

Summary of the
September 22, 2021 Public Workshop for the
Forward Township Comprehensive Plan

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The following are general statements reflecting overall workshop discussions. There was no survey or count of opinions to quantify how many or what percentage of attendees agreed or disagreed with any particular view or value.

1. Residents value many aspects of rural quality of life. They also want modern infrastructure and amenities, commonly found in urban and suburban communities.
2. Residents spoke about both freedom from excessive regulations and limiting housing options for other people.
3. Residents have varied perspectives on future development in the township and the need for and nature of township action regarding:
 - a. The development pressure that a growing metropolitan Pittsburgh region places on Forward Township and southwest Butler County.
 - b. Farmers who are aging toward retirement, many without an interested next generation farm owner/operator, thus sale of the farm is a financial means to retire.
 - c. The power of money to influence any property owner to sell their land.
 - d. Land development and zoning regulations, namely the scope and kinds of standards within these tools and how they are applied.
 - e. Land preservation that compensates the property owner for the removal of the development rights of a parcel.
4. Residents are concerned about various impacts of potential future development on the community – increased traffic, and increased stormwater.
5. The role of the Planning Committee was unclear to residents and should be clarified in future meetings/presentations.
6. The Butler Eagle was the primary means of awareness for the workshop, and many attendees felt the Township should have taken more steps to communicate with citizens about the plan and to give notice for the workshop. Many had misperceptions or uncertain expectations about the purpose of the plan and the workshop.

WORKSHOP DETAILS

Presenters

Michelle Brummer and Tom Thompson of Gannett Fleming, Inc., the township's engineering consultant, lead the presentation and discussion.

Attendance

44 people signed in for the workshop. Total attendance was estimated at 50 people. Several planning commission members and two supervisors were present.

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23 reported hearing about the workshop through the Butler Eagle news article (September 20, 2021).

Presentation and Discussion

The presentation began shortly after 7pm. The presentation and discussion (audio and visuals) were recorded.

Several “poll” questions were asked during the presentation. Michelle and Tom asked for a handful of responses and requested that all attendees submit comments and ideas via the paper Exit Survey and turn it in before leaving the workshop. Additional comments by sending email to Michelle were invited.

Comments and questions raised by attendees included:

- How was the planning committee picked?
- What is the composition of the committee - long-term and recent residents?
- Quality of Life: rural, live and let live, quiet, respectful
- Aspects that attract/retain residents: transportation access, schools, freedom (chickens and clotheslines), can burn without restrictions, low taxes, low regulations (to avoid getting grants)
- Few people travel long distances/travel times (30 minutes or more) to work
- Keep the Township rural
- Would like to see a 2-acre (or as large as possible) minimum density to mitigate impacts such as increased traffic and stormwater, expanded water and sewer utilities,
- Want all single-family home developments
- Local police service has a high cost, passed to residents through township taxes
- Few requests/needs for public water; a waterline to Nursery Road is being considered (by PA American?)
- Some sewer needs due to tougher PA DEP regulation of private septic systems
- Need a more dependable power supply (Penn Power)
- Requests for natural gas service
- Need better internet service from Armstrong
- Roads are not meant/not safe for bicycling and walking. A recent 5K event was traffic-controlled.
- Does PennDOT review proposed land developments? Yes, where access is proposed to a state road, not when access is proposed to a township road
- Consider changing the housing goal to reflect density/type
- Provide education for planning commission and supervisors for permitting requirements for landowners.

Poll Questions / Exit Survey

17 responses to the Exit Survey were submitted as of 9/29/2021.

1. How would you describe quality of life in the township?

- Quiet (3)
- Peaceful (3)
- Good (3) I like being able to be a farmer/nurseryman.
- Rural (2) with a few housing plans.

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- Respectful (2) neighbors
- Quiet, respectful, rural, good schools, farmland
- A throwback to a slower, simpler time (not negatively)
- Beauty
- “country living”
- Low crime
- Families
- Still
- Relaxed and laid back
- Excellent
- Not like Cranberry
- Like every other township, stick your head in the sand until it’s too late

2. What most attracted you (or keeps you) as a resident?

- Freedom (5) to have clothesline, chickens, etc. ; choices are not deiced by an HOA
- Low regulations/restrictions (4) than other areas
- Rural/rural character (3) but getting less
- Low taxes (2)
- Privacy (2)
- Close to the schools
- Lots of GREEN space
- Being able to run an agricultural business/green industry from my property/house. Evans City school.
- Rural life – ability to hunt on property
- Ability to enjoy the outdoors – quiet and accessibility to Pittsburgh activities
- Lifelong resident
- Rural conditions
- School district
- Friendly and helpful population
- Conservative community
- Pastoral scenery

3. What should be the same or similar to maintain quality of life?

Topic	Aspect to be the same or similar to maintain quality of life
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep low density as much as possible ▪ Single-family homes (3) with large lots ▪ Control development, nasty Z word ▪ Larger lots in developments – one acre minimum; minimum 2 acre lots in other areas ▪ Require lot size for housing ▪ ✓
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Control locations and types of businesses/manufacturing to maintain rural atmosphere

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Topic	Aspect to be the same or similar to maintain quality of life
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Farming ▪ ✓ / Keep same – low taxes (2) ▪ Farms / forests ▪ Maintain forest and streams for hunting wildlife and environment ▪ Preserve wooded areas and streams ▪ ✓ / Keep same (4)
Cultural and Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be respectful of these places ▪ School house on Brownsdale Road that Dean Zinkhann tried to preserve but hasn't been able to ▪ Not many ▪ ✓
Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rural ▪ Preserve open farmland/open property and forested areas ▪ Support farmers; our country needs food! ▪ Save farmland ▪ We have met the amount of high-density housing. We need to limit this high density. Balance of larger homes on larger lots. ▪ We need to change the ordinance about lot size. We need to consider simple zoning ordinances. ▪ Ability to have a business at your residence ▪ ✓ (2) ▪ Will change regardless
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Non-existent ▪ Rt 68 improvements for efficiency and safety
Water, Sewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain private water well and septic if at all possible ▪ Residents should not be required to tap into water/sewer when they have well/septic of their own ▪ Protect waterways. Forcing sewer on the whole township will ruin our area and be expensive ▪ Larger lots would require less public utilities ▪ ✓ (2) ▪ Expand coverage ▪ Will come with development pressure
Community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local non-profit organizations should have access to the township building for meetings. ▪ Improve our park ▪ ✓ / Same (2)
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All

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4. What should be different to maintain or improve quality of life?

Topic	Aspect to be different to maintain or improve quality of life
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Control growth and high-density housing plans ▪ Limit housing ▪ Have (minimum) land size requirement for building new homes. No apartments or multi-family dwellings. ▪ Single family / large lots for any developments (min 1-2 acres) ▪ Larger lots in developments – 1-acre minimum; minimum 2-acre lots in other areas ▪ Limit number of houses per acre ▪ ✓ ▪ Can't stop progress
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain rural feel to encourage farmers to continue utilizing their land for farming and not development ▪ Need grocery, gas station, and restaurants ▪ ✓ ▪ Evans City needs a grocery store ▪ Hope (it) improves
Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor smaller sewage systems to ensure natural resources are not being adversely affected ▪ No gas connections but lots of lines going through ▪ A township park with a walking trail would be nice ▪ ✓ (2)
Cultural and Historic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stamm School (2) ▪ There are a couple of old cemeteries that need to be preserved; one near Critchlow on Valencia Road that is very old ▪ ✓
Land Use pattern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specify zones for higher density housing/commercial building while maintaining a "rural" feel for the majority of the Township ▪ We could use an industry to sustain taxes ▪ Needs planning ▪ Larger lots in developments, lower density makes stormwater management easier ▪ Control development ▪ Limit development of farmland ▪ ✓ (2)
Transportation network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Needs improved ▪ Monitor traffic/speeding on some roads perhaps by using stop signs at some intersections ▪ Better access Brownsdale Road to 68; old 68 to 68; moving entrances to light. ▪ Reibold and Nursery Roads – pine trees are planted too close to the stop sign

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Topic	Aspect to be different to maintain or improve quality of life
Water, Sewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Township does a great job with the roads. PennDOT, not so much. ▪ Septic regulations have changed; is my system grandfathered in? ▪ We need sewer ▪ Expand coverage ▪ ✓ (2) ▪ Will come with progress
Community facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police force, fire ▪ increased fire department coverage will be needed more than police ▪ Improve Township park ▪ Internet and cable service ▪ ✓
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ better, more reliable power – trim the trees ▪ There are plenty of places to walk. You don't need to walk on blacktop or pavement. ▪ There needs to be more public input. ▪ None

5. What general changes would you make?

- Adopt zoning
 - to control locations of heavy manufacturing/commercial enterprises
 - to allow for “cottage industries”
 - to control location and number of multi-use developments
 - to control location and number of multi-family dwellings – limit sizes – no high rises!
- Increase lot sizes
- Need some zoning control
- No deals with big government for money
- Larger lots / residential 1 zoning
- Strict building code

6. What specific changes to Township services or facilities would you make?

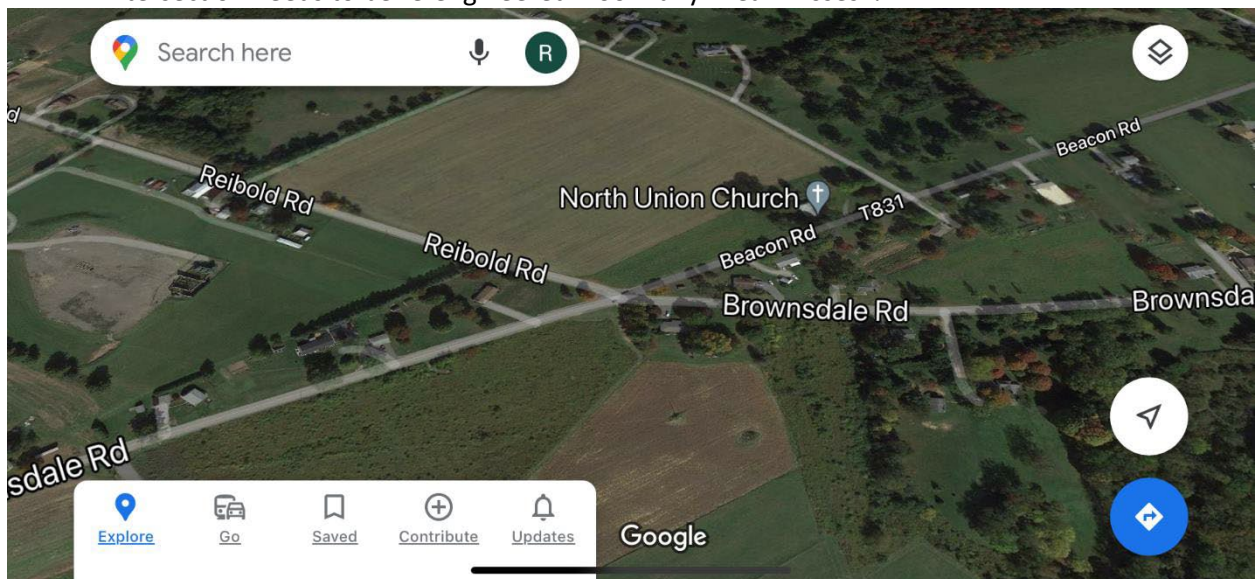
- **Add ___ to the park/ballfield/water access ...**
 - Restroom facilities to the water access; like to beginning of a rental; look toward a permanent facility
- **Improve safety at ___ (location)....**
 - Spithaler and Nursery Roads; confusing stop sign if not familiar with the road
 - Rt 68, Reibold Nursery Road, Spithaler School Road

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- Rt 68 / old Rt 68 / Brownsdale Road with a traffic light.
- **Other**
 - Use of township building for boy scout, girl scout, 4-H, etc. When I asked, I was told to check back in 8 years.
 - More walking trails – somewhere
 - Better parking at the Eckstine kayak launch
 - Road improvements
 - Save the Stamm 1-room schoolhouse on Brownsdale Road

7. Other Comments

1. Intersection of Reibold, Beacon and Brownsdale Roads is dangerous. Cars coming from the West on Brownsdale Road turn left onto Beacon at high speed and cannot see oncoming traffic coming from the East on Brownsdale Road. Also, people on Beacon Road frequently pull out in front of cars coming from their East on Brownsdale Road because it is hard to see. This intersection needs to be re-engineered. Too many “near misses”!



2. In the future I would like to see a display of history of the Township.
 - The Stamm 1-room schoolhouse would be a good starting point.
 - With history of the Short Line, other railroad lines that crossed through here.
 - Why is Tunnel Road so named?
 - What was the purpose of the structures on Vogel farm?
 - Who were these people that some roads are named for?
 - Photos from large area farms.

It would help tie new residents to the township.

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3. Keeping zoning to a minimum!
4. Better communication from township about what is happening; use email, text messages
5. Concern with strain on fire, police, ambulance, township resources to support new housing plan roads
6. Confine housing plan driveways to one entrance and not multiple driveways dumping out on to the new road/state road. Also causes overflow parking to be on the road.
7. Keep changes to a minimum.
8. Manage stormwater with development.
9. Our township already has a diversity of socio-economic houses and lots. Trailer homes, farms, small homes on small lots, large homes, etc. So, what we would like to do is keep that. We don't want overpopulation, wall-to-wall housing plans. I would like to see a resource provision option more than a regulation approach., e.g., provide resources for presenting water run-off and erosion as opposed to regulating against farming.
10. We don't need a town. Evans City is so close. They should be able to provide restaurants, library (they have a nice one), stores, etc.
11. I don't think most residents realize how fast things may change. Pressure from surrounding areas. Large farms with again owners. Developer pressures.
12. Need a traffic light at Brownsdale Road and Rt 68.
13. In the summer, kids congregate and jump off the trestle. Parked cars also congregate there causing some safety issues.
14. Looking into how Sewickley Hills and Sewickley handle their zoning.

End