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Would-be police HQ site at West Philly insurance building to become public health campus

The decision provides some clarity on the future of the 13-acre property at 46th and Market Streets, which has sat in limbo since the city's announcement that it would move its Police Department into the former Inquirer Building instead.



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The Provident Mutual Life Insurance building sits behind a tall chain-link fence as its being renovated by the city at the corner of 46th and Market.

MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

by Jacob Adelman
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The former Provident Mutual Life Insurance Co. building in West Philadelphia — once eyed as a headquarters for the Police Department — is slated to be transformed into a public health and community service center under a plan by Iron Stone Real Estate Partners.

The Philadelphia-based developer, in partnership with the Public Health Management Corp. health institute, was selected by the city to develop



The decision provides some clarity on the future of the 13-acre property at 46th and Market Streets, which has sat in limbo since [the city's announcement](#) in May 2017 that it would move the Police Department into the former Inquirer Building at 400 N. Broad St. instead.

"The plan is for what we're calling a public health campus," Eisenstein said.

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Iron Stone's past projects have included the redevelopment of the Medical College of Pennsylvania's former campus in East Falls into an educational and commercial complex. It recently acquired the Girard Medical Center at Eighth Street and Girard Avenue.

Some of the 92-year-old Provident Mutual building will be occupied by development partner PHMC, which plans to use the space for medical clinics, dental offices, a vision center, and mental health and community-outreach services.

Iron Stone is also in talks with Children's Hospital of Philadelphia to lease part of the building for medical offices, and it has been speaking with groups including the Young Men's Christian Association about the potential for a day-care center there, Eisenstein said.

Another potential tenant is Kismet Cowork, which could operate a shared office facility aimed at nonprofit users, Eisenstein said. Kismet currently has spaces in Chestnut Hill and in the [revitalizing warehouse district](#) north of eastern Center City.

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buildings on the sprawling property surrounding the glass-domed neoclassical insurance company building.

More immediately, it plans to construct semipermanent seating and retail structures — in the spirit of the Porch at 30th Street Station and Penn's Landing's Spruce Street Harbor Park — at the property's southeast corner, near the 46th Street stop on SEPTA's Market-Frankford Line. Other spaces will be landscaped, possibly in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

"All our plans really work on incorporating the building and the site into the neighborhood," Friedland said.

The Provident Mutual building's namesake occupant moved out in 1983. City Council approved plans under then-Mayor Michael Nutter in 2014 for its conversion into a police headquarters to replace the force's current home in the dated four-story concrete building at 750 Race St. known as the Roundhouse.

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[Those plans were abandoned](#) about three years later during the Kenney administration, when the city said it would instead seek to move the Police Department into the former newspaper tower on North Broad Street. The department is expected to be in its new home by spring 2020 [at an expense of \\$280.3 million](#).

After changing its plan for the headquarters, the city began seeking a developer to buy the site for some other use in a [competitive process that ended with Iron Stone's selection](#).

City spokesman Paul Chrystie said in an email that officials are not immediately able to discuss specific proposals for the site, but that they "remain excited about the opportunity to reactivate this property in a way that will benefit the community and the city."

Iron Stone will be getting the property after the city has paid more than



how much the developer will pay for the site.

The company's initial round of redevelopment work is expected to cost about \$80 million, Eisenstein said. Efforts are being made to have the building listed on the National Register of Historic Places so it can qualify for federal historic preservation tax credit support.

"That's something we've done throughout the city: trying to take over these large obsolete campuses or buildings and repurposing them in a way that's thoughtful," Friedland said.

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Jacob Adelman [✉](#) [🐦](#)

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