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Embody Fitness Gourmet Moving Out of Equinox to a Nearby Stand-Alone Location

Author : David Gurliacci

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Location, location, location:

The Embody Fitness Gourmet juice bar now located at the Equinox fitness club in Noroton Heights plans to move to a new location in a storefront next to Heights Pizza, where it will likely stay until that block's planned redevelopment takes place, at which time it will move to some other location.

The initial reason for moving out of Equinox because "Equinox, as a corporation, is making each of their cafes in their approximately 70 or so clubs throughout the country uniform" [Embody](#) founder and CEO Gillan Bryan said at a meeting last Thursday of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Bryan said he received the news about Equinox's change in plans last November.

Bryan's company has applied for a change in the site permit to allow his business to open up at 6 a.m. The P&Z Commission quickly agreed in a 4-0 unanimous vote. One member noted that a nearby coffee shop is open then, as well (Darien Doughnut opens at 5 a.m. and the shop inside the Noroton Heights Railroad Station building is also open early for morning commuters on weekdays).

"He realizes he's not going to be there very long, but it does give him the ability to stay in the neighborhood," town Planning Director Jeremy Ginsberg told the commission. "He has a very strong client following, and it's a nice opportunity for a stand-alone spot."

Ginsberg said Bryan only wanted one change in the site plan: "He's read the rest of the resolution [of the existing site plan] and said that 'I can live with everything [else] — the only thing I need is the hours to be changed.' [...]"

Bryan told the commission that people like to go to Embody when they're working out, so a 6 a.m. opening time is essential. "We're very much a routine-based business, so when somebody's finished working out, they come and get something."

P&Z board member Kevin Cunningham noted that there are other gyms or gym-like locations in the Noroton Heights business district, although Bryan reminded him that one of them, a yoga studio, had closed. The remaining ones: Infinity Fitness gym, the Darien Martial Arts karate studio and Pure Barre Darien. Equinox will still be nearby, "and a lot of our existing customer base shops at Palmer's," Bryan said.

It's possible that Equinox

"And you'll get some commuters, maybe," P&Z Chairman John Sini said.

"That's definitely going to be an opportunity," Bryan said.

Embodiment Fitness Gourmet started its first juice bar in the Equinox gym at 72 Heights Road nine years ago, Bryan said. It's now grown to three locations — the others are in Westport and New Canaan. For a time, Embodiment also had a location at the Darien YMCA.

"Much of our customer base actually comes from our non-Equinox members," he continued. "That actually gave us the confidence to take a chance and build out other locations that are now stand-alone locations."

"We love being in Noroton Heights. We'd love to maintain our presence there another 10 years. We're at sort of an interesting situation with the entire block being redeveloped, so we are looking for a temporary location while the project's ongoing down the street [at the Federal Realty tract that encompasses Stop & Shop and much of the land around Equinox] — or the project at Equinox fails."

Ginsberg added that in suggesting he come to the Planning & Zoning Commission to explain the request, "I

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told him he'd get a free plug on TV for his business."

Here's the TV (starting at 1:36:50 and continuing for the next four minutes):

[Planning & Zoning Commission 2-7-17](#) from [Darien TV79](#) on [Vimeo](#).