



OLSENDESIGNGROUP
ARCHITECTS

Neighborhood Revitalization
Master Plan
6th Ward - Reading, PA
March 2012



March 1, 2012

Dear Mayor Thomas H. McMahon,

On behalf of our Planning Team and Steering Committee, it gives me great honor to submit this Neighborhood Revitalization Master Plan of the Ricktown Arts District to the City of Reading. All of us on the Team know how deeply committed you have been to creating a viable neighborhood for the arts in the 6th Ward and the passion with which you have organized and rallied support for this vision of yours.

From the initial community engagement meetings with residents of the neighborhood in focus groups, it became quite obvious that this master plan would be deeply rooted in the traditions of the 6th Ward. We learned early on in the data gathering process how proud the residents are of their neighborhood. Some boasted of their being 3rd generation occupants of the neighborhood, even in the same property.

The two days of our Charrette in mid-April, 2011 were most revealing. There was an ample turnout of concerned and interested residents, community leaders and individuals with vested interests in the neighborhood, i.e. developers, the City and local artists. Although the room was not full to capacity, we had people there who cared. The group exercises manifested themselves into ideas of economic opportunities, needed community services, infrastructure upgrades and the promise of a greener and more sustainable community in terms of a clean, safe and walkable environment in which to raise children.

As the synthesis of the data progressed, it became obvious that there is a need for an overarching management organization to oversee the needs of the neighborhood, from affordable housing, artist specific housing, economic opportunities, infrastructure upgrade integration with the City and many other facets of municipal management for the good of the neighborhood. All of the ideas that were generated at the Charrette and then discussed in later public meetings were vetted and subsequently those that resonated have become a part of this master plan.

This master plan is the end result of many hours of work in the field, evening meetings, many of which you attended, healthy debate and research. We all feel that it is a true representation of all that was discussed and is a planning document that can serve as a template moving forward. We did not solve everything and sometimes we felt that we unearthed more than we bargained for, and may have raised more questions than we answered!

Planning documents are snapshots in time of a particular issue or problem, and have a limited "shelf life". This master plan will provide a solid framework to use in order to get started on the eventual and necessary revitalization of one of Reading's most treasured working class neighborhoods.

Respectfully submitted,
Lee C. Olsen AIA, NCARB, SEED
President / CEO
Olsen Design Group

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee C. Olsen" followed by a horizontal line.



OLSEN DESIGN GROUP
ARCHITECTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	4
Mission Statement	5
 Data Gathering	
History of Ricktown	6
Neighborhood Review	7 -13
Community Assests	14 -19
Quality of Life	20 -25
S.W.O.T. / Focus Groups / Charrettes	26 -30
 Housing	
Ricktown Housing Review & Recommedations	31- 33
Artist Housing	34 -39
 Entertainment & Business	
Theatre Outreach, Review, Recommedations	40 -42
Retail & Mercantile	43 -46
Community Center	47
 Community Maintanence	
Streetscape & Landscape	48 -55
Greenspace	56 -57
Safety & Crime Prevention	58 -59
 CBDO	60
Zoning & Implementation Plan	61 -75
 Appendix A: Blighted Properties Criteria	
Appendix B: The 6th Ward Engagement Initiative by Dr. William Davis	
Appendix C: Theatre Group Recap	
Appendix D: Housing Initatives	
Appendix E: Precendent Studies	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Reading is in need of visionary transformation, and in recent years the arts have emerged as a potential key to revitalization in cities like Reading. In a 2010 report for the National Endowment for the Art's Mayors' Institute on City Design, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa describe the process of "Creative Placemaking." This concept is one of the driving forces behind the Ricktown Arts District initiative.

"In creative place making, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities," according to Markusen and Gadwa (2010, p. 3).

Planners focus on making an area more physically attractive by animating public and private spaces, and rejuvenating structures and streetscapes. However, the ultimate goals of any creative placemaking plan are multi-faceted and include improving local business viability and public safety, celebrating community diversity, and promoting resident pride and ownership among other things. (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010).

The Ricktown Arts District is a creative placemaking effort focused on a 10-block area of the City of Reading. The focus area is kept to a modest size intentionally. In 2010, the City was advised by the State's Department of Commerce and Economic Development, to target investment in one compact area as part of the City's Act 47 Recovery Plan. This strategy will allow the City to show success and make a significant impact with limited resources in one particular area. The City would then use that model to develop other areas rather than stretching resources with little impact across the entire City of Reading.

The Ricktown Arts District Master Plan provides recommendations and outlines specific ways to capitalize on the neighborhood's existing arts and cultural assets, create new arts and cultural features, improve public spaces, use public resources and partnerships, attract new and retain current residents and investors, and encourage resident ownership and participation in order to spur overall community improvement. If successfully implemented, the plan will drive economic development and private investment in the neighborhood, The City, and eventually throughout Greater Reading.

"The City would then use that **model** to develop other areas rather than stretching resources with little impact across the entire City of Reading."

MISSION

To cultivate the renaissance and revitalization of Reading's Ricktown neighborhood through arts and culture, community engagement, and sustainable development.

VISION

- Create a diverse, sustainable neighborhood offering affordable housing options, cultural and entertainment activities, and live/work space for artists and artisans.
- Engage current residents in the development of the neighborhood, transforming the physical and social character of their community by making it a cleaner, safer and more walkable district.
- Encourage targeted public/private investment to rejuvenate structures, improve public spaces and enhance business viability.
- Emphasize and celebrate the area's historic heritage as a self-contained urban community, using it as a model for redevelopment.
- Develop and support active management, promotion, and advocacy for Ricktown.

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Ricktown Arts District Revitalization Initiative has been strengthened significantly by an exceptionally thoroughgoing community engagement process. Key stakeholders from residents, the private and public sectors, and the arts community, have been engaged in a process of needs assessment through the implementation of various methods of data collection and analysis.

Data on existing physical conditions has been collected exhaustively throughout the master planning process. Information on the ownership and condition of residential, commercial, and industrial property has been recorded and quantified in order to create this master plan. Written and illustrative information has been documented and used to guide the master plan.

Qualitative data collected from residents and other stakeholders also plays a vital role in shaping the goals of the initiative and the master plan. Data on community wants and needs have been collected through various qualitative methods such as focus groups, S.W.O.T. analysis and a community design charrette.

Community outreach and data collection will be described in further detail within the master plan. Using these methods for future community improvement and planning projects will be recommended as a best practice for the development of this initiative.

Outreach efforts for this initiative have spurred resident involvement in overall community improvement, even preceding the creation of the master plan. Maintaining community involvement stands as a paramount goal in successfully implementing the Ricktown project.

“To cultivate the renaissance and revitalization of Reading's Ricktown neighborhood through arts and culture, community engagement, and sustainable development.”

HISTORY

Founded in 1748 by the grandsons of William Penn and Conrad Weiser, the City of Reading found great growth and success through the latter 1700's, 1800's, and into the early 20th century. It was a self-sustaining city where people could work, live and enjoy the area's natural surroundings.

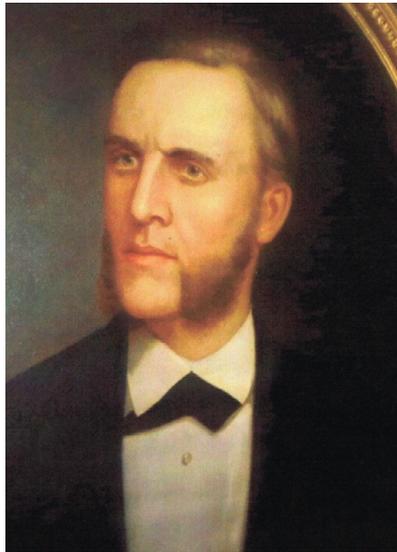
Reading was a city where investors and entrepreneurs like Charles Rick and his family could make a name for themselves. With the arrival of the Ricks, as well as the railroad in mid 1800's, Reading was at the cusp of an industrial boom, and the 6th Ward was a shining example with the help of the Rick family. It was here in the 6th ward where they settled in, buying properties for housing and business development. During the late 19th and 20th Centuries, under the Rick family, the 6th Ward thrived with businesses like the Reading Butt Works and the Rick Bros. Hardware Co.

In 1869, a local newspaper had this to say about the area: "We predict that the portion of the Sixth Ward known as 'Ricktown' will some day become one of the most beautiful and thriving sections of our city".

" We predict that
the portion of
the Sixth Ward
known as

Ricktown

will some day
become one
of the most
beautiful and
thriving sections
of our city"



John Rick (1839 -1900)



James Rick (1844 -1925)



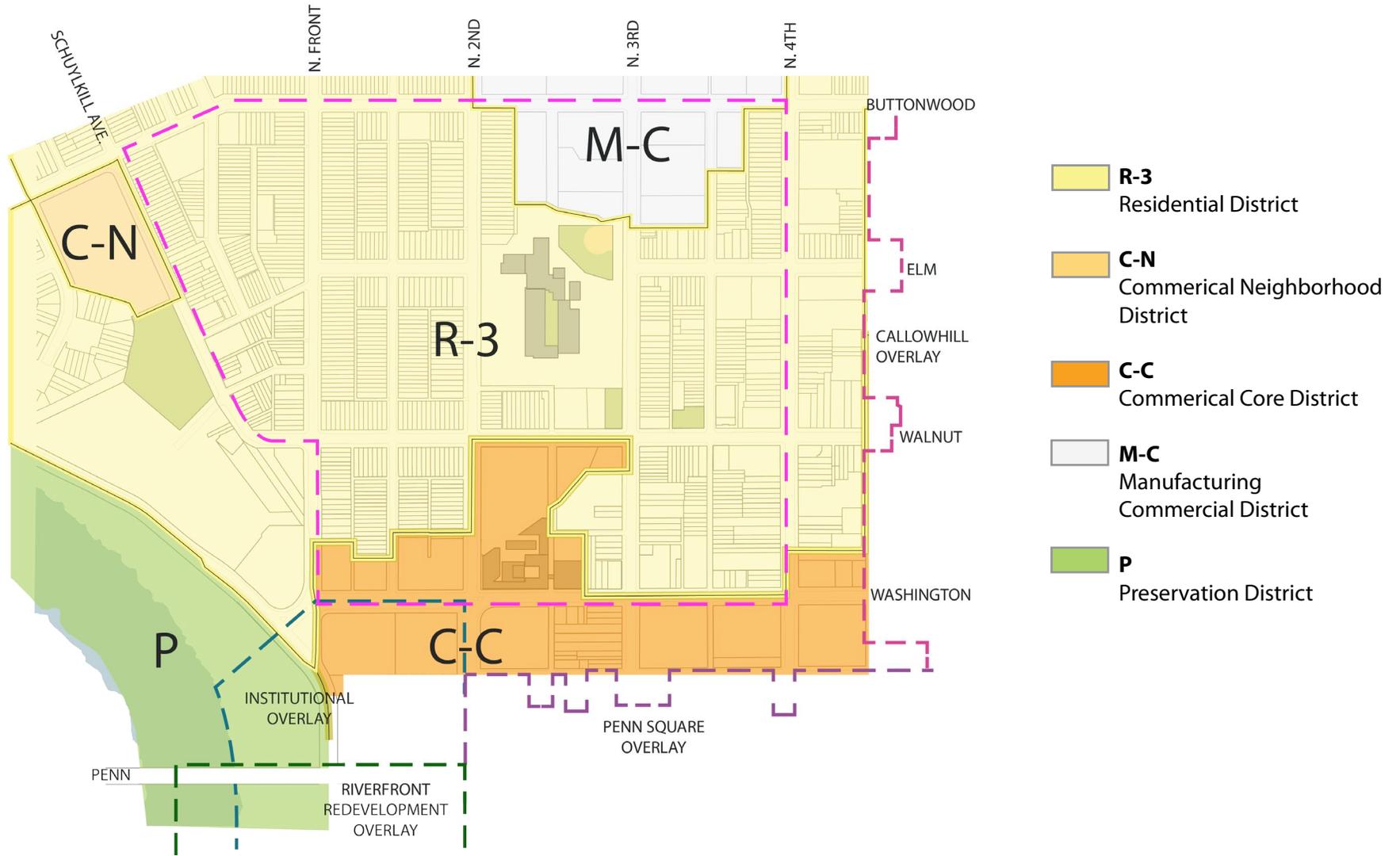
RICKTOWN BOUNDARIES

The Ricktown Arts District is strategically located north of Penn Street Corridor, east of the Schuylkill River, and southwest of the thriving Centre Park Community. The Ricktown boundaries run from Schuylkill Avenue to North 4th Street and from Washington to Buttonwood Street. This area contains approximately 990 properties.



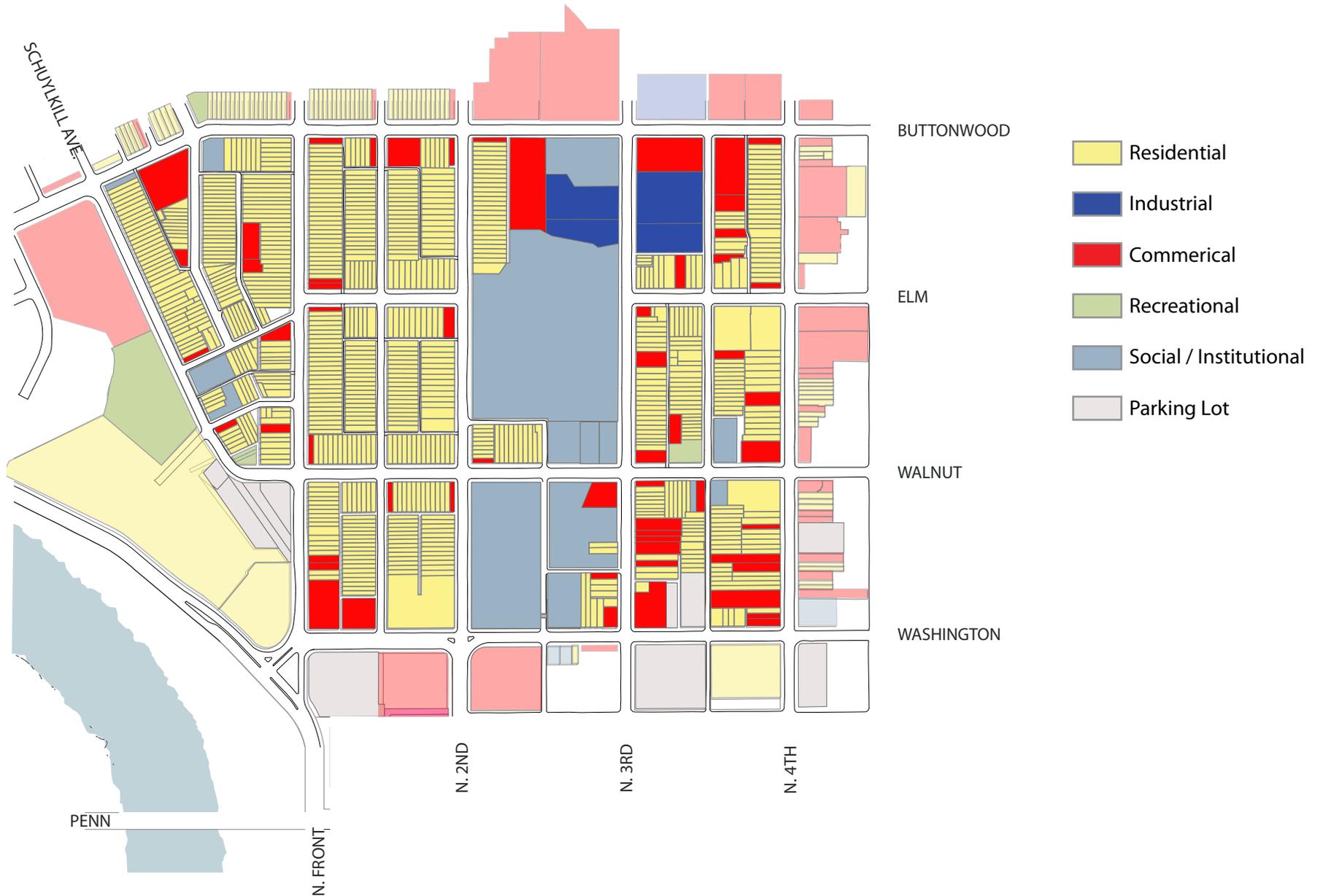
EXISTING ZONING

The Ricktown Arts District is comprised of three different zoning districts. The residential district is the largest in area, while manufacturing towards the north and the commercial core district at the south just begin to cross the boundary lines of Ricktown. Two other zoning districts to keep in mind are the preservation district as well as the commercial neighborhood district just west of Schuylkill Ave. In both districts natural and recreational amenities such as parks, playgrounds and waterfront lookouts are within walking distance for Ricktown residents.



LAND USE

Residential properties blanket most of the Ricktown neighborhood, while several social and institutional properties are located near its center. Commercial, parking, and some industrial and recreational properties are located along the boundaries, circling any social or institutional properties located in Ricktown.



BLIGHTED & VACANT PROPERTIES

Below are highlighted properties that have been certified as blighted or vacant by the City of Reading's Blighted Property Review Committee as of July 22, 2011. There are a total of **45** of these properties within the Ricktown boundaries. Blue represents vacant lots that have the potential for future development. There are approximately **23** vacant lots and **22** buildings certified as blighted.



STREETSCAPE

Existing streetscape conditions in Ricktown range from poor to good condition. Poor to moderate conditions with regards to sidewalks and green-scape may involve any of the following issues or a combination of the following: lack of greenery, overgrown greenery, broken sidewalks, protruding gutters, etc.



STREETSCAPE

Existing lighting conditions range from poor to moderate and may include; inadequate lighting, broken lighting, and/ or no lighting.



RICKTOWN COMMUNITY ASSETS

Depicted below are a number of existing assets in and around the Ricktown area.



1 Lauer's Park Elementary School

2 Elk's Club

3 Olivets Boys & Girls Club
PAL Center for the Performing Arts
Playground

4 GoggleWorks Center for the Arts
Berks Arts Council

5 GoggleWorks Apartments

6 IMAX Theatre

7 Reading Area Community College
Miller Center for the Arts

8 Reading Area Community College
Schmidt Training & Technology Center

9 Barbeys Playground

10 Garden of Good Thoughts

11 Eunie's Garden

12 Union Baptist Church

13 Church of God

14 Jehovah's Witness

15 Church of Zion

16 Schuylkill River

LAUER'S PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lauer's Park Elementary School, situated directly in the center of Ricktown, is considered a model school by many, and is certainly the pride of the neighborhood. Despite being in one of the City's most economically disadvantaged areas, the school boasts some of the City's highest standardized test scores.

In addition to academic excellence, Lauer's Park prides itself on building an environment for students that cultivates creativity. Walking the halls and exterior of the school exposes one to several artistic, agricultural, and educational features. The hallways are filled with murals, and often times a gallery of fine art on loan from one of the school's most devoted benefactors is even displayed for students' arts education enhancement.

The school also features its own baseball stadium named after the school's long-time Principal, Gordon Hoodak, whose dream of building the stadium finally came to fruition in 2006. The stadium was mainly funded by Baseballtown Charities, a nonprofit founded to keep baseball alive in Reading so young people can benefit from the many life lessons the game teaches.

Lauer's Park also opens its doors for public meetings, and parents stay actively involved in school and community activities using Lauer's Park as a headquarters.

ELKS LODGE

Quite befitting of an arts district that also aims to celebrate the history and culture of the community, Berks Lodge # 47 of the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World (IBPOEW) is a notable asset. It stands as a testament to the area's rich African-American heritage, and is the only Black Elks Lodge in the County.

The nationally recognized Elks organization is rooted in the arts. The Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks (BPOE) was born in New York City in 1868. At that time, the city's laws prevented public establishments from being open on Sundays. A group of actors and other entertainers wanted to be able to continue their regular social gatherings on Sundays and started the "Jolly Clarks" as a result.

Initially the group met purely to socialize, but as members began to face personal dilemmas and tribulation, the organizers of the club began to see their mission as forming fraternal bonds and assisting members with life situations. They soon chose the Elk as a symbol of their commitment to benevolence and protection.

However, as African-Americans were denied admittance to the original Elks organization, the formation of an "Improved Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks of the World" was initiated by B.F. Howard and Arthur J. Riggs, a Pullman Porter in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1898. Subsequently, the "Daughters" of the IBPOEW was also formed.

Lodge #47 is located at 237 Walnut Street, in the heart of the district within a Victorian Era (1860-1900) second empire style building that has retained its historic architectural integrity, though it is in need of some repairs.

Many of its members have also grown up in the immediate area and continue to stay active within the community and fulfill the mission of the IBPOEW today.



Lauers Park Elementary School



Gordon Hoodok Stadium



Elks Lodge

OLIVET BOYS & GIRLS CLUB , PAL CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The Olivet Boys and Girls Club of Reading and Berks County is part of the original group of 50 organizations that banded together in 1898 to form the Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

The PAL unit of the Olivet, formerly the Police Athletic League (PAL), and the PAL Center for the Arts are undoubtedly among the biggest arts, cultural, and educational assets of the neighborhood and the City. Since opening in November of 2000, PAL and the Center for the Arts have served thousands of local youth.

Students attending PAL unit's after-school and summer programs participate in activities centered around character and leadership development, education and career development, health and life skills training, as well as the arts.

The PAL's Mentoring and the Arts Program has exposed hundreds of students to the visual arts by combining mentoring with group art activities such as the creation of murals.

The PAL Center for the Arts has given young people the opportunity to experience the performing arts. They provide dance classes, guitar and piano lessons, and drama classes at their location on 328 Walnut Street. Through a partnership with the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, they are also able to provide digital music classes at the GoggleWorks.

In addition, they hold an annual summer theater camp culminating in a live musical theater performance put on by local youth and free to the public to attend. The theater camp has put on productions such as Dream Girls, The Lion King, and Alice in Wonderland.

The Olivet Boys and Girls Club was provided Community Development Block Grant funding from the City to install a playground in the 200 block of Walnut St. The playground is meant to accommodate younger children and includes a small play set and pavilion. Though the public has had difficulty accessing it, the Olivet has begun to create a process to ensure public access to the space and minimize liability.

GOGGLEWORKS CENTER FOR THE ARTS

In 2005, City and community leadership seized an opportunity to make a targeted economic investment in the arts when one of downtown's last large manufacturing facilities closed its doors. Through a combination of grants, loans, and private investment, a former safety-goggle factory building was reborn as the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts.

The mission of the GoggleWorks is to nurture the arts, foster creativity, promote education, and enrich the community. In the short time since it opened, the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts has become a true anchor for the arts in the City and Greater Reading, hosting a multitude of events and arts education opportunities.

The GoggleWorks accommodates practicing artists in all types of media, dance and music studios, glass-blowing, wood-working, darkroom facilities, ceramics and jewelry studios, and public galleries. It also houses a film theater, café, gift shop, classrooms and offices for local community and nonprofit organizations.

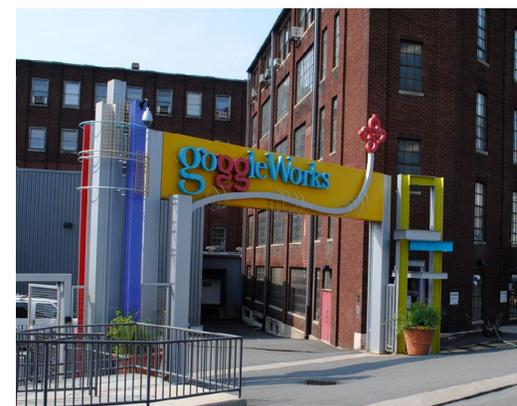
In an effort to fulfill its mission, the GoggleWorks also offers scholarship opportunities to area youth who would like to take classes there.



Olivet Boys and Girls Club



PAL Center for the Arts



GoggleWorks Center for the Arts

BERKS ARTS COUNCIL

The offices for the Berks Arts Council, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, are housed within the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts. Since its inception in 1969, the Berks Arts Council has strived to encourage and promote all art forms, to develop an appreciation of the arts and to enrich and enhance the quality of life through presentation, education and collaborations with other arts organizations.

They have undertaken the production of several annual events including the Berks Jazz Fest, Bandshell Concert Series, Greater Reading Film Festival, and the Pagoda Awards. In its 21st year as of 2011, Berks Jazz Fest hosts more than 50,000 people at 130 performances over 10 days. Thousands attend the Bandshell Concert series that offers free live music at City park on Friday nights throughout July. Such cultural events have lured the Greater Reading community back into downtown areas and contributed clear, substantial economic benefit to the city's hotels, restaurants and performance venues.

The Berks Arts Council also administers the Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts' re-granting program and provides other artists' services.

ENTERTAINMENT SQUARE

Entertainment Square is comprised of the GoggleWorks, the Reading Movies 11 and IMAX Theatre, the Miller Center for the Arts and a parking garage along Washington and Second Streets that sits above storefront and restaurant space. The mixed use GoggleWorks Apartment building is also under construction located at this intersection.

Positioned directly adjacent to the City's main gateway and downtown, the area is poised to draw investment, tourism, and a great deal of economic development opportunities. It will undoubtedly become the nucleus for arts and cultural activities while contributing to the overall development of the Ricktown Arts District, the City, and Greater Reading.



Berks Arts Council - GoggleWorks



IMAX Theatre



GoggleWorks Apartments
Under Construction

READING AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: Miller Center and Schmidt Training & Technology Center

Reading Area Community College (RACC) opened its doors in 1971, and has been expanding ever since. RACC is an accredited, comprehensive, open-enrollment education institution that provides Associate degrees in addition to offering certificate and diploma programs. Two of the campus buildings are located adjacent to Ricktown: the Miller Center for the Arts and the Schmidt Training and Technology Center.

Since its opening in 2006, RACC's Miller Center for the Arts has added much to the City of Reading's cultural landscape. The Miller Center's 509-seat theatre offers an array of performing arts entertainment from modern dance to improvisational comedy and children's programming. Along with performances, the Miller Center also hosts community events and is available to the public for rental.

The Schmidt Training and Technology Center provides customized training programs. Courses are offered under multiple branches of learning including manufacturing technology, electrical work, information technology, water treatment, and workforce development. Seminars and short-format courses are also offered throughout the year.

BARBEY'S PLAYGROUND

Barbey's Playground serves as the major recreation hub for the district. It is one of the City's largest and most frequently used playgrounds. Its location on one of the City's most frequently travelled roads, Schuylkill Avenue, adds to its importance.

Positioned along one of the City's major entrance ways from West Reading, the playground serves as a prominent landmark for area residents and others travelling to Entertainment Square and downtown Reading.

Its location has added to the magnitude to which it is essential to make sure Barbey's is well-maintained and has a positive visual impact on the district. With that in mind, many improvements have already been made to the playground with many more to come. In June of 2011, half of the playground was renovated by the Gilmore/Henne Community Fund of the Berks County Community Foundation while the second half of the playground is set to be renovated in November of 2011 with funds from the City's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation.

Replacement of playground equipment, landscape improvements, and implementation of "Safety by Design" techniques were all included in renovation plans.



Miller Center for the Arts



Schmidt Training & Technology Center



Barbey's Playground

RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS

Churches play an important role in augmenting social, economic, and other services that governments have a limited ability to provide to the community. They continue to be a valuable asset in every community, but have played and continue to play a distinctive role in the Ricktown area.

Ricktown is fortunate to have four houses of worship located within the vicinity: the **Jehovah's Witness Temple, Zion Baptist Church, Church of God and Union Baptist Church**. Though the neighborhood's current population is primarily of Latino descent, the existence of two Baptist churches with largely African-American congregations attests to the history of the neighborhood and its sizeable African-American population. The churches continue to be a place for socialization and fellowship in addition to religious worship.

Union Baptist Church has played a key role in the development of the community through its efforts in creating and running a community center, **Union Early Learning Center**. The Union Early Learning Center provides an educational environment and school readiness activities for children from the ages of two to five years old. It is open year-round. The church also serves as a meeting place for resident neighborhood organizations.



Church of God



Union Community Center

SCHUYLKILL RIVER

The Schuylkill River served as a transportation vehicle for Reading's early development. Many businesses throughout the county were located along the river banks and utilized the benefits of the water for power generation and other industrial needs. Flat-bottom boats coupled with the canal system made it possible to navigate the river and supply numerous goods to Philadelphia. After the turn of the 19th century, the steam railroad followed the path of river, as the manufacturing continued to grow in Reading.

The river today is primarily used for recreational purposes. Several initiatives, including Riverview at Reading, Riverplace, Berks County Conservation and Walk Bike Berks have all played a vital role in various efforts to create a vibrant and active river area. Several of these plans are underway to develop a system of bicycling and walking trails along the river.



Schuylkill River



Path to River from Barbeys Playground



Railroad along River

Quality of Life

The City of Reading's, Comprehensive Plan 2000 addresses Quality of Life values, a non-monetary index of social and economic well-being. These intangible ideals are what make a community a desirable place to live, work and visit. Recreation, streetscape, cleanliness, cultural resources, historic districts, security, noise, multiculturalism and community pride are the topics listed in the Comprehensive Plan 2000 and are based on input from city residents.

Berks County's Vision 2020 Plan encourages compact mixed-use communities to promote quality of life opportunities, pedestrian friendly design and alternative means of transportation. It further suggests livable communities should provide for the everyday needs of the residents, promote a sense of community, and respect the natural, historic and cultural heritage of the area.

Recognizing the importance of quality of life issues, the City of Reading implemented a new program with the Property Maintenance and Inspection Division of the city issuing tickets for violations of the City's Quality of Life Ordinance. The program is primarily focused on trash and waste problems and currently carries a fine of \$25.00 for any of the 19 offenses. Ticketing includes items such as: accumulation of rubbish or garbage, high weeds, grass or plant growth and motor vehicles as it pertains to unregistered, un-inspected or inoperative vehicles. Since its inception, the program has issued approximately 1,500 tickets in the 6th Ward, an area slightly larger than the Ricktown Arts District.

The City of Reading has a Graffiti Abatement Program. The Graffiti Abatement Program is run by the City of Reading. The program is staffed by one full time employee, two part time employees as well as community service and volunteers. Graffiti is reported to the city via city personnel, citizens and through the call center. Youth groups and citizen volunteers are recruited to assist in the graffiti removal process, and weekly updates are available to verify removals.

The Reading Downtown Improvement District Authority (DID) is providing clean & safe operations in a part of the Ricktown Arts District. The current DID coverage area is Front Street to Madison Avenue, Washington Street to Walnut Street. This effort is being funded by a grant from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and operations began in April of 2011. From April 2011 to July 2011 the following actions have been accomplished: removal of 602 bags of trash, removal of 92 graffiti tags and 35 blocks of weeds have been abated.

Trash has been an ongoing problem in downtown Reading. In addition to DID trash removal and volunteer clean-ups, the City of Reading has placed 24 trash receptacles in the vicinity of the Ricktown Arts District. The Wood-to-Wonderful, CAN IT (Clean A Neighborhood In Town) project is a grass roots litter abatement project, and the receptacles are maintained by property owners and concerned citizens.

Neighborhood Demographic Criteria

Geographical Description

The Ricktown Arts District project area and the 6th Ward Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area is in census tracts 1, 12, 13, and 25 and encompass seven block groups, and 68 individual census blocks. Census tract blocks within and adjoining the Ricktown project area were included in census data collection. Nine of the 68 census blocks do not have any residential housing units within them. There are a total of 3,877 people living within the boundaries of the 68 individual Census Tract Blocks identified as part of the Ricktown project area. The most densely populated part of the target area falls within Census Tract 12, Block Groups one and two.

Population Race/Ethnicity Information

The 6th Ward neighborhood has long been celebrated as culturally diverse and noteworthy as one of the City's two historically African-American neighborhoods. Originally settled by German and Italian immigrants, the area's African American population grew over time and reached its peak in the mid-to-late 20th century.

Though the ethnic demographics of the 6th Ward have changed significantly over the past few decades along with the rest of the City, the 6th Ward neighborhood remains the area with the largest African-American population in Reading. Over 20 percent of the area's population is Black or African-American according to 2010 Census information, in comparison with only 13.2 percent of the total population of the City of Reading. However, much like the rest of the city, the 6th Ward's population currently consists primarily of Latino residents of various races. According to 2010 census information, over half of the City's Latino population is of Puerto Rican descent. The same is likely true within the 6th Ward's Hispanic/Latino population.

The array of ethnicities in the 6th Ward today has contributed significantly to a desire among residents to unite as a community and promote cultural awareness and celebrate diversity and individual cultures. This is part of the mission of the newly formed 6th Ward Neighborhood Association, a group of residents working to organize projects and events focused on community improvement, developing resident leadership, and creating neighborhood unity.

2010 Census Data	Revitalization Area		City of Reading	
Total Population	3,887	100%	88,082	100%
White	1,373	35.3%	42,617	48.4 %
Hispanic/Latino (Of Any Race)	2,677	68.9%	51,230	58.2%
Black/African-American	859	22.1%	11,624	13.2%
American Indian/Alaska Native	42	.01%	794	.9%
Asian	31	.008%	1,039	1.2%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0%	72	.1%
Some Other Race	1,358	34.9%	26,538	30.1%
Two or More Races	223	5.7%	5,398	6.1%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Neighborhood Demographic Criteria continued...

Housing Characteristics

Housing information from the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau reveals that 16.3% of the total 1,427 units in the target area are vacant, and that the amount of rental units greatly surpasses that of owner-occupied units. Indeed, the 6th Ward, much like the rest of the City, has a rather large surplus of rental units. However, within the target area, it is the existence of a few large apartment complexes and high-rises that accounts for such a large disproportion of 36.4% owner-occupied units to 63.6% rental units.

If the large complexes were excluded from the data, the proportion of rental to owner-occupied units would look similar to that of the rest of the City, with 44.3% of units being owner-occupied and 55.7% being rental units.

This information is important to note as there are a few blocks within the target area that have a relatively large homeownership rate and a very stable population of residents who have resided in the neighborhood for a number of years. An informal survey of neighborhood residents uncovered that many of the residences have been occupied by members of the same family for many generations. This seems particularly true among the neighborhood's African-American families.

On the contrary, a turnover rate of nearly 80 percent annually at Lauer's Park Elementary School, situated in the center of the district, shows that there is still much transience in the neighborhood. This contributes to a less stable community overall.

2010 Census Data	Revitalization Area	City of Reading
Total Housing Units	1,427	35,150
Occupied Units	83.7%	89.2%
Vacant Units	16.3%	10.8%
Owner-Occupied	36.4%	42.7%
Renter-Occupied	63.6%	57.3%
Rental Vacancy Rate	-	4.3%
Homeowner Vacancy Rate	-	3.5%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Neighborhood Demographic Criteria continued...

Educational Attainment

Though quite a number of very well educated individuals have emerged as 6th Ward community leaders, the amount of poverty that exists in this particular neighborhood can be attributed in part to a lack of education among residents. Other major, and perhaps more significant factors include the overall state of the economy and the flight of many manufacturing and blue-collar jobs from the city of Reading.

Nonetheless, a look at the educational attainment among residents is important.

As is the case with economic information, educational attainment information was not available from the 2010 U.S. Census, nor was information available at the individual Census Block level, so data was gathered from the American Community Survey at the Census Tract level in and around the Ricktown area.

Figures averaged at the Census Tract level are comparable to levels of educational attainment city-wide, and it is probably reasonable to generalize the information collected about the areas in and around the Ricktown District to pertain to the 6th Ward as a whole.

On average, nearly 17% of residents have attained less than a 9th grade education. Combined with the average percentage of people attending high school without earning a diploma, an average of 43.7% of the area's population has not attained a high school diploma or GED. Only about 33% percent of people have graduated high school or earned a GED, and only about 23% have gone on to college with a far less number of individuals actually earning an Associate's, Bachelor's, graduate, or professional degree.

Population 25 Years and Over	Census Tract 1	Census Tract 12	Census Tract 13	Census Tract 25	RAD Average	City of Reading
Less Than 9th Grade	22.5%	17.6%	6.7%	19.9%	16.7%	17.1%
9th-12th, no diploma	26.5%	22.5%	37.8%	21.1%	27.0%	19.5%
High School Grad or GED	29.2%	35.5%	33.0%	34.5%	33.1%	38.9%
Some College, No Degree	15.1%	11.4%	15.0%	14.1%	13.9%	14.0%
Associate's Degree	1.0%	3.4%	2.8%	4.8%	3.0%	3.0%
Bachelor's Degree	4.7%	7.9%	2.4%	4.3%	4.8%	5.6%
Graduate of Professional Degree	1.0%	1.8%	2.4%	1.3%	1.6%	1.9%

Source: 2005-2009 American Community Survey

Neighborhood Demographic Criteria continued...

Economic Characteristics

The City of Reading is without a doubt one of the poorest cities in the nation. It has recently been declared the poorest city in the United States with a population over 65,000, having the highest percentage of its population living below poverty level.

The 6th Ward is one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the city. Data collected from the Census and 2005-2009 American Community Survey only provide economic information at the Census Tract and Census Block Group level. Therefore, the data takes into account the economic state of three times the amount of people living in the target area. However, given the demographics of the city as a whole and the surrounding area, it is reasonable to assume that the figures may be able to be generalized to the 6th Ward target area as a whole.

The data collected shows an average unemployment rate of about 10.5 % in the combined census tract block groups in and around the Ricktown District. It also shows that in and around the area, an average of about 81% of individuals have a low-to-moderate level of income and an average of about 50% of people live below poverty level. These are startling figures that attest to the need to target revitalization efforts and resources in this area.

Geography	Total Population	Unemployed (ACS)	Low-Mod Income (2000 Census)	Below Poverty Level (ACS)
City of Reading	88,082	11.5%	69.3%	41.3%
Census Tract 1	1919	9.9%	87.3%	47.2%
Census Tract 1, Block Group 4	990		84.6%	
Census Tract 1, Block Group 5	929		89.9%	
Census Tract 12	1856	4.1%	75.9%	39.2%
Census Tract 12, Block Group 1	1160		73.8%	
Census Tract 12, Block Group 2	696		78.0%	
Census Tract 13	2913	18.5%	76.2%	57.1%
Census Tract 13, Block Group 1	1146		65.8%	
Census Tract 13, Block Group 2	1003		74.6%	
Census Tract 13, Block Group 3	764		88.2%	
Census Tract 25	2128	9.3%	83.25%	54.6%
Census Tract 25, Block Group 1	677		86.6%	
Census Tract 25, Block Group 3	1451		79.9%	

Based on 2005-2009 American Community Survey Estimates and the 2000 Census



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The Ricktown Arts District and revitalization initiative has been strengthened significantly by an exceptionally thoroughgoing community engagement process. As a result, the master plan will be a living document that is a culmination of thoughts and ideas gathered from various community stakeholders since the project's inception.

Opportunities for engagement were designed and presented by various individuals in a range of formats to reach a broad knowledge base. Those engaged in the process included local government officials, representatives of non-profit and human service agencies, artists practicing in a variety of disciplines, and community residents.

This model for community engagement may be considered for use by others in community planning or project design.

- S.W.O.T Analysis
- Focus Group
- Design Charrette
- Artist Outreach
- Theater Outreach

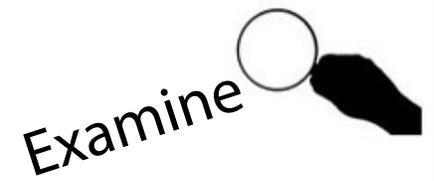
The process of community engagement for the Ricktown Arts District project can be seen as one of due diligence. It is clear that there is no one particular method for engaging individuals or organizations that works best. This is particularly true when it comes to involving community residents in the planning process. However, the more exhaustive and varied the methods of outreach are, the better the chance that community improvement plans will satisfy the desires and needs of all stakeholders.

“The Master Plan will be a living document that is a **culmination of thoughts** and ideas gathered from various community stakeholders since the projects inception”

S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

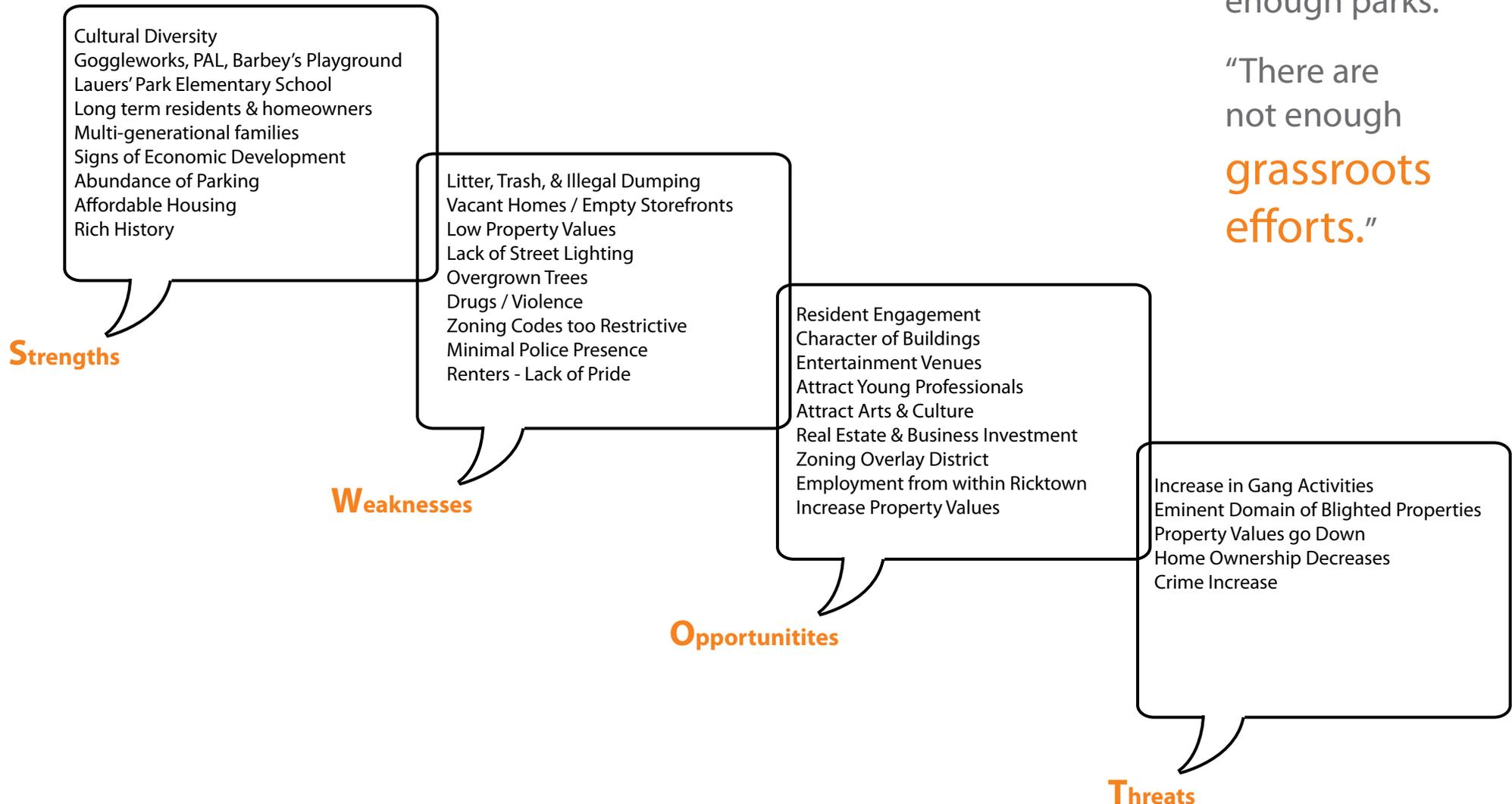
The facilitator led groups of residents of the proposed project area through an analysis of their particular neighborhood's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The exercise was designed to allow residents to express current concerns about their neighborhood while focusing on the possibilities for improvement and a better quality of life.

Four separate sessions were conducted with up to 30 neighborhood residents attending each one. Each of the sessions lasted over two hours with similar ideas being presented by residents each time, allowing facilitators and researchers to identify many recurring opinions to be considered in planning.



"The area is **not kid friendly** there are not enough parks."

"There are not enough **grassroots efforts.**"



FOCUS GROUP

Dr. William Davis, Jr. designed and conducted a qualitative research study of residents' feelings about their neighborhood in general and about the proposed Ricktown project in particular.

Participants were asked a series of five questions:

1. What have you heard about Ricktown and from whom?
2. What concerns do you have about the Ricktown project?
3. What hopes do you have for the project?
4. If resources were not an issue, what improvements would you like to implement in the 6th Ward?
5. If the Mayor himself called to ask your opinion about how to make sure the Ricktown project succeeds, what would you suggest?

A process of coding respondent comments enabled the researcher to develop themes from which recommendations were made to Ricktown project planners for consideration in the Master Plan.

An unanticipated, but assuredly positive, by-product of this kind of engagement was that it spurred further community engagement among residents which has been manifested into action.

To date, residents have been meeting regularly and working to organize a Neighborhood Association through which resident-driven community improvement projects, both apart and in conjunction with the Ricktown Arts District project, may be launched.

See attached appendix for document prepared by Dr. William Davis



“I hear they are going to knock down all the houses. I need to know exactly what’s going on I live there.

I have a **right to know.**”

“With this project we know that the **police patrol** aspect will come.”

CHARRETTE

A charrette can be referred to simply as a “Community Planning Workshop” that consists of an intense period of design activity. It generally takes place in an urban-planning context and brings all decision makers together for a compressed period of time.

What a Charrette Does:

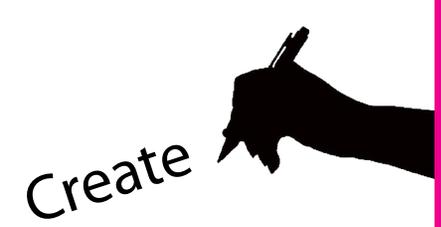
- Connects the talents and energies of all interested parties (stakeholders) to create a reasonable plan that represents transformative community change.
- Brings about realistic strategies and designs for the project area.
- Creates an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition.
- Involves anyone (stakeholders) who might approve, build, use, or even attempt to block the project.

Months of educational outreach about the project was followed by a community planning workshop or design charrette. All who had participated in any prior outreach sessions, including focus groups and SWOT analysis sessions, were invited to attend a half-day design session. Among attendees were officials from the Zoning, Codes, Planning, Police, and Community Development Department of the City of Reading, the Executive Directors of several local non-profits, several artists, and community residents.

Two sessions were held. One was on the afternoon of Friday, April 15th, 2011, and the other was held on the morning of Saturday, April 16th. Between the two sessions there was approximately nine hours of collaborative design time with a total of 55 charrette participants on Friday and another 40 charrette participants that came Saturday.

After the group collaborated on various concepts, the architect reviewed the ideas and provided drawings and documents as a feedback vehicle, thus summarizing key outcomes of the two work sessions.

The charrette participants regrouped weeks later to review the drawings and documentation for accuracy of prior discussions. This process of design and feedback contributed significantly to the architect’s ability to produce an executive summary and a master plan that accurately reflects the ideas presented by various community stakeholders.



CHARRETTE

Example of a group's vision that focused on Economic Development in Ricktown. The group believes the development should be phased. They also feel that commercial development should include a healthy grocery store (ex. Trader Joe's), coffee shops & flea markets. Art development should include a home for the theatre group, development of GoggleWorks 2, artist housing and the marketing of the GoggleWorks.



CHARRETTE

Example of a group vision that focused on Housing & Economic Development in Ricktown. The group believes the development should expand to include more of the cultural, commercial and entertainment area on Cherry Street & Penn Street. The project should also connect to the river where an amphitheater could be placed. Art should be placed on the corners of Ricktown. There should be an organization of outdoor events & block parties. They also felt that commercial development should include bike rentals, skating rinks, night life, restaurant / coffee shops, comedy club, culinary arts school at RACC, a swimming pool, gym, and a community center.





HOUSING

Synthesis of Data

Housing in the Ricktown Arts District currently consists primarily of single-family units. Most are narrow row homes with a few notable exceptions spread throughout the area. Among the small amount of multi-unit complexes is the BookBindery Apartments at 4th and Walnut Streets, the Elm View Apartments at 4th and Elm Streets, and the Reading Elderly High Rise at 100 N. Front Street.

Currently under construction, the area will soon include the GoggleWorks Apartments. The luxury six-story apartment complex will feature 59 units close to prominent area amenities such as the IMAX theatre, the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, the Miller Center, as well as current and anticipated Entertainment Square restaurants and shops. A total of 12 of the apartments will be reserved as affordable housing for low- to- moderate income families.

While a few new properties with more modern architectural characteristics are expected to be developed, much of the targeted investment in housing will involve the area's older buildings and historic architecture. Much of the area's housing stock is built in the Federal, Queen Anne, or Reading German "Stick" style. However, despite the inherently distinguished architectural style of the homes in the area, many of these structures remain in disrepair due to the limited availability of resources for residents to fund the upkeep of their properties.

The area has 22 properties on the certified blighted list and 23 vacant lots that often times are the result of dilapidated structures having to be demolished. The City's criteria for blight can be found in Appendix A. A recent assessment of each of the properties' physical condition taken by City personnel and project planners finds about 20 percent of the properties to be in "above average" or good condition, about 43 percent to be in "average" condition, while about 26 percent of structures are in "below average," and nearly 10 percent can be described as in poor condition. A property in poor condition can be described as one that appears to have serious structural issues, unsightly façade characteristics, and may be boarded up, vacant, or blighted.



Condition	Description	Amount
Good	Well-maintained with little façade work needed.	7.5 %
Above Average	Well-maintained with some small façade work such as painting needed.	13%
Average	Typical City property with some painting and other repairs to façade needed.	43%
Below Average	Needs much façade work and maintenance to appear in good condition.	26.5%
Poor	Left unmaintained for years that needs significant improvement.	9%
Candidate for Demolition	The amount of money it would cost to bring it to good condition would outweigh the value of the home or structure.	1%



HOUSING

Recommendations

In order to address deplorable property conditions, a number of steps must be taken. They start with the public sector and many public resources. The end result will be a targeted impact on the housing stock that increases property values, stabilizes the neighborhood by increasing current residents' desire to stay in the area, and spurs private investment in business, real estate and other types of development. This plan for targeted investment will align with the City's Act 47 Recovery Plan and complement efforts targeting other areas of the City such as the nearby Centre Park Historic District neighborhood.

Housing improvement will be conducted in phases over a 5-10 year period. In phase one, the housing improvement component of the project will be supported by grant programs and other investments from a number of non-profit sources and City Community Development funds.

Partners in housing revitalization efforts will include Habitat for Humanity, Our City Reading (OCR), Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks (NHS), the Reading Housing Authority, the Reading Redevelopment Authority, and the Berks Redevelopment Authority. Each organization brings an exclusive expertise to the project and has agreed to adopt specific projects within their respective organizational plans.

These contributions will be memorialized through partnership agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) and the formation of a Ricktown Housing Coalition. The coalition will be formed under the Ricktown Community-Based Development Organization (CBDO), whose sole mission will be to implement a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approved Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA) plan. The NRSA plan and the Ricktown Arts District Master Plan will be one in the same. The implementation of the plan will rely on partnership development, project management, and administration put into action by the CBDO under Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS) of Greater Berks.

HOUSING

Phasing Diagram for Housing Organizations





ARTIST OUTREACH

In a meeting with local area artists, questions were posed regarding attracting artists to move into the Reading area, types of housing and other facilities needed and what variety of streetscape art would be appropriate for the area.

Affordable housing was said to be an enormous potential attraction based on the ebb and flow of an artist's income. A range for rental from \$500 to \$1000 per month was stated as affordable. Local artists seek not only rental but homeownership opportunities as well. Rent-to-own options and incentives to purchase homes were requested. A very large concern was the flexibility of customizing a space to fit artist needs, especially in a rental situation.

Artists saw the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts as the activity hub where existing artists could engage with visitors and sell their art. However, a consensus emerged that downtown Reading needs to have a "cool and hip" vibe to attract people into the city in order for the GoggleWorks to remain successful. This would require a diverse and friendly atmosphere as well as walkability. Other features should include a local neighborhood atmosphere "as created in the TV version of Cheers," antiques stores, small scale music venues, book signings, coffee shops and additional activities contributing to a social atmosphere.

Amenities in the areas were considered limited and artists believe that the area requires additional facilities. The need for an art supply store, sound proof rehearsal space and a 24-hour express shipping and business center were among the top requests.

In addition, a place for people to rest was popular. The GoggleWorks Center for the Arts should have bench seating at the main entrance and Washington Street side for students waiting for classes, and people waiting for the movie theater. The surrounding area needs benches for young and old to create a gravitational pull of its own. Seating will provide places to view the creative projects that hopefully will be integrated into the landscape.

The landscape and streetscape art should include murals or mosaic tiles on corner units or empty lots. Pocket parks, flower boxes and "beautiful" landscaping were suggested to be implemented by the city with ongoing maintenance to be supplied by neighborhood residents to keep costs to a minimum. Additionally, developing a sponsorship program and having companies or individuals provide donations to beautify an area was recommended. Artists could also be supplied incentives to paint and create visual art to give the area an artistic feel.

"Downtown Reading needs to have a 'cool and hip' vibe to attract people into the city."

ARTIST HOUSING

Synthesis of Data

Since the completion of renovations to the old Wilson Safety Products complex in 2005, the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts has been at the forefront of a “cultural revolution” in Reading and Berks County. With dance, visual art, glass blowing, and rehearsal studio spaces, movie theatre, galleries, offices and the like, the amenities of a vibrant community art center are in place.

The area currently offers fine art and dance studios, glass blowing labs, lecture halls, movie theatres for indie flims, gallery space for exhibits, cafe’s and sizable retail space for gift shops. All of this lends itself to a viable ancillary support system, key to the economic success of the GoggleWorks. It has always been a plan of the developers of the GoggleWorks to build critical mass emanating from 2nd & Washington Streets, also known as Entertainment Square, into the 6th Ward, and the downtown area.

With the creation of the Ricktown Arts District, it is the City’s plan to expand this critical mass into the residential and commerical zones around the GoggleWorks, to encourage artists and non- artists alike to invest in properties to live, work, and prosper. A recent and nearby example of the success of such a neighborhood revitalization is the Banana Factory in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Within five years of the start-up of the Banana Factory, properties within a 3-5 block radius were occupied with thriving businesses. The Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia has also found success with inviting artists into their communities. Here the artists -in- residence comprise the Board of Directors and are “self-governing”, overseeing all operations (see appendix (e) for data).

There is precedent that art centers can exist solely on their own programming however in the case of the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts, it is necessary to look out into the immediate neighborhood for the sustainable elements to support a viable artist community. Initiatives around the country have taken flight to create incentive programs that are “artist and business friendly”. Implementing these best practices would be beneficial to the Ricktown District as well.

ARTIST HOUSING

Synthesis of Data continued...

- Cumberland & Frostburgh, MD
- Chatanooga, TN
- Covington, KY
- Evansville, IN
- Johnstown, PA
- Oil City, PA
- Paducah, KY
- Pawtucket, RI
- Rising Sun, IN

In these municipalities, a variety of tax incentives i.e., forgivable loans, grants, low interest-long term loans and other financial vehicles were offered to interested and qualified artists and businesses wanting to relocate into the designated arts district (see appendix (f) for artist incentive programs). Other artists' housing initiatives, are provided as follows:

Peekskill, NY

Our City Reading, a 501 (c) 3 Non- Government Organization, initiated research and a field trip to Peekskill, NY to investigate the possibility of:

- a) Investigating their zoning ordinance for possible adoption to govern Ricktown Art District occupancy.
- b) Inviting artists in Peekskill, NY to either relocate to Reading or open a satellite studio

An extract of the City of Peekskill, NY's zoning ordinance, (chapter 572, zoning section 575-33 c-2 central commercial district can be found in appendix (g).

Goggle-2

Our City Reading is planning to design and construct 16 to 24 "work/live" artist studio apartments on the top floors of Goggle- 2, a five story unoccupied structure east of the GoggleWorks Center for the Arts. This building is connected to the GoggleWorks at the top three floors via an enclosed walkway between the two buildings. The proposed studio apartments would to be between 1,000 to 1,500 sq. ft. in area and would be considered "loft style"apartments on the open market.

ARTIST HOUSING

Synthesis of Data continued...

3rd & Walnut St. Building

On the northeast corner of 3rd & Walnut St. at 201 N. 3rd St. there is a three story building owned by the Reading Housing Authority, it has been proposed that the building be occupied by an art gallery on the ground floor with the upper floors being converted into apartments for artists.

Recommendations:

The first recommendation would be creating a written set of guidelines and criteria that establishes the framework to define an "artist". Peekskill's Zoning Ordinance may be used as a reference for this purpose, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), who have an evaluation process used to award grants to artists. By combining the data gathered from Peekskill and the NEA, a viable and appropriate set of criteria can be developed to answer the question, "what is an artist?"

The second recommendation is to take the Peekskill Zoning Ordinance as a reference guide in developing a new document, site specific to the Ricktown Arts District, that governs the process for artists interested in purchasing, renting, leasing and otherwise occupying property within the district.

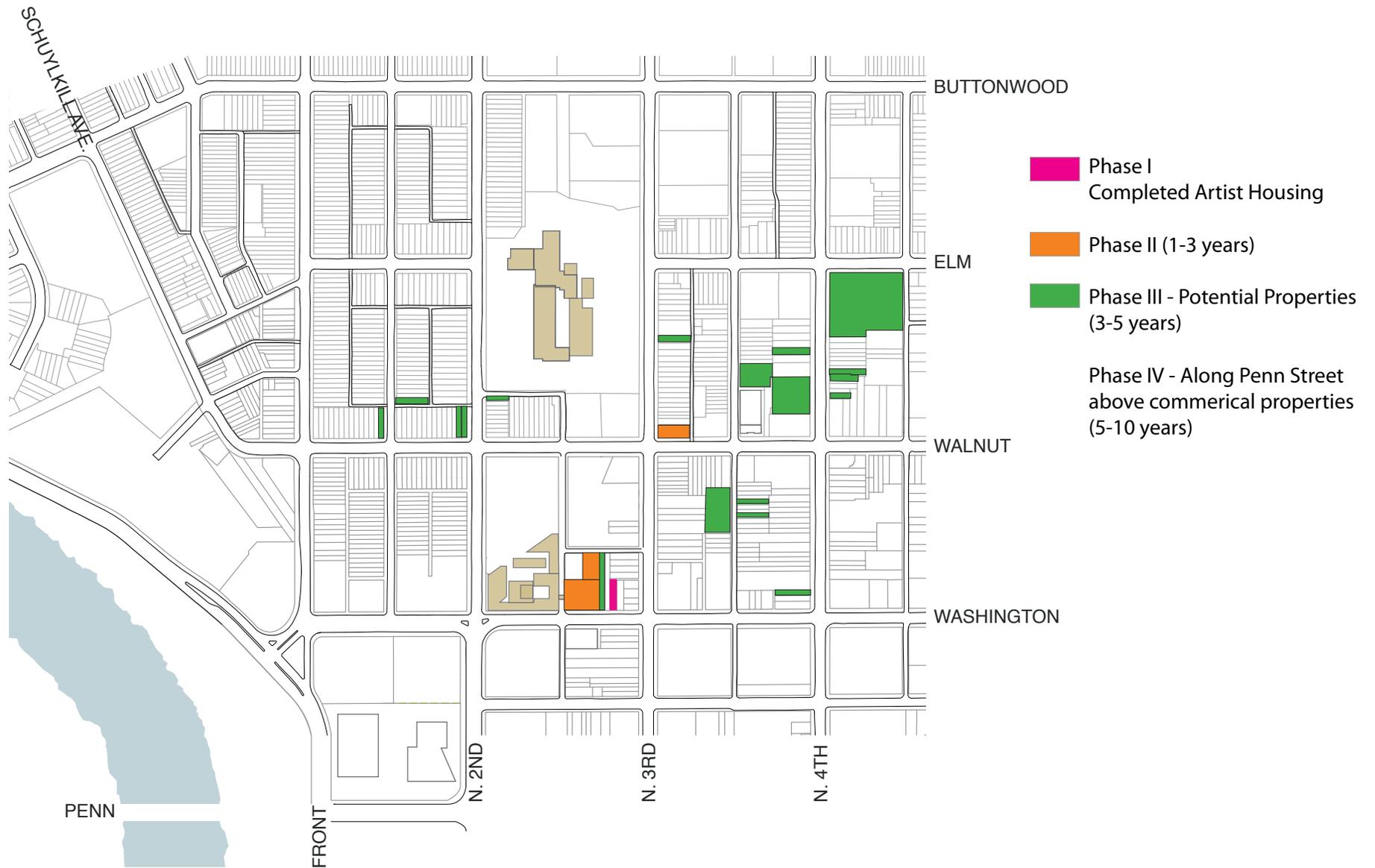
Our third and final recommendation is develop an incentive program for investment in the Ricktown Arts District in conjunction with the City of Reading and any/all of the following economic agencies :

- Reading Redevelopment Authority
- Community Development Department
- Berks Economic Partnership

This opportunity to create "out of the box" incentives to make the arts district a success is predicated on full inter-agency cooperation.

ARTIST HOUSING

Phase III recommends that any of the blighted or vacant properties shown below in green may be used to create new artist housing.



ARTIST HOUSING



Potential Site
Blighted Property: Old City Garage
Corner of N. 4th Street & Elm Street



Potential Artist Housing

Three story mixed-use building with parking below grade. The first floor would be dedicated to commercial and retail space, and the second and third stories would be dedicated to studio, single, and double bedroom apartments.



THEATRE OUTREACH

An important part of the Ricktown Arts District's planning process is that at each phase of community engagement, varying approaches were used to discover the community's capacity, size, and needs related to the performing arts.

Today three theatre groups; Reading Community Players, Reading Civic Theatre, and Genesis Theatre, are working in sub-par conditions. The individual needs of all three parties could be met through the formation of a new not-for-profit entity which would then reside under a new roof.

The theater outreach provided a time for all three groups to come together and provide this study with a needs assessment and comparative matrix, developed to assist the planning process.

Common concerns and needs shared by all three theatre groups:

- The location of theatres are limiting with regards to attracting an audience and talent
 - Indoor air quality is poor
 - Theatres run high in heating costs
 - Limited rehearsal space
 - Limited storage space
 - Limited parking space
-
- + All three theatre groups are interested in sharing a facility
 - + Interested in a black box theatre
 - + Need fly space



THEATER GROUPS

Synthesis of Data

The Reading theatre groups have an extensive longevity in performance-based arts. The combined theatre companies can describe themselves as a collective of performing artists and administrators who value teaching, collaboration and diversity in their local community.

The Reading Community Players was established in 1920. Their mission or objective was “to stage and produce plays of such nature that would not be given by commercial theater”. This theater is very diverse in performing one-act plays to full length plays.

The Reading Civic Theatre, as it is known today, started in 1894 as the Reading Civic Opera and in 1952 performed their first Broadway musical. In the past, performances have been twice a year and held at the Sovereign Performing Arts Center, a shared facility with the Reading Symphony Orchestra.

Genesis Theatre, aptly named after Saint Genesius, Patron Saint of Actors, is considered by many to be the more avant-garde theater of the three community groups. Founded in 1971 by Jane Simmon Miller and Michael O’Flaherty, the theater’s core belief is the best theatre is an experience of living and feeling, changing and growing, challenging and becoming.

Currently, there are two theaters in the Ricktown Arts District. One theatre is located in the GoogleWorks Center for the Arts and is a movie theater. The second theatre is the Miller Center for the Arts, located on the campus of the Reading Area Community College.

Recommendations

Exploration of a new home in the Ricktown Arts District for the three community theatres is the aspiration of the three non-profit groups. A new facility would require performance and rehearsal space, carpentry, lighting and audio maintenance shops, large storage capacity, a concession area, a reception area, office space, a small kitchen area, and seating for up to approximately 900 people. Three separate areas have been identified as potential sites for a new theater. One potential site is the old City Garage located at N. 4th Street & Elm Street, another is Washington between N. 3rd Street & Rose Street and finally the BARTA bus terminal currently located on N. 3rd between Penn Street & Court Street. Although this last selection is located outside the current boundaries of the Ricktown Arts District, this would serve as an excellent centralized location for a performing arts theatre when the BARTA bus terminal moves to its new location at 7th and Franklin Streets.

Recognizing that the Reading Civic Theatre does not have a permanent performance home and the cost of producing theatrical works has become prohibitively expensive in the area, a new theatre would provide opportunities for all theatre companies to further their artistic practice, perform for their communities, and connect with and develop new audiences. Combining these three well-established theater groups can create a solid foundation from which to build and expand the programs. It also promotes a downtown lifestyle that has the arts and entertainment at its core.



Proposed site
Property - N. 3rd & Penn Street

THEATRE



Existing Parking Lot
Corner of N. 3rd Street & Penn Street



Potential 900-seat Theater

RETAIL & MERCANTILE

Synthesis of Data

- Current economic conditions of Ricktown / Reading
- Current art communities that exists in Reading's surrounding area are GW, PAL.

Recommendations for Future Development

- Create a catalyst for economic development through a 'creative industry' or 'creative economy'
- Arts, culture and creativity
 - Create an identity and sense of place for Ricktown
 - Attract residents and visitors to Reading
 - Attract new community members (artists from nearby cities)
 - contribute to the skilled workforce
 - Increase quality of life of community
 - Attract young artists & professionals
- This can happen by:
 - Concentrating art focused industries in Ricktown and fostering a creative community
 - Marketing the community
 - Events that showcase the arts (visual performing etc.)
 - Link or bridge between local assets in the community to art focused activities
- Increase job creation
- Increase tax revenues
- Increase Property values
- Increase Retail Activity
- Tourism, crafts and cultural attractions
- Creating an artistic community image
- Community becomes more attractive to employees

RETAIL & MERCANTILE



1. Theatre
2. Arts-based retail
3. Mixed-Use/ Residential
4. Mixed-Use
5. Art Cafe'
6. Gallery / Performance Space
7. Manufacturing Company

RETAIL & MERCANTILE



Potential Site
Blighted Property
Corner of N. 3rd Street & Washington Street



Proposed renovation and reuse of blighted property: Mixed-use retail, art store, and office space.

ART CAFÉ



Existing Blighted Property
Corner of N. 3rd Street & Elm Street



Potential Art Café

Café program could hold a coffee shop, a space for live performances, as well as a place to buy works of art.



COMMUNITY CENTER

Ricktown has a number of amenities and services dedicated to its residents, that being said, a proposal for a new community center was offered up during the community charrettes. Many of the recommendations made by community residents stem from not being aware of the services already available within other agencies or from not being comfortable with utilizing the services provided within other agencies. So instead of trying to remedy a problem of discomfort by duplicating services, one important purpose of the new community center should be to act as a liaison between 6th Ward community residents and other agencies. In order to fulfill this role, the 6th Ward Community Center would have to employ a staff with knowledge of all agency services City and County-wide. The staff would also have to be willing and able to build a rapport with community residents and agency representatives, acting as organizers and case managers.

Purpose/Services

- To hold and organize community events, projects, and workshops geared toward increasing resident participation in community improvement, celebrate the history and cultural diversity of the 6th Ward, promoting leadership and unity among residents, and educating the community about resources available to them.
- It should be the center of informational resources pertaining to City and non-profit agency services for 6th Ward residents.
 - Have a full-time staff person “ Ricktown Community Resource Director” who has knowledge on all services available to speak with residents and refer them to these services.
 - Have general information on City Codes and ordinances, and provide residents assistance with reporting and remedying neighborhood issues.
 - Have a computer lab available to the public to conduct research on services and fill out necessary forms online when available with the help of a staff person.
- Provide a gathering space for the 6th Ward Community Association
- Provide workspace for organizing community events and projects
- Provide office machinery and materials necessary to conduct administration work
- Provide a meeting space for other community groups
- Computer lab
 - Provide free basic computer training to seniors and others in need
 - Provide access to internet for training, research, and education purposes
- Specialized Workshops
- Invite organizations to conduct various workshops at the center and use the “Ricktown Resource Director” and 6th Ward Community Association to advertise workshops throughout the community.



COMMUNITY CENTER

- Workshops can vary and include topics such as:
 - Creative writing
 - Cultural awareness
 - Energy efficiency
 - Home repair
 - Landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities
 - Language classes
 - Resume writing
 - Tree planting and maintenance

- Hold regular activities for families such as:
 - Movie nights
 - Game nights
 - Hobby Clubs such as a Book Club
 - Arts and crafts nights

- Provide direct access to Community Police Officer

- Other services as identified by the community

Whether it involves acquiring a renovated building or designing a new one, the community center should be a welcoming and a safe place for all Ricktown residents. The building should be open and inviting to the public a reasonable and consistent amount of hours throughout the week. The Community Center could also exhibit materials and art-work that reflects the community. It should have space large enough to hold an information desk, classrooms, meeting rooms, a computer lab, office space, as well as anything else the community feels it needs.

COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Traffic

Synthesis of Data

There are 3 major areas of concern for pedestrian safety in the Ricktown Arts District:

- N. 2nd Street at Lauer's Park Elementary School
- Schuylkill Avenue from Buttonwood Street south to Walnut Street
- The intersection at N. 2nd Street & Washington Street

Beginning with the concern for N. 2nd Street at Lauer's Park Elementary School, it is necessary to develop a traffic calming strategy to accommodate an already high volume and ever increasing number of vehicles that drop-off and pickup students on a daily basis.

Our second concern comes with the re-opening of the neighborhood grocery store at Schuylkill Avenue and Buttonwood Street, and the updating and renovations to Barbey's playground. There has been a significant increase in pedestrian traffic crossing Schuylkill Avenue from the neighborhood to these nodes of activity. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Schuylkill Avenue is a major vehicular entrance to the central business district from north and west Reading on the west via the Buttonwood Street bridge.

The third and final concern is the intersection at 2nd Street and Washington Street. This intersection is at the nexus of recent urban revitalization i.e.

- GoggleWorks Center for the Arts
- GoggleWorks Apartments
- I Max theatre

This intersection is at the center of Entertainment Square. It is also an integral part of the major westbound exit route for most vehicular traffic leaving the city.

The two left turns from Washington Street onto N. 2nd Street and N. 2nd onto Court become problematic during the evening due to inefficient street lighting in the Art District. Many lighting standards and lighting fixtures are blocked and obscured by overgrown and untrimmed trees. In many cases, lighting fixtures need new bulbs/ ballasts replacements or wiring / circuitry check-ups. On some streets within the Art District, there is an insufficient number of lighting standards. Light fixtures are too far apart to be effective as light sources for sidewalk illumination.

Greenscape

Lastly, there are concerns of trash, greenscape and street furniture. Trash is a citywide issue and the Arts District is no exception. With an inordinate number of vacant lots and abandoned/ blighted properties, trash like disgarded furniture and used tires, populate the neighborhood, leaving planted landscape and greenspace limited to street trees. In turn, trees and lack of landscape become problematic. Many of the trees have been neglected in their care and are seen to be lifting up sidewalks and busting curbs with their roots, making it difficult and dangerous for pedestrians to use the sidewalks. Street furniture along the sidewalk is nearly nonexistent, the only place where seating can be found is at Barbey's playground. There is a lack of public seating, congregational and solo seating.

COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Traffic & Greenscape

Recommendations

Due to the increase in both pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the areas of Lauer’s Park Elementary School, Barbey’s Playground, and Entertainment Square, traffic calming and pedestrian safety initiatives have been investigated and suggestions made.

In the area of 2nd and Washington Street, Barry Isett and Associates was commissioned by the City of Reading to develop the Downtown 2020 Master Plan. In a recent draft they proposed a more logical realignment of the vehicular traffic thus allowing for safer passage by pedestrians to navigate the intersection in the heart of Entertainment Square. The redesign is illustrated on page 53.

The pedestrian issues of safely crossing Schuylkill Avenue to access Barbey’s Playground were addressed and the traffic calming is also illustrated on page 55. The traffic congestion in front of the Lauer’s Park Elementary School can be altered by creating a two lane bus/passenger aisle on the existing “front yard” of the school on 2nd Street. School buses, as well as private vehicles, can be rerouted so that there is a safe place for drop-off and pick-up during those peak hours of the school day and still allows through traffic of the street.

The creation of bike lanes throughout the Ricktown Arts District provides yet another means of travel for the for residents of the area. The illustration on page52 demonstrates how a bike lane and path system can be integrated into the street and allow for the safe passage of bikes through the neighborhood and into center city.

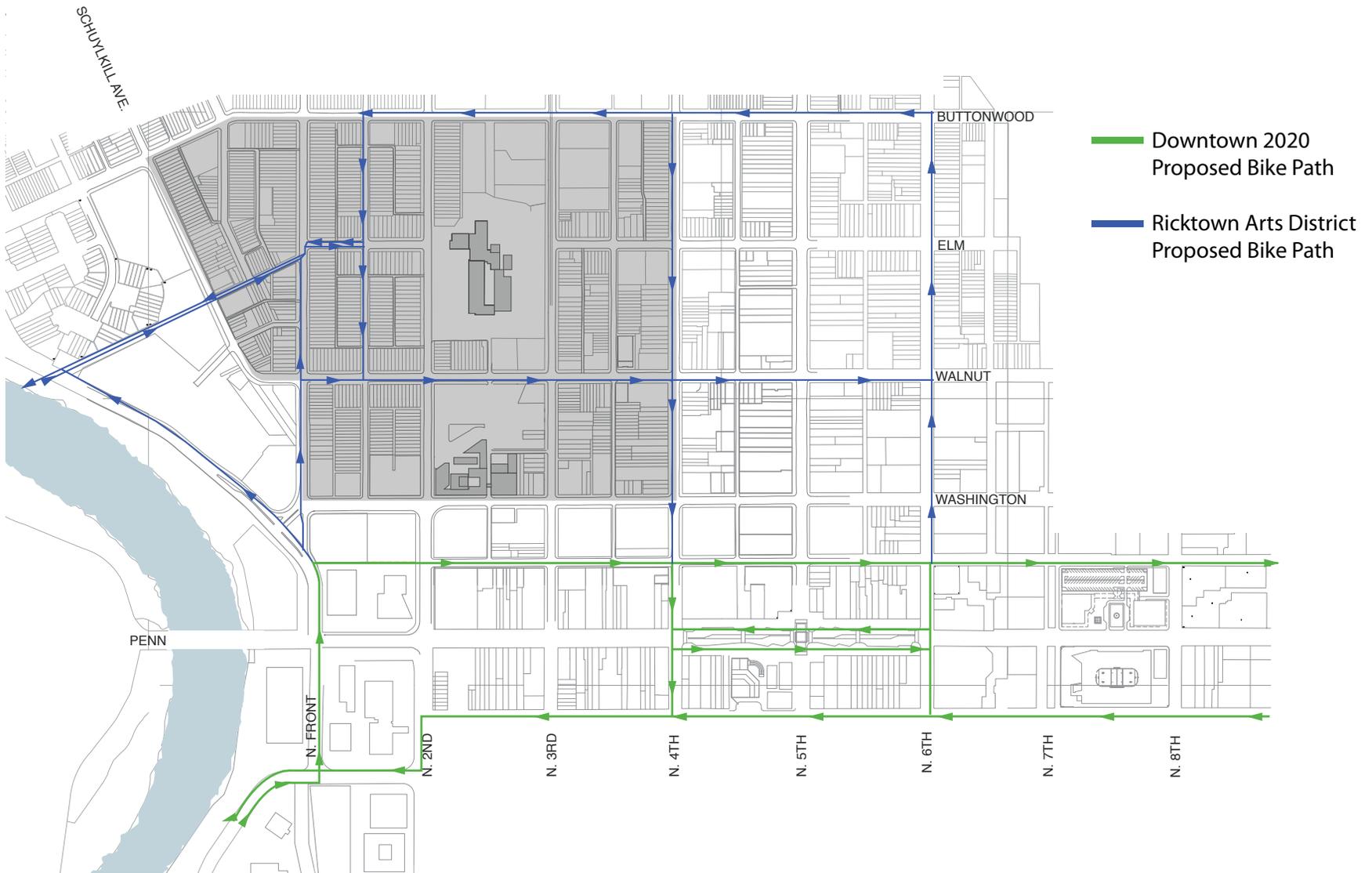
Other improvements to the streetscape and landscape include:

- Sustainability – storm water runoff
- Artistic sculptures and murals to contribute to the vibrancy of Ricktown
- Wayfinding

COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

Streetscape & Landscape

Ricktown bike path is to connect to the proposed Downtown 20/20 bike paths creating a link to the Schuylkill River Trail, Thun Trail, Berks County Park, and connect to existing Barbey's bike trail. Enhance the trail by placing wayfinders and a gravel path.



STREETSCAPE & LANDSCAPE

The creation of a bike path through Ricktown would provide a clear connection from the proposed Downtown 20/20 path, along the Thun Trail, to the Ricktown Arts District.



Existing Conditions - Walnut between
N. 2nd & N. 3rd Streets

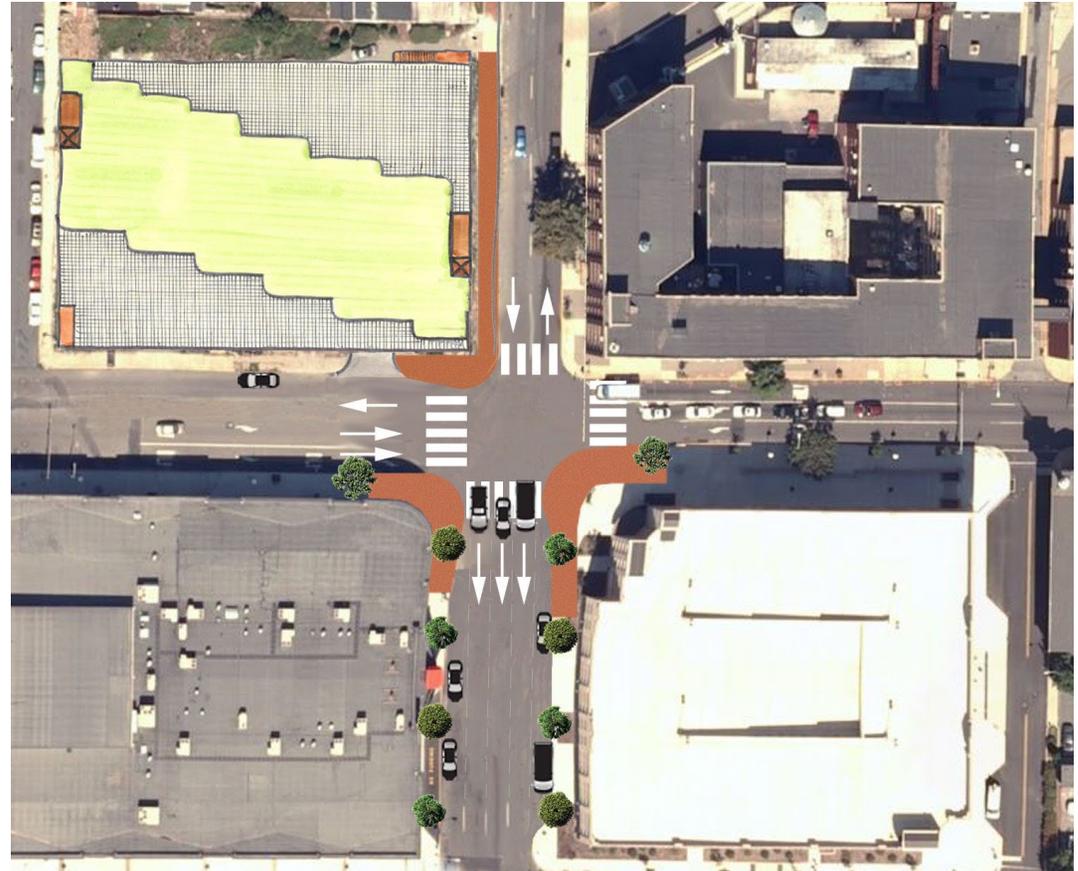


Potential Streetscape Improvements

COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Streetscape & Landscape

Second Street, between Washington and Franklin Streets; Per "Mixed Use Design Strategies," Second St. is proposed (Downtown 20/20) to include new five-foot wide paved planting strips along both curbs that would include brick pavers, new street trees, lighting, and other site furnishings. While three southbound traffic lanes would remain, it is recommended that their widths be reduced to 11 feet. This enables a lane of on-street parking to be added to both sides of the street. It will also be important for retail uses to occupy the ground floor of the parking garage. Transparent glass is recommended to replace the existing tinted/opaque windows. New stamped crosswalks are also proposed at the intersection of 2nd and Court St. where the downtown bike trail is proposed to cross.



Design courtesy of Downtown 20/20 & Barry Issett & Associates

COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

Streetscape & Landscape

Creating a two-lane drop-off with an island of greenscape at the Lauer's Park school entrance will introduce a safe zone for students and their families during drop off and pick up times, while still allowing non-related school traffic to pass with ease.



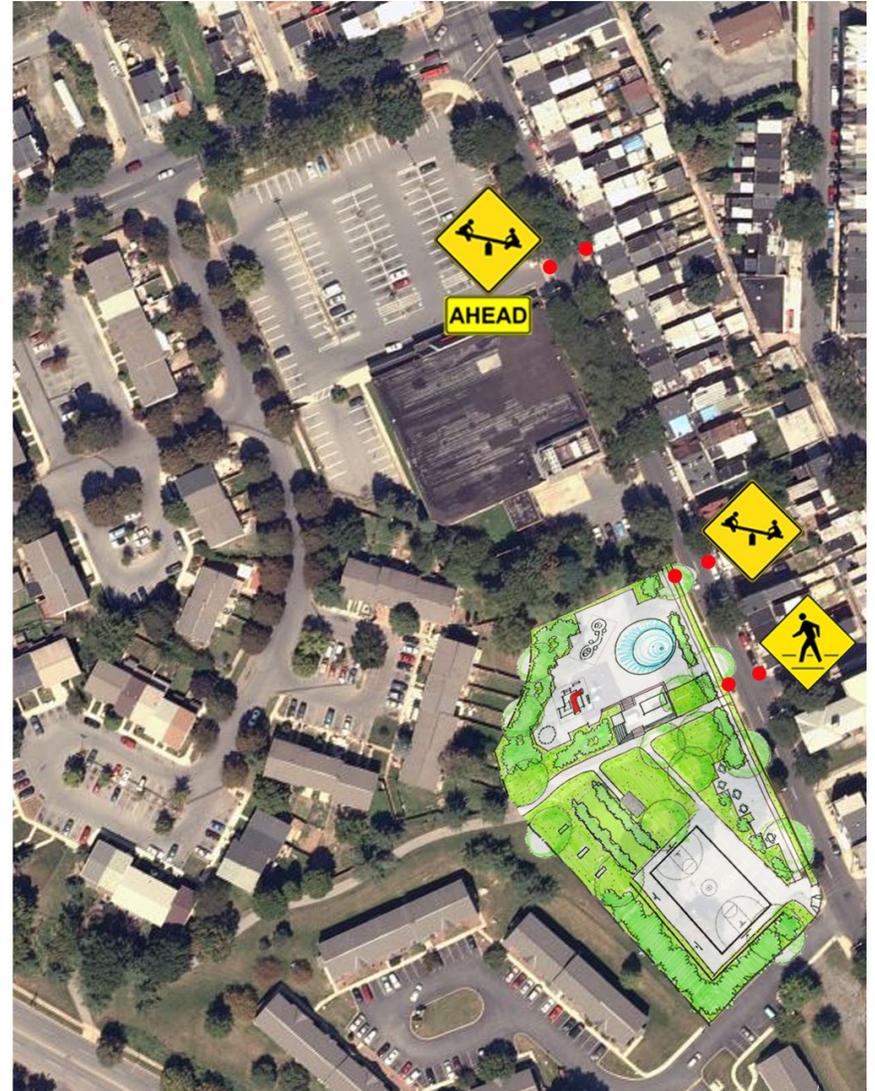
COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

Streetscape & Landscape

Schuykill Ave. has become a dangerous road to cross. With amenities like playgrounds and shopping, it is important to use traffic calming techniques throughout Schuykill Ave so that the intersections are safe places to cross. Traffic calming techniques include: an addition of signage that may reduce speed, flashing lights to warn drivers of high-traffic areas where children play, and speed bumps.



Location for new signage



Barbey's Playground Renovation

COMMUNITY MAINTENANCE

Streetscape & Landscape

Create a connection point to one of Ricktown's community assets, the Schuylkill River. Starting with an existing stone foundation, create a lookout point with a rest area so people can take advantage of the beauty and serenity of the river.



Proposed River Lookout



COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Public Green Space

Synthesis of Data

There are several green spaces in the Ricktown District. They include playgrounds, pocket parks, rest areas and urban gardens. However, not all of these spaces are easily accessed by the public, and many of them pose a maintenance burden for a financially-distressed city and some of the organizations in Ricktown.

With that in mind, it is important to consider whether it is more feasible to exert the time, money, and/or energy necessary to gain public access to these various spaces and to provide resources for maintenance, or to create new spaces altogether.

Recommendations

Investigate the opportunities to develop partnerships between organizations and the residents to increase public usage and accessibility. Also, identify funding sources to provide for more maintenance in the form of volunteer labor, supervision, materials and equipment. It has been stated numerous times during community engagement meetings that there is a lack of open, public green space to better serve the needs of the youth in the neighborhood. Mothers have stated, "I have no place for my children to play and get to "feel" nature and the outdoors" It is important to create new "green" spaces, as well as, a neighborhood structure and the cooperation of the city to monitor the creation of these spaces. The investment in artistic communities like Ricktown can help in the development of new ideas for creating public space. These ideas may manifest themselves as freshly painted street furniture, impromptu outdoor performance space, "organic" sculpture gardens, outdoor information kiosks and bulletin boards. It will allow for a level of gently rolling landscape that children may play and interact with.

Brief Overview of Existing Green Space

Space	Function	Owner	Publicly Accessible	Level of Maintenance
<u>Barbey's Playground</u>	Playground	City of Reading	Yes	Adequately Maintained
Gordon Hoodak Stadium	Baseball Field	Reading School District	No	Well-Maintained
Lauer's Park Urban Garden	Agricultural and Environmental Education	Reading School District	No	Well-Maintained
<u>Eunie's Garden</u>	Community Garden	Berks Conservancy	Need Key	Poorly-Maintained
Garden of Good Thoughts	Community Rest Area	Berks Conservancy	Yes	Poorly-Maintained
Olivet's Playground	Playground for young children	Olivet Boys and Girls Club	Yes	Well-Maintained



COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Public Green Space

Recommendations

Maintain current access to existing parks and playgrounds in the Arts District, and identify vacant lots for the creation of pocket parks. Pocket parks provide a wonderful opportunity to transform abandoned, unused, vacant lots, into paved or green public parks that are never gated or closed. Funding would need to be secured to cover the costs for local artists to personalize the park, giving it a local identity. Maintenance would become the responsibility of local civic organizations which would work with the city's Public Works Department to coordinate clean-ups. Any planned activities within these parks would be a joint effort between the city's Recreation Commission and local civic organizations.

Street curb parks are a recent phenomenon originating in San Francisco, CA. Sections of parking lanes located on the street (anywhere from 1 to 4 spots), are being replaced with the expansion of the sidewalk into the parking spot and used for public amenities such as: sidewalk cafes, pet walks, parks, in short, a community "kitchen table" where people may come to gather and relax. These parking spots, when strategically located within the Arts District, lend themselves to become extensions of living spaces; i.e. outdoor gathering spots for residents of the street, or extensions of the small business and the building lines. Urban amenities like these make perfect projects for local artists, and of course would be maintained and monitored by local civic organizations.



Existing Vacant Lots N. 3rd Street



Potential Pocket Park

COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Safety & Crime Prevention

Synthesis of Data

According to the CQ Press City Crime Rankings 2010-2011 Report, of the 132 cities with populations of 75,000 to 99,999, Reading, ranked number seven in the highest crime rank category. New efforts to change the community were implemented in 2006. The city adopted a community problem-oriented policing approach by adjusting plans for a specific neighborhood. The crime statistics have been reduced, but the decrease in police personnel due to retirement and financial constraints continue to pose concerns.

The National Crime Prevention Council affirms neighborhoods can reduce drug related activity and crime through the use of environmental changes. Physically designing and redesigning spaces offers protection for the residents of the community. Areas of the Ricktown Arts District and the surrounding neighborhood are currently attractors of certain unwanted activities. In some areas, streets allow speeding traffic, signs are in poor condition and lighting is insufficient. Lack of tree maintenance adds to poor conditions for signage, lighting and sidewalk deterioration.

Recommendations

A recommended approach to combating crime issues comes from the U.S. Department of Justice. The American Planning Association (APA) is utilizing the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to provide “safety by design”. CPTED’s core belief is that the physical environment can be altered or managed to produce responses that reduce the incidence of crime. When adapted in a community, CPTED generally is comprised of 4 key elements: surveillance, access control, territorial reinforcement and maintenance. A simple example of the CPTED model involves enhanced lighting, which contributes to natural surveillance.

Natural Surveillance - The Visual Connection

- Fully illuminate all doorways that open to the outside.
- Place the front door to be at least partially visible from the street when constructing new buildings.
- Provide appropriate illumination to sidewalks and all areas of the yard.
- Properly install and maintain landscaping so that it allows unobstructed views of vulnerable doors and windows.

Natural Access Control - The Spatial Definition

- Use walkways and landscaping to direct visitors to the proper entrance and away from private areas.
- Deny access to a crime target and create a perception of risk to offenders.
- A fence around a neighborhood playground is an example of an access control measure that protects children from wandering off and inhibits entry of potential offenders.

COMMUNITY MAINTANENCE

Public Green Space

Recommendations continued...

Crime and drug activity can be diminished if a neighborhood or community is physically designed to provide protection for its residents. Physical changes or improvements can include installing and maintaining better outdoor lighting, installing and enforcing traffic control signs and lights, closing or limiting access to streets to avoid through traffic, building low fences, cleaning up bushes and shrubbery in parks and other public places, installing or repairing sidewalks, and removing abandoned vehicles.

The City of Reading's Economic Development Strategy Act 47 Recovery Plan also addresses the aforementioned subjects by recommending porch and yard lighting to be funded through corporate and foundation resources.

Community meetings have been held on Tuesday evenings at the United Baptist Church located at 211 Schuylkill Ave. This neighborhood group has organized an effort to address several quality of life issues. A suggestion from the group is to provide block captains with training and enable the block captains to play the role of educators and mentors in their neighborhood. The Ricktown residents are motivated to work together to improve neighborhood appearance and deter criminals. It is highly recommended that these neighborhood efforts continue and expand well into the future.

Ricktown Community-Based Development Organization (CBDO)

Implements Ricktown Master Plan/
 HUD-Approved Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy
through partnership development, project management and administration



ZONING Overview

APPROACH

The Ricktown Arts District represents a targeted reinvestment and revitalization strategy focused on a neighborhood near downtown Reading. These efforts will also focus on leveraging existing arts and entertainment assets in the area and encouraging arts sector opportunities and experiences in collaboration with existing arts organizations. This project will also seek to engage new and current residents in the improvement of their neighborhood with its main goals being to develop a walkable urban community that enhances the quality of life in the neighborhood, City and Greater Reading community.

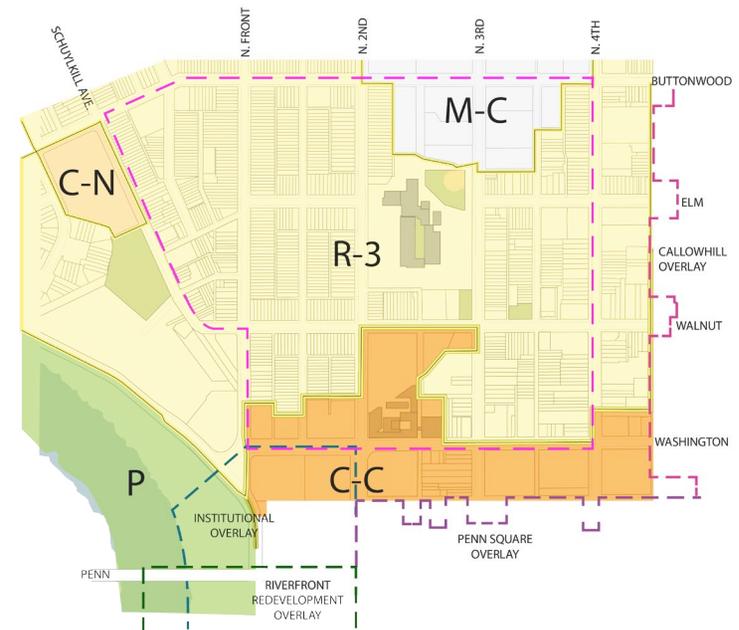
The mission statement of the Ricktown Arts District requires the review of the urban planning options available to facilitate the fulfillment of the mission of the District. The first step in this review process is to examine the existing zoning ordinance as it pertains to the geographic area of the RAD.

EXISTING ZONING

The current 2010 Zoning Ordinance & Map of the city of Reading has the proposed Ricktown Arts District divided into the following zoning districts:

R-3	Residential
P	Preservation
C-C	Commercial Core
C-N	Commercial Neighborhood
M-C	Manufacturing Commercial

The dominant district within Ricktown is R-3, consuming almost 80% of the land mass. The ultimate goal of revitalizing the Ricktown neighborhood is to create a “mixed use/ mixed occupancy friendly” zoning district, that would allow conventional commercial retail to coexist alongside artist housing with potential “live over work” occupancy.



ZONING Overview

ZONING OVERLAY SYSTEM

In a meeting on August 5th, 2011 with the City's Zoning Administrator, and the City's Planner 1, it was recommended to seek a zoning change or expansion for parts of Ricktown Arts District. The two districts that were suggested for possible consideration: C-N (Commercial Neighborhood) and C-R (Commercial Residential). Descriptions of the two districts can be found at the end of this section as a reference.

The mixed-use or "live over work" space for artist housing in a R-3 would require a special exception as well as costly fees for reviews and renovations. The conventional mixed use occupancy in a R-3, i.e. "live over a business" is too restrictive and would require fire separations and other safety features predicated on the business occupancy.

RE-ZONING TO C-N & C-R DISTRICTS

Reviewing the specific zoning ordinance section and definitions of the C-N & C-R Districts, the following commentary applies...

C-N or C-R zones may be ideal for this artist mixed-use concept in that, if you want to take a current residential unit and convert part into a studio, it should be automatically allowed without need for variance. The difficulty could come with the building codes. In the event that a home is used as a residence and studio for use only by the occupant, and as long as the space is not used by the public such as a store or gallery.

However, in mixing commercial with residential use in the same building that is not currently utilized that way, Building Codes could pose a larger issue. There are requirements for sprinklers, hardwired/ central station alarms, fire rated wall and ceilings, etc. This depends on size and type of use (public gathering space like in an art gallery or store etc.)

REDEVELOPMENT AREA

There is a more appropriate scenario to accommodate the mission statement. By designating the Ricktown Arts District a Redevelopment Area, the City of Reading creates a more equitable and overarching governing document to manage the growth and development of the District.

The creation of a Redevelopment Area requires the following 4 events by the City of Reading and the Reading Redevelopment Authority.

ZONING Overview Continued...

1) City Council passes a statement of community development objectives in accordance with section 606 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

i.e.) *Section 606. Statement of Community Developing Objectives. Zoning ordinances enacted after the effective date of this act should reflect the policy goals of the municipality as listed in a statement of community development objectives, recognizing that circumstances can necessitate the adoption and timely pursuit of new goals and the enactment of new zoning ordinances which may neither require nor allow for the completion of a new comprehensive plan and approval of new community developing objectives. This statement may be supplied by reference to the community comprehensive plan or such portions of the community comprehensive plan as may exist and be applicable or may be the statement of community development objectives provided in a statement of legislative findings of the governing body of the municipality with respect to land use; density of population; the need for housing; commerce and industry; the location and function of streets and other community facilities and utilities; the need for preserving agricultural land and protecting natural resources; and any other factors that the municipality believes relevant in describing the purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance.*

2) City Council designates the Ricktown Arts District as a redevelopment area, in accordance with section 35 P. S. and 1710 of the Urban Redevelopment Law.

i.e.) *1710 Preparation and adoption of redevelopment proposal*

(a) An Authority shall prepare a redevelopment proposal for all or part of any area certified by the planning commission to be a redevelopment area and for which the planning commission has made a redevelopment area plan.

(b) The planning commission's certification of a redevelopment area shall be made in conformance with its comprehensive general plan (which may include, inter alla, a plan of major traffic arteries and terminals and a land use plan and projected population densities) for the territory under its jurisdiction or for any greater area for which the field of operation of Authority has been extended under clause (e) of section 3 of this act. [FN1]

(c) The planning commission's redevelopment area plan shall include, without being limited to, the following:

- 1. The boundaries of the area, with a map showing the existing uses of the real property therein;*
- 2. A land use plan of the area showing proposed uses following redevelopment;*
- 3. Standards of population densities, land coverage and building intents in the proposed redevelopment;*
- 4. A preliminary site plan of the area;*
- 5. A statement of the proposed changes, if any, in zoning ordinances or maps;*

ZONING Overview

6. A statement of any proposed changes in street layouts, street levels, and proposed traffic regulations, including the separation or excluding of vehicular traffic partially or totally from pedestrian traffic;
7. A statement of the extent and effect of the rehousing of families which may be made necessary from the redevelopment area plan, and the manner in which such rehousing may be accomplished;
8. A statement of the estimated cost of acquisition of the redevelopment area, and of all other cost necessary to prepare the area for redevelopment;
9. A statement of such continuing controls as may be necessary to effectuate the purpose of this act.

(d) In conformity with such redevelopment area plan, the Authority shall prepare a proposal for the redevelopment of all or part of such area. The Authority may, if it deems it desirable, to hold public hearing prior to its final determination of the redevelopment proposal.

(e) The Authority shall submit the redevelopment proposal to the planning commission for review. The planning commission shall, within forty-five days, certify to the governing body its recommendation on the redevelopment proposal, either or approval, rejection or modification, and in the latter event, specify the changes recommended.

(f) Upon receipt of the planning commission's recommendation, or at the expiration of forty-five days, if no recommendation is made by the planning commission, the Authority shall submit to the governing body the redevelopment proposal with recommendation, if any, of the planning commission thereon.

(g) The governing body upon receipt of the redevelopment proposal and the recommendation, if any, of the planning commission shall hold a public hearing upon said proposal. Notice of the time, place and purpose of such hearing shall be published at least once each week for three consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in the field of operation of the Authority, the time of the hearing to be at least ten days from the last publication of notice. The notice shall describe that portion of the redevelopment area affected by the proposal by boundaries and by city block, street and house numbers. The redevelopment proposal with such maps, plans, contracts or other documents as form part of said proposal, together with the recommendation, if any, of the planning commission and supporting data shall be available for public inspection for at least ten days prior to the hearing.

At the hearing the governing body shall afford an opportunity to all persons or agencies interested to be heard and shall receive, make known and consider recommendations in writing with reference to the redevelopment proposal.

ZONING Overview

(h) The governing body shall approve or reject the redevelopment proposal as submitted. The governing body shall not approve a redevelopment proposal unless it is satisfied that the adequate provisions will be made to rehouse displaced families, if any, without undue hardship, if the municipality in which the project is to be located has filed its objections thereto.

(i) Upon approval by the governing body of the redevelopment proposal, as submitted by the Authority, the Authority is authorized to take such action as may be necessary to carry it out.

(j) The redevelopment proposal may contain the form of the redevelopment contract with the redeveloper selected and upon approval by the governing body of the proposal, as hereinbefore provided, the Authority is authorized to execute the said redevelopment contract. If the proposal does not contain the form of the redevelopment contract with the redeveloper selected, the Authority shall not execute the redevelopment contract with a redeveloper thereafter selected, until the said redevelopment contract shall have been approved by the governing body and found to be in substantial conformity with the proposal therefore approved by the governing body. No additional public hearing notice or publication shall be required with respect to such approval.

1945, May 24, P. L. 991, 10. Amended 1955, May 31, P. L. 107, 1-3; 1968, June 26, P. L. 263, No.125 12.

3) Once these first two steps have been implemented, the Redevelopment Authority would be incorporated under the Ricktown Community- Based Development Organization (CBDO) and work in concert with the other coalitions like: Housing, the Arts, Community Improvement, and Economic Development Coalitions.

4) After the redevelopment area designation expires in 20 years from its creation, required and necessary zoning changes may be considered by the City of Reading.

ZONING Ordinance C-R

City of Reading Zoning Ordinance – As Adopted July 26, 2010

§27-808. C-R Commercial Residential District.

1. Dimensional Requirements.

Uses	Min. Lot Size Sq. Ft.	Max. Bldg. Cov.	Max. Imp. Cov.	Max. Height	Min. Lot Width	Min. Front Yard Setback**	Min. Rear Yard Setback	Min. Side Yard Setback (each)
Allowed Residential Uses	Allowed under the provisions of the R-3 District regulations.							
High-Rise Apartments	25,000	70%	80%	100	72	10	25	15
Life Care Retirement Facility, Personal Care Home, or Nursing Home	2,500	75%	85%	40	40	10	20	8
All Other Allowed Uses	2,500	75%	90%	50	25	0	10*	0*

* Except 20 feet rear setback and 5 feet side yard setback shall apply for any use adjacent to an existing principally residential use, unless: a) a new building is replacing a building that was previously attached along that lotline, or b) unless the buildings are built as part of the same subdivision or land development. See requirements of the Construction Code, including separation from windows and doors. New dwelling units that are allowed to be attached to each other do not need a side yard setback between the new dwellings..

** See Section 27-909, which may require a certain front yard setback.

2. Allowed Uses.

a. Permitted by Right Uses:

The same Residential uses shall be allowed as are allowed in the R-3 district.

High-rise Apartments, provided at least one principal business establishment required to be located on the street level.

Bakeries (Limited to 2,000 Sq. Ft. Production Floor Area) and Retail Sale of Baked Goods.

Drive-through Services shall only be Permitted as Accessory to a Financial Institution or a Pharmacy.

College or University, provided that any residential uses shall meet the requirements for that type of residential use

Conversion of Existing Building Space into One or More Dwelling Units, which shall meet the requirements listed for “Conversions” in

Section 27-1203.D., even though the use is not a conditional use. Such conversion shall only be allowed if the lot includes at least one street level principal business establishment.

Exercise Clubs and Fitness Centers

Fire and Ambulance Station

Funeral Homes

Gardens, Crop Farming and Forestry

Movie Theaters / Performing Arts Facilities

Municipal Buildings

Nursing Homes or Personal Care Centers

ZONING Ordinance C-R

Offices, Clinics and Laboratories

Parking Garages and Lots. See also Section 27-1008 for off-premises parking.

Personal Services, such as barber or beauty shop (See Section 27-1103), tailors, nail salons (See Section 27-1103) and certified massage therapy (See Section 27-1103) , and not including a Massage Parlor.

Radio and Television Stations

Recreational Facilities, Public Parks and non-motorized recreation trails

Restaurants (Eat in or Take Out) Without Entertainment and Without Drive-Through Service. This use shall not allow outdoor sale of ready-to-eat heated food on a regular basis on a lot that is not operated from a building on the lot.

Retail Stores, with Drive-Through Facilities Limited to a Pharmacy, and with Vehicle Fuel Sales and Vehicle Sales Being Prohibited

Small Appliance Sales, Repair and Service Shops

Social Clubs and Associations (Non-PLCB Licensed), Provided Such Use shall not be Open Between 2 AM and 6 AM. For any use that also meets the definition of a BYOB, Ordinances 35-2007 and 37-2007 shall also be met.

Trade, Vocational and Hobby Schools, not including Residential Uses, and provided there is not exterior use of heavy equipment or heavy machinery in connection therewith.

- b. Accessory Uses: (See Part 10, Unless Otherwise Noted).

Amusement Devices Pursuant to §27-1010 of this Chapter

Entertainment Pursuant to §27-1005 of this Chapter

Home Occupations – Major or Minor – See Section 27-1006

- c. Conditional Uses: All Uses Listed below Shall Be Pursuant to §27-1203 of this Chapter

Banquet Hall

Boarding Houses

Group Care Facility

Public Utilities

Taverns and Nightclubs

Temporary Shelter

Group Care Facility

ZONING Ordinance C-R

- d. Special Exception Uses: All Uses Listed below Shall Be Pursuant to §27-1202 of this Chapter

- Adaptive Reuse

- Amusement Arcade

- Day Care Facilities

- Life Care Retirement Facility

- Primary or Secondary School, Public or Private

- Hospital

- Places of Worship

3. Additional Requirement in the C-R District.

- a. A drive-through facility shall not have an entrance or exit onto Penn Street.

ZONING Ordinance C-N

City of Reading Zoning Ordinance – As Adopted July 26, 2010

§27-809. C-N Commercial Neighborhood District.

1. Dimensional Requirements.

Uses	Min. Lot Size Sq. Ft.	Max. Bldg. Cov.	Max. Imp. Cov.	Max. Height	Min. Lot Width	Min. Front Yard Setback**	Min. Rear Yard Setback	Min. Side Yard Setback (each)
Allowed Residential Uses	Shall meet the provisions of the R-3 District.							
All Other Allowed Uses	1,800	70%	90%	60	20***	0	10*	0*

* Except 20 feet rear setback and 6 feet side setback shall apply adjacent to an existing principally residential use.

** See Section 27-909, which may require a certain front yard setback.

*** An existing principally residential building shall not be converted to a principal commercial use unless this lot width requirement is met, unless the building is not adjacent to any existing dwellings.

2. Allowed Uses.

a. Permitted by Right Uses:

Residential Uses – The same residential uses shall be allowed as are allowed in the R-3 District.

Bakery

Banking and Financial Institutions, which may include drive-through service

Convenience Stores, with Fuel Sales only allowed as a conditional use

Day Care Home

Drug Stores, which may include drive-through service

Dry Cleaners, Self-service Laundries (Limited to 2,000 Sq. Ft. of Service/production Area)

Exercise Clubs

Fire and Ambulance Station

Funeral Home

Gardens, Crop Farming and Forestry

Home Occupations, Major or Minor – See Section 27-1006

Municipal Buildings

Offices

Nursing Homes or Personal Care Centers

Parking lots other than parking areas that primarily serve tractor-trailer trucks

Personal Services, such as barber or beauty shop (See Section 27-1103), tailors, nail salons (See Section 27-1103) and certified massage therapy (See Section 27-1103), and not including a Massage Parlor.

Recreation Facilities, Public Parks and Non-Motorized Recreation Trails

ZONING Ordinance C-N

Restaurants (Eat in and Take Out), but not including drive-through service, provided that such uses shall not be developed in a building is attached to a principally residential building on another lot that is not in common ownership. This use shall not allow outdoor sale of ready-to-eat food on a regular basis on a lot that is not operated from a building on the lot.

Retail Stores without drive-through service, provided that such uses shall not be developed in a building is attached to a principally residential building on another lot that is not in common ownership.

Self-Storage Facilities

Small Appliance Sales, Service and Repair Shops

Storage or Warehousing as a principal or accessory use.

Wholesale Sales

b. Conditional Uses: Pursuant to §27-1203.

Banquet Hall

Taverns and Nightclubs, provided that such uses shall not be developed in a building that abuts a principally residential lot unless the lots are in common ownership.

Vehicle Fuel Sales, which shall only be allowed if the applicant proves the use will be designed to avoid conflicts with pedestrian travel and to provide compatibility with adjacent uses, and provided the use is not adjacent to a principally residential lot.

c. Special Exception Uses:

Day Care Facilities, Other than Day Care Homes

Adaptive Reuse in compliance with Section 27-1202.

Amusement Arcade

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
4Q 2011	October	November	December
1. Submit master plan document to City Council			
2. Public comment & input			
3. Acceptance and approval of the document by City Council			

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
1Q 2012	January	February	March
1. Approval of NRSA by HUD Neighborhood Revitalization Strat. Authority			
2. Creation of the Community Based Development Organization (CBDO)			
2a. Seek applicants to join the CBDO			
2b. Non-profit agency interviews and appoints members to the CBDO			
2c. CBDO elects officers and creates the following coalitions: Housing Arts Economic Development Community Improvement			
2d. CBDO & coalition appoints members			



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
2Q 2012	April	May	June
1. City Council adopts Community Development Objectives (section 606.4 PA MPC)			
2. City Council designates RAD Redevelopment Authority Area (section 35 p,s, 1710 of URL)			
2a. Zoning Hearing Board approval			
2b. City Planning Committee approval			
2c. Reading Redevelopment Authority approval			
2d. RRA enters into a MOU with CBDO			



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
3Q 2012	July	August	September
1. RRA identifies properties: either vacant lots or certified blighted (BPRC) and acquires by eminent domain			
2. RRA markets properties for acquisition (NHS, OCR, etc.)			



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
4Q 2012	October	November	December
1. RRA same as 3Q			
2. CBDO issues RFP for infrastructure design proposals i.e. lighting streetscape landscape curb/ sidewalks	BID		
4. CBDO reviews and approves design contracts		REVIEW	AWARD



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Ricktown Arts District Implementation Plan			
1Q 2013	January	February	March
1. design infrastructure implemented			
2. submissions of infrastructure design			



APPENDIX A

BLIGHTED PROPERTIES

Reading's Blighted Property Ordinance

Section 1-544 – Definitions

Blighted property - shall include

1. Any premises which because of physical condition or use is regarded as a public nuisance at common law, or has been declared a public nuisance in accordance with the local housing, building, plumbing, fire and related codes.
2. Any premises which because of physical condition, use or occupancy is considered an attractive nuisance to children, including but not limited to abandoned wells, shafts, basements, excavations, and unsafe fences or structures.
3. Any dwelling which because of its dilapidated, unsanitary, unsafe, vermin-infested or lacking in the facilities and equipment required by the housing or building codes of the municipality, has been designated by the department responsible for enforcement of the code as unfit for human habitation.
4. Any structure which is a fire hazard, or is otherwise dangerous to the safety of persons or property.
5. Any structure from which utilities, plumbing, heating, sewerage or other facilities have been disconnected, destroyed, removed, or rendered ineffective so that the property is unfit for its intended use.
6. Any vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground in a predominantly built-up neighborhood, which by reason of neglect or lack of maintenance has become a place for accumulation of trash and debris, or a haven for rodents or other vermin.
7. Any unoccupied property which has been tax delinquent for a period of 2 years prior to the effective date of this act, and those in the future having a 2-year tax delinquency.
8. Any property which is vacant, but not tax delinquent, which has not been rehabilitated within 1 year of the receipt of notice to rehabilitate from the appropriate code enforcement agency.
9. Any abandoned property. A property shall be considered abandoned if:
 - a. It is a vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground on which a municipal lien for the cost of demolition of any structure located on the property remains unpaid for a period of 6 months.
 - b. It is a vacant property or vacant or unimproved lot or parcel of ground on which the total of municipal liens on the property for tax or any other type of claim of the municipality are in excess of 150% of the fair market value of the property as established by any body with legal authority to determine the taxable value of the property.
 - c. The property has been declared abandoned by the owner, including, an estate that is in possession of the property.

APPENDIX B

The 6th Ward Civic Engagement Initiative by Dr. William Davis Jr.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some time ago, I had the privilege of working with a group of colleagues on an action-research collaboration between Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a local community action program. We were tasked with investigating poverty and coming up with recommendations for how to improve the plight of the poorest in the community. For approximately six months we held class discussions, participated in board meetings, conducted focus groups in local churches, and engaged community members in the task of defining issues and creating solutions. Initially, the community approached us reticently and vice versa. However, as time passed our team became more accepted and the community members themselves began to realize the power they had to create. Their stories, as evidenced by the focus group data, humanized the numbers to which we had all become so familiar. As the process unfolded we too underwent a transformation in that our eyes were opened. Gradually, county-level data about poverty, religious involvement, resiliency, and sustainable wages was replaced by the names and faces we had come to know personally. Consequently, the solutions to these issues, which had previously seemed all too simple, became more nuanced and personal. In sum, our small team of community members, practitioners, and activists were transformed. And we, in turn, began to transform the community.

Similarly, The 6th Ward Civic Engagement Initiative has been a transformational process. Our team consisted of community members, congregates, activists and as was the prediction, we too, have been transformed. Hopefully, we will in turn transformation the community.

This project could not have been a success without the help of Rev. Robia Thomas, Minister Tasha Isaac, and the Union Baptist Church family to whom the community is eternally grateful. Yours is truly a church of community transformation and for that we are grateful. The 6th Ward Community Association, which is a direct product of this project, has also been an invaluable asset. Thank-you all for being model citizens—our community owes you a debt of continuing in your example. May you continue the process of reaching out to and engaging with those who have been lost or forgotten.

II Samuel 9:1-13

The following is a collection of excerpts. To obtain a full version of the document or to ask questions or comments about this product please contact:

Dr. William Davis, Jr.,
E-mail: williamdavisjr@gmail.com
Phone: (215) 821-8087

HISTORY

For several months, the Ricktown Planning Committee held community meetings to elicit community input for the Ricktown Redevelopment Project that is being spearheaded by the Office of the Mayor for the City of Reading. With an understanding that there had become difficulties within the group dynamics several participants suggested a need for more community participation; however those in attendance noted unique barriers to this including: cost, perceived low interest among community members, and difficulty with accessing a wider range of key informants in the community. Given these difficulties we decided to develop a focus group with three goals in mind: (1) to assess residents' familiarity with and opinions about Ricktown; (2) to elicit recommendations for improving the quality of life in 6th Ward, and (3) to instill a sense of engagement, neighborhood pride, and an increased sense of community among participants. In sum, while we recognized the need to engage community members in this project, there was also a recognition that community members themselves needed to be empowered and would likely benefit from a proverbial bridge between themselves and city government. Overall, there appeared to be a hopeful consensus that the process of bringing the community together could serve as a prototype for medium-sized, diverse cities around the United States.

As a result of the Ricktown Planning Committee meetings and several consultations between the undersigned and Ricktown staff, a focus group discussion was scheduled for May 19, 2011 at a 6th Ward-area church.

Measures

The purpose of the focus group was to answer several pressing questions:

1. To what degree are 6th Ward residents knowledgeable about the Ricktown project?
2. What fears or concerns do residents have about the project?
3. What hopes do residents have about the project?
4. What do residents see as the future for the 6th Ward?

PROCEDURE

Invitations were sent out to key community members about the focus group. We also conducted outreach via Facebook. The majority of the participants were residents of the 6th Ward and the remainder were key operatives in business and social services in the 6th Ward. All participants were 18 years of age or older. The group was reasonably representative of the racial/ethnic composition of the larger 6th Ward population.

At the beginning of the conversation participants were welcomed and oriented to the process by Dr. Davis, who also introduced two designated note-takers. Members were informed about the nature of the discussion and were encouraged to be as honest as possible. Members were also guaranteed their responses would not be reported in a way that would identify them.

The conversation consisted of five main questions, the responses to which were queried by the main facilitator. The five discussion questions were:

1. What have you heard about Ricktown and from whom?
2. What concerns do you have about the Ricktown project?
3. What hopes do you have for the project?
4. If resources were not an issue, what improvements would you like to implement in the 6th Ward?
5. If the Mayor himself called to ask your opinion about how to make sure the Ricktown project succeeds, what would you suggest?

Participants were thanked for their contributions at the conclusion of the discussion. The facilitator collected participants' e-mail addresses for a follow up meeting which was scheduled for mid-June.

After the meeting, the data analysts were instructed to work independently to arrive at themes from the discussion based upon information in the focus group notes. Once completed, each thematic analysis was e-mailed to the other members of the team. Collectively, the reviewers met via conference call to begin identifying the most consistent themes from the conversation. The results below are the most consistent themes endorsed by the three reviewers. For ease of reading, the results are presented in tabular form. This report concludes with recommendations for moving forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Data from this endeavor is one small piece to the puzzle of engaging citizens in the redevelopment process. Although the data is limited in its scope and generalizability, we can arrive at several helpful recommendations—each of which should be evaluated and implemented as appropriate.

Table 1. What have you heard about the Ricktown Project?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>
Familiarity with the Ricktown project is inconsistent. Some residents have heard about the project first hand from City officials, whereas others have heard nothing. Still others have gotten the majority of their information from other city residents or the “rumor mill.”	Initiate and evaluate a multifaceted public education campaign surrounding the Ricktown Project and ways to improve quality of life in the 6th Ward. Ideally, the public education campaign will engage the community’s strengths and existing support systems, e.g., local churches, civic organizations, businesses, etc.	Designate a community board or select community members to act as liaisons and community-level information resources.
Residents want to hear more about the project from City officials.	Demonstrate a higher degree of transparency and accessibility toward community members. Develop a web presence for the project including a website, FB page, etc.	Assist redevelopment officials with engaging citizenry by inviting neighbors, friends, family members to meetings and public education sessions.
Residents want to learn more about the Rick brothers	See above	Identify and designate Block Captains to disseminate information.

Table 2. What, if any, concerns do you have about the Ricktown Project?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>
<p>Residents are concerned they will be pushed out, bought out, or otherwise displaced from their neighborhood.</p>	<p>Form strategic partnerships with community members and 6th Ward organizations.</p> <p>Design and implement plans for quality mixed-income housing.</p> <p>Develop a tiered strategy for codes enforcement that is flexible, yet effective.</p> <p>Allow greater access and transparency to blighted homes process.</p> <p>Recruit and retain local artists for inclusion in the arts district.</p> <p>Consider a 6th Ward preference for business bids and artist relocation initiatives.</p> <p>Advertise benefits to the current community</p>	<p>Establish a formally recognized community association to spearhead community-driven changes.</p>
<p>There is concern the Ricktown project is designed to benefit the well-to-do and not benefit the middle/low income families in the neighborhood.</p> <p>Residents are mistrustful of City officials in charge of the Ricktown project. There is concern the project will move forward regardless of citizen input. Moreover, residents think their opinions do not matter to those in charge.</p>		<p>Engage the community association to develop partnerships with local businesses.</p> <p>Offer classes and guest speakers on topics such as caring for homes, improving the value of one's property, etc.</p>

Table 2. What, if any, concerns do you have about the Ricktown Project?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>
<p>Residents are mistrustful of City officials in charge of the Ricktown project. There is concern the project will move forward regardless of citizen input. Moreover, residents think their opinions do not matter to those in charge.</p>	<p>Collaborate with the community board to establish accountability measures.</p> <p>Develop an on-line survey or suggestion box that can be accessed, evaluated, and reported by city officials.</p>	<p>Collaborate with the City of Reading to establish accountability measures.</p>
<p>Residents question the degree to which the project will be culturally relevant to current residents.</p>	<p>Devote a portion of the Master Plan and funds to Afro-Latino culture. Possibilities include: an “immigrant museum” or a community center.</p>	<p>Develop initiatives to unite the many cultures of the area such as the “Multicultural Days” project that is held in Philadelphia.</p>
<p>The Ricktown name is a major concern.</p>	<p>Develop a catchy slogan that appeals to members of many demographics</p>	<p>Inform residents about the name Ricktown once the information becomes available.</p>

Question #3: What hopes do residents have for the project?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>
Residents want a better relationship between themselves and city government/Ricktown planners. They hope for more transparency and accountability.	Engage city council members in the redevelopment process through guest lectures/speakers to community groups. Publish a newsletter that includes contributions from local artists, writers, etc.	Participate more heavily in available activities such as city council meetings, design meetings, civic associations, arts projects, etc.
Business development is highly important to residents.	Publish a business strategy for the neighborhood and solicit proposals. Grant a 6th Ward preference to business loan applicants.	Develop a business committee to assist 6th Ward businesses with becoming redevelopment focused. Develop partnerships with chambers of commerce (Latino Chamber of Commerce, African American Chamber of Commerce, Berks County Chamber of Commerce).
A plethora of 'culture,' i.e., arts and entertainment activities.	Develop a community arts initiative that includes performing and visual arts.	Develop a community arts initiative that includes performing and visual arts.
Residents hope the Ricktown project engages the 6th Ward's current cultural heritage	Same as above	Same as above
Residents hope the project results in a safe place to live.	Develop strategic partnerships between the Reading police and local organizations.	Engage youth in the redevelopment process via social media.

Question #4: What kind of neighborhood do residents want?

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>	<i>Recommendations: City Officials and Project Planners</i>
Residents want a neighborhood that celebrates the diverse culture of the area via educational, recreational, economic, social, and advocacy activities.	Include a community center in the Master Plan.	Assist with engaging Latino and African American organizations to provide programming and activities for a centralized 6th Ward community center.
Residents want an engaged neighborhood where there is unity and activism	N/A	Develop a system of Block Captains for the 6th Ward.
Residents want a thriving business district	See Table 3	See Table 3
Residents want to empower current homeowners to improve their properties	Develop a 6th Ward Beautification Project	Develop a volunteer corp to assist with the 6th Ward beautification project. Develop a consistent façade scheme or a preferred aesthetic strategy for homes.
Residents want the 6th Ward to be the flagship for civically engaged redevelopment in the City of Reading.	Publish and present about the process to local, regional, and national audiences	Publish and present about the process to local, regional, and national audiences

APPENDIX C

READING THEATER GROUPS

Theatre	Reading Community Players	Reading Civic Theatre	Genesius Theatre
Date Established	1920	1914	1971
Current Location	403 N. 11th Street, Reading, PA	126 N. 10th Street, Reading, PA	153 N. 10th Street, Reading, PA
Location Year	1969		
Contact	RCPtheatre@gmail.com	rctinfo@readingcivic.org	genesiustheatre@verizon.net
Website	www.rcptheatre.org	www.readingcivic.org	genesiustheatre.org

Performances			
Approval for Season Selections	Committee Decision	Committee Decision	Committee Decision
	Berks Art Council monthly mtg to discuss scheduling conflicts for shows	Berks Art Council monthly mtg to discuss scheduling conflicts for shows	Berks Art Council monthly mtg to discuss scheduling conflicts for shows
Future - Scheduling	3 years	1 1/2 to 2 yrs	less than 1 year
Avg Shows/Yr	5 to 8	2 to 5	10 to 14
Avg Performance/Show	6	3	12
Avg Attendance/Show	30	200	80
Avg Ticket Price	\$15 adult, \$10 senior	\$25 - \$45	\$15 - \$35
Avg Production Cost	\$1200 to \$4000	\$130K to \$150K	
		SPAC - Approx. \$55K/show	
		(2012 No Shows at SPAC due to \$\$\$)	
Royalties Fees (varies)			

Current Facilities			
Exterior			
Parking	No off street	Limited spaces in rear off bldg	Limited - approx. 20 spaces
Transportation	Shuttle from near by parking lot	None - N/A	
Lighting	Inadequate	Adequate	Adequate
Building/Structure			
Sq. Ft. (Approx. gross)	3600 (includes 3 garages)	8500	7/24-WIP (main bldg.????) Canal St. Storage approx. 1,000
Seating	150	N/A	120
Other Info	Outdated restrooms	No rehearsal space	Poor indoor air quality
	Limited storage	Stored material moved into rehearsal space to save \$\$\$	Rehearsal space in basement, not using in summer months

Theatre	Reading Community Players	Reading Civic Theatre	Genesius Theatre
	Small concession area	Bldg. utilization: Set creation, storage, ofcs	Seating needs replacing- agreement with Kutztown U
	High Heating costs	High Heating costs	High Heating costs
	Mold - Indoor Air quality	Mold - Indoor Air quality	Under utilized spaces
	Moisture Problems in Basement	Space is very limiting	
	Outdated lighting equipment		
	Outdated sound equipment		
	Electric load capacity		
	Roof needs replacing		

Problematic Concerns			
	Rdg Eagle no longer provides show reviews	Rdg Eagle no longer provides show reviews	Rdg Eagle no longer provides show reviews
	All theatres pull from same limited talent pool	All theatres pull from same limited talent pool	All theatres pull from same limited talent pool
	Neighborhood not interested- free tickets offered, one person showed	People reluctant to visit downtown Reading for auditions	Location limits the audience , not the actors
	Transient neighborhood - safety concerns	Miller Ctr - no fly space, min dressing rooms, Cast is generally 40 to 60	General bldg maintenance
	No endowment -need funding	No rehearsal space	Funding
	Neighbor - exit door	Bldg - for sale	
	Can only start new set design when prior show closes	Funding	
	Location prohibits large draw form surrounding areas		

Theatre	Reading Community Players	Reading Civic Theatre	Genesius Theatre
Wish List			
	Fully Support new shared theatre in Ricktown	Fully Support new shared theatre in Ricktown	Fully Support new shared theatre in Ricktown
	Seating - up to 75	Seating 750 to 1000	Seating - up to 200
	Black Box	Black Box	Black Box
	Fly space	Fly space	Fly space
	Mobile Seating & Stage	Wings	Mobile Seating & Stage
	Thrust space	Large dressing rooms	
	Confortable seating	Multi-purpose space	

APPENDIX D

Berks Housing Development Partnership (BHDP) - A Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO) of the Reading Housing Authority (RHA)

The Reading Housing Authority (RHA) is a Public Housing Agency that is organized under the laws of Pennsylvania, and whose primary contract is with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The agency offers affordable housing options and opportunities such as public housing with affordable rent and homeownership options to families. It also operates the Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) Program.

The Berks Housing Development Partnership (BHDP) is a CHDO organized under the RHA. Its main charter is to aid in the completion and management of the GoggleWorks Apartment project. However, the CHDO could possibly take on other projects in the Ricktown Area. The organization is committed to the following:

- Acquisition, development and operation of affordable rental housing in the Ricktown Arts District in accordance with federal HOME program guidelines.
- Provision of a part-time project manager to administer said acquisition and construction program.
- Administration and affirmative marketing of HOME projects.

Reading-Berks Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity of Berks County is a 501(c)(3) ecumenical Christian charitable organization which exists to create affordable homeownership opportunities with and for low-income families. Families who purchase Habitat for Humanity homes must first contribute 400 hours construction labor on a Habitat home, a contribution we call “sweat-equity.” Homes are sold to the families at no profit, and financed with zero-interest mortgages. The payments made by the families on their mortgages are then used to build more homes in the local community.

Habitat has selected the Ricktown Area as its first Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative Area. As part of this initiative, Habitat will work to engage residents to identify housing and community needs and target efforts to address those needs. They have committed to the following:

- Implementation of the City’s first Habitat for Humanity Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative Strategy in the Ricktown District
- Construction of new single-family homes
- Larger rehab projects
- Repairs to owner-occupied units
- Owner-occupied façade/landscaping improvement (“A Brush with Kindess” program)
- Volunteer-led neighborhood improvement activities including landscaping public or large areas, façade improvement for churches, neighborhood cleanups, block parties, tree planting, etc.

Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks

The mission of Neighborhood Housing Services of Greater Berks, Inc. (NHS) is to facilitate and provide affordable housing programs and initiatives that will expand home ownership opportunities for all people of Berks County, especially low-to moderate-income families, and will contribute to the revitalization of our neighborhoods and the greater community.

They have conducted homeownership and community outreach efforts in the 6th Ward (Ricktown) area for over 30 years. They currently provide landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities classes, budget counseling, delinquency/foreclosure prevention & mitigation counseling, as well as administering home repair loan and grant programs. It is vital for efforts in Ricktown to be collaborative with and/or complementary to the services NHS currently provides.

NHS is the most appropriate agency to act as the overarching entity that will implement the Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy/ Ricktown Revitalization Plan. It is recommended that the CBDO be formed under NHS. The agency will do the following as part of the project:

- Free Home buyer Education classes in the Ricktown District
- Home Ownership Preservation (HOP) loans, also called 2nd mortgage loans, for 20% of purchase price + closing costs to new home buyers in the neighborhood with incomes up to 105% Area Median Income (AMI)
- Assistance from a full-time Director of Neighborhood Building to do 'street level' work in the implementation of Ricktown Plan;
- Hold annual Operation Facelift event in Ricktown in 2012.
- Hold Foreclosure Mitigation classes in neighborhood to groups and offer foreclosure assistance to individual families at no cost to families.
- Provide up to \$100,000 in home repair assistance to families through low cost loans; CHRP at 3%/5 year and w/ no income or security restrictions.
- Administer the PHFA Keystone R&R program up to \$35,000 loans for 20 years; allows up to 150% AMI and 125% of LTV of homes.
- Provide up to \$50,000 of grants to homeowners below 80% AMI to replace building systems such as roofs and heating up to \$5,000/home – pending City funding.
- Provide free Tenant Education classes in the neighborhood to families renting from NSP or other funded rehabbed units, as well as being open to the general renter population.
- Apply for a grant of \$250,000 from the Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB) of Pittsburgh in support of Ricktown repair grants to homeowners to improve homes and/or comply with City Codes.
- Provide Community Leadership Institute (CLI) Training to 3-4 neighborhood resident leaders to attend an out-of-state national training institute on leadership, planning, and advocacy skills, with all expenses paid by NHS and NeighborWorks America.
- Provide volunteers and a \$2000 grant toward the clean-up and improvement of Barbey's Playground.
- Continue to provide an after-school homework assistance and computer internet program in Ricktown to neighborhood children.
- Create a Community-Based Development Organization (CBDO) under the agency to accomplish neighborhood goals and implement Ricktown plan.

Our City Reading

Our City Reading is a 501C non profit corporation with a three-pronged mission: to create pride and stability through home ownership to Reading's first-time home buyers, to bring new high quality job opportunities to the area, and to enhance the quality of life for city and surrounding community residents.

As of January 2007, Our City Reading has assisted over 300 families to become first time home buyers. OCR's banking partners provided low interest loans, at rates below standard residential housing mortgage rates. OCR will conduct the following activities as part of the Ricktown Plan:

- Complete a number of NSP2 rehab projects in the Ricktown area over the next five years to provide low-cost mortgages to first time home-buyers and affordable rental housing .
- Rehab commercial and residential properties for the allowance of rental housing and various types of live-work space.

The Berks County Redevelopment Authority

The Berks County Redevelopment Authority was formed in 1961 under Pennsylvania's Urban Redevelopment Law. It's mission is to eliminate blight and dangerous conditions. The Authority is authorized by the Board of County Commissioners and operates independently.

Since 2000, the Authority has taken great steps in renewing and revitalizing the City of Reading and the Borough of West Reading. It fulfills its role in the County's community revitalization using tools and funding programs administered by federal, state and local agencies. The Authority's activities are coordinated through and with the Berks County Community Development Office. They will:

- Implement the County's Acquisition, Demolition, and Disposition (ADD) Program in the Ricktown area in order to demolish one or two severely blighted properties.

The Reading Redevelopment Authority (RRA)

The RRA will do the following activities in Ricktown:

- Assist in identifying highest and best use for vacant/blighted commercial properties.
- Work with OCR and RHA to acquire, rehab, and manage properties.

Aside from housing, partners in the implementation of the Ricktown plan will consist of arts, economic development, and community improvement organizations. These partnerships will be developed and orchestrated through the CBDO

APPENDIX E

Peekskill, N.Y.

Peekskill is about 50 miles north of New York City. In the early 90s, the population was dwindling and the downtown area was becoming more vacant. The Common Council decided to make artist studios and galleries an important part of the City's revitalization strategy.

Today, the City of Peekskill has 80 artist live/ work lofts. This includes the Peekskill Art Lofts opened in 2002. The Peekskill Art Lofts are an affordable 28-unit limited equity cooperative apartment complex built for qualified artists.

As an economic development incentive, landlords can be offered tax incentives, grants, facade improvements, and loans to renovate buildings that can be used as live-work spaces by artists.

To lease one of these artist lofts for living and working, the City's Artist Certification Committee must certify an individual as an artist.

The City of Peekskill Department of Planning, Development and Code Assistance currently manages the developmental process to maintain and grow live-work spaces for artists on the upper floors of commercial buildings.



Banana Factory

Located in a re-imagined banana warehouse and distribution center in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the Banana Factory is a visual arts and education campus owned and operated through Art Quest. Art Quest is a non-profit organization that looks to celebrate the arts and culture. Their focus is directed towards music, arts, festivals and education. The Banana Factory campus is home to over 20 artists, several galleries, ceramic, and glass studios, has wide variety of visual arts classes, an Olympus Digital Imaging Center, the Pennsylvania Youth Theatre, and the Hispanic American League of Artists (HALA).

Torpedo Factory

The Torpedo Factory Art Center is the highlight of Alexandria's Potomac River waterfront, attracting approximately 500,000 visitors annually. Visit 82 artists' studios, six galleries, two workshops, and the Alexandria Archaeology Museum. Sign up for an art class with The Art League School. Then stroll along the waterfront, shop and sightsee on nearby historic streets, have a picnic on the dock behind the art center, or eat in the area's many fine restaurants. The Torpedo Factory Art Center houses more than 165 visual artists who produce artwork in a wide variety of media including painting, ceramics, photography, jewelry, stained glass, fiber, printmaking, and sculpture. The artists invite visitors to join them in their studios and observe their creative processes. The Torpedo Factory Art Center's mission is to enhance public art appreciation and education by providing the opportunity to visit working art studios and artist cooperatives, and to take classes.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Crystal Edwards
Gabriella Folino
Steve Haver
Mayor Tom McMahan
Lee Olsen
Cheryl Renninger
Brad Reinhart
Pier Ignozzi-Shaffer
Diana Tolentino
Hailey Weber

Neighborhood Housing Services

Reading Housing Authority

Our City Reading Inc.

Reading Redevelopment Authority

Googleworks

Berks Arts Council

Habitat for Humanity

Greater Reading Visitor's Bureau

Genesis Theatre

Reading Civic Theatre

Reading Community Players

Greater Reading Film Commission

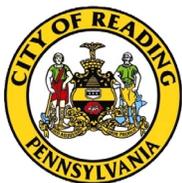
Reading Area Community College

Berks County Community Development

Berks Redevelopment Authority

Charrette Attendees
Community Leaders

Dr. William Davis
Ed Terrell
Anna Ortiz
Tasha Isaae
Grady Harris
Carl Taylor
Carmela Boykins
Samantha Thompson
Phillip Spradley
Nancy Centeno
Kelly Brown
Akida Meade
David Telstar
Ann Sellers
Suzanne Fellows
George Seidel
Al Huff



Ricktown Arts District

Ricktown Project Coordinator Office of the Mayor

815 Washington St., Reading, PA 19601

Phone: (610)655-6392

Fax: (610)655-6549

reading.ricktown@gmail.com

