



ZONING EXAMINER

REPORT TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL

January 4, 2016

SE-15-79 Verizon – West Speedway Boulevard
Public Hearing: December 17, 2015

BACKGROUND

This is a request by Michael Rankert of Tectonic Engineering, on behalf of Verizon Wireless, for approval of a wireless communication facility (WCF). The special exception site is located on the north side of Speedway Boulevard approximately 225 feet east of Riverview Boulevard. The preliminary development plan proposes a tower with twelve antenna panels concealed within an artificial pine tree (monopine), 65 feet in height.

Land use policy direction for this area is provided by *Plan Tucson* and the *Santa Cruz Area Plan*.

PUBLIC HEARING SUMMARY (Minutes Attached)

Glenn Moyer, Planning and Development Services Department, presented the staff report with a recommendation for approval. Mr. Moyer also commented that no written approvals and no written protests were received. Michael Rankert, the applicant's agent, presented the rezoning request and agreed to the recommended staff conditions of rezoning.

FINDINGS OF FACT

This is a request by Michael Rankert of Tectonic Engineering, on behalf of Verizon Wireless, for approval of a wireless communication facility (WCF). The special exception site is located on the north side of Speedway Boulevard approximately 225 feet east of Riverview Boulevard. The preliminary development plan proposes a tower with twelve antenna panels concealed within an artificial pine tree (monopine), 65 feet in height. The facility will be placed within an approximately 1,225 square foot lease along the east edge of the 0.22 acre parcel, which is currently vacant. The proposed ground equipment, including a backup diesel generator, will be located within an area screened by an eight (8) foot high masonry screen wall with a gated entrance along the north side of the compound. A twenty-foot wide access/utility easement for the WCF site will be provided from Speedway Boulevard.

Immediately adjacent to the east of the site is an existing retail liquor store. Farther to the east across Yucca Road and on the north side of Speedway Boulevard is a parking lot for the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind. The parcel immediately to the west is vacant land, zoned R-2. Parcels to the north and west are developed with single-family and multi-family residential land uses in the R-2 residential zone. Parcels to the south across Speedway Boulevard are single-family residential uses in the O-3 and R-2 zones.

Vehicular access to the wireless communications facility is from Speedway Boulevard through an existing curb cut. According to the *Major Streets and Routes Plan*, Speedway

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Boulevard is designated as an arterial street with a future right-of-way width of 120 feet. The Pima Association of Governments estimates that the proposed development will not generate additional measurable vehicle trips per day.

The *Santa Cruz Area Plan* and the *Plan Tucson* both provide land use guidance for this site. The *Santa Cruz Area Plan* supports new development that is compatible with existing neighborhoods in the area. The Plans support buffering and screening techniques that help ensure compatibility, minimize visual impacts and preserve views.

Plan Tucson identifies this area in the Future Growth Scenario Map as an “existing neighborhood ” Existing neighborhoods are characterized as largely built-out residential and commercial districts in which minimal new development or redevelopment is expected in the next few decades. The goal is to maintain the character of these neighborhoods while accommodating some new development and encouraging reinvestment, services, and amenities that contribute to further neighborhood stability. *Plan Tucson* supports existing neighborhoods and commercial districts while encouraging new services and amenities that contribute further to neighborhood stability. LT28.J.3 states that telecommunication facilities are to be designed with improved appearances of above ground structures and utilities throughout the city.

The proposed monopine will include four antennas per sector with three sectors for a total of twelve antennas. The applicant has submitted a photo-simulation of the monopine showing the antennas concealed by the artificial branches and needles. The monopine will be set back from Speedway Boulevard by approximately 75 feet. The nearest residential unit is located immediately to the north, approximately 60 feet from the WCF site, in R-2 zoning. The proposed monopine will be visible from the surrounding residential neighborhoods, commercial development, as well as from the adjacent streets.

The existing site has minimal landscaping and screening from adjacent residential uses and from Speedway Boulevard. The submitted landscape plan depicts screening to help mitigate height and soften the views of the WCF from adjacent land uses. Shrubs and live pine trees will be planted around the lease area. The PDP does not identify the type of pine trees to be planted or specify that irrigation will be provided. A minimum of six Afghan Pine trees will be planted; two on the north, two on the south and two on the west side of the lease area. This will allow sufficient space between each tree to grow to a mature height between thirty (30) and fifty (50) feet. The trees shall also be included in the irrigation plan.

The monopine will include faux-bark cladding to further disguise the WCF. In addition, antennas will be painted to complement the natural range of colors on surrounding trees, to mitigate and minimize visual impacts. The proposed WCF will be designed to support future collocation, with antennas mounted close to the pole and concealed by the monopine stealth design.

The applicant proposes to place the ground equipment just northwest of the monopine within the 1,225 square foot lease area. Ground equipment will be housed inside an

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equipment cabinet located next to a diesel generator, both to be located on a concrete slab. A proposed 8-foot high CMU wall will help mitigate noise from the back-up generator as well as the equipment's visual impact on the surrounding areas. The masonry wall will be textured and painted in a neutral desert color.

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 monopine shall not exceed 65 feet in height at the highest point;
- The monopine shall include branches and needles;
- The monopine hunk shall be covered with cladding (faux bark) wherever the pole is visible, and the trunk shall be painted to resemble a live pine;
- Replacement of lost/damaged branches and needles to be completed within ten working days of observation and branches and needles shall be colored to match live pines as closely as possible;
- Monopine branches shall start at 15 feet above grade elevation;
- All cables shall be run inside the pole, with no foot pegs or other visible appurtenances;
- All wire ports shall be concealed behind the antennas and equipment on the monopine shall be mounted behind the antenna panels;
- Six (6) live 24-inch box Afghan pine trees, (to grow 45 feet or more in height) shall be planted (2 each to the north, south and west of the WCF. Trees shall be added to the onsite permanent irrigation system and be maintained as part of the overall landscaping. If trees become damaged, diseased or die, they are to be replaced within 30 days of observation. Replacement shall be the responsibility of the wireless provider;
- Ground equipment to be located within lease area and housed within a walk-in shelter screened by an 8-foot masonry (CMU) wall. CMU wall shall be textured and designed to match other nearby CMU walls;
- Maximum antenna size is ninety-nine (99) inches in length, eighteen (18) inches in width, and eight (8) inches in depth;
- Antenna arrays shall have no more than 12 antennas (3 sectors with 4 antennas per sector);
- Antennas shall be camouflaged with faux pine needle socks to match needle density and color of monopine.

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.O and 4.9.4.I.2, .3, and .7.

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The Mayor and Council may forward the request to the Design Review Board for design review and recommendation.

4.9.4.I.7

- (1) The tower or antennas are not permitted by other provisions 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.

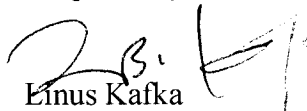
CONCLUSION

The proposed special exception use is consistent with the policy direction in the *Santa Cruz 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 be camouflaged and 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.

Respectfully Submitted,


Einus Kafka
Zoning Examiner

ATTACHMENTS:

Public Hearing Minutes
Rezoning Staff Report



MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 1, 2015
For December 17, 2015 Hearing

TO: Linus Kafka
Zoning Examiner

FROM: Jim Mazzocco, Interim Director
Planning & Development Services

SUBJECT: SPECIAL EXCEPTION LAND USE
PLANNING & AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT
SE-15-79 Verizon – W. Speedway Boulevard, C-1 (Ward 1)

Issue – This is a request by Michael Rankert of Tectonic Engineering, on behalf of Verizon Wireless, for approval of a wireless communication facility (WCF). The special exception site is located on the north side of Speedway Boulevard approximately 225 feet east of Riverview Boulevard (see Case Location Map). The preliminary development plan (PDP) proposes a tower with twelve antenna panels concealed within an artificial pine tree (monopine), 65 feet in height. The facility will be placed within an approximately 1,225 square foot lease along the east edge of the 0.22 acre parcel, which is currently vacant. The proposed ground equipment, including a backup diesel generator, will be located within an area screened by an eight (8) foot high masonry screen wall with a gated entrance along the north side of the compound. A twenty-foot wide access/utility easement for the WCF site will be provided from Speedway Boulevard.

A communications use of this type in the C-1 zone is subject to Sections 4.9.13.O and 4.9.4.1.2, .3, and .7 of the *Unified Development Code (UDC)* and requires approval through a Mayor & Council Special Exception Procedure, Sec. 3.4.4, because the tower height exceeds 50 feet and the tower is not set back at least two times its height from office zoned property located immediately north of the WCF. Documentation provided by the applicant indicates that no practical alternative exists, and measures are being taken to conceal or disguise the tower and antenna panels from view.

The Mayor & Council Special Exception Procedure requires a public hearing before the Zoning Examiner after which the Zoning Examiner forwards a recommendation to the Mayor and Council for a decision to grant the request with, or without, conditions or to deny the request. The Mayor and Council may also forward the request to the Design Review Board (DRB) for design review and recommendation.

Planning & Development Services Department Recommendation – The Planning & Development Services Department recommends approval of the special exception request, subject to the attached preliminary conditions.

Background Information

Existing Land Use: The site is currently undeveloped.

Zoning Descriptions:

C-1: This zone provides for low-intensity, commercial and other uses that are compatible with adjacent residential uses. Residential and other related uses are permitted.

Surrounding Zones and Land Uses:

North: Zoned R-2; Residential duplexes and single family homes

South: Zoned R-2 and O-3; Single-family residential, duplexes, and undeveloped lots

East: Zoned C-1; Retail

West: Zoned R-2; Undeveloped land

Previous Cases on the Property: None

Related Cases:

SE-15-11 Verizon – Swan Road, C-1 Zone – This was a request for approval of a wireless communication facility concealed within an artificial pine tree (monopine), 60 feet in height and associated equipment as a special exception land use. The special exception site is located approximately 300 feet south of Camp Lowell Road and 150 feet west of Swan Road. On September 9, 2015, the Mayor and Council adopted Ordinance No. 11301, allowing the special exception.

SE-13-22 AT&T– Fort Lowell Road, C-1 Zone – This was a request for approval of a wireless communication facility concealed within an artificial palm tree (monopalm), 65 feet in height and associated equipment as a special exception land use. The special exception site is located 180 feet south of Fort Lowell Road and 610 feet west of Campbell Avenue. On July 9, 2013, the Mayor and Council adopted Ordinance No. 11092, allowing the special exception.

Applicant's Request – The applicant requests special exception approval for the placement of a 65-foot high cellular communications monopole disguised as a pine tree with associated equipment on an undeveloped parcel.

Planning Considerations

The *Santa Cruz Area Plan* and the *Plan Tucson* both provide land use guidance for this site. The *Santa Cruz Area Plan* supports new development that is compatible with existing neighborhoods in the area. The Plans support buffering and screening techniques that help ensure compatibility, minimize visual impacts and preserve views.

Plan Tucson identifies this area in the Future Growth Scenario Map as an “existing neighborhood”. Existing neighborhoods are characterized as largely built-out residential and commercial districts in which minimal new development or redevelopment is expected in the next few decades. The goal is to maintain the character of these neighborhoods while accommodating some new development and encouraging reinvestment, services, and amenities that contribute to further neighborhood stability. *Plan Tucson* supports existing neighborhoods and commercial districts while encouraging new services and amenities that contribute further to neighborhood stability. LT28.1.3 states that telecommunication facilities are to be designed with improved appearances of above ground structures and utilities throughout the city.

The project is in general compliance with the intent of these plans. The plan policies generally support new cell tower proposals when designed to minimize visual impacts on surrounding neighborhoods and when buffering is provided. The monopine design will conceal the new tower and antenna structures. Ground equipment will be placed within the lease area and will be screened from view by an 8-foot high masonry wall.

Immediately adjacent to the east of the site is an existing retail liquor store. Farther to the east across Yucca Road and on the north side of Speedway Boulevard is a parking lot for the Arizona School for the Deaf and Blind. The parcel immediately to the west is vacant land, zoned R-2. Parcels to the north and west are developed with single-family and multi-family residential land uses in the R-2 residential zone. Parcels to the south across Speedway Boulevard are single-family residential uses in the O-3 and R-2 zones.

The Pima Association of Governments - Transportation Planning Division (PAG-TPD) estimates that the proposed development will not generate additional measurable vehicle trips per day. Field inspection by staff indicates there are currently no billboards on the rezoning site.

Design Considerations

Land Use Compatibility – The proposed monopine will include four antennas per sector with three sectors for a total of twelve antennas. The applicant has submitted a photo-simulation of the monopine showing the antennas concealed by the artificial branches and needles. The monopine will be set back from Speedway Boulevard by approximately 75 feet. The nearest residential unit is located immediately to the north, approximately 60 feet from the WCF site, in R-2 zoning. The proposed monopine will be visible from the surrounding residential neighborhoods, commercial development, as well as from the adjacent streets.

The existing site has minimal landscaping and screening from adjacent residential uses and from Speedway Boulevard. The submitted landscape plan depicts screening to help mitigate height and soften the views of the WCF from adjacent land uses. Shrubs and live pine trees are proposed to be planted around the lease area. The PDP does not identify the type of pine trees to be planted or specify that irrigation will be provided. Staff recommends that a minimum of six Afghan Pine trees be planted; two on the north, two on the south and two on the west side of the

lease area. This will allow sufficient space between each tree to grow to a mature height between thirty (30) and fifty (50) feet. The trees shall also be included in the irrigation plan.

The monopine should include faux-bark cladding to further disguise the WCF. In addition, antennas should be painted to complement the natural range of colors on surrounding trees, to mitigate and minimize visual impacts. Staff recommends the proposed WCF should be designed to support future collocation, with antennas mounted close to the pole and concealed by the monopine stealth design.

The applicant proposes to place the ground equipment just northwest of the monopine within the 1,225 square foot lease area. Ground equipment will be housed inside an equipment cabinet located next to a diesel generator, both to be located on a concrete slab. A proposed 8-foot high CMU wall will help mitigate noise from the back-up generator as well as the equipment's visual impact on the surrounding areas. Staff recommends the masonry wall be textured and painted in a neutral desert color.

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, typically observed 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 monopine shall not exceed 65 feet in height at the highest point;
- The monopine shall include branches and needles;
- The monopine trunk shall be covered with cladding (faux bark) wherever the pole is visible, and the trunk shall be painted to resemble a live pine;
- Replacement of lost/damaged branches and needles to be completed within ten working days of observation and branches and needles shall be colored to match live pines as closely as possible;
- Monopine branches shall start at 15 feet above grade elevation;
- All cables shall be run inside the pole, with no foot pegs or other visible appurtenances;
- All wire ports shall be concealed behind the antennas and equipment on the monopine shall be mounted behind the antenna panels;
- Six (6) live 24-inch box Afghan pine trees, (to grow 45 feet or more in height) shall be planted (2 each to the north, south and west of the WCF). Trees shall be added to the onsite permanent irrigation system and be maintained as part of the overall landscaping. If trees become damaged, diseased or die, they are to be replaced within 30 days of observation. Replacement shall be the responsibility of the wireless provider;

- Ground equipment to be located within lease area and housed within a walk-in shelter screened by an 8-foot masonry (CMU) wall. CMU wall shall be textured and designed to match other nearby CMU walls;
- Maximum antenna size is ninety-nine (99) inches in length, eighteen (18) inches in width, and eight (8) inches in depth;
- Antenna arrays shall have no more than 12 antennas (3 sectors with 4 antennas per sector);
- Antennas shall be camouflaged with faux pine needle socks to match needle density and color of monopine.

Road Improvements/Vehicular Access/Circulation – Vehicular access to the wireless communications facility is from Speedway Boulevard through an existing curb cut. According to the *Major Streets and Routes Plan*, Speedway Boulevard is designated as an arterial street with a future right-of-way width of 120 feet.

Use-Specific Standards – 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.O and 4.9.4.I.2, .3, and .7. The Mayor and Council may forward the request to the Design Review Board for design review and recommendation. Below is the applicant’s analysis of the performance criteria.

4.9.4.I.

.7 The following requires approval as a special exception in accordance with Section 3.4.4, *Mayor and Council Special Exception Procedure*. The Mayor and Council may forward the Design Review Board (DRB) for design review and recommendation.

a. Wireless communication antennas, provided:

(1) The tower or antennas are not permitted by other provisions of this Section.

The 65-foot top of monopine in the C-1 zone does not conform to other sections of the code because it is not 50 feet or less in height and does not meet the setback of two times its height to adjacent R-2 zoned property to the north and west.

(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.

The nearest existing wireless communications facility (WCF) is a monopalm for another wireless provider, and is located 0.60 miles south-southwest of the site. The search ring to resolve the Verizon coverage gap has a radius of approximately 0.25 miles.

- (3) All appropriate measures shall be taken to conceal or disguise the tower and antenna from external view.

The tower has been designed as a monopine and the tower and antennas will be disguised within the artificial branches and pine needles.

- (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.

The nearest existing WCF is approximately 3,200 feet south-southwest of the site. This tower was not suitable to fit within the existing sites on Verizon's network. The search ring to resolve the coverage gap has a radius of approximately 0.25 miles.

- (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.

All policies of the Mayor and Council Special Exception Process shall be followed accordingly.

Staff finds the proposal to be in compliance with the UDC Use-Specific Standards.

Conclusion – The proposed special exception use is consistent with the policy direction in the *Santa Cruz 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 be camouflaged and 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.