



## Rumford Community Celebration

### Proposed Installation of Gazebo in Veteran's Park



October 8, 2016





**Project:** Add a gazebo to Veteran’s Park to be used as a community gathering space and band stand to increase enjoyment of the Park and provide a place to host events.

**Lead:** Randall Therrien, Rumford Key Bank

## Project Overview and Celebration Summary

*Envision Rumford* and other stakeholders voted on adding a small gazebo to Veteran’s Park, which is located at one end of Rumford’s downtown main street and is at the point of the island of Rumford, backing up to the scenic Androscoggin River. There was local opposition by one individual to the original site chosen for the project due to an earlier commitment to use that space for a monument (by a previous select board). To maintain positive feelings about the gazebo, a new site in the Park has been selected and approved by the town’s planning board. Construction is slated to begin this fall and the contractor chosen, a Rumford resident, reports it will be completed by the onset of winter.

Carol Morris, GrowSmart Maine Board Vice Chair, and Tyler Kidder, GrowSmart Maine’s Community Outreach Director, staffed a table for Making Headway at Rumford’s annual fall event, the River Valley Pumpkin Fest. The weather was perfect and the festival was very well attended. There was a tug of war, ice carving, pumpkin tosses, and plenty of food and retail booths. Costumed children flocked to tables for the trick-or-treat portion of the day with their parents in tow. The Making Headway table gave out apple cider, apples, and invited those in

attendance to learn more about the upcoming gazebo project, how it had been accomplished, and share what is next for Rumford. There was a lot of excitement around the possibility of having a band stand in the park. People reported hearing about it from neighbors, reading about it in the paper, and some learned about it for the first time at the festival.



## Matching Grant Funds

*Waiting to hear details from the community for the accounting of the match provided by the community.*

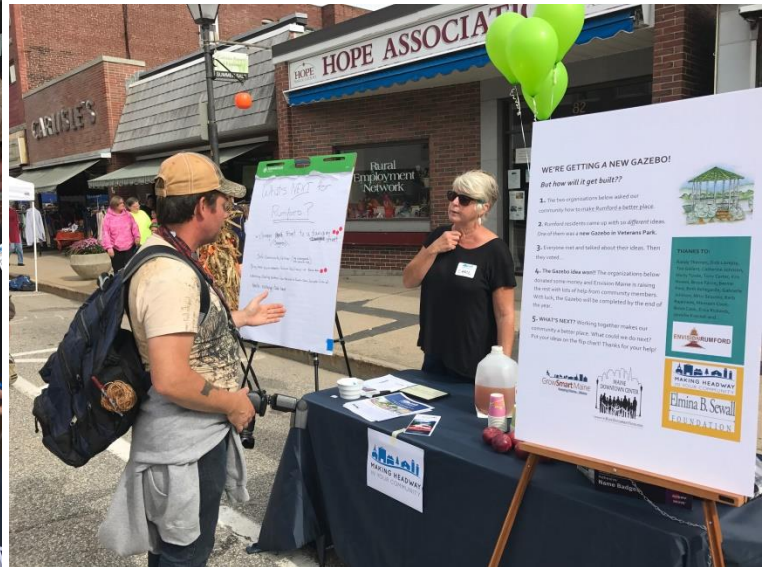
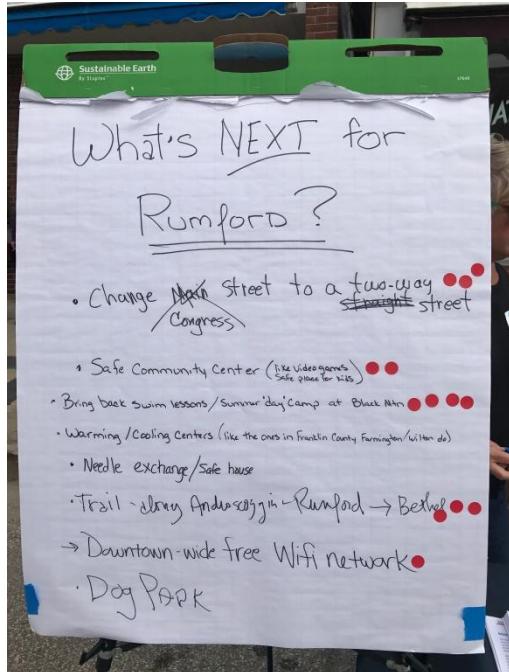
## Next Steps

At the Pumpkin Festival ideas were gathered on a flip chart with the prompt 'What's next for Rumford? Many thoughtful answers were gathered including:

- Make Congress Street two-way
- Safe Community Center aimed at youth – Place to kids to hang out
- Bring back swim lessons & summer day camp at Black Mountain
- Warming and Cooling centers (like those in Farmington and Wilton) for aging or vulnerable people to stay warm in winter and cool in summer
- Needle Exchange / Safe House
- Trail along the Androscoggin from Rumford to Bethel



- Downtown-wide Free WIFI Network
- Dog Park



## Community Capacity

Although the siting of the gazebo was delayed, the community process of investigating what matters most to Rumford was illuminating and brought people together. The second location may prove to be a better site than the first and the accommodation to the needs of the community built stronger relationships. During the time at the table, at least one resident was inspired enough to connect with the local leaders of the project as she wanted to be more involved with their future successes.

In addition to this small Making Headway project, the town of Rumford is fully engaged in other economic and community-building efforts such as the construction of a new hotel on the edge of downtown and the planned complete relaying of sidewalks and central downtown thoroughfare, Congress Street, in the summer of 2017. The restoration of two crucial bridges on either end of the downtown is also wrapping up this fall and conversations about a wide, connected trail system are underway by community groups and town administrators. In addition, Rumford has a redeveloped mill that hosts an art collective, career center, University College Center at Rumford/Mexico, and other community organizations.

## Lessons Learned from the Community

Because Making Headway In Your Community is a straightforward approach to accomplishing a manageable community-scaled project, by design it can inspire communities to continue the momentum and accomplish other projects together. Making Headway came to Rumford at a moment when it was ready to spring forward. The town appears to be committed to continue to address needs and opportunities utilizing the proven methods offered by Making Headway. There is a lot of optimism in Rumford, despite the many challenges that face rural and industry-based communities all over Maine.



## Skills, Abilities and Instincts

At the time of the writing of this report the community is finalizing how they will spend their \$500 for additional training or education for interested community members.

## Conclusion

The Rumford stakeholders group was initially frustrated by the delay of the construction of the gazebo. The community celebration event was timed to coincide with the The Pumpkin Festival as the project was supposed to be completed by then. Despite these bumps in the road and slightly unconventional pre-completion celebration, this project has been a success as it brought together a strong group of committed residents to rally behind something they believe

will benefit their community directly. Having a table at this well-attended event did much to expand awareness of Making Headway and the goals of GrowSmart and the Downtown Center.

Young and old visitors to the Making Headway table at the festival remarked how nice it will be to have a band stand and concerts in the park. Many of them do not currently use the space and the addition of the gazebo will invite more people to enjoy the park as well as provide entertainment and something to do during summer evenings. In a town struggling with housing affordability, career opportunities, and other challenges, bringing people together around something joyful like an outdoor concert has the power to build community and improve the quality of life for all. Small projects like this can pave the way for future impactful changes.



“Making Headway in Your Community” is a series of three public meetings, facilitated by GrowSmart Maine and the Maine Downtown Center, over a period of 8-10 months during which communities identify what they value most in their towns. Small projects are grant funded by the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation with local community match. The grants draw attention to collaborative work; improve connections within the community and inspire to improve communities across Maine. [www.Makingheadway.me](http://www.Makingheadway.me) is the program website designed for sharing these success stories and connecting with local, regional, statewide and even national organizations offering information and services to help communities in these efforts.

Funding is provided by the Elmina B Sewall Foundation. Making Headway in Your Community is a collaborative program of GrowSmart Maine and The Maine Downtown Center.