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## **Plan would add supermarkets in city**

**The \$100 million statewide proposal is intended to promote healthy eating in low-income areas.**

**By Vernon Clark  
Inquirer Staff Writer**

Ten supermarkets could be opened in Philadelphia in the next five years under a \$100 million plan to bring healthy food to underserved areas statewide.

Supermarket developers and state and city representatives announced the plan yesterday at the Reading Terminal Market in Center City.

"We are looking at the impact on the health of individuals," State Rep. Dwight Evans (D., Phila.) said, noting a shortage of supermarkets and other places to buy wholesome food in communities such as North Philadelphia. He said the shortage of markets was contributing to the spread of health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

"Jobs, jobs, jobs" for community residents would be another benefit of the supermarket development plan, Evans said.

He was joined at the news conference by officials including State Rep. Frank Oliver (D. Phila.); City Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown; Dennis Yablonsky, secretary of the state Department of Community and Economic Development; and State Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams (D., Phila.).

Under the plan, the state will offer \$100 million to help develop supermarkets in underserved urban and rural areas throughout Pennsylvania within 120 days, officials said. The money would come from the state's \$1.135 billion economic-development budget, officials said.

Yablonsky said \$10 million would be used for planning for supermarkets and \$90 million would be for low-interest loans for supermarket development.

Oliver, a sponsor of legislation for the plan, said, "In my 30 years in Harrisburg, this is the most important legislation that I have introduced."

He said that increasing the number of supermarkets in Philadelphia would be especially beneficial to senior citizens, who often have to pay to be driven to and from markets outside their neighborhoods. He noted a particular need for a supermarket in the area of 27th Street and Girard Avenue in his legislative district in North Philadelphia.

"This will help so many people all across the state, not just Philadelphia," Oliver said of the plan.

Hannah Burton, program coordinator for the Food Trust, a Philadelphia-based nonprofit organization working to increase access to nutritious food in low-income areas, said supermarkets are a key to a community's health, noting the need in North Philadelphia in particular.

"When a new supermarket comes in, it improves diets because people are able to purchase nutritious foods at lower prices," Burton said. "Supermarkets are not just about good food, they help stabilize neighborhoods, creating 50 to 100 full-time jobs and about 100 part-time jobs."

A 2001 report by the Food Trust said that a nationwide study found that the number of supermarkets in the lowest-income neighborhoods of Philadelphia region was substantially lower than in the highest-income areas.

Focusing on the Philadelphia area, Evans issued a list of potential sites for supermarkets: Progress Plaza at Broad and Jefferson Streets; 27th Street and Girard Avenue; 16th and Catherine Streets; Broad Street

and Godfrey Avenue; 19th Street and Cheltenham Avenue; Broad and Spencer Streets; 58th Street and Baltimore Avenue; Stenton and Ogontz Avenues; and Darby Township.

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