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Land use, design considerations ready for The LINK

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Imagine an urban blank canvas in New England's second largest city; one linear mile arching around downtown and the riverfront, abutting neighborhoods and college and university campuses; 19 acres, 17 pad ready developable parcels, 8 acres of parks with a stunning pavilion and grand central plaza all linked together by a breathtaking iconic bridge.

It's called The LINK. The land in Providence was reclaimed after the relocation of I-195. Able to support up to 3 million s/f of new mixed-use development, it represents one of the most ambitious projects in New England. The framework for its development is taking shape. Later this month, developers, businesses and institutions will have the chance to respond to the January 2014 Request for Information.

The RFI and Developers Toolkit for The LINK address considerations of land use and design. Look for additional details soon on the I-195 Redevelopment District website, www.195district.com.

The framework is intentionally broad to allow for maximum flexibility in the mixed-use development proposals. The threshold criteria are simple and based on two guiding standards - the ability of proposals to enhance Rhode Island's economy and create jobs, and the ability to build well-designed structures that enhance the value of surrounding neighborhoods and augment the sense of place.

For commercial use such as office, research & development, hospitality, recreation and institutions, the threshold requirements will take into consideration number of employees, mean income level of jobs, support for community diversity, and spin off economic development. For residential use, the threshold requirements will consider new housing units oriented to the general community as well as those oriented to student beds.

The I-195 Redevelopment Commission, which is the single entity for approving development proposals and associated economic development in The LINK, is putting in place an expedited and user friendly framework for development.

Developers whose proposals meet The LINK's general redevelopment goals gain the I-195 Redevelopment District Commission as a partner that will actively support the development process and investment in Providence and Rhode Island.

The timetable for development is highly predictable - and ambitious. The commission maintains full authority for proposal review and approval, zoning relief requests, and subdivisions and mergers. Any project proposed in The LINK can earn preliminary selection within three months and receive final approval within another three months.

Environmental master permitting is already in place and that means developers in The LINK can obtain environmental regulatory approval within 45 days of submission of final site design.

The commission has worked with state and city departments, and public and private utilities to ready The LINK for development and is offering pad-ready parcels in Providence's urban core.

Providence itself has the scale and convenience of a small city while offering all one hopes of a vibrant much larger city. Its growing innovation economy and thriving art scene have earned it the title of the Creative Capital. Centrally located along the Northeast Corridor, Rhode Island provides a strategically advantageous location for emerging businesses with proximity and access to NYC and Boston.

The LINK is the single largest piece of undeveloped property in Providence, and is the centerpiece of an historic transformation of the city's skyline. The canvas is prepared, the tools in place. We look forward to partnering with those interested in helping us make the vision a reality.

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