

Community Preservation Act in Reading

Presentation by the
Ad Hoc Community Preservation Act Study Committee
Annual Town Meeting, April 2026
readingma.gov/CPA



What is the Community Preservation Act (CPA)?

A Massachusetts law that permits communities to levy a small property tax surcharge to raise money for specific types of projects:

- open space preservation (conservation and recreation),
- historical preservation, and
- affordable housing creation and preservation.

State contributes a percentage match funded by deed registry fee
Average of ~22% over past ten years

201 of the 351 towns and cities have chosen to adopt the CPA, but Reading has not yet





What were we charged to do?

The Committee will study the merits of the CPA and the various methods for adoption and present its findings to the Select Board in time to achieve a Town Meeting vote no later than the 2026 Annual Town Meeting that accommodates the November 3, 2026 state election; said committee to sunset on May 31, 2026, unless extended.

Who are we?



- Joe Carnahan, Finance Committee
- Sarah Brukilacchio, Historical Commission
- Carlo Bacci, Select Board
- Martha Moore, Conservation Commission
- Kate Kaminer, Recreation Committee
- Margaret Donnelly Moran, Housing Authority
- Sandy Matathia, Resident At-Large
- (non-voting) Katie Gallant, Housing Authority Executive Director

How have we done this?

We have met with

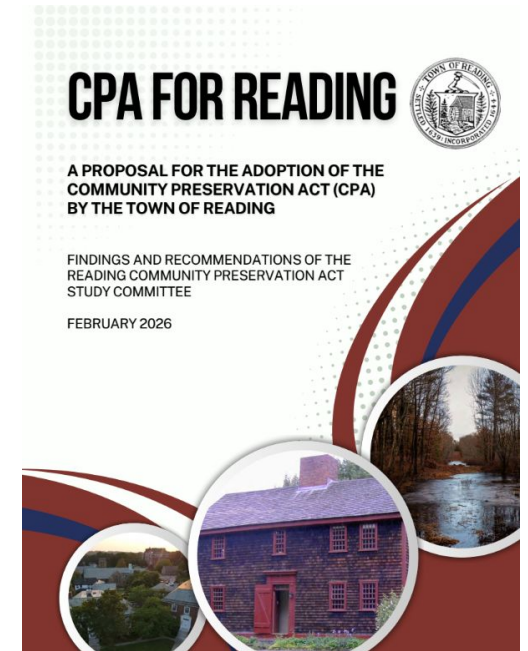
- the Community Preservation Coalition (nonprofit that helps municipalities with CPA matters),
- representatives of peer communities that have adopted the CPA,
- Reading residents who worked on previous CPA adoption efforts,
- eleven Town boards and committees, and
- two private Reading preservation organizations.



What have we done?

We have compiled information on

- past consideration of CPA in Reading,
- how and why CPA was adopted in Reading's peer communities, including surcharge rates and allowed exemptions,
- how much money CPA could raise,
- how CPA would impact different taxpayers, and
- specific projects CPA could fund in Reading.



What could CPA do: Open space preservation

Past and possible future projects:

- Grove Street lots / Town Forest entrance
- Maillet Sommes Morgan wetland and trails
- Removal of dead red pines in Town Forest
- Invasive species control (Bare Meadow, etc.)
- Mattera Cabin and Community Garden
- Dog park
- Trails and boardwalks: Expansion, accessibility



Funding multiplier: Could provide local seed money for state and federal grants for disaster preparedness and environmental protection

What could CPA do: Recreation

Past and possible future projects:

- Birch Meadow Phase 1 and Phase 2
- Playground creation and updates
- Accessibility improvements
- Splash pad
- Tennis, basketball, and pickleball courts



Funding multiplier: Could match and drive fundraising from Reading's many sports booster organizations

What could CPA do: Historic Preservation

Historic resources:

- Pleasant Street Center
- Town Hall
- Joshua Eaton and Parker Schools
- Library
- Laurel Hill Cemetery
- Privately-owned under preservation restriction:
 - Parker Tavern
 - Train depot



Funding multiplier: Could be used to apply for Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) grants

What could CPA do: Affordable Housing

Acute need for affordable housing:

- 30% of Reading households are "cost-burdened" (> 30% of gross income on rent or mortgage)
- **3 year waiting list** for affordable housing for veterans, almost **10 year waiting list** for others

Opportunities:

- Acquire or expand affordable housing (can borrow against future CPA funds)
- Fund planning or other pre-development activities
- Financial assistance to first-time homebuyers or struggling renters
- *Funding multiplier*: Opens significant grant opportunities from state and other programs



Recommendations

- We strongly recommend bringing the CPA to the voters of Reading.
- We recommend a 1% surcharge to align with past spending on CPA-eligible projects in Reading as well as with many peer communities.
- We recommend the following exemptions:
 - All commercial and industrial properties
 - All low-income (< 80% of AMI) residents
 - All low-and-medium income (< 100% of AMI) senior residents
 - The first \$100k of all other residential properties

How much would it raise?

Property class	Local funds	State funds (22.13%)	Total
Residential	\$822,589	\$182,022	\$1,004,611
Commercial/Industrial	\$52,132	\$13,960	\$77,041
Both	\$874,722	\$195,982	\$1,081,652

Assumptions:

Fiscal Year 2026 property values

Fiscal Year 2026 tax rate plus projected tax impact of Killam and ReCAL

CPA Surcharge rate of 1%

Exemption for first \$100k of property value

State funds based on average of last five years (source: communitypreservation.org/trustfund)

How much would it cost?

<i>(single-family residential)</i>	Assessed value	Current tax	CPA Surcharge
Average	\$944,193	\$11,390	\$101.83
Median	\$889,050	\$10,724	\$95.18
Bottom 10%	\$709,400	\$8,557	\$73.51
Top 10%	\$1,254,900	\$15,138	\$139.31

Assumptions:

Fiscal Year 2026 property values

Fiscal Year 2026 tax rate plus projected tax impact of Killam and ReCAL

CPA Surcharge rate of 1%

Exemption for first \$100k of property value

Timeline

- **Now (April 2026):** Town Meeting vote on whether or not to submit CPA to the voters

If approved by Town Meeting:

- **November 2026:** Town-wide vote on whether or not to adopt CPA

If approved by the voters:

- **April 2027:** Town Meeting vote on creating a Community Preservation Committee
- **April 2028:** Town Meeting vote on first allocation of CPA funds
- **July 2028:** First distribution of CPA funds

Summary



The Community Preservation Act lets Reading protect what we value using local control and access to state funds, allowing Reading to spend less of our operating budget on projects we would already fund or to fund additional projects without spending more.

Appendix / Backup Slides

(included as reference material for Q&A if needed)

Allowable Projects

	Open Space	Historic	Recreation	Housing
Acquire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Create	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Preserve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support	No	No	No	Yes
Rehabilitate and/or Restore	No (unless acquired or created with CPA \$\$)	Yes	Yes	No (unless acquired or created with CPA \$\$)

How would CPA and an override interact?

If Reading chooses to spend CPA money solely on projects that the town would have funded anyway, then the tax impact on Reading would be **~\$200k less** with CPA than without it.

Funding multipliers
(unlocking grants, etc.)
would reduce local costs even further.

