YORK RIVER ACCESS AD-HOC COMMITTEE · TOWN OF YORK, MAINE

The Grant House Paddlecraft Dock

Public access to the York River at Goodrich Park — what it is for, and who it is for

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Celebrate York River Month · September 17, 2026

Why we are here

York's Comprehensive Plan set this in motion, and named this site.

2022

York's voters adopt the Comprehensive Plan

The Plan's Marine Resources Strategy 3.1 calls for increased public access to the York River, especially at the Grant House — one of eleven immediate action items out of 203 strategies in the Plan.

2023

The committee forms

The York River Access Ad-Hoc Committee is seated to study river access and explore a paddle craft launch or dock at this location.

2024

The work is funded

A York River Watershed Grant ($10,000), the York Harbor Board account ($10,000) and $55,000 in ARPA funds, approved by the York Select Board, pay for the evaluation.

2025

Goodrich Park is the site that fits

As the Comprehensive Plan recommended, the committee evaluated all areas up and down the river that would possibly allow for SAFE public access. The Grant House, at this time, appears to fit that bill.

2026

Permitting clears, and we come to you

Federal and state permitting is complete. This committee is here before the York boards review it and before any ballot question.

In the Plan's own community survey, 67% said they would support the Town buying riverfront property to expand river access. One resident wrote: “Provide better paddlecraft access at Goodrich Park.”

What paddlers face today

Three ways onto the river, and not one of them was built for paddlecraft.

1

Scotland Bridge Road

A ramp built for trailers

Paddlers share the ramp with boats coming out of the water. A recent haul-out put kayakers and a trailer in the same space. It was genuinely dangerous.

2

Strawberry Island

The town's working landing

Paddlers are pointed at Town Dock #1, where the parking is posted for commercial fishermen and the float is there to load and unload boats.

3

The Route 1 bank

Nowhere to leave the car

An informal launch off the bank beside Goodrich Park. No dock, no footing at low water, and boats carried along the shoulder of a state highway.

7–9 ft of tide every six hours, with strong current. Access that only works at half tide is access that strands people, or sends them out at the wrong moment.

Why upriver, and not the harbor

Most launches point people into York Harbor, where the Plan found overcrowding has created safety concerns.

Down in the harbor

- The Comprehensive Plan found that most launching facilities direct users to York Harbor, where overcrowding has created safety concerns
- The Comprehensive Plan calls for proactive strategies, warning that conflicts between recreational and commercial uses of our waterways will otherwise continue
- The 2019 York Harbor & River Capacity Study called managing competing uses critical to safety, especially near the Route 103 bridge and the harbor mouth
- A narrow channel shared by marinas, a yacht club, two town docks and the commercial fleet, with no anchoring and limited mooring space
- Tide that runs hard through the narrows and swirls in the harbor, pushing small craft sideways

Up at Goodrich Park

- The Comprehensive Plan sets recreational access above Sewall's Bridge and working waterfront below it. Goodrich Park is above it
- Off the channel, away from the marinas and the fleet, so paddlers and powerboats stop competing for the same water
- Upstream: the salt marsh, the estuary and Smelt Brook — quiet water, birds, and the scenery the York River's Wild & Scenic designation exists to protect
- Downstream: a fair-tide run toward Wiggly Bridge and the old waterfront — a paddle you choose, not one you are forced into

Access for every age and ability

Right now, York's river access is for people who can climb down a bank.

A launch you can use sitting down

A drive-through accessible launch with a bench and grab rails. You transfer into the boat at a stable, level height instead of lowering yourself onto mud or rock.

A path, not a scramble

A level pathway from a drop-off area to the pier, with accessible parking already on site. Someone can be dropped at the door and reach the water on their own.

An aging paddling population

The people most likely to be shut out are the ones who have paddled this river their whole lives. This is the design decision that keeps them on the water.

Who this is for

- York residents
- York's children
- York's seniors
- Anyone who has been unable to get to this river at all

What the town could do with it

York Parks and Recreation is headquartered in this building. The river is a few hundred feet away and out of reach.

Storage racks on site

York Parks and Recreation intends to build racks so residents can keep a boat at the park, likely by fee or lottery.

Boats for people who don't own one

Rentals on site, opening paddling to residents without paddlecraft, and to visitors.

Kids on the water

Youth programs and camps that teach how current and tide actually behave on this river.

Paddling mornings for seniors

York's Center for Active Living has the population and the programming, but never a launch that works.

Instruction and certification

Parks and Recreation's sea kayaking and Registered Maine Guide courses already meet at 200 Route 1.

Programs closer to home

Free guided kayak trips with the York Land Trust already run here, staged from a ramp elsewhere.

Parks and Recreation hears from people who would paddle more, but find moving a kayak a hassle or a physical impossibility. Storage on site removes that barrier.

Parking, access and availability

The site already has the thing every other put-in on this river lacks.

A

An off-highway lot that already exists

Reached by Ferry Lane rather than a turn off Route 1, on land the town has owned since 1972. Room for cars, trucks with trailers, accessible spaces and a drop-off area, on a lot York Parks and Recreation already maintains.

B

Nobody carries a boat down a highway

Drop the boat at the path, then park. The Comprehensive Plan names limited parking as one of the main limits on public access to the river, and it is the reason the existing put-ins do not work for groups.

C

Book an hour, not a tide window

All-tide access means a class, a camp or a family schedules around people instead of around the chart. It also spreads use out rather than concentrating everyone on the same two hours of water.

D

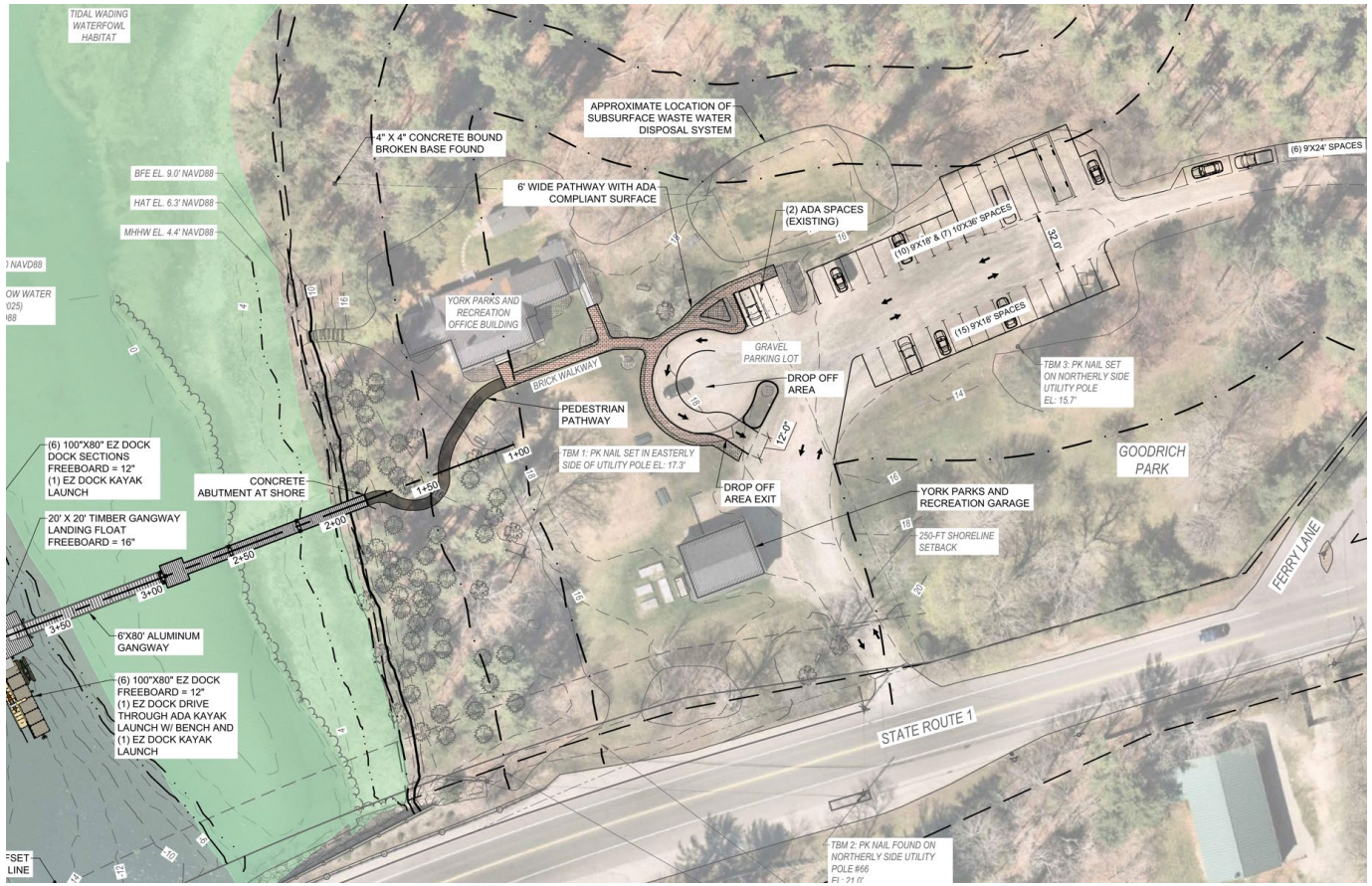
Relief for the boat ramp

Paddlers out of the Scotland Bridge Road ramp queue means faster, safer launching for trailered boats too. Everyone on that ramp gets on the water sooner.

The same drive-up access gives the York Harbormaster, the York Fire Department and an ambulance a shore-side point they can reach directly.

What is proposed

A pier and gangway to floating launches, with the upland access already in place.



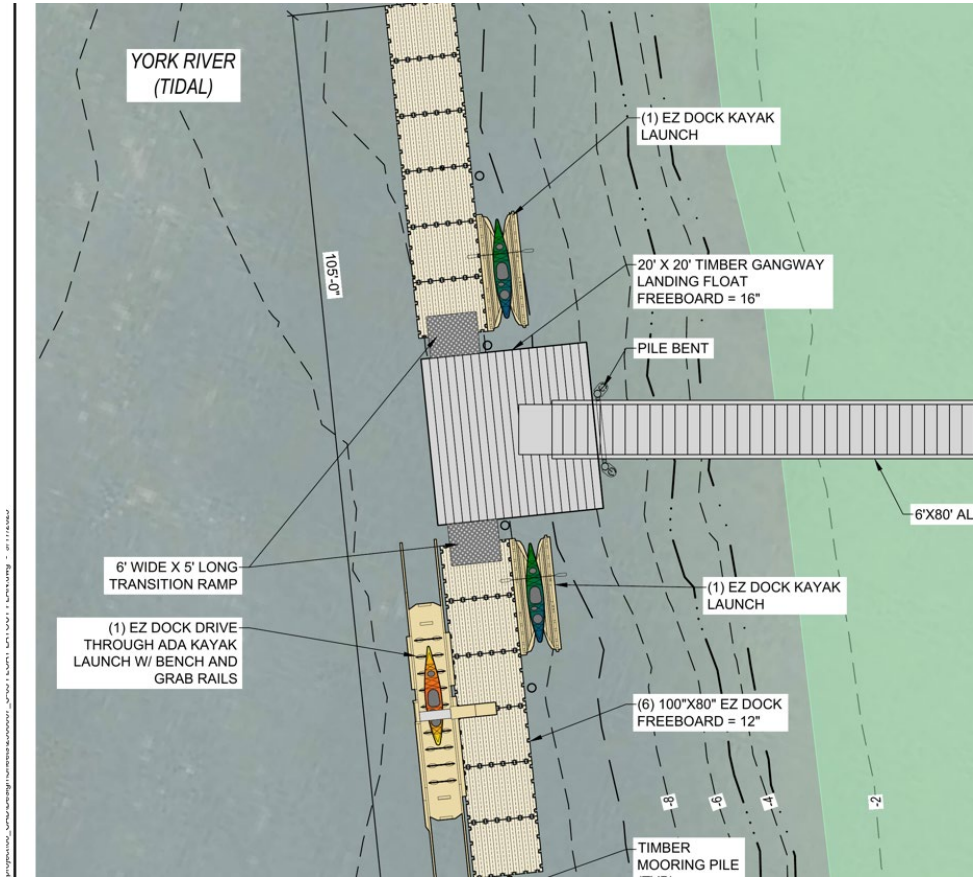
On the plan

- A timber pier out to a gangway and floating launches, reaching water at every tide
- Multiple kayak launches, including a drive-through accessible launch with bench and grab rails
- A level pathway from a drop-off area to the pier
- Parking and accessible spaces in the existing lot, off Ferry Lane rather than Route 1

Preliminary permitted design by GEI Consultants. The river access committee is refining it now, so expect changes before anything is built.

The launching stations

Multiple launch points, all of them at the same height as the water.



A drive-through accessible launch

Enter from the float and stay seated. A bench and grab rails steady the transfer, so nobody has to lower themselves to the water or be lifted back out.

Multiple launches for groups

Separate launch points let a group, a class or a family put in together instead of queuing one boat at a time down a ramp.

Floats that ride the tide

The launches sit on floating sections off the gangway, so the step into a boat is the same at high water and at low.

Preliminary permitted design by GEI Consultants — refinement is underway.

Where it stands

Federal and state permitting is complete. The town's decisions are ahead.

Done

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Maine Department of Environmental Protection have both signed off. The state submerged land lease is in process.

Next

Local review by the York Harbor Board, the York Planning Board and the York Select Board. The permits are valid for three years.

Ongoing

The committee has engaged GEI Consultants on a value-engineering review and is consulting regional pier builders on cost and constructability. Any changes stay within what is already permitted.

Questions — and the committee invites you to Goodrich Park to see the site, until 5 this afternoon.