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TIM FORAN Oct 27, 2010 - 9:07 AM 0

Industry, housing envisioned for surplus York lands

Rockcliffe property first to hit the market

The city's new arms-length real estate arm, Build Toronto, envisions the development of housing and jobs on four vacant and partially contaminated properties totalling almost 25 acres in west York.



The agency, which opened for business in the spring, recently listed its first property for sale in the former city of York: a 15.5-acre plot at 301 Rockcliffe Blvd., south of Alliance Avenue.

Once the site of a landfill, then the Rockcliffe Sewage Treatment Plant, and finally a Metropolitan Toronto works yard, the vacant L-shaped property makes up part an industrial park approved in 1998. Two portions of that six-lot subdivision were subsequently sold to a private company, but much of the remaining land has is empty save for an area used by the TTC to store poles.

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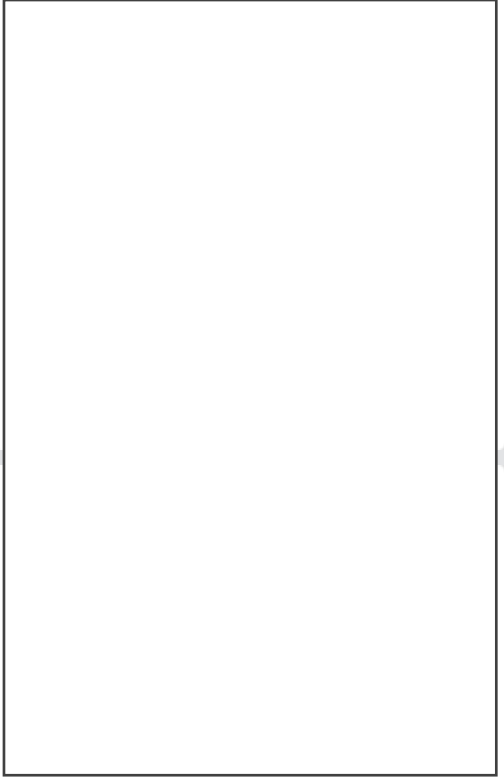
Build Toronto (BT) said it remains committed to selling the property as an employment area and has no plans to try to convert it to residential or retail uses.

"We don't expect we're going to bring in a heavy industrial user," added Mike Kraljevic, a BT spokesperson. He said the area is designated for "prestige industrial" uses, which generally involves indoor work and outdoor storage.

Located in a floodplain between a hydro corridor and the Black Creek culvert, the Rockcliffe property is subject to Toronto and Region Conservation Authority review of any future development proposals. There is also evidence of some contamination in the land due to its former municipal uses and development is therefore subject to some Ministry of the Environment conditions, according to city documents.

Despite these environmental encumbrances, Kraljevic said it is still possible to construct buildings on the property. He said the agency is open to selling portions of the property rather than requiring a buyer to acquire the whole site.

Featured



City council over the past year have also given staff approval to work out agreements to transfer the following sites to Build Toronto for redevelopment:

- 150 Symes Rd.

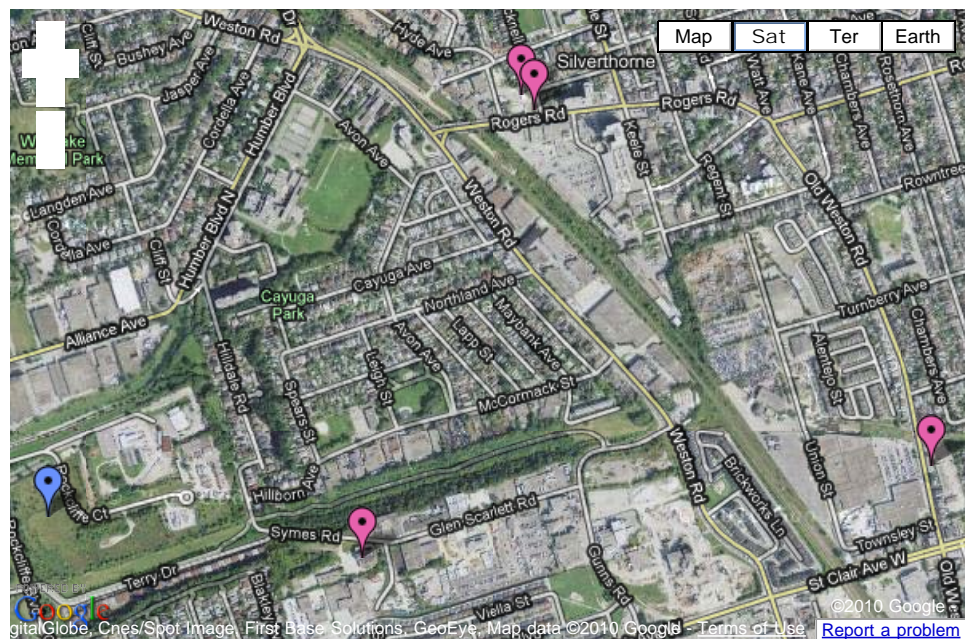
Located just up the hill from Rockcliffe, the vacant property has four buildings and is at the southwest corner of Symes and Glen Scarlett Roads north of St. Clair Avenue West. The 5.7-acre site was once the site of an incinerator and waste transfer station and also formed part of an old landfill. Kraljevic said BT will look for some employment uses on the site.

- 383-425 Old Weston Rd.

The 2.1-acre site has two empty buildings and is located behind some buildings at the northeast corner of St. Clair Avenue West and Old Weston Road. The property was once the site of a municipal waterworks yard, and one of the city's conditions of transferring ownership to BT is that the agency must continue environmental remediation programs because groundwater in portions of the property have been contaminated by xylene. Kraljevic said he could see residential and retail uses on the property, which is adjacent to the St. Clair streetcar line. However, any redevelopment will have to include 48 units of affordable housing - or another number agreed to by BT and the city's affordable housing office, according to the terms of the transfer of the property.

- 2 Bicknell Ave. and the Bicknell Avenue Loop

The latter location was used as a turnaround by the TTC's Rogers Road streetcar (which originated at St. Clair and Oakwood Avenue) until the route's demise in 1974. Thirty years later, the TTC decided its buses also had no use for the Bicknell Loop and it has been empty since then. The city also plans to transfer to BT the former York Hydro building north of the loop and the vacant property behind it, which extends to Forbes and Nashville Avenues. The city's 2005 budget stated affordable housing was planned for the site, and BT will have to work that out with the city before either selling or redeveloping the property. The TTC must also get protection from any liability for environmental contamination on the site, according to the city.



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