

# Reports: Hartz scraps plan for logistics park, open space at sprawling Hercules site on I-80

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Hartz Mountain Industries' proposal for the former Hercules Inc. munitions plant property in Roxbury includes a five-building, 2.5 million-square-foot industrial campus and some 500 acres of open space. — Courtesy: Hartz Mountain

*By Joshua Burd*

Hartz Mountain Industries reportedly has dropped its plan to build a 2.5 million-square-foot industrial park in Roxbury — one that also called for hundreds of acres of open space — following considerable pushback from a contingent of local officials, residents and others.

According to multiple outlets, the firm told the township's planning board last month that it was withdrawing its application to redevelop the long-dormant, former site of the Hercules Inc. munitions plant along Interstate 80. Additional details about the decision were not immediately clear, [as reported by TAPintoRoxbury](#), but the move came after more than a year of hearings and a series of contentious exchanges between the project team and the town's representatives.

Hartz, which is based in Secaucus, had proposed five buildings that would occupy only a quarter of the 820-acre development area. Its pitch for the property also called for some 500 acres to be preserved as parks, athletic fields and undeveloped land, while another 13 acres would be used to satisfy the town's affordable housing obligations.

The company was under contract to purchase the land pending approvals.

"It did surprise us," Roxbury Councilman Robert DeFillippo, who is also a planning board member, [told the Daily Record](#) this week. "It seemed pretty abrupt and sudden."

Other township officials had a similar reaction, the report said, although observers in recent months had noted what seemed to be an impasse and sustained frustration over the project. Steve Mlenak of Greenbaum Rowe Smith & Davis LLP, a land use attorney for Hartz, [told the Daily Record](#) that the developer had concerns about whether it was receiving due process from the planning board, one of several red flags recently that the project was in jeopardy.

Hartz's plan called for five speculative commercial buildings that are 45-feet high but not visible from surrounding roads due to the site's topography, the firm said in 2022. The design would allow all vehicles to access the property via Howard Boulevard, but trucks would only be able to exit by right turns onto the northbound lanes toward Interstate 80, aiming to minimize the impact on local roadways.

The company added that the plan complies with guidelines recently published by the State Planning Commission for warehouse development. It would also bring new life to a site where dynamite and other explosives were manufactured as far back as the 1870s, leaving decades of contamination before Hercules closed the site in 1996 and spent several years demolishing more than 325 buildings and more than 1 million square feet of foundations.

Hartz Mountain's Jay Rhatican said in September 2022 said the project would create more than 1,100 jobs during the construction phase and 1,200 permanent jobs during operation, citing a study by its professional team. Additionally, the redevelopment would generate more than \$4 million in new property tax revenue each year, he said, most of which would benefit Roxbury public schools.

| [Hartz details pitch for industrial park, open space at massive Hercules site in Roxbury.](#)