

Grand River Revitalization Update



Grand Rapids City Commission Committee of the Whole -- December 3, 2024



Grand River Revitalization Two Projects = One Catalytic Vision



REIMAGINING THE RIVER



2002 Grand Rapids Master Plan

- Broadening the visibility of the river, and improving access to it and its edge through continuous public access
- Expanding greenspace and recreation opportunities

2,500 participants
12 month process



2012 Green Grand Rapids

Reclaiming and reinvesting in a clean, accessible, beautiful, and green river

1,800 participants
17 month process



2010 - present Grand Rapids Whitewater

Restoring the Rapids to improve overall river health and recreational opportunities within the region

1,000s of participants
ongoing process



2017 Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan

Building a Grand River Waterfront and using the river's various tributaries and trails to create a connected network

5,300 participants
10 month process



- Creating an outdoor adventure city
- Establishing Grand Rapids as the hub in a regional river trail system
- Enhancing neighborhood access to the river

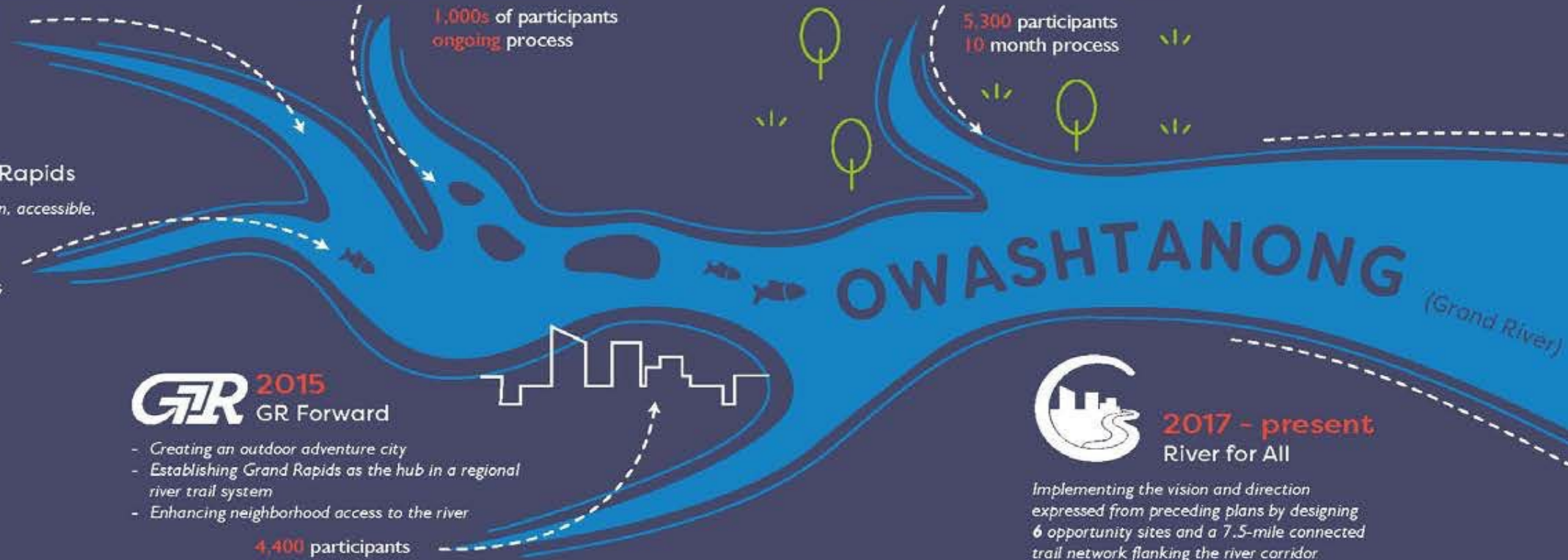
4,400 participants
20 month process



2017 - present River for All

Implementing the vision and direction expressed from preceding plans by designing 6 opportunity sites and a 7.5-mile connected trail network flanking the river corridor.

1,700 participants
11 month process



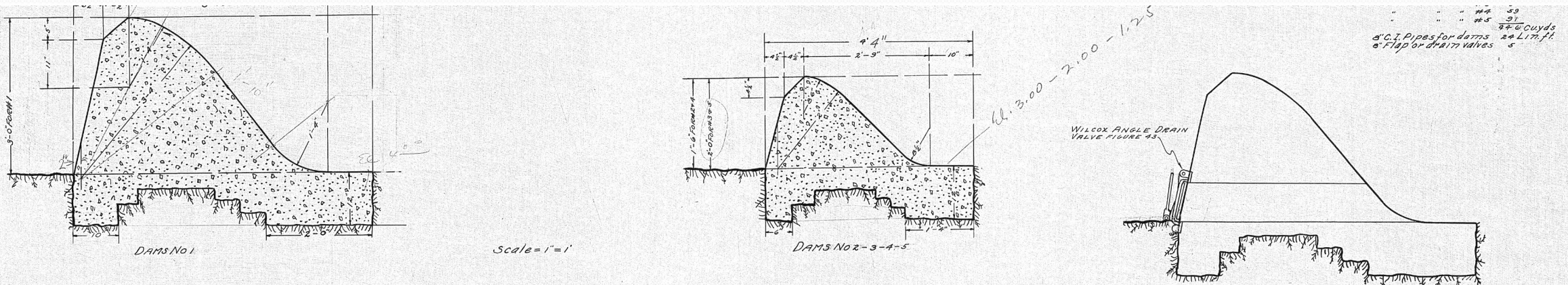
Grand Rapids 1868





Dams Today

- Four low-head dams exist today within the lower reach and present significant public safety hazards.
- It is believed these dams were built to originally facilitate the image of the Grand River and served the purpose to dilute raw sewage.
- In 2015, the City of Grand Rapids completed the removal of their combined sewer overflow points. The original purpose of the low-head dams is no longer being served.
- Hanshue and Harrington (2017) indicate that the low-head dams in the Project Area “likely represents a barrier to native fish species (e.g., Walleye Sander vitreus, suckers (family Catostomidae) during low flow conditions,”
- Visual and physical evidence exists to show these dams are deteriorating or have failed.



The Catalytic Vision

The original vision was to restore the rapids to improve overall river health and recreational opportunities within the region

- Public/private partnership to enhance GR quality of life
- Re-creation of truly grand rapids
- Remove the low-head dams and the associated public safety hazards
- Use recreational economic development as the funding tool for sustainable environmental river improvement
- Create accessibility and a living river
- Catalyze shoreline trail systems and other improvements



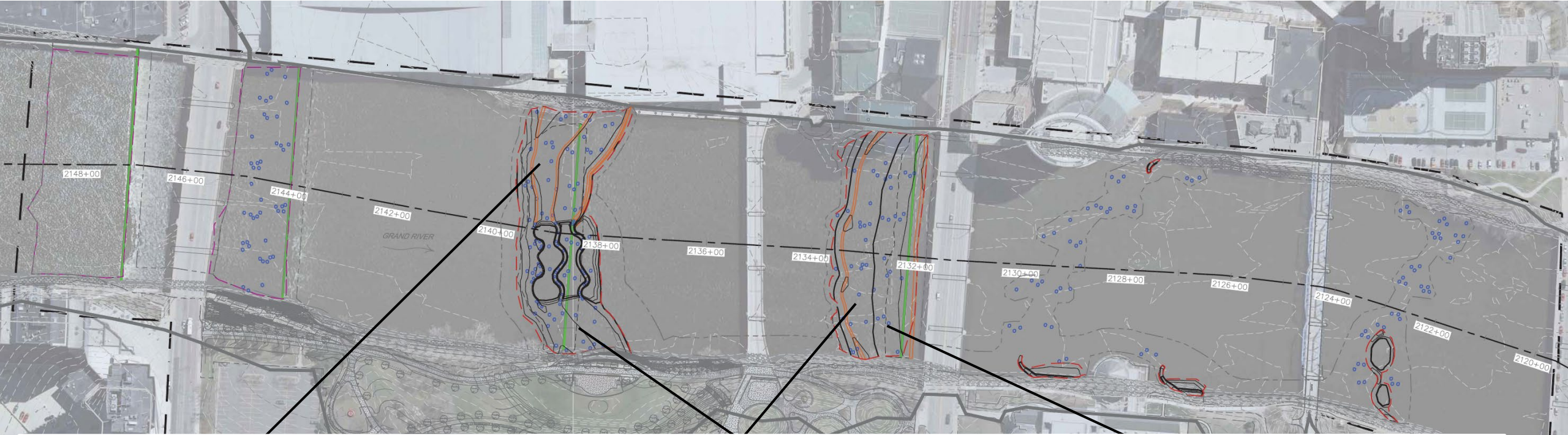


Project Objectives

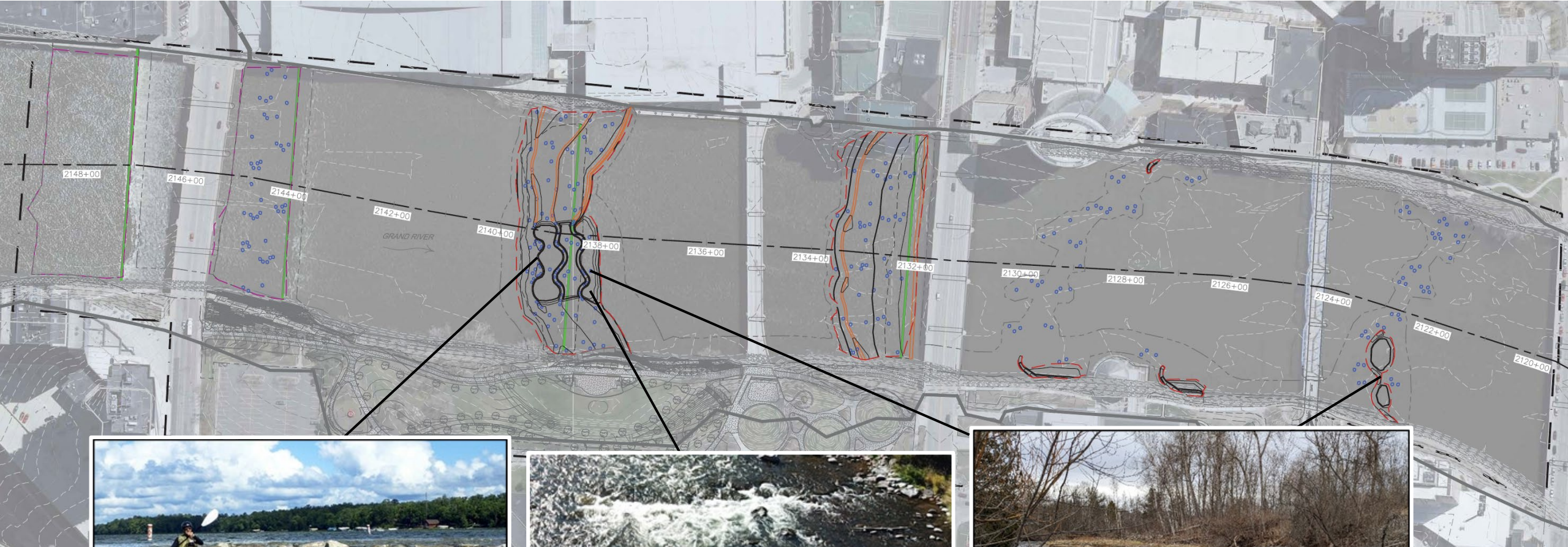
“The 2023 Framework”

- Remove the low-head dams and the associated public safety hazards
- Achieve fish passage and aquatic habitat enhancement targets established by MDNR
- Diversify recreational opportunities
- Develop as aesthetically and functionally natural stream design as possible
- Include safe river access
- Protect critical infrastructure
- Restore rapids
- Avoid and minimize bed instability and public safety concerns associated with increases in flow velocities and scour potential

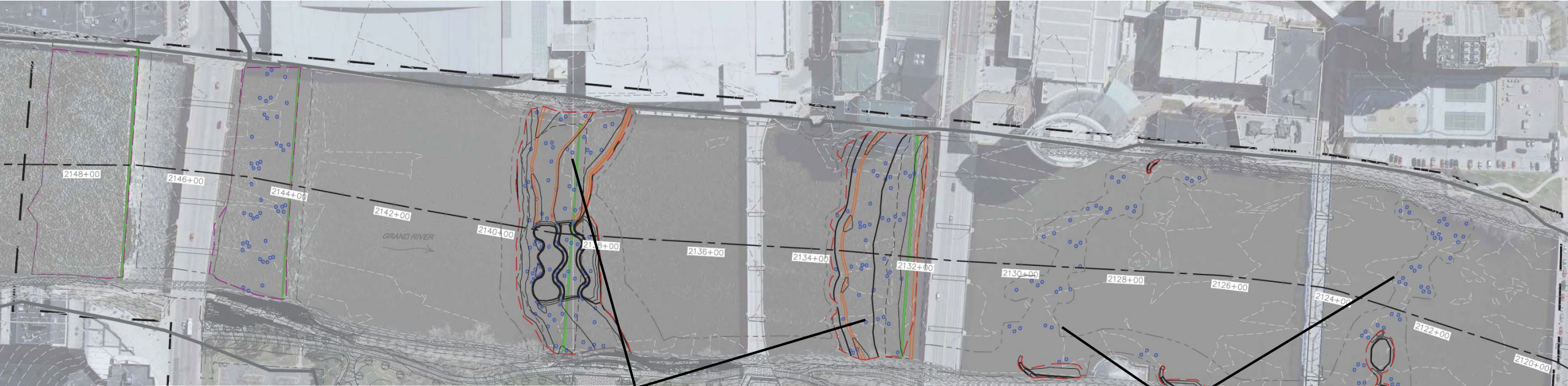
Design Element: Constructed Riffles



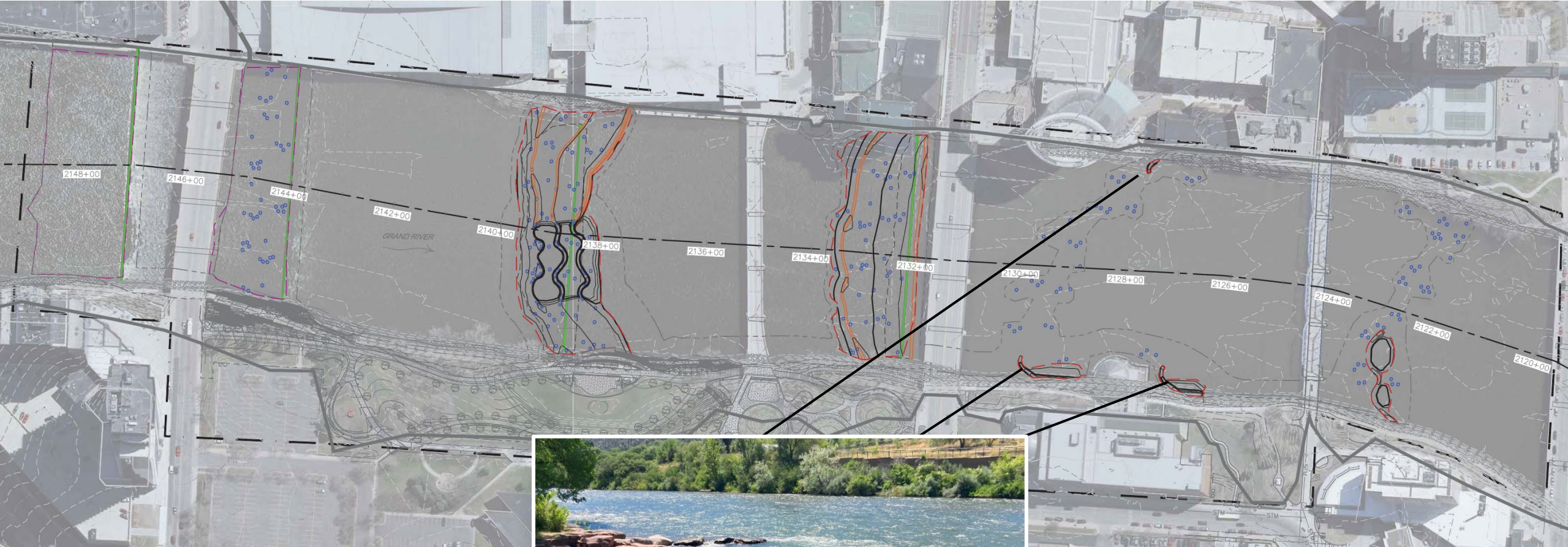
Design Element: Boulder Arch Structures



Design Element: Emergent Habitat Boulders



Design Element: Bank Vane Structures

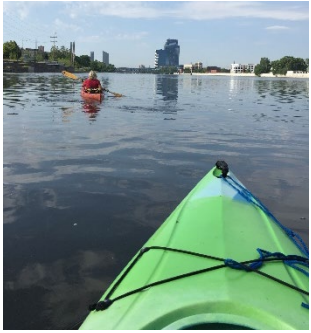


An aerial photograph of a city, likely Grand Rapids, Michigan, showing the Grand River flowing through it. Several bridges cross the river, including a prominent blue truss bridge in the foreground. The city features a mix of modern high-rise buildings and older structures. A highway with multiple lanes is visible on the left side of the image. The overall scene is captured from a high angle, providing a comprehensive view of the urban landscape and the river corridor.

Lower Reach Benefits:

This project will:

- Remove aging and dangerous low-head dams
- Improve aquatic habitat for threatened and endangered mussels
- Improve Sturgeon spawning habitat
- Achieve fish passage and habitat targets established by MDNR
- Provide additional access opportunities to the river
- Provide educational opportunities for students
- Continue to serve as a catalyst for additional investments in the Grand River Corridor throughout the county
- Put the namesake rapids back in the Grand River



Upper Reach Project

(Ann Street to Bridge Street)

- Priorities include; Public Safety/Flood Control, Sea Lamprey Control, Fish Passage, Recreation
- Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) is the lead federal/international agency
- \$22,000,000+ in federal funding committed (GLRI & GLFC Funds)
- MOA Partners include:



Partnership Agreements



Proposed MOU with Grand Rapids Whitewater (Agenda Item #10):

- Outlines City and GRWW roles in designing, permitting and constructing lower reach project
- 2019 City financial commitment of \$2 million remains unchanged
- GRWW leads fundraising efforts for capital costs
- Commitments secured from private donors, state and local governments; requests for federal funding pending

Proposed Memorandum of Agreement with City, GRWW, GLFC and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (Agenda Item #11):

- Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) will lead environmental review process and development of project alternatives
- City to support work with staff time and expertise
- Cost estimates for future upper reach projects will not be available until all Alternatives are analyzed; further agreements anticipated
- GLFC has secured approximately \$22M in federal funding for sea lamprey control.