

## 30<sup>th</sup> Street District Plan connects station to Center City and surrounding West Philly neighborhoods

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By Nicole Contosta

As commuters continued their everyday bustle through 30th Street Station December 16th, they may have cast a curious glance at the clusters of people gathered before tripods bearing maps, diagrams and other pertinent information. A few may have even stopped to investigate.

For those who didn't, the event represented the public unveiling of the 30th Street District Plan's draft of physical framework.

"This project leverages the alignment of a number of factors," Keith Orris, Drexel Senior Vice President, explained in a statement. According to Orris, those factors include "Philadelphia's resurgence as a vibrant urban core and ranking as the number-one-millennial city in the country, the resurgence of rail travel, and Drexel's expanding reputation as a national research university with an applied education model.

"Together," he continued, "these projects will create an incredible gateway to Drexel's campus and University City, and provide decades of economic opportunity for Philadelphia."

The Philadelphia 30th Street Station District Plan, led by Amtrak, Brandywine Realty Trust, Drexel University and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) and guided by a host of public and private stakeholders, seeks to create a single, integrated vision for the Philadelphia 30th Street Station District. It includes 175 acres of land between Walnut and Spring Garden Streets east of Drexel's campus and Powelton Village.

So what does the 30th Street Plan encompass? In the simplest of terms, plans thus far respond to its three primary goals: community, connectivity and identity.

In terms of community, the draft plan calls for a dense neighborhood of homes and offices at the current rail yard. Planners propose capping or covering 70 acres of the 80-acre yard to make way for this neighborhood. Public space and parks also factor into the design, both around the station and along the Schuylkill River.

Connectivity includes the construction of three new pedestrian bridges across the Schuylkill River. Those bridges will link residents to both Center City and adjacent West Philly neighborhoods. Connectivity also extends to the creation of a transit terminal for intercity bus operators, such as Bolt Bus, as well as expanded railways to support high-speed service.

Identity in some ways reflects the 30th Street District Plan as a whole. But it also pertains to improving 30th Street Station itself. Part of that calls for restoring the station and adding more shopping outlets. It



Planners vet the latest 30th Street District Plan with residents. Photo: N.C.

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also entails creating better access for commuters to Amtrak's main station. In addition, the draft includes an underground interchange between 30th Street Station and the Market-Frankford Line. Above ground, planners have also considered a right-of-way for new public transit routes.

Planners will publicly present the official draft district plan in the spring of 2016 and the final district plan in the summer. The final plan will include specifics to guide development through 2040. In the meantime, the public has the opportunity to weigh in on the draft physical framework from a survey available through January 15th. The public can also read the entire draft plan thus far online. To take the survey or to read the plan in full: <http://www.phillydistrict30.com>.

*source: weeklypress.com*