

CHAPTER 3 - RECREATION

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Recreation is an important component in community development. It helps to enhance the quality of life of town residents and those who choose to visit the community for the recreational opportunities available. Recreational opportunities help to add character to a community and provide a healthy option for personal time year-round.

A variety of recreation options is important to meet the needs and interests of the whole community. Active recreation, which involves organized activities such as baseball, softball, soccer, and basketball, attract many users and spectators. Equally necessary are the passive recreational opportunities such as hiking, swimming, boating, picnicking, and tourism. All types of recreation, active, passive, indoor or outdoor, add to the social capital of the community. Accessibility to these activities and areas must be available for people of all levels of mobility.

The Town of Hinsdale offers its residents a variety of recreational activities for both indoor and outdoor enjoyment. Through the combined efforts of town staff, organized sports leagues, and many volunteers, the town has had a successful recreation program for many years. Along with the structured school programs of sports and extracurricular endeavors, the open spaces located throughout the town offer additional opportunities for fun and relaxation.



Millstream Community Center
Photo By: Sean Leary

Hinsdale Millstream Community Center

The Hinsdale Community Center, located at 19 Main Street, was built in 1996. The Community Center is available for community functions as well as public or private activities. The entire center will hold a group of 150 people, and is also available for smaller groups; it can be divided into two separate spaces if needed. The Community Center is equipped with a kitchen, two sets of bathrooms, tables and chairs. There is also a patio that is located in the back of the building, giving a wonderful view of the waterfall and is especially beautiful during foliage.

The Community Center has hosted the following non-profits for special events and meetings: Voting, Earn-Program, Monadnock Family Services, Cheshire Mediation, Southwestern Housing and Development Services, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Lions Club, Historical Society, and area churches. The Community Center also offers flu shots and fuel assistance program help. The Community Center regularly hosts Meals on Wheels, blood pressure clinics, WIC Programs, Weight Watchers, Martial Arts classes, Weight Loss Challenge/Nutrition Class, and Strong Living Exercise program for people over 60 years of age. Other programs are welcome to utilize the facility when time is available.

The Community Center houses one main office for the Town's Program Director as well as a second office space that has been used by different groups and organizations over the years. The center also has a separated "Game Room" that is currently being used as a fitness room. The Community Center is available to rent for special events.

Community/Recreation Programs

The Hinsdale Community Recreation Committee is in charge of the summer 'camp' program, pool facility, and youth soccer/basketball programs. These recreation programs are run by a part time paid Program Director with the help of several volunteers.

Summer Camp:

The summer 'camp' program is located at the Field House on School Street. It runs Monday through Friday 9am to 3pm for 6-8 weeks, depending on the closing of school for the summer. This program offers a safe structured environment to Hinsdale children entering first through eighth grades, during the summer months when school is not in session. The program is a mixture of scheduled events and children having "just plain fun". Attendance runs from 100-135 children per day. The program works with the school district to offer free meals to every child that participates, and is open to all children in Hinsdale between the ages of 5-18. Field trips are offered to middle school level campers and before and after camp programming is provided by the Hinsdale After-School Program (HASP).



Trainings offered to camp staff include CPR/AED, Property Liability/Summer Safety, Training with a Licensed Social Worker. The town offers a Counselor In Training (CIT) / Jr. Counselor program that acts as a feeder program for future camp staff. Scholarships for camp tuitions are available based on economic need. The town is committed to ensuring that the summer camp program is made available to as many children in our community as possible.

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Community Pool:

The Town Pool facility is located on Brattleboro Road, across the lawn from School Street. The pool is open seven days a week for a season that runs June through August. The exact length of the "Open" season can vary dependent on the school district schedule and staffing. The pool facility offers swim lessons to residents at a reduced cost, a changing facility, and adult water aerobics.

The pool offers day passes as well as full season passes for residents and non-residents alike. In 2019, approximately 460 day passes and 9 seasonal passes were sold to town residents while 30 day passes and 1 seasonal pass were sold to non-residents.



Hinsdale Community Pool
Photo By: Sean Leary

Youth Sports:

The youth soccer, basketball and cheer-leading (cheer) programs are offered during fall and winter. These programs serve over 100 children per season, and are feeder programs for Hinsdale Middle High School. The Hinsdale chapter of Girls On The Run encourages positive emotional, social, mental and physical development through a nationally recognized GOTR program. GOTR targets a demographic of youth in Hinsdale (young girls, non-competitive programming) that is potentially underserved by our current soccer and basketball programs. The soccer season runs from September through November. The basketball and cheer seasons run November through March. GOTR is a ten week program that typically runs March through May.



Photo By: Andy Drummond

Recreation Program Recommendations:

- Work with the Hinsdale After-School Program (HASP) to establish a place in town for youth gatherings, either by purchasing a building or building a structure connecting to the present town pool.
- Organize various performances, sports, and trips for community residents.
- Offer sports camps during the summer program, such as soccer, basketball, tennis, and a swim team.
- Offer training for coaches, and work with the Hinsdale Middle High School to offer coordinating efforts in regard to skill sets for soccer and basketball, including social-emotional learning.
- Find a way bring back the “kiddie pool” or other alternate option for extremely young children.
- Renovate the summer camp Field House.
- Work with community partners to develop a walking/running program for a wide range of users, including adults.
- Continue to work with the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant (through HASP) to offer before-and-after camp programs.
- Work with the school district to offer an educational component to the summer program, such as reading initiative, math, or year-round gardening programs.
- Movie Nights at the Community Center (vs Town Hall), Different nights could cater to teens or seniors.
- Piggyback movie night with Concert in the Park.
- Develop new activities such as pickle ball, disk golf
- More frequent “Sign and Wine” nights.
- Craft nights- Both self-paced and guided classes.
- Bring community center programming out to the community “On the Road”. Select programs could be brought to places like Rolling Hills so people with limited access to transportation can take part in the activities.
- Free musical interludes in the parks (possibly tie in the school band).
- Public Business Days (bring people and businesses together).
- Greater frequency of Outdoor Hinsdale.
- Snowshoe trips in the winter.
- Walking groups to explore the trails.
- Haunted Hayrides / Fright Nights.
- Teen Center.

- Consider an early “pre-season” opening of the pool. This could serve as the “soft opening” and would consist of limited hours (perhaps weekends only). Additionally, the suggested duration could include a “post season wind down”. Similar to the pre-season concept, a post-season would be reduced hours (possibly just weekends).
- Consider specifying some “adult swim” hours. These time would be allocated for use of the pools by adults and seniors who might prefer use of the facility during quieter times of day when younger children are enjoying other activities.
- Consider expanding fee-based pool programming beyond swim lessons and one session of water aerobics to help revenues.
- Consider promoting the pool facility to non-resident users.

Other Recreational Activities:

The Town of Hinsdale has two boat landings along the Connecticut River: one at the base of Sand Hill and one between the bridges on Route 119. In recent years the recreational use of the Connecticut River has increased greatly, as evidenced by the number of boats in the summer and the number of fishing huts in the winter. Ice skating on the “setback” area of the river has become a common sight. Some of this increased activity is due to the opening of the railroad right of way, which provides off road parking.

As this report indicates, the Town of Hinsdale has tried to meet the needs of all age groups in providing recreational opportunities. With the pending construction of a new bridge over the Connecticut River, the state will be de-commissioning the boat ramp between the two existing bridges.

Policies:

- Provide for the preservation of open space and natural preserves to maintain the rural character of the town.
- Provide the variety of recreational facilities to accommodate all age groups and all levels of mobility.
- Continue to provide the use of municipal buildings for recreational purposes.
- Continue to fund the programs needed to make the town an enjoyable and healthy place to live for our citizens.
- Protect the scenic elements of the town’s natural environment such as water bodies, streams, rivers, and viewsheds.
- Retain the access to open space and environmental areas for public use.

The following is a summary of areas available to the public:

Name & Location	Use	Acreage/ Distance	Ownership
<i>Prentiss Taylor Memorial Field</i> Northfield Road	Softball, other outdoor recreation	3 acres	Town
<i>Prospect Street Boat Launch</i> Prospect Street (Off of Rte 119)	Public access boat launch to CT River, Fishing	-	State
<i>Rail Trails- Ashuelot Rail Trail</i> Starts at Dole Junction on Rte 63 in Hinsdale and ends in Keene	All non-motorized uses in summer and snowmobiling in winter	21 miles	Town
<i>Fort Hill Branch Rail Trail</i> Runs parallel to Routes 63 and 119 into Brattleboro VT	All non-motorized uses in summer and snowmobiling in winter	8.9 acres	State
<i>Foster Butler Land</i> Prospect Street and Route 119	Setback land surrounding State boat access	18.1 acres	Town
<i>School District Field</i> School Street & Brattleboro Road	Soccer, gymnasium sports, social & sporting clubs	12.46 acres	Town

Name & Location	Use	Acreage/ Distance	Ownership
<i>Wantastiquet State Natural Area</i> Route 119	Hiking, hunting	311 acres	State
<i>Bear Mountain State Park</i> Plain Road	Hiking, hunting, trapping	156 acres	State
<i>Heritage Park</i> Route 119	Tennis, basketball, picnics, outdoor concerts, community pool, softball	6.82 acres	Town
<i>Hinsdale Island</i> Connecticut River under Route 119 bridge	Public access boat ramp Currently scheduled to be decommissioned after construction of the new Route 119 bridge	6.49 acres	Town
<i>Boy Scout Park</i> Route 119 across from Oak Hill Rd	Wooded area overlooking the Connecticut River	9.9 acres	Town
<i>Hinsdale House</i> Route 119	Site of Ebenezer Hinsdale House & Farm (c. 1759) and Fort Hinsdale	37 acres	Hinsdale Historical Society
<i>Hinsdale Trail Entrance to Pisgah State Park</i> Route 63 North	Multi-Use trail	-	Town
<i>Kilburn Loop Trail and Kiburn Pond In Pisgah State Park</i> Route 63	Hiking, swimming, fishing	35 acre pond 5.4 mile loop around pond	Town / State
<i>Millstream Park</i> Route 119 / Main Street (Near Community Center)	Public water access, picnic area	4.4 acres	Town
<i>Pisgah State Park</i> Route 63 North	Hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and ATV trails	543 acres	State

Source: Town Staff

State Parks:

Wantastiquet Mountain Natural Area (Rattlesnake Mountain)

The Wantastiquet Mountain Natural Area, which is located in the Northwestern corner of town along the Connecticut River, encompasses over 1,000 acres of state-owned land between Hinsdale and Chesterfield. Many visit the area to hike the 1,335 feet high Wantastiquet Mountain, which offers outstanding views of Brattleboro, Vermont and the Connecticut River Valley. A wide and easy to follow trail (~2.0 miles) leads from a small lot at the gated end of Mountain Road to the Walter H. Child Monument. This trail connects to Miners Ledge, which provides a sweeping vista of the Connecticut River Valley, and continues on to the Madame Sherri Forest in Chesterfield.

Pisgah State Park

Spanning over 13,300 acres and 3 towns (Hinsdale, Winchester, and Chesterfield), Pisgah State Park is the largest property in the New Hampshire state park system. Although only a small portion of the park (~5%) is located within town boundaries, Pisgah provides great opportunity for residents to engage in activities like hiking, mountain biking, ATV and snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, bird watching, fishing,

boating, swimming, etc. Six trailheads around the park provide access to over 20 miles of multiple use trails. There are no campsites within the Park, which is open year-round at no charge. Trails that lead from Hinsdale into the Park include the Kilburn Loop Trail and the Hinsdale Trail. The Hinsdale Town Forest (28.69 acres) is located within the Park boundaries.

Bear Mountain State Forest

Bear Mountain State Forest is a 156-acre hunting and natural area owned by the state of New Hampshire. The forest, which can be accessed from Plain Road, contains Bear Mountain (1,027 feet). Trapping is allowed within the Forest for which permits can be obtained from NH Fish and Game.

Town Parks:

Heritage Park

Located off of Brattleboro Road (Route 119) next to the Hinsdale School District athletic fields, Heritage Park provides the opportunity and facilities for residents to engage in active recreation. The 19 acre town owned park contains tennis and basketball courts, a softball field, and the Town's only public swimming pool. The Park's gazebo, picnic area, and pavilion offer space for community gatherings, outdoor concerts, and other forms of leisure.

Boy Scout Park

Located off of Route 119 across from Oak Hill Road, is the so-called Boy Scout Park. This thickly wooded tract of town owned land overlooks the Connecticut River and provides space for picnic areas. The Fort Hill Branch Rail Trail intersects the property, which encompasses approximately 9.9 acres.

Prentiss Taylor Memorial Field

Close to the center of town, the 3-acre Prentiss Taylor Memorial Field contains a softball field and space for outdoor recreation. The field is located off of Northfield Road, approximately 150 feet from the bridge over the Ashuelot River, which connects Northfield Road (Route 63) to Main St. (Route 119). While the field had been privately owned in the past, it is currently owned by the town.

School District

The Hinsdale School District's athletic fields, located along School Street and Brattleboro Road next to the Middle/High School and Elementary School provide space for a number of field sports and activities. The site contains a soccer/field hockey field, baseball field, little league baseball field, and a field for smaller children. This site also provides space for gymnasium sports like basketball.

Millstream Park

Adjacent to Town Hall and the Millstream Community Center on Main Street is a strip of open space referred to as "Millstream" or "River" Park. This small park contains a picnic area and benches as well as access to the Ashuelot River for fishing. In addition, a small parking lot is located next to the park.

Public Water Access:

Kilburn Pond, Pisgah State Park

Kilburn Pond is a 35-acre pond partially located in the Hinsdale portion of Pisgah State Park. The pond is used for recreation purposes like swimming and fishing and is only accessible by hiking into the park. The Kilburn Road Trail provides access to the northern end of the pond from Chesterfield Road (Route 63). This trail connects with the Kilburn Loop Trail, which forms a loop around the perimeter of the pond.

The average depth of this mesotrophic water body is 9 feet with a maximum depth of 25 feet. Fish species found in the pond include Chain Pickerel, Yellow Perch, and Hornpout.

Prospect Street Boat Launch

The Prospect Street Boat Launch, located on Prospect Street off of Route 119, provides the public boat access to the Connecticut River. This state-owned site contains a gravel boat ramp and gravel parking area. While it is primarily used for boating, fishing is also allowed at this site.

At the time of this update, the State of New Hampshire is planning to renovate / update the Prospect Street Boat Launch to provide easier water access and improved parking. The landing bidding will be in March 2020 in hopes of a 2021 construction, which will take a full season. There is some land adjustment that needs to be done to clear up a right of way. The rail trail will be adjusted slightly to go through an access of the boat landing.



Millstream Park

Individuals can access the Ashuelot River from this park, which is described in the Town Park section of this chapter. There is no boat ramp at this site but there is a paved parking area.

Hinsdale Island

The public can access the Connecticut River via a gravel boat ramp on Hinsdale Island. This boat ramp is planned to be decommissioned at the start of the new bridge project (exact date pending).

Trails:

Rail Trails

The town contains two recreational rail trails that are owned by NH Department of Transportation: the Ashuelot Rail Trail and the Fort Branch Rail Trail. Both of these trails are managed by the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails.

The Fort Hill Branch Rail Trail is an 8.9-mile long trail that runs alongside the Connecticut River in Hinsdale and continues into Brattleboro, Vermont. Currently, the usable portion of the trail ends at a rail bridge over the Connecticut River that connects the Hinsdale portion of the trail to the Brattleboro, VT section. In the non-winter months, all non-motorized uses are allowed including hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. However, snowmobiling is allowed in the winter season.

At *Dole Junction*, the *Ashuelot Branch Rail Trail* branches from the Fort Hill Branch. This 21 mile gravel/dirt trail occupies the former Ashuelot Passenger and Freight Rail Route, which operated from the mid 1800's to 1984. From Dole Junction, the trail parallels Route 63 and then follows the Ashuelot River through Hinsdale into Winchester. The trail continues to follow local roads through Winchester, Swanzey, and Keene, where it ends. Like the Fort Hill Branch Rail Trail, all non-motorized uses are allowed on the trail in the non-winter months and snowmobiling is allowed in the winter season. One mile from the start of the Ashuelot Rail Trail is the

Hinsdale Station, a private restoration of a Boston & Maine Railroad station in New England. A Green Mountain Railroad boxcar and an old New Haven Railroad caboose can be found on the property.

Hinsdale Trail

The Hinsdale Trail is a multi-use trail that begins in the Hinsdale portion of Pisgah State Park. The trail entrance is located approximately a mile north of Hinsdale Depot reached via Depot St. to Route 63 North. The trail connects with the Reservoir Trail in Winchester and leads to the trail head at Reservoir Road. The trail also branches off to connect to Pisgah Reservoir.

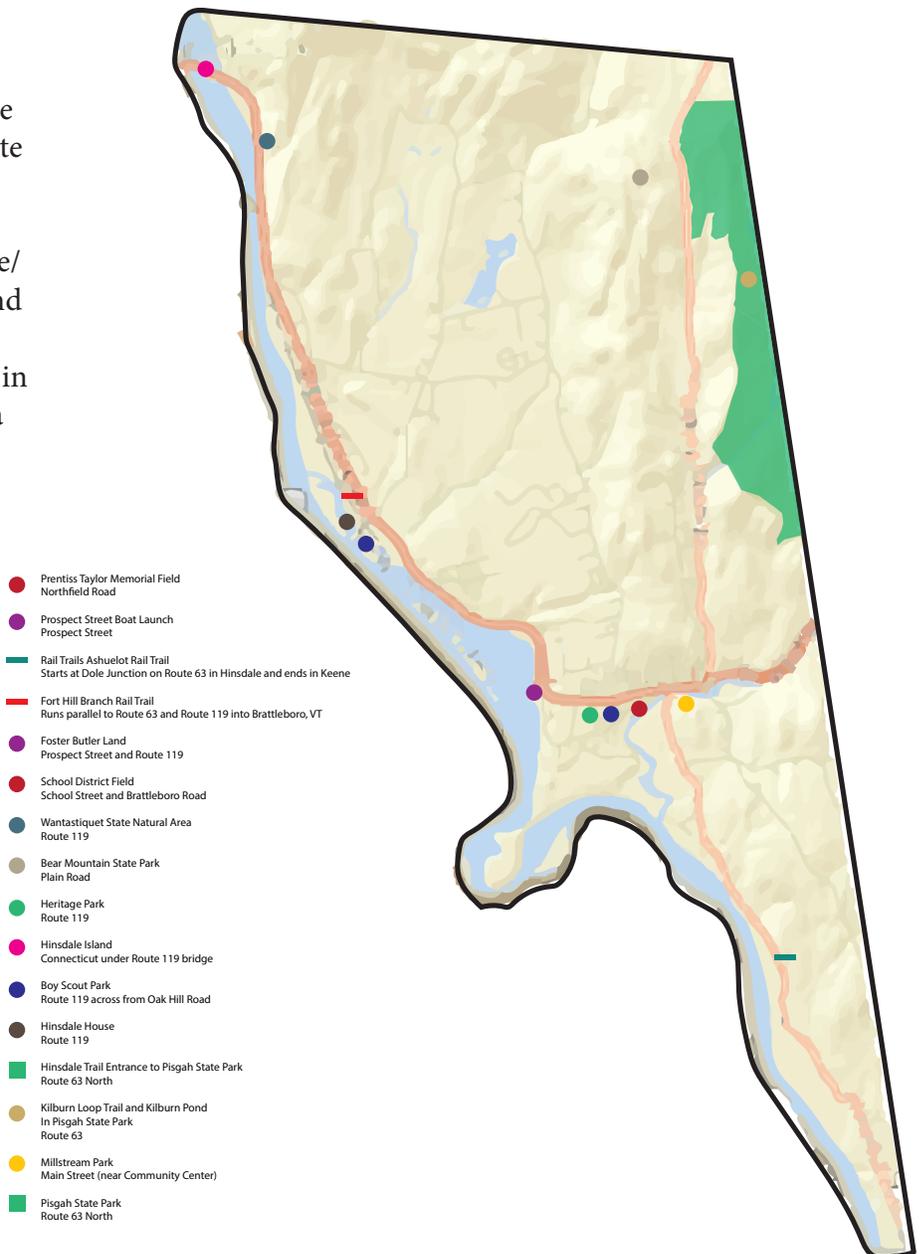
Kilburn Loop

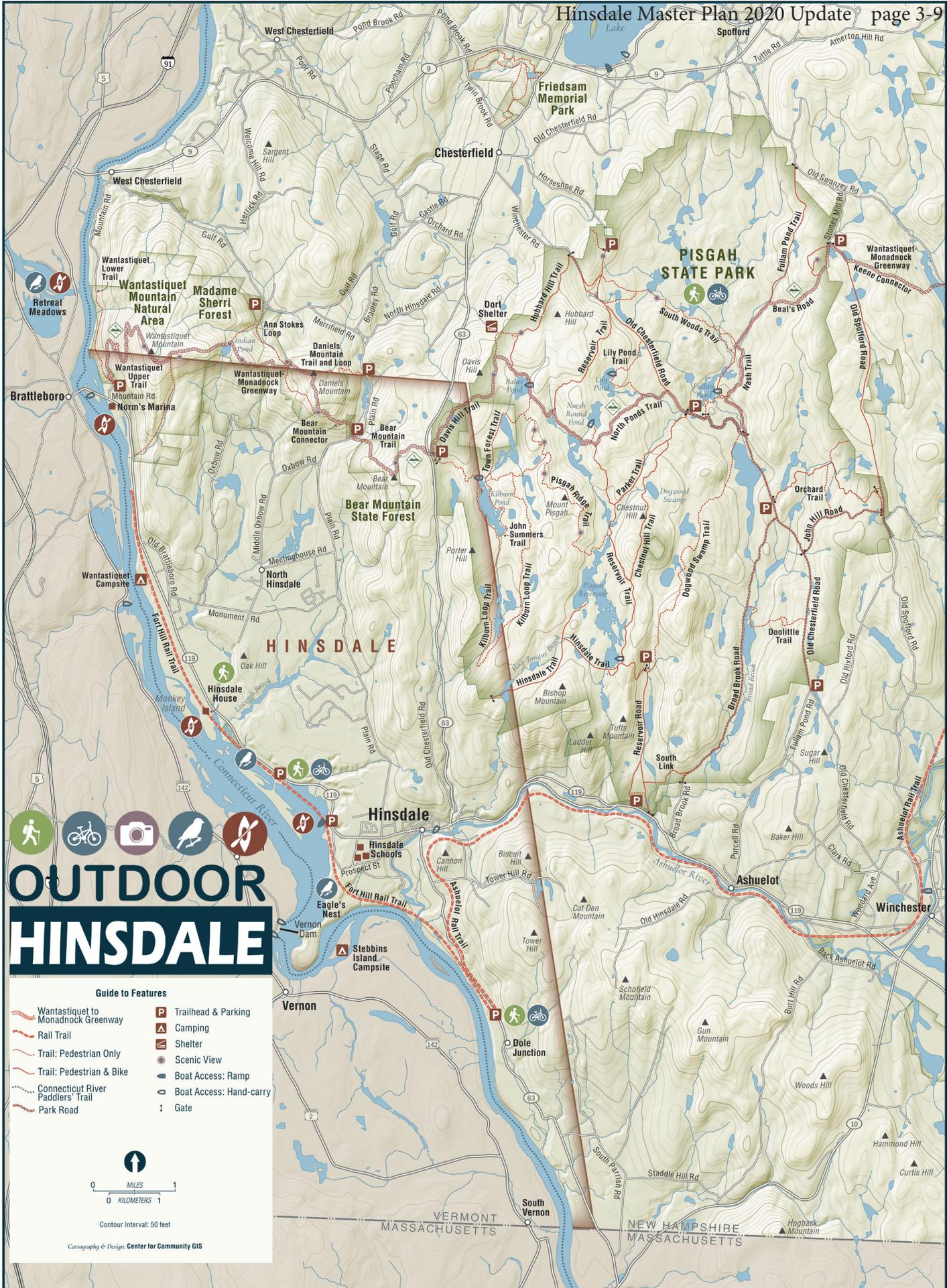
The Kilburn Loop is a 5.4-mile long hiking trail that surrounds the perimeter of Kilburn Pond. The trail is considered an easy hike as it gains no more than 200 feet in elevation. Key points along the trail include an inlet that leads to Kilburn Pond and junctions with the old Kilburn Road and Pisgah Ridge Trail. The trail is restricted to pedestrian use year-round. The Kilburn Loop can be accessed via the old Kilburn Road, a 0.7-mile trail that begins at the Kilburn parking lot located off Chesterfield Road (Route 63) in Hinsdale.

Hinsdale House

The Ebenezer Hinsdale House, c.1759, is situated on 37 acres of land bordering the Connecticut River. The property is the site of Fort Hinsdale as well as the Ebenezer Hinsdale Farm, which was built by the town's founder. Also on site are a carriage/livestock barn, two agricultural barns, and a blacksmith shop. The Hinsdale Historical Society acquired the property in 2009 and plans to renovate the site into a living museum.

A graphic representation of the relative locations of Hinsdale's recreational facilities shows, that while easily accessed by all areas of the town, there is a current lack of facilities in the are of North Hinsdale.





OUTDOOR HINSDALE

Guide to Features

- Wantastiquet to Monadnock Greenway
- Rail Trail
- Trail: Pedestrian Only
- Trail: Pedestrian & Bike
- Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail
- Park Road
- Trailhead & Parking
- Camping
- Shelter
- Scenic View
- Boat Access: Ramp
- Boat Access: Hand-carry
- Gate



Cartography & Design: Center for Community GIS

RECREATION – Action Plan

Goal: To enhance the quality of life for residents of Hinsdale and visitors through recreation.

Objectives:

1. Provide a range of year-round recreational opportunities for users of all ages and mobility levels to enjoy.

Actions:

- a. Perform a periodic inventory of existing and potential recreational areas and programs to determine specific locations and populations that are under-served.
 1. North Hinsdale doesn't have anything in terms of recreational facilities.
 - Expand and utilize Scout Hall and its land.
- b. Prepare a periodic inventory of the condition of facilities and equipment used for each recreational area and program. Work on a forecasting budget of items in need of repair or replacement.
- c. Continue to maintain the Branch Trail and Rail Trail for public use.
- d. Provide adequate trail-head signs and parking locations for public recreation.
- e. Provide sufficient parking for and public access to water resources for boating and swimming.
- f. Provide outreach and education on the location and type of activity for the recreational areas. Use methods such as signage, brochures, website, etc.
 - Hockey & Ice Skating- Possible addition of an area for hockey at Heritage Park. Hockey area could be flooded for skating. Areas may want to be covered to help protect the ice. Maintaining a smooth surface is key.
 - Renovating the courts and making them usable would bring tennis players back
 - Horseshoes used to be a popular activity with adults and seniors on Sunday afternoons. Renovating the pits could bring this activity back to life.
 - Add different features / amenities to make the parks more user friendly ex. Updated barbecue pits / Hibachis. Update equipment and look for portability (Could hibachis be stored and rented out for use at various locations vs. planted in one specific location).
 - The basketball courts are currently used daily (year round). Users have asked for a new hoop (backboard, rim, net) on the one pole they use most often. Current users would be happy with minimal updates to the one side they use most often.
 - Benches at the basketball courts.
 - Court lights are currently non-functional and haven't worked in over a year.
 - Storage lockers for equipment at the courts / fields.
 - Water fountain next to courts.

- Electrical outlets near the courts.

- Update and repair the electrical outlets in and around Heritage Park and the Pavilion that do not work.

- Explore bike signs around town by the river on Rt. 63 S for recreation opportunities.

2. Preserve open space and plan to acquire land for future recreational purposes.

Actions:

- a. Encourage public access onto conservation easements when possible.
- b. Prepare a plan of recreational needs and potential recreational areas throughout the town to consider in future proposals.
- c. Explore options to develop recreational opportunities on town-owned land formerly known as the Podlenski property.

Explore the possibility of creating a “new” second boat landing at Scout Park. This would not service motor boats of any size BUT could make a good launch point for canoes and kayaks.

Work to promote the growth of Outdoor Hinsdale with the overall goal of promoting our natural areas.

3. Promote the many recreational areas and activities available in town.

Actions:

- Electronic reader board on 119 at the town fields by School St.

- Events page on the website (community section? – Specify when it is “open to the public”)
Possible page specifically promoting the natural areas.

- Town welcome resource- Everything you need to know about the community. Given to new residents.
Talk to businesses: they may be willing to give samples and company information.

- Temporary lawn signs for upcoming events.