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Recreation



“What we do during working hours determines what we have; what we do in our leisure hours determines what we are.”

-George Eastman

Introduction

Littleton’s rich natural and cultural landscape and its four-season climate allows for a diversity of recreational activities. The mountains, trails, forests, rivers, town facilities, and programs are all robust outdoor recreation resources that promote physical activity, tourism, and a high quality of life.

Additionally, access to recreation facilities attracts families, employers, and an active workforce. Throughout successive Master Plans, Littleton’s residents have consistently voiced support for access to outdoor recreation activities and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This chapter highlights the existing recreation resources in Littleton and identifies recreation opportunities and potential actions.

EXISTING RESOURCES

The Littleton Parks and Recreation Department coordinates and manages a variety of recreation programs including basketball, soccer, swimming, t-ball, softball, school vacation camps, after school programs, and hockey. This Department also organizes community annual events such as Green Up Day, Hikes in the Whites, and the July 4th celebration, and maintains the following facilities which are open to the public (some of which are used by the town's school system):

Parks and Athletic Fields

REMICH PARK is a 15-acre park that includes:

- 2 tennis courts
- 2 baseball fields
- a soccer field
- a playground
- a basketball court
- a public outdoor swimming pool
- locker room
- a concession building
- a cross country skiing area
- an ice-skating rink, and
- a sledding hill in the winter

APTHORP COMMONS is a 5-acre public recreational facility that has:

- a softball field,
- a soccer field,
- a basketball court,
- 2 tennis courts,
- a playground,
- a concession building, and
- an area for fishing on the Ammonoosuc River.

THE NORTON PIKE FIELDS is approximately three acres and includes:

- a softball field,
- a youth soccer field,
- a concession building



Above: Remich Park's playground
Source: Plaid Polka Dots Blog



Above: The ice skating rink at Remich Park
Source: Plaid Polka Dots Blog



Above: A youth soccer game at Norton Pike Fields
Source: Caledonian Record

The **BRICKYARD ROAD RECREATION AREA** is 3 acres and has:

- a full size soccer field

Town Trails

Littleton has a robust network of trails throughout Town that are well documented and easy to find by using trail maps created by the Conservation Commission.

LITTLETON REGIONAL HEALTHCARE WALKING AND INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

This walking trail was designed for staff, patients, and visitors to relax and be in nature. The trail leads to a beaver pond and includes picnic tables, bird and bat houses, and ID markers for trees and wildflowers.

KILBURN CRAGS

Located between NH Route 18/135 and U.S. Route 302 the Kilburn Craggs offer a glimpse at Littleton’s rich geologic history. Another legacy to the Town

In 1917, Daniel Remich gave an area known as The Dells to the Town of Littleton to be kept as a “park forever.”

by Daniel Remich, the trailhead and parking area are located on NH Route 18/135. The 1.4 mile round-trip hiking trail winds through a meadow and forested area to a spectacular view of Littleton, the Ammonoosuc River Valley, and the Presidential Range. Kilburn Craggs is owned by the Town and maintained by the Conservation Commission.

THE DELLS

The Dells is open year-round for snowmobiling, x-country skiing, picnicking, walking, and fishing. This area is owned by the Town, managed by the Conservation Commission, and is open to the public. This area is highly valuable for bird habitat and biodiversity. The main walking trail within the park connects Dells Road to NH Route 18. Parking



Above: An overlook at Kilburn Craggs
Source: Rabbit Hill Inn

areas are available at each end of the trail.

PINE HILL TRAILS

Located within easy walking distance of the Downtown and adjacent to Remich Park, Pine Hill Road offers a public trail system through a stand of tall white pine trees, a cleared hillside, and onto the ridge of Pine Hill, showing hikers remnants of its geological history. The trail can be completed as a one-mile loop and its highest point is the Pine Hill Summit boulder.

LITTLETON RIVERWALK

The Ammonoosuc Riverwalk is a walking trail loop that runs along the Ammonoosuc River and is within the downtown area. The trail includes a covered bridge section, picnic tables, and seating, providing a great way for residents and visitors to access the river.

Other Trail Systems

AMMONOOSUC RECREATIONAL RAIL TRAIL

The Ammonoosuc Recreational Rail Trail is a year-round multi-use trail 19.2 miles long, extending from Woodsville to Littleton. There are plans to construct an extension and trail improvements over the next 3-4 years. These improvements include removing rail and extending the trail ~7 miles in Littleton and improving the trail surface for better biking and walking access. The first phase will focus on Industrial Park Drive to Cottage Street and will include paving at road crossings, scenic vistas for view of river and downtown, sidewalk improvements from trail to side streets and downtown, and additional signage. Phase 2 and 3 will focus from Cottage Street to Wing Road in Bethlehem. This extension project will connect the rail trail to the Downtown's River Walk, creating an incredibly economic and recreation opportunity.

PARKER MOUNTAIN

Parker Mountain has a 22-mile network of



*Above: Parker Mountain mountain biking trail
Source: Parker Mountain Trails*

mountain biking, hiking, skiing, and running trails just north of Downtown Littleton. Users can access the trail system from the Pine Hill trails on School Street where there is a trailhead and parking area. Trails range from easy to advanced.

STATE OF NH SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Another popular recreational activity in Littleton is snowmobiling. The State maintains a series of trails but there are also local trails. These trails are primarily on abandoned roads, logging roads, etc. The Snowmobile Club publishes a map of trails located in Littleton.

MT. EUSTIS SKI TRAILS

Mt. Eustis Ski Hill opened in Littleton in 1939 and shut down in the 1970s. A group of dedicated community members worked to reopen the ski hill and it officially began operating in 2016. Mt. Eustis Ski Hill is a non-profit organization.

Other Recreation Resources

There are currently 780 water bodies considered 'Great Ponds' in the State of New Hampshire



Above: Mt. Eustis Ski Area
 Source: Caledonian Record

and four of them are in Littleton. The table below summarizes these water bodies and the status of public access on each water body.

GREAT PONDS		
Name	Size (acres)	Public Boat Access
Moore Reservoir	3500	Yes
Comerford Reservoir	1093	Yes
Partridge Lake	105	Yes
Reynolds Pond	19	none

PUBLIC BOAT LAUNCHES

There are four boat launches on Moore Reservoir in Littleton and one at Comerford below Moore dam. Additionally, there are canoe take outs and portages around both dams. According to RSA 271:20-A, bodies of water greater than ten acres in size are public waters. RSA 233-A states that the State of New Hampshire must provide one public access site for water bodies 10-100 acres in size, two access sites for lakes 100-500 acres in

size, etc. A “public access site” is defined as those launch sites that are owned and or controlled by the State of New Hampshire. New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHF&G) manages the lake access program. There are, however, several other access sites around the lakes that are open to the public.

MOORE AND COMERFORD RESERVOIR AND THE FIFTEEN-MILE FALLS PROJECT

The largest single recreational area in Littleton is the Fifteen-Mile Falls hydroelectric project owned by the U.S. Generating Company. The project area includes about a 26- mile stretch of the Connecticut River, of which 16 miles is in Littleton. The resources include the Moore Reservoir (3531 acres), the Comerford Reservoir (1093 acres) and the McIndoe Reservoir (570 acres). Also, approximately 6,000 acres of forestland around the reservoirs (primarily Moore) is protected by conservation easements for recreational and forest management. There are several recreational activities currently available including boating, sailing, canoeing, fishing, swimming, hiking, snowmobiling, and bird watching. Recreational

facilities include twelve recreation access areas, including a visitor center at Moore dam, boat launches, picnic areas, hiking trails, swimming areas and parking.

THE AMMONOOSUC RIVER

The river is a significant natural resource and potential recreation asset in Littleton, especially because of it crosses through the Downtown area. Currently, access is limited and the river's underutilized for recreation purposes. More and more communities are learning that establishing pedestrian access and circulation by their water resources can have significant benefits, such as providing a unique community feature Downtown and promoting relationships between people and the river ecosystem.

RECREATION TRENDS IN NH

The 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan highlights important national outdoor recreational trends reported by the Outdoor Foundation from their 2017 Outdoor Recreation Report. The report showed the growth in nature-based outdoor activities and a decline in youth outdoor participation. These findings support Littleton's recreation planning efforts by analyzing the benefits and effects of outdoor recreation on the economy, health, and happiness. Here are some of the key findings:

- **RETURN TO NATURE:** Nearly 50 percent of Americans age six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2016, a slight increase from 2015, equating to a total of 144.4 million Americans.
- **FIRST TIME PARTICIPANTS:** Activities with the highest percentage of first-time participants in 2015 included stand up paddling, traditional/road triathlons, kayak fishing, and non-traditional/off road triathlon.



Above: A kayaker boating in the Moore Reservoir

Source: Britta Greene, NH Public Radio

- **THE ECONOMY:** 42% of outdoor participants said the economy impacted how often they participated in outdoor activities.
- **FITNESS AND HEALTH:** Outdoor participants rated their fitness level at 6.4 on a 10-point scale. In terms of health, outdoor participants rate their health level at 7.6 on a 10-point scale.
- **YOUTH:** Among youth, bicycling is the most popular outdoor activity.
- **PRESERVATION OF LAND:** The majority of Americans agree that preserving undeveloped land for outdoor recreation is important. A large percentage of outdoor participants also believe that developing local parks and hiking and walking trails is important and that there should be more outdoor education and activities during the school day.

PLANNING FOR RECREATION

Identifying challenges, opportunities, and potential projects for expanding or improving Littleton's recreation resources will provide significant economic, social, and environmental benefits for the community. The Town should identify recreation as a priority for achieving quality of life and economic development goals. As identified during

the public outreach component of the master planning process, the Town should assist leaders, organizations, and others in the outdoor recreation industry to help further Littleton's goals as being a hub for recreation activity.

FUTURE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

A recreation focus group and community forum was coordinated to collect feedback related to potential recreation opportunities, shown below:

- Create a dog park in Town.
- Explore the feasibility of developing additional indoor recreation programming and facilities, including more basketball courts, pickleball courts, and indoor track).

CASE STUDY:

Telluride, Colorado

Similar to Littleton, Telluride, CO's unique location in the San Juan Mountains makes this area a premier destination for hiking, mountain biking, and skiing. The Town's recreation facilities include a kid's fishing pond, 4 ball fields, an ice rink, a pavilion, concert stage, imagination station, a mountain bike pump track, a campground, and disc golf course. They also have a world class ski resort, hiking trails, and rock-climbing areas, and host large events, such as the Telluride Bluegrass Festival, which draw hundreds of people to the community. In their Master Plan, they acknowledge the connection between their outdoor based economy and the need to protect and restore the natural environment to ensure the health of local ecosystems and sustained human existence. Littleton has very similar assets to Telluride and should continue to leverage them to create a strong local economy and a robust outdoor recreation industry.

- Littleton should apply to become a Bicycle Friendly Community, awarded by the American League of Bicyclists.
- Utilize the Town bicycle and pedestrian plan to phase future projects that improve and expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
- Improve parking, littering, and access at local trail areas (such as Kilburn Crags and the Dells).
- Host more recreation related events in Town, such as a fishing derby or mountain biking events.
- Expand outdoor community gathering spaces, such as a public pavilion.
- Create a recreation directory that lists recreation programs, facilities, events, and trails in Town.



Above: Downtown Telluride
Source: Come to Life Colorado



Above: Disc Golf Course
Source: Colorado Ski Country USA