

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Riverwalk

1. Why are we building a riverwalk? Aren't there better ways to spend money?

It is important to first point out that this report is design recommendations not construction plans. If we were to pursue any of these recommendations, further work would need to be conducted. This is providing us with information to decide what, if any, changes we want to pursue. The idea of constructing a riverwalk is not new. It came up as a significant topic during the creation of the Downtown Master Plan in 2012 but it also has roots with Camden's Comprehensive Plan and the Camden/Rockport Pathways Committee. The idea of creating a riverwalk is based on listening to the community and imagining where it might go and what it could look like. By adding another amenity to Camden, it makes it more appealing to spend time here and relax therefore encouraging more people to come to Camden year round and spend more time in the downtown. It also would be an amenity for residents to be proud of and enjoy. This then assists all of us, from businesses, to property owners, to residents.

There are often competing interests for how to allocate the Town's budget. We want to balance the critical needs to ensure Camden is a safe and supportive environment to its citizens, businesses, and visitors with opportunities to ensure the significance Camden has always had is maintained if not strengthened.

2. Is anyone going to use this?

Yes, the notion of utilizing Camden's natural asset of the Megunticook River for a riverwalk is not a new idea. This has come up in a number of discussions from the Camden Rockport Pathways Committee to Camden's Comprehensive Plan to the Camden Downtown Master Plan, to name a few. There has not yet been a concentrated effort until now to determine feasibility, community reaction, cost estimates, and benefit. Camden is a recently designated Active Community Environment. This is supported by the Active Living Research organization that reports:

- People who live in neighborhoods with sidewalks on most streets are 47% more likely to be active at least 30 minutes/day
- Students who walked to school every day had 24 more minutes of physical activity/day
- A study in Nebraska found that for every \$1 spent on trails, there was almost \$3 in savings in direct medical costs
- People who live near trails are 50% more likely to meet physical activity guidelines

- People who live in walkable communities are 2 times as likely to get enough physical activity as those who don't

3. How is this being paid for? Are my taxes going to increase?

This project is strictly to create schematic designs, cost estimates, and economic impact for a riverwalk that runs 2 ¼ miles from Shirttail Point Park to Camden Harbor so we can have good information to decide what our options are. This current project does not involve construction. A \$15,000 grant was obtained from the Maine Coastal Program and matched with \$5,000 from the Sidewalks and Pathways Reserve fund. Therefore, your property tax has not changed to support this effort. If any of the recommendations are pursued at a later date, we will look for other sources of funds to support the changes. The report contains sources for funding construction of the riverwalk.

4. Who is deciding where this goes and what it will look like?

Four public, community-wide meetings have been held to hear and collect suggestions concerning the riverwalk. Also, one on one interviews were held with anyone who expressed an interest. Some private property owners were eager to allow the riverwalk on their property, some are waiting to see how the project progresses, and others have not expressed interest. In addition, a work group was formed at the beginning of the project with representation from town committees, businesses, property owners, and town staff. This work group also provided input to assist in guiding Town staff and the consultants. We have taken all of this input and come up with the report that has been delivered. Similar to the Downtown Master Plan in 2012, the Select Board will decide at their November 12th meeting whether to accept the report and what the next steps will be.

5. Who is going to maintain it and what is that going to cost?

The Town will be responsible for the riverwalk as it is primarily located on Town property. In those places where the riverwalk would be located on private property, the Town will need to make arrangements with the willing property owner concerning access, easements, ownership, responsibility, etc.

6. I have property on the Megunticook River. Are you going to put the riverwalk across my property even if I don't want it?

No. We are not planning to forcibly acquire private property. There are enough available segments for us to pursue construction there, pending availability of funds. Over time, we anticipate those property owners who were neutral or hesitant may see the benefit of having their property included in the riverwalk. This is an approach that has been successfully used in other locations.

7. How is this economic development?

Economic Development is a term encompassing many functions. It can include business development, such as helping new business but also assisting with the

retention of existing business. It can also include community development efforts such as assisting with programs and events in the community, building new sidewalks and improving infrastructure, and also working on projects such as the Public Landing and Riverwalk design projects. Camden is fortunate to have so many natural assets from the harbor, to the mountains, to lakes, and to the Megunticook River. Other communities are not as abundant in their natural assets. Having a river flowing from a park to the center of the downtown is an asset to our community and the region. A riverwalk would provide yet another feature to bring new businesses and entrepreneurs, bring additional visitors who may stay an extra day or two because we have so much to offer, and provide a proven means of increasing the health of our community's residents. From our Camden Downtown Master Plan completed in 2012, a riverwalk was also recommended as a means to connect peripheral parking areas to our downtown and promote the breadth of our entire downtown vs. the singular Elm St/Main St corridor.

8. Is the Tannery site going to be a park now?

This project's scope does not include determining how the former Apollo Tannery site (116 Washington St) should be used in light of constructing a riverwalk. Therefore, the approach being used by the Town is to continue having the Tannery site be promoted as a commercial opportunity in order to bring in new jobs and taxes.

9. When do I get to vote on this?

There is not a vote scheduled for this report because it is only a series of recommendations of what could be done, what it might cost, and what the benefits would be. When you read the report, you will observe that the full 2 ¼ mile distance of a potential riverwalk is actually comprised of a series of segments. As funding sources become available, different phases can be constructed with a long term goal of connecting the riverwalk end to end from Shirttail Point Park to Camden Harbor. A good analogy is a cookbook in that a person does not immediately make every recipe contained in the book. The report will be presented to the Camden Select Board at their regularly scheduled meeting of Tuesday November 12th at 6:30PM. This is a public meeting and anyone is welcome to attend. Similar to the Downtown Master Plan process in 2012, the Select Board will decide whether or not to accept the report and what the next steps in the process will be.

10. What activities will be permitted or prohibited on the Riverwalk?

The riverwalk schematic designs are based on a non-motorized, bicycle/pedestrian pathway. Some examples of acceptable use include walkers, joggers, and bicyclists but All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) would not be acceptable. Segments will be ADA compliant. Points of interest have been identified with

recommendations of installing displays or kiosks that provide interesting information about the history, flora, and fauna.