

FAMILIES FORWARD PHILADELPHIA

Leveraging Real Estate to Further the Mission

A **HOMELESS TO HOUSED** Initiative



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ON THE COVER: The Kirkbride Center. (ULI)



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About the Urban Land Institute

The Urban Land Institute is a global, member-driven organization comprising more than 48,000 real estate and urban development professionals dedicated to advancing the Institute's mission of shaping the future of the built environment for transformative impact in communities worldwide. ULI's interdisciplinary membership represents all aspects of the industry, including developers, property owners, investors, architects, urban planners, public officials, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, and academics. Established in 1936, the Institute has a presence in the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific region, with members in 83 countries.

ULI Philadelphia has more than 900 members in the Philadelphia District Council, which includes the Philadelphia metropolitan area, Central Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley, Southern New Jersey, and Delaware. ULI's extraordinary impact on land use decision-making is based on its members' sharing expertise on a variety of factors affecting the built environment, including urbanization, demographic and population changes, new economic drivers, technology advancements, and environmental concerns. Peer-to-peer learning is achieved through the knowledge shared by members at thousands of convenings each year that reinforce ULI's position as a global authority on land use and real estate. Drawing on its members' work, the Institute recognizes and shares best practices in urban design and development for the benefit of communities around the globe.

More information is available at uli.org. Follow ULI on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

ULI Advisory Services: District Council Programs

The goal of the ULI Advisory Services program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. The ULI Philadelphia technical assistance panel (TAP) program has assembled over 187 ULI-member teams in service of ULI's mission to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. Drawing from its local membership base, ULI Philadelphia conducts TAPs offering objective and responsible advice to local decision-makers on a wide variety of land use and real estate issues ranging from site-specific projects to public policy questions. The TAP program is intentionally flexible to provide a customized approach to specific land use and real estate issues. In fulfillment of ULI's mission, this TAP report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment. An additional local offering is the project analysis forum, which offers a shorter format for district councils to employ local member expertise to address regional land use challenges. Panelists are land use professionals uniquely positioned to address the specific challenges at hand, and provide in-depth, project-specific, and pragmatic recommendations. The intimate, conversational format encourages creative thinking and problem solving between the panel and the sponsor.

Learn more at www.philadelphia.uli.org.

ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing

The goal of the ULI Terwilliger Center for Housing is to advance best practices in residential development and public policy and to support ULI members and local communities in creating and sustaining a full spectrum of housing opportunities, particularly for low- and moderate-income households.

Established in 2007 with a gift from longtime member and former ULI chairman J. Ronald Terwilliger, the center integrates ULI's wide-ranging housing activities into a program of work with three objectives: to catalyze the production of housing, provide thought leadership on the housing industry, and inspire a broader commitment to housing. Terwilliger Center activities include the development of practical tools to help developers of affordable housing, engagement with members and housing industry leaders, research and publications, a housing awards program, and an annual housing conference.

ULI Homeless to Housed

Homeless to Housed (H2H) recognizes that ULI members are well positioned to help address homelessness. With generous support from a growing number of ULI members, the initiative works to explore real estate solutions to the growing crisis affecting communities everywhere. Core elements of this work include conducting research, promoting cross-sector collaboration, providing local technical assistance through ULI's network of district councils, and sharing knowledge and expertise for addressing housing challenges for individuals and families.

This initiative began through the 2022 research report *Homeless to Housed: The ULI Perspective Based on Actual Case Studies*. Driven by the generosity and guidance of Preston Butcher, the report explores the role the real estate community can play in addressing the issue of homelessness. It includes a summary of lessons learned, a blueprint for how to replicate best practices in U.S. communities, and a series of case studies that demonstrate how the development community can be an active partner in addressing the critical shortage of housing in the United States. See the full report and companion case studies at uli.org/homelessness.

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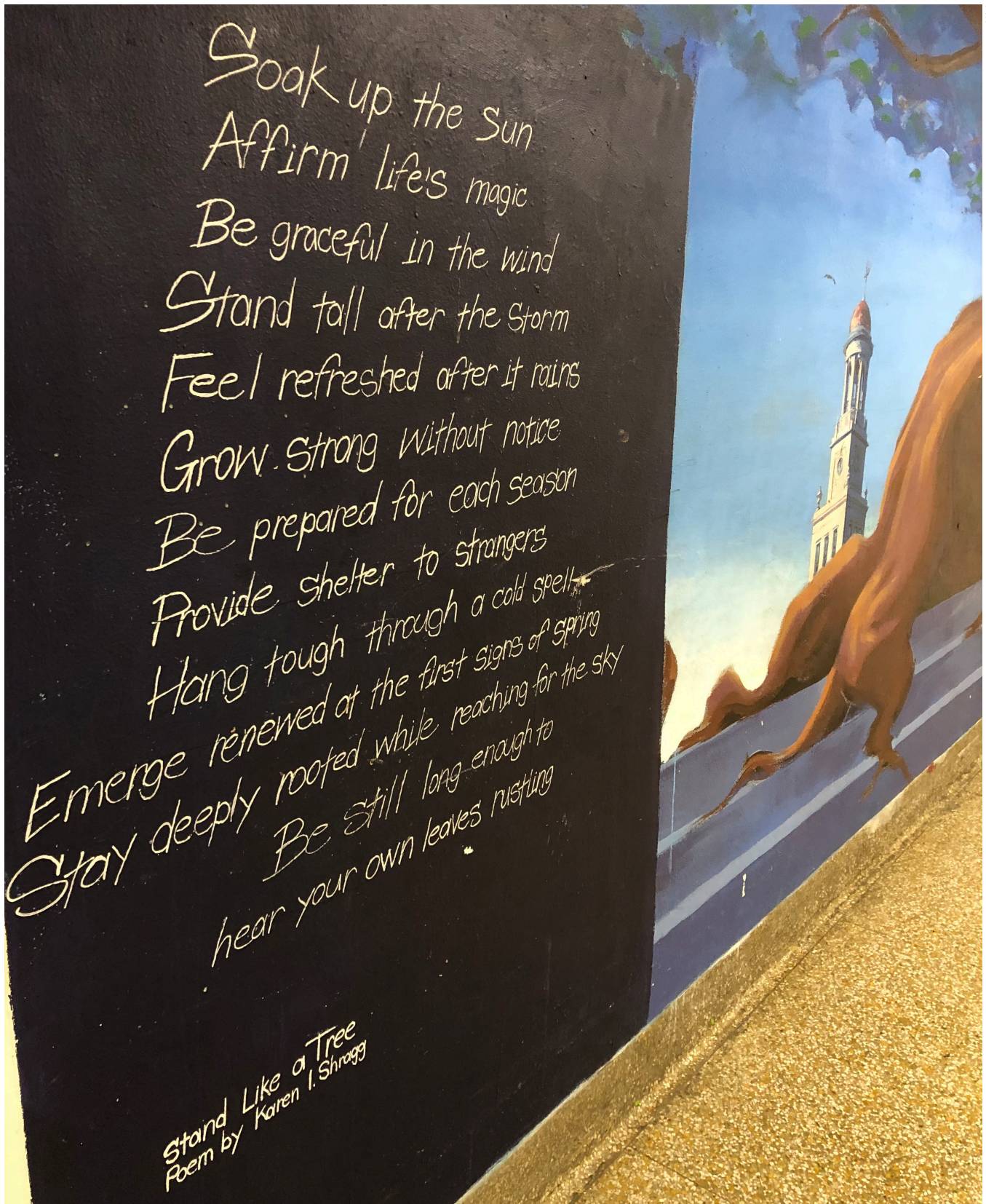


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The entry and lobby of the Kirkbride Center.

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Mural in the basement corridor of the Center, completed in partnership with Mural Arts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Families Forward Philadelphia (FFP), a nonprofit that provides housing and supportive services to families experiencing homelessness, engaged with ULI and its Homeless to Housed Initiative to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP). The objective was to help FFP evaluate its current real estate portfolio and make recommendations to improve services and expand housing capacity.

The TAP was held March 14-15, 2024 at the Kirkbride Center, which houses Families Forward Philadelphia’s headquarters as well as its 49th Street family shelter.

On Thursday, March 14, participants toured the shelter, including common spaces and individual rooms. Later in the day, the TAP broke into smaller groups and conducted stakeholder interviews with leaders from local and national peer organizations, consultants, real estate investors, city agency representatives, local elected officials, internal staff, and board of trustee representatives.

The following day, Friday, March 16, the group reconvened to review its findings and identify common themes. From

these, the panel developed a set of recommendations to improve current housing stock and expand capacity for housing and services for greater impact.

Areas of Focus

- Improving and expanding permanent existing supportive housing stock
- Improving current emergency housing stock
- Transitioning away from transitional housing
- Amplifying the mission, serving more families, and broadening impact



Shelter room on the first floor of the Center.



First floor corridor of the Center.

Guiding Principles

- Maintain a focus on the mission to serve families.
- Continue to build on strategic planning vis à vis the Theory of Change.
- Draw on organizational strengths like strong leadership, committed staff, and an institutional legacy of keeping families together.
- Evolve with systemic changes such as funding shifts.

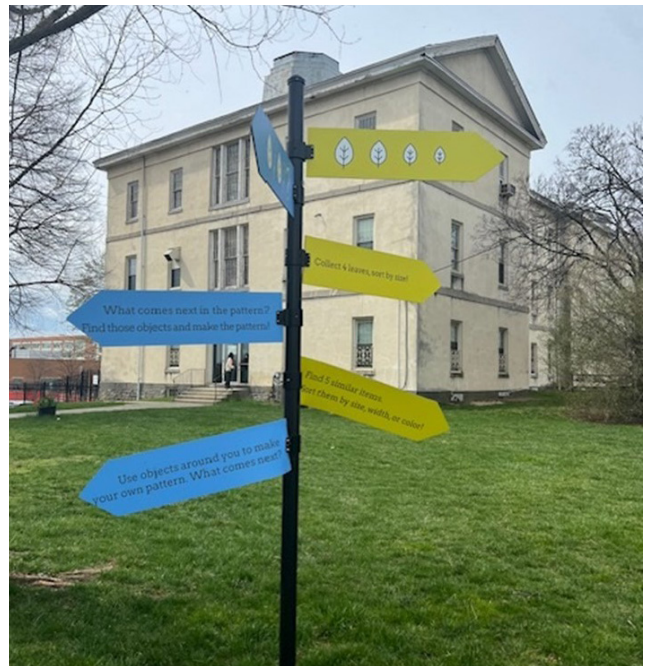
Recommendations

The panel delivered a set of recommendations to inform FFP’s strategic planning, which include the following:

- Improve permanent supportive housing stock by expanding and enhancing landlord relationships, identifying and leveraging shallow rent subsidies, and acquiring additional rental units.
- Improve current emergency housing by working collaboratively with the landlord and the City to conduct a facility needs and space assessment, audit the existing lease, plan for building updates, and make those updates, both in the short term and longer term.
- Transition out of transitional housing by renovating Melville Way to become permanent supportive housing,

reconfiguring units, finding rental assistance for new tenants and establishing good neighbor and good resident agreements.

- Broaden capacity through partnerships, more public-facing engagement, advocacy work, and knowledge sharing.



Signage to encourage exploration.



This mural in the corridor of the basement and the outdoor signage above are part of a project completed in partnership with Hope PHL & Playful Learning Landscapes to help parents and caregivers encourage children to explore and notice the joys of their surroundings, even during the most difficult of times.

HOMELESS TO HOUSED IN PHILADELPHIA

Across the United States, on any given night, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimates that over 650,000 people are living in a shelter or on the street. These figures, compiled by nonprofit service providers and local governments across the states, represent the [2023 point-in-time calculations](#), gathered one evening in January, and are largely understood to be a significant underestimation of the true numbers of unhoused individuals and families struggling to find shelter throughout the rest of the year.

In the most recent 2023 point-in-time calculations for Philadelphia, 788 individuals were unsheltered and 3,701 individuals were living in temporary housing, much of which is either emergency or transitional housing. Like nearly every other city across America, the City of Philadelphia is striving to meet the needs of its unhoused population, providing emergency housing services and supporting partnered efforts to provide more stable housing long-term. As noted in the City of Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services 2022 annual report, [Housing: Love in Action](#), housing—not shelters—solves homelessness. Operating within this framing, OHS is pursuing solutions to increase the supply of deeply affordable long-term housing while continuing its work to support temporary housing measures. OHS and a network of nonprofit organizations, provide emergency and temporary housing to people who are experiencing homelessness, in addition to operating homelessness prevention and diversion aid programs. These programs are overseen by HUD through the [Continuum of Care \(CoC\) program](#) which direct funds to nonprofits and cities to end homelessness. Cities which receive funding are required to establish local CoC boards to oversee the application process for funding from local service providers.

While homelessness is a social and humanitarian issue, it is also an economic issue for families and communities. [Many agree that the leading causes of homelessness are economic, often tied to a lack of affordable housing, low wages, unexpected expenses, loss of employment, illness, and more.](#) Additionally, a [2010 HUD study](#) found

Relevant Terms

Supportive housing (formerly known as permanent supportive housing): a housing model that combines low-barrier affordable housing, health care, and supportive services. This model has been shown to not only impact housing status, but it also results in cost savings to various public service systems. Residents live independently in an apartment property with the same standard residential lease and community rules that one would find in any other apartment complex. Wraparound services are offered, including case management, service coordination, substance abuse services, links to vocational training, and health and wellness programming.

Point-in-time count: the point-in-time count is an annual count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness that HUD requires each continuum of care nationwide to conduct during the last 10 days of January.

Rapid re-housing: rapid re-housing is an intervention, informed by a “housing first” approach that is a critical part of a community’s effective homeless crisis response system. Rapid re-housing rapidly connects families and individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing through a tailored package of assistance that may include the use of time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services.

*[Homeless to Housed: The ULI Perspective](#)
Based on Actual Case Studies* by ULI

that it is more costly to house first-time homeless families in emergency housing than in supportive housing, the latter of which provides families with a more effective path toward permanent shelter.

“When viewed as an economic issue, homelessness becomes easier to comprehend and address with each public- and private-sector organization having a unique role to play: the real estate industry is responsible for planning, funding, and operating the development of housing while using as little government assistance as possible; social service organizations are responsible for providing the essential services required to ensure success; and government is responsible for providing a policy framework and support to allow for and encourage the production of housing and the provision of service.” ([Homeless to Housed: The ULI Perspective Based on Actual Case Studies](#) by ULI)

Homeless to Housed

In response to this nationwide crisis, ULI’s Homeless to Housed (H2H) initiative, a program of ULI’s Terwilliger Center for Housing, aims to spark conversations regarding the role of the real estate community in ending homelessness. The initiative seeks to identify best practices and effective solutions for addressing the needs of the unhoused through research, local district council engagement, and awareness-building activities.

ULI Philadelphia’s Role

ULI Philadelphia has a long history of engaging its members and the community on the need for preserving and increasing the supply of affordable housing in the region, including a recent project with the Terwilliger Center focused on [preserving Philadelphia’s naturally occurring affordable housing](#). This work and recent events have catalyzed additional interest in the role the real estate industry can play in the provision of solutions along the housing continuum. More recently, a small working group of ULI members sought to consider where, within the Philadelphia homeless services ecosystem

specifically, the real estate community could make meaningful contributions. This convening and subsequent conversations with OHS regarding the supply of supportive and subsidized housing led ULI Philadelphia to identify two critical emergency and transitional housing providers as partners in its H2H work. The goal of the partnership was to explore how each service provider can expand into or reposition their real estate assets to include critical supportive housing for individuals and families.

Families Forward Philadelphia and Drueding Center

Families Forward Philadelphia, in West Philadelphia, and the Drueding Center near Olde Kingsington were selected as the agencies of focus and partners in the H2H work. Both agencies provide supportive housing and each also focused a great deal on the provision of transitional housing, a model which the City of Philadelphia is no longer prioritizing in its funding efforts. This citywide shift in funding priorities has left many of these agencies, and these two in particular, without a funding mechanism to support this critical housing need. In the midst of this potentially existential funding shift, both agencies embarked on the Homeless to Housed partnership with ULI to explore how they can reposition their real estate assets in a manner that continues to support their core mission and continues to provide critical housing and related social and wraparound services during this time of policy and funding transition and well into the future.

Homelessness service providers have been hard at work in communities across the country long before ULI raised its proverbial hand to assist. Homelessness is a complex social issue that has many layers, some of which are very real estate-driven. By bringing real estate professionals together with policy experts and the tenacious nonprofit leaders guiding these important social service organizations additional progress can be made and stable housing can become a reality for all.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

About Families Forward Philadelphia

The organization known today as Families Forward Philadelphia was founded in 1913 as Travelers Aid Society of Philadelphia, which provided “information, guidance, aid and shelter” to assist stranded travelers—often new immigrants. At the time of its founding, there were 100 Travelers Aid chapters across the country and the Philadelphia outpost joined this nonsectarian network of agencies. Over the course of the 20th century, the organization extended its mission to include housing and services for the unemployed and supporting traveling uniformed military personnel and war refugees. One of its signature programs was a kiosk on the main concourse of 30th Street train station in Philadelphia with volunteers providing travel and visitor information daily to passengers. This legacy offering continues to this day.

In the 1990s, Travelers Aid evolved to focus on persistent poverty and homelessness in the city, establishing emergency and transitional housing programs and supplemental supports, including intensive case management, employment support and after school and summer programs for children. In the early 21st century, the organization changed its name to Families Forward Philadelphia to more accurately reflect its current mission.

Indeed, FFP’s goal to both serve families and keep families together is a differentiator, particularly because its housing and programs welcome single fathers and teenage boys, who are often denied by other programs. Comprehensive supports include case management, education, workforce development, and assistance navigating public agencies.

Today, the organization operates a City of Philadelphia designated and funded emergency shelter on 49th Street that serves 65 families nightly, each in their own room. The city leases this property within the historic Kirkbride Center in West Philadelphia.

In addition, the organization operates 73 units of transitional and permanent supportive housing units across Philadelphia with a concentration in West Philadelphia. One such building, Melville Way, is an eight-unit transitional housing facility that was purchased in 2001.

In 2021, FFP released its Theory of Change, which details how providing housing, coupled with supports, can keep families together, help them stabilize economically, and help them thrive in community. It also embarked on a strategic planning process which was completed in 2023.

In early 2024, the City announced that it would no longer be providing funding for transitional housing at Melville Way. This has created an additional set of questions for Families Forward Philadelphia and other local nonprofit organizations that operate transitional housing programs: Should they continue to offer this type of housing and find new funding streams or look for ways of updating their housing stock to align it better with the city’s current funding model?

Overview

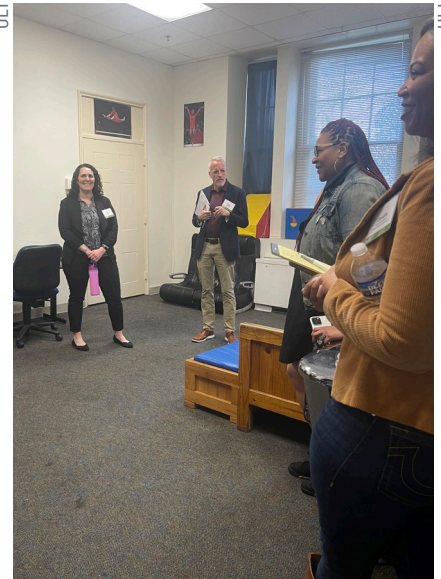
To carry out its mission to help families experiencing homelessness become healthy, productive, and self-reliant, Families Forward Philadelphia must optimize its assets and services. After developing its Theory of Change, Families Forward Philadelphia completed a strategic planning process in 2023 that identified a core priority of maintaining, creating, and expanding “safe, inclusionary spaces in both emergency shelter and community housing sites.”



Panel members and FFP staff touring the first floor of the Center.



A shelter room is prepared for a new family.



Teen room with games and lounge furniture.



Mural in the corridor of the administrative offices with reference to Families Forward Philadelphia previous affiliation with Travelers Aid.

In 2024, Families Forward Philadelphia began conducting a housing feasibility study with the assistance of Diamond and Associates consultants to evaluate its current real estate assets and identify opportunities to grow housing capacity, create and implement a landlord recruiting plan, and establish an action plan for its Melville Way property. The latter became an even more important concern when, in early 2024, the City of Philadelphia announced that it

would no longer fund the transitional housing facility. Given that the organization owns it outright, the property now presents several different possibilities for FFP to consider in its planning efforts.

The FFP TAP was intended to be an adjunct to the feasibility study to further support future strategic planning.

Scope

To help FFP carry out its mission and support more families, the ULI member experts assembled for the TAP were asked to consider the following questions:

- In what ways can FFP improve its current housing stock with the continuum of care programs of Transitional Housing, Rapid Re-Housing, and Supportive Housing?
- Is FFP utilizing Melville Way in its program model of transitional housing in the best way possible?
- Given that the FFP Shelter is always at capacity, are there housing models that FFP should consider to increase housing capacity in Philadelphia for families (subsidized and unsubsidized)?
- Given the hurdles that exist to building affordable family housing, what is the best approach for FFP to increase its housing capacity?

On the morning of Thursday, March 14, TAP participants convened at the Kirkbride Center for a morning briefing meeting with FFP leadership. During this meeting, a video tour of Melville Way was shared with the panel. Following this meeting, the group toured the emergency shelter facility, including its residential rooms, common spaces, teen and children's lounges, and dining area. Later that afternoon, the panel was divided into smaller groups to meet with stakeholders. They conducted interviews with leaders at local and national peer organizations, consultants, real estate investors, city agency representatives, local elected officials, internal staff, and board of trustee representatives. They asked stakeholders about the housing landscape in Philadelphia, how funding changes might impact FFP, and how the organization could most effectively expand its footprint as the leading provider of services for families experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia.

The panel examined the common themes that arose during these conversations and developed a set of recommendations for FFP that addressed the organization's goals of improving current housing stock and expanding its housing stock and capacity.



Childcare and activity space with games and toys in the Center.



Panel member preparing presentation.



Front view of Melville Way, 4520 Walnut Street.

ASSESSMENT

As a foundation for its recommendations, the TAP made some general observations about FFP’s organizational strengths and challenges.

Organizational Strengths

Dedicated and Experienced Staff

FFP’s staff clearly demonstrate their passion for their work. Many employees have lived experience; others have been at FFP for several years, showcasing a commitment to the organization. Their belief in the mission and obvious dedication to their work is a boon for FFP.

Strong Leadership

With their Theory of Change as a guiding light, the executive staff have effectively articulated the driving purpose behind FFP, and with the organization’s strategic planning process, a vision for the future will emerge more clearly in the coming months. The Wall of Keys in the corridor of the Kirkbride Center, showcasing the families that have gone on to move into permanent housing, is a moving tribute to the power of FFP’s work.

Focus on Families

FFP’s audience is also its differentiator. As previously discussed, the nonprofit’s unique focus on serving families experiencing homelessness with housing and support services that help them stay together, sets FFP apart from other housing and homelessness services organizations in the region.

High-Value Physical Assets

FFP owns the Melville Way building at a desirable location in West Philadelphia. The property as is has been valued at \$1.2 million dollars with a hypothetical as-renovated market value of \$2.1 million dollars.

Kirkbride Location

The West Philadelphia location of the Kirkbride Center is ideal for the organization, both for its headquarters offices and as an expansive space for emergency shelter housing.



Shared space on the first floor of the Center for residents to use computers.



Staff lockers.

As was noted during stakeholder interviews, it's extremely difficult to find not only the appropriate space for larger-scale affordable housing or any type of short-term temporary housing, but also an uncontested location in a convenient neighborhood. Though FFP is a tenant through a master lease held by the City and the space requires renovation, this legacy building serves FFP well.

Institutional Knowledge and Legacy

Having served travelers, immigrants, veterans, and people experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia for over a century, FFP has a well-honed body of knowledge about how to best support its constituency and help people navigate the complicated social services system in Philadelphia.

Organizational Challenges

The Changing Funding Landscape

As noted, Philadelphia is cutting back its support of transitional housing. This change in funding directly impacts FFP and its offerings.

Limited Brand Resources

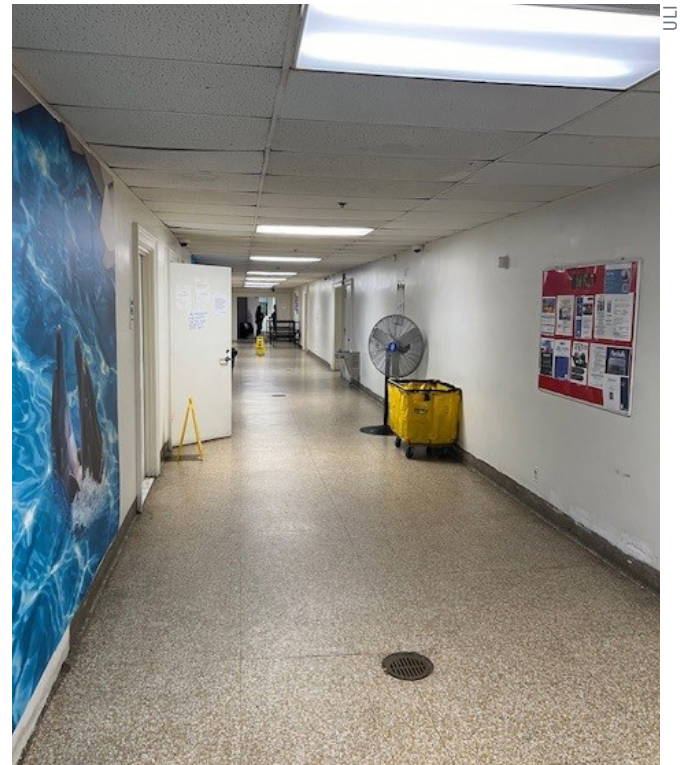
As mentioned previously, FFP's unique focus on keeping families whole is an organizational strength, but as is the case with many small non-profit organizations, limited resources make it challenging to effectively achieve brand recognition and communicate stories of success and impact with potential funders and broader stakeholders.

Current Real Estate Realities

Options for expanding housing stock depend on the real estate market in Philadelphia. Currently a lack of land, bureaucratic hurdles, NIMBYism, and the high costs of land, capital, labor, and materials make it very difficult to build new construction of affordable housing or even redevelop existing properties.



The Wall of Keys in the first floor of the Center showcases residents who have moved into their own housing.



A corridor in the basement level of the Center.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the Kirkbride Center at capacity and an ever-increasing need to provide more housing, improving and expanding FFP's current housing stock is an imperative. The TAP drilled down into where and how the organization could focus these efforts.

Improving and Expanding Current Housing Stock

Permanent Supportive Housing

FFP's Community Housing Program consists of 80 scattered site or individual housing units, located across Philadelphia and mostly in West Philadelphia. This program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which enables FFP to provide subsidized rental housing alongside intensive weekly case management, supportive services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, financial literacy workshops, and other adjunct programs and services.

One of the ongoing challenges of this program is to find landlords and maintain positive relationships with them over time. In order to identify more landlords who are willing to both rent to individuals transitioning out of homelessness and to accept rental subsidies, the panel offered the following recommendations, all of which could be implemented in the immediate future:

- *Issue an annual RFP for landlords.* The goal is to increase the FFP network by one or two new landlords each year and to increase the number of properties that are master leased.
- *Work with existing landlords to expand reach and cultivate better working relationships.* This could include talking to current landlords about the benefits of the arrangement to learn how to better position FFP to potential new landlords.
- *Utilize the city's [Landlord Gateway](#) platform to identify additional landlords.* This centralized database can help narrow down landlords who are interested in and willing to work with affordable housing tenants.

- *Apply for additional funding for shallow rent subsidies to help bridge the gap between CoC rental assistance and market rent.* This funding could come from city programs such as the [Shallow Rent Program](#) from Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation, grants, or philanthropy.
- *Acquire additional rental properties/units.* Purchase more rental units or small properties to lease for rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing.

Emergency Housing

The panel noted the many advantages of The Kirkbride Family Shelter facility, including its size, location, and legacy lease to the City of Philadelphia. However, the facility has its drawbacks, such as basement or "garden" level rooms lacking natural light, and a disjointed configuration of spaces that FFP occupies. The panel noted that most of these challenges could be easily overcome with thoughtful planning and investment.

Facility Needs and Space Assessment

FFP should assemble a team that includes architects, engineers, landscape architects, preservationists and construction professionals to commission a facility needs and space assessment for current space needs and future space wants. As part of the facility and space review process, FFP should establish a task force that includes staff, the board, the landlord and representatives from the city as well as members from the shelter's Resident Council. The task force should meet regularly to discuss needed and desired improvements and how to move them forward.

Facility Development Planning

To support planning for facility updates, FFP could apply for a Design Grant from the local Community Design Collaborative. They could also seek guidance from the Preservation Alliance on available resources to help FFP and task force with needed updates to the historic building.

Audit Existing Lease

To ensure that the Kirkbride Center remains a vital resource to the organization, FFP should examine its current lease and consider negotiating a longer one—ideally a 15-year lease with three 5-year renewal terms. As part of the lease discussions, FFP should collaborate with the landlord to reconfigure the current space, which could include an already-discussed long-term plan of consolidating FFP’s footprint in the building and moving shelter units out of the basement. An audit of the lease should include a review of tenant improvement dollars and add more where necessary. The panel suggested including language such as “landlord’s construction contractors should fit-out space to tenant’s specifications” to codify the landlord’s role in making improvements. Finally, FFP should perform an operating expense audit and review utility charges to look for potential savings.

Make Improvements

The panel noted that the building, which was originally designed by Isaac Holden in the 19th century as the Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital, was intended to be a therapeutic space for treating people with mental illness. The hospital included “pleasure grounds” on its 17 acres and became a national model for a generation of similar institutions across the country as they abandoned the previous asylum model. This rich history could and should inform any future updates to the building.

Shorter Term Improvements

A top priority for the panel was improving the garden-level housing space to make it more welcoming and uplifting for residents. They suggested incorporating brighter lighting that mimics daylight and increasing the ceiling height where possible. Additional improvements across the facility could include (but are not limited to):

- Intentionally using corridors as social spaces, and designing them accordingly
- Introducing color, texture, and variety to corridors to minimize the institutional feel



CSARCH

Example of a school corridor with seating area.



HEY NEIGHBOUR COLLECTIVE

Example of nook seating that can be placed in the corridor.

- Conducting ongoing lead monitoring and proactively making building and infrastructure improvements to meet public health requirements
- Leveraging the open space around the building and developing outdoor play and therapeutic landscapes for families and staff, guided by trauma-informed design
- Making more use of natural light

Longer Term Improvements

FFP already plans to consolidate its space in the building, and this plan should include moving all residential space out of the garden level and into the southern wing of the building. The panel also suggested reducing the vast and mostly unused parking lot to build out still more therapeutic outdoor landscapes.

Transitioning Away from Transitional Housing

A major question for the panel, given recent shifts in funding, was what to do with the Melville Way transitional housing facility. The panel was asked to weigh all possibilities, including selling Melville Way to fund the expansion of services or more housing units. However, the panel strongly opposed any plan to sell the property. They contended that it was an asset to the organization, and that given its convenient location near transport and within a desirable school catchment, it would continue to grow in value. However, at the current time its appraised value was not high enough to justify selling the property—proceeds from a sale could not pay for another property of greater scale. Given that Melville Way is owned outright with no debt, they recommended holding on to it and repositioning its function to serve as permanent housing. One long-term goal could be to retain the property with the potential to leverage its equity for additional affordable housing development in the future.

Renovating Melville Way

In order to renovate the property and redevelop it as permanent supportive housing, FFP should first consider its funding options. Here, the panel recommended that



The panel recommended leveraging the open space—like this space in front of the administrative office—using trauma-informed design.



The open space around the building could be redesigned using trauma-informed and therapeutic design to benefit the residents.



Therapeutic landscape.



Panel members work in small groups and together on Day 2 of the TAP to summarize findings and prepare recommendations.



the organization continue its work with Diamond and Associates to review the property's pro forma and apply for relevant loans, grants, and other funding from the Federal Housing Finance Agency Federal Home Loan Bank (FHLB), PA Housing Affordability Fund (PHARE), City of Philadelphia Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Pennsylvania Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy Program (C-PACE) and others.

Rental Assistance

In order to support new tenants with rent subsidies, the panel recommends applying for project-based rental assistance vouchers.

Project-based vouchers provide rental assistance for eligible individuals and families who occupy specific housing units managed by private owners and who have entered into agreements with a Public Housing Agency (PHA). The tenants pay a set amount each month (typically approximately 30% of their household income) and the PHA pays the balance of the rental amount. Project-based vouchers are attached to the building and the units and do not allow the tenants to take the vouchers with them when they move. Households must be income-eligible to receive project-based vouchers, as determined by the PHA.

Unit Reconfiguration

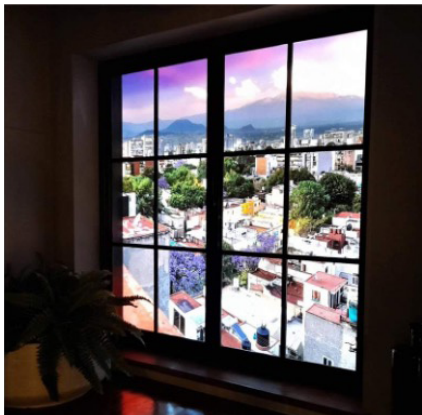
The existing units in the Melville Way building are three-bedrooms, and some stakeholders suggested that residents did not always need to utilize the third bedroom. The panel suggested conducting an assessment of the space and evaluating the possibility of reconfiguring the building to include some one and/or two-bedroom units to house families of varying sizes. The panel also discussed options to increase the building's height to add additional units. This approach would require a zoning variance, and would be an uphill journey if there is significant community resistance or NIMBY-ism.

Good Neighbor and Good Resident Agreements

The panel heard from stakeholders that there had been some complaints about tenants from Melville Way's neighbors. To foster a more amenable transition to permanent housing and mitigate risk of further complaints, the panel suggested drawing up Good Neighbor Agreements for FFP to sign with its neighbors as well as Good Resident Agreements for tenants to sign that would codify expectations between relevant parties.



SARAH ZWERLING, CONNECTION, 2018



LITE HOUSE - LIGHTING SOLUTIONS UK

Examples of wall murals with soft lighting as background that could be used in the corridors or communal spaces.



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The communal kitchen in the basement of the Center. Three meals and a snack are provided to the residents daily.

Broadening Capacity

In considering whether FFP should take on development projects to expand its housing stock, the panel uniformly agreed that given the complexities and constraints of real estate development in Philadelphia—cost, lack of land, complicated zoning regulations, community resistance and NIMBY-ism, lack of funding—it would not be the best use of the organization’s time and resources. Rather, they advised that FFP continue to focus on its core competencies as a housing and services provider. Instead, FFP should identify more experienced developer partners to support affordable housing development projects. The end goal for FFP would remain the same: creating more housing options for families with strong services support.

Build Capacity Through Partnerships

The panel recommended that FFP focus on creating

partnerships for expanding capacity, scaling services and serving more families. This could take a number of different forms:

- Partner on existing Office of Homeless Services units created via City funded developments and advocate for more family units
- Develop more master lease relationships with both existing landlords and new landlords to build housing stock
- Partner with mission-aligned developers to provide fee for service supports in order to reach more individuals experiencing homelessness
- Convene with other homeless housing and service providers to expand services, align priorities, and fill gaps

Amplify the Mission

At the core of expanding capacity and serving more families is garnering the public support FFP needs to carry out its mission. The panel recommended that the organization develop a communications strategy to ensure that people of influence, donors, the media, and the general public better understand the value of its work.

Knowledge Sharing Tour

With its decades of experience and proven track record, FFP has knowledge to share with crucial audiences about what it does, why it's effective, and how these audiences can help.

- **Politicians:** FFP does not operate in a vacuum and it requires the support and advocacy of elected officials who can assist with funding initiatives, advocacy, and helping reduce the inefficiencies of homeless services systems.
- **Coalitions:** There is power in numbers, and FFP can tap into the collective wisdom of coalitions of like-minded organizations and work together to support each other in a way that leverages their individual strengths and areas of expertise.
- **Conferences:** Annual gatherings such as Homes Within Reach present a powerful opportunity for FFP to talk about its work and share learnings.
- **Philanthropists:** Whether it's a local forum of philanthropists, individual meetings, or sponsored symposia, FFP should use these opportunities to tell its story and build relationships with key funders.

Storytelling Themes

Much of what the panel saw and heard during the two days they spent at the Kirkbride Center was inspiring. The panelists identified three themes that FFP can focus on in its future communications.

- **Theory of Change:** Sharing the underlying philosophy of how and why FFP is effective showcases its forward-thinking and innovative approach.

- **Individualized care and keeping families together:** FFP's focus on families and individually tailored services are both its differentiators from other organizations and the reasons for its excellent track record.
- **Measuring impact:** Any storytelling will be more effective with metrics to support the narrative. To that end, the panel recommends using available tools such as Caseworthy to track outcomes and report them out.

Advocacy

Joining forces with other local, regional, and national organizations can amplify FFP's voice, raise awareness about its work, and help advocate for better policy and system improvements. The panel suggested engaging with the following organizations around advocacy:

1. [Housing Alliance of PA](#)
2. [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)
3. [Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations](#)
4. [Philadelphia Coalition for Affordable Communities](#)

CONCLUSION

To carry out its mission of serving families experiencing homelessness, Families Forward Philadelphia engaged with ULI's TAP program to explore all possible options for improving and expanding its housing stock and services capacity. The panel found that FFP plays a critical role in the city's housing system, providing shelter and services across the continuum of care that are specifically tailored to families, and which have helped thousands of individuals over the organization's history.

However, changing funding, and future planning have necessitated a reassessment of the organization's real estate portfolio and what it means to serve families in Philadelphia in 2024.

The panel determined that FFP's unique assets position the organization well for its mission. The city's legacy lease of emergency housing shelter at the Kirkbride Center—an enormous building amid 17 acres of land in a convenient location—is a boon to FFP.

The panel recommended specific upgrades that would improve the daily lives of people who live and work in the facility. Likewise, the panel recommended holding on to the Melville Way building previously used for now defunded transitional housing, and rehabbing and repositioning the



property to expand supported permanent housing options. Rather than expanding its housing capacity through new development, the panel encouraged FFP to partner with developer organizations and/or offer its services on a contract basis to support more families.

Finally, given the organization's singular approach to homeless services, FFP should focus efforts on gathering more outcomes data and using storytelling to raise money,

advocate for system change, and share its decades of knowledge as a nonprofit leader—all of which will help the historic organization enact its mission, scale up, and build on its success.

APPENDICES

Additional Resources

Funding Sources

City

[Commercial Property-Assessed Clean Energy \(C-PACE\)](#)

[Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations](#)

State

[Neighborhood Assistance Program \(PADCED\)](#)

[PA Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Fund \(PHARE\)](#)

Philanthropic

[Healthier Together: Housing \(CHOP\)](#)

[Local Initiatives Support Corps \(LISC\)](#)

[Housing for Everyone \(TD Bank\)](#)

Other Innovative Models

Shared Housing

[Fact Sheet from National Alliance to End Homelessness](#)

Community Land Trusts

[Philadelphia Community Justice Land Trust](#)

Modular Development

[Hope Village II in Newark](#)

[Louis Services and Travelers Aid in New Orleans](#)

For Further Reading

[The Economic and Societal Impact of Project HOME](#)

[Envisioning Living Environments for People with Mental Illness](#)

Stakeholders

The following organizations were represented in the TAP stakeholder interviews:

Bell Project

City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services

Community Design Collaborative

Community Solutions

Council for Relationships

Diamond and Associates

Drueding Center

Families Forward Philadelphia Staff and Board Members

HopePHL

Pathways to Housing PA

Philadelphia City Council

Real Property Opportunities

Self INC

Travelers Aid International of New Orleans

Walnut Hill Community Association

Glossary

The following terms were taken from ULI's *Homeless to Housed: The ULI Perspective Based on Actual Case Studies* and may prove helpful in upcoming conversations FFP hosts with partners, developers, and the community.

Adaptive use: the renovation and reuse of existing buildings and structures for new purposes.

Area median income (AMI): the area median income is the midpoint of a region's income distribution—half of families in a region earn more than the median and half earn less than the median. For housing policy, income thresholds set relative to the area median income—such as 50 percent of the area median income—identify households eligible to live in income-restricted housing units and the affordability of housing units to low-income households.

Chronic homelessness: a term referring to people who have experienced homelessness for at least a year—or repeatedly—often while struggling with a disabling condition such as a serious mental illness, substance use disorder, or physical disability.

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC): a tax credit that subsidizes the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income tenants. The LIHTC was enacted as part of the 1986 Tax Reform Act and has been modified numerous times. Since the mid-1990s, the LIHTC program has supported the construction or rehabilitation of about 110,000 affordable

rental units each year (though there was a steep drop-off after the Great Recession of 2008–2009)—over 2 million units in all since its inception.

New Masters Tax Credits (NMTC): a tax credit that provides an incentive for investment in low-income communities for community development and economic growth. The U.S. Department of the Treasury competitively allocates tax credit authority to intermediaries that select investment projects. Investors receive a tax credit against their federal income tax.

Public/private partnerships: collaboration between a public agency and a private-sector company that can be used to finance, build, and operate projects, such as transportation systems, parks, and convention centers. Public/private partnerships often involve concessions of tax or other operating revenue, protection from liability, or partial ownership rights over nominally public services and property for private-sector, for-profit entities.

Responsible property investment: a strategy and practice to incorporate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors in real estate investment and development decisions and active ownership.

ABOUT THE PANEL

Paul Vernon

**Panel Chair
Urban Designer
Kimley-Horn**

Paul Vernon, RA, AIA, brings nearly 30 years of planning and urban design experience in urban, suburban, and rural communities with a personal portfolio in architecture that is focused on community-based projects and special needs populations. Much of Paul's work has centered around multi-family housing, downtown redevelopment, bicycle and pedestrian planning, corridor planning, special area planning, urban parks and open spaces, and transit-oriented development. His experience includes public speaking, group presentation, facilitation, and communication for projects that have faced significant public scrutiny.

Matthew Bartner

**Managing Principal, Practice & Performance
Thriven Design**

Matthew Bartner, AIA, LEED AP BD+C serves as Thriven Design's Managing Principal for Practice & Performance. In this role, he steers professional practice and coordinates seamless project delivery, drawing from more than 25 years of experience in the planning, design, and construction of numerous multifamily residential projects.

Matt has extensive affordable housing expertise, gained through successful completion of many affordable multifamily projects in Philadelphia, and multiple other projects in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and beyond. He has successfully designed environments that support families, individuals at risk of homelessness, individuals with disabilities, individuals overcoming addiction, veterans, seniors, and LGBTQ teens and youth.

Kelly Cary

**Development Project Manager
Stone Sherick Consulting Group**

Kelly is a Development Project Manager at Stone Sherick Consulting Group, a Philadelphia based firm specializing in Real Estate Development Services and Owner's Representative Services for affordable housing, commercial, and industrial real estate development projects. She completed her Master's in City Planning degree at the University of Pennsylvania in 2023, targeting affordable housing policy and development. Kelly interned throughout graduate school with organizations in the public and private sector focused on housing, community, and economic development. Previously, Kelly spent 5 years at the Urban Land Institute Philadelphia running community impact programs that promoted equitable development practices and brought accessible real estate and land use planning education to minority developers, public officials, and community leaders.

Stephen Madsen

**Associate Director
Econsult Solutions, Inc.**

Stephen Madsen is an Associate Director at Econsult Solutions, Inc. (ESI), providing expertise in housing and economic development policy analysis. In 2020, Mr. Madsen earned his Master's in City and Regional Planning from the Rutgers University Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. In 2012, Mr. Madsen earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the College of the Holy Cross.

Prior to joining ESI, Mr. Madsen worked across the public and private sectors with experience at New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency; the New York City Economic Development Corporation; and Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP. During these experiences, Mr. Madsen has worked on the development, implementation and evaluation of local, state and federal affordable housing programs and economic development policies including the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit; state-level down payment assistance programs; and local real estate development financing mechanisms.

Raina Mehta

**Supervising Staff Attorney
Regional Housing Legal Services**

With over two decades of experience as a practicing real estate development and finance attorney in Philadelphia, Raina Shroff Mehta, Esq. began her tenure as an Adjunct Professor of Housing Law at Temple University, Beasley School of Law in January 2024.

Since January 2023, Raina has served as a Supervising Staff Attorney at Regional Housing Legal Services (RHLS). There, she leads a team of attorneys who advocate for organizations dedicated to the development of affordable housing and provides counsel on low-income housing tax credit transactions. She has also played a pivotal role in policy analysis and has initiated system innovations focusing on housing, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization.

Before joining RHLS, Raina was the Legal Director for Hilco's Bellwether District project, the site of the former PES oil refinery. Raina also served as Senior Counsel for PNC Real Estate for nearly a decade. In her early career at White and Williams LLP, Raina represented national banks in commercial financing transactions, with a niche focus on the resort finance lending sector.

Raina remains an active member of the Forum of Executive Women. She was honored as a 2023 Diversity Lab Equal Access Fellow and previously as a 2017 Leadership Council on Legal Diversity Fellow. Currently, she holds the position of Vice President of the Board of The Peace Center in Bucks County, PA, an organization dedicated to educating, empowering, and supporting individuals and groups in their efforts to prevent violence, advocate for peaceful conflict resolutions, and nurture inclusive, equitable, and safe communities both locally and globally. Raina earned her J.D. from the Beasley School of Law at Temple University and her B.A. from the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania. She resides in Upper Makefield with her husband and three children.

Ali Mooney

Managing Consultant, Housing and Community Solutions Guidehouse

Ali Mooney is a Managing Consultant in the Housing and Community Solutions group at Guidehouse. She has over 14 years of experience in housing and community development in the public and non-profit sectors. Ali has extensive experience with housing policy and affordable housing program design and implementation. Ali assists clients with analyzing policy frameworks to maximize their potential housing development opportunities, determines available financing opportunities, assesses the viability of their programs, and addresses regulatory compliance.

Prior to joining Guidehouse, Ali managed the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERAP) for the City of Philadelphia. Philadelphia's rental assistance programs received national attention for their success in effectively and efficiently deploying federal funds and were praised by the U.S. Department of Treasury and featured on CNN and the front page of The New York Times. In addition to ERAP, Ali managed a pilot Universal Basic Income study, a \$40 million low-income home repair loan program and four other affordable housing programs operated by the agency.

Ali received her Master of Urban Planning degree, with a concentration in housing and community development, from Hunter College. She is passionate about housing policy and adept at creating and implementing innovative solutions to complex affordable housing problems. She is a member of the Urban Land Institute's (ULI) National Housing Exchange, Women in Housing and Finance, and was named Innovator of the Week by the Bloomberg Cities Network for her work on the Philadelphia ERAP program. Ali currently serves on the board of directors for the Philadelphia based nonprofit Women in Transition, which provides services and assists individuals to thrive beyond domestic abuse/intimate partner violence and substance abuse. Ali also has experience working in affordable and supportive housing, community development and policy analysis in New York, NY and Milwaukee, WI.

Candis Pressley

Managing Partner Trinity Property Advisors

Candis Pressley has devoted her adult life to the real estate industry, beginning her career while in college by obtaining her real estate license at age 19 and swiftly progressing to earn her broker's license. With over 25 years of experience, she has sold over 300 homes and effectively managed portfolios encompassing more than three million square feet of commercial real estate, contributing to a \$192 million dollar annual budget.

At age 22, she acquired her first duplex. Presently, her portfolio comprises nine properties in the Philadelphia area. Her latest venture involves the acquisition and redevelopment of a 3,400 sq ft commercial building, now serving as her real estate business headquarters and a versatile event and work space.

Under Candis' leadership, Trinity Property Advisors has expanded its services, obtaining a general contractor's license and incorporating consulting and real estate development. Trinity is now recognized as a boutique commercial and residential real estate firm with MBE Certification and licenses in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and New York.

Active within the real estate community, Candis holds memberships in various organizations. She has served as President of the Philadelphia Metropolitan Board of Realtist and as Regional Vice President for the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, the nation's oldest minority trade association. In 2017, she achieved the prestigious CCIM Designation [Certified Commercial Investment Member] from the CCIM Institute. Candis is a graduate of Temple University, holding a Bachelor of Business Administration in Real Estate, and the University of Florida, where she earned a Master of Science in Commercial Real Estate in 2015.







WHERE THE FUTURE IS BUILT

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