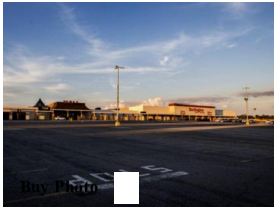


Tri-State Mall could see residential, retail future



Xerxes Wilson, The News Journal 9:59 a.m. EDT August 31, 2016

Local planners hope development activity in Claymont will spur new life for the downtrodden mall



(Photo: KYLE GRANTHAM/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

Claymont is seeing a flurry of activity (<http://Claymont%20train%20station%20gets%20green%20light%20with%20%2410%20million%20grant>) with the repurposing of the Claymont Steel property, a new train station and ongoing construction of new apartments on Philadelphia Pike.

But the Tri-State Mall's future remains an uncertain eyesore tucked into the unincorporated area. Local planners hope that activity around the mall will prod the underused property's owners to rethink the 41-acre site's future.

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The sun illuminates at water tower behind the empty Tri-State Mall in Claymont on Wednesday evening. (Photo: KYLE GRANTHAM/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

The property just north of the former steel mill across Naamans Road has been hurt by store closures, including a Value City that shut its doors in 2008 and a Kmart that vacated the property nearly two years ago. The mall's 535,000-square-foot structure, built in the 1970s, sits largely empty. Last year, the mall was featured on a [YouTube series](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0L4TCUjNhCo) chronicling some of the worst "dead malls" in the country.

DEAD MALL SERIES : Tri-State Mall **Closed 1...



Larry Tarabicos, an attorney representing the property's owners, said there is movement to rehabilitate the property, but nothing concrete is currently in the works.

"There is strong desire and earnest effort to attract interest to redevelop the property but there is nothing beyond that really," Tarabicos said.

Tarabicos said anything that goes there must be able to survive largely off the local population. He said the commercial potential of the property has been tempered by job losses in the area like the closing of Claymont Steel.

STORY: [Claymont revitalization a 'game-changer' \(/story/money/2015/11/13/renaissance-claymont/75671072/\)](#)

STORY: [Claymont train station gets green light with \\$10 million grant \(/story/news/2016/07/29/new-claymont-station-boon-job-growth/87700644/\)](#)

"It is a tough economy," Tarabicos said. "People struggle every day and particularly in that area of New Castle County.

Brett Saddler, executive director at Claymont Renaissance Development Corp., a public and private effort to transform the town, said the property has retail and residential potential.

Claymont steel mill demolished

Those future plans include:

- A proposed \$40 million covered train station built on a portion of the former [Evraz Steel Mill site in Claymont \(/story/money/2015/11/13/renaissance-claymont/75671072/\)](#). Officials recently announced a \$10 million federal grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation spurring the project which will also see state investment.
- The redevelopment of Evraz Steel Mill into what is being called [First State Crossing. \(/story/money/business/2015/04/30/claymont-project-add-jobs/26663983/\)](#) a mix of offices, warehouses, and a logistics center for container shipping. St. Louis developer Commercial Development Co. estimates the 425-acre project could bring as many as 5,000 jobs to the area.
- The first of two buildings at the [Reserve at Darley Green \(/story/news/2016/03/20/millennials-boomers-fuel-apartment-construction-uptick/81820754/\)](#), a 281-unit apartment development on Philadelphia Pike, is showing strong rental activity with a townhome portion of the development also seeing strong sales, officials said.



A rendering shows the new Claymont train station, which was awarded a \$10 million grant Friday. The rebuilt station will cost \$40 million. (Photo: PROVIDED)

Saddler's organization has teamed with state economic development and transportation officials, the Wilmington Area Planning Council as well as New Castle County government to develop an "ideal scenario" they hope can serve as a guide for future development of the mall.

They say the mall has potential for an institutional use as well as retail and residential development situated in a walkable village setting. The idea includes a road connecting the mall property through the former steel mill site to the new train station, tying potential residents to job centers in Wilmington, Philadelphia and beyond.

"The train station will be the big catalyst for redevelopment there," Saddler said.

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A SETPA bus driver stands outside his bus in the empty parking lot that surrounds the Tri-State Mall in Claymont on Wednesday evening. (Photo: KYLE GRANTHAM/THE NEWS JOURNAL)

The plan will be presented to the public in October.

"We are going to be presenting (the mall owners) with the community-based preferred redevelopment plan, that is based on market analysis," Saddler said. "We will be saying what we believe is the highest and best use and a way for the owners to maximize the use of the property and bring new residents to Claymont."

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