

FOOTHILLS FOUNDATION Organizational Plan + Regional Recreation Analysis

March 2022



TABLE OF CONTENTS

04

FOOTHILLS FOUNDATION

06

MARKET ANALYSIS

09

ASSETS

12

DESTINATION ORGANIZATION +VISITOR FLOW

15

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

21

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

24

IMPLEMENTATION



CHAPTER 1

FOOTHILLS FOUNDATION

The intent of this Organizational Plan + Regional Recreation Analysis is to communicate the community's vision for outdoor recreation, the existing inventory of recreation and tourism assets in the region, critical gaps in the system that should be addressed, and future recreation and tourism opportunities. Understanding the Foothills Foundation is a relatively new initiative, the plan focuses on identifying the most important needs to address and helps the foundation explore the best organizational structure and auspices to deliver on these needs over time. The plan is intended as an initial roadmap for the organization to illuminate the future plans and ongoing activities the foundation should work on.

MISSION

The Foothills Foundation is a nonprofit organization based in Northfield whose mission is to promote outdoor recreation and economic expansion through community partnerships.

VISION

The Foothills Foundation's vision is to expand outdoor recreation opportunities, connect existing trails, and make Northfield, Tilton, Franklin, and the surrounding areas of Belknap and Merrimack counties a recreation and mountain biking destination. Trails will serve existing residents, make the region a more attractive place to live, and develop the region's economy. At the core of the Foothills Foundation's approach is engaging the community, ensuring that the initiative aligns with the community's goals. Trails and recreation will benefit the community and region and be sustainably implemented and effectively managed for the community and visitors to enjoy.

**PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:
REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM**



BUILDING NEW TRAIL
CONNECTIONS



SUPPORTING ON-GOING
TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND
MANAGEMENT



COORDINATING TRAIL
AGREEMENTS, CONTRACTS &
EASEMENTS



PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE
MAPPING OF TRAILS,
OUTDOOR REC ASSETS, AND
TOURISM AMENITIES



UNIFIED SIGNAGE AND
WAYFINDING THROUGHOUT
THE RECREATION SYSTEM

**SECONDARY RESPONSIBILITY:
REGIONAL RECREATION DESTINATION**



SUPPORTING COLLABORATION
AND COORDINATION ACROSS
OUTDOOR RECREATION
INITIATIVES



PROMOTING AND MARKETING
THE REGION AS A RECREATION
DESTINATION



ENGAGING WITH THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY, RESIDENTS,
AND BUSINESSES



FUNDRAISING TO SUPPORT
THE ORGANIZATION, TRAILS,
AND OUTDOOR RECREATION



SUPPORTING OUTDOOR
RECREATION PROGRAMS
AND MANAGING EVENTS

CHAPTER 2

MARKET ANALYSIS

MARKET ANALYSIS

The primary study region of Franklin, Tilton, and Northfield have a combined population of approximately 17,000 people. Most of the tourism businesses within the study region are located in Tilton (outlets, chain hotels) as it is partially a gateway to Laconia and other Winnepesaukee towns. Franklin has had relatively limited tourism but is developing a whitewater park and is trying to “re-invent itself as an outdoor recreation community.” The whitewater park will be part of a community adventure park with mountain biking. The study area is proximate to the Lakes Region, a highly seasonal tourism destination that sees approximately 12% of the states tourism spending.

To increase recreational tourism visitation to this area, the Foothills region should track both national and activity-specific recreation trends to understand how they can best position themselves in a competitive marketplace.

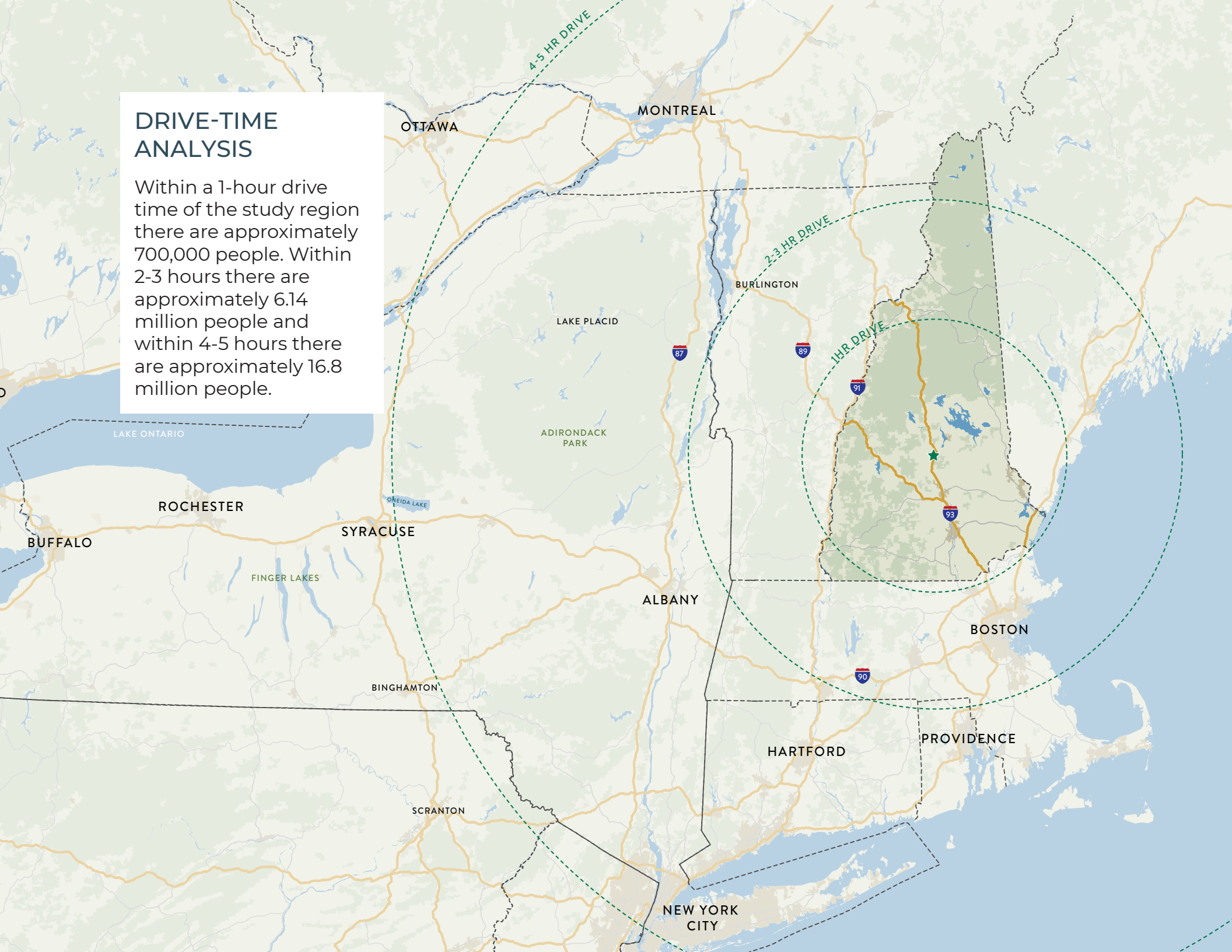
NATIONAL TRENDS

In 2020, the Outdoor Foundation released the *Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*. The report highlights growth in female participation and a continued decline in youth outdoor participation. The report includes the following key findings:

- ▶ Running, fishing, hiking, biking, and camping are the most popular activities by participation rate.
- ▶ Non-participants are interested in trying activities such as fishing, biking, camping, swimming, and hiking.
- ▶ The frequency of outdoor outings has declined.
- ▶ Bicycling (including road, mountain, and BMX biking) was the most popular activity for children (ages 6-17).

DRIVE-TIME ANALYSIS

Within a 1-hour drive time of the study region there are approximately 700,000 people. Within 2-3 hours there are approximately 6.14 million people and within 4-5 hours there are approximately 16.8 million people.



RECREATION TRENDS



MOUNTAIN BIKING

Nationally, mountain biking participation is at 2.9%. Mountain bikers take an average of 4.53 destination mountain bike trips per year and tend to have higher household incomes and significant disposable incomes, with nearly half of participants surveyed living in households with incomes of at least \$75,000. Lift-served mountain bikers reported higher incomes, with over half reporting incomes above \$100,000 in a survey. In a 2016 IMBA survey, mountain bikers identified cross-country singletrack and all-mountain trails as the most popular while bike parks and lift-served gravity trails were the least most popular. Mountain bikers identified that trail quality, aesthetic beauty, and proximity were their top factors for choosing a trail location. For lift-served riders the top priorities were skill level appropriate trails, quality technical downhill trails, and quality bike park features. Participants are more likely to visit a downhill bike park if there are other activities for themselves and family members.

Participation in most paddle sports has been in decline or stagnant in the last 5 to 10 years. Exceptions to this trend include recreational kayaking and paddleboarding. According to the 2020 Outdoor Participation Report, approximately 13 million people kayak recreationally, 3.6 million paddleboard, 9.5 million canoe, and 3.4 million raft.



PADDLESPORTS

CHAPTER 3

ASSETS

The Foothills region has a variety of existing recreational assets that are already drawing visitors. Between Highland Mountain Bike Park and Franklin Falls Dam, mountain bikers have access to a diverse range of riding experiences including machine-built cross-country trails, technical cross-country singletrack trails, downhill flow trails, jump lines, and skills parks. Highland Mountain Bike Park also offers a full-service bike and rental shop, an indoor training facility, and a variety of summer and after-school programs.



For those that want to explore the regions rivers and rail trails, Outdoor New England in Franklin rents bikes, kayaks, tandem kayaks, and paddleboards. They also offer a variety of guided river tours and watersports clinics. The Town of Franklin is working towards creating New England's first whitewater park. This park will include many different recreational amenities including river play areas, a surfable river wave, an amphitheater, and a community garden.

The Foothills region is located amongst three rail trail systems: the Northern Rail Trail, the WOW Trail, and the Winnepesaukee River Trail. Together, these trails systems provide over 60 miles of paved and natural surface trail for cyclists, horseback riders, runners, walkers, cross-country skiers to enjoy. The Northern Rail trail also allows snowmobiling in the winter.



ASSET GAPS

	TRAILS & CONNECTIVITY		PARKS & NATURAL AREAS		COMMUNITY ASSETS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Biggest need is for “trunk connectivity” along the Franklin/Tilton/Northfield downtown corridor with small “branches” leading to neighborhoods and other assets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A primary branch should be the 820 trail up to Highland • Close critical rail trail and multi-use path gaps ▶ Sidewalk, bike lane and active transportation networks to get people from home or Airbnb to trail system 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Encouraging safety and security by activating trails and areas around them with use ▶ Promote and leverage existing community parks, neighborhood parks, and conserved open lands ▶ Designating blueways and river corridors with consistent and cohesive with access points 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Continue to support and engage downtown and community vibrancy efforts ▶ Greater opportunity to use towns as trailheads and to develop parking and trail connections within downtown corridor 	



TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

- ▶ Opportunities for additional lodging options: boutique hotel/motel, landscape hotel, cabins, Airbnb's, glamping/ Tentrr
- ▶ Lack of campground, glamping, camping facilities
- ▶ Breweries, nightlife, music, and cultural events could be expanded
- ▶ Support continued entrepreneurship and retail business incubation in downtowns



DEVELOPED RECREATION

- ▶ Fairly well covered within the broader Lakes Region
- ▶ Interest in downhill skiing, but not much in the way of financial feasibility. Explore options for Nordic/backcountry skiing and smaller-scale operations

CHAPTER 4

DESTINATION ORGANIZATION + VISITOR FLOW

An analysis of the recreational assets, market demand, transportation network, natural landscape, and local community fabric of the Foothills region suggests the best approach for positioning the outdoor recreation assets is with a “Hub and Spoke Model”. Under this tourism destination model, there are several key assets that act as primary anchors for the destination with a network of complimentary and supporting assets that improve the attractiveness of the overall destination and extend lengths of stay for visitors to all the anchors. Primary recreational activity anchors should be bicycling, paddling, fishing, and watersports. There is an incredible wealth of opportunities in both cycling and watersports in the region with “destination quality” options for both mountain biking and casual/rail trail cycling as well as whitewater and flatwater paddling. The diversity of cycling and paddling experiences that could be offered creates a great opportunity to build important learning progression.

Equally important to aligning these anchor recreation assets around tourism activity will be developing complimentary recreation assets that support local quality of life, workforce retention, and business attraction. These sorts of opportunities would be less expansive in scope and are often closer-to-home and more community-oriented. These would include activities such as hiking trails, cross country skiing, community parks. These assets are not necessarily something visitors would specifically travel for (like the anchor activities) but would make the Foothills region a great place to live as well as a great place to visit.

A high level of connectivity between the downtowns of the three communities and the rail trail system, mountain bike system, and river and paddling system will also support the communities of Tilton, Franklin, and Northfield acting as destination anchors themselves. This should be represented physically—through trail connections and river access points—but also through wayfinding signage, marketing identity, and promotion of the recreational assets around them. Downtown parking should also be enhanced and developed to serve as anchor parking so that towns can act as “trailheads” for the recreation system.

DESTINATION & VISITOR FLOW MAP



WEBSTER LAKE & NORTHERN RAIL TRAIL

DOWNTOWN FRANKLIN & MILL CITY PARK

DOWNTOWN NORTHFIELD & WINNIPESAUKEE RIVER TRAIL

I-93 INTERCHANGE & LAKES REGION TOURISM CENTER

HIGHLAND MOUNTAIN BIKE PARK

Legend

- Points of Interest
- Anchor Parking

Winnepesaukee River Rail Trail

Northern Rail Trail

Planned Rail Trail

Proposed Single Track Connections

Proposed Active Transportation Connection

Proposed Multi-Use Path

1 Veteran's Memorial Recreation Area & Ski Hill

2 Franklin Falls Trails

3 Great Gains Memorial Forest

4 Southwick Pump Track

5 Salmon Run Conservation Area

6 Spaulding Woods Trails and Boat Ramp

7 Knowles Pond



Promotion of downtowns as trailheads should start with Tilton, Franklin, and Northfield as they have current river and rail trail access. The 820-mountain bike trail and the connection of the Winnepesaukee River Trail between Northfield and Tilton should also be prioritized to support this activity. Supporting MTB loops of varying ability level and typology should also be developed off the 820, and a connection between the Winnepesaukee River Trail and the Northern Rail Trail should also be prioritized.

Trails and other active transportation connections such as sidewalks and bike lanes in downtowns and shoulders and 'sidepaths' in more rural locations should be pursued to support last mile connectivity for residents and visitors in nearby lodging. These more 'minor' connections should also be pursued for as many of the supporting assets as possible, such as Franklin Falls or the Southwick Pump Track. Even signage of on-road routes could improve connectivity as an interim solution or in areas where off-road trail cannot be developed.

There may also be an opportunity to develop the envisioned campground as an anchor parking location by offering public parking for the trail system and river, as well as additional day use amenities such as a welcome center, trail info, rentals, and food service. See the [Southern Gap Outdoor Adventure Center](#) in Virginia as an example of what could be provided.



CHAPTER 5

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL #1

COMPLETE INTERCONNECTED TRAIL SYSTEM

Objective 1: Complete a trails & connectivity plan

- ▶ Identify needed paved, soft-surface, and active transportation connections through a trails and connectivity plan that would represent a second phase of this current work.
- ▶ Identify trail users, difficulty levels, and experiences desired for each trail segment
- ▶ Ensure sustainable trail design and layout principles are applied (half rule, ten % average guideline, max trail grades, grade reversals, outslope, etc.)
- ▶ Ensure input from a variety of stakeholders and partners.

Objective 2: Develop soft-surface trail connections

- ▶ Work with public and private landowners to secure access to land for trail development through handshake agreements, easements, or other means.
- ▶ Design and flag the trail corridor incorporating all of the desired features and creating a sequence of events that will make the trail interesting and meet the desired level of challenge.
- ▶ Prepare a construction plan which includes input of key participants and land managers to ensure that construction techniques and equipment used are well suited for the type of trail being built.
- ▶ Formalize a management and maintenance plan to ensure that ongoing maintenance is being considered at the point when the trail is being constructed.

Objective 3: Support development of active transportation and paved-surface trail connections

- ▶ Advocate for trail and bike/ped connectivity and leverage the enhanced bike-ped system for minor asset and neighborhood-level connectivity
- ▶ Convene trail and bike/ped advocates in the region and work with local municipalities and committees on trail development, active transportation efforts, complete streets policies, and safe routes to school
- ▶ Support grant applications, offer project support and oversight, and participate in committees for active transportation and paved trail projects

**GOAL
#2*****PRESENT A CLEAR REGIONAL IDENTITY FOR
OUTDOOR RECREATION*****Objective 1: Create a robust digital presence**

- ▶ Develop a comprehensive website that highlights recreation assets access points and related activities and amenities (lodging, dining, rentals, gear shops, events, etc.)
- ▶ Utilize asset and trail information to develop a public-facing interactive map that combines tourism and recreational elements
- ▶ Maintain and update the website and recreational tourism map on an on-going basis
- ▶ Develop strong social media presence on a variety of platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
- ▶ Encourage partners to cross promote and identify opportunities to nest branding

Objective 2: Consistent signage & physical presence

- ▶ Create a wayfinding plan and update periodically as new assets and trail connections are developed
- ▶ Create consistent signage across land managers
- ▶ Develop trailhead signage that includes tourism and recreational elements

Objective 3: Implement Brand

- ▶ Develop a regional brand identity that is used consistently on all public-facing products (flyers, website, trailheads, trail maps, signage, etc.)
- ▶ Create marketing collateral or other simple printed material that can be included in event packets throughout the region/state

**GOAL
#3*****PROVIDE HIGH-QUALITY
RECREATION EXPERIENCES*****Objective 1: Support a variety of recreational experiences that welcome a broad user base**

- ▶ Continue to add activities to the recreational mix. These could include regional/state parks, hiking experiences, snowshoe/ Nordic experiences, and others.

Objective 2: Ensure adequate learning progression and appropriate venues for all recreation experiences and abilities

- ▶ Work with user groups to evaluate learning progression within each activity type (paddling, hiking, biking, etc.)
- ▶ Evaluate the system for adaptive recreation uses (handcycling, mobility devices, etc.)"
- ▶ Conduct accessibility assessments

Objective 3: Develop a well-built and cohesive recreation system

- ▶ Work with municipalities, local businesses, and non-profit partners to provide complementary recreation activities to anchor activities.
- ▶ Construct and maintain new and existing recreation assets to a high standard

GOAL
#4**SUPPORT RECREATIONAL TOURISM****Objective 1: Develop a destination marketing strategy**

- ▶ Conduct market research
- ▶ Determine visitor profiles
- ▶ Assess marketing needs
- ▶ Determine marketing budget
- ▶ Create media plan
- ▶ Develop a photo and video library of the regions attractions (biking, river activity, rail trail, entertainment, etc.)

Objective 2: Encourage the development of support businesses (camping, dining, cultural attractions, etc.)

- ▶ Encourage recreation entrepreneurs to share their experiences through case studies or presentations aimed at encouraging other businesses to follow suit. These could be shared on the Foothills website or in small, evening events focused on networking and resource sharing for recreation businesses.
- ▶ Support business incubation and start up efforts by partnering with the [Granite Outdoor Alliance](#) and other similar organizations in the state.
- ▶ Coordinate efforts with the [NH Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development](#)

Objective 3: Host events

- ▶ Create community connections by partnering with local recreation providers to host events
- ▶ Utilize events that highlight key assets such as Highland, Mill City Park, or the rail trail system, but that also serve to introduce visitors to other assets to the region. This could be achieved by holding registration, meals, or après events at supporting attractions.
- ▶ Seek an event schedule that supports visitation in the off-season months.
- ▶ Evaluate scale and feasibility of proposed event to ascertain economic and community benefits or potential impacts on resource.

GOAL #5

BRING LOCALS ALONG FOR THE RIDE

Objective 1: Increase community access to recreation by prioritizing funding and development of gateway activities, beginner experiences, and introductory programs.

- ▶ Create instructional programs for community members within various activity types
- ▶ Provide access to equipment through either a scholarship, grant program, or community lending/ sharing program.
- ▶ Support programming with local youth and schools to introduce whole families into the recreation in the region

Objective 2: Create opportunities for landowners to provide feedback about trail users

- ▶ Conduct an annual landowner/ land-manager survey
- ▶ Create consistent signage across land managers

Objective 3: Create opportunities for ongoing community engagement

- ▶ Conduct a recreation survey once every 3-5 years to provide clarity on the ongoing recreational demands of the community and facilitate community engagement.
- ▶ Convene all recreation stakeholders and organizations for an annual trails and recreation summit with the intent of sharing successes from the past year and plans for the next.
- ▶ Seek community engagement and collaboration through regular Foothills Foundation board meetings by being as inclusive and inviting as possible to all who are interested.

Objective 4: Build a coalition of volunteers

- ▶ Organize events that introduce community members to volunteer opportunities and allows recreation stakeholders like the Mill City Park group or the folks working on the 820 Trail an opportunity to “advertise” what they do and what they need from volunteers.
- ▶ Utilize social media to promote events needing volunteers
- ▶ Work with partners to host a recreation volunteer celebration or meal that recognizes and rewards volunteers.

**GOAL
#6****COORDINATE WITH RELATED
ORGANIZATIONS****Objective 1: Facilitate collaboration and communication across trail and outdoor recreation organizations in the region to sustain and enhance experiences, management, and promotion of assets.**

- ▶ Organize annual meetings with partner organizations to discuss initiatives, explore opportunities for collaboration, and review progress.
- ▶ Develop MOU to clarify roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the region

Objective 2: Cross-Promote with State and Regional Tourism Organizations

- ▶ Coordinate with the Lakes Region Destination Tourism Office
- ▶ Coordinate with the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs & Division of Travel and Tourism Development

Objective 3: Develop a consistent and comprehensive website and brochure/map to promote recreation in the region.

- ▶ Act as a clearing-house for information on recreation programs and opportunities in the region.
- ▶ Gather and consolidate information from program providers for easy, one step access by the community. Consider and utilize the most effective approach, including:
 - Online options (Facebook, website, social media)
 - Printed and/or digital publication
 - Local newspaper
- ▶ Help promote events and activities through website and other promotional materials.

CHAPTER 6

ORGANIZATIONAL CASE STUDIES

There are many ways the Foothills Foundation could deliver upon its envisioned responsibilities. Below are two case studies that examine the structure and operational sustainability of similar organizations that will help identify the best mechanisms for managing, promoting, and maintaining the Foothills recreation network and destination in the long term.

	CARRABASSETT VALLEY TRAILS	UPPER VALLEY TRAIL ALLIANCE
Geographic Scope	Carrabassett Valley, Maine	4-County Region (NH & VT)
Volunteer Hours	1,000+	1,900 (2021)
Staff	5-9 Seasonal, Project Dependent	4 Full-Time
Budget	\$20k maintenance + 250 Volunteer hours \$125-200k/year new construction 2022-25	\$263,508 (2018)
Funding Sources	Direct appropriations, grants, event fundraising, donations	Donations, membership fees, foundations, trail services, events
Project Focus	Building trails, Promoting MTB in the region	Trail mapping and maintenance, trainings, events

UPPER VALLEY TRAIL ALLIANCE

Founded in 1999 as a priority arising from a multi-community needs assessment, the Upper Valley Trails Alliance was formed to respond to the desire for trails as pathways to improve health outcomes and quality of life. The Upper Valley Trails Alliance advocates for the development, use, and maintenance of trails in the Upper Valley region in Vermont and New Hampshire. UVTA utilizes education, outreach, and stewardship to connect people and places through a regional trail network, lead a coalition of local trail groups and advocates, and promote active lifestyles through trail use in all seasons. The Trails Alliance promotes stewardship by supporting, coordinating, and leveraging a range of local partners, including town conservation commissions, recreation departments, non-profits like Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Upper Valley Land Trust and Hanover Conservancy, and generous individual landowners.

UVTA hosts trainings such as chainsaw safety, trail building, bridgework, leave no trace, and wilderness first aid. In addition to trail building and maintenance, UVTA launched The UV High School Trail Corps Program for students to learn about trail building in a sustainable way from UVTA's staff members. UVTA launched events such as Passport to Winter Fun, STOAKED trail race, skate-a-thon, and Tour de Taste.

In 2019, with the help of over 200 volunteers and trail corps members, UVTA completed more than 30 trail projects covering over 70 miles of regional trails. UVTA provides a wide range of services including fiscal sponsorship, meeting facilitation, project management, general trail maintenance, trail assessment, map creation and planning, and the building of bridges, stone steps, reroutes and brand-new trail connections.

By 2025, UVTA hopes to be the recognized leader and preferred partner for trail development, programs, information, and support in the region, creating an extensive, accessible, and integrated Upper Valley trail system for use by all residents.



CARRABASSETT VALLEY TRAILS

In recent years, the Carrabassett Valley has exploded into a regional hub for mountain biking. The area has long been a winter destination with Sugarloaf Mountain ski area. Now, visitors are flocking to the area year-round for a robust trail system, recently named #1 in the state by singletracks.com. This trails success story is due to the collaborative effort of the Carrabassett Region chapter of the New England Mountain Biking Association (CRNEMBA), the Town of Carrabassett Valley, and Maine Huts & Trails.

In 2017, the three formalized the partnership as the Carrabassett Valley Trails Committee. Sugarloaf recently joined the committee to fuel the growth of the trails network. In 2009, the town conducted a study on the feasibility of new mountain bike trails and drawing riders to the area. The study called for the formation of a mountain bike club to spur trail development in the area and CRNEMBA began in 2010. The club worked closely with the town and Maine Huts & Trails to formalize existing trails and huts as part of a mountain bike trail network. The system incorporated the town's 90 km of Nordic ski trails and the Maine Huts & Trails four lodges and 50-mile trail corridor. The three entities have worked closely to build more trails in the area, through fundraising and co-hosting trail building events.

Maine Huts & Trails, along with CRNEMBA, hosted a NEMBA Trail Fest in 2012 that brought mountain bikers from across New England to ride and help build the trails. The event has become a yearly fixture and CRNEMBA also hosts work days throughout the year to maintain and improve the trail system. Today, the trail system has 77 miles of trails, 23 of which are new or entirely reconstructed in the past few years.

The trails committee has also worked closely with other area groups for volunteers, funding, and easements. The trails are on a combination of town, Penobscot Indian Nation, Sugarloaf Mountain, private, and Carrabassett Sanitary District land. The Sugarloaf Outdoor Center, the base for Nordic skiing operations in the winter, is one of the "pods" of the network with 35 miles of trails and its own bike shop. Local businesses and non-profits have sponsored trail maps and volunteered their time to help build the network.

At the end of the day, the town has played a central role in the network's success. The town instigated many of these collaborations, provided land, and invested heavily in the system. Much of the funding for the project has come from the town's Recreational Endowment fund. The fund, from taxpayer dollars, supports recreation-related projects for town residents by matching grants and donations. Through these efforts and partnerships, the Carrabassett Valley has a world class mountain biking network.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLEMENTATION

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Based on the case studies and the structural evolution of other similar organizations, the Foothills Foundation should organize into tactical committees focused on some of the most pressing and immediate next steps. These should include:

1. Trail Development & Planning
2. Partnerships, Volunteering & Engagement
3. Fundraising & Financials
4. Branding, Website & Communications
5. Organizational Evolution & Capacity

The Foothills Foundation should continue to pursue 501(c)3 designation and work to further expand its organizational capacity and resources. This includes leveraging technical support, staff, and intern resources through the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, while working towards dedicated staff for the organization. This could be accomplished through agreements and partnerships like Carrabassett Valley Trails or by direct employment through the Foothills Foundation like the Upper Valley Trails Alliance.

Organizations like the Foothills Foundation are typically supported by mix of internal revenues, local business partnerships and sponsorships, community volunteerism and fundraising, and local, state, and federal government support. Revenue streams such as map sales, events and programs, or trail planning and technical support should be explored.

The Foothills Foundation should also seek to broaden the Board of Directors to include representatives from each municipal government (Northfield, Franklin, and Tilton), as well as the officers and/or Board of Directors from the Winnepesaukee River Trail Association (WRTA), the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail, the Mill City Park 501(C)3, and Outdoor New England (ONE). While many partnerships and relationships will be important for the success of the organization, these entities will be the most critical to coordinate efforts with. Having board representation will also ensure the community and organizational goals of these partners is reflected in the organization's plans and operations moving forward.

IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

While the Goals, Objectives, and Actions help paint the overall strategic direction for the organization, the following represent the **immediate next steps** each recommended committee should work on.

1. TRAILS DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING COMMITTEE

A) TRAILS & CONNECTIVITY MASTER PLAN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Trails & Connectivity Plan would represent a second phase of this current work identifying the needed paved, soft-surface, and active transportation connections in the Franklin-Northfield-Tilton region in greater detail. The Trails and Connectivity Master Plan should identify trail users, difficulty levels, and experiences desired for each trail segment. It should also ensure sustainable trail design and layout principles are applied and that input is collected from a variety of stakeholders and partners. The Trails and Connectivity Master Plan should support the on-going soft surface trail development efforts of the Foothills Foundation, as well as identify improvements to the on-road, sidewalk, and rail trail networks that would complement this trail system.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Municipal governments, Winnepesaukee River Trail Association (WRTA), the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail, and the New Hampshire Bureau of Trails who manages the Northern Rail Trail and assists organizations, municipalities, and trail clubs with the development of trails on both public and private lands.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Continued mapping and inventory of existing trails

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Grants such as [NH Recreation Trails Program](#) or the [NH Recreation Revolving Fund](#) could be considered for the Trail and Connectivity Master Plan, but given the immense trail development expertise within the Foothills Foundation this project may be best suited for something like the [National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation \(RTC\) Assistance Program](#). Rather than grants the RTC program provides technical assistance for community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects. They could work with you to develop the plan in-house as a “living document” that can be updated over time.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Trail projects move at different speeds depending on funding, access to lands, etc. and this master plan will need to support both longer-term efforts that will require grants, many partners, and state cooperation as well as the low-hanging fruit that could get built next year with existing resources and access to the land.

1. TRAILS DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING COMMITTEE

B) CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 820 TRAIL AND OTHER SOFT-SURFACE CONNECTIONS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Trail development on the 820 trail and other connections around Highland Bike Park should continue as funding, resources and access to land allow—you should not wait until the trails and connectivity master planning is done to keep building.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Volunteers

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Trail flagging and design, handshake agreement/easement negotiation

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

1. [NH Recreation Trails Program](#)
2. [NH Recreation Revolving Fund](#)

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Building connections close to where people want to go, but not having access all the way there can sometimes create trespassing and unsanctioned use. Don't get too close to the Hwy 132/I-93 corridor until you can connect people all the way there. Maintain the area as a loop network until you can formalize a connector trail.

2. PARTNERSHIPS, VOLUNTEERING & ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

A) TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY MASTER PLAN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Trails & Connectivity Plan is also mentioned as an important initiative of the Partnerships, Volunteering & Engagement committee. The committee's role in this project would be to bring together the various partners and support the community and stakeholder conversations that would need to happen as part of the planning process.

B) SHARE/PRESENT ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The current Organizational Plan and presentation of mission, vision responsibilities, and goals should be shared with each municipality, state agencies, and partner organizations, so they clearly understand your organization's goals and direction and you can identify ways they can support/partner. These presentations can also open a line of communications for on-going coordination, funding, etc.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Municipal leadership (board of selectmen, town administrators, planning departments, etc.), NH Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development, NH Tourism, NH Bureau of Trails, the Mill City Park 501(C)3 & Outdoor New England (ONE), Granite Outdoor Alliance, Winnepesaukee River Trail Association (WRTA), and the Friends of the Northern Rail Trail.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

None

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Relatively low cost; can likely be done with board time alone.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Keeping up the relationships and organizational contacts over the long-term can take a lot of time and effort so having a committee specifically focused on this can be helpful.

3. FUNDRAISING & FINANCIALS COMMITTEE

A) APPLY FOR GRANTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The fundraising and financials committee should work on two immediate grant and technical support applications. One for the [National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation \(RTC\) Assistance Program](#) to support trail master planning efforts and one from [New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#) for organizational capacity support.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

National Park Service and New Hampshire Charitable Foundation; letters of support from as many other partners as possible (municipal leadership, NH Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development, NH Tourism, Mill City Park 501(C)3, etc.).

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

While many materials needed for the grant applications were generated from this organizational plan, there will be some additional narrative, content, maps, etc. that may need to be developed.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Relatively low cost; can likely be done with board time alone.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Grant applications take time to develop and don't always pan out, especially in the first year. Be sure to get feedback on your application scoring build upon your application materials year over year.

3. FUNDRAISING & FINANCIALS COMMITTEE

B) HOLD A FUNDRAISING EVENT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

While the recreation system is not yet complete, a more local/regionally-focused paddle-pedal event could highlight the existing rail trails, paddle access points, and the recently completed whitewater park as well as showcase the Foothills Foundation's mission and raise funds for the organization. See the example from Vermont's Missisquoi Valley [here](#) (rail trail and river)

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Winnepesaukee River Trail Association (WRTA) and the Mill City Park 501(C)3/Outdoor New England (ONE)

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Event planning and coordination will likely take 2022 for a 2023 event

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Relatively low cost; can likely be done with board time alone.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Events take a lot of effort to manage and orchestrate—especially if they are fundraising events—so event sponsors, registration fees, etc. will all need to be carefully planned for to ensure a return on investment of board time and effort.

4.

BRANDING, WEBSITE & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**A) COMPLETE BRANDING/LOGO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT BRAND****PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Complete branding and logo design for the Foothills Foundation and implement brand into project website, presentations, and other materials. Share brand with relevant tourism groups and begin discussions on how to build out the brand in support of destination marketing that may come a bit later (after more trails and connections are developed).

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Trent/Abby/Graphic Designers, NH Tourism, Lakes Region Tourism, Granite Outdoor Alliance, NH Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development, etc.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Complete brand and identity documents, logo.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Relatively low cost; can likely be done with board time alone.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Regional branding will ultimately have a large role to play in destination marketing, but even before that the Foothills Foundation brand can help reinforce the organizations mission, goals, and approach with local residents, businesses, and state partners.

4. BRANDING, WEBSITE & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

B) PHASE 1 FOOTHILLS WEBSITE

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Update the Foothills website to be a mostly local-serving resource that communicates the mission and vision of the organization, the Organizational Plan, etc. as you continue to build out the trail system and bring more partners and support into the fold. Eventually the website could be transitioned to more of an user information, mapping, and trip planning resource or the a separate website could be developed to support this.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

Trent/Abby/Graphic Designers

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Complete brand and identity documents, logo.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Relatively low cost; can likely be done with board time alone.

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Website maintenance requires on-going effort.

5.

ORGANIZATIONAL EVOLUTION & CAPACITY COMMITTEE

A) CONTINUE WORK ON ORGANIZATIONAL EVOLUTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Continue to work through the designation process to be incorporated as a 501(c)3 and update bylaws to support committee and staff structures. Collaborate with UNH Extension staff to direct and oversee potential intern and AmeriCorps positions in the interim. Work with the New Hampshire Center for Non-Profits, the NH Charitable Foundation, and others to expand board capacity and organizational structure.

PARTNERS INVOLVED:

UNH Extension, NH Charitable Foundation, New Hampshire Center for Non-Profits

ADDITIONAL PLANNING REQUIRED:

Bylaw and incorporation research

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

1. [New Hampshire Charitable Foundation](#)
2. [New Hampshire Center for Non-Profits](#)

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Ensuring adequate resources are allocated to organizational capacity as the organization grows over time.



FOOTHILLS FOUNDATION
Organizational Plan + Regional
Recreation Analysis