

## Broad Street Brief: New Affordable Housing Development Coming to Grays Ferry, Point Breeze; Landlord Sued by Federal Government Over Alleged Selective Housing Voucher Denial



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### CITY HALL

#### **New Grays Ferry, Point Breeze Affordable Housing Development Made Possible by City's Neighborhood Preservation Initiative**

On Monday, city workers and elected officials broke ground on a new development project that will bring more affordable housing units to Grays Ferry and Point Breeze. The development is part of City Council President Darrell Clarke's signature Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, which aims to address the city's affordable housing crisis by increasing the number of available affordable housing in pockets of rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia, thus helping to revive commercial corridors and improve neighborhood infrastructure. The three-bedroom homes will be listed under the Turn the Key program for \$230,000 — less than half the median sale price in the neighborhood — with soft loans available up to \$75,000.

#### **Members of City Council Vow to Hold Hearing on Youth Gun Violence and Call on Mayor Kenney to Address Semi Trailer Parking Problem, Honor Local Public School Student-Athlete**

Last week, City Councilmembers Jamie Gauthier of the 3rd District and Kenyatta Johnson of the 2nd District vowed to hold hearings on Philadelphia's gun violence epidemic. In particular, these hearings will focus on the formation of a comprehensive strategy to prevent the city's youth from becoming involved in situations that may lead to gun violence. Also during last week's meeting, Councilmember Anthony Phillips of the 9th District called on Mayor Jim Kenney and his administration to investigate semi-trailer and truck tractor parking and regulations across the city — the first resolution introduced by the newly minted council member.

#### **Large Philadelphia-Area Landlord Facing Federal Discrimination Lawsuit Over Alleged Denial of Housing Vouchers**

Though it is illegal in Philadelphia to deny a prospective tenant's application due to their use of a housing voucher, a 2018 study conducted by the Urban Institute found that nearly 70% of Philadelphia landlords engage in this practice. One such landlord is now facing a federal lawsuit for allegedly refusing to rent to voucher holders — approximately 80% of whom are Black, according to data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development — in majority-white neighborhoods, while accepting them in majority-Black neighborhoods. The company had advertised this discrepancy in acceptance of vouchers since at least July 2020.

#### **Eastwick Neighborhood to Receive Custom Emergency Alerts Due to Susceptibility to Extreme Flooding**

Philadelphia's Eastwick neighborhood will be getting custom emergency alerts due to its particular susceptibility to flooding compared with the rest of the city. While the Office of Emergency Management currently distributes emergency alerts from the National Weather Service to residents who opt in to the city's Ready Philadelphia system — and in certain cases, all residents regardless of opt-in status — such alerts have not been sufficient during past events like Tropical Storm Isaias in 2020, during which alerts were only pushed out after flooding in the neighborhood had already begun.

## **Philadelphia's Health Systems Experiencing Significant Financial Losses**

Health systems throughout the Philadelphia region have been struggling financially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with systems like Main Line Health projected to have lost \$100 million for the second consecutive year by the end of December. These significant losses are due to a confluence of issues, including shifts in the labor market in response to the pandemic, increased drug and supply costs, and insurance payments that haven't kept pace with historic inflation rates. These trends, should they persist, are expected to lead to more closures — with notable closures in the past few years including Hahnemann, Tower Health, and Crozer Health — which would further hamper Philadelphians' access to health care.

## **City Removes Box Concealing Controversial Christopher Columbus Statue in Accordance With Commonwealth Court Ruling**

The plywood box that had shielded a statue of Christopher Columbus at Marconi Plaza from public view since summer 2020 has officially been removed, as ordered by a Commonwealth Court panel. While previous city commissions had recommended the removal of the statue — which became a point of conflict most recently during the nationwide racial justice protests in response to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis — and Mayor Jim Kenney and his administration expressed concern that the statue's continued display may imply their tacit endorsement of what they view as a problematic message, the court's most recent decision landed in favor of Friends of Marconi Plaza, represented by attorney and former Republican candidate for U.S. Senate George Bochetto.

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