

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of July 17, 2018

**SUBJECT: Honda Research Facility Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval and Landscape Modification Petition
Project No. SP18-023**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the Honda Research Facility Site Plan to expand the existing parking lot and the Landscape Modification Petition to permit more than 15 parking spaces in a row without a landscape island break and permit less than 50% of the required interior landscape areas to be depressed bioretention areas.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the **site plan** be **approved**, because once all outstanding issues have been addressed the contemplated development would comply with all applicable state, local, and federal law, ordinances, standards and regulations; and the development would not cause a public or private nuisance, limits the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land, and would not have a detrimental effect on the public health, safety or welfare.

Staff recommends that the **landscape modification petition** be **approved** because they are consistent with the intent of the Landscape and Screening regulations and are associated with site conditions where additional required landscaping would be detrimental to the existing plant materials and would create undesirable conditions.

LOCATION:

This site is located on the east side of Research Park Drive, which is generally northeast of the South State and Ellsworth intersection, in the South planning area.

SUMMARY:

The applicant seeks site plan approval to eliminate 18 previously deferred (approved but unbuilt) parking spaces, construct 21 new parking spaces on the south side of the building, and add a carport structure over 8 existing spaces. The project increases the number of approved spaces by two, from 69 to 71, and increases the number of constructed spaces by 23, from 48 to 71. A landscape modification is requested to allow more than the maximum number of parking spaces in a row without a break and less than the minimum percentage of bioretention area.

Proposed Development – The [proposed site plan](#) eliminates 18 deferred parking spaces on the north side of the building, adds 21 open parking spaces on the south side of the building, and adds a carport structure over 8 existing parking spaces on the west side of the building. A landscape modification petition has been submitted to permit a long run of parking spaces and no depressed bioretention areas.

COMPARISION CHART:

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Base Zoning	RE (Research)	RE (Research)	RE (Research)
Lot Area	116,520 sq ft	116,520 sq ft	60,000 sq ft MIN
Lot Width	300 ft	300 ft	150 ft MIN
Floor Area and FAR	43,473 sq ft 37%	43,473 sq ft 37%	87,390 sq ft MAX 75% MAX
Land Coverage of Structure	37%	37%	No MAX
Building Height	37 ft 4 in	37 ft 4 in	None
Front Setback	50 ft 6 in	50 ft 6 in	25 ft MIN, 50 ft MAX
Side Setback	40 ft 6 in	40 ft 6 in	None
Rear Setback	128 ft 3 in	128 ft 3 in	None
Parking	Research/Development land use	Research/Development land use	Research/Development land use
Parking – Automobiles	66 spaces (48 existing, 18 deferred) (based on 40,743 sq ft of floor area)	71 spaces (none deferred)	68 spaces MIN
Parking – Bicycles	7 Class B	7 Class B	7 Class B MIN

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING:

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	General Office	RE (Research)
EAST	Vacant Lot	RE
SOUTH	Automotive Research Facility	RE
WEST	Railroad track	RE

LANDSCAPE MODIFICATIONS:

Flexibility in the application of landscape and screening regulations may be allowed if certain standards are met.

Requested Modifications – The applicant [requests](#) these modifications:

- Permit more than 15 parking spaces in a parking row without a landscape island break
- Permit less than 50% of the required interior landscape areas to be depressed bioretention areas

Approval Standards – The Planning Commission or City Council may approve modifications based on compliance with the following standards:

1. The modifications are consistent with the intent of the Landscaping and Screening regulations
2. The modifications are associated with one of these site conditions:
 - a) Site is located in a special parking strict (i.e. the downtown parking exempt area)
 - b) Strict application of this chapter will result in a loss of existing parking spaces required by the Off-Street Parking regulations where the parking does not abut residential uses
 - c) Topographic features of the site create conditions so that the strict application of the Landscape and Screening regulations will result in less effective screening and landscaping than alternative landscape designs
 - d) Existing vegetation and landscaping are located or spaced in such a manner than the additional required landscaping would be detrimental to the plant material or create undesirable conditions
 - e) Use of bioretention areas, native or prairie plantings, structural amenities or xeriscaping would prevent strict application of the Landscape and Screening regulations
 - f) In the case of planned projects, a rearrangement of the landscaping elements will achieve the spirit and intent of the Landscaping and Screening regulations
 - g) Landscape elements which are part of a previously approved site plan may be maintained and continued as nonconforming provided no alterations of the existing landscape elements are proposed

Justifications – The applicant's justifications for the landscape modifications are contained in the [petition](#) and are summarized below.

- Strict application will be detrimental to the existing storm water management system
- Additional landscaping where required could introduce excessive moisture into the existing building housing testing equipment via introduction of infiltrative and bioretention elements near the building

- Converting the existing landscape islands to depressed bioretention areas could be detrimental to the mature trees in those islands
- The existing landscaping achieves and maintains the spirit and intent of the Landscape and Screening regulations

Staff Findings – Staff find that the modification request meets the standards for approval. It meets the spirit and intent of the regulations and strict application would harm existing vegetation as well as be incompatible with the existing storm water management system.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

This project requires Type 2 citizen participation, written notification that a petition was submitted. A postcard was sent by the applicant to all owners and residents within 500 feet of the site as required.

HISTORY:

The Research Park platted subdivision was established in 1961. The current Honda research facility was constructed on a then-vacant lot in 1975. Site plans for additions were approved in 1994 and 2013 which have doubled the size of the original facility.

SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS:

Planning – Comments made during the review process have been addressed.

Urban Forestry/Natural Resources – Comments made during the review process have been addressed.

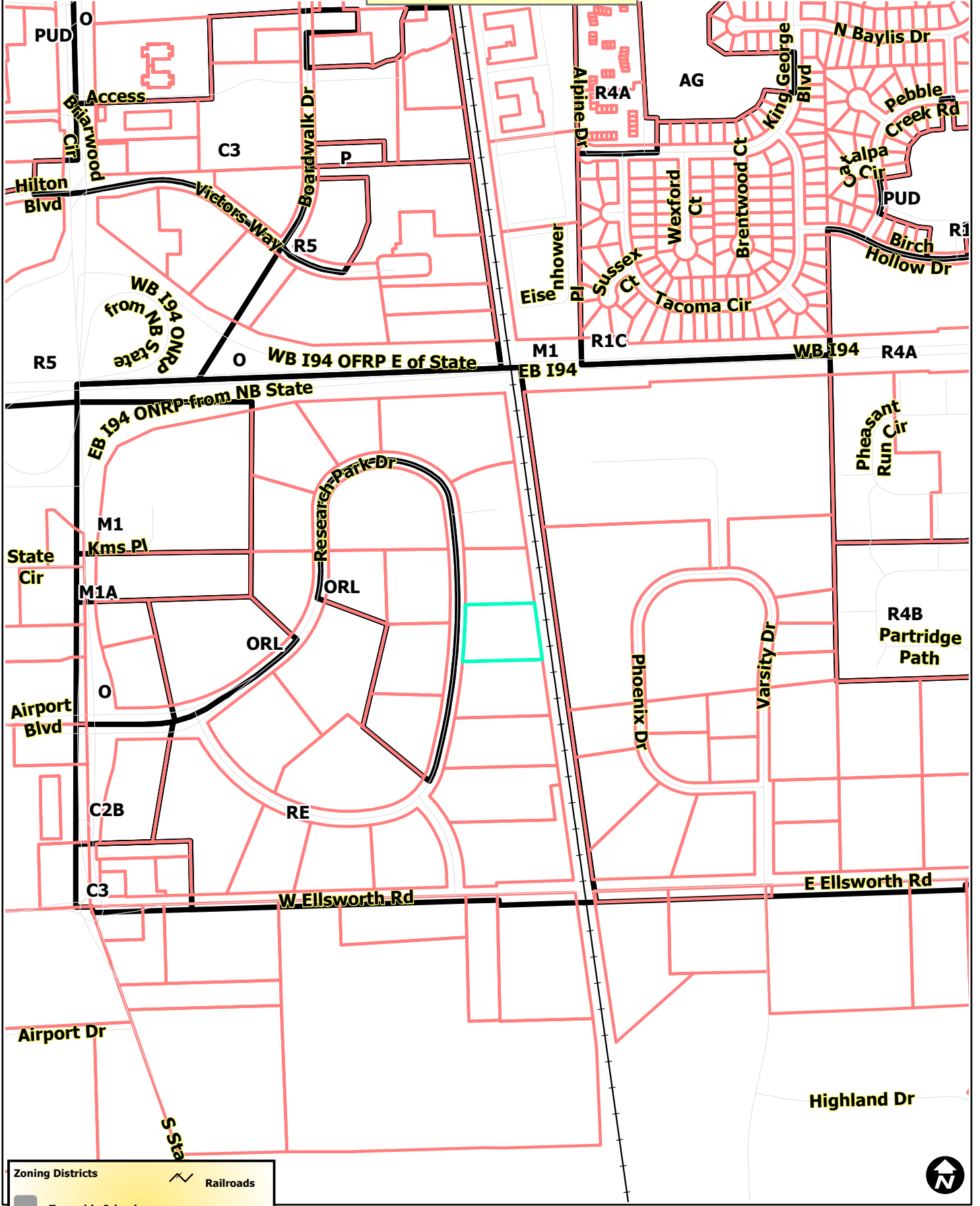
Engineering – Two outstanding issues were identified in the second round of review. Revised plans were submitted on July 10, 2018 but staff was unable to review prior to drafting this staff report on July 11, 2018. An update will be included in the staff presentation for the project on July 17, 2018.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo
Reviewed by Brett Lenart
5/11/18

References: Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
[Site Plan](#)
[Landscape Modification Petition](#)

c: Petitioner's Agent – Poggemeyer Design Group, Inc. (David Saneholtz)
Property Owner – American Honda Motor Co., Inc (Joann Vincent)
Systems Planning
Project No. SP18-023

3947 Research Park Dr



Zoning Districts	Railroads
Township Islands	Huron River
City Zoning Districts	Tax Parcels



Map date 5/16/2018
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