

L A T C H S T R I N G P A R K

YARMOUTH, MAINE

HISTORY AND PROGRESS OF THE LATCHSTRING PARK TASK FORCE

In Fall of 2018, a group of neighbors organized a cleanup of the park. We spent a Sunday morning digging out debris, including pieces of a stockade fence, an old car battery, leaves and branches. Following the cleanup, we began looking at the park's use and potential for improvement. Latchstring Park was largely dilapidated, resembling more of a parking lot than a park. The rear of the park was particularly neglected.

We noted that the parking lot was frequently used as a cut-through for traffic to avoid the light at the intersection of Elm and Main Street, which was dangerous for pedestrians. Working with the council and the town manager, barricades were placed along the side of the park facing Patty Lane to ensure the safety of pedestrians walking and biking in the area. It was at this time, Summer of 2019, that the council voted to establish the Latchstring Park Task Force with the charge of making recommendations for improvement to the "safety, function and aesthetics" of the park.

The Latchstring Park Task Force began working in the Fall of 2019, largely in agreement that we as a community benefit from small green spaces along Main Street that are accessible to people of all ages and abilities. We agreed that these spaces enhance the experience of living and working in Yarmouth.

Our initial challenge was to balance the need for parking with the value of the green space, trees, and enhanced aesthetics. In early 2020, Josh Tompkins fortunately joined the work of the Task Force. Josh is a talented Landscape Architect in private practice here in Yarmouth. With his expertise, we developed a design concept that meets this challenge and accomplishes the need for parking, while creating a recognizable park: a place for people to gather and relax in close proximity to homes and businesses.

Over the last eighteen months, the design concept has been extensively reviewed by town staff, the Economic Development Advisory Board, neighbors, businesses and many others in the community. It has been endorsed by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee and the Parks & Lands Committee. In response to the feedback received during this public process, the design concept was thoughtfully revised and ultimately presented to the Town Council.

After multiple iterations, the design concept was endorsed by the Town Council on February 25, 2021. As part of their endorsement, the Town Council voted to extend the work and adapt the mission of the Task Force to include raising the funds needed to detail and implement the design for construction, in accordance with the Design Concept and without impact to the Town budget.