

ANN ARBOR PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of August 8, 2018

**SUBJECT: Midtown Ann Arbor Condominium Site Plan for City Council Approval and Landscape Modification Petition
(1420 South Maple Road)
Project SP17-038**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Midtown Ann Arbor Condominium Site Plan and Development Agreement (1420 South Maple), and Landscape Modification to: provide interior landscape islands in an atypical configuration; and to omit conflicting land use buffer plantings on the north side of the entry drive, adjacent to the wetland northwest of building 16, between the Grace Bible Church soccer field and I-94, and along three sides of the wetland mitigation area. Approval is contingent upon the receipt of variances for drive placement and the I-94 front setback from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the **site plan** petition be **approved** because once variances are received from the Zoning Board of Appeals, it complies with all the applicable local, state, and federal laws, ordinances, standards, 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. Staff also recommends that the **landscape modification** petition be **approved** because it is consistent with the intent of the Landscape and Screening regulations and is associated with site conditions where additional required landscaping would be detrimental to the existing plant materials and would create undesirable conditions.

LOCATION

The site is located on the west side of South Maple Road, opposite Pauline Boulevard and behind the Hansen Nature Area, in the West planning area and the Allen Creek watershed (Ward 5).

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

The petitioners are seeking approval to develop the 20.46 acre site and construct 256 dwelling units with 600 bedrooms in 17 buildings. The proposed density is 12.51 dwelling units per acre. A link to the full plan set may be [found here](#).

Existing Site Conditions – There are two single-family homes on the site that would be demolished. The rest of the site is undeveloped.

Natural Features – The southern portion of the site is mostly scrub and trees that have been allowed to grow since the church was built in the 1970s. The northern portion contains wetlands and some woods that are a continuation of the Hansen Nature Area. Fifty eight percent of the site is proposed as open space.

Natural feature impacts due to the development include removing 28 woodland trees with an 8" diameter or larger. 109 landmark trees are present, and none of them will be removed. For the woodland tree mitigation, 77 trees of 2 ½" caliper (deciduous) or 7' (coniferous) are shown on the plan for a total of 192.5" DBH. Two existing street trees are proposed to be removed and mitigated by six new street trees along South Maple Road.

The 1.06 acres abutting Hansen Nature Area, east of the wetland mitigation area, is proposed to be dedicated to the City as parkland. To date, this process has not commenced.

Access – No public or private streets are proposed. All of the buildings are accessed by a series of one- and two-way private driveways from a single curb cut aligned opposite Pauline Boulevard. An emergency access drive connects the north edge of the developed area to the Grace Bible Church parking lot, and also serves as a pedestrian path. Sidewalks are proposed on the south side of the entry drive, and along the fronts of the condominium buildings.

Parking – There are 500 parking spaces proposed: 360 indoor spaces in single- and two-car garages; 134 exterior spaces; and six barrier free spaces, one of which is van accessible.

Solid Waste – Six trash and recycling dumpster areas are located in the condominium development.

Utilities – Water and sanitary sewer service will be connected to existing mains on South Maple, and new 12" and 8" water mains constructed on site. A public water booster station will be located on site. Easements will be granted for new public water mains and sanitary sewers.

Storm Water Management – Storm water management will be handled through four detention systems sized for a 100-year storm. The eastern half of the site drains into a northeast chamber or southeast basin, both of which discharge into city storm sewers. The western portion drains to a southwest basin which discharges into an offsite wetland that drains across I-94 to the Honey Creek watershed. There is also a shared detention basin on the Grace Bible Church site. This basin discharges to an existing on-site wetland and the proposed wetland mitigation area.

Traffic Analysis – A traffic impact study was submitted and reviewed by city traffic engineering staff. It shows 110 additional peak hour car trips in the morning, and 130 in the afternoon.

Development Agreement – Development agreements are used for projects that include public and offsite improvements, such as extension of a public utility main, a contribution of land or money, or other capital improvements. The Midtown development agreement will address the construction of a water pump station, sanitary sewer mitigation, easements related to the shared storm water detention system, sanitary and water easements, crosswalk improvements, costs of equipment for traffic signalization changes, parks contribution, street tree escrow, and other site improvements.

Citizen Participation Meeting – Citizen Participation Meeting notices were mailed to 1,507 owners and occupants for a meeting held at the Pittsfield Branch of the Ann Arbor District

Library on August 6, 2017. There were 15 attendees. Questions were addressed on impacts on infrastructure and traffic, building height, wetland mitigation, and stormwater runoff. A [copy of the meeting report](#) is attached.

COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Base Zoning	R4B	R4B	R4B
Lot Area	20.46 acres	20.46 acres	14,000 SF MIN
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	10.23 acres	3,481 SF	2,900 SF
Open Space (% of lot area)		57.3%	55% MIN
Dwelling Units	2	256	307
Active Open Space per Dwelling Unit		82,082 SF/256 DU = 320 SF	300 SF
Front Setback EAST		22 ft	15 ft MIN, 40 ft MAX
Front Setback WEST		118 ft*	15 ft MIN, 40 ft MAX
Side Setback NORTH		39 ft	39 ft**
Side Setback SOUTH		60 ft	39 ft**
Building Height	1 story	45 ft	45 ft w/ parking below at least 35% of building
Parking	Dwelling, Single-Family land use	Dwelling, Multi-Family land use	Dwelling, Multi-Family land use
Parking – Automobiles	4 spaces	1.95 spaces per unit or 500 spaces	1.5 spaces per dwelling unit or 384 spaces
Parking – Bicycles		1 space per .96 dwelling units or 208 class A/60 class B	1 space per 5 dwelling units or 26 class A/26 class B

*Requires a variance for exceeding the front setback maximum.

**Increased due to building height/length.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Public Park	PL (Public Land District)
EAST	Multiple -Family Residential (across S. Maple) Church (abutting site)	R4A (Multiple-Family Dwelling District) R4B (Multiple-Family Dwelling District)
SOUTH	Multiple -Family Residential	R3 (Townhouse Dwelling District)
WEST	I-94 Expressway	TWP (Township District)

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:

- Provide interior landscape islands in an atypical configuration
- Omit conflicting land use buffer plantings:
 - on the north side of the entry drive
 - adjacent to the wetland northwest of building 16
 - between the Grace Bible Church soccer field and I-94
 - along three sides of the wetland mitigation area

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.

Landscape islands

- The vehicular use area contains parallel parking in a configuration that is unique compared to typical parking lots.
- The parking design limits bio-retention opportunities; bio-retention areas proposed site-wide are in excess of standard requirements.
- The number of trees provided exceeds the number required for a parking lot of a conventional design.

Conflicting Land Use Buffers

- The entry drive is more like a private road than a driveway; thus the proposed street trees are appropriate.
- Along wetlands and wetland mitigation areas, new plantings would disturb existing natural areas. The existing landscaping achieves and maintains the spirit and intent of the Landscape and Screening regulations.
- West of the Grace Bible Church soccer field, a pedestrian path is proposed, and existing trees and shrubs will remain.
- The project provides screening between proposed buildings and adjacent developments, and screening of parking from public road rights-of-way.

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 natural areas.

HISTORY

1947 aerial photographs show the entire area in cultivation, with the exception of the Hansen Nature Area, which was heavily wooded and surrounded by farm fields on all four sides. The existing Grace Bible church building was built in 1971 on approximately 35 acres. In 1975-76, the church built two houses on the southern end of the property. These houses, totaling 1.66 acres, were split off in a land division in December 2006.

In 2008, the 42 North Apartments Site Plan was approved on a 15.32 acre parcel to be divided from the Grace Bible Church site. The plan included 120 four-bedroom units in five buildings plus a clubhouse. This site plan expired in 2011, and a request to extend the plan administratively was denied because of code changes between 2008 and 2011.

In 2017 the Grace Bible Church site plan was administratively amended, and the parent parcel divided in two: Parcel A, Grace Bible Church, retained 15.42 acres, and Parcel B, the proposed Midtown Condominium plus the two houses at the southeast corner of the site, is 20.42 acres.

UNIT COMMENTS

Planning – A variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals is required for the site drive approach proposed to be located within the South Maple Road and Pauline Boulevard intersection. The petitioner has filed the application with the City. A second variance is required for the west setback on I-94 because it exceeds the 40 foot maximum front setback.

Engineering – Comments have been provided to the petitioner noting that sanitary sewer flow equivalent to 265 GPM will need to be removed from the sanitary sewer system in order to mitigate new flow from this proposed development. Alternately, a payment may be made in lieu of performing actual flow removal.

Parks – A park contribution of \$107,000 and 1.06 acres of donated land is requested, based on the formula found in the PROS plan. The formula is applied as follows: number of units x acreage desired to keep pace with existing parkland density x average cost of parkland/acre, or $256 \text{ units} \times .0125 \times \$50,000 = \$160,000$. 1.06 acres at \$50,000/acre reduces the request to \$107,000. In a March 31, 2018 response memo, the petitioner offered 1.06 acres and \$80,000.

Prepared by Jill Thacher
Reviewed by Brett Lenart
August 8, 2018

Attachments: Draft Development Agreement

Additional Information Links:

[Site Plan](#)

[Landscape Modification](#)

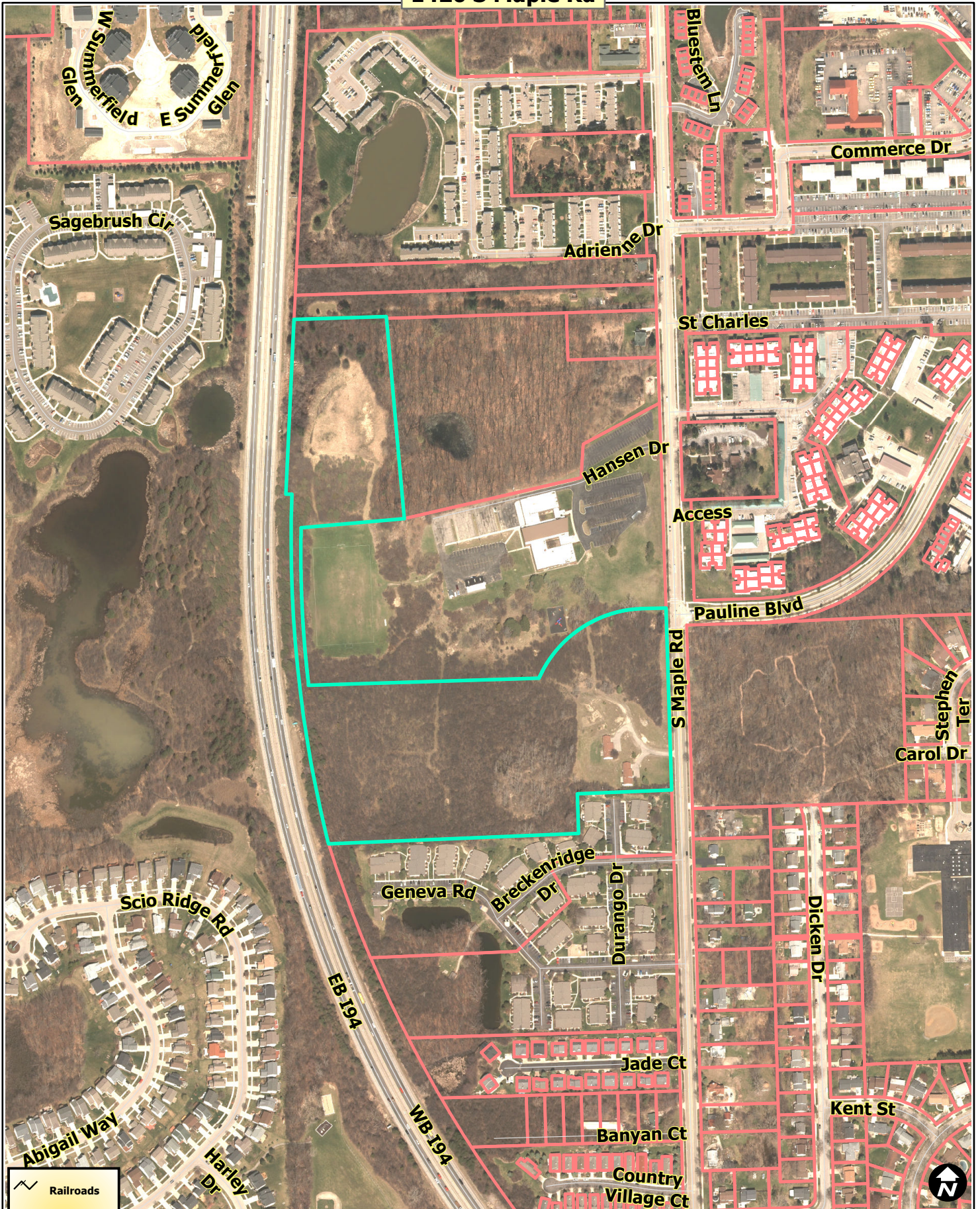
[Citizen Participation Report](#)

Petitioner: Midwestern Consulting LLC
 Scott Betzoldt
 3815 Plaza Drive
 Ann Arbor, MI 48108

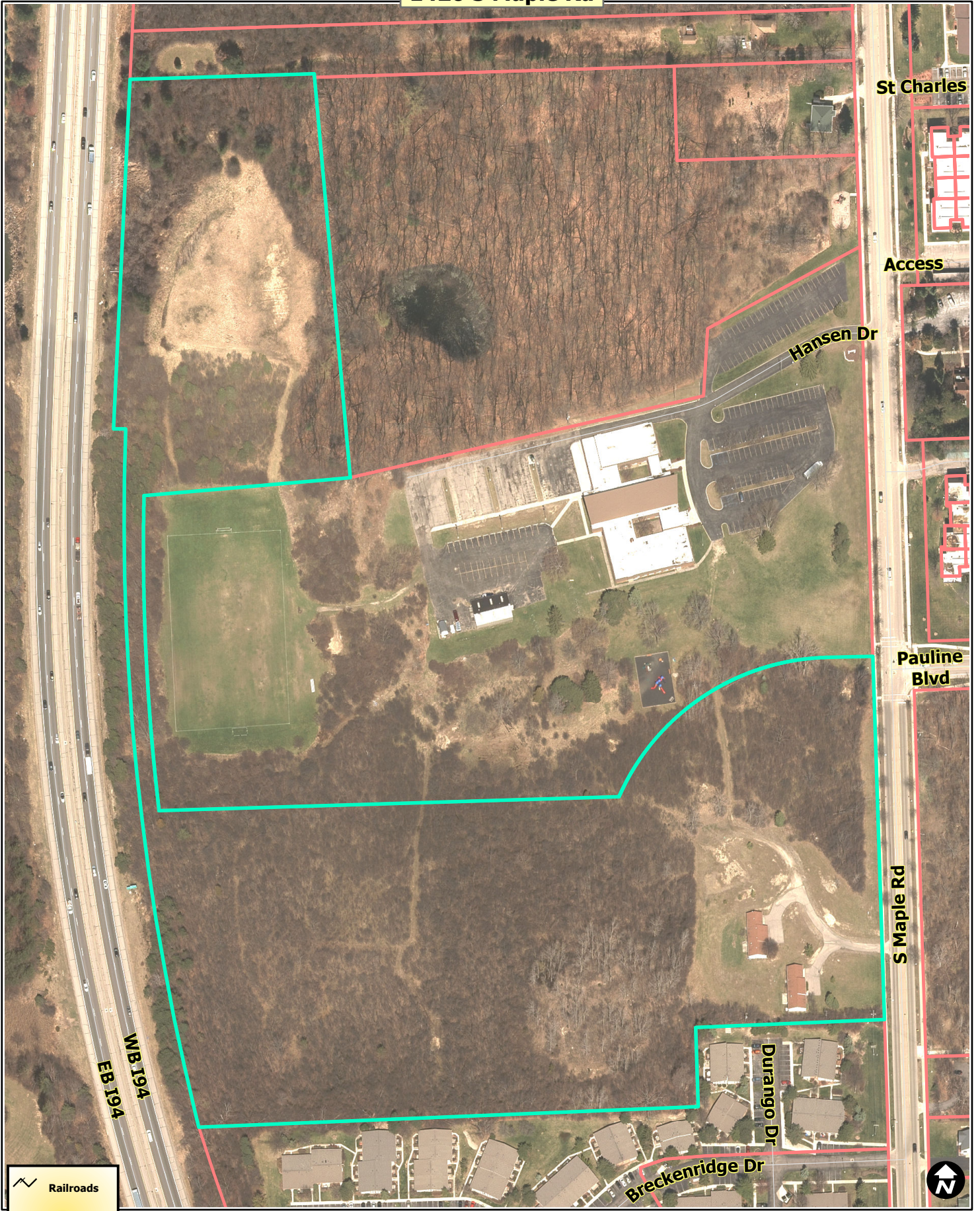
Owner: Arco Construction
 25925 Telegraph Road
 Southfield, MI 48003

Systems Planning
Project Nos. SP17-038

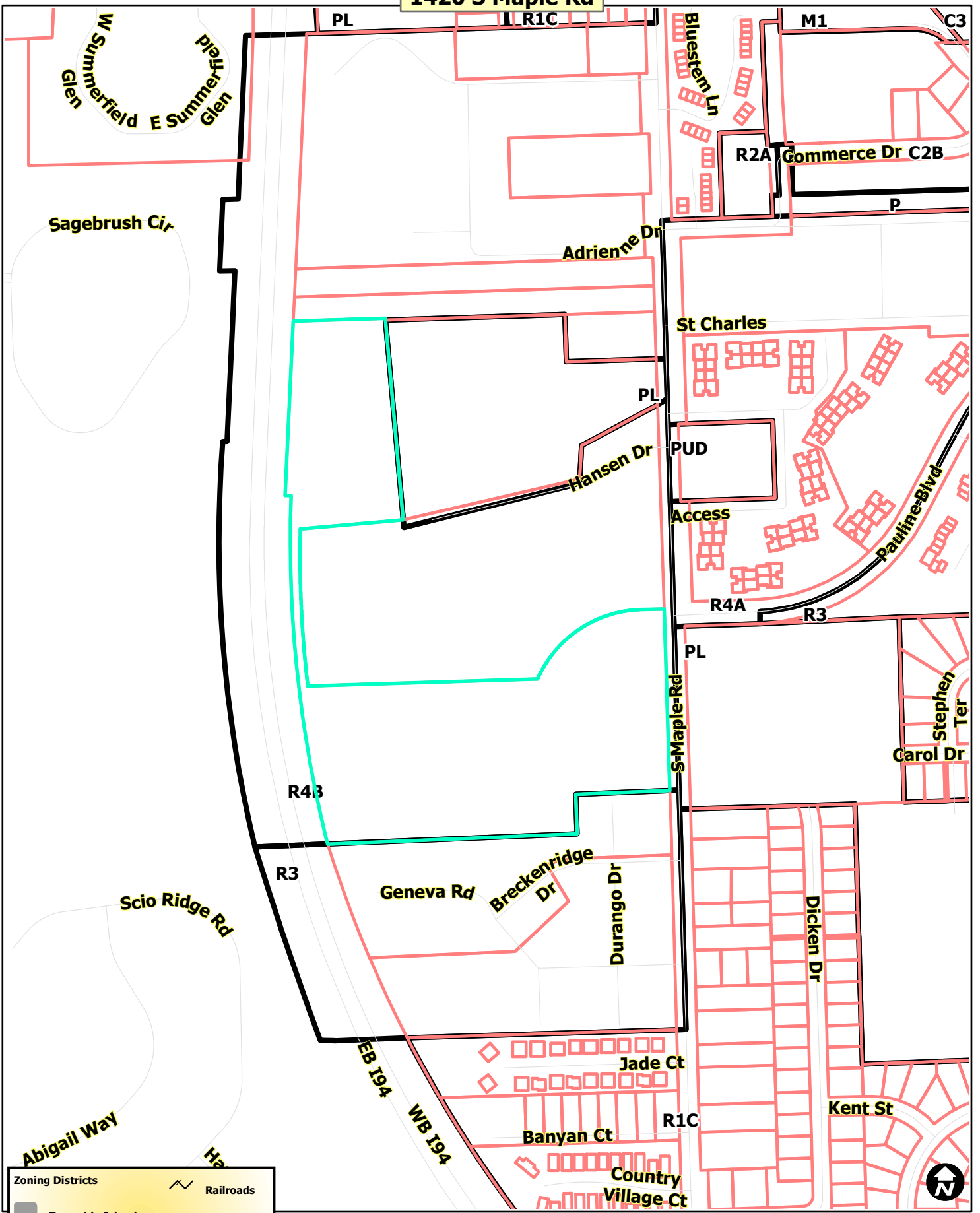
1420 S Maple Rd



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Zoning Districts

- Township Islands
- City Zoning Districts

Railroads

- Huron River

Tax Parcels



Map date 6/28/2018
Any aerial imagery is circa 2015 unless otherwise noted
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