



GRAND RIVER
RESTORATION
COMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

07/21/15



The Grand River Restoration Steering Committee is pleased to submit for your review and action the attached final report. The report summarizes the committee's charge, accomplishments and recommended actions.

The committee has completed its work assuring coordination of the various planning studies to create a vision for the restored river, downtown and the river banks. The Committee is proud of its accomplishment and looks forward to assisting in the transition from vision to implementation. In order to do so, we urge the City to act upon the recommendations contained in the report. Key recommendations include:

1. The City Commission should authorize a transitional role for a successor to the Steering Committee (Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee) to identify or create a new public-private partnership, not-

for-profit organization capable of coordinating construction, management and operations for river/corridor restoration-related projects and activities and capable of coordinating long-term leadership, public engagement, fundraising, programming, stewardship, operations and maintenance services. A draft Interim Organizational structure document is included which suggests a future governance model for the new Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee.

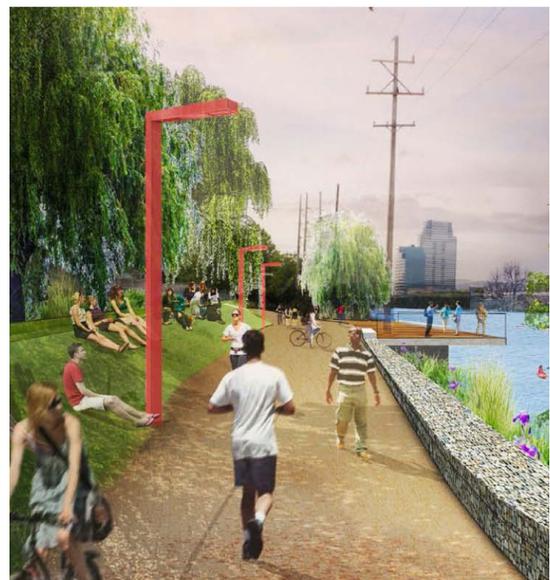
2. Work with key partners including the City of Grand Rapids and Grand Rapids White-water to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Trust for Public Land (TPL) by which (with private philanthropic funding) TPL would provide professional support to the Grand River Corridor

Revitalization Committee in its transitional role and would coordinate vital near-term tasks, likely to include:

- a. Assessing capacities of local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and other organizations and, then, developing a strategy and timetable for identifying or creating an NGO as described in Recommendation 1 above;
- b. Serving as fiscal agent and fiduciary for funds contributed to or designated for specific projects, such as restoring the namesake rapids to downtown Grand Rapids;
- c. Developing and coordinating execution of a fundraising strategy for early projects and activities catalyzed by the prospect of River/rapids restoration; and,
- d. Coordinating with the City and key partners in applying for permits, identifying funding sources and beginning implementation of

river/corridor projects, especially the catalytic project of restoring the namesake rapids to downtown.

3. On a parallel track, the Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee, supported by TPL, should explore the formation of a complementary “recreational authority” like organization under Michigan law (with inclusion of key government jurisdictions upstream and downstream from Grand Rapids) and/or of potential “improvement districts” and similar funding mechanisms, carefully coordinating with the City in view of the existing system-wide parks millage.



4. Recognizing that the Grand River is held in public trust by the State of Michigan and is a watershed in which Grand Rapids is one community among many, special consideration must be given to regional efforts that positively contribute to water quality for river recreation. Improving water quality must be an imbedded priority in program and funding strategies, messaging and branding. The Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee and any subsequent entity or entities managing the oversight and coordination of the river corridor projects, must work in partnership with others to closely monitor water quality and support both regional and local efforts to minimize pollutants to the Grand River. Strategies for achieving water quality improvements include

a. The notion of improving the quality of the water in the Grand River should be imbedded in the messaging, branding and funding initiatives of the river restoration effort. Responsibility for monitoring progress on the recommendations should become part of

the work of the entity that takes on oversight and coordination of the next phase of the project.

b. Address high impact point-source water quality infrastructure opportunities in the Grand River watershed area.

c. Address livestock and cropland pathogen pollutants in the Direct Drainage Subwatershed management unit of the Lower Grand River Watershed and in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership area. Plant buffer and filter strips along priority acreage adjacent to and encompassing the Direct Drainage Subwatershed and Urban Waters Federal Partnership area.

d. Improve septic programs and policies in the Grand River watershed area. Work with the Governor's Administration on a statewide

septic code and with local health departments to adopt operational inspections and maintenance requirements in their septic regulations.

- e. Maximize implementation of green infrastructure and low-impact development (LID) within the River Restoration Project Corridor area by encouraging local policies and incentives that favor LID.
- f. Implement projects identified by the City of Grand Rapids Green Infrastructure Opportunity Assessment. Inspire a similar assessment and implementation process for managing stormwater runoff in upstream communities.

Our ability to complete the work as assigned by the City Commission is due in large part to the diverse committee leaders that include members from local, state, tribal and federal governments, businesses, community groups, river user groups, conservation and environmental organizations.

Thank you for your continued support in strengthening our City's biggest asset, the Grand River.

Sincerely,

**River Restoration
Steering Committee:**

Joe Jones, Co-Chair

Fred Keller, Co-Chair

Vicki Anthes

Patty Birkholz

Steve Faber

George Heartwell

John Helmholdt

Scott Hicks

Rachel Hood

Ryan Huppert

Kris Larson

Megan Lemmen

James Moyer

Chris Muller

Nkatha Mwenda
Larry Romanelli
Rodney Stokes
Greg Sundstrom
Mary Swanson
Jim Talen
Rick Treur
Kristian Williams

Liasons:

Scott Bishop,
Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Jason Carey,
River Restoration Org.

Neil Carlson,
Calvin College

Tim Kelly,
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc.

Barbara Nelson Jameson,
National Park Service

Kalie Nye,
Grand Rapids Whitewater

Wendy Ogilvie,
Grand Valley Metro Council, Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds

Nick Occhipinti,
West Michigan Environmental Action Council

Scott Page,
Interface Studio

Eric Pessell,
Kent County Health Department

Chris Reader,
GRForward River Corridor
Committee Chair

Chip Richards,
Grand Rapids Whitewater

Allison Rudi,
Calvin College

Jim Smalligan,
Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr and
Huber

Dana Strouse,
State of Michigan, Department of
Environmental Quality

Mark Van Putten,
ConservationStrategy LLC on behalf
of the Wege Foundation

Staff:

Eric Delong
Kim Dixon
Hannah Fernando
Mike Lunn
David Marquardt
Suzanne Schulz
Jay Steffen

Committee Charge

The Grand River Restoration Steering Committee was appointed by the Grand Rapids City Commission in March, 2014. The Steering Committee was co-chaired by Fred Keller and Joe Jones and the Commission provided the Committee with the following charge:

- Provide overall guidance on efforts associated with the restoration of the Grand River and riverbank;
- Assure a common vision that advances broad and diverse community interests and the effective alignment of various projects related to river restoration;
- Serve as a resource to advise the City Commission regarding the GRWW plan, permits, funding, project staging, construction, maintenance, and operations of any projects associated with the Grand River.

Steering Committee

Members:

The members of the Steering Committee are:

- Vicki Anthes, Planning Section Chief, Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Patty Birkholz, West Michigan Director, Michigan League of Conservation Voters and West Michigan Environmental Leadership Network
- Steve Faber, Byrum & Fisk Communications
- George Heartwell, Mayor, City of Grand Rapids
- John Helmholdt, Executive Director of Communications & External Affairs, Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Scott Hicks, Field Office Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Rachel Hood, Executive Director, West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Ryan Huppert, Principal, Grand Rapids Public Schools

- Joe Jones, President and CEO, Grand Rapids Urban League
- Fred Keller, Founder and CEO, Cascade Engineering
- Kris Larson, President and CEO, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc.
- Megan Lemmen, Student, Grand Valley State University
- James Moyer, Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning, Grand Valley State University
- Chris Muller, Co-Founder, Grand Rapids Whitewater
- Nkatha Mwenda, Student, Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Larry Romanelli, Ogema (Chief), Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Rodney Stokes, Special Advisor, Office of Governor Rick Snyder
- Greg Sundstrom, City Manager, City of Grand Rapids
- Mary Swanson, Assistant Administrator, Kent County
- Jim Talen, County Commissioner, Kent County

- Rick Treur, City of Grand Rapids Planning Commission
- Kristian Williams, Resource Conservationist, U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service

Steering Committee Tasks

1. Develop guiding principles by which to consider and evaluate recommendations. The principles shall take into account the environment, the economy and social equity;
2. Monitor the progress, coordination and alignment between the Restoration Plan, Downtown Plan and River Corridor Plan;
3. Cultivate and inspire widespread participation and support of the project;
4. Advocate for resources on the Federal, State and regional levels;
5. Explore potential organizational models and processes for the long-term operation, management and programming of river improvements;
6. Ensure annual reporting on progress outcomes is available to citizens.

The Steering Committee met 11 times and progress with respect to each of these tasks is summarized here:

Task 1: Develop Guiding Principles

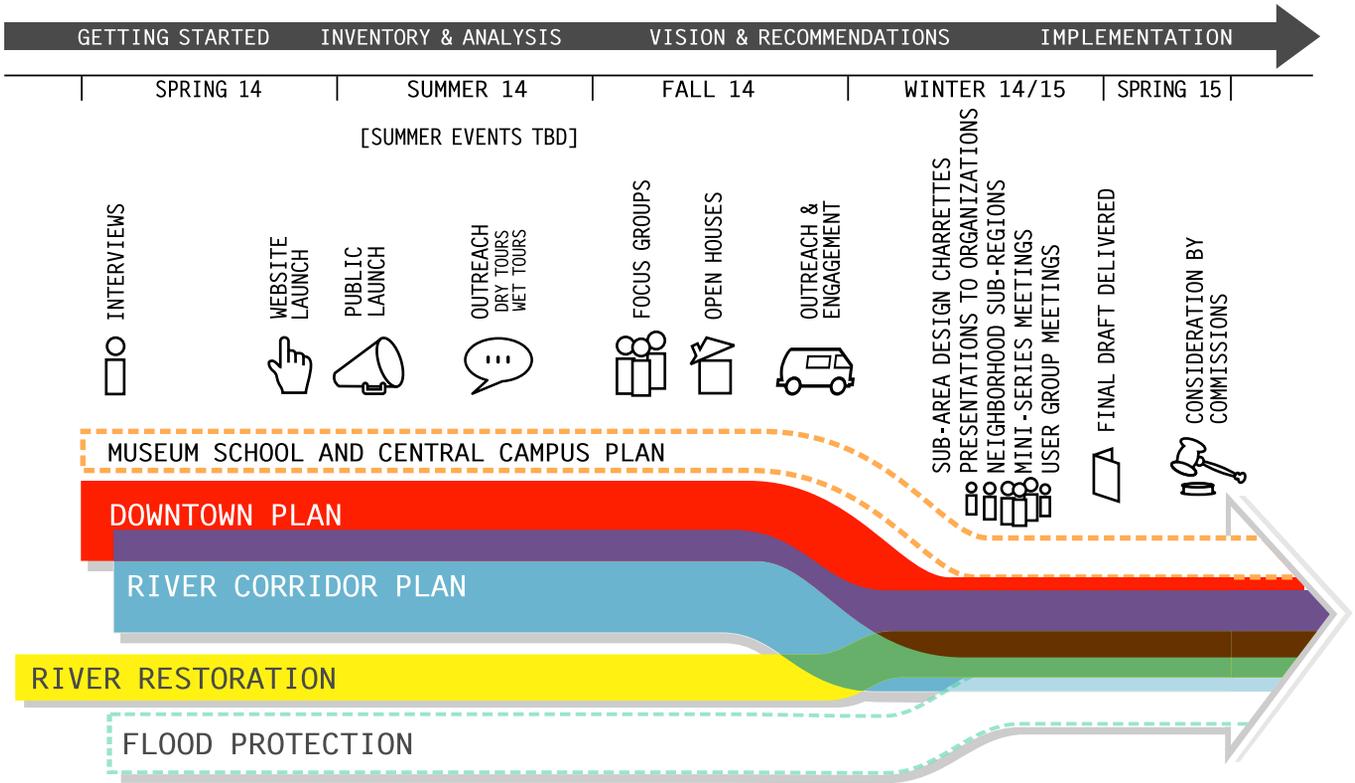
The River Restoration Steering Committee devoted several initial meetings to developing the guiding principles to be applied to projects for revitalizing the Grand River and river corridor:

- Recognize that the Grand River belongs to everyone and contributes to our quality of life.
- The Grand River as it flows through Grand Rapids is part of a watershed that has regional implications.
- Every action should improve the ecological condition of the watershed and be an exemplar for others.
- Seek to balance human interaction, commercial investment, and environmental considerations.
- Consider future generations by ensuring that actions are sustainably designed, well-managed, responsibly assessed, continuously evaluated, and corrective action taken as necessary.
- Preserve and restore habitat for desirable species and deter invasive species.

- Direct and develop the capacity and resources (people, organizations, and finances) necessary to enhance all human and natural habitats.
- Encourage innovation, the leveraging of resources, and shared accountability by engaging residents, businesses, government, education, philanthropy, and non-governmental organizations.
- Celebrate our history and cultural diversity.
- Ensure that future development of the river and its edges contributes to the local economy by creating wide-ranging investment, recreation, and employment opportunities for all.
- Develop the programming of places and activities to be accessible and safe for everyone; being mindful of social and/or physical barriers.
- Use intentionally inclusive and transparent decision-making to foster ownership of a re-imagined Grand River watershed that serves as a beacon for civic identity.

Task 2: Monitor the progress, coordination and alignment between plans

DOWNTOWN AND RIVER ACTIVITIES SCHEDULE



10/14/14

The Steering Committee assured coordination between the various planning studies for the restored river, downtown and the river banks. Every meeting agenda included an update on each of the planning processes. There was cross-pollination between committees which was achieved by having key committee members on each of the three committees. The consulting firms for the river and GRForward communicated very well to assure that the plans for the “wet” and “dry” were integrated. A summary of steering committee meetings follows:

- 11 River Restoration Steering Committee Meetings
- 14 River Corridor Steering Committee Meetings
- 12 Downtown Steering Committee Meetings
- 209 Basecamp Participants from the Three Committees, Consultants and Staff

Task 3: Cultivate and inspire widespread participation and support of the project

The Steering Committee was laser-focused on community engagement. They regularly asked questions and made suggestions about the process and how traditionally marginalized communities were to be involved. Thanks to the generous funding from local foundations including Dyer-Ives, Frey, Grand Rapids Community, and Wege, a series of three meetings were held in each neighborhood adjacent to the river. In addition, city-wide meetings were held in neighborhoods farther from the river as well as meetings with government and special interest groups in west Michigan. A summary of the activities is below.

- Over 3,300 people signed-in at the meetings
- Two public forums with over 200 attendees total
- Open house with 450 visitors
- 24 meetings in Grand Rapids neighborhoods
- Dozens of meetings in the region with government and other interest groups

- Over 31,000 website views
- Over 1,100 Facebook likes
- 250 Instagram followers
- 290 Twitter followers

Task 4: Advocate for resources on the Federal, State and regional levels

The Steering Committee was briefed on and monitored a wide variety of grant applications such as:

Applications in Progress:

- Healing Our Waters – Assistance in Developing a GLRI proposal
- Consumers Energy - Education
- NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program – conservation assistance to producers and landowners

Submitted/Waiting Decision

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Sustain Our Great Lakes Full Application - River Habitat Restoration

- Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund – Land Acquisition
- HUD – National Disaster Resiliency Competition submitted by the State

Received/Underway:

- United States Fish and Wildlife Service – Fish Passage Grant
- Michigan Department of Transportation, Monroe North TIFA, Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition – River Edge Construction
- National Park Service – Technical Assistance Grant for Organizational Models
- United States Army Corp of Engineers – Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration – Adjustable Barrier
- Healing Our Waters - Mussel Report

Task 5: Explore potential organizational models and processes for the long-term opera-

tion, management and programming of river improvements

The Steering Committee formed two work groups to address specific aspects of this task: the Organizational Models Work Group and the Water Quality Work Group. The final reports of each work group are included.

Organizational Models Work Group

The participants in the Organizational Models Work Group were:

- Eric DeLong,
City of Grand Rapids
- Steve Faber,
Byrum & Fisk Communications
- Rachel Hood/Elaine Sterrett-Isely, WMEAC
- Kris Larson,
DGRI
- David Marquardt,
City of Grand Rapids
- Chris Muller,
Grand Rapids Whitewater
- Barbara Nelson Jameson,
National Park Service
- Kalie Nye,
Grand Rapids Whitewater

- Wendy Ogilvie,
Grand Valley Metro Council
- Suzanne Schulz,
City of Grand Rapids
- Jay Steffen,
City of Grand Rapids
- Mark Van Putten, representing
the Wege Foundation

The Work Group developed a Work Plan, approved by the Steering Committee in August 2014, which included: (1) identify likely future organizational functions and tasks; (2) identify and review relevant examples; (3) identify and assess existing local capacities; and (4) identify options and prepare recommendations. It is important to note that the Work Group was not able to complete the third task as originally contemplated due to a lack of capacity. Instead, as included in the recommendations above, the Work Group has identified this as an essential early task to be undertaken by Trust for Public Land (or an equivalent partner).

The Work Group scheduled a series of interviews/webinars with leaders from several communities around the U.S. that have recently undertaken waterfront revitalization projects and with leaders of statewide and national not-for-profit organizations experienced with such projects, including:

- Detroit Riverfront Conservancy
- Atlanta – Proctor Creek (Urban Waters Federal Partnership Project)
- Pittsburgh – River of Steel (National Heritage Area)
- Cleveland -- Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition (National Heritage Area)
- Memphis Riverfront Development Corporation
- LIAA (webinar on recreational authorities under Michigan Law)
 - Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission
 - Traverse City/Garfield Township Recreational Authority
- National Not-for-profit Land/Park Conservancies
 - Trust for Public Land
 - Conservation Fund

Based on its research, the Work Group has identified the following key lessons to be learned from examples from elsewhere, based on which the Work Group developed four recommendations, which have been approved by the Steering Committee:

1. The City Commission should authorize a transitional role for a successor to the Steering Committee (the Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee) to identify an existing or create a new public-private partnership, not-for-profit organization capable of coordinating construction, management and operations for river/corridor restoration-related projects and activities and capable of coordinating long-term leadership, public engagement, fundraising, programming, stewardship, operations and maintenance services.
2. The public-private partnership identified or created by the Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee should conform to the best practices especially concerning governance, fundraising, coordination, accountability, public outreach and engagement, and accessing local expertise and experience.
3. On a parallel track, the Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee, supported by Trust for Public Land, should explore formation of a complementary “recreational authority”-like organization under Michigan law (with inclusion of key government jurisdictions upstream and downstream from Grand Rap-

ids) and/or of potential “improvement districts” and similar funding mechanisms, carefully coordinating with the City in view of the existing system-wide parks millage.

4. The Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee should proceed quickly, but with due diligence, to work with key partners including the City of Grand Rapids and with Grand Rapids White-water to develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Trust for Public Land by which (with private philanthropic funding) TPL would support the Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee in its transitional role and would coordinate vital near-term tasks, likely to include:
 - a. Assessing capacities of local NGOs and organizations and, then, developing a strategy and timetable for identifying or creating an NGO as described in Recommendation 1 above;
 - b. Serving as fiscal agent and fiduciary for funds contributed to or designated for specific projects, such as restoring

the namesake rapids to downtown Grand Rapids;

- c. Developing and coordinating execution of a fundraising strategy for early projects and activities catalyzed by the prospect of River/rapids restoration; and,
- d. Coordinating with the City and key partners in applying for permits, identifying funding sources and beginning implementation of river/corridor projects, especially the catalytic project of restoring the namesake rapids to downtown.

The Work Group also developed a set of “best practices” (a.k.a. “lessons learned”) concerning not-for-profit conservancies, which are described in detail in the report.

Water Quality Work Group

The participants in the Water Quality Work Group were:

- Scott Hicks,
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Rachel Hood, West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Mike Lunn,
City of Grand Rapids, Environmental Services Department
- Kalie Nye,
Grand Rapids Whitewater
- Nick Occhipinti,
West Michigan Environmental Action Council
- Wendy Ogilvie,
Grand Valley Metro Council,
Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds
- Eric Pessell,
Kent County Health Department
- Dana Strouse,
State of Michigan, Department of Environmental Quality
- Jim Talen,
Kent County Commissioner
- Kristian Williams,
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service

The Water Quality Work Group developed the following recommendations:

1. The notion of improving the quality of the water in the Grand River should be imbedded in the messaging, branding and funding initiatives of the river restoration effort. Responsibility for monitoring progress on the recommendations should become part of the work of the entity that takes on oversight and coordination of the next phase of the project.
2. Address high impact point-source water quality infrastructure opportunities in the Grand River watershed area.
3. Address livestock and cropland pathogen pollutants in the Direct Drainage Subwatershed management unit of the Lower Grand River Watershed and in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership area. Plant buffer and filter strips along priority acreage adjacent to and encompassing the Direct Drainage Subwatershed and Urban Waters Federal Partnership area.
4. Improve septic programs and policies in the Grand River watershed area. Work with the Governor's Administration on a statewide septic code and with local health departments to adopt operational inspections and maintenance requirements in their septic regulations.
5. Maximize implementation of green infrastructure and low-impact development (LID) within the River Restoration Project Corridor area by encouraging local policies and incentives that favor LID.
6. Implement projects identified by the City of Grand Rapids Green Infrastructure Opportunity Assessment. Inspire a similar assessment and implementation process for managing stormwater runoff in upstream communities.



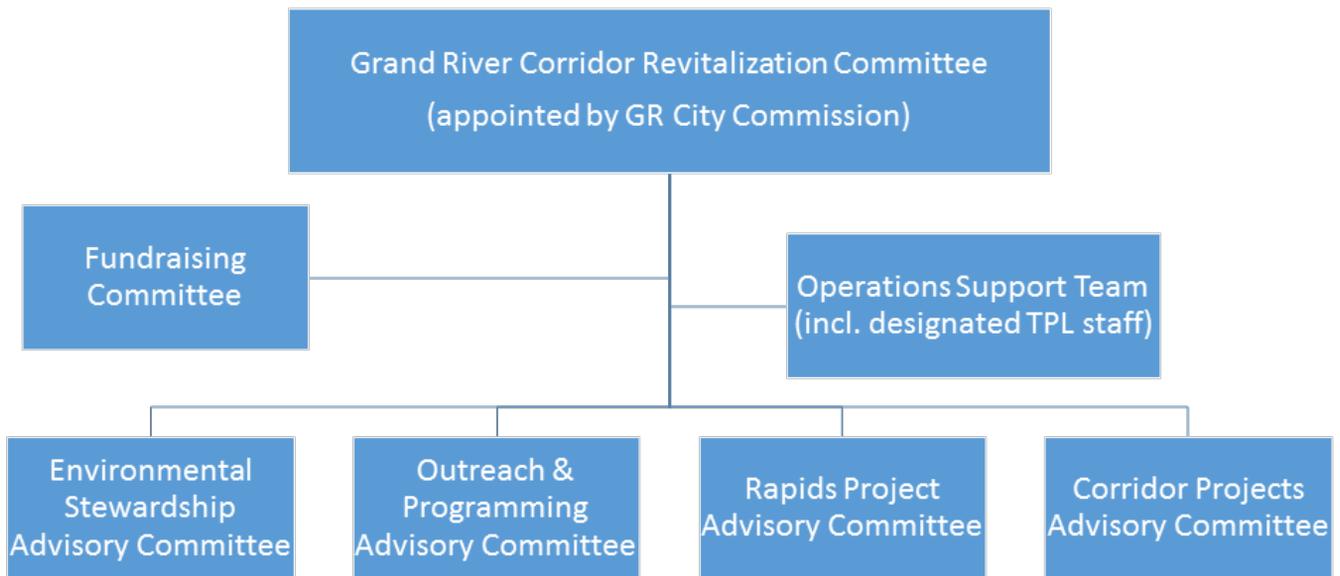
Task 6: Ensure annual reporting on progress/outcomes is available to citizens.

The Steering Committee Co-Chairs and work group leaders have briefed the City Commission about the progress of the committee for the past 14 months. GRForward is in the draft document phase with presentations

planned for the DDA, DGRI, Planning Commission and City Commission in mid to late July. It is anticipated that an open house will be held in August and that another round of Grand Rapids neighborhood meetings will take place around this time. The public comment period will end in September, with City Commission review of the final draft plan in October. They can vote to accept, modify or reject the plan.

(Draft) Interim Organizational Structure for Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee

(As endorsed by the Grand River Restoration Steering Committee on July 16, 2015)



Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee

The Grand River Corridor Revitalization Committee (“GRCRC”) will be appointed by the Grand Rapids City Commission as the successor to the Grand River Restoration Steering Committee. It will provide oversight and accountability for moving forward with the restoration and revitalization of the Grand River and corridor in the City of Grand Rapids in close coordination with upstream and downstream jurisdictions, Tribes and stakeholders. In accordance with the “best practices” recommended by the Steering Committee’s Organizational Models Work Group, this public-private partnership:

- will include members drawn from the City and other governmental jurisdictions in the region, but will primarily be composed of members from non-governmental sectors;
- will include diverse representation from the community;
- will include senior-level, acknowledged community, philanthropic and business leaders;
- will include leaders from key related planning efforts, e.g. GRForward’s downtown & corridor planning processes;

- will have members independent of representational roles with organizations likely to receive funding;
- will analyze, incubate and launch a new or repurposed not-for-profit conservancy and, depending on analysis, an associated Recreational Authority; and,
- will receive staff support from Operations Support Team Leader and designated OST staff.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee will oversee the development and implementation of a long-term fundraising strategy and will assist with fundraising. It will assure coordination of the long-term strategy with near-term fundraising campaigns for specific projects such as restoring the namesake rapids. It will assure coordination of applications for federal, state, tribal and local government grants. Its members will include prominent representatives of foundations, businesses, and individual philanthropists willing to contribute financially and help recruit other donors. The Fundraising Committee will be supported by the designated staff from Operations Support Team, including local and TPL development professionals.

Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee

The Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee will advise the GRCRC on integrating the environmental stewardship opportunities associated with Grand River/corridor restoration, including water quality improvements. The Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee will be supported by the designated staff from Operations Support Team.

Outreach & Programming Advisory Committee

The Outreach & Programming Advisory Committee will advise the GR-CRC concerning and will help coordinate continuing outreach to the full diversity of stakeholders in the City, as well as upstream and downstream. It will help assure that historically-disadvantaged communities and communities of color are consistently engaged in all aspects of River/corridor restoration. It will help assure ongoing outreach to current and prospective businesses interested in associated economic development and to private property owners in and near the River corridor. The Committee will also help assure effective integration of current and anticipated future programs of existing, local not-for-profit organizations. The Committee will help in

identifying, developing and promoting relevant recreational and community-oriented programs, including programs to be conducted by organizations represented on this Committee. The Outreach & Programming Advisory Committee will be supported by designated staff from the Operations Support Team.



Rapids Project Advisory Committee

The Rapids Project Advisory Committee will assure coordination of broader and longer-term goals with finalization and implementation of Grand Rapids Whitewater's plans for restoring the namesake rapids. It will include at least one overlapping member from the other committees described above and

a member of the GRWW Board of Directors. In addition to advising the GRCRC, the Rapids Project Advisory Committee will provide ongoing advice and input on project design, construction and management directly to Grand Rapids Whitewater and to any subsequent entities with leading roles in implementation of this project. The Rapids Project Advisory Committee will be supported by designated staff from the Operations Support Team.

Corridor Projects Advisory Committee

The Corridor Projects Advisory Committee will assure coordination of broader and longer-term goals with development and implementation of specific projects for revitalization of the River corridor. It will include at least one overlapping member from the other committees described above and a representative of any organization undertaking such a project. In addition to advising the GRCRC, the Corridor Project Advisory Committee will provide ongoing advice and input on project design, construction and management directly to organizations undertaking specific projects. The Corridor Projects Advisory Committee will be supported by designated staff from the Operations Support Team.



Operations Support Team

The Operations Support Team will provide coordinated, professional staff support to the GRCRC, the Fundraising Committee and to the advisory committees (current and any created in the future). It will include staff detailed to the OST by the City, Grand Rapids Whitewater, Grand Valley Metro Council, Trust for Public Land and, potentially, other organizations. It will include both locally-based TPL staff and TPL staff with specialized expertise located elsewhere. A local-based Team Leader will be designated to coordinate and assure the effective deployment of adequate staff resources to support the GRCRC, the Fundraising Committee and the advisory committees. The OST will operate based on an annual staffing plan and budget approved by the GRCRC and it will be funded by in-kind contributions of staff time and by support from private donors.