

Planning Brief

Viaduct Revitalization District

Canton, Massachusetts

Prepared for:
Canton Planning Board
and
The Master Plan Study Committee

Prepared by:
Canton Planning Department
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The Canton Planning Department has identified the Viaduct Revitalization District as a Priority Revitalization Area (PRA) capable of redevelopment to help meet the future employment, economic development and housing needs of Canton. The Viaduct Revitalization District Planning Brief has been prepared to help guide the revitalization of this area.

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1.0 Introduction

The Viaduct Revitalization District provides Canton with a unique opportunity to create a major new revitalization project within a strong framework of green open spaces (See attached Map entitled "Viaduct Revitalization District").

The proposed revitalization area has unequalled local and regional location qualities. It is in close proximity to Boston, Route 128 and Interstate I-95 and is within easy walking distance to Canton Center, two MBTA commuter rail stations, the potentially attractive Canton River, and the historic Canton Viaduct. A redevelopment area of this scale and with these location qualities is truly exceptional.

2.0 Economic Context

The Planning Department identified the Viaduct Revitalization District as a Priority Revitalization Area (PRA) capable of redevelopment to help meet the future employment and housing needs of Canton. The District offers the opportunity to be a showcase for achieving the Town's economic and affordable housing development objectives and making a major contribution to revitalizing Canton Center.

The Viaduct Revitalization District is a major opportunity to provide a landmark office complex. This type of high quality/prestige development, taking advantage of the riverside location and easy access to public transportation, could serve the headquarters market (AKA Reebok, etc.). The site location for new offices will be a key element in the redevelopment of the Viaduct Revitalization District.

- The Planning Board recognizes that the timing of the provision of an office plan is dependent on market demand. This element of the mixed-use proposal for the area is fundamental in achieving the Master Plan's economic development objectives.
- Proposals put forward for the proposed Viaduct Revitalization District should be tested against the goals, policies and key objectives of the current Canton Master Plan Initiative.

The proposed Viaduct Revitalization District provides Canton with a significant economic development opportunity. It is therefore a priority that the plan for the site contributes towards the economic objectives of the Town and the revitalization objectives of Canton Center. The Viaduct Revitalization District's redevelopment demands a plan that will strengthen the Town's economy and enhance the vitality and viability of Canton Center.

3.0 Planning

There is danger of piecemeal development that would not maximize the redevelopment opportunities of the area. As a Supplementary Element of the Master Plan, potential future redevelopment will be analyzed in a comprehensive manner to determine the highest and best use of the land. This document will serve as a valuable starting point for the Viaduct Revitalization District Plan. The Master Plan process will include visioning, goal setting, policy development, and key objectives. Additional planning work will include detailed economics, site planning/design, environmental, historic and transportation studies. The comprehensive

approach help will ensure that the developmental and environmental potential of the area is maximized. It will be subject to full public participation as part of the Master Plan process.

4.0 Existing Conditions

4.1 Zoning

The Viaduct Revitalization District is zoned "Industrial" (I) and General Residence (GR). The "Industrial" (I) Zoning District provides for (1) Office and limited light manufacturing and assembly, such as electrical, medical, optical, devices and goods, (2) warehouse and distribution facilities, (3) printing and publishing, (4) retail stores, showrooms, salesrooms, and (5) wholesale offices and showrooms.

The General Residence Zoning District provides for multi-family housing on lots of 217, 800 SF or more.

4.2 Land Uses

The Viaduct Revitalization District encompasses 54 acres of land, excluding Revere Street. Of the 54 acres, 48 acres is currently zoned Industrial (I) and 6 acres General Residence (GR).

Of the 48 acres zoned Industrial, the Plymouth Rubber Company occupies 40 +/- acres. This is the largest redevelopment site in the Viaduct Revitalization District. The remaining 8 acres of Industrial Zoned land is in four smaller parcels, ranging from 3.48 acres to 0.8 acres. All the parcels are occupied by light industrial, warehouse and distribution facilities.

Approximately 6 acres of land within the Viaduct Revitalization District is zoned General Residence (GR). Of the 6 acres, 3 acres is developed with 14 single-family homes on individual lots. The single-family lots range from 5,500 square feet to 12,900 square feet. A single 3.1 acre undeveloped parcel is included in the General Residence District.

4.3 Historic Buildings and Structures

To the north side of the Proposed Viaduct Revitalization District is an important and unique historical landmark, the Canton Viaduct. Within the Plymouth Rubber property is an important historical building, Paul Revere Barn.

5.0 The Vision

The site's close proximity to Boston, several major highways, two MBTA commuter rail stations and "downtown" Canton makes it an excellent location for either office or multi-family development. An area of such exceptional location characteristics and qualities require a redevelopment plan of the highest quality.

One vision for the redevelopment of this key town area is:

"To create an exciting and attractive new riverside development that adds to the vitality and viability of Canton Center, meets the economic development objectives of the Town, and which promotes sustainable development by providing a mix of office and residential uses, with priority given to a pedestrian friendly environment and connections to MBTA commuter rail stations".

6.0 Key Objectives

This “Vision” can be reality if the following key objectives are achieved:

- an overall site master plan is developed for the area and the area is redeveloped in a comprehensive rather than a piece meal manner.
- a mix and variety of new office and residential uses are provided within a framework of urban and green open spaces.
- the Town's economic development objectives are met, as set out in the on-going Master Plan.
- the plan is of the highest quality of site and architectural design that creates a sense of place through the arrangement of buildings within a framework of pedestrian ways and public open spaces, which are permanently accessible.
- The plan creates an attractive new riverside environment that maximizes the opportunities to enhance the Canton River and its environs as a wildlife corridor, landscape asset and local amenity for people to enjoy.
- The plan creates and enhances pedestrian links to Canton Center, the Canton Center Rail Station and the Canton Junction Rail Station.
- the plan creates a relatively vehicle free surface environment through provision of below grade or above grade structured automobile parking.
- opportunities to access public transportation for pedestrians, people with mobility problems, and bicyclists are maximized.
- The plan provides Transportation Demand Management Programs (TDM'S).

7.0 Planning and Urban Design Requirements

This vision statement provides supplementary planning guidance to the policies and standards being set out in the on-going Master Plan Initiative.

7.1 Uses

The Planning Department recommends the Viaduct Revitalization District be redeveloped as part of a comprehensive mixed-use plan. The redevelopment plan should establish physical links and integration with Canton Center. Residential and office uses should generally be located to overlook the attractive views of the Canton River and the Viaduct.

- flexibility will be needed to allow the area to be developed in an integrated way.
- The key requirement is for an integrated plan based on a clear vision of how the redevelopment area as a whole will look and function, make use of the riverside location and create obvious pedestrian access routes with Canton Center and the Canton Junction Train Station.
- For residential dwellings, a least 15% should be “affordable”. The actual numbers of residential units that can be provided depend on site constraints, the detailed layout, and massing arising from the design analysis.
- A strong landscape infrastructure that creates unity throughout the development, including a high quality riverside walk providing a significant area of public open space.
- Given the proximity to Canton Center, it is recommended that residential and office buildings are allowed to be constructed up to three stories, but not exceed 35 feet.

- The plan must be of the highest order, respect Paul Revere Barn and the Canton Viaduct, and make a significant contribution to the overall vitality, viability and attractiveness of Canton Center.
- With the exception of Paul Revere's Barn, the current buildings in the proposed revitalization district are of no great architectural value and actually detract from the character and appearance of the adjacent historic Canton Viaduct and the natural beauty of the Canton River. Comprehensive demolition and clearance of the existing structures (excepting the Paul Revere Barn) would therefore represent an opportunity to enhance the setting of the adjacent Canton Viaduct and the Canton River.

7.2 Affordable Housing

- The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) identified a shortage of affordable housing in the Boston region, including the Town of Canton. It is therefore important that affordable housing is provided within the site as part of the plan. This could be a mix of affordable rented and affordable for sale housing provided through the Canton Housing Authority. The scope to mix some affordable housing with market housing should be considered in accordance with the latest State of Massachusetts Guidance on Affordable Housing.

7.3 Integration of Uses

- The mix and disposition of residential and office uses needs to reflect market requirements to ensure a commercially viable plan. The uses in the plan should avoid stand-alone single uses but rather a mix of different uses within the revitalization plan. The need to consider amenity and noise/nuisance issues for existing homes in the vicinity of the site will be an important site design consideration.
- The integration and mix of uses will help bring more variety and vitality than isolated stand-alone development containing a single use. Mixing of uses within buildings particularly lends itself to riverside frontages. Specifically, commercial development on the first floor and residential development on the second and third floors.
- The revitalization/redevelopment area is sufficiently large to create its own unique identity and sense of place.
- Any revitalization/redevelopment proposals should respect the natural environment and ecology of the Canton River. There are some existing buildings hard up to the river's edge. This style of development should not be encouraged.
- There are a variety of architectural styles and a wide range of possible design solutions. The benchmark is quality and distinctiveness. The design must be a unique response to the site and its context.
- There is a significant wetland habitat along the Canton River. Any redevelopment plan must be sensitively designed and constructed to avoid disturbance of the wetland and disruption of wildlife. Opportunities to enhance the natural wetlands should be examined.
- Ecological surveys will be required from the outset. These surveys will help determine which areas should be preserved and protected, and then used as a foundation for establishing ecological enhancement opportunities to create an attractive riverside public area.
- The landscape infrastructure of the site will comprise both urban and green open space and a high standard of hard and soft landscape.

- Along the Canton River, the proposal should create, enhance and ensure continuity of the wildlife corridor. Riverside landscaping should use native species. Moving away from the river, non-native species (ornamental planting) would be appropriate.

7.4 The Canton River

- The stretch of the Canton River, which runs within the proposed Viaduct Revitalization District, forms part of a river wildlife corridor, which extends from Forge Pond to its confluence with the Neponset River. Adjoining the site, vegetation has become established, as a result of natural regeneration. The regeneration of vegetation has occurred on disused and underused land, on the river walls and banks, and within the channel of the river. Existing vegetation and habitat within the wildlife corridor should be used as a basis for identifying opportunities for new landscape planting in the vicinity of the river, using native species of local origin.
- The existing riverside vegetation should be retained and enhanced if the background ecological survey and analysis indicate that it contributes meaningfully to the natural environment. Any prospective developer who proposes to develop adjacent to the Canton River should identify improvements that can be made in terms of landscape, nature conservation and amenity.
- The Canton River is a natural river system, degraded over time by culverts, straightening, diversion and the creation of artificial hard edges. However, there is the space and opportunity at key points to create a softer more “natural” river and a riverside walkway. This would offer an attractive contrast to existing conditions and significantly contribute to the Canton River as a feature of the community. The most appropriate location of any riverside walkway and/or open space network would be dependent on the findings of landscape ecology and design studies.

Appendix: Viaduct Revitalization District Map

