



Community transformation through outdoor recreation

Why a River Park?

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 and bolster the regional economy by attracting visitors, businesses, and a talented workforce.

A river park is an infrastructure investment that provides easy access to the water, enhanced whitewater waves for recreating, and welcoming green space for community members and visitors to enjoy.

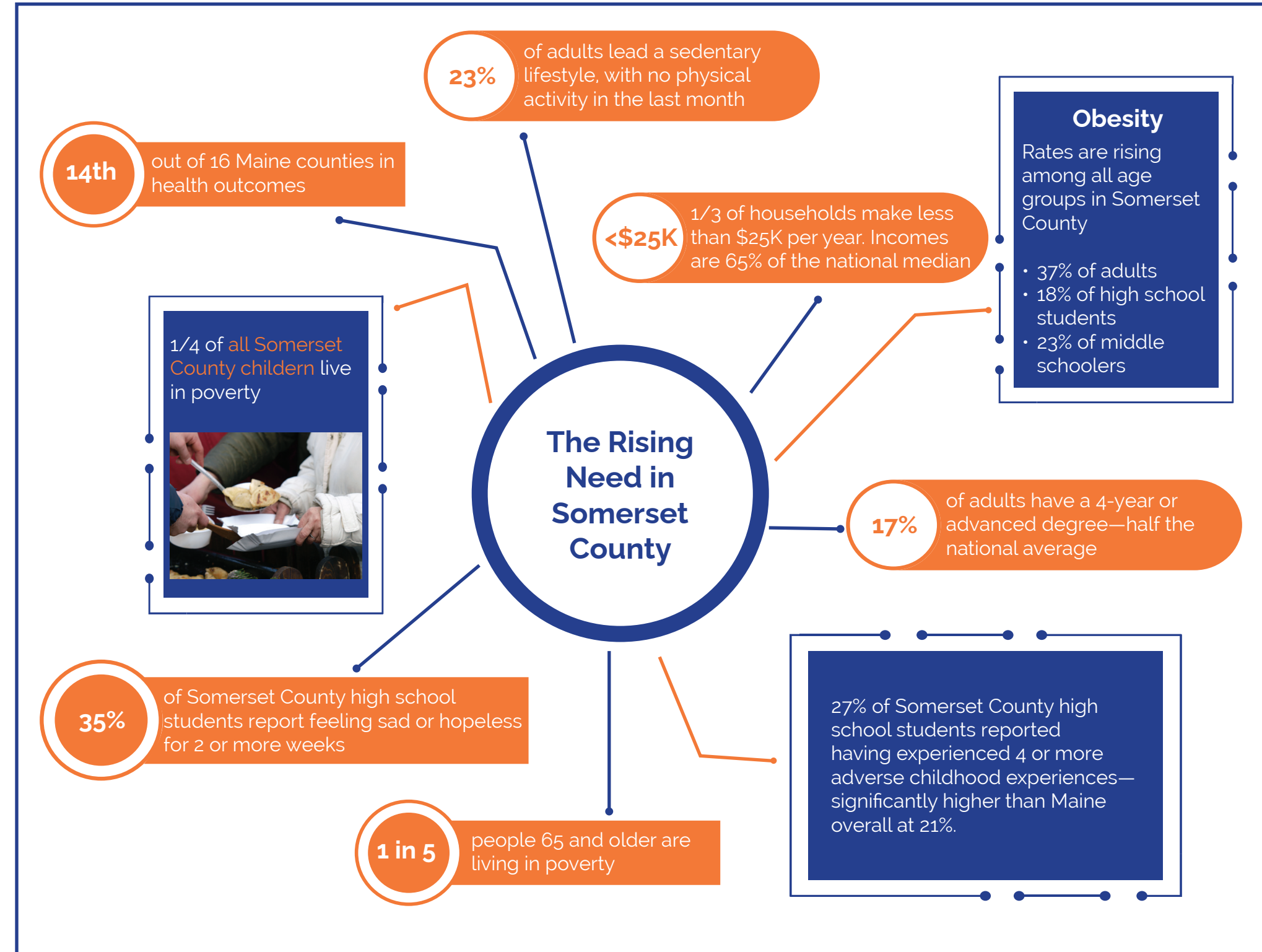
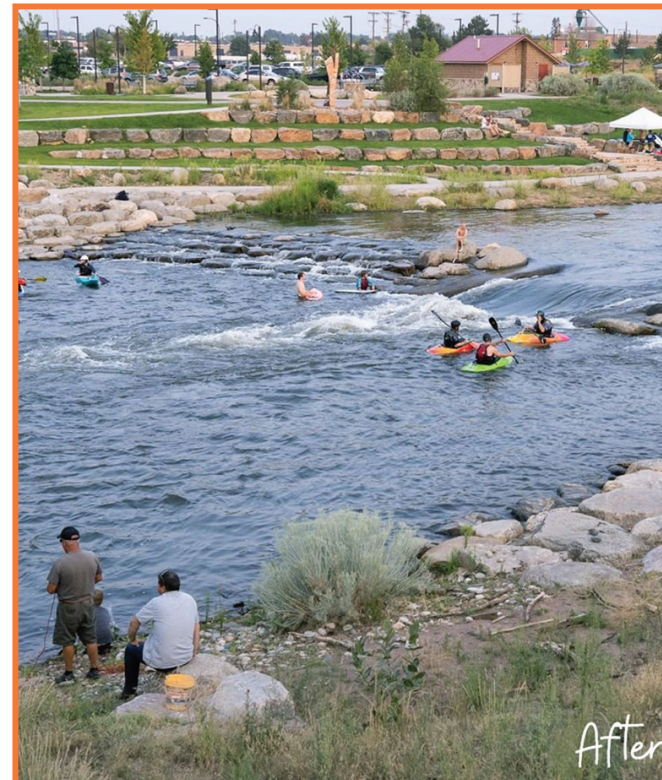
This is Skowhegan's return to the river...

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; fostering economic prosperity by drawing tourists, attracting and retaining new businesses and a talented workforce; and creating places people want to live, work, and play.

Skowhegan plans to tap into this potential by developing a river park in our downtown Kennebec gorge—a community asset that has been overlooked for years.

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



Outdoor Recreation as a Solution

All people have the right to live in, and feel connected to, a healthy community. When more people have more meaningful experiences outdoors, their quality of life, health, and social well-being improve—and in turn, their communities become stronger and more sustainable.

The Skowhegan River Park is placemaking and community development at its finest. By leveraging our natural resources, investing in outdoor recreation infrastructure, and providing free programming and gear, we will help the Central Maine Region achieve its brightest future.



Residents not only support the river park plan—proven by the project's popularity during a community-wide strategic planning process—but they are also excited to see it transform central Maine into a place where residents are proud to live and visitors never want to leave.

A Bolstered Economy

According to our 2016 Economic Impact Study, we can expect the following economic benefits:

Local Impact

- Skowhegan as a tourist destination = increased visitation to the region
- \$4.6 million in spending in Somerset County in the base year; up to \$19 million by year 10
- Diversification of Skowhegan tax base (currently Sappi represents 40 percent of the tax base)
- New businesses and more jobs
- Increased property values
- Attract entrepreneurs, new residents, and a talented workforce

"Creation of the river park and associated amenities downtown will likely have positive impacts on the economy of the region, and also the social capital, livability, and attractiveness of Skowhegan. The Town and Main Street Skowhegan should make sure the project maximizes its connections and benefits to downtown." -Jeff Levine, Levine Planning Strategies, The 2021 Skowhegan Housing Assessment & Whitewater Park Case Study

Outdoor Recreation Programming and Gear

The Skowhegan Outdoors Basecamp, an initiative of nonprofit partner Main Street Skowhegan, offers community members free outdoor recreation activities and whitewater training, more than 180 items of outdoor gear to borrow (free!), and a welcoming place to gather, learn, and connect around a shared interest in the outdoors.

- Five trained AmeriCorps members serving as Outdoor Rec Facilitators
- Free, guided outdoor recreation programs 3x/week
- After-school programs, outing club facilitation, summer rec camp activities

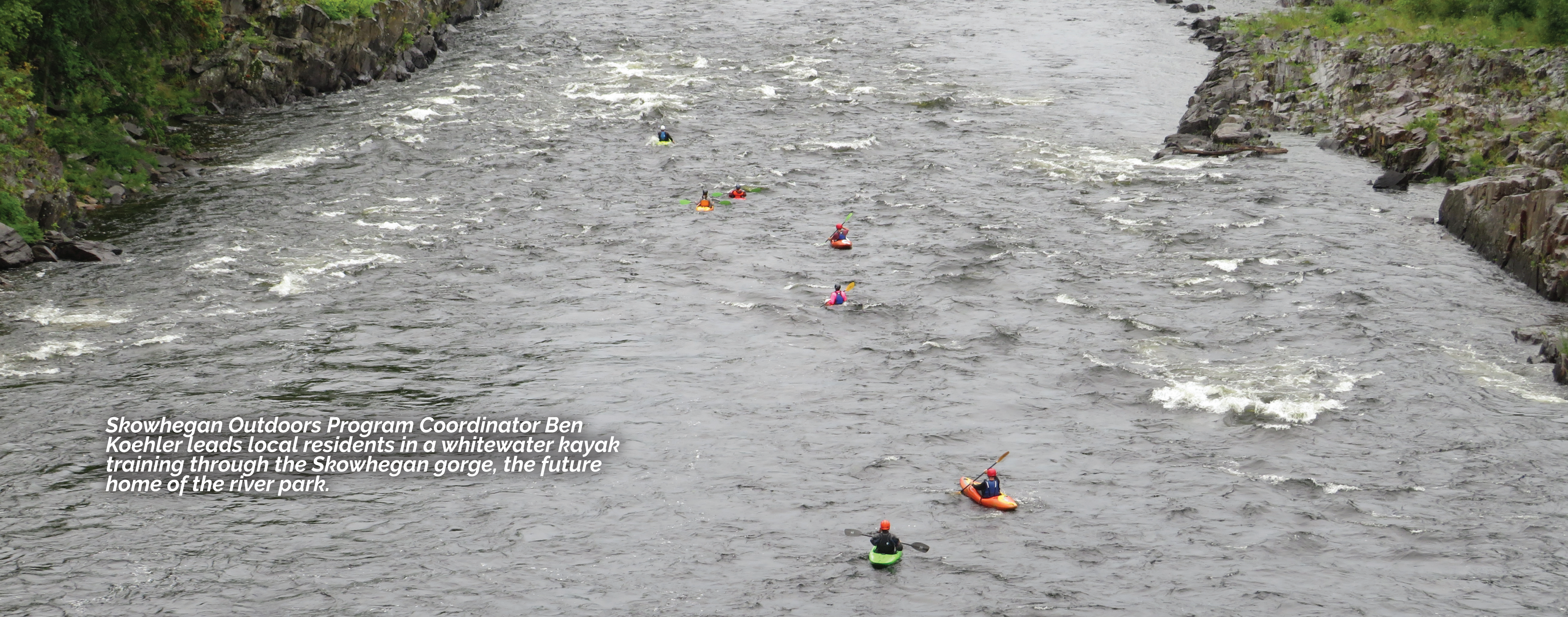
Learn more at SkowheganOutdoors.com

Private Investment in anticipation of the Skowhegan River Park

- *7 Island Avenue:* Redevelopment underway; taproom/ restaurant & hotel rooms, three floors of housing
- *151 Water Street:* Renovated retail space, future AirBnB units
- *181 Water Street:* Redeveloped community center, future pool renovations for kayak rolling clinics
- *185 Water Street:* Redevelopment underway; future home of a kitchen incubator, food hall, and distillery
- *24 Court Street:* Planned mixed-use development adjacent to Maine Grains that will expand the town's burgeoning food hub
- *31 Court Street:* Recently renovated AirBnB unit
- *7 Joyce Street & Lot 73 Mt. Pleasant Ave:* Recently purchased to offer visitors riverside accommodations
- *123 Madison Ave:* Former home of Whit's End Bar & Grill; new Brickyard Hollow restaurant
- *65 Water Street:* Recently purchased; Skowhegan Outdoors Base Camp & Joe's Flat Iron Café

With a growing group of local leaders 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?



Skowhegan Outdoors Program Coordinator Ben Koehler leads local residents in a whitewater kayak training through the Skowhegan gorge, the future home of the river park.

Enhanced Quality of Life

Youth Engagement

With new opportunities to get outside and engage with peers and community members through Skowhegan Outdoors programming, local youth are learning outdoor recreation skills and teamwork. Over time, they will feel more valued, engaged, purposeful, and connected to their community—which will help stem youth outmigration and lead to more productive, happy, healthy adults.

According to a recent Maine Integrative Youth Health Survey, only 46 percent of youth in our region feel like they matter to people.



Health and Wellness

"Physical activity is the closest thing we have to a wonder drug."
-Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of U.S. CDC

A growing body of research shows that health benefits of regular outdoor activity include weight loss, lower blood pressure, reduced arthritis pain, and lowered risk of diabetes, certain cancers, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disease.

People who engage in outdoor physical activity also report greater feelings of enjoyment, energy, vitality, restoration, and self-esteem, while access to green space in low-income neighborhoods has proven promising in reducing health inequalities, increasing longevity, and improving health behaviors. For children, unstructured outdoor time reduces stress and symptoms of attention disorders.

By providing accessible outdoor recreation opportunities in downtown Skowhegan, we will help improve the quality of life and make our town and region a safer, healthier, and better place to live.

The World Obesity Atlas 2023, published by World Obesity Federation, predicts that the global economic impact of overweight and obesity will reach \$4.32 trillion annually by 2035 if prevention and treatment measures do not improve. At almost 3% of global GDP, this is comparable with the impact of COVID-19 in 2020.

River Park Features

Easy River Access

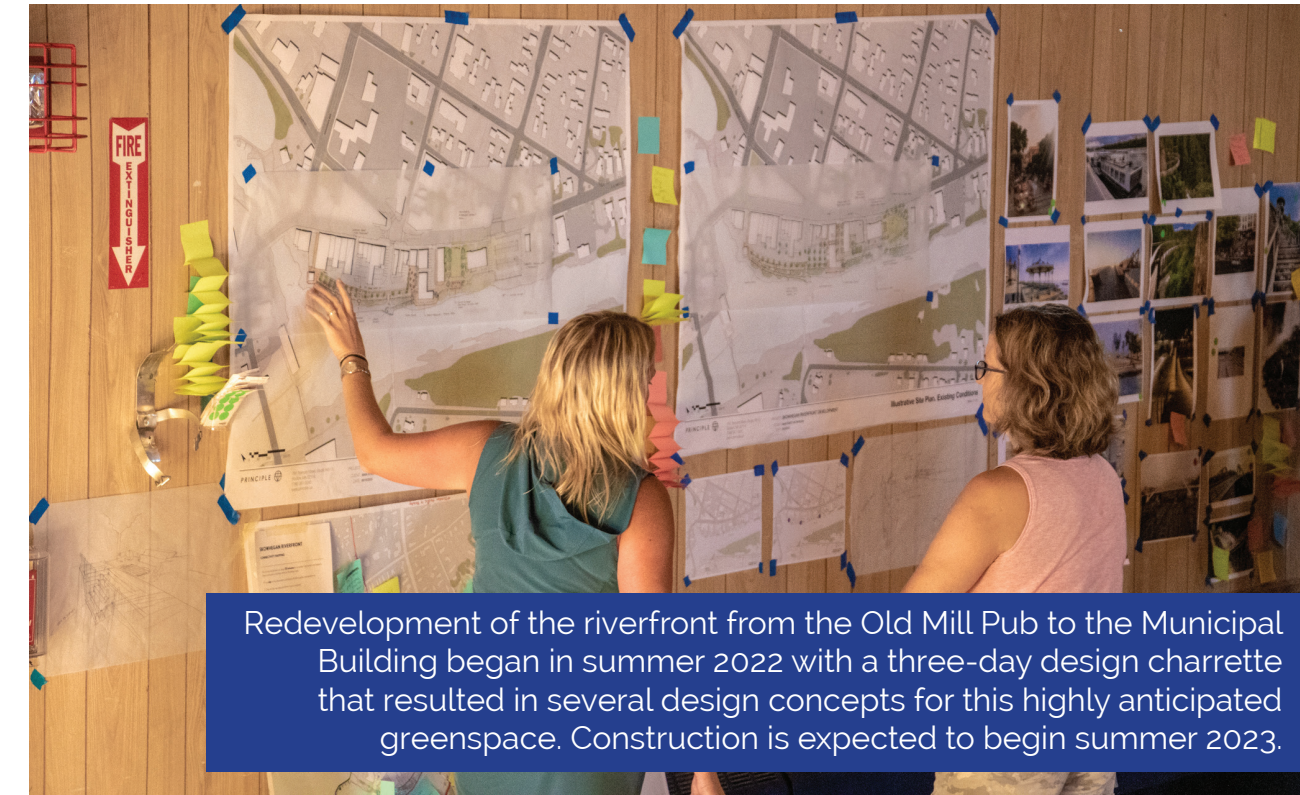
A set of stairs from downtown (on the north river bank) and an ADA ramp leading to the water's edge (on the south bank) from Debe River Walk, will make the river accessible by all.

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.

Riverfront Promenade

A two-mile pedestrian and bike path from the Old Mill Pub to Coburn Park and beyond to Cleaver Boat Landing on Route 2 will offer river overlooks and viewing areas as well as gathering and green space. The Town of Skowhegan is also working with DOT to assess traffic and parking to make the village area safer for bikes and pedestrians.



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. Construction is expected to begin summer 2023.



Skowhegan River Park Features Cont.

Improved River Health

During construction of the Skowhegan River Park, we will remove hazardous materials from the riverbed—debris from the collapse of a railroad bridge during the flood of 1987.

Evidence suggests that the riverbed was altered during the days of the log drives to prevent log snags. The installation of whitewater features is expected to restore some hydraulic diversity, improve fish habitat, and offer safe passage during fish migration.

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.

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 on 300 acres in the heart of town to accommodate walking, running, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and more. A master trail planning effort is underway, with a final report anticipated in Fall 2023.

National Events Venue

Our river park will be a great venue for hosting major paddling competitions and whitewater festivals that will draw paddlers and surfers from all over the country to the Central Maine Region.



How to Donate

For more information or to donate, please contact Skowhegan River Park Committee fundraising lead Kristina Cannon at kristina@mainstreetskowhegan.org or 207-614-4078.

Naming Opportunities

The greater river park project has a number of naming opportunities.

Anonymous Gifts

We appreciate all gifts. If you desire to give anonymously we will not list your name in materials or on signage.

Corporate Matching Gifts

Ask your employer (or former employer, if retired) if the company will match your contribution.

Tax Advantages

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

Appreciated Securities

Contact us to learn about transferring securities to support the Skowhegan River Park.

Bequests

Check with your attorney for information on including a bequest provision for the Skowhegan River Park in your will.

SkowheganRiverPark.com

