

Public Services Department
Town of Reading

16 Lowell Street
Reading MA 01867
www.readingma.gov



JULIE D. MERCIER
Community Development Director
Phone 781.942.6648
jmercier@ci.reading.ma.us

Sean R. Cronin
Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services
Division of Local Services
PO Box 9569
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 626-2381

September 18, 2019

Dear Mr. Cronin,

Thank you for your inquiry about the Town of Reading's efforts in support of our Community Compact Best Practices related to downtown development and housing/economic development. At this time, we do not have a final report as our work on economic development and housing initiatives is ongoing, and permeates almost everything we do here in Reading.

For example, since we signed the Community Compact in 2016, here is a list of some of the things we have done:

- Hired an Economic Development Director;

Downtown-related initiatives:

- Expanded the Downtown Smart Growth District (40R), which resulted in the permitting of 3 new 40R projects in the expanded district (+1 in the existing district), which are all currently under construction;
- Were awarded an MDI grant for Wayfinding/Branding in our downtown - signs have been fabricated and are being installed in phases;
- Hired a consultant to update our Downtown Parking Study – implementation of recommendations (i.e. signage & expanded hours) is ongoing;
- Hosted an Economic Development Forum in October 2018 to convene local stakeholders for a discussion of our downtown development, parking, wayfinding and district management initiatives;
- Were awarded an MDI grant for Downtown District Management – the Working Group is launching the initiative at a public event next week (see article in Boston Globe: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/globalocal/2019/09/03/reading-holds-social-help-create-vibrant-downtown/Kzq6up5THfZo85XHRdldHK/story.html>);
- Put out a town-wide 'ReImagine Reading' survey to solicit feedback on our initiatives downtown and received over 1100 responses in the first week (see survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3RNLJYC>)
- Authorized funds for studies of the Town's water, sewer and stormwater capacity and infrastructure downtown;
- Authorized funds for survey and redesign of the streetscape & aboveground features in a portion of the downtown;
- Used TNC funds to hire a consultant to explore the feasibility of creating a common Uber/Lyft/App Ride pick-up/drop-off location in the downtown;
- Current effort to use TNC funds to increase bike parking infrastructure in the downtown through MAPC's collective purchasing contract; and
- Ongoing effort to modify the Downtown Smart Growth District Design Guidelines to better address district edges and adjacencies with historic/residential uses.

Other:

- Designated a Housing Choice Community based on 3% and 4+ best practices;
- Permitted 3 new 40B projects in addition to the 40R projects mentioned above and surpassed 10% on our Subsidized Housing Inventory; and
- Ongoing effort to annually/periodically put out a community-wide survey to solicit feedback about a handful of planning/economic development initiatives.

Eastern Gateway (Walkers Brook Drive/Ash Street/New Crossing Road)-related initiatives:

- Hosted an Economic Development Summit in October 2017 to convene local, regional and state-level stakeholders around future development opportunities and objectives in our industrial area ('Eastern Gateway');
- Were awarded a Housing Choice Initiative grant to work with a consultant on a redevelopment concept for our the Eastern Gateway;
- Hired a traffic engineering consultant to do a comprehensive corridor/intersection analysis of Walker's Brook Drive in preparation for future redevelopment and economic growth within the Eastern Gateway;
- Added flexibility to our Industrial district zoning regulations; and
- Ongoing explorations to relocate and potentially regionalize the Town's DPW facility, to free up space for redevelopment in this area.

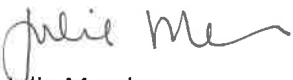
South Main Street (Route 28)-related initiatives:

- Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendments for November 2019 Town Meeting to add Mixed-Use to the Business A district (flanks both sides of the southern portion of Rte. 28 in Reading), which has an inclusionary zoning provision; and
- Submitted Better Bus Network proposal through online portal to extend/add/relocate a bus route down Main Street in Reading to connect people from housing to jobs to the Reading Commuter Rail Station.

The Town is pleased to have become an early member of the Community Compact Cabinet and looks forward to continuing the positive and productive relationship that we have with your office and other divisions of the Commonwealth.

Feel free to contact me at any time if you need additional information.

Thank you,



Julie Mercier

Community Development Director