



## Penn Valley Civic Association

*Fostering community since 1930*

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4 January 2023

Dear Lower Merion Township Commissioners,

The Penn Valley Civic Association opposes the placement of billboards along I-76 within Lower Merion Township borders.

Given that the proposed highway signage placement would occur on public property and therefore require rezoning and a potential RFP process, we believe that the Township opens itself to further billboard requests by additional companies—a risk not worth taking. Further, public property should not be rezoned for private billboards. The Township currently fulfills the state requirement to offer a reasonable number of billboard locations and therefore has no obligation to provide additional space.

The entrance to our neighborhood through the Old Belmont area already hosts 4 billboards, and we do not support adding more in an expanded area that would mar the otherwise green viewshed that we steward along the highway—a natural asset that we should protect to the fullest extent possible. We are all familiar with the unfortunate viewsheds along highways in other areas where regulations fail to protect otherwise beautiful verges.

Studies have also demonstrated that billboards increase driver error and slow reaction time to road signs. Digital billboards in particular distract driver attention; as little as 2 seconds with eyes off the road increases crash rates. A recent study in Texas showed that even well-intended digital highway signage meant to educate drivers about distracted driving inadvertently increased crash rates due to distraction.

We regret that a developer is stressing community relations with unrelenting insistence on installing advertising devices unwanted by residents, but it is the responsibility of Haverford Township to create accommodation for billboards as required by an admittedly onerous and unsafe state legal requirement.

We believe that Lower Merion Township has made a tremendous years-long attempt to help Haverford with this issue in a good faith effort to benefit the residents of both townships, but we believe the cost of additional unnecessary billboards within Township borders exceeds the benefit of continued negotiations—especially since future developers could again challenge Haverford for billboard space on Lancaster Avenue regardless of the outcome with the current billboard company.

Sincerely,

Michelle Detwiler, PVCA president

Steve Filippone, PVCA vice president

Jen Kelly, PVCA treasurer