THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: August 23, 2007 **REPORT NO. PC-07-116**

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of August 30, 2007**

SUBJECT: CROWN CASTLE – UNIVERSITY (REDWOOD STANDPIPE). PROJECT NO 55447. PROCESS NUMBER 4.

OWNER: **City of San Diego**
APPLICANT: Crown Castle

SUMMARY

Issue(s): Should the Planning Commission approve a wireless communication facility consisting of a new 65-foot high mono-eucalyptus faux tree and associated equipment, located at 6010 Hughes Street within the Mid-City Communities Planning area?

Staff Recommendation:

1. **Approve** Conditional Use Permit No. 293929; and

2. **Approve** Planned Development Permit No. 293930; and

3. **Approve** Site Development Permit No. 471003.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: On March 14, 2006, the Eastern Area Community Planning Committee voted 10-1-0 to recommend approval of this project Attachment 10).

Environmental Review: This project was determined to be categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Article 19 Section 15303 on July 12, 2007.

Fiscal Impact Statement: All costs associated with the processing of this permit are paid by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact: None

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Housing Impact Statement: None

BACKGROUND

The 1.2 acre project site is located at 6010 Hughes Street within the Mid-City Community Planning Area. It is zoned OR-1-1 and is designated for Open Space Residential in the Mid-City Communities Plan (Attachments 1, 2 and 3). The project includes the removal and decommissioning of an existing 60 foot high monopole and the installation of a new 65 foot high mono-eucalyptus tree which will support twelve Cingular antennas (3 sectors of 4 antennas each). The associated Cingular equipment enclosure existing from the previous expired permit will remain unchanged at 360 square-feet. Fencing at the site will be configured to isolate the water tank and its related equipment from this wireless communication facility (Attachment 5).

The previous monopole facility was approved through Conditional Use Permit No. 94-0280 in November 3, 2004 (Attachment 9). There are currently two other wireless providers on site. Verizon, with antennas mounted on the water tank and a dish antenna screened on the top of its equipment enclosure (expiring July 27, 2010); and T-Mobile with water tank mounted antennas and equipment enclosure (expiring November 15, 2010).

The Communication Antenna regulations identify the Cingular proposal as a minor telecommunication facility as the facility will be integrated into the landscape and is proposed on a non-residential use within a residential zone. However, due to the height of the faux tree at 65 feet (over the 35 foot height limit), a Planned Development Permit is required.

The site is immediately adjacent to an elementary school and surrounded on the other sides by single- and multi-unit residential (Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION

Project Description:

Crown Castle proposes to remove the existing expired 60 foot high monopole (previous CUP 94-0280 expired November 3, 2004) and install a new 65 foot high mono-eucalyptus tree, which will support twelve Cingular antennas (3 sectors of 4 antennas each). The site presently consists of a 125 foot high water tank and mature eucalyptus trees. Additional five eucalyptus trees (three 48 inch box and two 15 gallon) will provide additional vegetative buffering. The associated Cingular equipment enclosure existing from the previous expired permit will remain unchanged at 360 square-feet. Fencing at the site will be configured to isolate the water tank and its related equipment from this wireless communication facility. Additionally, the project includes the removal and undergrounding of existing power utility lines.

The existing Cingular antennas on the monopole are actually at a higher point on the pole than they will be on the faux tree, however, because Cingular wants to maintain current coverage,

they need to remain at a height that can accommodate the network needs. Additionally, the faux tree will provide support for future collocation opportunities for other carriers.

The Communication Antenna regulations strongly encourage architectural integration and by doing so, applicants can benefit with more favorable processing and decision levels. This project would have been a Process 3, Conditional Use Permit; however, due to the proposed height of 65 feet for the faux tree, a Planned Development Permit is required in order to exceed the maximum height of 30 feet for the OR-1-1 zone. The new design of a faux eucalyptus tree integrates better into the project site due to the existing mature trees and the backdrop of the water tank (Attachment 6).

Community Plan Analysis:

The proposed wireless communications facility is located in an area identified as Open Space – Residential in the Mid-City Communities Plan. The Mid-City Communities Plan recognizes that wireless telephone service providers continue to develop analog and digital wireless transmission lines within the Mid-City Communities planning area.

The proposed wireless communication facility integrates with the existing mature eucalyptus trees at the site and uses compatible materials and colors, and therefore does not conflict with the Mid-City Communities Plan.

According to the Public Facilities and Services Element of the Plan, all available means should be used to ensure that communications antennas and associated equipment facilities are adequately screened or concealed from view. The replacement of the existing 60-foot monopole with the proposed faux eucalyptus tree implements this recommendation.

Environmental Analysis:

This project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines.

Project-Related Issues:

The project proposes a deviation to the 30-foot height limit for the new mono-eucalyptus tree at 65 feet. The deviation for the new faux tree would allow Cingular to meet their current coverage and capacity demands in Mid City - Eastern Area and surrounding areas. The proposed project would include an existing Cingular 360 square-foot equipment enclosure and another 173 square-foot enclosure, undergrounding of existing overhead utility lines and the addition of five live eucalyptus trees.

The proposed mono-eucalyptus tree will be located a distance of 62 yards to the north, 40 yards to the west and 76 yards to the east of adjacent residential, 54 yards away from the adjacent school property line, and a total of 104 yards from the nearest school building. The faux tree will

be screened by the existing vegetation and additional plantings, therefore it will not create a visual impact at the site.

The project site contains environmentally sensitive lands, both steep slopes and sensitive vegetation; however, the installation of the proposed tree will occur on a previously disturbed portion of the water tank site and will not impact any resources. A biological letter report submitted with the project identified that there could be a potential impact to the existing sensitive vegetation with the proposed planting of five eucalyptus trees. In order to avoid this potential impact, the permit has been conditioned to relocate the trees closer to the existing equipment shelters and away from the edge of the sensitive biological area.

A Planned Development Permit allows flexibility in the application of development regulations where strict application of the development regulations would result in a less desirable project. Additionally, the Communication Antenna regulations encourage project applicants to integrate their wireless projects into the architecture of existing buildings or environments. Wireless communication technology is dependent on clear lines of site and in this case, the additional height is needed to continue to provide the coverage network necessary for the area. Staff supports the proposed deviation to height as it has been determined to not cause any visual impact.

This project is located in an open space – residential zone on a non residentially used property therefore, requiring a Conditional Use Permit. A Site Development Permit is also required due to the proximity of sensitive vegetation to the site.

Conclusion:

Staff has reviewed the proposed project and has determined the project is consistent with the purpose and intent of the applicable development regulations of the San Diego Municipal Code, which includes the development regulations of the OR-1-1 zone and the Communication Antenna Regulations. A Planned Development Permit is required for the height deviation, but it has been determined that the design of the new faux tree is well integrated into the existing landscape. The required findings have been made (Attachment 8) to support staff's recommendation. Therefore, staff recommends the Planning Commission approve Conditional Use Permit No. 293929, Planned Development Permit No. 293930 and Site Development Permit No. 471003 (Attachment 7).

ALTERNATIVES

1. **Approve** Conditional Use Permit No. 293929, Planned Development Permit No. 293930 and Site Development Permit No. 471003, **with modifications.**

2. **Deny** Conditional Use Permit No. 293929, Planned Development Permit No. 293930 and Site Development Permit No. 471003, **if the findings required to approve the project cannot be affirmed.**

Respectfully submitted,

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Development Services Department

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Project Manager
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ESCOBAR-ECK/NDF

Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Community Plan Land Use Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Project Data Sheet
5. Project Plans
6. Photosimulation
7. Draft Permit with Conditions
8. Draft Resolution with Findings
9. Copy of Recorded Permits
10. Community Planning Group Recommendation
11. Ownership Disclosure Statement
12. Project Chronology
13. Notice of Public Hearing