

**PHILADELPHIA HOUSING AUTHORITY**  
**RFP #P-004440 UNIT-BASED OPERATING SUBSIDY PROGRAM**  
**GALA – GOLDEN AGE LIVING ACCOMMODATIONS**

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**3. Site and Neighborhood Standards:**

GALA will be developed within West Oak Lane, an area in need of redevelopment, as evidenced in the Philadelphia Planning Commission's *West Oak Lane Redevelopment Area Plan*. In large part though what this plan says is that West Oak Lane is a great neighborhood that is not living up to its potential and can and should do better. West Oak Lane has one of the highest of homeownership rates in the City and has a very small number of subsidized and public housing units. Specifically:

**Underserved Areas** – GALA will provide shelter for lower income seniors age 62 and over. Affordable housing for seniors is in very short supply in West Oak Lane. Additionally, the site is directly across the street from the Mt. Airy Baptist Church and in very close proximity to amenities that are appropriate for seniors including recreational options, retail establishments, home health agencies, and hospitals.

**Community Revitalization Plans** -- GALA is located at 2030 E. Haines Street in Philadelphia, in the West Oak Lane section of Philadelphia. West Oak Lane is a quiet row-home community in Northwest Philadelphia with one of the highest homeownership rates in the City. The area is experiencing gentrification and is **not** within a QCT. The proposed location of GALA is currently underutilized, containing three vacant residential structures (one twin and one single family home) along with a vacant auto repair garage each of which contribute toward neighborhood blight. At present, the site is vacant and derelict and surrounded by barbed wire fencing which is very much out of character with the larger residential neighborhood. By way of a summary:

1. GALA is part of a broader, comprehensive neighborhood improvement plan. In the winter/spring of 2013 our team met with the Philadelphia Planning Commission (specifically, Paula Brumbelow, Brian Wenrich and David Ortiz). The commission was extremely supportive of our plans to develop GALA as it met the goals and objectives of the Planning Commission's *West Oak Lane Redevelopment Area Plan*. The Planning Commission was also instrumental in the project's receipt of its zoning variance from Philadelphia's Zoning Board of Appeals which was granted on 10/2/2013. GALA is located within the boundary of the redevelopment area found on page two of the plan. The intention of the plan is to encourage housing renewal, general revitalization and the elimination of blighting influences attributed to undesirable land uses. The plan also calls for the investment and beautification of residential properties. When we demolish the vacant structures presently on our site and develop the GALA project GALA will fulfill the objectives of the Redevelopment Plan.
2. As stated previously, West Oak Lane has one of the highest homeownership rates in the City of Philadelphia. Many of these homeowners are older residents and are now looking for more age appropriate housing with senior amenities. Because these residents will be selling their house to downsize their lives we felt this would be a perfect opportunity for a mixed income community which was also borne out in the market study (refer to Tab 4).

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3. GALA will fundamentally change the character of the neighborhood by enhancing the lives and amenities available to the residents of the neighborhood. Philadelphia is generally considered to be an affordable housing market in comparison to the other major northeastern cities. Opportunities to live in decent, affordable rental housing though is limited by strong occupancy and long waiting lists at existing properties that range up to 10 years in length. This is especially true for senior housing in the delineated PMA because of the limited number of affordable senior housing properties, the majority of which are concentrated in the Germantown neighborhood south of West Oak Lane. Of the nine existing affordable housing developments in the three zip codes, eight are located in the Germantown zip code, 19144.

Market research indicates that the rents for market-rate apartments at well-maintained properties were above the affordable levels. Rents for units with one-bedroom and one bath ranged from \$730 for a 501sf unit (\$1.46/sf) to \$1,395 for a 770sf (\$1.81/sf) apartment – GALA's proposed 60% units will be 647 sf and rent for \$830 (\$1.28/sf) -- a 14% advantage over the least expensive units and a 41% advantage over more expensive units. Most of the comparable market rate apartments are located in the 19144 (Germantown) or 19150 (Mt. Airy) zip codes – not West Oak Lane – which is similar to the pattern for the affordable housing.

The housing stock in the West Oak Lane neighborhood consists primarily of 50-100 year old row homes that contain three bedrooms and one bath and are not handicapped accessible. A number of houses in the neighborhood suffer from deferred maintenance. Many of these properties belong to seniors who can no longer afford nor are capable of maintaining them. As the properties turn over, young families purchase and renovate them. The development of GALA will provide sorely needed senior affordable housing, in West Oak Lane, to those whose existing homes no longer meet their needs, and hasten the gentrification process by enabling the sale of these homes to young families who will continue to invest in the neighborhood and renovate these properties.

4. GALA is located in a mixed income neighborhood. The 2000 Census placed the median home value at \$63,842 in West Oak Lane. The 2005-2009 ACS estimated that the median home value in West Oak Lane increased to \$95,948 a 50% increase in value. While some of these homes may be affordable to GALA residents, homeownership is often not the preferable option for seniors, especially the frail elderly, in neighborhoods where most of the units have two or more stories with stairs and the associated responsibilities of property maintenance and repair.
  5. The site for the GALA property is located within a Transit Oriented Neighborhood. Ogontz Ave is serviced by many active SEPTA bus routes which takes riders up and down the Ave. Many of these routes will take riders to the Frankford Transportation Center which connects to many other SEPTA bus routes and the Broad St Subway. From the Transportation Center a rider can get anywhere in Philadelphia. A complete analysis of the transportation provided to the site can be found on page 6 of the market study.
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