



Town of Needham, Massachusetts Media Release

Office of the Town Manager
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Town Proposes Purchasing 34 Acres of Open Space in a Once in a Generation Land Acquisition

NEEDHAM – Friday, September 9, 2022 – The Town of Needham today announced that it will ask Town Meeting members this October to authorize the purchase of 34.3 acres of open space in a partnership that would give the community unprecedented access to the Charles River, walking trails, and recreational opportunities for generations to come. This land, a portion of the Castle Farm Property owned by the Foster Estate, would cost the Town \$2.5 million.

The Town's plan includes the purchase of two parcels of land totaling 6.3 acres along Charles River Street and an additional 28 acres of meadowland along the Charles River. Each of these parcels directly abuts the existing Ridge Hill Reservation which was acquired by the Town from the Fosters in 1981. The acquired land would allow for maintenance of the existing trail network (a portion of which travels across the to-be acquired parcels along Charles River Street), preserve the scenic road view for residents and passers-by, and significantly expand the Town's waterfront access to the Charles River.

"Open space is critical to the quality of life in Needham," said Select Board Chair Marianne Cooley. "It's space for our residents and visitors to play, to exercise, to explore and to just simply be in nature. The pandemic, in particular, has demonstrated just how important it is to have space for people to get outside, breathe fresh air and connect in safe and healthy ways. This partnership will allow the Town to provide more of this kind of space and to protect this land now and for generations to come through Town ownership."

Town leaders are working in collaboration with Northland Residential on the purchase of the entirety of the 64.16 acre-Castle Farm, a partnership critical to preserving 34 acres from development. Northland has proposed building a residential development on an approximately 14-acre parcel and setting aside an additional 14 acres to serve as an open space buffer/set back area from Whitman Road. In total, the envisioned partnership is projected to keep an estimated 48 acres, or 75 percent of the current property as open space, and prevents the kind of clear cutting of trees that could take place if the land was sold to a private developer for the construction of large, single-family homes on conventional lots.

Northland proposes to build a 70-unit high-quality age-directed clustered townhouse neighborhood that would include some affordable housing units. Northland is proposing the project as a Local Initiative

Project, also known as a “Friendly 40B”. This process provides an opportunity for input from the public and Town boards, and requires state and local approval of the project. The total cost of the parcels to be purchased by the Town and Northland is \$21 million, \$2.5 million of which would be Town funding.

“For over 50 years we have worked closely with landowners, conservation groups, municipalities and state environmental agencies to create, maintain and protect open space and conservation land, through the implementation of carefully designed and executed cluster developments,” said Jack Dawley, President and CEO of Northland Residential. “The envisioned land use plan simultaneously honors the lifelong environmental stewardship legacy of Henry and Barbara Foster, the conservation and land preservation objectives of the Town and the recognition of fair market value of land assets of this nature.”

The land purchase is contingent upon the execution of a signed Purchase and Sale Agreement, approval of Town Meeting, and a number of development-related milestones.

More information will be made available prior to Town Meeting on Monday, October 24, 2022. See attached map for more information.

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