

My name is David Amado. I live in Westover Hills Woods---a 70-year-old neighborhood separated from Westover Hills by route 141. This evening, I speak to something about which I am, by some measure, an expert--- noise—or more precisely sound. As the Music Director and Conductor of the Delaware Symphony, I preside daily over the transformation of noise into sound. So it is understandable, then that the sonic implication of the Barley Mill Plaza redevelopment is a subject both close to my heart and to my back yard.

Our neighborhood will be greatly impacted by the redevelopment of Barley Mill Plaza. Some of those impacts will be positive. Other impacts, though, threaten not just our quality of our life, but the intrinsic value and appeal of our neighborhood.

Westover Hills Woods, bound intimately on one side by Route 141—is already busy and already noisy. Of course, over seventy years ago when our neighborhood was established, Centre road was a quiet two-lane thoroughfare. It is hard to imagine the old Centre Road accommodating today’s volume of traffic. It is equally hard to imagine the current route 141 accommodating what will surely be a dramatic increase in traffic volume as the result of the proposed redevelopment of Barley Mill Plaza.

Already, at rush hour, the traffic creates a constant veil of white noise obliterating birdcalls and making outdoor conversations separated by a tables-width seem like a shouting match. Measured over a five-minute span of rush hour, from my backyard, noise levels peaked at 77.4db, and averaged around 66 db. This level is perilously close to the Code of Federal Regulations limit of 67db governing the implementation of noise abatement for neighborhoods.¹ Weekends are quieter, but still punctuated by growling motorcycles, implausibly loud Jake breaking, and the occasional after-hours drag race.

As it stands now, our neighborhood’s many charms and beauties mitigate the noise. But more traffic noise would tip the balance the other way--unless active steps are taken to abate it.

Reduction of traffic noise can be accomplished in four ways:²

1. Increasing the isolation quality of the home
2. Masking the sound
3. Building a barrier wall
4. Noise control at the source

All of these should be implemented. The first two are within the purview of the homeowner, the second two, without. Quality windows work keeping noise outside

¹ *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 23 “Highways” Chapter I “Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation”, subchapter H, “Right of Way and Environment” Part 772 “Procedures for abatement of highway traffic noise and construction noise”, table 1

² www.trafficnoise.org

and peace inside. Music and white-noise generators effectively mask noise. But the two most effective methods of sound reduction are out of the homeowner's control: Building a barrier wall and the use of quiet pavement, like rubberized asphalt. Barriers, like the ones on Route 141 near 202---at the Ronald McDonald house--- have the added advantage of not just blocking noise pollution, but of forcing polluting exhaust from thousands of cars upward instead of into our yards. In addition, lowering the speed limit on route 141 could reduce traffic noise. A car traveling at 70 mph produces 68db at 15 meters, whereas at 50mph, produces 62db--A substantial reduction.³ (remembering that decibels are logarithmic, like the Richter scale, and not linear)

I understand the motivations behind this development. I respect them, and wish, for everyone's sake, success. I understand the need for space and services and I understand the business models that have proven lucrative for developers and gratifying for consumers.

However, one ought not deny the social responsibility of developers to make life better, not worse. If noise abatement is not implemented, the potential benefits of this plan will be overshadowed. What might be an improvement for Barley Mill Plaza will be a serious degradation for those of us nearby. Without noise abatement, property values will fall---and that is the first slip of a neighborhood economic slide.

A developer's sense of social stewardship and responsibility dictates that the pursuit of profit should not interfere with the pre-existing life of the neighborhoods they influence and seek to improve. An implemented comprehensive noise-abatement plan is a demonstration of that social responsibility.

Our neighborhood peace, currently blemished by the noise on 141, will be irreparably scarred by the noise of traffic coming and going from the destination that will be Barley Mill Plaza unless an effective noise abatement plan is implemented.

As a representative of my neighbors, I submit this petition signed by our residents approving the construction of a barrier to keep the increased traffic noise of 141 out of our yards.

This is a unified and clear demonstration of Westover Hills Woods' support and commitment to our wonderful quality of life.

Good fences really do make good neighbors.

³ *Code of Federal Regulations*, Title 23, Chapter I, subchapter H, Part 772 appendix A "National Reference Energy Mean Emission Levels as a Function of Speed"