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The developers of the sprawling former Provident Mutual Life Insurance property at 46th and Market Streets began a series of stops at neighborhood groups last night at the Spruce Hill Community Association (SHCA) monthly board meeting to garner support and input for its proposed health campus.



A partnership between Philadelphia-based commercial developers Iron Stone and the Public Health Management Corp. (PHMC) will develop the 13-acre site, once slated to be the new home of the Philadelphia Police Department.

PHMC will run three programs at the site, including a federally funded health center that will provide primary care and dental services, a public health office and a 20- to 30-bed overnight site. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) plans to operate a children's mental health services center from the site and several day care providers, including the YMCA, are interested in opening a large (some 120 children) facility, Andrew Eisenstein of Iron Stone Real Estate Partners told the SHCA board.

All of these would be housed in the main building, which is under renovation. Eisenstein said one of the strengths of his firm's bid was its plan to move quickly to complete construction.

"We're not going to sit on this," he said. "We're going to design it and build it."

The stately main building, complete with a polished cupola, is the focus of the first phase of the project. The proposal also calls for an outdoor space that includes small retail establishments selling coffee and food aimed at the more than 500 employees who will work in the 325,000-square-foot main building, similar to The Porch near 30th Street Station.

An ordinance still needs to pass through City Council because the property is owned by the city. That means that Jannie Blackwell, the councilwoman who represents that area, will have some say in how the project proceeds thanks to the city's system of councilmanic prerogative, which gives council members some say over city property sold in their districts. Eisenstein said Blackwell supports the project, but has made some recommendations.

More buildings will likely be erected on the site. The site is zoned to allow developers to build up to 3.5 million square feet, Eisenstein said.

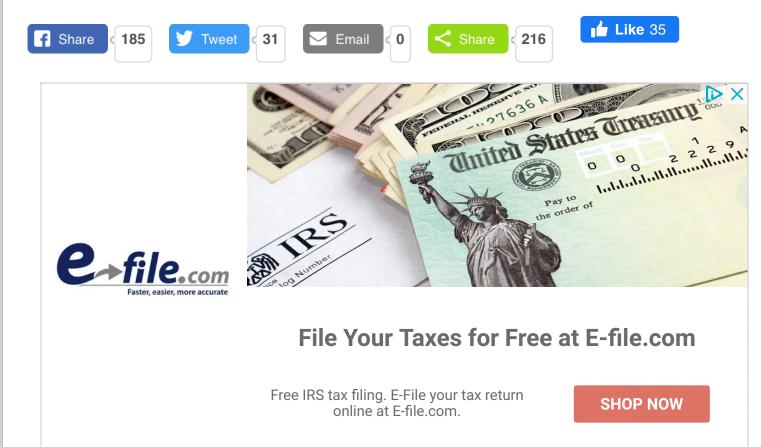
"I don't think we'll ever get close to the max zoning," said Eisenstein.

Eisenstein said the development partners will apply for historic preservation tax credits.

The 19th century pump house – the brick building with the smoke stack on the southwest corner of the site – is heavily damaged and will likely be demolished, Eisenstein said.

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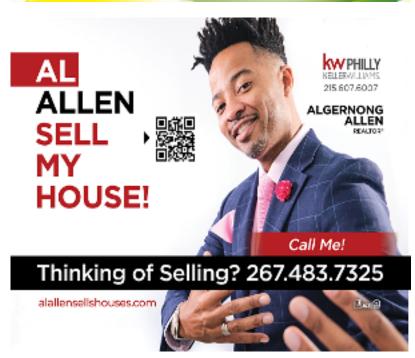
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