



Ox Fibre Property (MD 191)

What You Need to Know

Site Location

The former Ox Fibre Property (“Property”) is located at 400 East Church Street in Frederick City, Frederick County, Maryland. The 2.68-acre site is located on the southeast side of East Church Street in a mixed residential-commercial use area. The Property is bordered by commercial properties on all other sides with the Yellow Cab of Frederick to the southwest, Potomac Edison Office and Storage Yard to the south and southeast and a multi-tenant commercial building to the northeast. The Property is currently developed with an 81,632 square foot two-story warehouse and a smaller shed structure. Remnants of former railroad spurs are present on the southeast and western portion of the Property. The remaining portion of the Property is covered by asphalt and gravel parking lot. The most recent use of the Property was as a warehouse and distribution center for Goodwill Industries. At present, the building on the Property is vacant and proposed for development into a multifamily residential dwelling. The groundwater flow is towards the south following the topography and the nearest surface water body is the Carroll Creek located approximately 800 feet south of the Property.

Site History

The building on the Property was constructed in 1891 for manufacturing machinery to produce brush filling fiber and manufacturing of fiber brushes. The Property was occupied by Palmetto Fibre Company from 1891 before transitioning to the Ox Fibre company in 1902. The initial development on the Property housed the offices, machine shop, fiber and frame storage, filling, brush cleaning and drilling operations. Expansions were used for varnishing and packing operations. Several building expansions occurred between 1905 and 1947. An expansion prior to 1922 resulted in the parcel boundary being shifted further to the west into the adjacent former Frederick Gas Co, Inc. property. Several railroad tracks and spurs were also present on the Property from around 1944 until 1965. Three 10,000-gallon fuel oil tanks and an oil house were on the Property at variable locations. The 1904 Sanborn maps indicate that the tanks were located near the northern Property boundary close to the East Church Street. Subsequent Sanborn maps indicate that the fuel tanks were relocated to the southwestern portion of the Property and eventually to the adjacent former Frederick Gas Works site. It was not clear whether the tanks were underground or aboveground storage tanks (AST).

On November 30, 1967, the operations of the Ox Fibre factory reportedly ceased, and the site was purchased by Goodwill Industries in 1970. Goodwill operated a donation processing and retail sale store at the site from 1970s until 2019. Between 1974 and 1981, a fire destroyed

approximately 100,000 square feet of the southern portion of the existing building bringing it to the present-day configuration. The second floor of the building was inaccessible and uninhabitable prior to 2002. In January 2002, a 12000 square feet renovation allowed Goodwill to utilize the second floor for office space, training, and administrative facility.

The Property was purchased by the present owner, 400 East Church Street, LLC in 2018.

Environmental Investigation

In June 2017, a Phase I Site Assessment was performed by ICOR Ltd (ICOR). The Phase I identified the presence of three 10,000-gallon fuel tanks near the southwestern property boundary. The tanks and on-site railroads spurs were identified as recognized environmental conditions existing on the Property. ICOR report also identified a release from an on-site AST and the subsequent cleanup. The case was closed under the supervision of MDE's Oil Control Program (Case #90-2812FR).

In January 2018, ICOR conducted a Phase II Site Assessment and collected nine soil samples from eight soil borings at depths ranging from 8 to 23 feet below ground surface (ft bgs) in the western parking lot area. Two groundwater samples were also collected from 9-19 ft bgs. The samples were analyzed for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), poly aromatic hydrocarbon (PAHs) and total petroleum hydrocarbon-diesel and gasoline range organics (TPH-DRO/GRO). Results indicated that soil at depth and groundwater at the Property were impacted by VOCs including benzene, ethylbenzene, xylene and naphthalene, PAHs including benzo (a) anthracene, benzo (a) pyrene, benzo(b) fluoranthene, fluoranthene, phenanthrene and pyrene and, TPH DRO/GRO. Two sub-slab soil gas samples collected from the interior of the building did not identify any contamination above MDE Tier I Residential Target Soil Gas Standards.

In December 2018, AEI Consultants (AEI) conducted a Limited Phase II Subsurface Investigation to characterize the eastern portion of the Property which consisted of a gravel covered parking lot. Four soil borings were advanced in the eastern parking lot and two soil samples were collected from 4-6 ft bgs for analysis of VOCs and PAHs. One of the soil samples was collected from inside the building. This sample was analyzed for polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) and RCRA 8 metals in addition to VOCs and PAHs. Two groundwater samples were collected at 15 to 18 ft bgs and analyzed for VOCs and SVOCs. Five sub-slab soil vapor samples were also collected and analyzed for VOCs. Arsenic and mercury were detected in the soil sample analyzed. No other compounds were noted above MDE's Residential Cleanup Standards (RCS).

In March 2019, AEI conducted a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment for the Property which reported that the 10,000-gallon fuel oil tanks were located adjacent to the southwest of the main building. In addition, the previously reported spill reported by ICOR was identified as a release from a 250-gallon kerosene oil tank. Following the spill, cleanup was conducted including oil recovery and follow up excavation and removal of impacted soil under OCP supervision.

Based on the historical industrial/commercial use of the site and the proposed site development for residential use, 400 Church Owners LLC applied to the Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP) of the Maryland Department of the Environment in May 2019 as a responsible person (RP). In a letter dated June 14, 2019, VCP requested for additional investigation to address data gaps in the environmental investigation.

In October 2019, AEI submitted a revised Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Report which indicated that approximately 200 gallons of hazardous products including 3 gallon gasoline tanks, motor oil lubricants, 50 pound propane tanks, paints, paint thinner and 55-gallon aerosol drums were stored on the Property within the shed and staged near the southwestern Property boundary, in addition to the previously reported RECs. This report also confirmed that fuel tanks were not located adjacent to the building at any time during the Property's use for manufacturing.

In October 2019, AEI submitted a limited Phase II Subsurface Investigation Report. Twelve soil borings were installed throughout the Property and surface (0-2 ft bgs) and sub-surface (2-4 ft bgs) soil samples were collected and analyzed for VOCs, PAHs, priority pollutant metals (PPL metals) and TPH-DRO/GRO. Five soil vapor/sub-slab samples and two indoor air samples were also collected and analyzed for VOCs. PAHs including benzo(a) anthracene, benzo(a) pyrene, benzo(b) fluoranthene, dibenz (a,h) anthracene and indeno (1,2,3 -cd) pyrene, TPH-DRO and metals including arsenic, mercury, thallium and hexavalent chromium were detected in soil sample above RCS. Chloroform and 1,3-butadiene, which are common urban contaminants were also observed in the soil gas samples. No contaminants were observed in the indoor air samples above the MDE Tier I Standards.

Current Site Status

The Property has been approved for participation in the VCP. The site owners have submitted a Response Action Plan (RAP) which is currently under review.