

# Tonawanda 'mudflats' attracting developers

By FARAH SAFIUDDIN  
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The Town of Tonawanda has found possible developers for a new industrial park in an area north of town known as the "mud flats."

Two regional developers, whose names are currently being withheld because of ongoing talks, have expressed an interest in 80 acres of town-owned property along the City of Tonawanda border, said Robert Dimmig of the town's Development Corp.

A new industrial park could add \$40 million to the town's tax rolls and mean 1,200 additional jobs, Supervisor Carl J. Calabrese said.

The Development Corp. has been marketing the property for sometime. "We may see an offer (on the property) real soon," Calabrese said.

The site is near the Fire Tower Industrial Park. It is bounded by the Tonawanda line to the north, the Youngmann Highway to the south, Military Road to the east and Two-Mile Creek Road to the west.

"This is really the next source of growth in the town," Dimmig said.

There is little open, available land remaining in the town and much of what remains is former industrial land with environmental problems. Proposed waterfront redevelopment, for example, hinges on the clean up of contaminated sites and acquisition of properties.

The mud flats property has long been in the hands of the town, is environmentally clean and is already commercially zoned, he noted.

One barrier to the development has been a nearby Conrail line. Any entrance to the park will have to cross the tracks. The town requested a grade-crossing but the state Department of Transportation had been insisting that the town build a bridge over the tracks.

The town worried that the incline from Military Road would be too steep and unsafe. The transportation department recently backed off and agreed to study the matter further, Calabrese said.

The town could encourage development, Calabrese said, by offering new owners a low-interest loan from the business incentive fund.

The town also included the site in its application for a state economic development zone, which offers state and local tax incentives to aid growth in economically depressed areas.

Under the tax incentive, the town would not assess a business within the zone for the full value of any new building or expansion for 10 years.

The town is competing with about 30 other municipalities for one of 15 designated zones. The town's application recently completed on-site review and a final decision is expected in early June, Dimmig said.