



THE REVITALIZATION OF SKOWHEGAN

2022 Impact Report & 2023 Outlook



Awarded **\$4.89 MILLION** to construct Skowhegan River Park whitewater wave features

The Skowhegan River Park is a nod to our past and an investment in our future. With river access, enhanced whitewater, and more than 50 miles of trails accessible via downtown, the park will redevelop our industrial river gorge into an outdoor recreation asset that will help improve health & wellness outcomes and bolster our economy. Main Street has partnered with the Town to move this project forward; we're leading all fundraising efforts. [Learn more at SkowheganRiverPark.com](http://SkowheganRiverPark.com).



Awarded **\$2 MILLION** to redevelop Skowhegan's downtown riverfront

For decades Skowhegan has turned its back on the Kennebec River, with buildings facing Water Street, chainlink fences, and dumpsters lining the beautiful gorge. This \$2 million in federal funding will help us change that by adding river access, a promenade, and viewing areas. [Stay informed at BuildSkowhegan.com](http://BuildSkowhegan.com).



Awarded \$195K to develop a kitchen incubator and food hall

This new facility at 185 Water Street will feature a shared-use commercial kitchen and flex space for food stalls and a market, splitting the space with a future bar and distillery. (Example photo) [Learn more at SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com](http://SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com).



Partnered with the Town and DOT to launch the Village Partnership Initiative to develop a downtown master plan

With so many major projects underway in Skowhegan, it's imperative we take a comprehensive look at traffic, parking, and new developments in order to plan for Skowhegan's future. MSS is eager to be part of this important project as an extension of our Village Design Committee work. [Sign up for informational emails at BuildSkowhegan.com](http://BuildSkowhegan.com).

MSS IMPACT: 2022

Launched the Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship



Our Skowhegan Center for Entrepreneurship opened in April 2022, and now serves as the hub of entrepreneurial activity in Somerset County. Business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs of all ages can seek resources and assistance with starting and growing a business. The Center also offers space for coworking (with 24/7 access), meetings, and community gatherings. [Learn more at SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com](https://www.skowheganentrepreneurship.com).



Hosted more than two dozen business trainings in 2022.



Met with more than 100 area business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs in 2022.



Awarded \$10,000 in TA Grants and pitch prize money to Skowhegan area entrepreneurs in 2022.



Collaborated with 16 regional partners to serve our business owners and entrepreneurs.

Awarded \$5K in prize money at our inaugural pitch competition



PC: Ann Rieke Photography

In October 2022, we hosted our first business lab, a seven-week course designed to walk entrepreneurs through business planning, culminating in a pitch competition for \$5,000—thanks to Skowhegan Savings—to start or grow a business. Winner Matt Quinn, owner of the Cornville Christmas Tree Co., used the prize money to purchase equipment to help increase efficiencies at his tree farm, resulting in an 80% increase in year-over-year sales in 2022. Matt is continuing his entrepreneurial journey in Maine Center for Entrepreneurship's Top Gun program in 2023. [Check out a video about the business lab at SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com](https://www.skowheganentrepreneurship.com).

We launched our second Business Lab & Pitch Competition in April 2023 with 11 participants.

Hosted **203 free outdoor programs**, serving **704 area residents**, including some of our region's most underserved families and children



Skowhegan Outdoors program participation increased by 46 percent over last year, with 1,801 user days (repeat participants) and 704 individuals joining us for workshops, activities, and outings to a variety of locations all over the region. [Check out our program schedule and borrow gear at SkowheganOutdoors.com.](#)

Awarded grant funding to purchase **8 whitewater kayaks** and hosted our first **kayak clinic**



Our approach to community revitalization through outdoor recreation is multi-faceted. Building a river park is only one piece of the puzzle. In order to engage our local families in healthy outdoor activities and prepare area residents to be kayakers, mountain bikers, hikers, skiers, and lifelong outdoor enthusiasts, we are providing training and gear—for free. [Learn more at SkowheganOutdoors.com.](#)

MSS IMPACT: 2022

Welcomed 300 Build Maine conference attendees to Skowhegan in June



PC: Ann Rieke Photography

The Build Maine Conference Planning Committee selected Skowhegan as its home for 2022, and Main Street Skowhegan was thrilled to host and support this event that brought people from all over the state to our town. The conference will be back again this year, June 7-8, 2023. [Find out more about this event at MainStreetSkowhegan.org.](https://MainStreetSkowhegan.org)

Transformed a downtown riverside parking lot into a public greenspace



Our riverfront greenspace served as a welcoming public gathering and event space along the Kennebec in downtown. It also showed the potential for riverfront development along the gorge—arguably our most valuable land in Skowhegan. We look forward to bringing it back in 2023. [Share your feedback about this greenspace at BuildSkowhegan.com.](https://BuildSkowhegan.com)

Coordinated
the **longest**
holiday parade
in Skowhegan's
history



PC: Ann-Rieke Photography

In addition to leading economic development projects for the town, we also look forward to hosting community events. Our annual SKOW-Whoville celebration, formerly known as the Holiday Stroll, takes place annually the first weekend in December. In addition to bringing smiles to thousands, it's a great example of community collaboration—with many partners and volunteers helping to ensure its success. [Get all the details at SKOW-Whoville.org](http://SKOW-Whoville.org).

Drew **2,000+ visitors** for our annual skijoring
event (our 2023 event was even bigger!)



Our events are tied directly to Skowhegan's strategic priorities, specifically strengthening local businesses and promoting outdoor rec and local food. Events like Skijor Skowhegan and the Skowhegan Craft Brew Fest showcase Skowhegan as an outdoor recreation and local food destination while attracting people to our town who spend money at our locally owned businesses. [Save the date for 2023 events at MainStreetSkowhegan.org](http://MainStreetSkowhegan.org).

MSS IMPACT: 2022

Skowhegan's Return to the River

The Skowhegan River Park will redevelop an industrial downtown river corridor into an accessible outdoor recreation asset with an expanded trail network and enhanced whitewater. The river park will benefit community members through improved **river access** and **free recreation opportunities**, while **bolstering the regional economy** and attracting visitors, businesses, and a talented workforce.

Enhanced Whitewater

We'll enhance whitewater waves that are currently present in the gorge to make them ideal for whitewater kayaking, surfing, river boarding, and standup paddle boarding. Once construction is complete, Skowhegan will boast the only adjustable wave in the Northeast, providing high quality recreation.

Major Trail Network

Because we know not everyone will want to recreate in the river, we're planning for fifty miles of four-season trails accessible via the heart of town for walking, running, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and more. A master trail planning effort is underway, with a final report anticipated in Fall 2023.

Easy River Access

A set of stairs from downtown (on the north river bank) and an ADA ramp leading to the water's edge (on the south bank) from Debe River Walk, will make the river accessible by all.

Local Training Venue

Reliable flows and waves in the river park will make it an ideal training facility for safely learning how to paddle and surf. Locals can take advantage of free whitewater kayak training and gear via the Skowhegan Outdoors program.

Natural Tubing Channel

Families looking for something more relaxing can access, via new stairs from downtown, the natural channel on the left side of the river, and float to the Big Eddy or beyond to Cleaver Boat Landing.



Before and after of River Run Park in Englewood, Colorado. Photos courtesy of McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group.



Rendering of Skowhegan's future river park.



Project Update

Environmental permitting is underway, and construction could begin as early as Fall 2023. [Learn more at SkowheganRiverPark.com.](https://www.skowheganriverpark.com)

Traffic & Parking Enhancements

2023



2023 Initiative

PC: Jonathan Wheaton Photography

Main Street Skowhegan is working with the municipality and MaineDOT on a Village Partnership Initiative (VPI), an effort to enhance Skowhegan's greater downtown area by assessing and reimagining traffic patterns, parking, and pedestrian and bicycle safety—all in the context of the many infrastructure projects that are in the works. A placemaking initiative at its core, the goal of the VPI is to develop and implement a master design plan for Skowhegan's commercial core that will improve the quality of life for residents while promoting economic growth, enhancing the visitor experience, and guiding future development.

Our role as a partner in this initiative is to ensure the public is engaged throughout the process. Visit BuildSkowhegan.com and sign up for emails to stay informed.

Riverfront Development



2023 Initiative

PC: MXH Marketing

Redevelopment of the riverfront from the Old Mill Pub to the Municipal Building began in summer 2022 with a three-day design charrette that resulted in several design concepts for this highly anticipated greenspace. We gathered additional feedback via survey, and we're now working with the design firm to finalize plans based on public sentiment. [Learn more at BuildSkowhegan.com](https://BuildSkowhegan.com).

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

Entrepreneurial Inspiration

According to the National Main Street Center, 74 percent of businesses in communities, like Skowhegan, were launched by local entrepreneurs. To that end, Main Street Skowhegan is doubling down on supporting local entrepreneurs and growing our business community from within via the following initiatives in 2023.



Business Lab & Pitch Competition

"One thing that this has accomplished in me is the idea that I can be successful. That I'm legitimate. The positive feedback, the faith, it really has made me very proud to be doing this."
- Matt Quinn, owner of Cornville Christmas Tree Farm

Business Lab is a FREE, fast-paced, interactive program of seven classes held over seven weeks, followed by a pitch competition, designed to help entrepreneurs create, refine, implement, and present their business. We'll offer Spring and Fall sessions in 2023.



Support

- 2x weekly office hours for walk-in support
- Monthly Small Business Meet Ups
- Business trainings, including design thinking, e-commerce, and Grow with Google, a business-focused computer skills and career-building curriculum
- Workshops on available business funding
- Shared web-based programming from partners CEI Women's Business Center and the Small Business Development Center
- \$5,000 in Technical Assistance Grants awarded to Skowhegan businesses annually

Partnerships

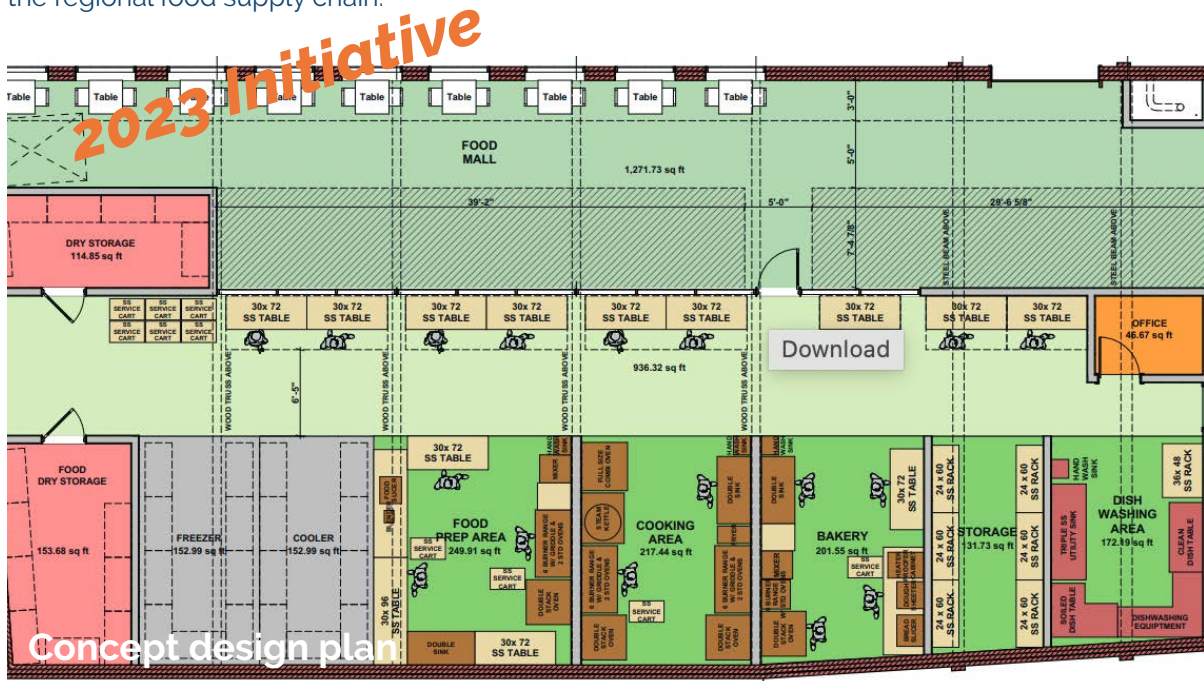
- Collaborating with JMG partners to connect Skowhegan Area High School Juniors and Seniors with local business owners for their Maine Career Exploration Badge, which offers a 40-hour paid work experience and \$500 stipend.
- Partnering with Aspire River Hawks to launch a school-based, youth entrepreneurship program.
- Strengthening collaboration with regional partners to support entrepreneurs throughout the funnel—from startup to acceleration.
- Working with the Roux Institute, Maine Outdoor Brands, and the Maine Department of Outdoor Recreation to host an outdoor rec-themed Start Summit in Skowhegan in April.

Learn more at [SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com](https://www.SkowheganEntrepreneurship.com).

Kitchen Incubator & Food Hall

2023

In collaboration with Eli Soll & Kim Leo, owners of 185 Water St., Main Street will spend 2023 developing a shared kitchen, food hall, and market—infrastructure necessary to incubate food-based startups. Thanks to several businesses and a popular year-round farmers' market, Skowhegan has a burgeoning agricultural and local food economy. The development of the shared kitchen and food hall will bolster this sector while building resilience and strengthening the regional food supply chain.



This facility will directly benefit the Skowhegan community by:

- Providing low-cost, shared kitchen space for food entrepreneurs
- Offering low-cost startup space for food retail & restaurants
- Supporting Central Maine's farmers and growers by connecting them to food entrepreneurs seeking local products
- Supporting startups as they grow, increasing the likelihood of business success and the creation/retention of new jobs
- Attracting new businesses to Skowhegan
- Inspiring local youth to consider starting a food-based business in Skowhegan



Food entrepreneurs at Fork Food Lab in Portland.

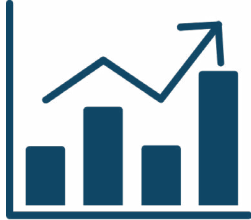
SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Community Transformation through Outdoor Recreation

The Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps Program, an initiative of Main Street Skowhegan, is an effort to ensure that everyone in the Skowhegan community has equitable access to the outdoors, opportunities to participate in free outdoor activities, and the tools to experience the natural world on their own. [Learn more at SkowheganOutdoors.com](https://www.skowheganoutdoors.com).

2022 Data



46% increase in YOY program attendance



1,801 participants served



203 guided programs



180+ gear library items (and growing!) for FREE lending

Partnerships

Somerset Outing Club

R.E.A.C.H.

Lake George Summer Camp

Outdoor Clubs



At the start of the 2022 school year, Skowhegan Outdoors, in partnership with Somerset Public Health's Move More Kids program, began offering monthly outing club trips to expose youth and their families to different outdoor opportunities in the region and beyond. Trips are free and include transportation, lunch, and a curated and guided outdoor experience.

During this after-school program serving underserved youth, Skowhegan Outdoors brings middle school students closer to nature through outdoor education and recreation. 2023 will be our fifth year of collaboration with this program.

During the six-week summer program for Grades 1 to 8 at Lake George Regional Park, Skowhegan Outdoors AmeriCorps members facilitate adventures ranging from mountain biking and hiking to whitewater rafting clinics. For many campers, this is their first exposure to these outdoor recreation activities thanks to instruction and gear provided by Skowhegan Outdoors.

Via a partnership with Somerset Public Health and their Move More Kids program, AmeriCorps member Charlotte Allard is facilitating after-school outing club activities for middle-school youth, with the goal of starting an outing club in every middle and high school in Somerset County.

Skowhegan Outdoors Basecamp

2023



The upward momentum and growth of the Skowhegan Outdoors program have prompted our organization to move into a larger and more accessible and visible space in downtown Skowhegan at 65 Water Street. We are transforming the 3,000-square-foot, river-adjacent half of the first floor into the Skowhegan Outdoors Basecamp, a community gathering place from which we'll expand our gear library and host free outdoor-focused educational programs.

The Basecamp will offer the following benefits to the community:

- Easily accessible and visible home for our gear library
- Walk-in gear lending services and expanded hours
- Outdoor recreation hub, providing a central location for outdoor clinics and workshops
- Low-cost bike and ski maintenance services
- A well-stocked resource library, including local trail info and area maps
- Welcoming place where community members can gather and connect through a shared love for the outdoors

2023 Initiative



A draft design of the Skowhegan Outdoors Basecamp space expected to open for operation in Spring 2023.

"I am a mom of two very different children. One is a nature-loving 13-year-old boy, and the other is a sweet 9-year-old girl who has significant special health needs and utilizes a wheelchair for mobility. Our family has been blessed by the programs that Skowhegan Outdoors offers because they have allowed my son to access the outdoors in a safe, supportive group environment without our family's typical limitations due to his sister's mobility and health challenges. Many of the programs have been accessible for my daughter, and she has enjoyed being a part of the experience. The presenters and Skowhegan Outdoors Staff are all exceptionally welcoming and encouraging. They serve our community not only as liaisons between our sedentary city streets and the great outdoors, but also as role models and guides for our youth.

THANK YOU!" - Megan Patrick

Youth Summer Clinics

2023 Initiative



Ben Koehler, Skowhegan Outdoors Program Coordinator and Certified Whitewater Kayak Instructor, leads an Introduction to WW Kayaking Course on the Kennebec in Skowhegan. Ben will lead several kayak trainings in summer 2023 as well three weeklong clinics for local high school students focused on whitewater, hiking, and mountain biking.

PRIORITIZING WELLNESS

Board members & volunteers at the ribbon cutting for the riverfront greenspace



PC: Ann Rieke Photography



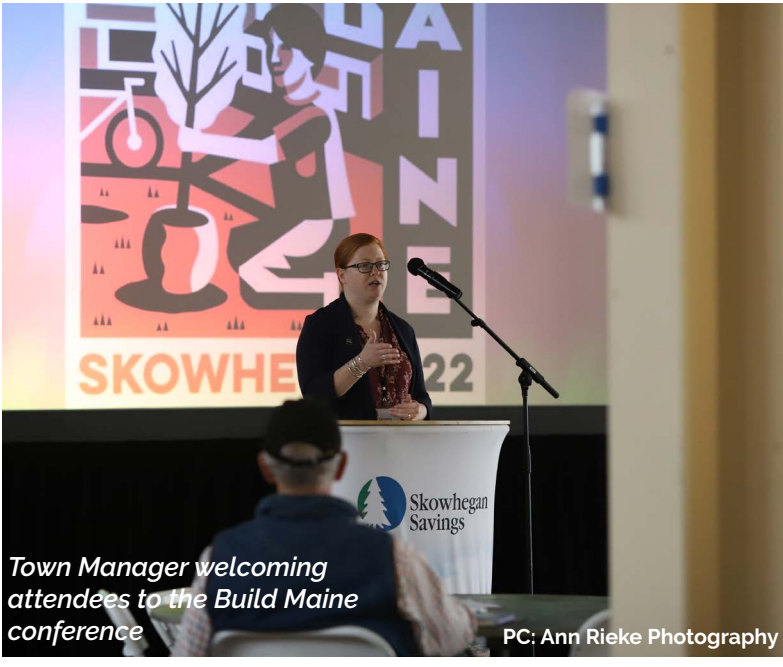
Volunteers serving popcorn at SKOW-Whoville

PC: Ann Rieke Photography



Skijor Skowhegan volunteers

Board members at a regional chamber event



Town Manager welcoming attendees to the Build Maine conference

PC: Ann Rieke Photography

2023

CELEBRATING LOCAL LEADERS



Staff, board members, & volunteers painting crosswalks for improved pedestrian safety



MSS Executive Director and Skowhegan Regional Chamber of Commerce board members and staff at the grand opening of the Center for Entrepreneurship

PC: Ann Rieke Photography



Skowhegan Craft Brew Fest volunteers

650+ Million Reasons to Celebrate Skowhegan

With a growing group of local leaders, community-directed strategies for growth, and \$650 million in private and public investment planned for the next few years, the future is brighter than ever.

Will you be a part of Skowhegan's transformation?



Please consider supporting Skowhegan revitalization efforts by donating to Main Street Skowhegan. Donations are accepted at MainStreetSkowhegan.org or via snail mail (65 Water St. Unit 1, Skowhegan).

Front Cover PC: MXH Marketing
Back Cover PC: Maria Landry