



The RACER Trust: Empowering America's Auto Communities



Detroit, MI

RACER Site 12940

Commercial Land
6241 Cass Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202

Site Description

The site is a 1.4 acre vacant, almost entirely-paved lot located in a commercial area just north of downtown Detroit, at the intersection of Amsterdam Street and Cass Avenue. It is rectangular in shape, and is comprised of a fenced, asphalt-paved parking lot. The site is bordered by railroad tracks to the north, and local small businesses and/or parking lots in other directions. The site is accessed on the east side via two entrances along Cass Avenue, and on the south side via one entrance from Amsterdam Street.



The site was controlled by the Detroit Motor Company, and housed a lead smelting building, and two fire department structures dating back to 1897. Prior to 1910, the Cadillac Motor Car Company took over operations of the building and entire site, except for the fire department structures. Just prior to 1941, the building was removed, along with the fire department structures, and a used car building was established on the southern portion of the site — lasting until 1951, when it was replaced with a different automobile sales and service building in the same vicinity. This structure was present until just before 1961, when it was removed from the site. A second structure had remained on the northeastern portion of the site from before 1941 until approximately 1977, when it was removed. The site has been vacant and used as a parking lot since 1977.

Environmental History

Various environmental assessments of the site have been conducted between 1996 and 2013 to identify and document environmental conditions and any environmental impact as a result of past operations.

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In June 2004, a geophysical survey to determine the presence or absence of former underground storage tanks (USTs) identified anomalies in several areas, and those were further investigated through test pits and soil sampling in March 2007. Three test pits were excavated, and contained soil, building materials (i.e., wood, bricks), concrete, and metal pipe. In addition to the test pits, five soil borings were taken, ranging from 5 to 15 feet below the ground surface. Groundwater was not encountered during the investigation.

Soil samples noted elevated levels of benzo(a) pyrene (BAP) in the soil, along with lower levels of lead and arsenic. In 2012, the area with elevated BAP levels was fully delineated, which encompasses approximately 150 cubic yards of soil.



Next Steps

A proposal for follow-up action pertaining to the BAP-impacted soil was submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in 2012; however, during its review of the proposed action, the MDEQ identified additional areas of Recognized Environmental Concern (RECs) believed to warrant investigation. A follow-up work plan was submitted for MDEQ review and approval in December 2012 and was approved by MDEQ in February 2013. The investigation included soil sampling at 10 locations involving the following RECs:

- Former Railroad Spur (depicted on historical Sanborn® maps as possibly in the northern portion of the site as spanning approximately 150 feet laterally across the site near the northern boundary);

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- Former Unknown Structure (northeast corner of the site);
- Former Lead Smelting Building;
- Former Varnishing and Finishing Area;
- Former Oil Storage Building;
- Former Used Car Sales and Service Area; and
- Former Storage Building (southwest corner of the site).

Ten soil borings were drilled in these locations, and one soil sample was collected from each boring and analyzed for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and Michigan 10 Metals. The results are expected to be available during the second quarter of 2013.

Further determinations as to what additional investigation or remediation/site control is necessary will be made following an analysis of the results from the investigation and discussions with MDEQ. Institutional controls are planned, including prohibiting residential use of the property, requiring proper soil management, prohibiting the use of groundwater, and possibly requiring a cover over the BAP impacted soil.

More detailed information on the site can be viewed at the RACER website at www.racertrust.org.