

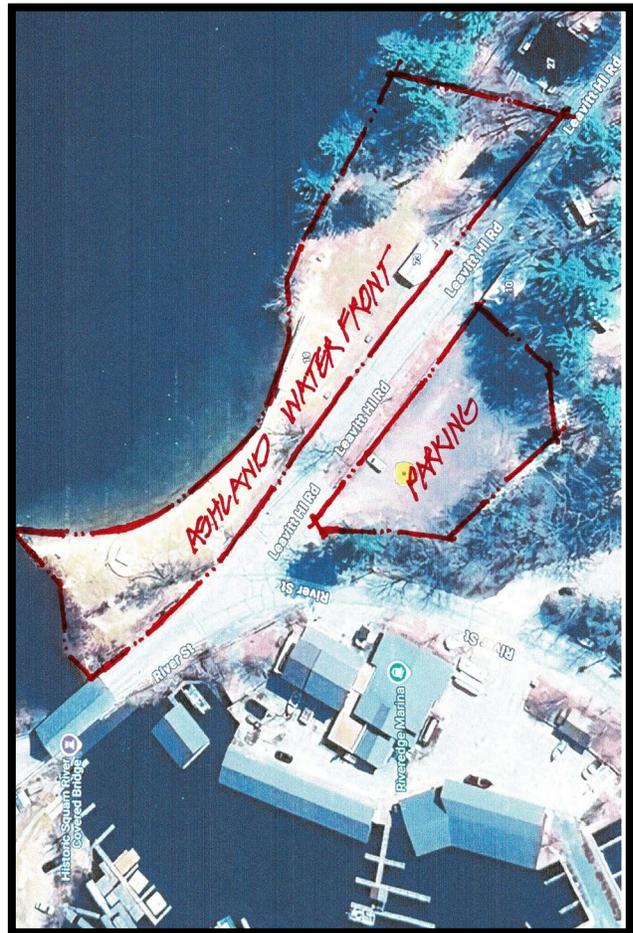
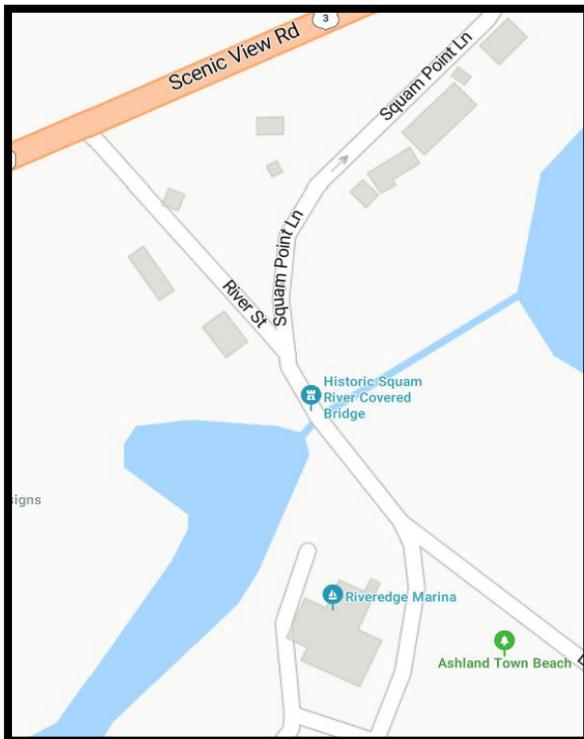
Ashland Waterfront Redevelopment Project (AWRP)

Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) Catalyst Grant for Feasibility Study & Development of Comprehensive Plan

Questions & Answers and Comments

1/17/2026 Economic Development Committee Town Briefing

Introduction: The NBRC Catalyst Grant is \$50,000, which must be matched by \$50,000 raised by the town. Ashland is eligible for the grant because it is designated as an area of distress with 25% of residents living below the poverty level. The purpose is to improve the standard of living for residents and promote economic development by redeveloping the waterfront. The \$100,000 Feasibility Study is a necessary first step and obtaining community input is an important part of the process. The Feasibility Study Report will include an assessment of environmental, economic, legal, social, and environmental aspects of recreational options and site designs for the waterfront area. It will recommend redevelopment plan(s) that offer the best return on investment and public benefits and will help avoid costly mistakes. Once the Report is issued and approved by the Board of Selectmen, it will be used to seek grants and financing for completing the AWRP.



1. **Q:** What will the impact be on streets adjacent to Town Beach--Rte. 3 turnoff onto River St., River St., Squam Point Ln., Leavitt Hill Rd.? Concerned about increased traffic volume and speeding on River St. and the turnoff from Rte. 3 onto River St.

A: Addressing traffic and parking issues will be included in the instructions for consultants that are hired to conduct the study and develop the plans. The parking area across Leavitt Hill Rd. from Town Beach is part of the waterfront redevelopment project.

2. **Q:** Will there be a preference for Ashland residents to visit Town Beach?

A: Consultants conducting the feasibility study and developing the plans will be asked to present options for preferring Ashland residents.

3. **Q:** Is the goal to have more residents or out-of-town people visit the waterfront?

A: Both. The goal of waterfront redevelopment is to boost the town economically and recreationally by offering more types of recreational activities that attract residents, non-residents, and businesses to Ashland and contribute to the town's economic development. It will also improve the waterfront's appeal, safety, accessibility, and environmental and economic sustainability.

4. **Q & Public comments about resident & visitor fees:** What are current charges for using the Town Beach? The study should consider the fee structure and ways (such as a rubberized wrist band) to identify residents.

A: Yes, the fee structure and ways to improve and simplify resident access can be addressed in the study. Currently, there are fees during the summer season:

Residents & Taxpayers: Daily (16 yrs and up) \$2.00, Season, \$25.00

Non-Residents: Daily \$4.00, Season \$50.00

Free: Under 16 years of age, Seniors (65+)

Parking is free



5. Q & Public comments regarding environmental/silting issues: What has EDC shared with the Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) thus far?
Concerns about erosion and that silt is now moving down river. NHDES must be brought in early. Very limited dredging is permitted in Squam River to remove silt and it's necessary to address this silting problem as part of the grant.
A Squam Lakes Association (SLA) representative who attended the briefing indicated that SLA is interested in collaborating and referred us to the [Squam Lakes Watershed Implementation Plan](#), Feb. 2020, which SLA developed in collaboration with NHDES and others. It includes Ashland Town Beach. [[sla_wmp_final_02.2020.pdf](#); see p. 11, Site 41, Ashland Town Beach, which has a low impact rating and the recommendation is: "Evaluate septic systems; replace/upgrade, if necessary."].

A: NHDES visited the waterfront site with EDC members last year. NHDES recognizes the town beach as a regional asset and will ensure the town addresses runoff, silting, erosion, and other environment and water quality concerns in compliance with state and federal laws as the redevelopment plans are developed. A waterfront redevelopment plan cannot move forward without NHDES approval and permitting.

6. Comment by a town member who participated in the evaluation of the beach when it was changed from a sloped beach to a perched beach (with a retaining wall): The problem with the beach is that the town chose the cheap option for erosion control when the beach was redesigned and the retaining wall was installed to create a "perched beach." That is why too much wall is now exposed and there are safety, erosion, and silting concerns. A hydrology study is required to determine the most appropriate and sustainable way to control runoff, erosion, silting, and water quality problems. Look at results of past erosion studies regarding the beach, wake zone, dye studies; when sand has been deposited onto the beach area; maintenance of wall; etc.

A: As part of the feasibility study, the consultants will study and identify options for recreational activities and structures and designs to support them that are economically and environmentally sustainable. That includes consulting with NHDES and conducting required or needed hydrology studies.

7. Q: What about people with disabilities, elderly, young children, and other accessibility and safety issues (beyond the ramp to the water and retaining wall)?

A: A goal of the project is to improve safety and increase accessibility and usability for people with disabilities, young children, older adults, and others. Town input about those concerns and compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (a federal law) are part of the feasibility study for the project.

8. Q: Can the Parking Area be expanded?

A: Redesigning the parking area will be considered as part of the feasibility study, along

with addressing traffic concerns.

- 9. Q:** Town Beach land was donated by the Edward N. Doggett family; there are restrictions and wishes to be considered in the deed.

A: Yes, and they were reviewed by legal counsel. The deed required the beach to become public 4 years after donation and children under 16 years of age must be allowed access free of charge.

- 10. Q and comments regarding safety:** Will safety concerns be considered? Examples: raft, docks (if added); deep vs. shallow water; keeping boats separate from beach users; lack of sloped beach.

Concerns about current lack of best safety practices for children, such as lack of a gradual slope for entering water.

If the town doesn't approve the grant, these problems will continue and safe access for kids will still be a problem, limiting use of the beach area.

A: Yes, safety requirements and concerns for children and others will be addressed as part of the feasibility study and development of redevelopment plans.

- 11. Q:** Will the campground amenities be considered? Or other upgrades, such as campground bathhouse; the beach house; food or other consignment; better area for recreation program attendees.

A: The campground and campground bathhouse are not included in the AWRP site. The AWRP includes the area between Leavitt Hill Rd. and Little Squam Lake that is owned by the town and the parking lot across the street (see page 1). Thus, options and designs for a beach house, bathrooms, changing rooms, food and other consignments, improved areas for and more types of recreation, and structure(s) that provide cover from elements are considered as part of the feasibility study and redevelopment plans.

- 12. Q:** Is a launching area for kayak at Town Beach being considered? Currently, people can't launch from the beach area most of the day during beach season.

A: Ann Barney, Ashland Parks and Recreation Director, commented that when lifeguards are on duty, they are responsible for anyone using the beach area, for example, if a kayaker was in distress, the lifeguards are required to respond.

The purpose of the AWRP is to increase recreational offerings and achieve:

- The first goal in Ashland's Master Plan: "to enhance the town's position as a destination for those seeking quality outdoor recreation," and
- The goal in Ashland's Recreation Plan to create "additional educational and recreational opportunities at the beach."

Best practices and legal requirements for separating the beach area from areas where kayaks or other watersports are launched or conducted and designs that can

accommodate multiple recreational uses will be considered and assessed as part of the feasibility study and redevelopment plans.

13. Q: How does Big Squam Lake play into this redevelopment? For example, potential funding sources and collaboration such as collaborations with SLA or other organizations for water quality or educational programs? Offering sailing lessons?

A: Those and other ideas about programming and collaborations are welcomed as part of the feasibility study and by the EDC as it seeks partnerships and financial and in-kind contributions for funding the improvements and redevelopment of the waterfront.