

RECREATION CHAPTER

Adopted xxx 2026



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Vision

The Town of Newmarket is committed to enhancing the vibrancy of our community by providing accessible and affordable programs and events and creating opportunities for people to connect with each other and enjoy nature. The Town provides dynamic recreational experiences that promote well-being, resilience, and a sense of belonging for all. As we grow, the Town strives to expand opportunities for active engagement while ensuring an inclusive and sustainable recreation culture for future generations.

The Town of Newmarket's Recreation Department's values provide additional aspirational statements for this Recreation Chapter:

- **Lead with Heart:** We foster a welcoming and inclusive community where kindness, connection, and compassion drive everything we do.
- **Play with Passion:** We strive to create engaging and energetic recreational experiences that inspire joy, creativity, and a lifelong love of play.
- **Explore Personal Growth:** We provide opportunities for individuals to challenge themselves, develop new skills, and build confidence through recreation.
- **We Recognize You:** We celebrate the contributions, achievements, and unique qualities of every participant, volunteer, and staff member.
- **Support the Rec, Create Community:** By choosing to participate in Newmarket Rec programs, residents are directly investing in the town, as all net revenue helps to fund recreational capital projects without relying on tax dollars.

Executive Summary

Newmarket prides itself in offering diverse recreational amenities that enhance community life, from organized activities and events to opportunities to enjoy the town's wealth of natural public spaces. The Town has a unique opportunity to capitalize on and invest in these assets to enhance residents' quality of life and contribute to the Town's economic development.

Master Plan Themes and Goals

Five guiding themes for the Master Plan emerged from the public engagement process: Vibrancy, Connectivity, Accessibility, Affordability, and Resiliency. Each Master Plan chapter uses the themes to explore the subject matter from different perspectives, helping to focus community goals and actions.

Vibrancy

A vibrant community is one that exudes energy and is full of activity and life. It is welcoming and friendly to all ages, supports cultural diversity, encourages recreational living, and provides economic opportunities.

For recreation, vibrancy involves promoting recreational activities across the municipality by offering opportunities to connect, play, exercise and explore. The Town supports a variety of recreational experiences, including organized programs for all ages as well as unstructured and self-guided nature-based recreation.

Newmarket's recreational responsibilities are split amongst five entities including the Recreation Department, the Conservation Commission, the Public Works Department, the Newmarket Youth Athletic Association and the schools. The Recreation Department provides programs and events for the town's youth, adults, and senior populations at the Leo Landroche Field Complex, the Community Center, Kayak launches, schools, and the Sunrise Sunset Center. The Conservation Commission manages Town-owned conservation areas, develops and maintains the town's trail network, partners with other organizations to host educational programs and events, and stewards Schanda Park. The Public Works Department is responsible for the maintenance of parks, including mowing trails and fields, and often assists with enhancing or building new infrastructure. The Newmarket Youth Athletic Association (NYAA) is typically responsible for their select site maintenance along with operating several youth sports programs.

There are also other organizations that contribute to the vibrancy of Newmarket's recreation offerings such as residents, businesses, local organizations, land trusts, and interest groups. Together, these entities strive to work together to provide recreational opportunities that reach all ages, abilities, and incomes, providing a strong sense of well-being and community.

One aspect of recreational vibrancy that is especially successful in engaging residents and visitors is the variety of year-round family-friendly events and programs. The Recreation Department hosts a number of big events including the Halloween Haunt, the Backyard Bash, Easter Egg Hunt, and Christmas activities. The Conservation Commission offers seasonally focused activities such as the Turtle Fest, guided nature walks, and other nature-based activities often in partnership with other entities such as the Newmarket Library, Sunrise Sunset Center, and Other partners. The NYAA offers youth baseball, softball, soccer and basketball programs. Programs, activities and events like these are fantastic ways to strengthen Newmarket's bonds and enjoy significant resident participation. There is room to grow if additional public spaces are created or renovated to support these types of activities.



Figure 1 Schanda Park (source: S.J. Labadie)

Respondents to the Master Plan survey identified the addition of a permanent outdoor performance venue as a priority. The current outdoor stage at the Leo Landroche Field Complex is very limited and the Recreation Department must rent a temporary stage for events to allow for reasonable-sized performances. This need is also discussed in the Arts, Culture & Historic Resources Chapter. A larger permanent stage would allow the Town to host more vibrant events that can accommodate various performance types and support the

Arts in the Park Concert Series. Other recreational renovations that have been identified for future expansion include the Community Center and Sunrise/ Sunset Center to create multi-purpose rooms which would improve the vibrancy of indoor events, along with parking improvements.

Skateparks and pump tracks for mountain bikes are also examples of spaces where the young and the young at heart gather and contribute to the sense of vibrancy and vitality in the community. Providing designated public spaces for these types of uses would help focus the activities on an off-road safe place. Other public spaces that help support a vibrant community can be as simple as an open field or park where people can get together to play pick-up games of soccer, disc golf, picnic, or walk dogs. In the 2024 Master Plan Survey and at the Fall 2024 Master Plan Workshop, a few participants suggested the need for a dog park in Town (see Appendix I for a heat map showing the locations of where dog licenses have been issued). Neighborhood pocket parks and playgrounds are also important public places where people of all ages connect. Additional public engagement is needed to determine the feasibility, support and potential locations for these types of uses, depending on funding and available land.

Respondents to the Master Plan survey were asked to rank their interest in various types of recreational programming. The types of activities that received the highest interest were outdoor recreation “in nature” programs, and adult health, wellness, and fitness.



Figure 2 Rockingham Rail Trail (source: L Franceschini)

This is consistent with the observations that Newmarket's conservation areas saw a significant increase in use during the COVID-19 pandemic and interest in developing more nature-based recreation continues to rise. Working together or individually, the Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Newmarket Library or others, could develop additional outdoor programming to support a multitude of age groups, interests, and capabilities. Examples

include expanded outdoor school programs or classrooms, walking trails, nature walks, swimming, fishing or kayaking lessons. This is a great way to enable residents and visitors to become more familiar with Newmarket's open space and provide context for the beautiful environment that exists within Town.

All of Newmarket's recreational offerings rely heavily on volunteers. The Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Newmarket Library, and NYAA provide events and programming that rely heavily on the time and talent provided by committed residents. This pool of volunteers is the core of recreational vibrancy for a significant amount of time and there are concerns that this pool may shrink as the current pool ages. The Town should look always to bolster volunteerism to keep up with potential growth of events or capabilities at existing events.

Vibrancy Goals:

1. Provide spaces that support a variety of recreational activities for all age groups, abilities, and interests.
2. Offer family-friendly and nature-based community events that further strengthen the bond of Newmarket residents.
3. Investigate methods and options to increase volunteerism

Connectivity

A well-connected community addresses infrastructure needs and the emotional well-being of its residents. This means creating safe and efficient connections between homes, workplaces, schools, essential services, and recreational areas like parks that are inclusive to all and encourage social interactions among community members. Additionally, a connected community promotes the idea of ongoing communications, social networking, collaborations and partnerships among like-minded organizations and town entities to create a community atmosphere where we all work together for one connective common goal.

Connecting recreation destinations to homes, workplaces, schools, and essential services is a primary function of creating an active living environment in Newmarket. The Conservation Commission has established trail systems throughout town, some of which provide connections to trails in neighboring towns (Figure 3). Enhancing existing connections and building new physical connections to fill the gaps to recreation and conservation sites across town would allow people to visit outdoor spaces by walking, bicycling or driving.

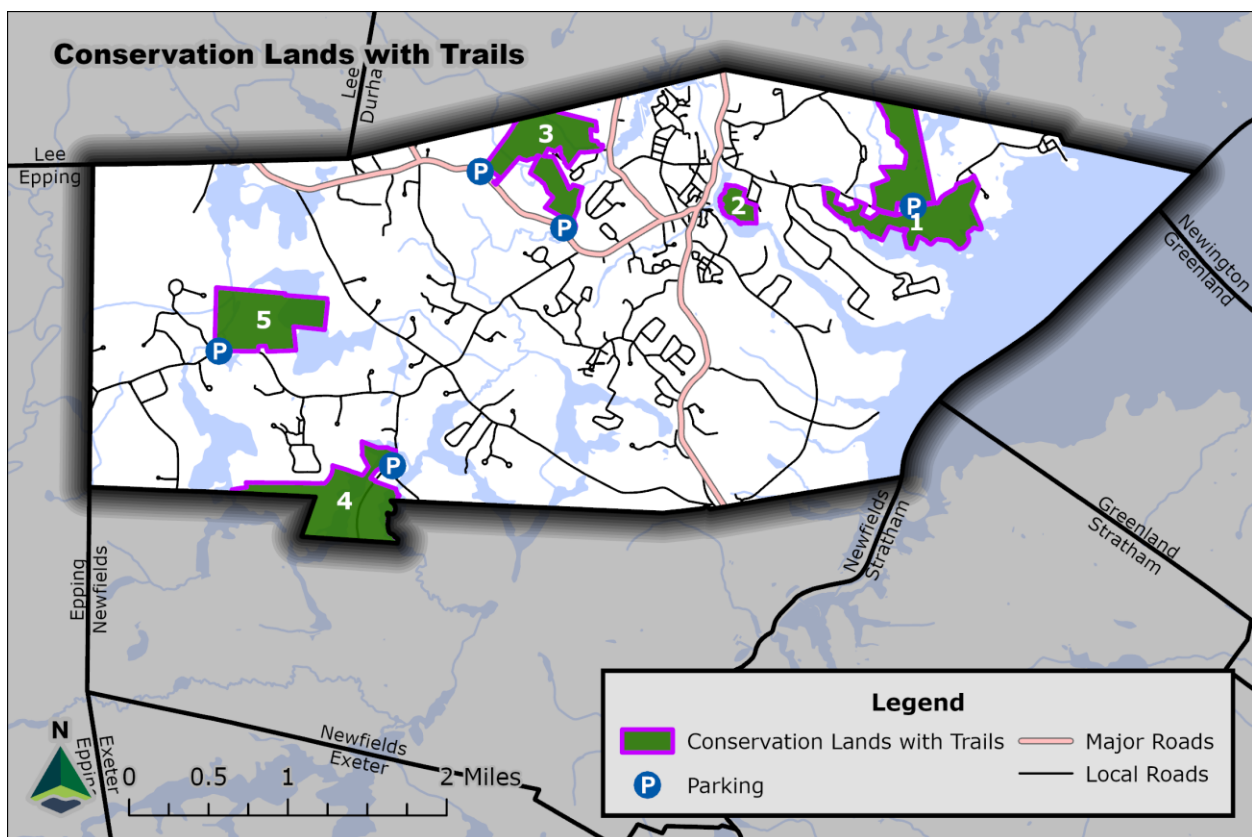


Figure 3 Conservation Lands with Trails (source: SRPC)

Enhanced connectivity between recreation sites in Newmarket could include sidewalks, trails, or safe bike lanes that extend to the village core, providing recreational users ways to connect to take advantage of the local shopping, open space, and services. In addition, many school children bike to school and informally use convenient areas in between the schools and neighborhoods that are often on private property. These initiatives will increase the quality of life throughout town by allowing people to access recreational activities without a car. For additional information about Newmarket's trails and conservation areas, see the 2024 Open Space Plan. Figure 4 indicates areas within an approximately 10-minute walk to recreation sites.

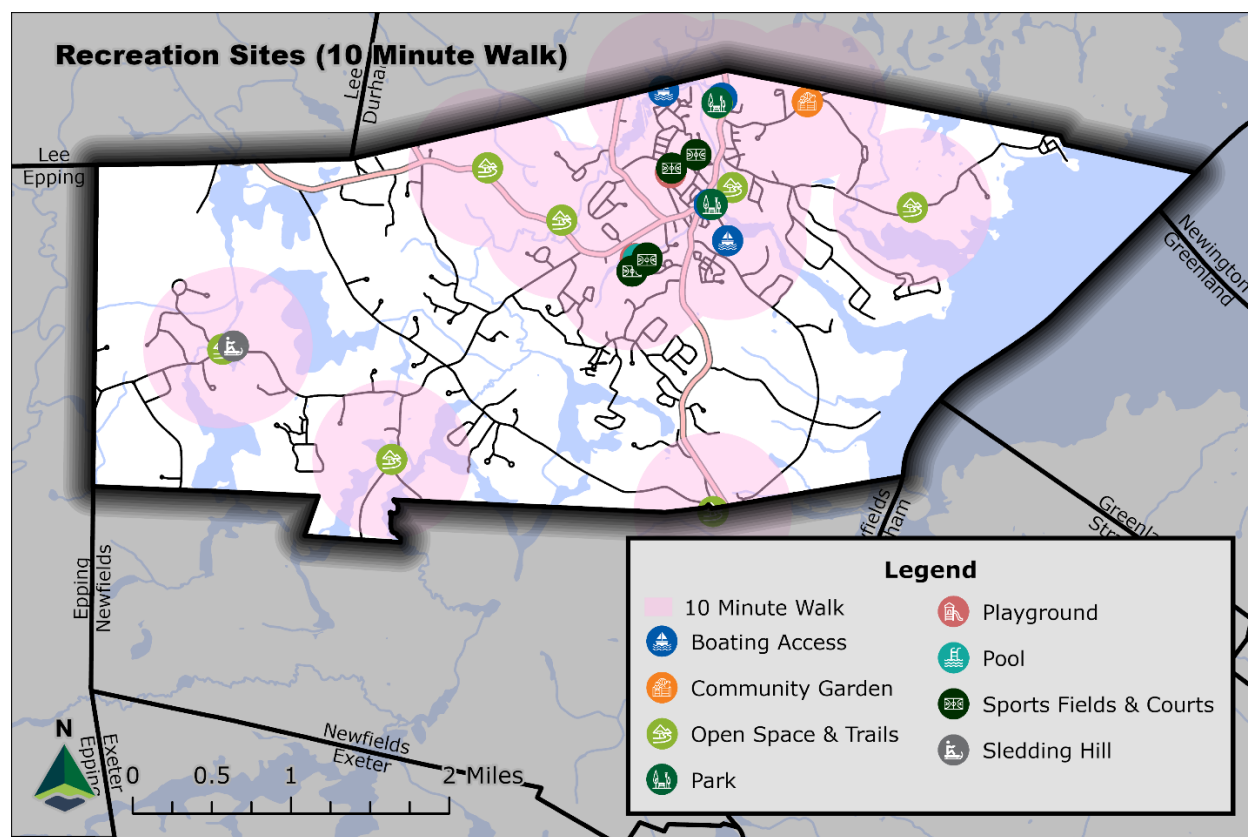


Figure 4 Recreation Sites within a 10 Minute Walk of Residences (source: SRPC)

The Transportation Chapter explores potential new bike and pedestrian connections. Developing a connection to the Rockingham Rail Trail and an off-road connection between Newmarket and Durham could add tremendous value to the town by providing a way for residents and visitors to access Newmarket's downtown from surrounding municipalities. A connection from the Rockingham Rail Trail to the village core would allow people to also access Newfields, Epping, Raymond, Candia, Auburn, and Manchester by bike or walking. Connecting an off-road trail to Durham would allow Durham and Newmarket students and residents to travel between the two towns in a safe manner without using Packer's Falls Road or NH108.

Figure 5, Recreation Sites Accessible by Sidewalks, illustrates where recreation sites are easily accessible by sidewalks. Recreation sites that are not directly connected to sidewalks could potentially be walkable where there are low volumes of traffic and the roadway can accommodate pedestrians and bicycles. The SRPC Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress (PLTS) study, expected to be completed in 2025, will help to identify where sidewalks could be considered, or where the roadway can safely accommodate pedestrians.

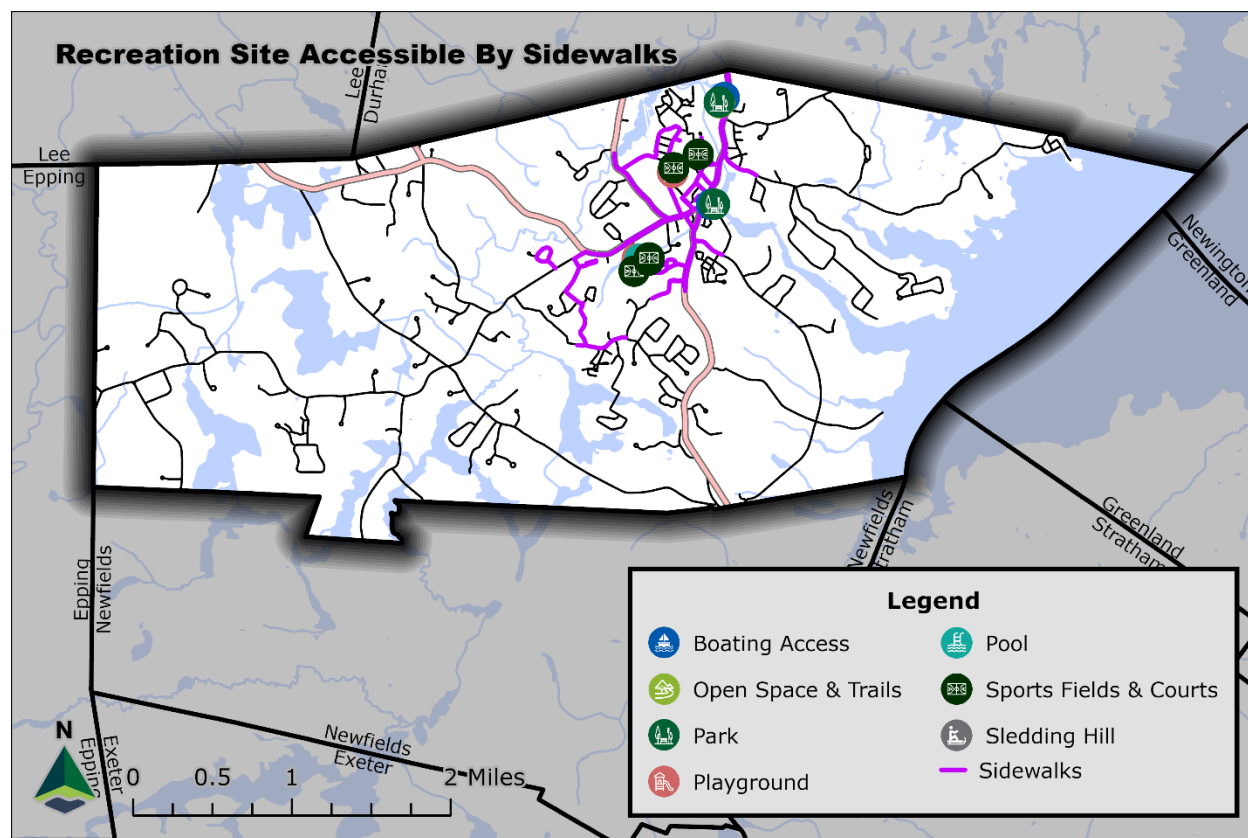


Figure 5 Recreation Sites Accessible by Sidewalks (source: SRPC)

Figure 6, Recreation Sites and Bicycle LTS, illustrates the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS), which indicates how comfortable it feels for most people to bike on a roadway. The analysis is based on the number of traffic lanes in each direction, posted and prevailing speed, type and width of bicycle infrastructure, presence and width of on-street parking, frequency of bike lane blockage, presence and characteristics of turning lanes, and presence and characteristics of unsignalized crossings. BLTS levels 1 and 2 are the two seen as “accessible” for most people. See Appendix I for an additional description of the analysis.

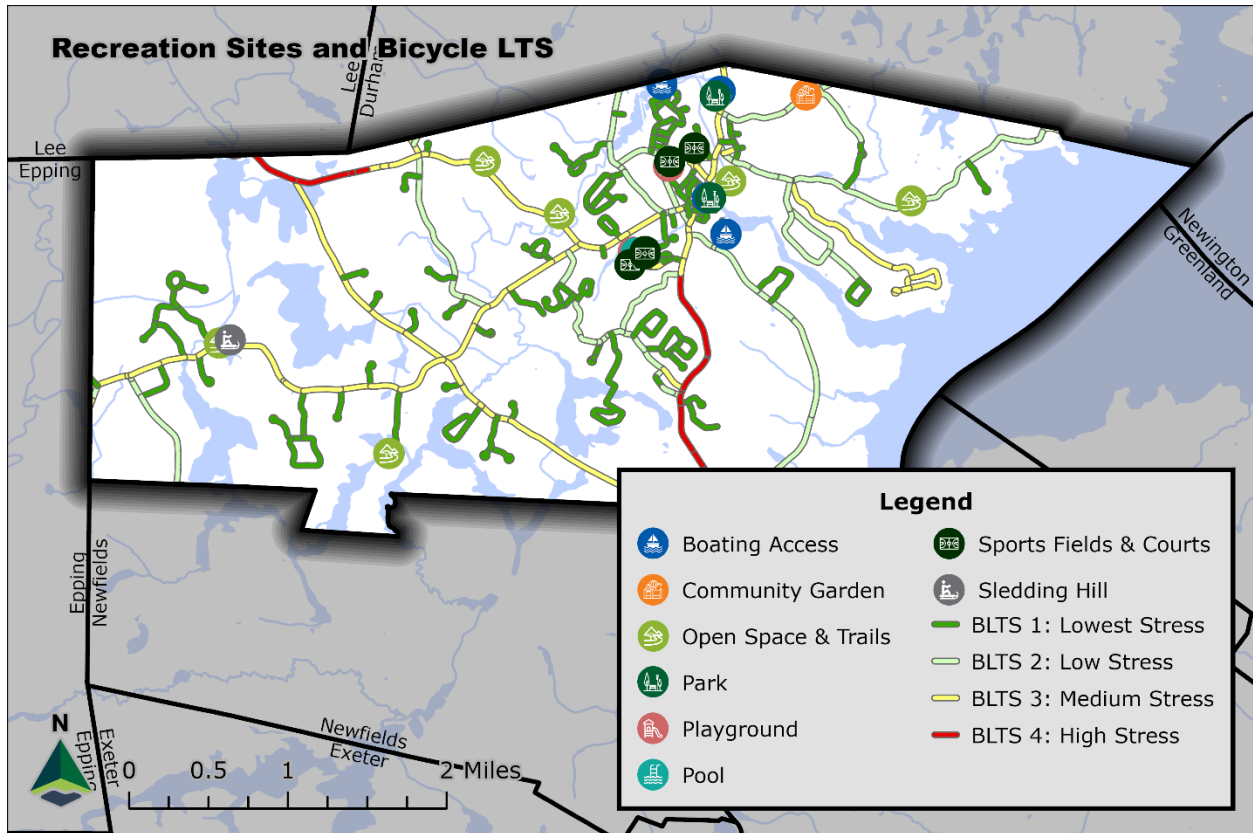


Figure 6 Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress to Recreation Sites (source: SRPC)

Figure 7, Recreation Sites Accessible by BLTS 1 or BLTS 2 Roadways, illustrates where all BLTS 1 and 2 roads exist alongside the outdoor recreation sites to determine areas where investment could be made to connect these areas to each other and allow biking to each recreation site safely.

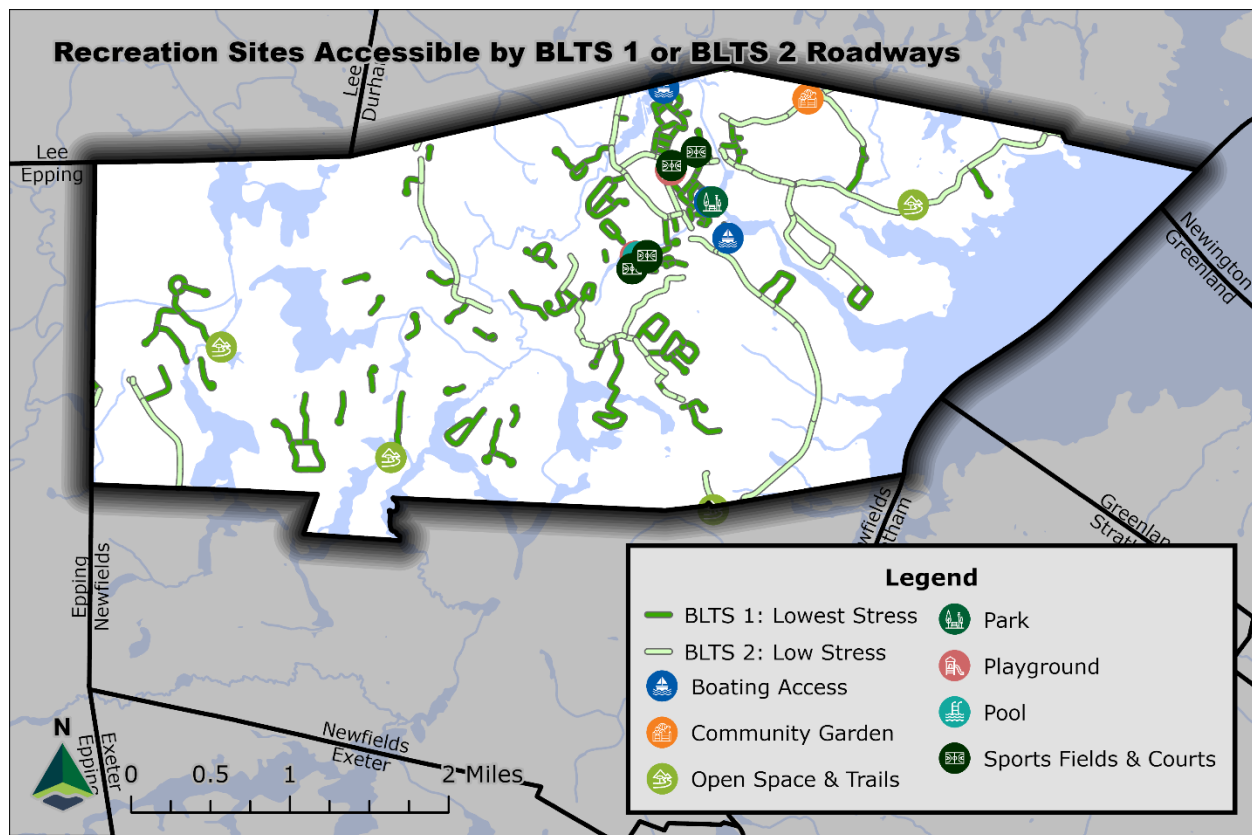


Figure 7 Recreation Sites Accessible by BLTS 1 or 2 Roadways (source: SRPC)

Social connections are as equally important as physical connectivity. Recreational activities organically facilitate interpersonal connections between participants. Ensuring that residents know about and can engage in activities in a variety of ways is critical for social connection. Newmarket does a good job of this through its weekly email Newsletter. Additionally, Newmarket hosts events such as “Rec Connect,” a year-round program that culminates in a one-stop hub for information pertaining to upcoming events and programs. Each year, Rec Connect hosts the Annual Recognition Mixer, which brings together community leaders, organizations, boards, and businesses. It provides an opportunity to network, share resources, learn about new developments in town, and collaborate on community improvement. This annual spring event aims to foster a sense of community and celebration. The Newmarket Business Association, a co-sponsor of the event, solicits nominations for various civic-minded awards, allowing community members to nominate deserving individuals.

The Arts, Culture and Tourism Chapter also discusses additional ways for residents to be informed and to encourage collaboration across organizations. This includes Newmarket Library, which is an important hub for community connection, offering educational events and programming, as well as the Sunrise Sunset Center, which provides important connections for the over 55 population in town.

Connectivity Goals:

1. Prioritize physical and mental well-being through spaces that encourage active living.
2. Promote the development of links between the local and regional recreational and conservation sites and the natural, historical, cultural, assets of the area.
3. Update, promote, and support community connections and the encouragement of sharing resources with town organizations, businesses, and resident stakeholders, through Rec Connect Community Collaborations program or similar programs.
4. Enhance townwide communication strategies to reach more of the community, such as e-news, social media, library, rec center, or strategically placed kiosks.

Accessibility and Affordability

An accessible and affordable community has an environment that is meaningful and usable for all in which it is a community where people can live and recreate comfortably without financial or physical difficulty.

Residents should be able to access recreation destinations safely and efficiently, regardless of income, age, or physical ability. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements for accessibility set the minimum standard for public buildings and infrastructure. While this is a good baseline, Newmarket should aim to incorporate more universal design standards into construction or renovation of recreational facilities and public spaces. Universal design allows all people to use the resource regardless of age, ability, or other characteristics, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. One example of where accessibility improvements could be deployed in recreation facilities is at the Sunrise/Sunset and Community Centers where installing automatic door openers would better accommodate all users. For nature-based recreation, the Town could develop a paved off-road path that allows people of all abilities to enjoy Newmarket's beautiful outdoor resources.

Wayfinding is a critical component of accessibility. People need to know where recreation resources are located, how to get there, and where to go once on site. Several chapters in this Master Plan, including the Transportation, Arts, Culture and Historic Resources, Economic Development and Downtown Riverfront Chapters discuss the importance of wayfinding to the future of the town's development). All wayfinding materials should be consistent and use the same thematic styling to make a cohesive identifiable marker to residents and visitors. The materials should also have an accessible color palette and fonts to allow readers to absorb information regardless of disorders such as color blindness and dyslexia.

In addition to being accessible, the Town should maintain and expand affordable or free recreational opportunities. As the main providers and stewards of Newmarket's recreational resources, the

Recreation Department and Conservation Commission strive to continue to provide these important amenities for residents and visitors.

The Newmarket Recreation Department prides itself in offering affordable recreational programs to the community throughout the year. Among its most cost-effective initiatives is the Summer Camp program, "Camp Wanna Iguana", which is one of the most affordable summer camps in the Seacoast. It also offers scholarships for more children to be able to attend. It also provides free events such as the Holiday Party, fishing derby, garden tour, and Arts in the Park.

Additionally, the splashpad at Leo Landroche Field is available for community use at no charge. By offering affordable programming to diverse age groups, Newmarket Recreation addresses the recreational needs of the municipality and adapts to evolving interests and trends. This approach also fosters interaction among different age groups and creates opportunities for multi-generational programming, including skill-sharing programs, mentorships, and family-friendly events. Newmarket Recreation's adult, teen, youth, and preschool programs remain more affordable than local private options, ensuring accessibility for all residents. Any net profit generated is reinvested into the Capital Reserve Budget. Newmarket Recreation also offers after-school programs that are competitively priced compared to private local alternatives.

The Conservation Commission is the steward of Newmarket's wealth of natural resources such as conservation lands and trails, which offer free or low-cost outdoor recreation opportunities. The Commission partners with other community entities, including Scouts, Newmarket schools, Department of Public Works, Newmarket Library, and Recreation Department, among others, to host trail walks and other activities that are free or no cost. In addition, the Commission developed a series of detailed trail maps that people can download from the town's website for residents and visitors to enjoy Newmarket's natural resources. Hiking, bird watching, fishing, biking, and kayaking are also low-cost activities that allow Newmarket to make use of its natural environment as a recreational asset for all to experience.

Connectivity Goals:

1. Expand recreational access and opportunities to serve a variety of needs and functions by adding multiple purposes and uses at existing and future recreational facilities.
2. Continue to provide affordable recreational events and programs for residents, including summer camp scholarships.
3. Continue to offer nature-based recreation at little to no cost to the community.

Resiliency

A resilient community must adapt to new or changing circumstances, plan for the future, recover quickly from setbacks, and support the well-being of its residents in times of crisis or concern.

Climate change is increasing the likelihood of extreme and damaging weather events. Once-in-a-generation storms are happening more often. These and other extreme events pose a rising threat to recreational assets. Sea level rise will change the landscape in the Great Bay and affect recreation sites and greenspace near the tidal portion of the Lamprey River. Larger storms and flooding pose a risk to fields, especially in spring when soils are soft. Along with unpaved parking lots, these facilities can get very messy during mud season. Several organizations made note of this in focus interviews held for this chapter in early 2025. Flood mitigation efforts were implemented at the Leo Landroche complex, but it still suffers from the combined use by local school sports and Recreation Department programs.

Staying active in regional climate adaptation process is essential for Newmarket to plan for anticipated challenges. The Town participated in the first New Hampshire Coastal Risk and Hazards Commission as well as the 2025 update to ensure local and regional climate concerns are represented in updated research and recommendations.

Newmarket is highlighted in the state's 2016 sea level rise report. As a coastal community, Newmarket plays a critical role in a regional decision-making process around climate adaptation. The primary recreation locations that could be affected by coastal flooding/riverine flooding are Schanda Park, Shoppmeyer Park, and Sliding Rock Conservation and Recreation Area ("Piscassic Boat Launch")

Planning for the future is an important factor to maintain resilient recreational assets and networks. As a part of the update process of this Master Plan, SRPC conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis with the Recreation department to determine the improvements needed at several recreation sites in town. While the Recreation department is not responsible for each recreation site that they operate within, they do understand the issues and needs of these sites and have identified a number of needs for each facility (see Appendix I).

A primary recommendation in the Town's [2023 Municipal Facilities Master Plan](#) is that Newmarket should conduct a detailed study to guide future recreation space and programming needs. The result of the study could be used to inform renovation and development at Beech Street Community building, additional athletic and other fields, playgrounds, as well as other recreation facilities.

In addition to recreational facilities and programming, there are other areas in town that should be explored for future nature-based recreation opportunities which could also lead to economic opportunities. The hubs indicated on the map below are areas where there are current recreational activities and opportunities.

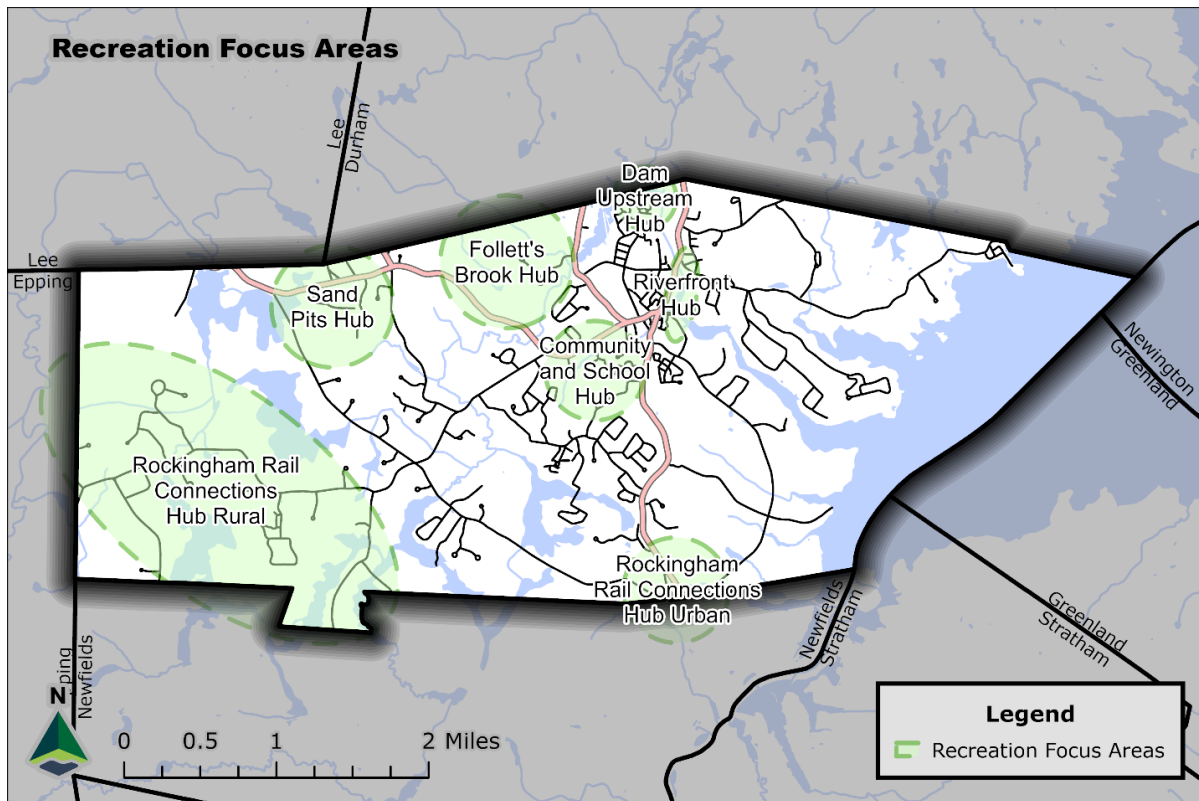


Figure 8 Recreation Focus Areas

Potential uses and ideas for each hub are described below. Further engagement and study should be conducted to prioritize, reach out to landowners in the respective areas, and plan for and fund projects for these areas.

1. Assess private landowners' interest in partnering with the town at each of these recreation hubs.
2. Gravel Pits Hub – Explore Potential Plan NH Charette for Gravel Pits to be converted into a potential recreation site.
3. Community and School Hub - Explore potential connections to school zone and primary recreation area of Leo Landroche Field.
4. Riverfront Hub - Increase trail and other recreation opportunities and connectivity along the Lamprey River Dam to Bay Road.
5. Dam Upstream Hub - Explore potential connection between Shoppmeyer Park and Piscassic Park. Increase connectivity, awareness, and utilization of those two sites.
6. Follett's Brook Hub - Explore potential trail connection between Newmarket and Durham. Explore further conservation opportunities with interested landowners in the Expand Follett's Brook watershed. Pursue sidewalk connection from the elementary school and high school to Piscassic River-Loiselle Conservation Area.

7. Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail Connections Urban Hub - Explore connection from Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail to New Road. Explore connection underneath NH108 bridge.
8. Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail Connections Rural Hub - Explore connections to the Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail specifically from Neal Mill Road and Bald Hill Road. An active trail and bikeway connection to downtown from these two roads should be explored as well.

Resiliency Goals

1. Follow town protocol to ensure disaster and emergency preparedness during times of crisis or concern at events or programs.
2. Continue to grow and adapt to the growing population and changing demographics of Newmarket that impact as many residents as possible while considering recreational trends.