

# Canadian Brownfields Case Study

## Centre Suites



*Exterior of Centre Suites.*

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Centre Suites, is located within the downtown region of the City of Owen Sound. The scope of the project includes the conversion of the upper portion of a commercial structure into a residential condominium building. The proximity of this site to the many amenities of downtown Owen Sound has made this site an appealing location for residential units, as residents would be in walking distance of the many unique businesses that Owen Sound has to offer. Through the efforts and dedication of the project's redevelopment company 215947 Ontario Limited, the Centre Suites project was a 2016 Brownie Award in 2016 as a small-scale project that utilized unique staging of the record of site condition into two parcels.<sup>1</sup> It was further accomplished by the XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists Consulting Group.

Centre Suites is located at 945 3rd Ave East in Owen Sound, Ontario. The City of Owen Sound is located approximately 190 kilometres north of the City of Toronto, and is situated in Grey County along southern Georgian Bay. It has a population of 21,341<sup>2</sup>, and is surrounded by rural townships such as the Municipality of Meaford and the Township of Georgian Bluffs. Some features of this area include the Bruce Trail, Inglis Falls and

Harrison Park. It is also proximally located to the Bruce Peninsula and the Blue Mountains.

The City of Owen Sound is the largest urban community in Grey county<sup>3</sup>. The downtown area of the city is commercialized, with many businesses choosing to locate within the central portion of the city. These businesses include large department stores as well as many locally sourced food stores, art galleries and museums.

### QUICK FACTS

#### Location

Owen Sound, Ontario

#### Project type

Small-scale residential

#### Site size

1.3 hectares (3.2 acres)

#### Land uses

Mixed- Use, commercial and residential

#### Keywords/special features

Residential, downtown, small-scale

#### Website

<https://suiteson3.com>

#### Project address

945 3rd Avenue East, Owen Sound, Ontario

#### Brownfield Project Award(s)

2016 Brownie Award Finalist: Reinvest - Financing, Risk Management and Partnerships

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Case studies were prepared as a course assignment by students enrolled in PLG845: Brownfield Reuse & Development, Cleaning up the Past and Building the Future, School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University (Winter 2019). Information for the case studies was obtained from online sources, available reports, and, in some cases, site visits and direct communication with stakeholders.

If you are aware of any errors or have updates to the case studies, please contact [chris.desousa@ryerson.ca](mailto:chris.desousa@ryerson.ca)

The opinions expressed in this case study are those of the authors only and do not represent the opinions and views of either Ryerson University, the School of Urban and Regional Planning, or the Canadian Brownfields Network.



## Site Characteristics

Centre Suites has some historical significance for the City of Owen Sound, as the subject site was the location of a single-detached dwelling and a four-storey printing plant constructed in 1922, nearly a century ago<sup>4</sup>. In 1972, the printing plant moved to a new facility, leading to the conversion of the building into an office building called the Professional Centre. In 2012, an opportunity for redevelopment of the upper two floors of the commercial building into residential condominium units was conceptualized by the redevelopment company 215947 Ontario Limited. Simultaneously, plans for redevelopment identified the need for a Record of Site Condition (RSC), which were to be completed by XCG Environmental Engineers and Scientists.

## Cleanup

XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists were called upon to complete the required and necessary assessment activities leading up to the identified RSC required for the site. A Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) identified the presence of low-level chlorinated volatile organic compounds (VOCs) within the groundwater, which exceeded generic site conditions ultimately slowed the project<sup>5</sup>; however with pressure to continue pursuant development on site, innovative planning solutions led to a decision to treat the subject property as two distinct parcels. Doing so enabled the project team to file the RSC for the larger of the two parcels that was not impacted by the VOC groundwater impacts, while the smaller parcel went through a more rigorous Tier 3 risk assessment. This assessment was conducted with a focus on site specific soil, groundwater, soil vapour, and indoor air sampling results, which was in accordance with Ontario Regulation 153/04<sup>6</sup>. An underground storage tank was also removed from the site, and residual hydrocarbon impacts were excavated and removed. The Ministry of Environment acknowledged a record of site condition for the development site, and the property underwent a Site Plan Agreement procured by the City of Owen Sound. This Site Plan Agreement was passed by council on October 7th, 2013 as By-law 2013-185<sup>7</sup>, allowing development to continue on the subject site.

The streamlined Tier 3 risk assessment was approved in 2016, and a risk management measure of no first-level residential units was



Source: XCG Environmental Engineers and Scientists

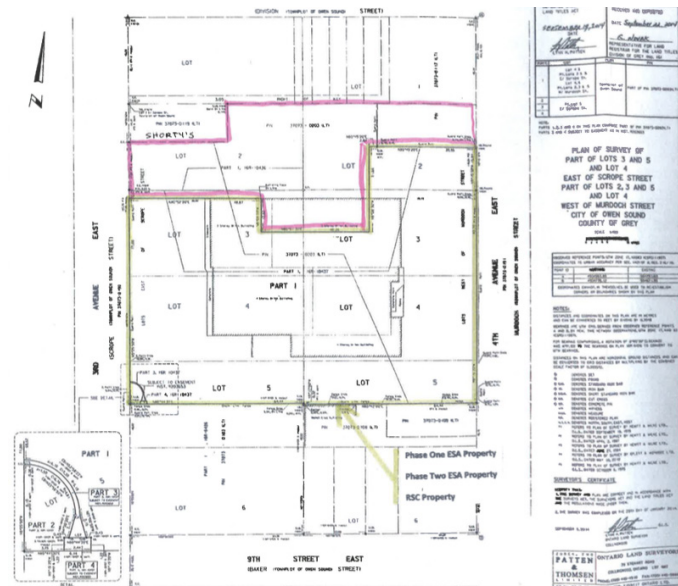
The contaminated parcel of land undergoing soil examination and remediation.

Property Use was arranged and a Record of Site Condition for the contaminated parcel was filed<sup>9</sup>. This filing permitted the occupancy of the final residential units of the development project.

## Planning and Redevelopment

As the City of Owen Sound is an important urban area within Grey County, there is a necessity for residential units within the downtown core and in close proximity to the main employment opportunities in the city. Fortunately, the subject site is roughly 1.34 hectares and is zoned C1 Downtown, which allows for mixed commercial/residential uses<sup>10</sup>. The company's redevelopment plans, inclusive of the need for a Record of Site Condition, and amounting environmental assessment and remediation work, had an initial budget of \$325,000<sup>11</sup>. As such, the redevelopment company, 215947 Ontario Limited,

applied for the City of Owen Sound's Brownfield Financial Tax Assistance Program in 2015, and were approved for the eligible costs (that incurred between October 2012 and January 2015) of \$520,388<sup>12</sup>. The Brownfields Financial Tax Incentive Program is a tax assistance program outlined in the City of Owen Sound Community Improvement Plan, a program initiated to encourage the rehabilitation and environmental cleanup of vacant and contaminated lands<sup>13</sup>. The eligible costs of the project included the Environmental Site Assessment Phase I and Phase II, the remedial work plan (including environmental consultant fees and actions required to remediate the lands to permit a Record of Site Condition to be filed) and preparation of a record of site condition. They were approved to be paid through municipal taxes over five years upon the first assessment by MPAC<sup>14</sup>.



Source: City of Owen Sound, 2015

Centre Suites Plan of Survey showing the division of the site.

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### Benefits and Lessons Learned

There was evidently great value in separating the initial site into two distinct parcels, as it enabled time-sensitive construction to begin on the non-contaminated portion of the property. It further expedited the time-line for condominium sales<sup>15</sup>. For developers, financial profit from projects are crucial. In this case, the division of the site was imperative for 215947 Ontario Limited to begin profiting and making use of the property, it helped ensure occupancy and therefore earnings, could take place prior to the cleanup of the entire project area.

The resulting redevelopment of the project area included a complete building façade and exterior renovation, including parking lot improvements to accommodate residents. The upper third and fourth floors have been improved with Residential Condominium Apartments, and amenities such as a gym and first floor common areas have been added to the facility<sup>16</sup>. As per due diligence, the record of site condition filed was made public information and was filed in the Environmental

Site Registry, as well as by the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change<sup>17</sup>. There has been no apparent public opinion or community involvement towards the brownfields site. To date, 26 of the 32 units have been sold<sup>18</sup>, showing that the majority of the public was not deterred by the contaminated lands on site. Beneficially, this site showcases the importance of and potential success of building on once contaminated lands. In using a historic building for adaptive reuse, Centre Suites was successfully able to increase use of an existing space, enhance the sites value and contribute to the overall livability of the area.

With a large older adult population choosing to locate north of the City of Toronto, the City of Owen Sound is becoming a more appealing location to reside. The location of Centre Suites is ideal for many property inquirers, as it is close to medical centres, local food stores and community centres making redevelopment a valuable investment. It has also helped revitalize and support change in the downtown core, allowing more residents to reside and engage

locally.

Finally, this case study demonstrates the importance of the Community Improvement Plan for the City of Owen Sound, as it facilitated the development of residential units in the downtown core. This development will promote and enhance the livability within the downtown area of the city, and will allow more residents to work and live within the city.

## Endnotes

- 1 Brownie Awards 2018. (2019). 2016 Brownie Awards: Best Small Project. 2018 BrownieAwards. Retrieved 7 March 2019. <https://brownieawards.ca/winners2016/>.
- 2 City of Owen Sound. (2019). Demographics: Population: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census. Retrieved from <https://www.owensound.ca/en/investing/demographics.aspx>.
- 3 City of Owen Sound. (2019). About Owen Sound. 2019 City of Owen Sound. Retrieved from [https://www.owensound.ca/en/living/about-owen-sound.aspx?\\_mid\\_=8980](https://www.owensound.ca/en/living/about-owen-sound.aspx?_mid_=8980).
- 4 XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists. (2019). Site Assessment: Risk Assessment for Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Centre Suites on 3rd Ave. XCG Consulting Limited. Retrieved from <http://www.xcg.com/risk-assessment-for-residential-commercial-mixed-use-centre-suites-on-3rd-ave/>.
- 5 XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists. (2019). Site Assessment: Risk Assessment for Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Centre Suites on 3rd Ave. XCG Consulting Limited. Retrieved from <http://www.xcg.com/risk-assessment-for-residential-commercial-mixed-use-centre-suites-on-3rd-ave/>.
- 6 City of Owen Sound. (2015). Staff Report: Application for Brownfield Financial Incentive– 945 3rd Avenue East (Centre Suites). Retrieved from <https://owensound.civicweb.net/document/90827/RPT%20CS-15-019%20-%20Application%20for%20Brownfield%20Financi.pdf?handle=F79B95459971405E9C57B47B632B403A>.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists. (2019). Site Assessment: Risk Assessment for Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Centre Suites on 3rd Ave. XCG Consulting Limited. Retrieved from <http://www.xcg.com/risk-assessment-for-residential-commercial-mixed-use-centre-suites-on-3rd-ave/>.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 City of Owen Sound. (2015). Staff Report: Application for Brownfield Financial Incentive– 945 3rd Avenue East (Centre Suites). Retrieved from <https://owensound.civicweb.net/document/90827/RPT%20CS-15-019%20-%20Application%20for%20Brownfield%20Financi.pdf?handle=F79B95459971405E9C57B47B632B403A>.
- 11 XCG Environmental Engineers & Scientists. (2019). Site Assessment: Risk Assessment for Residential/Commercial Mixed Use Centre Suites on 3rd Ave. XCG Consulting Limited. Retrieved from <http://www.xcg.com/risk-assessment-for-residential-commercial-mixed-use-centre-suites-on-3rd-ave/>.
- 12 City of Owen Sound. (2015). Staff Report: Application for Brownfield Financial Incentive– 945 3rd Avenue East (Centre Suites). Retrieved from <https://owensound.civicweb.net/document/90827/RPT%20CS-15-019%20-%20Application%20for%20Brownfield%20Financi.pdf?handle=F79B95459971405E9C57B47B632B403A>.
- 13 Corporation of the City of Owen Sound (2015). City of Owen Sound Community Improvement Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.owensound.ca/en/resourcesGeneral/Documents/Final-CIP-Approved-2010---Extended-2015.pdf>.
- 14 City of Owen Sound. (2015). Staff Report: Application for Brownfield Financial Incentive– 945 3rd Avenue East (Centre Suites). Retrieved from <https://owensound.civicweb.net/document/90827/RPT%20CS-15-019%20-%20Application%20for%20Brownfield%20Financi.pdf?handle=F79B95459971405E9C57B47B632B403A>.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 City of Owen Sound. (2015). Staff Report: Application for Brownfield Financial Incentive– 945 3rd Avenue East (Centre Suites). Retrieved from <https://owensound.civicweb.net/document/90827/RPT%20CS-15-019%20-%20Application%20for%20Brownfield%20Financi.pdf?handle=F79B95459971405E9C57B47B632B403A>.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Centre Suites on 3rd Avenue. (2019). Featured Suites. New Residential Condos in Owen Sound, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved from <http://suiteson3.com>.