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## Willow Valley to build urban campus at LNP site, assist with Southern Market redevelopment



TIM STUHLBREHER | Staff Writer Jun 19, 2019



This aerial photo shows Southern Market building and the LNP production building Tuesday, June 18, 2019. Tower in the Greist Building and Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square.

BLAINE SHAHAN | Staff Photographer

Willow Valley Communities has won national plaudits for its campuses in West Lampeter Township, which together constitute Lancaster County's largest retirement community.

Now the organization is planning to enter Lancaster city with two projects that local officials are calling transformational.

Willow Valley has announced it plans to build a multi-story mixed-use complex on the site of the former LNP Production Building at the northwest corner of South Queen and West Vine streets.



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TIM STUHLBREHER | Staff Writer

It will have up to 150 residential units for people age 55 and up, plus restaurants and retail outlets at street level, open to the public.

Across Vine Street, Willow Valley will partner with the nonprofit group Lancaster Equity to create a food hub at the C. Emlen Urban-designed Southern Market Center, as Lancaster Equity proposed last year.

The two projects would dramatically advance the revitalization of Lancaster's "South Gateway" along Queen Street.

"This is a win-win for the city," said Marshall Snively, president of Lancaster City Alliance, a nonprofit focused on economic development.

The senior-living complex is expected to create about 175 to 200 jobs, said John Swanson, CEO of Willow Valley Living, the management company for Willow Valley Communities.

The food hub could create around 30 full-time and 50 part-time jobs, said Lancaster Equity President Dan Jurman. More will come from other uses that will be brought into the market — possibilities include offices, art venues, co-working and maker spaces, shops and an event hall.

Mayor Danene Sorace said the projects are exciting, and her administration looks forward to helping Willow Valley and Lancaster Equity "extend downtown's success further into our neighborhoods with new investment and new opportunities."

## 'Natural fit'

In an interview with LNP, Swanson called downtown Lancaster a logical next step and a “natural fit” for Willow Valley.

Last year, U.S. News & World Report named Lancaster County the best place in the U.S. to retire. Lancaster city is officially “age-friendly” and has racked up numerous accolades for its arts, culture and culinary offerings.

More and more seniors are coming to appreciate the advantages of downtown living, Swanson said, and “we want to meet people where they want to be.”

Willow Valley had been exploring potential locations in Lancaster for several years, Swanson said. In the course of evaluating LNP’s production building site, it became aware of Lancaster Equity’s plans for the market and realized the potential synergy, he said.

Lancaster Equity is a nonprofit community development corporation created to help implement the strategies of “One Good Job,” the 2016 report of a mayoral commission that called for cutting poverty in half by 2032.

Willow Valley’s project “was so compatible with what we were doing,” Jurman said. The nonprofit is taking the place of private partners with whom Lancaster Equity initially planned to collaborate.





The LNP production building at 17 W. Vine St.

BLAINE SHAHAN | Staff Photographer

## The residential complex

LNP Media Group announced Willow Valley's pending acquisition of the property Monday at its 225th Anniversary celebration. Robert M. Krasne, CEO of Steinman Communications and publisher of LNP, said Willow Valley's project will make the site "an active and integral part of city life."



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The timing of groundbreaking is contingent on completing the planning and design process and securing city approvals. Construction is expected to take about two years.

The company is planning one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments, plus a full range of resident amenities. The project cost, square footage and other details remain to be determined, Swanson said.

Residents will pay an entrance fee and monthly service fee. Parking will be offered at the Steinman Park Garage.

LNP's production building will be demolished to make way for the new structure. The historic house of attorney and judge Jasper Yeates (1745-1817) on the site's east side will be preserved and restored.

## Food hub, jobs pipeline

At Southern Market Center, some components could be operational as early as the end of 2020, Swanson said.

The building is owned by the city redevelopment authority. On Tuesday, the authority approved a development agreement and a sales agreement under which Lancaster Equity will acquire the market for \$800,000, paid in three installments.

Willow Valley will provide the purchase funds and will hold a 29-year master lease on the building. It will also handle the renovations. The building needs a lot of work, including all-new mechanical systems and repointing of brickwork, Swanson said.

Lancaster Equity will sublease about 10,000 square feet, where it will build out and equip a food hall, commercial kitchen and culinary job training center.

Willow Valley will manage and use or sublease the rest of the building. Office space will be offered to Assets, the nonprofit that is currently the market's sole tenant.

"Our hope is to continue as a tenant ... (and) be a support to the entrepreneurial activity," said Assets' co-director Jonathan Coleman.

Jurman envisions the market creating a jobs "pipeline." Not only will Willow Valley be just across the street, it plans to operate a shuttle service to its flagship campuses.

They're home to more than 2,400 residents from 37 states and employ more than 1,400 people, including more than 500 in food service. The shuttle will help to make employment there feasible for southside residents who may not have reliable transportation of their own.

"Everyone wins," Jurman said, "most importantly, city residents."

Lisa Riggs, president of the Economic Development Company of Lancaster County, called Willow Valley's investment "monumental" and "an extraordinary validation of the vibrancy of Lancaster city."



Southern Market Center

LNP File Photo

Said Snively: “This type of local investment and partnership will be viewed as a model for other communities.”



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