

About the Coalition

A group of local residents has come together to say it is time to reconnect the Hoosic River with the City of North Adams.

Imagine a downtown North Adams where both branches of the Hoosic River are lovely to look at, suitable for fishing, boating and swimming, bordered by trails running through parkland, and where people come for business and socializing.

The River is a natural attribute in the city, but the concrete flood control chutes that once saved the city, now hide it from view. It is important to maintain flood control, but it is also possible to combine that requirement with the goal of making the River a vital downtown attraction.



This coalition of citizens and public officials believes that the enhancement of the river, as it flows through our downtown, would complete this picture of a city with outstanding recreational, cultural, and business opportunities.

We are working in concert with HooRWA, the Hoosic River Watershed Association, whose focus is the entire River. They, too, believe that North Adams can also have a thriving downtown by making the River and its surrounding area a vital part of our beautiful city, just as they are doing in Lowell and Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and in Providence, Rhode Island.

The Hoosic River flows through the heart of the city.

History Behind the Channelization of the River

North Adams, a beautiful city nestled below the Hoosac Range, the Green Mountains, and Mt. Greylock, became a thriving community during the 1800s. This was due in part to the industriousness of its residents, but also because it was at the junction of the North and South Branches of the Hoosic River. This fast-flowing water provided power to drive the machinery in the cotton mills; it also served as a convenient way to get rid of waste from these mills. Sadly, even within the memory of current North Adams residents, the Hoosic River ran different colors, smelled awful, and carried toxic waste. Furthermore, in the early part of the 1900s, the River often overflowed its banks and was a threat to city infrastructure and to its residents.

In response to the serious damage that occurred during these floods, the US Corps of Engineers in the 1950s constructed the flood control chutes, which you can see starting at the Eclipse Mill on the North Branch and near Noel Field on the South Branch.

These flood chutes funnel the Hoosic River through North Adams' downtown, merging at the west end of Mass Museum of Contemporary Art. The chutes have done their job; the River is no longer a danger during heavy rains or Spring runoff. And, due to tighter environmental regulations from the Federal Government, the River presents no health threat to the City's residents.



The Hoosic River was been channelized in several areas with concrete sides to control flooding. This practice damages aquatic habitat and limits public use and enjoyment of the river.

A time for change

During the past 20 years, the city has gone from a dying mill town to a community in the midst of a major revitalization. We have seen the renovation of an old mill-factory into an Art museum, the conversion of former cotton mills to artists' studios and lofts, an increase in the number of fine restaurants, a change in the mission of North Adams State to a liberal arts college (MCLA), and lastly, commitments by elected officials and entrepreneurs to create a modernized downtown with both stores and condominiums in those beautiful 20th century commercial buildings.

An accessible river would be an enduring community-building amenity that will both benefit the people of North Ad-



River revival efforts have led to positive change in other northeast cities. Waterplace Park in Providence, RI reclaimed riverfront for public arts and recreation and contributed to the revitalization of the downtown.

Photograph by Richard Benjamin

HOOSIC RIVER RIVIVAL COALITION

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The Hoosic River has always been linked to North Adams' ability to thrive.

North Adams, beautifully situated among the Hoosac, Green and Taconic mountains has an additional resource that has been neglected for many years, the Hoosic River.

The city is located at the junction of the North and South branches of the River, a location that was a boon to our 19th and 20th century industries, as a source of water power and a means for getting rid of waste.

New laws and the departure of those industries have cleansed the River; flood control chutes have both tamed it and prevented the public from seeing, using, and appreciating it.

After years of post-industrial economic struggles, the city is recovering, becoming a hub for those involved in the creative economy.

Along with that recovery, the time has come to reconnect the Hoosic River to our city, to make it an attribute for recreation, economic development, and community building.

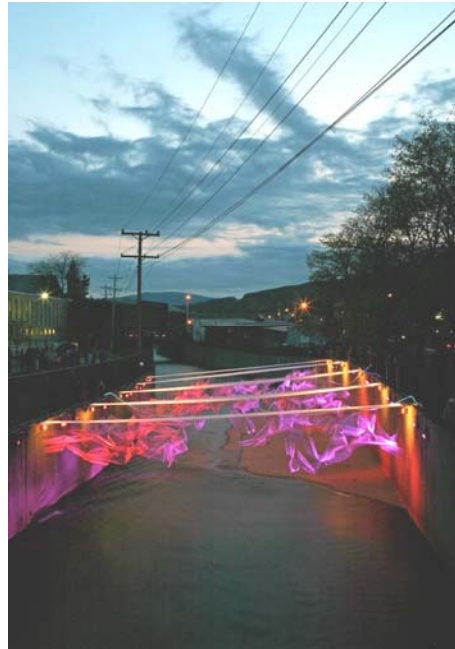


Photo by: Roman Iwasiwka

Hoosic River Revival Coalition

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Working to make the Hoosic River and its surrounding area a vital part of our beautiful city



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