



Recommendations of the Symonds Way Exploratory Committee

Carlo Bacci, Chair – Select Board

Chuck Robinson, Vice Chair – School Committee

Angela Binda – Recreation Committee

Heather Clish – Community Planning and Development Commission

Andrew Dribin – Conservation Commission

Karen Janowski – Council on Aging

Nancy Twomey – Permanent Building Committee

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Introduction

SWEC Formation

- In 2019 the Town purchased approximately 15 acres on Symonds Way, off Haverhill Street. A subsequent site survey, completed in September 2022, performed by the engineering company Weston and Sampson, showed approximately 2.5 acres of the land was buildable due to the proximity of wetlands.
- In November 2022, the Reading Select Board formed the Symonds Way Exploratory Committee (SWEC) to serve as an advisory committee for the purpose of recommending the best options for uses of this land for our community.

SWEC Charge

The purpose of this committee is to serve as an advisory committee to the Reading Select Board for the purpose of recommending the best options for uses of the land for our community, understanding the needs of the community, located on Symonds Way.

SWEC shall gather input from its members and the Reading residents as to what the property should look like and its functionality. SWEC will hold regular meetings and community outreach, SWEC will gather, analyze, and organize information for future planning decisions related to the best uses for this property.

SWEC Charge

The Committee shall consider the following:

- Best uses to serve as many residents as possible
- Using public funds and grants where possible towards development
- Private/public partnerships to develop the property

The first task of SWEC will be to define the best use for the property. SWEC will provide feedback on potential physical layouts on the property developed by SV Design Architects and funded by Town Meeting on April 2022. If a private/public partnership is deemed appropriate, the SWEC will work with Reading Town Hall staff to develop and review a Request for Proposals (RFP) for private developers to invest in the property. Once proposals are received, and with the help of Reading Town Hall Staff, SWEC will help review and evaluate the submittals to the RFP. The Committee will offer recommendations for potential funding options, if pursuing public development is deemed appropriate.

SWEC Actions

1. To gain an understanding of what the community would like, a survey was developed and published.
2. Initial schematic drawings were produced by SV Design to help the committee understand the scope and scale of various types of recreation that could fit within the 2.5 acres.
3. At a March 2023 meeting, comments made by the public suggested that we look at all Town-owned area on Symonds Way.
4. At SWEC's request, the Select Board, at their May 2023 meeting, voted to expand the Committee's charge to include areas that the Town's Conservation Administrator determined were possible areas to develop, including behind the Burbank Ice Arena, the baseball field, and a small area next to 18 Symonds Way.
5. A Request for Information (RFI) was developed and published to solicit responses from parties interested in a private/public enterprise.

Evaluation Criteria

- To help the Committee identify the best use(s) of the property, evaluation criteria were discussed and established as follows:
 1. Provides a wide-range of public use.
 2. Provides inter-generational use.
 3. Meets a demonstrated need.
 4. Maintains Town's ownership of property.
 5. Minimal taxpayer expense/fiscally responsible.
 6. Compatible with surrounding uses.

Community Input

- Over multiple meetings, several requests were heard from the public including:
 1. Contracting with Black Earth for a compost facility.
 2. Building pickle ball courts behind the Burbank Ice Arena utilizing their overflow parking area and built through private donations.
 3. Creating more practice fields for Reading Youth Lacrosse.
 4. Creating an aquatic center.
 5. Using a portion of the land for a dog park built through a grant specifically for dog parks.
- Finally, the Town is concurrently conducting a feasibility study that potentially places the Reading Center For Active Living within the original 2.5-acre site.

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Community Survey Results

Community Survey Responses

Total responses

- 1,727

Age of Respondents

18-29	30
30-39	299
40-49	628
50-59	340
60-69	213
70-79	144
80-89	35
90+	2
Prefer Not to Answer	36

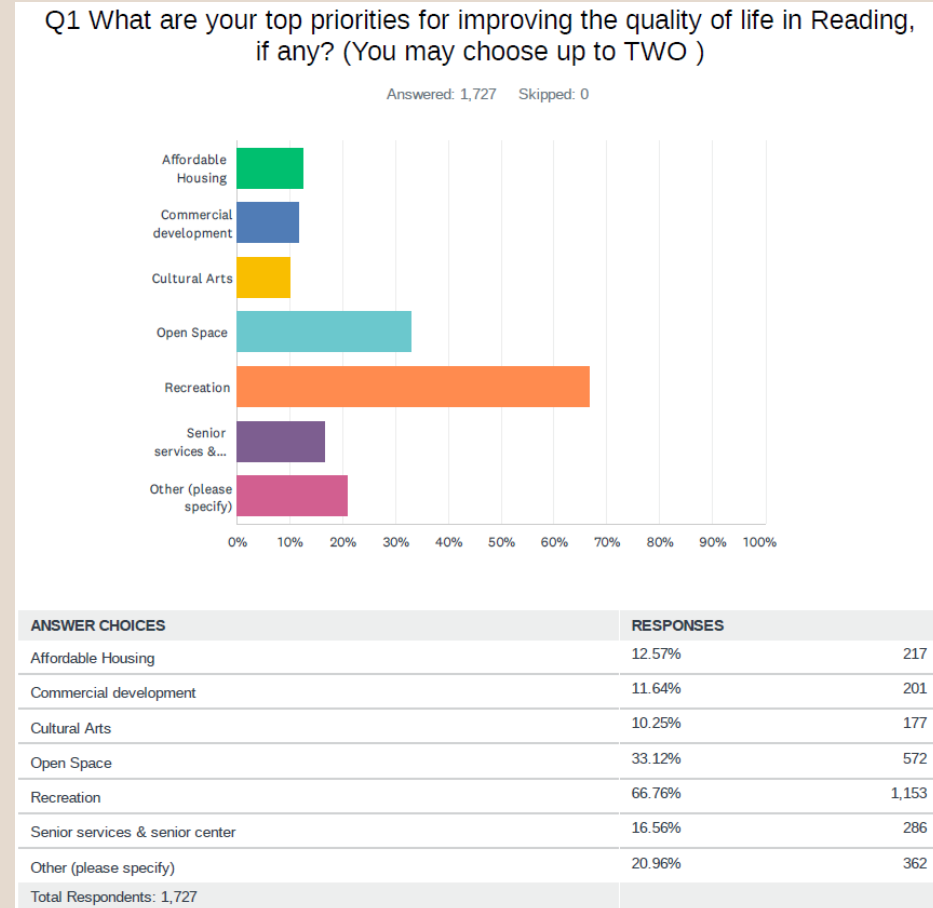
Are there children under age 18 in your household?

Yes	1,061
No	591
Not Applicable	46
Prefer Not to Answer	29

Question 1:

What are your top priorities for improving the quality of life in Reading?

- Top Answers:
 1. Recreation 66.76% (Chosen highly among households with and without children)
 2. Open Space 33.12%
 3. Senior Services & Senior Center 16.56%
 4. Other (Top Fill-in Responses out of 362)
 1. Hockey/Ice Rink 113
 2. Pickleball 73
 3. Fields (turf/outdoor/athletic) 39

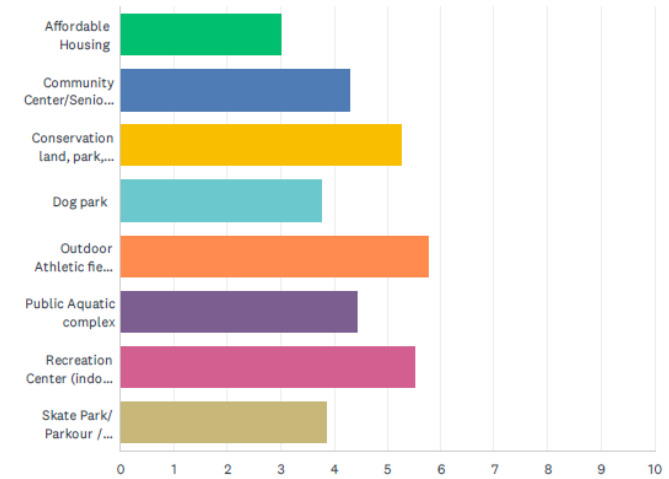


Question 2:
Rank the priority of example projects.

- Top Answers:
1. Outdoor Athletic Fields/Courts
 2. Recreation Center (Indoor)
 3. Conservation Land/Green Spaces

Q2 Below is a sample list of projects areas that may be considered for this parcel. Rank these in your order of priority (1 is Most Important).

Answered: 1,727 Skipped: 0

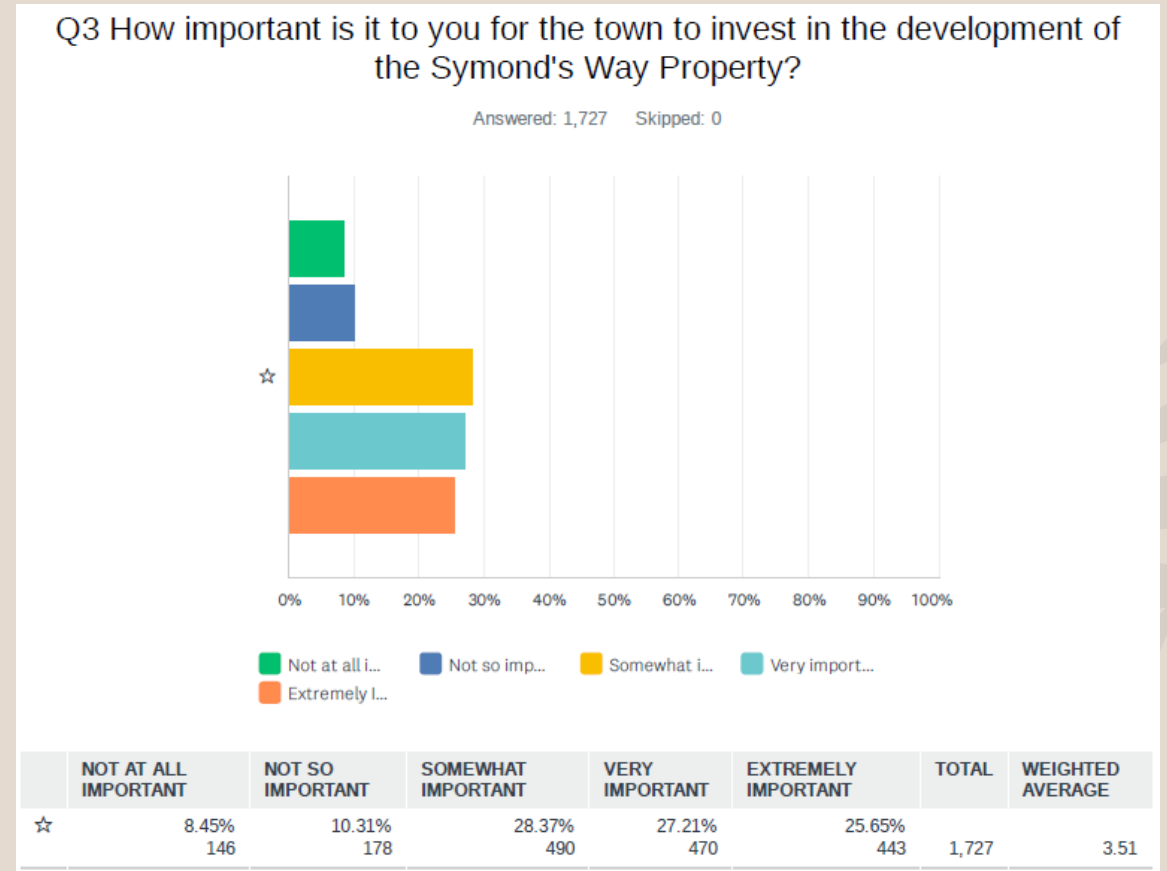


	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TOTAL	SCORE
Affordable Housing	9.90% 171	5.62% 97	4.98% 86	5.27% 91	7.24% 125	9.21% 159	14.36% 248	43.43% 750	1,727	3.03
Community Center/Senio...	10.42% 180	10.60% 183	11.70% 202	10.19% 176	13.90% 240	16.39% 283	20.50% 354	6.31% 109	1,727	4.31
Conservation land, park, and/or green spaces	17.14% 296	14.94% 258	18.07% 312	13.78% 238	13.90% 240	11.35% 196	7.01% 121	3.82% 66	1,727	5.26
Dog park	4.11% 71	7.35% 127	10.13% 175	15.11% 261	13.90% 240	17.54% 303	16.62% 287	15.23% 263	1,727	3.77
Outdoor Athletic fields or courts	24.96% 431	18.76% 324	15.69% 271	13.09% 226	13.61% 235	6.60% 114	5.27% 91	2.03% 35	1,727	5.77
Public Aquatic complex	11.23% 194	10.25% 177	12.97% 224	12.51% 216	13.49% 233	17.43% 301	14.01% 242	8.11% 140	1,727	4.44
Recreation Center (indoor athletic facility with programming managed by the Recreation Dept).	20.03% 346	24.78% 428	13.03% 225	11.81% 204	8.69% 150	7.70% 133	9.96% 172	4.00% 69	1,727	5.53
Skate Park/ Parkour / Outdoor Fitness Course	2.20% 38	7.70% 133	13.43% 232	18.24% 315	15.29% 264	13.78% 238	12.28% 212	17.08% 295	1,727	3.87

Question 3:

How important is the development of the Symonds Way Property?

- Weighted Average 3.51 (out of 5) in importance



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Property Overview

Property Overview

Zanni Land Purchase, Town Meeting 2019

Articles 22, 23 “authorized the select board to purchase for general municipal purposes on such terms as the Select Board shall deem to be in the best interests of the Town...”



Property Constraints

- Contaminants?



Property Constraints

- Contaminants?
- Wetlands (35' "No Build Zone")



Property Constraints

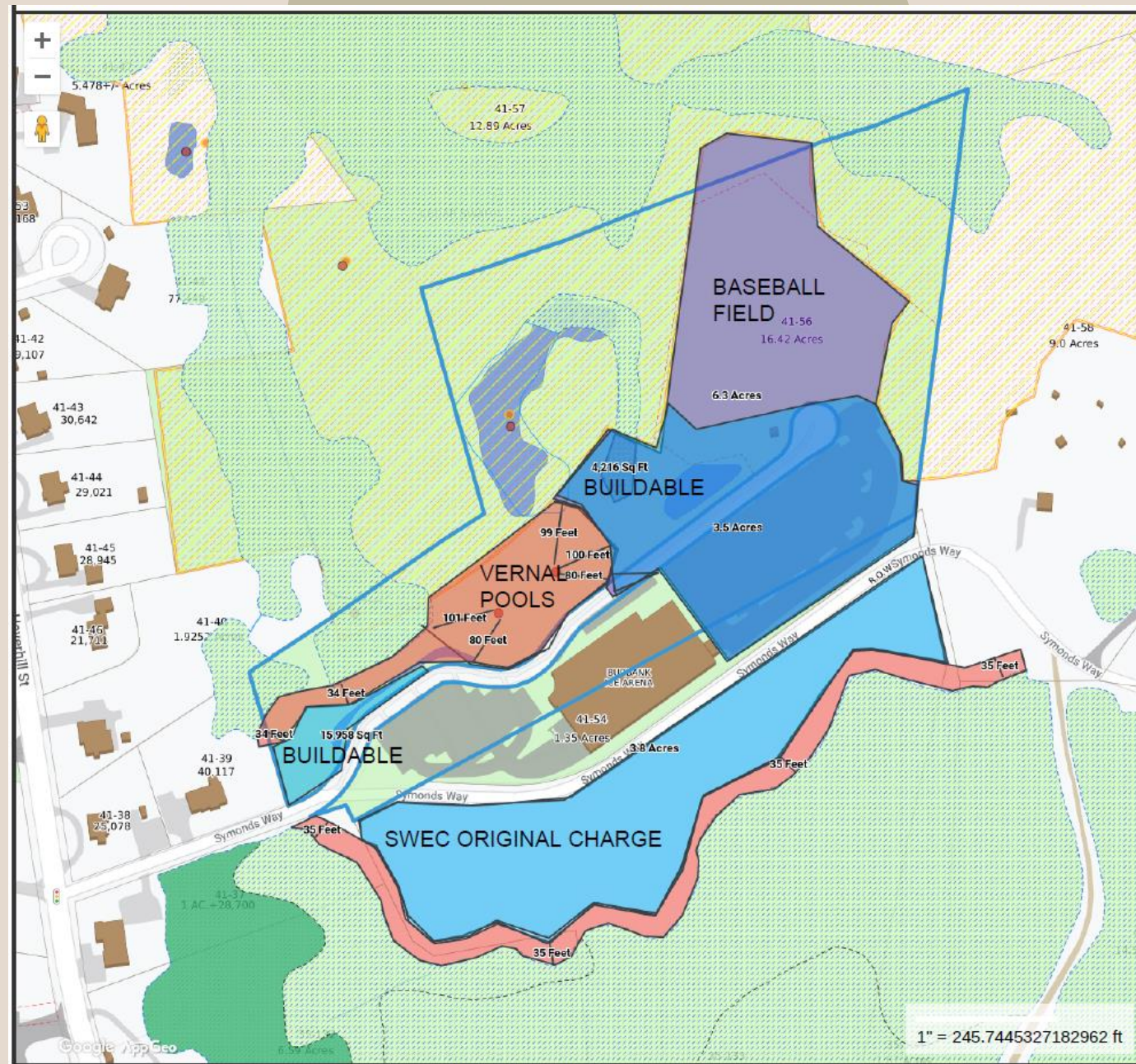
- Contaminants?
- Wetlands (35' "No Build Zone")
- Need for Emergency Fire Lane
- Potential Range Road Upgrade
- Limited Buildable Space



Property Overview

Expanded Charge May 16, 2023

- Baseball field
- Parking area behind Burbank Arena
- Small area adjacent to 18 Symonds Way



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Recommendations

Recommended Options

PUBLIC-PRIVATE MULTI-USE
RECREATIONAL FACILITY

CONSERVATION

PICKLEBALL COURTS

CENTER FOR ACTIVE LIVING
(SENIOR/COMMUNITY
CENTER)

MULTI-PURPOSE FIELDS

DOG PARK

Multi-Purpose Fields

- High need identified by Recreation Department and sports leagues.
- Need for additional lighted practice field growing as high school teams use fields later in the day and evening.
- No other locations currently under consideration for additional fields.
- Can be combined with other elements at Symonds Way property.

Pickleball Courts

- Demand identified in survey and public discussion.
- Sound is unlikely to negatively impact neighbors.
- Most suitable location for new courts identified in town, as discussed by several Town Boards, based on current noise impacts and parking needs.
- Can be combined with other elements at Symonds Way property.

Center for Active Living (Senior/Community Center)

- A recognized Town need. Feasibility Study being led by Reading Center for Active Living (ReCAL) Committee and Council on Aging.
- Two other locations in Reading also under consideration, neither of which appear suitable for the other recommended Symonds Way property uses.
- Potential to combine with other recommended uses if full extent of Town property is used.

Dog Park

- Considered by SWEC in context of grant opportunity at the time.
- While Town Forest is heavily used for dog walking, a dedicated dog park would offer a place for off-leash use and contain dog waste.
- Unclear whether there are other locations that could serve this purpose.

Multi-use Indoor Recreational Facility

- Request for Information (RFI) response received from Edge Sports Global.
- Large flat area to east of Burbank Ice Arena offers uniquely suitable area for complex that could meet multiple needs, including indoor fields & courts, aquatic center, walking track, parking.
- Would require renegotiation with Reading Ice Arena Authority for use of Town land and public-private agreement to assure Town use of facilities.
- Potential to combine with outdoor fields and courts through full use of Symonds Way property.
- For this option, SWEC recommends creating multiple uses over duplicating ice rink at this time.

Conservation

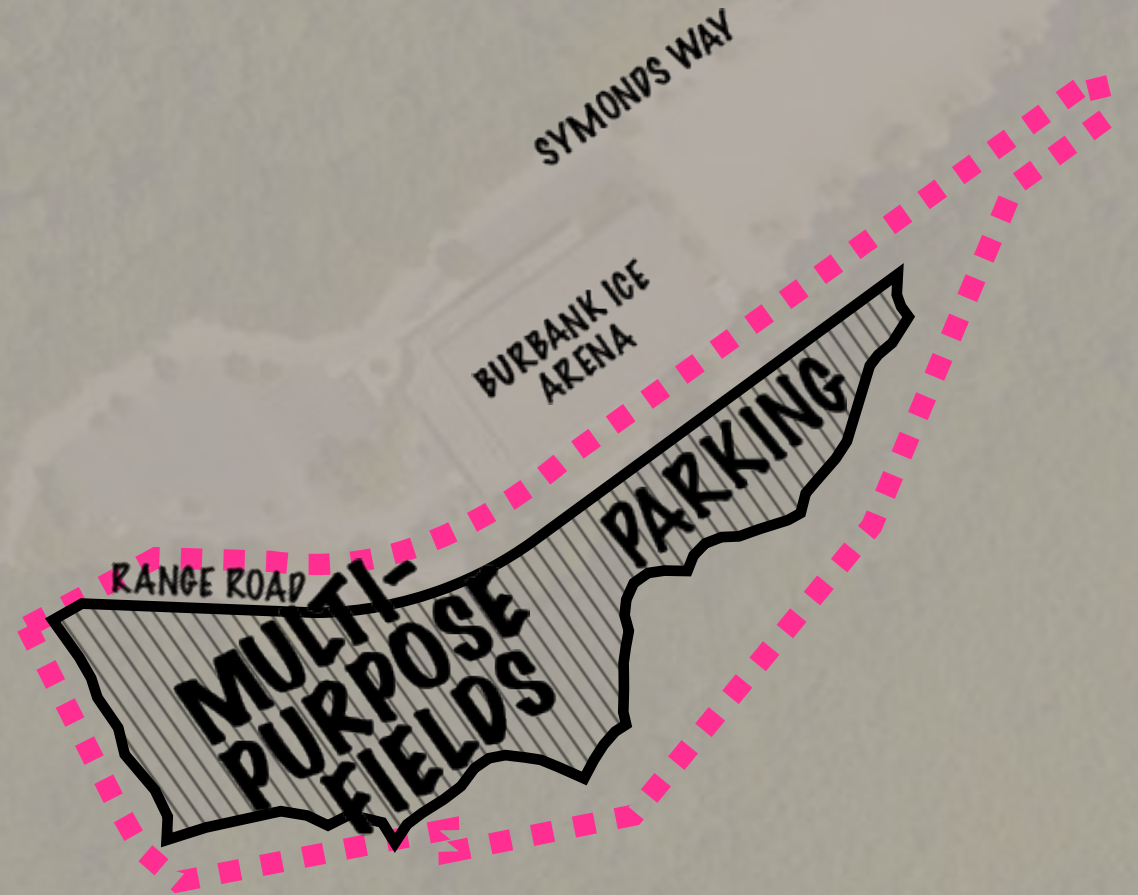
- Recommend gifting non-buildable land to the Conservation Commission to be identified by future site plan.
- Also highly ranked on the community survey.

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Possible Options

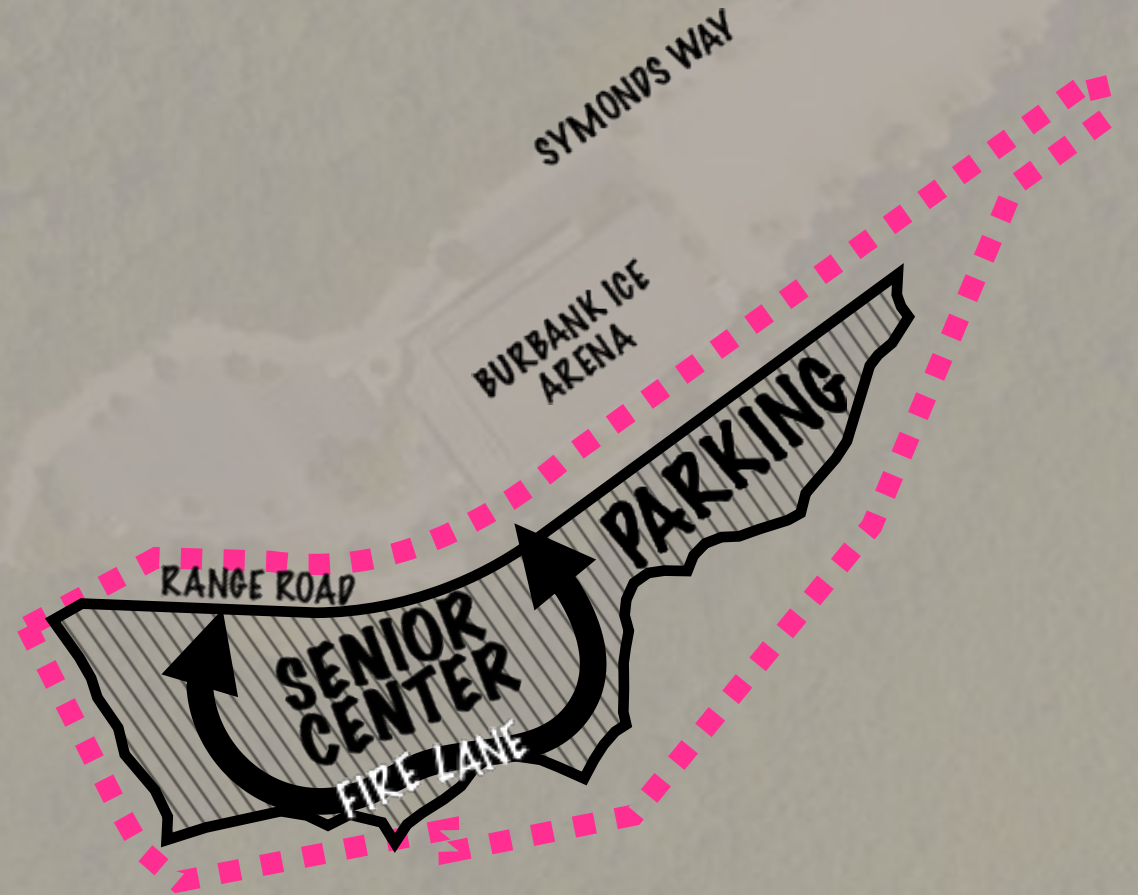
1. “Just a Little” ... **Multi-Purpose Fields**

- Multi-use lighted courts could include: Youth Soccer; Youth Lacrosse; Field Hockey; Basketball Courts; Pickleball.
- Meets a Reading Recreation need.



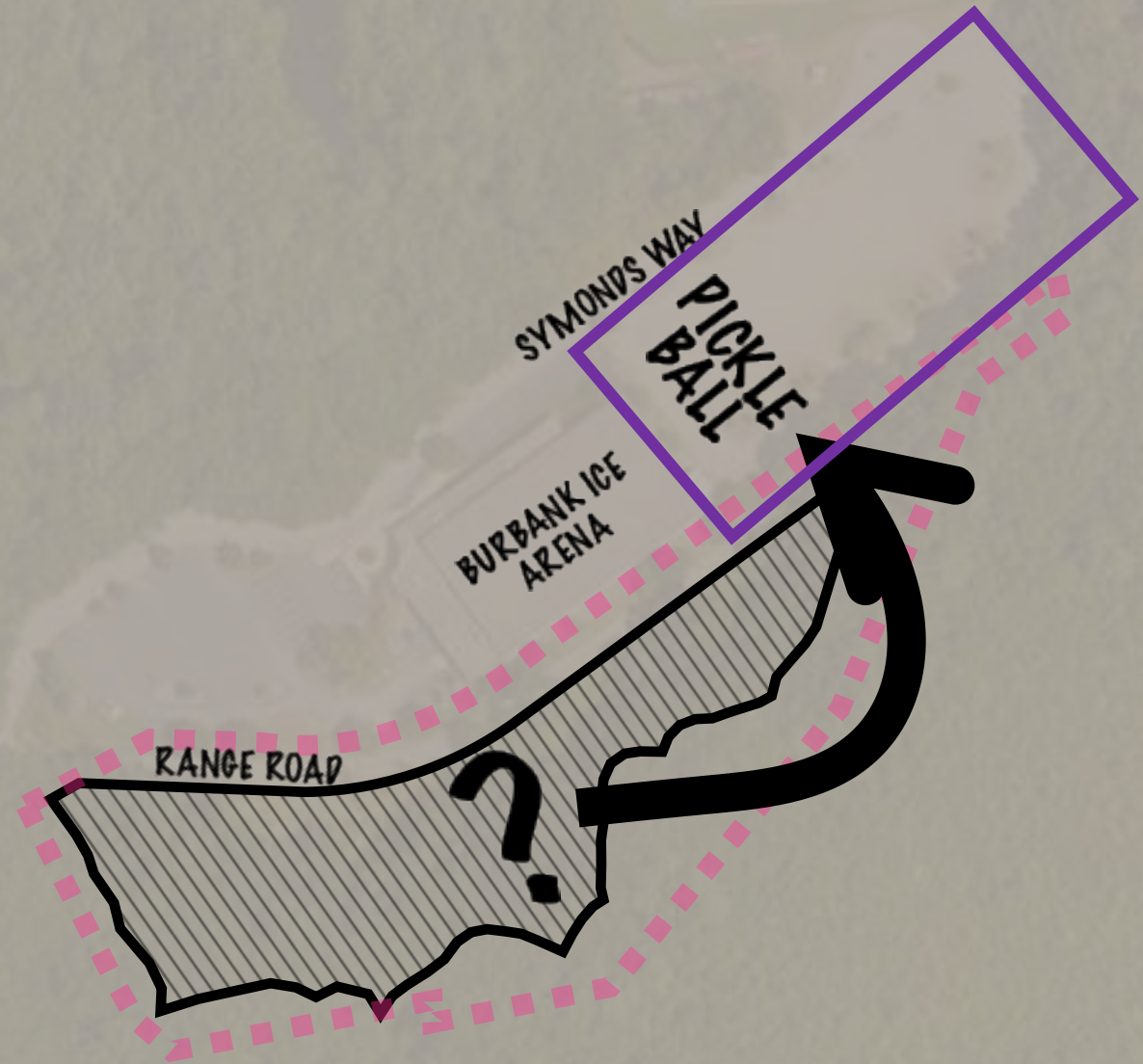
2. “Just a bit more” **Center for Active Living (Senior/Community Center)**

- A recognized Town need. Location under review by Reading Center for Active Living (ReCAL) Committee.
- Need for Emergency Fire Lane around building.



3. “Outside the Box” Use of Burbank Leased Land

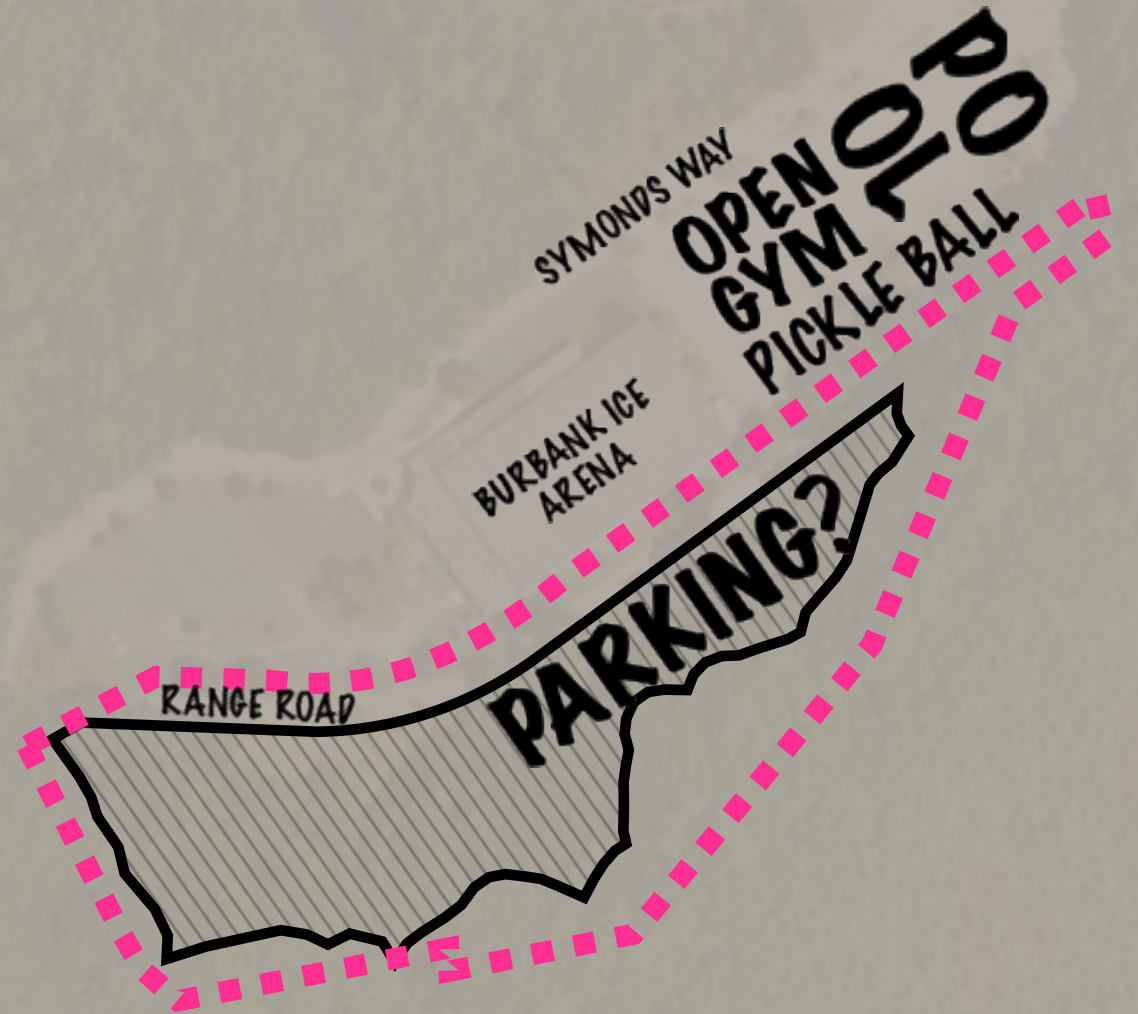
- Expanded charge to include land behind Burbank Ice Arena (approx. 1.5 acres).
- Pickleball Courts on parking lot proposed by Reading Pickleball Players Association.



4. Do A Lot...

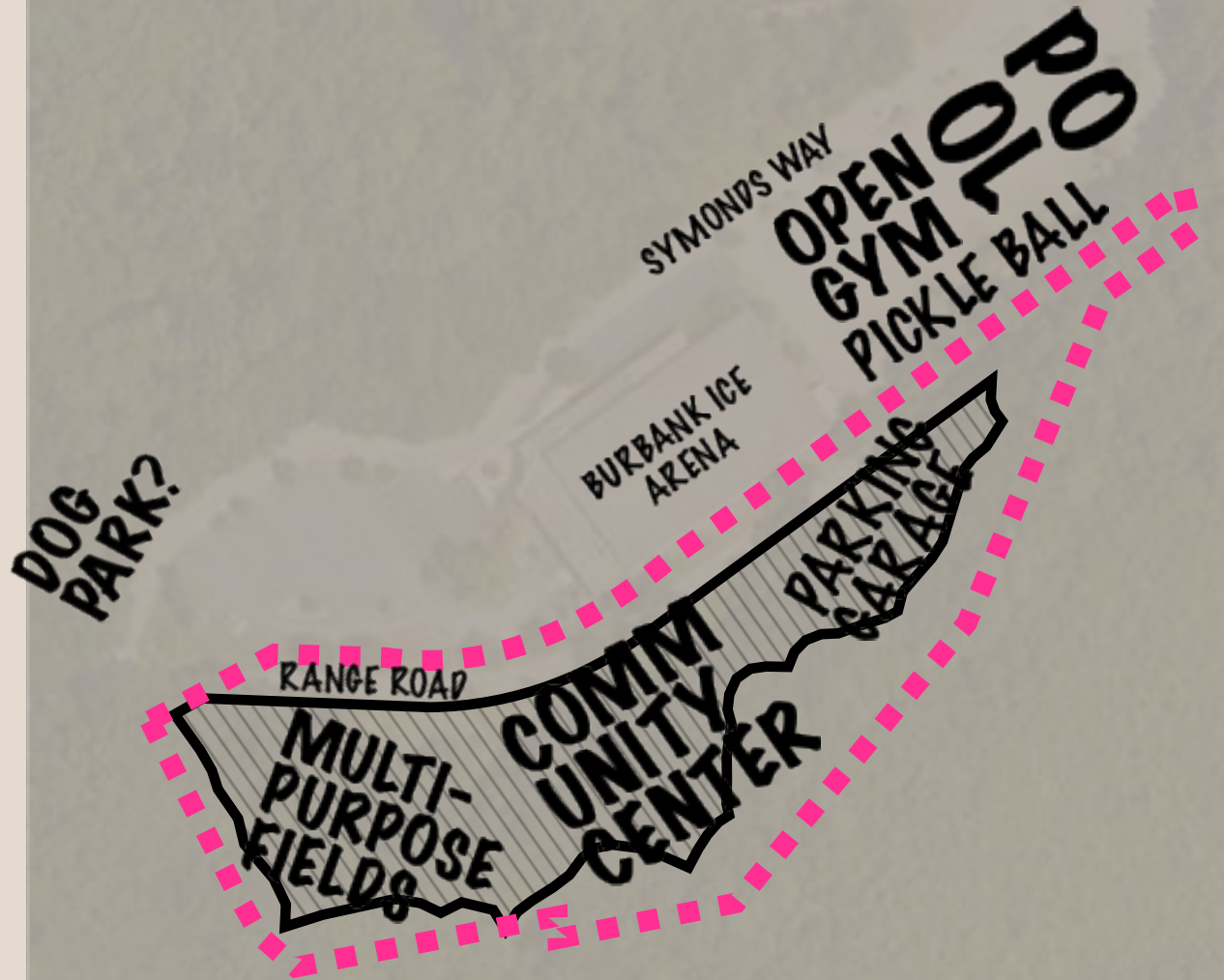
Multi-use Recreational Facility

- Make the most of the land available behind Burbank Ice Arena.
- Public/private partnership opportunity with Edge Sports.
- Where to park?



5. Do it All!

- Full use of Symonds Way property?
- Public/private partnership.
- Meets a wide variety of needs.
- We can think big!



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Methods to Achieve Recommendations

How We Get There (Potential Funding Options)

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Taxpayer Funding
 - Funded through Operating Budget or Debt/Capital Exclusion

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

- Develop and issue detailed Request for Proposals (RFP)
- Edge Sports & Town of Reading

How We Get There (Potential Funding Options)

GRANTS AND STAKEHOLDER FUND-RAISING

- Utilize a grant writer to research grants available for community recreational venues or the final determination of the Select Board
 - MA Land & Water Protection Fund Grants
 - Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program – Small Town program
 - Community Preservation Act
 - Brownfield Funds
- Reading Pickleball Players Association, a 501c3 organization
- Interested stakeholder or community donations

How We Get There - Next Steps

- Present recommendations to the Select Board.
- Address Contaminants and get an **Environmental Impact Report**.
- Formally delineate wetlands for the expanded scope area.
- Select Board determines short-term and long-term priorities.
- Consider establishing Symonds Way Site Plan and Master Plan in concert with appropriate boards and committees.
- Consider negotiating agreement with Burbank Ice Arena for use of overflow parking lot.
- Utilize Grant Writer to research grant opportunities.



thank you

Symonds Way Exploratory Committee