

## Article

# Tower development supports Oshawa's long-term vision

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In what might have been considered a visionary, if not daring, move at the time, the City of Oshawa acquired an eight-acre industrial site in the heart of its downtown 30 years ago with the idea that it could be transformed into other uses.



Toronto-based Atria Development has started construction of a \$60-million, 12-storey glass and metal panel tower in downtown Oshawa, Ont. It is being built on part of what once was the General Motors automotive assembly facility on Bond Street. - Photo: Wallman Architects Ltd.

That vision would appear to have been borne out.

Now occupied by the Oshawa YMCA and the Durham Consolidated Courthouse, the former General Motors automotive assembly facility on Bond Street has become the focus of one of the largest private sector investments in the downtown.

In early October, Toronto-based [Atria Development](#) began construction of a \$60-million 12-storey glass and metal panel tower which will consist of 239 rental apartment units, more than 13,000 square feet of commercial floor space, one level of underground parking and 83 bike spaces.

Wallman Architects Ltd. is the architect and the structural engineer is [Jablonsky Ast and Partners](#). Caliber Structures Ltd. is the construction manager.

Occupancy is scheduled for late 2016, with some construction extending in 2017, says principal Hans Jain, adding Atria also plans to build a similar, albeit higher, tower on its 2.1-acre parcel.

Atria took an option on the parcel in 2006 and then closed the deal with the city in 2011 after a major remediation was completed, says Jain, who credits city council and staff for their "vision" in supporting the project.

Located at 100 Bond Street East at the juncture with Carriage Works Drive, the tower will be directly adjacent to the courthouse on the east side of that street. The name reflects the fact the property was the original home of the McLaughlin Carriage Works, the forerunner of General Motors of Canada.

To the north of the Atria site is the Oshawa YMCA.

"We had to have the architects of the courthouse approve the (Atria) design," says City of Oshawa development services commissioner Paul Ralph, explaining that caveat is in the city's 99-year-lease agreement with Infrastructure Ontario.

Over the years Oshawa had conducted negotiations with several developers interested in building hotels and/or a convention centre, but none of these discussions went anywhere until Atria came forward with its plan, says Tom Mclelwin, principal of Whitby-based Golder Associates, the lead consultants in the cleanup of 100 Bond, as well as the entire eight acres.

In tracing the rather convoluted history of that remediation, Mclelwin explains the city acquired the entire city-block site in 1985 in a land swap with General Motors as part of a long-term downtown revitalization plan.

Although the manufacturer demolished the former plant to the floor slabs, the city subsequently identified contamination of the soil and groundwater from trichloroethylene (TCE), a common industrial solvent degreaser widely used at the plant, as well as by metals such as lead and cadmium. Ten years later, the upper two metres of fill across the site was excavated, including removing the demolition rubble and metals.

However, the groundwater remained impacted by the TCE across the site.

When the new Oshawa YMCA was constructed in 1998, a deep foundation drainage system was installed to collect groundwater, including the residual TCE contamination.

"This (the system) safeguards the facility against environmental impacts affecting users," says Mclelwin, explaining the YMCA was made fully aware that the site was somewhat contaminated by the TCE.

Infrastructure Ontario was considerably more demanding when considering the property as the location for a consolidated courthouse that would replace multiple courts throughout Durham Region. The site was chosen on the condition it would be "subject to the satisfaction of the city of an onerous environmental clean-up."

Oshawa agreed to those conditions and the province subsequently awarded the city the courthouse site, he points out.

Some of the elements of the remediation included on-site treatment of contaminated groundwater and a two-stage barrier system around the north, west and south sides of the courthouse property to prevent recontamination of the lands to the south and west. An inner barrier prevents contaminated water flowing onto the courthouse property.

A similar clean-up approach was used for the staged clean-up of the Atria site between 2007 and 2011, says Mclellain, explaining that a very high barrier has to be attained in the remediation of lands slated for residential development.

"I think they (city council) were proven correct as the courthouse and YMCA buildings are developed and the foundation is being poured for Atria's building," says policy services manager Warren Munro, in a reference to the 1985 land acquisition.

But that property isn't the only brownfield site that has been converted into other uses, says Munro, pointing to the nearby Costco, the GM Centre sports and entertainment venue and a planned 2,200-unit Medallion Homes development.

The stimulus for those projects, at least in part, is the Brownfield Renaissance Community Improvement Plan which provides a series of grants and tax incentives for projects throughout urban Oshawa — not just the downtown — south of Highway 407.

"It (the plan) sends messages that we're open for business," says Munro.

Implemented in 2005 and originally set to expire at the end of this December, the plan was recently extended to 2020, says Munro.

## Photo



Work is well underway on the new development at 100 Bond St. E. in downtown Oshawa.

Photo: City of Oshawa

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