

HILL AND RIVER NETWORK



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

TO CREATE CONCEPT DESIGNS, DEVELOP A PREFERRED DESIGN, AND PREPARE CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS FOR A SERIES OF NETWORK INTERVENTIONS TO STRENGTHEN DOWNTOWN GRAND RAPIDS' HILL AND RIVER NETWORK

DUE JULY 12, 2021

Grand Rapids, MI
June 7, 2021



DOWNTOWN
GRAND RAPIDS INC.



RENDERING OF "SWITCHBACK PARK" FROM GR FORWARD

A collaboration between:

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc (DGRI)
City of Grand Rapids
Neighbors of Belknap Lookout (NOBL)
Monroe North Business Association
Monroe North neighbors
Spectrum Health
Grand Valley State University
Michigan State University

All inquiries shall be submitted via email to:
Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI)
Mark F. Miller AIA AICP
Managing Director of Planning and Design

mmiller@downtowngr.org



PROJECT SUMMARY

Downtown Grand Rapids Inc. (DGRI) is seeking proposals to complete Concept Design, Design Development, and Construction Documentation services for a comprehensive connection strategy related to Belknap Hill, Monroe North, Downtown Grand Rapids, and the Grand River.

This project is in close collaboration with the City of Grand Rapids, Neighbors of Belknap Lookout (NOBL), the Monroe North Business Association, Monroe North neighbors, Spectrum Health, Grand Valley State University, and Michigan State University.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

For more than a decade the connections between Belknap Hill, Monroe North, and Downtown have been studied through various plans and visioning projects. While these efforts illustrate community-supported goals and high-quality visioning, they lack a cohesive strategy to implement tenable connections between the various neighborhoods, institutions, businesses, employment centers, and people associated with this unique geographic area.

Today this area of Grand Rapids is strengthened by purposeful and directed investments, and planned generational river transformation projects that will reshape the environment and provide an even greater need for human-scaled infrastructure that enhances livability and vitality.

Past projects provide a sound foundation, while these planned future projects provide a critical framework. This future opportunity comes with an urgency to deliver meaningful connections in a timely fashion to bring people to the places that are evolving adjacent to them.

This project intends to build upon the high-quality decades-long engagement and resulting plans to forge a series of “shovel-ready” network interventions that are informed by both yesterday’s voices and today’s opportunities.



LOOKOUT PARK, NEWBERRY STAIRS AND DIVISION AVENUE, MOBL NOBL CHARRETTE, 2006

PROJECT GOALS

CONNECTIVITY

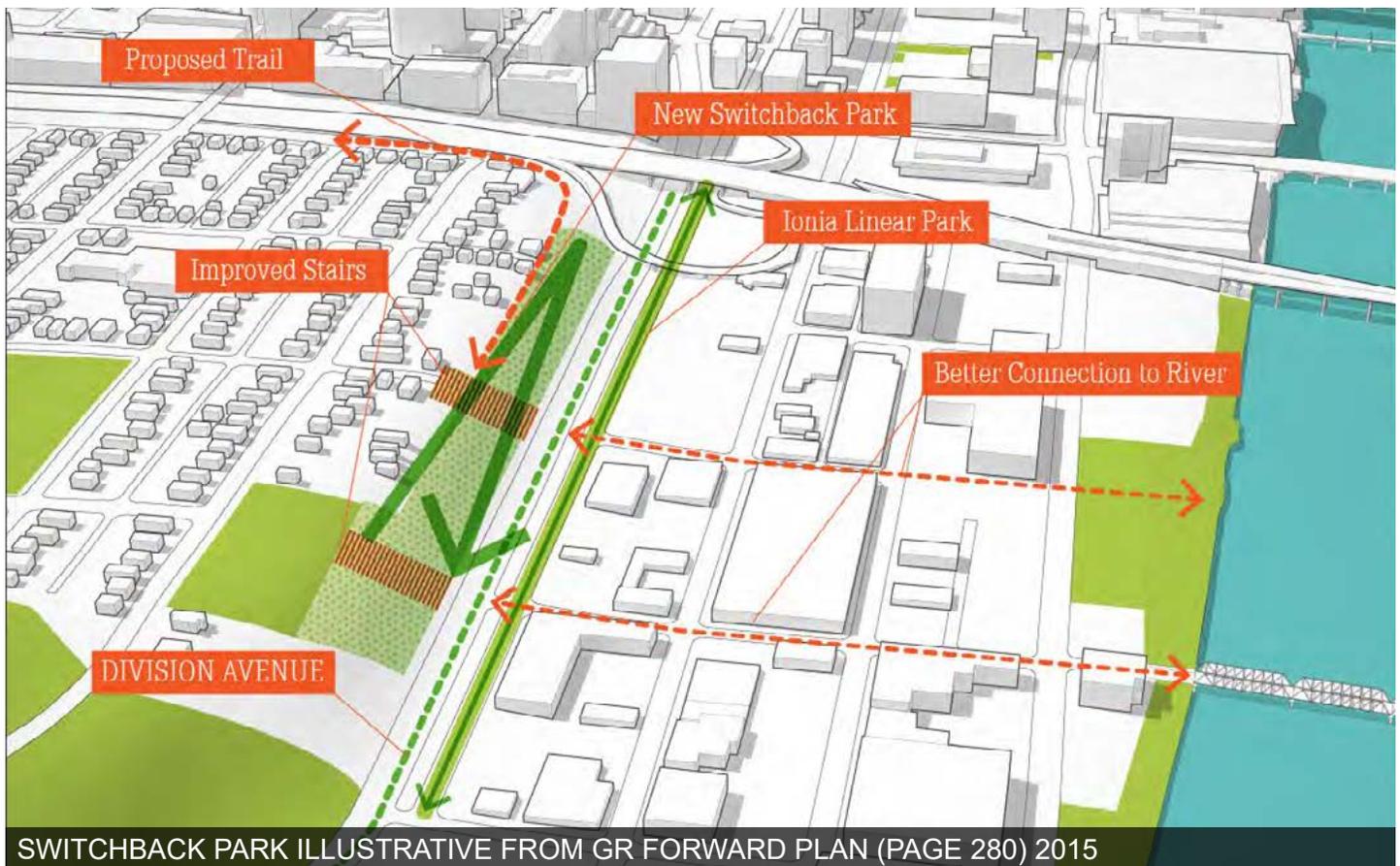
Increase connectivity between Belknop Hill, Belknop neighborhood parks, Monroe North, Downtown, and the Grand River.

- >> Retain and restore historic stairways down the hill at Fairbanks Street (currently intact) and Newberry Street (deteriorated and non-functional).
- >> Provide safe pedestrian crossings of Division Avenue with design that calms traffic, slows vehicle speeds, and builds a human-scaled environment, while considering planned future land uses for Ionia Avenue.
- >> Extend and accentuate connection from the hillside and the Belknop neighborhood to the Grand River, adjacent parks, and the river trail system along key east-west streets like Fairbanks and Newberry.
- >> Consider how the existing parks within the Belknop neighborhood, and specifically Belknop Park, can be better and more purposefully connected to each other and to the broader network.

ACCESSIBILITY WITH INCLUSIVE DESIGN

Create a human-scaled environment that can be used by people of all abilities and ages.

- >> Create an accessible route for people to move up and down the hill that can accommodate multiple types of non-motorized access. *This is sometimes referred to as the switchback or swoop in previous plans and within this RFP, however consultant teams are encouraged to consider other options for accessible movement up and down the hillside*
- >> Extend the Hastings connector from the neighborhood to the hillside and integrate it with the switchback.
- >> Design should be filtered through a universal design lens that goes above and beyond the “standard ADA” solutions and there should be a person or sub-consultant that specializes in inclusive design and accessibility on the project team.



PROJECT GOALS (continued)

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Use thoughtful landscape design to build resilient infrastructure.

- Maintain, preserve and increase green space.
- Envision the hillside not only an opportunity for connections, but also as a unique park that offers views and immersion in a natural environment.
- Anticipate the need to improve the stability of the hillside while preserving existing trees and increasing native vegetation.
- Increase tree canopy within network interventions, various connectors, and existing rights of way.
- Consider infrastructure that can minimize heat island effect and elegantly manage stormwater and run-off.

PEOPLE-CENTERED PLACE

Design the places and connections for the people who will use them.

- Create visually attractive overlooks and resting places along the hillside connections to take advantage of views.
- Streetspace furnishings, lighting, and other infrastructure along both hillside and surface connections should promote walking and lingering.
- Improve security (including lighting), hillside stability, attractiveness of public infrastructure, and visibility for safety as people use and enjoy these connections. *Lighting is a priority item for many stakeholders - specifically lighting of hillside connections.*
- Collaborate with Mobile GR staff to integrate future plans for a protected bike lane along Division Avenue with the network interventions design.



EXISTING LOOKOUT PARK

PROJECT GOALS (continued)

ENDURING QUALITY

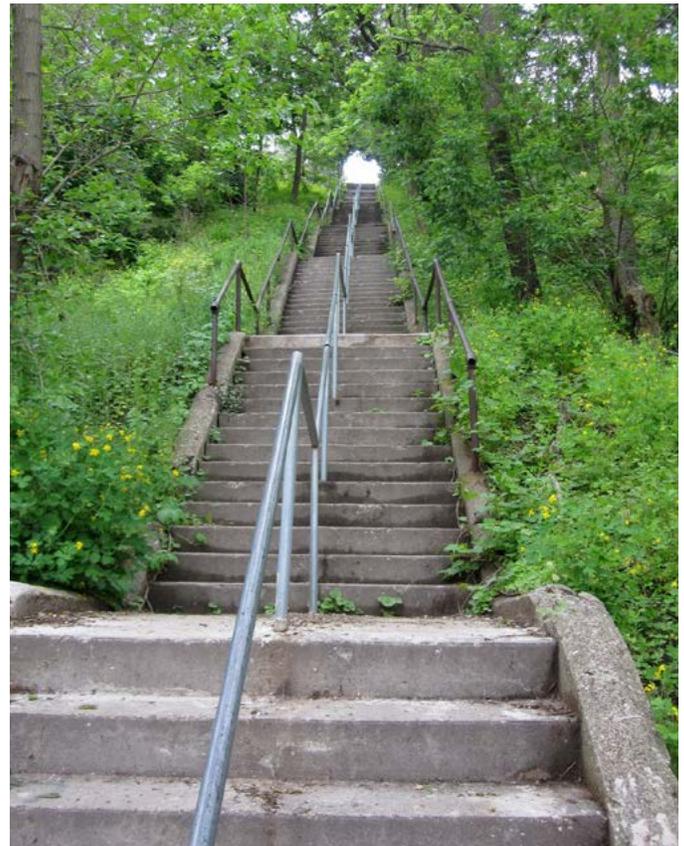
Design and build practical, high-quality infrastructure that can be maintained.

- >> Plan for ownership and maintenance of hillside connections and other related infrastructure.
- >> When possible use natural materials that are durable and age gracefully over time.

MOBILITY

Connections should consider the many forms of non-motorized travel.

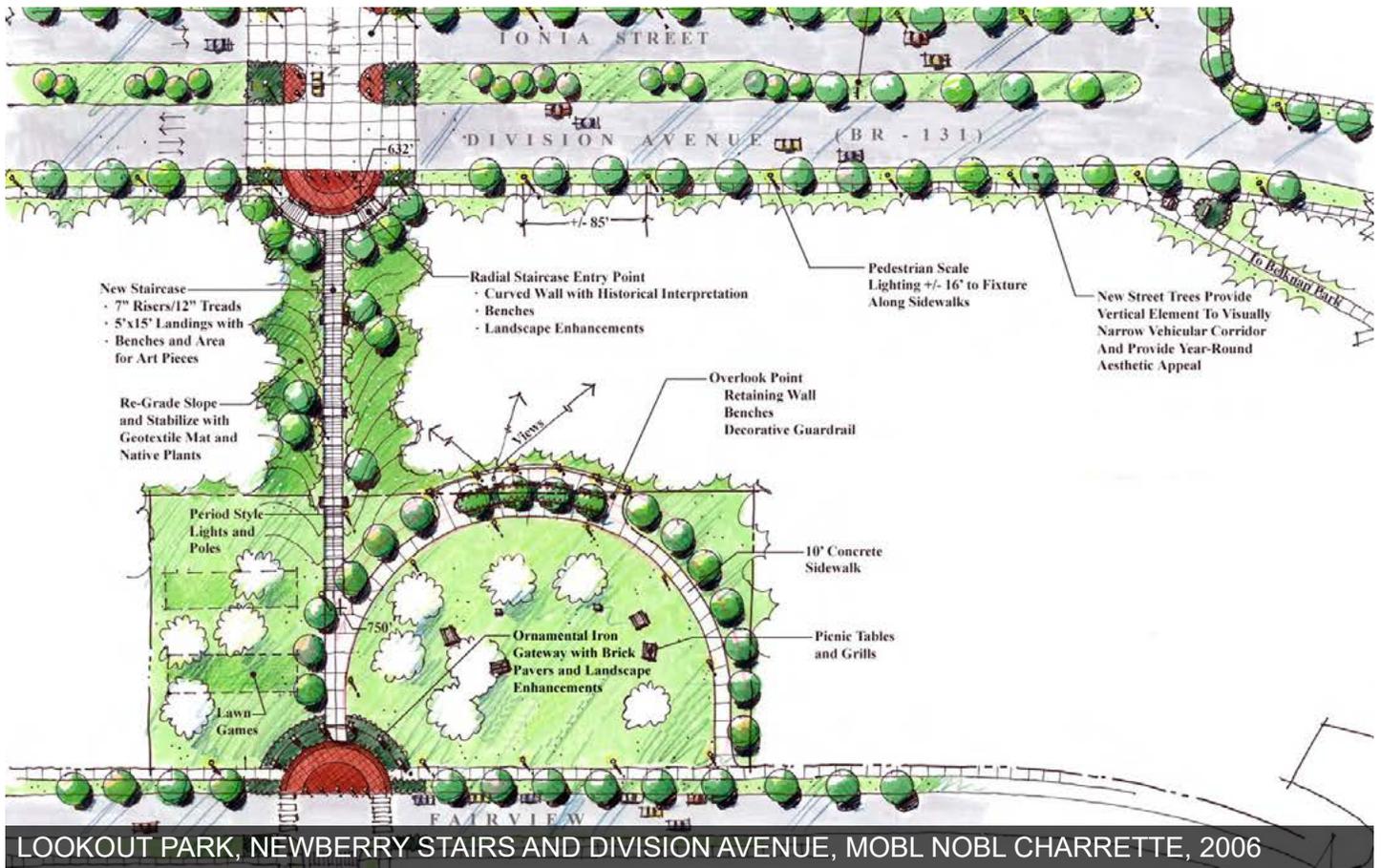
- >> Plan for bicycle access up and down the hillside- including potentially incorporating stairway runnels (or similar design) for those who may want a more direct access up the hill.



FAIRBANKS STAIRWAY, EXISTING CONDITIONS



IONIA AVENUE LINEAR PARK ILLUSTRATIVE FROM GR FORWARD PLAN (PAGE 282) 2015



PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

Use the visions and outcomes of major planning efforts that involved neighborhood input as recently as 2019 as a foundation for the project. Important plans to reference include:

2006 Design Charrette MOBL NOBL

Studies and plans that inform the Belknap Hill and Division Avenue connections. Pages 24-25 depict Newberry Street stair concept.

2009 Belknap Area Specific Plan

Provides snapshot of neighborhood vision and priorities, primarily related to land use and redevelopment.

2015 GR Forward

Goal 1 Restore the River as the Draw and Create a Connected and Equitable River Corridor

Speaks to access and connection to the Grand River.

- >> Page 78: Create a series of east/west green corridors to connect neighborhoods to the River
- >> Page 82: Improve streets that make important connections to riverfront parcels
- >> Page 87: Ensure sufficient river access

Goal 3 Implement a 21st Century Mobility Strategy

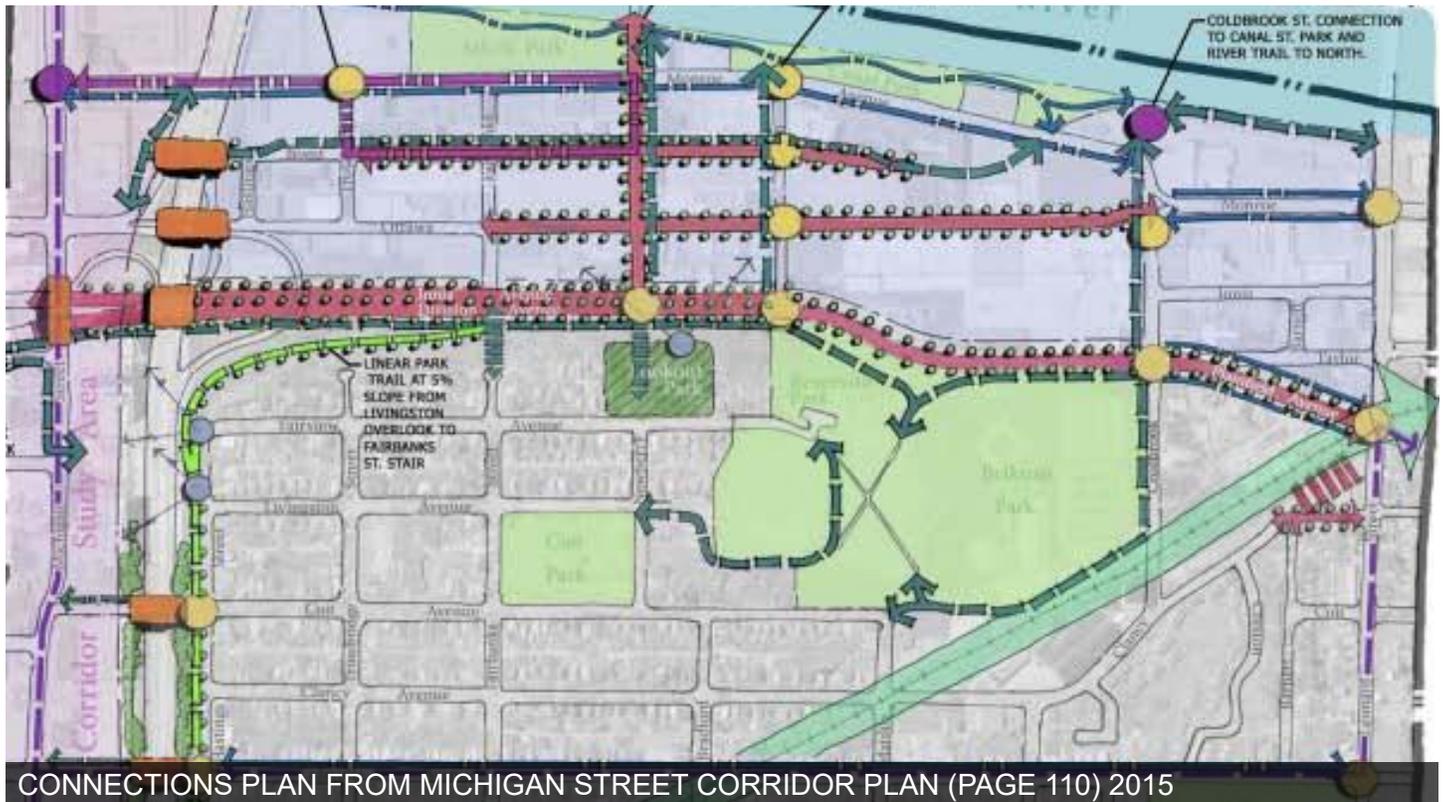
Insights for this project related to connections, safety, and pedestrian crossing of Division Avenue.

- >> Page 186: Provide a stress free pedestrian experience for all ages and abilities
- >> Page 187: Prioritize pedestrian safety and connectivity at intersections
- >> Page 212: Enhance physical and perceived connections to neighborhoods surrounding Downtown for all modes
- >> Page 212: Create the most bicycle friendly Downtown in the Midwest
- >> Pages 215-216: Discuss improvements to Ionia/Division north of I-196

Goal 5 Reinvest in Public Space, Culture, and Inclusive Programming

Vision for Belknap Connection and Ionia Ave Linear Park.

- >> Page 273: Enhance existing non-riverfront parks and open spaces through redesign and programming
- >> Pages 280-281: Switchback Park
- >> Page 282: Ionia Linear Park
- >> Page 287: Plant and maintain more shade trees to increase the Downtown tree canopy
- >> Page 295: Improve lighting on streets and in public spaces



2015 Michigan Street Corridor Plan

Link will take you to City of Grand Rapids Master Plan website where you will have to scroll down to this plan.

- >> Page 110: Connections Plan illustrates many of the network connectors that this RFP references
- >> Page 111: The Hastings Linear Park and specifically the Hastings Elevated Walkway references a connection similar to the Hastings Connector referred to in this RFP

2018 Division Avenue, Hastings Pathway, and Newberry Stairs Improvement Study

City of Grand Rapids commissioned a study to connect the Hastings Pathway to the hillside and Division Avenue and to replace the Newberry stairs.

Division Avenue was envisioned as a narrowed cross-section with bike lanes and a center median.

This study included concept designs and opinion of probable costs for Division Avenue and the Newberry stairs. An illustration of the conceptual improvements is included below.

2019 Downtown Streetspace Guidelines

Public realm guidelines will provide insight into river connections, streets as places, and streetspace design guidelines.

2019 River For All Plan and Guidelines

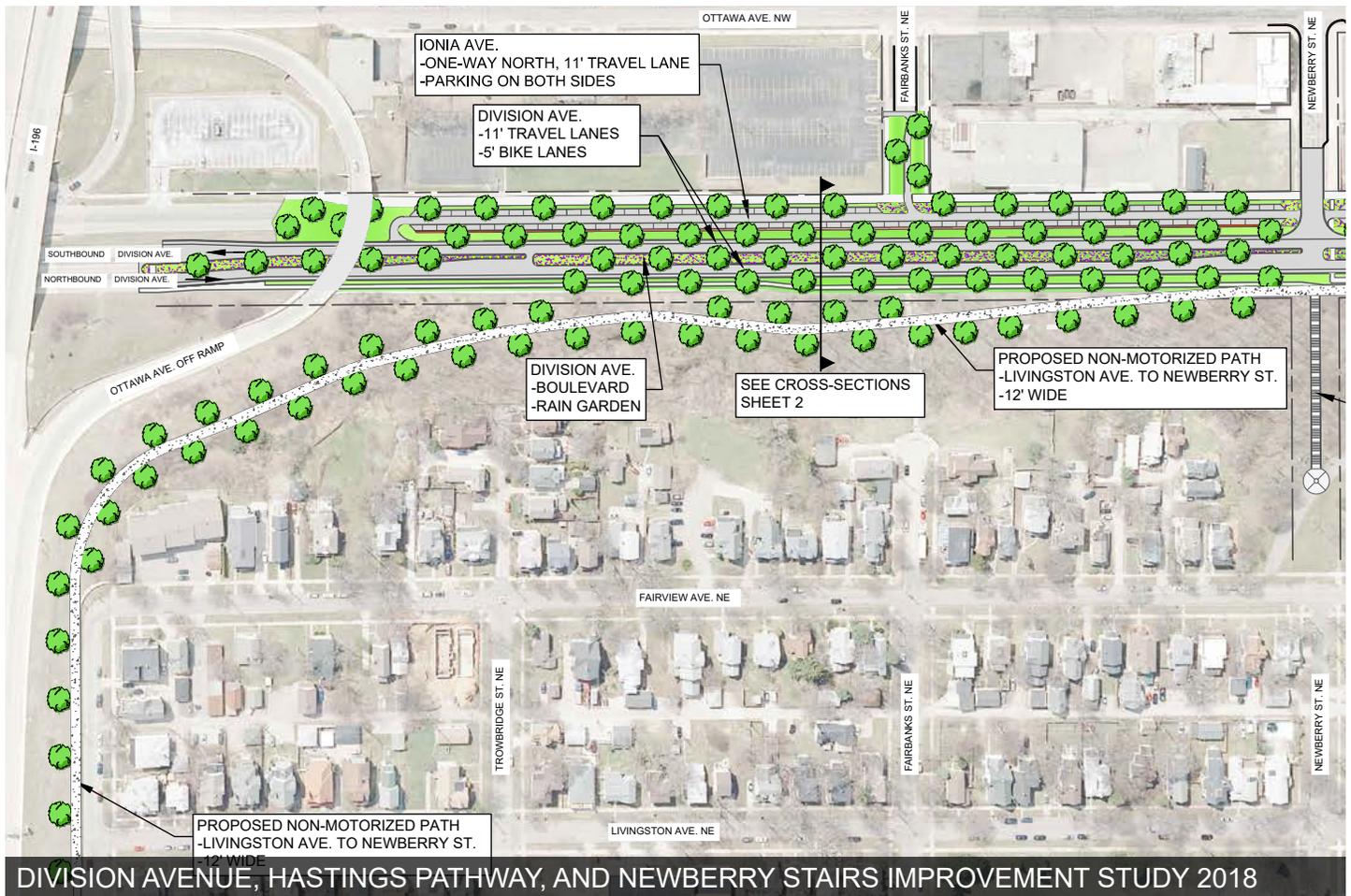
Link will take you to City of Grand Rapids Master Plan website where you will have to scroll down to River for All Plan. This includes guidelines for creating a cohesive and accessible river trail system and connector network

2019 Kendall College of Art and Design Urban Collaborative Studio

Graduate level studio at KCAD collaborated with the community to create design concepts for the hillside.

Highlights are featured in the [2019 NOBL Annual Report](#)

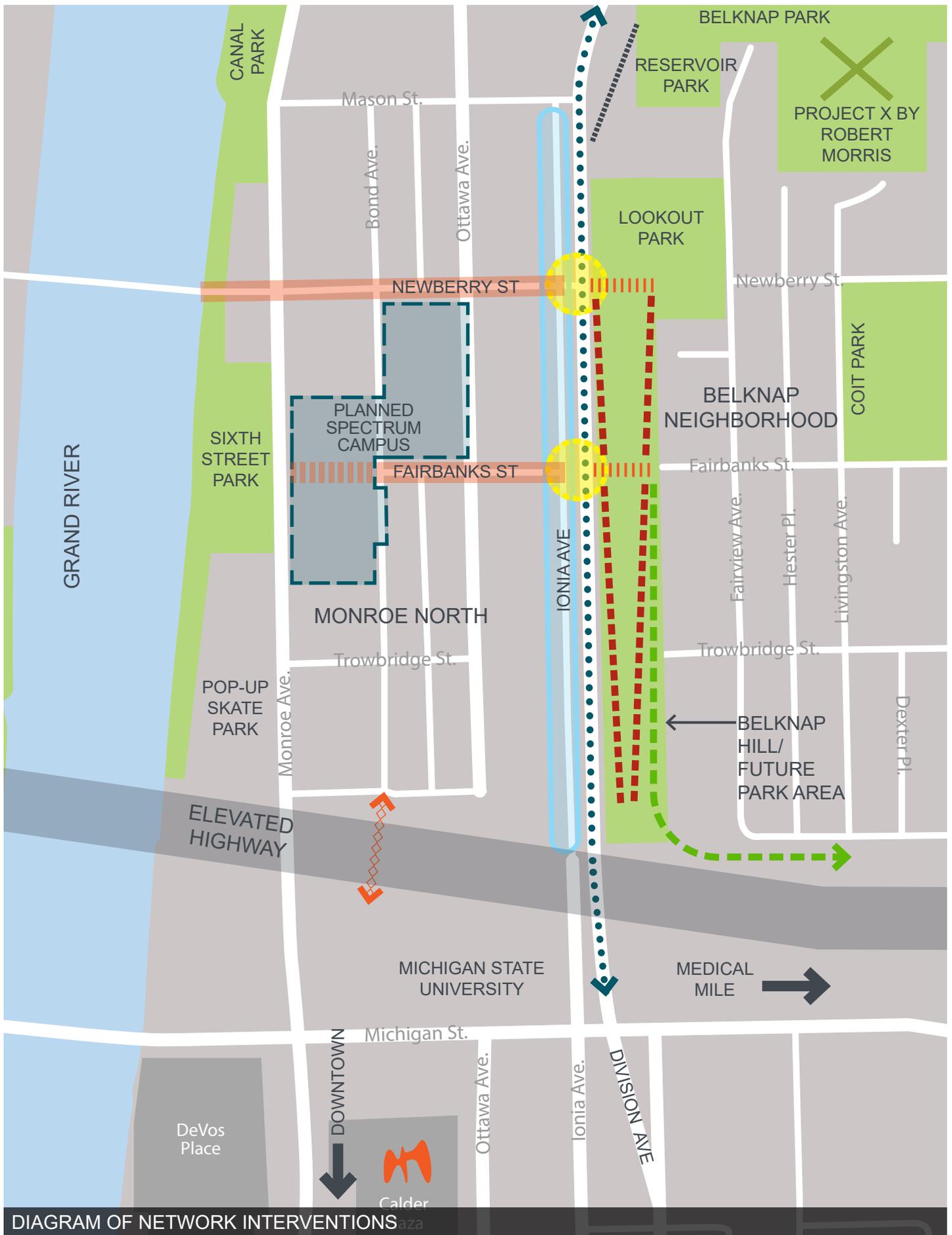
[Facebook page](#) has images of the four concepts. (scroll down to December 16, 2019)



KEY TO NETWORK INTERVENTIONS (refer to adjacent page)

-  **Switchback Pathway on Belknap Hill connecting Hastings Trail to stairs and Division Avenue**
Switchback may be an elevated pathway due to grades (refer to rendering, inside front cover), an at-grade installation, a combination of the two, or something completely different to achieve the same intended results and purpose.
-  **Hastings Connector links Hastings sidewalk to Switchback Pathway**
Existing Hastings sidewalk ends at Livingston Street. Due to grade, the connector may need to be elevated and not at grade, especially at retaining wall where it curves toward the hillside.
-  **Stairs at Newberry and Fairbanks connect Belknap Neighborhood to Monroe North and River**
Stair at Newberry is non-functional and will need to be reconstructed. Stair at Fairbanks, while functional, may also need to be reconstructed, restored, or rehabilitated. Consideration should be given to strategically connect stairs to the Switchback Pathway at key intersection points and landings.
-  **Key pedestrian crossings at Division Avenue**
Integrated with sidewalks, crosswalks, and future implementation of phased Separated Bicycle Lanes.
-  **Railway Tunnel Connector**
Former rail tunnel under elevated highway I-196 is envisioned to provide a non-motorized connection between Monroe North and MSU Campus / Downtown
-  **Ionia Avenue**
Consider future land use and infrastructure within this underutilized right-of-way and how it may accentuate the various desired connections. For instance, GR Forward envisioned a linear park and bikeway here (bikeway was considered prior to using Division Avenue for a protected bicycle lane pilot project).
-  **East-West Connectors**
Newberry and Fairbanks Streets should be integrated into the overall connection strategy to allow for a low stress pedestrian environment that connects the Grand River, parks, and the river trail system to the adjacent neighborhoods, residents, and businesses. Newberry Street has recently been partially reconstructed to include elements recommended in the River For All Plan, but still requires a more purposeful design consideration for pedestrian connection. Fairbanks Street does not extend all the way to Monroe Avenue and will be integrated into planned Spectrum Campus, phase 1.
-  **Separated Bicycle Lanes on Division Avenue (not part of design)**
Collaborate with Mobile GR on integration of planned Phase 2 separated lanes. Existing lanes are currently striped. Phase 2 envisions installing barricades to accentuate the separation and protection. Future phases may create a more integrated and permanent facility. The project design should consider and integrate into these future iterations, however bicycle lane design is not part of this project.
-  **Project X by Robert Morris**
Consider how this earthwork project / art installation can potentially have a larger role in the overall network connectivity of the district and how it may inspire the design of the Belknap Hill connectors. This may include increased awareness of the X or being more purposeful about how it connects into the broader network. [Link to Project X information.](#)
-  **Wooded trail / “goat path”**
A non-formalized existing trail on northern portion of hillside that extends from Division Avenue sidewalk through woods is an indicator of importance and practicality of this particular connection. How might this connector be upgraded and integrated into the broader network?

NOTE: Other network connectors not identified in this RFP that result from stakeholder dialogue or consultant inspiration may also be incorporated into the project. DGRI and partners encourage additional solutions that may help to achieve the project goals.



PROJECT SCOPE FRAMEWORK

The following is a general minimum framework of intended project scope including engagement and technical support. Respondents are strongly encouraged to use their expertise to formulate a project scope that meets or exceeds the scope elements contained in this general outline, while also meeting the goals and objectives of the project.

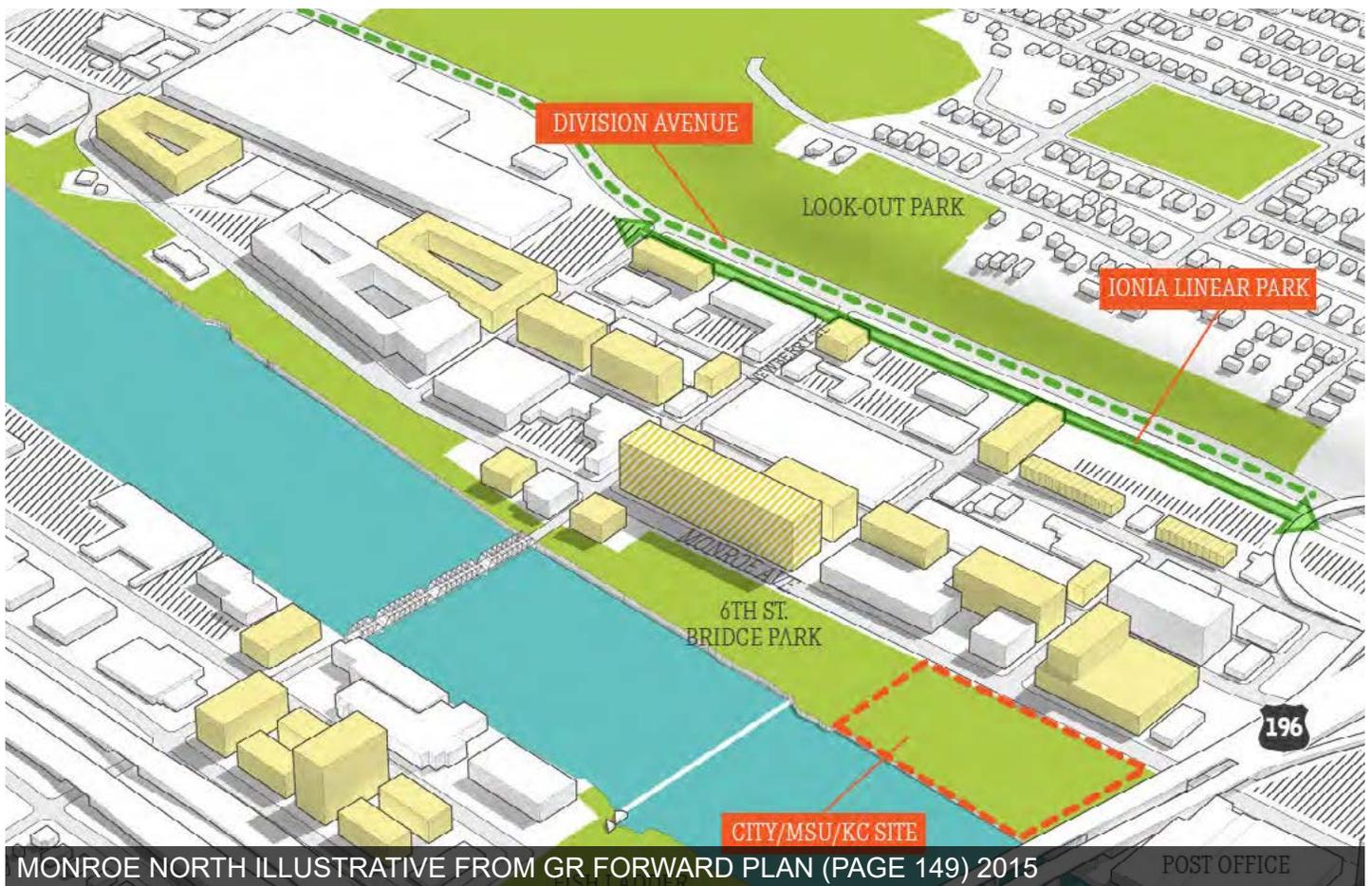
ENGAGEMENT

As referenced previously, various elements of this project have been studied and planned over the course of the last decade. These various plans have been informed by robust public engagement and citizen dialogue. This project intends to build upon this past citizen engagement, but not reinvent or redo it. As a result, the project engagement plan should prioritize strategic focus group meetings with various key stakeholder groups, including Neighbors of Belknap Lookout (NOBL), the Monroe North Business Association, Monroe North neighbors, Spectrum Health, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, and the City of Grand Rapids. The Grand Rapids Parks Department and Mobile GR will be the primary City of Grand Rapids departments that will be involved in this project.

It is anticipated that each of these groups will be engaged at least twice during phase 1 work; however, it is within the respondents' purview to propose a meaningful engagement process to inform the design and project strategy. Assume at least 10 different potential focus groups.

Representatives of these various stakeholder groups will make up a small steering committee that will interface with the consultant team during a regular schedule of design and progress meetings. These should be considered separate from the focus group meetings.

A note on engagement and COVID-19: At the time of RFP issuance, most public gatherings and in person meetings are just beginning to happen with greater numbers of people - particularly in outdoor venues. This may impact in-person focus group meetings or larger gatherings. Respondents should make considerations for various scenarios that include virtual, hybrid, and/or in-person as circumstances and guidelines change.



MONROE NORTH ILLUSTRATIVE FROM GR FORWARD PLAN (PAGE 149) 2015

PHASE 1: CONCEPT DESIGN

Create two design options through a stakeholder engagement process that utilize a series of network interventions (refer to diagram on page 11) to improve connections between Monroe North, the Belknap neighborhood, the Grand River, parks, and Downtown Grand Rapids with a coherent, safe, convenient, and meaningful multi-modal network.

Concept design of network interventions should incorporate all elements related to the project including the Switchback Pathway, Hastings Connector, the two stairs, Division Avenue crossings, the former railway tunnel, Ionia Avenue right-of-way, and the east-west connections to the River. The future phases of the separated bicycle lanes on Division Avenue should be considered as they relate to the other interventions, but are not part of this design effort.

Additionally, the design concepts should include the creation of a park within the hillside that incorporates the stairs, Switchback Pathway, Hastings Connector and a series of overlooks that provide views and places to linger for users.

Other network connectors or design interventions not identified in this RFP that result from stakeholder dialogue or consultant inspiration may also be incorporated into the project. DGRl and partners encourage additional solutions that may help to achieve the project goals.

The various network interventions should be designed in a way that they can be phased incrementally over multiple funding cycles. This phasing will need to be considered during Design Development and Construction Documentation.

Once completed, these two design options should be presented to a single gathering of all stakeholder groups so that the stakeholders can collectively make a recommendation for a preferred concept.

Phase 1 Consultant Responsibilities

- Conduct a design kick-off meeting to discuss the project with the steering committee, obtain available information, and review existing conditions.
- Preparation of design concepts may require boundary and topographic information. Refer to survey note on page 15.

- Conduct focus group meetings with stakeholders to inform concept creation and design.
- Create two (2) concept design options based on stakeholder input.
- Complete an order of magnitude cost comparison between the two design concepts to better inform the discussion with the large group. This does not have to be as specific as the typical Opinion of Probable Costs, but rather more broad to help stakeholders make informed decisions.
- Conduct one large meeting of all stakeholder groups to determine preferred design concept.

PHASE 2: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Develop the preferred design concept into refined plans, details and illustratives that convey each of the network interventions and the hillside park. Depict how these elements interrelate to improve connections and create a coherent, safe, convenient, and meaningful multi-modal network. This will form 30% completion of the project and achieve stakeholder approval to proceed with the next phase of the project.

Phase 2 Consultant Responsibilities

- Conduct focus group meetings with stakeholders to review design refinements.
- Preparation of design development will require boundary and topographic information. Refer to survey note on page 15.
- Present at the City's Design Team for overall project coordination with City infrastructure, planning, storm water, traffic safety, fire, and police departments for direction that may inform the design development.
- Complete an Opinion of Probable Cost (OPC) for the Final Preferred Design at the end of Phase 2.
- Complete a draft phasing plan that provides an incremental approach to implementation of the various network interventions and the hillside park so that these projects can be implemented over multiple funding cycles.
- Complete a draft operations and maintenance plan for the Final Preferred Design at the end of Phase 2.

PHASE 3: CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

The construction document phase of this scope includes preparation of technical drawings and specifications to bring the network interventions to a point of being ready to bid and construct.

Specific network interventions to be included in the construction documents will include the Switchback Pathway, Hastings Connector, the two stairs, Division Avenue crossings, improvements related to the former railway tunnel, the Ionia Avenue right-of-way, improvements to the east-west connections to the River and the hillside park. The future phases of the separated bicycle lanes on Division Avenue should be considered as they relate to the other interventions, but are not part of this effort.

Phase 3 Consultant Responsibilities

- >> Prepare complete and accurate construction documents ready for advertising and bidding. Complete plans and specifications are intended to be used for future permitting, bidding, and construction. Construction drawings will need to meet City standards.
- >> Preparation of documents will require boundary and topographic information. Refer to survey note on page 15.
- >> Conduct 60% and 90% review meetings with steering committee for concurrence of the intent of the proposed construction plans and specifications.
- >> Refine OPCs for 60% and 90% construction plans. The OPC shall be based on the current market for construction materials and labor in the region, and shall provide the steering committee with an up to date understanding of the cost to complete construction. This will be the opportunity to recommend adjustments and refinements to the construction scope in order to remain within a tenable project budget over multiple funding cycles. Base bid items, alternates, and available funding shall be considered.

- >> Complete final phasing plan that provides an incremental approach to implementation of the various network interventions and the hillside park so that these projects can be implemented over multiple funding cycles.

- >> Complete final operations and maintenance plan for the project elements.

Items not required to be included in this proposal:

- >> Assistance with obtaining the necessary permits and City approvals.
- >> Pre-bid or bidding support services.
- >> Construction administration services.

These services may be added at a later date depending on funding and alignment with other project timelines.

ADDITIONAL TECHNICAL SERVICES TO BE INCLUDED AS PART OF PROPOSAL AND FEE

BOUNDARY AND TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Prepare a boundary and topographic survey of the project area as required for the preparation of design and construction documents.

Survey should include ownership boundaries along the hillside. Ownership is believed to include the City of Grand Rapids, the Michigan Department of Transportation, and various private property owners along the upper portion of the hill. Property boundaries will be important to determine how and where the Hastings Connector and Switchback Pathway are located.

It is suggested that topographic information be gathered at a point in the design process where it can be more targeted to specific network intervention locations rather than the entire hillside. It is unlikely that the project would require topographic information for the entire hill.

Survey should locate utilities in adjacent rights of way and utilities and easements within the hillside, specifically at targeted locations where interventions will occur.

GEOTECHNICAL SERVICES

The soil and structural capabilities of the hillside need to be evaluated for any future interventions, including stairs, at-grade paths, supports for elevated paths, lighting and other improvements.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND HILLSIDE EROSION

Part of the hillside technical evaluation should include stormwater management specifically related to how future improvements will impact current and future erosion of the hill and design recommendations to mitigate current and future erosion.

Proposed scope should include a description of these services and how they will be intentionally used to evaluate the existing conditions, including the hill's stability. Description should also include how geotechnical services will be used to facilitate the constructibility of the various interventions.



HILLSIDE, BELKNAP NEIGHBORHOOD AND DIVISION AVENUE

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals submitted shall be limited to twelve (12) pages. This includes all pages, from cover to cover.

Proposals shall be submitted digitally as a PDF that contains not more than 12 pages.

Proposals shall be 8½ x 11 in either portrait or landscape format.

The proposal should include the following information:

1. A summary of project understanding including the project expectations and opportunities.
2. Firm overview of proposed lead consultant and any subconsultants proposed to work on the project including an organizational chart with all project consultants identified.
3. A description of experience in completing work of this type, including at least three (3) examples and project references. Examples shall be with work on similar projects in an urban context.
4. A description of your proposed work plan for completing this project, including a schedule of work.
5. Number and type of proposed meetings and engagement sessions for each phase of the project.
6. A description of your proposed staffing including condensed bios of staff assigned to this project. Include information for the responsible Principal, Project Manager, and key project staff. Staff listed must be the same as those working on the project.
7. Your total professional fee for completing the work as described. Fees shall include all tasks and staffing necessary to complete the project as outlined above and within your submitted proposal. All reimbursable expenses incurred shall be included in this fee, but listed as a separate line item. Include standard hourly rates for all staff levels in the proposal.
8. Separate the fees associated with the survey work and the geotechnical services, but also include them in the total fee.
9. Additional information – Present any data or information which you consider pertinent to the selection process. Information should be kept relevant to the project.

DELIVERABLES

Anticipated deliverables include the following:

1. Data gathering: summary of goals and key elements of the project; boundary and topographic survey that depicts utilities, as outlined; geotechnical information and recommendations; additional information gathered during focus group meetings.
2. Electronic submittal of concept designs to stakeholders sent 3 days prior to meetings for review. This should include cost comparison.
3. Electronic submittal to steering committee of 30%, 60%, & 90% review documents. Electronic copy to be sent 3 days prior to meeting for review. This should include related draft OPCs, draft phasing plan, and draft operations and maintenance plan
4. Electronic submittal to steering committee of 100% plans & specifications for review.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Similar project experience: 20%

Strength and diversity of project team: 10%

Project approach including schedule: 30%

Ability to meet objectives: 25%

Clarity and responsiveness of proposal: 10%

Professional fee: 5%

REGISTRATION

All interested consultants are encouraged to send an email to Mark Miller (mmiller@downtowngr.org) to register their intent to respond to this RFP. All firms expressing interest will be added to an email distribution list and will be notified if additional information related to the RFP becomes available. Firms failing to register in this manner may not receive all information relevant to the preparation of their proposals.

RFP QUESTIONS

Any questions regarding the proposal may be submitted by email to Mark Miller (mmiller@downtowngr.org). Questions must be submitted by 5pm (local time) on Friday, June 18, 2021. Responses will be sent to all registered participants no later than 5pm on Friday, June 25, 2021.

PROPOSAL DATES

RFP Issued: June 7, 2021
RFP Questions Due: June 18, 2021
Response to Questions: June 25, 2021
Proposals Due: July 12, 2021, 1pm
Consultant Selection: by July 30, 2021

PROPOSAL SUBMITTAL

A digital copy of the proposal in PDF format is **due by 1pm (local time) on Monday, July 12, 2021**. Proposals shall be emailed to mmiller@downtowngr.org. Digital files only.

