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# Iron Stone plans 1,240 apartments in next phase of Provident campus redevelopment

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When Iron Stone Real Estate Partners came up with a plan for the property at 4601 Market St., Partner Jason Friedland and his colleagues knew what they wanted.

First, they wanted to restore the former Provident Mutual Life Insurance Co. headquarters that was built in 1927. They wanted to transform it into a commercial anchor for the West Philadelphia neighborhood with health and education tenants. Then they wanted to add apartments to the property.

Iron Stone has all but wrapped up the first phase of that plan. The company bought the property from the City of Philadelphia for \$10 million in 2019 and spent \$70 million to continue repairs on the building. It's been up and running with tenants inside since the summer and the last remaining space could be leased out in January.

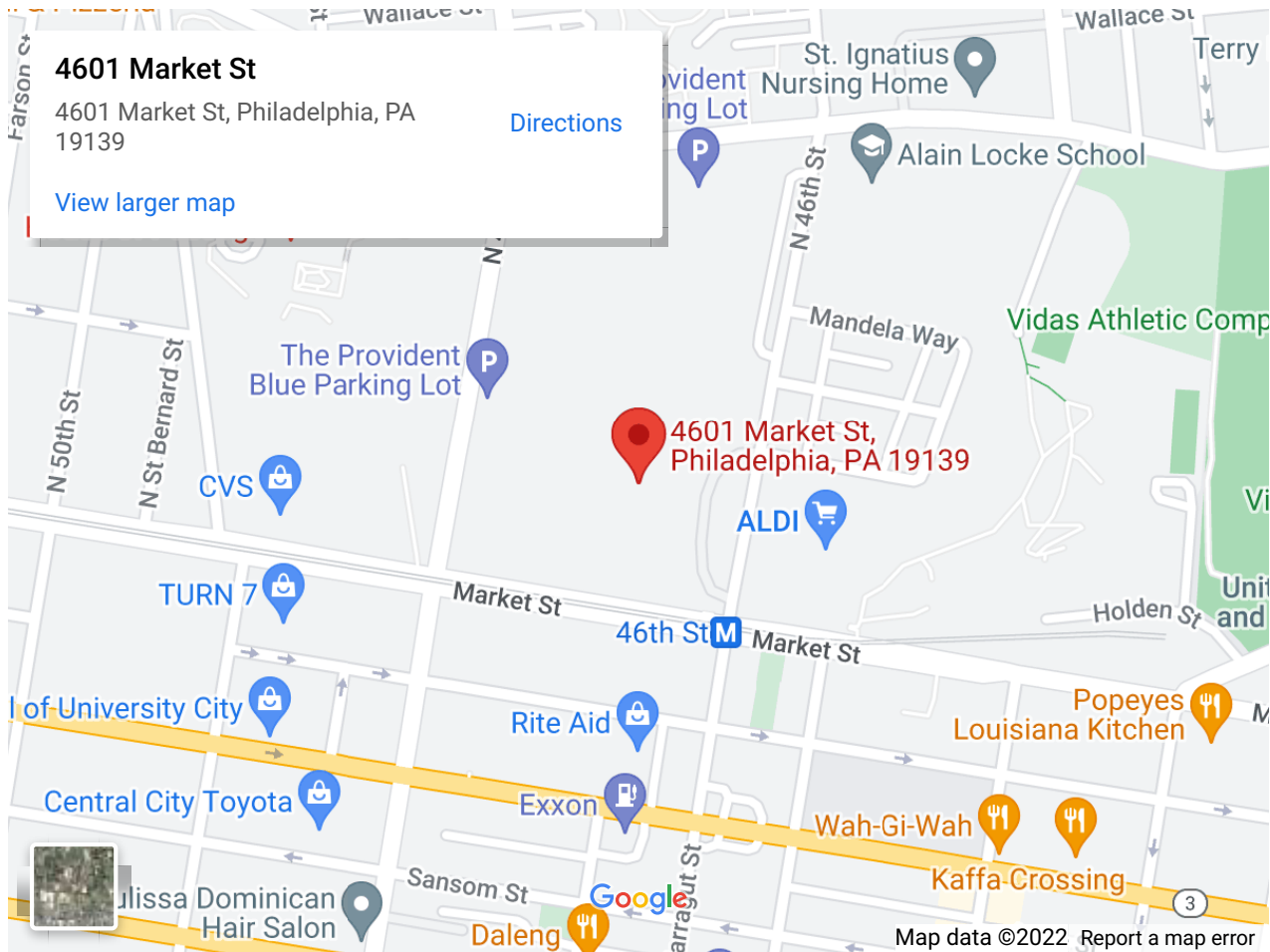


IRON STONE REAL ESTATE PARTNERS

A rendering shows the view looking east from 48th Street of some of the 1,240 planned apartments on the property behind the former Provident Mutual Life Insurance Co. building at 4601 Market St.

Now, Iron Stone is shifting from rehabbing the Provident building to planning 1,240 apartments in six new buildings. The centerpiece of the development would be a convenient walking path from North 48th Street toward the Provident building, which sits facing North 46th Street.

The design is a key part of the project since the Provident building was cut off from the rest of the neighborhood for decades, according to Friedland.



Iron Stone's goal is to design a campus that's accessible and integrated with its surroundings rather than closed off. The through-block connection pathway, quality lighting and green space is intended to help create that.

Iron Stone plans to build a variety of apartment sizes and hopes to cater to people already living in the neighborhood rather than making those residents feel as if they're being pushed out. The mix of sizes is intended to lead to a mix of price points and renters with varying household sizes and income levels.

Potential affordability requirements are still being determined. Plans for the

apartments were submitted to the city before new mixed-income housing requirements went into effect. The recent legislation says new developments with 10-plus units built in West Philadelphia must offer at least 20% of units below market rate.

Friedland said he's sensitive to concerns about gentrification. Iron Stone is in the process of meeting with community groups as it finalizes specifics for its plan.

"We want it to be open to all," said Mike Pearson, a partner with Iron Stone. "And invite that energy from around the neighborhood as opposed to blocking it out."

Growing up, Pearson visited relatives in the area and saw the Provident building while riding the Market-Frankford line. The census tract where the Provident building sits is 92% Black or African American alone or in combination with other races, according to the 2020 Census.

As a child, Pearson, who is African American, would wonder: "What is that building? What do they do there? Why are there so many people that don't look like me in that building?"

At the time, affluent white collar employees for the insurance company worked at the building, and a fence surrounded the property. The only way to get from 48th Street to 46th Street would be to walk around the outside. In front of the building, there's a semi-circle driveway. Around it, there's grass and parking. It's a slice of the suburbs in the middle of West Philadelphia next to SEPTA's 46th Street station.

The setup led Pearson to feel working at a place like the Provident building was unattainable. Iron Stone's planned path through the campus is meant to offer more inclusivity. The tenants inside are meant to enhance the well-being of the neighborhood.

Public Health Management Corp. is now occupying the ground, first and second floors of the building, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia is occupying the third floor and KIPP Philadelphia Public Schools' Octavius Catto Elementary is on the fourth floor. The fifth floor has 12,000 square feet of office space available and shared amenities like a fitness center and food area.

The emphasis on children, health and education was by design. Friedland wanted to

make a difference in the neighborhood. The resources wouldn't be available in close proximity if not for Iron Stone's redevelopment. CHOP's floor, for example, is dedicated to its Center for Advanced Behavioral Healthcare.

CHOP's Senior Vice President of External Affairs Peter Grollman called it a "real commitment to our West Philadelphia community."

"To help the people, the children, in the neighborhood where it's being developed," Friedland said, "that's true impact."

After Provident left the building in 1983, it was used by a mix of groups including universities, nonprofits and small entrepreneurs. It eventually became vacant and Philadelphia Industrial Development Corp., the city's quasi-public economic development agency, bought the building in 2008.

Former Mayor Michael Nutter intended to use the building as police headquarters, and the city spent \$52 million abating asbestos, cleaning up windows and limestone and making other improvements. Mayor Jim Kenney changed plans and the police department moved to 400 N. Broad St., leading to a bidding process for the Provident building that was won by Iron Stone. Though the city's initial plans fell through, the investment was critical.

"If the city didn't put that money into the building, it would've been a teardown," Friedland said.

**Paul Schwedelson**

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