



Play Space Action Plan 2023



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The picnic benches in the Village Center are a popular place to take a break from play! Photos courtesy of the New Boston Recreation Department

Introduction

Play is essential to well-being. Encouraging more activity among families, and especially young children, can help reduce the risk of obesity and set the stage for a lifetime of healthy habits. In fact, a growing body of public health research indicates that spending time in green, well-maintained parks and recreation spaces is associated with an abundance of positive health outcomes – such as increased physical activity, reduced stress, enhanced academic performance, and improved social connections.

Pathways to Play is a two-year initiative led by the **Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC)** to increase access to recreation spaces in the greater Manchester region. Funded by the **New Hampshire Children's Health Foundation**, Pathways to Play activities included fielding a region-wide survey to understand recreation barriers and opportunities, and developing an online, interactive map to increase awareness of regional recreation resources.

In summer 2023, SNHPC issued an open call for projects and recreation spaces that might benefit from free planning support. **New Boston's Village Center** was selected as the location for the Pathways to Play pilot project. The New Boston Recreation Department assembled an enthusiastic volunteer advisory group to guide the initiative, and the collaboration benefited from a remarkable degree of local expertise and enthusiasm.

This **Play Space Action Plan** captures the community's aspiration to make most of a robust network of recreation resources in the Village Center. While the initiative was sparked by discussions about children's recreation, the final Plan fosters a broad sense of inclusion to address the needs of people of all ages and abilities. The Plan builds upon the Town's many successes, and recommends a variety of opportunities to realize the **community's vision for inclusive, well-connected play spaces**. Suggested strategies range from quick wins that can make a difference right away, to longer-term initiatives that will require dedicated time, effort, and financial resources to complete.

As you navigate the Play Space Action Plan, please dive into the goals and strategies that matter most to you. There are ample opportunities for everyone to get involved in making this vision a reality! If you'd like to support implementation efforts, please reach out to Mike Sindoni, Recreation Director, at m.sindoni@newbostonnh.gov.

The Planning Process

New Boston's Play Space Action Plan was informed by a series of outreach and engagement efforts conducted during Fall 2023. Key aspects of the planning process are summarized here.

Volunteer work group

- Kick-off meeting
- Feedback throughout the process
- Work session to refine draft plan

Community engagement

- Activities at the September 30th farmer's market
 - Imagine your dream park
 - Visual voting exercise
 - Scavenger hunt
- Community-wide survey with 55 responses

Knowledge-sharing

- Strategy session on pedestrian safety w/ New Boston staff and NH Department of Transportation
- Field trip to inclusive playground in Windham

Research & technical analysis

- Review of existing materials (e.g. Master Plan)
- Bike/ped count to observe crossings near Town Common

Look for community quotes throughout this plan that capture local insights!



Goal 1: Communicate and Clarify

While there are many wonderful recreation resources in the Village Center, community survey responses indicated that not everyone is fully aware of which resources are available to them. This section outlines opportunities to build awareness and help residents and visitors make the most of recreation resources.

Successes to build upon

New Boston benefits from an **abundance of communication channels**, as well as a wide variety of programming and events drawing people to the Village Center. Key avenues for communicating updates include:

- Town website, including a page targeting new residents
- Recreation Department newsletters and Facebook page
- Bobcat News from the New Boston Central School
- Whipple Free Library newsletter and Facebook page
- Bulletin boards at the Library, Town Hall, and Dodge's Store
- Local journalism, including the New Boston Beacon, Goffstown Business Connection, and the Messenger

Key opportunity

New Boston can broadly disseminate a map of all the recreation facilities in the Village Center. The map can also help communicate which facilities are open to the public and when (e.g. school playgrounds, parking lots, etc.)

Strategies: Communicate and Clarify

1.1 Post and distribute a map to highlight the “Pathways to Play” in the Village Center. Use the map as a tool to clarify regulations around facility access, hours of operation, and parking.

The map on page 9 was developed by SNHPC staff in collaboration with the volunteer work group. While the map originated as a fun scavenger hunt activity to bring to a Saturday Farmers Market, conversations with community members and survey feedback pointed to the opportunity to further develop the map as a resource to help residents and visitors make the most of the Town’s many recreation resources.

Opportunities for disseminating the map include:

- Create large poster-size maps to install at key locations, including the Library, Recreation Department, Town Hall, and School Lobby.
- Hand out small “to-go” maps at various Town locations.
- Install a kiosk on the Town Common to share the map and other information about community events and activities.
- Include the map in a “Newcomers Welcome Packet” to distribute to new families.



1.2 Install welcoming wayfinding signage to help new visitors find their way around.

“Wayfinding” refers to informational cues that help people navigate a new environment, such as signage, symbols, and ground markings. Wayfinding signage can help newcomers find their way around the Village Center and easily identify New Boston’s publicly accessible recreation facilities. Ideas for enhancing wayfinding include:

- Design and install pedestrian-oriented signage for each location on New Boston’s “Pathways to Play” map.
 - Apply uniform materials and a consistent graphic design approach to support ease of navigation.
 - Incorporate QR codes on wayfinding signs to connect visitors to key Town resources.
- In the longer term, install road signs to help drivers know where to turn to access the Mill Pond Trail and New Boston Rail Trail.



At the September 30th Farmers Market temporary, pedestrian-oriented signage was installed at various locations to encourage exploration of New Boston's Village Center.

Each sign included a fun fact about recreation or nature, an idea for something fun to do in New Boston, and a QR code to connect people to Town resources.



New Boston Farmers Market

September 29 • 📍

Saturday Sept 30 at NBFM 10 - 1pm

...

New Boston



Pathways
TO PLAY



Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission

Published by Tam Zam • September 27 • 📍

Did you know that there are at least 8 unique places to play within ½ mile of New Boston's Town Commons? Join the Southern NH Planning Commission for a fun scavenger hunt during the 9/30 [New Boston Farmers Market](#) from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM. A map will be provided to point the way. Be on the lookout for hidden images, fun facts, and more information about local recreation resources!

New Boston



Pathways
TO PLAY



Did you know?

There are twice as many bicycles in the world than cars. Biking is great for the planet – saving more than 238 million gallons of gas each year!

In New Boston...

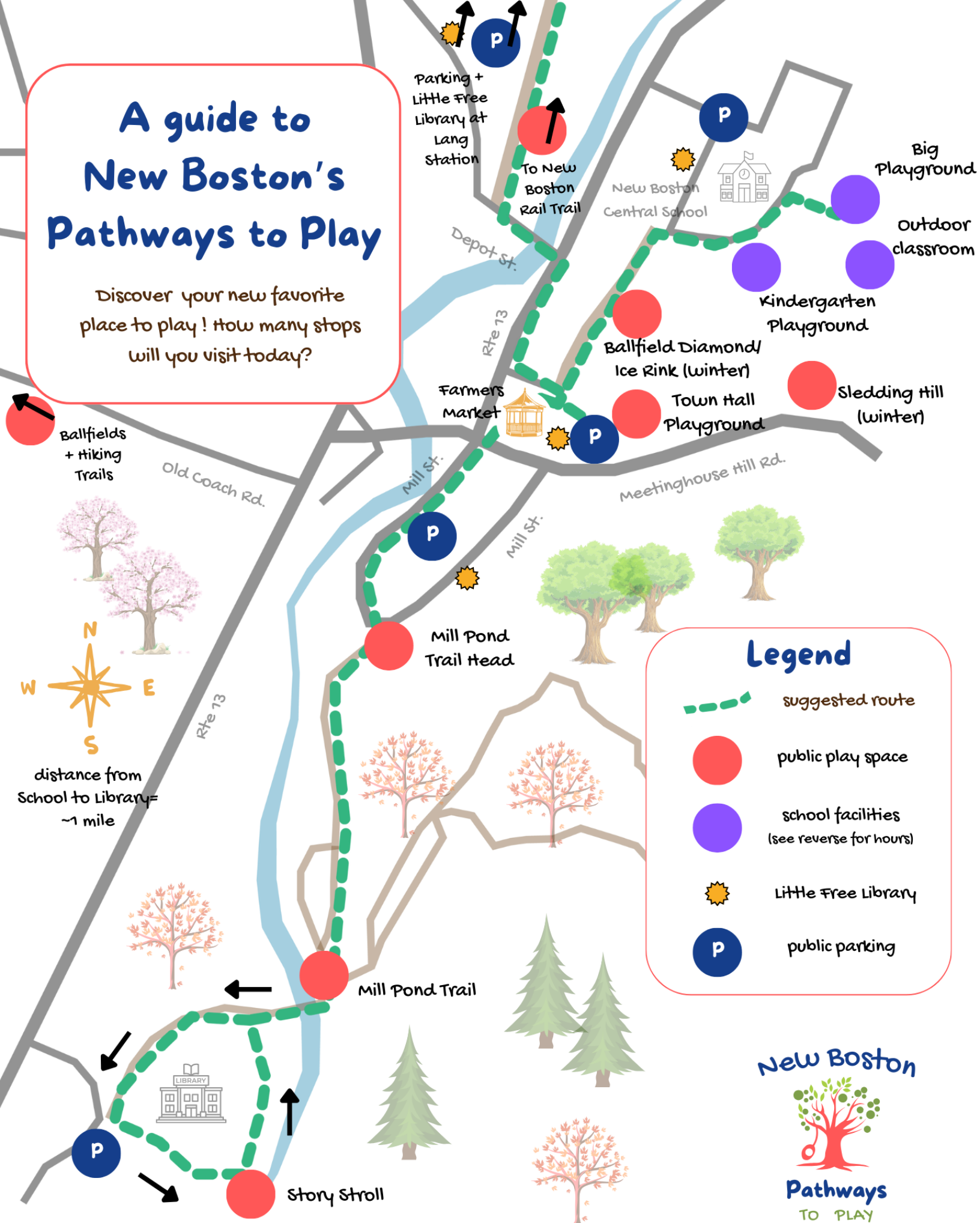
Take a ride on the New Boston rail trail!

Learn more:



A guide to New Boston's Pathways to Play

Discover your new favorite
place to play! How many stops
will you visit today?



Tips

School Facilities



School facilities are open to the public on all non-school days & after 2:30pm on school days (Monday through Friday)

Rail Trail Access



The route shown on this map is a public right-of-way. Follow the gravel road to reach the official New Boston Rail Trail trailhead located at the Fairgrounds.

(NOTE: The Hillsborough County Youth Center reserves the right to charge admission to the Fairgrounds on event days. To bypass the area, park at the Lang Station trailhead off RT 13 Gregg Mill Road.)

Restrooms



The restrooms at Town Hall are open to the public during regular business hours (9:00am- 4:00pm Monday through Friday)

Porta-Potties are available seasonally at the Ballfield

Love Your Play Space!



Leave no trace!



But leave what you find!



And ALWAYS be kind!!

For questions, contact:

New Boston Recreation
5 Meetinghouse Hill Road
New Boston, NH 03070

603.487.2880

recreation@newbostonnh.gov

Goal 2: Design for Inclusion

The concept of “inclusive design” refers to creating public spaces and facilities that accommodate a wide variety of needs, abilities, and interests. At various points throughout the planning process, New Boston community members emphasized the importance of inclusion and accessibility in shaping the Town’s vision for recreation. This section focuses on opportunities to create play spaces that are well-used and well-loved by people of all ages and abilities.

Successes to build upon

The Town has many successes to build upon:

- The New Boston Recreation Department has expressed a **strong commitment to prioritizing accessibility**.
- The community benefits from a variety of events, programs, and **activities that appeal to a range of age groups** – from summer camp for kids, to outings for seniors.
- The **New Boston Rail Trail** has been designed to offer a safe, level travel route for all ages and abilities.
- The Town’s **Recycled Benches initiative** has been a great success, resulting in the installation of 4 new benches created from recycled plastic.

Key opportunity

When updating recreation facilities and related infrastructure, New Boston can explore a range of opportunities to maximize accessibility and inclusion. Updated spaces can be designed to support a diverse cross-section of visitors – including people with mobility challenges, individuals with physical or cognitive differences, families with young children, and seniors.

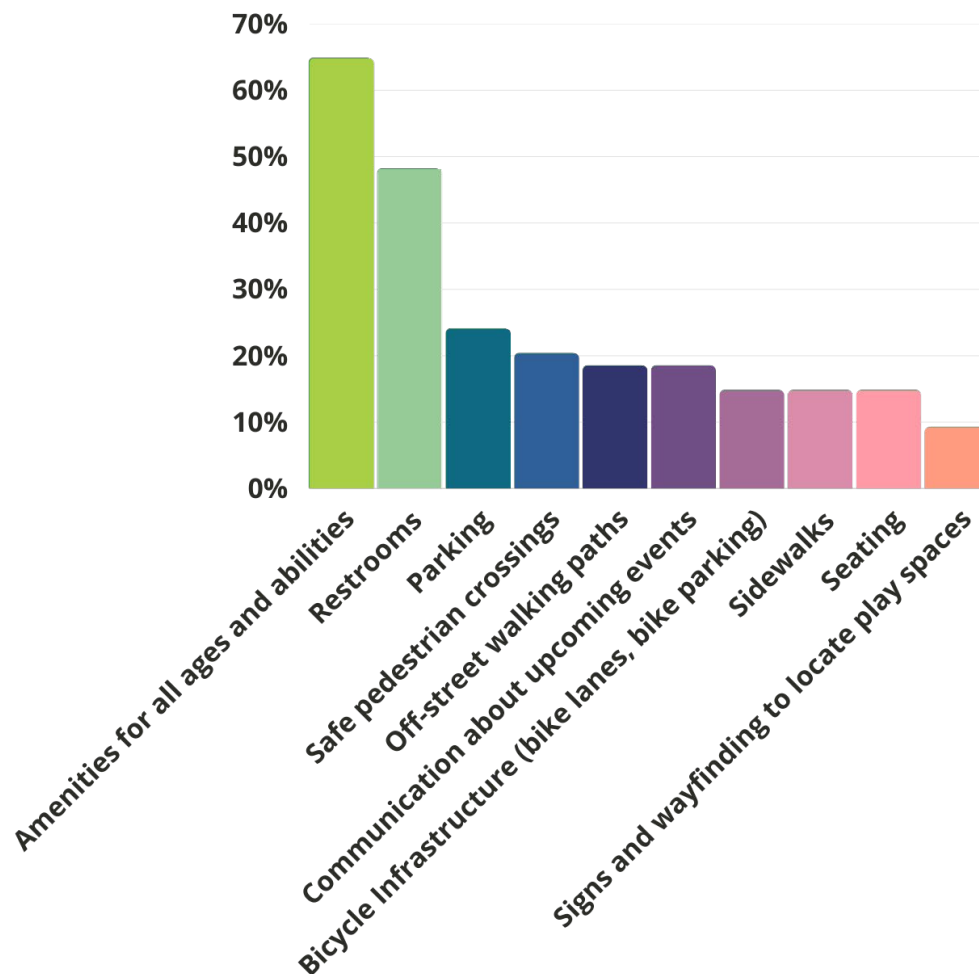
Community Insights: Design for Inclusion

SURVEY HIGHLIGHT:

“Which of the following are the most important for increasing access to play in New Boston?”

Top answers:

1. Amenities for all ages and abilities (65% of respondents)
2. Restrooms (48%)
3. Parking (24%)
4. Safe pedestrian crossings (20%)



Strategies: Design for Inclusion

2.1 Update the Town Hall playground to be more inclusive.

New Boston was originally nominated for the Pathways to Play pilot by a local resident interested in seeing more toddler-friendly equipment at the Town Hall playground. This vision is embraced by Recreation staff, who are anticipating an update of the playground in the next few years.

A field trip to the new inclusive playground in Windham generated a variety of ideas for potential features that can contribute a more inclusive playground, including:

- **Accessible ground surface material** that is stroller, walker, and wheelchair friendly.
- A **communication board** for non-verbal visitors.
- Features that encourage **creative, collaborative play** for people of all abilities (such as a “we-go-round”, ramps, and music features).

Our friends in Windham did a fantastic job creating a play space that is welcoming to visitors with a variety of physical, mental, emotional, and social needs and preferences.



2.2 Improve accessibility throughout the Village Center for those with mobility challenges.

In addition to enhancing accessibility at priority recreation sites, it is essential to consider how users with mobility challenges travel to these sites. Potential accessibility improvements include:

- Provide additional **ADA-accessible parking spaces**.
- **Improve the pathways** people use to access inclusive play spaces. For example, expand the use of accessible surfaces, repair sidewalks and walking paths, and install curb cuts where needed.

"The area could be more accessible to people with mobility issues."



"Wheelchair access is VERY important to me."



New Boston's new accessible walkway at Old Coach Field makes it easier to get to play spaces.

Photo courtesy of the New Boston Recreation Department

2.3 Provide additional benches and seating.

Seating is an essential element of an accessible community. Outdoor benches, tables, and chairs provide places to stop and rest, take in the view, and connect with friends and neighbors. Shaded seating areas can also increase the comfort of caretakers while watching kids at play.

The community can keep building upon the success of the Recycled Benches initiative to identify additional strategic locations for installing public seating.

2.4 Explore opportunities to increase access to restrooms

During the course of the planning process, several community members expressed an interest in

increasing access to restroom facilities in the Village Center. While installing public restroom facilities can present challenges in terms of expense and maintenance, the Town can begin taking key steps toward improving restroom access:

"We could benefit from having bathrooms available year-round"



- Provide **information about existing restroom facilities**. The new Pathways to Play map highlights the seasonal porta-potties as well as the publicly accessible restrooms open during Town Hall business hours.
- **Upgrade and expand facilities where possible**. For example:
 - Install additional porta-potties at the Rail Trail (e.g. Lang Station).
 - Update the Town Hall restroom to include child changing stations.
 - Research costs and feasibility of investing in an all-seasons, ADA-accessible restroom trailer.

Goal 3: Support Walking and Biking

Did you know the New Boston Central School is less than 1 mile away from the Whipple Free Library? New Boston can make the most of its close-knit Village Center resources via improved pedestrian and bicycle connections. This section captures strategies for increasing mobility options, better connecting visitors to Town resources, and addressing transportation safety priorities.

Successes to build upon

The Village Center already benefits from a strong network of existing trails and pathways that offer **safe, off-road connections** between recreation facilities. The **New Boston Rail Trail** is a particularly well-loved resource, which is accessible from the Village Center and offers trail connections via Goffstown all the way to Manchester! Existing **community programming** helps build awareness and appreciation for New Boston trails – such as a Thursday morning “Walk in the Woods” with the Conservation Commission, mountain bike clinics led by the Recreation Commission, and organized group rides sponsored by the New Boston Rail Trail.

Key opportunity

New Boston can undertake strategic efforts to enhance pedestrian and bike safety, especially at intersections. By building upon the success of existing programming, the community can also explore new ways to build confidence among new cyclists.

Community Insights: Support Walking and Biking

SURVEY HIGHLIGHT:

"How do you usually get to these parks or play spaces?"

While driving was by far the most common answer, **trails stood out as attracting more diverse transportation options**. For example, 15% of survey respondents say they get to the Mill Pond Trail by walking. For the New Boston Rail Trail, about 13% of respondents walk, and 7% bike.



Strategies: Support Walking and Biking

3.1 Explore opportunities to enhance intersection safety.

A bike and pedestrian count conducted by SNHPC staff during the September 30th Farmers Market revealed that many residents and visitors are crossing roadways on foot. This reality is further confirmed by anecdotal conversations with community members who say they walk with kids from the Town Hall playground and cross Meetinghouse Hill Road to access the Mill Pond Trail and the Library.

The Town can explore a range of opportunities to introduce safer pedestrian connections and intersection improvements to cue drivers to the presence of pedestrians and maximize safety for all road users. Sample initiatives may include:

- **Install a pedestrian crossing at Meetinghouse Hill Road.** Since this is a local road, the Town has full control over a crossing installation. To maximize safety as well as ease of navigation for users, a new crossing and associated signage should adhere to [New Hampshire Department of Transportation \(NHDOT\) design standards](#).
- **Explore crossing viability on State roads.** Typically, NHDOT is open to approving pedestrian crossings on a state route as long as: 1) the crossing is safe; and 2) the Town is willing to maintain it. Such crossings will require close collaboration with NHDOT as well as abutting property owners to ensure pedestrian access points are safe and aligned with design standards.
- Work with SNHPC to **scope more comprehensive intersection improvements** and submit projects for state and federal funding. In 2021, the Town applied for funding through the NHDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) to construct a tunnel under Parker Road to create a safe, ADA-accessible trail connection. While that project is currently unfunded, the Town should continue to coordinate with SNHPC to participate in TAP and other funding programs, and explore additional opportunities for advancing pedestrian and vehicle safety improvements.

3.2 Improve bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the village center.

Smaller-scale initiatives can also make a big difference in how users perceive a public space. As intersection safety projects are planned, the Town can also consider advancing complementary design and maintenance work to help create spaces that are more appealing for walking and biking. For example:

- Work with SNHPC to host a **pop-up Complete Streets demonstration project** and invite people to experience walking and biking in the Village Center.
- **Install bike racks** at strategic locations (e.g. near the picnic tables on the Common).
- Explore **cost-effective solutions to maintain sidewalks in winter** (e.g. via collaboration with local businesses and property owners).
- Undertake **minor sidewalk repairs** and improvements.

"I'd like to see increased spaces and opportunities for kids to safely bike."

"I wish the sidewalks were in better shape; crosswalks have disappeared."



3.3 Create bike programming to support new riders.

May is Bike Month! Spring is when many families dust off their bikes for the season. It's also a great time of year to help first-timers learn to ride safely.

In May 2024, SNHPC will coordinate with New Boston Central School, New Boston Rail Trail, and the New Boston Bike Alliance to host a Bike Rodeo! The event will feature games and a skills course to help new riders learn bike safety techniques. Depending on the success of the Bike Rodeo, this could become an annual event – and potentially be accompanied by additional bicycle programming, such as a “Walk and Roll to School Day.”



Bike rodeos are a fun way to work on balance, starting/stopping, braking, and dodging obstacles. These skills are important for safety, and also build confidence!



Families can also learn how to properly fit a helmet, and practice checking their ABCs (Air, Brakes, & Chain) before riding.

Goal 4: Tap Additional Resources

Given the breadth of expertise and enthusiasm that went into completing this Play Space Action Plan, it's clear New Boston is well positioned to put all these ideas into action! This section outlines opportunities for leveraging additional resources – including funding, technical assistance, and people power – to support the Town's vision for inclusive, accessible play throughout the Village Center.

Successes to build upon

New Boston is home to a **robust network of enthusiastic volunteers** who are already working together. Many of the individuals from the volunteer working group that guided the development of this Play Space Action Plan are already collaborating on a regular basis to share space and resources. New Boston's community leaders are **adept at fundraising**, and have coordinated a range of successful campaigns to support the library, rail trail, and school playground.

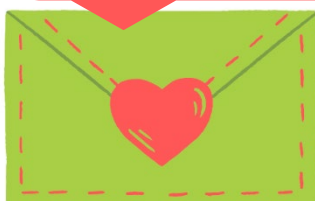
Key opportunity

New Boston is in an excellent position to apply for grants and build relationships with new funders to support the implementation of this Play Space Action Plan.

"We moved to New Boston two years ago and could not be happier with the town, the schools, and the people. Thank you New Boston Rec!"

"I love that for a small town we have so many places to go!"

"The rail trail is amazing!"



"The Town ballfield is a great community building space."

Strategies: Tap Additional Resources

4.1 Leverage volunteer and pro-bono services.

New Boston's volunteer networks can help identify strategies that may be "low hanging fruit" for local talent to lead. For example, graphic design and communications skills can be leveraged to support certain strategies in this Plan. Scouting programs can generate young leaders who are excited to support project implementation.

Pro bono professional services may also be available from certain vendors. For example, in the process of creating their inclusive playground, the Town of Windham received free playground design services from the equipment vendor.

4.2 Explore innovative fundraising techniques.

Given the community's previous fundraising successes, local organizations are poised to expand their creativity and develop new fundraising approaches. Examples might include: sponsorship opportunities for local businesses; fundraising events featuring local artists; and "buy a brick" campaigns for local residents to demonstrate their support and have their names embedded in new projects.

4.3 Work with SNHPC to advance transportation initiatives

New Boston benefits from a strong relationship with SNHPC. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the greater Manchester region, SNHPC oversees long-term transportation planning efforts and programs federal transportation funds.

At the Town's request, SNHPC can leverage technical assistance funding to help New Boston advance certain transportation-related strategies. Priority projects can be integrated into regional planning processes and submitted for potential inclusion in NHDOT's Ten Year Plan, which establishes a funding commitment and timeline for project implementation.

4.4 Pursue grant-funded opportunities

Grant writing can require significant effort – along with meticulous attention to a funder priorities and application requirements. The New Boston community appears primed to pursue strategic grant applications given the volunteer expertise already at the table. Additionally, the successful development of this Play Space Action Plan demonstrates an element of collaboration and community buy-in that may bolster the prospects of a grant application.

The table below provides a suggested list of grant-funded opportunities that may be particularly well-suited to advancing New Boston's Pathways to Play.

Select grant opportunities to explore

Funder	Funding Opportunity	Key dates
NH Children's Health Foundation	General operating support for 1 year, \$10,000 - \$20,000 NHCHF funded this Pathways to Play Action Plan under their "Healthy Eating and Active Living" funding priority.	Call for Applications to open in February 2024. Submit a letter of inquiry between Feb 1 and Feb 15.
AARP Community Challenge	Grants to undertake immediate improvements or jump-start long-term projects to support residents of all ages. Average grant is \$11,900.	Application cycle opens January 2024. Register for Q&A Webinar (January 24).
NH Charitable Foundation	Community Grants Program offers unrestricted grants to non-profits. Updated, streamlined approach anticipated for 2024.	Anticipated announcement in early 2024. Join mailing list here.

Funder	Funding Opportunity	Key dates
Points32 Health Foundation	Supports community organizations across New England. Healthy aging is a funding priority.	"Our process starts with a conversation." Schedule a meeting to explore possibilities.
American Trails - Trails Capacity Program	Grants range from \$5,000 - \$10,000. Stewardship training and trail maintenance are funding priorities.	Application link. Application Deadline: January 15, 2024
T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program	Up to \$50,000 for shovel-ready projects in small towns. They fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers.	Applications are accepted on a quarterly basis.
NH Council on Developmental Disabilities	\$1,000 for "Community Projects and Educational Programs", such as: inclusive playgrounds and equipment; inclusive trails; communication boards.	Grant application can be found here.

Acknowledgements

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New Boston Volunteer Working Group

Mike Sindoni, Recreation Department

Sheri Moloney, Recreation Department

Helen Fanning, Recreation Commission

Laura Bernard, Conservation Commission

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Additional Links and Resources

Town of New Boston Resources:

- [New residents page](#)
- [New Boston Recreation Department](#)
- [New Boston Rail Trail](#)
- [New Boston Conservation Commission](#)

External Resources:

- Learn more about the [Pathways to Play](#) initiative in Southern New Hampshire.
- The national **Safe Routes Partnership** provides resources to help communities advance safe walking and biking options. Check out materials to support [Safe Routes to Parks](#).
- The [Children & Nature Network resource library](#) offers infographics and advocacy tools to help make the case for increasing access to nature.
- **The Nature Conservancy** published the [New Hampshire All Persons Trail Guidebook](#), which documents key learnings that emerged during the creation of the All Persons Trail at the Manchester Cedar Swamp.
- **Kaboom!** Is a national organization focused on equitable access to play spaces. Check out their [gallery of "Play Everywhere" projects](#) for ideas and inspiration.