Ironically, Coming: more sprawl

Developments are breaking out all over in once-rural townships outside Pottstown.

Last week, the Lower Pottsgrove commissioners approved the first phase of a $146 million project that will eventually contain a 100-room hotel, medical offices, 340 apartments and 170 townhouses on a currently wooded area of the township west of the so-called Evergreen Road.

Think what that kind of money could do for Pottstown, which has a mostly vacant shopping center, scores of empty houses, and acres of underutilized industrial land.

Instead, it will pave over virgin land and generate more car traffic to clog up area roads.

In adjacent Limerick Township, the supervisors last week granted final site approval for the first phase of a 30-acre project euphemistically called the "Limerick Town Center.” But it will have nothing resembling a downtown. It will consist of one pod with 160 townhouses, a second pod with an assisted living complex, and a third pod with three commercial buildings, all surrounded by parking lots. More cars, more traffic, more pavement, less green space.

Meanwhile, New Hanover may raise its traffic impact fee on developers. The township is expecting more than 2,000 new homes in the next decade, and more money will be needed to widen its roads to accommodate more cars.

Would-be exurban residents aspire to live in the open countryside and drive over uncongested roads to stores, schools, and workplaces.

But as large numbers move into the countryside, it loses the very qualities – beauty, solitude, tranquility – that make rural life desirable.

Eventually, people will wise up and realize the best place to live is a real town, like Pottstown, which has character and walkability.

AS MORE WOODS AND FARM FIELDS are ripped up for isolated, car-dependent subdivisions, historic homes in Pottstown like the one at 542 High Street, below, deteriorate for a lack of investors to fix them up.