



# Reading Center for Active Living Committee

Presentation to the  
Select Board

August 20, 2024

# Presentation Overview

- Mission
- ReCALC Members
- Prioritizing Age 60+/Current Pleasant Street Center
- RECALC Progress Timeline (2017- current)
- Phase 1 & Phase 2 Efforts
  - Community Survey & Engagement, Site Visits
  - Identified Needs, Priorities and User Groups
  - ReCALC Charter Extension
  - Additional Site Surveys
  - Alignment with COA & Other Community Priorities
- Feasibility Study
  - Site Selection Process & Options
  - Site Selection Identified Pros & Cons
  - Site Selection Recommendation
- Next Steps

# Mission

Explore the current and future needs of the Community, and initiate planning for a potential new Senior/Community Center in town that will focus on residents aged 60+ and possibly other members of the Community.

Senior/Community Center = **Reading Center for Active Living (ReCaL)**

# ReCALC Members

- John O'Neill, Chair
- John Sasso, Vice Chair
- Ron Assini, Secretary
- Nora Bucko
- Michael Coltman, REC Representative
- Mark Dockser, Select Board Representative
- John Parsons, COA Representative



# Prioritizing a Vulnerable Population Age 60+

- NEED: The Reading Center for Active Living is a \*NEED\* supported by data provided by professional consultants and 8+ years of exploration.
- IMPACT: Serve the growing 60+ population: 20% in 2010, 26% 2020, 28.6% 2024, 30% 2030.<sup>1</sup>
- SPACE: Reaching more members of our 60+ population requires we create **better accessible and inclusive spaces** acknowledging that individuals will have a varying degree of interests and physical capabilities.

<sup>1</sup> Community Engagement and Planning Report, ReCal, December 2022



# Pleasant Street Center (PSC): NOT MEETING CURRENT NEEDS – LIMITED CAPACITY

- Space Constraints
  - 4,550 Sq feet of usable space
  - Effectively only three multipurpose program rooms
  - Have you tried to play pool in the game room?
- 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Main Room
  - 60 people capacity with Tables/Chairs
  - 85 people with chairs only
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor (2 Program Rooms)
  - Lounge Capacity 16 w/Table, 20 w/Chairs
  - “Kitchen/Art Room” 12 w/Table, 15 w/Chairs
- Many programs have waitlists due to space
  - Example: Annual Independence Day BBQ 28 on waitlist
- Center usage is Increasing (+11,753 over last year)
  - Interactions: FY23 25,384 / FY24 37,137

Overflow from Chair Yoga





# Pleasant Street Center Unable to Meet the Growing Age 60+ Community Needs



Office in the Hallway



- No bathroom on first floor
- No private offices
- No one-on-one space
- Space Constrained Kitchen
- Unable to run multiple (lg.) programs at once
- 140 yr. old historical building **Smell of Gas!!!**
- No dedicated space for art, fitness, social, library
- Building Access, Limited Parking



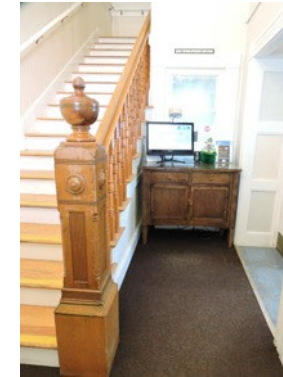
Kitchen



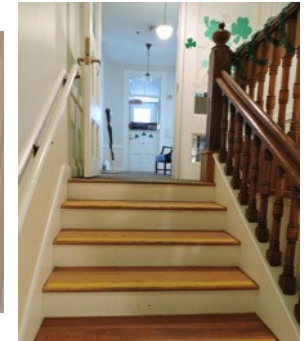
Non-Dividable Multi-Purpose Room (700 Sq. ft.)



Art/Lunch/Meeting Room (no dedicated storage)



Registration



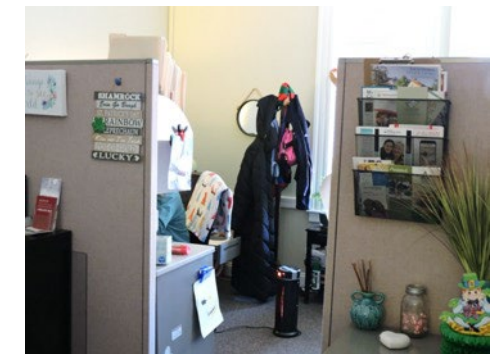
Hallway Waiting Areas



Computer & Game Rooms (basement)

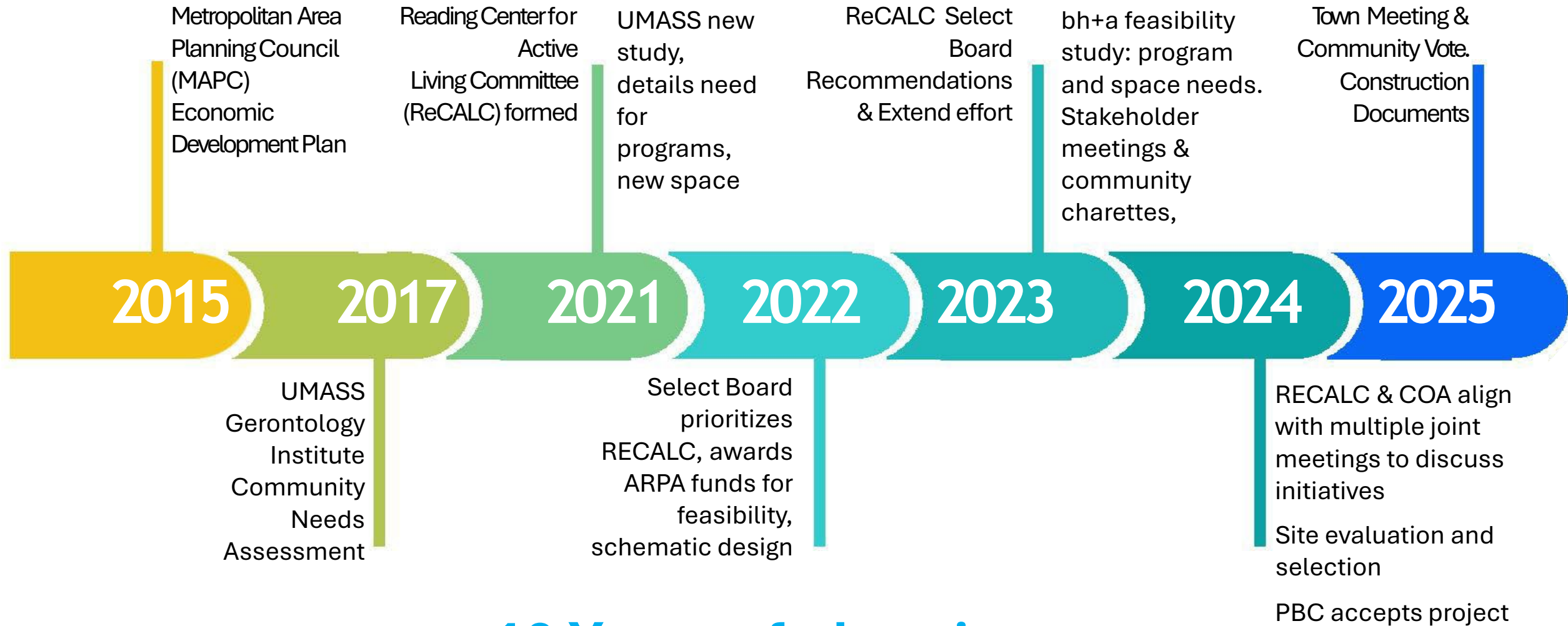


Reception



Nurse & Senior. Case Worker Office (no privacy or one-on-one space)

# Project Timeline



**10 Years of planning**



# ReCALC Phase 1 & 2 Efforts

# Defining the Users of RECAL

## Key Findings in UMASS Study

- Facilities and programming ability for age 60+ is insufficient today and getting worse.
- Senior center vs. Community Center with designated senior space?
  - Age 70+ prefer Senior Center
  - Nearly ½ of survey respondents preferred an “all-ages community center including designated space and programming for residents age 60+.”
  - More than half of respondents under age 60 preferred an all-ages community center.
- Results from all data sources indicate that older residents are open to the idea of an all-ages community center, but must have their own space and experiences with peers

# Survey Results



## Town of Reading Community Survey of Reading Residents

The Town of Reading has provided programs and services for residents aged 60 and over at the Pleasant Street Center (PSC) for 29 years. Increasingly, space limitations have restricted opportunities to expand programming and introduce updated design features in the existing space. A *community needs assessment* conducted in 2017 by UMass Boston, in collaboration with the Town, demonstrated that the PSC has reached its limits. Conclusive recommendations included exploring the feasibility of expanding the capacity of Reading's Elder and Human Services Division.

In response to these challenges, the Town of Reading is engaged in a planning process to explore the development of a new senior center or community center that offers new opportunities for the expansion of programming and new features. This planning project, the Reading Center for Active Living (ReCAL), is a forward-looking effort to plan for the needs and interests of the community. A critical component of this process is collecting feedback directly from Reading residents of all ages. We ask each individual in Reading to complete the survey. **Surveys from each adult in the same household are encouraged.**

You are invited to share your views and preferences for programming and services that will have implications for future space and staffing needs. **This survey should take no more than 10 minutes.** All of your responses will be kept confidential. **Please do not include your name or other identifying information on this survey.** If you have questions or would like to complete this survey by phone, please leave a message at 617-267-7413 or email [csdra@umb.edu](mailto:csdra@umb.edu), and our staff will set up a time to go through the survey with you over the phone.

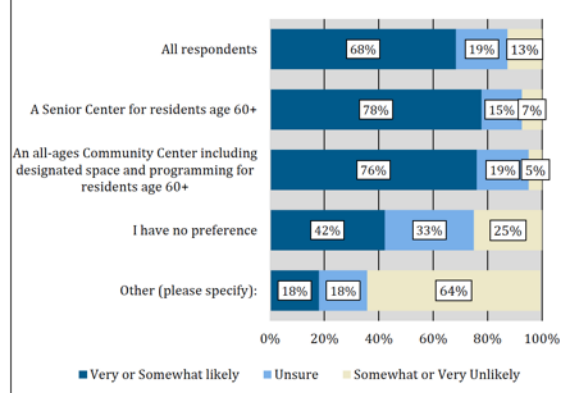
We thank you in advance for your participation.

Please return your completed survey to a drop-off box at Town Hall, the Library, or the Pleasant Street Center  
**NO LATER THAN September 30<sup>th</sup>**

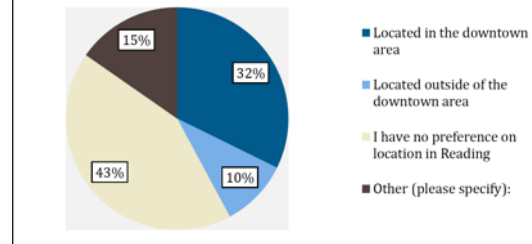
## Community Survey

- 1472 Responses to 24 Questions
- Focused on Community & Neighborhood, Future Senior/Community Center, Programs & Services

**Figure 9. Likelihood of using a new senior or community center, by scenario preference**

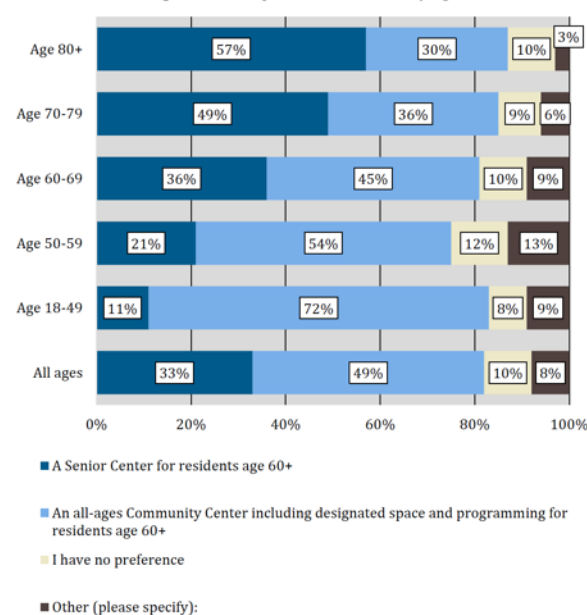


**Figure 7. Location preference for a future senior/community center**



## Where

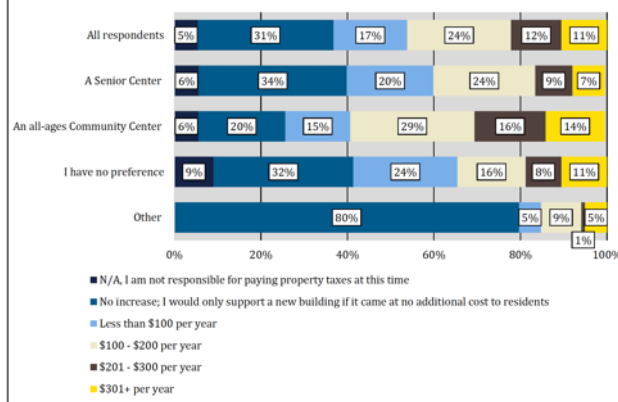
**Figure 6. Most preferred scenario, by age**



## What

## Will They Use It

**Figure 8. Maximum household tax increase supported, by senior or community center preference**



## How Much \$\$

	Reading town census, residents age 18+, postcards mailed	Age distribution (%), town census	Number of responses	Response rate by age	Age distribution (%), survey responses
Age 18-29	3,597	18%	18	<1%	1%
Age 30-49	6,427	32%	267	4%	18%
Age 50-59	3,547	17%	212	6%	15%
Age 60-69	3,283	16%	342	10%	23%
Age 70-79	2,304	11%	329	14%	22%
Age 80+	1,302	6%	125	10%	9%
Age not provided	---	---	177	---	12%
<b>All ages</b>	<b>20,460</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,470</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Who Responded



# Community Forums

- Reading as a Place to Live
  - (+) Close knit, feel safe, social/cultural, proximity to Boston, downtown+, many resources
  - (-) Housing costs, tax rate, getting around
- Envisioning a Center
  - Age-inclusive space, meet a variety of needs and interests, flexible and adaptable.
  - Challenging, interesting, and active programs. Engage with children, young adults, & caregivers
- Specific Needs
  - Social space, meals, computer classes, movie room, evening & weekend programs, one-on-one mtg space
  - Parking & transportation, accessibility, comfortable
  - Dedicated art space, exercise room/equipment
  - Employment opportunities, low/no cost programs & services



- **Held 3 Community Forms (172 participants)**
- **General Feedback**
  - **Need Better Communication**

# VISITED 15 EASTERN MA PEER CENTERS

## • Food Preparation and Meals

- 10 centers providing weekday lunch meal, 4 centers w/Chef on Staff
- Most charge nominal fee (\$2-\$4)
- 6 centers prepped meals on-site, 7 centers did not

## • Center Operations

- Average Peer Community Budget (FY22) \$860k vs. \$220.5k for Reading (\$356k FY24)
- Average Peer Community Bldg. 19,300 sf. vs. 7,000 sf. for Reading
- Average Peer Community Staff 14 F&PT vs. 6 for Reading

## • Transportation & Parking

- All have transportation options
- Cost ranging from free, to donations, to \$20 depending on service
- On-Site Parking: 55 spaces (ave), 5 handicapped

## • What is Current Center Missing

- Dedicated Technology Room, More Parking, Outdoor Activities, Evening Hours, Gym, Commercial Kitchen, More Storage, Access, Private Office/Visit space, Lounge, Washer/Dryer

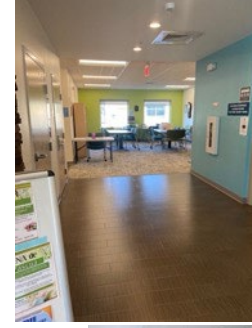
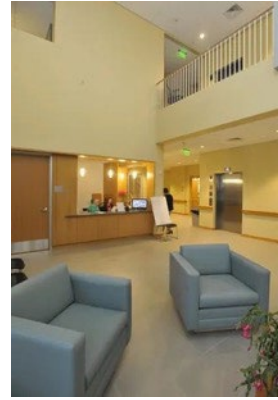
## Building Features

Feature	Yes	No
Elevator	9	6
Bathrooms	15	0
Wheelchair Accessible	15	0
Visual/Auditory Impaired Access	8	4
Gym	6	9
Exercise Equipment	11	4
Showers	5	10
Admin Program Staff Offices	15	0
Library-Quiet Area	11	4
Individual Counseling Areas	13	2
Health Clinic	10	5
Creative Arts Room	14	1
Reception Area	14	1
Adequate Storage	7	4
Outdoor Programming Space	8	3

## Programmatic

Question	Yes	No
Multiple Programs at once	15	0
Capped Programs	10	0
Centralized Programs	11	0
De-Centralized Programs	3	4
Intergenerational Programs	12	3
Can Large Room Be Divided	7	2







# Recommendations from RECALC

## Delivered to Select Board February 2023

1. Define and execute an immediate facility solution for replacing and/or expanding the current Senior Center
2. Continue to enhance (invest in) the programming/services for Seniors including new offerings and better accessibility (e.g. address transportation, evening programming, etc.)
3. Develop communications strategies and community outreach regarding the needs for Seniors.
4. The desire for an all-ages community center (with dedicated senior space) is real. However, it should not take precedence over first meeting program, service, and facility needs of Reading Seniors.

# Select Board Additions to Charter (6/23)

- Information for Feasibility Study: Using information obtained and developed through review of best practices, visits to and discussions with other senior /community centers around us, and survey results, provide a document and information to be used by the firm being hired to perform the feasibility study. Goal of sharing this within 45-60 days.
- Program focus: Using the above tools and new interviews, explorations and discussions, add programming review to help define what we may want to offer in terms of services for seniors. Focus on other similar communities, best practices, enticing new participants in the 60+ age bracket to attend programs at the center.
- Operating Finance: Explore a variety of financing alternatives used by other senior/community centers for programming activities to include donations, grants, town support and potentially other alternatives.
- Transportation: Explore transportation best practices for senior centers.

# Project Priorities for RECAL

## Project Priorities

A new center, focused on the needs of Reading's 60+ community, should provide spaces that support:



**Socialization:** Dedicated senior lounge space for informal gathering, and a multipurpose room sized to accommodate social events



**Diverse and concurrent uses:** Various sized program rooms that allow for a variety of programs at the same time



**Physical activity:** Fitness room, equipped with age-appropriate workout equipment and a separate gross motor room



**Meals programming:** Dedicated dining area and commercial kitchen to support it.



**Outdoor activity:** Space for formal and purpose-built activities, like pickleball



**Administrative support:** Adequate space for social services, staff collaboration and private consultations



**Accessibility:** Rooms are sized to exceed code minimums



**Affordability:** Both the building and program costs are affordable



# Additional Peer Site Visits

**Focus on understanding financial, programmatic and transportation issues**

	Needham (new 2014)	Burlington	Wakefield	Randolph (new 2017)
Finance/Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>\$2.5M Budget</b> (w/HHS, Youth &amp; Family Services, Aging Services &amp; Veterans)</li> <li>• <b>7 FT, 8 PT Staff</b></li> <li>• Grants to support Shine Program</li> <li>• Friends Group fundraising sponsors programs</li> <li>• Program, Transportation &amp; rental fees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$462k, 4 FT, 7 PT</li> <li>• Grants but no friends group or fundraising</li> <li>• Charge for Transportation, but not for programs or meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No friends group for fundraising</li> <li>• Charge for programs and transportation</li> <li>• Use old school for Sr. Center (20 yrs now)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No charge for town transportation. Charge \$9.00 for Med. transportation.</li> <li>• Had Friends Group but never got it restarted after Covid</li> <li>• They do not charge for programs</li> </ul>
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness, Special Entertainment, Community Dinners, Yoga</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fitness, Bingo, Pizza &amp; Movie night, Musical Entertainment, Meals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zumba, Aging Backwards, Chair Yoga, Shine, AARP Tax Support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs enabled by facility that includes gym, exercise and fitness rooms, indoor walking track, greenhouse, meeting spaces, classrooms, a teaching kitchen, theatre and arts space, and outdoor amenities</li> </ul>
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 Town owned Vans, 600+ trips/month (only 2 PT drivers)</li> <li>• No evening/weekend transport</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Town Owned Vans, also use Lyft and Go-Go Grandparent (Town Subsidized \$11k/month)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Van Driver, contract for medical trips when driver not available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Vans for transportation about to add a third van</li> </ul>

- There is more work to be done, but Elder Services has already benefited from some of the cross pollination of Program ideas
- Financial and Transportation issues require more effort

# ReCALC & Council On Aging

- ReCALC engaged COA throughout the process.
- COA has contributed to this effort in a variety of ways
  - Communication of PSC deficiencies (video)
  - Held numerous open houses to allow the public to see the center
  - Expanded program opportunities given ARPA funding and has seen increase in participation (which further highlighted the center limitations to accommodate all)
- COA Participated in the feasibility project reviews and site selection activity resulting in a similar site prioritization as ReCALC
- ***Although not a COA initiative, Friends of Reading Seniors group (FORS60+) has been formed as a non-profit and has already begun fundraising activities***

# RECAL Brings Together Community Priorities



60+ Adults



Intergenerational programs



Modern Accessibility Services



Outdoor Recreation

Community Health Improvement Planning





# Feasibility Study

# Phase I & II Feasibility Study Efforts

- Town of Reading explored other opportunities and put out RFQs for non town-owned land which ended with no success.
- Town and consultant identified 3 parcels of town-owned land that could be viable for RECAL
  - Current Center on Pleasant Street
  - Oakland Road
  - Symonds Way
- Developed design options for building and site features in design charettes
- Held numerous community meetings to solicit feedback and address issues
- Performed comparative assessments of each site against defined criteria





# Pleasant Street with Gym

Does not comply with setback requirements

PLEASANT ST

75 PLEASANT

R-125'-0"

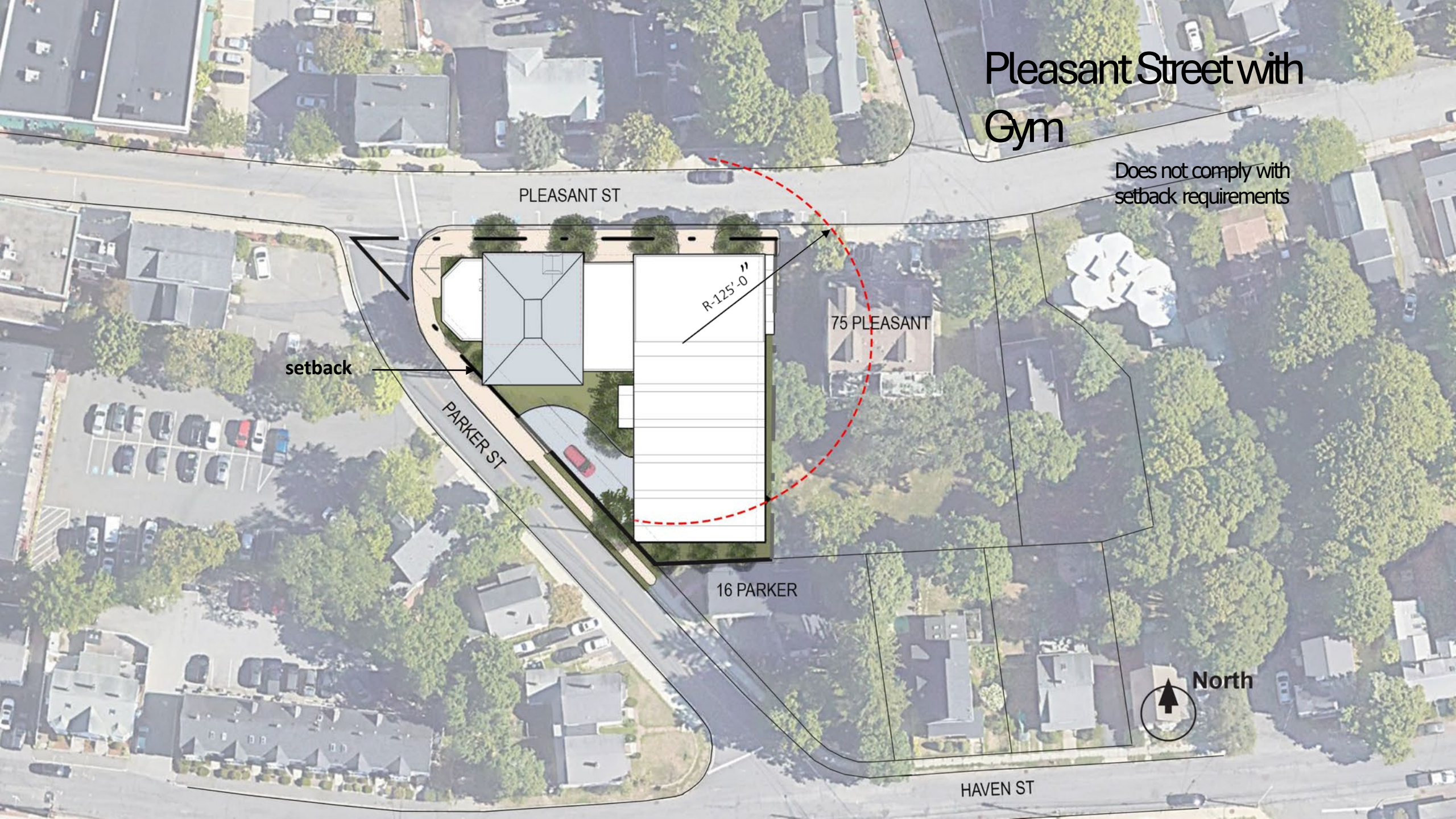
setback

PARKER ST

16 PARKER

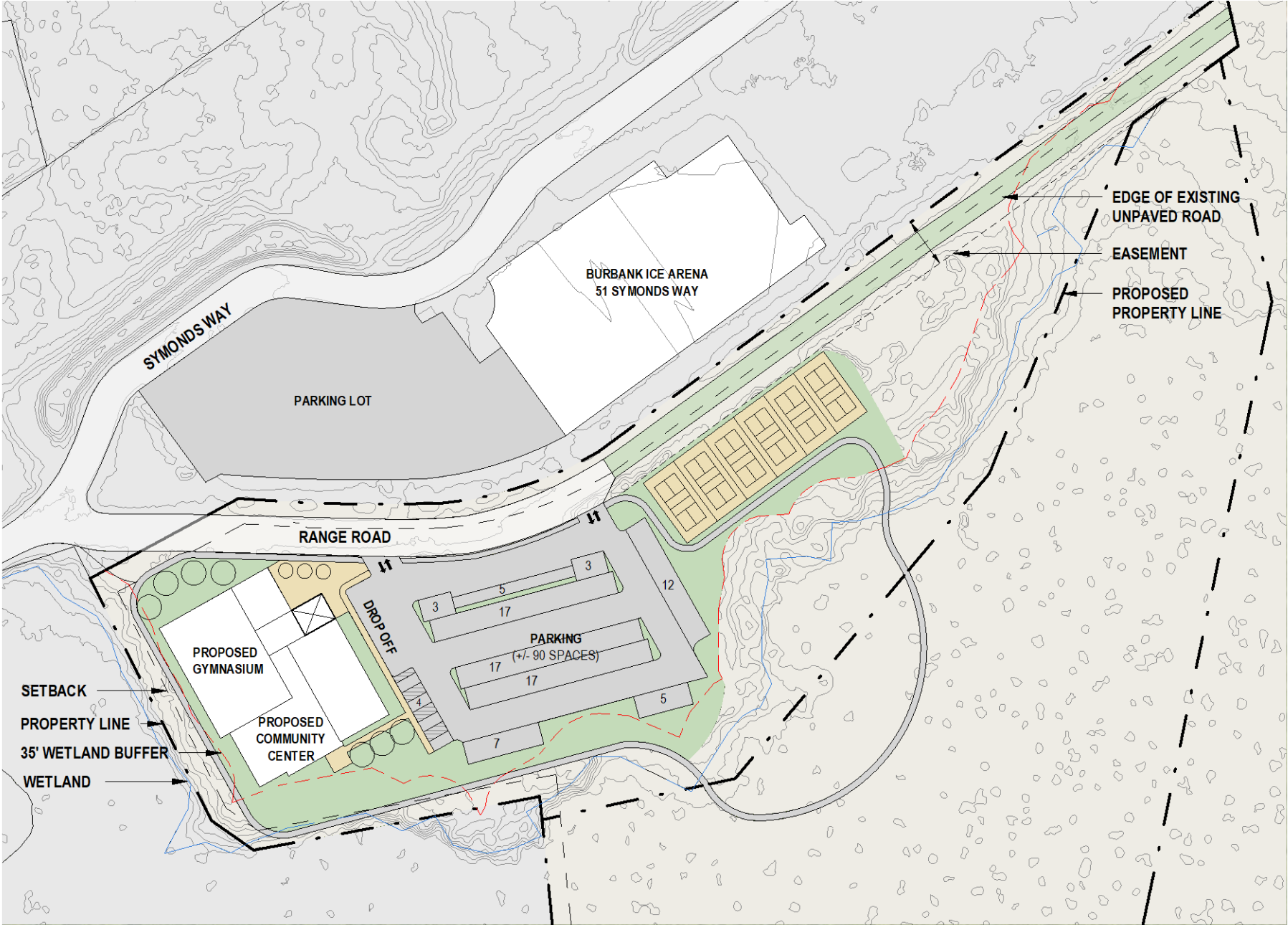
North

HAVEN ST

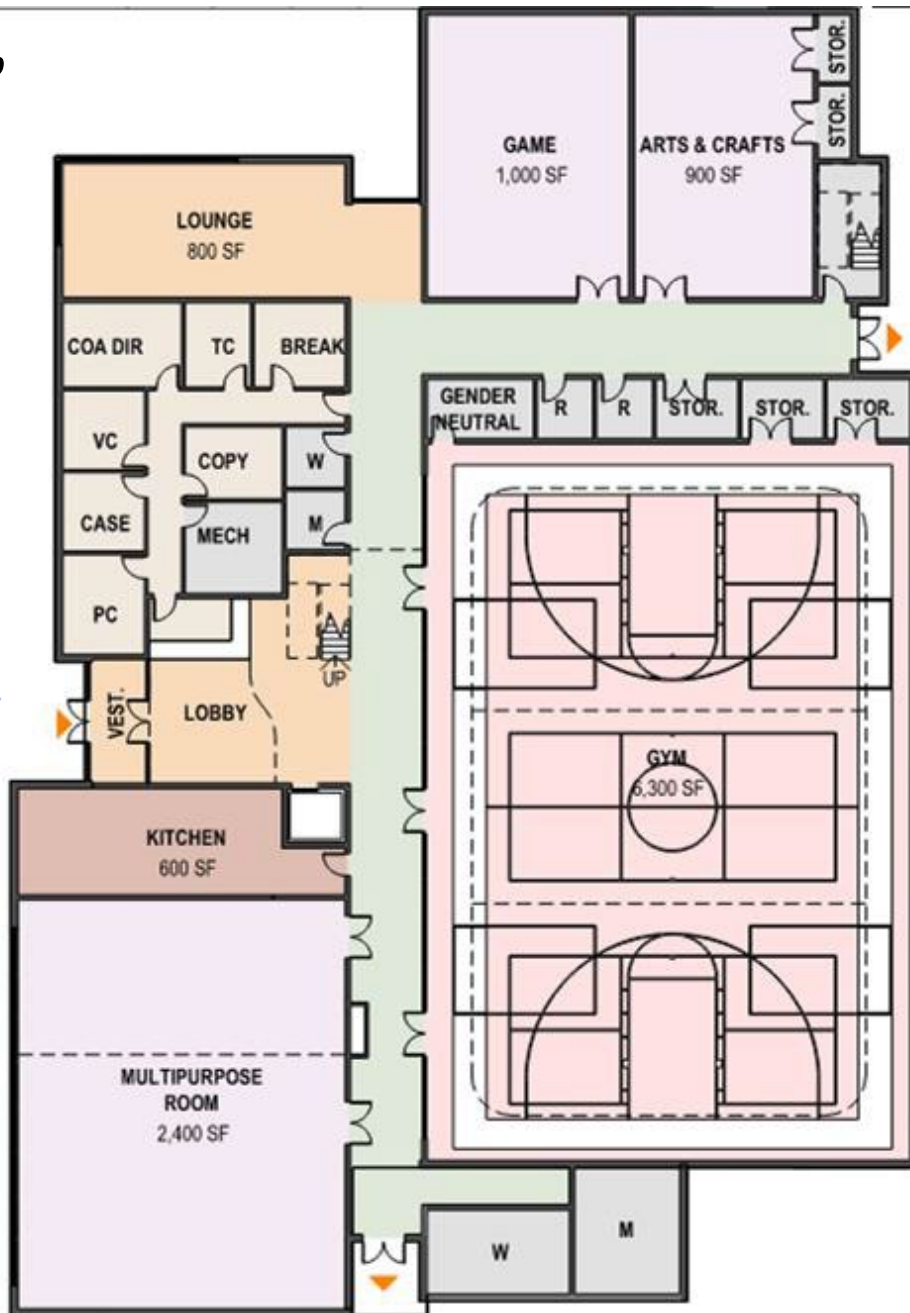
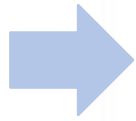




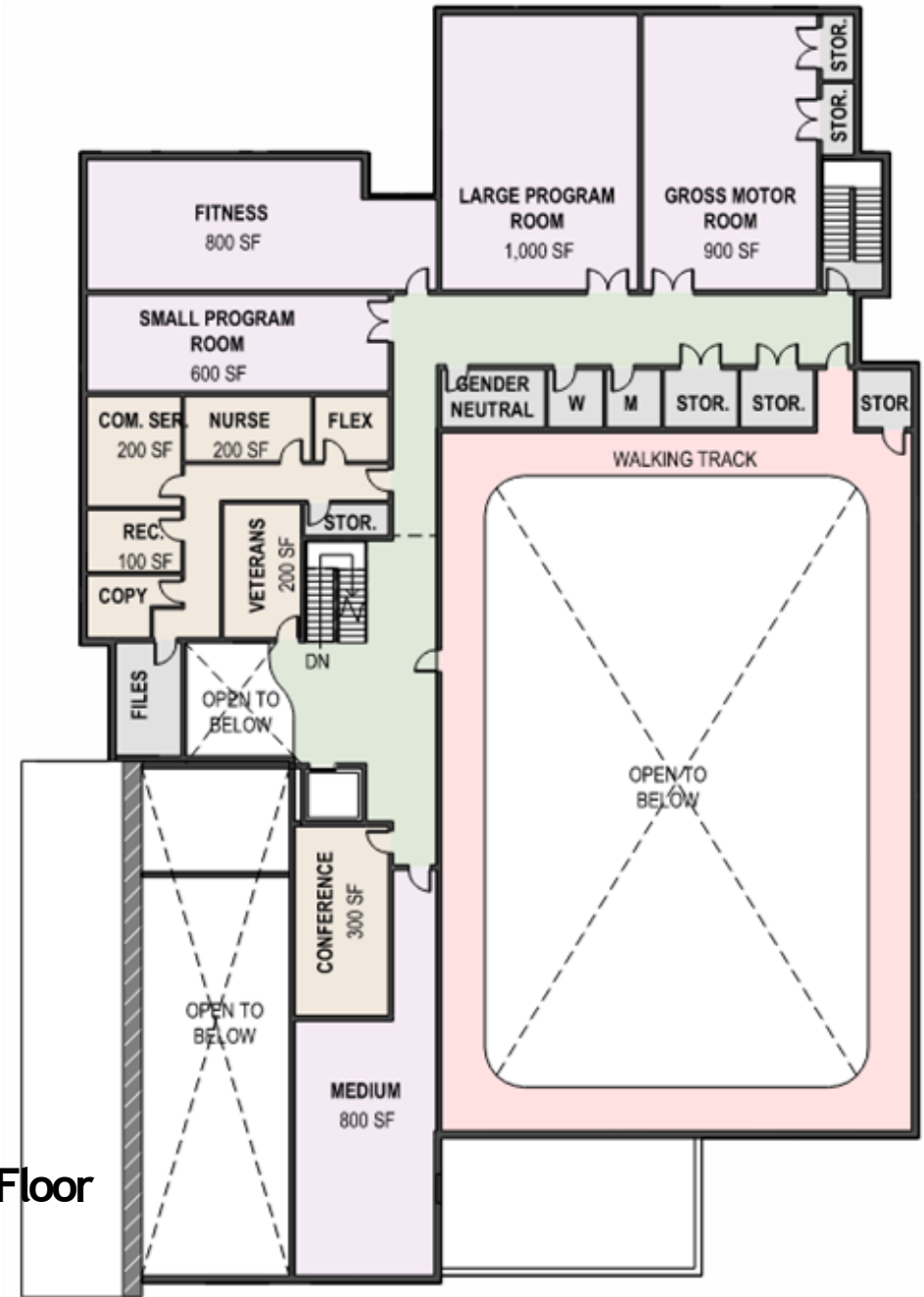
# Symonds Way



# Oakland Rd, Symonds



First Floor

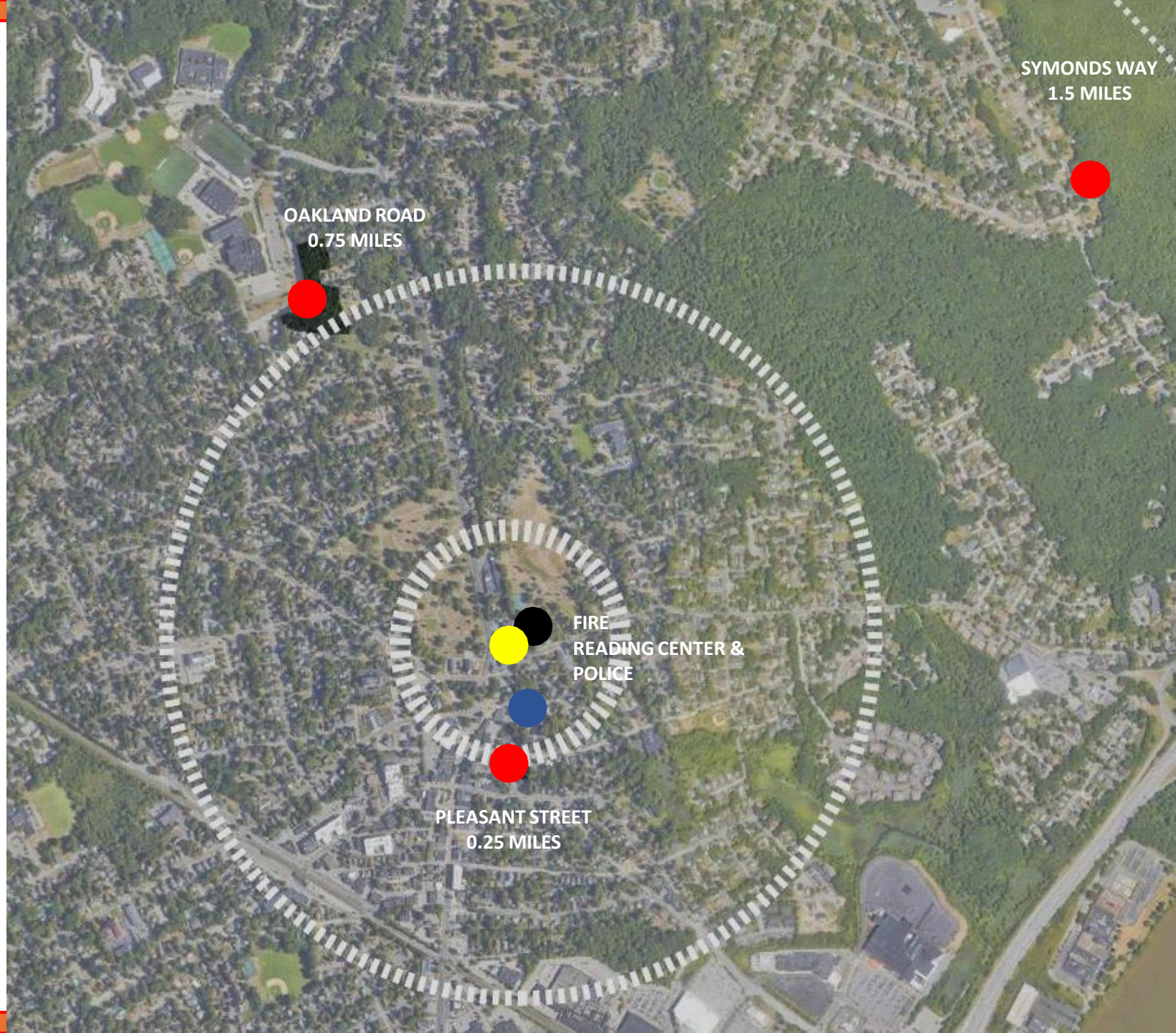


Second Floor



# Site Options

"Comparative Analytics"









# Comparative Information

Location	PSC (Existing)	PSC (New) w/2 Story Parking Garage	Oakland Rd & Symonds Way
Overall Bldg. (sq. ft.)	7,160	20,000 w/Gym	26,300
#Program Rms	5	6 w/Gym (no lounge)	8
Multipurpose	1650 sq. ft. Cannot be divided	1970 sq. ft.	2430 sq. ft.
Gym Options	None	Adding gym results in reduced program areas and no walking track	6300 sq. ft.
Site Ranking	N/A	A distant 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Symonds Way #1 Oakland Road #2

- Historical Commission: Modifications to PSC not favored
- Meeting with Abutters: Objections to Oakland Rd site (see next slides)
- Conservation: Wetlands delineated but plan will have to be presented to Conservation
- Community Development: CPDC review after a plan is available
- Recreation: Engaged with committee and has provided input on opportunities for synergy

# Site Benefits

## Pleasant Street Center

- Close to Downtown
- Historical Integrity
- Familiarity for current users

## Oakland Road

- Intergenerational Opportunities being located next to 3 schools of various age groups
- Walkability from school sites to the center after school
- Still close proximity to downtown
- Near by outdoor recreational opportunities already exist
- Could be a net-zero building
- Parking would be great
- Overflow Parking opportunities on select days of the week
- Can accommodate other outdoor Activities like a trail, bocce court, garden, etc.

## Symonds Way

- Connection to Nature
- Opportunity for many outdoor recreational opportunities--trails, pickleball courts, bocce etc.
- Near by outdoor recreational opportunities already exist
- Intergenerational Opportunities with Burbank Ice Arena and Killam Elementary School
- Parking would be great
- Overflow Parking opportunities with Burbank Ice Arena on certain days of the week
- Could be a net-zero building
- Most Potential for Expansion

# Site Drawbacks

## Pleasant Street Center

- Close to abutters
- Parking Garage not ideal for senior population
- Historical Commission not in favor of design proposals that dwarf existing building which would in turn not allow RECAL to have full center needs
- No opportunity for outdoor recreation
- No potential opportunity for expansion
- Smaller Rooms and less rooms

## Oakland Road

- Close to abutters
- Potential impact on traffic with the High school already causing some concerns
- Topography could limit construction or make construction a nuisance and/or costly

## Symonds Way

- Furthest Away from downtown
- Unknown impacts on contaminates on land which could be costly to remediate
- Various user groups are interested in the site, though compatible with plans

# ReCALC Recommends Symonds Way Site

- New Center is needed => community high priority and long overdue
- Preferred building includes a gym and walking track
  - Best meets needs of 60+ AND the broader community
  - Other communities that include them love them
  - Those communities that did not include, wish that they had
- Symonds Way is preferred site
  - Reviewed by ReCALC and COA using evaluation criteria (from multiple other communities) => ranked Symonds Way first
  - #2 is Oakland Road but with some concerns
  - Current PSC too small to accommodate size, especially if gym is to be considered



# Where are we now... Next Steps

## ReCALC Sunsets August 31

- Permanent Building Committee (PBC) agreed to take on program
  - ReCAL building committee consisting of PBC + 1 COA member and 1 SB member
  - PBC to hire OPM to help coordinate the completion of Schematic Design Phase
  - Complete site review to concur with recommendations, provide cautions and plan. ETA: Mid-Q4 2024
- Upon completion of PBC site review, return to Select Board
  - Finalize site selection and move ahead to schematic drawings (by BH&A, already funded via ARPA funds).
  - Additional site testing during schematics—funding TBD
- Return to Select Board in late 2024/early 2025 with plan and costs.
  - Community will have an opportunity to review/scrutinize/ask questions.
  - Present to Spring town meeting 2025 and then to voters
- With Symonds Way site, opportunity to explore new uses for Pleasant Street Center
- Funding
  - Financial approach for funding TBD (contingent on final cost estimate)
  - Town Meeting & Community approval required for any debt exclusion
  - Project Timing considerations – multiple town priorities



Questions