

Marshall Township Ordinance Update

Steering Committee Meeting #2: 910 Transitional Overlay/CR District

6/21/2023

Meeting Minutes

- **Overview of Tonight's Goals**
 - The main focus of this meeting was collecting input to advise drafting of the Conservation Residential Zoning District and Route 910 Transitional Overlay. The project team relies on the committee, as a representative cohort of the community, to provide advisory context that informs the draft regulations that the Planning Commission and Supervisors will consider. This discussion is centered on trade-offs: How should regulations reconcile competing priorities?
- **Status Update on Grading Ordinance**
 - The project team has provided Township staff with a draft grading ordinance that incorporates text and definitions aligned with the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) and grading standards that reflect best practices.
 - Revised formatting and ordinance references for consistency. Coordinated definitions with the SALDO.
 - Compared the Grading Ordinance with the SALDO and corrected any conflicting information or requirements.
 - Revised Inspections section to outline specific requirements and actions needed for different project types, and penalties for non-compliance.
 - Adjusted grading standards according to standard practices where appropriate and added Standards for Retaining Walls and floodplain areas.
 - Added a section for Geotechnical Report and Slope Stability Analysis Requirements.
 - Added a section for Natural Resource Protection Standards
 - Staff explained that the Township's existing protections for subdivision development are solid, but proposed changes strengthen provisions for single-lot development.
 - Committee members emphasized the importance of ensuring that ordinances adequately address runoff and flooding issues caused by storms of increasing severity and frequency. Staff clarified that the stormwater management ordinance, SALDO and grading ordinance work together; this project will improve consistency.
 - The project team will work with staff to determine whether the Township may exceed Allegheny County Act 167 standards in local stormwater regulations.
 - The project team will circulate the draft grading ordinance.
- **Review Work to Date**
 - Due diligence review memos to staff – zoning and SALDO

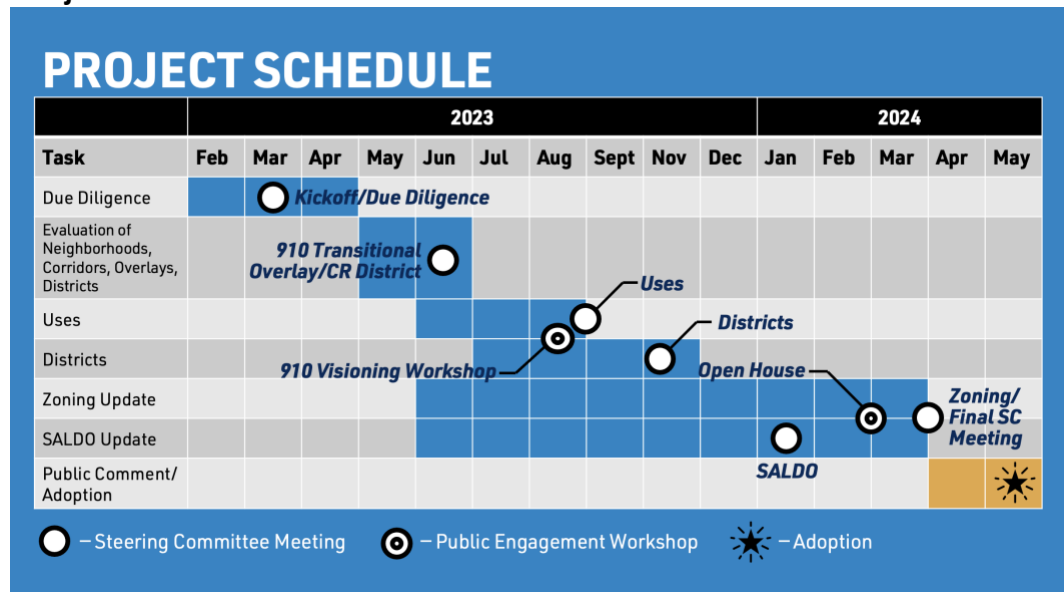
- Additional platforms for committee engagement (*planmarshall.org* forum with prompts, preference surveys)
- Primer materials
- **Conservation Residential District**
 - Review Context
 - The Conservation Residential (CR) district covers the majority of the Township's western side. The Township created it as part of a major 2008 zoning rewrite to implement its 2006 Comprehensive Plan.
 - Both the plan and ordinance took into account the Sanitary Authority's approval of the Big Sewickley Creek sewer extension, the purpose of which was to address the environmental hazard of several failing septic systems in the area. The intent was to ensure that landowners have the ability to develop their property, if desired, while preserving as much of the natural environment as possible.
 - CR accommodates housing development primarily in the form of density-neutral cluster subdivisions designed to preserve sensitive environmental areas. A four-step process determines conservation areas and where homes and infrastructure will be sited. This results in a significant percentage of buildable land permanently protected in a manner that creates interconnecting greenways – more habitat for wildlife, more filtering and retention of stormwater, less new infrastructure being built, greater potential to preserve natural scenery.
 - Discussion
 - One committee member noted that not more than 200 to 300 acres remain to develop in the CR district. They contended that the CR district as written is not the most efficient way to achieve conservation of green space; higher density per acre would be.
 - For example: A development that preserves a greater amount of greenspace with a denser, development footprint would, in turn, limit the amount of infrastructure (roads in linear feet) required, thus making it more environmentally friendly.
 - Demand existed when CR was enacted and persists. Marshall is the second-fastest-growing township in the state. Draws include location, school quality, low taxes, park and trail amenities, and the natural landscape.
 - Review VPS Survey Results
 - The group generally liked that **Option 1** set aside more green space – less yard area to manage, more natural environment, more buffer for road noise.
 - Preserving rural character is very important to residents. People care about what they can see from the roads. Long entranceways with undisturbed area along the road is one way to preserve a rural look and feel, though this can present a layout challenge on sloped sites.

- Providing space for recreation is important, especially as local fields are “maxed out” with heavy use. The group specifically mentioned playground and spaces for kids to play. For the last 20 years, the Township has actively pursued trails and sidewalks, negotiated easements.
 - In **Option 2**, the group preferred substantial vegetative screening (exceeding what was depicted). Deciduous trees are bare in the winter.
 - Not all properties have tree cover – some were originally cleared for agriculture.
 - The project team is working actively on incorporating best practices for tree preservation.
 - Detention ponds should be landscaped and planted better than they are now. Retention ponds are preferable to detention ponds: “We’re losing groundwater down the creek”; it should infiltrate. There’s less need for man-made stormwater controls if natural features are left in place.
 - If retention ponds requirements are pursued, there should be specific language outlining landscaping requirement i.e. native sedges, rocks, and other aesthetic elements.
 - The group generally liked the mixture of housing choices in **Option 3**: “Not everyone wants a five-bedroom house.” Less roof, less street = less runoff. Owners/developers in CR have the option of large-lot homes, but zero have chosen it, as it doesn’t sell. The current trend locally seems to be building the largest possible homes on small lots, “that’s the market.”
 - The group agreed that townhomes would be an acceptable use in CR provided that overall dwelling units per acre remain neutral. (“Tradeoff interior density for surrounding undisturbed area.” “Please make them cute!”)
- **910 Transitional Overlay**
 - Review Context
 - One directive from the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan was to conduct a more detailed analysis of conditions and preferences for Route 910 to calibrate a transitional zoning overlay. The stretch of this road between the I-79 interchange and the Pine Township border has been the focus of commercial development pressure that intensifies with PennDOT’s plans to replace the Wexford interchange.
 - The tradeoff here: balancing the rights and desires of property owners who wish to sell their property to developers who would expand the reach of more commercial use farther down Route 910 vs the rights and desires of property owners who want to preserve what they have.
 - The committee mentioned that demand for commercial/townhome development exists currently in this area.
 - Case study
 - Cranberry Township addressed similar conditions along Freedom Road by 1) undertaking a Traffic and Land Use Study that resulted in specific

placemaking goals, 2) identifying discrete areas that called for different treatment, 3) adopting overlay districts for each area, which allowed for greater use flexibility in exchange for conformance to highly detailed design standards.

- Development has been sluggish – assembling tracts to amass sufficient land to develop can take many years.
- Review 3 options presented in the Comprehensive Plan and VPS
 - Do nothing
 - Limited office transition
 - Limited commercial transition
- Discuss Priorities
 - Nobody wants to live along Route 910, yet no one can sell property, as the only interest is commercial (not currently permitted).
 - The group generally agreed that the extent of the proposed transitional overlay is appropriate.
 - A committee member suggested using the existing transitional zoning overlay as a template. This designation applies to only a couple of parcels.
 - The group agreed that townhomes and commercial uses would make sense here *provided that* the problem of access is solved.
 - The access lane idea has a lot going for it, though acquisition would be challenging.
 - Anecdotally, people who live along Route 910 support commercial use. People who don't live there expect that rezoning to commercial would make traffic worse. It may not, as much of the trips are generated elsewhere. Turns are an issue.
 - Townhomes and commercial uses would work with limited access points.

- **Review Project Schedule**



- **Next Steps**

- Marshall Township Community Day — 8/26/23
- 1st Public Engagement Meeting: Route 910 Visioning Workshop — September
- Project Team will start working with Staff on the Use Matrix
- Project Team to begin developing updates to the CR District and Route 910 Transitional Overlay for Staff’s initial review