestrian experience with storefronts, street trees, pedestrian lighting, sidewalks and landscaping defining the edge of the public realm. Along the street wall, off-street parking should be prohibited and buildings should be required to occupy 40 to 60% of their frontage to create a well-defined street experience. Building fronts should be located along sidewalks for a minimum “frontage occupancy” to create continuity of buildings fronts facing each street.

Building Storefronts and Active Frontages

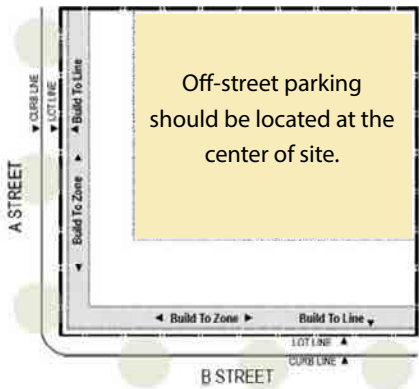
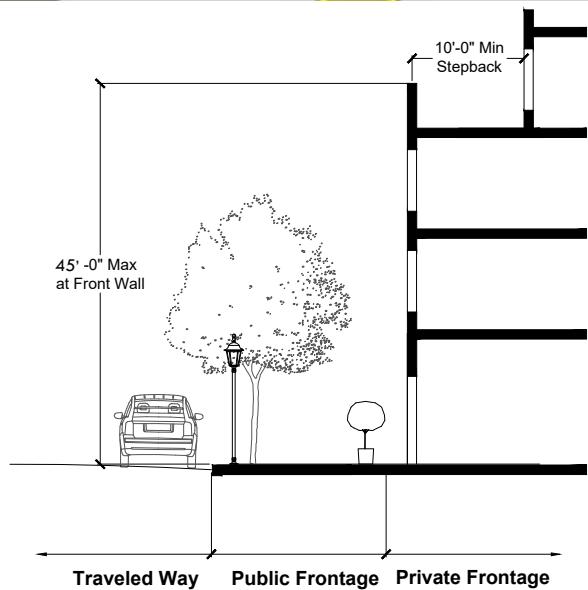
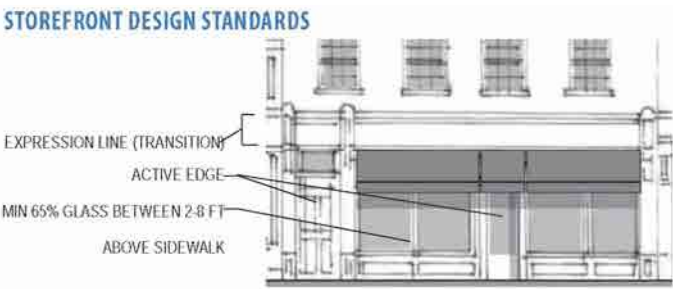
A Regulating Plan should establish locations where storefronts and frequent doorways and windows are required along the primary retail streets. Typical storefront standards are to provide a minimum of 60% glass between 2 and 10 feet above the sidewalk. To avoid the experience of dead walls where shopping and strolling is interrupted, active frontages should be incentivized or controlled to encourage frequent entrances (every 50 to 75 feet) and minimum glazing areas for windows so necessary for a vibrant shopping and dining districts.

Civic Space

Civic spaces should be incentivized along public street frontages to create destinations where West Reading residents and visitors can gather and socialize. The Borough may want to either establish a minimum of 5 to 15% civic space on each lot or require land development applicants to contribute to an open space fund for construction of plazas, trails or pocket parks. The regulating plan may designate certain locations where civic spaces are to be encouraged or required.

Building Setbacks

To maintain the character of existing streetscape vistas in the downtown, the plan calls for reduced building height along the street, while allowing for taller portions of a building to be placed at least 10 feet behind the front building wall. The Borough may want to consider a building setback, where the buildings can be 45 feet high within the 10 feet closest to the front lot line while allowing for up to 65 feet high at other locations.





**Parking**

Parking standards should be established for West Reading that permit on-street parking to count toward overall parking requirements. Off -street parking should be limited to locations at least 10 feet away from the sidewalk and streets to reduce the perception of parking as the dominant land use. Off-site parking should be permitted and municipal parking areas should be explore to promote downtown commerce.

**Adopt a Regulating Plan to Define the Placement of Storefronts, Civic Spaces, Trails and Active Frontages**

Certain streets such as Penn Avenue between 4th & 8th Ave should maintain the predominant pattern of storefronts facing the street to ensure continuity of pedestrian commercial activity. By adopting the regulating plan recommendations shown at the right as a complement to the zoning map, the active frontages defined on this map will ensure that future development expands in a manner that promotes vibrant shopping streets and reinforces the importance of the West Reading’s public realm.

**Require Storefronts Facing Primary Shopping Streets**

Consider portions of Penn Avenue, N. 5th Ave and N. 6th Ave as locations where storefronts should be required.

**Require Active Street Frontages along Secondary Shopping Street**

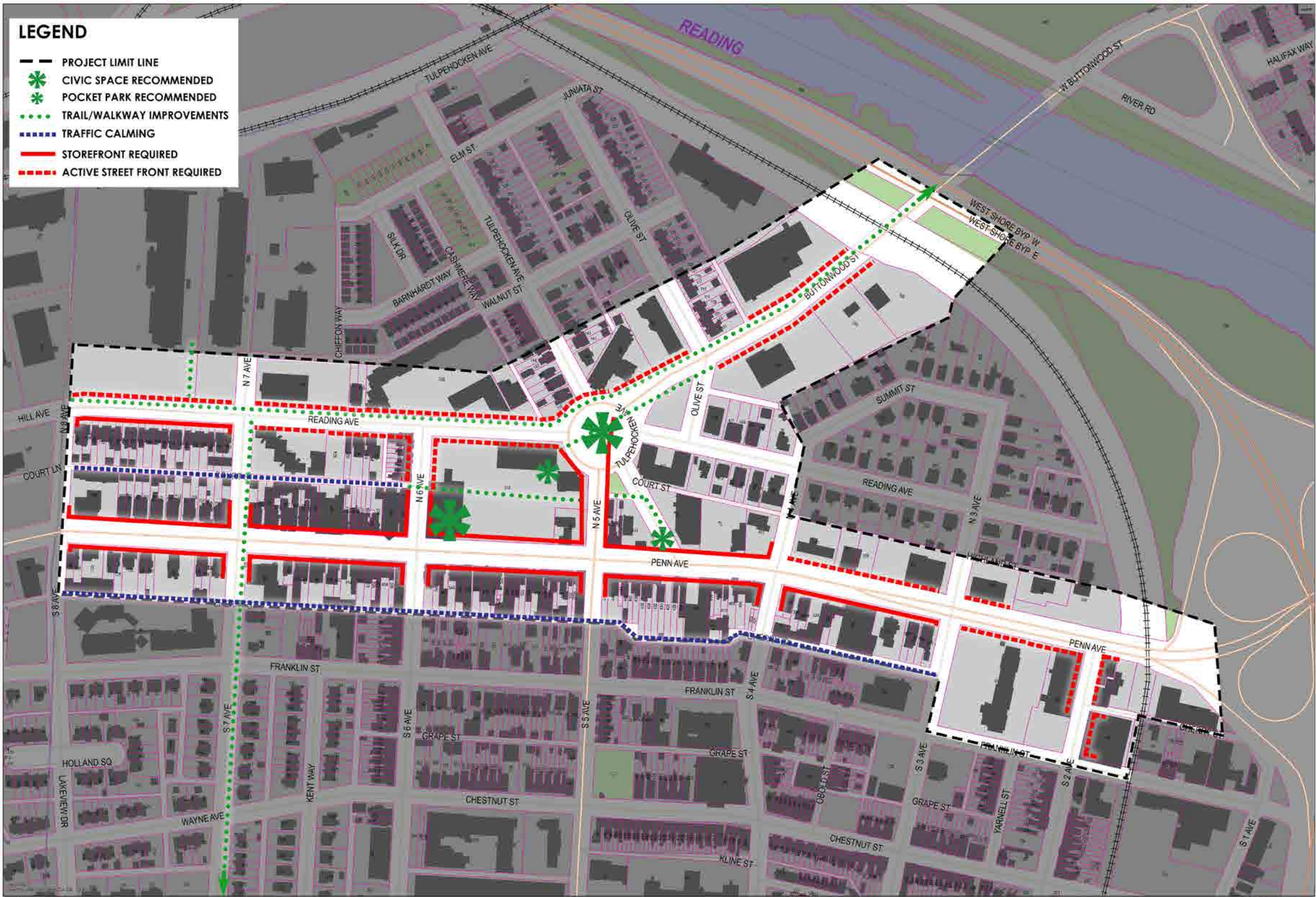
Consider the 500 to 700 blocks of Reading Avenue and portions of the 200 to 300 blocks of Penn Avenue as locations where active frontages such as frequent entrances, ground floor windows and shallow front yards should be required.

**Encourage and/or require Civic Spaces**

Consider incentivizing the construction of civic spaces to activate downtown commerce and create great locations for community events at the locations designated with green starrs.

**Encourage and/or require Multipurpose Trails**

Consider designating locations for multipurpose trails along Reading Avenue, Buttonwood Street and mid block locations such as Cherry Street and Court Street.



**West Reading Master Plan Study: Regulating Plan**  
West Reading Borough, Berks County, Pennsylvania - 10/15/19





# 5

## Branding & Implementation Strategies



*The West Reading Brand Assessment has identified a number of strategies that will create a more cohesive brand for the downtown while supporting the ongoing implementation plan. Successful implementation strategies require a clear vision and partners committed to investing the time, talent and resources of their organizations to achieve the goals of a plan. This Master Plan for Downtown West Reading will require ongoing involvement from business leaders, the Borough of West Reading and the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation.*



Expanding your market, enhancing the downtown experience

Within the Brand Assessment report, we established a deeper understanding of West Reading’s:

1. Market position within the trade areas and tourism programs within the region and state
2. Use of Social, Digital and Print Media to reach your customers
3. Current Branding Components and the graphics, logos and current taglines
4. Community Insights from the survey of 324 respondents
5. WRCRF Board Insights from all 9 Board Members
6. Demographic data and trends

By building upon these assessments of West Reading’s brand and the downtown revitalization planning insights we have gained during this planning effort, we offer the following recommendations. To achieve your goals of growing your market and better defining

your brand, we offer the following recommendations related to your markets, customers and businesses.

Define your Target Market

To best determine the most appropriate brand identity for West Reading’s business district, we believe it should be informed, to some degree, by the target audience that the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation chooses for growing your customer base. Should the district expand your base to a more regional focus or increase your base by increasing the number and frequency of local customers? You can seek to do both, but you will need to remain aware of how the words, brand themes and events impact both audiences. When we asked the WRCRF board “where should most of the target audience live/be drawn from?” there was overwhelming support for expanding your target audience to a more regional base. As the map below suggests, nearly all of

the 324 survey respondents live in Berks County and most live within 10 miles of downtown.

Expand upon the reasons why visitors come to West Reading

The survey reveals that most visitors come to West Reading for:

- Restaurants
- Bars, breweries and tasting rooms
- Festivals and events
- Shops
- Coffee & treats

To expand upon these areas of strength, we recommend the following:

Encourage existing businesses and recruit new businesses that will draw locals to patronize more businesses on a daily and weekly basis

While your customer base is impressive, it should be further diversified because most visitors to West Reading do not visit more than once per month. West Reading needs to work with its existing businesses and recruit new businesses that will draw more visitors to the district weekly and daily.

Expand the Local Customer Base

At present, 50% of survey respondents dine in West Reading more frequently than once a month and 30% of respondents shop more frequently than once a month. To increase the local market customer base, we would encourage the district to recruit more businesses that provide daily services such as

a neighborhood grocer, hardware store, fitness center or pharmacy.

Expand the Regional Customer Base

Of the 324 survey respondents who provided their home zip code, nearly all of them live within 10 miles of the downtown. To increase the regional customer base that lives more than 10 miles from the downtown, the district should consider recruiting niche businesses such as artisans, galleries, arthouse cinema, performing arts venues, antiques, specialty stores and boutiques that have a broader geographic customer base.

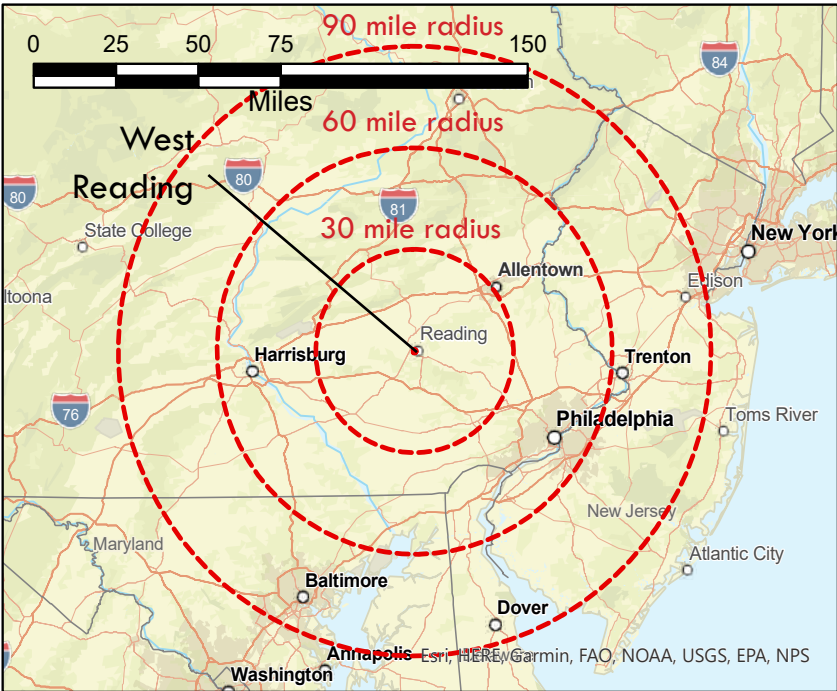
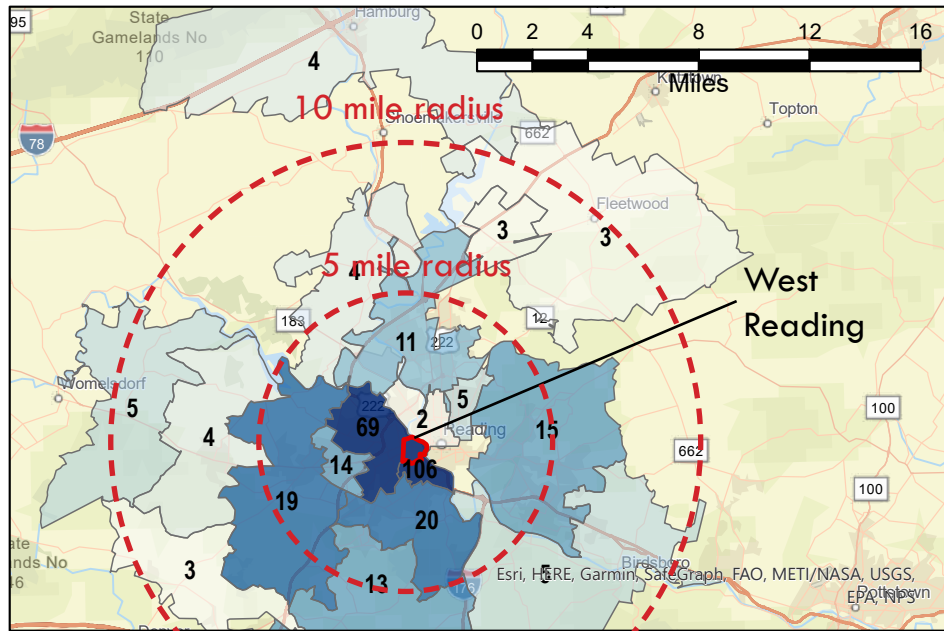
For the reasons described above, we suggest your branding and business attraction and retention efforts focus on both on recruiting or enhancing businesses that appeal to greater frequency of patronage from the local target markets, while placing a greater emphasis on attracting a regional customer base that is willing to travel 30, 60 or 90 miles to West Reading because your attractions offer a quality experience worth visiting. We feel these regional draw attractions must build upon your unique assets. Once these visitors have chosen to come to West Reading, it remains paramount that the downtown experience is a positive one that encourages return visits from these households and others in their circle of influence.

Enhance the Downtown Experience

To reinforce the visitor experience community members suggest West Reading enhance the downtown experience in the following ways:

- **Businesses:** Diversify the variety of stores and restaurants, especially those that shift the focus away from drinking
- **Parking:** Invest in signage, wayfinding, parking management, and additional parking as well as short term parking to support take-out food
- **Arts and Activities:** Encourage new venues and activities to extend the visitor experience including visual arts, performing arts, an arboretum, and walking and trails.
- **The Place:** Invest in plazas, trees, landscaping, lighting, benches and gathering places to create a more welcoming environment
- **Hours of Operation:** Expand the hours of operation to include evenings, Sundays and Mondays.
- **Branding:** Update the downtown web site, brochures, tag line, branding of the arts, advertising for events and the business district.

Encourage existing businesses and recruit new businesses that will draw visitors from beyond Berks County



Map of West Reading’s potential Regional Market Draw Area showing a 30, 60 and 90 mile radius from the center of West Reading.



Assets, words, tag lines & brochure to visualize your brand

**Build Upon your Assets**  
West Reading’s brand should focus on its strengths as a great place for: arts and culture; shopping; and dining.

**Celebrate the Arts:** West Reading and its recognized Mural Arts Walk and local art galleries, as well as other arts venues throughout the Greater Reading area such as the Reading Museum, the Goggle Works, and other galleries and museums offer numerous opportunities for locals and visitors from beyond the region a place to experience the visual arts during the daytime or evening. In addition, many of your existing streets celebrate the arts with signage, Frogs, and other reminders of the murals throughout the downtown. The brand for West Reading should build upon The Arts as a key asset.

**Feature Your Unique Shops:**  
West Reading offers a wide array of specialty shops that focus on wellness, jewelry, home goods, and locally crafted products. With the Knitting Mills down the road and so many unique local offerings on Penn Avenue, it is time to celebrate the downtown’s offerings. The brand for West Reading should build upon Shopping as a key asset.

**Downtown Dining:** West Reading offers dozens of venues for crafted cocktails, crafted beers, fine dining, ethnic cuisine, memorable desserts, and family dining options. The brand for West Reading should build upon Dining as a key asset.



**Engage a Graphic Designer**  
Based upon the insights gained from the community from the 324 survey respondents and further insights from the West Reading Community Revitalization Board, we offer the following brand recommendations for considerations by a graphic designer, web designer, and ongoing investment in the messages you deliver to the current and future visitors to West Reading.

Here are a number of insights that we offer to assist the graphic designers and web designers that will craft the specific logos, words, graphics, and web pages that can realize these brand aspirations.

**Choose Words that will Support the Brand**  
Key words people associate with West Reading and its Penn Avenue business district include:

- Quaint
- Walkable
- Restaurants
- Fun
- Boutique
- Farmer’s Market
- Shopping
- Craft
- Small Business
- Art

**Use West Reading as your Place Name**  
For the purposes of describing your business district, 78% of the

WRCRF board agreed that “West Reading” should be the words used to describe your district and not “Penn Avenue” or “The Avenue.” We recommend you embrace these words and avoid using the name of your Foundation when referring to the district. We suggest the West Reading brand take center stage wherever possible.

**Create a Tag Line & New URL**  
Although not a part of our brand assessment scope of work, we want to offer some alternatives for ongoing consideration:

- Love West Reading
- Choose West Reading
- Visit West Reading
- Artfully done
- Heartfully done
- Make your mark
- Feed Your Heart and Soul
- Heart and Soul of Berks County
- The heartbeat of Berks County
- Artfully yours
- Express Yourself
- Curated and Creative

There are certainly more examples of tag lines that may be appropriate for promoting the district. Based on the results of this assessment, we suggest the ultimate tag line should be drawn from your agreed-upon narrative and flow through all of your branding touch-points: Facebook, web site, Instagram, print and digital materials.

Currently, the main web site is [www.visitwestreading.com](http://www.visitwestreading.com). A new tag line does not need to become part of the URL but it is important that the brand, logo, tagline, and URL all work seamlessly together.

**Update Your Visitor Brochure**  
The current brochure is an excellent starting point and should be updated for visitor use. If budgets and demand warrant, it can be printed for distribution. Or, it can be updated and created in a digital format for download and use on a smart phone or formatted for download and personal printing.

In addition, specifying reasons to come to West Reading would be a good addition to a publication of this type. For example:

**4 Reasons to Make Your Mark in West Reading:**

- Continue your creative pursuits from the GoggleWorks to the Mural Arts Walk
- Stretch your outlet shopping muscles with an evening gallery walk
- Bring your interplanetary view from the Neag Planetarium to our out-of-this-world restaurants
- West Reading has a lot to offer but connecting with neighbors adds another dimension to experience.

This visitor brochure will help illustrate the narrative, tag line, logo and celebrate West Reading’s authentic assets and experiences.

“...branding is the concerted effort to make something identifiably distinctive.”

Robert Govers



Implementation Strategy

The implementation of this plan relies on collaborative efforts between the Borough of West Reading and its municipal leaders and boards, the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) staff and board as well as local businesses and property owners.

The Master Plan for Downtown West Reading will be guided by this seven year plan of action. The following strategies and tasks defined in the Implementation Plan Matrix, located on page 59, have been prioritized to allow time for design, funding, implementation and/or construction of the plan elements. Each implementation task has been assigned an organization responsible for leading this effort. The lead organization is responsible for identifying how each task will be designed, funded and implemented. This task may also require the support of design professionals, property owners, business owners, and others to implement the task.

Rebranding & Design Standards

The organizations listed for each strategy is guided by the Brand Assessment report and the hiring of consultants to assist with branding graphics, brand narrative, wayfinding, signage, design standards for facade enhancement matching grants and guidelines for gateways and civic spaces defined in Chapters 3 & 4. The regulatory modifications will include the Borough Planning Commission hiring a consultant to prepare ordinances to update the zoning and land developments defined in Chapter 4.

Placemaking

The placemaking strategy is designed to enhance civic spaces, the mural arts, parking and wayfinding throughout the downtown. These recommendations actions are documented in Chapter 3.

Expanding the Business District

The expansion of the Business District is designed to create new shopping streets and increase the tax ratables within the downtown. As documented in Chapter 3, these expansions will begin along 6th Avenue and continue onto Reading Avenue.

Infill & Redevelopment

The zoning and design standards documented in Chapter 4 are designed to incentivize private sector investment as documented in Chapter 3. In certain cases, the Borough can facilitate this process by designating certain municipally owned sites for potential sale or redevelopment.

Organizational

The organizational development tasks have been identified to support the creation of a Business Improvement District. The WRCRF should collaborate with the Pennsylvania Downtown Center to identify the potential district boundaries, organizational goals, operating costs and revenue strategies necessary to support a sustainable organization.

Keystone Main Street Designation

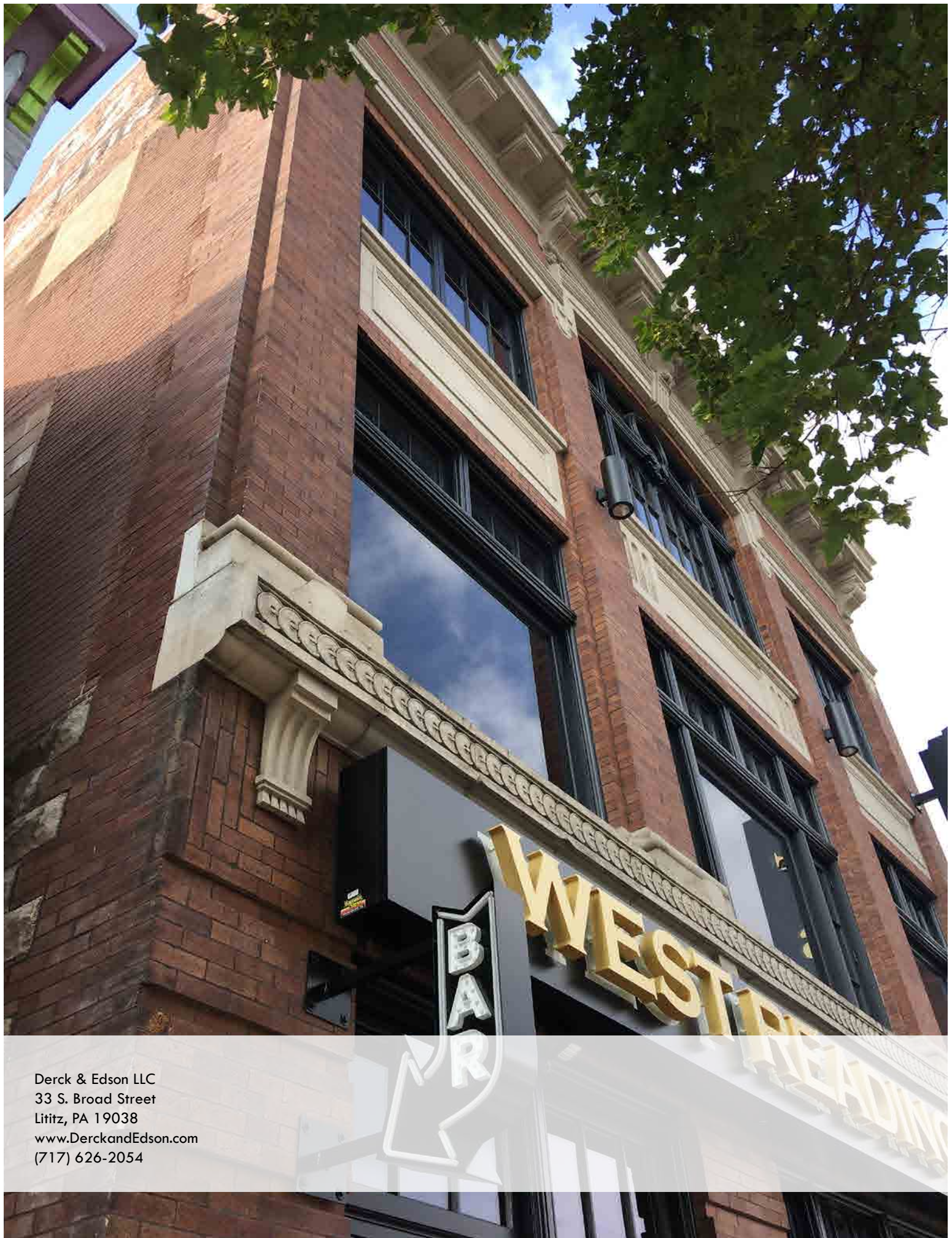
To assist the West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation and Borough of West Reading grow the downtown and provide the necessary staff support, organizational resources and funding resources for these initiatives, the Foundation and Borough should consider becoming a Keystone Main Street program as defined by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. This designation can provide additional funding resources, technical resources and capacity to realize the goals of this Downtown Plan.

The seven year plan outlined at the right is a critical building block in the creation of the organizational capacity, revitalization priorities, funding priorities and goal alignment across the many individual and organizations necessary to achieve these outcomes. We strongly encourage both the Borough and WRCRF establish a primary point of contact to assist in implementing these tasks and facilitate regular meetings, at least quarterly, to maintain a master schedule, identify challenges, seek project partners and document progress towards the goals of this plan.

The Implementation Plan Matrix

Implementation Strategy								
	Responsibility	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Rebranding & Design Standards								
Rebranding								
Establish Image & Principles	West Reading CRF							
Develop Design Standards for Facades & Signage	West Reading CRF							
Design Wayfinding Consistent With Rebranding	West Reading CRF							
Establish Guidelines for Gateways & Civic Spaces	West Reading CRF							
Regulatory Modifications								
Modify Zoning Code	Borough of West Reading							
Modify Land Development Regulations	Borough of West Reading							
Brand Image Implementation								
Façade/Signage Incentive Program	West Reading CRF	Design	Fund/Kick-off	Implement				
Placemaking								
Civic Spaces								
East Gateway Signage/Enhancement	Borough of West Reading	Design	Fund	Construct				
Penn/6th Pocket Plaza	West Reading CRF/Borough of West Reading	Agreement	Design	Fund	Construct			
Delaney Circle/Tulpehocken Avenue Modifications								
Traffic Engineering/Utilities Assessment	Borough of West Reading							
Design/Fund/Construct	Borough of West Reading			Design	Fund	Construct		
Penn Avenue Traffic Calming/Streetscape Enhancements	Borough of West Reading		Design	Fund	Construct			
Cherry/Court Street Traffic Calming	Borough of West Reading			Design	Fund	Construct		
Two-Way 2nd Avenue Traffic Modifications	Borough of West Reading			Design	Fund	Construct		
Mural Arts								
Process To Formalize Mural Arts Program	West Reading CRF							
Develop/Implement Routine Maintenance	West Reading CRF		Fund	Implement				
Implement Legal Protections for Murals	West Reading CRF		Design	Implement				
Enhance Streetscape Adjoining Murals	Borough of West Reading				Design	Fund	Construct	
Expand Mural Locations	West Reading CRF/Borough of West Reading							
Parking								
Reading Ave./Court St. Parking Deck	Borough Of West Reading'/Others/Berks County Redevelopment	Design	Fund	Construct				
Other Court Street Parking Consolidation	West Reading CRF							
West Reading Shopping Center Garage	Borough Of West Reading'/Others/Berks County Redevelopment				Design	Fund	Construct	
Tower Health Lot Reconfiguration	Others							
Wayfinding								
Install New Wayfinding Elements	Borough of West Reading		Design	Fund	Construct			
Expand Business District								
N. 6th Avenue								
Redevelop/Reconfigure 6th Ave. Frontage of West Reading Shopping Center	West Reading CRF/Others	Design	Fund	Construct				
Reading Avenue								
Add New Restaurants/Retail To Corner Pads NW 7th and NE 8th	Others							
Infill & Redevelopment								
West Reading Shopping Center								
Redevelop Penn Avenue Frontage As Mult-Story/Mixed Use	Others				Design	Fund	Construct	
Delaney Circle/Tulpehocken Avenue Sites								
Redevelop Surplus Sites from Delaney Circle /Tulpehocken Ave. Reconfiguration	Borough of West Reading				Market			
Chocolate District								
11-Acre Riverfront Site	Borough of West Reading	Market						
Encourage Rehabilitation of 118 Franklin for Residential/Mixed Use	Others							
Support Other Rehabilitation/Conversion Efforts	Others							
Organizational								
Business Improvement District								
Complete Plan	West Reading CRF							
Adopt District	West Reading CRF/Borough of West Reading							
Implement	West Reading CRF/Borough of West Reading							





Derck & Edson LLC  
33 S. Broad Street  
Lititz, PA 19038  
[www.DerckandEdson.com](http://www.DerckandEdson.com)  
(717) 626-2054