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Plans for transit-oriented development near Temple announced

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It was a project 10 years in the making, but on Monday the city announced plans to build 164 apartments, with ground-floor stores, near the Temple University rail station in North Philadelphia.

With SEPTA trains rumbling behind him, Mayor Nutter hailed the development as one of the city's biggest efforts to promote a lifestyle in which people can walk, ride bikes, or take public transportation.

"It's going to be a model not only throughout the city but nationally," Nutter predicted.

He said the construction, which will take 18 months and begin in the second half of next year, will create 400 jobs.

The site is a Philadelphia Gas Works parking lot, next to the station at 915 W. Berks St. Artists' renderings show a five-story building with "green" roofs covered in plants that will help make the project more energy-efficient.

The Temple station is one of the city's busiest, with access to many train routes. Planners hope that the station's proximity to the proposed \$48 million development will allow residents to use fewer cars.

"Philadelphia, with its existing infrastructure of trains and transit, is a good candidate for transit-oriented development," said Paul Freitag, director of development for Jonathan Rose Cos., the New York firm that is overseeing the project. Transit-oriented development refers to the creation of compact, walkable communities centered around public transportation.

Nilda Ruiz, president of Asociacion Puertorriqueños en Marcha, the Philadelphia neighborhood development group that is a partner in the project, said she had been trying to get it off the ground for 10 years, but it didn't come together until this year.

"It's very exciting," she said. "I was born and raised in Philadelphia, and I remember what this neighborhood was like, with glass on the ground. People just drove by on I-676 or I-95. You didn't have to come here."

Sen. Bob Casey (D., Pa.) secured \$487,000 in federal economic development money for the project.

The rest of the funding was a mix of private, state, and federal money. The Citi Foundation, a nonprofit arm of banking giant Citigroup, provided a \$125,000 grant.

Of the 164 units, at least 44 will be for affordable housing. Developers hope to include a cafe, medical offices, and other amenities in the retail portion of the venture.