

Walnut Hill Transit Oriented Development

Philadelphia City Planning Commission
Walnut Hill Neighborhood Coordination Strategy Team

Planning Memo
October 2009



City Of Philadelphia

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What is TOD?

Transit Oriented Development, or TOD, is characterized by a mix of land uses centered around a transit station or transit hub. TODs are compact, dense, multi-story developments that incorporate residential uses, office spaces, retail shops, personal services, entertainment venues and open spaces generally defined within a quarter to half mile radius around a public transit station. While the term TOD stresses the importance of public transit, TODs accommodate all transportation modes. They can include streetscape improvements such as bumpouts and street furniture for pedestrians; lanes and parking for bicyclists; and multi-story parking garages, which are often wrapped with ground floor retail, for cars. The proximity of these various uses offers “one-stop shopping” and reduces the need to travel long distances by car for everyday tasks such as buying groceries, dropping off dry cleaning and meeting up with friends for a cup of coffee. It reduces dependence on cars, thus further reducing dependence on foreign oil and promoting sustainability.

TOD is not a new concept. Much of West Philadelphia developed as a TOD. Residential development proliferated with the introduction of streetcars in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the opening of the West Market EI in 1907. Commuter suburbs clustered around transit lines as Philadelphia’s emerging middle class took advantage of the quick, easy and convenient travel times to employment in Center City.



Large, formally industrial lot located immediately adjacent to the Market El.



Historic Provident Mutual Building on north side of Market St, with Market El and vacant lot in foreground.

Introduction

This planning memo will document ways that TOD principles can be incorporated into these planned and future development proposals and identify other locations for TOD development within the vicinity of the station. There is potential to redevelop this section of Walnut Hill (roughly defined as Market Street to Spruce Street and 46th Street to 52nd Street) into a walkable, mixed use, multi-story neighborhood that is completely integrated with the newly reconstructed 46th Street El station.

However, the area bounded by Market, 46th, Walnut and 49th Streets had already been developed with various industrial uses that had located there to take advantage of proximity to the Mill Creek. Like many creeks in Philadelphia, the Mill Creek was put into an underground sewer in 1895 to allow for orderly grid patterned development. Despite the overlay of the grid pattern in this area, the industrial uses remained and by the 1940s many of the relatively large industrial lots were converted to auto oriented uses such as garages and gas stations with some residential uses interspersed. Currently, the Enterprise Center is planning to construct a mixed-use building on the southwest corner of Market and Farragut Streets, immediately adjacent to the 46th Street El station.

Similarly, the north side of Market Street also contains large lots that tend to be auto oriented. The Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital originally occupied the area between Market and Haverford Avenue between 42nd and 49th Street. Over time, the parcel was subdivided for various institutional and residential uses such as the Kirkbride Center, the Provident Mutual building and the Westpark Apartments. Currently, several new, large-scale projects are planned for the former Provident Mutual site. The Youth Study Center is being relocated from the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to the north side of the lot and proposals are being reviewed for the possible reuse of the Provident Mutual building (4601 Market St) for various City services or other commercial uses.



Newly reconstructed 46th Street Market El Station.



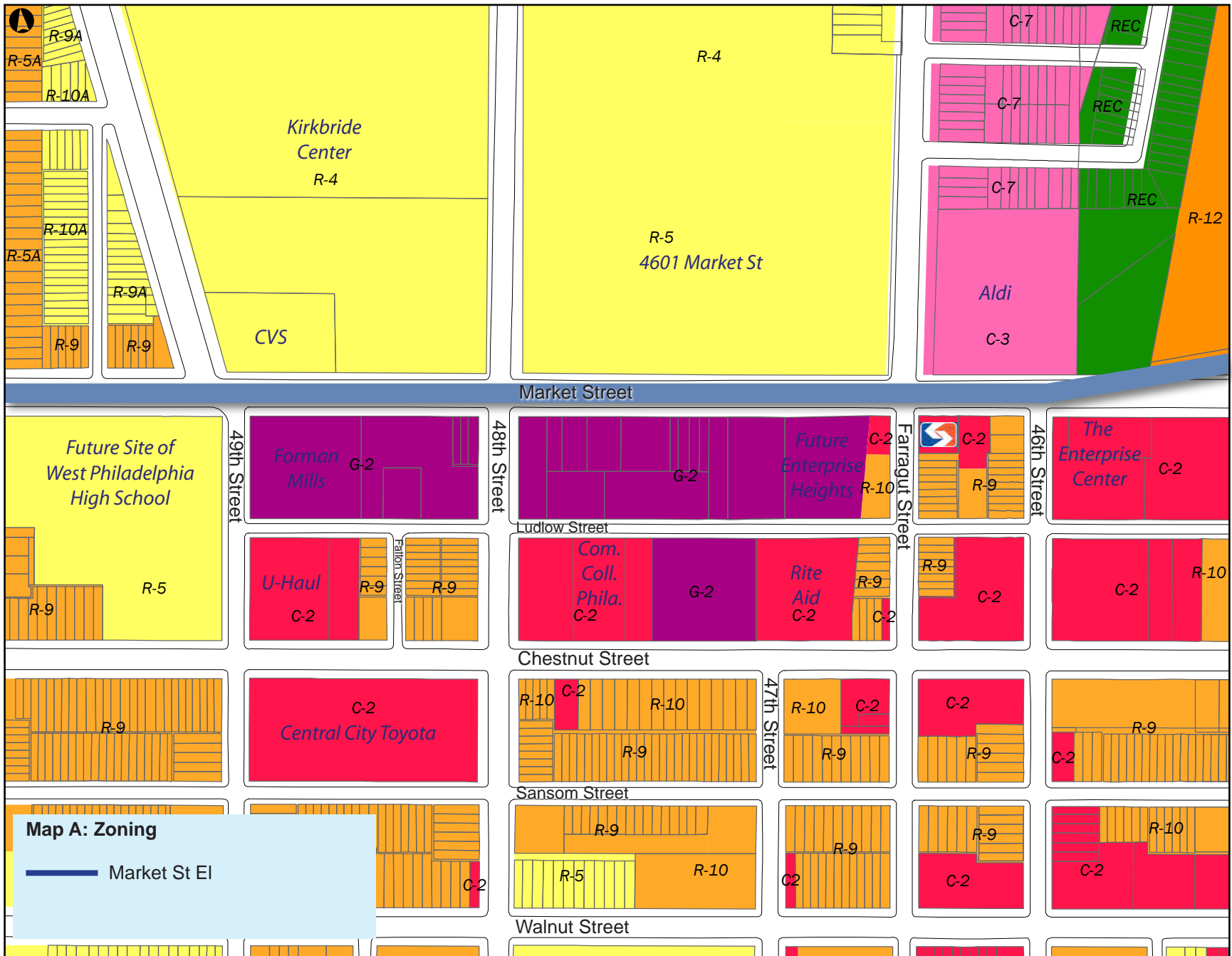
Current environment around the station is not pedestrian friendly.

In the last decade, the principles of Transit Oriented Development have gained new life both in Philadelphia and across the United States. In 2004 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania established a special area designation called a Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID). TRIDs are areas where the tenets of TOD are put into place and special incentives are created. A TRID is usually a quarter or half mile radius from a transportation node with a special management entity made up of City organizations, the local transit company, and the community. A TRID is also given priority for state financing and programs. Another major piece of the TRID legislation is known as Value Capture. This involves the capture of real estate taxes above an established base for use in the district. The captured funds can be used for anything from streetscape improvement to gap financing for major projects. The TRID management entity would be charged with the allocation and use of these funds.

Neighborhoods Now, a local non-profit organization that develops market driven programs to improve the health and competitiveness of low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, has been a major promoter of TOD in Philadelphia and has worked to establish TRIDs. They created a pilot program where different transit nodes were studied for their ability to become a TRID. Two stations were chosen for more in-depth study, the Temple University Regional Rail Station and the 46th and Market Elevated Station. Out of this in-depth study a Value Capture analysis, TOD Template Zoning Code Standards, and a TRID Planning Study were created. These documents have helped to shape not only this planning memo but also a proposed TOD Zoning Overlay for Philadelphia.

In 2009 teams representing City Agencies with knowledge of development and planning were created to focus on priority areas in Philadelphia, this is known as the Neighborhood Coordination Strategy. One of those priority areas is Walnut Hill, with a particular focus on TOD around the 46th and Market Elevated Station. The Planning Commission leads the team with members including Commerce, OHCD, the RDA and PIDC.







Auto-oriented use within a quarter mile of the station.



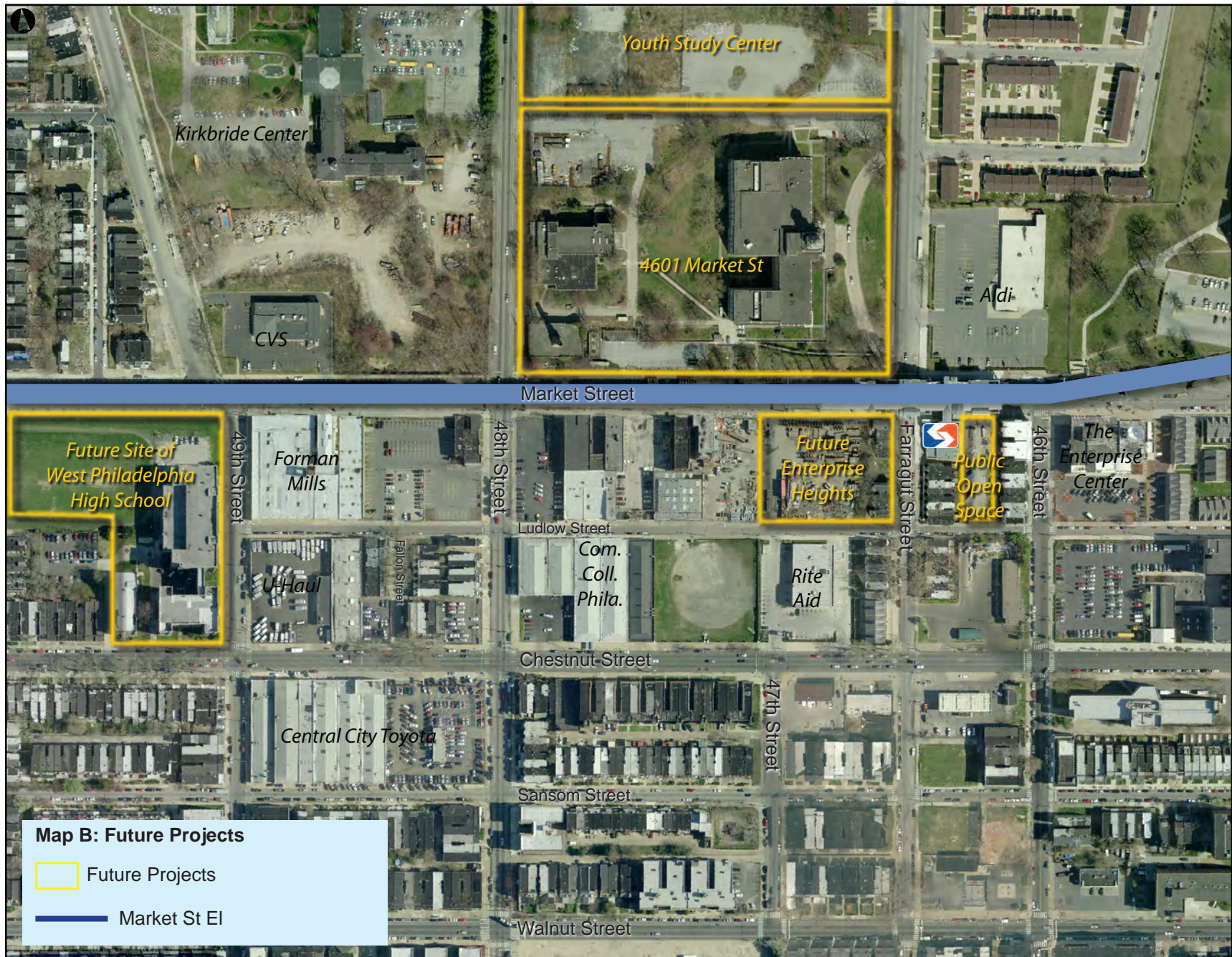
Large parking lot across Market Street from the station.

Zoning and Land Use

Currently the northern section of Walnut Hill is mostly zoned industrially as seen in *Map A*. There are pockets of commercial zoning along Chestnut and Walnut Streets and residential along Sansom Street. There has been a significant amount of abandonment of the industrially zoned land (*Map C*) and this leaves a major opportunity for modern, dense, mixed-use development. This development will be the most sustainable if it is done in a fashion that builds off of the strengths of the area and follows a consistent pattern. Some of the strengths of the area are large amount of public investment in new projects as well as the proximity to transit. There are major commercial anchors in the area such as Forman Mills at 49th and Market Streets and Central City Toyota on Chestnut Street from 48th to 49th Streets. Unfortunately industrial development is no longer viable or feasible in this area and the obsolete industrial properties have created a major gap in the urban environment under the Elevated Rail along Market St. Except for a major vacant gap along the 4600 block of Sansom Street, the residentially zoned areas are in good condition and are used for housing. The “super-blocks” north of Market Street which are zoned R4 and R5 are non-conforming uses that are left from before the last re-write of the Zoning Code in 1962.

A major issue in the area is that a large amount of properties have auto-oriented uses. This includes gas stations, car washes, and retail sites with parking in the front of the building. In an area with such a close proximity to a high-speed transportation node, these are severely underutilized properties and a transformation to a more pedestrian and urban friendly design should be encouraged. This is a perfect area for Transit Oriented Development, and creating less auto-orientation is an important factor in that. Specifically around the Farragut and 46th Street corridors (see *Map C*) there are multiple sites which are considered underutilized or soft-sites which have the potential for more dense, urban and pedestrian and community friendly uses.





Current and Future Plans and Projects



Site proposed for community garden



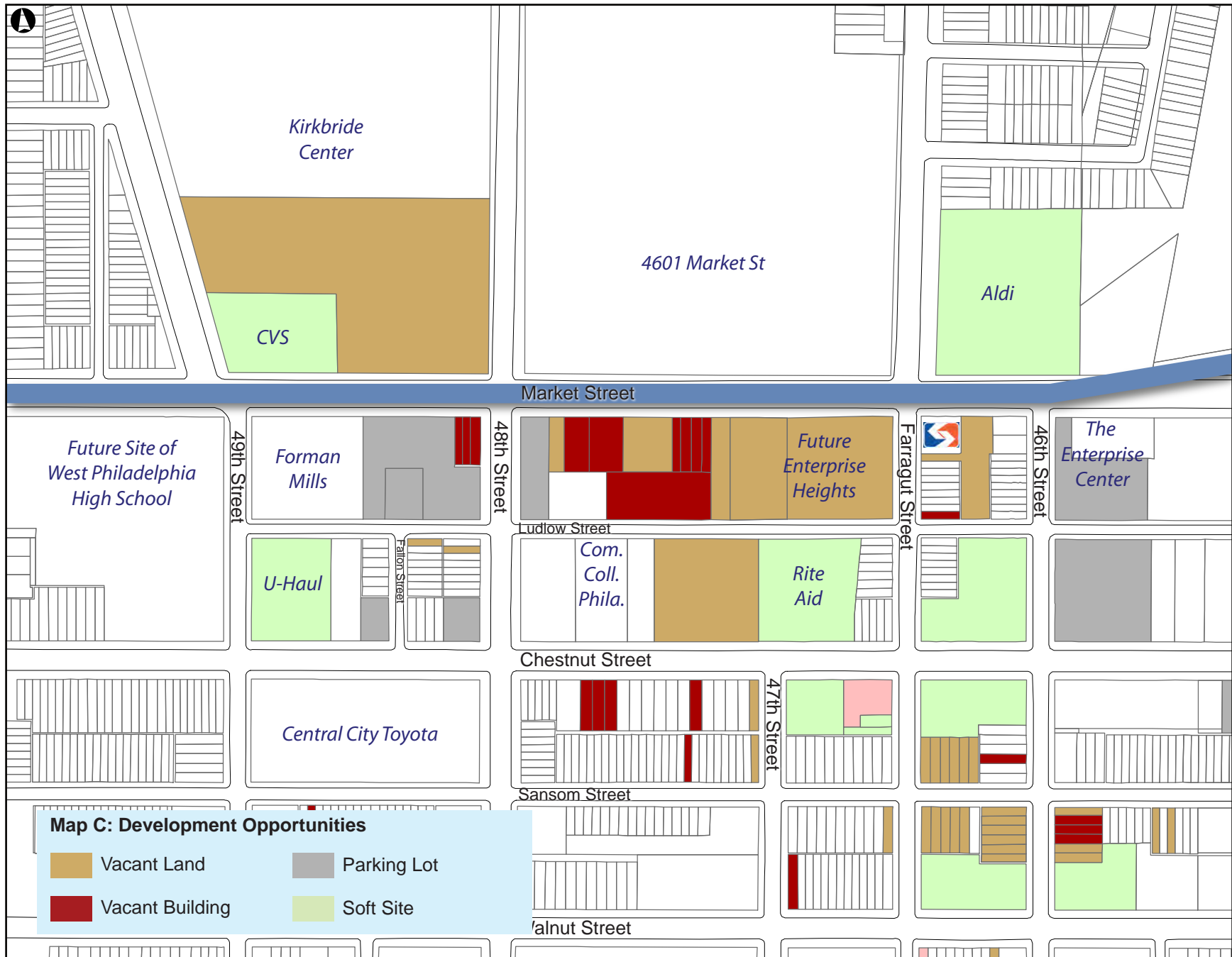
Proposed community garden plan

The area around the 46th and Market Elevated Station is enjoying significant development activity that will last for several years. Therefore this is the perfect time to build off of their momentum and offer better services and living conditions to the people of Walnut Hill and other surrounding communities. At 4601 Market Street, in the building formerly occupied by the Provident Mutual Insurance Company, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation is looking into the re-use of the multi-acre site for a variety of different purposes. Just north of the Provident Mutual site, the Youth Study Center is being constructed. This is a state-of-the-art facility which is moving from its former home on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and interim home in East Falls. Both of these developments would create a significant number of jobs and an influx of workers and visitors within a block of the Elevated Station. The impact of this will be very important to the ability of the area to develop services and retail shops to serve these new endeavors.

At the southwest corner of Market and Farragut Streets The Enterprise Center is developing Enterprise Heights. This is a retail and commercial office project which will bring an environmentally and pedestrian friendly development to the new Station. With retail on the ground floor and a common space/courtyard on Farragut Street, this development will be important to liveliness of the area, benefitting residents workers and transit users alike. The Enterprise Center Community Development Corporation is also working on the creation of public space and community garden just east of the Elevated Station on a vacant piece of land which stretches from Market to Ludlow Streets. The community garden section would be located behind the houses to give the home owners a nice area to look out upon with a public seating area located at the north behind the EI Station. This would be a great addition to the community and is sorely needed.



Proposed public space with community garden in background



Recommendations

An important part of the ability for the growth of TOD around the 46th and Market Elevated Station is the ability to redevelop available land and to attract the correct type and style of private development. Since at this time there is a large amount of public investment in the area (4601 Market, The Youth Study Center, West Phila. High School, etc.) it can be extruded that more focus on the area and a rise in the number of workers and transit riders will help the development community see the potential for growth among the vacant, parking, and soft sites. A soft site is a property that has been judged to be a poor use of available space for reasons such as low-height, large amounts of parking, over-reliance on the automobile, and proliferation of duplicate uses (car washes, gas stations, etc.). In *Map C* there is a significant amount of real estate that is either vacant land, vacant building, parking lot or soft site, these properties make up the vast development opportunities that are unique to the 46th and Market Street Station area when compared to other transit hubs in the City.

The private development community has an opportunity with the amount of developable land available to create a fully functionable node of activity just a six minute ride on the Market-Frankford El to downtown (as shown in the Illustrative Site Plan on this page). This development would be oriented to the City grid of streets and would contain a mix of uses so that the area would turn into a “one stop shop”. Previously auto-oriented and underutilized sites could be re-programmed to contain both their current use, but also a mix of others. Such would be the case of the Aldi Grocery Store at the corner of Farragut and Market Streets. The grocery store is vital to the community, but the design of the site does not utilize it's prime location and doesn't lend itself to the changing nature of the station area. To achieve this level of development this memo proposes three measures be undertaken.

- *Zoning Remapping*
- *TRID implementation*
- *Streetscape Improvements*



Illustrative plan of C-3 development on the study area's soft/vacant/parking sites

Zoning

In order to promote this mixed-use medium to high density development it is recommended that the areas shown on *Map A* be zoned C-3 Commercial. C-3 is the most appropriate zoning classification in the current City of Philadelphia Zoning Code based on a multitude of reasons. C-3 offers a Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) of 4.5 to 5.5 depending on the use of the structure (FAR is the ratio of the height of the building to the size of the property). This FAR will allow what is believed to be an appropriate level of height to the properties with regards to the tenets of TOD and the relationship of the proposed new district to the neighborhoods surrounding it. C-3 also allows a mix of uses including residential, office and retail and the ability to mix those uses to make the maximum impact of property development at the location.



While density and a mix of uses is a major tenet of Transit Oriented Development, there are other issues that can be addressed. TOD promotes the use of transportation and connectivity through walking and cycling, and creating a more pedestrian friendly environment is important. This involves reducing the number of curb cuts where cars can cross the sidewalk, promoting development that meets the street and presents a consistent street wall, and making street crossings safer. As previously stated, auto-oriented uses provide a major problem in the area surrounding the 46th and Market Elevated Station. The uses are major offenders against the pedestrian environment because they generate a significant amount of traffic crossing the sidewalk at multiple locations, creating safety as well as aesthetic issues.

Over the past year a TOD zoning overlay has been developed with the help of the Planning Commission, Neighborhoods Now and City Council. This zoning overlay which can be used at any transit hub in Philadelphia, would enhance walkability and reduce the amount of parking created by new development. If and when this bill is completed and passed by Council, it should be studied closely for its possible implementation here at the 46th and Market Streets area.

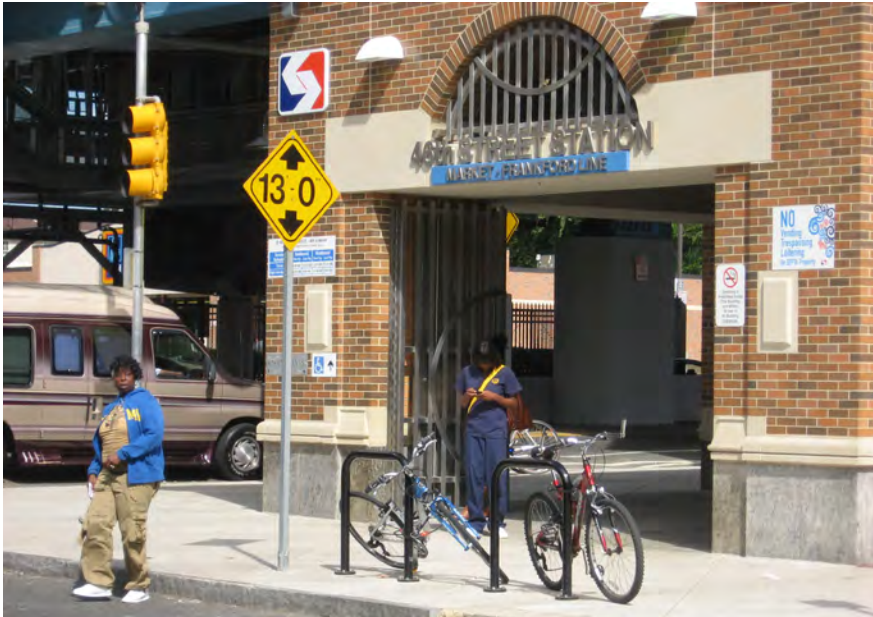


Sites recommended for C-3 Commercial zoning

TRID

As stated previously, the area around the 46th and Market St El Station was chosen to be a pilot location for a Transit Revitalization Investment District (TRID) by Neighborhoods Now. Up until this point however, the TRID has not been officially put into action at this location and it is recommended that this be done. In implementing the TRID, a management entity will be created comprising of local government agencies, the community, and SEPTA. This body will monitor the growth of the area and the allocation of funding generated by the TRID's value capture mechanism. The TRID district should be created with the boundaries stretching to a quarter mile from the 46th and Market Street Elevated Station. With the boundary this size the focus will be kept on the large swaths of vacancy and underutilization nearest to the station.

There have been problems in the current economic market in securing the bond to create the Value Capture portion of the TRID legislation; however, even if the TRID was put in place without this, it would still be beneficial. A TRID designation would demonstrate to the development community that the City, State, and SEPTA are committed to well-planned growth and investment in the 46th and Market Street area. The management body would help to promote the right kind of transit-friendly, pedestrian-oriented development regardless of the ability to capture funds through the monitoring of development and support for the correct sort of projects. Creating the TRID would also give the district the status of being a priority area for state funding. This would help developments and improvement projects to receive state financing and become reality.



TRID designation helps promote alternative transportation modes and walkable communities.



Existing condition of sidewalk along Farragut St.

TOD Streetscape

When looking at *Map C* it is apparent that there is a significant amount of vacancy and underutilization not only on Market Street but also along Farragut and 46th Streets. It is recommended that these two streets be designed with the ideals of Transit Oriented Development to facilitate movement of pedestrians and cyclists towards the 46th and Market Street El Station. Streetscape improvements would create a natural flow north and south and would help to pull some of the strengths of the developments along Market Street down into the Walnut Hill neighborhood. These improvements would stretch from Market Street to Walnut Street along both 46th and Farragut Streets and would include many specific improvements. Special 'wayfinding' signs would be designed to orient pedestrians around the area and towards the El Station. Signage could indicate when the train would be arriving and to where potential riders could then travel. 'Bump Outs' would be created at intersections so that pedestrians would be able to cross the street with the least amount of time in the roadway as possible. In creating this energized pedestrian zone the station would be able to attract residents from the strong housing areas to the south of Walnut Street while also helping retail businesses located closer to 46th and Market Streets.

This plan for streetscape improvements was nominated for an earmark of stimulus funding. It is unknown at this time whether financing will come through that channel, but other sources should be kept in mind. If the TRID is implemented with the value capture, this would make an excellent first choice of the refocus of captured funds.





Gas station streetscape on 46th St - Before and After



Streetscape Improvements:



1. Landscape control

Fence or retaining wall to keep vegetation from encroaching on the sidewalk.

2. Sidewalk maintenance

Repair concrete if needed, clean up trash, and keep a minimum clearance of 6' for pedestrians.



3. Pedestrian lighting

Streets with direct access to EI stations need pedestrian lighting. This is a standard Center City District pedestrian light fixture.



4. Amenities zone

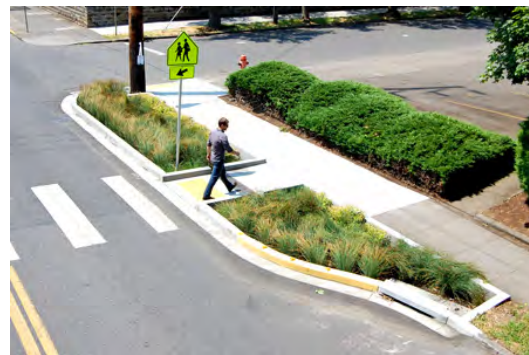
A buffer zone between pedestrians and traffic could include trash cans, landscaping, bike racks, benches, trees, etc.



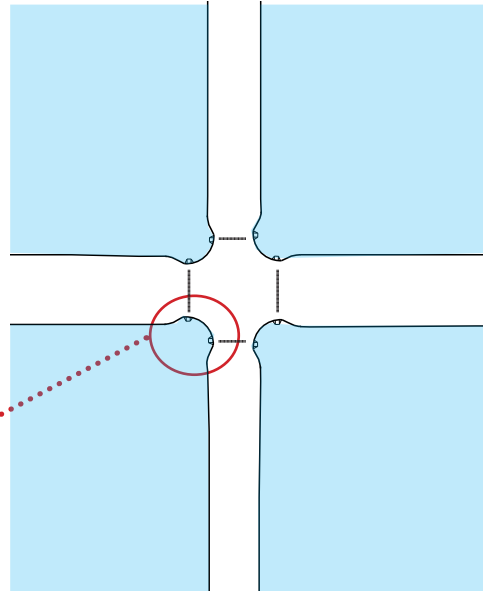
5. Wayfinding signage

Signs locating EI stops will help increase transit ridership.

Streetscape Improvements: Curb extensions along 46th and Farragut Streets



Bump outs increase pedestrian safety



1. Typical curb extension intersection
“Bump outs” shorten the pedestrian crossing distance and increase intersection safety. Bump outs could include landscaping, signage, or even bike racks.

