

DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT CHAPTER

Adopted xxx 2026



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Vision

Newmarket's Downtown Riverfront will be recognized and celebrated as a place where the community enjoys the Lamprey River from the shoreline or from the water. The Downtown Riverfront will bolster local businesses and connect people with the beauty, serenity, and natural resources of this special place in the community. The area will offer diverse opportunities for the community to enjoy the Lamprey River. Existing publicly owned land will be reimagined to enhance public access to the riverfront. The Town will work thoughtfully and strategically with property owners and the community to identify creative solutions to create a cohesive riverwalk and pedestrian network, while respecting private property rights. Improvements and infrastructure projects will strive to maximize climate resiliency, integrate arts and culture, and protect natural resources and water quality.

Executive Summary

Like many mill towns in the state, Newmarket's industry and downtown grew around its riverfront. Situated at the head of the tide on the Lamprey River and steps from Main Street, the Downtown Riverfront is a bridge between the natural and the historic and contemporary built environment of Newmarket that continues to define the character of the community.

The importance of the Downtown Riverfront to the town warranted the addition of this new chapter of Newmarket's Master Plan. The geographic scope of this chapter extends north to the NH Route 108 bridge over the Lamprey River and south to the water treatment plant parcels and east to include Heron Point Sanctuary (see map below). Key components of the riverfront that are explored in this chapter include Schanda Park, The Riverwalk, Heron Point, Leo Filion Park, and Town property to the south of the Upper Narrows, and the linkages to these locations.

The central amenity of the Downtown Riverfront is Schanda Park, a small, well-utilized destination for enjoying the river and wildlife, walking, enjoying a picnic, launching a kayak or motorized watercraft, or attending a concert or event. The community has envisioned redesigning this space to increase its accessibility, functionality, and resilience.

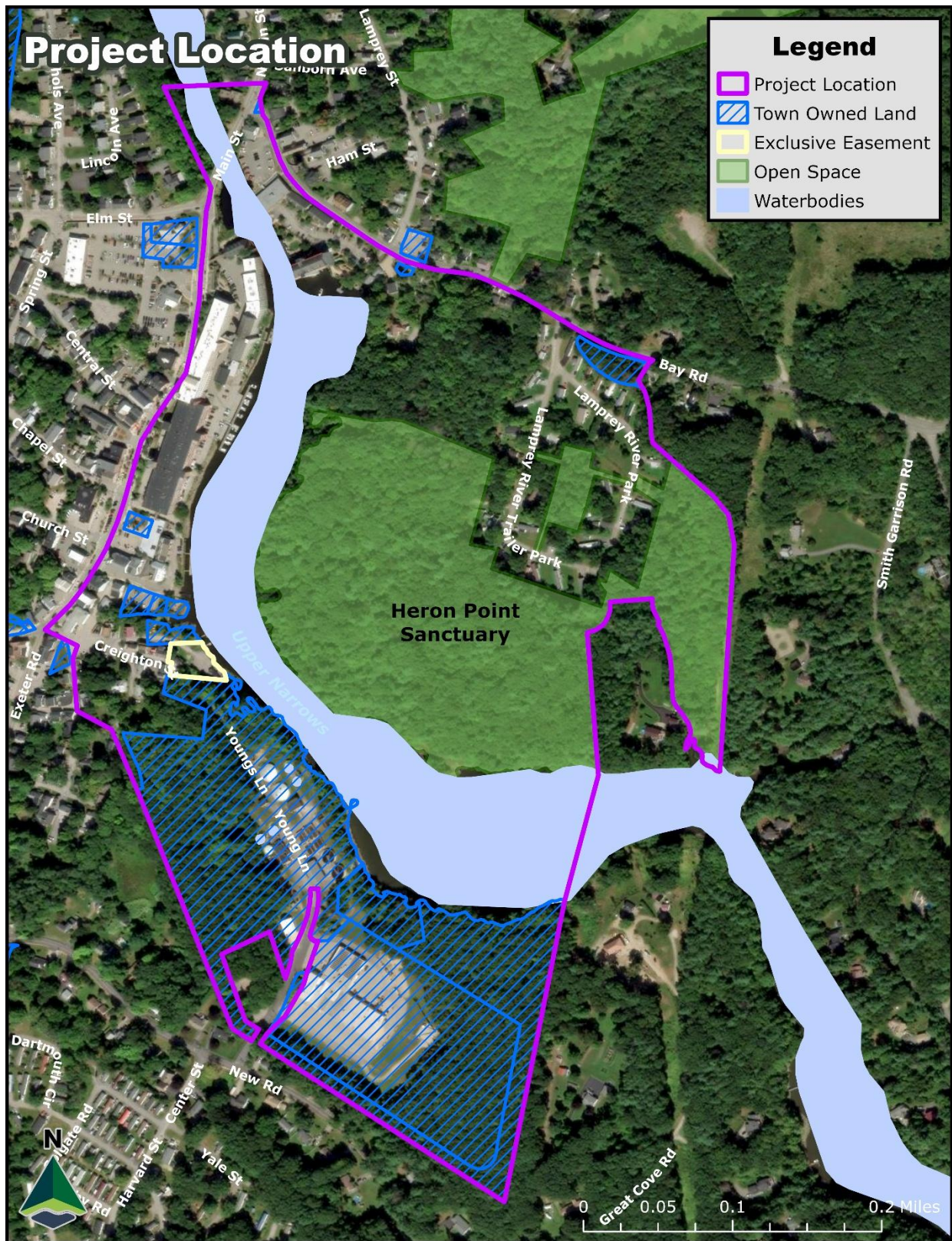
The Town aims to enhance the connectivity of the Downtown Riverfront through improvements at existing public lands, wayfinding, and identifying alternative ways to access destinations like Heron Point. One of the key challenges and opportunities in the Downtown Riverfront is navigating the patchwork of public and private property in this location in order to enable greater public access to the riverfront and water-based activities while respecting private property rights. The Town plans to gather information on existing property agreements to best understand existing property divisions and work with private abutters to develop a mutually beneficial approach to connectivity of public areas.

To realize the vision for the Downtown Riverfront, the Town has identified several key recommendations, including:

- Celebrate the social, economic, and natural history of the Downtown Riverfront area through increased educational signage and art

- Establish a cohesive riverwalk
- Improve Moonlight Brook and Creighton Street Pump Station infrastructure
- Advance the conceptual plan for Schanda Park
- Develop a workplan for the implementation of Downtown Riverfront projects.

In 2024, the Town engaged Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) and consulting firm EF | Design & Planning, LLC to create the Downtown Riverfront Chapter under the direction and guidance of the Newmarket Master Plan Committee, the Riverfront Advisory Committee, and Town staff. The Team captured input from the community on the current use and desired future use of the riverfront through a community-wide survey, a public forum, a Plan NH Design Charrette, and several stakeholder meetings. The input collected during these engagement efforts and through conversations with stakeholders directly informed the development of this chapter and its recommendations.



Aerial image of the Downtown Riverfront (source: SRPC)



Downtown Riverfront (source: EF | Design & Planning, LLC)

Master Plan Themes and Goals

Five guiding themes 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.



View of the Downtown Riverfront from the south (source: Tom Morgan)

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, and provides economic opportunities.

Relative to the Downtown Riverfront, vibrancy means places to gather and enjoy the Lamprey River and surroundings, a healthy ecosystem, and thriving water-dependent and waterfront-enhanced uses.

The riverfront is widely utilized by the community in a variety of ways and is a critical element of Newmarket's downtown and identity. Public input collected during a Master Plan survey and workshops confirmed that one of the most popular activities in the Downtown Riverfront is walking. The riverfront is also used for parking, boating, picnicking, concerts, and enjoying natural spaces and views. The Downtown Riverfront is a place for relaxing and taking in the natural surroundings, including the birds and ducks that frequent this area. Scenic outdoor space, access to the river, high foot traffic, and proximity to Main Street, and the historic mills – along with their commercial and residential occupants – contribute to the vibrancy of the Downtown Riverfront. The variety of land uses in this area, including conservation land and parks, commercial, industrial, mixed-use, and residential land, helps to create this diversity of uses and experiences in the Downtown Riverfront.

The heart of the Downtown Riverfront is an 0.36-acre Town-owned park located on parcels at the end of Water and Creighton Streets that are adjacent to the Lamprey River. This waterfront space was acquired by the Town in 1981 and 1984 with funds from the National Park Service

Land and Water Conservation Fund. Additional funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund enabled the development of boating facilities in 1984. In 2004, with improvements funded by a New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program Grant¹ and other donors, the park was renamed Richard Schanda Conservation Park, after Richard “Red” Schanda (1929-2004), a lifelong resident of Newmarket who was active in the community. It is now known as Schanda Park.

Today, Schanda Park's amenities include picnic tables, a commemorative bench, landscaping, a small, multi-used paved space, and a short walking path over Moonlight Brook to a boat dock. Parking



View of Schanda Park from above (above) (Image: Tom Morgan) and overlooking the Lamprey River (below) (Image: Liz Durfee)

at the Schanda Park lot — which is used by patrons of the park, The Riverwalk, the Town boat ramp, and other locations in the downtown — is limited to 15 spaces (refer to the Transportation Chapter for additional information about parking). The park is an excellent location for viewing tidal portions of the Lamprey River, Heron Point Sanctuary, the wildlife that inhabits these areas, and Newmarket's historic mill structures.

In addition to providing a place for informal gatherings, casual strolls, and rejuvenation, Schanda Park is home to the Arts in the Park Concert Series. The Concert Series draws around 40 to 80 community members during each of the five to eight concerts offered each season. To date, the program has been funded through sponsorships from local businesses and donations at the concerts but would benefit from a stable funding source.² Enhancements to Schanda Park may also be required for the long-term success of this program.

Since 2015, Schanda Park has been a key location for the Recreation Department for its kayak rental program. Over the last four years, the Recreation Department has rented an average of 43 kayaks per season at Schanda Park. Expanding the rental season, establishing a kayak launch, and addressing some of the rental program logistics could enhance this program and enable more people to get out on the water.

As the only public gathering space on the Lamprey in the downtown, there are many demands on Schanda Park, which itself provides a relatively small amount of greenspace. When asked to rank investment options, community members prioritized more greenspace.

The Heron Point Sanctuary on the opposite side of the river provides 35 acres of open space and shoreline for the community to explore. Improving access to this natural area would significantly increase the area of open space within proximity to the downtown. In addition, there are other Town or publicly owned waterfront properties that may provide additional locations for the public to enjoy riverfront greenspace. Portions of the parcels to the south of the Upper Narrows where the Wastewater Treatment Plant and Water Treatment Plant are located may be adapted to accommodate the demand for open space, recreational space, or a boat launch,³ as well as parking for these uses. In addition, the NH Fish & Game-owned Leo Filion Park near the fish ladder at Macallen Dam is another underutilized property that offers a unique vantage point of the river. These locations will be discussed further in other sections of this chapter.

In addition to the quantity of greenspace, the community values the quality of the space. Maintenance and beautification of Schanda Park, the Riverwalk, and other highly trafficked waterfront destinations should be prioritized. Infrastructure in the Downtown Riverfront, including the Creighton Street Pump Station, other public utilities, and private utilities should be well screened



Public input collected at the Plan NH Design Charrette

to enhance aesthetics. A prime concern of residents is the impact of dog waste and feeding ducks and other waterfowl — which negatively affects water quality and health of wildlife — on visitors’ experience at the waterfront, as well as on water resources.⁴

During the Plan NH Design Charrette in October 2024, several conceptual improvements to Schanda Park and Moonlight Brook were explored. These concepts were informed by site investigations, review of past projects including the Great Bay Living Shoreline Design Project (discussed further in the Resiliency Theme of this chapter) and discussions with the community. Shown in the conceptual plan below, creation of a plaza-like deck or bridge structure over Moonlight Brook is a key feature of the reimagined Schanda Park. This plaza would serve several purposes, including expanding park space, offering a unique visitor experience, addressing stream hydraulics and stabilization of the bank, and increasing resilience to sea level rise and flooding.⁵ The plaza would offer gathering space on its deck and the adjacent park segments. Shade trees and native plants would enhance habitat while also providing shade.⁶

Art and design can make Schanda Park a more engaging and welcoming place for people of different ages. Play structures, a tunnel log, or steppingstone paths, for example, would enhance the space for younger users while also helping to address the demand for amenities for children in the downtown. More seating options would provide a place for pedestrians to rest and enjoy the view.

“As part of the greater effort to revitalize Newmarket’s whole waterfront, the Town wishes to address existing concerns associated with the park’s boat ramp and deteriorating shoreline revetment, as well as develop the park’s overall resilience and aesthetic character”

Source: Great Bay Living Shoreline Design Memo

Signage, along with public art, are two components that shape sense of place, or the connection between people and surroundings. In addition to wayfinding signage, which is discussed in the Connectivity Theme of this chapter, art creates more vibrant spaces. The Town’s Arts & Culture Commission strategic plan envisions Newmarket as a town where vibrant cultural life can be found in every corner of the town. Part of this includes permanent art installations located in places where people gather. Opportunities to enhance the public realm in the Downtown Riverfront abound. For example, one idea garnered from the Master Plan Survey was to paint more murals downtown. Street art – such as paintings,

sculptures, or footprints of species found in the Lamprey River – could be used to guide residents and visitors to Schanda Park and other waterfront amenities. Art can also be used to tell the story of the historic shipbuilding industry in Newmarket. The Charrette Design Team also identified the opportunity to enhance user experience of Schanda Park through installation of a climbable structure for kids and adventurous adults. Countless concepts to connect park visitors to their environment could be explored, including an interactive and climbable weir.⁷

Elements to address stormwater, improve the boat ramp, add interpretive signage, enlarge recreation space, and accommodate living shorelines are integrated into this plan and discussed further throughout this chapter.



Conceptual plan for plaza-like bridge structure over Moonlight Brook (source: Ironwood Design Group, LLC, Plan NH Charrette)

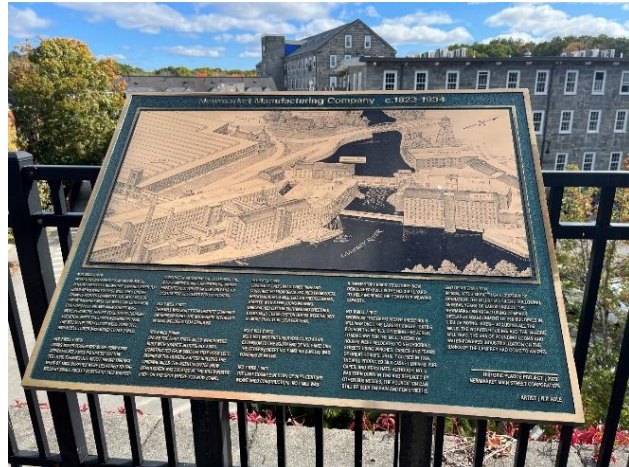
The vibrancy and character of the Downtown Riverfront is strongly influenced by its history and historic built environment. The presence of the mills is a dominant element of the Downtown Riverfront. Newmarket's mills date back to 1823, when the Newmarket Manufacturing Company built its first mill along the Lamprey.⁸ By 1917, a total of eight large mills loomed over the Lamprey and bolstered the town's economy. The mills operated until 1934 when discrepancies between laborers and management drove the closure and abandonment of the mills. Residents and visitors can glimpse a view of the mill yard in its heyday via the bronze plaque installed in 2021 on the overlook off Main Street near Number 4 Mill. The plaque depicts the former mill structures and describes the timeline of their development.

After years of abandonment, the buildings now known as Bryant Rock Condominiums, Rivermoor Landing, and the Selectwood building were redeveloped in the 1980s through 2000. Between 2010 and 2012, four other mill buildings were redeveloped and converted to mixed-use development. This project brought life back to four granite mill buildings on Main Street and Penstock Way and had a rippling economic impact on the downtown. The project was completed in part with a 20% Historic Preservation Tax credit from the National Park Service, which made the massive redevelopment viable and resulted in the preservation of the historic character of the mills.⁹

Today, the former mill buildings are home to approximately 220 residential condos and apartments, and over 50,000 square feet of commercial space, including the Millspace. The Millspace is a volunteer-run community civic space on the lower level, water side of the historic Newmarket Mills that is committed to bringing more art, theater, music, and history to the town of Newmarket. The Millspace brands itself as a community living room that is a place for people to gather, share ideas, and enjoy each other's company. It hosts a gallery and is available for the public to rent.¹⁰

The current land use along the riverfront includes mixed uses in the mill buildings and the Lang's Warf Townhouse Condominiums and F.E. Land Blacksmith building. Similar to the Newmarket Mills, the F.E. Lang Blacksmith building, formerly home of Joyce's Kitchen, was restored in 2013 using Federal Historic Tax Credits. Among the other uses in the riverfront area are the Rivermoor Landing Condominium Association's parking garage and parking lot, Arbor Park, the Creighton Street Pump Station, and a handful of homes and structures. Further downstream, the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant occupies waterfront space. Much of the east side of the Downtown Riverfront is encompassed by Heron Point Sanctuary. The Lamprey River Estates Cooperative abuts Heron Point.

The current zoning in the Downtown Riverfront includes five zoning districts: M1, M2, R2, R4, and B2. The M-1 and M-2 districts emphasize enhancing the downtown waterfront and providing public access to the Lamprey River, respectively. The Town's ongoing form-based code rezoning project proposes to convert the zoning in most of the Downtown Riverfront vicinity to the proposed Village Corridor. This zone will emulate the traditional Main Street pattern of Newmarket.¹¹



Bronze plaque showing the Newmarket Mills (above) (Image: Liz Durfee) A sign on the west side of Main Street commemorates No. 8 Mill (below) (Image: Design Charrette Team)

As with nearly all waterfront spaces, effort should be made to prioritize water-dependent uses and public access to the waterfront.

To the extent possible, commercial spaces should be oriented towards enhancing physical or visual access to the river. This may be accomplished, for example, by providing outdoor public seating, maintaining pedestrian paths, or crafting land use regulations that preserve viewsheds and ensure that new development or redevelopment does not impede views of the river. One measure taken to enhance public access to the riverfront was the creation of The Riverwalk, which is discussed further in the Connectivity Theme section of this chapter. The vibrant riverfront draws both residents and visitors to the downtown and helps attract customers to patronize local businesses. Leveraging natural resources, such as the public riverfront and trails, to attract and connect people to business ranked fifth out of eight options to promote growth and enhancement of Newmarket's downtown businesses in the Town's Master Plan Survey.

While the mills dominate the contemporary visual landscape of the Downtown Riverfront, as noted by the New Market Historical Society in their walking tour transcript, "fishing, ship building, and trading were here long before the big stone mills,"¹² and pre-Colonial, Indigenous history of the Lamprey River dates back more than 8,600 years. The historical significance of fishing the Lamprey is evident in the nearly 100-year-old weir that sits in the river off Schanda Park. The use of weirs on the Lamprey predates European settlement.¹³ This weir, operated by Chick Hays from 1938-1979 and Jerry Collins from 1979 to the present, is the last known weir in New England.¹⁴ While fishing the weir is not as plentiful or economically viable as it once was, maintaining the tradition and showcasing this artifact has significant historical value.¹⁵ While there have been years that NH Fish & Game has not permitted fishing the weir due to low average herring counts in the Great Bay region, when it is fished, the weir provides valuable bait for local lobstermen.¹⁶

The weir's aesthetics, potential impacts to shoreline habitat, and perceived concerns related to navigation have led to some controversy over the weir. For over 40 years, the landing pocket of the weir has been stored in its current location on the edge of Schanda Park from around October to April. While the weir must be stored close to the location it goes into the water due to its size and brittleness, future improvements to the shoreline of Schanda Park should consider the best possible options for accommodating the weir and a living shoreline. Improved educational signage about the



View of the Newmarket Mills (source: Tom Morgan)



View of the weir in the Lamprey River (source: Liz Durfee)

weir and historical use of weirs would be an asset to Schanda Park, as those who are not familiar with what a weir is may not recognize this structure or appreciate its value, and visibility of the current granite sign is obstructed by snow fencing near Moonlight Brook.

Connectivity, accessibility, affordability, and resilience are driving forces of vibrancy. These topics are discussed next.

Vibrancy Goals

1. Celebrate the social, economic, and natural history of the Downtown Riverfront area.
2. Incorporate arts and culture into riverfront improvements and activities.
3. Maintain and enhance the amenities of Town-owned properties.



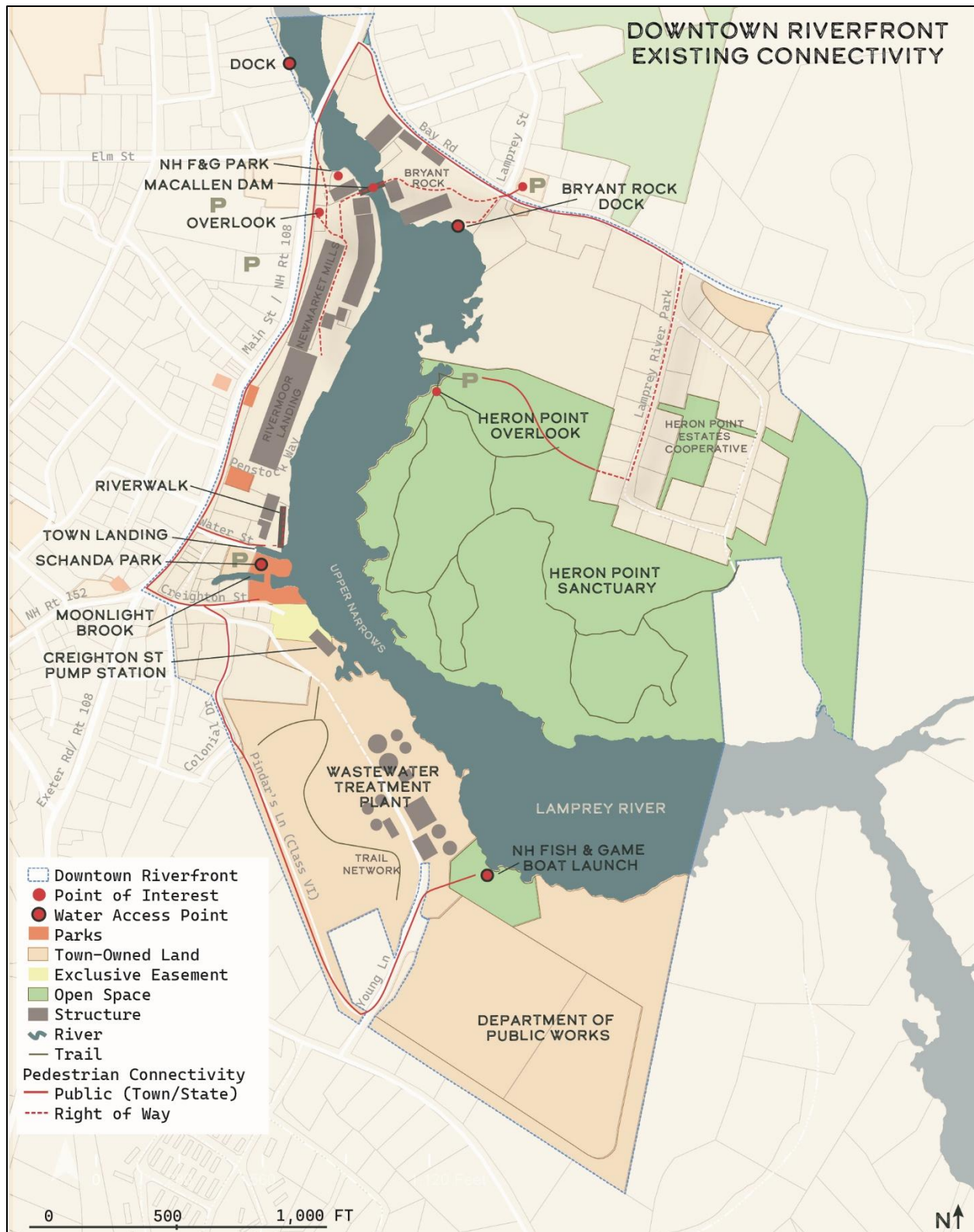
Image of Schanda Park (source: Sarah Wrightsman)

Connectivity

A connected community has efficient and safe links to daily needs such as between home, jobs, shopping, school, services, parks and open space, and provides welcoming and inclusive public places for social interaction.

Connectivity to and within the Downtown Riverfront is important to community members. As shown in the map below, the downtown is well connected through its sidewalk network. A key takeaway from the public input survey and Design Charrette was the need to improve the connectivity of riverfront spaces. The community is fortunate to have several Town-owned riverfront properties, but they lack connectivity and development for public use. In some cases, a lack of wayfinding signage is the primary impediment to a more unified waterfront, while in others, land ownership, physical constraints, and concerns over safety and vandalism are factors.

Additional community input received during the development of this chapter narrowed the scope of the options to enhance connectivity that were identified in the Design Charrette.¹⁷ Four key opportunities to improve connectivity are described below and shown in the map below. Refer to the [Design Charrette Report](#) for details on these and other concepts, including a bridge over the Lamprey River, that could be further investigated.



Existing and Potential Routes to Enhance Pedestrian Connectivity in the Downtown Riverfront (source: EF | Design & Planning, LLC)

Area A – Extended Riverwalk



The Riverwalk (left) (Image: Sarah Wrightsman) and aerial view of The Riverwalk and north (right) (Image: Tom Morgan)

One location lacking in connectivity is The Riverwalk, which is a 150-foot pedestrian way that extends north from the boat ramp at Water Street in front of the Lang’s Warf Townhouse Condominiums. The Riverwalk was developed in the early 2000s and includes brick walks, flowering trees, benches, lighting, decorative railings, and raised perennial beds. It offers public access and views of the Lamprey River that are now obscured by landscaping. The paved Riverwalk ends abruptly, transitioning to gravel before reaching Penstock Way, a private road.

While there are right-of-ways for the public to traverse the Newmarket Mills driveway (Penstock Way), The Riverwalk, Bryant Rock’s sidewalk and parking area, and the dock at Bryant Rock, there is a lack of signage clearly delineating where the public is welcome and where private property rights must be respected. The combination of a lack of wayfinding signs and clarity among all parties over property rights is a particular challenge at the Rivermoor Landing and Bryant Rock properties, both of which are areas that pedestrians frequently pass through and have on occasion disrespected property owners and their property. A legal review of the existence of a right-of-way or agreement that allow the public to pass through Rivermoor Landing property is ongoing. This review and further discussion with property owners may lead to opportunities to establish a missing link for pedestrian connectivity along the shoreline. During the [Design Charrette](#), publicly accessible sidewalks on Penstock Way and boardwalks were among the conceptual ideas explored.

A connected riverwalk has been a vision for decades. In 1996, a [Riverwalk Feasibility](#) study explored construction of a public Riverwalk along a 3,500 foot stretch of the Lamprey River between the NH Fish & Game land and the Route 108 bridge over the Lamprey River in order to: 1) enhance public access to the historic Newmarket waterfront, 2) Provide enjoyment of this unique waterfront, 3) Revitalize the historic downtown waterfront.

Area B – Schanda Park to NH Fish & Game Launch

A second opportunity to enhance connectivity is to link Town-owned parcels at Schanda Park and the Wastewater Treatment Plant. This would allow for the creation of a longer walking loop through Town-owned land, trails, and the Class VI road known as Pindar's Lane that runs from the top of Colonial Road to Young Lane. The Wastewater Treatment Plant (Tax Map U3-47) is located on an over 12-acre lot, approximately two-thirds of which is forested. Improved access in this areas could connect Schanda Park to the Fish & Game ice fishing launch, an underutilized water-access point with scenic views of Heron Point and the river.

Similar to an extension of The Riverwalk, completing this linkage would require negotiation with willing landowners. Any anticipated increase in foot traffic on Pindar's Lane would necessitate communication with abutters of Pindar's Lane, as some have structures infringing on this path. Wayfinding signage would be important to demarcate trails and the boundaries of private property.



View down Pindar's Way / Class VI Road
(source: Sarah Wrightsman)

Area C – Bay Road to Heron Point

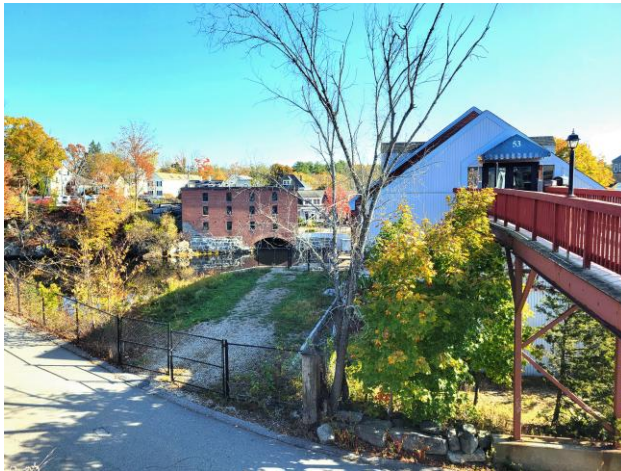
The public can enjoy the Lamprey River waterfront and trails of the Heron Point Sanctuary, however access to this land is disconnected from the Downtown Riverfront. The Town permanently locked the access gate to drive into Heron Point in the summer of 2024, as discussed further in the Accessibility & Affordability Theme of this chapter. Several options to better connect Heron Point to the downtown were discussed during the Design Charrette and with stakeholders, including:

- Purchase land on Bay Road or an easement on property located on Bay Road.
- Create a boardwalk or waterfront trail from Bryant Rock or Bay Road to Heron Point.
- Modify the existing access to Heron Point, such as through increased policing, staffing the gate, or other means in order to minimize impacts to residents of Heron Point Estates Cooperative.
- Develop an educational trail/route with wayfinding signage to direct pedestrians from the downtown or the Bay Road Parking Lot to the existing Heron Point access road.

As with other proposed linkage improvements, additional community input and support and interested and willing landowners would be critical to the success of improved connectivity to Heron Point.

Area D – Leo Filion Park

The underutilized area located adjacent to the fish ladder at the Macallen Dam could serve as a potential linkage from the dam to an upstream kayak launch as well as an additional space for accessing the waterfront. Formally named Leo Filion Park, this State-owned parcel could be developed into a scenic park with excellent views of the freshwater portion of the Lamprey River above the dam and the historic mill structures. Events like the Lamprey River Advisory Committee's Herring Day are already held at this location. The Book Exchange building property holds an easement on this lot; Coordination with Paszec Investors Inc., the current property owner, would be required.



Existing Leo Filion Park (left)(source: Sarah Wrightsman) and conceptual connectivity plan for the park with the upstream kayak launch and existing pedestrian ways (Source: Bartsch Landscape Architecture)

Nearby, the pedestrian bridge over the Lamprey River provides scenic access to both sides of the river and a unique Newmarket experience. The existing pedestrian bridge will need to be replaced within 5-10 years due to corrosion. The Town submitted an application to NH Department of Transportation to include the bridge replacement project in the Transportation Alternatives Program.¹⁸

The new pedestrian bridge, in addition to the NH Route 108 bridge, are alternative locations that the Town is considering to reroute an existing sewer forcemain over the river instead of across the riverbed. Rerouting the forcemain on the pedestrian bridge structure would require the bridge to be replaced with a structure designed to carry that load.¹⁹



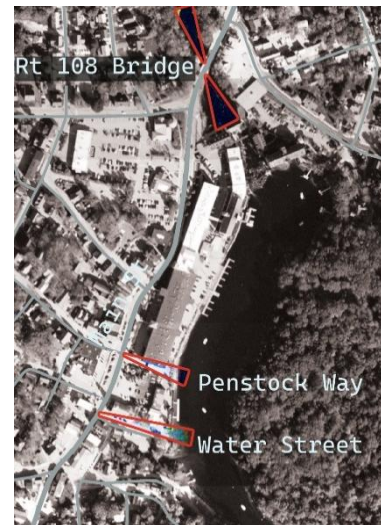
The Main Street / NH Route 108 bridge and the pedestrian bridge located below the Macallen Dam connect the east and west sides of the Lamprey River. They also serve as prime vantage points to view the upstream and downstream river (source (left): Tom Morgan, (right) Liz Durfee)

Visual Connectivity

Maintaining visibility of the river from Main Street is important both for attracting people down to the waterfront and up to Main Street businesses. While they are beautiful and historic components of the Downtown Riverfront, the large mill buildings effectively block views of the river from many points on Main Street. Existing views from Main Street down Penstock Way and Water Street should be enhanced to the extent possible. Further obstruction of the riverfront views should be avoided to preserve these scenic resources.

Regional Connectivity

Community members are interested in greater connectivity to local and regional trails and cycling routes within the town and surrounding communities.²⁰ Measures to increase the connectivity of destinations along the Downtown Riverfront may also enhance bike-pedestrian connectivity of the downtown to popular cycling routes including New Road, Bay Road/Durham Point Road, and Packers Falls. Community members noted the proximity of the Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail in Newfields to New Road, which connects to Young Lane and the Fish & Game ice fishing launch. Amenities like parking, regional trail signage, and bike racks at this property or adjacent Town land would be an asset to both boaters, cyclists, and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts.



River views from Main Street

Wayfinding Signage

Wayfinding signage is a critical component of an accessible and connected riverfront. Wayfinding signs can help direct residents and tourists to various destinations and points of interest along the riverfront, provide critical information to delineate public and private property, guide vehicular traffic to parking areas, and educate pedestrians about sensitive natural areas and resources. While limited signage – including a sign at the top of Water Street and near The Riverwalk – exists, more directional and educational signs are needed. One opportunity presented in the Design Charrette was use of art to enhance connectivity to and along the riverfront. Using pavers, street art, and other landscaping features can be an effective and aesthetic way to identify spaces where the public is welcome. Charrette participants also recognized the opportunity for a downtown map to be installed in a central location such as the gazebo on Main Street, Willey House plaza, or Arbor Park.



An example of how art can be used as part of the Downtown Riverfront wayfinding (Source: Pinterest)

Connectivity Goals

1. Establish a cohesive riverwalk.
2. Enhance the connectivity of Main Street, commerce, and the Lamprey River.
3. Seek creative solutions to strengthen the connectivity of all Town-owned properties in the vicinity of the Downtown Riverfront.
4. Enhance connectivity of the Downtown Riverfront, Newmarket and amenities in surrounding communities.



A boater launching watercraft at the Schanda Park ramp (source: Liz Durfee)

Accessibility and Affordability

An accessible community has an environment that is meaningful and usable for as many people as possible. An affordable community is where people can live comfortably without financial difficulty.

With respect to the Downtown Riverfront, connectivity and accessibility go hand in hand. With relatively little riverfront space and many competing uses, access to the waterfront is not an unfamiliar challenge in Newmarket, nor in other communities. In 1752, a Town Warrant recognized that the town's waterfront had become overrun with shipyards, stating that "the landing-place at Lamprey River is much incumbered with shipyards so the public have not the benefit of said landing place."²¹ In the 2024 Master Plan Survey, improved public water access opportunities (swimming, boat, kayak, dock) ranked second out of 15 options of where the Town should prioritize investment in recreation.

Boater Access

For boaters, the existing public water access points in the downtown vicinity include the:

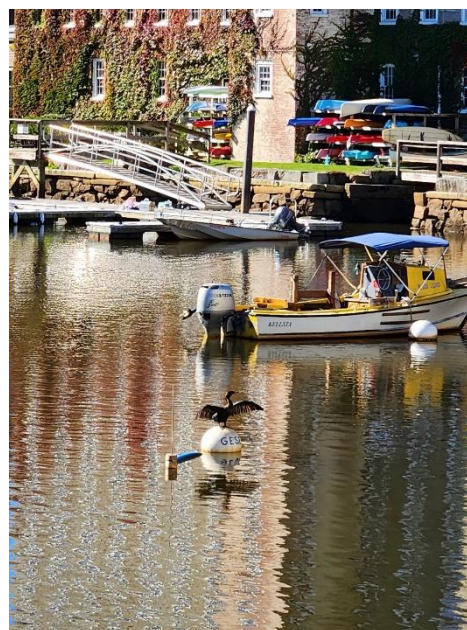
- Boat ramp at Schanda Park
- Seasonal dock at Schanda Park
- Dock at Bryant Rock Condominiums
- Fish & Game boat launch located near the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Privately owned docks and slips include Langs Wharf Condo Association dock, Marina Falls Landing, and the Newmarket Mills dock.

There are no public ADA boat launches within the Downtown Riverfront. Communities like [Rochester](#) and [Dover](#) have good examples of ADA accessible facilities that allow people of all abilities to enjoy the river.

Several Master Plan Survey respondents noted that they would prioritize things like repair of the boat launch, creation of an all-tide boat and kayak launch and a day boat dock, more boat slips, public moorings, and permanent docks. Lamprey River water levels in the Downtown Riverfront currently change by about seven feet with the tidal cycle,²² presenting a challenge for maintaining dock access at all tides.

The boat ramp at Schanda Park is located at the end of Water Street and is managed by NH Fish & Game. The ramp is considered overly wide and requires improvements to address broken pavement near the high-water line as well as gravel that regularly washes away.²³ A renovation of the ramp would provide the opportunity to construct a ramp of standard, 18-foot precast concrete planks and allow for installation of a narrow floating dock alongside the boat ramp for use by kayakers, canoeists, and paddleboarders.²⁴ The addition of a floating dock at the boat ramp would provide the necessary space for launching non-motorized watercraft, especially as traffic on the river increases.²⁵ Other ideas to enhance access include rentable public dock and mooring space that would accommodate both residents and day visitors traveling to Downtown Newmarket via the Lamprey River.²⁶



Private kayak storage and boat mooring
(source: Tiffany Tononi Macnamara)



Schanda Park Dock at low tide (source: Sarah Wrightsman)

Vehicular and trailer parking were noted as a top priority for the Downtown Riverfront area by a handful of survey participants. The Schanda Park lot has 15 vehicle spaces and four boat trailer spaces, however because of this parking is not available on a regular basis there is a lack of direct vehicle access to the park and surroundings. One parking space has a charging station and is reserved for electric vehicles, and one space is ADA accessible. Street parking is also available on Water Street and nearby on Main Street, however cars parked at the top of Water Street obstruct visibility of oncoming traffic on Main Street.²⁷



The dock at Bryant Rock Condominiums is open to the public and accessible at all tides (source: Liz Durfee)

The Bryant Rock Condominiums dock, also referred to as the Lamprey Street dock, is a carry in boat launch that is accessible via the Bryant Rock Condominium property on Bay Road. Parking is available across Bay Road at the municipal lot. This dock may not be widely recognized as a location where the public can launch their canoe or kayak from.



The NH Fish & Game Lamprey River ice fishing access (source: Sarah Wrightsman)

Another location where carry in access is allowed is the NH Fish & Game's Lamprey River ice fishing access, located on a State-owned parcel adjacent to the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant off of Young Lane. This site does not accommodate trailered boat access or access for any watercraft at lower tides. With parking improvements, the site could be better utilized. Expanding publicly accessible waterfront space on the Wastewater Treatment Plan parcel at 5 Young Lane could further enhance riverfront amenities in the southern end of the Downtown Riverfront.²⁸ Exploration of whether this location could provide better access during all tides than a dock as Schanda Park is warranted.

Pedestrian Access



View of the mills and Macallen Dam from Heron Point
(Image: Liz Durfee)



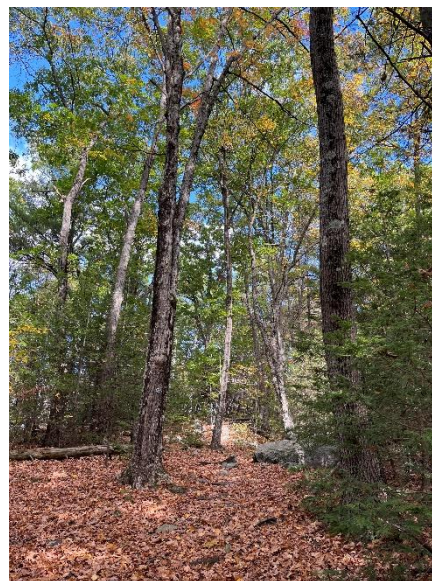
Access gate to Heron Point from Meadow Lane (Heron Point Estates Cooperative)(Image: Liz Durfee)

Pedestrian access to the Lamprey River consists of a patchwork of locations including Heron Point, Schanda Park, and the Riverwalk, as discussed in the Connectivity Theme of this chapter.

Although it does not have a boat launch, Heron Point Nature Sanctuary provides scenic waterfront recreational opportunities in all seasons and the ability to walk to water's edge. Heron Point was deeded to the Town in 1996 to preserve as undeveloped open space for the enjoyment of the public and education of the local community. In 2013, a 30-foot easement on Lot 86-18 was granted to the Town for the purpose of maintaining and improving an 18-foot-wide gravel driveway to Heron Point.²⁹

The access way was open from dawn to dusk until the Town permanently locked the electronic access gate in 2024 due to repeated damage to the electronic gate. This significantly impacted the accessibility of Heron Point, as visitors are required to park their cars in the municipal lot at Lamprey Street and Bay Road and walk approximately ¼ miles to the gate and another ¼ mile to get to the viewing deck and trailhead within Heron Point.

During the Design Charrette, several conceptual ideas for improving access to Heron Point were explored. Among the ideas discussed were an access easement or purchase of land between Bay Road and Heron Point. Such access would provide better pedestrian access to Heron Point from the Bay Road Parking Lot while also avoiding the need to pass through the privately owned Heron Point Estates Cooperative property.³⁰ Stakeholders also suggested the possibility of a boardwalk or river's edge trail connecting Bay Road to Heron Point.^{31,32} Another conceptual idea explored during the Charette was construction of a bridge spanning across the river to Heron Point from one of two locations,



The Conservation Commission maintains a well-utilized (and [mapped](#)) trail network at Heron Point with an interpretive kiosk and is responsible for stewardship of the Sanctuary (Image: Liz Durfee)

downtown Main Street or Town property in the vicinity of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The feasibility and desirability of these options would require significant planning, analysis, community buy-in, funding, and in some cases, private landowner interest and support.

Affordable Access

For the Downtown Riverfront, affordability relates to the ability of community members of all income levels to enjoy the Lamprey River. This is particularly important because housing costs are high and public access to the riverfront is quite limited relative to the total frontage along the brackish and freshwater portions of the Lamprey in Newmarket.



Recreation Department kayak storage at Schanda Park
(Image: Sarah Wrightsman)

For the Town, this means maintaining and enhancing amenities like Schanda Park, the Riverwalk, the boat dock, and the boat ramp. These assets provide places for those that do not have access to a private dock with a place to launch their trailered or small watercraft and access Great Bay. The Town offers free programs like the Arts in the Park concert series in this scenic, downtown location, as well as a kayak rental program for people who do not own their own boat at Schanda Park.

Affordability of the Downtown Riverfront also relates to economically sustainable Town programming and spaces. While Public Works is responsible for waste removal and other general maintenance activities, the overall planning, maintenance, and improvement of Schanda Park falls under the purview of the Conservation Commission. The Commission received a one-time donation of \$4,000 for Schanda Park from the Masonic Lodge but does not otherwise have an annually appropriated budget. Members of the Conservation Commission, Ad Hoc Riverfront Advisory Committee, and Planning Director recognize that neither the Conservation Commission nor the Riverfront Advisory Committee have the capacity to steward Schanda Park and that this role is better suited to the Recreation Department and/or Public Works.³³ While the exact terms of a transfer in stewardship are not known, the Town is exploring this concept.

Partnering with businesses and volunteer groups to help maintain these public spaces brings in in-kind support to help keep these well-frequented places tidy while keeping maintenance costs down. For example, in 2024, students and a high school teacher assisted the Conservation Commission with maintenance by resetting bricks in the walkway, cleaning the patio and walkway, and installing new posts and fencing at Schanda Park during Newmarket Cares Day.³⁴

When investing in any improvements to waterfront locations, the Town should ensure that public investments are designed to withstand sea level rise and flood events. Investment in resilient infrastructure has been shown to generate a fourfold return on investment by avoiding the need to continually repair and rebuild,³⁵ thus avoiding future costs for taxpayers.

The Town should also endeavor to maintain and establish public-private partnerships to enhance riverfront spaces by creating more public space or contributing to the landscaping of existing public spaces.

With respect to private development, developers have had success utilizing tools such as 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Incentives and Historic Preservation Tax Credits to help finance redevelopment projects while retaining historic character. Opting into the array of tax incentives and business tax credits that are available in New Hampshire helps make redevelopment projects viable while also providing public benefits, which could take the form of enhanced public space or even community art in the Downtown Riverfront.



View south from the Heron Point shoreline (Image: Liz Durfee)

Affordability and Accessibility Goals

1. Ensure that all community members have access to the riverfront.
2. Improve water access points for motorized and non-motorized watercraft.
3. Continue to seek solutions to improve access to Heron Point Sanctuary.
4. Continue to offer free and low-cost programs and events in Schanda Park.
5. Seek opportunities to utilize public-private partnerships to establish and maintain spaces that are welcoming to the public.
6. Approach planning and design projects from a multi-faceted and integrated perspective that allows funding, efficiency, and coordination across departments, boards, commissions, committees, and regional partners to be maximized.

Resiliency

A resilient community can withstand, recover or adjust to adversity or change.

Resilient areas start with healthy ecosystems. Changes in climate, increases in impervious cover, and aging infrastructure have contributed to numerous and significant flood impacts in the Moonlight Brook watershed. In addition to flooding, precipitation events, development, and aging infrastructure and illicit sewer connections have also led to poor water quality in Moonlight Brook.

Clean water is a top priority for the community. Addressing and preventing pollutants from entering local waterways, followed by replacing aging and/or undersized storm drain systems ranked highest in terms of which stormwater challenge should be addressed first by survey respondents.

The main channel of Moonlight Brook runs approximately 1.5-miles from its headwaters to its outlet at the Lamprey River.³⁶ Moonlight Brook's 486-acre watershed³⁷ extends both northwest and south-southwest of the downtown and includes a drainage network of around 1.1 miles of pipes and 2.44 miles of open stream.³⁸ Within downtown Newmarket, areas including New Road and Great Hills drain to Moonlight Brook.³⁹ At the southern side of the Schanda Park parking lot, the brook runs through three 24 inch diameter precast concrete pipes before flowing into the Lamprey River.⁴⁰ Microbial source tracking in the Moonlight Brook watershed and other areas in the Lamprey River watershed, occurred in 2024 and will continue in 2025 to identify the types and sources of contamination.⁴¹ Both pet waste and human contamination have been detected in excess of NH Department of Environmental Services standards.⁴²

A climate adaptation plan was developed for the watershed in 2016. This plan identified several structural and non-structural low impact development (LID) mitigation strategies for target retrofit areas that have the greatest benefit for stormwater management at the lowest cost. A matrix of best management practices for runoff control from this study is included in the Appendix. One example of implementing LID is the Lang's Wharf redevelopment, which utilized disconnection of rooftop downspouts combined with Xeriscaping and infiltration to reduce the amount of runoff and associated pollutant from the development project.⁴³



The pathway connecting Schanda Park over Moonlight Brook (Image: Sarah Wrightsman)

The Town of Newmarket is responsible for implementing and performing various plans and activities related to stormwater management Pursuant to the requirements of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s "National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for Storm Water Discharges from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4)" (Source: [Town of Newmarket Website](#))

Several recommendations for Moonlight Brook were identified by the [Great Bay Living Shoreline Project](#). At high tide, the three concrete pipes that the brook runs through at Schanda Park are underwater, impacting the brook's hydraulics and causing sediment to block the pipes. Potential solutions included the replacement of the pipes with a culvert to daylighting the brook. Another recommendation was to remove the revetment and restore the tidal marsh to the south of the culvert where banks of the brook are steep.

A conceptual design for Schanda Park that accommodated measures to improve the hydraulics of Moonlight Brook was created during the Design Charrette (as discussed in the Resiliency Theme). The conceptual plan envisioned a plaza over Moonlight Brook and replacement of pipes with a more natural stream bank would serve to expand park space while enabling a free-flowing brook and increasing resilience to sea level rise and flooding.⁴⁴

The Town Council approved a resolution for engineering for the septage receiving station that would enable the removal of all of the truck traffic and septage out of the Creighton Street pump station to the Wastewater Treatment Plant in early 2023.⁴⁵ In addition to reducing traffic and impacts like odor in the neighborhood, this measure may also increase the space available for a living shoreline, which would help stabilize the shoreline in addition to creating an ecological feature.⁴⁶

Two priority projects for Moonlight Brook have been identified by the Town: 1) Implementing a stormwater treatment Best Management Practice (BMP) at the Schanda Park parking area, and 2) Addressing water quality issues and channel stabilization in Moonlight Brook. To advance implementation of these projects, a preliminary scope and cost estimate have been prepared for these projects by VHB.

Options for stabilizing the shoreline via a living shoreline were explored through the 2023 [Great Bay Living Shoreline Project](#), which aimed to create new living shoreline projects that protect salt marsh habitat and coastal communities from erosion, sea level rise, and flooding. The design team proposed improvements at Schanda Park including:

- Revetment removal and tidal marsh creation
- Boat Ramp upgrade
- Parking lot stormwater management upgrades
- Existing plantings and invasive species management plan.

The living shoreline design team also identified the need to redesign a culvert for Moonlight Brook and noted that moving the weir through existing or proposed tidal marsh area should be avoided.⁴⁷ Concepts for shoreline

A living shoreline is a management practice that provides erosion control benefits; protects, restores or enhances natural shoreline habitat; and maintains coastal processes through the strategic placement of plants, stone, sand fill and other structural organic materials. (Source: Great Bay Living Shoreline Project)

management were also explored in the 2024 Design Charrette, including use of vegetated wall systems and salt and flood tolerant plants like Seaside Goldenrod, Switchgrass, Bear Oak, and Serviceberry/Shadbush along the upland edge [Refer to Design Charrette Report].⁴⁸ Due to the urbanized nature of the area, a living shoreline installation could be anticipated to have an approximately 30-year lifespan before the tidal buffer and high marsh is forced out by sea-level rise.⁴⁹

Therefore, it should be considered as a near-term component or phase of a long-term plan for shoreline management and adaptation to sea-level rise in the Downtown Riverfront.

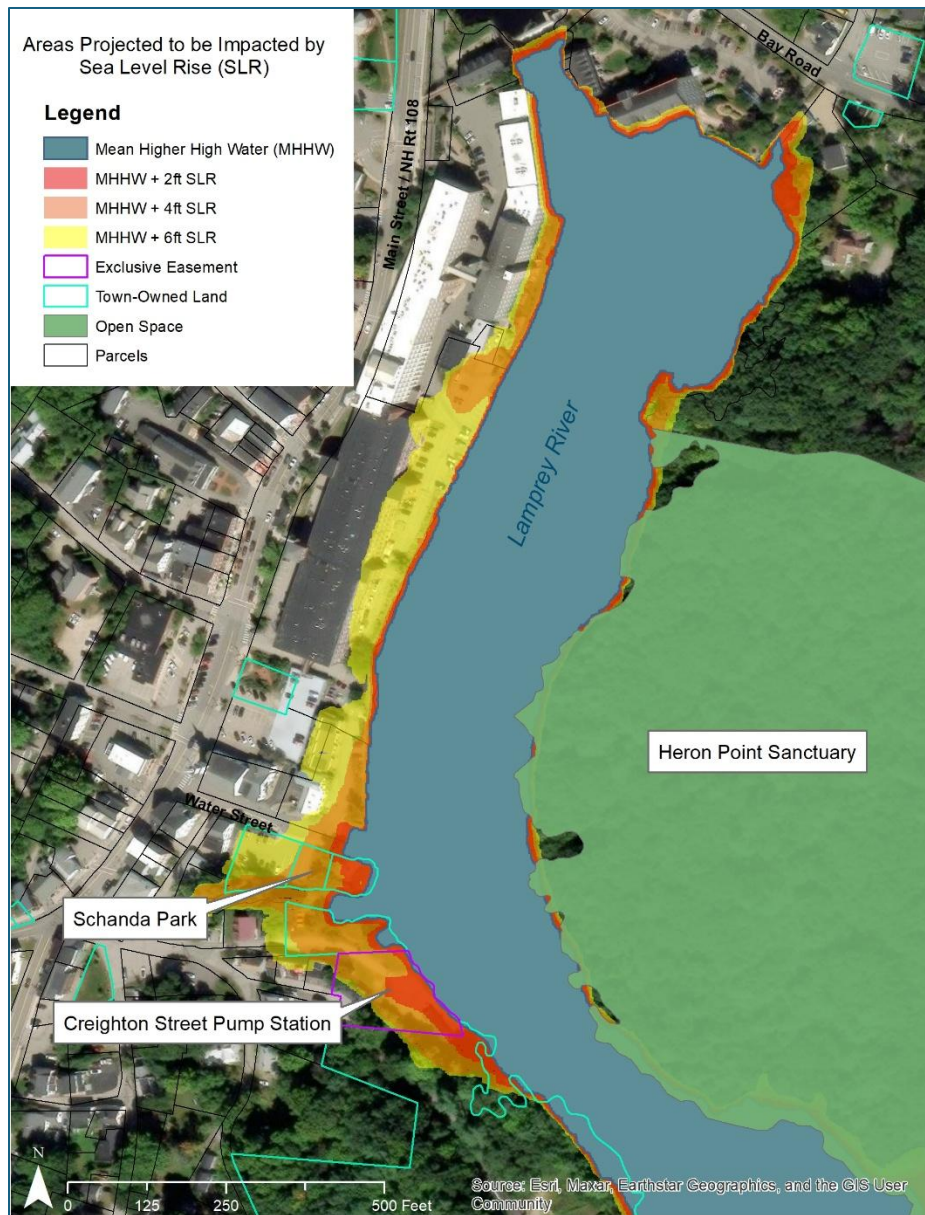
Sea level rise will impact connectivity and accessibility of the riverfront. A fundamental aspect of resilience in the Downtown Riverfront area is the ability to withstand, recover, or adapt to changes and stresses like flood events, sea level rise, and increased temperatures.

Portions of the Downtown Riverfront are located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Floodplain. Large portions of Schanda Park and the Creighton Street Pump Station, as well as private property along the shoreline, are vulnerable to the 1% annual change flood, meaning that each year, there is a 1% chance that these areas will flood. As Newmarket has seen in the past, flooding is not limited to those areas shown in official flood maps.



High tide flooding at The Riverwalk and Schanda Park, January 13, 2024 (Image: Peter Nelson)

When sea level rise is considered, the risk for flooding and inundation increases further. Although several miles from the New Hampshire seacoast, the Downtown Riverfront sits on the tidal portion of the Lamprey River and will be impacted by sea level rise. Sea level rise projections of two feet show river water reaching well into Schanda Park and the vicinity of the Creighton Street Pump Station, while scenarios of four and six feet of sea level rise extend over The Riverwalk and up Water Street, impacting several private properties, including the mill complexes and Penstock Way.



Map of areas projected to be impacted by sea level rise (EF | Design & Planning, LLC)

In 2017, a set of maps and statistical data about the potential impacts from sea-level rise and storm surge to infrastructure, critical facilities transportation systems, and natural resources, was produced for Newmarket through the Climate Risk In the Seacoast Vulnerability Assessment project.⁵⁰ Vulnerable critical infrastructure included the Creighton Street Pump Station, which is the primary influent pump station to the Town's Wastewater Treatment Plant. This site requires shoreline stabilization and general site improvements to increase resilience to flooding and sea level rise. Improvements to this site should account for sea level rise. The NH Coastal Flood Risk Summary, Part II: Guidance for Using Scientific Projections recommends the design of critical infrastructure with a design life through the year 2080 (approximately 55 years) should account for about four feet of sea-level rise.⁵¹

Coastal Flood Risk Summary, Part II: Guidance for Using Scientific Projections

[Coastal Flood Risk Summary, Part II: Guidance for Using Scientific Projections](#) includes a seven-step framework to guide decision makers in selecting appropriate coastal flood risk projections, assessing the impacts of those projections, and considering flexible and incremental actions to increase project resilience. The Guidance lays out the relative sea level rise and storm surge scenario to consider designing or planning for based on tolerance for flood risk and the project timeframe.

The elevated plaza for Schanda Park builds resiliency into the park design by allowing that portion of the park to be constructed above anticipated water levels. Climate-adaptive park space should be flexible and adjustable over time as conditions — such as access to the park or the viability of a living shoreline — change. The park should consider methods to manage stormwater and both advancing and receding and floodwaters. Any future boardwalks along the east or west side of the Lamprey River should be designed to accommodate sea level rise and storm surge.



The Trustees of Reservations concept plan for Boston Harbor urban waterfront park is an example of a flexible space designed to accommodate flooding or higher water levels (Source: The Boston Globe, November 22, 2020)

Adapting to sea level rise at Heron Point and the east side of the river may look different than the west. Measures to protect the shoreline from erosion, such as by encouraging visitors to stay on the

trail and off steep slopes, will be important. As water levels rise, there may also be an opportunity to expand the marsh land along portions of the shoreline.

Funding For Resilience

Enabling legislation allows municipalities to develop financing options for resilience. NH RSA 79-E:4-a enables communities to create a Coastal Resilience Incentive Zone (CRIZ) and grant tax relief to for implementing resilience measures such as elevation and freeboard renovations, construction of natural features, elevation of private driveways and sidewalks, and construction or enlargement of private culverts. The Town could also finance improvements through a tax increment financing district or a capital reserve fund or trust fund for the CRIZ in order to provide funding for projected municipal costs associated with projected sea level rise, storm surge, and extreme precipitation.

Under RSA 36:53-a, Strafford Regional Planning Commission can create a climate resilience cooperative agreement to form an authority to plan for an address sea-level rise, storm surge, and flooding from extreme precipitation. This authority can establish a coastal resilience fund that would be funded by contributions from participating parties or by bonds, to plan for and address current and future regional needs for projects such as, but not limited to, road projects, shared municipal facilities including wastewater treatment and wastewater systems, and other coastal mitigation and protection projects.

Resiliency Goals

1. Incorporate climate resilience into the planning and design of all infrastructure improvements and investments.
2. Improve the water quality of Moonlight Brook and the Lamprey River.
3. Enhance shoreline and aquatic habitat.
4. Educate the community about resilience.
5. Modify infrastructure at Moonlight Brook to improve hydrology.

Endnotes

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