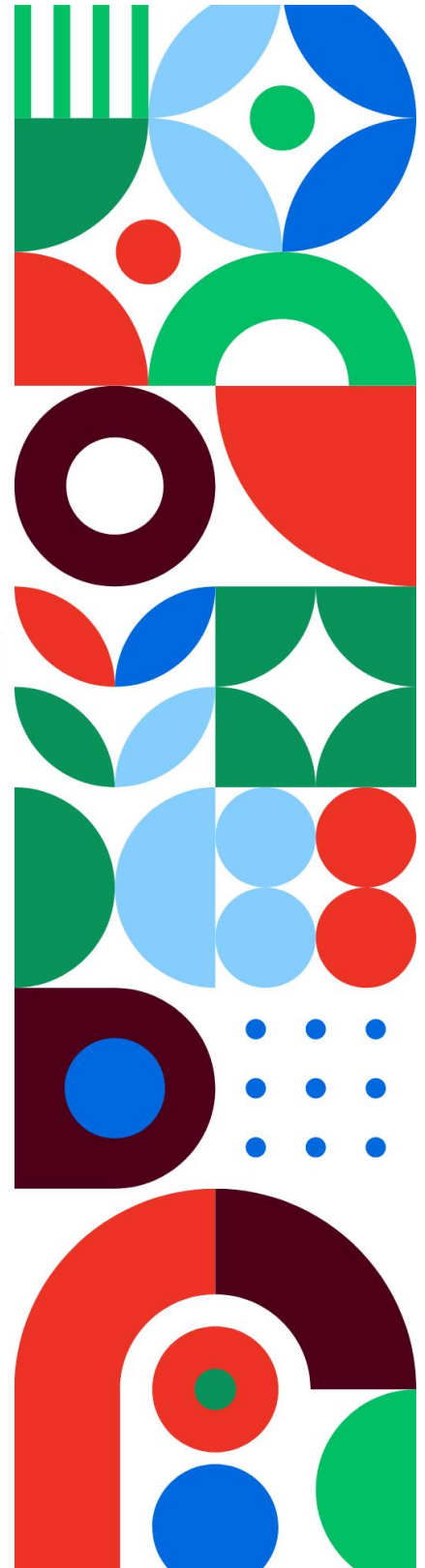




Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan

2025



Acknowledgements

The *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* is the product of the generosity of Reading's diverse arts and cultural community, encompassing all users. Reading's larger arts community spans the surrounding region, as people come to participate in the town's arts and cultural life which ultimately supported the development of this plan. While this document is an essential tool for supporting community action, the people who champion its implementation will create the future of Reading's arts and culture community.

The plan is the result of a grant awarded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) and funding from the State's Local Rapid Recovery Plan earmark. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) staff collaborated with the Department of Community Development and Planning, as well as the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group, to develop the plan.

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Special thanks to the Reading Public Schools staff who helped coordinate focus groups and arts-based activities with students as part of the planning process.

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Executive Summary

Overview

The 2025 *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* documents the town's arts and cultural resources and provides a roadmap for the future of arts and culture investments. This plan is the culmination of years of community efforts to support Reading's arts and cultural community, specifically in assessing the need for a cultural facility, identifying opportunities for creative placemaking, and enhancing downtown as a hub for arts and community life. Reading is a historic community with a dynamic arts and cultural ecosystem that actively hosts and supports arts and cultural activities, events, and organizations.

This plan documents the community's desires to support arts and culture in Reading, guided by vision and goals developed through engagement with community members via community surveys, focus groups, interviews, and community showcase events. The arts and culture action plan is a living document to support the implementation in partnership with the Town, cultural stakeholders, and community members. This plan offers an invitation for all community members in Reading to engage in creative implementation to actively support the advancement and improvement of town's arts and culture ecosystem.

Vision

The Reading Arts and Cultural Action Plan Working Group developed the following vision statement to guide the development and implementation of the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan*.

"Our vision is to create an inclusive and vibrant arts and culture community in Reading, where diverse programming reflects the richness of our community's experiences."

Goals

This plan outlines a community process that led to the development of six goals for the future of Reading's arts and culture. Each goal includes multiple strategies and actions, detailed in the action plan, along with specific implementation partners.

GOAL 1

Reading is a hub for artists, artisans, and creative workers throughout the region.

The town boasts a notable performing arts legacy and is home to organizations educating youth and adults alike in refining their creative practices. As Reading grows and plans for the future of arts and culture, it is critical to ensure opportunities for artists and cultural groups to connect, be known and visible, and be able to access Reading both as a home and for their creative practices.

GOAL 2

Reading is a town known for coordinated communication for cultural events and programs.

Like many peer communities, Reading has many avenues to communicate with its residents, including promoting and sharing arts and cultural events. However, it has yet to establish a standard practice for reaching and connecting with community members. Reading seeks to coordinate existing resources maintained by the Town and local cultural organizations to enhance communication of cultural events, programming, and general community resources.

GOAL 3

Reading is a welcoming community that embraces and celebrates cultural diversity.

As the community's cultural diversity grows, arts and culture programming and events that embrace and celebrate diversity are critical to fostering connection and quality of life for all residents.

GOAL 4

Reading is a destination for its active and vibrant downtown known for its strong sense of place.

Reading has successfully implemented partnerships with community leaders to lead culturally driven economic development and placemaking initiatives. Examples include the ArtBox Mural Program, Haven Street Pocket Park, and the Bistro Table Program. Reading continues to invest in efforts to support local businesses and attract visitors to the community.

GOAL 5

Reading is home to multiple arts spaces that nurture intergenerational participation in arts and culture.

Since 2014, Reading's arts and cultural community has organized and petitioned for a physical space to better support arts and cultural activities. Since there is no central location, cultural organizations are housed across a variety of areas to meet the community's needs. Pressing needs include rehearsal and performance space for large ensembles, artists' workspace, and a makerspace with opportunities to take art classes. Similarly, community members articulated the need for space for youth and seniors to access connection, creativity, and community.

GOAL 6

Reading is a place that respects, honors, and commemorates the history of all people and land.

Reading recognizes the importance of honoring the land, people, and events that shape its evolution and development. From acknowledging the land and people who have lived here for thousands of years ago to the experiences of Reading today, the town's history is a living history animated by remembrance. As Reading continues to grow and evolve, it is illuminated through these stories and by sharing historical events of local and national significance.

Introduction

What is an Arts and Culture Action Plan?

An Arts and Culture Action Plan is a form of cultural planning that seeks to define actionable goals to further shape a community’s arts and cultural landscape. Cultural planning is a place-based planning practice designed to strengthen and nurture arts and cultural assets within a community, thereby enhancing civic life, economic vitality, and overall social health, resiliency and livability.

In cultural planning, local engagement prompts residents, workers, and visitors to reflect on the conditions that shape arts and culture in a defined geographic place and to think strategically about the policy and programmatic support necessary to foster conditions that allow arts and culture to flourish. Planning for arts and culture enables communities to invest in policies that shape the built environment and create conditions that foster the thriving of people and places.

Why an Arts and Culture Action Plan?

In January 2024, the Town of Reading started working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to develop an arts and cultural plan. The *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* guides Reading's efforts to foster thriving arts and cultural assets that are accessible to residents and visitors. Components include a cultural asset inventory and map, a list of local and regional arts and culture stakeholders, policy goals and strategies to strengthen arts and cultural opportunities, recommendations for creative placemaking opportunities, and an assessment of community needs for a potential cultural facility.

Funding for the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* included a \$25,000 grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development's Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) Technical Assistance grant and \$25,000 from the Town's Local Rapid Recovery Plan earmark. As part of this plan, the primary focus areas included activating Reading's arts and cultural community, assessing cultural facility needs, and supporting creative placemaking efforts in the downtown area.



Figure 1: Photograph of Reading Center Signage

Leadership and Vision

Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group

A dedicated group of volunteers from Reading's arts and cultural community served as a working group to guide the development of the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan*. The Working Group met monthly throughout the planning process at the First Congregational Church of Reading, which operates as a hub for artists, cultural organizations, and performing arts events. In addition to the First Congregational Church of Reading, the committee included longstanding arts organization representatives from Arts Reading, Creative Arts, Reading Cares, and the Reading Antiquarian Society. Local business representation included the Reading Chamber of Commerce and local business owners. Finally, the Reading Cultural Council, Reading Public Library staff, and Town staff provided critical perspectives on Town Governance in this planning process.

Vision

The Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group developed a vision statement to guide the planning process and engagement activities and revised it based on feedback from community members.

"Our vision is to create an inclusive and vibrant arts and culture community in Reading, where diverse programming reflects the richness of our community's experiences."

With this vision and planning process, the Working Group also named the intentions to:

- Collaborate and coordinate efforts among arts and culture groups and other institutions.
- Provide accessible arts and culture programming.
- Foster a sense of belonging for all members of the Reading community.
- Amplify the voices of underrepresented communities in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Explore opportunities to establish a physical home for supporting arts and culture.
- Cultivate a more connected community with an active, vibrant downtown.

Community Process

The *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* emerges from a community process composed of countless conversations, gatherings, events, and survey responses with community members of all ages, and artistic disciplines. This section provides an overview of the community engagement activities and processes that shaped the plan.

Kick Off Meeting

In January 2024, the Town of Reading hosted a community forum at Reading First Congregational Church to kick off the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan. Attendees included stakeholders in cultural and historical organizations, arts leaders, and local businesses. Following this initial meeting, the Town staff invited individuals to participate in the planning process by volunteering as part of the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group.

Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group

The Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group was formed in February 2024 and includes representation from the Arts Reading, Creative Arts, Reading Antiquarian Society, Reading Business Improvement District Committee, Reading Cares, Reading Chamber of Commerce, Reading Cultural Council, Reading First Congregational Church, Reading Public Library, and local businesses. The working group's role is to support engagement, inform the plan's goals and strategies, and steward the vision for the planning process.

Interviews

MAPC conducted eight interviews with members of the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group in February and March 2024. The interviews covered a variety of topics related to the participants' lives and their experiences in Reading, providing important context of prior processes. Additional interviews included community members participating in arts and culture efforts through the Reading Cultural Council and as municipal staff. These interviews provided a framework for developing the community survey, outlined existing stakeholders, and identified relevant projects connected to arts and culture in Reading.

Survey

Community members provided feedback through a community survey, which received 211 unique responses. The survey was available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese and remained open from May 2024 through October 2024. Town staff, MAPC, and Working Group members participated in public events in June, including Reading's Friends and Family Day and Reading Porch Festival, to support outreach and engagement. These direct outreach efforts informed Reading community

members about the arts and culture plan and invited community members to participate in the community survey.

The survey asked respondents questions about their experiences of arts and culture in Reading,



Figure 2: Photograph of the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Survey Flyer at Reading Porchfest.

what aspects of Reading's cultural resources are most important to them, and their participation in arts and culture activities. **Thirty percent of survey respondents consider themselves to be artists or creative workers, and forty-six percent consider themselves active consumers of arts and culture in Reading.** Respondents identified arts and cultural assets in Reading, which supplements the list of arts and cultural assets included in **Appendix C.**

The final section of the survey included an optional section for participant demographics, helping to ensure that the survey results are representative of Reading's demographics and informing additional engagement needs. Nearly 80% of survey respondents identify as white,

over 70% are 45 years or older, 65% have lived in Reading for more than 10 years, and the majority are homeowners. While all survey responses were in English, respondents noted that they also speak additional languages at home—seventeen languages in total, including Spanish and French, which are the most common. Additional languages mentioned in the survey included French, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Tagalog, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, an Indic Dialect, Korean, Hebrew, Hindi, Romansh, German, Bulgarian, and Pampangan.

Focus Groups

To augment the survey findings, this process included four focus groups to account for specific experiences and perspectives on Reading's arts and culture programming and activities. In partnership with the Town staff, MAPC hosted conversations with a sample of local businesses in October 2024, seniors at the Pleasant Street Center in November 2024, and youth participants in the Multi-Language Learners program in November 2024, as well as a topic-specific conversation for cultural facility stakeholders in December 2024.

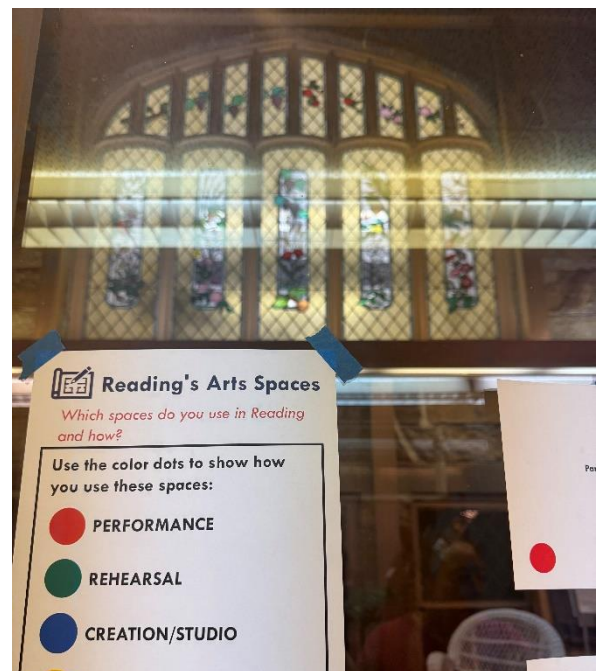


Figure 3: Photograph of cultural facility engagement workshop activity with Reading First Congregational Church windows in the background.

Youth Arts Engagement

In addition to youth engagement with students participating in the Multi-Language Learners program at Reading Memorial High School, students in Parker Middle School submitted visual artwork in response to the question: *“What do you want Reading to be known for?”*

More than thirty students in sixth and seventh grade responded to this prompt and provided illustrations of their answers to this question. This plan features their artwork, accompanied by individual acknowledgments in **Appendix I**.

Community Showcase

In January 2025, the project team presented draft goals for the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* to the public for feedback at the Community Showcase event held at the Reading Public Library. Over twenty attendees provided edits and feedback on the vision and goal language. The conversations and written feedback provided, along with an asynchronous engagement poll offered online, were incorporated into the final version of the goals, strategies, and actions outlined in this plan.

Activation Event

In April 2025, the Town of Reading and the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Working Group hosted another event at the Reading Public Library as a call to action with community stakeholders to build momentum on the actions identified in the action plan. Community members, Town staff, and Working Group members reviewed the action plan and strategies to support implementation.



Figure 4: Photograph of Working Group members facilitating conversations about the plan goals.

Community Context

Reading is a mature suburban town approximately fifteen miles north of Boston in Middlesex County. Reading's northern border includes parkland of the Reading Town Forest, Marion Woods, and Cedar Swamp, moving east to west. Interstate 93 runs along Reading's western border, and Interstate 95 runs along the southern border up until Lynnfield. Reading borders six municipalities, including North Reading, Wilmington, Woburn, Stoneham, Wakefield, and Lynnfield. The town has a commuter rail station as part of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail on the Haverhill Line, which cuts across the southwest portion of the town.

Population Characteristics

Reading's population is 25,518, according to the 2020 Decennial Census. The median age in Reading is 44.1 years, and nearly 30% of the population is 60 years old. Family households represent 73% of Reading's population. Reading's community is predominantly White, with 85.9% of the population identifying as white non-Hispanic. 6.2% of Reading's population identifies as Asian, with 3.8% specifically identifying as Chinese and 1.3% as Indian. Additionally, 4.6% identify as Hispanic or Latine.

Approximately 12% of households speak a language other than English at home, based on the 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Reading Public School offers a Multilingual Learner (MLL) program that serves students in Reading Public Schools speaking 20 languages. Approximately half of MLL students are Portuguese speakers, and 10% are Spanish speakers. Other languages spoken by MLL students include Assamese, Albanian, Arabic, Benin, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, French, Japanese, Korean, Luganda, Maithili, Mandarin, Persian, Polish, Telugu, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Reading's residents are primarily homeowners, and most housing available in town are single-family homes. 92.2% of Reading's estimated 9,574 occupied housing units (according to the 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates) are owner-occupied, and the median household income is \$163,725; however, the estimate for households with married-couple families with children is \$230,773. According to a recent housing study conducted by the town, 75% of Reading's housing stock consists of single-family units as opposed to multi-family units. Over half of Reading's housing stock was constructed before 1950, and 27.9% before 1939.

Local Government and Regional Coordination

Reading's local government acts through a select board and representative town meeting. Voters elect the five-member select board with three-year terms who are responsible for calling elections, as well as initiating legislative policy, reviewing fiscal guidelines for the annual operating budget and capital improvements program, and making recommendations to town meeting members. Town meeting members are elected from eight precincts, with twenty-four town meeting members per precinct, each serving overlapping three-year terms, resulting in a total of 192 town meeting members.

As part of the metropolitan Boston area, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council is the regional planning agency that serves Reading. Reading is one of the nine communities that participate in the North Suburban Planning Council, designed to support collaboration on planning initiatives between neighboring communities, including Burlington, Lynnfield, North Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn.

Contextualizing Reading's History

Interwoven within Reading's cultural life are the town's historical development, relationships with surrounding communities, and significant moments in history. This section includes a brief excerpt from Reading's history to contextualize the present day, noting that Reading once encompassed the present-day towns of Wakefield and North Reading. Reflecting on the community's history and unique stakeholders lays the foundation for the Town to imagine the future of arts and cultural life in Reading.

While much of Reading's pre-colonial history remains under documented, we do know that the fields and swampland located at the headwaters of the Saugus, Aberjona, and Ipswich rivers were essential resources for subsistence and cultural practices, as well as critical regional trails for local tribes. Indigenous people belonging to the Massachusetts tribe traveled throughout the area. Archaeological sites in the region reveal evidence of native occupation, highlighting the deep history of indigenous communities before European colonization and their ongoing connection to the land today.

As colonists settled in Boston, settlers explored the surrounding areas. By 1639, 29 settlers from Lynn had moved to Lake Quannapowitt, initially naming the territory Linn Village. Reading was then incorporated as an official Town on June 10, 1644.

As Reading's economy developed, it focused on agriculture and cottage industries. Residents grew crops for sale and raised cattle, producing dairy products, beef, and hides for footwear production. Homes often had workshops for crafting shoes from these materials. In 1690, John Eaton operated the "Slab City" mill behind 100 Grove Street, located on a branch of the Aberjona (Mystic) River. This mill also included a tannery at one point.¹

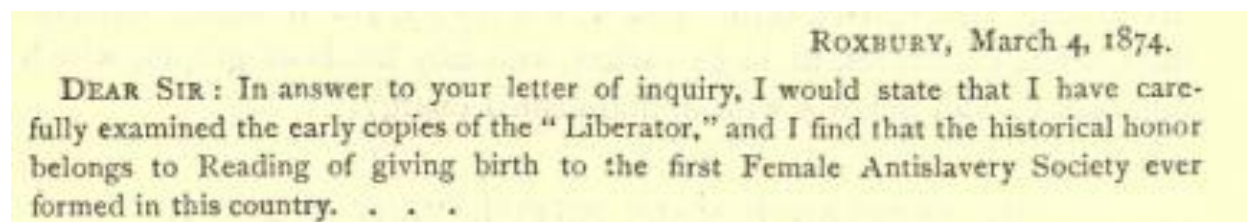
By 1720-21, "A catalogue of the brethren and sisters in full communion in the first church in Reading," recorded 184 residents of Reading.² Throughout the 1700s, residents of Reading also included enslaved persons, including African men, women, and children. Between the 1754 and 1765 slave censuses, "between twenty and thirty persons" were enslaved in Reading before the American Revolution, and other sources cite as many as 53 names.³ Efforts to document the lives of these individuals demonstrate that enslaved people of Reading were integral members of the community, as members of Reading's First Church, laborers supporting Reading's local economy, maintaining households, and serving on behalf of Reading in the American Revolutionary War.⁴

Reading's Female Anti-Slavery Society

The Female Anti-Slavery Society of Reading, established on March 22, 1832, was “one of the earliest” female anti-slavery societies in the United States, forming just a month after Salem’s society formed in February 1832. Led by Mrs. Sarah Reid, wife of Rev. Jared Reid, as its first president, the society aimed to abolish slavery through lawful, humane, and religious means. Their mission also included improving the lives of free Black individuals and advocating for their equal civil and political rights.⁵

Meeting at Union Hall, the society became a cornerstone in the anti-slavery movement. Reading also established the first male auxiliary society to the New England Anti-Slavery Society, reinforcing the town's leading role in the abolitionist cause. The society's contributions were significant: they regularly donated to anti-slavery efforts in Boston and New York, supported the enslaved African captives from the brig AMISTAD, and funded schools for Black children in Canada.

The society was actively engaged in the community, distributing anti-slavery literature, hosting lectures by prominent advocates, and collecting signatures for petitions to Congress. One such petition, presented by John Quincy Adams, called for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, exemplifying the society's influential advocacy and dedication to the cause.⁶



ROXBURY, March 4, 1874.

DEAR SIR: In answer to your letter of inquiry, I would state that I have carefully examined the early copies of the “Liberator,” and I find that the historical honor belongs to Reading of giving birth to the first Female Antislavery Society ever formed in this country. . . .

Figure 5: Letter documenting the founding of Reading's Female Antislavery Society

In 1770, the Third Parish meeting house, located in the town center at Reading Common, centralized development, although much of the local economy remained subsistence farming and home-based businesses. Notable exceptions included Joseph Bancroft, who started a boot and shoe business in 1758 that expanded into broader industrial development.

In the 19th century, Reading’s town center further developed with connections to the regional Boston and Maine Railroad lines and improvements to roads connecting north and south, including routes between Boston and Merrimac and the Andover Turnpike through Reading Center. In 1800, shoemaking was the primary industry in town, with growth in manufacturing chairs and cabinets in the early 1800s. Manufacturing continued to develop beyond furniture to clocks, organ pipes, neckties, and a casket manufacturing center with industrial growth peaking in 1855 before the Civil War.⁷

During the Civil War, Reading’s manufacturing and the town began subdividing. North Reading separated to the north of the Ipswich River in 1853, and South Reading became Wakefield in 1868. By 1870, nearly 10% of the town’s population was foreign-born, with a significant Irish population. Emerging notable industrial developments of the time included the rubberized fabric

industry and the invention of the wire hairbrush. Reading also boasted one of the largest nurseries for fruit and ornamental trees, established by Jacob Manning in 1889.⁸

In the twentieth century, both Reading's foreign-born and overall population increased, with new residents arriving from Nova Scotia, Ireland, and English-speaking areas of Canada. Improved highways replaced local trolley routes along Route 28 (Main Street) and Route 129 (Salem-Lowell Streets). By the 1930s, Reading was a small residential community with commuter services, which included the Eastern Massachusetts Street Railway, now managed by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA). In the early twentieth century, the town continued to grow in tandem with its rubber industry, which pioneered the development of rubberized auto materials and raincoat fabrics and led to advancements in hearing aids and sound amplification devices. By 1924, Reading boasted 15 manufacturing establishments employing 546 individuals. In addition to industry, Reading became home to critical military operations nationally and locally.

In 1905, construction began for the Bay State Rifle Association, which included a landmark shooting range. Throughout the 20th century, the site evolved into what is now known as Camp Curtis Guild, named for the former Massachusetts Governor and National Guardsman During World War I and World War II, which has hosted troops throughout the Commonwealth for small arms training. Since its initial construction, the Camp has hosted the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marines, the National Guard, the Works Progress Administration, the Massachusetts Military Academy, and the Massachusetts Army National Guard. In 1998, the firing range was closed due to safety concerns. The site remains active as the National Guard continues to utilize the Camp for training exercises.

Reading's Historical Stakeholders

Multiple stakeholders steward Reading's history as they seek to preserve and expand the documented historical narrative and assets of the town. The Town has two volunteer boards tasked with historic preservation activities: the Reading Historical Commission (RHC) and the Reading Historic District Commission (HDC). These boards identify and record Reading's historical assets, promoting historical awareness through historic markers for buildings of historic and architectural significance, including the Lafayette's Tour trail signage.

Reading Historical Commission

The Reading Historical Commission (RHC) was established in 1977 to identify and record the town's historical assets and develop and implement programs for preservation. Shortly after its formation, the commission began working to create the Historical Architectural Inventory, which included houses and buildings of historical significance and unique architectural styles. The commission also manages a Historic House Marker Program and maintains the Town Historical Archive. Reading's Demolition Delay Bylaw is a valuable tool for historic preservation, preventing the complete demolition of historic structures in town. RHC also supported the "Outside the Box



Figure 6: An "Outside the Box" utility box located in Town Center.

Project," which displays historic photographs and information about the town's history on utility boxes throughout the town.

The Reading Historical Commission also oversees the Reading Common Historic District in Downtown Reading, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as both a National Register District and the National Register Multiple Resource Area, indicating multiple individual properties on the National Register of Individual properties. Established in 1984, the Reading Common Historic District began documenting the architectural and historic significance of the area surrounding the Town Common. The boundaries include all municipal, institutional, and residential buildings that define the historic center of Reading's community. Notably, the district comprises Laurel Hill Cemetery, the town's original burial ground, dating back to 1737. It was also the site of the first meeting house established in present-day Reading. Religious institutions, such as the First Congregational Church and the First Church of Christ Scientist, were also constructed of stone in the Gothic Revival style and are core anchors of the district. Other significant buildings constructed included secular buildings like the old high school, now the Schoolhouse Condominiums, and the former public library, which now serves as the Town Hall Annex.

Reading Historic District Commission

Reading's distinctive history and architecture led to the creation of the Reading Local Historic District Commission in 2006, invoking The Historic Districts Act, Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40C. Reading's Historic District Commission oversees the two local historic districts, including the West Street Historic District and the Summer Avenue Historic District. The Town established historic districts to protect the distinctive character and architecture of the areas, maintain and improve the settings of the buildings, and encourage building design compatible with the area. The West Street Historic includes diverse housing styles dating back to the late 1700s, spanning three centuries of architecture and history. The Summer Avenue Historic District, just west of Parker Middle School, was approved by Reading's Town Meeting in 2014.

Additionally, the Woburn Street Historic District, established in 1982, documents the architectural significance of the development of an upper-middle-class neighborhood built on farmland. While initial new commuters settled around Washington Street near the train depot, later more affluent commuters and professionals sought out larger lots on Woburn Street, leading to buildings distinctive of the late 19th and early 20th century Colonial Revival architecture.

In addition to Town-staffed commissions, local organizations preserve and elevate Reading's historic places and stories of Reading residents, including the Reading Antiquarian Society and The Coalition of Us (CATO).



Figure 7: Photograph of Parker Tavern.

Reading Antiquarian Society

The Reading Antiquarian Society was formed in 1916 to save Parker Tavern from demolition and eventually purchased the building in 1923. Following renovations, the building opened to the public in 1930. Parker Tavern sits on land acquired by Abraham Bryant, Sr., after he contributed to the Indian Deed in 1886, and he passed the deed on to

his two sons. Abraham Bryant, Jr., a farmer and blacksmith, built the tavern in 1694 in the “saltbox” style typical of 17th-century homes. In the mid-1700s, the building served as an inn run by Ephraim Parker, the great-grandson of the Town’s co-founder, Thomas Parker. Ephraim Parker operated the building as a tavern. Parker Tavern is the oldest building in Reading today and remains open to the public as a museum.

Coalition of Us (CATO)

The Coalition of Us, or CATO, was named after one of the enslaved individuals who lived in the Reading area. The organization was formed in 2020 following the tragic murder of George Floyd, with the mission to advance racial justice for Black and Brown people through advocacy, education, engagement, and empowerment. CATO's projects include multiple efforts to broaden and reflect on the town's history, such as the Reading Remembrance Tour, a biannual walking tour in downtown Reading that explores the lives and locations of Black and enslaved residents during the colonial era. Additionally, CATO is leading efforts to educate residents about the history of Bill Russell's experiences living in Reading in the 1960s while playing for the Boston Celtics.

Arts and Cultural Life in Reading

A diverse range of passionate stakeholders, including artists, arts organizations, cultural groups, and entrepreneurs, drive arts and culture activities in Reading. Reading’s public resources also play a critical role in the arts and cultural life of Reading, from the public schools to the library and the senior center facility at the Pleasant Street

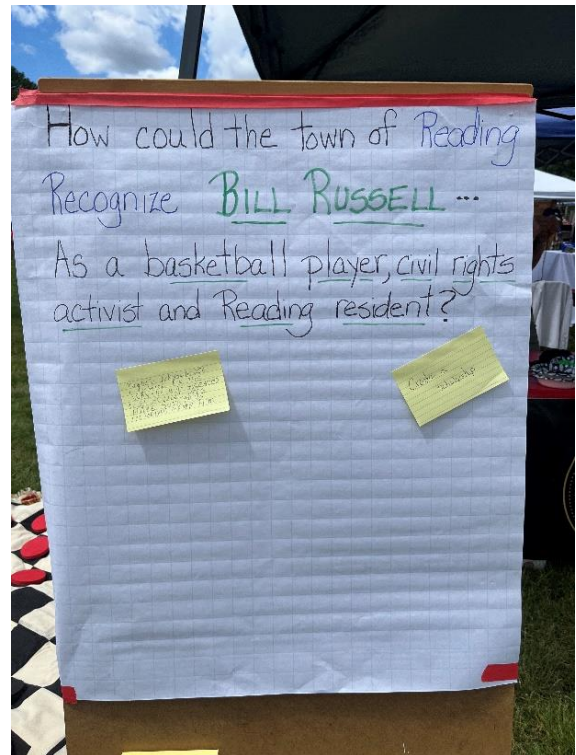


Figure 8: Photograph of CATO's engagement question at asking about how to recognize Bill Russell's legacy in Reading.

Center. In terms of leadership, Reading is home to multiple arts organizations that support cultural life in various ways, including funding, programming, and coordination.

Reading's Arts and Cultural Stakeholders

Multiple organizations in Reading offer arts and culture services and programming. **Appendix A** includes a comprehensive list of arts and culture stakeholders. This section provides a brief overview of Reading's arts and cultural stakeholders and prior efforts to support arts and culture in the town, including the Town-led efforts, organizational leadership, and local businesses.

Town Led Efforts

Reading Public Schools, the Reading Public Library, and Reading Community Services serve as the core pillars for arts and cultural programming in town. Each year, Reading Public Schools hosts an ARTSfest to showcase artwork and performances of students at Reading Memorial High School Performing Arts Center. Art and culture activities in Reading Public Schools include both elective classes and extracurricular activities, depending on the grade level. The public school's auditoriums frequently serve as a default performance space for other performing arts groups in town.

Reading Public Library provides integral resources and spaces for Reading's community life. The Reading Public Library hosts events and programs for all ages, including special programs for children and youth, as well as adults. Many events hosted at the library include art or music-based activities, as well as crafts, book groups, and games. The library hosts various cultural events and celebrations, including Juneteenth and Lunar New Year, and offers multilingual programming. In addition to being a hub for community resources, the library expanded to include the Office of Equity and Social Justice, which supported the creation of the Partners and Allies for an Inclusive Reading (PAIR) and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audit in 2024.

Additionally, Reading's Community Services leads numerous programs, activities, and initiatives related to arts and culture. Reading's Community Services includes the Recreation, Elder and Human Services, and Veteran Divisions. The Recreation Department currently offers art classes and workshops for youth, and Elder and Human Services hosts culture events at the Pleasant Street Senior Center. In 2021, the Community Services formed the Reading Center for Active Living Committee to develop a proposal for a new community center designed to meet the needs of adults aged 60 and above. The facility passed voting thresholds in 2025 to ensue design and construction advancement, with goals to operate the facility by 2027.

Beyond this, Reading has a dedicated council to support arts and culture in the town. The Reading Cultural Council (RCC) is a volunteer board in Reading that awards grants to individuals and organizations offering cultural programs that serve the community. As a part of MCC's Local Cultural Council (LCC) network, the RCC receives an annual allocation from the Massachusetts State Legislature. In 2024, the RCC distributed \$25,802 in grant awards. Additionally, the RCC conducted a town-wide survey in 2022 to gauge the arts and culture needs within Reading. With 118 responses, the survey highlighted Reading Porch Fest as the most attended arts and cultural event, followed by the Downtown Reading Art Walk. Community-wide gatherings, such as

festivals, concerts, and plays, were the most prioritized activities for future investment by the RCC, followed by projects celebrating local history and cultural diversity. Survey responses also suggested that the town needs more coordination and promotion of arts and cultural events.

Organizational Leadership

In addition to the Town-led efforts, multiple organizations are leading arts and culture educational programs, partnerships, and funding initiatives in Reading. Examples include Creative Arts, a non-profit formed in 1978 in collaboration with the Town of Reading, which serves as a community arts school, providing instruction and classes in music, theater, and visual arts. In 2014, a coalition of regional artists, arts organizations, and cultural groups formed Arts Reading to explore the possibility of creating a state-designated cultural district. Although the application for a cultural district was unsuccessful, the Arts Reading organization continues to offer organizational and individual memberships to support Reading's arts and cultural community. **Appendix A** includes a list of Reading's arts and culture stakeholders.

Reading Cultural District Exploratory Study 2014

In 2014, Reading's Community Services and Planning Division hired FinePoint Associates to prepare a report to apply for cultural district designation. While the findings did not fully support the ability for a cultural district designation, the planning process created a cultural inventory of existing cultural facilities, historic assets, businesses that complement the arts and culture sector, local cultural organizations and individual artisans, and events. The report includes a survey with 52 respondents from Reading's downtown business owners, representatives from cultural organizations, and individual artists and artisans. The *Downtown Reading Cultural District Exploratory Study* provided a five-year vision for Reading's future cultural district that continue to resonate with community stakeholders today including:

- Downtown Reading is a destination that hosts great restaurants and a diversity of cultural offerings.
- Reading hosts multiple venues for art performances, exhibits and classes.
- Reading collaborates and amplifies promotion for arts and cultural events in town.
- Reading is home to a cultural arts center facility.

Activating Reading's Downtown

Reading's efforts to invest in downtown development extend beyond the exploration of the cultural district designation and have been a priority since the 2005 Master Plan. In 2007, the Town's *Reading Downtown Revitalization Observations* presentation to the Reading Economic Development Committee included a recommendation for creating a Business Improvement District (BID) to improve downtown Reading. The presentation identified funding strategies, including setting up a local options tax to collect funds, utilizing a parking benefit district model, or establishing a 501(c)3 nonprofit to make investments in downtown. Other recommendations included improving pedestrian access in alleys with enhanced lighting, appearance, and crosswalk visibility.

In 2021, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) developed a *Rapid Recovery Plan* to help stabilize municipal downtowns following the economic impacts of COVID-19. EOHLC collaborated with Reading's Business Improvement District (BID) Steering Committee on the development of the plan. It included three core recommendations: improved access and connectivity, technical assistance, and business support, particularly in areas such as marketing, outdoor activities, and placemaking. Specific to art and culture, over 49% of respondents in the Customer Survey "indicated they would like to see more arts and culture activities in the Downtown". The plan included recommendations for a call for art for street murals as tactical pedestrian improvements downtown to increase safety, an event to encourage walking in downtown, a calendar of downtown events, a pop-up permitting to allow for more tactical urbanism, hosting a festival for illuminating downtown in the winter months, activating vacant storefront windows with artwork, and creating a placemaking plan to support more arts and culture activities downtown including public art and events. Outdoor dining and Town provided bistro seating was accomplished during this time. This plan provides multiple recommendations relevant to arts and culture investments.

Downtown programming has been building over the last number of years with additional events hosted on the Town Common and surrounding area. In recent years, the Town has sponsored events like Juneteenth celebrations, Fall Craft Markets, and has been building on efforts to attract more visitors to Downtown Reading. The Town has also secured funding to improve the right of way and public space along the lower Downtown corridors of Haven and High Street. Examples include installing wider sidewalks, improving the landscaping, and investing in public amenities like public benches and artwork. These efforts also aim to attract more pedestrians to this area, along with more mixed-use development.

Reading's Arts and Cultural Assets and Needs

Reading's arts and cultural ecosystem comprises a diverse range of stakeholders and active participants. Many community members celebrate the arts community in Reading and recognize the strengths of Reading's unique cultural and historical assets, which encompass community-based arts groups, public school arts programs, local festivals, historic buildings, and architecture. Throughout this planning process, community members identified these cultural assets during interviews, focus groups, and survey results. Participants described what Reading is like for the people who live, work, and study in the town. This section includes a summary of Reading's arts and cultural assets, including a stakeholder map, an inventory, and a map of physical assets throughout the town.

In addition to Reading's cultural assets, community members also shared their perspectives on the pervasive needs and challenges experienced by Reading's arts and cultural stakeholders. This section also documents the core challenges faced by individuals participating in arts and cultural life in Reading. The findings from this section directly inform the proposed goals, strategies, and actions for the action plan.



Figure 9: Photograph of artwork at the Reading Public Library.

Reading's Arts and Cultural Assets

Arts and cultural assets include both tangible and intangible assets. Tangible arts and cultural assets include the people, places, associations, organizations, and businesses that support arts and cultural life in a community. Intangible cultural assets encompass the stories, traditions, and relationships that shape the unique identity and sense of place. Reading's tangible cultural assets are documented in **Appendix C**, which includes an inventory, and mapped in **Appendix D**.

Reading serves as a regional magnet for neighboring communities, hosting arts and educational programming for youth, offering opportunities for adults to participate in the performing arts, and featuring a variety of businesses in the creative sector.

Youth Arts Programming

Reading is home to many families with children and teens who are actively engaged in arts and cultural programming. Reading has strong local programs through both Reading Public Schools and regional organizations that focus on artistic programming for youth, including Creative Arts,

Northeast School of Ballet, and Sound Play Music. Reading's arts programming for youth is a foundational draw for some families to the community to the school district. One survey respondent shared that the arts programming at Reading Public Schools was a crucial factor in their decision to enroll their kids in the school.

“Our children attended private school until grade 5. A large part of why we transferred them to RPS was because of the strong arts programming in the middle and high school.”

Many survey respondents and focus group participants want to celebrate the strength of existing youth arts programs just as much as the town's youth sports programming. Participation in arts and culture also provides youth opportunities to connect with the broader community in Reading and develop a sense of connection with their community. Given the strength of these programs, it is also essential to improve access to these existing arts programming opportunities for students in the Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO) and Mutli-Language Learner programs.

Adult Arts Programming

Arts programming participation in Reading extends beyond youth to residents of all ages. Programs for adults in Reading include multiple theatre companies and community ensembles, including a concert band, symphony, and choral groups. Participation in Reading's arts groups extends beyond Reading residents and includes many people who live outside of Reading and in neighboring towns. However, residents of neighboring communities remain active participants in these organizations for performing arts. In addition to performing arts, entities like the Reading Arts Association provide opportunities for visual artists to share their work. The town serves as a regional hub for performance arts programs for both youth and adults.

Existing Cultural Spaces

Cultural space is a crucial resource for Reading's arts and cultural activities. Currently, arts and cultural activities take place throughout the town in a variety of spaces, including public schools, the library, faith communities, local businesses, and at home. These spaces are crucial for artists, arts organizations, and community members as places to gather, showcase their artwork, experience cultural events, take classes, rehearse, and perform.

Public resources for space include school auditoriums, Pleasant Street Center, the Reading Public Library, and the Town Common. Faith communities, such as the First Congregational Church of Reading, provide rehearsal, performance, classroom, and artist studio space for nearly ten different arts organizations and entities in town. Ivy Chord Coffee House also served as a live music venue in the Unitarian Universalist Church of Reading. Local businesses also provide spaces for book readings and performances in town, Whitelam Books and Venetian Moon. All these spaces are critical spaces for gathering and connecting with Reading's arts and cultural community. Notably, artists also utilize their homes as workspaces or places to offer music lessons.

Recurring Cultural Events

Reading hosts regular cultural events that provide opportunities to showcase local artists and performers, as well as celebrate cultural diversity. Passionate community members also champion annual local cultural events in town, such as Reading Porch Fest, Reading Arts Walk, Reading Rotary Fall Street Faire, and Reading Friends and Family Day. The Town also hosts annual events, including New Residents Day, a Juneteenth Celebration, and the Reading Public Schools Arts Festival. Local arts organizations also host more frequent events, including the Reading Art Association's monthly demonstration events, monthly open mic nights hosted by the Reading School of Guitar, and seasonal performances from Creative Arts, the Reading Colonial Chorus, the Reading Symphony Orchestra, the Quannapowitt Players Theater, and many others.



Figure 10: Photograph of Reading Porchfest sign from 2024.

When asked why people participate in arts and culture programming, most survey respondents shared that they are seeking entertainment, supporting local artists, and for their happiness and well-being, as shown in **Table 1**.

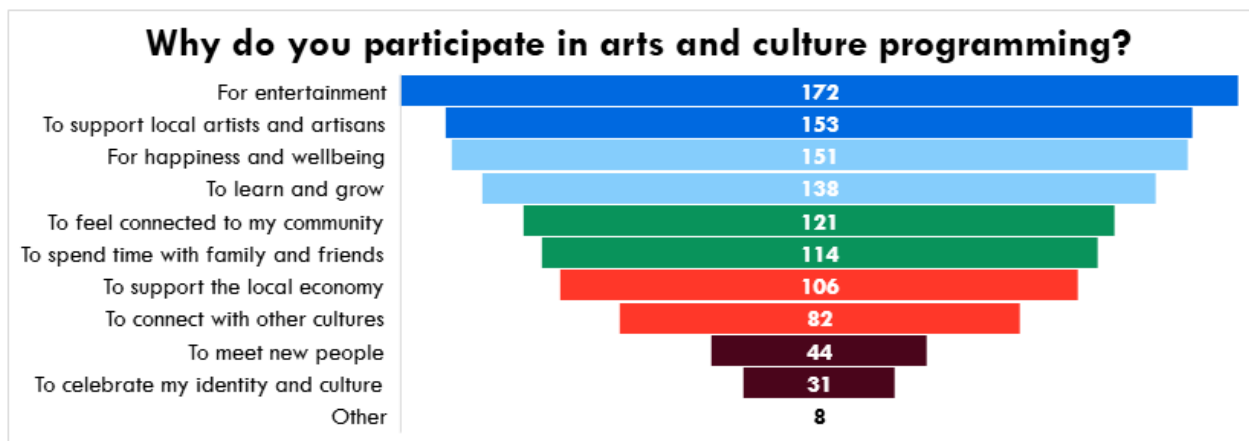


Table 1: Survey Results on Arts and Culture Program Participation

Diverse Creative Sector

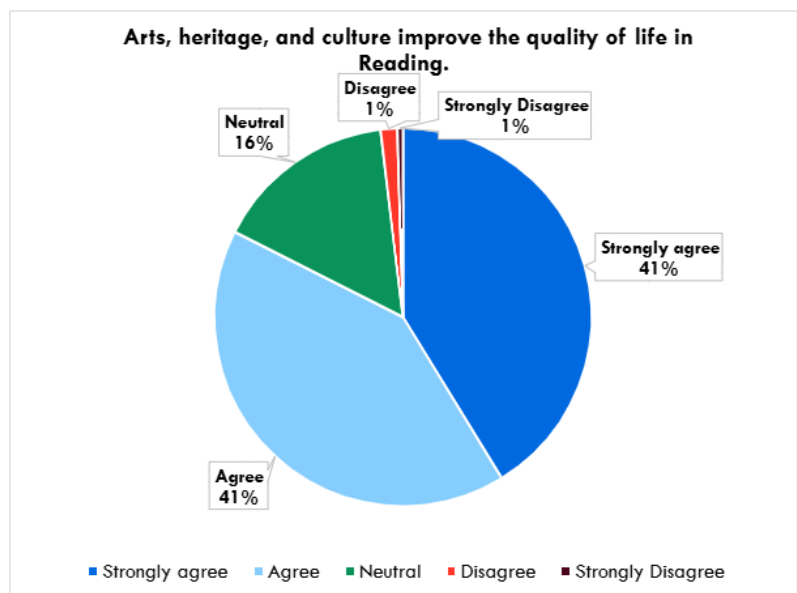
In addition to organizations that provide classes or programming in the performing arts, Reading is also home to a variety of creative sector businesses and local artists who contribute to the local economy. **Between 2012 and 2022, Reading saw a 25% increase in the average employment in the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector.** There are multiple entertainment companies,

audio recording studios, promotion and marketing agencies, and photography businesses located in Reading. Other unique local companies include the Writers Collaborative Learning Center, which hosts writing workshops for all ages in downtown Reading. In focus groups with local businesses, one entrepreneur noted that Reading’s proximity to Boston and connection to the commuter rail are essential factors for choosing downtown Reading as the location for their business.

Nearly **30% of survey respondents consider themselves to be artists, crafts persons, or creative workers**, and 46% of survey respondents identify themselves as active consumers of arts and culture in Reading. While not all these artists, craftspeople, or creative workers may be actively selling their artwork or performing, the broader impact of creative participation in Reading’s community has a significant effect on the local economy and quality of life.

Community Values

The presence of arts and cultural activities, organizations, and programs enriches Reading’s community life. Reading community members value arts and culture; 82% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that “*arts, heritage, and culture improve the quality of life in Reading*” and that “*arts benefit for health, connectedness, equity, inclusiveness.*” The survey indicated that arts and culture are essential aspects of community life for both artists and cultural consumers alike. Multiple organizational efforts, including Arts Reading, Reading Arts Association, Draw 01867, and Reading Porch Fest, demonstrate a sustained interest and dedication to fostering a vibrant cultural community.



Arts and Cultural Asset Mapping

Reading’s arts and culture asset inventory documents the arts and culture organizations, activities, and events in town. As part of the planning process, the Reading Arts and Culture Asset Map shows the geographic relationship between these assets and their location throughout the community. Community members identified cultural assets throughout the engagement process, sharing where they experience arts and culture on the survey and in focus groups. Assets include physical places that support arts and cultural activities and organizations, events, and historical significance. The cultural asset inventory includes **165 unique cultural assets**, including arts and culture organizations and businesses, eating and drinking places, public art and cultural events,

public facilities and open spaces, historic landmarks and attractions, religious institutions, arts exhibition space, and artist workspace. In Appendix C, there is a detailed count o A detailed description of these eight categories is below.

Arts and Cultural Asset Categories

ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES: Non-profit cultural organizations, associations and fraternal societies, non-profit arts organizations, and creative enterprises including businesses that provide opportunities to learn creative activities such as music, dance, foreign languages, and crafts.

EATING AND DRINKING PLACES: Restaurants and bars that offer diverse cultural cuisine, host or sponsor arts and culture activities and events, or function as cultural gathering places.

PUBLIC ART OR EVENT: Temporary and permanent public art and recurring arts and cultural events in town.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE: Public buildings and open spaces that contribute to the art and cultural life of Reading.

HISTORIC LANDMARKS AND ATTRACTIONS: Historic assets identified as contributing directly to the arts and cultural experience and identity of Reading.

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS: Historic faith-based and religious institutions in town that provide space for arts and cultural organizations and activities within their facilities.

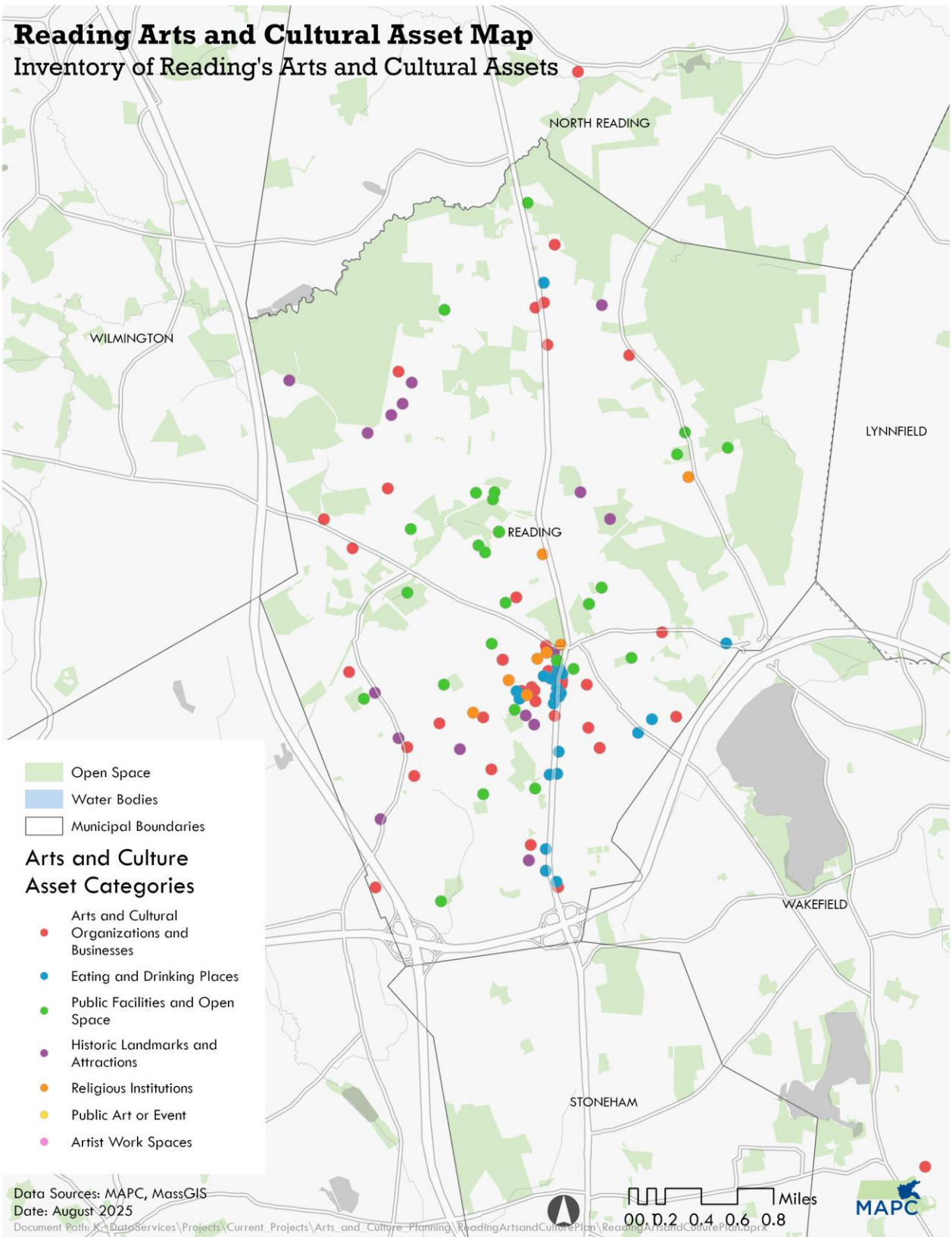
ARTIST WORK SPACES: Enterprises that primarily provide artists with studio space. Reading First Congregational Church is home to the one documented artist work space in Reading. However, there are certainly artists who work from home that are not documented in this inventory.

ARTS EXHIBITION SPACES: Businesses and organizations that provide space for artists to exhibit their work, in Reading this only includes the Downtown Artwalk. However, there may be additional businesses that need to be added to the inventory.

The cultural asset map demonstrates the concentration of cultural assets in Downtown Reading, as a hub for restaurants, events, religious institutions, historic attractions, and the only artist work space in Reading. Reading's public parks and open spaces are also dispersed throughout the town, providing opportunities for gatherings, events, and public art. Reading's arts and cultural organizations are located throughout the town and reflect Reading's active arts and culture community.

Reading Arts and Cultural Asset Map

Inventory of Reading's Arts and Cultural Assets



Community members included a couple cultural assets located in neighboring communities of North Reading and Wakefield. Notably on the map, the locations of Public Art and Events included multiple sites or did not have an address included in the inventory. Both Public Art and Events are documented in the cultural asset inventory in **Appendix C**.

Reading Arts and Cultural Needs Assessment

While Reading boasts numerous cultural resources, it also faces persistent challenges within its arts and cultural community. The primary needs articulated by community members include improved coordination and communication, support for organizational efforts that rely on volunteers, and additional space for community members of all ages to engage in arts and cultural performances, productions, and gatherings. A further challenge is that housing costs make Reading a cost-prohibitive community for many working artists, which hampers the support of growth in the community. This section provides a more detailed analysis of these needs articulated by Reading community members.

Communications and Coordination

The primary challenge identified by community members throughout the engagement is a lack of communication and marketing for existing programs and events, reflecting broader communication challenges in town. Many people are unaware of the existing arts and cultural resources, organizations, and events in Reading, highlighting a need for stronger communication and coordination. Community members struggle to stay informed about what is happening in town and would like to see a centralized point of communication established. While arts organizations host event calendars, many struggle to publicize their events and raise awareness about the various programs offered in town.

“Information is all so fragmented.”

While some community members utilize the Town’s website and Town Manager Minutes, there is no widely used collective events calendar among Reading’s arts and cultural organizations, nor is there a central location to find the town’s annual events. Without a widely distributed calendar or centralized communication, it is challenging for new residents to participate in and engage with local events, resulting in ongoing events that are segmented and difficult to follow. Part of the reason marketing and promotion remains a particularly challenging obstacle for Reading’s arts and cultural community is that many of the organizations running public events depend on volunteers and coordinating multiple volunteer entities to make it possible. No single umbrella organization currently compiles, promotes, and markets Reading’s arts events and organizations consistently.

Dependency on Volunteers

While Reading’s volunteer-led organizations undertake an impressive amount of leadership in the community, these groups can also struggle with limited bandwidth for coordination, communication, and promotion. 34.7% of Reading’s households have one or more children under 18, and many of those households have school-aged children, meaning that volunteer time from this population tends to be limited by other responsibilities. Organizing events and programs on a volunteer basis requires a significant dedication of time and energy, often relying on retired community members for leadership. While volunteer-led efforts provide crucial support for Reading’s arts and cultural community, they can also lead to burnout and volunteer fatigue. Volunteer-led organizations can

also make it difficult for new community members to find pathways to join or contribute their skills and talents in new ways.

Venue Gaps

While Reading's art and cultural community remains active in the available spaces, community members also desire additional space for arts and culture. A pervasive issue for many performing arts organizations and community groups is the lack of appropriate space for performances and ongoing challenges balancing existing venue schedules. Many community groups rely on the auditoriums at Reading Public Schools, including Reading Memorial High School and Parker Middle School, for events. However, there is a high demand for these venues among performing artists for both rehearsal and performance spaces.

“The biggest problem facing an active art and culture scene in Reading is the lack of an appropriate venue.”

There are spaces like the Quannapowitt Players Theater, which features a black box theater, and the First Congregational Church of Reading, which hosts the only documented artist studio in town. However, there is a growing desire to see a more centralized space for arts and culture in Reading that can serve as a hub for larger performances and provide spaces for artists and makers to showcase their works. Community members also want additional space for meetings and gatherings for all ages.

“Reading is culturally limited by not having a dedicated building that can host musical performances.”

There is a need for more social spaces for gathering, particularly for young people and artist workspaces. Despite the numerous existing cultural activities in Reading, there are still gaps in programming and missed opportunities for cultural exchange. In focus groups and throughout the survey, community members expressed the need for more space for youth to gather and socialize. Residents want more spaces for live music and dancing that can accommodate crowds of all ages, including those under 21.

“If downtown didn't close up at (eight) and there were places to go in the evening other than restaurants/bars.”

As demonstrated by efforts around the Reading Center for Active Living for Reading's seniors, there is a strong desire among Reading's residents of all ages to have places to gather for activities and programming. Community members want more space to meet and host meetings.

Arts Programming Gaps

At every stage of engagement, community members name the desire for more opportunities to participate in arts and culture in Reading. Whether it is the opportunity to try out a new art form or creative hobby, such as sewing or ceramics, or a dedicated class in visual arts or music, community members want more access to these programs. There is a gap in programming available for adults in Reading, and a desire exists to encourage intergenerational programming for youth and seniors. Essential considerations for this programming include offering it consistently, ensuring affordability, and providing opportunities to celebrate cultural diversity in Reading.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is a pervasive challenge in Reading, particularly affecting seniors on fixed incomes. The high cost of housing and limited rental opportunities prevent many people from

being able to live in Reading. In a town where the median household income is \$163,483, approximately 22.6% of households are cost burdened, meaning they are paying more than 30% of their income towards housing cost. Cost of living challenges presents obstacles artists seeking housing in Reading. 83.3% of Reading's housing is owner-occupied, as opposed to only 16.9% renter occupied. There is concern that for many practicing artists, Reading's housing market is too cost prohibitive.

“There are nowhere near enough affordable living spaces for artists in town.”

Challenges for Reading's arts and cultural community reflect broader on the town and the region. Coordinating consistent communication is a pervasive obstacle for many arts and cultural programs and event promoters throughout the region, particularly with programming and events that serve populations beyond the town boundaries. Access to affordable and accessible art spaces for performances and productions remains a persistent challenge in the greater Boston region, primarily due to the high cost of living and real estate. Operational and administrative expenses for cultural facilities require coordination and consideration of partnerships, and governance can support such a facility. As for the programming and space needs for youth, the lack of spaces for community members to gather extends to all aspects of life. Finally, housing affordability in the region also poses challenges in terms of accessibility. Addressing all these issues requires a strong coalition to motivate political will and intentional investment from the Town and its cultural partners.

Opportunities for Arts and Culture in Reading

Reading is well positioned to nurture existing arts and cultural assets into defining characteristics of the town. There are many passionate and creative community leaders, as well as existing cultural resources, that can strengthen Reading's arts and cultural community. This plan intends to catalyze these opportunities into action. Based on the needs assessment findings, Reading's primary opportunities for arts and culture include improving coordination and communication about existing events and resources, strengthening Reading's role as a cultural hub for the region, and expanding the histories and celebrations of Reading's cultural communities. In partnership with Town staff and leadership, Reading is well poised to centralize its organizational efforts to support arts and culture, identify the next steps for a cultural facility, and create a dynamic environment that fosters an inclusive community for all cultures.

Communication and Coordination

Strengthening communication and coordination within Reading's arts and culture communities is critical for existing organizations and programs and a key factor in enabling future opportunities. Reading has multiple entities working to promote arts and cultural events, as well as numerous public resources aimed at connecting with Reading residents. Aligning efforts and resources to promote community events is strategic and necessary for the future of Reading's arts and cultural community.

Centralize Organization Efforts

One strategy for connecting people with arts and culture activities and resources includes centralizing promotion, organization, and management efforts throughout Reading's cultural entities. Establishing a clear policy and process for sharing town-wide communications through the Town government, Reading Public Schools, and Reading Public Library can help provide consistency for community members and cultural organizations alike.

Many community members spoke to the need for a centralized event calendar for arts and culture events. Additionally, multiple organizations work to coordinate relationships with arts organizations, including sharing calendars, hosting events, and offering funding opportunities. Combining forces of organizations like Arts Reading and the Reading Cultural Council to support communication and coordination can help streamline arts and cultural resources and information.

Cultural Destination and Arts Hub

Reading is a prime hub for arts and cultural activities, coordinating with neighboring communities. As home to multiple landmark performing arts organizations, Reading draws regional

participation into its programming. By embracing and strengthening these assets, the Town can establish the community as a cultural hub. Organizations such as the Northeast School of Ballet and the Writers' Collaborative Learning Center offer regional services. Celebrating the local businesses that host a broader audience can provide pathways to cultivate Reading's identity as an arts and cultural hub. The Town can complement these efforts by investing in considering local cultural facilities and strategically investing in creative placemaking efforts in Downtown Reading.

Cultural Facility

As Reading considers the future homes for cultural activities in the community, it is helpful to document the existing spaces in Reading and evaluate the pressing needs. This planning process identified spaces that support art and cultural activities in Reading's arts and cultural community.

First Congregational Church of Reading serves as a hub for local arts organizations, including Creative Arts, an individual artist studio, and a rehearsal and performance space for multiple local arts organizations. Other local performing arts organizations frequently utilize spaces at Reading Public Schools, such as the **Reading Memorial High School Auditorium** or the **Parker Middle School Auditorium**. However, most local performing arts organizations note the need for a space that is more consistently accessible. Other notable smaller spaces that host events and performances include **the Quannapowitt Players Theater**, which features a black box theater space, and the **Pleasant Street Center**, a space dedicated to Reading's seniors.

Based on survey data and a focus group on cultural facilities, the primary need identified in Reading is a performance space. Community members identified a need for a large performance venue to serve as a rehearsal and performance space for adult performing arts groups, such as symphonies, orchestras, and choruses. This venue could host monthly arts and culture events, rotating exhibitions, and performances that showcase and represent the diverse cultures in town.

In terms of location, a larger performing arts venue would benefit from a central location in town, potentially utilizing existing structures. Parking remains a challenge for many community members, and there is a desire to see ample parking close to any future space. Local case studies for cultural facilities include **Meeting House Arts** in Freeport, Maine; **Albion Cultural Exchange** in Wakefield, Massachusetts; and **Arts Medford Collaborative** in Medford, Massachusetts, as listed in **Appendix G**.

As for programming the space, there are ample opportunities for multi-use, including exhibits, classes, and studio space. There is a need for a social gathering space that is accessible to all age groups, particularly for youth and seniors alike.

Community members want more consistent opportunities to participate in arts and culture. By providing a dedicated space for trying new arts and crafts in town, the space can offer an opportunity for artists to provide affordable arts classes for families and adults. Ideas for programming included continuing education in music and visual arts, as well as offering opportunities for cultural exchange.

Others identified the need for a multi-purpose maker space that could also host events, such as live music and exhibits, in a unique atmosphere. Exhibition space for visual art is another consideration for the town, potentially partnering with businesses or storefronts.

Dynamic History and Growing Diversity

Reading is a community proud of the town's historic significance in the American Revolution, as well as the buildings and architecture that span three centuries of American history. Reading's development from farmland to a suburban community reflects one of many stories that comprise the town's history. The preservation of historical buildings, such as the Parker Tavern, demonstrates the community's commitment to sharing history and celebrating a sense of place in Reading's cultural landscape.

In recent years, community members have been elevating lesser-known histories and stories to foster dialogue and understanding. Examples of this effort include the recognition that Reading is on the ancestral land of the Pawtucket band of the Massachusett tribe, as well as educational programming offered through the Reading Public Library. Another resident-led effort to broaden the stories told about Reading's history includes reporting on stories of people enslaved in Reading during the Colonial period through the efforts of the Coalition of Us (CATO) and documenting histories through the "*Lives Lived Unfree*" article in the local newspaper. Finally, the Ad Hoc Commemoration Establishment Committee, which strives to honor Bill Russell, the Celtics star, and reckon with the racial violence experienced by him and his family as residents of Reading in the early 1960s, is another example of important work documenting Reading's dynamic history in ways that can seed a more inclusive future.

While Reading's population has historically and presently remained predominantly white, over the past ten years, the town has experienced increased racial and ethnic diversity, both in the town and in the public schools. Community members in the survey, focus groups, and artwork from students articulated the desire to experience Reading as a friendly, welcoming, and kind community. Opportunities to celebrate and learn about the diverse cultural experiences of community members are integral to future arts and cultural programs, potentially in partnership with Partners and Allies for Inclusive Reading (PAIR). Multiple community members expressed a desire for culturally responsive programming that is inclusive and accessible to all community members.

Creative Placemaking

As Reading considers future investments in arts and culture, particularly downtown, there are opportunities to activate areas in ways that reflect the distinct sense of place in Reading. Utilizing creative placemaking, the practice of community-led arts and culture activations, which can range from public art to performances and events. Creative placemaking is a strategy that brings community members together, invites visitors to experience a unique dimension of Reading's culture and history, and supports other community goals, including economic development, sustainability, and quality of life for all residents. Opportunities for creative placemaking can include highlighting sites of historical remembrance for residents, creating public art installations that underscore the dynamic history of Reading, and strengthening partnerships with local businesses to activate Reading's downtown area.

Reading's Art Box program, *Outside the Box Artwalk*, is one example of utilizing art installations for **historical remembrance** throughout the town. Building on this effort, the town and historical stakeholders can utilize art installations, walking tours, and public performances to draw attention to these moments, prompting reflection on Reading's history. Suggestions for engagement included developing a scavenger hunt of Reading's historic buildings and supporting the existing walking

tours in the community, like the *CATO Reading Remembrance Tour*, about the Black and enslaved residents and soldiers who lived in Reading during Colonial times and their roles in the Town's history, or Walkable Reading's *Tour of Historic Homes*, sharing stories of the people who lived in Reading's historic homes. As Reading continues to honor its history, creative placemaking efforts can lead to opportunities to image Reading's future.

Another creative placemaking strategy involves investing in **public art installations**, which can comprise both temporary and permanent public artworks, as well as events that feature performances and encourage community gatherings and celebrations. Local business leaders expressed a desire to have transparent processes in place for installing murals and opportunities to showcase artwork. Efforts to support local events downtown, which include performances, potentially in partnership with schools or organizations offering music lessons, is another way to activate the downtown area and provide support to young artists and performers. Other areas for public art can include parks, trails, open spaces, and the community garden, where Reading can build on its rich natural resources and green spaces in town.

Ultimately, within creative placemaking, it is crucial to foster dialogue and **partnerships with local businesses**. In addition to establishing clear communication about events and streamlined processes for installing artwork, local businesses are essential partners in shaping the character of downtown Reading. Efforts for the *Shop the Block on the Common* are prime opportunities to support local programming and a way to highlight local artists. Businesses like Whitelam Books, Reading School of Guitar, and Venetian Moon, and others provide opportunities for book readings, open mics, poetry, and performances. Food festivals and celebrations of local cuisine are another way to gather community members to experience a diversity of cultures and make new connections in town.

For events downtown, coordination with local businesses to support extended business hours on a standing schedule, such as First Fridays, could include performances in the spring and fall. Even in future development, the Town can work with businesses to support spaces for gathering and provide opportunities for cultural uses, including gallery space and storefront windows, and partner with artists to utilize excess space. Town staff can build upon existing events in partnership with organizations such as the Lion's Club and the local cultural council and support coordination.

Goals and Strategies

Proposed Goals

Based on the community feedback shared throughout this process, six goals emerged to structure the arts and culture action plan. Each goal includes three underlying strategies that organize proposed actions. Mirroring the core findings, the plan's goals, strategies, and actions reflect three primary themes:

- Strengthen Reading's arts and cultural community through **communication and coordinating** local resources.
- Prioritize investments that ensure Reading serves as a **cultural destination and arts hub** for artists, artisans and cultural events.
- Invite the community to reflect on Reading's **growing diversity and dynamic history** to seed connection and cultural equity.

GOAL 1: Reading is a hub for artists, artisans, and creative workers throughout the region.

The town boasts a notable performing arts legacy and is home to organizations educating youth and adults alike in refining their creative practices. As Reading grows and plans for the future of arts and culture, it is critical that there are opportunities for artists and cultural groups to connect, be known and visible, and be able to access Reading both as a home and for their creative practices.

- 1.A)** Align Reading's existing cultural organizations to advance local arts priorities and strengthen the creative sector.
- 1.B)** Cultivate Reading's local artist community by providing pathways for greater visibility and strengthening local networks.
- 1.C)** Ensure zoning definitions, land use regulations, and local bylaws support arts and cultural expression and nurture a growing arts community.

GOAL 2: Reading is a town known for coordinated communication for cultural events and programs.

Like many peer communities, Reading has many avenues to communicate with its residents, including promoting and sharing arts and cultural events. However, it has yet to establish a standard practice for reaching and connecting with community members. Reading seeks to coordinate existing resources maintained by the Town and local cultural assets to enhance communication of cultural events, programming, and general community resources.

- 2.A)** Centralize promotional efforts for arts and cultural events and programs in Reading.
- 2.B)** Strengthen communication and outreach practices to advertise cultural events and amplify existing programming.
- 2.C)** Develop a branding strategy reflecting stories and images of Reading's arts and culture community.

GOAL 3: Reading is a welcoming community that embraces and celebrates cultural diversity.

The survey shows that 57% cited community connection as a top reason for participating in arts and culture. As the community's cultural diversity grows, arts and culture programming and events that embrace and celebrate diversity are critical to fostering connection and quality of life for all residents.

- 3.A)** Support culturally representative town programming and events.
- 3.B)** Diversify Town Boards and Committees.
- 3.C)** Ensure equitable access to existing cultural resources.

GOAL 4: Reading is a destination for its active and vibrant downtown known for a strong sense of place.

Reading has successfully implemented partnerships with community leaders to lead cultural economic development and placemaking initiatives. Examples include the ArtBox Mural Program, Haven Street Pocket Park, and the Bistro Table Program. Reading continues to invest in efforts to support local businesses and attract visitors to the community.

- 4.A)** Support local business partnerships to facilitate cultural events to activate downtown.
- 4.B)** Activate downtown Reading with placemaking efforts that highlight local culture.
- 4.C)** Establish a replicable process for commissioning and maintaining public artwork in Reading.

GOAL 5: Reading is home to multiple arts spaces that nurture intergenerational participation in arts and culture.

Since 2014, Reading's arts and cultural community has organized and petitioned for a space to support arts and cultural activities. While Reading is home to multiple cultural facilities, there is no central location to meet the needs of the community. Pressing needs include rehearsal and performance space for large ensembles, artists' workspace, and a makerspace with opportunities to take art classes. Similarly, community members articulated the need for space for youth and seniors to access connection, creativity and community.

- 5.A)** Recognize and strengthen existing arts and culture venues serving the larger cultural community.
- 5.B)** Advocate for the expansion of arts and culture spaces in new and proposed development.
- 5.C)** Expand arts and culture facilities to improve access to community members at every stage of life.

GOAL 6: Reading is a place that respects, honors and commemorates the history of all people and land.

Reading recognizes the importance of honoring the land, people, and events that shape its evolution and development. From acknowledging the land and people who have lived here thousands of years to the experiences of Reading today, the town's history is a living history animated by remembrance.

As Reading continues to grow and evolve, it is illuminated through these stories and by sharing historical events of local and national significance.

- 6.A)** Expand the narrative of the Town to more fully contextualize Indigenous people and honor pre-colonial history.
- 6.B)** Support public history projects to educate and highlight Reading's rich and diverse histories.
- 6.C)** Preserve Reading's historic landscape and sense of place.

Action Plan

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The Action Plan includes a full listing of the goals, strategies, and actions listed in the plan. Underneath each goal there are three strategies with supporting time-bound actions include implementation partners. Each action item consists of a timeline for implementation, designated as Short Term (ST) for 1-2 years, Medium Term (MT) for 3-4 years, and Long Term (LT) for 5+ years. Additionally, each action includes a list of potential implementation partners, whose abbreviations are listed below.

Implementation Partners

TOWN DEPARTMENTS

RFD - Town of Reading Facilities Department
RBD - Town of Reading Building Department
RPW - Town of Reading Public Works
RPSPD - Town of Reading Public Services Planning Division
RED - Town of Reading Public Services – Economic Development
RTM - Town of Reading Town Manager
RTC – Reading Town Clerk (ADA Coordinator)

TOWN COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES, AND COUNCILS

RCC - Reading Cultural Council
RHC - Reading Historical Commission
Public Services
RPL - Reading Public Library
OESJ - Town of Reading Office of Equity and Social Justice
PAIR -

YOUTH PARTNERS

RPS - Reading Public Schools
MLL - Multi-Language Learners Program, Reading Public Schools
RChC - Reading Children’s Cabinet

ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

AR - Arts Reading
CA - Creative Arts
ODA - Open Door Arts
COM – Communitas
ROLT - Reading Open Land Trust

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS

RAS - Reading Antiquarian Society
CATO - Coalition of Us

LOCAL BUSINESSES

RChC - Reading Chamber of Commerce
RSG - Reading School of Guitar
WB - Whitelam Books

STATEWIDE RESOURCES

MCC - Massachusetts Cultural Council
NEFA - New England Foundation for the Arts

GOAL 1

Reading is a hub for artists, artisans, and creative workers throughout the region.

The town boasts a notable performing arts legacy and is home to organizations educating youth and adults alike in refining their creative practices. As Reading grows and plans for the future of arts and culture, it is critical to ensure opportunities for artists and cultural groups to connect, be known and visible, and be able to access Reading both as a home and for their creative practices.

1.A) Align Reading's existing cultural organizations to advance local arts priorities and strengthen the creative sector.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Establish an Arts and Culture Action Plan implementation coalition to document the progress for all six goals outlined in the action plan.	ST: 1 YR	RCC, FCCR, RPL, RPSPD
2 Convene an annual arts gathering for Reading cultural stakeholders to align event calendars, share programming updates, and check in on priorities for the year.	ST: 1 YR (ongoing)	RPSPD, FCCR
3 Outline existing efforts across Reading's existing arts and cultural organizations and entities to avoid duplication and identify areas for collaboration (e.g., programming, priorities, funding, resources, membership, youth programming, event producers, local businesses, artists, and performing groups).	ST: 1-2 YRS	CA, FCCR, RCC, RPS
4 Strengthen the capacity of the Reading Cultural Council by expanding opportunities for associate members to support cultural organizations.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RCC
5 Connect with neighboring municipalities to envision ways to leverage the constellation of cultural resources found in surrounding communities. One method could be coordinating an annual regional arts summit or working with local cultural councils to promote events across neighboring municipalities.	MT: 3-4 YRS	RCC, RPSPD

1.B) Cultivate Reading's local artist community by providing pathways for greater visibility and strengthening local networks.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Develop an arts and culture stakeholder directory on the Town's website that includes contact information, creative disciplines, annual events, and websites. The directory can be populated using the Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan stakeholder lists and verifying information with existing organizations. It can also connect with the NEFA Creative Ground portal and encourage local artists and venues to utilize this resource	ST: 1-2YRS (ongoing)	NEFA, RCC

	for greater regional visibility. (Note: This could be a required section for the Reading Cultural Council grant process.)		
2	Highlight the Reading Public School’s visual and performing arts programs as part of town events, programming, branding, and storytelling.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RPS
3	Provide consistent opportunities for youth to perform, showcase, and participate in Reading’s cultural events and public programming.	ST: 2-3 YRS (ongoing)	RChC

1.C) Ensure zoning definitions, land use regulations, and local bylaws support arts and cultural expression and nurture a growing arts community.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Support policies designed to expand access to affordable housing units (e.g., updates for the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw, Affordable Units). Recognizing that affordable housing is essential for artists and creative communities, Reading’s efforts to provide more affordable units are key for supporting its arts and cultural community.	ST: 1-3 YRS (ongoing)	RPSPD
2 Review Reading’s Special Home Occupation applications to identify arts and cultural businesses. Flag potential barriers that restrict the use of residential property for a home-based business for cultural uses. Amend the home-based business bylaws to allow greater use for creative and cultural businesses.	ST: 1-3 YRS	RPSPD
3 Define and approve Artist Live/Workspace as a subcategory for zoning use and code.	MT: 3-5 YRS	RPSPD
4 Revise restrictive signage bylaws and design standards to ensure clear definitions and approval processes for temporary and permanent public artwork.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RPSPD
5 Streamline permitting process for special events and temporary activations to support arts and culture stakeholders in promoting and hosting events. Streamlining the permitting process for temporary activations and events.	ST: 1-2YRS	RPSPD
6 Review sound policies, noise ordinances, and speaker system regulations to ensure no unintended impact on restricting cultural activity.	ST: 1 YR	RPSPD

GOAL 2

Reading is a town known for coordinated communication for cultural events and programs.

Like many peer communities, Reading has many avenues to communicate with its residents, including promoting and sharing arts and cultural events. However, it has yet to establish a standard practice for reaching and connecting with community members. Reading seeks to coordinate existing resources maintained by the Town and local cultural organizations to enhance communication of cultural events, programming, and general community resources.

2.A) Centralize promotional efforts for arts and cultural events and programs in Reading.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Establish clear procedures for public communications from Town Departments, Reading Public Schools, and Reading Public Library for distributing community events and programs, and publish this on the Town website so community members know how to direct their requests.	ST: 6 months	RPS, RPL, RTC
2 Identifying one point of contact for coordinating the Town outreach requests to create consistency and clarity on point of contact, which could also be establishing a communications email address not specific to any one staff person for seamless transition if individual staff members leave.	ST: 6 months	RTC
3 Combine contact listservs for Reading's public communication and send an email to request subscription preferences, including arts and cultural events and programming. (Note: Currently, on the Town website, there is an option to subscribe to the Town Manager's Minute, along with over 20 committees' calendar subscriptions.)	ST: 1 YR	RTC, RPSPD
4 Designate a virtual public events calendar with detailed information about community events that can be a landing page for upcoming arts and culture events. (Note: While the Reading Public Library and the Office of Social Justice post events in the existing Town calendar, there is no space for images; however, on the RPL events page , there are small images included. In its current form, the Town Calendar is not the most user-friendly or enticing calendar, particularly for arts events, it could be beneficial to create a community events calendar on the Reading Public Library calendar interface, named something like "What's Happening in Reading?" in a way that is linked to the Stay Connected page on the Town website and linked in the Town Manager's Minute.)	ST: 1 YR	RTC
5 Create a user-friendly events promotional portal for community members and organizations to submit details and advertisements for upcoming cultural events and programs. Details on the form would include the name of the event or program, date(s),	ST: 1-2 YRS	RTC, RPSPD

registration information, location, age group, upload for a flyer or graphic, required specific event or programming category (i.e., class, workshop, event), contact information for the event, if applicable, website and social media information for the event host. The point of contact for outreach requests should review submissions before promoting them publicly.		
6 Develop a community flyer invitation to populate the community events calendar and circulate with all known arts and culture stakeholders, and community groups through existing listservs and networks. The information on this community flyer should also be on the bottom of the page for the community events calendar with easy instructions for how to upload information and who to contact for support in the Town	ST: 1 YR	RTC, RPSPD

2.B) Strengthen communication and outreach practices to advertise cultural events and amplify existing programming.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Incorporate the practice of naming upcoming events as part of Town procedure in interdepartmental Town staff meetings, public meetings, and events as standard procedure for Town gatherings and events.	ST: Immediately (ongoing)	RTC
2 Activate the Town's digital and physical noticeboards in public facilities with flyers to amplify existing programming and events in Reading as well as a QR code to access the public events calendar. Locations for posting digital and printed media would include Reading Public Library, Reading Public Schools, Reading's Pleasant Street Center, and Reading's YMCA. Make these selected locations known to all arts and culture event producers as key distribution sites.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RPS
3 Improve two-way communications opportunities with Reading Public Schools to promote arts showcases, local programming, and events to families and support greater awareness of school programming for the general community.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RPS
4 Publish an annual events calendar for arts and cultural events and programs in Reading, building off an annual gathering. One option might be to hire a local graphic designer to imagine colorful templates to incorporate a guide to annual events in Reading. The target audience should include new residents and ESL populations, and community members should have information on how to get involved and learn more through a QR code or point of contact.	MT: 2-3YRS	RCC
5 Coordinate regional marketing and promotion for annual events with regular check-ins to existing organizations and coalitions.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RCC, RChC

2.C) Develop a branding strategy reflecting stories and images of Reading’s arts and culture community.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
<p>1 Promote local artists, performing arts groups, and landmark events as part of local marketing materials. These materials could include a local feature or highlight of local businesses hosting events and programming in the paper and potentially engage the Reading Writers Collaborative Learning Center as a partner for local journalism.</p>	<p>ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)</p>	<p>RCC, WCLC, RDP, RED</p>
<p>2 Host a local photo contest to capture high-quality images of Downtown Reading to promote the Town’s arts and culture scene. Provide an honorarium for local photographers who submit photos selected to promote Reading.</p>	<p>ST: 1-2YRS</p>	<p>RED, RCC</p>
<p>3 Develop a local brand, language, and imagery reflecting Reading’s artistic and cultural identity and the stories of Reading community members. Highlight Reading's unique role as a magnet for performing arts community members in the regional cultural community.</p>	<p>MT: 2-3 YRS</p>	<p>RED, WCLC</p>
<p>4 Advertise Reading as a hub for arts and culture in the local “constellation” of resources offered throughout the surrounding towns, connecting neighboring communities' history of development and interdependence.</p>	<p>MT: 2-3 YRS</p>	<p>RED</p>

GOAL 3

Reading is a welcoming community that embraces and celebrates cultural diversity.

As the community's cultural diversity grows, arts and culture programming and events that embrace and celebrate diversity are critical to fostering connection and quality of life for all residents.

3.A) Support culturally representative town programming and events.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Commit budget line item for existing cultural programming and events celebrating Reading's cultural diversity, such as Juneteenth, Lunar New Year, Indigenous Peoples Day, and other holidays.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	
2 Form a group to guide culturally responsive programming for public entities (e.g., Reading Public Schools, Reading Public Library, Town-led events), to create cultural celebrations and events, and find appropriate partners to lead programming.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RPL, RPS, OESJ
3 Partner with Reading Public Library to host consistent educational programming to improve awareness of diverse cultural experiences and celebrations. Building on the Library's existing programming, these efforts could include community cultural exchanges of food, dance, film screenings, etc. Community members appreciate when programs are held regularly and facilitated in ways that do not reinforce stereotypes.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	MLL, RPL, MCC
4 Review applications and awards from the Reading Cultural Council to identify any gaps and opportunities to support diverse existing cultural events and programming.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RCC, DESJ
5 Conduct an annual assessment of cultural programs with community partners and attendees to document successes, identify improvement areas, and expand the partners' network in this work.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	OESJ, RPL

3.B) Diversify Town Boards and Committees.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Identify diverse community stakeholders and culture bearers to join Town leadership , like the Reading Cultural Council. Diversity includes age, racial and ethnic identity. Showing attention and intention when inviting these community members into leadership positions can help mitigate candidates' doubts about their qualifications.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RCC, RPS, MLL, OESJ

<p>2 Establish a clear pathway for community members to get involved in local arts and culture events and bring their expertise and energy to existing groups. Post an invitation to get involved in the local arts and culture community on the Town's website landing page that connects people to the Reading Cultural Council.</p>	ST: 1-2 YRS	RCC, RTC
<p>3 Broaden participation on boards and committees by adjusting 'business as usual' committee structures. Retirees run many arts and culture organizations because they are the few community members with time and fewer responsibilities. Make the commitment more manageable for parents and youth to participate by providing childcare, finding accessible meeting times, utilizing virtual meetings as needed, etc. Designing committee spaces and meeting times to accommodate the schedules of younger residents can also encourage more diverse intergenerational boards and committees.</p>	MT: 2-3 YRS (ongoing)	OESJ
<p>4 Expand efforts to highlight youth voice in decision-making, building on the Children's Cabinet and other youth organizations, getting involved with Town boards and committees, and potentially serving as a youth delegate for the Reading Cultural Council. This effort can connect with Reading Public Schools's civics and government curriculum.</p>	MT: 2-3 YRS	RPS, OESJ, CC, RCC
<p>5 Build capacity for mentorship and support for board and committee members by expanding opportunities for non-voting roles that can provide continuity in the Reading Cultural Council membership. As part of this effort, it would be helpful to document and share the appointment process and provide ongoing support throughout the appointment and approval process.</p>	MT: 2-3 YRS (ongoing)	RCC, RPSPD

3.C) Ensure equitable access to existing cultural resources.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
<p>1 Assemble a guide for existing arts and culture programs offered in Reading by age group, discipline, organization, and location. This guide can be a resource for community members looking to get involved as well as provide analysis to identify arts and culture programming gaps.</p>	ST: 1-2YRS (ongoing)	Coalition
<p>2 Identify cultural organizations and entities able to close gaps in Reading's arts and culture programming, building off Reading's existing cultural assets, resources, and artist community. Examples include offering affordable arts and culture classes and programs accessible to youth, families, adults, seniors, and people with disabilities. Recommendations for continuing education courses, visual arts (i.e., painting, drawing),</p>	MT: 3-4 YRS	RCC, COM

	and music classes. Share arts and culture programming priorities with the Reading Cultural Council to support the Local Cultural Council grant process.		
3	Expand access to existing Reading Public Schools arts and culture programs for all students, particularly noting transportation limitations for students who depend on the bus, like METCO and Multi-Language Learner students.	MT: 3-4YRS	RPS
4	Improve awareness about Cultural Council grant opportunities and the typical grant cycle for local community-based organizations.	ST: 1 YR (ongoing)	RCC, OESJ, RPS
5	Provide translated versions of the Cultural Council grant applications and distribute the application in partnership with the schools and community-based organizations working with non-English speaking populations. Massachusetts Cultural Council may be able to support this effort in addition to local partners.	MT: 3-4 YRS	MLL, RPL, MCC
6	Host an accessibility workshop with arts and culture organizations to review the Arts & Culture Accessibility Self-Assessment and identify improvements for existing programming and cultural spaces. Encourage organizations to flag any non-ADA-accessible venues for future grant opportunities to improve infrastructure and accessibility.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RPL, CA, RCC, RBD, RFD, ODA
7	Identify key community-based organizations to partner in inclusive engagement for Town-led projects and events, and highlight arts and culture resources, including the Office for Equity and Social Justice, Reading SEPAC, METCO, local faith communities, arts businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and the Children’s Cabinet.	ST: 1 YR (ongoing)	RPSPD
8	Research opportunities to expand transportation access via local shuttle services to support greater access to arts events for elders and disabled community members, as well as youth for afterschool programming. Potential partners might include neighboring municipalities in the subregion and require models that incorporate ride-share.	MT:4-5 YRS	RPSPD

GOAL 4

Reading is a destination for its active and vibrant downtown known for its strong sense of place.

Reading has successfully implemented partnerships with community leaders to lead culturally driven economic development and placemaking initiatives. Examples include the ArtBox Mural Program, Haven Street Pocket Park, and the Bistro Table Program. Reading continues to invest in efforts to support local businesses and attract visitors to the community.

4.A) Support local business partnerships to facilitate cultural events to activate downtown.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Initiate a Main Streets Coalition to coordinate efforts for downtown improvements, including beautification, community events, and cultural programming.	ST: 1 YR	RED
2 Identify opportunities for festivals and events to collaborate with local businesses to activate downtown, advertise for upcoming events, and promote the Town's local businesses. Building on existing performances and events like Reading Porchfest, cultural celebrations, and local beer gardens provide opportunities for co-promotion and activation. Examples might include a discount with proof of attendance at local performances or sponsorship deals with local restaurants.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RChC, RED, RPF
3 Explore feasibility of future programming and events such as local food festivals, farmers markets, local artisan events connecting with local restaurants, Calareso's Farm Stand, and creative businesses	MT: 3-5 YRS	RChC, RED
4 Pilot extended hours program for downtown businesses for special events aligned with community-wide events and performances.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RChC, RED
5 Pilot regular street closures for cultural events during summer hours downtown. Hosting monthly cultural and commercial events during the summer can attract future audiences to cultural groups and potential clientele to local businesses and artists.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RED
6 Determine funding sources for Main Streets Coalition, potential sources could include utilizing parking fees to fund local events, through a Parking Benefit District.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RED, RCP

4.B) Activate downtown Reading with placemaking efforts that highlight local culture.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Support arts-based activation to support local businesses through pop-up events, like performances, art installations, and demonstrations.	ST: 1-2YRS (ongoing)	RED, RChC

2 Identify temporary gallery spaces through vacant storefronts. Work with the Main Streets Coalition to proactively communicate with property owners and permitting to allow for temporary use and activation.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RED
3 Utilize outdoor spaces for community events and gatherings. Community members want to see greater use of Memorial Park as opposed to the Town Common for town events for safety reasons	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RED, RRD

4.C) Establish a replicable process for commissioning and maintaining public artwork in Reading.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Establish a public art program led by a Public Art Committee to help manage and guide decision-making. Set up a Public Art Committee structure and conduct outreach for prospective members through the Town's Planning Division. Appoint committee members through the town manager with approval from the Select Board, considering youth representation	MT: 2-3 YRS	RCC, RPSPD, RDPW
2 Draft and adopt a public arts policy outlining the goals, values, and priorities of the public arts program, structure of the committee, staffing, funding sources, and decision-making processes.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RPSPD
3 Identify priority locations for public artwork on publicly owned property, including greenspaces, parks, Town Center, and other priority areas for artwork, like the Reading Community Garden. Identify spaces for temporary public art activations as well as permanent installations.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RCC, RchC
4 Outline potential multiple funding sources to fund public artwork efforts in Reading, including grants and local funds.	ST: 1-2 YRS (ongoing)	RPSPD, NEFA
5 Determine a maintenance plan detailing the responsibilities and budgets for public artwork upkeep with Department of Public Works staff.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RDPW

GOAL 5

Reading is home to multiple arts spaces that nurture intergenerational participation in arts and culture.

Since 2014, Reading's arts and cultural community has organized and petitioned for a physical space to better support arts and cultural activities. Since there is no central location, cultural organizations are housed across a variety of areas to meet the community's needs. Pressing needs include rehearsal and performance space for large ensembles, artists' workspace, and a makerspace with opportunities to take art classes. Similarly, community members articulated the need for space for youth and seniors to access connection, creativity, and community.

5.A) Recognize and strengthen existing arts and culture venues serving the larger cultural community.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Create a map of arts and culture resources in Reading for community members identifying spaces for performance, rehearsal, studio, and fabrication. The map could be a digital resource highlighting Reading's art and cultural spaces and a tool for community members to identify spaces for specific events or programs.	ST: 1 YR	RPSPD, RED, RCC
2 Identify funding opportunities to improve existing cultural facilities including renovations for spaces including public buildings, like Pleasant Street Center, Reading Memorial High School, and Parker Middle School auditoriums, and private facilities like First Congregational Church, Quannapowitt Playhouse black-box performance space, and vacant commercial spaces.	ST: 1-2 YR (ongoing)	RPSPD, RED
3 Improve accessibility of Reading Public School spaces for community events, including considerations of designated parking, senior shuttle access, and seating accommodations.	MT: 2-4 YRS	RPS
3 Initiate a program for local businesses and commercial spaces to host arts gatherings or open to showcase local art. Invite local businesses to sign up for arts activation opportunities, such as displaying local artwork, hosting arts events after hours, or interest in performances. Utilize this list as a resource for local artists and community organizations looking for space partnerships. Local business owners and artists can determine the specifics of these agreements.	ST: 1-2 YRS	RED, RChC, RCC
4 Support greater use of parks and open spaces for arts and cultural events, programs, and celebrations, such as Memorial Park.	ST: 1-2YRS (ongoing)	RDD

5.B) Advocate for the expansion of arts and culture spaces in new and proposed development.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
<p>1 Advocate for arts spaces and cultural uses in the Town’s facility priorities, such as the Reading Center for Active Living (RCAL) and Pleasant Street Center, with specific recommendations from the arts community, including advocating for design needs such as a multi-use performance space, flexible seating, audio-visual infrastructure, space for exhibition, etc.</p>	ST: 1-3 YRS (ongoing)	RCALC
<p>2 Develop an arts proposal for the Reading Center for Active Living to support Reading’s arts and culture community, potentially with desired spaces like a stage and performance area or makerspace.</p>	ST: 1 YR	Coalition, RCALC, RPSPD,
<p>3 Employ development opportunities for commercial space to incentivize arts and culture uses, such as a multi-use arts space as part of commercial development. For instance, in commercial development proposals for the Eastern Gateway consider needs for arts spaces in future development. Examples for incentivizing art space in the region utilize community benefit agreements (Cambridge and Somerville), designated allowable arts use by right (Somerville), definitions of arts use in zoning code can be found Boston Zoning Code.</p>	MT: 3-5 YRS	RED, RPSPD

5.C) Expand arts and culture facilities to improve access to community members at every stage of life.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
<p>1 Establish a cultural facilities committee to steward cultural facility needs in Reading that can review case study models and lead future investments. Representatives on this committee should include people stewarding existing venues, such as the Reading Public School Facility team, First Congregational Church of Reading, Pleasant Street Center, Reading Recreation Division, and the Reading Cultural Council.</p>	ST: 1-2YRS (ongoing)	RPS,. FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED
<p>2 Review key case study models for municipal cultural facilities to provide a future home for Reading’s arts and culture community, and determine which model meets future community needs.</p>	ST: 1-2 YRS	RPS,. FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED
<p>3 Review the FY25 Massachusetts Cultural Council and MassDevelopment Cultural Facilities Fund Application. Based on the model pursued by the cultural facilities committee, review eligibility for opportunities to apply for up to \$200,000 in funding, with a 1:1 match required.</p>	ST: 1-2 YRS	RPS,. FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED

<p>4 Outline municipal and private resources for the Cultural Facilities Fund grant required 1:1 match. Use the opportunity to convene and coordinate funders around a cultural facilities funding strategy.</p>	<p>MT: 3-4 YRS</p>	<p>RPS, FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED</p>
<p>5 Refine the proposal for a governance structure for a cultural facility in terms of ownership, financial structures, operations, and management with the existing committee. Clearly outline the Town's responsibilities and role.</p>	<p>LT: 4-5 YRS</p>	<p>RPS, FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED</p>
<p>6 Identify financing and funding opportunities for a community cultural facility including local funds, private grant opportunities, and bond</p>	<p>LT: 1-6 YRS (ongoing)</p>	<p>RPS, FCCR, PSC, RRD, RCC, RPSPD, RED</p>

GOAL 6

Reading is a place that respects, honors, and commemorates the history of all people and land.

Reading recognizes the importance of honoring the land, people, and events that shape its evolution and development. From acknowledging the land and people who have lived here for thousands of years to the experiences of Reading today, the town's history is a living history animated by remembrance. As Reading continues to grow and evolve, it is illuminated through these stories and by sharing historical events of local and national significance.

6.A) Expand the narrative of the Town to more fully contextualize Indigenous people and honor pre-colonial history.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Identify ongoing partnership opportunities with indigenous communities connected to Reading. Within existing town events to educate community members about Indigenous history within Reading. Utilize celebrations like Indigenous Peoples' Day and Town Founding Day on June 10, 1644, to expand the dialogue about indigenous communities and colonial settlements.	ST: 1-2YRS	RPL, RDP
2 Expand efforts to respectfully honor the ancestral lands of the Pawtucket band of the Massachusetts tribe. Building on the foundation of the Reading Public Library's Land Acknowledgement , identify opportunities to strengthen and recognize the ongoing relationship that Indigenous communities maintain with these lands today.	LT: 5+ YRS (ongoing)	RPL
3 Explore opportunities to introduce cultural respect easements in Reading's publicly owned land, Reading Open Land Trust, and local conservation organizations. Examples of cultural respect easements include the Nemasket River Village Native Land Conservancy in Middleboro, MA.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RDP, ROLT

6.B) Support public history projects to educate and highlight Reading's rich and diverse histories.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Honor the life and legacy of Bill Russell. Building on the efforts of CATO to commemorate his time in Reading, fostering dialogue on local civil rights history, and utilizing arts and culture to educate and engage community members of all ages.	ST: 1-3 YR (ongoing)	CATO, RPL
2 Commemorate the people and lives of people enslaved in Reading before the American Revolution and the outlawing of slavery in 1783, building on existing tours in town.	LT (ongoing)	CATO

3 Highlight the national significance of Reading's Female Anti-Slavery Society and abolitionist histories in Reading.	MT (ongoing)	RPL, FCCR
4 Invite youth in Reading to imagine possibilities for Reading's future, building on the efforts of the Reading Children's Cabinet. This effort might include an annual event in partnership with Reading Public School to invite youth into public discourse about the future and priorities for future investments.	MT: 2-3YRS (ongoing)	RPL, RPS, OESJ

6.C) Preserve Reading's historic landscape and sense of place.

Actions	Timeline (ST, MT, LT)	Partners for Implementation
1 Utilize efforts to honor the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution to reflect on the role of historic organizations to commemorate and honor living histories and highlight the importance of buildings like Parker Tavern.	ST: 1YR	RHC, RAS
2 Commission a preservation plan to document Reading's historical significance, recognizing Reading's historic districts, including local architecture, supporting treatment to preserve existing structures, and including informational signage as appropriate.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RHC, RAS, RHDC
4 Use cultural and commemorative events to regularly convene historians and organizations to highlight significant moments in Reading's history through storytelling, educational programming, and activities.	MT: 2-3 YRS	RPL, RHC, RAS

References

Community Context Endnotes

1. Massachusetts Historical Commission. *MHC Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Reading*. Boston: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 1980.
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Appendices

Appendix A: List of Local and Regional Stakeholders

Appendix B: Inventory of Municipal Facilities and Open Spaces

Appendix C: Updated Cultural Asset Inventory

Appendix D: Survey Findings

Appendix E: Community Survey

Appendix F: Cultural Asset Map

Appendix G: Cultural Space Case Studies

Appendix H: Art and Culture Program Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Appendix I: Parker Middle School Student Artwork Acknowledgement

Appendix A: List of Local and Regional Stakeholders

Reading is an essential anchor for many regional arts and culture stakeholders. Below is a list of local and regional stakeholders who have participated in ongoing conversations around Reading's arts and cultural planning efforts and who are critical partners in the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan* next steps. This list will continue to expand with individuals as engagement continues throughout Phase 2 of the planning process.

Name	Organization / Business	Participation
Reading Historical Commission	Town Committee	Local Stakeholder Group
Reading Historic District Committee	Town Committee	Local Stakeholder Group
Eileen Barrett	Draw 01867	January Kick Off Meeting
Besty Schneider	First Congregational Church	January Kick Off Meeting,
Tara Gregory	Reading, Reading Cares	Working Group Member
Joe Leto	CATO - The Coalition of Us	January Kick Off Meeting
	Arts Reading, Woburn Guild	January Kick Off Meeting,
	of Artists	Working Group Member
Michelle Aguilon		January Kick Off Meeting,
Brian Kimerer	Creative Arts	Working Group Member
	Reading Arts Association	January Kick Off Meeting
	Arts Reading, Colonial	
Tom Coffin	Chorus Players	January Kick Off Meeting
Nora Bucko	Arts Reading	January Kick Off Meeting
Rod Chandler	Reading Community Singers	January Kick Off Meeting
		January Kick Off Meeting,
Jon Taubman	Reading School of Guitar	Working Group Member
Alan Foulds	Reading Porchfest	January Kick Off Meeting
Ace Foulds	Reading Porchfest	January Kick Off Meeting
	Reading Antiquarian	
Virginia Blodgett	Society, Parker Tavern	January Kick Off Meeting
	Reading Antiquarian	
Cherrie Dubois	Society, Parker Tavern	January Kick Off Meeting
	Reading Antiquarian	January Kick Off Meeting,
Jen Barsotti	Society, Parker Tavern	Working Group Member
	First Congregational Church	January Kick Off Meeting,
Reverend Emelia Attridge	Reading	Working Group Member
	Town of Reading Town	
Matthew Kraunelis	Manager	Working Group Member
	Whitelam Books, BID	
Liz Whitelam	Committee	Working Group Member
	Reading Director of Equity	
Albert Pless	Social Justice	Working Group Member
	Reading Chamber of	
Rob Minor	Commerce	Working Group Member

Michelle Filleul
Stephen Theodoridis
Christine Keller

Reading Public Library
Reading Cultural Council
Reading Cultural Council

Working Group Member
Working Group Member
Working Group Member

Appendix B: Inventory of Municipal Facilities and Open Spaces

The Town of Reading is responsible for maintaining eight school buildings and seven town buildings, as well as the public and open spaces included in the inventory below. Municipal Facilities and Open Spaces include parks, fields, courts, and open spaces maintained by the Town, as well as schools and Town buildings providing public services or event space.

Facility	Address
<u>Barrows Elementary School</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Baseball Field</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Basketball Court</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Cafeteria</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Field</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Gymnasium</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Playground</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Barrows Elementary School - Tennis Courts</u>	16 Edgemont Avenue
<u>Birch Meadow Complex</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Adventure Course</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Castine Field/Skating</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Community Tennis Courts</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Morton Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Multi-Purpose Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Stadium Turf Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Street Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Tot Lot</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Turf Field 2</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Complex - Tennis Court Baseball Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Birch Meadow Elementary School</u>	27 Arthur B Lord Drive
<u>Birch Meadow Elementary School - Cafeteria</u>	27 Arthur B Lord Drive
<u>Birch Meadow Elementary School - Gymnasium</u>	27 Arthur B Lord Drive
<u>Burbank YMCA</u>	36 Arthur B. Lord Drive
<u>Burbank YMCA - Pool</u>	36 Arthur B. Lord Drive
<u>Castine Field</u>	Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Castine Field - Ice Skating</u>	Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Community Tennis Courts</u>	Bancroft Avenue
<u>Community Tennis Courts - TENNIS COURTS</u>	Bancroft Avenue
<u>Coolidge Middle School</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - Cafeteria</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - Gymnasium</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - Library</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - Multi Purpose Room</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - SMALL NON-FIELD AREA</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive
<u>Coolidge Middle School - Soccer/Lacrosse Field</u>	89 Birch Meadow Drive

Hunt Park	Pleasant Street
<u>Hunt Park - Baseball Field</u>	Pleasant Street
<u>Hunt Park - Playground</u>	Pleasant Street
Joshua Eaton Elementary School	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Cafeteria</u>	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Field A</u>	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Field B</u>	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Gymnasium</u>	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Playground</u>	365 Summer Avenue
<u>Joshua Eaton Elementary School - Soccer Field</u>	365 Summer Avenue
Killam Elementary School	333 Charles Street
<u>Killam Elementary School - Cafeteria</u>	333 Charles Street
<u>Killam Elementary School - Gymnasium</u>	333 Charles Street
<u>Killam Elementary School - Playground</u>	333 Charles Street
<u>Killam Elementary School - Soccer Field</u>	333 Charles Street
<u>Killam Elementary School - Softball/Baseball Field</u>	333 Charles Street
Lighted Softball Field	Birch Meadow Drive
Longwood Park	75 Pearl Street
<u>Longwood Park - Soccer Field</u>	75 Pearl Street
Mattera Cabin	1481 Main Street
Memorial Park	Harrison Street
<u>Memorial Park - Basketball Court</u>	Harrison Street
<u>Memorial Park - Ice Skating</u>	Harrison Street
<u>Memorial Park - Playground</u>	Harrison Street
<u>Memorial Park - Tennis Courts</u>	Harrison Street
Parker Middle School	45 Temple Street
<u>Parker Middle School - Cafeteria</u>	45 Temple Street
<u>Parker Middle School - Collins Field</u>	45 Temple Street
<u>Parker Middle School - Gymnasium</u>	45 Temple Street
Pete Moscariello Ballpark	62 Oakland Road (Parking Area)
<u>Pete Moscariello Ballpark - Batting Cage</u>	62 Oakland Road (Parking Area)
<u>Pete Moscariello Ballpark - Full Size Baseball Diamond</u>	62 Oakland Road (Parking Area)
Pleasant Street Center	49 Pleasant Street
Reading Memorial High School	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Baseball Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Cafeteria</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Field House</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Gymnasium</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Soccer Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Stadium Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Tennis Court Field</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Track</u>	62 Oakland Road
<u>Reading Memorial High School - Turf Fields</u>	62 Oakland Road

<u>Sturges Park</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Basketball Court</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Ice Skating, Outdoor</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Playground</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Soccer Field</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Softball/Baseball Field</u>	South Street
<u>Sturges Park - Tennis Courts</u>	South Street
<u>Symonds Way Field</u>	Symonds Way
<u>Symonds Way Field - Baseball 90' Field</u>	Symonds Way
<u>Symonds Way Field - Soccer Field</u>	Symonds Way
<u>Tot Lot</u>	Located by Community Tennis Courts - Bancroft Avenue
<u>Tot Lot - Basketball Court</u>	Located by Community Tennis Courts - Bancroft Avenue
<u>Tot Lot - MultiCourt</u>	Located by Community Tennis Courts - Bancroft Avenue
<u>Washington Park</u>	Washington Street
<u>Washington Park - Baseball Field</u>	Washington Street
<u>Washington Park - Basketball Court</u>	Washington Street
<u>Washington Park - Playground</u>	Washington Street
<u>Washington Park - Tennis Courts</u>	Washington Street
<u>Wood End Elementary School</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane
<u>Wood End Elementary School - Cafeteria</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane
<u>Wood End Elementary School - Gymnasium</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane
<u>Wood End Elementary School - Lacrosse Field</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane
<u>Wood End Elementary School - Soccer Field</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane
<u>Wood End Elementary School - Upper and Lower Playground</u>	85 Sunset Rock Lane

Appendix C: Updated Cultural Asset Inventory

The cultural asset inventory below is an update to the 2014 cultural asset inventory included in the Reading Cultural District Exploratory Study. In the table below, MAPC documented 161 assets, and a summary of the eight categories as part of the inventory. Reading's Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses category lists the most assets, followed by Eating and Drinking Places, and then Public Art or Events. This cultural asset inventory will continue to be updated throughout the planning process and in collecting responses from the *Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan Survey*.

Arts and Cultural Asset Category	Number of Assets	Percent of Total
Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses	57	34.55%
Eating and Drinking Places	29	17.58%
Public Art or Event	17	10.30%
Public Facilities and Open Space	31	18.79%
Historic Landmarks and Attractions	20	12.12%
Religious Institutions	9	5.45%
Arts Exhibition Spaces	1	0.61%
Artist Work Spaces	1	0.61%

Cultural Asset	Cultural Asset Designation
First Congregational Church: Artist Studios	Artist Work Spaces
Arts Reading	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Boston City DJs	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Colonial Chorus Players	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Comically Speaking	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Cordele Photography	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Creative Arts	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Elite Freestyle Karate	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Elyse Jewlers	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Encore Dance Academy	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Erin Dhimo's Bass Lab Studio	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses
Executive Headshots Boston	Arts and Cultural Organizations and Businesses

Five Star Theatre Company

IMAX Theatre (Jordan's Furniture)

Infinite Recording Studios

J&D Dance Academy

Justine Yandle Photography

Katheine Henry Photography

La Pierre School of Dance

Michele's Music School

Nuimage Entertainment

Peg Raciti Photography

Pirate!

Portraits by Frank

Quannapowitt Players

RCTV

Reading Advocate

Reading Arts Association

Reading Community Concert Band

Reading Community Singers

Reading Connection Audio Institute

Reading Memorial High School Drama Club

Reading Patch

Reading School of Guitar

Reading Symphony Orchestra

Arts and Cultural Organizations and
Businesses

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Ron Ranere Photography

Simms Jewlery

Sound Play Music

Spiritual Diva Hair Salon and Jewlery

The Swan Boudoir Studio by Tara Starr Photography

Thrown Together Pottery Studio

Tin Bucket Shop

Whitelam Books

Writers Collaborative Learning Center

Intertwine Media

B & D Advertising Agency Inc

Pellet Productions Inc

Northeast School of Ballet

Barrier Architectural Reps Inc

Rick Obey's Entertainment Co

O'Sullivan Architects

Music Works International

Relux Decor Inc

M & H Interiors Inc

Square Dance Foundation of New England

Intent Architects LLC

Callan Photo LLC

Home Elation Interior Design

Arts and Cultural Organizations and
Businesses

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Arts and Cultural Organizations and
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Downtown Artwalk	Arts Exhibition Spaces
Bagel World	Eating and Drinking Places
Bunratty Tavern	Eating and Drinking Places
Caffe Nero	Eating and Drinking Places
Cal's Brick Oven Pizza	Eating and Drinking Places
Cal's Creamery	Eating and Drinking Places
Christopher's Restaurant	Eating and Drinking Places
DeISurNatural Empanadas	Eating and Drinking Places
DiCara's Deli	Eating and Drinking Places
Dunkin'	Eating and Drinking Places
Empower on Haven	Eating and Drinking Places
Fat Larry's	Eating and Drinking Places
Fusilli's Cucina	Eating and Drinking Places
Half & Half	Eating and Drinking Places
House of Bagels	Eating and Drinking Places
Last Corner Restaurant	Eating and Drinking Places
Longhorn Steakhouse	Eating and Drinking Places
Mandarin Reading Restaurant	Eating and Drinking Places
Nella's Pizza	Eating and Drinking Places
Oye's Restaurant & Bar	Eating and Drinking Places
Perfecto's Caffé	Eating and Drinking Places
Post 1917	Eating and Drinking Places
Professor's Market	Eating and Drinking Places
Public Kitchen Reading	Eating and Drinking Places
Starbucks	Eating and Drinking Places
swissbakers	Eating and Drinking Places
The Charles @ Bunratty Tavern	Eating and Drinking Places
The Chocolate Truffle	Eating and Drinking Places
Venetian Moon	Eating and Drinking Places
ZUCCA Italian Restaurant and Bar	Eating and Drinking Places
Bancrodt Homestead	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Charles Lawn Cemetery	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Early Parker House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Eaton-Prescott Farm	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Forest Glen Cemetery	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Foster-Emerson House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Jabez Weston House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Joseph Parker House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Laurel Hill Cemetery	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Old Nichols Home	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Parker Tavern	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Reading Common Historic District	Historic Landmarks and Attractions

Woburn Street National Historic District	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Summer Avenue Local Historic District	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
West Street Local Historic District	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Richard Nichols House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Samuel Bancroft House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Stephen Hall House	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Walnut Street School	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Wood End Cemetery	Historic Landmarks and Attractions
Annual Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony	Public Art or Event
Chickadee (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Generations of Reading (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Govenor Greenhalge (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Ipswich River Watershed (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Mechanics Building (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Porchfest	Public Art or Event
Reading Depot (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Reading Fall Street Faire	Public Art or Event
Reading Friends and Family Day	Public Art or Event
Reading Winterfest	Public Art or Event
Reading Lafayette Trail Marker Tour	Public Art or Event
Reading Mascots (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Reading Then and Now (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Summer Concert Series at Memorial Park	Public Art or Event
Three Trolley Cars (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
View from Old South (Outside the Box Artwalk)	Public Art or Event
Bare Meadow	Public Facilities and Open Space
Barrows Elementary School Playground & Fields	Public Facilities and Open Space
Birch Meadow Complex	Public Facilities and Open Space
Burbank YMCA	Public Facilities and Open Space
Castine Field	Public Facilities and Open Space
Cedar Swamp	Public Facilities and Open Space
Community Tennis Courts	Public Facilities and Open Space
Coolidge Middle School Fields	Public Facilities and Open Space
Driscoll Softball Field	Public Facilities and Open Space
Higgins Farm Conservation Area	Public Facilities and Open Space
Hunt Park	Public Facilities and Open Space
Joshua Eaton Elementary School Playground & Fields	Public Facilities and Open Space
Killam Elementary School Playground & Fields	Public Facilities and Open Space
Longwood Park	Public Facilities and Open Space
Maillet Conservation Land	Public Facilities and Open Space

Mattera Cabin
 Memorial Park
 Parker Middle School Field
 Pete Moscariello Ballpark
 Pinevale Conservation Land
 Pleasant Street Center
 Reading Memorial High School Courts, Fields, and Stadium
 Reading Public Library
 Sturges Park
 Symonds Way Field
 Thelin Bird Sanctuary
 Tot Lot
 Town Common
 Washington Park
 William E. Endsloew Performing Arts Center (Reading Memorial High School)
 Wood End Elementary School Playgrounds & Fields
 Church of the Good Shepherd
 Congregation of St. Athanasius
 First Baptist Church
 First Congregational Church
 Korean Church of the Nazarene
 Old South United Methodist Church
 North American Foundation of Islamic Services (NAFIS)
 St. Agnes Church
 Unitarian Universalist Church

Public Facilities and Open Space
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Appendix E: Survey Findings

TABLE X: Survey Respondents Demographics

Age Groups			Race & Ethnicity			Gender		
65+	55	26.1%	White	168	79.62%	Female	144	68.25%
45 to 65	95	45.0%	Asian	7	3.32%	Male	46	21.80%
35 to 44	41	19.4%	Black or African American	1	0.47%	Non-Binary	3	1.42%
25 to 34	12	5.7%	Multiracial	8	3.79%	Other	2	0.95%
18 to 24	2	0.9%	Other	4	1.90%	Prefer not to answer	16	7.58%
Under 18	2	0.9%	Prefer not to answer	23	10.90%			
Prefer not to answer	4	1.9%						

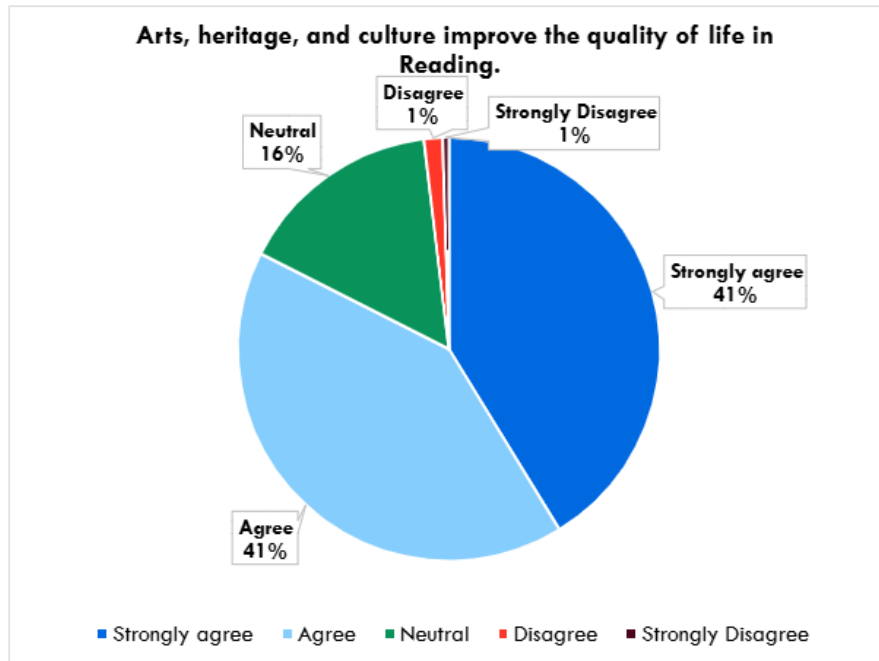
TABLE X: Survey Respondents Household Characteristics

Annual Household Income			Tenure in Reading			Home Ownership		
\$200,000 or higher	50	23.70%	More than 40 years	26	12.32%	Home Owners	179	84.83%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	23	10.90%	21 – 40 years	59	27.96%	Renters	11	5.21%
\$100,000 – \$149,999	26	12.32%	10 – 20 years	55	26.07%	Other	3	1.42%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	12	5.69%	6 – 10 years	20	9.48%	Prefer not to answer	18	8.53%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	8	3.79%	1 – 5 years	27	12.80%			
\$40,000 - \$59,999	6	2.84%	Less than 1 year	2	0.95%			
\$20,000 - \$39,999	1	0.47%	I do not live in Reading	19	9.00%			
Prefer not to answer	85	40.28%	Prefer not to answer	3	1.42%			

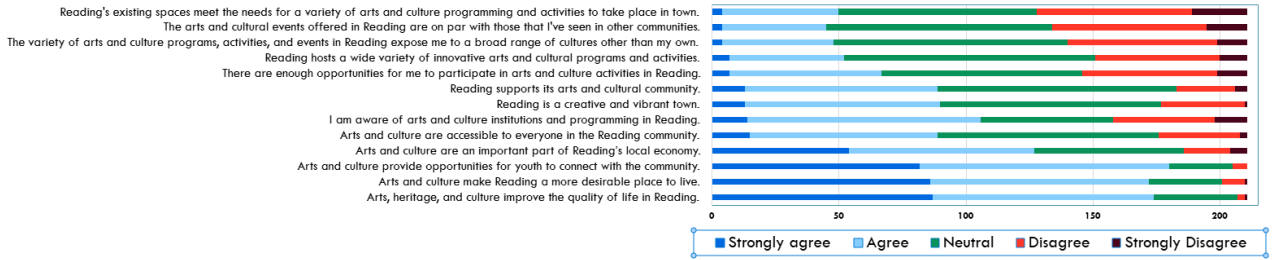
TABLE X: Survey Respondents Linguistic Characteristics

Languages Spoken at Home	
English only	174
Prefer not to answer	13
French	5

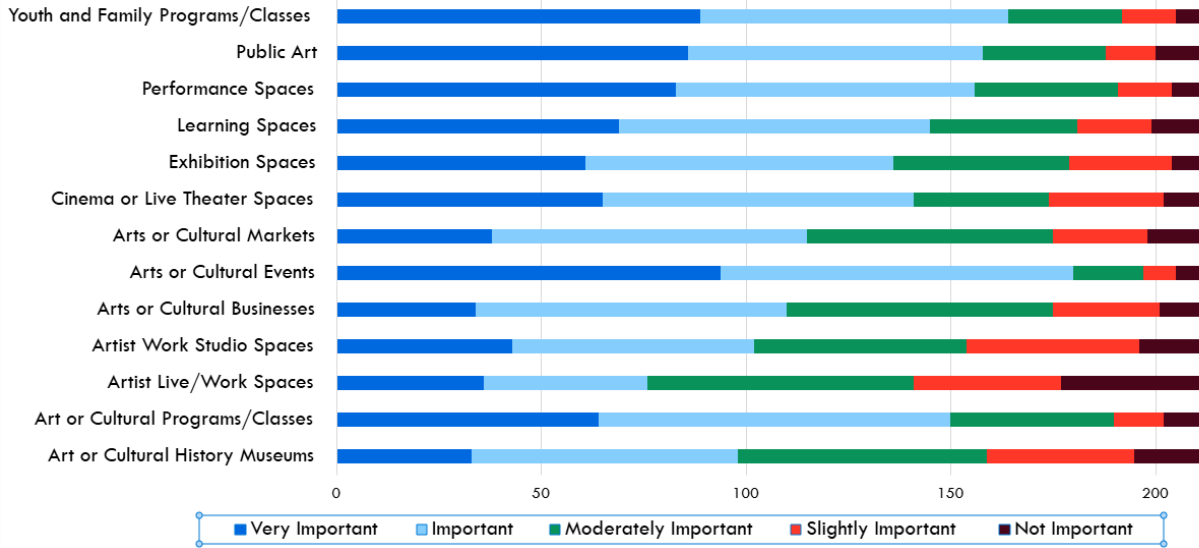
Spanish or Spanish Creole	5
Arabic	2
Japanese	2
Tagalog	2
Portuguese or Portuguese Creole	2



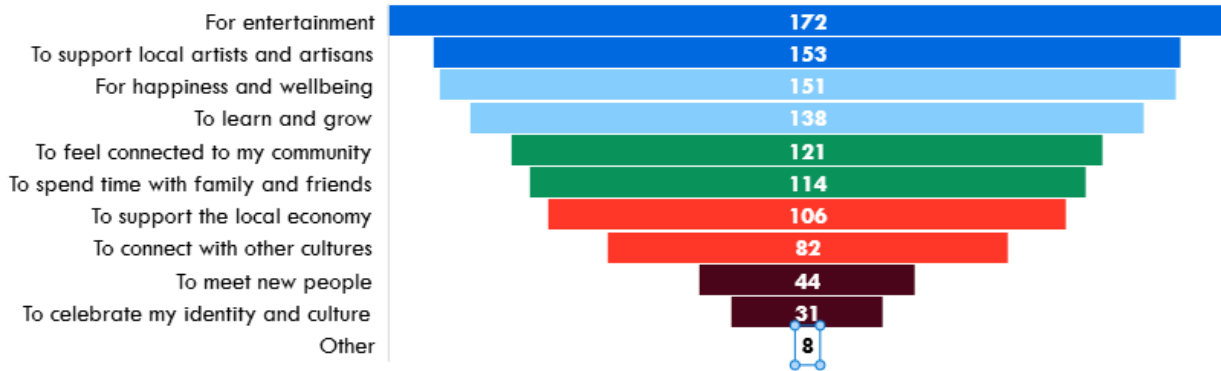
Reading's Arts and Culture Assets



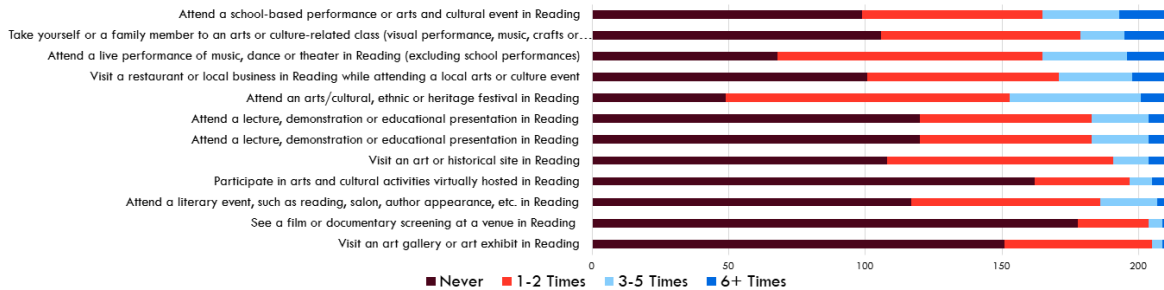
Importance of arts and cultural activities or facilities



Why do you participate in arts and culture programming?



Frequency of Attendance at Arts & Cultural Events



Appendix E: Survey

Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan Survey

The Town of Reading is working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to develop a **Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan** to strengthen and grow the town's arts and cultural assets. The Action Plan will identify policy and programming changes to be pursued by the Town and community partners **to support a thriving arts and cultural life in Reading.**

In this survey, we invite your perspectives and ideas on:

- Your participation in Reading's arts and culture 'Reading's arts and cultural assets
- Reading's existing arts and cultural assets
- The opportunities exist to strengthen Reading's arts and cultural offerings.

This survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is **open until June 30, 2024.**

Relationship to Reading

1. Please tell us about your relationship to the Town of Reading.* Select all that apply.

- I am a resident of Reading
- I own a business in Reading
- I work in Reading
- I attend school in Reading
- I am a former resident of Reading
- Other (please describe your relationship to Reading)

2. How would you describe your participation in Reading's arts and culture community?*

Select all that apply.

- I am an active consumer in Reading's arts and culture community.
- I consider myself to be an artist, craftsperson, writer or creative worker. (If this applies to you, please select regardless of whether you earn income from this activity).
- I support the arts and culture sector in some other capacity (this could include as a teacher, administrator, volunteer or technician).
- None of the above.
- Other

Participation in Reading's Arts & Culture Activities

3. In the past 12 months, how many times did you*

- Attend an arts/cultural, ethnic or heritage festival in Reading
- Attend a live performance of music, dance or theater in Reading (excluding school performances)

- Attend a school-based performance or arts and cultural event in Reading
- Attend a literary event, such as reading, salon, author appearance, etc. in Reading
- Attend a lecture, demonstration or educational presentation in Reading
- Participate in arts and cultural activities virtually hosted in Reading
- See a film or documentary screening at a venue in Reading
- Take yourself or a family member to an arts or culture-related class (visual performance, music, crafts or language) in Reading
- Visit an art or historical site in Reading
- Visit an art gallery or art exhibit in Reading
- Visit a restaurant or local business in Reading while attending a local arts or culture event
- Never
- 1-2 Times
- 3-5 Times
- 6+ Times

4. Why do you participate in arts and culture programming?*

Select all that apply.

- For entertainment
- For happiness and wellbeing
- To feel connected to my community
- To spend time with family and friends
- To celebrate my identity and cultural background
- To meet new people
- To support local artists and artisans
- To connect with other cultures and communities
- To support the local economy
- To learn and grow
- Other (please specify)

5. How do you usually find information about arts and culture programming in town?*

Select all that apply.

- Word of Mouth
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Television
- Posters, flyers or noticeboard
- Internet or website
- Social media
- Newsletters

- Other (please specify)

6. What are the specific noticeboards, websites, social media pages, or newsletters where you find information about arts and culture programming in town?*

7. Have you experienced any obstacles to attending arts and cultural programs or events?*

Select all that apply.

- None – no obstacles
- Activities were too expensive (e.g., high admission cost)
- Did not know programs were happening
- Did not feel welcome
- Could not arrange transportation
- Worried about finding parking
- Could not arrange or afford childcare
- Had concerns about COVID or health risk
- Had other safety concerns
- Activities were not age-appropriate
- Experienced language or cultural barriers
- Experienced accessibility issues (e.g., ADA compliance, sensory friendly)
- Activities available don't interest me
- Other (please specify)

8. Where do you typically go to experience arts and cultural events and activities (e.g., festivals, markets, performances, productions, etc.)?*

Select all that apply.

- My home or someone else's home in Reading
- Locations outside my or someone else's home (nonprofit or business) in Reading
- Local public schools
- Indoor public facilities in Reading (e.g., Town Hall, public libraries)
- Outdoor public facilities in Reading (e.g., streets, sidewalks, parks, Town Common)
- Throughout the Greater Boston region
- Outside the Greater Boston region
- Other (please specify)

9. Where do you go to experience arts and cultural events and activities throughout the Greater Boston area?

For instance, do you go to neighboring communities like Wakefield, Stoneham and Woburn? Or other communities in the North Shore, like Salem and Beverly? Or other communities like Boston, Cambridge or Somerville?

10. What type of arts and culture events do you go to outside of Reading?*

Select all that apply.

- Arts/cultural, ethnic or heritage festivals
- Live performances of music, dance or theater (excluding school performances)
- School-based performances or arts and cultural events
- Literary events, such as readings, salons, author appearances, etc.
- Lectures, demonstrations or educational presentations
- Film or documentary screenings
- Arts or culture-related classes (visual performance, music, crafts or language)
- Art or history museums
- Art galleries or art exhibits
- Other (please specify)

Satisfaction with Arts & Cultural Life in Reading

Please respond to the following statements.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

11. Reading is a creative and vibrant town.*

12. Arts, heritage, and culture improve the quality of life in Reading.*

13. Arts and culture make Reading a more desirable place to live.*

14. Arts and culture provide opportunities for youth to connect with the community.*

15. Arts and culture are an important part of Reading's local economy.*

16. Arts and culture are accessible to everyone in the Reading community.*

17. Reading supports its arts and cultural community.*

18. I am aware of arts and culture institutions and programming in Reading.*

19. There are enough opportunities for me to participate in arts and culture activities in Reading.*

20. Reading hosts a wide variety of innovative arts and cultural programs and activities.*

21. The variety of arts and culture programs, activities, and events in Reading expose me to a broad range of cultures other than my own.*

22. The arts and cultural events offered in Reading are on par with those that I've seen in other communities.*

23. Reading's existing spaces meet the needs for a variety of arts and culture programming and activities to take place in town.*

Importance of Reading's Arts and Cultural Assets

Arts and cultural assets include the people, places and activities that are essential to the arts and cultural life of communities. Arts and cultural assets can include: people, parks, squares, historic properties, organizations, programs, businesses, production spaces, manufacturing spaces, performance spaces, temporary and permanent public art, festivals, markets and more.

24. Below are examples of arts and cultural assets and resources. For each please indicate the importance of each type of arts and cultural activities or facilities in Reading.*

- Not Important
- Slightly Important
- Moderately Important
- Important
- Very Important

- **Arts or Cultural Businesses***
- **Arts or Cultural Events***
- **Art or Cultural History Museums***
- **Arts or Cultural Markets***
- **Art or Cultural Programs/Classes***
- **Youth and Family Programs/Classes***
- **Artist Work Studio Spaces***
- **Artist Live/Work Spaces***
- **Cinema or Live Theater Spaces***
- **Performance Spaces***
- **Exhibition Spaces***
- **Learning Spaces***
- **Public Art ***

Inventory of Reading's Arts & Cultural Assets

The Town of Reading is updating its inventory of arts and cultural assets.

25. Are there arts and cultural assets that you want to include in Reading's inventory?

Please drop a pin on the map below to include additional cultural assets to the Reading arts and cultural asset inventory. Use the text boxes below to name and describe the asset you added to the map.

Arts and Culture Asset Name

Arts and Culture Asset Description

Anything Else?

26. Is there anything else you would like to tell us related to arts and culture in Reading?

Your Background

Your answers to these questions are entirely optional and will help us ensure that our outreach and engagement for this project is representative of Reading's population.

27. What age group do you belong to?

- Under 18
- 18 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 64
- 65+
- Prefer not to answer

28. How do you identify yourself?

Select all that apply.

- American Indian or Alaska Native or Indigenous
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino/a or Latinx
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

29. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please self identify)

30. What language(s) are spoken in your home?

Select all that apply.

- Albanian
- Arabic
- Benin (Edo)
- Chinese dialect
- English
- French
- Haitian Creole
- Indic dialect
- Italian
- Japanese
- Korean
- Luganda
- Persian
- Polish
- Portuguese or Portuguese Creole
- Spanish or Spanish Creole
- Turkish
- Vietnamese
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify)

31. What is your annual household income?

- \$0 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,999
- \$150,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 or higher

- Prefer not to answer

32. Do you own your home or rent?

- I own my home
 I rent my home or apartment
 Prefer not to answer
 Other (please specify)

33. How long have you lived in Reading?

- Less than 1 year
 1 – 5 years
 6 – 10 years
 10 – 20 years
 21 – 40 years
 More than 40 years
 I do not live in Reading
 Prefer not to answer

34. Please provide the 5-digit ZIP code of the address where you currently live.*

Questions for Future Participation

Over the next several months, project partners will be hosting a series of events including focus groups related to Reading's arts and cultural life. Each focus group will last for 1.5 hours and light refreshments will be provided at each meeting.

35. Please indicate how you would like to be involved in the Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan moving forward:

- I would like to receive email updates on this project – including notices of upcoming public events
 I am interested in volunteering in future arts and culture events in Reading
 I am interested in participating in a focus group
 I would like to be involved in the Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan in another way (please specify)

36. If you are interested in future participation in the project, please provide your email address below.

- Email

Reading Arts & Culture Action Plan Arts & Culture Survey: Arts & Culture Participant Survey Addendum Questions

If respondents indicated in question 2 that they identify as an artist or are an active participant in cultural sector, there is a short additional set of optional questions below.

Arts & Culture Sector Questions

37. Do you earn a portion of your income from your artistic or creative work?

- Yes
- No

38. Which of the following best describes your artistic practice(s) or creative work?

Select all that apply.

- Painting or drawing
- Photography
- Film and video
- Textile crafts (e.g., sewing, knitting or quilting)
- Crafts like pottery, jewelry or working with wood, glass or metal
- Composing or performing music
- Dance
- Live theater
- Writing
- Comedy/Improv
- Other (please specify)

39. Where do you primarily create, develop and/or engage in your creative work (whether it is for yourself, others or for retail)?

- In Reading in my home or someone else's home
- In Reading at locations outside my or someone else's home (e.g., at a local nonprofit or business location)
- In Reading at a public facility (e.g., public schools, Town Hall, public libraries, streets, sidewalks, parks)
- Throughout the Greater Boston region
- Outside the Greater Boston region
- Other (please specify)

40. What is the type of space/facility in which you primarily create, develop and/or engage in your creative work?

- I rent my primary creative space
- I own my primary creative space

- I have an informal arrangement for my primary creative space
- Other (please specify)

41. Please indicate if any of your creative activities have been delayed or stopped in the past 12 months due to following reasons:

- You couldn't find the right instructional program or space to create and/or practice your work
- You couldn't find the right outlet in which to display/market your work
- You lacked sufficient funding and/or staffing support
- The COVID-19 pandemic and health safety has limited your creative activities
- Other (please specify)

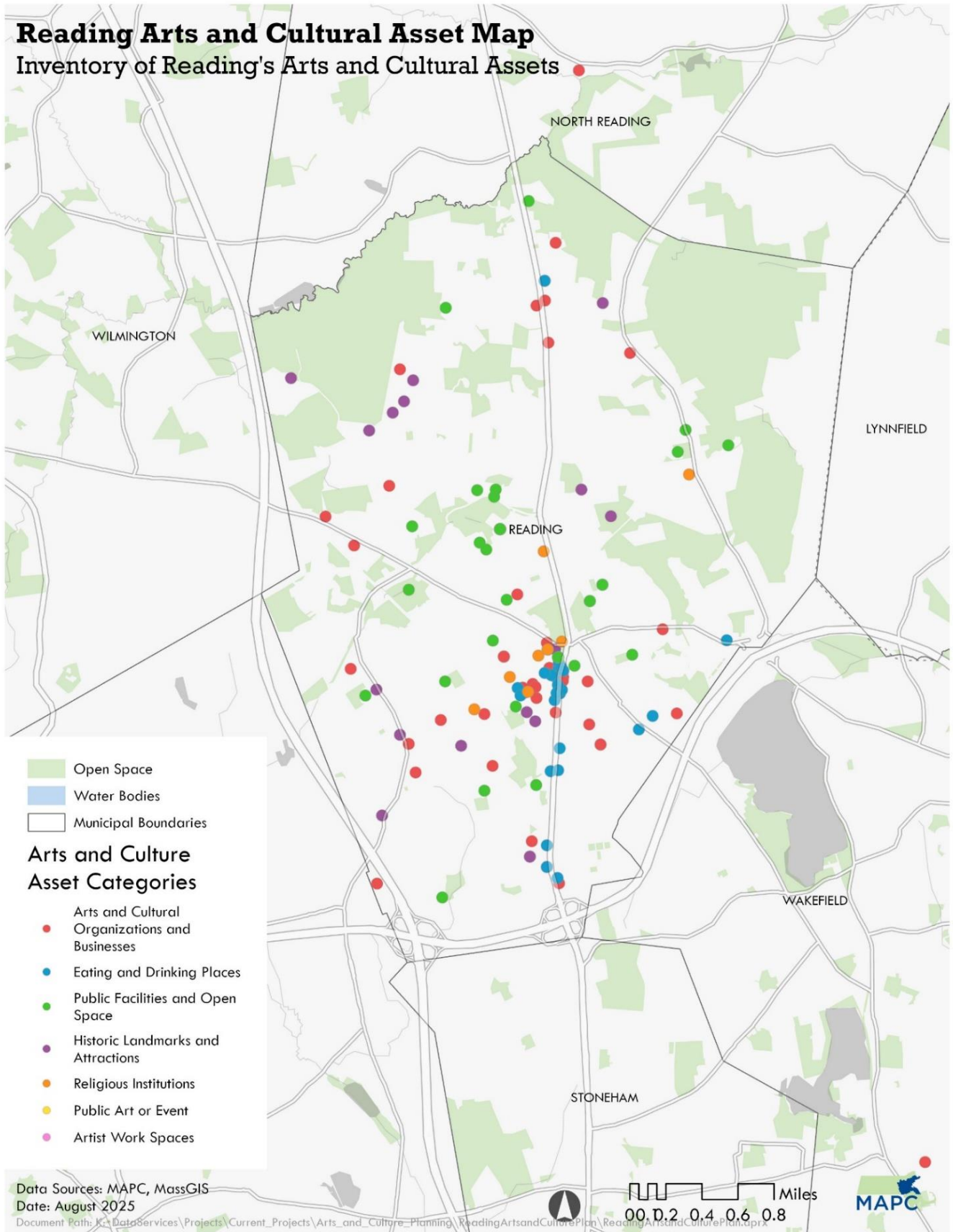
42. Please indicate what resource you currently lack that would allow you to more fully pursue your creative interest

- Tools, equipment, supplies or materials
- Appropriate space
- Affordable space
- Grant opportunities for staffing, marketing, and resource support
- Pandemic/health safety support
- Other (please specify)

43. Are there other community resources that would support your artistic and/or creative work that you would like to see in Reading?

44. Do you work with or as part of a local arts or cultural organization, or nonprofit? If so, please specify.

Appendix F: Cultural Asset Map



Appendix F: Cultural Asset Map



Figure 11: Meetinghouse Arts building exterior, white building with square steeple.

Image Source: Brianna Soukup/Staff Photographer Portland Press Herald

MEETINGHOUSE ARTS

Location: Freeport, Maine

Website: meetinghousearts.org

In 2015, the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Freeport (ACAF) incorporated as a nonprofit organization. This organization formed a board of directors representing arts groups, local businesses, artists, and arts advocates. Following the initial launch of a website, newsletter, and Facebook page to promote and support arts and culture activities in Freeport, the organization worked with the Town to create the Freeport Cultural Plan. This planning process identified the need for an arts and culture center with a gallery and stage, ultimately launching efforts for Meetinghouse Arts.

In evaluating potential spaces, ACAF negotiated to lease the historic First Parish Church on Main Street, with the financial support of an extensive capital campaign and financial support from the Town. The meeting house structure was constructed in 1895 and required extensive updates and remodeling to accommodate the art space. Seven years after the formation of ACAF, Meetinghouse Arts Gallery opened in June 2021, and four months later, the 182-seat performance hall, Meetinghouse Arts Stage, opened. In 2022, ACAF officially changed its name to Meetinghouse Arts. Meetinghouse Art Gallery & Stage hosts local and touring visual and performance artists and cultural organizations.



Figure 12: Albion Cultural Exchange building front, brick building with white windows and a sign over the door

ALBION CULTURAL EXCHANGE

Location: Wakefield, MA

Website: <https://www.wakefieldma.gov/777/Albion-Cultural-Exchange>

The Albion Cultural Exchange (ACE) is a Renaissance Revival building on 9 Albion Street, originally constructed as a post office in 1910. Later, the Town-owned building served as business offices for the Town's Municipal Gas & Light Department. As an anchor in the Albion Arts Corridor, it hosts local arts programming and events and is an art gallery.

Previously, a Town-run committee, the Albion Cultural Exchange Committee, oversaw the building's refurbishment, scheduling, and management. However, in 2023, the Recreation Department took over the management of ACE from the Albion Cultural Exchange Committee. ACE includes three stories, with a gross area of 7,440 square feet. The ground floor is an active site for arts and culture events and programs, while the basement and second floor require renovations. In 2025, state officials secured \$20,000 from the state budget to make ADA accessibility upgrades to the building.

Case Study Takeaways

As Reading considers the local need for arts and culture space for performances, rehearsals, events, and gallery space, these two case studies present alternative pathways for future investment and management.

MEETINGHOUSE ARTS

- Managed by a nonprofit organization representing a diverse cohort of arts and culture stakeholders, including local businesses, but in partnership with the Town.
- Funding for this Meetinghouse Arts relied on private fundraising and public support from the Town of Freeport.
- Meetinghouse Arts provides a model lease structure with a faith-based organization, which the Town of Reading could replicate with the First Congregational Church of Reading.
- Two full-time staff members, including an Executive Director and Program Coordinator, support the organization's operations.

ALBION CULTURAL EXCHANGE

- The Town of Wakefield's Recreation Department manages the space, though initially it had support from a citizen committee. Still, there is limited information on the development of the building and the division of responsibilities.
- ACE aligns with Reading's goal to invest in downtown's cultural vibrancy and provides an anchor institution eligible for public funding from the state budget for improvements.
- Redevelopment is incremental, and programming is dependent on municipal staff availability.

In both cases, the local municipal government plays a critical role in these two arts centers, as partners in development and direct funding. Citizen-led committees and nonprofit organizations, including arts and culture stakeholders, are key leaders in developing new spaces and play an essential role in promoting visibility of the local arts community in each town.

As Reading considers locations for an arts and cultural facility, the phased approach from Meetinghouse Arts demonstrates a pathway for building two dedicated spaces, one for gallery space and the other for performance. While the Town of Reading might consider pursuing an agreement with the First Congregational Church of Reading, it is also feasible to explore the use of existing Town-owned properties like Pleasant Street Center in a similar use as the Albion Cultural Exchange. In both case studies, additional financial information for the renovation and development can help inform different approaches. Furthermore, Reading must conduct feasibility studies for proposed arts and cultural space sites.

Appendix H: Art and Culture Program Staff Roles and Responsibilities

The Town's arts and culture efforts should be staffed by a paid staff member of the Planning Division. They will be responsible for managing and implementing all stages of public art projects and cultural initiatives located throughout Reading.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Develops and oversees the implementation of the Arts and Culture action plan with input from the Arts and Culture Action Plan Implementation Committee.
- Develops and implements local policies to support public art commissioning with input from the Arts and Culture Action Plan Implementation Committee for presentation to the Select Board.
- Oversees periodic updates to the Town's Arts and Culture Action Plan, with input from the Arts and Culture Action Plan Implementation Committee.
- Staffs the Arts and Culture Action Plan Implementation Committee.
- Works with Arts and Culture Action Plan Implementation Committee to identify program opportunities and project sites for public art—and, where appropriate, develops collaborative public processes to achieve these goals—with input from relevant Town staff, boards, and commissions.
- Manages the implementation of Reading Arts and Culture Action Plan objectives, including installation and maintenance of permanent and temporary public artwork on Town property (including Town-owned buildings and outdoor spaces), commissioning of cultural programming, and fulfillment of contracts with artists.
- Maintains regular communication with Town boards and departments whose work intersects with the strategic priorities of the Arts and Culture Action Plan, including the Department of Public Works, Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, the Reading Public Library, and the School Committee.
- Serves as a liaison between local arts and cultural organizations and Town boards, departments, and leadership.
- Promotes awareness of arts and culture activities in Reading by interacting with local news, TV, radio, and social media, and by managing public website of Town-wide cultural programming, activities, and events.

Qualifications

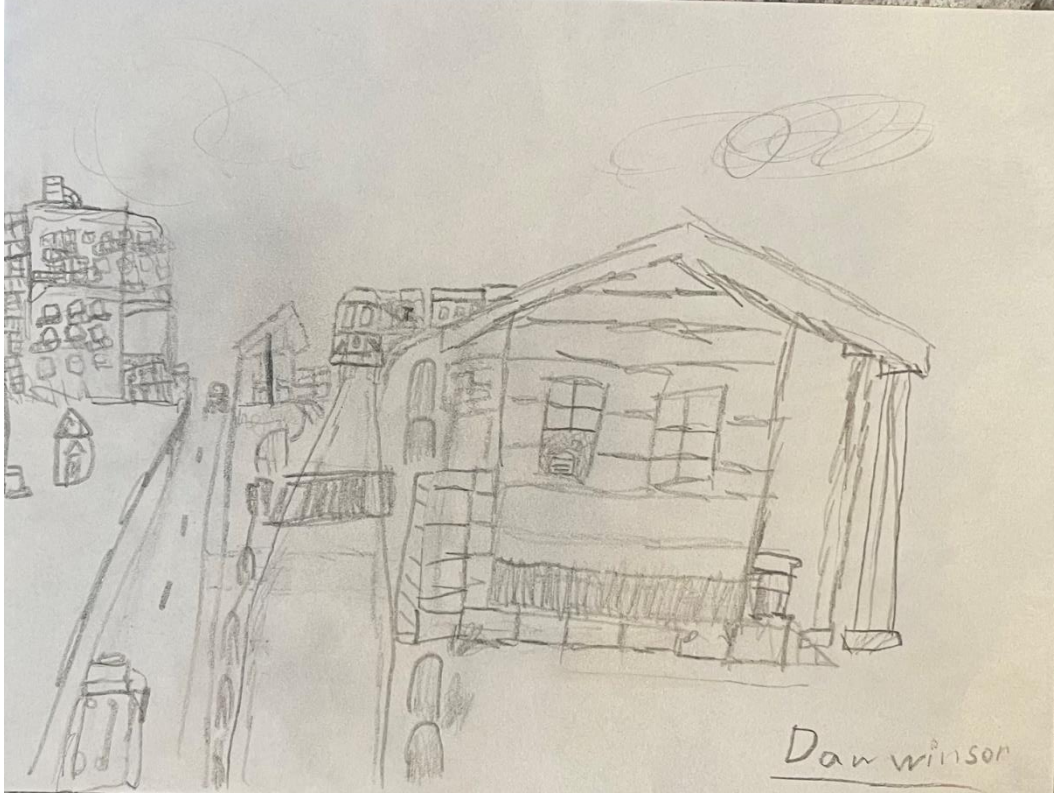
- Background in arts administration, cultural planning and policy, cultural organizing, community-based arts or a related field plus three years or more of experience in public art project management (or an equivalent combination of education, experience, and transferable skills).
- Exceptional project management and organizational skills.
- Excellent verbal and written communications skills, including a demonstrated ability to navigate competing interests and build consensus.
- Knowledge of emerging practices in the fields of contemporary and public art, including creative placemaking, socially engaged art, performance art, media and digital arts.

Appendix I: Parker Middle School Student Artwork Acknowledgement



Jack Cardoos, Parker Middle School

On Arbor Day everyone goes to the open fields and brings blue recyclable materials. After this, they all pile the materials into one big pile. Finally, everybody takes what they need, and they all build blue recyclable tree sculptures.



Dan Winsor, Age 8

I think Reading should add little community gardens in all the neighborhoods.

6th Grade:



B Carnahan, 6th Grade



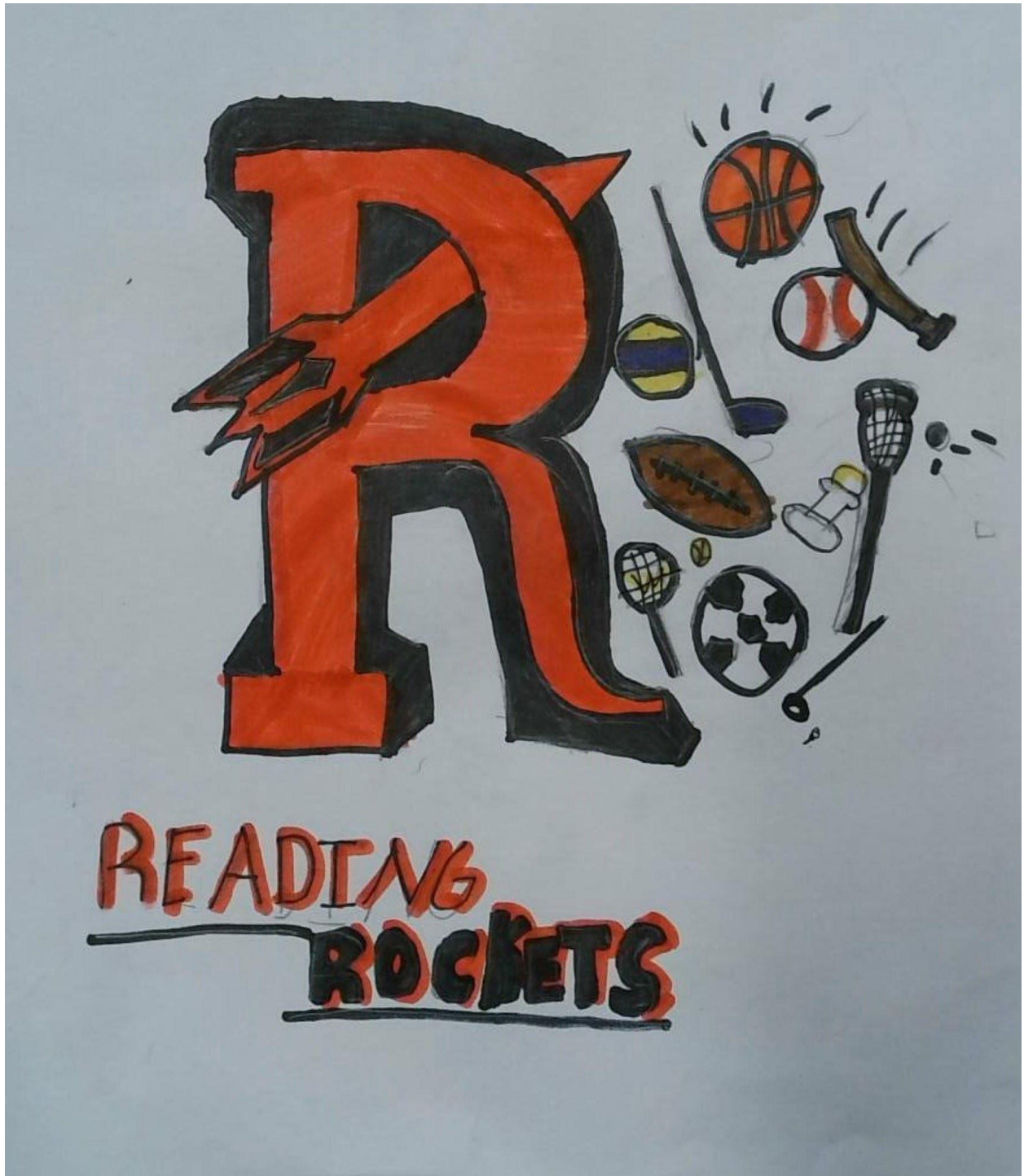
Cam Foristall, 6th Grade



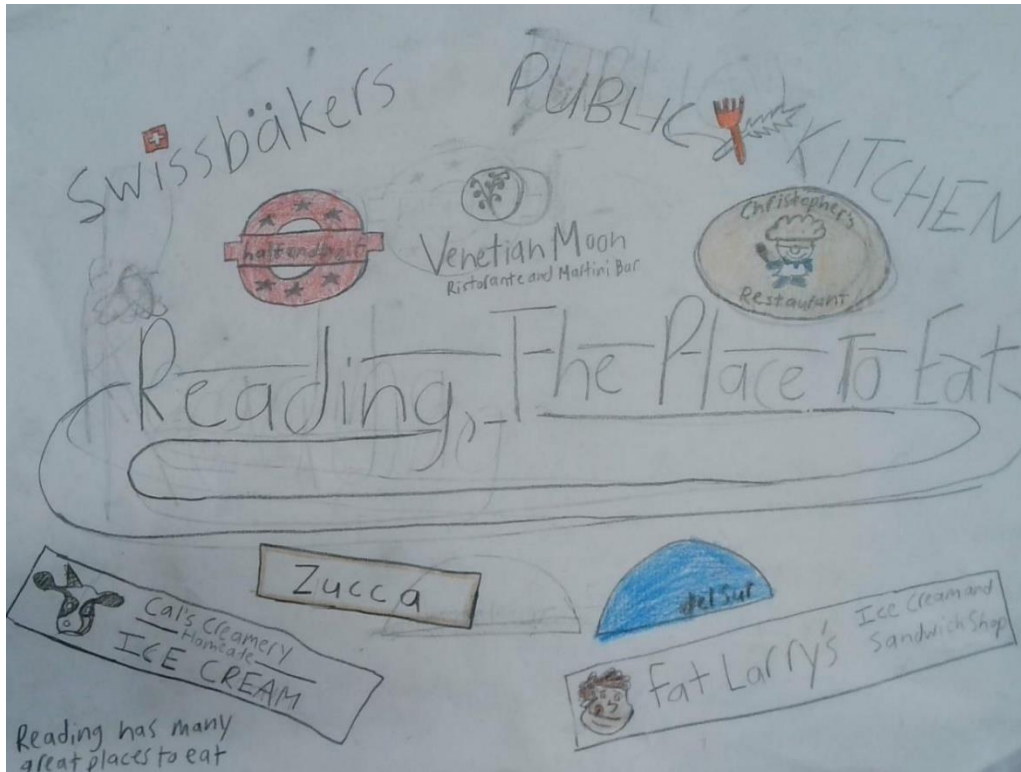
Milena Gearity, 6th Grade



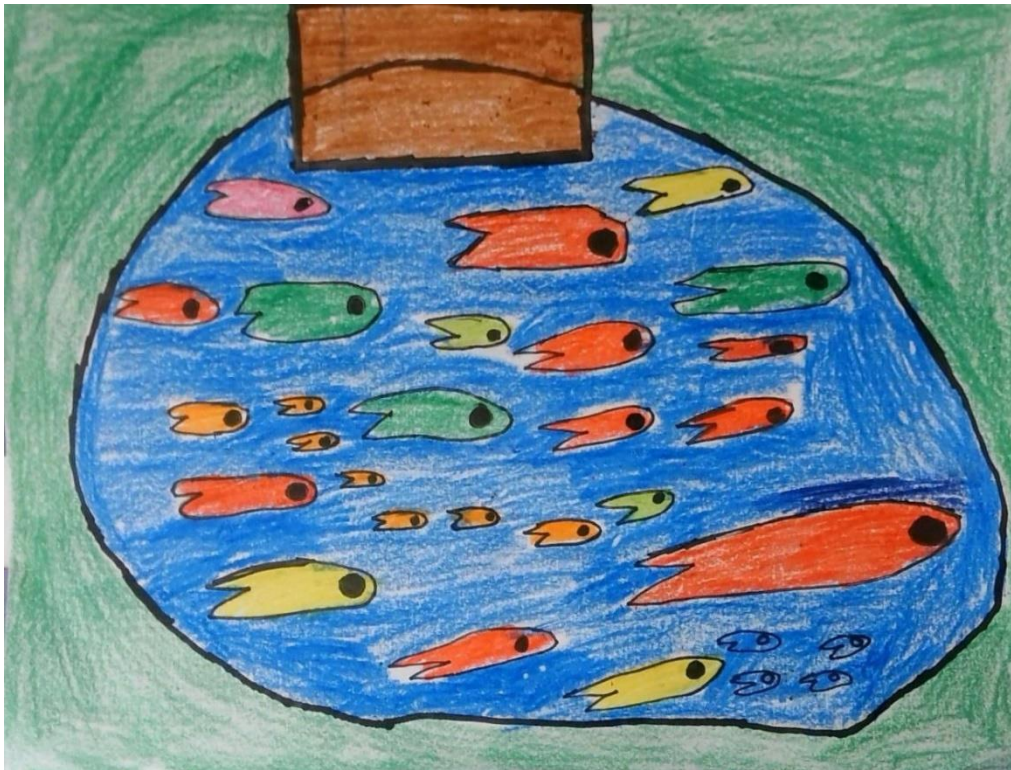
Addy Hillary, 6th Grade



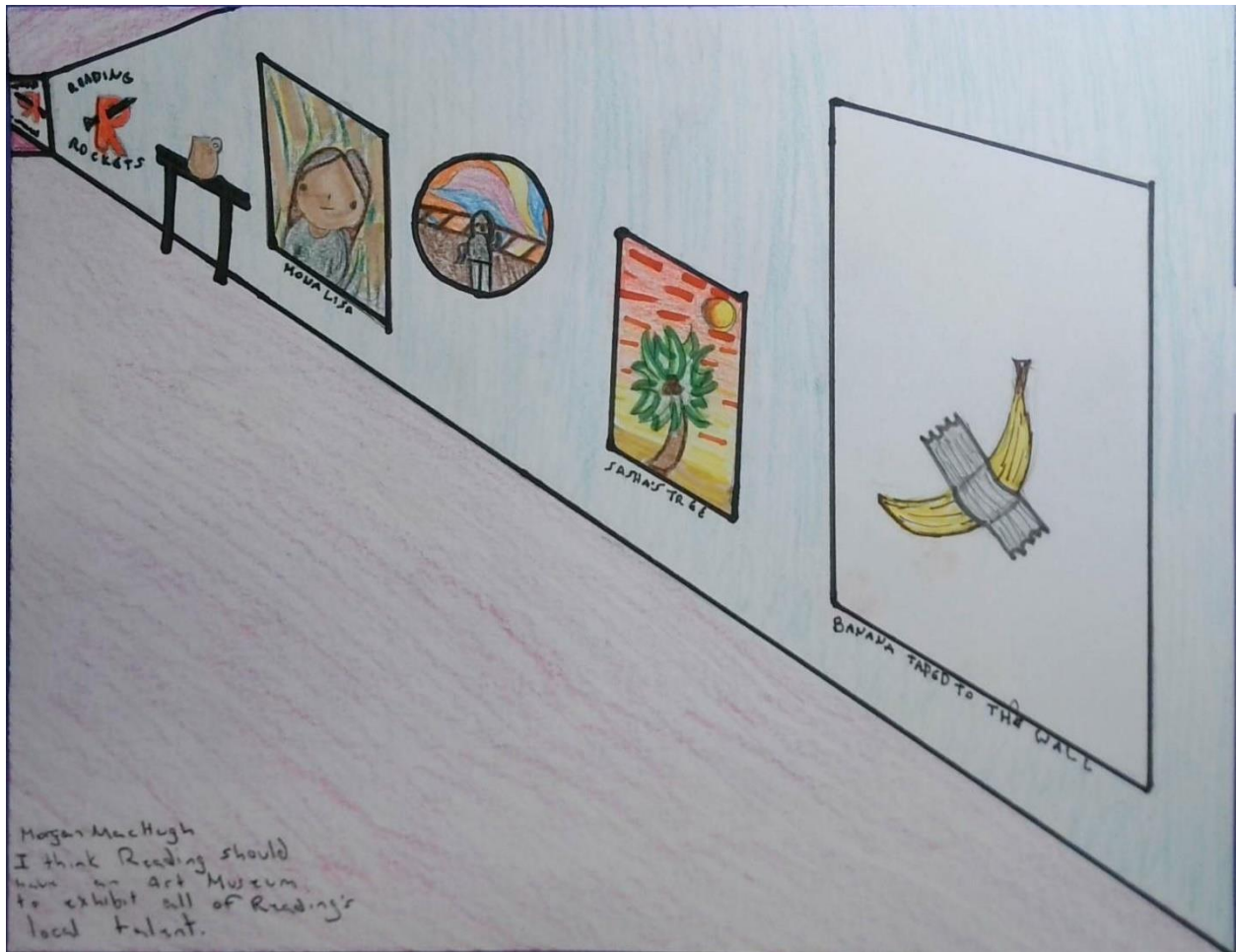
John Peter Gentilucci, 6th Grade



Jayden James, 6th Grade



Andrew Lundbohm, 6th Grade



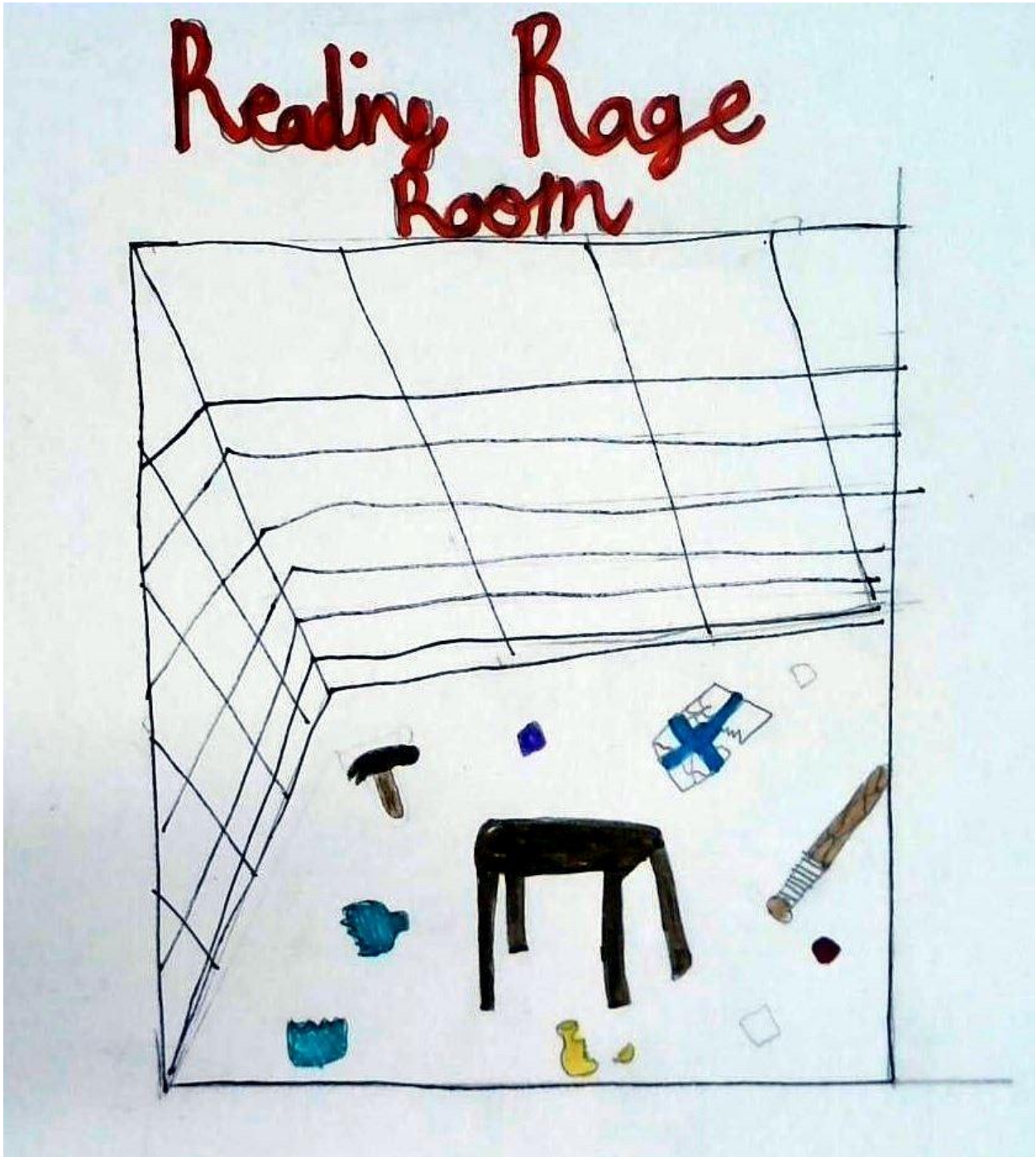
Morgan MacHugh, 6th Grade



Requing's
Cricket field

Aarav Raval, 6th Grade

7th Grade:



Alia Assarian, 7th Grade



Charlotte Bakst, 7th Grade



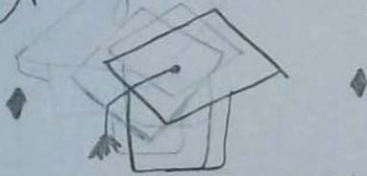
Mario Cerasulo, 7th Grade

I WANT READING TO BE

KNOWN FOR...

=equality for ALL!

high quality



education

WELCOMING
COMMUNITY ☺

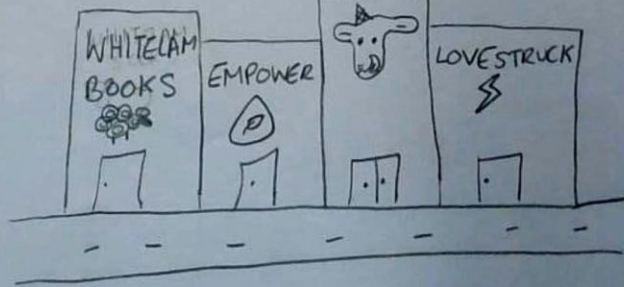


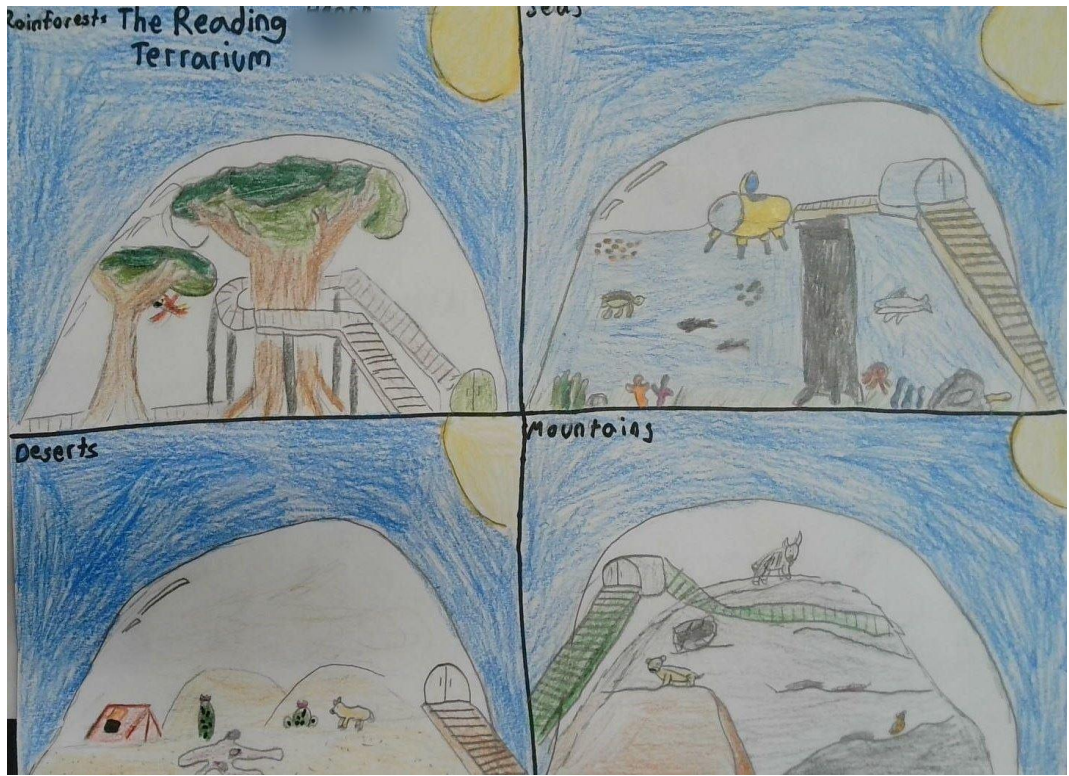
Nice houses & living spaces

WALKABLE



its local businesses &

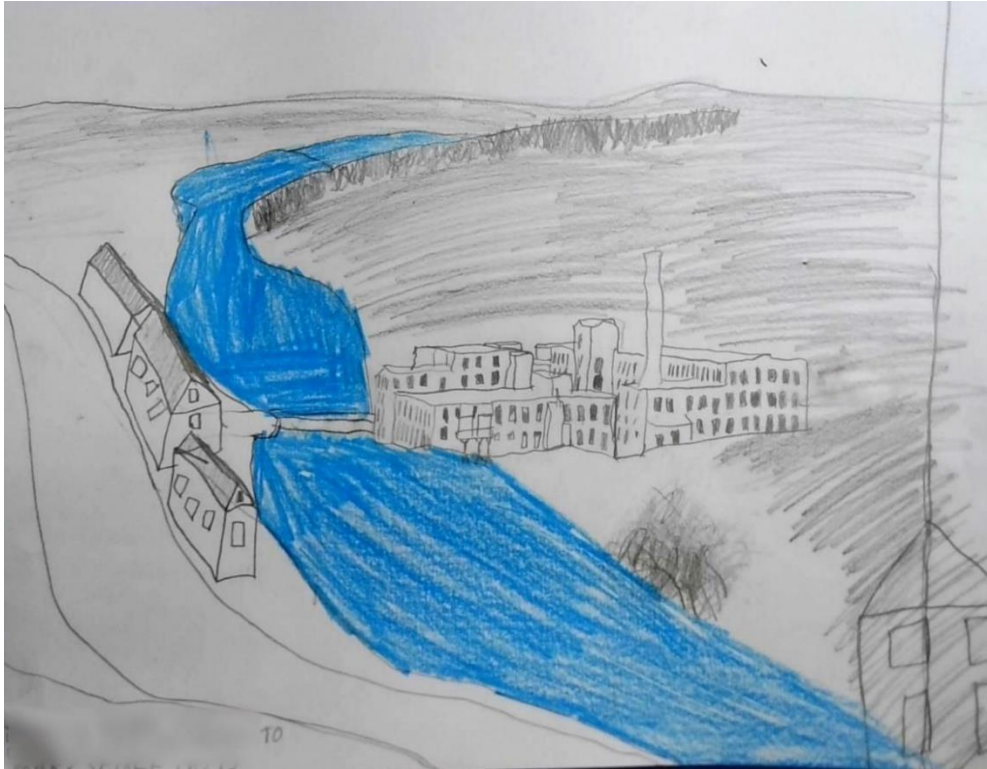




Henry Harris, 7th Grade



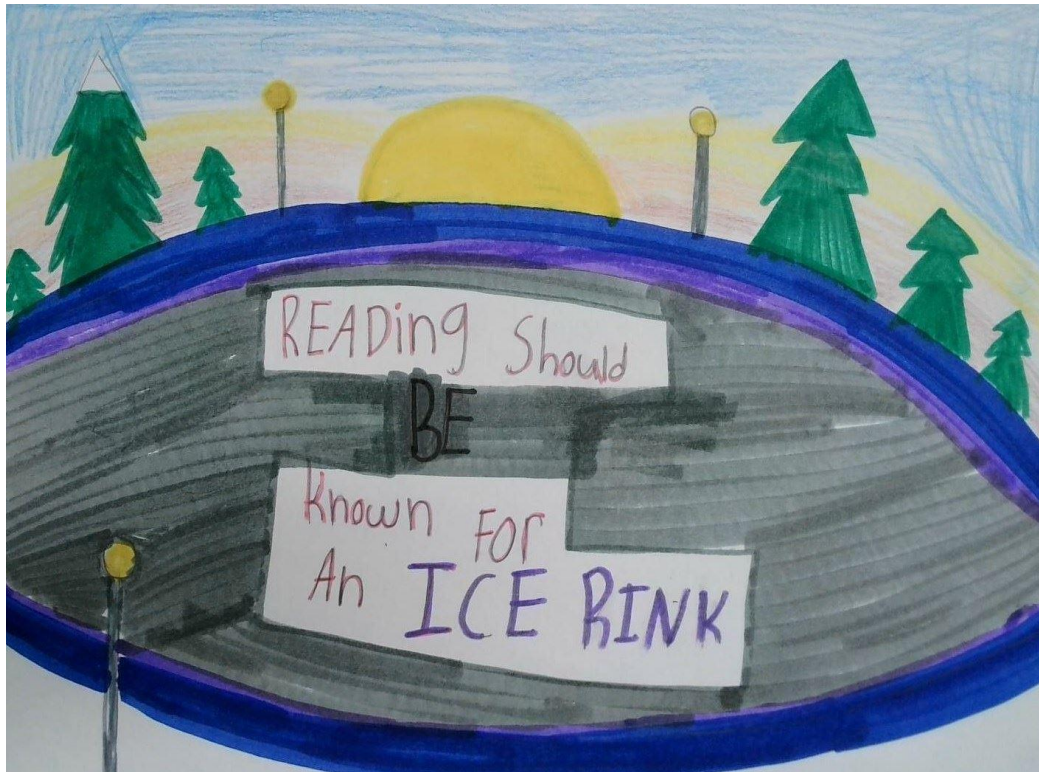
Maile Doroquez, 7th Grade



TJ Hinkle, 7th Grade



Ella Huntington and Kendall Shaw, 7th Grade



Remy Long, 7th Grade



Viola Magro, 7th Grade



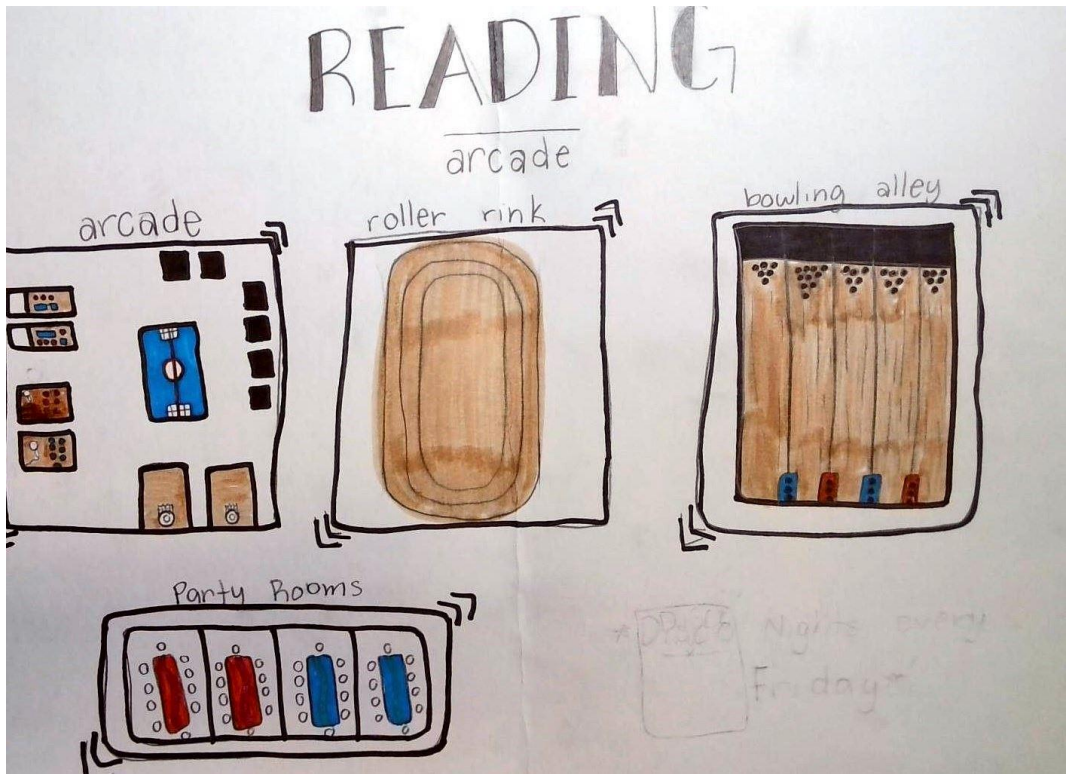
Nicholas Prinic, 7th Grade



Sarah Roden, 7th Grade



Concetta Marino, 7th Grade



Emily Roberts, 7th Grade

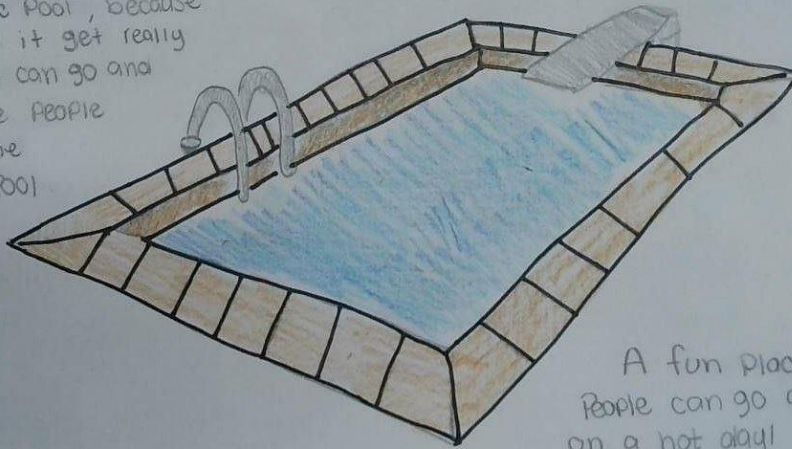


Matthew Smart, 7th Grade

READING

PUBLIC POOL !!!

I think that we should have a public pool, because in the summer it get really hot so people can go and cool off! Some people don't have the privilege of a pool or going to the lake or beach.



A fun place were people can go and hangout on a hot day!

Emma Racicot, 7th Grade

