

High-tech “industrial”, battery safety and performance testing, incentives and predictable approvals

Why UL Solutions and why Auburn Hills? This is a useful example for communities that are cautious about industrial development, because it shows what a lot of “modern industrial” has become: controlled, high-value technical work that supports manufacturing, without looking or operating like a traditional heavy plant. UL’s Auburn Hills facility is built specifically for advanced battery testing and engineering, which is the kind of work EV and energy-storage companies need to move products through validation and certification.

It’s also a practical municipal case study because the project ran through a familiar set of levers: industrial land in a tech/industrial park, site plan approvals with site constraints (trees, access, emergency response), and a local and state incentive package.

Asset Class: advanced battery testing laboratory. This is “industrial” in the modern sense: a facility that enables manufacturing at a large scale by reducing safety risk, accelerating product development, and meeting compliance requirements for batteries used in vehicles and stationary storage.

Tools Used:



2. Master Planning for Industrial ●○○



9. Site Design ●●○



10. The Development Review Process ●●○



13. Brownfields and Incentives ●●○

AUBURN HILLS, MI

UL Solutions

Site Context and Facility Details

The lab is located at 4322 New Energy Way within Auburn Hills' broader tech/ industrial park environment. The site is behind an existing TÜV SÜD facility, accessed via a private road off Dutton Road, with additional access planning tied to Bald Mountain Road for emergency response.

There were several items that came up during the approval process, which other municipalities could learn from.

- Emergency-only gated access from Bald Mountain Rd with a Knox box arrangement for Fire Department entry
- Perimeter screening added as part of the project approach
- A bike path diversion onto the property to preserve larger trees as part of the review process
- Operational and circulation concerns were raised publicly and the developer responded and took these seriously
- Groundbreaking occurred in June 2023, and UL held a grand opening in August 2024

By the Numbers

- Building size:** 83,061 square feet
- Projected investment:** Up to \$72.7 million total capital investment
- Projected jobs:** 61 new jobs
- Local abatement basis:** \$40,404,000 under PA 198
- State support:** \$1.0 million Michigan Business Development Program performance-based grant; \$500k Jobs Ready Michigan grant; 50 percent Alternative State Essential Services Assessment Exemption up to 5 years.

Site Location: 4322 New Energy Way, Auburn Hills, MI 48326



Planning Policies and Local Partnerships

The City of Auburn Hills' role was decisive.

The City provided the basic preconditions: an appropriate industrial context, a review pathway that could handle a technical facility, and enough clarity to keep the entitlement process predictable.

Design and operations still mattered.

Even for a lab, the City and developer worked through emergency response access, internal circulation, and site interface issues—including trail alignment and trees. This allowed the City to manage impacts while reaping the benefits of industrial development.

The project was also a competition.

State sources explicitly frame the project as competing with other states, and the incentive stack reflects that reality: local abatement and state grants. Because of the financing package, UL Solutions selected the Auburn Hills site over competing locations in both Indiana and Ohio, which featured lower upfront company investment.

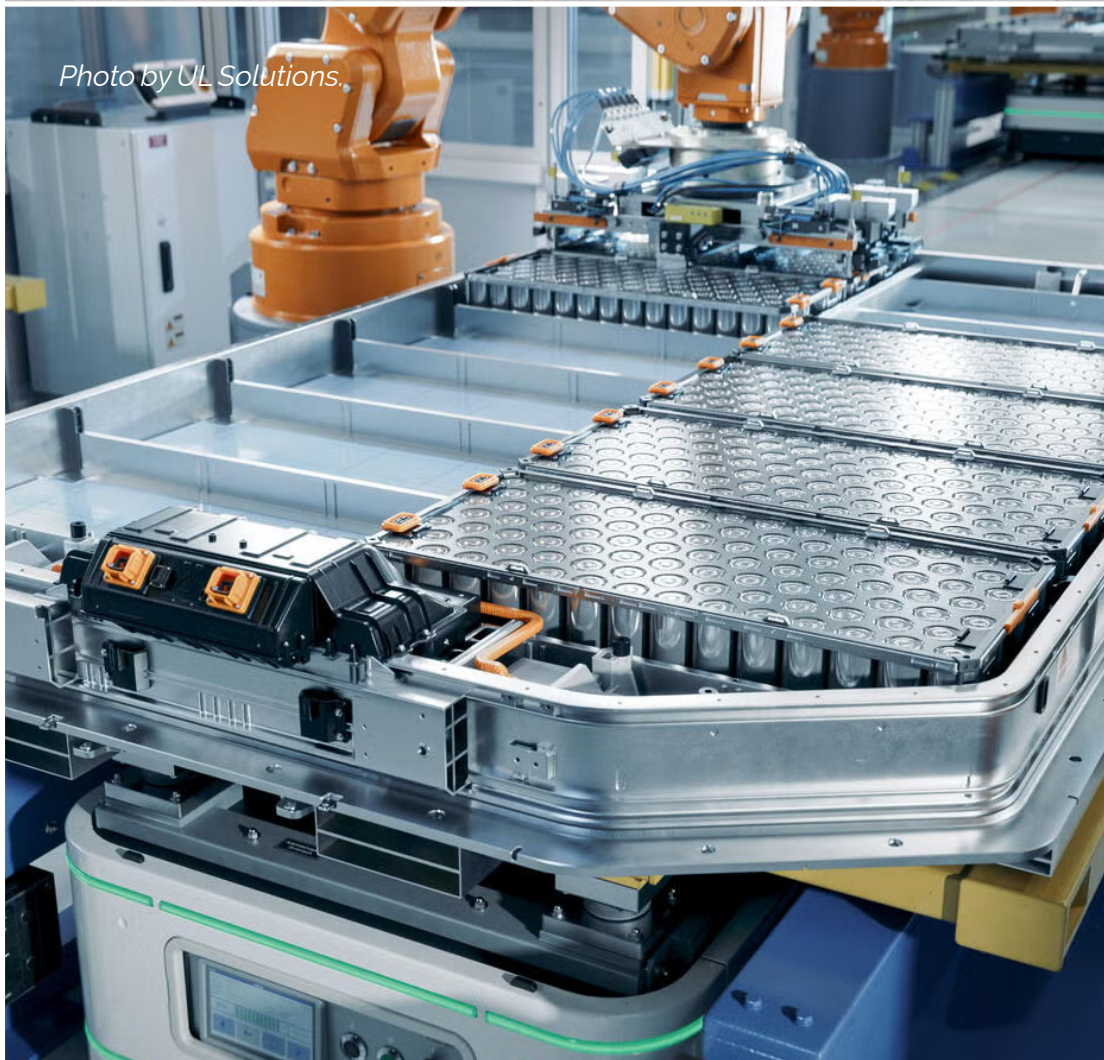




Photo by Lisa Passalacqua, City of Auburn Hills.

What lessons can others take from UL Solutions?

Photo by UL Solutions.

Industrial development isn't just factories anymore.

If your community only plans for warehouses or heavy manufacturing, it can miss the “support infrastructure” that advanced manufacturing depends on.

Predictable approvals are an economic development tool.

The City of Auburn Hills shares [application checklists](#), tax incentive resources, and information tailored to exemptions for industrial facilities online. City staff are also

available for pre-application meetings before submitting site plans. This transparent and collaborative approach to development proposals lets potential applicants know the City is open for business.

Emergency access and operational design belong in the conversation early.

Technical facilities still raise real questions, which can be answered through design requirements instead of political drama.

Incentives are often about competitiveness, not generosity.

The public record is clear—the incentive package helped Michigan compete against contending sites in Ohio and Indiana.