

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 18, 2008

**SUBJECT: Mercedes Benz Planned Project Site Plan (3953 Research Park Drive)  
File No. 12093K19.5b**

### PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Mercedes Benz Planned Project Site Plan, with proposed modifications to the front setback requirements of Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:42, and subject to maintaining a minimum usable open space of 40 percent.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the planned project site plan be **approved** because it would comply with local, state and federal laws and regulations; the development would limit the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land; would not cause a public or private nuisance; and would not have a detrimental effect on public health, safety or welfare. The requested planned project modification to the front setbacks is consistent with the standards of Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:70, Standards for Approval for Planned Projects.

### LOCATION

The site is located north of Ellsworth Road east of Research Park Drive (South Area, Malletts Creek Watershed).

### DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

This site is currently zoned RE (Research District) with planned project modifications to accommodate this proposal. The planned project modification includes a reduced front yard setback fronting Research Park Drive.

This 3.12-acre site currently contains a 20,821-square foot building. A planned project site plan is proposed to add two one-story office additions totaling 2,010 square feet in the front setback and a 4,653-square foot warehouse addition to the rear for a new total building area of 27,484 square feet. The RE District front setback requirement is 75 feet and this proposal requests a reduction of 24 feet for a new front setback of 51 feet. The existing surface parking lot is proposed to be reconfigured with a new curb cut on Research Park Drive to access the northern 33 parking spaces. The existing curb cut will access 22 parking spaces to the south. The proposed warehouse addition will be located between the two parking lots and there is no connection between the two parking lots. Sidewalks are proposed to front along Research Park Drive and an interior sidewalk to connect to the proposed northwest office addition. Five Class B bicycle parking spaces are proposed near the warehouse entrance. Traffic generation during

*8a*

the AM and PM peak hours is anticipated to be less than 50 trips; therefore, a traffic impact study is not required.

The storm water management system meets 100-year storm water detention requirements. No natural features are impacted on site. No footing drain disconnections are required.

### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Research and Offices	RE (Research District)
EAST	Research/Office/Industrial	M1 (Limited Industrial District)
SOUTH	Research and Offices	RE
WEST	Research and Offices	RE

### COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	RE (Research District)	RE	RE
Gross Lot Area	3.12 ac (135,907 sq ft)	3.12 ac (135,907 sq ft)	1.37 ac MIN 60,000 sq ft MIN
Maximum Usable Floor Area in Percentage of Lot Area	20,821 sq ft (15%)	27,484 sq ft (20%)	40,772 sq ft MIN (30% MIN)
Usable Open Space – Percent of Lot Area	N/A	41 percent	40 percent MIN *
Setback – Front	58-feet **	51-feet *	75 ft MIN
Setback – Side(s)	67 ft – North 75 ft - South	67 ft - North 57 ft – south	50 ft MIN
Setback – Rear	239 ft	169 ft	75 ft MIN
Height	25 ft	25 ft	29 ft MAX
Parking – Automobile	36 spaces	59 spaces	46 spaces MIN
Parking – Bicycle	4 spaces – Class C	Class B – 5 spaces	Class B – 5 spaces MIN

\* Added with the planned project approval.

\*\* Existing nonconforming.

## HISTORY

A site plan for the current building was approved by Planning Commission in 1978. An administrative amendment to the site plan was approved in 1995 for changes to the landscaping and to add a transformer to the rear of the existing building.

## PLANNING BACKGROUND

This South Area Plan recommends research uses for this site.

### PLANNED PROJECT STANDARD FOR APPROVAL REVISIONS

The required front setback for RE zoning is 75 feet. The existing building is set back 58 feet. Staff was unable to determine why the existing building was constructed in the front setback. The current proposal requests a front setback of 51 feet. A reduced front setback of approximately 24 feet from Research Park Drive has been requested as part of the planned project application.

According to Section 5:70 of the Zoning Ordinance, the City Planning Commission may recommend approval and City Council may approve modifications of the area, height and placement regulations of the Zoning Ordinance in the form of a planned project site plan, based on the following standards (Petitioner's responses in regular type, *staff comments in italic type*).

- (a) **The lot or lots included in the planned project must meet the minimum gross lot size requirement of the zoning district in which they are located. In residential zoning districts, the minimum gross lot size shall be the combined total of the minimum gross lot sizes for each dwelling on a parcel. However, the minimum gross lot size and width requirements may be reduced as part of a planned project for a zero lot line duplex or townhouse development which provides affordable housing for lower income households. For purposes of this section, zero lot line duplex or townhouse development shall mean a development containing attached single-family units on individual lots. In no case may the gross lot size be reduced below the minimum lot area per dwelling unit requirement for the dwelling unit type proposed.**

*The lot meets the minimum gross lot size requirement in the RE zoning district.*

- (b) **The proposed modifications of zoning requirements must provide one or more of the following:**

1. **Usable open space in excess of the minimum requirement.**
2. **Building or parking setback(s) in excess of the minimum requirement.**
3. **Preservation of natural features.**
4. **Preservation of historical or architectural features.**
5. **Solar orientation or energy conservation design.**
6. **An arrangement of buildings that provides a public benefit, such as transit access, pedestrian orientation, or a reduced need for infrastructure.**
7. **Affordable housing for lower income households.**

The proposed modification addresses Items 1, 2 and 6.

1. *The petitioner has agreed to a minimum of 40 percent open space on site when none is required. This meets Item 1 listed above.*
2. *Increased rear and side setbacks are maintained for this project beyond the required setbacks.*
6. *Sidewalks are proposed along Research Park Drive with an interior sidewalk connection to the proposed northwest building entrance.*

**(c) The planned project shall be designed in such a manner that traffic to and from the site will not be hazardous to adjacent properties.**

The proposed modifications to the parking lot will have no impact on the adjacent properties.

*No additional employees are being added to this site. This building expansion is for needed office and vehicle testing space.*

**(d) The proposed modifications shall be consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.**

The proposed modification will be consistent with use and development.

*The existing research and development use is consistent with the surrounding uses and zoning.*

**(e) Required off-street parking and landscaping must be provided in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 59 and 62.**

We plan on meeting the provisions.

*The minimum number of parking spaces and parking lot landscaping is being met. The petitioner indicated additional parking spaces are needed to accommodate the vehicles being tested on site.*

**(f) The standards of density, allowable floor area and required usable open space for the zoning district(s) in which the project is located must be met.**

We plan on meeting provisions.

*The petitioner has agreed to a 40 percent minimum open space for this site when none is required. The maximum floor area total allowed is 40,772 square feet and 27,484 square feet is proposed.*

**(g) There shall be no uses within the proposed project which are not permitted uses in the zoning district(s) in which the proposed project is to be located.**

The proposed use is permitted in this zoning district. Mercedes-Benz Technology Center was established in 1979 and significantly expanded in 1992. The expansion in 2008 will enhance further development of clean technology vehicles by Daimler AG for the United States market. The laboratory's main test area consists of two vehicle exhaust emission test cells. Both cells will be capable of testing gasoline and diesel vehicles as well as hybrids and alternate fueled

vehicles. The focus of these test cells is to verify vehicle emission performance over temperature range of 10-110 degrees Fahrenheit ensuring that Mercedes-Benz remains one of the greenest automobile manufacturers. In addition to exhaust emission testing, the facility supports hydrogen fueled vehicle development. The proposed office expansion will provide workspace for employees, allowing Daimler AG to locate high tech jobs in the City of Ann Arbor. A combination of an automotive talent pool, a highly ranked University, and the close proximity to the EPA are driving forces for Daimler AG to expand the Ann Arbor facility as opposed to relocating.

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS PENDING, DISMISSED OR UNRESOLVED**

Planning – Staff supports the planned project modification to this site with a front setback reduction from 75 feet to 51 feet. In exchange for this front setback, the petitioner has agreed to a 40 percent minimum open space on site and maintaining rear and side setbacks in excess of the minimum required. The existing and proposed location of the detention basin also limits the building envelope and makes it difficult for expansion within the rear setback.

Prepared by Christopher Cheng  
Reviewed by Connie Pulcifer and Mark Lloyd  
jsj/3/12/08

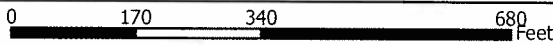
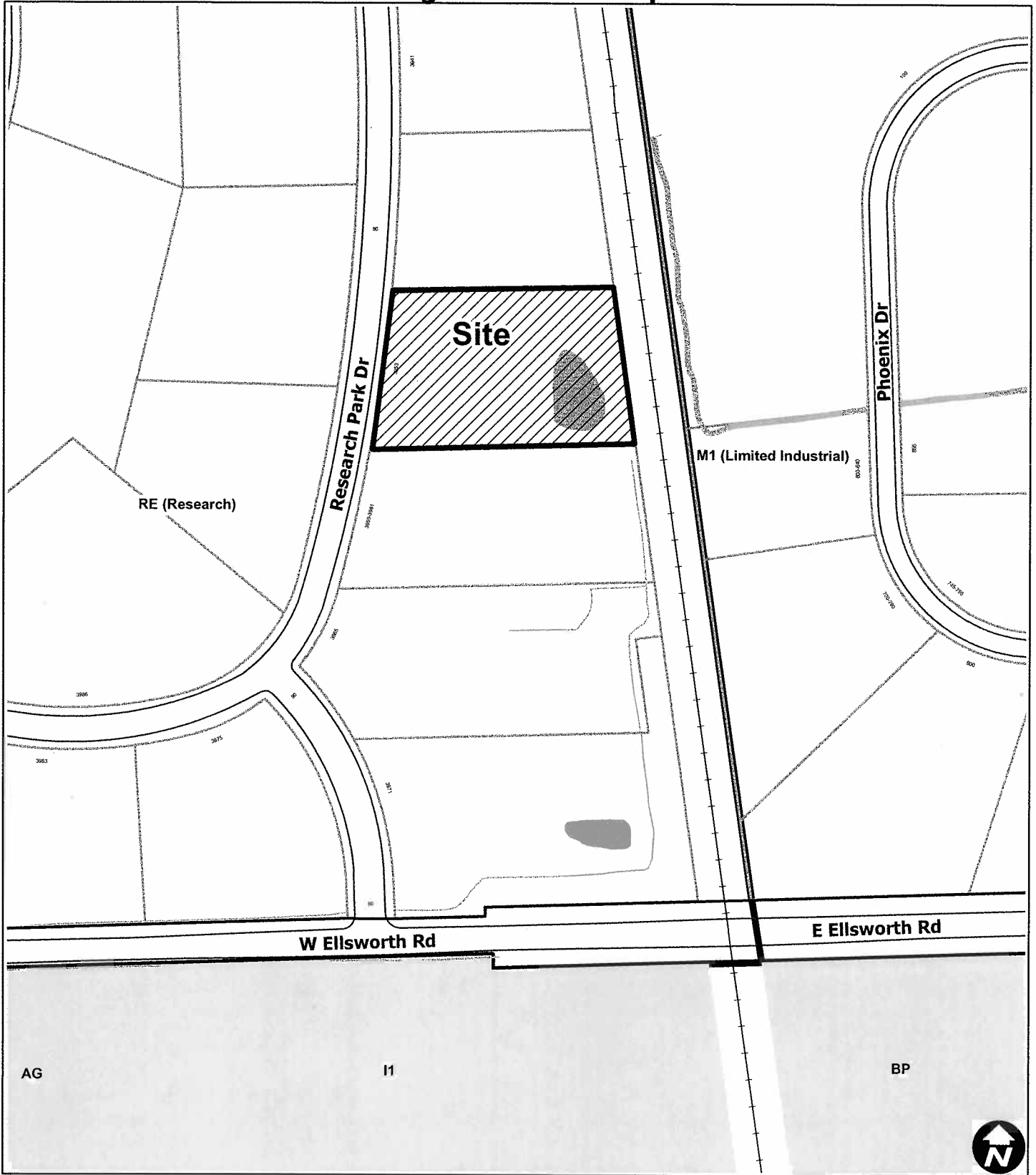


Attachments: Zoning/Parcel Maps  
Aerial Photo  
Site Plan  
Landscape Plan  
Elevations

c: Petitioner: David Haskins  
Rand Construction  
1270 Rickett Road  
Brighton, MI 48116

Systems Planning  
File No. 12093K19.5b

# 3953 Research Park Drive Zoning and Parcel Map



Map Legend	
	City Boundary
	Railroads
	Edge Of Pavement
	Parcels



Maps available online:  
<http://gisweb.ewashtenaw.org/website/mapwashtenaw/>

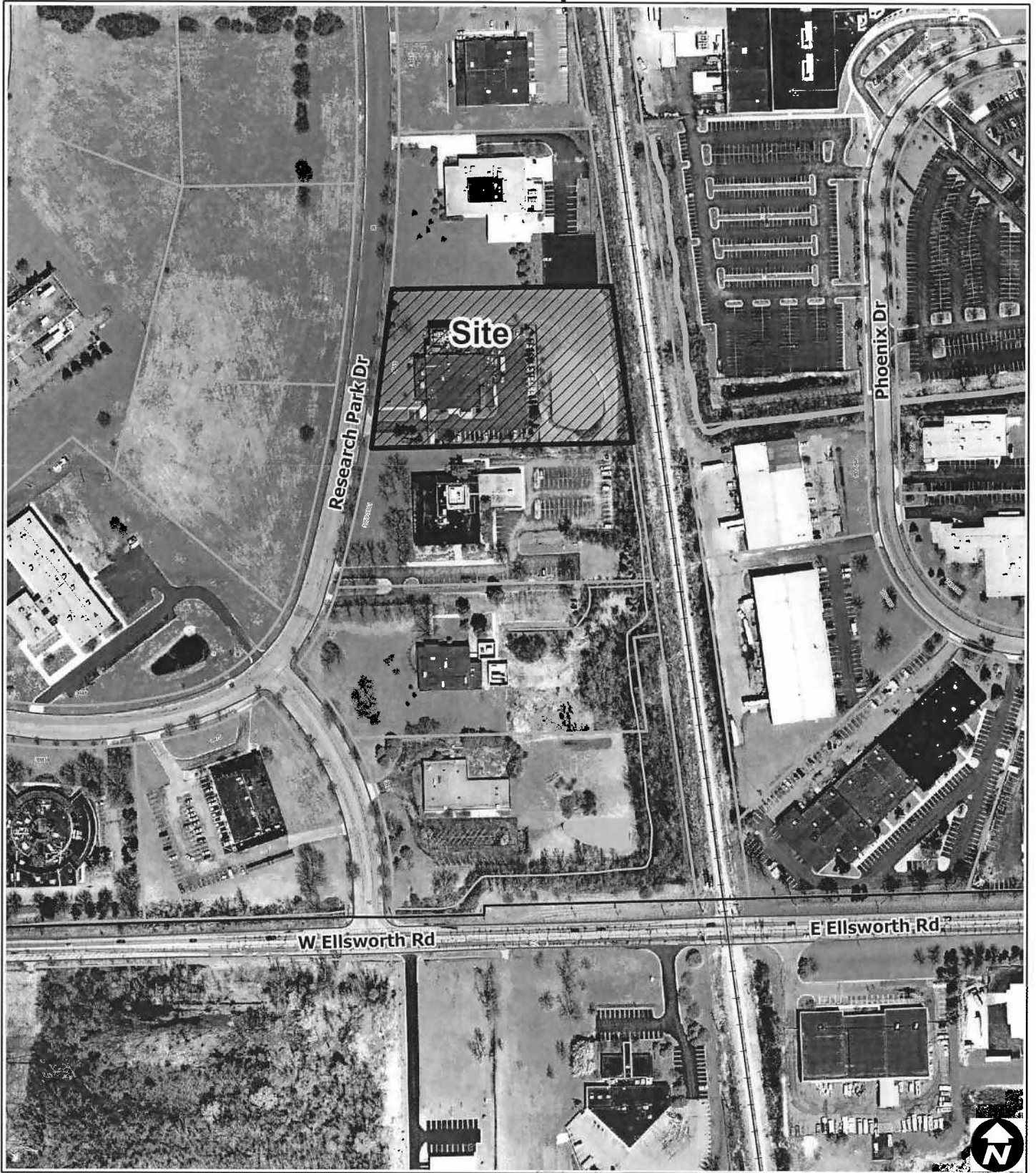
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# 3953 Research Park Drive Aerial Map



0 170 340 680 Feet



- Map Legend**
-  City Boundary
  -  Railroads
  -  Edge Of Pavement
  -  Parcels



Maps available online:  
<http://gisweb.ewashtenaw.org/website/mapwashtenaw/>

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