

Strengthening Connections Downtowns & Trails

Hopkinton-Contoocook, New Hampshire | 2023 Program Summary



The Partnership

In December 2022, the Town of Hopkinton, New Hampshire entered into a formal partnership with the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension. Extension's Community and Economic Development team worked with town leadership and volunteers to conduct the Downtowns & Trails Program throughout the following year, and recently completed the program's final report. Key points to the program are an assessment of natural and built assets in the community (including trailheads, parks, businesses, and outdoor spaces), training community volunteers on assessment methods, and analyzing collected data to explore action items that may better leverage connections between the community's natural assets and downtown to increase economic vibrancy.

The Program Process

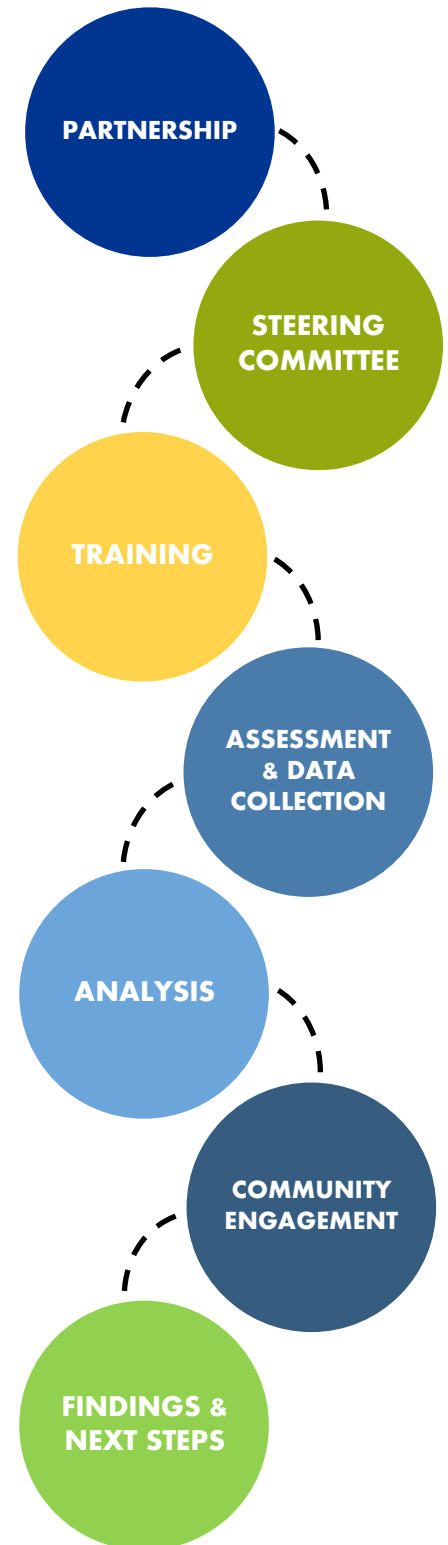
Steering committee members brought diverse perspectives to the program - economic development, conservation, recreation, fire and safety, and local business - applying them to the central focus area of the program - Contoocook Village.

Specifically, the area of assessment was defined as the Stevens Rail Trail through the village to the Little Tooky Trail east of the village center with the Contoocook River identified as a key asset for the community.

Extension staff discussed the economic benefits of trails, natural spaces, and connections to downtowns and village centers with the steering committee members. Over the year, Extension staff trained the steering committee members how to conduct a detailed spatial assessment of the focus area using an ArcGIS geospatial program, which resulted in 251 keen observations.

A series of surveys were conducted to gather input from residents and visitors and Extension staff trained steering committee members how to conduct key stakeholder interviews.

The preliminary findings of the assessments, surveys, and interviews were shared with the community in late July at the Contoocook Farmers Market, where additional feedback and input was gathered and incorporated into the analysis and program final report.



The Downtowns & Trails Program relies on dedicated community leaders and volunteers to form a steering committee, perform assessments, and undertake data analyses. With the help of Hopkinton's Economic Development Director, a steering committee was formed.

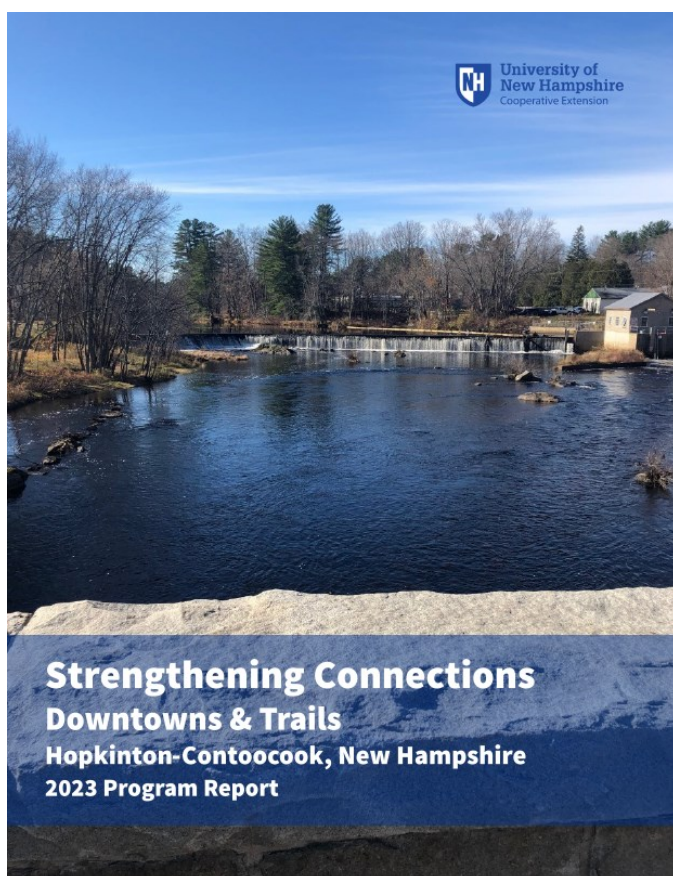
The Findings and Next Steps

The data gathered during the spatial assessment of the village, resident and visitor surveys, key community stakeholder interviews, and community feedback from the Contoocook Farmers Market event resulted in several key findings and next steps. Several opportunities are highlighted that recommend improvements to existing community assets, and action items that may better support the experiences of residents, visitors, and local businesses. The findings, recommendations and next steps focus on the community's goals around better connecting the village center to natural assets, including trails and the river.

The summarized findings identify the following recommended next steps:

- Improved wayfinding and signage to better highlight assets in the community (including advertising of businesses to promote their services for trail users on TrailFinder.com)
- Establish better connectivity and walkability, and improve safety at crosswalks and on sidewalks
- Additional maintenance of public spaces and trailheads
- Improve infrastructure in public spaces, including additional trash receptacles, seating areas, planters and public art, water bottle filling stations, and permanent public restrooms
- Complete improvements to the community boat launch on the Contoocook River

This summary document provides a brief overview of the process and findings in the Downtowns & Trails Program in Hopkinton-Contoocook, New Hampshire, final report completed in November 2023.



The full report, including comprehensive details on the program's structure, process, findings, detailed breakdown of recommendations and next steps, may be accessed online at: <https://bit.ly/3G4bflr> or by scanning the QR code below.



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