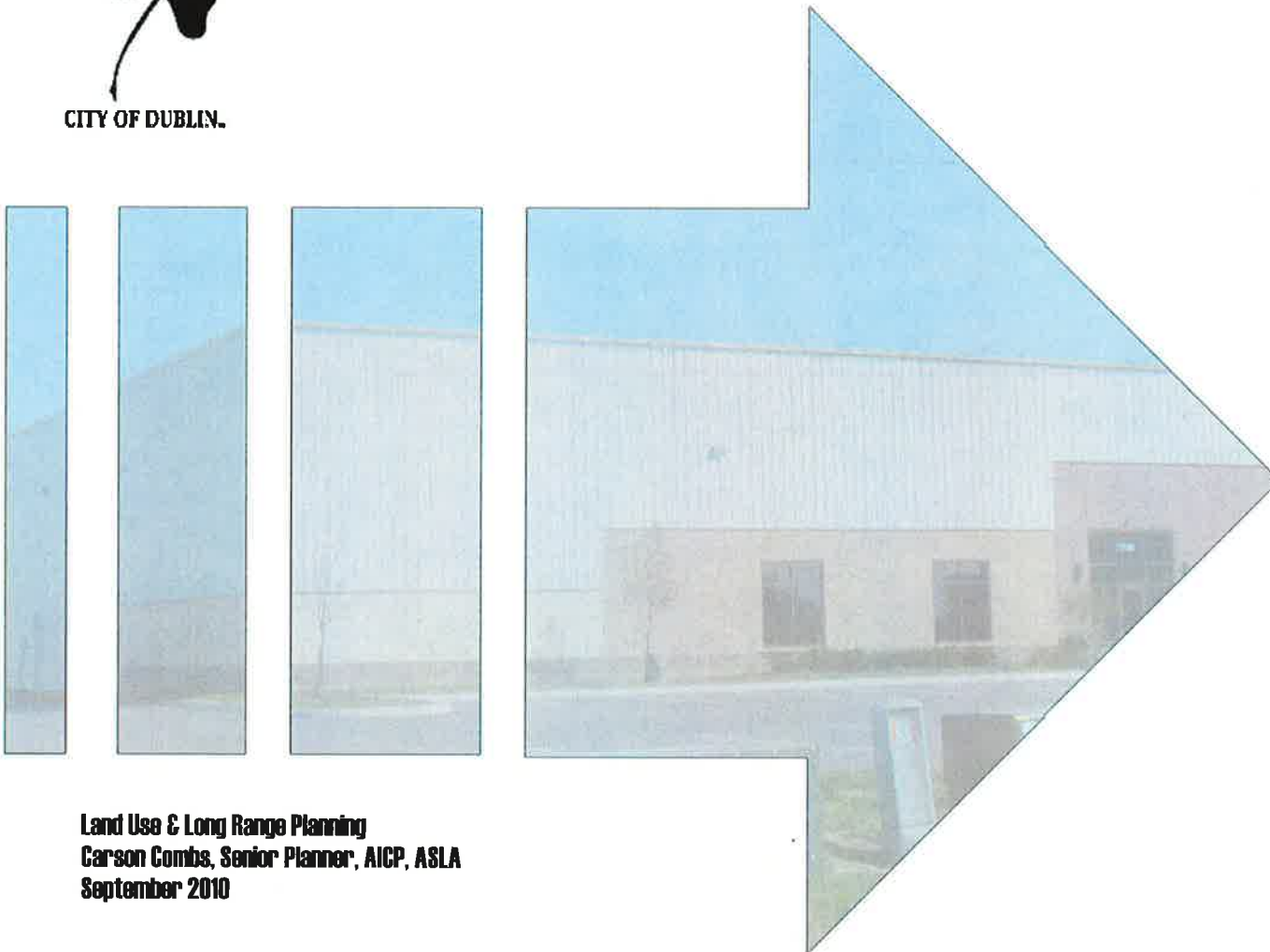


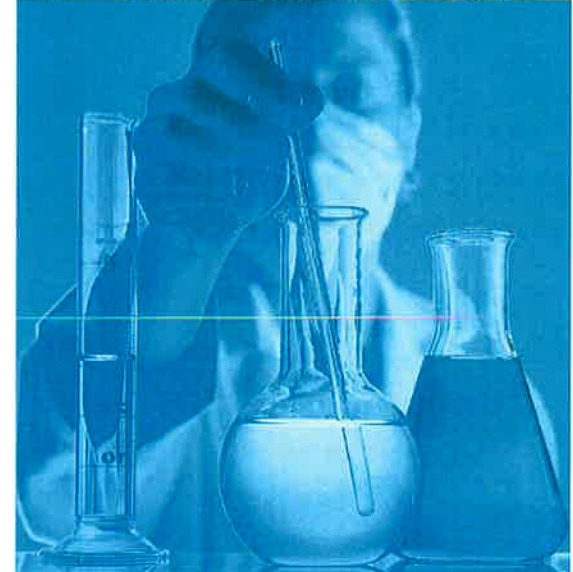
# An Industrial Facelift: Modifying Dublin's zoning districts to meet changing demands



CITY OF DUBLIN.



Land Use & Long Range Planning  
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## **Introduction & Background:**

Today's economic environment in Central Ohio is becoming increasingly competitive, and the need to understand the changing needs of businesses and the development community is even more critical. While business operations and technology constantly evolves, the basic framework of Dublin's zoning code dates back to at least 1970 and closely mirrors that of many township codes. Dublin's industrial categories, as well as other zoning districts within the City, also implement a land use classification system developed prior to World War II.

The City of Dublin has historically focused on light industrial uses that provide a clean environment with little impact on surrounding uses. Recent trends further emphasize the need for flexible industrial space that can be easily modified as business models grow and companies stretch to meet growing product or service demands. The need for additional office locations and space for mobile research activities further indicates that Dublin's code with its outdated industrial classes is not adequately prepared to meet expected market demands and regional competition.

The changing nature of industrial uses requires a code that encourages flexibility for business, while providing a development style compatible with the city's desired character. Updating and streamlining Dublin's industrial districts can encourage compatible uses near neighborhoods, provide greater development flexibility that will encourage business activity, and establish opportunities to satisfy important niches of the office, research and light industrial sectors.

## **Issues Identification:**

### *Dublin's Aging Zoning*

Today's industrial districts date back to 1970, when the Village of Dublin enacted a new zoning code and map. Ordinance 21-70 created the Restricted Industrial (RI), Limited Industrial (LI) and General Industrial (GI) Districts that are still in use today. Since that time, only minor modifications have been made to address park and rides, pet care and telecommunication issues.

While offices have been a long-standing desired use throughout Dublin, industrial property owners were forced in the past to rezone property to allow such uses. Based on the vacancies of previous research facilities such as Adria Labs, minor code modifications were made to encourage the leasing of such vacant facilities. In January 1999, City Council passed an ordinance changing the Restricted Industrial (RI) District to include office uses within the Code as a condition use as a "temporary fix." (1) Today, Buckeye Check Cashing continues to function as an office use at the former Adria/Pharmacia site after obtaining a conditional use approval and eventually receiving a zoning amendment to a Planned District. Other uses not specifically addressed by the Code were also accommodated over time in some districts through the conditional use process. Research also indicates that no less than 30 conditional use and variance requests have been made for other industrial properties.

Like the City's many industrial districts, the Office, Laboratory and Research (OLR) District was established as part of the 1970 Zoning Code and has also changed little since. In May 1973, Ordinance 21-73 narrowly modified the OLR District to permit employee training and on-site lodging for a specific telecommunication use on Blazer Parkway. This district then remained unchanged until 2000 when auto-oriented facilities were added as a conditional use. The resulting Code changes to consider auto-oriented uses like drive-thrus and auto repair do not match with the character of the district, which is typified by offices, large corporate campuses and clean industrial uses.



*Above: The OCLC campus is a significant office/conference center that does not match with its industrial zoning. (photo: KSA historic archives)*

### *The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)*

The SIC Code is a system developed during the 1930s by the federal government to establish a uniform way to classify the nation's industrial and manufacturing uses. The SIC was last updated by the Bureau of the Budget in 1987, and "was revised periodically to reflect the economy's changing industry composition and organization.(2)" Dublin's zoning code, however, references the 1954 manual and the adopted 1963 supplement, despite many later revisions.

Adherence to the SIC as part of zoning code uses creates a very rigid use classification that emphasizes traditional manufacturing over today's constantly changing service-oriented economy and newly created uses. A system so complex to describe national-scale industry makes the delineation of uses within a zoning code very difficult. Subcategories under major headings may also include duplication, making the administration of today's uses very difficult.



*Left: The Standard Industrial Classification of uses creates a very rigid structure that does not meet today's planning and development needs.*

### *Dublin's Changing Environment*

While Dublin's industrial districts have remained constant for at least four decades, the city has undergone transformative change from a small rural village to a bustling edge city. Even though industrial uses have been traditionally downplayed or even discouraged, the growing economic importance of technology and research-related uses necessitates the ability to provide capable sites. The inclusion of office and laboratory components as a conditional use makes no economic sense when laboratories have become extremely mobile and office uses are generally considered as visually, functionally and fiscally desirable.

Development requirements within Dublin's industrial and research districts also create significant administrative issues (see Table 1). Most industrial structures within Dublin were constructed prior to annexation and have resulted in many nonconforming issues. While the industrial zones tend to have a hierarchy of use intensity that increases from RI through GI, general setbacks and development requirements are not similarly coordinated. Complex equations to determine side yard and rear yard setbacks at face value acknowledge a need for increased separation as structures get larger, but are difficult to apply and result in variance requests. While this sliding scale approach makes sense for new construction, its implementation creates future problems for companies who are trying to expand older sites and for which the city would like to retain and grow successful companies.

**Table 1: Current Dublin Industrial Standards**

|    | Side Yard  | Rear Yard  | Lot Cover |
|----|--|--|-----------|
| RI | 1/3(height + depth)<br>Min 15' interior<br>Min 25' residential         | 1/3(height + width)<br>Min 15' interior<br>Min 25' residential         | 70%       |
| LI | 1/3(height + depth)<br>Min 50' residential                             | 1/3(height + width)<br>Min 50' residential<br>Min 50' planned district | 70%       |
| GI | 1/3 (height + width)<br>Min 100' residential<br>Min 100' plan district | 1/3 (height + depth)<br>Min 100' residential<br>Min 100' plan district | 70%       |

*Comparisons & Current Development Trends*

An online review of five other comparable suburbs indicates a much more simplified list of districts that provide straight-forward setback requirements (see Table 2). While the designated setbacks may vary slightly depending upon the municipality, the idea of setting a clearly defined number is apparent. The limited number of districts also lends itself to simplicity. In contrast, Hilliard with its significant industrial, manufacturing and warehousing base is the one sample which includes three industrial classifications similar to Dublin's Code. The only other identified anomaly is Worthington's extremely stringent lot coverage requirement.

A review of other cities also reveals that most industrial zones permit offices, research and laboratory uses. This deficiency in the Dublin Code provides a distinct regional economic disadvantage. The resulting pattern places Dublin out of an important market that serves small companies that can grow over time into much larger employers.

**...Dublin's industrial districts were established in 1970 and the Code has changed little since, while Dublin exploded into a major suburban employment core.**

**Table 2: Other Regional Industrial Approaches**

|             | Districts  | Side Yard   | Rear Yard              | Lot Cover  |
|-------------|------------|---|------------------------|------------|
| New Albany  | LI         | Min 25'<br>Min 50' res                              | Min 25'<br>Min 50' res | 75%        |
| Westerville | Industrial | Min 15'<br>Min 50' res                              | Min 15'<br>Min 50' res | 85%        |
| Worthington | I-1<br>I-2 | Min 30'<br>Min 30'                                  | Min 20'<br>Min 20'     | 35%<br>40% |
| Gahanna     | RI         | Min 25' (+ 1'<br>for each ft<br>>40)<br>Min 50' res | Min 30'                | NA         |

**Solutions**

*Be Strict, but Flexible*

Updating uses within the Dublin Zoning Code will provide the opportunity to eliminate many undesirable uses that are part of an outdated use classification. Focusing on clean manufacturing and light industry will better encourage compatible development. Uses common in the 1940s such as furriers and howitzer plants, while comical, do not match Dublin's existing and future development expectations.

In addition to greater limitations on industrial activity, the need to be more flexible with other uses is also necessary to maintain site selection choices and Dublin's overall desirability. Permitting offices, research and laboratory uses and flex space within the city's industrial districts will provide greater opportunity for high quality development that will generate revenue and successfully coexist near other districts.

Flexibility must also include clear development regulations for site development that are easy to interpret and allow the flexibility for Dublin's many existing industrial structures to be modified. The

capacity for small companies to expand operations within currently leased space is very important to ensure that Dublin can encourage entrepreneurial activity and work with companies to stay within the City as success results in expanding operations.



*Above: Architecture should be attractive and flexible to accommodate a broad range of uses and internal configurations.*

#### *Create an Integrated Industrial District*

Dublin's three existing industrial districts are applied on a limited basis and provide a very unclear relationship between use intensity and development intensity. The integration of industrial activity into one district would make regulatory oversight more streamlined and upfront. Any new district should clearly define expectations and attract more traditional light industrial uses and technology/research activity that will diversify Dublin's economy while providing an opportunity for more affordable and flexible space for start-up companies and home-grown businesses that will become tomorrow's economic engine. A new "Flexible" industrial district can be used to achieve these many goals and enhance the marketability and identity of Dublin's industrial core, based largely along Shier Rings Road.

**...standards that are clear, concise and result in streamlined processes will improve Dublin's economic competitiveness.**

#### *Revamp the Office, Laboratory & Research District*

Properties in Dublin within the OLR District provide a greatly untapped potential for future development within the city's core. Despite major uses such as Ashland Chemical and Nationwide, significant properties remain available for development. Given these high profile buildings and a valuable location within I-270, significant opportunity exists to attract higher intensity uses that are less industrial-focused. Greater office and research components with adequate support uses and environmentally-friendly design techniques could make this area of the city between Tuttle Crossing and Bridge Street unique and highly desired.



*Left: Office and research space can utilize new green techniques that can create a unique identity.*

#### *Use the Economic Advancement Zone (EAZ) when Opportunity Knocks*

Undeveloped areas to the west of Avery Road between Shier Rings and Post roads provide a distinct opportunity for future growth. The implementation of an Innovation (ID) District that permits administrative approval of research projects dependent upon grant funding, quick permitting and fast construction will address an additional sector of the economy that can augment Dublin's existing research base. With adequate infrastructure planning and provision, lands near the US 33/Post Road

interchange can provide a "quick-to-build" environment that can make Dublin a more attractive location for site selectors and special projects.

#### *Coordinate efforts through the COIC Umbrella*

As a general marketing and development concept to promote Dublin's employment core, the Central Ohio Innovation Corridor provides an important opportunity to align development regulations with the goals of long range planning, economic development initiatives and the Community Plan. Every opportunity should be sought to clearly identify areas where the application of use districts and processes can be consolidated and simplified for greater marketability.

### **Summary**

With a significant amount of undeveloped land and future potential, Dublin's zoning districts provide a potential hindrance to future growth. In a time of nationwide slowdown, the opportunity to update Dublin's regulations in preparation for an economic upturn will never be better. The adage that "simple is better" has been proven time again. A three-pronged approach to zoning that is more concise and targeted can provide for an improved development environment that stands out from other communities:

1. Integrate properties into one flexible industrial district that eliminates undesirable uses and provides greater opportunity for office, research and flex space with a focus on small and mid-size users;
2. Modify the Office Laboratory and Research (OLR) District standards to better encourage higher intensity office and research uses with support services that will foster a more unique environment for larger users; and
3. Complete plans and adjust standards for the Economic Advancement Zone (EAZ) to encourage fast-track research and development opportunities through the administrative Innovation Districts

The combination of these three elements will comprehensively attract quick-turnaround projects, provide a segment for traditional industrial space that can focus on serving flexible space needs and growing companies and an OLR area that can attract larger, traditional office and research development. These elements will together create a full range of development opportunity that can maintain Dublin's status as the desired location in Central Ohio for business development.

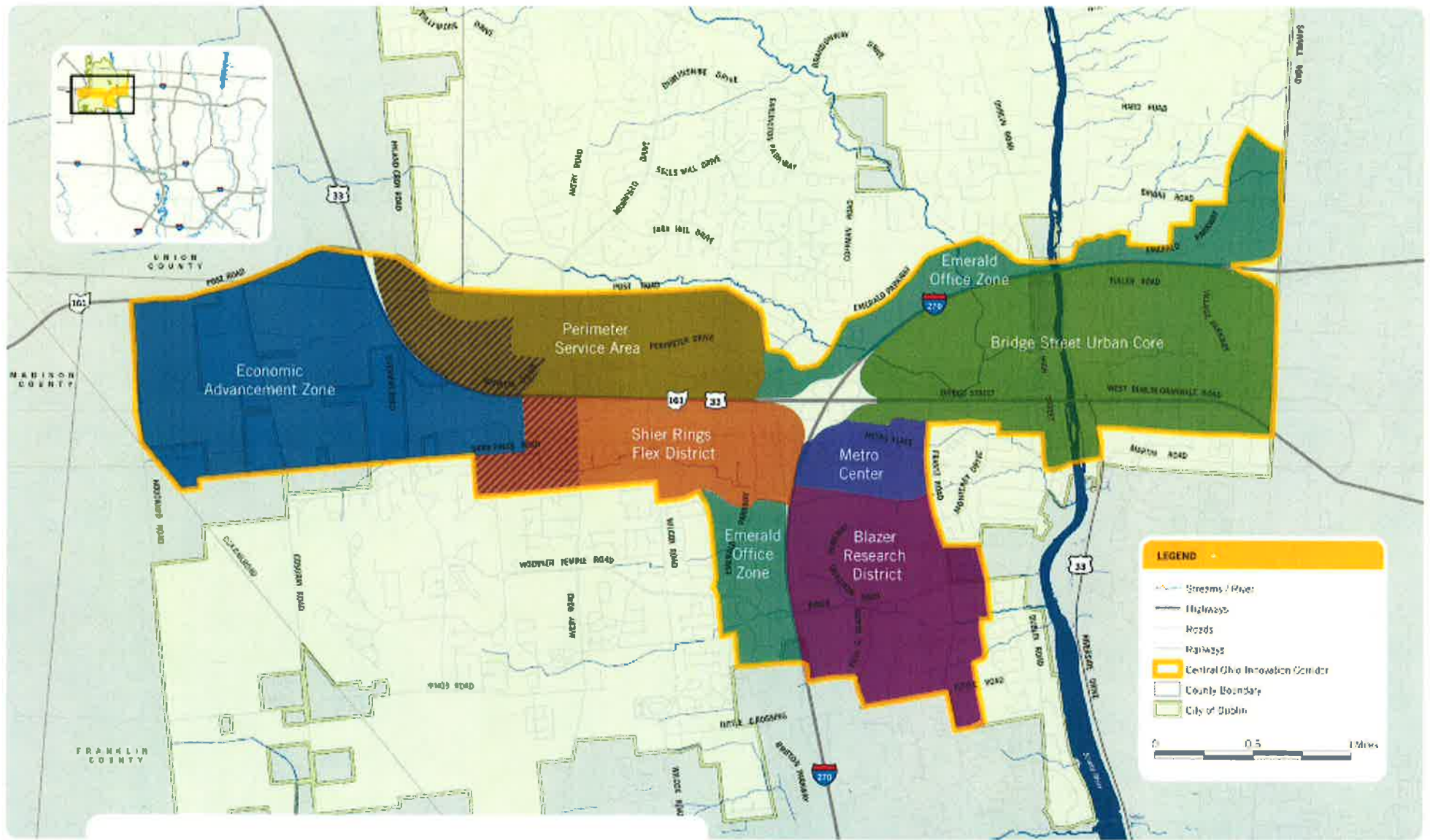
### **Works Cited**

- (1) (December 3, 1998). Dublin Planning and Zoning Minutes. "Case #98-124ADM – Restricted Industrial District."
- (2) Pearce, Esther. (July 10, 1957) "History of the Industrial Classification." Office of Statistical Standards, Bureau of the Budget, US Executive Office of the President.

### **Related Dublin Ordinances**

|             |                                       |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ord 21-70   | Dublin Zoning Code                    |
| Ord 21-73   | Use Modifications to the OLR District |
| Ord 147-97  | Wireless Telecommunication            |
| Ord. 133-98 | Office Uses within RI Districts       |
| Ord. 57-07  | Wireless Telecommunications           |
| Ord. 96-07  | Pet Care, Park and Rides & Other Uses |





## Central Ohio Innovation Corridor



**The Central Ohio Innovation Corridor can provide a broad range of site selection opportunities from small industrial sites along Shier Rings Road to large office/research in the Blazer Parkway area to ready-to-build research locations west of U.S. 33.**