

Kelley Park Design Charrette

Bristol, NH

May 18th and 19th 2018



Bristol Kelley Park Design Charrette Acknowledgements

Thank you to the individuals who donated their time, energy, and expertise for this charrette, and to all the community members who shared their insights about Kelley Park and the surrounding areas.

The Plan NH Team

Charrette Team Lead

North Sturtevant
Principal
JSA Architects

Charrette Team

Robin LeBlanc
Executive Director
Plan NH

Sage Sluter
Landscape Designer
Greenman Pederson, Inc.

Jeff Hyland
Landscape Architect
Ironwood Design Group

Caroline Corriveau
Architectural Designer
Warrenstreet Architects

Andrew Cushing
NH Preservation Alliance

Nick Swedberg
Architect
S/L/A/M Collaborative

Geoffrey Sewake
Community and Economic Development
Field Specialist
UNH Cooperative Extension

Sarah Garstka
Executive Director
Seacoast Workforce Housing Coalition

Robert White
Landscape Architect
Greenman Pederson, Inc.

John Arnold
Attorney
Hinckley Allen

Doug Dowell
AARP Volunteer

Beth Wheeler
Healthy NH Foundation
HEAL NH



The Bristol Team

Without the support and participation of all of the following individuals, this charrette would not have been possible:

Christina Goodwin
Land-Use and Assessing
Kelley Park Committee

Dorcas Gordon
Kelley Park Committee

Leslie Dion
Tapply-Thompson Community Center
Kelley Park Committee

Liz Kelly
Bristol Town Planner

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- LinCross
- Homestead Restaurant
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- Henry Whipple House Bed and Breakfast
- Barnard Survey Associates, Inc.

Plan NH is grateful for the special support of these members:



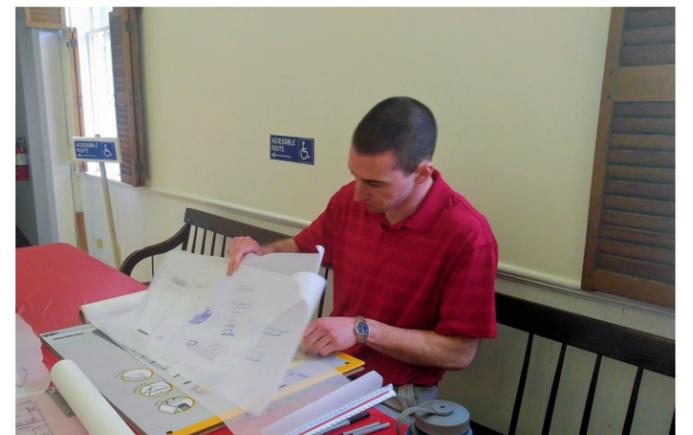
Who is Plan NH?

Plan New Hampshire, The Foundation for Shaping the Built Environment (Plan NH), is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed in 1989. Plan NH has a *vision* of a New Hampshire that is vibrant and healthy for its people, its economies and the environment. To achieve that vision, Plan NH's mission is to "foster excellence in planning, design and development of New Hampshire's built environment," because we believe that *what we build, where we build and how we build anything* has a significant impact on that vibrancy and health.

Plan NH *champions principles and ideas* that balance building projects, including anything built in the public realm, such as buildings, roads, bridges, memorials, public sculpture, with:

- the needs of people, including where they live, how they get about, what services are necessary, what they value
- maintaining the "sense of place" of our towns, cities and villages that make them unique, including preserving historic assets, open spaces, agriculture and farming
- protecting our air, water, flora and fauna

Among our signature programs is the *design charrette*, an exercise that brings professionals from our membership together with New Hampshire communities to explore design ideas, usually around a town center or other significant neighborhood. Through recommendations made, Plan NH can demonstrate the role and importance of the principles and ideas noted above in concrete, real examples.



Why did Plan NH come to Bristol?



In November 2017, the Town of Bristol submitted an application to Plan NH for a Community Design Charette. This was not the first time Bristol and Plan NH worked together, however. In 2008, Bristol hosted Plan NH for a *Community Design Charrette* focused on the town's downtown area.

The Town of Bristol requested Plan NH return, this time to examine Kelley Park—a 6.83 acre park owned by the Town and located adjacent to downtown. Kelley Park is currently used as the primary athletic fields for the Newfound Area School District and the Tapply Thompson Community Center, a local non-profit recreation department, and as a venue for multiple municipal and community events.



In the application, the Town of Bristol noted that they wish to build on the Town's "tremendous momentum" by developing a vision for how Kelley Park may be "improved upon and optimized to become an even more appealing and efficient recreational space". The park's proximity to downtown is an asset, but the connection between downtown and the park is something that has not been highlighted or leveraged in the past.

Plan NH met with the Town of Bristol in January 2018 and approved the application.



Plan NH Comes to Bristol, NH

May 18th and 19th, 2018

Plan NH charrettes take place over the course of two days.

Day One

On the first day, the Plan NH team gathered at the Old Town Hall. Led by Dorcas Gordon of the Kelley Park Committee, the team spent the morning touring the park and the surrounding area. After lunch, the team met with local leaders in Bristol to gather input about the park and the Town of Bristol, and conducted two community listening sessions with the objective of learning as much as possible about Kelley Park and discovering the community's vision for the area.

Day Two

On the following day, the Plan NH team regrouped to discuss what they saw and heard and began to formulate some recommendations to help the Town of Bristol take advantage of the park's potential. The team worked through the morning and into the early afternoon, studying the maps and considering the observations made during the site walk and the themes that emerged during the listening sessions. Plan NH invited the public back to the Old Town Hall for the big reveal presentation on Saturday afternoon.



The charrette team explores Kelley Park and the surrounding area.



The charrette team is joined by members of the public for a listening session.



Charrette team members work on drafting recommendations.

What is a charrette?

Simply stated, a charrette is a brief, intense, brainstorming session in which ideas are brought together for the purpose of defining potential planning recommendations and possible design solutions for an identified need. For Plan NH, this is usually related to a town center or other significant neighborhood in a community. Charrettes are typically short. Plan NH's community design charrettes take place over the course of two days: 8 hours on a Friday for listening and then another 8 hours the next day for brainstorming, crafting recommended solutions, and presenting thoughts to the community.

The process engages planning and design professionals in direct dialog and conversation with local residents to collect information needed in order to develop good and relevant recommendations about how to address a particular challenge. Plan NH sees this part of the process as a period of *discovery*: discovering who the community is, what they value, what they really want. This community input is essential and critical to the value of the outcomes.

The results of a Plan NH charrette are general and overarching planning and design *recommendations*, rather than specific directions. Plan NH does not *dictate*, but *suggests*. Most often, the outcome of a Plan NH charrette is described as a "vision": an expression of how things *might be*, based on what the team saw and heard and learned.

char·rette

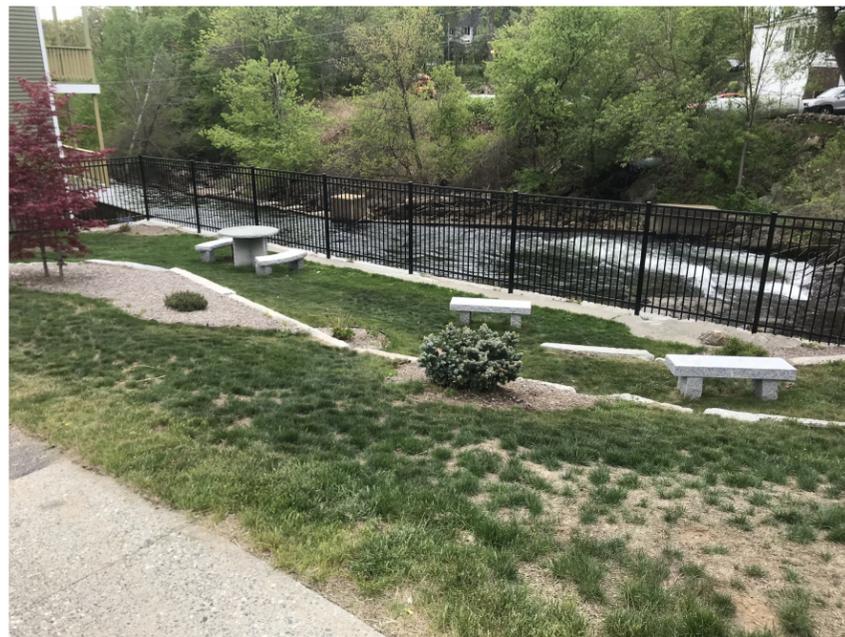
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noun NORTH AMERICAN

a meeting in which all stakeholders in a project attempt to resolve conflicts and map solutions.

Charrettes blend the broad experience of design professionals with local citizens' detailed knowledge of their community to produce a plan of action that addresses issues of particular concern. The charrette provides an overall framework within which more detailed solutions and plans can be developed.

Site Tour Observations



What the Plan NH Charrette Team Saw...

- Kelley Park is not visible from the downtown, and there is very little signage.
- The banks from North Main Street to park are very steep and edges are undefined
- The one-way section of North Main Street is part of somewhat dangerous traffic pattern and may present a challenge.
- The park is a flat and open field, utilized mostly as sports field
- The stump is a beautiful piece of the park
- The location of the park is an asset. The park is in close proximity to the elementary school, middle school, community center, downtown area, public library, restaurants, coffee shops, and breweries, and the Post Office
- The rail trail presents an opportunity to create a walking path that connects the park with other amenities, including those listed above.
- The level of cooperation between the schools, community center, and town is an asset—one that is unique to Bristol.



What Bristol Told Plan NH

What The City Leaders Told Plan NH

How is Kelley Park used?

- The park is used by the schools for recess, physical education, athletic department, and now the middle school graduation ceremony.
- The park is very busy after school.
- The summer concert series can bring anywhere from 60 to 400 people to the park.
- Adults use the park for pickle ball and adult softball.
- The basketball court is used by teens, but is not maintained.

What do you want to see?

- A guard or edge of some sort that would prevent vehicles from driving down the slope into the park.
- Stairs and ramp access into the park from North Main Street.
- Better seating for spectators
- Traffic calming on North Main Street
- Opportunities for unstructured activity for older children and teens
- Wayfinding from downtown to park
- Fitness stations in park
- Second tennis court
- Use of natural elements, for example building a slide into the hill
- Highlight the beautiful stump
- Move the concessions, bathrooms, and concert stage to a more central location in park
- Arrange stage so that speakers are turned away from abutting homes
- Increased lighting for evening and night use of park
- Water activities, like a splash pad
- Ice skating rink
- Nicer looking perimeter of park
- Enclosure for the basketball court
- Walking path around perimeter of park

What else do we need to know?

- The park closes at 9 PM, but this rule is not enforced as long as everyone behaves
- Safety concerns are few, but there are concerns about cars driving into the park down the slope on North Main Street.
- North Main Street was converted to a one-way street within the last few years for safety reasons
- Busses and cars both use North Main Street for school pick up and drop off, which caus-

es the narrow street to be clogged. The middle school asks parents to pick up and drop off at Lake Street

- Park users park in the empty lot across North Main Street that used to belong to the church.
- There is senior housing nearby, but the park is not used by seniors.
- There is a lack of seating and shade in the park.
- There is very little vandalism at the park.
- The park is used by surrounding towns and there is a huge demand for field space.
- Horseshoe pits are almost never used.
- The park is a draw for those living in abutting homes. The park's neighbors move to or stay in the area because of the park.
- The school system and community work collaboratively.



What Bristol Residents Told Plan NH

Two public listening sessions were held during the afternoon and evening of Friday, May 18th. The sessions served as an opportunity for the public to share their comments and ideas about the park and the surrounding areas. Plan NH's process encouraged participation and input from *everyone* in the room.



Why is Kelley Park Important to Bristol residents?

- Kelley Park provides a wide array of **structured and unstructured opportunities for school-aged children and teens**. Bristol residents noted the fields are nearly always in use.
- To a lesser extent, the park is **also a spot for adults**, who visit the park to play pickle ball and softball. The many events held in the park, such as the live music, are a draw for residents.
- Kelley Park's **central location makes it the epicenter of town**. The park is in close proximity to the schools, the community center, Newfound Lake, the public library, and Bristol's downtown. The park's location makes it a great gathering place.

What do you want to see at Kelley Park?

- Wayfinding signage to the park from the downtown
- Greater visibility, so the park can be seen from the downtown
- Improved connectedness to the other amenities in Bristol: Mill Stream Park, the lake, and the downtown area
- Walking paths through park
- Bicycle racks in the park and in town
- Opportunities for people of all ages and abilities
- Equipment for toddlers
- Opportunities for unstructured activities for teens
- Exercise stations and places for group exercise
- Accessible access into the park for those with disabilities and mobility issues
- Amenities that make the park welcoming to all: water fountains, trees, shady areas, places to sit
- Art, culture, and charm
- Year-round recreational activities: snow shoeing, cross country skiing, ice skating rink, and plowed walking paths
- Public bathrooms



What else does Plan NH need to know?

- The park lacks character and depth
- Aside from large events, Kelley Park is used primarily as a sports field—not a community gathering space
- The town population triples in the summer
- Concerts can draw up to 400 people to the park
- The schools, town, and community center are happy to work collaboratively and reincorporate school-owned property, like the basketball court, back into the park



Placemaking

The Plan NH recommendations sought to make Kelley Park...

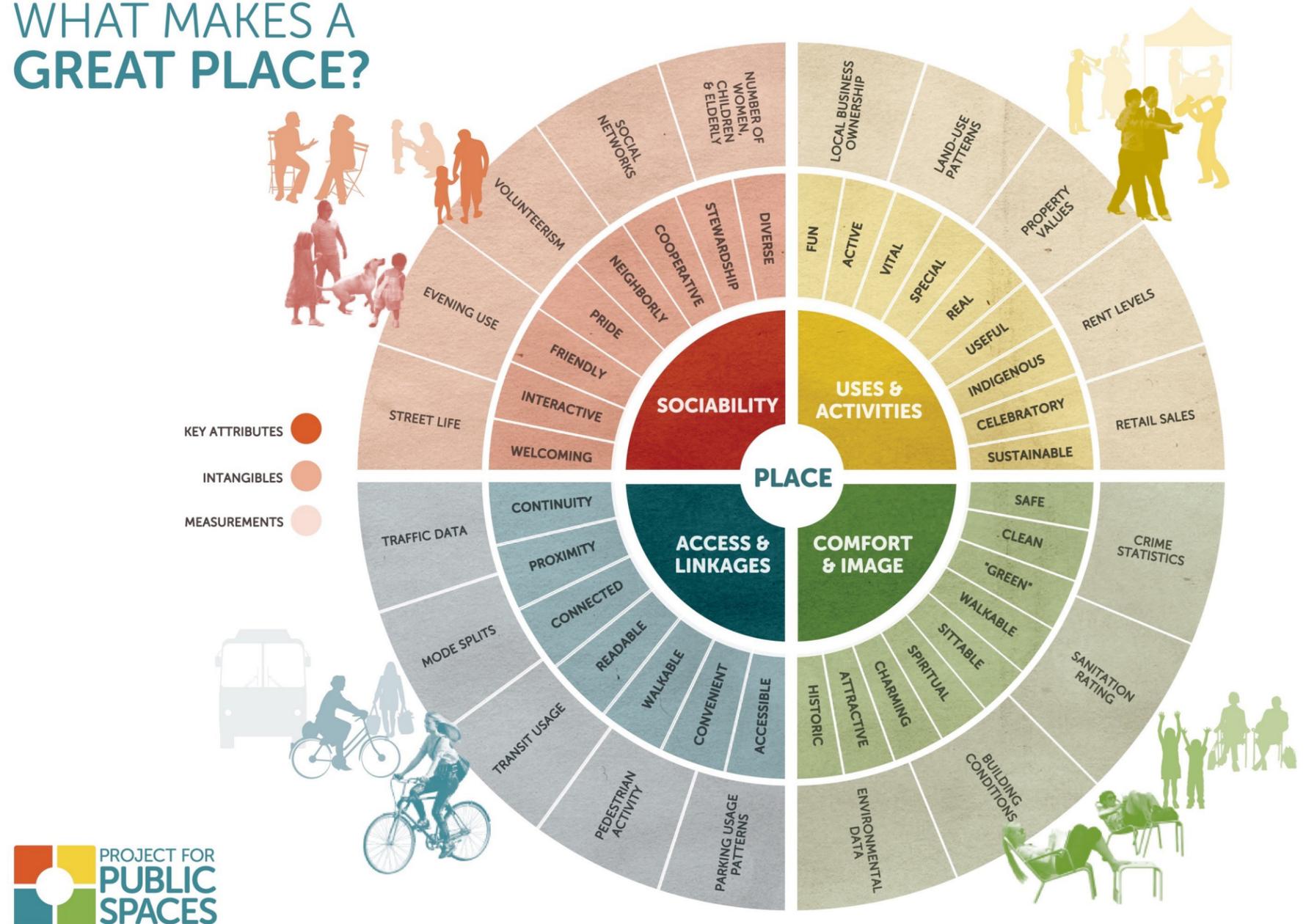
- Social
- Comfortable
- Charming and beautiful
- Accessible
- Connected

The Plan NH team consider what makes a place great when crafting our recommendations.

The image on the right from the *Project for Public Spaces* outlines what makes a great place.



WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



Recommendation Summary

Recommendation	Rationale and Connection to Placemaking
1. Explore ways to celebrate Bristol's 200th year in a way that is fun and meaningful for the community (page 11)	Opportunity to use the park in a way that is fun and social and brings all members of the community together to celebrate their town's history. This recommendation satisfies three of the four key parts of placemaking: sociability, uses and activities, and comfort and image.
2. Add art to Kelley Park by taking advantage of the backsides of buildings that abut the park (page 11)	Improve the image of Kelley Park and enhance the beauty and charm of the park. Further, art will provide a reason to gather at the park. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: comfort and image, and sociability.
3. Decorate downtown crosswalks (page 11)	Celebrate the history of the town, while improving wayfinding in a unique way. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
4. Create a new "main entrance" to the park on Lake Street (page 12, 14)	Improve the flow of traffic for park users and increases safety on North Main Street by redirecting traffic. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
5. Add wayfinding signage downtown (page 12)	Help pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers find the park and make increase use for walkers and bicyclists. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages., and uses and activities.
6. Move the large Kelley Park sign from inside the park to a more central, downtown location (page 12)	Help pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers find the park and improve the park's image downtown. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
7. Create walking paths that wander through and around the park and plant trees alongside the new paths (page 13)	Create opportunities for more leisurely park use and shady spots for sitting areas and alternative activities. Satisfies all four of the key parts of placemaking: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image.
8. Add a sidewalk to the park side of North Main Street (page 14)	Give North Main Street a defined edge and improves the pedestrian experience. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
9. Change angled parking on North Main Street to parallel parking (page 14)	Create space on North Main Street for a bicycle path and improves the flow of traffic on this section of the road. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
10. Add a gateway at the park entrance on North Main Street near current playground and alter slope to create more accessible path to the park (page 14)	Create a more accessible and easier to locate entrance to the park. Satisfies two of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages, and comfort and image.
11. Move tennis courts to the basketball court area to make room for a central pavilion (page 15, 17)	New central pavilion will provide an enhanced gathering space for events, such as concerts and better provide amenities, such as restrooms and food and beverage, to park users. Satisfies all four of the key parts of placemaking: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image.
12. Communicate with lot owners to make parking available for park users and make drivers aware of options using signage (page 18)	Create additional parking for park users and encourage drivers to park in available lots and walk to park. Satisfies one of the four key parts of placemaking: access and linkages.
13. Extend the bicycle path on North Main Street and better utilize the rail trail (page 19)	Create additional opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists in and around park and take advantage of proximity to other amenities in Bristol. Satisfies all four of the key parts of placemaking: sociability, uses and activities, access and linkages, and comfort and image.

The Bristol Brand and Adding a Little Charm

Based on the feedback gathered during the public listening sessions, the Plan NH team recommends introducing art into the park and the area surrounding Kelley Park.

Recommendations:

- Look at other communities for examples about how Bristol can celebrate the town's 200th year in a fun way that will invite all members of the community to gather at the park.
- Take advantage of the backsides of buildings abutting the park on Lake Street by using this wall space to paint murals.
- Illustrate Bristol's history and landmarks, while simultaneously drawing pedestrians to the park by decorating pedestrian crosswalks downtown in a creative way.

The recommendations aim to make the park a more social gathering place and make finding Kelley Park easier, safer, and more interesting.



The backside of this building is in the park. Take advantage of the blank space and paint a mural on the empty wall.



Find a fun way to celebrate Bristol's 200th year together and do so in a way that highlights Kelley Park.

Left, this town took children's hand prints and created this interesting piece of art. Below, community members in this town stood on the field and took aerial pictures.



Creative crosswalks are not just fun to look at, they also calm traffic and draw pedestrians to town. Liven up the crosswalks with cardigans, which were invented in Bristol, or water in honor of Newfound Lake. Above, this zipper is a real life example from another town.



Wayfinding, Visibility, and Creating a Presence

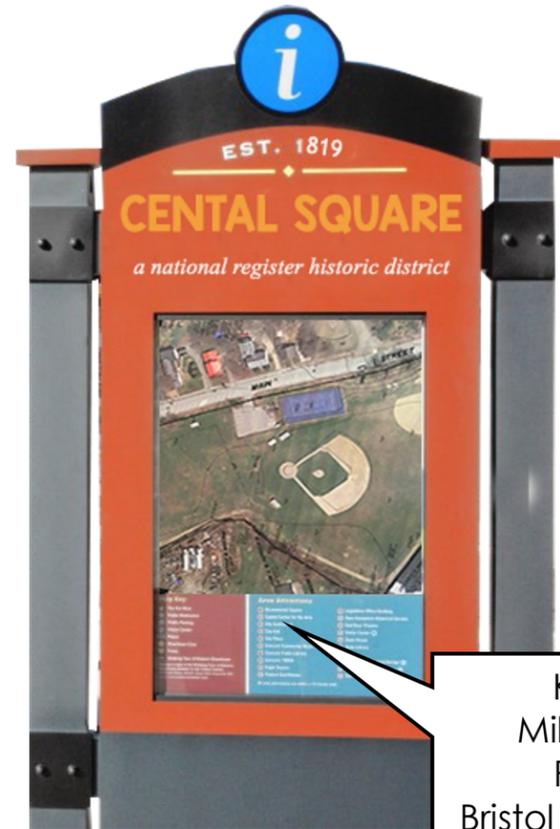


During the guided tour, the Plan NH charrette team noticed that Kelley Park is nearly invisible from downtown. The lack of presence and need for wayfinding came up again and again during the three listening sessions.

The Plan NH charrette team recommended:

- Give the park a presence on Lake Street by creating a new “main entrance” at the Middle School. This will create a safer and less congested traffic pattern for North Main Street and make the park easier to find from the downtown area.
- Use wayfinding signage in multiple places downtown to make finding Kelley Park easier for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.
- Consider moving the large, beautiful Kelley Park sign from the park to an alternate location downtown.
- Use wayfinding signs to make park users more aware of the many parking options near Kelley Park. *(More on parking on page 16.)*

The only sign for Kelley Park downtown is this little street sign....



Kelley Park
Millstream Park
Profile Falls
Bristol Branch Rail Trail

These recommendations aim to make Kelley Park easier to find and more connected to other amenities in the Town of Bristol.



The Big Idea — “Rooms”



Create walking paths and plant trees around and through park to divide the large open space into “rooms”. The walking paths illustrated in the rendering above (labeled “A”) connect the North Main Street and Lake Street entrances and continue both around the perimeter of the park and through the park, crossing in front of the new pavilion (page 17). The trees will create shady areas perfect for picnic tables, benches, exercise stations, and playground equipment. This will make the park more accessible and comfortable for park users young and old, and enhance the park’s natural beauty.

Lake Street Entrance



The Plan NH Charrette Team recommends creating a new “main” entrance into the park for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists alike on Lake Street.

The creation of a Lake Street entrance will:

- Create a safer traffic pattern on North Main Street for the schools buses and residents by rerouting park users to the Lake Street side of the park.
- Make the park more visible from Bristol’s downtown area.
- Improve access to parking available at the Middle School for drivers.

Additional recommendations and considerations (illustrated to the left):

1. The main entrance to the Middle School on Lake Street, which would be used by park users. Please keep in mind, the park is most active outside of school hours.
2. Addition of a speed table to calm vehicle traffic in Middle School parking lot.
3. Move basketball court to lower level.
4. Move tennis and pickle ball courts to area where the basketball court is currently located.
5. Add foot bridges for crossing over the storm water detention area, which is ordinarily dry, as part of the walking path illustrated on page 13. Foot bridges will be both useful and beautiful for park users.



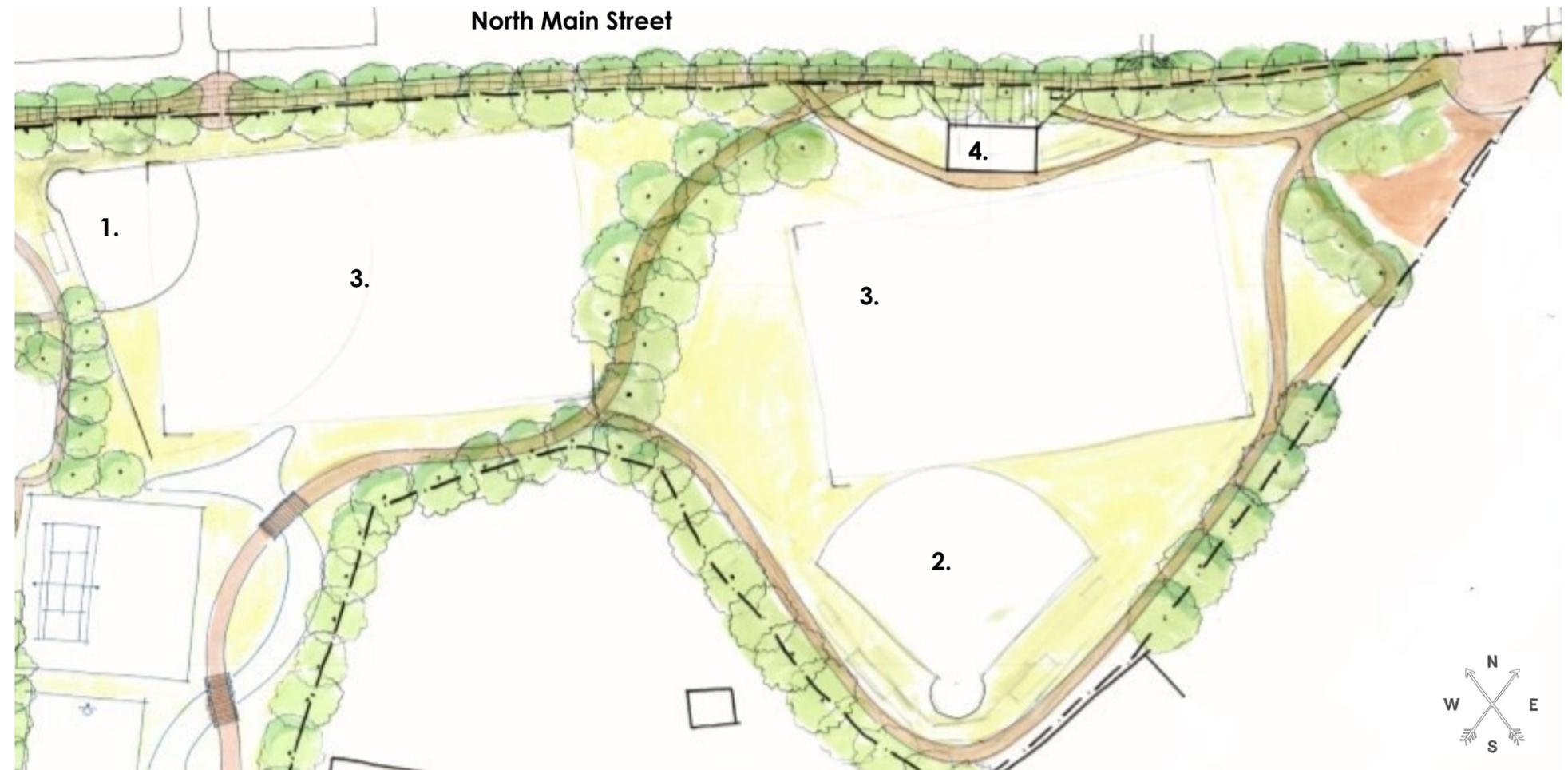
Athletic Fields

When drafting recommendations, the Plan NH Charrette Team was sensitive to the fact that Kelley Park serves the schools and the greater community as the primary athletic fields.

The Charrette Team recommends moving the baseball field across the field, so that Homeplate faces North Main Street. This change makes room for the pavilion and leaves plenty of space for two additional fields for soccer and field hockey. In regard to T Ball, the Charrette Team recommends, since T Ball is portable, the team set up wherever there is space, being sure to rotate around the park preventing isolated wear-and-tear to any one particular area.

Placement of athletic fields:

1. Softball field
2. New baseball field
3. Soccer and field hockey fields
4. New pavilion (page 17)



North Main Street

North Main Edge Issues



North Main Street currently presents many challenges to the Town of Bristol: the narrow one-way street is unsafe and traffic is often congested, and the steep slope makes accessing the park on this side difficult.

Recommendations:

- Create a gateway at the park entrance on North Main Street (in addition to the recommended Lake Street entrance) near the current playground to create a more attractive "entrance" and alter slope to create a more accessible and comfortable route from the street to the park.
- Add a sidewalk to the park side of North Main Street to give the street a defined edge, create a safer experience for pedestrians, and address the concern of vehicles driving into the park.
- Switch the angled parking to parallel to create space for pedestrian amenities and a bicycle path and address the concern of vehicles driving into the park.



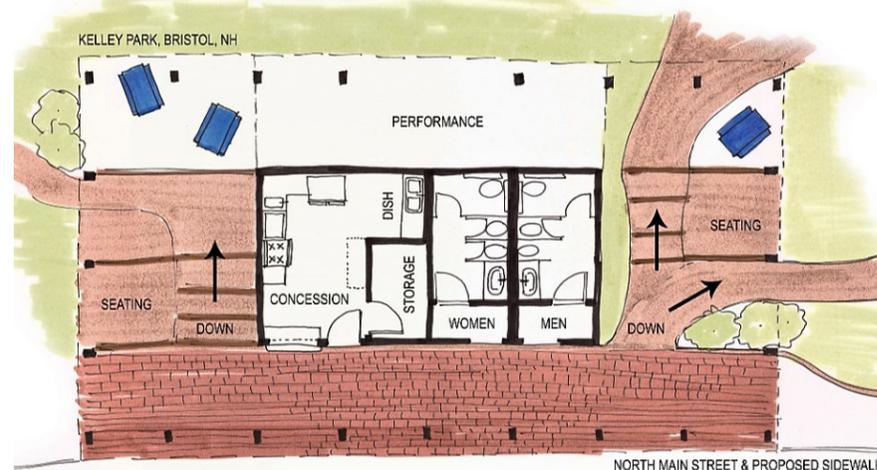
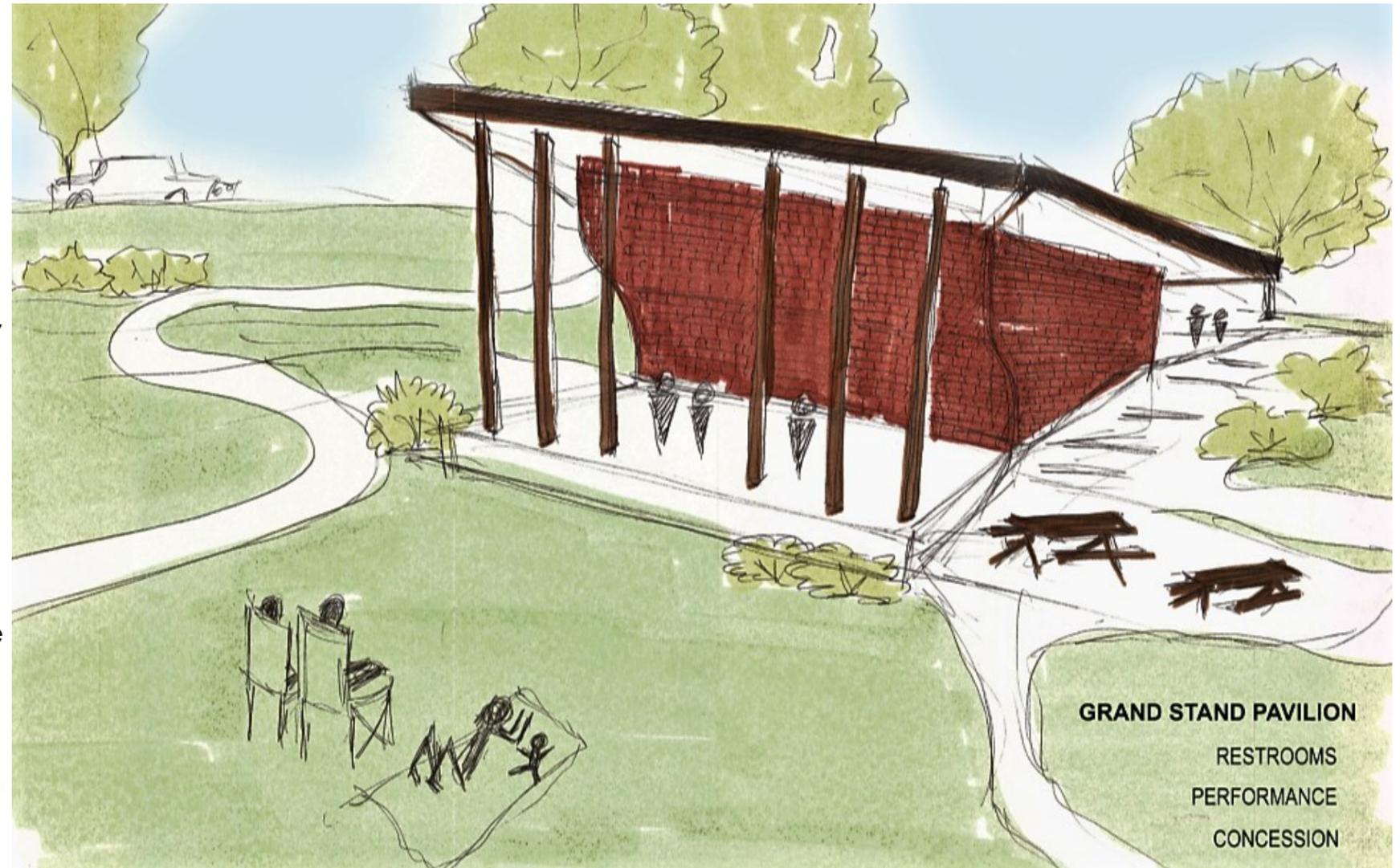
These recommendations aim to make accessing the park from North Main Street easier, more accessible, safer, and more comfortable for all.

The Central Pavilion

Recommendations:

- Move tennis court adjacent to basketball court and move baseball field across park to create space for a pavilion centrally located in the park on the North Main Street edge.
- The elevated pavilion takes advantage of the sloped hill on North Main Street and the proposed sidewalk leads pedestrians directly to the new concession stand, public restrooms, and stairs down to the park.
- The lower level of the pavilion can be used as storage, while the side facing the park will provide stage space for performers.

This recommendation aims to create an enhanced gathering space for large park events, such as concerts, and better provide access to amenities, such as restrooms and food and beverage. The central pavilion will increase the uses and activities, increase opportunities to socialize, and create a comfortable, beautiful place to enjoy the park.



The “P” Word (Parking)



Parking—the “P” word—comes up during most, if not all, charrettes, so the charrette team was not surprised to hear Bristol residents worry about having adequate parking.

The Plan NH team looked first at the total number of parking spaces within a reasonable walk (about five minutes) of the park, not including the middle school, which provides significant parking for the park outside of school hours.

Given that the park's busiest times don't coincide with school hours, the adjacent schools provide adequate parking for park users. The Plan NH charrette team suspects the parking problem in Bristol may be one of awareness.

While many of these lots are not public, we recommend the town further explore arrangements directly with owners of the above lots to provide adequate parking for the park. Once arrangements are made, signage is needed to ensure driver's are well-informed of their options for parking.

Ensuring adequate parking is available will increase accessibility to park and using lots further away, but within walking distance of the park, will increase pedestrian traffic in downtown and around the park.

Recommendations:

- Work directly with nearby lot owners to ensure underutilized lots can be used for park use.
- Use wayfinding signage to make drivers aware of the many options for parking near the park and take advantage of underutilized parking lots.



Approximate number of parking spaces around Kelley Park

- Library 29 spaces
- Post Office 23 spaces
- Elementary School 62 spaces
- Family Practice Lot 27 spaces
- TD Bank Municipal Lot 18 spaces
- Central Square Area 30+ spaces
- Corner lot on North Main Street 20 spaces
- B.H.O.P. 30 spaces
- Former liquor store 38 spaces

Total: 277+

Connectedness—The Rail Trail

Given the proximity of Kelley Park to a variety of amenities, including downtown, the rail trail and other park areas, the public library, the post office, and more, the charrette team developed recommendations that will help the Town of Bristol better connect these amenities.

The charrette team recommended Bristol extend the current bicycle path into town by utilizing North Main Street, which offers a moderate grade and low traffic, and the leg between the rail trail and the center of town along Lake Street as a possible loop.

The rail trail and bicycle path could also be improved with wayfinding signage and pavement markings to help users find their way.

This recommendation aims to make the park better connected to other amenities, increase sociability and comfort, and enhance uses for cyclists, walkers, joggers, and more.



Concluding Thoughts

What the Plan NH team saw and heard during their stay in Bristol is a cooperative community with dedicated leadership and a beautiful outdoor space that functions mainly for structured athletics and unstructured play, but desperately wants to be a community park. Kelley Park's location has made it the epicenter for Bristol residents. The park is in close proximity to the elementary and middle schools, downtown businesses, restaurants, coffee shops, and brew pubs, Newfound Lake, the rail trail, the Community Center, the public library, and various other Bristol amenities. However, the park's current design is as a sports field first and not a community gathering spot. Luckily, the collaborative relationship between the school system, the community, and the town's leaders gave the Plan NH team a lot of hope. The recommendations in this book aim to make the park more social, comfortable, beautiful, accessible, and better connected space for all in the Bristol community.



Thank you for letting Plan NH be part of your community!



Resources

NH Recreation and Park Association

<https://www.nhrpa.com/>

NH Division of Parks and Recreation

<https://www.nhstateparks.org>

Recreational Trails Program through the Bureau of Trails

<https://www.nhstateparks.org/about-us/Trails/grants/recreational-trails-program.aspx>

NH Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

<http://dnrc.nh.gov/>

HEAL NH (Healthy Eating, Active Living)

<https://healnh.org/>

Project for Public Spaces

www.pps.org

Complete Parks Playbook

ChangeLab Solutions

<http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/complete-parks>

The Field Guide For Parks and Creative Placemaking

The Trust for Public Land and The City Parks Alliance

<https://www.tpl.org/field-guide-creative-placemaking-and-parks>

Planning for Play: A Parks and Playgrounds Guidebook for New Hampshire

HNH Foundation and the NRPC

<http://www.nashuarpc.org/hot-projects/parksplaygrounds/>

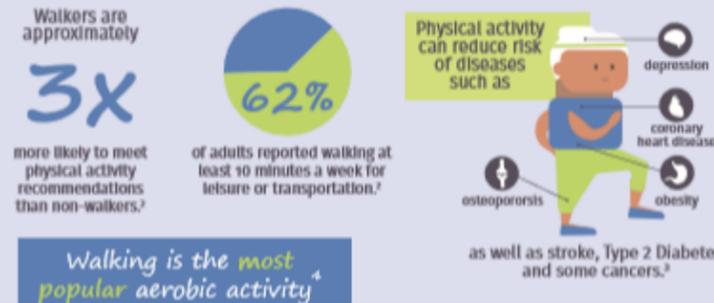
Safe Routes to Parks Action Framework

National Recreation and Parks Association

<https://www.nrpa.org/Safe-Routes-To-Parks/>

Parks and recreation agencies are creating
Safe Routes to Parks
to facilitate safe access to parks for all people¹

Walking Offers Big Benefits



Parks Promote Walking

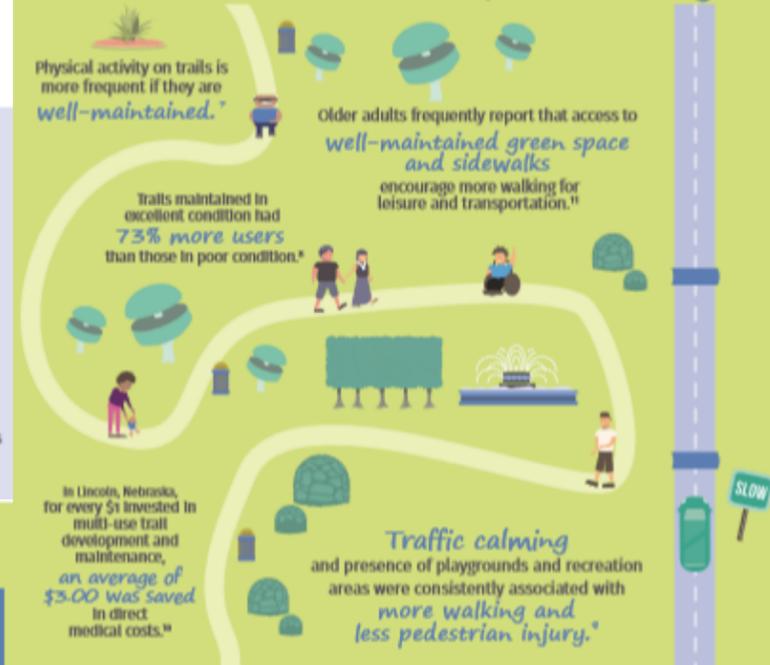


Five Essential Elements to Safe Routes to Parks

When people can safely walk to parks, it provides more opportunity for physical activity and greater access to open space.

- Safety**: Safety elements (e.g., lighting, traffic) must be included for pedestrian routes.
- Convenience**: Walking routes to parks should be no longer than a 10-minute walk.
- Access & Design**: Proper design, signage, ADA compliance, and multiple entry points benefit all users.
- Conditions**: Sidewalks and trails should be inviting, comfortable, and safe for all users.
- The Park**: Facilities, amenities and programs at the park should reflect the needs of the community.

Safe Routes Get People Walking



Addressing Walkability in Your Community

- Assess Park Usage**: Conduct observation studies or local needs assessments to determine if residents are using the park.
- Conduct a Walkability Audit**: Identify walking routes that are well-maintained and those that require improvement.
- Engage the Community**: Gather feedback from residents on what improvements are needed for them to feel safe walking to parks.

Safe Routes to Parks is a vital component in creating more walkable communities and a sustainable future.

www.nrpa.org/Walking

National Recreation and Park Association
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