

Canadian Brownfields Case Study

Via Moto: Salvage Yard Redevelopment



Source: Google Earth 2018.

Figure 1. Proximity of Large brownfield redevelopment “Via Moto” to the Town of Nobleton’s main intersection located on King Road and Highway 27.

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project consisted of redeveloping a salvage yard located 1km from Nobleton’s main intersection. This site had significant contamination due to operating for 39 years with multiple environmental polluting activities. These activities included the disassembly and storage of vehicles, acting as a dump site for contaminated fill from other sites, and the use of aboveground storage tanks for petroleum products. The remediation process began in 2013 and concluded in 2015 by excavation and removal of contaminated soil and the use of a mobile treatment unit to clean the affected groundwater. Directly following remediation, the Ministry conducted an audit and found significant levels of contamination remained. In 2018 conditions were cleared from the audit and the plan of subdivision was approved containing 152 dwellings. The project allowed the community to fulfil their goal of relocating the existing salvage operation and has benefitted numerous stakeholders highlighting the success of brownfield redevelopments.

Site Characteristics

This 13.68 hectare site is located in Nobleton, Ontario, a community of roughly 4700 people which is in the municipality of King in the York Region (See Figure 1.). This site was created by assembling five parcels of land to create a large residential infill development adjacent to single dwelling neighbourhoods. ¹ Two of the parcels, including the largest one of 11.64 hectares, were

in the middle of the site and were of significant environmental concern due to their previous use.² These subject lands were owned and operated by Nobleton Truck Wreckers Limited from 1973 to 2012. ²

Specifically, the major parcel of land was of industrial use and operated as a salvage yard and waste disposal facility which imported fill material

QUICK FACTS

Location

Nobleton, Ontario

Project type

Excavation

Site size

13.68 hectares

Land uses

Residential

Keywords/special features

Salvage yard, Excavation, Mobile Water Treatment, Residential

Website

<http://www.viamoto.ca/>

Project address

6178, 6220-6230 and 6288 King Road

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Case studies were prepared as a course assignment by students enrolled in PL8312/PLE845: Brownfields & Sustainable Development, School of Urban and Regional Planning, Ryerson University (Winter 2021). 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 updates to the case studies, please contact chris.desousa@ryerson.ca

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of unknown quality, and stored gasoline and associated products in aboveground storage tanks (AST) (See Figure 2.).¹ In 2012, the operation of the salvage yard stopped when Nobleton Developments purchased the adjacent three parcels of residential land and submitted a Draft Plan of Subdivision and Zoning By-law amendment.¹ At the time of submission, the site contained 4 residential buildings with basements, a detached garage and, two sheds with the remaining land made up of fields.²

Cleanup

Once Nobleton Developments Inc purchased the land a phase one Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted. The phase one ESA identified four major areas of potential environmental concern (APECs) as the subject lands had four registered waste generators with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC).² Examining the sites historical records indicated the central portion served as an Anderson's Waste Disposal Site, an automotive wrecking yard. Additionally, fill material was in the central site location with unknown contaminants and close by the presence of two aboveground storage tanks (AST) with leaking fuel.²

In the subsequent years of 2013 and 2014, a phase two ESA was conducted which revealed numerous contaminants of petroleum hydrocarbons (PCHs), benzene, ethylbenzene, VOCs and, various metals within the soil and groundwater.² Cleanup required approximately 11,640 m³ of contaminated soil to be excavated and disposed of at another MOECC approved facility while the groundwater was remediated using a mobile treatment unit.¹

Following completion, an RSC was filed in August of 2015 and the assembled parcels of land were then sold to Edgecore Investments, known as Fandor Homes to continue the application process for the draft plan of subdivision and zoning by-law amendment.³

Shortly after the land was transferred, in December of 2015 the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) conducted an audit on the subject lands as the filed RSC did not comply with Ontario's regulations 153/04 and failed to demonstrate a complete evaluation of



Figure 2. 2009 Historical Satellite view of the future development boundaries. Various AST, Fill piles and automobiles can be witnessed in the central section of the property.

Source: Google Earth 2009.

the subject lands.³ Therefore, did not adequately report contamination levels for the soil, groundwater, and sediment quality. The audit found that 67% of the previously excavated lands were over minimum standards for soil quality. Additionally, the audit sampled 15 locations across the assembled parcel and found that 11 of the tested sites failed to conform.³

On average a truck can hold 8 cubic metres per trip which means that roughly 4800 m³ was removed, which is 41% of the total.⁵ Lastly, it was determined that an additional 7,540 m³ of soil would have to be excavated and sent to a MOECC approved facility for disposal.³ The remediation of the site continued until the adequate level of contaminants was met and the Ministry cleared the conditions in May of 2018.⁶

Additionally, it was reported that the applicant had removed 600 loads of contaminated fill from the property without obtaining a site alteration permit from the municipality.

Figure 3. "Via Moto" Plan of Subdivision.



Source: Committee of Whole Report Attachments

Planning and Redevelopment

Upon submission of the Draft Plan of Subdivision Nobleton's Sewage Treatment facility's maximum capacity of 6500 people was of concern as the current infrastructure could only support 35 units of development. That said, this was a challenge which Nobleton had previously indicated the desire to relocate the existing salvage operation and their future interest in servicing the adjacent neighbourhoods on Russel Snider Drive and Sheardown Drive and expanding their capacity.¹ A Functional Service Report from 2012 found that it was possible to connect these neighbourhoods through the subdivision to the sewer and water lines under King Road.³

Therefore, a Section 37 Agreement entered to accomplish this through connection and provide the funding required to expand Nobleton's capacity of this supportive infrastructure and in return granted a bonus of 50 units.¹

Since the Via Moto development connects to King Road, which acts as a major arterial road for Nobleton, increased traffic was a major concern.¹ Specifically, individuals from existing adjacent neighbourhoods expressed concerns with the subdivision connecting Russel Snyder Drive to West and Sheardown Drive to the North. Public consultation and traffic studies help determine the placement of the parkland dedication in the center of the development to deter increased

traffic.⁴ Further, the design would enhance pedestrian safety by calming traffic and increase the aesthetic upon entry into the subdivision.

Buildings

This plan of subdivision contains 152 total units comprised of single-detached houses, townhouses, and bungalows, divided into three phases (See Figure 3.).⁶ The housing offered varies in size ranging from bungalows (i.e., 2206 square feet) to larger homes (i.e., up to 6905 square feet).⁷ The design of houses in the subdivision has received praise. For instance, Fandor's 3665 square feet "Evora Model," which was listed for approximately \$1.8 million, won a BILD award for "Best Single-Detached Home Design, Large" in 2018 (See Figure 4).¹¹ This award assesses homes larger than 3,500 square feet on 5 elements including, space, uniqueness of design, functionality, target market relevance, and value.⁸

Phase One began in 2018 with the construction of 43 units. Within phase one, connections to the adjacent neighborhood were established, the Park and Stormwater Management Pond were constructed along with single detached and townhouse units. As of February 2021, this project has entered Phase Two which has 50 units consisting of both single-detached lots and townhouse units. Finally, Phase Three of this development has 59 units and is releasing additional units from

previous phases along with bungalow models.⁷

Financing

The Municipality of King did not provide direct financial assistance for the remediation of the land. Alternatively, incentives were created through a Section 37 Agreement to increase density in exchange for connecting sewage infrastructure to adjacent neighbourhoods aligning with Nobleton's future objective. In consideration of Section 37, 50 bonus units were added to the development raising the total amount to 152 dwellings. Therefore, this would significantly increase the future profitability of the project upon completion.

Lessons Learned

Overall, the remediation and redevelopment of this brownfield encountered numerous challenges and delays throughout the process. During a Town Council meeting in 2014, the displeasure of progress was noted due to the dilapidated conditions of the original structures remaining on the site two years after the granting of demolition permits.⁹ Additionally, the 2015 RSC audit following the sale of the land revealed contamination levels required additional remediation.

Although construction was halted until 2018, the remediation of this site significantly benefits numerous stakeholders such as the Town of Nobleton, Fandor Homes, adjacent neighbourhoods, and members of the community. Both Nobleton and adjacent neighbourhoods were provided with key sewage collection infrastructure connections. Further, previous research has highlighted the statistical significance of remediating brownfields raises nearby property values on average between 5%-15.2%.¹² It can be argued that these adjacent neighbourhoods value could have increased substantially more due to the provided infrastructure connection. As a result of increased property values and additional dwellings, Nobleton generates more property taxes allowing for further investment and funding into services and projects for the community.¹³ Lastly, the profitability of this brownfield redevelopment is highlighted as the project contains 152 dwellings and the lowest starting price is \$1.1 million displaying the success for Fandor Homes.¹¹



Source: Viamoto.ca

Figure 4. "Evora" Model in Via Moto Development by Fandor Homes that won BILD's "Best Single-Detached Home Design, Large" in 2018.

Endnotes

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