

A TRULY *super* SUPERMARKET

When a neighborhood goes downhill, it often requires a group that will take a big risk in order to turn the community around. When that situation presented itself in 2015 in the Wynnefield area of Philadelphia, along City Avenue, that was the challenge. The Pathmark supermarket had closed, and the shopping center in which it was the anchor tenant was struggling.

In a city setting like Wynnefield, you would think access to fresh food would be easy to find. Just jump in the car and drive a few miles. But in this part of Wynnefield, many of the residents are seniors, disabled or have health issues. They were used to walking to the Pathmark because, for many of them, that really was their only option. But now their section of Wynnefield had become a “food desert,” lacking easy access to healthy food options.

A COMMUNITY LEADER WITH A VISION

The community was struggling mightily until Brown’s Super Stores took on the challenge. With 12 urban, community focused supermarkets located in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey, Brown’s had the expertise to tackle the challenge and a big heart that truly cared about the community.

“It was a problem to solve,” says Jeff Brown, CEO of Brown’s. “It really had one of the most gigantic gaps financially of any of the food desert projects we looked at before.

“We are a for-profit business, but we’re mission-focused, and we’re very interested in solving food deserts. So the mission part of it made us think there must be some way to get the people in this community a grocery store again.”

With leadership from Brown’s Super Stores, financial support from the state, and \$10 million of New Markets Tax Credits from Commonwealth Cornerstone Group, a plan was created to bring fresh food back to this section of west Philly. CCG

was created by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency in 2004 to provide critical funding for economic development projects in low-income neighborhoods, just like this one.

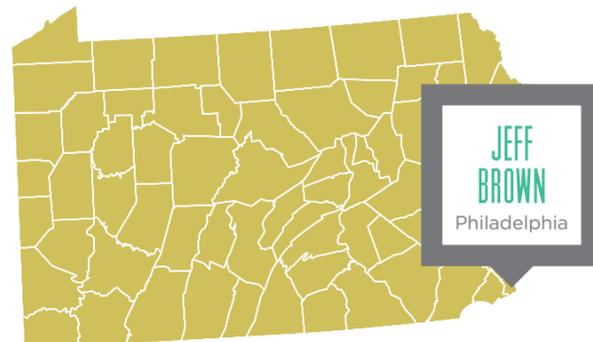
“One thing I think is interesting about Commonwealth Cornerstone Group is that it’s ahead of the curve to understand that housing without life-sustaining services and amenities is not 100 percent of a solution,” Brown observes. “So the fact that PHFA and CCG have been providing New Markets Tax Credits and using them to build the services that make the housing and communities work, I think that’s ahead of the curve.”

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

Where the Pathmark had been, a new store was constructed and called The Fresh Grocer of Monument Road. Not only has it brought healthy foods back to Wynnefield, but it introduced amenities like extensive food service offerings and an inviting social atmosphere where neighbors can meet, with a fireplace and a big screen TV.

The community response has been tremendous, and the shopping center that surrounds the supermarket is rebounding now, as well.

“One of the reasons we love this work is because of the difference it makes,” Brown shares. “And it does feel good to see the reaction of consumers and see the difference it’s made in their lives.”



“THE PEOPLE [in the neighborhood] are thrilled they have a place to buy their fresh, healthy foods.”

—Jeff Brown
CEO, Brown’s Super Stores