



2021 ANNUAL REPORT





Front: New birdhouses and banners in downtown – photo by MXH Marketing
 Top: Kristina Cannon presents Town Manager Christine Almand with a check for the Skowhegan River Park – photo by Betty Austin
 Bottom: The Main Street Skowhegan team (board members, staff, and volunteers) celebrates Kristina's Outstanding Professional of the Year Award at the Mid-Maine Chamber Banquet in November - photo by Samantha Jonness Photography

From Executive Director Kristina Cannon

I'm so excited to share our 2021 annual report! We started the year hopeful and determined, and thanks to the dedication of our Board of Directors, our amazing volunteers, and our steadfast donors and supporters, we ended 2021 stronger than ever. We solidified community collaborations and partnerships, brought back festivals and fundraisers while still executing major community projects and initiatives, and ended the year by hiring three full-time staff members—one whom we share with Lake George Regional Park. I can't wait for you to meet them!

I want to take a moment to thank all of our partners, volunteers, donors, and supporters. We couldn't do this work without you. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do for Main Street and our great town of Skowhegan.

I hope you'll take a few minutes to check out all that we accomplished in 2021—the things YOU made possible—and learn more about what's next as we continue this important work in 2022. I truly could not be more pleased with the progress we've made over the last 12 months. Our team is tenacious, resilient, and thrilled to be leading the charge in Skowhegan.

Best,

Top 13 of 2021 (We couldn't choose just 10!)

1. **Added staff!** Meet them on pages 6 and 12.
2. **Surveyed 135 Skowhegan business owners and new entrepreneurs** to learn more about their business needs and how we can help. [Pg. 4]
3. **Raised funding and signed a lease to move forward with the development of the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship!** [Pg. 3-4]
4. **Raised the remaining \$173,000 needed for Skowhegan River Park environmental permitting** and awarded funds to the Town of Skowhegan. To date, we've raised nearly **\$600,000 for this important community project!**
5. **Live streamed Skijor Skowhegan via Facebook**, enabling people from all over the U.S. and Canada to watch the event. To date, nearly 9,000 people have viewed the video!
6. Awarded more than **\$6,000 in TA Grants to 13 businesses.** [Pg. 5]
7. **Secured \$100,000 in AmeriCorps funding for 2022**, which has enabled us to grow our team and enroll more members who will run community outdoor programs! [Pg. 11-12]
8. Seventy-five teams competing in our SKOW-Whoville *Search for the Grinch's Heart* turned in (for scavenger hunt points) **receipts from local businesses totaling nearly \$900!**
9. **Completed the Kennebec on Fire public art installation** with five fire sculptures and \$75,000 in grant funding invested. [Pg. 15-16]
10. **Resurrected the MSS Design Committee** to address pedestrian safety, traffic, parking, and riverfront connectivity in downtown Skowhegan. [Pg. 9-10]
11. **Added to the river park design plans an ADA access ramp and set of stairs from downtown to the river's edge.** These enhancements will make the river more accessible to community members. [Pg. 7-8]
12. Purchased **10 mountain bikes and 8 inflatable kayaks** to use for community programming and add to our gear library—residents can borrow them for free! [Pg. 13-14]
13. **Hung 200 birdhouses on downtown street light poles** thanks to a great community collaboration! See page 18 for a list of our great partners and supporters.



YEAR IN REVIEW

Enhancing Skowhegan's Business Ecosystem

After a year of conducting surveys and focus groups to assess Skowhegan's business ecosystem, we kicked off 2021 by drafting an action plan for addressing ecosystem gaps. The plan includes projects and initiatives that will bolster support for new entrepreneurs and existing businesses and encourage new investment in Skowhegan. We are currently working to implement the plan (see bullets below).

BIG NEWS! We're thrilled to announce that we're opening the new Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship at 181 Water Street this spring!

In 2021, we:

- Surveyed 135 Skowhegan business owners and entrepreneurs and drafted the Skowhegan Business Needs Assessment Report (see top findings on next page).
- Hired Levine Planning Associates to conduct a Skowhegan Housing Assessment & River Park Case Study to learn more about Skowhegan's current and projected housing market, and how we can support and encourage redevelopment of historic downtown properties (see findings on page 6).
- Raised funding for Skowhegan's first Center for Entrepreneurship in downtown Skowhegan.
- Hired our first Business Relations Manager, Patric Moore. Flip the page to read Patric's bio!

In 2022, we plan to:

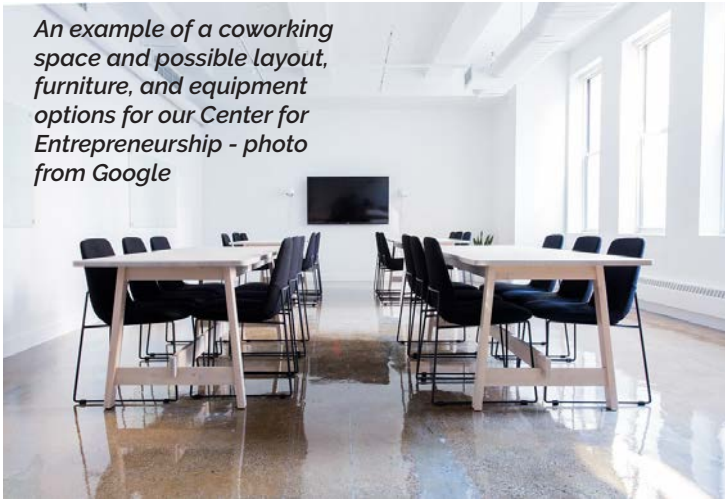
- Launch the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship at 181 Water Street in downtown Skowhegan! A contractor has already begun updating the space, and we're procuring equipment and furniture. We plan to open the center this spring!
- Facilitate regular programming at the Center.
- Support current businesses and new entrepreneurs by connecting them to resources, mentors, funding, etc.
- Create video business profiles to promote our businesses and inspire new entrepreneurs.
- Encourage redevelopment of downtown properties to add second/third floor housing and upgrade commercial space. We'll assist with projects and create a case study to guide future development.
- Identify business opportunities/gaps in Skowhegan and encourage startups.

Center for Entrepreneurship Lead Sponsor



Skowhegan SAVINGS

An example of a coworking space and possible layout, furniture, and equipment options for our Center for Entrepreneurship - photo from Google



Our Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship will be located on the second floor of the smaller building at 181 Water Street - photo from The SPACE



Business Needs Assessment Findings

- Top challenges facing businesses: finding and retaining qualified employees and securing financing
- Top near-term opportunities identified by businesses: scaling operations and increasing their customer base
- 53% of business owners interviewed are interested in attending trainings focused on business growth
- Businesses' top desire for an entrepreneurial facility is conference space, followed closely by increased networking opportunities



Leadership Maine participants listen to an update from Somerset Economic Development Corporation Director Christian Savage in the space that will soon be home to Main Street's new Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship Partners



Ecosystem Team

Kristina Cannon, Exec. Director of Main Street Skowhegan
 Patric Moore, Business Relations Mgr at Main Street Skowhegan
 Christine Almand, Manager of Town of Skowhegan
 RJ Anzelc, Owner of Bricks Innovation & Coworking Space
 Samantha Burdick, Marketing Director at Hight Family of Dealerships
 Patrick Dore, Branch Mgr at Franklin Savings Bank/Co-owner of Old Mill Pub
 David Dorr, Director of Somerset Career & Technical Center
 Matt DuBois, Owner of The Bankery and Skowhegan Fleuriste

Jason Gayne, Exec. Director of Skowhegan Regional Chamber
 Sam Hight, Principal of Hight Family of Dealerships
 Amber Lambke, Owner of Maine Grains & The Miller's Table
 Lisa Landry, HR Director at Redington-Fairview General Hospital
 Jeremy Lehan, Director of MSAD 54 Adult & Community Ed
 Danielle Libby, Owner of Butler's Car Wash
 Molly Woodward, Business Relations Manager at Bangor Savings

Technical Assistance Grants

The Main Street Skowhegan Business Enhancement Committee awarded \$6,250 in grant funding to 13 Skowhegan businesses to support growth and increased capacity. See several examples below.

This grant program is made possible by our generous funding partners: Skowhegan Savings Bank, Franklin Savings Bank, New Dimensions Federal Credit Union, Franklin-Somerset Federal Credit Union, Bangor Savings Bank, Warren Shay, the Old Mill Pub, and the Hight Family of Dealerships.

1. Bouncing Bubbles Child Care - to build outdoor play spaces necessary to become a certified Nature Classroom through Nature Explore
2. Bigelow Brewing - to help complete a traffic study in anticipation of their new home at 7 Island Avenue
3. Fat Daddy's BBQ - to help cover the cost of refrigeration, financial software, credit card hardware, and website technical assistance for their new food truck business
4. Launchpad Learning Center - to cover marketing and legal expenses for their new business venture
5. Maine Stitching Specialties - towards the purchase of a screen printing press
6. Stan's French Fries - to help cover the cost of food truck upgrades
7. The SPACE on the River - towards the purchase of an electronic scoreboard for the gymnasium
8. Trust in Us - to purchase and install a new sign
9. The Good Crust - towards the marketing and branding of Skowhegan as a pizza destination
10. Unwined - to help purchase a point-of-sale system

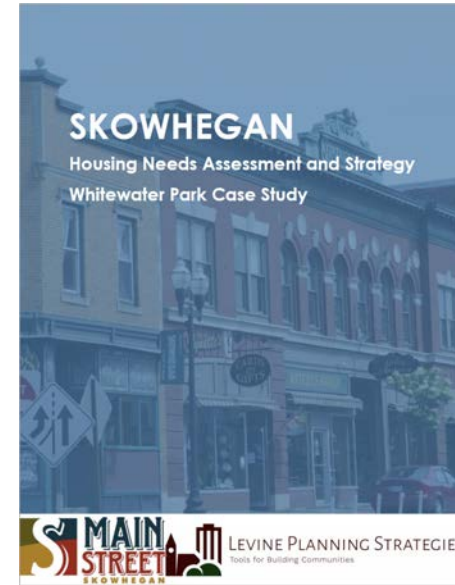


Nature classroom - photo from Bouncing Bubbles Child Care



Scoreboard at The SPACE on the River - photo from The SPACE

Housing Assessment & Case Study



We commissioned a housing study to better understand current and future needs in Skowhegan. The study also examined the housing market in Salida, Co., a rural town with a river park. Data shows the number of housing units in Salida has grown significantly since the park opened in 2000. Here are a few takeaways we'll use to guide future work.

- Based on current low vacancy rates and expected development of the Skowhegan River Park, there appears to be demand for additional housing development downtown, both on upper floors of existing commercial buildings as well as in new infill buildings, and it should be encouraged.
- The Town should explore building and fire code limits to adaptive reuse and amend codes to remove any unnecessary barriers to housing production.

- Existing upper-story space downtown—much of what appears to have formerly been housing—could provide opportunities to offer additional housing choices if code issues can be resolved.
- While there are benefits to the river park increasing housing value downtown, consideration should be given to how this increased cost might impact existing households.

“Creation of the river park and associated amenities downtown will likely have positive impacts not just on the economy of the region, but also on the social capital, livability, and attractiveness of downtown Skowhegan. The Town and Main Street Skowhegan should make sure the project maximizes its connections and benefits to downtown.” -Jeff Levine, Levine Planning Strategies

New Staff: Business Relations Manager

As Business Relations Manager of Main Street Skowhegan, Patric Moore leads our entrepreneurial ecosystem work, which includes but is not limited to, managing our nearly ready-to-launch Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship, working on real estate redevelopment projects, and assisting local business owners and entrepreneurs start and grow within Skowhegan.

Patric is an Air Force Veteran where he worked for the last ten years as a Cryptologic Language Analyst in the U.S. Intelligence Community and more recently as the Active-Duty Air Force Recruiter for Central Maine. He is currently enrolled at Southern New Hampshire University for a bachelor's in Business Administration and has further plans of attending the University of Southern Maine to earn a Master's in Policy, Planning, and Management. Originally from Pennsylvania, Patric has come to love Maine through his time spent recruiting and now calls it his home. In his time off, Patric enjoys traveling across Maine, experiencing the state through the Maine Ale Trail. He also spends most of his time with his dog, Barkley.



Regional Economic Development Collaboration

The Community Economic Resource Council (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, continues to meet.

In 2021 we added reps from the Small Business Development Center, CEI Women's Business Center, and Kennebec Valley Council of Governments.

During monthly meetings we share information and discuss possible business leads to ensure that we're working together for the benefit of the region. We also host guest speakers to provide insight on current topics and trends in economic development.



Planning for a Safer Downtown

In 2021, we re-launched our Design Committee with an energetic group of community members:

- Darryll White, Lake George Regional Park
- Brian Eng, Developer
- Margi Browne, WesArts & Lakewood Golf Course
- Lisa Landry, Redington-Fairview General Hospital
- Steve Govoni, Select Board & Wentworth Partners
- Luke York, Chamber of Commerce & 201 Service
- Joel Greenwood, Skowhegan Town Planner
- Jeff & Pam Powers, Bigelow Brewing
- Joe Almand, Skowhegan Fire Department
- Kristie LeBlanc, Somerset Public Health
- Garrett Quinn, Whittemore's Real Estate
- Eli Soll & Kim Leo, The SPACE on the River
- David Larkin, Somerset Woods Trustees
- Jack Gibson, Somerset Woods Trustees
- Steve Dionne, Dionne & Son Builders
- David James, community member
- Jon Kimbell, community member
- Kristina Cannon, Main Street Skowhegan
- Patric Moore, Main Street Skowhegan

In 2022, the committee will tackle projects that will help slow traffic, connect downtown to the river, and make downtown safer and more accessible for pedestrians. We'll work in partnership with the Town and engage community members throughout the process.

We are currently seeking grants for a traffic study and to help fund a Downtown Design Master Plan that will guide infrastructure, traffic, parking, and design decisions as Skowhegan moves into the future.



The Design Committee is also excited to announce that we'll be working with Build Maine to host their annual conference in Skowhegan this year!

Save the date for June 8-9!

Build Maine introduces cutting edge business practices and focused conversations with leaders in transportation planning, real estate development, and public service, demonstrating a breadth of knowledge we can apply locally.

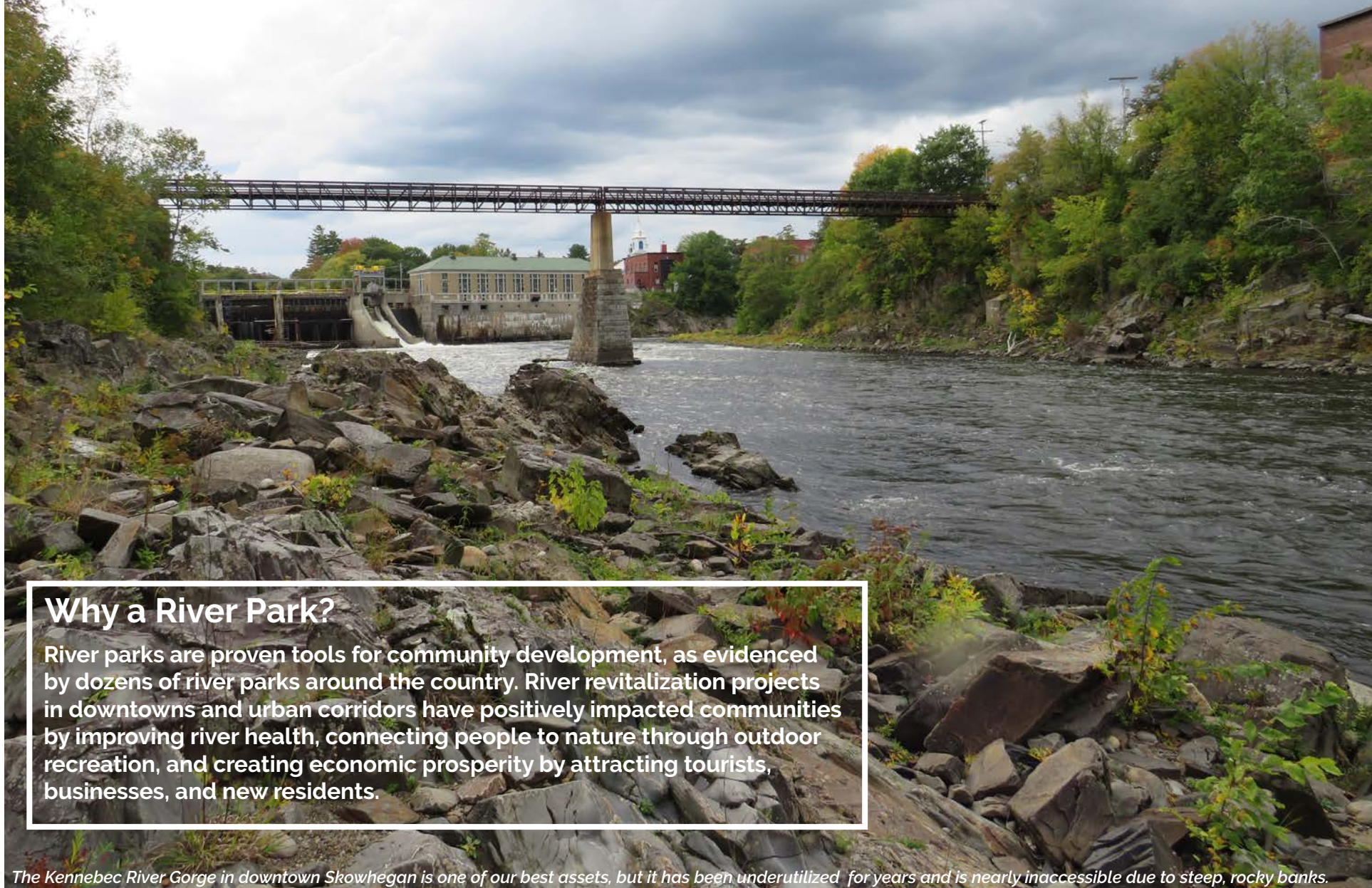


Downtown Skowhegan - photo MXH Marketing

DOWNTOWN DESIGN

Enhancing River Access & Recreation Opportunities

The development of Skowhegan's river park will enhance the gorge, providing access to the river; recreation opportunities for paddling, surfing, and tubing; a riverfront promenade; and an expanded trail network. With environmental permitting underway, we are full-speed-ahead with final design and fundraising for construction. Learn more at SkowheganRiverPark.com.



Why a River Park?

River parks are proven tools for community development, as evidenced by dozens of river parks around the country. River revitalization projects in downtowns and urban corridors have positively impacted communities by improving river health, connecting people to nature through outdoor recreation, and creating economic prosperity by attracting tourists, businesses, and new residents.

The Kennebec River Gorge in downtown Skowhegan is one of our best assets, but it has been underutilized for years and is nearly inaccessible due to steep, rocky banks.

Community Benefit: PROMENADE & GREEN SPACE

The proposed riverfront promenade will connect downtown to the river and feature a pedestrian and bike path, river overlooks and viewing areas, as well as gathering and green space.

The south half of the river will feature enhanced waves for paddling & surfing and will serve as a whitewater competition and events venue that will attract visitors from all over the country.

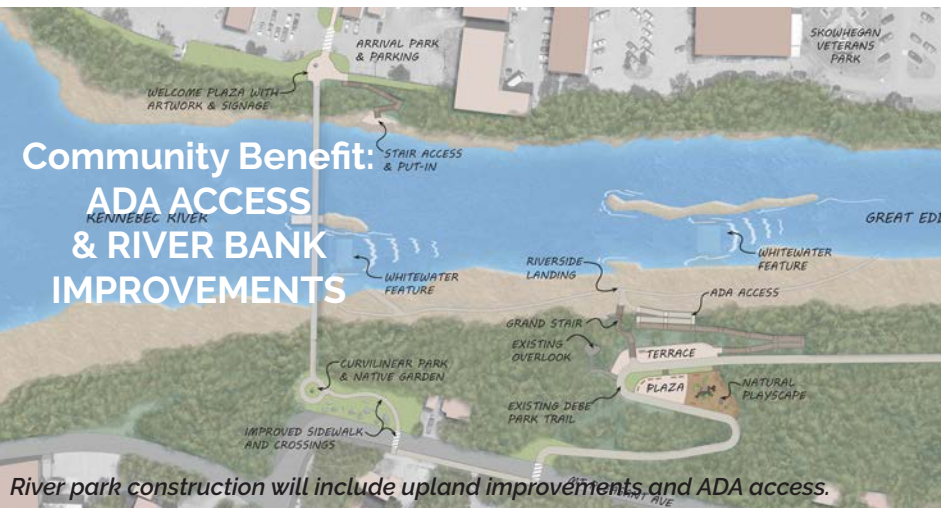


Community Benefit: IMPROVED ECONOMY

The north half (downtown side) of the river will remain unchanged, providing a natural channel for floating—with all hazardous debris from the collapsed railroad bridge removed.

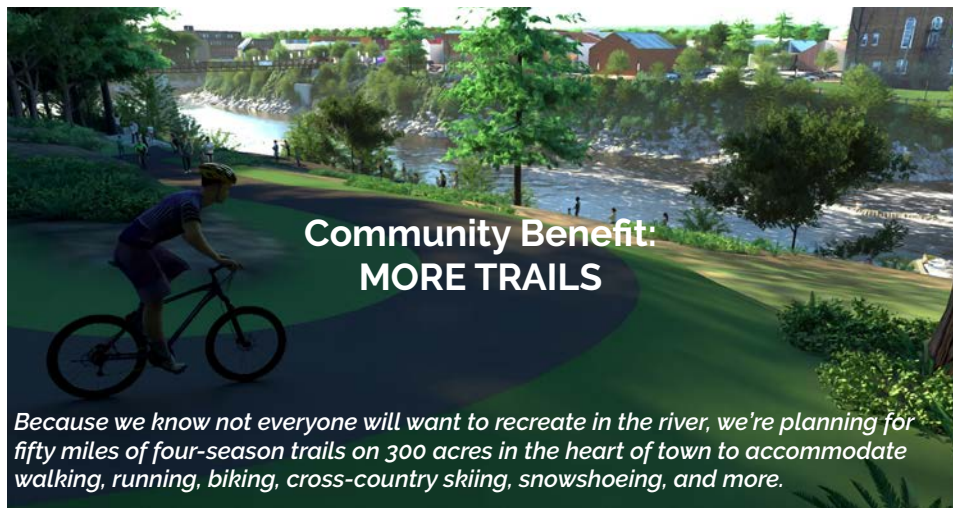


Community Benefit: RIVER RECREATION

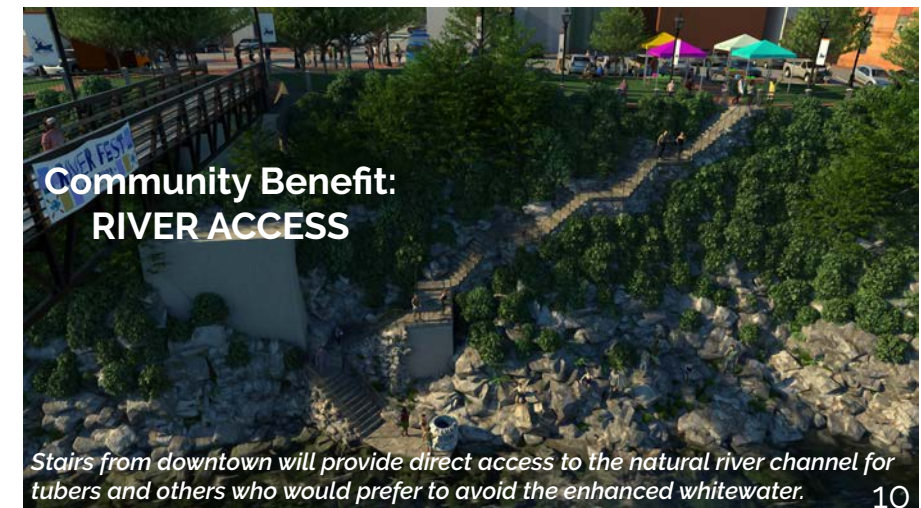


River park construction will include upland improvements and ADA access.

Community Benefit: MORE TRAILS



Community Benefit: RIVER ACCESS



SKOWHEGAN RIVER PARK

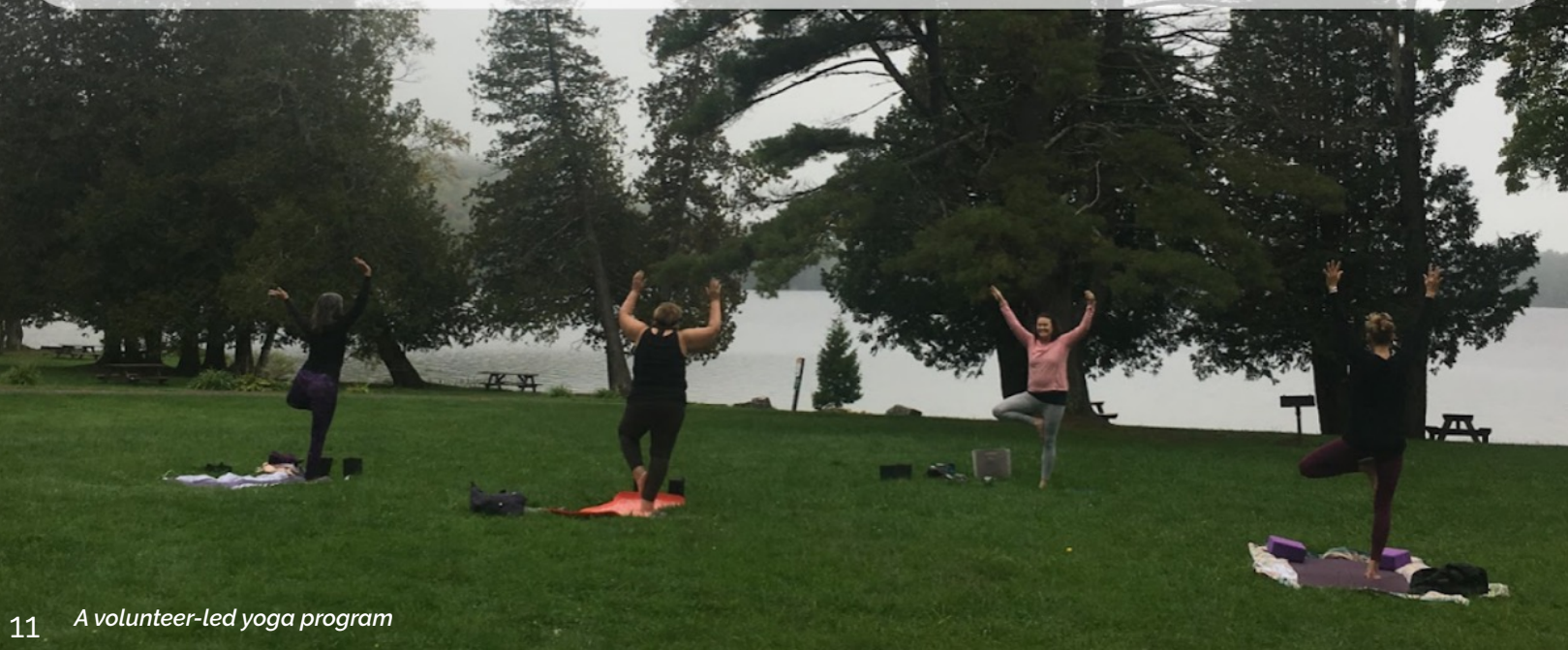
Ensuring *Equitable* Access to the Outdoors

Our AmeriCorps members, serving as Outdoor Rec Facilitators, lead free outdoor activities every week. We're also building a gear library for residents to borrow equipment that will help them enjoy this beautiful region we call home.



Sunset snowshoe

"THE INSTRUCTORS WERE ALL SKILLED AND FABULOUS! THE SETTING AT LAKE GEORGE WAS AMAZING. WILL ATTEND NEXT SUMMER! THANK YOU!"



A volunteer-led yoga program

New Staff: Skowhegan Outdoors Program Coordinator



Ben manages Main Street Skowhegan's Skowhegan Outdoors program and leads our team of AmeriCorps members. Ben is from Orono, Maine, where he grew up canoeing and swimming on the Penobscot River. During his time at UMaine Orono studying Mechanical Engineering, he worked summers whitewater guiding on the West Branch of the Penobscot near Millinocket. After graduating Ben traveled west to work two summers teaching whitewater kayaking on the Snake River in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, spending the winters skiing and working at Alta near Salt Lake City. Ben also worked as a river boarding guide (swimming down rapids with surf fins and a foam board) in New Zealand before returning to his first love, Maine, and to the West Branch of the Penobscot. Ben can often be found snorkeling down the upper Kennebec or hiking in Baxter State Park. He is excited to get the Skowhegan community outside, and can't wait to surf it up on Skowhegan's future river park.



Cross-country ski clinic

New Staff: Skowhegan Outdoors Park Activities Coordinator



Chelsea is a shared employee between Main Street Skowhegan and Lake George Regional Park. She coordinates Skowhegan Outdoors programming at the park and serves as the LGRP Camp Director. Chelsea is from Mount Desert, Maine, home to Acadia National Park, where she grew up hiking, biking, and swimming on the Maine coast. After serving as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, Chelsea worked for five seasons as a National Park ranger in Acadia where she further developed her teaching skills and style, as well as gained knowledge of native plants and natural resources. Chelsea is excited to incorporate this knowledge into the outdoor recreation programs she'll be leading. When Chelsea isn't exploring the local Skowhegan trails you can find her skiing at Sugarloaf, kayaking the Maine Island Trails or hiking somewhere in Maine's western mountains.



Long-distance swim club

SKOWHEGAN OUTDOORS

"THANK YOU FOR THE INTERESTING WALK. I FEEL THAT THE MORE THAT PEOPLE ARE AWARE OF THE INVASIVE INSECTS AND PLANTS THAT MAYBE THERE IS HOPE THAT WE CAN STOP FUTURE THREATS. SO THANK YOU FOR SPREADING THE WORD."



Nature walk led by partners Somerset Woods Trustees

Community Partners and Supporters

Austin & Associates
 Hight Family of Dealerships
 Lake George Regional Park
 Outdoor Sport Institute
 Jim Browne Foundation/Lakewood Golf
 REACH After School Program
 Redington-Fairview General Hospital

Skowhegan Fire Department
 Skowhegan High School Outing Club
 Somerset Public Health
 Somerset Woods Trustees
 SCTC Outdoor Leadership Program
 Whittemore & Sons

2021 By the Numbers



150 outdoor programs executed by AmeriCorps members



830+ participants attended Skowhegan Outdoors activities



46 volunteers dedicated 325+ hours



\$75,000+ in community investment



180+ items in our gear library available to the community for FREE



Inflatable kayaks on the Kennebec in Skowhegan - photo Down River Expeditions

"THANKS MARA! I HAVE NOT WINTER CAMPED BEFORE BUT IT IS ON MY TO DO LIST AND CLOSER TO ACTUALLY HAPPENING THANKS TO YOUR TIPS"



Winter camping clinic

Skowhegan Outdoors Gear Library

Borrow - for free! - any of the following items:

- Canoes
- Standup paddle boards
- Inflatable duckies (kayaks)
- Life jackets/PFDs
- Fly fishing rods/reels
- Sleeping bags/pads
- Cook stoves/pots
- Assorted camp cookware
- Compression/dry sacks
- X-country skis/boots/poles
- Microspikes
- Mountain bikes
- Bike helmets
- Yoga mats/blocks
- Hiking backpacks
- Tents
- Binoculars
- Snowshoes
- Headlamps

SKOWHEGAN OUTDOORS

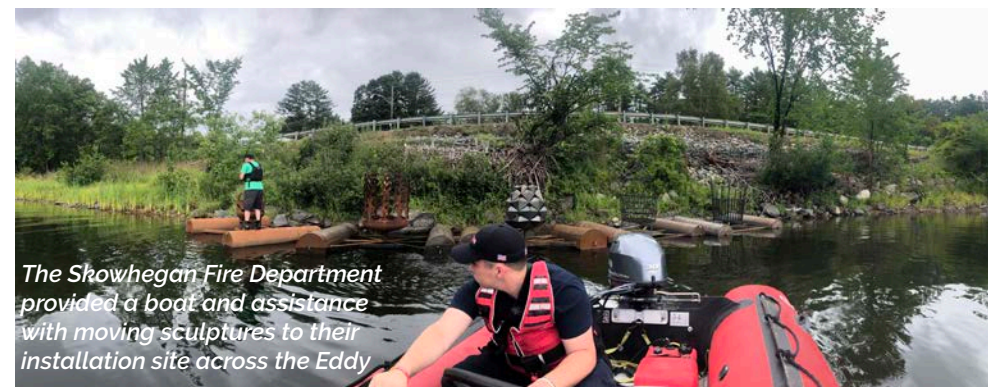
The installation can be viewed July to September from Coburn Park and the sandy beach off the Debe River Walk -photo MXH Marketing



Anton & Lev Yudin and Scott Barden assist with loading wood into fire sculptures



Carrier Trucking helped with sculpture transport to and from river



The Skowhegan Fire Department provided a boat and assistance with moving sculptures to their installation site across the Eddy

KENNEBEC ON FIRE

With the completion of this seasonal public art installation, we've funneled more than \$75,000 in grant funding directly to five Maine artists and several local businesses.

We are excited to host 2022 lighting events!

Many Thanks to Our Project Supporters and Partners

Anton & Lev Yudin
Brookfield Renewable
Carrier Trucking
Central Maine Crane
Cousineau Wood Products
GFWC Semper Fidelis Club
Joe Almand
Maine Arts Commission

Maine Community Foundation
Maine Wood Heat
MXH Marketing
Skowhegan Fire Department
Skowhegan Highway Department
Skowhegan Police Department
Wesserunsett Arts Council & KOF Jury Members
And many other volunteers!



Downhill kayak race at Lake George Regional Park during Somerset SnowFest - photo Jonathan Wheaton Photography

Festivals and Community Events

In 2021, we hosted modified outdoor festivals. Please save the date for the following 2022 events!

Somerset SnowFest | February 19-27
 Hosted in collaboration with Lake George Regional Park. Join us in the grandstand at the fairgrounds on Feb. 26 for Skijor Skowhegan!

Skowhegan River Fest | August 3-7
 Hosted in collaboration with the Town and the Chamber of Commerce. Dinner in the Park is scheduled for Aug. 6 in Coburn Park.

Skowhegan Craft Brew Fest | September 3
 A celebration of Maine craft beverages and local food in downtown Skowhegan.

Small Business Saturday | November 26
 Stay tuned for a revamped shop small event!

SKOW-Whoville | December 2-3
 A holiday celebration like no other with the Grinch himself!

For the LOVE of Skowhegan

Show your love for this community by tagging photos #SKOW!



Our community pride campaign, #SKOW - Someplace Kind Of Wonderful, officially kicked off in 2021 with new street pole banners, a graphic designed by Mackenzie Cayford, and a collaborative community birdhouse project spearheaded by River Roads Artisans Gallery and supported by Overman Academy, Somerset Public Health, REACH After School Program, and KVCAP.



Birdhouses and a new banner adorn a downtown street light pole - photo MXH Marketing



Birdhouses painted by community members and ready to hang - photo River Roads Artisans Gallery, A Member Co-op



Triangle garden - photo MXH Marketing

#SKOW efforts were enhanced thanks to the work of our garden volunteers who care for the Triangle Garden downtown, ensuring spring, summer, and fall beauty each year.



Garden volunteers (missing Patricia Horine) - photo Patricia Horine

COMMUNITY

Paddle boarder in gorge - photo from drone footage
taken by Matt Quinn

How Can *You* Make a Difference in Skowhegan?



Please consider supporting Skowhegan revitalization efforts by donating to Main Street Skowhegan. Donations are accepted at MainStreetSkowhegan.org or via snail mail.

Our mission is to celebrate Skowhegan's rich heritage while achieving our brightest future as a thriving economic, cultural, and recreational community where residents enjoy a high quality of life.



MainStreetSkowhegan.org