



The RACER Trust: Empowering America's Auto Communities

Detroit, MI

RACER Site 12940

Commercial Land
6241 Cass Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202

Updated June 2021

Site Description

The property 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 property is bordered by railroad tracks to the north, and local businesses, Wayne State University-related operations, and/or parking lots in other directions. The property is accessed on the east via two entrances along Cass Avenue, and on the south via one entrance from Amsterdam Street.



The property was controlled by the Detroit Motor Company, and housed a lead smelting building and two fire department structures dating to 1897. Prior to 1910, the Cadillac Motor Car Company took over operations of the building and the entire property, 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 property. In 1951, 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. A second structure had remained on the northeastern portion of the property from before 1941 until approximately 1977, when it was removed. The property has been vacant and used as a parking lot since 1977. It was sold to Wayne State University in 2014 and continues to be used as a surface parking lot.

Environmental History

Various environmental assessments of the property were 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.

A proposal for follow-up action pertaining to the BAP-impacted soil was submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality in 2012 (now the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy); however, during its review of the proposed action, the agency identified additional areas of Recognized Environmental Concern (RECs) believed to warrant investigation. A follow-up work plan was submitted for agency review and approval in December 2012 and was approved 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 property and spanning approximately 150 feet laterally across the site near the northern boundary);
- Former Unknown Structure (northeast corner of the property);
- 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 property).



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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. Results indicated the need to delineate the extent of soil impacts in two areas of the property that contained concentrations of lead and certain PAHs above nonresidential direct contact criteria. These areas were subsequently delineated and the existing asphalt cover and soil to a depth of two feet below grade were excavated and properly disposed off-site. About 540 tons of material was disposed. The excavations were backfilled and the backfill serves as an exposure barrier to contaminated soil that remains below two feet.

Additionally, the results of the investigations identified concentrations of trichloroethene and certain PAHs in soil that exceeded state soil vapor screening levels.

A Declaration of Restrictive Covenant (DRC) was approved by the state in August 2014 and was recorded with the Wayne County Register of Deeds on September 8, 2014. A summary of the restrictions include the following: restricts use of the site to nonresidential; prohibits installation of groundwater wells or use of groundwater except for state-approved response activity or short-term construction dewatering; requires proper soil management and relocation; prohibits disturbing or damaging the exposure barriers except during short-term construction; and requires soil vapor management before constructing or occupying any structure.

A request for a Certificate of Completion dated September 16, 2014 and an Addendum to the Request for a Certificate of Completion were submitted to the state and the state issued a Certificate of Completion for response activities on November 26, 2014.

Next Steps

Next steps include the property owner complying with and RACER monitoring compliance with the DRC.

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