



# ZONING EXAMINER

## REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

June 12, 2015

**SE-15-14 Verizon - Grant Road**  
**Public Hearing: May 28, 2015**

### **BACKGROUND**

This is a request by Adam Brixius of Pinnacle Consulting, on behalf of Verizon Wireless, for approval of a wireless communication facility. The special exception site is located approximately 96 feet north of Grant Road and 67 feet west of Columbus Boulevard.

Land use policy direction for this area is provided by the *Grant - Alvernon Area Plan (GAAP)* and *Plan Tucson*.

### **PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY (Minutes Attached)**

Glenn Moyer, Planning and Development Services Department, presented the staff report with a recommendation for approval. Mr. Moyer commented that one approval and one protest were received in the formal protest area.

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

This is a request by Adam Brixius of Pinnacle Consulting, on behalf of Verizon Wireless, for approval of a wireless communication facility. The special exception site is located approximately 96 feet north of Grant Road and 67 feet west of Columbus Boulevard. The preliminary development plan proposes a wireless communication tower with twelve antenna panels concealed within an artificial palm tree (monopalm), 60 feet in height. The facility will be placed within an approximately 520 square foot lease area in the northwestern portion of the 0.23 acre site.

The special exception site is currently developed with a retail land use in the C-1 commercial zone. To the north, are retail and multi-family residential uses, zoned C-1 and R-2. To the south and east are automotive uses, zoned C-2 and C-1. To the west are office uses, zoned C-1. Vehicular access to the wireless communications facility is through the existing parking lot and curb cut from Columbus Boulevard. According to the *Major Streets and Routes Plan*, Grant Road is designated as an arterial street and Columbus is designated as a collector street. The Pima Association of Governments - Transportation Planning Division (PAG-TPD) estimates that the proposed development will not generate additional measurable vehicle trips per day. Tucson Department of Transportation (TDOT) anticipates the planned Grant Road Improvement Project will only have minimal impacts at the southeast corner of the site. The cell tower should not be impacted in any way by the proposed improvements.

Land use policy direction for this area is provided by the *Grant - Alvernon Area Plan (GAAP)* and *Plan Tucson*. The rezoning site is located within a mixed-use center as

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identified on the Future Growth Scenario Map of *Plan Tucson*. Mixed -use centers combine a variety of housing options, retail, services, office, and public gathering places, located close to each other, providing occupants of the center and the residents and workers in the surrounding neighborhoods with local access to goods and services. *Plan Tucson* policies protect established residential neighborhoods by supporting compatible development, including non-residential uses, where the scale and intensity of use is compatible with adjacent uses. Policy LT28.1.2 requires that, if possible, wireless communication facilities be located, installed and maintained to minimize visual impacts and preserve views.

The special exception site is located within an Office, Commercial, High-Density Residential area as identified in the *GAAP*. For these areas, the plan contains guidance on wireless communication facilities in Office and Commercial Land Use Policy 6, which discourages wireless communication antenna arrays unless concealed, disguised, or collocated on existing buildings or structures. Land Use, Office and Commercial Land Use Policy 2 encourages incorporating appropriate design elements and buffering techniques during the zoning application and associated land review processes.

The proposed ground equipment is located within an area screened by an eight (8) foot tall chain link fence. A proposed diesel generator and cabinet will be located on a concrete pad. A twelve foot wide access easement for the WCF site will be provided from Columbus Boulevard. The access easement is located within an existing driveway. The nearest residential unit is located approximately 115 feet to the north of the proposed WCF site.

The proposed monopalm will include four antennas per sector with three sectors for a total of twelve antennas. The applicant has submitted a photo-simulation of the monopalm showing that the antennas concealed by the artificial fronds of the monopalm's crown. The monopalm will be set back from Columbus Boulevard by approximately 67 feet and 96 feet from Grant Road.

The monopalm will be visible from the surrounding residential neighborhoods, commercial development, as well as from the adjacent streets. The proposed monopalm stealth design reduces the visible impacts to the neighborhood, and according to the photo- simulation submitted by the applicant, the monopalm will be visible from the single-family residential neighborhood to the north. The nearest residence is north of the site in R-2 zoning approximately 115 feet from the proposed location of the monopalm. There are some desert trees and palm trees in the general area, including one tall palm tree of approximately 40 feet tall located about 350 feet to the east of the site, two to the south (approximately 40 feet tall and 500 feet away), and one to the north (approximately 30 feet tall and 260 feet away). These trees allow the monopalm to blend in when viewed from a distance. Staff recommends that any existing on-site palm tree, native tree or landscape planting disturbed during the monopalm or ground equipment installation be replaced in accordance with the UDC and heat island mitigation.

The applicant proposes to place the monopalm and ground equipment in a 520 square foot lease area in the northwest corner of the parcel, which is currently a portion of the parking

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lot for Arizona Economy Insurance. Ground equipment will be housed inside an equipment cabinet located next to a diesel generator, both to be located on a concrete slab. Staff recommends that WCF use an 8 foot masonry wall in place of the chain-link fence to help mitigate noise from the generator and to help mitigate the equipment's visual impact on the surrounding areas. Should the masonry wall pose traffic turning problems, as determined by staff, a chain-link enclosure will be an acceptable alternative to the proposed recommendation. Staff also recommends the 8 foot masonry wall to be painted in neutral desert colors or to match the surrounding existing buildings.

In terms of wireless communication facilities, a stealth application is one that disguises the appearance of the pole and antennas to look like an element of the built or natural landscape, which could typically occur at the chosen location. A stealth application should be as close as possible in scale and appearance to the object it is disguised as, with no obvious unnatural elements. The success of a stealth application is dependent on the ability of the design and construction of the cellular site to fit into its surroundings to such a degree that it is not noticeable. Scale and proportion, site design, color, and materials, are particularly important in stealth applications insofar as they contribute, or do not contribute, to the ability of the facility to be as unobtrusive as possible. To ensure a successful stealth monopine at this location, the following standards are recommended:

- The monopalm shall not exceed 60 feet in height at top of fronds;
- The monopalm shall include crown and apple;
- The pole shall be covered with cladding (bark) from the pineapple to bottom of pole, and painted to resemble a live palm;
- There shall be a minimum of 65 fronds ranging in length from seven (7) feet to ten (10) feet and placed to extend above, below and between antenna panels;
- Replacement of lost/damaged fronts to be completed within ten working days of observation and fronds shall be colored to match live fronds as closely as possible;
- All cables shall be run inside the pole, with no foot pegs other visible appurtenances;
- All wire ports shall be concealed behind the antennas and all equipment shall be mounted behind the antenna panels;
- Antenna panels shall be painted with a light/shade pattern to better camouflage them;
- Ground equipment to be screened by an existing masonry wall (provide elevation of street views).
- Maximum antenna size is ninety-nine (99) inches in length, eighteen (18) inches in width, and eight (8) inches in depth,
- Antenna standoff from the pole shall not exceed thirty (30) inches.

The applicant's proposal requires approval as a Mayor and Council Special Exception and must meet the Use-Specific Standards of UDC Sections 4.9.13.0 and 4.9.4.1.2, .3, and .7. The Mayor and Council may forward the request to the Design Review Board for design review and recommendation.

**4.9.4.1.7**

- a. Wireless communication antennas, provided:

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- (1) The tower or antennas are not permitted by other provision of this Section.
- (2) New towers require a minimum separation of one mile from any existing tower, regardless of ownership, unless documentation establishes that no practical alternative exists.
- (3) All appropriate measures shall be taken to conceal or disguise the tower and antenna from external view.
- (4) All appropriate measures shall be taken to reduce the negative proliferation of visible towers and antennae by the collocation of new antennae on existing towers or with the facilities of other providers which are located or planned for development within the proposed service area.
- (5) Notice shall be provided to all agents designated at least 15 days prior to the date of the public hearing before the Zoning Examiner.

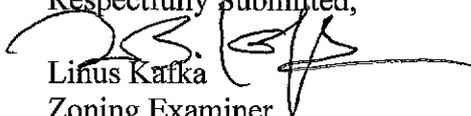
**CONCLUSION**

The proposed stealth tower is in compliance with the performance criteria for a wireless communication facility. The special exception request is consistent with the policy direction in the *Grant-Alvernon Area Plan* and *Plan Tucson*, which support development designed to be compatible with and sensitive to surrounding land uses. The proposed wireless facility has been designed to blend in with the surroundings and does not conflict with plan policies. Subject to compliance with the attached preliminary conditions, approval of the requested special exception is appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Zoning Examiner recommends approval of the Special Exception request subject to the proposed preliminary conditions.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Linus Kafka  
Zoning Examiner

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Public Hearing Minutes