HOOSIC
RE-ENVISIONING THE SOUTH BRANCH
RIVER
IN NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS
REVIVAL
Nestled in the northern edge of The Berkshires, the Hoosic River valley is one of the most scenic regions in Southern New England.
We have a vision to re-establish the **HOOSIC RIVER** as the heart of North Adams’ economy and community.

Until recently, the Hoosic River has been the engine behind North Adams’ economy. On occasion the river also delivered flood waters through the city. Given the severity of repeated flood events from the 1920s through the 1940s, our community sought an engineering solution from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. While the resulting 15 foot-high concrete chutes and earthen walls have protected the city from flooding for over 60 years, their singular function has separated the city’s residents from one of their greatest assets.

In 2008, the Hoosic River Revival was founded as a coalition of ‘dreamers’ with the vision of reconnecting the people of North Adams to a restored river. Seeking to create a catalyst for the resurgence of our community, it is a vision realized by many revitalized ‘river walk’ cities across the country. Like those historic river towns with vacant mills and struggling Main Streets, North Adams is long overdue for a creative and proven approach to spur economic development.

As we move ever closer to making this dream a reality through our exciting, creative plan for the river, we now face the challenge of finding the financial resources to help us implement this vision. Teaming with the nationally renowned and Massachusetts-based river restoration and design firms Inter-Fluve and Sasaki Associates, we are pleased to share with you the next step of our journey toward a restored river and the renaissance of North Adams.

Richard Alcombright  
**Mayor of North Adams**

Judy Grinnell  
**Founder & President of the Hoosic River Revival Board of Directors**
IMAGINE
A REVITALIZED HOOSIC RIVER
Currently the river is a community eyesore

With over 2.5 miles of aging flood chutes (North & South Branch combined) within its downtown, the river is unattractive, unhealthy, inaccessible, and considered a safety risk.

Hoosic River North Branch
Near MASS MoCA
Photo: Cindy Delpapa
The existing concrete chutes and levees have effectively contained floodwaters for over 60 years. However, this engineering approach to flood management comes at a cost. Our otherwise wild, trout-filled river becomes a barren, wildlife-deprived trickle as it passes through North Adams. The looming walls are unattractive and serve as a real barrier for aquatic species, who find the walls difficult to access and completely inhospitable. Given the advancing age of the flood chutes, the time is ripe to invest in an enlightened approach to flood management design.
Each journey begins with a first step. For the Hoosic River restoration, this meant identifying a key section of the river to serve as a test project. This pilot incorporates many key elements which the community identified as important through community conversations held to solicit the ideas and dreams of North Adams’ residents.
MAKING ROOM FOR THE RIVER

River specialists now know brute engineering to control natural forces is not often the best approach. Designs capitalizing on natural processes are more likely to succeed and be sustainable. For example, reestablishing a river’s connection to historic floodplains provides a natural ‘relief valve’ for flood waters. This additional space also allows a river to meander, creates better habitat and invites people to access the river. It is this approach of letting nature inform design that is at the heart of the Hoosic River restoration.

Hoosic River North Branch
Near Clarksburg, Massachusetts
Photos: Judith Grinnell
Reinvented as a river filled with life, both in the channel and along its banks, the preliminary design for the pilot project includes improved habitat for river species, reimagined recreational facilities, well-planned paths, and a host of amenities for residents and visitors. These improvements will transform the area while still maintaining the existing level of flood protection.
RESTORING THE RIVER ECOLOGY

Restored reach near Noel Field
Conceptual Rendering
Kondo Associates Inc.
Based on river conditions further upstream, the goal of the in-channel restoration is to develop and enhance stable river corridor habitats, improve water quality, reestablish riverine habitats, and restore in-stream connectivity. This strategy results in a design that is largely self-maintaining, reducing overall long-term costs.
This plan celebrates the Hoosic as a connecting feature through the city, improving access between Main Street, MASS MoCA, Heritage State Park, and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts campus. The scenic multi-use trail runs north-south along the entire 1.5 mile length of the South Branch, tying into proposed extensions of the Mohawk and Ashuwillticook recreation trails.
EXPERIENCE
A RIVER FOR ALL SEASONS

View north from Noel Field
Conceptual Rendering
Sasaki Associates, Inc.
THE HOOSIC RIVER REVIVAL ORGANIZATION

A nonprofit tax-exempt organization
501(c)(3)
EIN 46-1081343

15 Person
all volunteer
Board of
Directors
representing the
community and
a wide-range of
backgrounds

Active group
of advisors
from both local
and state entities

$800K
collected from private & public sources
with $700K invested in research, community outreach, and restoration design

7,000
volunteer hours
devoted to the project by the Board of Directors and community members

$0
direct cost to North Adams, one of the poorest cities in Massachusetts
IMPLEMENTATION
NEXT STEPS

Since the inception of this project, Hoosic River Revival has been working closely with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials to facilitate the authorization process. Coupled with a thorough design process and hydraulic modeling of each design phase, we are pleased to propose the following ambitious timeline.

2015
Authorization process with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; design refinements

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

Flow and flood modeling updated; Corps PEER review; federal, state and local regulatory agencies permitting

Recreational fields relocation; pedestrian/bike trails built; landscaping

Site preparation; in-stream enhancements; utility relocation

Restored South Branch of the Hoosic River is open for recreation and enjoyment!
JOIN IN THE REVITALIZATION OF OUR RIVER AND OUR CITY!

Thank you for sharing the excitement and passion we feel about restoring a cherished asset in our great community. Inspired by numerous successful urban river revitalization projects across the country, we are confident a healthy, attractive Hoosic River will become an engine for renewed investment in the heart of our city.

The city is not new to addressing the challenges of existence as a former mill town. The 1990 dream to transform one of our idle factory complexes into the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) has paid off, moving the city in a new direction. While highly successful in its own right, the museum is only one component of what our city needs. This river project is the next major step towards a fully inviting, thriving city where locals and tourists alike can experience not only the arts and culture of MASS MoCA, but also the Hoosic River as a public amenity.

Lacking big industry or large commercial establishments, we need caring and visionary people just like you to be the foundation of this next chapter in the life of the Hoosic River. Please join us in supporting this healthy, dynamic resource for the people and wildlife of North Adams, and for our visitors and new residents to come.

Thank you again for sharing this vision with us!