

CHAPTER 1 LETTER FROM MPAC

Dear Reading Resident:

The enclosed Master Plan represents Reading's ongoing commitment to planning the future of our community in an inclusive, comprehensive manner. Despite the valuable and exhaustive efforts of the prior Master Plan Advisory Committee, Reading has changed in many unanticipated ways since adoption of the last Master Plan in 1991, creating impacts that continuously challenge our way of life. This demonstrates the need to proactively identify what we do and don't like about the changing landscape, to allow us to efficiently seek a path toward maintaining and enhancing what is good while attempting to avoid all the rest.

The process the MPAC adopted to update the Master Plan reflects a thorough, balanced, comprehensive and open exercise designed to include as much public input as possible. There will always be people who will disagree with the results but the MPAC has invested substantial time and effort to ensure that their voice was heard as loud as any choir of consensus.

The MPAC has approached this exercise as a way to inform and involve as many of Reading's residents as possible in the planning of our community. The Master Plan is not meant to be a technical document that sits on a shelf awaiting occasional use by staff and special interests. It is a living document to be used by the breadth of our citizenry to inform and inspire reasoned and meaningful discourse about the way of Reading's future.

Ultimately the Master Plan will be used in a variety of official and practical ways in the conduct of Town business, such as defending legal challenges to Board or Commission decisions, guiding land use through zoning amendments, directing administrative priorities and management, enabling State-sanctioned housing and economic development plans, and accessing state funding to promote ongoing capital projects. But the true value in this exercise lies in providing a vision by which the community as a whole can share in the management of Reading's destiny.

The formal implementation of this document is meant to be entrusted to the dedicated residents who serve the community on various Boards and Committees. Reading's reputation as a municipality run openly, fairly, efficiently and ethically primarily depends on the ongoing commitment of these individuals and bodies, who understand and respect the importance of the public's contribution to the governmental process. The Selectmen, CPDC, Historical

Commission, Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals have all been intimately involved in the Master Plan update and are among the fine examples of how well- served Reading's constituency is by the volunteer gatekeepers of our community. Other individuals in the nonprofit and business community have provided great insight to the MPAC and their contribution was invaluable.

As this document is implemented by the community there will be ongoing evaluations to determine what is and isn't working. Of course, we do not live in a vacuum and events beyond Reading's control will dictate that our course is corrected on occasion. Therefore it is anticipated that the Master Plan herein may be examined and modified periodically to account for these effects, or certain priorities will be adjusted or abandoned as needed. The goal is not to stubbornly stick to the path we're on, but be mindful of obstacles in the road or better routes that may emerge.

Certainly the Master Plan will only be as effective as Reading's residents allow through their support. Further, in the case of the many zoning changes recommended in this document the ultimate authority on whether they will be enacted will still be our representative government, as defined by the Selectmen and Town Meeting. This Master Plan does not and will not supersede Reading's Home Rule Charter, but merely serves as an advisory and enabling document to achieve elected officials' and the public's planning and policy initiatives.

The Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) greatly appreciates the excellent work done by Chris Reilly, Town Planner, and its Consultant, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council in developing the Community Development Plan, which served as the foundation for the greater task of updating the entire Master Plan. The MPAC also thanks those members of the public who participated in the four visioning sessions and in the "Putting It All Together" workshop, and contributed their thoughts, ideas, concerns, knowledge and above all patience as the Master Plan was carved and crafted into its final form.

Respectfully submitted,

Master Plan Advisory Committee

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