

ARTICLE XII

T&R, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH DISTRICTS

PREAMBLE

The T&R, Technology and Research Districts are established to provide a high-quality environment for corporate and regional headquarters, research and development facilities, advanced technology enterprises, automation and robotics operations, aerospace, life sciences, biotechnology, information technology, engineering, and other employment-generating uses of a similar character and intensity. The Districts are intended to support Auburn Hills' role as a hub for corporate investment, innovation, and advanced technology employment opportunities by encouraging the development of businesses and facilities that contribute to the City's diversified economic base.

Technology and Research Districts are intended to be located and designed to:

1. Support innovation, investment, and economic growth by providing a business environment that encourages the development, retention, expansion, and diversification of technology-based, research-oriented, and advanced employment uses across multiple industry sectors;
2. Accommodate complementary accessory and support uses that serve the operational needs of businesses and employees within the District, provided such uses remain clearly secondary and supportive of the District's primary corporate, research, technology, and employment-generating functions;
3. Promote high-quality development standards through coordinated site planning, building design, architecture, landscaping, and infrastructure improvements that reflect the District's importance as a location for corporate, research, and advanced technology investment; and
4. Protect the long-term function and economic vitality of the District by ensuring compatibility among permitted uses, maintaining adequate infrastructure capacity, and encouraging development patterns that are consistent with surrounding land uses and the City's long-range planning objectives.

SECTION 1200. PRINCIPAL USES PERMITTED

In the T&R Technology and Research District no building or land shall be used and no building shall be erected except for one (1) or more of the following specified uses, unless otherwise provided in this Ordinance:

1. Any use charged with the principal function of research, design, and development of pilot or experimental products and processes including research labs, training facilities, and light assembly operations as adjuncts to the principal use. Assembly operations shall be limited to those involving premanufactured finished objects and components and shall include only the incidental fabrication, machining, or forming of metal, plastic, or other materials as part of product development, experimentation, demonstration and repair, or the provision of customized components.
2. Single and multi-tenant office buildings. Sales as an adjunct to the principal use are also permitted.
3. Municipal buildings and uses.
4. Accessory buildings and accessory uses customarily incidental to any of the above principal uses permitted (e.g., child care, food service, and health/workout rooms, and other similar adjunct uses provided within a facility which are intended for sole use of the workers of said facility and not the general public).
5. Uses determined to be similar to the above principal permitted uses in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 1827 and which are not listed below as Special Land Uses Permitted.

SECTION 1201. SPECIAL LAND USES PERMITTED:

The following uses may be permitted under the purview of Section 1818 by the City Council, after site plan review and Public Hearing by the Planning Commission, and subject further to such other reasonable conditions which, in the opinion of the City Council, are necessary to provide adequate protection to the health, safety, general welfare, morals and comfort of the abutting property, neighborhood and the City of Auburn Hills:

1. Retail business conducted wholly within an enclosed building. Such uses shall be accessory to the principal use of the premises. Freestanding retail shopping centers and freestanding restaurants, including drive-through and drive-in restaurants, shall not be permitted in the district.
2. Banks and credit unions with drive-in facilities may be permitted when said drive-in facilities are incidental to the principal function, and subject to the following conditions:
 - A. Drive-up stations shall provide at least five (5) queuing spaces eighteen (18) feet long by ten (10) feet wide from each order/transaction station. The lane containing the queuing spaces shall be separate and distinct from other access drives and maneuvering lanes for parking spaces. The queuing space lane shall have a clear width of ten (10) feet and be physically separated from access drives, maneuvering lanes and parking spaces with a landscaped area eight (8) feet wide with raised curbs on all sides.
 - B. Drive-up windows shall provide at least ten (10) queuing spaces eighteen (18) feet long by ten (10) feet wide from the window. The lane containing the queuing spaces shall be separate and distinct from other access drives and maneuvering lanes for parking spaces. The queuing space lane shall have a clear width of ten (10) feet and be physically separated from access drives, maneuvering lanes and parking spaces with a landscaped area eight (8) feet wide with raised curbs on all sides.
3. New motels, hotels, and conference centers, or the expansion of existing motels, hotels, and conference centers, shall only be permitted in the T&R Technology and Research Districts via Section 1830. Planned Unit Development Option. The decision to approve a Planned Unit Development allowing a motel, hotel, and/or conference center, or the expansion of an existing motel, hotel, and/or conference center, in the T&R Technology and Research Districts shall be at the sole discretion of the City Council, after recommendation from the Planning Commission. An applicant shall not have the right to seek relief from this section to the Zoning Board of Appeals. Motels, hotels, and conference centers approved by the City Council in the T&R Technology and Research Districts before February 17, 2020 shall be considered legally conforming and subject to the Zoning Ordinance standards and conditions in effect at the time of the City approval.
4. Nursery schools, day nurseries and child care centers provided the following conditions are met:
 - A. Such facilities shall be located on major thoroughfares with an existing or proposed right-of-way of one hundred and twenty (120) feet.
 - B. Any area not used for parking in the front yard shall be kept in lawn and landscaped in accordance with Section 1808.
 - C. Outdoor play areas shall be in the side or rear yard in the amount of one hundred (100) square feet for each child cared for, but at least a minimum of one thousand two hundred (1,200) square feet.
 - D. Whenever the school or center abuts a residential district, parking, drop off, and play areas shall be screened with an obscuring six (6) foot fence or wall, four foot six inch (4'6") high berm with landscaping or a twenty (20') foot wide greenbelt landscaped in accordance with Section 1808, or a combination of the above, whichever in the opinion of the Planning Commission and City Council achieves the objective of screening and controlling noise levels.
 - E. Any other conditions which the Planning Commission and City Council deem necessary to assure that the technology and research character of the district shall be maintained.
5. Multiple family residential dwellings shall not be permitted as a Special Land Use, but shall only be permitted via Section 1830. Planned Unit Development Option in the T&R Technology and Research Districts. The decision to approve a Planned Unit Development allowing multiple family residential dwellings in the T&R Technology and Research Districts shall be at the sole discretion of the City Council, after recommendation from the Planning Commission. An applicant shall not have the right to seek relief from this section to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
6. Public, quasi-public, and commercial recreation facilities including parks, golf courses, health and athletic clubs.
7. Clean industrial uses may be permitted as Special Land Uses within the T&R District when conducted entirely within an enclosed building and when consistent with the purpose and intent of the District. Such uses shall comply with the requirements of Section 1202 and shall be subject to the following standards:

- A. Definition and Operational Characteristics. For purposes of this Section, a clean industrial use is a light industrial operation involving the assembly, incidental fabrication, processing, testing, research, development, or production of advanced technology, high-value, precision, or specialized products within an enclosed building. Clean industrial uses shall utilize processes designed to minimize external impacts, including noise, vibration, odors, dust, smoke, emissions, outdoor storage, and truck traffic. A clean industrial use may constitute the principal use of a site and need not be accessory to an office, research and development, or corporate headquarters use. A clean industrial use does not include a Data Center, as defined in Section 1837.
 - B. Site and Building Design Standards. Buildings and sites occupied by clean industrial uses shall maintain the high-quality character and development standards of the T&R District through superior site design, landscaping, greenspace, and architecture. Building elevations visible from public rights-of-way, private road easements, or adjacent properties shall incorporate high-quality materials, glazing, and architectural features consistent with a corporate, research, or technology-oriented appearance.
 - C. Transportation and Freight Limitations. Truck traffic associated with clean industrial uses shall be limited to deliveries and shipments customary and incidental to the operation of the use. Warehouses, distribution centers, fulfillment centers, freight terminals, logistics facilities, and similar uses whose primary function is the storage, distribution, or movement of goods are prohibited, regardless of whether such facilities include office, corporate, or administrative space. Uses that are dependent upon high-volume truck traffic or intensive freight movement are likewise prohibited.
8. Vertical Take-Off and Landing fields (VTOL), and Heliports shall be permitted subject to the following conditions:
- A. The minimum site size for heliports shall be one (1) acre, unless the location or other circumstances would dictate a smaller site, and shall conform in dimension to the requirements of the FAA.
 - B. Any petitioner for a heliport shall prepare a written statement to City Council addressing at least the following factors:
 - 1. Minimum obstructions in the approach and departure area.
 - 2. Minimum disturbance from noise and desirable location with regard to adjacent land use.
 - 3. Access to surface transportation.
 - 4. Safety precautions for the control of pedestrian and vehicular circulation in relation to the heliport.
9. Wireless communication facilities in accordance with the standards and requirements listed in Section 1832, except for co-location applications which are subject to the administrative review provisions listed in Section 1832, Item K.
10. Vehicular evaluating tracks, provided the following conditions are met:
- A. The track shall be screened from public view in accordance with Section 1808.
 - B. Any outdoor lighting shall be shielded in compliance with Section 1810.
 - C. The noise limitations and other requirements of Section 1807, shall be adhered to.
 - D. Adequate safeguards shall be provided to prevent the trespass of animals onto the track.
11. Outside storage of vehicles only when the vehicles are accessory to the principal use of the premises. The vehicle storage shall relate to the retrofit, manufacture, or testing of said vehicles. Space for said outside storage of vehicles shall be provided in addition to required parking. Such areas shall be screened from adjacent public right-of-ways and properties with a minimum twenty-five (25) foot landscaped greenbelt with staggered eight (8) foot evergreen trees. Alternative screening techniques within the minimum twenty-five (25) foot landscaped greenbelt shall be at the discretion of the City Council, after recommendation from the Planning Commission. *Exception: The Director of Community Development may approve the outside storage of vehicles only when the vehicles are accessory to the principal use of the premises and provided the total site area is no less than four-hundred (400) contiguous acres.*
12. Colleges, universities, and other such institutions of higher learning, both public and private, provided the property is located on the land bounded by M-59 and Featherstone Road, between I-

75 and Squirrel Road. In addition to requirements for signs permitted within Section 1811. Signs, the following additional sign standards shall apply:

- A. Two (2) automatic changeable copy signs may be permitted and shall be considered as a separate special land use under the purview of Section 1818, provided the following conditions are met:
 1. The sign shall meet the standards of Section 1811.3(C)1 for automatic changeable copy signs, with the following exceptions:
 - a. The sign may be increased in height from ten (10) feet to twelve (12) feet and in width from twelve (12) feet to twenty (20) feet.
 - b. The LED copy area of the sign may be increased from sixty (60) to eighty (80) square feet in size.
 - c. The signs shall be setback a minimum of one (1) foot from the road right-of-way and adjacent property lines.
 - d. The total sign area on each face of the sign shall not exceed two hundred (200) square feet.
 - B. Two (2) signs incorporated in decorative landscape walls may be permitted and shall be considered as a separate special land use under the purview of Section 1818, provided the following conditions are met:
 1. The signs may only be permitted along Squirrel Road and Featherstone Road.
 2. The height of the sign shall not exceed eight (8) feet.
 3. The signs shall be setback a minimum of one (1) foot from the road right-of-way and adjacent property lines.
 4. The total sign area of each sign may not exceed two hundred (200) square feet.
 - C. One (1) accessory identification pylon sign may be permitted on the property adjacent to an interstate highway and shall be considered as a separate special land use under the purview of Section 1818, provided the following conditions are met:
 1. The height of the sign shall not exceed sixty-five (65) feet.
 2. The sign shall be setback a minimum of thirty (30) feet from the road right-of-way and adjacent property lines.
 3. The total sign area permitted on each face of the sign shall not exceed two hundred (200) square feet.
 - D. The signs described in this subsection A-C may be submitted in a single special land use permit application package or in parts.
13. Accessory buildings and accessory uses customarily incidental to any of the above special land uses permitted.
 14. Special land uses determined to be similar to the above special land uses in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 1828. The application for Special Land Use Approval will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria in addition to the requirements of Section 1818. Will the proposed development:
 1. Have an adverse effect on the ambient noise level for a significant number of people?
 2. Have an adverse visual or aesthetic effect?
 3. Adversely divide or disrupt an established community, or divide existing uses?
 4. Have an adverse effect on areas of unique interest or scenic beauty?
 5. Destroy or detract from important recreational areas?
 6. Interfere with important wildlife breeding, nesting, or feeding grounds?
 7. Significantly increase air or water pollution?
 8. Adversely affect the water table of the area?
 9. Cause excessive congestion on existing ground transportation facilities?
 10. Adversely affect the Master Land Use Plan for the area and the City?

SECTION 1202. REQUIRED CONDITIONS:

Principal and Special Land Uses Permitted shall be subject to the following conditions, as applicable:

1. Building Height:
Any building over four (4) stories shall require the approval of the City Council in accordance with Section 1818. Any mechanical equipment on the roof of the building, and penthouses on the

building, may not be more than twenty (20) feet in height. Mechanical equipment and penthouses are not counted as a story for purposes of this Section.

2. Setbacks:

- A. Buildings containing office uses, light industrial uses or research-related lab and/or assembly operations, or any mixture of said uses, shall be setback a minimum of fifty (50) feet from any public right-of-way. Minimum side and rear yard setbacks specified in Section 1701 for I-1, Light Industrial uses shall be observed.
- B. Buildings four (4) stories or taller shall provide a minimum front, side, and rear setback equal to the height of the building.
- C. Nursery schools, day nurseries, and child care centers shall observe the minimum setback requirements specified in Section 1701 for the B-2, General Business district.
- D. Hotels, motels, and conference centers shall be set back a minimum of fifty (50) feet from any public right-of-way. Minimum side and rear yard setbacks shall be equal to the height of the building.
- E. Public, quasi-public, and commercial recreation buildings shall be setback a minimum of fifty (50) feet from any public right-of-way. Minimum side and rear yard setbacks specified in Section 1701 for B-2, General Business uses shall be observed.
- F. All buildings shall be located at least one hundred (100) feet from any residential development.
- G. All residential uses shall observe the applicable minimum setback requirements specified in Section 1700.

3. Landscaping and Buffers:

- A. Landscaping shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of Section 1808.
- B. A minimum twenty-five (25) foot landscaped greenbelt shall be provided abutting public right-of-ways and private road easements in accordance with Section 1808 and kept free of parking.
- C. A minimum twenty-five (25) foot landscaped greenbelt with staggered eight (8) foot evergreen trees shall be provided between residential and non-residential uses. Alternative screening techniques within the minimum twenty-five (25) foot landscaped greenbelt shall be at the discretion of the City Council, after recommendation from the Planning Commission.
- D. For each one (1) story increase over four (4) stories, an additional three (3) feet of greenbelt shall be added to the greenbelt required by Section 1805 and Section 1808. This provision shall not apply to the twenty-five (25) foot required greenbelt.

4. Outside Storage:

No outside storage shall be permitted, with the exception of outside storage of vehicles as provided in Section 1201, Item 11.

5. Off-Street Parking:

Off-street parking shall be provided in accordance with Sections 1804 and 1805.

6. Cross-Access Interior Drives:

Cross-access interior drives, or drives that will allow vehicles to move from one site to another without entering the frontage street, may be required.

7. Off-Street Loading:

Off-street loading space shall be provided in accordance with Section 1701, Item p and Section 1806, with the exception that office uses shall provide paved loading space at a ratio of ten (10) square feet per front foot of building.

8. Performance Standards:

All development shall adhere to the Performance Standards specified in Section 1807.

9. Protection of Natural Amenities:

Natural terrain and amenities shall be protected and preserved to the greatest extent possible.

10. Site Plan Review:

Site plan review and approval is required for all development within the District in conformance with Section 1815.

11. Freestanding Lighting:

Freestanding light poles shall not exceed forty (40) feet in height and lighting shall be shielded onto the site so as to not become a nuisance to adjacent areas. For purposes of clarification, the height of light poles illuminating outdoor recreation facilities permitted via Section 1201, Item 6 may

exceed forty (40) feet in height at the discretion of the City Council upon Special Land Use review and approval of said use.

SECTION 1203. AREA AND BULK REQUIREMENTS

See Article XVII, Schedule of Regulations, for additional requirements limiting the height and bulk of buildings and not in conflict with this Article XII.

(Amended: 3-06-00 per Ordinance No. 658)
(Amended: 11-11-02 per Ordinance No. 712)
(Amended: 10-06-03 per Ordinance No. 726)
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(Amended: 2-17-20 per Ordinance No. 913)
(Amended: 3-18-24 per Ordinance No. 938)
(Amended: 3-17-25 per Ordinance No. 946)
(Amended: 8-24-26 per Ordinance No. 951)