THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: September 13, 2007 **REPORT NO. PC-07-129**

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of September 20, 2007**

SUBJECT: T-MOBILE – COLUMBIA COURT- PROJECT NO. 97607
PROCESS 4

OWNER/ APPLICANT: Columbia Heights Homeowners
Omnipoint Communications, DBA T-Mobile

SUMMARY

Issue(s): Should the Planning Commission approve a Conditional Use Permit and Planned Development Permit for an existing, expired wireless communication facility consisting of a total of six panel antennas mounted on and behind a mansard roof with associated equipment on the building roof top located at 3217 Columbia Street within the Uptown Community Planning area?

Staff Recommendation: Approve Conditional Use Permit No. 318017 and Planned Development Permit No. 444839.

Community Planning Group Recommendation: On June 6, 2006, the Uptown Community Planning Committee voted 10-0 to recommend approval of the Columbia Court project.

Environmental Review: This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. This project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Article 19, Section 15303, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on May 17, 2006, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended June 1, 2006.

Fiscal Impact Statement: None with this action. All costs associated with the processing of this project are paid by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact: None with this action.

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Housing Impact Statement: None with this action.

BACKGROUND

This project is located on an existing three-story condominium building located at 3217 Columbia Street within the MR-1500 zone of the Uptown Community Planning area. The project is an existing, expired Conditional Use Permit (95-0350-039) for a wireless communication facility that was approved by the City Council on March 19, 1996. The facility is located on a three-story, previously conforming condominium building that exceeds the maximum height limit of 30 feet.

The Conditional Use permit (CUP) was originally issued to Pacific Bell Mobile Services (PBMS) for a period not to exceed ten years. With mergers, buy outs and changing technology, the site now belongs to T-Mobile who is seeking to obtain approval of a CUP to maintain the facility as it exists with minor modifications to the façade mounted antennas.

The multi-unit residential structure was built sometime in the early 1970's under the R-1500 zone, which permitted building heights over 50 feet. The highest portion of the building is 57' 6". In 1974, the property was rezoned to MR-1500, which included a 30 foot height limit. The original CUP was approved under the Old Municipal Code (§101.0510), which allowed deviations to the development regulations, hence the permission to exceed the 30 foot height limit.

DISCUSSION

Project Description:

The project consists of two façade mounted antennas located on the exterior of the mansard roof on the southwest portion of the building. There are a total of four additional antennas located behind a screen wall designed to appear as part of the mansard roof; two on the southeast and two on the northwest sides of the building. The associated equipment consists of four approximately six-foot high cabinets located on the roof top. Because the building is previously conforming, exceeding the 30 foot height limit, a Planned Development Permit (PDP) is required.

The condominium building is three-stories high and includes 15 units. The architecture is basic with balcony features, interspersed short parapets and a mansard roof along the front of the building facing Interstate-5. The roof is flat and supports a solar panel system. The existing exposed antennas on the front of the building currently do not conform to the Communication Antenna regulations; however, T-Mobile is proposing to add skirts to the sides and bottom of the antennas to help them integrate better into the mansard roof. The other four existing antennas are located behind a screen wall and are not visible.

The three existing equipment cabinets are situated on the roof top toward the back of the building, immediately adjacent to a stairwell enclosure. T-Mobile is proposing to remove all

stairwell enclosure. They are proposed to be painted the same color as the stairwell enclosure so as to further blend with the building and roof top. By replacing and relocating the cabinets, the roof top clutter and visual impact will be reduced.

Community Plan Analysis:

The Uptown Community Plan does not specifically address the proposal of wireless telecommunications facilities. However, the Urban Design Element of the community plan recommends that visually distracting rooftop appendages such as stairway towers and mechanical equipment be screened from public view. The replacement and relocation of the equipment cabinets so that they are up against the stairwell enclosure, will help to blend them into the existing rooftop appurtenance.

Project-Related Issues:

This project is considered a major telecommunication facility due to the fact that it is located on a residential building within a residential zone. Major telecommunication facilities are required to be designed to be minimally visible through the use of architecture, landscape architecture and siting solutions. T-Mobile has proposed to upgrade the installation of the exposed facade mounted antennas on the mansard roof, as well as the equipment cabinets, which will be reduced in number and placed adjacent to the stairwell enclosure so as to blend in better with the building. Staff finds both of these upgrades acceptable.

Conclusion:

The original CUP for this project expired on March 19, 2006. In order to maintain operations at this location, T-Mobile is required to obtain permits in conformance with the current regulations. Zoning, including policy and regulations have changed since the original approval making the permit feasibility of this project as it exists unachievable. The project proposes changes to both the antennas and the equipment that are both acceptable to staff. T-Mobile is requesting a deviation to the height limitation and roof top screening regulations of the Land Development Code. Staff recommends approval of CUP No. 318017 and PDP No. 444839.

ALTERNATIVE

1. **Approve** CUP No. 318017 and PDP No. 444839.

2. **Approve** CUP No. 318017 and PDP No. 444839 with modifications.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Westlake
Program Manager
Development Services Department

Karen Lynch-Ashcraft
Project Manager
Development Services Department

ESCOBAR-ECK/KLA

Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Community Plan Land Use Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Project Data Sheet
5. Project Plans
6. Draft Resolution with Findings
7. Draft Permit with Conditions
8. Copy of Recorded Permit
9. Community Planning Group Recommendation
10. Ownership Disclosure
11. Statement Project Chronology
12. LDC Section 141.0405 Communication Antenna Regulations
13. Notice of Public Hearing
14. T-Mobile Corporate Listing

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