



Town of Reading
16 Lowell Street
Reading, MA 01867

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April 14, 2025

Minor Site Plan Review

DECISION

Project/Site: 0 Birch Meadow Drive – Birch Meadow Park

To the Town Clerk:

*This is to certify that, at a meeting of the Community Planning and Development Commission, opened on April 14, 2025, **continued to Date and closed on Date**, by a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted:*

“We, the Reading Community Planning and Development Commission, upon request from Activitas, Inc., on behalf of the Town of Reading, for Minor Site Plan Review for the property located at 0 Birch Meadow Drive (Assessors Map 27, 27, 33, Lots 343, 342, and 57) for site improvements including renovating the existing courts and playground, upgrades to the existing parking areas, and other site circulation, landscape, and lighting improvements, as presented in the application materials enumerated below, do hereby vote **0-0-0**, to **approve** the project under Minor Site Plan Review in accordance with Section 4.6.3 of the Reading Zoning Bylaw, subject to the Findings and Conditions below.”

Materials Submitted:

The following materials were submitted into the public record:

1. Certified Abutters List, dated 1/27/25;
2. Minor Site Plan Review Courtesy Notice of Public Meeting to Abutters, stamped with the Town Clerk 3/20/25;
3. Minor Site Plan Review Application, received and dated 3/17/25;
4. Project Narrative, prepared by Activitas Inc., dated 3/17/25;
5. Civil Plan Set Birch Meadow Park Phase II Renovations, prepared by Activitas Inc., prepared for the Town of Reading, and including:
 - a. Cover Sheet and Locus Map, dated 3/17/25;
 - b. Sheet One: Topographic Survey, prepared by Reed Land Surveying, Inc., dated 8/4/23, and most recently revised 1/10/25;
 - c. Sheet SP1.1: Site Preparation and Erosion Control Plan Sheet One, dated 3/17/25;
 - d. Sheet SP1.2: Site Preparation Detail Sheet Two, dated 3/17/25;
 - e. Sheet L1.1: Layout and Materials Plan Sheet One, dated 3/17/25;
 - f. Sheet L2.1: Grading and Utility Plan Sheet One, dated 3/27/25;
 - g. Sheet L3.1: Planting Plan Sheet One, dated 3/17/25;
 - h. Sheet L3.2: Planting Details and Schedule, dated 3/17/25;

- i. Sheet L4.1: Detail Sheet Plan One, dated 3/17/25;
 - j. Sheet L4.2: Detail Sheet Plan Two, dated 3/17/25;
 - k. Sheet L4.3: Detail Sheet Three, dated 3/17/25;
 - l. Sheet L4.4: Detail Sheet Four, dated 3/17/25;
 - m. Sheet L5.1: RISE Pre-School Playground Resurfacing Plans, dated 3/17/25;
 - n. Sheet E0.0: Electrical Legends and Schedules, dated 11/2024;
 - o. Sheet E1.1: Electrical Site Plan, dated 11/2024;
6. Colorized Site Renderings, prepared by Activitas Inc., dated 3/11/25;
 7. Stormwater Report, prepared by Activitas Inc., 3/26/25
 8. Public Comment:
 - a. Email comments from David Swyter, received 3/31/25;
 - b. Email comments from David Swyter, received 4/6/25;
 9. Staff Reports:
 - a. Draft Decision, dated 4/14/25

Findings:

- 1) Applicability: The proposed work requires Minor Site Plan Review approval under Zoning Bylaw Section 4.6.2.3(b), ***“The addition of 2 or more parking spaces, a change to the layout or location of 2 or more parking spaces, an increase in pavement of more than 300 square feet....”***
- 2) Zoning/Site: The site is located in the S-15 Residential Zoning District. The abutting/local area also includes the Coolidge Middle School, Reading Memorial High School and the Burbank YMCA.
- 3) Existing Conditions: The site maintains a public educational use with associated parking and open space/recreational amenities, with neighboring residential abutters. The Birch Meadow Park area under consideration for Phase II improvements is primarily accessed off of Bancroft Avenue and Oakland Road via the Reading Memorial High School Parking Lot. The existing recreational uses on the site include a playground, a basketball court, and paved pickleball courts.
- 4) Phase I: Phase I of the site improvements have been completed. Phase I included the paving of the “Imagination Station” gravel parking lot; a new walkway/path system to connect the parking lot to the High School; site lighting, landscape and drainage improvements; as well as the construction of a new restroom/storage facility building and a new lacrosse wall.
- 5) Overview: The proposed site improvements to the Birch Meadow Park Complex under consideration for Phase II include a full renovation of the existing basketball/pickleball courts, a full renovation of the existing playground, new accessible parking spaces along Bancroft Ave, pedestrian accessibility and crossing improvements at Bancroft Avenue, and site/athletic lighting, circulation, landscaping, and drainage improvements.
 - a. Parking Improvements: Two new accessible parking spaces, including one van space, will be constructed along Bancroft Avenue south of the existing perpendicular parking spaces and adjacent to the tennis courts. These spaces will provide direct ADA access to the proposed improvements. Vertical Granite Curbing is utilized along the parking area
 - b. Basketball Courts: Proposed renovations will rebuild the existing asphalt basketball and pickleball courts into two new post-tension concrete pavement basketball courts. Existing athletic court lighting will be replaced with new LED athletic lighting. The courts will have a 10’ high chain link fence around them.

- c. Playground: Proposed renovations expand the existing playground areas and include new playground equipment suited for children aged 2-12. The surface of the playground area will be poured in place, and the perimeter of the playground will have a 4' high ornamental fence.
 - d. Walkway/Path System Improvements: ADA accessible walkways will connect the proposed site elements and adjacent parking areas and site facilities. A crosswalk is proposed from Hartshorn Street across Bancroft Avenue. The existing gravel path will be expanded and paved to allow for improved accessibility. It will be constructed of bituminous concrete pavement (asphalt). Along the pathway will be a series of benches, directional and educational signage, and site amenities (i.e. trash/recycle bins) throughout the park complex. Paths will range from 5' to 12.27' wide but all will be accessible with flush connections to adjacent areas.
 - e. Landscaping: The proposed site work will preserve all existing trees on site to the extent practicable and is proposed to plant 10 new trees. A series of shrubs, trees, upland and wetland plantings will be provided and strategically located on-site. 9,000sf of area will be re-seeded with upland seed mixes and wetland meadow seed mixes.
 - f. Lighting: A series of light fixtures will be provided by the parking lot, along the path system and on/within the new sports courts. A new electrical equipment enclosure, and utility infrastructure will be located on-site, north of the playground area.
 - g. Grading and Drainage Improvements: The project will disturb approximately 1.14-acres of area and will increase impervious area within the limit of work by 4,655sf. Minor regrading of the site will occur to the north and the east of the sites limit of work – to support the pathworks, basketball courts, and stormwater system. Stormwater will be directed through existing drainage on site, with the addition of a new area drain to the southeast of the basketball courts. The playground area will be graded and drain to a perforated drainpipe. Capture will be conveyed to the existing drainage infrastructure along Bancroft Street or the existing wetlands to the east.
- 6) Trash: A series of trash and recycling receptacles will be provided near the proposed ADA parking spaces and the Reading Memorial High School parking area, along the walkway/path system.
 - 7) Snow Storage: A snow management and storage plan is to be developed with the Reading Department of Public Works and Facilities divisions. Snow storage shall be prohibited within the wetland buffers and in any future bioretention areas.
 - 8) Conservation: The proposed improvements require a Notice of Intent application with the local Conservation Commission. The project will increase impervious area on the site by 4,535 square feet and a portion of the proposed project is within the 100' buffer zone of an adjacent wetland. The Applicant/future owner(s) shall comply with the Conservation Commission conditional approval.

Conditions:

General:

1. **Limitations / Future Uses:** The Decision herein does not include approval for any future uses or site renovations that may – on their own merits and design – trigger the requirements of future site plan review, and/or require a special permit.
2. **Public Health, Safety and Welfare:** If, at any time, the site becomes a nuisance to public health, safety or welfare (i.e., traffic spillover, excessive noise, unreasonable site illumination beyond the hours of operation, etc.) – as shall be evidenced by substantiated complaints to the Police Department or Public Services Office – the Applicant/Owner shall agree to work with staff to rectify the problem. Should the situation warrant it, an additional Site Plan Review by the CPDC may be required.
3. **Permitting:** The approval herein is for Minor Site Plan Review only. The Applicant shall seek building, electrical, plumbing, and gas permits as required for the work.
4. **Lighting:** Light fixtures shall be installed/adjusted to minimize impacts on traffic and abutting neighborhoods. All exterior building and site lighting shall comply with the dark sky initiatives
5. **Conservation:** At all times throughout construction of the project and occupancy of the site, the Applicant and/or future owners shall comply with all provisions of the Order of Conditions issued for the project by the Reading Conservation Commission.

During Construction:

6. **Construction Hours:** Construction shall be limited to the hours specified in General Bylaw Section 8.9.8.
7. **Construction Activities:** Construction activities shall be conducted in a workmanlike manner at all times. Blowing dust or debris shall be controlled by the Applicant through stabilization, wetting down, and proper storage and disposal methods, subject to the approval of the Health Agent or designee. The Applicant shall ensure that the abutting local streets are kept clear of dirt and debris, which may accumulate as a result of construction activities for the Project. Documentation shall be provided as needed demonstrating ongoing pest management control, subject to the approval of and administration by the Health Agent.
8. **Site Inspections:** Town staff or their designee shall have reasonable access to inspect the site to determine compliance with this Decision.

Prior to the Issuance of Occupancy:

9. **Right of Way/Traffic Improvements:** The Applicant shall continue to work with the Town's Parking Traffic and Transportation Task Force (PTTTF) and school administration for review and implementation of additional right-of-way improvements and/or traffic regulations (i.e. turning movement restrictions, etc.).

Conditions for Ongoing Maintenance After Occupancy:

10. **Landscaping:** Landscaping on-site shall be maintained in a healthy condition in perpetuity. In the event that landscaping is damaged during snow removal operations, the property owner shall replace such landscaping during the next growing season.

Modifications/Revisions - Plan Changes after Approval by the Approving Authority:

Contemplated future changes to the plan approved herein shall be presented to the Community Development Director and the Zoning Enforcement Officer/Building Inspector, or other relevant Town staff, for review prior to implementation of proposed changes.

1. Minor Modification: Changes that do not substantially alter the concept of the approved Plan in terms of the specific location, the proposed land use, the design of building form and approved building details and materials, site grading or egress points. These include but are not limited to small changes in site layout, topography, architectural plans, landscaping plan, traffic circulation, parking, lighting, signage, open space or other criteria set forth in Section 4.6.9.1. Requests for approval under a minor modification for future renovations/alterations to the approved site plan or for future tenant changes shall be reviewed by the Community Development Director to determine if the proposed work qualifies for review through the Minor Site Plan Review process of Section 4.6.3 of the Reading Zoning Bylaw. If the work is eligible for review under Minor Site Plan review, the Community Development Director may review and grant approval of the proposed work by administrative approval of the Minor Modification. At the determination of the Community Development Director, the Applicant may be required to present the proposed project at a public meeting of the CPDC.

2. Major Modification: Substantial additions, deletions or deviations from the approved plan, including but not limited to changes in site layout, topography, architectural plan, landscaping plans, traffic circulation, parking, lighting plan, signage, open space or other criteria set forth in Section 4.6.9.1 of the Reading Zoning Bylaw. (Note: Approval of the major modification shall be grounds for reconsideration of the Site Plan application. Denial of proposed major modifications shall not invalidate the Site Plan in conformance with the previously approved Plan).

Signed as to the accuracy of the vote as reflected in the minutes:

Andrew MacNichol, Community Development Director

Date

Cc: Applicant, Town Clerk, CPDC, Development Review Team, Building Inspector, planning file