

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 17, 2015

**SUBJECT: CrossFit TreeTown Special Exception Use
(815 Wildt Street)
File No. SEU14-018**

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 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:104 (Special Exceptions) and, therefore approves the CrossFit TreeTown Special Exception Use for an indoor recreation facility, subject to installation of ten bicycle parking spaces.

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 of the neighborhood.

LOCATION

The site is located between Summit Street and Sunset Street. It is in the Allen Creek watershed.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The petitioner seeks special exception use approval to operate CrossFit TreeTown, a membership-based indoor recreation and fitness facility, in a former industrial building. Per the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 55, M1 (Limited Industrial District) zoning permits indoor recreation with special exception use approval.

The site has two zoning designations: The east half, along Wildt Street, is zoned M1 Limited Industrial District. The existing building and parking lot are within this district. The west half, or rear portion of the site, is zoned R2A Two-family Dwelling District and consists of very steep slopes with a rise of 20 to 30 feet to the lots behind this one.

The 0.62 acre site contains a 5,800 square foot, single-story masonry building. CrossFit TreeTown occupies about 4,900 square feet of the building, and the other 900 square feet has a separate tenant and office use. The petitioner indicates there are 16 parking spaces on the site. There are no changes proposed at this time to the site or exterior or interior of the building.

The petitioner indicates that CrossFit TreeTown offers classes to twelve or fewer people and will operate only inside the building. There are currently 152 active members and four employees.

Twelve to twenty people typically use the site at the same time. Per this month's online schedule, classes begin on weekdays at 6am or 7am, and end by 8pm. On weekends, classes run from 8am or 9am until noon.

The petitioner mailed a postcard describing the project to 160 property owners and occupants within 500 feet of the site on February 3, 2015. Per the applicant, they received one email from a nearby business owner expressing support for the project, and one phone call from a resident immediately behind the site who supported the use but requested that music not be played loudly on site like it was when the dance studio occupied the building. The business owner told her that he would make sure music was played at a volume that would not disturb her.

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

| | LAND USE | ZONING |
|-------|-------------|---|
| NORTH | Residential | R2A Two-family Dwelling District |
| EAST | Railroad | M1 (Limited Industrial District) |
| SOUTH | Residential | R4C (Multiple-family Dwelling District) |
| WEST | Residential | R2A Two-family Dwelling District |

COMPARISON CHART

| | EXISTING | PROPOSED | REQUIRED |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|---|
| Zoning | M1 | M1 | |
| Gross Lot Area | 0.62 acres | 0.62 acres | 0.30 acres minimum (13,000 square feet) |
| Floor Area in % of Lot Area | 21% | 21% | 75% maximum |
| Gross Land Coverage of Structure | 21% | 21% | 40% maximum |
| Parking - Automobiles | 14 | 14 | 25 |
| Parking – Bicycles | Indoor parking on request | 10 class C | 1 class B, 1 class C |

HISTORY

An earlier industrial building on the site manufactured radio parts until it was destroyed by fire in 1931. The existing building was constructed in 1953 on a larger 0.86 acre site. At that time, there was a single-family house immediately to the south at the corner of Summit and Wildt, and

one to the north at 907 Wildt. The Morton Bearing Company occupied the building from 1953 to 1956, when it became the Ann Arbor Bearing and Manufacturing Company. They occupied the building until 2001 or 2002. Peter Sparling's Dance Gallery Studio occupied the space from 2003 until 2008. In 2002, the parcel to the north (855-857 Wildt) was split off from the plating company parcel and rezoned to R2A Two-family Dwelling. In 2005, a duplex condominium was constructed on the new parcel. In December 2014, Planning staff received a complaint that a fitness club had opened up at 815 Wildt St. without the required zoning approval. Staff subsequently informed the petitioner that a Special Exception was required and directed to go through this review.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The *Master Plan Land Use Element* recommends that this lot and the railroad segment across Wildt Street have a future land use of office/research/light industrial. The surrounding lots to the north, south, and west are recommended for single and two-family use.

SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE STANDARDS

General Standards - The Planning Commission, in arriving at its decision relative to any application for a special exception, shall apply the following standards (petitioner's response in regular type, staff's comments in *italic type*):

E. The proposed use or uses shall be of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the appropriate and orderly development of the zoning district and adjacent zoning districts in which the site is situated. In applying this standard, the Planning Commission shall consider whether the proposed use:

1. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Master Plan;

The subject lot and existing building are designated in the City Master Plan for future "industrial and research" uses, which is consistent with the existing zoning classification.

The surrounding neighborhood is planned for future "single and two-family residential" uses. A recreation and fitness facility in this building offers an important neighborhood service to area residents, which is also consistent with the following Master Plan specific goals and objectives:

(page 36, excerpts from Goal D) "To support the continued viability, health and safety of City residential neighborhoods [by encouraging] new development and redevelopment within established residential areas to complement the design elements of the neighborhood, including size and height [and by locating] common neighborhood services (schools, parks, places of worship, community and commercial centers, etc.) in areas that provide convenient and safe accessibility for residents."

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

CrossFit Tree Town will be maintained as a neighborhood-scale facility within the building and site at 815 Wildt St. No changes or additions are proposed to this existing building, which has been extensively renovated (interior and exterior) by the building owner. The renovated building and recreation facility land use are compatible with the neighborhood's planned character.

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

No changes or additions are proposed to this existing building. We have four (4) employees, of which two (2) are typically on-site at any given time. We currently have 152 active members, of which between 12 and 20 members are using the facility at the same time. The facility layout, class size, and number of available employee/fitness coaches on-site have been deliberately designed to maintain a specific scale of activity compatible with a neighborhood-scale operation.

4. Will not be detrimental to the use, peaceful enjoyment, economic value or development of neighboring property, or the neighborhood area in general;

All scheduled group fitness classes take place within the existing building. Recreation and fitness activities at CrossFit TreeTown will not be detrimental to the peaceful enjoyment of the neighborhood, and will be of positive benefit to the economic value of neighboring property, especially when compared to the other potential land uses allowed in the M-1 zoning district.

5. Will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment.

Operation of a neighborhood-scale recreation/fitness facility at 815 Wildt St. will maintain the positive neighborhood benefits resulting from the owner's earlier clean-up, renovation, and adaptive re-use of this former Ann Arbor Bearing & Mfg. Co. industrial site. No other impacts are anticipated.

(b) The location and size of the proposed use or uses, the nature and intensity of the principal use and all accessory uses, the site layout and its relation to streets giving access to it, shall be such that traffic to and from the use or uses, the assembly of persons in connection therewith, and the effect of the proposed use on public services and facilities, will not be hazardous or inconvenient to the neighborhood nor unduly conflict with the normal traffic of the neighborhood. In applying this standard the Planning Commission shall consider, at minimum:

6. The location of and access to off-street parking and the safe provisions for pedestrian traffic;

The lot at 815 Wildt St. includes existing, off-street parking areas for up to 16 vehicles. Up to 16 additional on-street parking spaces are available in front of this lot within the Wildt St. right-of-way and M-1 zoning district. Approximately 30% to 40% of our members walk, bike or use other non-motorized transportation to visit CrossFit TreeTown, depending on the season. One (1) employee never uses a car, and another bikes to work during warm weather months. Barrier-free access is available to the building, and

the existing parking and pedestrian facilities have more than sufficient capacity to safely serve the needs of CrossFit TreeTown members and staff.

7. The relationship of the proposed use to main traffic thoroughfares and to streets and road intersections;

Traffic into and out of this site is not anticipated to have any detrimental impact on the capacity of Wildt St. or Summit St., or on any major intersections in this part of the city.

8. Vehicular turning movements in relationship to traffic flow routes;

There are no visibility or topographic limitations that would inhibit the safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians into and out of this site. No other impacts on traffic flow routes are anticipated.

9. The intensity and character of traffic and parking conditions on the site, and in the general area;

A neighborhood-scale recreation/fitness facility at 815 Wildt St. is more compatible with the neighborhood and less intensive in character and intensity than other potential land uses allowed in the M-1 zoning district. Limiting class sizes to 12 persons minimizes any potential impacts on traffic in the area. More than sufficient existing parking spaces are available for members and staff. With 30%-40% of members and some staff accessing the CrossFit TreeTown facility by non-motorized means at least part of the time, the potential impacts on the neighborhood are further minimized.

10. The requirements for additional public services and facilities which will be created by the proposed use will not be detrimental to the social and economic welfare of the community.

While there is some potential for athletic training-related injuries associated with any recreation/ fitness-related facility, the potential need for emergency services is limited, and is far less than what could be necessary to support more intensive land uses allowed in the M-1 zoning district. The existing building has been improved by the owner with all necessary fire exits, smoke detectors, and emergency equipment, based on applicable code requirements. No other impacts on the capacity of public services and facilities are anticipated.

CrossFit TreeTown provides employment to area residents, and serves the physical fitness needs and interests of its members in this area. The potential for improved health and well-being among area residents who chose to use the facility could also be considered a distinctly positive social benefit for the community. We also take part in the "Sweat Angels" program to assist various charities, and are currently doing a "Keep Warm and Well Fed" canned food and blanket drive to give to a local shelter.

This site is already on city water and sewer; no additional public services are required.

(c) The standards of density and required open spaces for the proposed use shall be at least equal to those required by Chapter 55 in the zoning district in which the proposed use is to be located, unless a variance is granted.

No variances are necessary for approval of the CrossFit TreeTown facility at this location.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Traffic – Traffic staff visited the site and conveyed to Planning that Wildt Street is wide enough, and that it is desirable, to allow parking on both sides of the street. Parking cars on both sides of the street slows traffic, in particular cars traveling fast downhill from Sunset.

Fire – To test whether the street width is adequate for emergency vehicle movement, the Fire Marshal sent their large truck to Wildt Street on a day in February shortly after a considerable snowfall, at a time when cars were parked on both sides. Fire reported that the street width was adequate for emergency vehicles.

Planning – Staff received many comments and concerns from a residential neighbor to the north. These were mostly traffic related, including concerns about the noise of car doors slamming during the early and late hours of operation, the narrow width of the road, and cars being allowed to park on both sides. As noted above, the traffic and on-street parking conditions were reviewed by the Traffic Engineer and Fire Department and determined not to be a hazard.

Staff counts 14 on-site parking spaces on aerial photographs: 11 on the north side of the building, and three on the south. Chapter 59 Off-Street Parking would typically require 25 spaces for a health club use of this nature and size; however, this lot is a legal nonconforming parking lot and may be maintained and continued as such.

The petitioner currently allows employees to bring their bicycles indoors to park them. No bicycle parking currently is provided outdoors on-site. Staff has recommended the installation of more bicycle parking to encourage the use of non-motorized transportation. The petitioner has agreed to install a bike rack in the spring. If the project is approved, staff recommends approval conditioned upon installation of bicycle parking.

The M1 Limited Industrial District permits various types of industrial and manufacturing uses, such as construction contractors, laundry services, food production, printing, metal plating and fabricating, chemical and pharmaceutical preparation, and manufacturing of jewelry, toys, novelties, signs, and other. Also permitted are those uses permitted in the RE Research District and O Office district. Chapter 55 Zoning, Section 5:10.24(2)(h) says that “Places of recreation, such as: bowling alley; boat or canoe livery; indoor tennis courts and other court game facilities...; and private club or lodge hall renting for meetings or social occasions, or similar recreation uses or places of assembly;...shall be permitted as a special exception use pursuant to section 5:104.” Because Chapter 55 does not directly address CrossFit-type health club uses, but there is a demand for such uses, staff has consistently interpreted health clubs as falling in the category of “similar recreation uses” in the M1 district for many years.

Prepared by Jill Thacher
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson
3/12/15

Attachments: Zoning/Parcel Maps
Aerial Photo

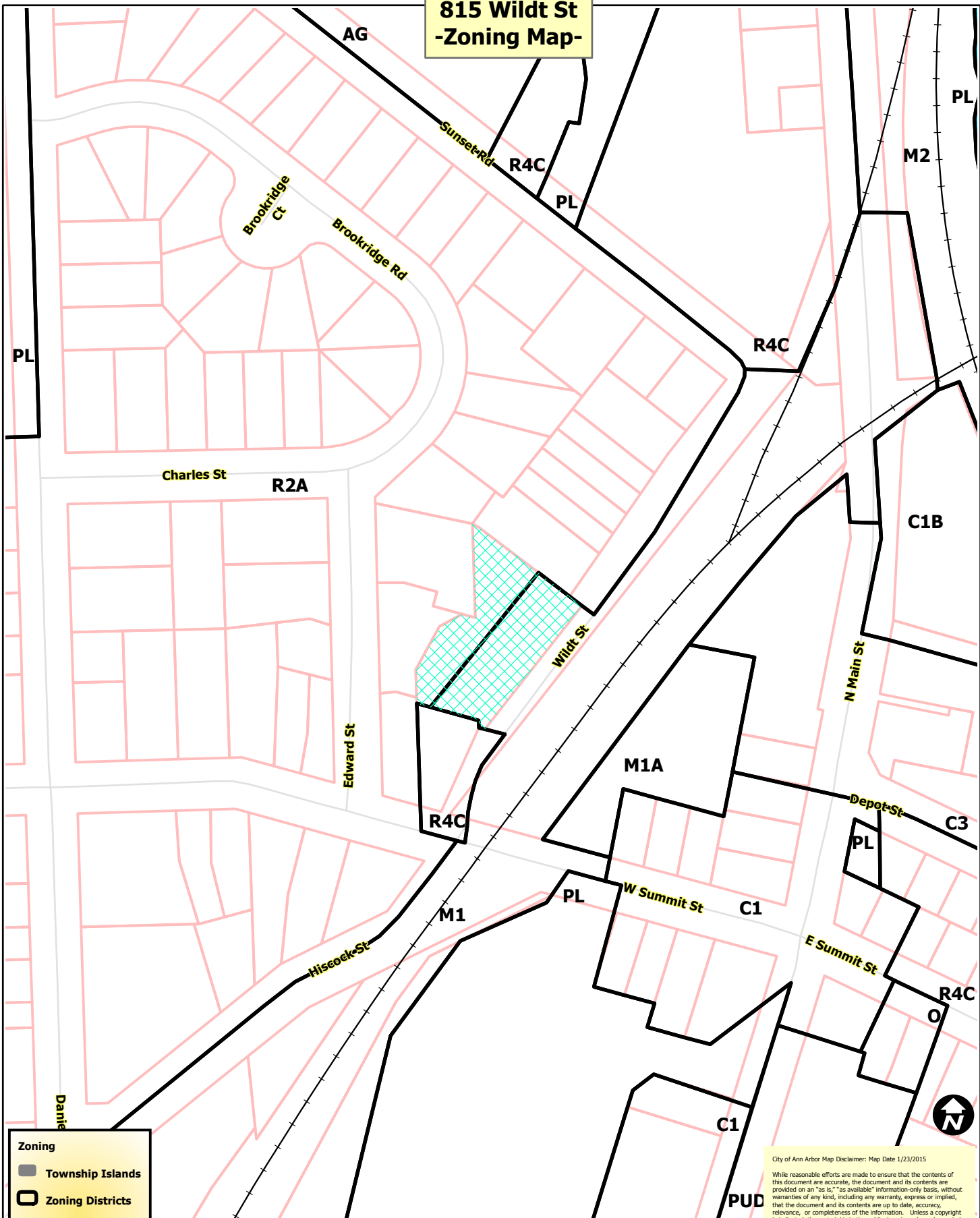
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Traffic
Systems Planning
File No. SEU14-018

**815 Wildt St
-Zoning Map-**



Zoning

- Township Islands
- Zoning Districts
- Railroads
- Parcels
- Huron River

City of Ann Arbor Map Disclaimer: Map Date 1/23/2015

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815 Wildt St -Aerial Map-



-  Railroads
-  Parcels
-  Huron River



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815 Wildt St -Aerial Map-

Brookridge Rd

Wildt St



- Railroads
- Parcels
- Huron River



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