



Due to COVID-2019 State of Emergency, the City Council will be holding its meetings remotely using the web-based program, Zoom. City Councilors will be participating in this meeting remotely. Members of the public will be able to assess this public meeting through a variety of options, described below. If you encounter any issues accessing this meeting, please call 603-757-0622 during the meeting. To view the City Council meeting, please navigate to www.zoom.us and enter the Meeting ID# 881 6823 0749. To listen via telephone call 877-853-5257 and enter the Meeting ID # 881 6823 0749.

City of Keene

New Hampshire

**MUNICIPAL SERVICES,
FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE
COMMITTEE
AGENDA
Council Chambers B
September 23, 2020
5:30 PM**

Janis O. Manwaring, Chair
Michael Giacomo, Vice Chair
Randy L. Filiault
Bettina A. Chadbourne
Robert C. Williams

1. Ashuelot River Park - Climate Resilient Master Plan - Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director
2. REPORT OUT: Katie Schwerin – Proposal for Permanent Public Art Installation – Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

MORE TIME ITEMS:

- A. Councilor Philip Jones – Maintenance of the Wilson Pond Dam on Arch Street and Communication from Robert Malay/Keene School District – Maintenance of the Wilson Pond Dam

Non Public Session
Adjournment



September 9, 2020

TO: Municipal Services, Facilities and Infrastructure Committee

FROM: Andy Bohannon, Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

THROUGH: Elizabeth A. Dragon, City Manager

ITEM: 1.

SUBJECT: Ashuelot River Park - Climate Resilient Master Plan - Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept as Informational.

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

Powerpoint

BACKGROUND:

In the early spring of 2020, the Ashuelot River Park Advisory Board hired the Conway School of Landscape Design to embark on creating a new master plan for the park. The primary focus of the project was to assess the ecological resilience of the arboretum and the former Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Lab. This process — like all things—was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the semester continued and the project went to an online format. This process certainly provided limited public engagement for the two public meetings. However, the meetings received limited engagement from the public, but the two main groups overseeing park the Advisory Board and the Friends of Ashuelot River Park participated with the students to provide positive feedback and challenge the thought process. Additionally, an online survey that received 75 responses provided direction for the project.

The primary focus areas for the project included:

- Conducting an ecological analysis to identify ecosystem services provided by the park and the resilience of the park impacts to the impacts of climate change;
- Identifying educational opportunities within the park;
- Assessing the effectiveness of current park maintenance;
- Taking inventory of plant beds within the arboretum;
- Recommending plant palettes that increase native vegetation and biodiversity.

And additional 3 secondary focus areas included:

- Increasing the diversity of seating within the park;
- Proposing an invasive species management plan;
- Exploring options for replacing the existing composting toilet.

The project focused on four main locations of the park:

- Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Lab (RMOLL)
- North Arboretum – pedestrian bridge north to the Jonathan Daniels Trail
- Southwest Arboretum – Starbucks side entrance to West Street dam
- Main Arboretum – West Street entrance, Mascoma Bank entrance, gazebo area and main lawn

Each section of the park received extensive detail and costs associated with the design elements. The RMOLL primarily focused on reestablishing this area as a useful asset to the current park. Originally when the park first opened in 1996, the City collaborated with Antioch University and the Keene School District to provide outdoor educational programming. With the end of the program, the area became and after thought; now the area is brush-hogged once a year to keep site lines open and homeless population from creating encampments within the park.

Through the survey and design, the students explored the social context of the park's relation to Keene's homeless concerns. The park is a go between the large encampment behind Hannaford's Plaza and the various services provided in the downtown area. The park provides shade and cooler temperatures in what would otherwise be known as a heat island with the great amount of impervious covers that surround the park. The RMOLL provides the greatest relief from the heat in the summer months and provides an opportunity to create more meaningful learning or recreational opportunities than what currently exist.

The northern section off the arboretum stood out as a way to improve sightlines and decrease and remove the invasive species problem to improve bank stabilization along the Ashuelot River.

The southwest section of the arboretum created opportunities for increased accessibility to the park, views of the river, and to improve the drainage issues that occur in the entrance area.

The main area of the arboretum provided increased areas to increase various shade areas, and enhance the garden beds through the initiative of the Friends group. It also increased vegetation without decreasing sightlines on West Street to create a landscape border that helps clearly define the park. Additionally, the plan suggests replacing the gazebo with another like shade covering, and creating a path with improved accessibility from the parking area to the viewing area of the dam and bridge.

Finally, the designs incorporated the project goals and provided the Advisory Board opportunities for considerable changes to create a more climate resilient park that will meet the future needs of the City.



Photo: Councilor Steve Hooper

City of Keene

Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resiliency Master Plan



Parks and Recreation Mission

- ▶ To provide the citizens of Keene with quality community services and amenities including a park and cemetery system, balanced environmental stewardship and diverse programming to inspire and support active lifestyles for all ages throughout the life span.



Parks & Recreation Vision

- ▶ Our community works together to provide for life-long opportunities for active living and wise stewardship of natural resources. Keene has beautiful, well-maintained parks and cemeteries, a citizenry that incorporates physical activity into their daily lives, and a connected system of open space, parks and trails.



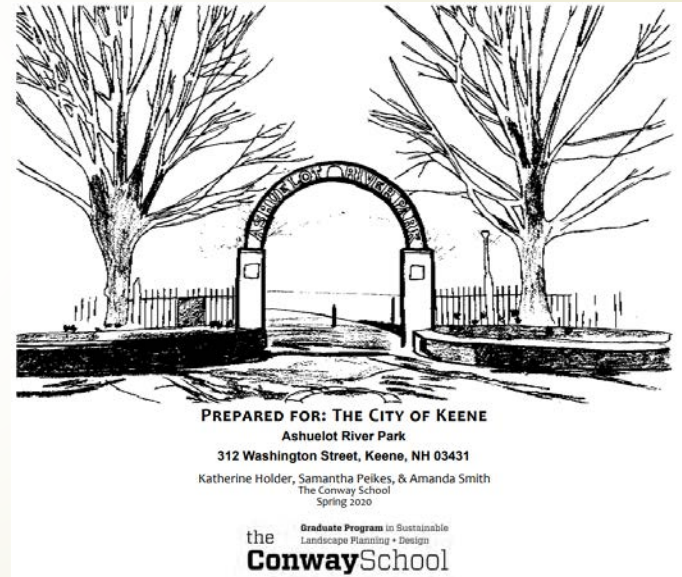
Ashuelot River Park Advisory Boards Purpose

- ▶ This Committee was created to promote, enhance and maintain the Ashuelot River Park for its present and future use, enjoyment and educational benefit for all residents of the City of Keene.



Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

- ▶ Primary Goals
- ▶ Conducting an ecological analysis to identify ecosystem services provided by the park and the resilience of the park impacts to the impacts of climate change;
- ▶ Identifying educational opportunities within the park;
- ▶ Assessing the effectiveness of current park maintenance;
- ▶ Taking inventory of plant beds within the arboretum;
- ▶ Recommending plant palettes that increase native vegetation and biodiversity.



Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

- ▶ Secondary Goals
- ▶ Increasing the diversity of seating within the park;
- ▶ Proposing an invasive species management plan;
- ▶ Exploring options for replacing the existing composting toilet.



The main pillars to achieve a resilient park include fostering community engagement and social equity, improving the ecological services already provided by the park, and planning for climate change.

Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

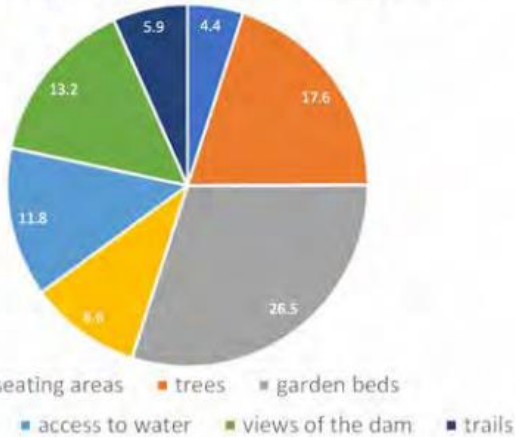
- RESILIENCE
- Resilience refers to the ability of a system to bounce back from or withstand disturbance, such as a natural disaster or development that interferes with wildlife habitat and natural processes.



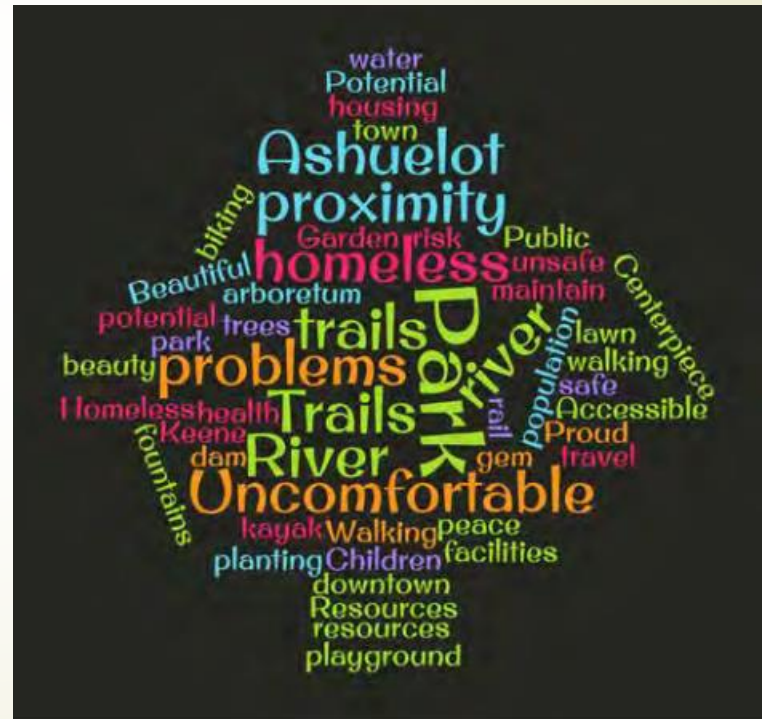
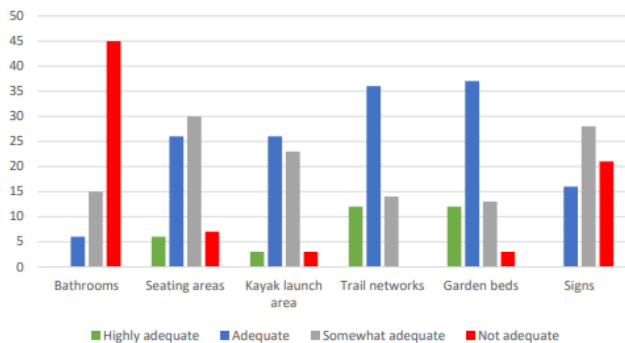
There are multiple entry points adjacent to the accessible parking area.

Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

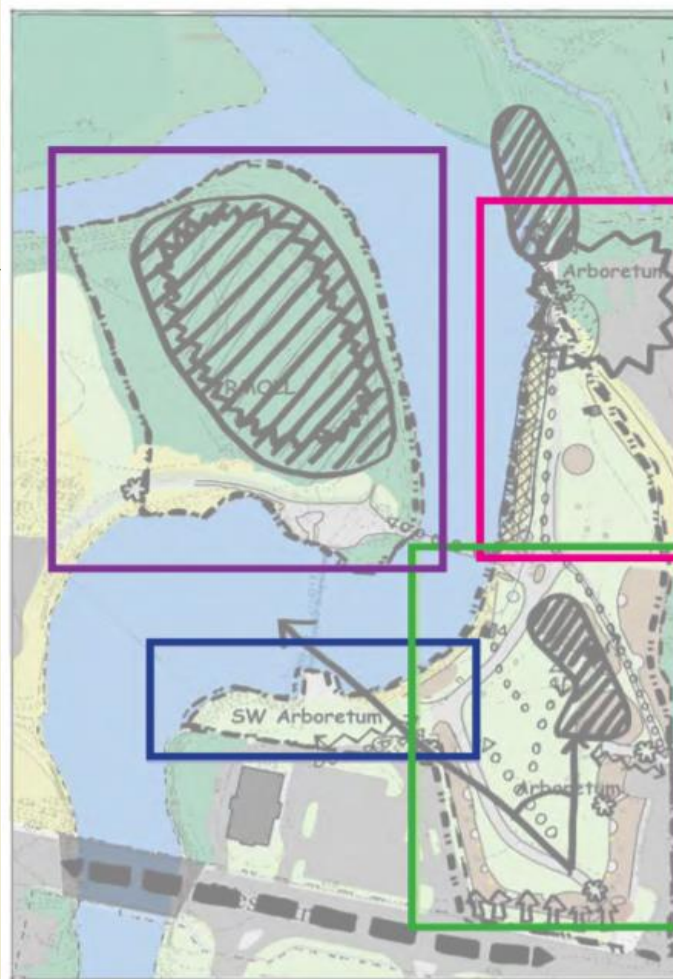
What do you like most about the park?



How adequate are current facilities/resources in the park?



Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan



Rachel Marshall Outdoor Learning Laboratory Criteria:

- Increase educational signs.
- Improve accessibility and safety along the trail.
- Increase shade and seating options on the platform north of the dam. Any structures in these areas will likely need permitting.

North Arboretum Criteria:

- Mitigate areas of compaction and erosion.
- Improve lines of sight.
- Explore ways to integrate the park with the adjacent parking lot which will eventually be transformed into a public green space.
- Explore methods for bank stabilization.

Main Arboretum Criteria

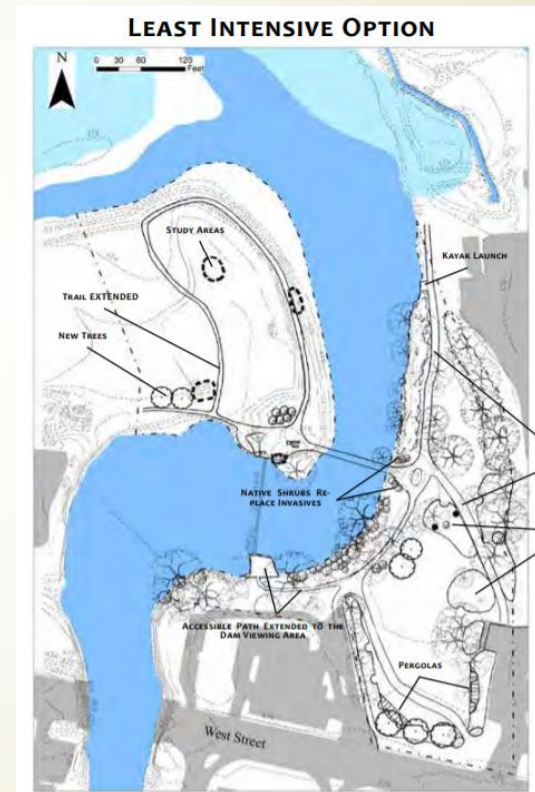
- Increase shaded and sheltered seating areas that are accessible to all and do not block lines of sight.
- Enhance garden beds in the front by increasing native plant communities, increasing plant diversity (color, size, texture, etc.), and replacing trees that are in fair or poor condition and threatened by climate change.
- Add vegetation to create a greater sense of separation between the park and West Street.
- Remove conifers that interfere with lines of sight into the park to improve safety.
- Consider removing the old gazebo.
- Create an ADA accessible path from the accessible parking lot.

Southwest Arboretum Criteria

- Create an accessible entrance point and trail from Starbucks to the park.
- Manage pooling water north of the Starbucks parking lot.
- Limit structures and use within the 50-foot buffer zone to minimize degradation of the riverbank.
- Add vegetation to create comfort and shade

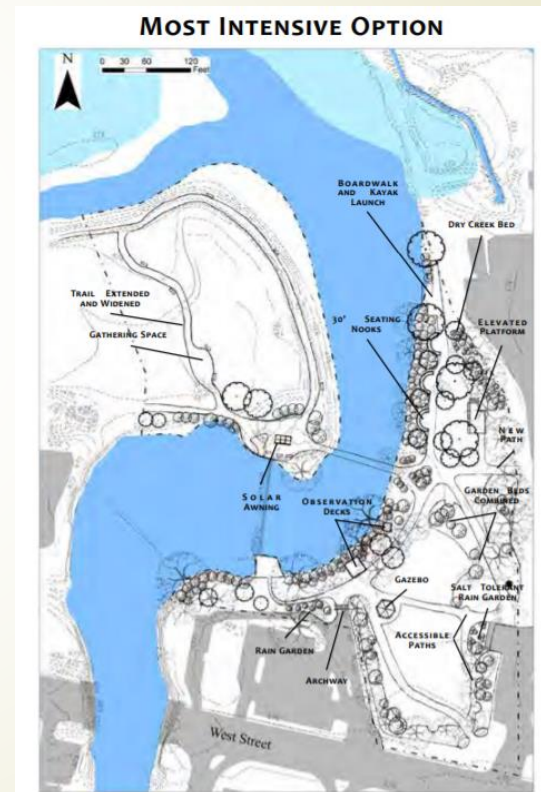
Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

- Improved kayak launch
- Remove and replace the gazebo with pergolas near front of park
- Remove mature conifers with lower level plants to increase site lines
- Improved trails in RMOLL
- Replace invasive species with native shrubs
- Accessible path to dam viewing area



Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

- Solar awning to provide power to the park
- Rain gardens
- Defined entrances at Starbucks and Mascoma Bank
- Elevated platform for education and performances
- Move gazebo to new location for increased visibility
- Increased plant coverings in the beds



Ashuelot River Park – Climate Resilient Master Plan

➤ QUESTIONS?

