

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Townships losing virgin land

From Upper Pottsgrove to New Hanover to Lower Frederick, more sprawling development is coming to a site near you.

Although each of these isolated developments is saving a portion of the project as open space, they still fragment the landscape and erode native habitats.



Commentary by
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On Tuesday, we discussed a typical car-dependent development under construction in Lower Pottsgrove. The 179-home project is close to

schools, stores, and offices, but because of the way existing roads are designed, all destinations can only be accessed by car.

Now Upper Pottsgrove is considering a development of 143 detached homes for "seniors only" on Farmington Avenue west of Route 100. You may be able to walk within the development, but no where else.

Meanwhile, New Hanover Township is sparring with a developer over

a laughably-named "town center," covering 209 acres with 793 dwelling units and a "big box" store with abundant asphalt for parking.

The development hasn't been approved yet, but acres of trees have already been removed, according to the township solicitor.

Lower Frederick is dealing with a typical sprawl problem. Residents living in houses with failing on-site sewage systems — systems which never should have been allowed in the first place — are looking to a developer to fix their sewers, but the developer needs to build a lot more houses to make the investment financially feasible.

The fact is, there's little need to build on virgin land in southeastern Pennsylvania. Our existing cities and boroughs have sufficient vacant and underutilized land to accommodate thousands of new homes.

But that's not the way we do things in Pennsylvania. Development is allowed in scattered locations in every township, blighting our landscapes and degrading the environment.



100 ACRES OF TREES, left, were cut down to make way for West Pottsgrove's Upland Square shopping center in 2009. More land-ravaging developments are coming soon.




The world is losing about 45 million acres of trees annually, an area four times the size of New Jersey

THANKS TO SPRAWL, we're losing trees, birds, and other wildlife. Humans have cut down nearly half the trees on earth since the beginning of civilization. Most of that loss has occurred in the last 200 years, as the world population has grown from 1 billion to 7 billion. Meanwhile, the United States and Canada have lost nearly 3 billion birds since 1970, almost a third of the previous population. Fragmented habitat is a major cause.