



STAFF MAP BY SARAH KAEMPFE /
 STAFF PHOTO BY JOHN WILCOX



Northern suburb offers short commutes, small-town feel

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By PAUL RESTUCCIA

Dianna Jones works in Malden and her husband's job is in Waltham, so the \$419,000 Cape they bought recently near the Reading commuter-rail stop sits in an ideal spot. "Reading is the perfect location for us, said Jones, a 40-year-old data analyst. "I can drive or take the commuter rail to work. And it's a great town to raise our 1-

year-old son in."

Built in 1949, the Jones' home features hardwood floors, new appliances, a large yard, an added-on family room and screened-in back porch.

"It's a perfect New England home that's near the schools and walkable to Downtown Reading," Jones said. "It was quite a find."

Reading is a popular choice for couples who, like the Joneses, work between the nearby Route 93/Route 128 interchange and Boston. The community also draws in lots of buyers from Boston and inner-ring suburbs who want a less-urban atmosphere.

"People who look to live in Reading are drawn by its

good schools and accessibility to Route 128 and Boston," said Mary Ann Quinn of Century 21 North Shore, whose office is in the Reading commuter-rail depot. "Once they come here, very few leave, choosing to upgrade to bigger houses in town."

That's exactly what Maureen Skehan and her husband are doing.

The Skehans bought a four-bedroom, one-bathroom Cape in town six years ago, but recently upgraded to a bigger house 1 1/2 miles away to accommodate their two growing children. For \$435,000, they got a four-bedroom, custom-built home with hardwood floors, a family room and three

By the numbers

Here's a look at who lives in the 01867 ZIP code, which covers all of Reading. All figures are from the 2000 U.S. census:

Population: 23,708	Adults with high-school education or higher: 94.5 percent
Median age: 39.1	Adults with a bachelor's degree or higher: 47.8 percent
Median household income: \$77,059	Married people: 63.5 percent
Owner-occupied units: 82.5 percent	
Renter-occupied units: 17.5 percent	

bathrooms.

"We love Reading's small-town atmosphere and sense of community and never thought two moments about leaving," said Skehan, whose children attend Reading public schools. "From the moment we arrived in Read-

ing, it's felt like home. Citizens care about what's going on in the town, and parents are very involved."

Founded in 1639, Reading was once a manufacturing center known for making

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