

Let's Talk Reading



A Community Sponsored World Café Conversation about our Future

Join neighbors and friends who live & work in Reading for an inclusive community dialog to explore:

What Can Reading Also Be?

What do we want for the future of our town?

What dreams, opportunities and dilemmas are present?

What steps can we start to take to get what we collectively want?

Wednesday, February 27th, 6:30–10 pm

Field House, Reading Memorial High School

www.readingworldcafe.org

1. What is the World Café?

- It is a conversation process designed to help large groups of people **talk together about questions that matter** to them in a respectful and inclusive manner.
- It is a process that helps groups think expansively about relevant issues, **discover common values and objectives**, and solidify their commitment to work towards a shared future
- The process does not ask yes or no questions (“Do you want this?”); instead it asks **expansive questions** (“What do you want?”)
- The World Café has been used by hundreds of groups across the globe including large multinational corporations, small non-profits, government offices, community-based organizations, and educational institutions. Visit www.theworldcafe.com for more information about this process

2. Why have a World Café in Reading now?

- History teaches us that the **most successful way to confront challenging times is to come together around common purposes**, and work side by side to make it through. In the wake of the divisive discussions about the Addison Wesley property, we stand to benefit as a community from making concerted efforts to build mutual commitment for a shared future
- To create greater community connections in Reading between organizations, volunteers, residents and businesses.
- To start a positive, **inclusive community dialogue about the future of Reading**. We have a far better chance to achieve what we collectively want when we can describe it and recognize its shared appeal.
- To gather community feedback **for use by town officials and planning boards**. This data may complement the recently approved Master Plan and School District Improvement Plan. The feedback can be used to identify priorities, target key actions, and address broadly held concerns of the community
- **To better prepare, with a long-term focus**, for a fiscally challenging and uncertain future – what resources do we have and what kind of investment will have the greatest community benefit?
- In our 24/7 driven culture, we rarely take time as a community to **talk about important questions that matter – about our future, our responsibility to that future, and how we can help each other**. Lets start that conversation today
- We need to take time to determine what we have in common that connects us, versus focusing on how our differences keep us apart

3. How does it work?

- The Reading World Café is a community conversation, sponsored and supported by community businesses, churches, arts organizations and others, in addition to town government and schools. A structured conversation process, the World Café is a valuable tool for creating greater community connection and for **drawing out the best ideas from a broad range of community members who care about the future of this town**. The participants, and their organizations, determine what becomes of the results of the World Café as they work together and consider next steps
- First, World Café Supporters identify key question(s) for discussion, and then **every member of the community is invited to talk about the questions, on one night**. There is no limit on how many people can participate, because participants work in small groups at separate tables.
- The small groups shift, and the conversation evolves as people change tables and **share insights and perspectives** from their previous conversations
- As the network of conversations and new connections increase, what starts to emerge is **a greater understanding of what is commonly believed, desired and valued** by those at the Café
- After these expansive conversations are completed, the groups participate in a debrief process that uses targeted questions to harvest key insights, desires, opportunities, dilemmas and next steps.
- The immediate results of the process will include **many possibilities for follow-up actions, and a likely ground swell** of communal support and energy for taking any next steps.

4. How can Reading benefit from the World Café process and results?

- **Generating information about what community members want** to in order to inform traditional decision-making processes
- Creating a report of the outcomes for public viewing – posted on websites, published in newspapers, presented to local boards & committees
- **Formulating a shared vision about our future** that can serve as guidance for the day-to-day dilemmas and decisions the town must face
- **Increasing opportunities for collaboration among community groups** who might benefit from working towards common objectives
- The process can inspire greater volunteer support for key initiatives and programs, and will **engage a more substantial representation of the town** in civic and community purposes
- Opening possibilities for hosting or sponsoring additional Café conversations or similar processes for getting more qualitative community input and a sense of priority
- The process will allow everyone who participates to get to know more people who live/work in this town and will **expand our appreciation and understanding of each other**

5. What won't the World Café do?

- The **World Café is a process, not a plan**. It is not aimed at accomplishing a particular goal; instead it aims to identify multiple interests and goals.
- The World Café will not make decisions for the community.
- **It will not replace local government** – elected and appointed boards, town meetings or the election process
- It is not an opportunity to complain about proposed town actions
- It will not result in divisive debate or polarized positioning; rather, it will help us **discover where we have common ground as a community**
- It will not replace the Master Plan or the District Improvement Plan, although the **data from the World Café can inform local leaders charged with the implementation of those plans**

6. How do the World Café results differ from the Master Plan, the District Improvement Plan, and other official town actions?

- The World Café cannot supersede the Master Plan or District Improvement Plan, as those documents have a legal status that the World Café will not have.

7. How does it differ from town government & Board oversight?

- **The World Café is a non-binding, non-authoritative gathering**, that has not been established by any statutory or municipal government authority