

# Monadnock Region Parks and Play

## Municipal Guide to Creating Accessible Outdoor Active Recreation Spaces

Prepared by Southwest Region  
Planning Commission



SWRPC



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# Regional Planning Commissions Leading the Way



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Monadnock Region  
Parks and Play



**STRAFFORD**  
Regional Planning Commission



# What is the Municipal Guide?



Provides municipalities with planning recommendations for improving existing and developing new park and recreation spaces that promote:

- Economic and environmental benefits to Monadnock Region communities
- Community and social interactions
- Accessibility for all including people of all ages and abilities, lower income households, people of color, people with disabilities
- Healthy, active lifestyles
- Safety for users



# Integrating Local and Regional Planning with Public Health

Southwest New Hampshire is known for:

- ▶ Its abundance of places for children and residents of all ages and abilities to get outside, be active and enjoy nature
- ▶ A rich history of collaboration between the community planning and public health sectors

*With guidance from local and regional planners, the Healthy Monadnock Alliance has received national recognition for its achievements in creating healthy parks, supporting initiatives to make streets accessible and safe for all users, and supporting trails improvements throughout the region.*

# What's in the Guide?

Best practice recommendations, tools, resources, and relevant community examples for creating vibrant parks and play spaces:

- ▶ Inventory and needs assessment
- ▶ Community engagement
- ▶ Master plan recommendations
- ▶ Policy and regulatory guidelines
- ▶ Park design and programming recommendations
- ▶ Safe Routes to Play guidelines
- ▶ Financing and funding options
- ▶ Interactive outdoor recreation resource map



# What are Parks and Play Spaces?



Areas that promote outdoor active recreation and a connection to nature, including:

- Parks
- Playgrounds
- Trails
- Greenways
- Undeveloped open spaces
- Sports fields and courts
- Water amenities for swimming, canoeing, and kayaking

# What are the benefits of accessible and welcoming parks and play spaces?



- ▶ 18.3% increase in the number of people who use parks
- ▶ Economic benefits exceed cost for infrastructure interventions (median benefit to cost ratio of 3 to 1)
- ▶ Environmentally resilient and sustainable communities
- ▶ Advance diversity, equity and inclusion and challenging historical and systemic inequities
- ▶ Create a space for cross-sector partnerships with health, environmental, housing, and other partners for collective impact

# Community Example: Park Restoration

## The Restoration of a Community Treasure Franklin, NH



Odell Park sits on 12 acres in the heart of the city of Franklin and is surrounded on three sides by the Winnepesaukee River. In its heyday over a century ago, the park was a gathering place for Franklin residents. After years of disrepair, community residents, led by the Odell Park Centennial Committee, came together to restore the park to its former glory and give residents a vibrant community resource with opportunities for safe physical activity. Renovations included

purchasing security cameras, entry signage, “You Are Here” maps, no alcohol/drugs signage, and connector signs to make the park safer. Four exercise equipment stations were also purchased and installed for public use.

The Franklin Parks and Recreation Department reported that walking trail usage tripled soon after the renovations were completed. In addition, people can be seen using the exercise equipment, artists, and even children celebrating birthdays in the park that was once run down, unsafe, and plagued by vandalism.

In addition to the transformation of Odell Park, engaged community partners facilitated other parks and play spaces improvements, including renovations at two other parks and extensions of two rail trails that serve the region.

## Transformational Results:

- ✓ Walking trail usage tripled
- ✓ Vibrant space – people using exercise equipment, attraction to artists, children celebrating birthdays in a park that was once run down, unsafe, and plagued by vandalism
- ✓ Engaged community partners renovated 2 other parks and extended 2 rail trails that serve the region



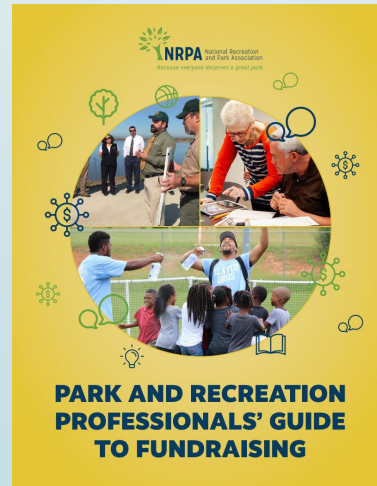


# Community Example: Safe Routes to Parks

## **Swanzey Complete Streets Transformation**

*Following the adoption of a Complete Streets policy in 2015, the Town of Swanzey secured multiple grants to implement a phased approach to improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety for citizens residing in the densely settled residential neighborhoods around Swanzey Center. These changes have made it safer for families and children to walk and bicycle to the Mt. Caesar hiking trails, as well as the Mt. Caesar Elementary School playground and Monadnock Regional Middle-High School sports fields. The Town's long-term goal is to create pedestrian access for those living, working, and attending school in Center Swanzey to the Ashuelot Rail Trail.*

# Featured Resources



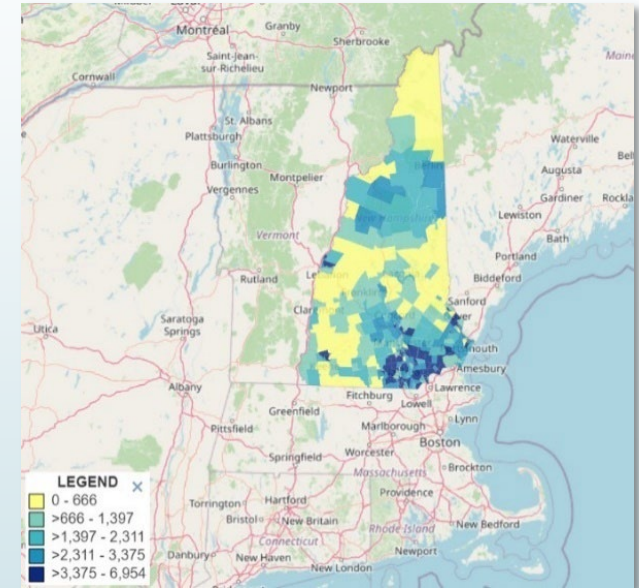
# Making the Case for Investment: Benchmarks and Metrics

Metrics to evaluate, plan, and promote parks and play spaces at system and neighborhood levels:

- Walking access
- Park proximity\*
- Land area
- Physical activity, visitation
- Frequency of visits
- Duration of time spent at specific facilities

\* Proximity to parks and play spaces with routes for walking, hiking, or cycling is a critical determinant in park access.

Over 75% of Keene residents live within a half-mile of a park or playground as compared to less than 10% in many rural communities in the region.



*Environmental Public Health Tracking  
Data Explorer*

# Outdoor Recreation Resource Map

[An interactive map for community members to locate access points to recreation sites in the Monadnock Region.](#)



# Where do we go from here?



- ▶ Partnership with Monadnock Outdoors
- ▶ Promote community awareness of existing outdoor programs and opportunities
- ▶ Monadnock Gear Library
- ▶ Improve outdoor resource map
  - ▶ Recruit volunteers to collect additional media on rec sites
  - ▶ Update web map features

