

Someplace Kind Of Wonderful



A Message from Main Street Skowhegan Executive Director Kristina Cannon

It's been quite a year. As an organization we've weathered the storm and done our best to turn this pandemic into a learning opportunity. During the midst of this spring's quarantine, we realized it was a defining moment for us. We could continue our good work and brace for change, or take initiative and MAKE change. I've never been one to back down from a challenge, so we dug in, doubled-down, and started laying groundwork for Skowhegan to come out on the other side of the pandemic stronger and more resilient.

Major initiatives like Run of River, Skowhegan Outdoors, and our Technical Assistance Grant Program took precedence over event planning. We also spent significant time focused on business growth opportunities, advancing several projects within our new economic resilience strategy, Scale Up Skowhegan.

We are acutely aware of perhaps one silver lining of the pandemic—the unique opportunity for rural Maine towns to attract new residents. Pandemic trends, confirmed by a 32% increase in Somerset County home sales this summer over last, find people moving to rural communities that offer broadband, lots of land, and easy access to outdoor recreation. Skowhegan has all this and more, and we must take advantage of this opportunity to add new residents, which will in turn help stabilize our workforce, add new businesses and jobs, and increase local spending.

Skowhegan is already Someplace Kind Of Wonderful — #SKOW — and we're working hard every day to make it even better for everyone. I truly believe our best days are still to come.

I hope you'll take time to peruse the following pages and check out what we've done this year and what we have planned for 2021 and beyond.



Please also consider donating to our operations fund. We cannot do this work without the support of our community, partners, advocates, and volunteers.

I am so proud to serve Skowhegan.

-Kristina

This photo is courtesy of the Outdoor Sport Institute. Here I am learning how to whitewater SUP on the Penobscot—prepping for our future whitewater park in Skowhegan. I don't just talk the talk, I walk the walk.



We are focused on the big picture and committed to improving the quality of life for everyone who lives here, in our little slice of heaven on the Kennebec River.

Local Business Grants

Main Street Skowhegan TA/COVID-Relief Grants

We awarded \$20,000 in varying amounts to 23 Skowhegan businesses through our Technical Assistance / COVID-Relief Grant Program in May—at the height of pandemic-related business closures. Many thanks to our donors for making this happen. We are already raising funds for a 2021 round of grant funding!
MainStreetSkowhegan.org/TA

"Thanks to this award, Happyknits will be able to update our website! We're grateful to Main Street and all of the funding partners who made this grant possible. We appreciate all you do!"

-Karla Bailey, MaryLou Ridley, Sarah Davis



Community Economic Resource Council

Main Street board member Sam Hight spearheaded the formation of the CERC, an alliance of local economic development leaders that includes representatives from the Skowhegan Economic Development Corporation, Skowhegan Regional Chamber of Commerce, Somerset Economic Development Corporation, the Town of Skowhegan, Skowhegan Savings Bank, and Main Street Skowhegan. This partnership will strengthen economic development initiatives, promote Somerset County as the ideal rural Maine location to start a business, and provide a one-stop resource for business owners and new entrepreneurs.

In 2020, this group worked together to raise and award \$100,000 in funding to 50 Somerset County businesses negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Learn more at somersetbusinessresources.org.



"Thank you for your financial assistance that will allow Bigelow Brewing Company the ability to redesign our outdated website. This project is especially important now, more than ever, as we navigate our way through the new normal. As businesses are shuttered to customer traffic, relying on a virtual presence that will propel commerce is vital, especially for rural Maine communities."

-Jeff Powers, Bigelow Brewing Co.

Local entrepreneurs hold grant award letters from our TA/COVID-Relief Grant Program. Clockwise - top left: Happyknits (Karla Bailey, MaryLou Ridley, Sarah Davis); The Good Crust (Heather Kerner); Kennebec Stitchery (Merlene Sanborn); Jessica Rae Photography (Jessica Rae Stetson); River Roads Artisans Gallery (Gretchen Washburn); LaCasse Bats (Jesse LaCasse); Brick House Kitchen (Angela & James Kelby, Beth & Tyler Terstegen)

Skowhegan Outdoors

Ensuring Equitable Access to the Outdoors



Our AmeriCorps members, serving as Outdoor Rec Facilitators, lead free outdoor programs, clinics, and activities every week, including guided hikes, cross-country ski clinics, forest scavenger hunts, and more. We're also building a gear library for residents to borrow the equipment they need to get out and enjoy this beautiful region we call home.

Participants at our first annual Kennebec River Paddlethon, a collaborative event with Somerset Woods Trustees



Bike clinic during rec camp at Lake George Regional Park



Canoeing clinic



Family stroll in Coburn Park



In 2020, we invested more than \$75,000 in grant funding in our community via Skowhegan Outdoors programming, trainings, and gear purchases.

Fly fishing clinic in partnership with Fins & Furs Adventures

"Took my granddaughter on a hike up the Moxie Trails with this group and had a blast. Mara and Emma are both knowledgeable about plant and animal life and encourage active participation in learning about various sightings along the trail. It was also great to know they are certified lifeguards and trained in emergency response. These coaches are the real deal. My granddaughter who is 8yrs old was a first-time hiker, and she was thrilled every time they encouraged her to climb the challenging areas. There was one particular challenging rock climb. Emma was so kind while encouraging her to use what method was comfortable, while explaining the safest rocks to hold and use to her advantage. My granddaughter shouted out 'I did that!' many times. Beautiful day and a spectacular view!! Great job Skowhegan Outdoors!! I highly recommend it!! Thank you Emma and Mara for giving Layla her best, first experience climbing a mountain!"



- Jennifer, Skowhegan Outdoors participant, granddaughter Layla pictured below



"It has been fulfilling personally and professionally to serve for the Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program. We have had the privilege to watch our outdoors community grow in Skowhegan through programming and also to take part in laying the foundation for such an exciting project. We believe that whoever has the opportunity to serve for this program will grow immensely and continue to serve their future communities with grace and gusto."

- Emma Corwin (back) & Mara Kavanaugh Outdoor Recreation Facilitators



Weekly yoga at Lake George Regional Park



Guided hike

Scale Up Skowhegan

Strategy for Community Resilience & Economic Growth

Through the implementation of Scale Up Skowhegan, we will help diversify Skowhegan's economy, strengthen our community, and position Skowhegan as an ideal location to call home via the following tactics:

1. Utilize \$50,000 in secured grant funding from the Maine Community Foundation to strengthen our entrepreneurial ecosystem and bolster support for local businesses and startups. Use recent assessment data and focus group/survey findings to draft strategy winter 2021; select and launch implementation projects spring 2021.
2. Launch a business accelerator program in partnership with Waterville's Dirigo Labs and the Central Maine Growth Council. Enroll first cohort summer 2021.
3. Connect entrepreneurs with seasoned mentors via networking opportunities and formalized mentorship program. Design and implement spring 2021.
4. Seek solutions to real estate challenges, including lack of ready-to-move-in retail spaces and affordable housing. Research and assess winter/spring 2021.
5. Inspire new business development via findings from the soon-to-be-completed industry marketing analysis. Share data and opportunities with business owners & new entrepreneurs winter 2021.
6. Promote Skowhegan as a great place to live, work, and play. Launch a community pride initiative winter 2021 and new business & resident recruitment campaign summer/fall 2021.

We'll implement the above with help from the Skowhegan Ecosystems Team, which includes local entrepreneurs and representatives from the private sector, municipality, chamber, Somerset Economic Dev. Corp., MSAD #54, Somerset Career & Tech Center, and Redington-Fairview General Hospital.

 **Government Policy / Regulations**
Business policies, including regulatory, permitting, and zoning practices & investment in public infrastructure

 **Financial Capital**
Breadth and depth of resources available at all stages of the business lifecycle


 **Social Capital**
Opportunities to build relationships, trust, and connections


Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

 **Place Factors**
Physical spaces, building fabric, amenities, and place assets that promote business success

 **Human Capital**
Workforce, talent pipeline

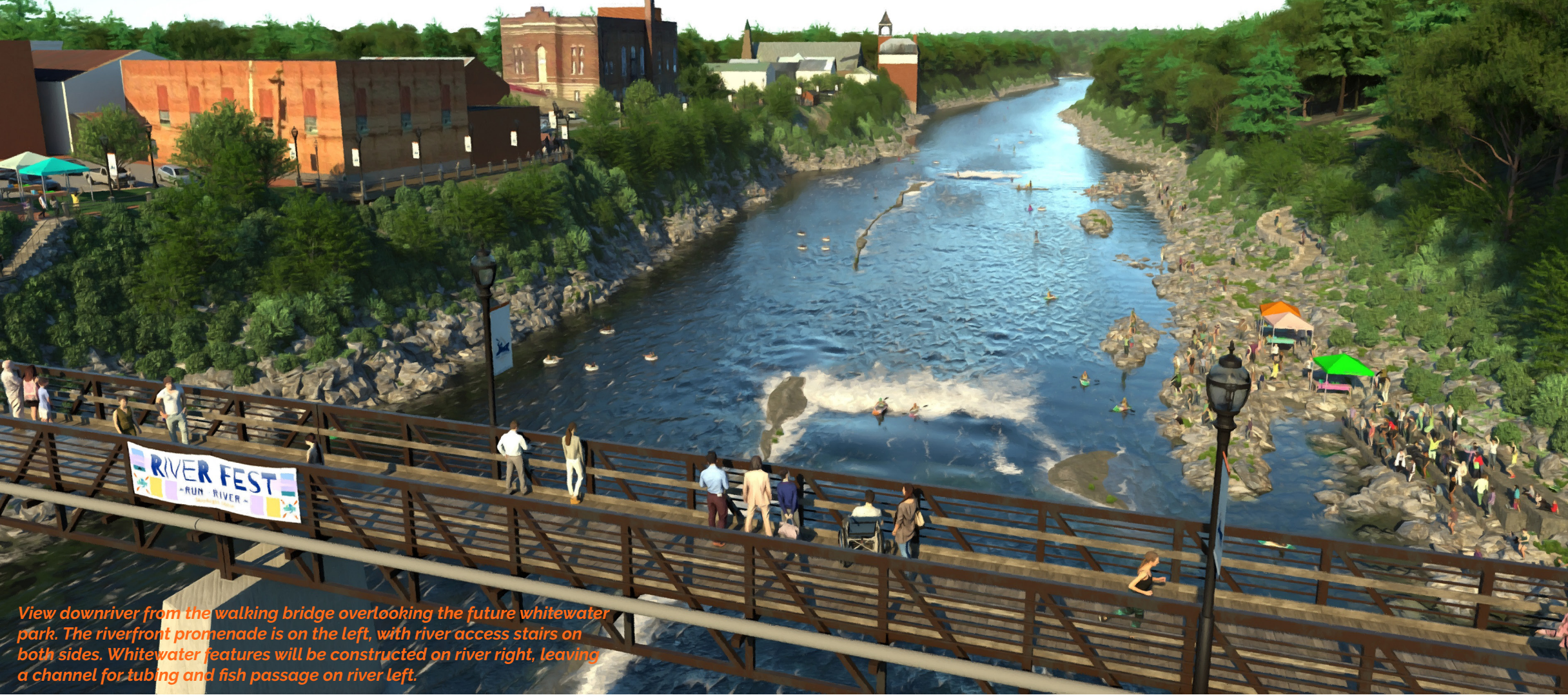
 **Culture**
Local perspectives on risk-taking, innovation, career self-determination, business regulation, and other attitudes toward entrepreneurship

 **Education & Training**
Technical assistance on business basics as well as scaling beyond a startup

The need to strengthen support systems for our locally owned businesses and diversify our rural economy has never been more urgent—a hard lesson learned from the pandemic. As the Skowhegan community continues to weather negative impacts from COVID-19, we are laying the groundwork for economic recovery and making plans for building community resilience.



Run of River Whitewater Recreation Area



In partnership with the Town of Skowhegan, we are working behind the scenes to make Run of River a reality.

In 2020 we met with regulatory agencies to kick-off the environmental permitting process, worked with a designer to create new renderings and a video to help people visualize the project, and strengthened relations with Maine's whitewater community to bring future in-river events to Skowhegan. We continue to cultivate donors and seek grant funding to cover remaining costs.

For more details, check out RunofRiver.org.

View downriver from the walking bridge overlooking the future whitewater park. The riverfront promenade is on the left, with river access stairs on both sides. Whitewater features will be constructed on river right, leaving a channel for tubing and fish passage on river left.

Paddle & Surf Park | 50 Miles of Trails | Riverfront Promenade



The first whitewater feature will provide paddlers with a reliable wave to learn the sport.



A second whitewater feature will enable surfing, river boarding, and kayaking.



Run of River will serve as an ideal location for river festivals and freestyle paddling, SUP, and surfing competitions.



Maine Wood Heat fabricated the base and assisted Central Maine Crane with getting the base and sculpture into and out of the Big Eddy.



The Skowhegan Fire Department provided manpower and a boat to tow the base and sculpture across the Big Eddy

Kennebec on Fire

The prototype sculpture & base were completed and installed in the Big Eddy in August 2020. In collaboration with the Wesserunsett Arts Council, we are currently commissioning additional sculptures to finalize the installation in Summer 2021.

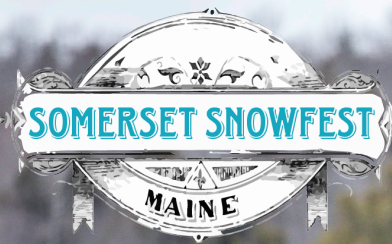


The installation can be viewed from Coburn Park and the sandy beach off the Debe Trail.



Through this project, we've funneled more than \$11,000 in Maine Arts Commission grant funding directly into our local economy. We'll invest an additional \$75,000+ in the coming years as we employ local businesses and artists in the creation of additional sculptures.

We lit the sculpture during a small ceremony in August. Several additional sculptures will create a striking display when installed next summer.



In collaboration with Lake George Regional Park, we hosted Somerset SnowFest in February 2020, featuring the 2nd annual Skijor Skowhegan, the long-time favorite box sled race, as well as two new events—a downhill kayak race and winter triathlon.



Skijor Skowhegan and box sled race photos by Jonathan Wheaton



In lieu of our annual brew festival, we prepared a pre-packed Skowhegan Craft Brew Bag complete with 15 Maine craft brews and local goodies for people to enjoy at home.



Skowhegan #ShopSmall Week November 28 - December 5

Extended from 1 day to 8 days to reduce crowds
49 participating local businesses offered shopping incentives
\$300 in prizes for shoppers—gift cards to local businesses
More than \$2,000 spent in marketing to promote local businesses

How *You* Can Make a Difference in Skowhegan



ROUNDUP APP

EFFORTLESSLY GOOD

RoundUp lets you round up and donate the change from your credit or debit card purchases. You can even cap the maximum amount you want to donate in a given month!

Simply download the app or use the web version at roundupapp.com. Create an account and choose Main Street Skowhegan as the organization you will support.



Use the enclosed form, or go to mainstreetskowhegan.org/donate.

Talk to your financial or tax advisor to find out about making a charitable gift directly from your IRA assets without tax implications.

Every donation helps, and we sincerely appreciate our community's generosity!



Do you shop on Amazon for things you can't find locally? Use Amazon Smile, and they'll donate a percentage of all eligible purchases!

Just go to smile.amazon.com, sign in with your Amazon login, type "Main Street Skowhegan" under "Pick your own charitable organization," and click "search." Select Main Street Skowhegan and follow additional prompts. Then, each time you shop Amazon, be sure to start at smile.amazon.com!

Skowhegan Swinging Bridge by Sam Horine

Commitment to Community

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core tenets of thriving communities. Our nation's collective commitment to these tenets is imperative for the future success of our society and our economy.

To that end, we believe Skowhegan is a place for everyone. At the core of our approach to community revitalization is a commitment to shared prosperity, equitable access to opportunity, and inclusive engagement.

We model and champion this vision through our actions and programs.



MainStreetSkowhegan.org