

ULI Philadelphia

WHITE HAVEN CENTER
REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Foster Township, Pennsylvania



Sponsored by Luzerne County
with support from the Department of General Services
Technical Assistance Panel
July 15–16, 2026

About

Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute. It is supported by more than 45,000 members in 82 countries representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities worldwide. ULI Philadelphia has more than 900 members in the Philadelphia District Council, which includes the Philadelphia metropolitan area, Central Pennsylvania, Delaware, the Lehigh Valley, and Southern New Jersey. ULI provides guidance to nonprofits and municipalities seeking solutions to land use challenges. Its Technical Assistance Panels objectively evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation in an atmosphere free of politics and preconceptions. ULI member and non-member professionals provide their expertise in a voluntary capacity and each has signed an agreement to prevent current and potential conflicts of interest.

ULI Advisory Services

Since 1947, the ULI Advisory Services program has assembled well over 700 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for complex land use challenges. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's advisory services. National and international panelists are specifically recruited to form a panel of independent and objective volunteer ULI member experts with the skills needed to address the identified land use challenge. The program is designed to help break through obstacles, jump-start conversations, and solve tough challenges that need an outside, independent perspective. Three- and five-day engagements are offered to ensure thorough consideration of relevant topics. An additional national offering is the project analysis session offered at ULI's Fall and Spring Meetings, through which specific land use challenges are evaluated by a panel of volunteer experts selected from ULI's membership. This is a conversational format that lends itself to an open exchange of ideas among diverse industry practitioners with distinct points of view. From the streamlined two-hour session to the "deeper dive" eight-hour session, this intimate conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving. Learn more here. Distinct from Advisory Services panels, TAPs leverage local expertise through a half-day to two-day process.

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Cover photo: The 182-acre White Haven Center in Foster Township, Pennsylvania, presents a unique redevelopment opportunity for Luzerne County. (Pennsylvania Department of General Services)

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Acknowledgments

On behalf of ULI Philadelphia, the panel would like to thank Luzerne County, the Pennsylvania Department of General Services, and Pennsylvania Department of Human Services for inviting ULI to conduct this technical assistance panel. In particular, ULI thanks the following key contacts for providing insights and information leading up to and during the two days of the panel: Luzerne County contacts Romilda Crocamo, Karissa Kross, and Harry Skene; Department of General Services contacts Catherine Califano, Brett Crans, Andrew Lick, and Tracy Surfield; and Department of Human Services contacts Kevin Dressler, Heathcliff Kalac, and George Maag. The panel would also like to thank the wide range of professional, municipal, and community stakeholders who generously took the time to share their perspectives during the interview sessions.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The White Haven Center in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, is an 182-acre institutional residential campus that was recently decommissioned with 500,000 square feet of built space across 23 buildings. It is divided essentially into two parcels by state-owned Oley Valley Road. Run by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, White Haven Center once served youth with special needs and their families. As the approach to residential care and education for this special population has evolved, the residential care model provided by the White Haven Center became outdated, rendering the campus obsolete for its intended purpose. While at one time employing up to 500 people and contributing $300,000 annually to Foster Township through wage taxes, today the White Haven Center (the Center) maintains only a small maintenance staff, on hand to ensure that the buildings are kept in good working order while the future of the campus and its buildings is determined.

To help Luzerne County (the County) and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (the State) evaluate potential new uses for the campus and how best to shift the property once again into productive use, the governmental entities together turned to the Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council (ULI) for assistance. Using its technical assistance panel (TAP) program, ULI convened a panel of real estate and land use professionals to evaluate the redevelopment opportunities for the property and provide recommendations for a viable path forward. Those recommendations are summarized below.

Highest and Best Use Analysis

The expert panel evaluated the highest and best use options for the property, including those that utilize the existing structures and those that require clean, clear developable land.

Following a tour of the White Haven Center campus and meetings with community and Center stakeholders, the panel also evaluated the site's strengths and weaknesses in terms of access, regional placement, demographics, and infrastructure.

Regarding reuse of existing structures, the current buildings do not meet current building code standards and are not up to current standards for senior or affordable housing. All of the buildings on campus require major updates. With 23 buildings total, these needed updates will create a financial and logistical challenge for a new user, so the panel determined that it is highly unlikely for a single user to purchase and redevelop the full 182 acres and 500,000 square feet of buildings for another institutional use.

Single-use opportunities. There is potential demand for a clean, clear, assembled large lot for industrial, data center, or energy generation.

- **Light industrial.** A light industrial use would clear the site of existing buildings, generate tax revenue, and create jobs. There is increasing market demand for industrial sites, but transportation access is a concern, as is the limited existing utility service.
- **Data center.** A light industrial use would clear the site of existing buildings, generate tax revenue, and create jobs. There is increasing market demand for industrial sites, but transportation access is a concern, as is the limited existing utility service.
- **Renewable energy.** A renewable energy user would align with the Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan and create little negative impact on the community. It would also provide limited direct community benefit.
- **Conservation or open space.** A conservation use or campground might reuse a few of the buildings and could leverage the proximity of nearby trails and parks. This use provides little tax benefit and may instead require additional ongoing public funding.

If nearby stakeholders are overwhelmingly interested in preserving the site, the state will likely need to consider multiple transactions or find a redevelopment partner committed to the long-term effort of carrying out a vision on behalf of the interested stakeholders. The State is amenable to working with the County to find a use that could be of greater direct benefit to the surrounding community. This approach prompted the ULI panel to factor potential community impact into its use analysis, which, for this purpose, could

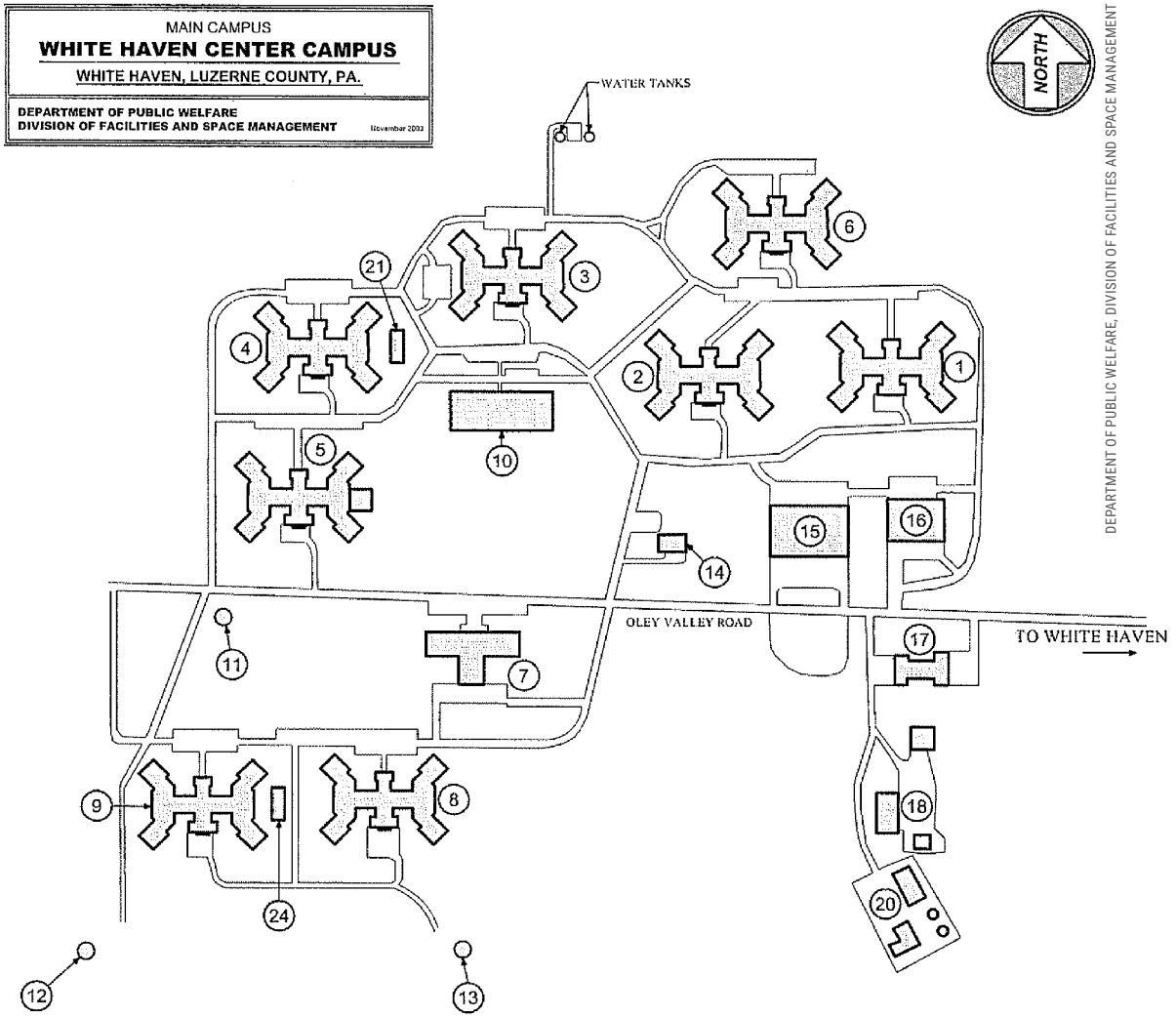
include tax revenue generation, job creation, and quality-of-life attributes.

Multiple-use opportunities. Multiple users could leverage portions of the site and, when taken as a whole, would represent the conversion of the entire campus. These uses might include attainable housing that is affordable to the area's workforce, housing for homeless veterans, drug and/or alcohol treatment services, local education services, workforce skills training space, sports fields, and open space for recreation. A number of these options are not tax-producing functions and need to be evaluated by local government stakeholders regarding alignment with the overseeing bodies' priorities. The prescribed zoning then should complement the local priorities and allow those uses to exist by right, instead of the present case, which only allows institutional use.

Disposition Framework and Process

Given the public nature of the site—owned by the State with critical County, municipal, and community interests—the panel turned to best practices in the disposition of large swaths of publicly-held land. In addition to the case studies it provided on page 20, the panel drafted a process that the parties can use to guide the various entities through the disposition process.

Following the anticipated September 2026 vote in the State Legislature to approve the disposition plan for the Center, the State is



The campus is divided north and south by Oley Valley Road, which is owned and maintained by the PA Department of Transportation. The campus buildings and water wells are marked on the map and noted in the key to the right

encouraged to issue a Request for Interest in the site. Concurrently, the Luzerne County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) should consider taking responsibility for the campus disposition and lead the process.

If the IDA agrees to take the site, then a feasibility study and land use plan follow, as does securing the buildings in place (thereby ceasing all maintenance operations and ending the State's annual $5 million maintenance expense). Marketing the site follows, which likely includes a request for proposal (RFP) for desired uses. Negotiations with developers ensue, and the disposition sequence can be drafted. Any required zoning modifications would follow shortly thereafter.

Summary

The future of the White Haven Center lies in the hands of Luzerne County officials as they consider the degree to which they intend to be involved and the level of risk the County is willing to assume with the site. With support from the State, the County can determine the depth of its involvement in the campus disposition. The County should also consider the leadership position it would be willing to embrace in pursuit of new uses that could provide both market value and community benefit. The collaborative nature of the County and the State, as demonstrated through the partnership for this TAP, is an early indication that the parties are capable and willing to work together toward an end that best benefits the community. How that path unfolds will be up to the County and neither path is with out risk or important tradeoffs that must be considered. ULI and the individual panelists are energized by the opportunities ahead for the White Haven Center and stand ready to answer ongoing questions as the need arises.



PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

Introduction and Background

The White Haven Center in Luzerne County is one of a number of outdated, state-owned institutional campuses that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has decommissioned. This campus, in the foothills of the Poconos Mountains, ceased operations in 2023.

While the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services operated the White Haven Center when it was still serving youth with special needs, the Department of General Services (DGS) is responsible for managing the sale and transfer of the property out of the state's administration.

DGS has posted an Expression of Interest (EFI) for the entire property and would typically place the campus on e-marketplace, where the State would accept the offer from the highest bidder. The EFI has elicited a few early inquiries; however, DGS and Luzerne County leadership are interested in exploring the highest and best use for the site as well as expanding considerations to include potential uses that might also directly benefit the surrounding community.

During this process, the property remains in a holding pattern, with staff ensuring the buildings remain operational until there is a determination as to whether the buildings can be reused effectively and whether a new user is likely to do so. The land and buildings have an estimated value of $12.8 million, and the property's land disposition plan is anticipated to gain approval from the State Legislature in September 2026. At that time, a formal appraisal will be conducted, and the State has the authority to sell the site. In the meantime, DGS is spending $5 million annually to maintain the operational capacity of the buildings and grounds.

To assist Luzerne County and DGS (together the Sponsors) with their evaluation of the site's market potential, the Sponsors turned to the Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council for guidance. ULI, using its trusted and objective technical assistance panel program, convened a panel of real estate and land use professionals to study the site, consider the questions posed by the Sponsors, and deliver a set of recommendations the Sponsors can consider as they plan for the disposition of the 182-acre campus.

Key outcomes. The Sponsors' scope for the TAP included the following intended outcomes.

- Evaluate feasible redevelopment and reuse scenarios for a large, multi-building institutional campus.
- Identify zoning, infrastructure, and regulatory considerations that may impact redevelopment potential.
- Assess market feasibility and appropriate phasing strategies.
- Provide guidance on public and private coordination, community engagement, and implementation strategies following site disposition.

The Site at a Glance

Land Area: 182.72 acres

Total Buildings: 23

Year Built: Established in 1901 with subsequent renovations (1950s and 60s)

Total Enclosed Space: 525,000 +/- square feet

Zoning: S-1 Special Purpose Institutional Use

Questions for the Panel

The TAP sponsors asked the panel to address the following four questions:

- What redevelopment and reuse scenarios are most feasible for the White Haven Center campus given its size, location, existing building stock, and current market conditions?
- How can redevelopment be phased in to balance initial market realities along with long-term economic development goals for Luzerne County and the surrounding region?
- What zoning, land use, or regulatory strategies should be considered to support flexible redevelopment while maintaining compatibility with surrounding uses?
- What implementation and governance strategies can Luzerne County pursue to help guide redevelopment outcomes following the Commonwealth's disposition of the property?

White Haven Center

Spanning 182.72 acres, the White Haven Center campus is located directly north of Interstate 80 in Foster Township. Although the Center is within the jurisdictional boundaries of Foster, the campus abuts the Borough of White Haven and more closely aligns with that community. Over 1,100 people live in White Haven, and many worked at the Center while it was in operation.

Community facilities. In addition to the residential buildings spread across the campus, the White Haven Center was home to an indoor swimming pool and large gymnasium, both of which were open to the White Haven community and provided welcome recreational amenities for the surrounding residents.

Residential buildings. The majority of the residential buildings were constructed in the 1960s, and there is some known asbestos in some of the walls. The buildings were also built before modern Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and have not been adapted to meet current guidelines. Finally, the residential buildings were built in a barracks-style, with residential wings surrounding a central dining and gathering space. The kitchens in each building were scaled back to manage final meal preparation and service only, and the primary commercial kitchen and cooking are instead managed out of one central building elsewhere on campus.

Utility services. The campus has four wells providing water service to all 23 buildings. An on-site treatment facility manages wastewater, and a boiler and generator provide heat and redundant power.

Surrounding demographics. The surrounding area is mostly rural, with 30,000 people living within a 20-minute drive of the Center. The unemployment rate hovers around 5 percent, and the poverty rate at 9 percent is higher than Pennsylvania's average.

Stakeholder Takeaways

In addition to reviewing the briefing materials provided by the Sponsors and touring the campus, the panel spent time interviewing a range of community, campus, and agency stakeholders connected to the Center in some fashion or who might have insights into potential new uses and a market for the property. The following list represents the panel's key findings from those interviews.

- **"It's White Haven, but not in White Haven."** While not physically in the borough, White Haven residents and civic leaders feel a close association with the campus.
- **Job creation should be a goal.** The White Haven community was impacted by job losses when the Center closed. Many residents must now travel outside the area for employment and would like to see job opportunities return to the campus.



The buildings across the campus are a mix of residential and operational (administration, maintenance, and recreation) facilities.



The residential buildings are not readily convertible to a new use.

- **Tax revenue is needed.** With the Center's closing, it is estimated that Foster Township lost $300,000 in annual tax revenue. With a growing residential population, school student population, and continuing infrastructure maintenance needs, tax revenue generation is a key priority for the township.
- **The community wants amenities.** The community valued its access to the pool and gym and would prefer that the new use also provide amenities for the community.
- **Housing is needed.** White Haven is full of two-story homes that are well-suited for the borough's hilly neighborhoods. These two-story homes, however, are difficult for seniors to navigate, and many would like to see new one-story options that allow them to remain in their community as they age.
- **There are affordability and homelessness risks in the community.** Many in the area's senior population are experiencing financial pressures that impact their ability to age in place, which adds to broader housing affordability stresses and creates additional risks for homelessness.
- **Complement White Haven's economy.** Some business owners expressed concerns that the site might include new uses that are incompatible with White Haven's businesses, whether through a use that is potentially a deterrent, like a prison, or a use that might bring new competition to White Haven businesses.



LUZERNE COUNTY PUBLIC GIS PORTAL

The White Haven Center property (dashed white lines) lies within Foster Township and abuts the White Haven Borough limits on the east. Interstate I-80 and the interstate easement lies adjacent to the southern property boundary and Oley Valley Road bisects the property east to west. There is a small five-acre parcel of the Center's land holdings that sits within White Haven (at the property's southeast corner), and a creek and adjoining wetlands run through the entire parcel's southern edge. The property generally slopes to the south and has a more pronounced in the northern reaches of the northern parcel, which has been left generally unimproved to date.

For additional perspective, one of the panelists share information from Pennsylvania's Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) database about Luzerne County. ALICE earns above the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), but makes less than what is needed to afford basic essentials. ALICE often earns too much to qualify for government assistance, and there is no room in ALICE's budget for emergency expenses.

Luzerne County Total Households: 140,231

Total Households in Poverty: 18,599 (13%)

Total ALICE Households: 35,502 (25%)

Total Households above ALICE Threshold: 86,130 (61%)

- **Traffic impacts are a concern.** White Haven is close to the interstate and is no stranger to truck traffic. The borough has narrow roads and limited alternative routes, so additional vehicular traffic volume is generally unwelcome unless it is visitor traffic to the Main Street businesses.
- **White Haven is a Blueprint Community.** Blueprint Communities is a revitalization and leadership initiative that serves as a catalyst for creating sustainable communities across the state. This designation comes with leadership training, assistance with visioning and implementation, and coordination of investments by public and private funders.
- **The site requires significant annual expense.** Even in its current, pared-down operational state, the campus still requires $5 million annually to maintain the buildings and grounds in the most basic manner.

Site Characteristics

Strengths. The panel noted the following attributes of the campus that should serve as strengths in pursuing a new use.

- It is a large site at 182.72 acres.
- One owner holds the land.
- Interstate 80 access is within one mile, and Interstate 480 is five miles to the east.
- White Haven is within a two-hour drive of key markets, including Philadelphia and

New York City.

- The campus has good infrastructure and basic on-site utilities.
- The site's aesthetics are appealing, and the land is relatively flat.

Challenges. The following challenges may curb market interest and potentially complicate a sale.

- There are some natural barriers on the site, including wetlands, Linesville Creek, and a floodplain that covers some of the site's southernmost land.
- There are legal encumbrances relating specifically to well access by four adjacent, privately-owned residential properties.
- The existing zoning for the site is highly specific to its former use and is thereby restrictive. A zoning change will be required.
- The site is bifurcated north and south by Oley Valley Road, which is a state roadway.
- The buildings are outdated and have known hazardous materials, including asbestos and lead-based paint.
- There are layered public interests at the site, including Foster Township, White Haven, Luzerne County, and multiple State agencies.

Site setbacks. In considering potential new uses at the site, the panel drafted potential setback recommendations based on best practices that may impact the site's buildable area.

- For industrial uses, the required 100-foot setback from the property line would reduce the campus from 182 acres to 151 acres.
- For a more intensive use like a data center, the 500-foot setback reduces the site to 65 buildable acres.

Existing Zoning

The existing Special Purpose Institutional zoning for the campus allows the following range of residential, health care, agricultural, and community uses at the site.

Residential

- Single-family residence
- Two-family residence
- Multifamily dwelling unit (3 or more DUs in a building)
- Home office
- Home occupation

Health Care Related

- Continuing care facility
- Intermediate care facility
- Skilled nursing facility
- Medical clinic

Community Facilities

- Library
- Place of worship



PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

The Center's over 500,000 square feet of built space is spread out across the 182 acres.

- Public building or facility
- School (special exception)
- Recreational facility – public
- Recreational facilities – commercial

Mixed Use Structure (Special Exception)

Agriculture

- Agriculture tourism
- Forestry

The panel's evaluation of the site, its market potential and the anticipated highest and best use, pointed to new uses that do not fit these designations. New zoning will be needed.

Highest and Best Use Analysis

The panel sought to create a mixed-use vision that maximizes community and economic value. Guided by this goal, it began its objective evaluation of a potential highest and best use for the campus by reviewing the 2021 Lackawanna-Luzerne Counties Joint Comprehensive Plan. Understanding Luzerne County's priorities helped the panel remain aligned with the County's goals while formulating land use recommendations.

The evaluation process took into account information and data collected from the Sponsors' briefing materials, additional research conducted on the ground during the TAP, insights from the 17 TAP stakeholder interviews, and the panelists' professional expertise. The panel then returned to the Comprehensive Plan and prioritized aligned uses, as well as uses that would support County tax revenue. The resulting matrix, included on pages 15 and 16, outlines each potential use and lists each with related impacts, anticipated benefits, and potential challenges.



The panel met with local and State leaders in the effort.

Potential Uses

The large site provided a broad canvas for several potential uses. The following list contains uses that were, in the panel's estimation, the most applicable to the campus and thus warranted closer evaluation. Items marked with an asterisk align with the County's comprehensive plan.

- Light industrial.
- Data center.
- Renewable energy generation.*
- Secondary housing, such as vacation homes.
- Attainable housing.* Any housing at the site would likely be constructed as low density given the low demand intensity of the surrounding population.
- Veterans' housing. Multiple stakeholders raised this idea, so the panel added it to the matrix for consideration.
- Senior housing. Residents expressed a desire for more single-level and senior-supportive housing that would allow them to stay in the community as they age.
- Active recreational, including sports fields, tournament facilities, and more.
- Conservation, open space, or camping.*
- Educational, technical school, or community college. Stakeholders also raised this use as a way to leverage existing buildings and equipment on campus while providing beneficial workforce development opportunities.
- Health care options.
- Cannabis facility.

** This use that aligns with the goals of the County's comprehensive plan.*

Reuse of Existing Structures

The existing buildings on campus, 23 in total, were carefully considered with each proposed use. If the existing structures were viable for a use or could be adaptively reused, they could represent a significant asset in the sale of the property. Through the panel's cursory evaluation, however, it determined that all of the potential users of the entire site would require a cleared site. There were a few small users, listed as part of the "multiple-user matrix," that may be able to reuse some of the buildings.

The barracks-style design of the residential buildings does not readily convert to office uses or new residential space. The group sleeping arrangements are also no longer supported in a post-COVID environment, nor are shared living spaces and shared restrooms. The panel noted that to adjust the restroom configuration, all of the flooring would need to be removed in order to replumb the spaces.

As noted earlier, the buildings are not built to current accessibility requirements. Of particular note, current ADA standards feature much lower slope standards than are currently found on the existing ramps, and the site's topography would make new low-slope ramps challenging to install.

The buildings would require sprinkler systems as well as new facades, roofing, and windows, all of which would be costly.

Taken singularly, any one of these updates in one building might be easily overcome with a small investment. Taken together across eight residential buildings, these updates create an uphill challenge and a much larger investment that is likely curbing market and developer interest in the site.



The barracks style residential buildings feature communal bathroom facilities that are outdated.

Evaluation Framework

The panel evaluated the following key criteria across each potential use.

- The potential for reuse of the existing structures resulted in a preliminary finding of yes, no, or partial reuse may be possible ("partial").
- The potential impact of the proposed development could include tax revenue generation, potential job creation and income generation, and the value the project might bring to the community in quality-of-life attributes or the community's market competitiveness.
- The potential opportunities and challenges of each site, including market demand or competitiveness, the site constraints and related impact on the particular use, the likely need for updates to zoning to allow the use, and the anticipated investment or private, public subsidy, philanthropic funding that would be required to bring the use to market.

The panel also considered uses that could leverage the entire site through a single transaction or a range of uses that would likely involve multiple developers and multiple transactions.

Single-Use Opportunities

Light industrial. There is decent market demand for large industrial sites similar to the size of the White Haven Center campus, and a light industrial user could include manufacturing, warehousing, and logistics, and could also include cannabis operations.

There would be no need for the existing buildings, but the potential positive impacts could include tax revenue to the County and new jobs for the community.

The primary challenge for a new industrial user here lies in the limited transportation access. While the interstate is close, the nearest interchange is still a mile away, and the route winds through White Haven, bringing with it potential traffic volume and congestion concerns for the community. Building a new interchange for the site would be expensive and presents other challenges given the wetlands to the south. Finally, the existing utility capacity will not be adequate to meet the needs of an industrial user large enough to purchase the entire campus.

Data centers. A data center could make use of the entire site and, like the industrial user, would have no use for the existing buildings. The tax revenue potential would be high, and the increasing market demand may make this use increasingly more viable.

There are significant challenges with bringing a data center user to the site, however. The general public often stands in opposition to new data centers locating in communities

across the country, and this area is no different. This generalized public perception leaves the County and a developer with a significant public relations hill to climb. The site is also receiving 1 megawatt of power, which is far less than the 100-megawatt ideal for a data center user.

Renewable energy. A renewable energy generator at the site would align with the County's comprehensive plan and would likely be undeterred by the site's bifurcated nature.

This use would likely have little to no negative impacts on the community (e.g., no increased traffic volumes) and would not use the existing buildings. A community solar farm would deliver some positive impacts to the community, mostly through the provision of renewable and reliable power generation.

This new use would require adding an alternative energy overlay to fit within current zoning regulations. It would also require an investment in infrastructure to prepare the site.

Conservation or open space. Stakeholders voiced a desire to preserve the site's open space. A conservation edict or formal open space use could include trails, a park, an environmental center, an RV park, or a campground.

A conservation use might be able to reuse some of the existing buildings, but not all, if the operator also provides community classrooms, a nature center, or other environmentally- or educationally-focused service. An open space use could leverage the site's proximity to the D&L Trail that runs along the Lehigh River and could bolster ecotourism in White Haven and the surrounding area.

A wholly conservation-focused or open space use of the site would not provide tax revenue to the County and might instead require additional public funding for ongoing operations.



The panel toured most of the campus grounds as well as a number of key buildings.

Multiple-Use Opportunities

Beyond finding a single user to purchase the full 182 acres, the panel considered uses that could leverage a portion of the site and, when taken as a whole, represent the conversion of the campus. This approach would hinge on DGS's willingness to sell the property in pieces and then subdivide the site, creating separate pipelines for each parcel. Should DGS be willing to take this approach, the panel considered the following multiple-use opportunities.

Attainable housing. Housing was mentioned multiple times during the stakeholder interviews and touched on various levels of affordability, from low-income to attainable or workforce to market-rate housing. Housing is already allowed under current zoning for the campus and would align with the County's comp plan.

Stakeholders noted a particular interest in using the site to address local needs, specifically multigenerational housing and aging in place.

The potential drawbacks to using the site for housing development include the demolition of all existing buildings, limited tax revenue to the County, and inadequate existing utility capacity. There is also limited access to employment opportunities, amenities, and public transportation in the area, all of which play a critical role in the success of attainable housing development in particular.

The build-out of 182 acres of housing would likely depend on several developers

each tackling a portion of the campus. Construction would be dependent on funding cycles, which typically deliver 45-60 units per 3-5 years per phase. Housing development at the site would be a long-term process.

Secondary housing. There is a secondary home market in the region that developers might be able to tap into for the campus, including a property owners association (POA) structure. A POA could make use of the existing residential zoning and develop a portion of the site. The flexibility of the site design–the ability to choose a section to develop–could be attractive to developers.

This approach would deliver some tax revenue back to the County, but it would not make use of the existing buildings. There is also potential competition from other established POA communities in the area. While the site is attractive, there are no natural water features that would make housing here more attractive or distinctive. Lastly, the existing water and sewer capacity is limited and inadequate for development of scale.

Active recreation. Commercial sports fields might be possible on the site. With multiple fields or courts, these professionally run, for-profit recreational entities provide space for games, matches, and tournaments and are often surrounded by hospitality amenities like hotels, restaurants, and entertainment facilities that benefit from the traveling teams, players, and families needing lodging, dining, and entertainment outside of the games. Spooky Nook is a good example of this type of use.

An active recreational user would not leverage the existing buildings, but could provide moderate tax revenue to the County. The incorporation of hotels, retail, and other uses could benefit the surrounding community in other ways, providing additional resources for tourists and trail users, as well as employment opportunities for residents.

The area represents a small market, however, and competition from other regional population centers, like Mountain Top, may weaken demand for a use like this on the campus. Other smaller recreational operations may seek to leverage nearby hotel and retail amenities, instead of building new ones, and may find the surrounding options still too limited at this time.

Educational and training. Vocational training, a community college satellite, or a technical training facility would support and expand the County's workforce development success and bolster the area's continuing education and workforce readiness pursuits.

This type of use could leverage some of the campus buildings while retaining its bucolic character. An institutional use of this nature would be consistent with the site's existing zoning.

The challenges with pursuing this type of use lie primarily in its remote location. Proximity to population or employment centers and public transportation resources are important to the success of these types of educational ventures. Facility build-out, in addition to existing building updates, would likely require public, institutional, or philanthropic funding, and a savvy operator to champion and manage the efforts.

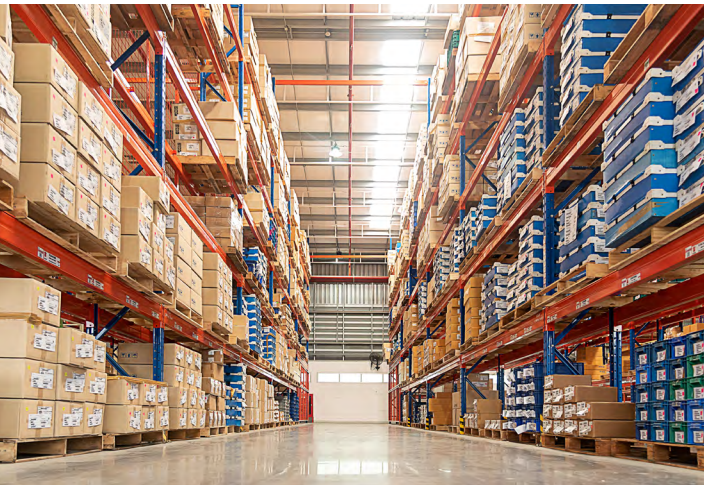
There is a possibility of using the existing utilities in this use. Still, a new user must consider the ongoing costs associated with the long-term maintenance of the boiler, the water system, and the wastewater treatment center.

Healthcare or social services. The existing configuration of the campus buildings led the panel to consider the potential for new healthcare or social services on the site. A conventional rehabilitation center would fall under the site's existing zoned uses and could reuse some of the existing structures and infrastructure with limited updates. This use would also support the local community through service provision and by providing jobs.

The drawbacks to this approach lie in the tax-exempt nature of the use, the need for a trusted operator, the fact that it would likely consume just a small section of the broader campus, and that it would still require long-term maintenance of the boiler and wastewater treatment facilities, which come with added costs.

Highest and Best Use Evaluation, Single Use

	Description	Use of Existing Structures	Impact	Opportunity	Challenges
Light Industrial	Manufacturing, Warehousing, Logistics, Cannabis	No	$$$	Increasing market demand Precedent for larger-scale development Industrial uses could take up entire site	Lack of immediate interstate access Cost and logistics for interchange Future roadway congestion Lack of adequate utility access
Data Center	Data center	No	$$$$	Increasing market demand	Potential externalities Public perceptions and misconceptions 1 megawatt currently (ideal is ~100 MW)
Renewable Energy	Community solar farm	No	$	Alignment with comp plan Low impact to community Alternate energy overlay	Infrastructure investment
Conservation, Open Space	Trails; Park; Campground; Environmental Center; RV Park	Partial		Leverage existing D&L Trail linkage Bolster ecotourism Preserve open space Community serving use Reuse of structures	Requires funding Identification of operator







(from left) Light industrial uses, renewable energy generation, and open space were all considered in the panel's future use evaluations.

Highest and Best Use Evaluation, Multiple Uses

	Description	Use of Existing Structures	Impact	Opportunity	Challenges
Secondary Housing	Second home market, POA community	No	$$	Established typology in market Site design flexibility Residential is permitted under current zoning	Competition from other established POA communities No natural water features Issues with water and sewer access and ongoing maintenance
Attainable Housing	Affordable (veterans, senior, workforce) to Market-rate	No	$	Alignment with comp plan Meet local needs Residential is permitted under current zoning Support multigenerational housing and allow of aging-in-place	Issues with water and sewer access (maintaining infrastructure) Built out dependent on funding cycles (approx.. 3-5 years per phase for 45-60 units per phase) Limited access to employment, amenities, and public transportation
Active Recreational	Commercial sports fields	No	$$	Incorporation of new hotels, retail, and other uses	Identification of operator Lack of existing hotels and retail amenities Competition from regional population centers (Mountain Top)
Educational, Training, Higher Learning	Vocational training center; community college; technical training	Yes	$	Maintain bucolic campus Maintain institutional use (consistent with zoning) Opportunity to expand County's workforce development footprint	Public, institutional, and philanthropic funding No public transportation Identification of operator Costs for long-term maintenance of boiler and water and wastewater treatment center
Healthcare, Social Services	Rehabilitation center Conventional	Yes	$	Already a permitted use Leverage existing structures and infrastructure Support local community	Similar uses are typically on smaller sites Costs for long-term maintenance of boiler and water and wastewater treatment center Identification of operator

Disposition Framework and Process

The White Haven Center is a large site that has had a significant presence in the community for decades. The public nature of the site comes with significant public interest, and multiple jurisdictions have a voice in or can influence what happens with the land. Given this complexity, the panel turned to best practices in the disposition of public land, gathering and drafting process guidance that can help all parties in this matter operate collaboratively and in the best interests of the community.

Several examples can help inform the Center's disposition process. From the incredibly complex Federal Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process to the closing and repositioning of former hospital properties, multi-acre, multi-layered public lands can be transformed into new successful uses. The common threads through the case studies the panel evaluated were streamlining, where possible, of interested entities; transparency where possible; working with one party or one appointed voice for the local community; and the ability to convey the property in the fewest parcels and transactions possible.

Outstanding questions. Before traveling too far down any one disposition path, however, those managing the campus's sale will need to address or gain clarity on the following three topics:

- The State's marketing and conveyance abilities are limited. Expanding these abilities would serve the site and the process well, and change should be pursued if possible.
- A recent public engagement process conducted by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, in collaboration with State Senator Argall and State Representative Walsh, invited community input on future uses of the site. The panel appreciated learning about this effort and discussed whether additional public engagement opportunities might be beneficial to further inform future planning and decision-making.
- The zoning at the site was a frequent topic of concern for the panel. At present, the site requires a conditional use permit for any use that will cause more than 40,000 square feet of disturbance, there is a 35-foot height restriction, and a new data center ordinance was recently adopted. Each of these factors may impact the viability of a new use at the site, and a zoning change or overlay district may be needed.

Recommended Process

The panel outlined the following potential process the County and State could follow to market and convey the campus to a new user(s).

September 2026:

- The State issues a Request for Interest as soon as possible for the adaptive reuse of the site or proposed new uses. This early market intelligence can help inform decisions required later in the process.
- The State Legislature addresses the disposition plan for the Center.
- At the same time, the State asks the Luzerne County Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to take on responsibility for the campus disposition and lead the process.

Approval of the 2026 Real Property Disposition Plan by the legislature would authorize DGS to issue an RFP for a competitive bidding process for the sale of White Haven Center. A direct sale to a specific buyer would require additional, standalone legislation. DGS may convey the property directly to a qualified redevelopment authority without legislation if the property meets criteria of being a blighted property under Urban Redevelopment Law. (Visit Surplus Properties | Department of General Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for more information on the process.)

Pursuing these steps concurrently ensures that all possible solutions are advanced without delay and encourages the IDA to evaluate the opportunity and render a timely decision.

Assuming the State Legislature's approval to dispose of the site and if the IDA agrees to take the site, then the following steps unfold sequentially.

- The Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority (RDA) conducts a feasibility study and creates a land use plan, paid for by the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development. (It may also be possible for the State to provide additional staffing support for the work ahead.) The findings of the feasibility study are made public.

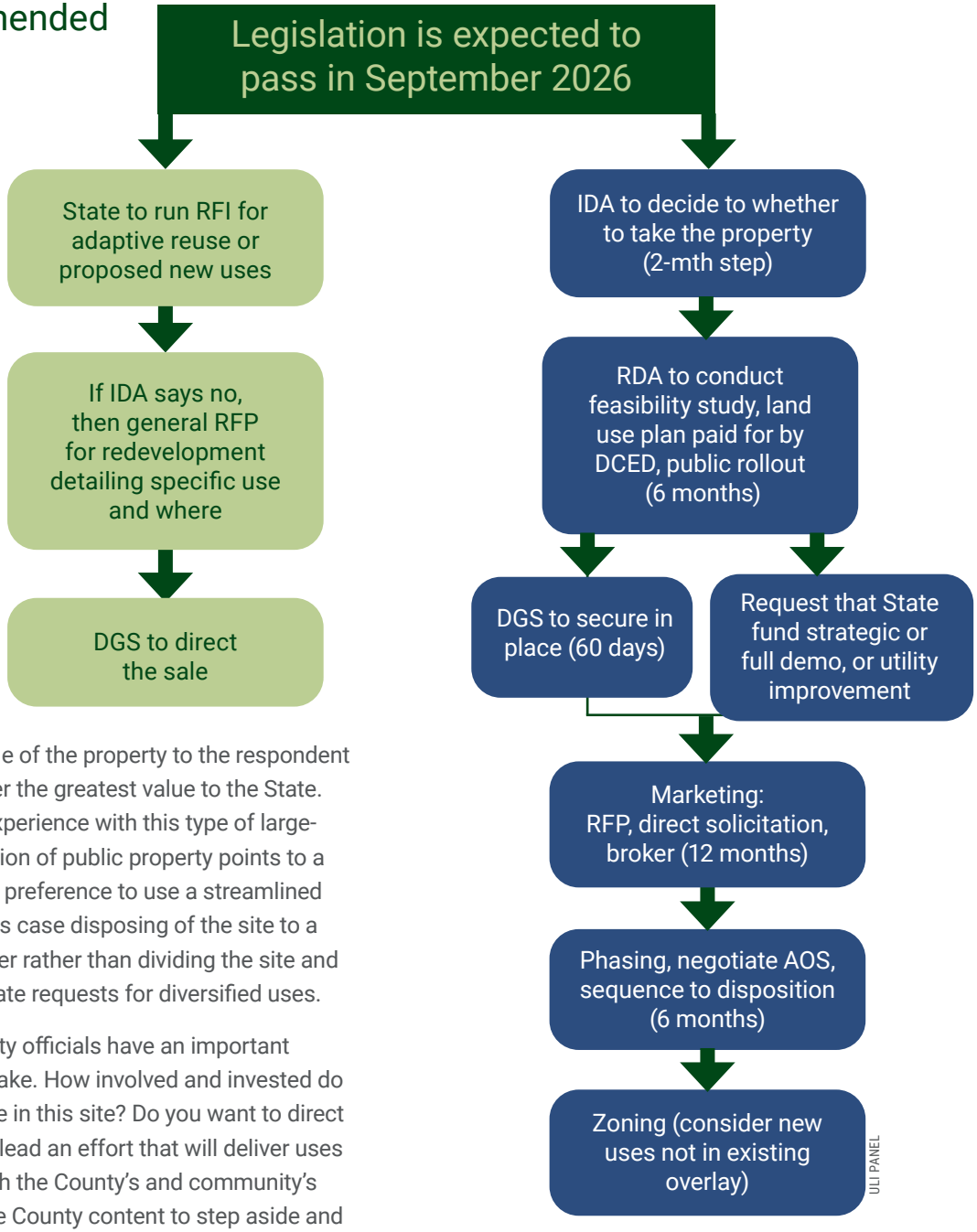
- DGS secures some or all of the buildings on campus in place, ceasing all operations and maintenance functions and significantly reducing or eliminating associated costs.
- RDA issues a request for assistance from the State to fund strategic demolition of buildings, full demolition, and/or utility improvements, depending on their overall vision for the site.

- The property enters the active marketing phase, including issuing a request for proposal (RFP), working with the brokerage community, and pursuing direct solicitation with markets, potential owners, and developers. The RFPs could structure a request for development for (1) the entire site, featuring the various uses the public would like to see at the site, or (2) individual parcels featuring the discrete uses anticipated for each parcel.
- Once a developer has been identified, the agreement of sale (AOS) is negotiated, phasing plans are formulated, covenants and restrictions are negotiated, as are utility access and mutual use of stormwater basins. The sequence to disposition can be drafted at this stage.
- Zoning considerations follow, addressing each property owner and proposed use, with a determination as to whether or not new uses will be considered for the site.

If the IDA declines to take on the disposition of the site, then DGS drafts the RFP for redevelopment of the entire campus and uses the RFP to specify the desired use(s). DGS then directs the sale of the property to the respondent that will deliver the greatest value to the State. The panel's experience with this type of large-scale disposition of public property points to a governmental preference to use a streamlined process, in this case disposing of the site to a single new user rather than dividing the site and issuing separate requests for diversified uses.

Luzerne County officials have an important decision to make. How involved and invested do you want to be in this site? Do you want to direct its future and lead an effort that will deliver uses in keeping with the County's and community's goals, or is the County content to step aside and let the State direct the sale and eventual campus reuse?

Recommended Process



Case Study

Willow Grove Naval Air Station

Following the September 2011 closure of Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base Willow Grove in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, the Department of Defense provided for the transfer of the former base's 1,142 acres to the Horsham Land Redevelopment Authority.

Following a delay associated with environmental hazards, Horsham Township launched a land-use planning process that took into account environmental, historic, topographic, community priorities, and market demand.

According to a June 2025 Horsham Township press release, "Since the closure of the base... the Township has been proactive with the future redevelopment by expanding the sewer treatment plant, planning for public water, planning and implementing traffic improvements, and the next logical step is to be proactive with zoning."

Read more.

Case Study

Norristown State Hospital Redevelopment

In this instance, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania conveyed 68 acres of the Norristown State Hospital property to the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority in 2022 for a new use. The hospital consolidated its operations into a new, single, more efficient building on an adjacent parcel.

Before the land conveyance, the State spent $30 million on demolition, environmental remediation, and other site readiness work. Once site preparation was complete, the Redevelopment Authority issued an RFP and sold the acreage for $4.7 million to a master developer.

The site straddles two separate townships and has a mixed-use zoning overlay guiding work on the site. The Preserve at Stony Creek is the first development to break ground.

Read more.

Case Study

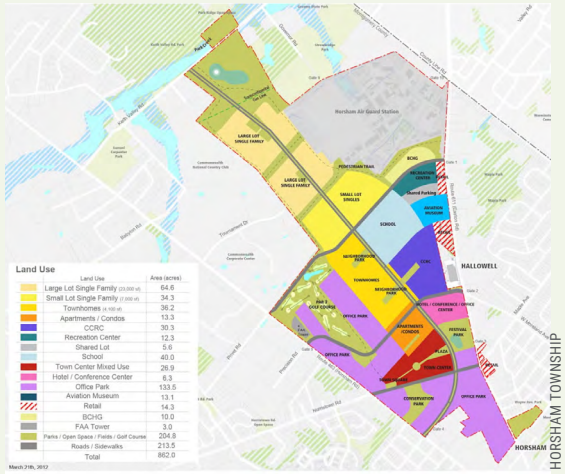
Byberry State Hospital

The Byberry State Hospital in northern Philadelphia closed its doors in 1990 and sat vacant for the following decade, falling into disrepair.

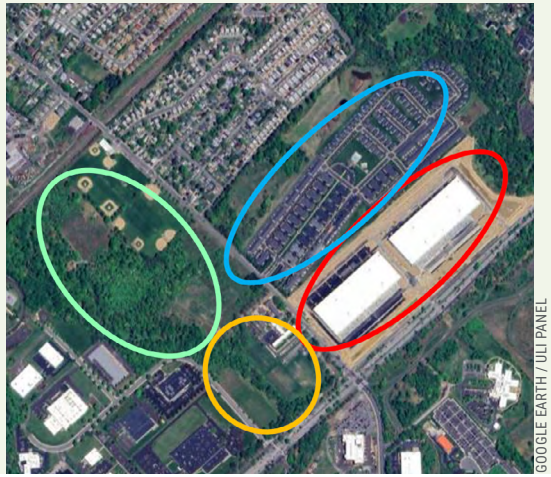
Through a mix of conveyances, the State transferred a portion of the site to three non-profits and the remaining land to the IDA. The IDA then managed the demolition of the buildings and the associated environmental cleanup, preparing the site for an RFP and final conveyance, via purchase, to a developer who has since built a 332-unit active adult residential community.

Industrial uses line the former hospital site along Roosevelt Boulevard, and sports fields sit adjacent to the nonprofit uses, across Southampton Road from the residential community.

In both of the site maps below, the blue circles encompass residential uses and the red highlights the industrial uses. On the right, the Byberry site also includes recreational (circled in green) and nonprofit uses (yellow).







Summary

The disposition of the 182-acre White Haven Center campus represents a potentially significant shift in this historically State-owned property. While the Center had been for decades a predominant factor in the White Haven community, the evolution of the State's provision of health and human services for special needs youth has rendered the buildings and the facility obsolete for those purposes.

Whether or not the Center's buildings may be reused for other purposes remains an open question, and one that is best answered by the market. Across the potential new uses evaluated by the ULI panel, only a small number might find the buildings of interest; and the majority of new users would require a clean site.

As the State issues its request for interest for the campus, Luzerne County leaders have a choice to make. They can decide to play an active role in the redevelopment of the site through a local redevelopment authority, or they can choose to leave the campus in the State's hands, likely selling the site in whole to the highest bidder.

Choosing to direct the site's future will require more effort from the County and involvement from local officials. By leveraging the resources of a redevelopment authority and with the backing and support of the State, the County has an opportunity to guide uses at the site that may help meet some of the expressed needs of the surrounding community, namely housing and jobs. This path may also–will likely also–require subdividing the site into parcels based on intended use. This subdivision, again requiring more effort by local officials, can provide the market with greater flexibility to respond to individual opportunities based on developer interest, expertise, and market knowledge.

With the State as a willing and interested partner in this disposition process, the County is well-positioned to take the lead on this effort. With the right local partners in place, including Foster Township officials and leaders from the Borough of White Haven, it may be possible for the White Haven Center campus to transform into its next iteration as a community center of activity, housing, employment, and pride.



PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

About the Panel



PANEL CHAIR

Liz Gabor

Principal
GAIA Real Estate



Liz Gabor is a seasoned economic development and real estate executive with more than 25 years of experience leading complex investment, redevelopment, and public-private partnership initiatives throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Recognized for her expertise in large-scale real estate transactions, Liz has built a career at the intersection of economic development, government strategy, and transformative redevelopment.

A former Presidential Management Fellow, Liz served in the Pentagon's Office of Economic Adjustment and worked with the Overseas Basing Commission, where she developed specialized expertise in compatible use planning and military-community redevelopment. She has since brought that knowledge to the private sector, helping guide the redevelopment of former military bases and industrial properties for major corporations and institutional investors, including Blackstone and IKEA North America.

Liz is the founder of Gaia and has led projects involving complex public funding structures, industrial park redevelopment, and strategic economic development initiatives that drive long-term community and business growth.

Liz holds a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania through a unique interdisciplinary real estate finance program that combines coursework from The Wharton School, the School of Design (Planning), and the Fels Institute of Government. This combination of academic rigor and hands-on experience has positioned her as a trusted advisor on large-scale redevelopment, economic development strategy, and complex real estate projects.

Thomas Dredge

Senior Project Engineer
Langan Engineering



Tom Dredge is a Senior Project Engineer with Langan Engineering and is a licensed Professional Engineer in the state of Pennsylvania. He has over 20 years of experience managing and implementing land development and roadway construction projects. His experience has involved preparing engineering plans and reports for various industrial, commercial, higher education and residential projects. This work included overall site layout, stormwater conveyance and management design, soil erosion and sediment pollution control design, utilities design, and traffic impact assessment.

Tom has worked with various local and state agencies throughout the permitting and approval process to achieve client and project goals. This includes coordination with local municipalities, conservation districts and PennDOT offices, as well as Pennsylvania DEP.

Kim Krauter

SVP of Real Estate Development
HDC MidAtlantic



Kimberly Krauter is the Senior Vice President of Real Estate Development for HDC MidAtlantic, where she leads the organization's affordable housing development efforts across Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. With more than 30 years of experience in housing and over 20 years dedicated to affordable housing in Pennsylvania, Kimberly has built a reputation for successfully advancing complex community development initiatives that create lasting impact. Throughout her career, she has managed the development and preservation of affordable housing communities serving seniors, families, and individuals with disabilities. Her expertise spans project management, strategic planning, community engagement, operations, financing, and navigating complex zoning and entitlement processes.

Kimberly was recognized as a 2025 Philadelphia Region Social Innovation Design Award winner for Housing and Community Development and served as project manager for Pennsylvania's first PHFA Innovation in Design Award-winning development. She is particularly passionate about developing creative, cost-effective services and housing solutions that enable seniors and adults with disabilities to age in place with dignity, independence, and choice. A lifelong advocate for people with disabilities and older adults, Kimberly serves as President of the Board of the Montgomery County Down Syndrome Interest Group (MCDSIG) and is a member of the NeighborWorks America Real Estate Advisory Committee. Her work is driven by a commitment to expanding access to quality affordable housing and strengthening communities through thoughtful, resident-centered development.

Brian Licari

Vice President
Econsult Solutions Inc.



Brian Licari is a vice president at Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI) and leads economic development, strategic planning, competitive positioning evaluation, and community market assessment engagements for public, private, and nonprofit clients. With more than 20 years of urban planning, real estate, and local government experience, including more than 15 years in consulting, he has a deep understanding of key economic and market indicators. He applies his expertise to data-driven approaches that balance the contextual needs and motivations of stakeholders at different levels of local, regional, state, and national involvement.

Brian's direct project experience includes market analysis, economic and fiscal impact analysis, industry cluster analysis, place-based economic development strategies, stakeholder and community engagement, district reinvestment strategies, and entrepreneurial ecosystem assessments. He is adept at applying a wide range of analytics and strategic approaches for helping clients, communities, and stakeholders understand and address complex challenges related to regional development patterns, fiscal solvency, equitable growth, and economic competitiveness.

Brian holds a master's degree in urban planning from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina. To refine his expertise in real estate, he recently completed a commercial real estate certificate program from Cornell University. Brian is actively involved with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as a member of the Neighborhood Planning and Development Local Product Council and UrbanPlan committee.

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Evan Rassman

Partner
Fox Rothschild



Evan advises developers nationwide on major commercial real estate transactions. A keen strategist and creative problem solver, he is known for taking a practical and commonsense approach to getting complex deals done. Commercial Mortgage-Backed Securities Evan is particularly well-versed in representing borrowers in CMBS financing, with a focus on the origination, restructuring and workout of complex commercial real estate loans. His work spans office, multifamily, hospital and health care assets, and includes negotiating loan documents, intercreditor agreements, title and survey, and servicing matters. He understands how to work closely with special servicers and direct certificate holders, and he guides his clients in resolving issues that arise over the life of CMBS loans. Depth of Experience For more than a decade, Evan has advised developers and owners on the full lifecycle of commercial real estate assets. That starts with acquisition and continues through financing, structuring of joint ventures, construction, leasing and disposition. Evan is also outside counsel to national title insurance companies and has deep experience handling complex title and survey issues. He also frequently represents real estate private equity funds in formation, mezzanine and equity investments, acquisitions and fund disposition. His experience spans the full range of properties, including hotels and hospitality; renewable energy; self-storage; shopping centers and retail space.

Peter Simone

President
Simone Collins
Landscape Architecture



Pete is a graduate of Rutgers University in Landscape Architecture and is founding principal of Simone Collins Landscape Architecture. He is a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and a member of The American Planning Association. His work covers a broad spectrum, including land use planning, zoning, comprehensive and master planning, recreational and trail planning and design as well as grant writing and public involvement strategies.