

AKRON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 13, 2026 - 9:00 A.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, THIRD FLOOR, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 166 S. HIGH STREET

(1) CORRECTION and APPROVAL of Minutes of January 23, 2026

(2) PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. Approval of sales of property and/or development plans in Urban Renewal and Community Development projects and assorted matters necessary to promote the Urban Renewal and Community Development Plans.
 - (1) **No new business**
- B. **PC-2025-80-CU** – Petition of David Walker for a Conditional Use to establish a defense education training facility at 1928 Eastwood Avenue
- C. **PC-2025-83-CU** – Petition of Ray of Hope International Church, Inc., to place a shed within the rear yard/side yard setback at 844 E. Archwood Avenue
- D. **PC-2025-91-CU** – Petition of Akron Zoological Park for a Conditional Use to expand the zoo on property south of Diagonal Road and east of Auldfarm Road (Parcel Nos. 6701439 and 6761223)

(3) RENEWALS

KJ/emd

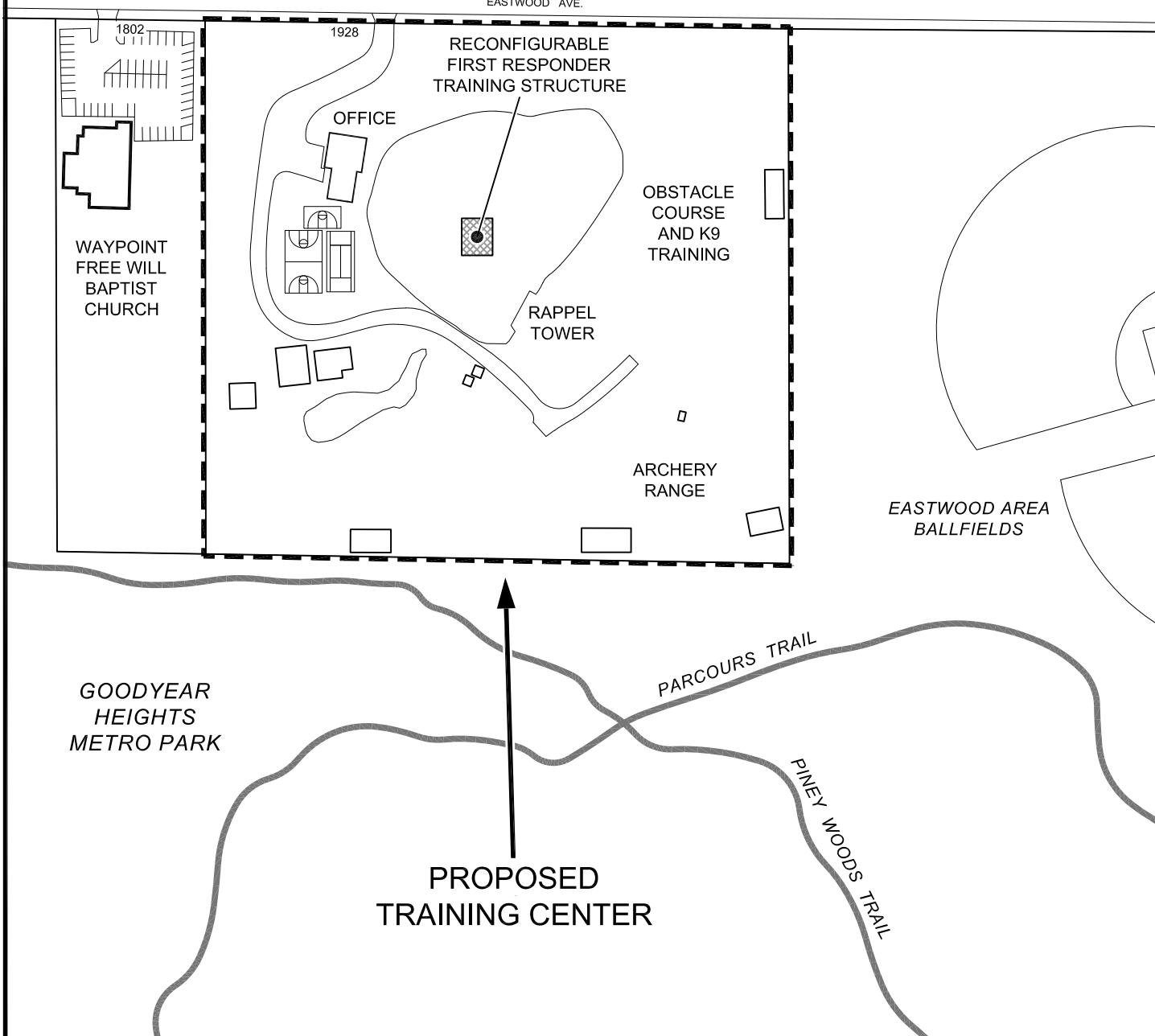
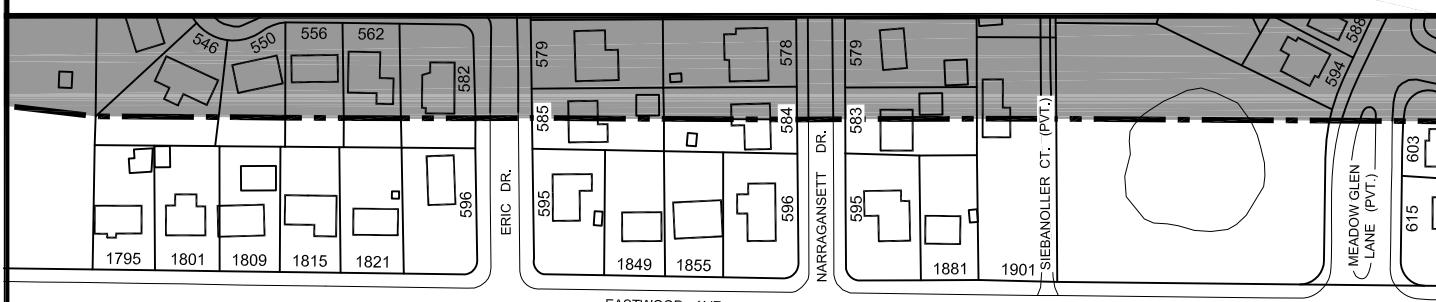
PC-2025-80-CU

Petition of David Walker
for a Conditional Use to
establish a training facility
at 1928 Eastwood Avenue

U1 Single Family
Residential
City of Tallmadge



0
200'
Created 12/18/2025 jwh
Revised 01/05/2026 jwh



MEMORANDUM

TO: AKRON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION **ITEM # 2B**
PC-2025-80-CU

FROM: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2026

WARD: 10
COUNCILPERSON: Connor

SUBJECT: PC-2025-80-CU – Petition of David Walker for a Conditional Use to establish a training facility at 1928 Eastwood Avenue

GENERAL LOCATION: South side of Eastwood Avenue, west of Darrow Road

LAND USE OF THIS PROPERTY: Former private recreation facility

LAND USE IN THE SURROUNDING AREA:

NORTH SIDE: Residential
SOUTH SIDE: Open space recreation
EAST SIDE: Open space recreation
WEST SIDE: Church and open space recreation

ZONED: Single Family Residence Use District (U1, H1, A1)

SIZE OF LOT & AREA: Rectangularly shaped, containing approximately 12 acres of land

COMMENTS:

David Walker is the owner of approximately 12 acres land located on the south side of Eastwood Avenue, west of Darrow Road, addressed as 1928 Eastwood Avenue. The parcel has frontage of 757 feet and extends approximately 690 feet to the south. In 1954, the Walker family applied to the Planning Commission to operate a swimming pool and picnic grounds on the property, and in November of that year the commission approved the application. A few years later, the family built their family home on the property and proceeded to operate the Eastwood Park swim club until approximately 2014. The Petitioner's son currently resides on the property. Surrounding uses include Goodyear Heights Metro Park to the east and south, a church and additional park land to the west, and residential to the north. The property is zoned Single Family Residence Use District (U1, H1, A1), and the Land Use and Development Guide Plan recommends parks, recreation, and open space here.

The Petitioner is proposing to establish a training facility at the subject location. Because the use is not permitted in a residential district, Conditional Use approval is necessary.

The core of the proposed training center would be a new 3,840 square feet structure

placed within the base of the existing drained concrete pool. The building would be purpose-built by Forge Fire & Co., which specializes in creating rugged, reconfigurable units that will endure the rigors of repeated training sessions. While appearing similar to a set of stacked containerized units, they are uniformly painted, typically black, with an accent color for available for door, railings, and other trim pieces. The 8'x40'x9' (WxLxH) units would be configured and assembled on-site to create a 40'x48' first floor, a 40'x40' second level with a sloped roof on one side, and a 40"x8' third level on the opposite side. An exterior staircase will provide second story access on one side of the structure. Because the structure would be recessed in the bowl of the pool, the 27-foot height of the structure would be approximately 20 feet above ground level. The interior of the structure would be fitted with magnetic movable wall panels to allow various scenarios. Video cameras throughout and around the structure would allow for performance review by team leaders and instructors. The structure would be utilized not only by Fire and EMS personnel, but also by local police, SWAT teams, and individuals desiring personal defense training. The Petitioner is partnering with Achilles Heel Tactical to provide use-of-force training. In all cases, the use of Simmunition rounds will be required. These are reduced-energy, non-lethal cartridges that leave a wax, detergent-based, or water-soluble color marking compound to allow accurate assessment of simulated tactics. They do not contain any lead or heavy metals and the rounds to be utilized are quiet enough that hearing protection is not required. Participants can opt to use their personal or agency-issued firearms if modified to only accept the required rounds, or ones available for rental on-site. Due to the indoor nature of the simulations and the structure's 250-foot distance from Eastwood Avenue, the discharge of weapons should be inaudible to adjacent properties. The second floor of the existing primary structure would be utilized as office space for staff, and the first floor would be used for customer preparation, training film review, lunch breaks, and lounge areas and would also house a small retail shop. Gravel areas lined with railroad ties toward the entry would provide parking for customers.

A second phase would establish memberships for an archery range to be located in the southeastern quadrant of the property. While final details have not been determined, it would feature targets in 10-50 feet range available from platforms at multiple heights and would be enclosed with a specially manufactured fencing/netting 16-20 feet in height to prevent any stray arrows from escaping the range. The basketball and tennis courts would also be offered for use. A third phase could offer a rappel tower offering descents from 30 feet above ground into the deep end of the pool. Also envisioned are a military style obstacle course and K9 training course.

No objections to the proposed repurposing of this property have been received from any City department. One objective of the Land Use and Development Guide Plan is to develop recreational facilities so that surrounding residents are not negatively affected by their use. The training facility should have minimal impact on surrounding uses, as training sessions would primarily be scheduled events for individual organizations. The

training would be performed indoors in a controlled environment and then reviewed for effectiveness. Fire and EMS training would not include actual or simulated fire, and law enforcement training would never utilize live ammunition. A Federal Firearms License (FFL) is not required to sell or provide Simunitions or the devices that use them, and the Petitioner does not intend to obtain an FFL for liability reasons. The archery range would be screened and buffered from the adjacent Metro Park property, and the elevated platforms would necessitate aiming toward the ground. Any commotion or sounds of encouragement elicited by the obstacle courses would certainly be less frequent and noticeable than that created by the former swim club. The proposed training center is an imaginative solution to repurpose a former recreation club to meet a real need to provide additional training to first responders as well as individuals desiring personal defense training and community groups looking to provide fitness training and team-building activities. The Planning Staff is supportive of this request.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Staff finds the requested Conditional Use is consistent with the standards found in Section 153.474 (A thru H) and the Land Use and Development Guide Plan and recommends **APPROVAL** of the petition of David Walker for a Conditional Use to establish a training facility at 1928 Eastwood Avenue in accordance with submitted plans and subject to the following conditions:

- (1) That a fencing plan for the archery range be submitted to the Department of Planning and Urban Development for its review and approval, and that the fencing be installed and maintained as shown on the approved plan.
- (2) That the structures and layout of the development conform substantially to the approved plans; however, minor changes may be approved by the Department of Planning and Urban Development.
- (3) That all exterior building facade, wall and other surfaces at the property shall be kept in good repair, in a safe condition, and, if constructed of a non-weatherproof material, or if currently coated by stucco, paint or other treatment, or if required to be coated by the Building Code, shall be protected against decay from the elements, and shall be uniformly coated by paint or other treatment, free of chips, cracks, flaking, chalking, peeling or exposed underlying surfaces, and shall be free of holes, cracks, or broken, loose or decaying materials.
- (4) That live ammunition shall be prohibited from use on the site.
- (5) That the outside storage of scrap or display of merchandise be prohibited.
- (6) That the area be kept free of trash and litter.

(7) That the number, size, and location of all exterior signs shall conform to Section 153.345-.375 of the Zoning Code.

JH/emd

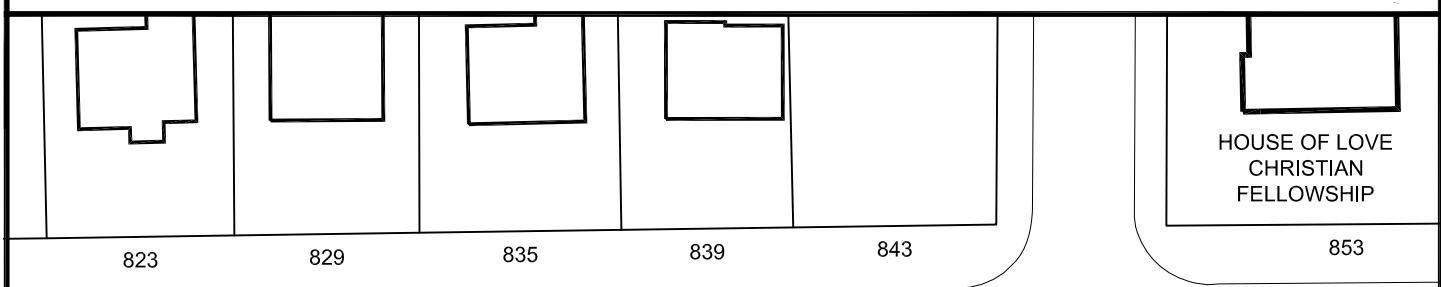
PC-2025-83-CU

Petition of Ray of Hope International Church, Inc., for a Conditional Use to place a shed within the required setback at 844 E. Archwood Avenue

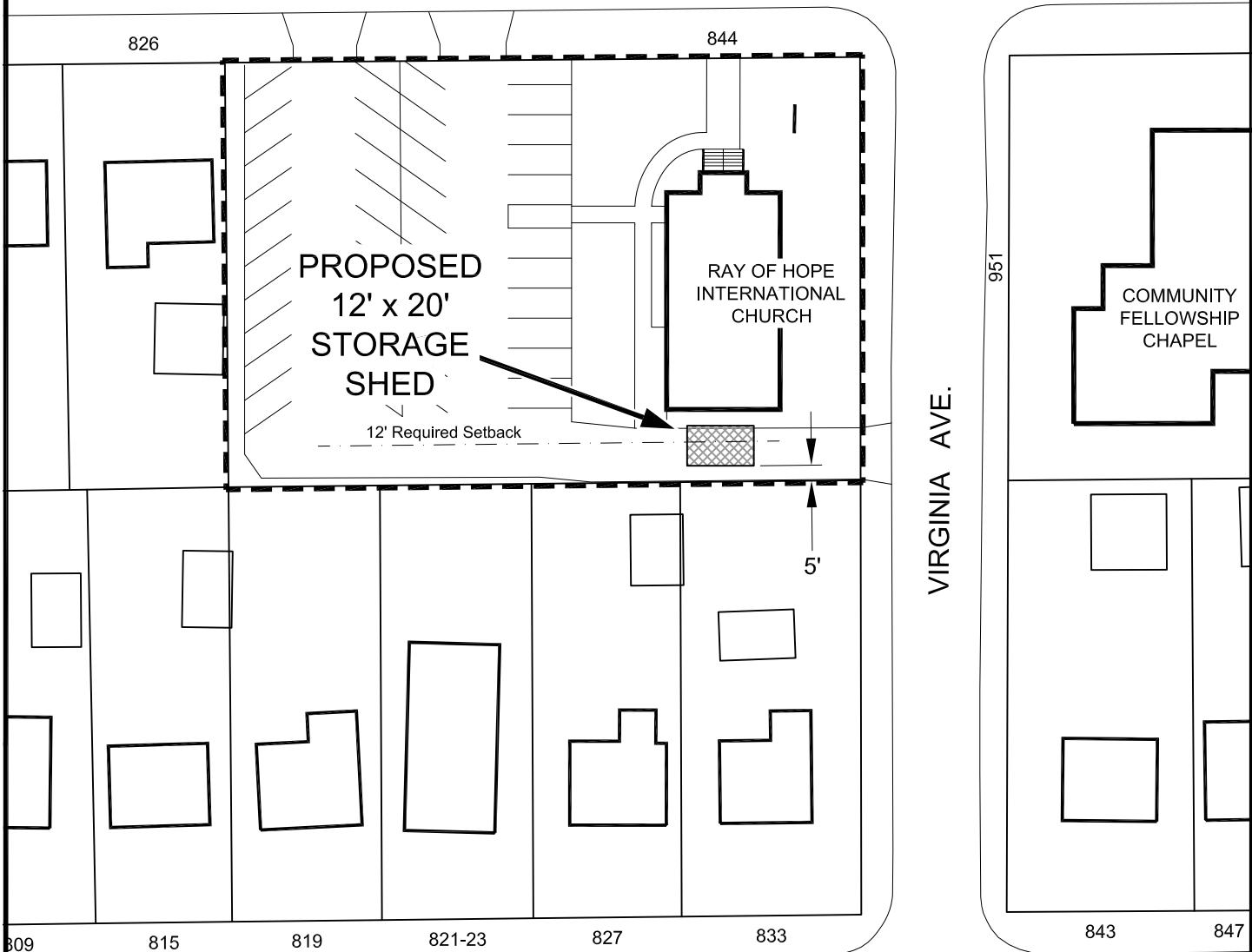
 U1 Single Family Residential



0
50'
Created 01/08/2026 jwh
Revised 01/08/2026 jwh



E. ARCHWOOD AVE.



DAVIES AVE.

MEMORANDUM

TO: AKRON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION **ITEM # 2C**
FROM: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND **PC-2025-83-CU**
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2026 **WARD: 5**
COUNCILPERSON: Hannah

SUBJECT: PC-2025-83-CU – Petition of Ray of Hope International Church, Inc., to place a shed within the required setback at 844 E. Archwood Avenue

GENERAL LOCATION: Southwest corner of East Archwood Ave and Virginia Ave

LAND USE OF THIS PROPERTY: Single-family residential

LAND USE IN THE SURROUNDING AREA: All sides single-family residential

ZONED: Single Family Residential Use District (U1, H1, A1)

SIZE OF LOT & AREA: 187 feet in width by 130 feet in depth = 24,310 square feet of area

COMMENTS:

Ray of Hope International Church, Inc. is the owner and operator of a church located on the southwest corner of E. Archwood Avenue and Virginia Avenue. The property measures 187 feet in width by 130 feet in depth for a total of 24,310 square feet of area. Surrounding uses are all residential. The property is zoned Single Family Residential Use District (U1, H1, A1) in accordance with The Land Use and Development Guide Plan.

The Petitioner is requesting permission to vary the rear yard setback for a proposed storage shed. The Zoning Code stipulates that structures must maintain a minimum twelve (12) foot setback from a property line in a residential use district. Since the proposed shed will be less than 12 feet from the rear property line, in a residence use district, a variance of 7 feet is necessary.

The Petitioner wishes to preserve parking for their parishioners while siting the shed placement close to the church building itself. The shed will measure 12 by 20 feet for a total of 240 square feet. The shed will be grey with white accents, a gable standing seam metal roof, as well as two large barn-style doors, and two windows. The Petitioner has stated that the small addition of a shed at the rear of the building will help them better serve their parishioners by providing more storage space for tools to help with landscaping and beautification of the church's exterior. It will allow them to preserve their parking spaces for those who are not within walking distance of the

church. The relatively small addition will not be an overdevelopment of the site, should not impose on the neighboring property ,and will enhance functionality and day-to-day operations of the church. The well-maintained Ray of Hope International Church has been a stable and positive influence in this neighborhood. As such, the Planning Staff supports this request.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Staff finds the requested Conditional Use is consistent with the standards found in Section 153.474 (A thru H) and The Land Use and Development Guide Plan and recommends **APPROVAL** of the petition of Ray of Hope International Church, Inc. for a Conditional Use to place a shed within the required setback at 844 E. Archwood Avenue.

BL/emd

PC-2025-91-CU

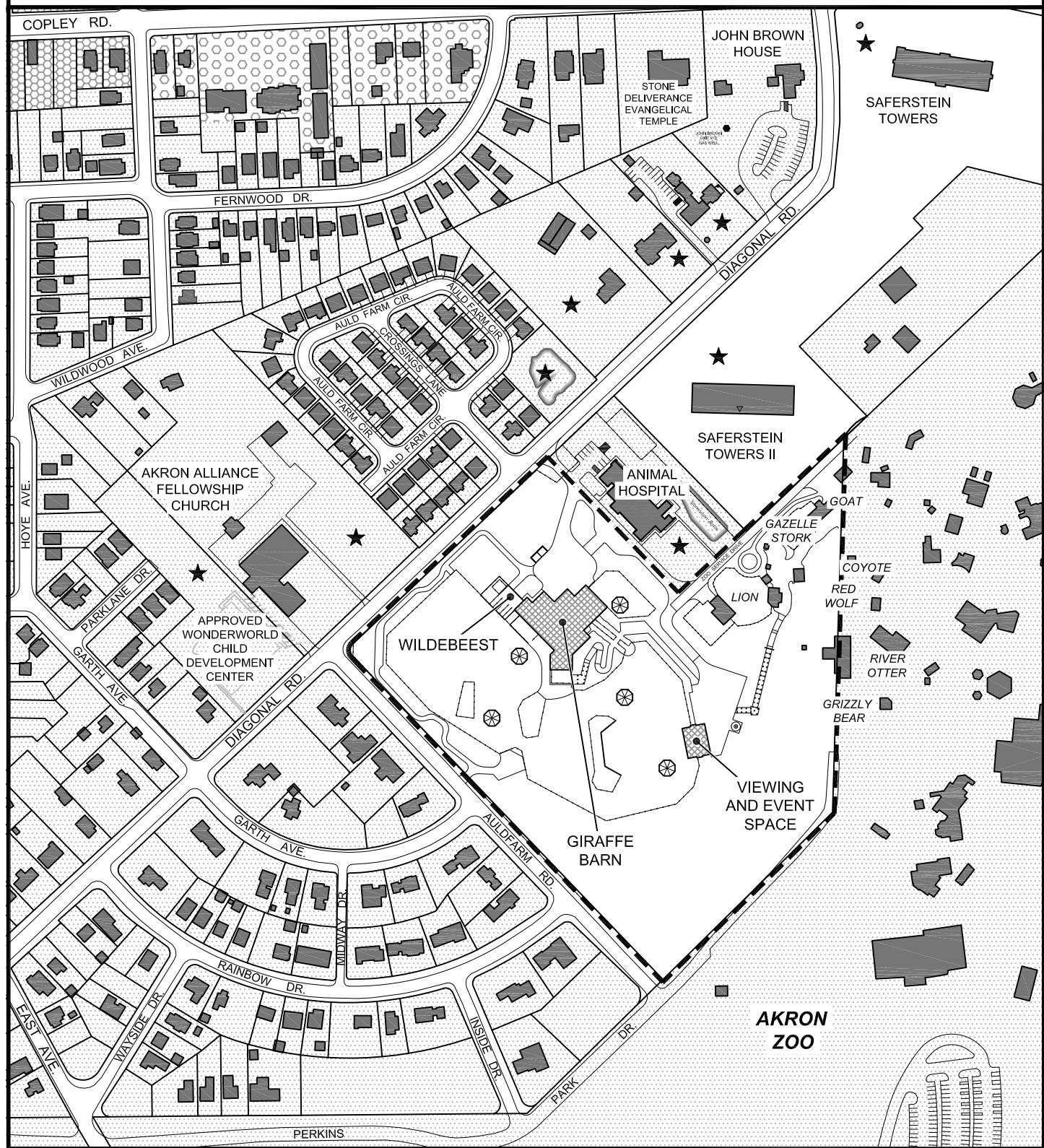
Petition of Akron Zoological Park for a Conditional Use to expand the zoo on property south of Diagonal Road and east of Auldfarm Road
(Parcel Nos. 6701439 and 6761223)



★ Conditional Use



0 300'
Created 01/20/2026 jwh
Revised 01/28/2026 jwh



MEMORANDUM

TO: AKRON CITY PLANNING COMMISSION **ITEM # 2D**
PC-2025-91-CU

FROM: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2026

WARD: 3
COUNCILPERSON: Sommerville

SUBJECT: PC-2025-91-CU – Petition of Akron Zoological Park for a Conditional Use to expand the zoo on property south of Diagonal Road and east of Auldfarm Road (Parcel Nos. 6701439 and 6761223).

GENERAL LOCATION: East side of Diagonal Road, north of Auldfarm Road

LAND USE OF THIS PROPERTY: Vacant Land

LAND USE IN THE SURROUNDING AREA:

NORTH SIDE: Zoo hospital

SOUTH SIDE: Zoo

EAST SIDE: Zoo

WEST SIDE: Single-family

ZONED: Two-Family Residence Use District (U1, H1, A2)

SIZE OF LOT & AREA: Approximately 16.6 acres

COMMENTS:

The Akron Zoological Park is the owner of vacant land on the south side of Diagonal Road, north of Auldfarm Road. The wooded land contains approximately 16.6 acres of area. Surrounding uses include the new Akron Zoo Animal Hospital being constructed to the north, Akron Zoo grounds to the east, and single-family dwellings to the south and west along Auldfarm Road and Diagonal Road. The property is zoned Two Family Residence Use District (U1, H1, A2), while the Land Use and Development Guide Plan (LUDGP) recommends medium density two-family, and apartment uses.

The Petitioner, Akron Zoological Park, is proposing to expand their animal exhibit space onto this residentially zoned property. As such, Conditional Use approval is necessary.

The lots contain approximately 16.6 acres, of which the zoo intends to use approximately 9.25 for an expansion of its “Pride of Africa” exhibit and surrounding walkways, landscaping, and plaza. The expansion includes a large habitat enclosure featuring giraffes, wildebeests, ostriches, and Marabou storks. Animals will be able to

roam together within the enclosed habitat that will be situated directly south of the new animal medical center. Public access will be from the lion habitat situated on the north. The fence surrounding the habitat exhibit will be a 10 feet high, dark colored chain link fence. Existing forested trees will be removed, as they can be toxic to the animals. The zoo will plant tree islands including vegetation compatible with the animals. The tree islands will be protected from the giraffes by a combination of fencing, deadfall, and boulders. The overall landscaping among the expansion will have a scattered mix of shade and ornamental trees, shrubs, perennials, and ornamental grasses along walkways and throughout the site.

Two larger buildings will be featured within the habitat to house and allow for observation of the animals by the public. Both structures will continue the theming of colors and patterns as used in the adjacent lion exhibit completed in 2019. The largest building is the giraffe barn. The irregularly shaped building will measure approximately 125 feet in width and 190 feet in length for a total of 11,500 square feet. It will contain stalls and a day room for the giraffes plus necessary utility space for the zookeepers. It will also have a publicly accessible observation area extending 60 feet from the southern corner of the building. The building will be situated 140 feet from the Diagonal Road street line and 321 feet from the Auldfarm Road street line. The peak height of the roof will be 31 feet from grade. Exterior building materials would consist of precast decorative concrete walls and a flat roof. The observation area will have a thatched, hipped roof over its structure. Staff service access to the back of the building will be from the existing curb cut and access drive along Diagonal Road previously constructed for the animal hospital. There will also be internal vehicular access from the zoo's service drive.

The second building on site will be a 50 feet by 66 feet covered pavilion set on the eastern side of the exhibit. It will be sited over 650 feet from Diagonal Road and 375 feet from Auldfarm Road. It will be constructed to a height of 27 feet with stone and wood building materials and a thatched, gabled roof. Zoo patrons will be able to use it as an observation area or perhaps as an event space. Access to the pavilion will be from a new main plaza set directly south of the lion exhibit. A 30 feet tall ADA accessible tower ride will be set across the plaza and can accommodate up to 8 riders at a time. The ride will provide zoo patrons with an active recreation opportunity and allow them to have an elevated perspective of the zoo and its surroundings. The ride rotates slowly and is manually operated by guests, so it creates minimal sound. It will be located approximately 700 feet from the Diagonal Road right-of-way and 500 feet from the Auldfarm Road right-of-way.

The existing site plan also depicts a 10 feet wide gravel access road extending west from the back of the giraffe barn to within 10 feet of the property line and turning southwest, following the space between the exterior habitat fence and an 8 feet tall perimeter fence set along the zoo's property line. The path runs parallel to the Diagonal Road right-of-way then continues southeast to closely follow the Auldfarm Road right-of-way between the perimeter fence and habitat fence for about 380 feet,

where it intersects with a gate on the south side the habitat fence. The gate will provide zookeepers with access to the back section of the exhibit. The Petitioner has also noted that the access road will also be used to provide special VIP tours typically on a daily basis or as scheduled. The site plan shows that the space between and among the path will be landscaped and planted with various trees and shrubs.

Since there are single-family homes across the road from the site, it is the Planning Department's opinion that denser landscaping is vital and should be utilized as a buffer to preserve the character of the neighborhood. While it is understood that removal of existing trees is necessary within the animal habitat, the Planning Department recommends that a dense, landscaped buffer be maintained between the right-of-way and the perimeter fence to provide for a strong visual buffer between the zoo and adjacent residential uses. All existing trees within the buffer should be preserved and protected during construction, as well as all trees within the public right-of-way along Auldfarm Road. Any questions about the health of specific trees within the right-of-way should be referred to the city arborist who can make the final determination about preservation or removal. The perimeter fence should be located at the inside of the landscaping buffer at least 15 feet from the property line and dense landscaping should be provided between the property line and perimeter fence.

All animals to be included in the exhibit are quiet by nature and should not be disruptive to the surrounding neighborhood. Odors produced should not be enough to impact the surrounding area and animal waste will be cleared regularly and disposed of twice per week.

Objectives of the Land Use and Development Guide Plan include promoting good design standards for buildings and parking lots and appropriate landscaping, and maintaining open space buffers between such uses and residential neighborhoods. This objective can be applied to the expansion of the Akron Zoo whereas the buildings conform to required setbacks, the animal enclosures should also maintain a dense screening as a buffer to the neighborhood from the activities at the zoo. Maintaining the existing line of trees along the Diagonal Road and Auldfarm Road property lines, supplemented by additional landscaping, should shield the use from the nearby residential dwellings. The Akron Zoo employs over 400 people and has been a positive presence in this Sherbondy Hill neighborhood since the 1950s. The Akron Zoo's expansion of the "Pride of Africa" exhibit will create opportunities for guests to have year-round access to the giraffes and other animals, and will be an excellent addition to the zoo and surrounding community. So long as the recommended screening from Diagonal Road and Auldfarm Road is maintained, this proposed expansion will positively enhance the zoo property to continue the goal of providing enjoyment for the public without having a negative impact on the surrounding area. As such, the Planning Staff is supportive of this request.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Staff finds the requested Conditional Use is consistent with the standards found in Section 153.474 (A thru H) and the Land Use and Development Guide Plan and recommends **APPROVAL** of the petition of Akron Zoological Park for a Conditional Use to expand the zoo on property south of Diagonal Road and east of Auldfarm Road (Parcel Nos. 6701439 and 6761223) subject to the submitted plans entitled, "Akron Zoo Pride of Africa Expansion", and subject to the following conditions:

- (1) That a landscape planting and fencing plan be submitted to the Department of Planning and Urban Development for its review and approval and that the landscaping and fencing be installed and maintained as shown on the approved plan.
- (2) That the Petitioner submit a storm water management plan to control the run-off, siltation and sedimentation during construction and to control the run-off after the development is completed. This plan is to be consistent with all the requirements of Section 192.101-114 of the Code of Ordinances and is to be subject to the approval of the Bureau of Engineering and submitted prior to the issuance of any building permits.
- (3) That all driveways and parking areas be hardsurfaced and curbed to Bureau of Engineering specifications.
- (4) That the number, size, and location of all exterior signs shall conform to Section 153.345-375 of the Zoning Code.
- (5) That the Petitioner provide adequately dustproofed off-street parking for construction workers and off-street storage space for materials and equipment during construction.
- (6) That the structures and layout of the development conform substantially to the approved plans; however, minor changes may be approved by the Department of Planning and Urban Development.
- (7) That all exterior building facade, wall and other surfaces at the property shall be kept in good repair, in a safe condition, and, if constructed of a non-weatherproof material, or if currently coated by stucco, paint or other treatment, or if required to be coated by the Building Code, shall be protected against decay from the elements, and shall be uniformly coated by paint or other treatment, free of chips, cracks, flaking, chalking, peeling or exposed underlying surfaces, and shall be free of holes, cracks, or broken, loose or decaying materials.
- (8) That all public utility services be installed underground, and their locations suitably marked for safety.

- (9) That to ensure development as shown on the approved plans, a Performance Bond be placed with the Department of Planning and Urban Development at 100% of the estimated cost of the following:
 - (a) Landscaping installation as referred to in Item (1) above.
 - (b) Hardsurfacing installation as referred to in Item (4) above.
- (10) That as a prerequisite to the issuance of any building or grading permit incident hereto, the following be submitted to the City:
 - (a) Bond as referred to in Item (11) above.
 - (b) Landscape plan as referred to in Item (1) above.
 - (c) Storm water management plan as referred to in Item (2) above.

MM/emd