

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT**

**For Planning Commission Meeting of February 23, 2023**

**SUBJECT: University of Michigan Credit Union (UMCU) -2929 Plymouth Road Special Exception Use, Land Division and Site Plan  
File Nos. LD22-2004 & SP22-2015**

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission, after hearing all interested persons and reviewing all relevant information, finds the petition to substantially meet the standards in Chapter 55 (Unified Development Code), Section 5.29.5 (Special Exceptions), approves the UMCU Special Exception Use for a three-lane drive-thru bank facility with the following condition:

This approval is based on the following findings:

1. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Comprehensive Plan of office uses in the area;
2. The proposed use will not adversely impact traffic, pedestrians, bicyclists, circulation, or road intersections based on the location. The proposed use is consistent with other surrounding uses' traffic impact.

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby approves the UMCU Site Plan, subject to 1) demolishing the existing structure on site; 2) dividing the subject parcel from the parent parcel; and 3) a landscape modification for the location of street trees outside the public right-of-way as required in 5.20.10 of Chapter 55.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the special exception use be **approved** because the proposed use is of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the zoning district in which the site is situated; and the location and size of the proposed use, its nature and intensity, the site layout and access, and effect of the proposed use on public services would not be hazardous or inconvenient to the neighborhood nor unduly conflict with the normal traffic or the neighborhood.

Staff recommends that the site plan be **approved** because, if the proposed conditions are satisfied, it would comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations.

Staff recommends that this landscape modification be **approved** because the modifications are consistent with the intent of the ordinance.

## LOCATION

The site is located on the north side of Plymouth Road, west of Prairie Street (Northeast Area, Millers Creek Watershed, Ward 2).

## SITE PLAN

This development proposes demolishing the existing two-story, 26,330-square foot office building, and constructing a one-story, 4,790-sq ft bank building with three drive-thru lanes. The approval of this project is subject to dividing the 1.73-acre parent parcel into a .99-acre eastern parcel housing the bank and the .74-acre western parcel remaining vacant.

This site will be accessed from one existing curb cut off Prairie Street and one relocated curb cut off Plymouth Road. The existing curb cut off Plymouth Road is to be closed and shifted approximately 100 feet to the east and be shared to serve the future development to the west. A one-way entry into the three drive-thru lanes is proposed near the eastern Prairie Street curb cut with egress to either Plymouth Road or Prairie Street.

A total of 22 surface parking spaces are proposed along the perimeter of the main entrance drives with an additional four deferred spaces installed if needed in the future on the north side of the site. A total of six EV-I (Installed) and four EV-R (Ready) spaces are proposed. Four hoop style bicycle racks totaling eight spaces are also proposed at the northwest corner of the building entrance. One solid waste enclosure is proposed at the northwestern portion of the site and includes trash and recycling dumpsters.

One-hundred-year storm water detention is required and provided under the northern parking lot area. Runoff will be collected through catch basins in the parking lot and yard basins on the sides of the building leading to the underground chamber. Portions of the drive-thru loop and Prairie Street access drive will flow into the rain garden located at the center of the site. An overflow structure in the rain garden will allow for ponding water to overflow into the underground detention chambers. An outlet pipe will discharge water from the chambers into an outlet control structure, which then slowly releases storm water into the existing city storm sewer in Prairie Street.

A 15-ft wide conflicting land use buffer (CLUB) is required along the northern property line to screen from the residential uses. This CLUB width is currently 30 feet and remains the same width.

A landscape modification has been submitted to plant two street trees on private property fronting this site due to the location of the existing sidewalk and utilities in the Plymouth Rd. public right-of-way. These two proposed street trees are to be planted on the north side of Plymouth Rd within eight feet of the r.o.w. and combined with the two existing street trees to meet street tree requirements.

Two landmark Honey Locust trees are proposed to be removed due to the Plymouth Road curb cut relocation approximately 100 feet to the east. Mitigation trees are located along the north property line.

Construction is proposed in one phase.

### **SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE**

The proposed bank includes a three-lane drive-thru facility, which requires Special Exception Use approval per the Office (O) zoning district requirements. The drive-thru lanes may not be located between a street and the principal building, and the vehicular circulation to enter and exit the facility may not impair the general vehicular circulation on the site or pedestrian circulation on and off the site. The drive-thru lanes are accessed from the one-way entrance drive off the Prairie Street entrance or from Plymouth Road by looping around to the drive-thru entrance. The petitioner submitted justification for this drive-thru and is attached.

The three proposed drive-thru lanes are located on the north side of the proposed bank building providing the required screening from Plymouth Rd. Petitioner responses are in regular font and Staff responses to the special exception use requirements are in *italics* below.

- a. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Master Plan.

The current Northeast Area Future Land Use Map within the City of Ann Arbor Master Plan Land Use Element identifies this parcel for office. The proposed development as a credit union is consistent with the current zoning classification (O: Office) and the future land use designation. The credit union is intended to serve the surrounding residential neighborhood and will also provide convenient access along the Plymouth Road corridor. Economically viable financial institutions currently include drive-through facilities for their customers.

*The Master Plan: Land Use Element recommends office uses for this site. The Office zoning allows bank drive-thrus as a special exception use.*

- b. Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity.

Businesses along Plymouth Rd corridor serve local neighborhoods as well as a more regional population due to the proximity to the US-23 freeway interchange. The proposed credit union is similar in character to the adjacent businesses, and the proposed drive-through facility is consistent with several other drive-thru facilities in the vicinity including the PNC Bank site immediately adjacent to this parcel to the west. Additionally, the unique circumstances of the past two years have led to a dramatic increase in the demand for goods and services provided by curbside or remote facilities. Even today, many people still prefer to limit the amount of time they spend indoors in public places and choose to utilize remote services when available. As such, drive thru facilities that allow customers to have secure access to their accounts from their vehicles are in integral part of the credit union's business operations and a critical component of this project. Drive-thru transactions at the credit union are limited in scope and are typically completed in less time and with fewer cars queuing in line than what is generally seen with other drive-thru uses such as restaurants.

*Numerous banks with drive thrus exist in the Plymouth Rd corridor. This project replaces a vacant office building.*

- c. Will be consistent with the general character of the neighborhood considering population density, design, scale, and bulk; and the intensity and character of activity.

The proposed credit union and drive-thru is consistent with existing financial institutions and restaurants along the Plymouth Rd corridor with drive-thru facilities.

*The bank use is consistent with the neighborhood in that the proposed project is similar in size and use to other bank and commercial uses in the area.*

- d. Will not be detrimental to the use, peaceful enjoyment, economic value or Development of neighboring property, or the neighborhood area in general.

The proposed credit union and drive-thru are consistent with drive-thru immediately west of this site. The proposed building is located on the southern half of the site, farther from the adjacent neighborhood than the existing building. Additionally, existing landscaping will be supplemented with additional trees and shrubs to screen the proposed credit union and drive-thru from the adjacent residential uses as well as from the Prairie Street r.o.w.

*The proposed three-lane drive thru is located behind the building and hidden from view along Plymouth Rd. The anticipated number of new trips to this site is minimal when compared with the existing office when occupied.*

- e. Will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment.

This proposed redevelopment project will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment. Landmark trees are the only regulated natural feature located on this site. Two landmark trees and one street tree will be removed as part of the proposed project, and mitigation trees will be provided on site for the three existing trees to be removed.

*This site is already developed, and the proposal is to demolish the existing structure and construct a bank facility with drive thru lanes*

### **SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING**

|       | LAND USE                   | ZONING                                |
|-------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| NORTH | Single-Family Residences   | R1C (Single-Family Dwelling District) |
| EAST  | Office Complex & Pool Club | O & R1C (Office District)             |
| SOUTH | UM North Campus            | PUD (Planned Unit Development)        |
| WEST  | Bank with Drive-Thru       | O                                     |

## COMPARISON CHART

|   | EXISTING                                   | PROPOSED (EAST SITE)                          | PROPOSED (WEST SITE)        | REQUIRED/PERMITTED (EAST SITE)                 |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Zoning  | O (Office District)                        | O   | O                           | O  |
| Gross Lot Area                                      | 75,383 sq ft<br>(1.73 acres)               | 43,456 sq ft<br>(.99 acres)                   | 31,927 sq ft<br>(.73 acres) | 6,000 sq ft MIN                                |
| Maximum Usable Floor Area in Percentage of Lot Area | 34.9%<br>(26,330 sq ft)                    | 10.9%<br>(4,740 sq ft)                        | Vacant                      | 75% MAX<br>(32,592 sq ft MAX)                  |
| Setback – Front                                     | 57 feet-Plymouth Rd<br>51 ft – Prairie St. | 37.8 ft – Plymouth Rd<br>19.1 ft – Prairie St | Vacant                      | 15 ft MIN<br>40 ft MAX                         |
| Setback – Side(s)                                   | 55 ft – North                              | 49.2  | NA                          | 0 ft   |
| Setback – Rear                                      | 49 ft – West                               | 172 ft - North                                | NA                          | 30 ft MIN when abutting Residential            |
| Height  | 3 stories                                  | 1 Stories<br>(26 feet)                        | NA                          | 55 ft MAX<br>4 stories                         |
| Parking – Automobile                                | 146 spaces<br>(Located below building)     | 22 spaces                                     | NA                          | 27 spaces (1/180 sq ft MAX)                    |
| EV Parking  | NA   | 6- EVI<br>4- EVR                              | NA                          | 2- EVI (Installed) 5%<br>4 – EVC (Capable) 15% |
| Parking – Bicycle                                   | N/A  | 8 spaces -Class C                             | NA                          | 3 Class C – MIN                                |

## HISTORY & PLANNING BACKGROUND

A site plan for this site was approved in 1969 and the building was constructed in 1969 according to the City Assessor's office. From an AA Observer article in 1998:

1970: 2929 Plymouth. After Gene Power stepped down from University Microfilms, he commissioned Dow to build this small office building just east of Huron Parkway. "I was glad I selected Alden, because my site presented a difficult design problem," Power recalled in his autobiography, Edition of One. "The zoning regulations stated that floor space could not exceed 40 percent of the land area. There had to be one automobile parking space available for every 110 square feet of floor space, and the structure could be no more than three stories high. Dow met these requirements by raising the building on columns, with only a small entrance lobby and elevator area extending down to the

ground-floor level. Most of the area on that level formed a parking lot beneath the rest of the building.”

Power’s son, U-M regent Phil Power, recalls the office as “a lovely place to work. It had a beautiful view of North Campus. It had a fireplace, shelves with Eskimo art, orchids, a nice sitting area, and was lined with bookshelves.” The building—which always reminded Rumelhart of “a giant toadstool”—is now rented to several small tenants.

The MPLUE (Master Plan: Land Use Element) Future Land Use Map recommends office uses for this site.

### **DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

Office of Sustainability and Innovation – Solar panels are proposed on the drive-thru canopy. The petitioner also proposes to explore energy storage technology. OSI requested full building electrification and the petitioner explored this option and responded the use of alternative mechanical systems that do not use natural gas have resulted in various operational and maintenance issues that would almost certainly be realized if a fully electrified building were to be incorporated. The petitioner is seeking sustainability goals in other facets of the project such as the proposed solar array, rain garden and throughout the use of energy efficient building materials.

Systems Planning – Before Building permits are issued, a joint application signed by both parcel owners (at such time the western parcel is sold/developed) will be required to acknowledge and accept the shared driveway/opening/approach existing closer than 4.5 feet from the property line.

Transportation - The petitioner has shown that the new trips will contribute a small number of new trips to the system. This small amount will not have a significant effect on the transportation network.

Forestry – Staff supports the requested landscape modifications since street trees are a requirement of city code and there isn’t room for street trees between the sidewalk and road. Street trees are proposed near the ROW line to meet the spirit of the code.

Planning – Staff supports closing the Plymouth Rd. curb cut with the future relocated curb cut being shared for both sites subject to this site plan being approved. Existing sidewalks front both Plymouth Rd and Prairie St. with a relocated bus stop and sidewalk connection off Plymouth Rd. to the proposed bank entrance. The site plan shows proposed sign locations for this site. Signs are separate from the site plan application and require review and approval through the sign application process.

Based on previous CPC comments regarding drive-thrus, non-motorized modes of transportation need to accommodate this request. A walk-up ATM is proposed on the northwest corner of the credit union building. Staff is coordinating with the petitioner to provide signage allowing bicycles in the drive-thru lane as this is a low volume and low speed transaction. The petitioner indicates this is acceptable.

Staff has received numerous opposition communications from neighbors regarding this proposal regarding traffic on Prairie St. and the petitioner is prepared to discuss this concern in greater detail at the upcoming City Planning Commission Meeting.

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mg/2/15/23

Attachments: Site Plan/Landscape Plan/Elevations  
[Additional Files](#)

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