

Main Street Skowhegan January 2011
Draft Template for Economic Restructuring/ Downtown Planning



Instructions: please feel free to fill in as much detail as you know-this is a first draft only

Project Name:

Run of River

Project Type:

Infrastructure, Economic Development, Environmental, Waterfront Development, Tourism.

Summary:

History:

The ROR Committee was formed in 2003 in an effort to mobilize community support to study the feasibility of developing the Kennebec River Gorge area of the downtown as a destination location to attract visitors to Skowhegan. Projects envisioned included trails development, the development of a white water park and viewing areas for tourism enjoyment and for visitors to view white water kayak events.

Progress to Date:

A feasibility study was completed in 2004 by Kleinschmidt Associates of Pittsfield. The study concluded that that “Incorporating the whitewater course and recreation facilities improvements into the plan for revitalization of downtown Skowhegan provides the opportunity to market and promote complimentary services, amenities and activities. The potential increase in visitors to the Skowhegan area, and greater lengths of stay for these visitors, could contribute to small business, industry and overall economy of the Town.”

The study recommended that a “physical model of the proposed system be done... While it has been preliminarily determined that whitewater features within the gorge could be constructed without affecting tail water elevations at the Weston Dam and that with proper design and construction, these features should be able to be placed within the gorge, a physical model would test the stability of the proposed features and the whitewater characteristics that the project is trying to achieve.”

We are now at the point where we are seeking funds to pay for the physical model of the riverbed and shoreline to determine the feasibility of moving forward with the construction of the white water park.

The Town of Skowhegan has received 3 Maine Community Foundation grants to help fund the feasibility study by Kleinschmidt Consultants. In keeping with this plan a grant from the Conservation Dept Recreational Trails Program for \$20,000 was received along with matching dollars to fund the revamping of the Philbrick Trail. The Middle School Hemlock team students and the Maine Conservation Corps helped with the planning and construction.



In 2008 the town received a grant from New Balance Shoe "Move More Kids" Initiative to fund 48 mountain bikes and helmets, along with training. This was in direct relationship to the Run of River project looking to help get the kids out on the trails and moving. The move more kids funding will continue into the future.

Also in 2008 the Somerset Woods Trustees purchased a piece of land that lies between the Philbrick Trail and the downtown. This was funded by a grant from Land for Maine's Future of \$34,000 and another \$34,000 donated by Somerset Woods Trust. The land is being turned over to the Town of Skowhegan as soon as the paper work is done.

What about the the River Bond??

Timeline for next phase, collaboration partners and lead agency/individual, existing plans, specs and data

We are in the process of writing a USDA Rural Development Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RGOG) for \$40,000 to match \$40,000 that the Town and the ROR Committee have accumulated. The grant award date is likely in the early fall of 2011. If successful the Town would be required to put out an RFP for quotes and by the time that process is completed the best guess is that work on the modeling could go forward in the winter/spring of 2012 (weather and water flows allowing).

Partners are the Town of Skowhegan Economic and Community Development office, the ROR Committee, Somerset Economic Development Corp and Main Street Skowhegan.

Scope of Work by phase:

McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group indicated that they would require one and a half days to do site reconnaissance and project scoping at a cost of \$17,000 plus travel expenses.

They then need five months of preliminary engineering design work at an estimated cost of 6% of the construction costs.

Based on the construction costs from the 2004 feasibility study this could be between \$36,000 and \$90,000. After these steps are completed would come final design and permitting and bid solicitation and construction. We do not have estimates for these portions of the project.

Cost (total and breakdown, if possible)

The quote we have to do the modeling is \$80,000. Construction cost was estimated in 2004 at between \$600,000 and \$1,500,000.

Jobs created:

This is difficult to determine. There would be some job creation likely from any vendors that served the events held at the park, there may need to be additional staff at the Town's recreation department and depending on the success of the project there would likely be increased employment at existing retail businesses in the area as well as at new start up businesses that would provide kayak, canoe, and other white water related service businesses.



Public health, education, quality of life benefit:

Public health benefits would seem to include additional recreational activities on the river for kayaking and canoeing as well as the existing and planned trails for hiking/walking.

Education benefits include the opportunity to teach young and old people kayaking and canoeing skills through programs that could be designed by the Skowhegan Recreation Department. There could also be classes on river ecosystems along the trails by the river.

Historic significance

None we are aware of.

Public Participation and sponsors (historically and/or potentially)

Town of Skowhegan Recreation Department and Economic and Community Development Dept.
USDA Rural Development
Somerset Economic Development Corp.
Maine Department of Conservation Recreational Trails program
Federal Government through Federal Appropriations

Public and Municipal impact:

We see the development of this modeling and its subsequent construction as a way to provide entertainment and activity within the downtown footprint, preserve historic character with non-motorized watercraft use, through this innovative new attraction, and the melding of recreation and leisure activities in the downtown of Skowhegan.

Skowhegan is in a position to provide the first whitewater rafting destination in the Northeast and to provide a unique recreational opportunity for out-of-state tourists who can experience a “wilderness” activity within a fairly developed area.

In addition to the impact the ROR Project will have on the Town of Skowhegan, this project provides an additional attraction to market to visitors to the region from within Maine and indeed around the country.

The ROR Project will enable use of the Kennebec River Gorge for a variety of land and water based public recreation activities. This project will serve the needs of local residents and seeks to provide a regional attraction that will draw recreational users and tourists to the greater Skowhegan area.

Presented by:

