

# Wynnefield Plaza



An Urban Land Institute  
Technical Assistance Panel  
September 24, 2013



Serving Eastern and Central Pennsylvania, Southern New Jersey, and Delaware

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On behalf of:



# About ULI-Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute and is supported by 30,000 members worldwide representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide responsible leadership in the use of land to enhance the total environment and to create and sustain thriving communities.

In 1947, ULI began providing advice to nonprofits and units of government that needed help in planning and development. At the tri-state regional level, ULI Philadelphia offers Technical Assistance Panels (TAPs) which bring together planners, developers, lenders, architects, and related professionals to objectively evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation. A TAP is a voluntary process. None of the professionals involved receive monetary compensation for their work.

# Introduction/ Background

Wynnefield Plaza, a building which formally housed a pharmacy and lunch counter located at the northwest corner of Bryn Mawr and Wynnefield Avenues in the Philadelphia neighborhood of Wynnefield has been vacant since 2000. David Groverman bought the building in 2010. He currently has cleared out the interior, and has repaired the most problematic parts of the building envelope. Mr. Groverman intends to renovate the exterior of the building to return it to its original appearance.

This property is in the midst of a stable pedestrian-scale neighborhood and adjacent to a SEPTA train station, overpass, bus stop, neighborhood-scale retail and several multi- and single-family residences. It is located along a corridor well-traveled by both Philadelphians and residents of Lower Merion. As such, it seems like a prime opportunity for redevelopment.

The Technical Assistance Panel for the Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation (WORC) was held on September 24, 2013. Nine ULI members formed the Panel and 13 stakeholders were interviewed including staff of WORC; the building owner; City Councilmember; and the City of Philadelphia's Water, Streets and Commerce Departments.

# Introduction/ Background

Panelists began the day with a tour of the building and then returned to the nearby New Testament Church of God and formed four working groups to identify opportunities for site, identify constraints and potential usage, as well as potential partnerships and funding sources.

The Panelists spent the morning interviewing stakeholders. With the interviews completed, panelists discussed the various stakeholder issues and goals and formulated their recommendations. Stakeholders were invited to return at the end of the day to hear a brief preliminary presentation of the comments and recommendations now finalized in this report.

The owner proposes a mixed-use development which would house commercial and retail space on the first floor and residential on the second floor. The total square footage of the building is 31,000 square feet.

Residential:

- 12 one-bedroom loft units.
- 500 –650 square feet.
- Average monthly rent: \$825.

Commercial – potential tenants:

- Edible Arrangements or similar.
- Upscale deli /convenience store.
- Pharmacy.
- Locally focused real estate agent.
- Dry cleaner (existing).



*Proposed front elevation on Wynnefield Avenue (top); side elevation on Bryn Mawr Avenue (bottom left); and rear alley elevation (bottom right).*

# Context

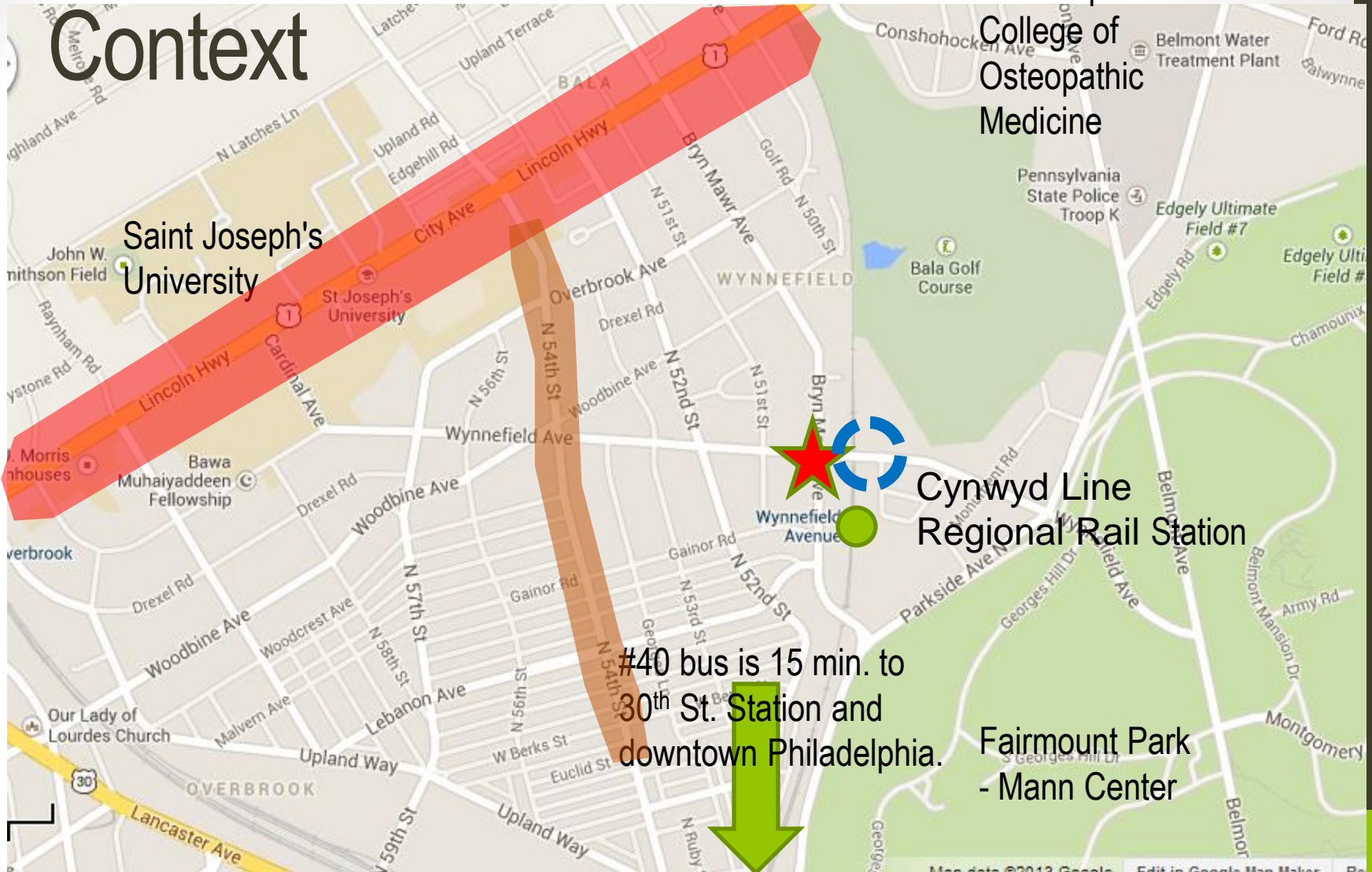
Saint Joseph's  
University

Philadelphia  
College of  
Osteopathic  
Medicine

Cynwyd Line  
Regional Rail Station

#40 bus is 15 min. to  
30<sup>th</sup> St. Station and  
downtown Philadelphia.

Fairmount Park  
- Mann Center



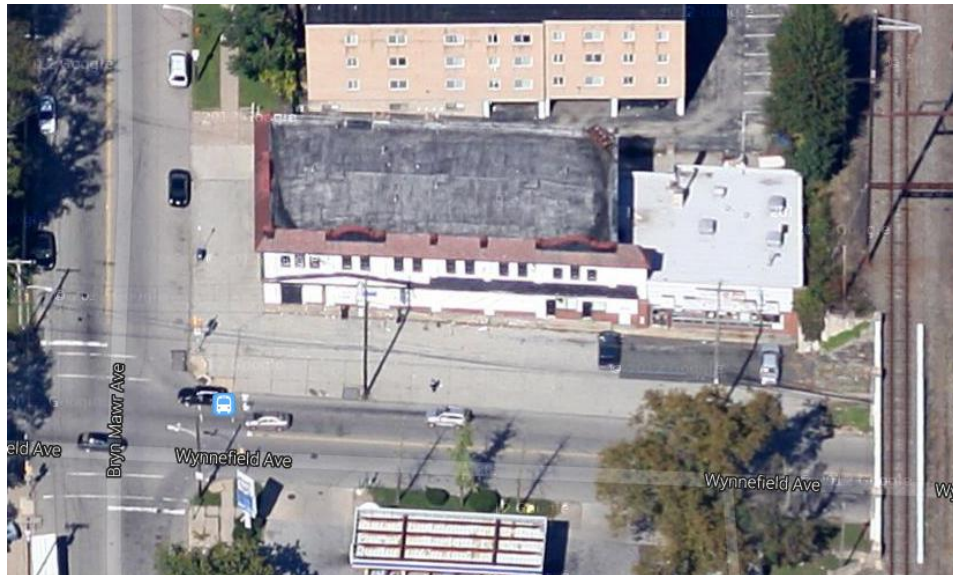


# Opportunities

- Market – Residential and Commercial
  - New residential units are undersupplied in the neighborhood.
  - Transit opportunities.
  - Proximity to Saint Joseph's University.
  - Visibility: 16,000 cars pass every day.
  - Diverse neighborhood to draw many demographics.
  - Stable residential neighborhood.
- Financing
  - Debt available for residential multi-family to help move the property forward.
  - Qualifies for 10-year tax abatement.
  - Possible Historic tax credit qualification.
- Community perspective:
  - Several elected officials in the neighborhood are supportive.
  - Site has strong historical reference to the neighbors.
  - Fill a void – no existing public gathering space to bring community together.
  - Organizational support through various civic and neighborhood stakeholders.
    - Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation, Wynnefield Residential Association, City Avenue Special Services District.
- Building
  - Desire to retain original exterior design and expand previous use.
  - Potential lofts offer a new product for neighborhood.

# Opportunities

- Site specific:
  - The square footage of the entire building is 31,000 square feet.
  - Large space between the building and street could be utilized for public with integration of parking.
  - Streetscape improvements: trees, paving, street furniture.
  - Bus shelter: grant funding, work with advertisers, tenant cooperation.
  - Synergy between nearby uses: Produce Junction & access to SEPTA parking lot.



*Aerial photograph of the building.*



# Challenges

- Market
  - Identify residential target market demographics.
  - Long vacancy creates a negative perception.
  - Not an extremely strong retail location currently.
  - 6,000 square feet of retail may be too much to fill.
  - Unattractive intersection.
  - Needs \$18-\$20 per square foot minimum retail rents to support costs.
  - Parking is limited for all uses.
- Financing
  - Not eligible for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money due to stability of neighborhood.
  - Pre-leasing of commercial space may be necessary.
  - Lenders will require equity contribution.
- Community perspective
  - Uses that are compatible with the neighborhood.
  - Identifying the target audience in a diverse neighborhood.
  - Parking ingress/egress.

# Challenges

- Building
  - “Old, dilapidated and unappealing” in current condition.
  - First floor retail space ceiling height is 9 feet; tenants are seeking higher ceiling heights (typically 14 feet).
- Site specific issues:
  - Parking: property line/right-of-way.
  - Currently an uninviting pedestrian experience.
  - Gas station across the street is not aesthetically appealing.

# Recommendations: Market

- Residential units make sense – site is surrounded by rental buildings and will provide new supply in aging market.
- 6,000 square feet of commercial may be too much to fill – possibly consider additional residential on part of the first floor.
- Commercial should be integrated into a neighborhood community amenity tied to strong “public realm:”
  - Coffee shop.
  - Café with outdoor seating.
  - BYOB restaurant.
- Build complementary food retail/service from success of nearby businesses such as Produce Junction.
- Neighborhood services tied to nearby amenities of Fairmount Park:
  - Seek Bike Share station for Philadelphia’s new Bike Share program .
  - Bike shops sales and service.
  - Real estate office oriented to neighborhood.



*Example of how bike sharing can be integrated with streetscape – coming to Philadelphia next year --*  
[www.phila.gov/bikeshare](http://www.phila.gov/bikeshare)



*Example of how outdoor café seating adds street life.*

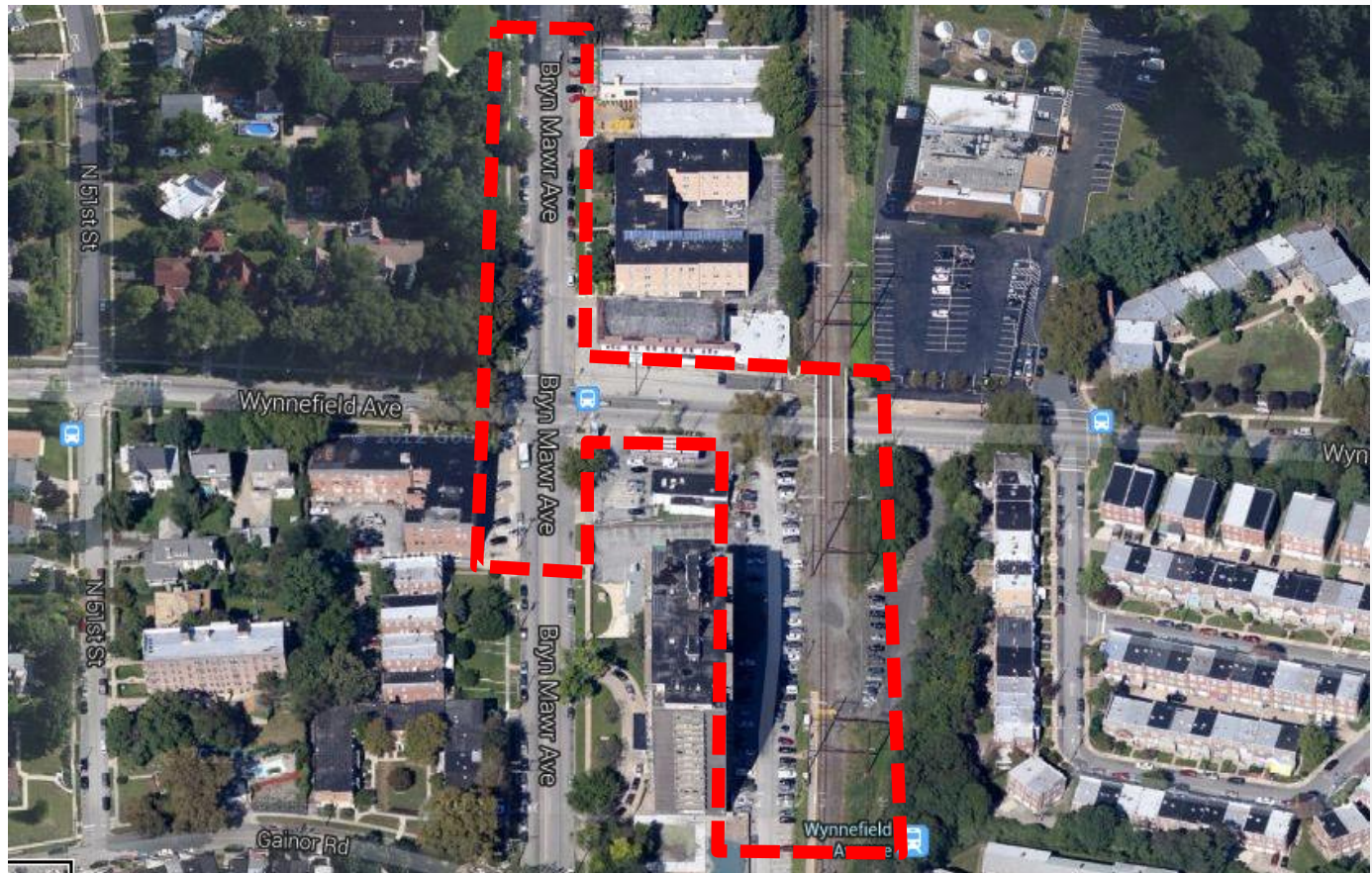
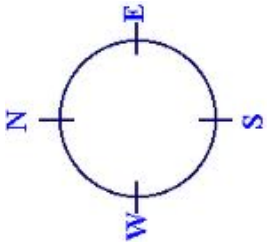
# Recommendations: Financing

- Subsidies and funding sources to investigate:
  - City of Philadelphia (Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr.)
  - The Reinvestment Fund.
  - Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation.
  - Historic tax Credits .
- Consider partnership with a multi-family developer to kickstart the project.
- Streetscape improvements:
  - Obtain more street trees through Parks & Recreation .
  - Explore Water Departments “Green Streets” initiative.
  - Work with Streets Department for potential parking improvements.
  - Explore opportunities for bus shelters through City.



# Recommendations: Community

- Consider current commercial area more holistically – provide connections and add life to the streetscape.





# Recommendations: Community

- Utilize sidewalk / outdoor space to:
  - Provide ongoing pedestrian activity (outdoor seating).
  - Program special events such as farmers market, sidewalk art, church activities, etc.).
- Re-design for pedestrian orientation:
  - Soften space with landscaping including planters and trees.
  - Add street furniture such as tables and chairs for public space.
  - Need covered bus shelter.
  - Improve exterior streetscape and building lighting for safety.
  - Improve connections to SEPTA.
  - Explore improving railroad bridge with Philadelphia Mural Arts program.
  - Improve façade (planned by developer).
- Consider community-oriented uses in the commercial space.

# Recommendations: Building/Site

- Building
  - Façade improvements – modernize with historic references.
  - Utilize windows for displays to improve façade aesthetic.
  - Utilize WORC's design guidelines including signage to help tenants maintain aesthetics.
  - Connect interior and exterior spaces through windows and door design.
- Site specific issues:
  - Streets Department coordination to integrate:
    - Parking.
    - Public sidewalk amenities.
  - Possible coordination with SEPTA for additional community parking.

# Stakeholders Interviewed

**Jennifer Barr**, Senior Long Range Planner, SEPTA.

**Reverend J. Barrett**, New Testament Church of God.

**David Dlugosz**, Streets Department, City of Philadelphia.

**Jim Flaherty**, Senior Manager, City of Philadelphia Commerce Department.

**David Groverman**, Site Owner.

**Nicole Hostettler**, City Planner, Philadelphia Water Department.

**Jay Johnston**, Board Member, Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation.

**The Hon. Curtis Jones Jr.**, 4th District Councilmember, City of Philadelphia.

**Maggie McCullough**, President, Policy Map, The Reinvestment Fund; Overbrook resident.

**Andrew Meloney**, West Philadelphia Community Planner, Philadelphia City Planning Commission.

**Jerry Murphy**, Executive Director, Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation.

**John Paone**, Board Member, Wynnefield Overbrook Revitalization Corporation.

**NazAarah Sabree**, Business Services Manager, Commerce Department, City of Philadelphia.

# Technical Assistance Panelists

**Megan Leinart**, Proposal Manager, TimHaahs & Associates (Co-Chair).

**Rich Wilson**, Vice President , Arcadia Land Company (Co-Chair).

**Michael Aylmer**, Assistant Vice President, Northmarq Capital.

**J. Michael Davis**, Project Manager, Nave Newell, Inc.

**Jamie Flaherty**, Associate, U3 Ventures.

**Imani Hamilton**, Assistant Vice President, M&T Bank.

**Michael Herrmann**, Senior Project Executive, O'Donnell & Naccarato.

**Rachel Lewis**, Associate Attorney, Cozen O'Connor.

**Randahl Matsuno**, Intern Architect, Kitchen & Associates.