Why Revitalize West Reading

Mark Evans, AICP PP AIA
Director of Planning
MEvans@DerckandEdson.com

Mark Ratcliffe
Main Street Manager
mark@visitwestreading.org
Why invest in West Reading or your Main Street
New generation of entrepreneurs goes west

Young retailers add to business revival in West Reading

By Karen L. Miller

Business owner Rebecca Simmons and other young merchants may be the future of entrepreneurship in West Reading.

Simmons, 36, owner of Firefly on Penn, a children's clothing, women's clothing and gift store at 530 Penn Ave., and her husband, Mike, 38, located at West Chester and Wilmington, N.C., before deciding on the 600 square-foot shop in West Reading.

The Simmonses bought the former Village Hobby site and live above it with their daughter, 16-month-old Grace, 3, because of the success of West Reading and Mike Simmons family ties to Wilmington where he grew up.

Rebecca Simmons, who plans to open Friday, is one of a handful of business owners opening or planning to open shops on Penn Avenue.

Sam Loth, manager of the West Reading Main Street Program, an extensive multiyear downtown revitalization project, said he sees a trend.

A few of the new entrepreneurs are young and have a choice of places to settle, and they chose West Reading, he said.

"Some of the older businesses are finding the downtown area sparsely populated," Loth said. "They are choosing urban communities that are growing." He added that he believes the wave of young entrepreneurs will continue.

With the West Reading Main Street Program nearly complete, a handful of new businesses have decided to open in the borough, with each of the blocks between Fourth and Seventh avenues getting new businesses.

New businesses

...
Pumpkin Festival
Art on The Avenue
Craft Pretzel & Beer Fest
Santa Run
DeSoto Plymouth Dealer
West Reading Motor Club
Cherry Street
“A thriving West Reading can be a catalyst in our efforts to attract new talent and revitalize our community,”

“The next step will be to spread that success to Reading and surrounding communities,”

Greater Reading Chamber Alliance President
a five year plan for west reading & its downtown
why revitalize

protect existing historic character
repair the “missing teeth” in urban fabric
innovate or decline
need for green & public places
downtown grocer & arts anchors
coordinated plan for infill mixed use/public places
rehabilitate with newer residential living choices
look at the big picture
assess the opportunities
define success
engage, survey & listen
conceptualize & calibrate design standards
Task 1: Data Collection
- Assessing & Exploring

Task 2: Land Use & Analysis
- Conceptualizing & Refining

Task 3 & 4: Design Standards & Report
- Validating & Endorsing
look at the big picture
Penn Corridor

a regional economic development opportunity
Seek regional partnerships

Municipal Investment in Public Places & Infrastructure

Private Investment in Buildings and Businesses

regional economic development & urban strategy to link the Penn Corridor from Wyomissing to West Reading to Reading

Source: Sasaki Associates - 2007
2 demographic & site assessment
classic “main street” with storefronts at the street
suburban style shopping center
Figure 4: Weekday Private Parking Occupancy

Legend

- Red: ≥ 85% Occupancy
- Orange: 70% to 84% Occupancy
- Yellow: 51% to 69% Occupancy
- Green: ≤ 50% Occupancy

Source: Water Consultants, 2017
Weekday Public Parking Occupancy

Figure 5: Weekday Public Parking Occupancy

Legend
- Red: ≥ 85% Occupancy
- Orange: 70% to 84% Occupancy
- Yellow: 51% to 69% Occupancy
- Green: ≤ 50% Occupancy

Source: Welker Consultants, 2017
Cars available per households in West Reading Borough when owner occupied

- 52% households with 2 or more cars available
- 48% households with 0 or 1 car available

Cars available per households in West Reading Borough when renter occupied

- 71% households with 0 or 1 car available
- 29% households with 2 or more cars available
market opportunities

Retail/ Service Businesses

- 22 Clothing & Jewelry Stores
- 4 Gift Stores
- 31 Restaurants & Eating/ Drinking Places
- 9 Health & Personal Care Stores
3 define success
Sixth Avenue as Plaza for Events
Eastern Industrial/ Riverfront District
Preliminary goals

Defining what success looks like in West Reading

4. engage, survey & listen
Enhance the quality of the streetscape & building frontages
Traffic calmed and pedestrian friendly streets
Public Spaces
community engagement

community open house
5 conceptualize & calibrate design standards
3D visualizations

visualizing west reading’s new places
design standards/ form-based codes

- Community Preferences
- Design Standards
- Form Based Codes
- Zoning ordinances & overlays
look at the big picture
assess the opportunities
define success
engage, survey & listen
conceptualize & calibrate design standards
Why Revitalize West Reading

Mark Evans, AICP PP AIA
Director of Planning
MEvans@DerckandEdson.com

Mark Ratcliffe
Main Street Manager
mark@visitwestreading.org