



Springfield Comtu Cascade Park

When Planning Leads to Action

Better Connections and Downtown Transportation Funds Spark Downtown Revitalization in Springfield

Through the **Better Connections Grant Program**, the Town of Springfield launched a community-driven planning effort to better align land use and transportation and establish a clear vision for downtown revitalization. That work laid the foundation for implementation through the **Downtown Transportation Fund (DTF)** and other sources, allowing the Town to move from ideas to action. Together, the programs supported the transformation of a long-neglected downtown site into **Comtu Cascade Park**, a welcoming public space that reconnects the community to the Black River and supports broader downtown investment.

Challenges

Springfield's downtown is located along the Black River, one of the community's greatest assets. For years, however, deteriorated buildings along the Main Street corridor blocked access to the river while detracting from the surrounding streetscape. Community members and local leaders recognized that revitalizing this site could have a significant impact on downtown vitality, but doing so required coordinated planning, broad support, and strategic investment. There was a shared desire to create public space, improve pedestrian circulation, and reconnect the village to the river as part of a larger effort to strengthen downtown connections and access to nearby schools.

Impact and Benefits

The **Better Connections** planning process enabled Springfield to take a holistic look at land use, transportation, and public space. Community engagement and visualization

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helped residents and decision-makers imagine how opening the site could restore river access, improve walkability, and create an accessible gathering place.

With a clear plan in place, Springfield advanced the project through the **Downtown Transportation Fund**. DTF investments over multiple years supported demolition, design, drainage, sidewalks, stairs, ramps, landscaping, lighting, and wayfinding. Accessibility and safety were integrated throughout the design, and coordination with Historic Preservation ensured the park fit within the historic downtown. Today, **Comtu Cascade Park** is complete and actively used, hosting live music, gatherings, rallies, and everyday community activity.

“The town is coming alive - with families, multigenerational gatherings, and the sounds of the river. It’s an exciting part of the community.” Bob Flint, Springfield Regional Development Corporation

Beyond the park itself, the project has served as a catalyst for additional revitalization, inspiring improvements to nearby buildings and increased private investment downtown. Approximately **\$100,000 to \$150,000** in additional resources were leveraged through partnerships and community contributions.

“This project has become a catalyst for reinvestment in the downtown. Numerous investors have since invested money to bring new life to the buildings that surround the park.” Jason Rasmussen, Mount Ascutney Regional Commission

Lessons Learned

Springfield’s experience demonstrates the value of pairing **Better Connections** and the **Downtown Transportation Fund**. Better Connections provided the shared vision and coordination, while DTF delivered the investment needed to implement that vision. Strong leadership, continuity, and partnerships were essential, helping Springfield maintain momentum despite rising costs and extended timelines. Together, the programs helped Springfield move from planning to place, showing how coordinated land use and transportation investment can drive lasting community revitalization.

“This is a corner piece of a puzzle, and the puzzle is now coming together.” Bob Flint, Springfield Regional Development Corporation

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