Ironically, Can we fix a prominent eyesore?

A Conshohocken developer will ask Pottstown Council this month to waive a land development plan for changes it wants to make at High Street Plaza, a strip development on East High Street where a Subway Restaurant and beverage distributor used to be located.

The developer plans to demolish part of the Subway building, spruce up the remaining structure, and lease the major part to Dollar General.

Under Pottstown ordinances, the developer would have to submit a land development plan for an engineer's and planning commission review and meet current requirements for new developments.

But because the developer is making minimal changes, he hopes to save time and money by skipping the review.

Certainly, Pottstown wants to be developer-friendly. But this tract is a longtime eyesore, sandwiched between two of Pottstown’s most attractive developments — the McDonald's Restaurant (rebuilt in 2005) and the Wawa (built in 2008).

Whether it requires a land development plan or not, Council should seek the same design elements — new sidewalks, planting strips, street trees, faux iron fence with brick columns, and compatible building façade — that make the McDonald’s, Key Bank, and Wawa so attractive.

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown Planning Commission. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the Commission’s.

Commentary by Thomas Hylton

MCDONALD’S ON HIGH STREET, rebuilt in 2005, is one of the most attractive fast food restaurants in the country, thanks to Pottstown's design review process.

THE WAWA CONVENIENCE STORE—KEY BANK COMPLEX is likewise among the most attractive of its class, anywhere in America, thanks to a co-operative design process between Wawa and the borough.

THE FORMER SUBWAY STRIP MALL near the Wawa's and McDonald's has crumbling sidewalks and shabby building exteriors, topped by an ugly roof sign structure. It lacks trees, planting areas, and any separation between the sidewalk and parking lot.

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