

Marshall Township Ordinance Update

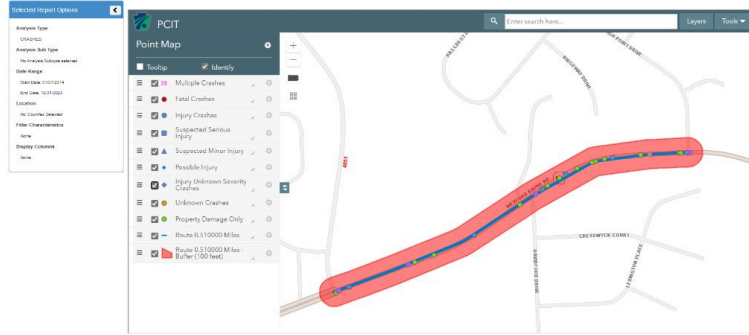
Route 910 Overlay Public Meeting

August 20, 2024

The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update to the community on Marshall Township's zoning update project as it relates to Route 910 and seek input from area residents and other interested parties on a potential zoning overlay. Approximately 105 were in attendance. The meeting began with establishing speaking ground rules, followed by a brief presentation by the project team on the current zoning proposal, which has developed based on a year and a half of research and discussion, as well as the context, research and input compiled to date.

Here is a summary of the presentation:

- There is no current development plan in this area.
- This meeting is focused on gathering feedback on a potential zoning overlay to address safety issues along a stretch of Route 910. A zoning overlay is a set of more specific guidelines for development that apply on top of base zoning regulations. It's a tool that allows for the imposition of higher and more specific standards.
- This issue is not a new one.
 - Traffic volume along Route 910 has dramatically increased in past decades due to accelerating development in neighbor communities. This is *the* east/west route from I-79 Wexford.
- Both the previous comprehensive plans recognize worsening safety, traffic, and noise in this area.
- A previous meeting was held at Altmyer Barn last year to discuss this issue with people who live or own property along the corridor.
 - Safety, traffic, and noise remain the top concerns of this area.
 - Several property owners (and people from adjacent neighborhoods) prefer to leave the zoning as is.
 - Other property owners feel that the zoning should allow for commercial transition.
- Traffic design and patterns
 - PennDOT is resurfacing 910 from I-79 to Gibsonia for **\$8.4M**
 - PennDOT will start construction within the next couple of years on a complete reconfiguration of the I-79 Wexford Interchange. This work does not extend beyond Mingo, but it will change traffic patterns in the area, resulting in a more efficient traffic flow (that may induce additional volume) and fewer gaps in traffic, which affect turning movements.
 - Current PennDOT projects do not address safety concerns along this stretch of 910.
 - Traffic counts from PennDOT and Streetlight Data (cellphone location data) indicate rapid increase in traffic over the last 20 years.
 - ***In the last 10 years (January 2014 to December 2023) between Mingo Road and Highpoint Drive, PennDOT records show approximately 50 crashes, none of which were fatal.***



- - Information can be verified here: [Custom Query Tool \(pa.gov\)](http://pa.gov)
 - <https://crashinfo.penndot.pa.gov/PCIT/queryTool.html#>
- Streetlight data shows that average daily traffic volume along this corridor is above 20,000 trips and is increasing.
- Trip generation numbers were analyzed to investigate suitable land uses that would be compatible in the area.
- The completion of the I-79 Wexford interchange redesign represents the arrival of the tipping point: The Township must prioritize the public good and solve for safety in this area.
- Proposed Overlay
 - **Use overlay districting**
 - An overlay district is applied *over one or more base districts* to establish *additional or stricter standards* and criteria
 - Here, it's a way to add development options **ONLY** in conformance with a specific higher set of standards.
 - Base zoning doesn't change – existing uses may continue.
 - **Purpose.** The purpose of the Route 910 Transitional Overlay District is to provide flexibility for lot consolidation and redevelopment according to standards intended to:
 - Foster improved traffic circulation and safety for all users through access control.
 - Enable transition to limited multifamily and non-residential uses.
 - Limit the impact of development on residences through controlling the scale and orientation of buildings and parking lots and requiring buffer landscaping.
 - Maintain a high level of scenic and aesthetic quality along the Route 910 corridor.
 - **Expand uses**
 - Conditional use: Townhouse or limited commercial (emphasis on local business), only when **all** of the following can be achieved:
 - **Five-acre minimum lot size** (likely achieved through parcel assembly), add on to existing (future) RTO development – or eliminate/consolidate at least four driveways onto Route 910 existing at the time of enactment
 - Meet **access management standards** (dedicated light, turn lane, access road)
 - **Design and Performance Standards**
 - Pedestrian network (interconnected sidewalks)
 - Enhance quality architectural character, aesthetic
 - Mitigate externalities (noise, glare)
 - Landscaping/environmental features

- **Buffer Planting**
 - Must screen adjacent residential neighborhoods
 - Designed to block 100% of the view at six-foot height.
 - Fence or masonry wall AND 20' deep dense vegetation.
 - Plants located to produce greatest reduction of light, noise, and views.
 - Buffer must contain per 20' deep, 100' wide, at least:
 - 2 shade trees
 - 8 evergreen trees
 - 24 shrubs
- **Access Management**
 - Internal access road
 - Elimination of individual curb cuts in this area
 - Ingress/Egress at Mingo Road light
 - Potentially providing one-way access for Davidford residents
- **Rationale**
 - Doing nothing is an option, but not one without consequences.
 - The interchange project will reduce gaps in future traffic, which we expect to continue increasing.
 - Reducing potential conflict points (driveways) along this stretch is critical for improving traffic safety.
 - Traffic conditions have rendered the single-family home use along Route 910 increasingly untenable, sapped home values.
 - Adding the overlay opens compatible new development options **in exchange for** high development standards that increase safety and protect nearby neighborhoods.

Resident Concerns and Sentiments

Please note that these are summaries of what people said and are not verbatim.

Bob Mitchell – Mr. Mitchell believes that the proposed change to zoning in this area is “a bad, terrible idea” and claims the area never had one crime. New access is going to bring more and more traffic. Mr. Mitchell worked for thirty years with the FBI and believes that culs-de-sac deter criminals. Mr. Mitchell argues that additional through traffic would beget more crime, package stealing, etc.

Tom Baier – Mr. Baier has been a resident for 38 years and has seen a lot of changes. The road used to be a rural road with just stop signs in a rural township. Mr. Baier believes the Township has grown beyond its rural infrastructure. A group of residents canvassed Davidford, Hampshire Farms, and Highpoint residents. Mr. Baier states that a large number of these residents didn't know how far the comp plan progressed and didn't know what was being proposed. He said that many are very upset and want NO changes to 910 zoning. They believe any change will have a negative impact on their property values, and commercialization will alter their quality of life. Mr. Baier questions why the township hasn't partnered with PennDOT to get trucks to the next exit or partnered with NRPD for speed enforcement. He thinks that there is enough commercial and office nearby and that an overlay district is rezoning. He would prefer to keep *Marshall Township Naturally Connected*, like

the new slogan states. He also mentioned concerns about the future land use change affecting flora and fauna in the area.

Rick Vater – Mr. Vater stated the following four points.

- Page #16 of comp plan states: interest in keeping Marshall Township green is important to keep its natural character.
- The township should be adding more protections in this area, not less.
- Mr. Vater thinks single-family housing along 910 is still viable—look at South Hills municipal roads that have a mix of single family and businesses co-existing, such as West Liberty Ave and Greentree Road.
- Rezoning 910 has come up before. With Marshall Heights, the Township said at the time that the development would be the buffer, delineating the end of multi-family and commercial. Mr. Vater wants the Township to keep that promise.

Rosemary Murphy – Hasn't lived here long and likes that it was close enough to businesses, but far enough not to be in the development. Ms. Murphy doesn't understand how any changes would fix safety, traffic, and noise. She believes there must be other options. Although she appreciates that what is proposed would have strict regulations, she wonders where we draw the line. Ms. Murphy points out that there are already empty leases in existing commercial businesses in the area.

Mike Stupy – Mr. Stupy claims there are currently no homes in Marshall Township adjoining commercial property. If this happens, there would be 13. He asks, "what are the people on 910 hoping to get for their property? You chose to build/buy there."

Mary Ann Grom – Ms. Grom has been a resident for 25 years. She believes that zoning is in place to prevent incompatible uses from being next door to each other. However, she states, it can also mandate sprawl, effectively operate with racial or classist biases, or preclude people from affording houses. She thinks this study area needs a more careful analysis.

Morti Hughes – Ms. Hughes thinks that speed bumps and/or a stoplight should be installed on this road. She adds that you take your life in your hands when you make a left-hand turn onto 910.

Kathy Kross – Ms. Kross has been a Highpoint resident for years. She believes that this will affect them directly, because of Leidecker Lane backs up to their property. She reiterates how hard it is to get out of Highpoint. She recalls that PennDOT already changed access to 910 and wonders why don't cops enforce speed? She believes the overlay is just going to add more traffic.

Drew Cox – Mr. Cox has been a Highpoint resident for 37 years. He has a concern that an access road would upset their backyard. He asks, supervisors are elected – are they required to vote the way the people want?

Jeff Yates – Mr. Yates lives on Davidford Drive and surrounded on two sides by the overlay district. He wants to see standards before anything is adopted. He asks if we have explored the idea of a traffic signal at 910 and Davidford. He claims that at least 60 cars try to exit Davidford Drive daily. The minimal sight-distances and dangerous conditions exist for their neighborhood too.

Dan Mahon – Mr. Mahon asks if development in this area is more expensive than adding a speed bump or a mirror that would fix all these issues.

Bryan Peterson – Mr. Peterson has had issues since 1997 trying to get out of Davidford Drive. He heard that because of a new I-79 flyover we need to change the overlay. Mr. Peterson doesn't see how what we are proposing will solve any problems. He asks the Township not to make changes. Mr. Peterson wonders if there is a way to make 910 drivers yield to Davidford Drive drivers. He thinks police need to enforce speed, not speedbumps and that the Township or PennDOT should also include warnings/signage to help slow drivers.

Kristen Johnson – Ms. Johnson is a newer homeowner (7 years). She likes that they are close to retail, but not in the mix. She believes it is only a matter of time before development wants to develop their neighborhood and is not in favor of the zoning change.

Pete Domville – Mr. Domville recollects how kind people are in the area and that they would allow them to ride bikes through their yards. He notes that existing businesses are already struggling, so why add more? Mr. Domville spends his evenings walking, and adds that his home is where he recreates and meditates. He asks why the Township cannot make this a park or some other kind of use? He thinks that what is being proposed is just an increase in what is already happening somewhere else and that it would destroy his dream for the area—his home.

Francois Bitz – Mr. Bitz notes that he is the first person who owns property in the overlay area that has gotten up to speak. He currently has 3 tenants and owns multiple properties. He wants property rezoned because no one can get out of driveways. He thinks it is going to be very hard to get 5 acres assembled. He has plans for 20 townhomes that would come out to the traffic light at Mingo Rd.

He states that he is representing 5 property owners and that he bought a piece of property and for 7 years and has not been able to get an HOP from PennDOT.

John Nolan – Mr. Nolan compliments everyone for their great job explaining their residential situation. He thinks that if you take the Marshall Heights development and put it on this property, there will be a lot more driveways, cars, delivery trucks, and infrastructure. He states that Davidford Drive is a 1/3-mile loop and it is walked and used a lot by residents, kids, and high school athletes. He believe any connection to Davidford is bad and that this proposal should provide a lot more protection. He thinks townhomes in this area could be done in a much better way.

Wade Leidecker – Mr. Leidecker says his family had the farm that is now Highpoint. He doesn't care what the township does because he is never moving, though he is curious how the change would impact assessed values that drive property taxes. He thinks noise pollution is a huge problem that upsets his quality of life. Mr. Leidecker also reiterates the opinion that truck traffic needs to be re-routed to Warrendale Bayne and that it is very, very dangerous to pull out onto 910.