

# The Industrial Park: A Landscape-Based Vision for the Turners Falls Canal District

Masters of Landscape Architecture Final Project  
By Josiah Simpson

This study provides an overview of historical, social, and economic context of Turners Falls that points to the importance of mostly vacant Canal District to the town and the obstacles that stand in the way of redevelopment today. Landscape improvements as redevelopment is proposed as an alternative pathway for transforming de-industrial space into a multi-functional layered place that offers numerous attractions to residents and visitors alike. While providing a valuable amenity for the town in the near-term, it also is about laying the groundwork that can influence wider market forces that in turn will initiate redevelopment of other properties throughout the Canal District later.

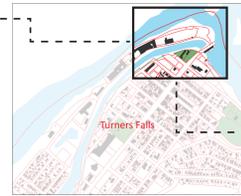
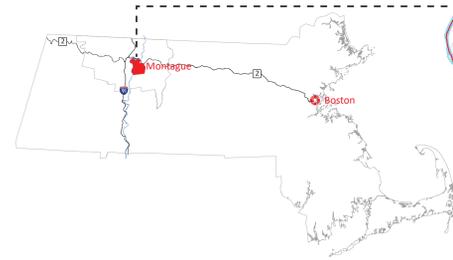
This project builds upon two key planning studies, the *Turners Falls Livability Plan* by Dodson and Flinker (2013) and *Powering Forward* a UMass MRP studio (2016). These studies identified two parcels at the northern end of the Canal District that are strong candidates for initiating and supporting redevelopment there. These parcels include a privately owned FirstLight Energy parcel, and town-owned land known as the former

Index site. The planning studies both propose transforming this area to a recreation focus that can connect downtown to the Connecticut River and waterfall and begin to re-brand the character of the district. Open space and recreation are cost effective pathways for positively changing a difficult area like this one, and can catalyze the type of market change the Turners Falls Canal District so badly needs. Together these parcels have several qualities and opportunities that will be leveraged for initiating multiple programs that have been identified through past planning work and interviews. The spatial layout, interpretive elements, and phasing will be explored through design.

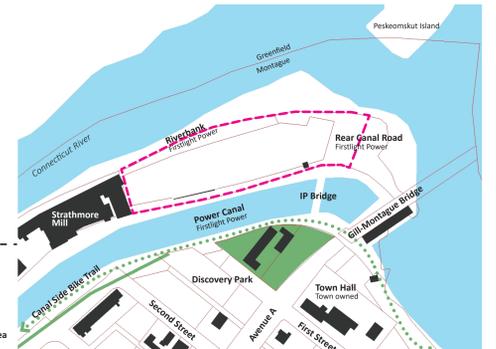
The purpose of this study is to use a landscape design framework, as an alternative approach to conventional redevelopment processes. Beyond an academic exercise, the findings from this design study reveal pragmatic options for the town to do something impactful with the Index site and adjacent FirstLight property that will dramatically change the Town's relationship to the Canal District in positive ways.

## Project Goals

- Establish a new vision for the site that helps revitalize this area of Turners Falls
- Create a vision that reflects the history of Turners Falls and specifically the Index site.
- Provide a proposal for the site that reflects community wishes and needs, and is informed by previous planning efforts.
- Propose design approaches that provide a mix of recreational, cultural and historic uses.



Study Area



An aerial image of the study area within the Canal District. Downtown Turners Falls is 500-feet from the iron pedestrian bridge to the island. The Gill Montague bridge crosses the Canal and Connecticut River (left). The foundation walls of the 19th-century mills are visible on the banks of the river. The Index co-generation ruins can be seen next to the 85-foot tall coal silo.

The proposed design of the park is a combination of small yet impactful interventions that offers new opportunities for positive public use, while preserving a creative and industrial character that is authentic to Turners Falls. By retrofitting an abandoned and overgrown industrial site into a safe and fun place, the design intends to improve access and sense of safety to create a healthy and desirable extension from downtown to the island. The design's purpose is to transform the perception and relationship of locals and visitors by connecting people with the amazing natural resources and history visible in this part of town.

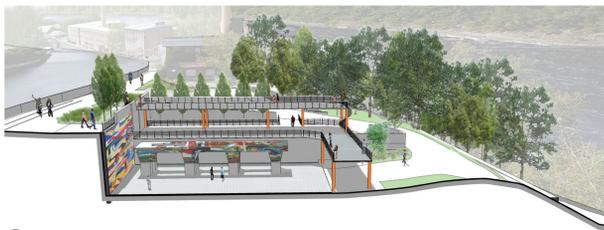
River. The man-made island's disconnection from the town is overcome by improved sight lines into and within the park, enhancement of the co-generation plant's ruins into monuments, bright colored materials and paint, lighting, and improved views of the river and dam, and safe routes to the water's edge. The draw to the park is multifaceted as it offers multiple experiences depending on the visitor. While the park's various experiences overlap and are integrated throughout, the park is generally organized into four main areas. These include:

- Entry and River Access
- Open Recreation Area
- Art and Culture Space
- Utility Zone

The park occupies 6-acres sandwiched between the rushing power canal and the Connecticut



0 40 80 120 feet



Section C-C: The section shows a daytime view of the powerhouse foundation that has been converted into a multi-purpose performance space. Murals transform the concrete into an expressive canvas. Two platform levels allow visitors to explore the foundation from different vantage points and look out over the Connecticut River.



Section D-D: A nighttime view of the powerhouse foundation. Light is projected on the coal silo setting the evening mood in the performance area and illuminating a landmark seen from other parts of Turners Falls.



Section B-B: Section B-B cuts through the Recreation Area, an open terrace for passive recreation and community events. An overlook plaza is adjacent to the Canal Road (left), the rubble garden frames the open space (center midground), and a concrete foundation from the co-generation plant is adapted as river overlook (right).



Section A-A: A section view through the Entry and River Access area showing the primary boat slipway. The slipway is composed of large stone boulders that descend into the river allowing visitors to safely access the river at different levels. The slipway gives water enthusiasts access to the exciting rapids below the Great Falls. The water access at the park allows boaters traveling down the Connecticut River to portage around the dam.

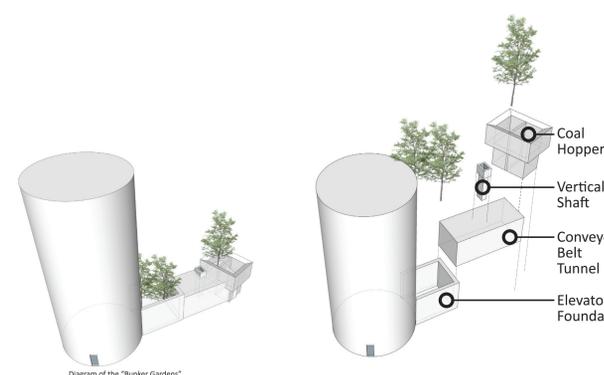
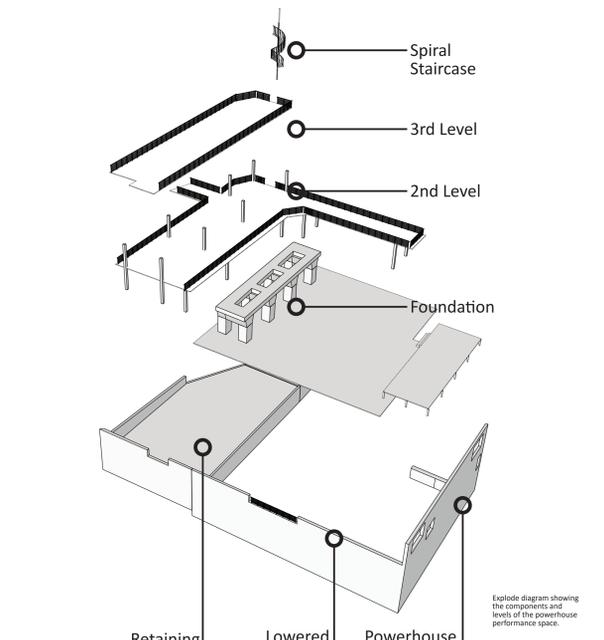


Diagram of the "Bunker Gardens"



Explode diagram showing the components and levels of the powerhouse performance space.



Visualization of the exterior co-generation area, showing the Canal Road Promenade (left), movable benches on tracks (midground), the sculpture park and outdoor workshop area (right), bunker gardens (right), and mural art on the coal silo.