



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE ISSUED: July 1, 2010 **REPORT NO. PC-10-045**

ATTENTION: **Planning Commission, Agenda of July 8, 2010**

SUBJECT: SYCAMORE – WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITIES
VERIZON – PROJECT NO. 88040
AT&T – PROJECT NO. 199531
SPRINT/CLEARWIRE – PROJECT NO. 201396
T-MOBILE – PROJECT NO. 98370
PROCESS 4

**OWNER/
APPLICANT:** Mast Boulevard, LLC/
Verizon Wireless, T-Mobile West Corporation, AT&T Mobility and
Sprint/Clearwire (See Attachment 19)

SUMMARY

Issue(s): Should the Planning Commission approve Neighborhood Use Permits and Planned Development Permits for a multi-carrier Wireless Communication Facility (WCF) located to the northwest of the intersection of Highway-52 and Mast Boulevard in the East Elliott Community Planning area?

Staff Recommendation:

1. **Approve** Neighborhood Use Permit No. 757169 and Planned Development Permit No. 757156 (Verizon – Project No. 88040).
2. **Approve** Neighborhood Use Permit No. 757168 (T-Mobile – Project No. 98370)
3. **Approve** Neighborhood Use Permit No. 757165 and Planned Development Permit No. 757155 (AT&T Project No. 199531)
4. **Approve** Neighborhood Use Permit No. 757161 and Planned Development Permit No. 757162 (Sprint/Clearwire – Project No. 201396)

Community Planning Group Recommendation: There is no recognized community

planning group for East Elliott at this time. Each of the carriers was asked to present their project to the Mission Trails Regional Park Citizens Advisory Committee (MTRPCAC).

- Verizon – On March 3, 2009, the MTRPCAC voted 10-1 to recommend approval of the project with the condition that the final tower design be approved by the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) Senior Park Ranger (Attachment 16). Verizon also presented the project to the Tierrasanta Community Council on July 15, 2009, where it was recommended for approval by a vote of 12-0-1 (Attachment 17).
- T-Mobile – On May 4, 2010, the MTRPCAC reviewed the project again and voted to support the project in concept, but requested T-Mobile to return on July 6, 2010 to address the following outstanding issues: 1) Landscape plan with irrigation; 2) clarification of the antennas on the tower; and 3) color selection of the tower, antennas and equipment enclosures (Attachment 16). An update will be provided at the July 8 Planning Commission hearing with regard to this request.
- AT&T – On March 2, 2010, the majority of the members of the MTRPCAC voted to approve the AT&T application with one no vote and one member abstaining (Attachment 16).
- Sprint/Clearwire - On May 4, 2010, the MTRPCAC reviewed the project again and voted to support the project in concept, but requested Sprint/Clearwire to return on July 6, 2010 to address the following outstanding issues: 1) Landscape plan with irrigation; 2) clarification of the antennas on the tower; and 3) color selection of the tower, antennas and equipment enclosures (Attachment 16). An update will be provided at the July 8 Planning Commission hearing with regard to this request.

Environmental Review:

- Verizon – This project was determined to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19, Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction (Attachment 18). This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on March 10, 2010, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended March 31, 2010.
- T-Mobile - This project was determined to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19, Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction (Attachment 18). This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on June 9, 2010, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended June 30, 2010.

- AT&T - This project was determined to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19, Section 15301, Existing Facilities (Attachment 18). This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on January 25, 2010, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended February 16, 2010.
- Sprint/Clearwire - This project was determined to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19, Section 15302, Replacement or Reconstruction (Attachment 18). This project is not pending an appeal of the environmental determination. The environmental exemption determination for this project was made on June 10, 2010, and the opportunity to appeal that determination ended July 1, 2010.

Fiscal Impact Statement: All costs associated with the processing of this project are paid from a deposit account maintained by the applicant.

Code Enforcement Impact: Neighborhood Code Compliance has been notified of the expired permits and the unpermitted Cell On Wheels (COW- a temporary portable cell tower) and has been monitoring the progress of these projects through the discretionary process.

Housing Impact Statement: Not applicable.

BACKGROUND

This project is a multi-carrier design solution for an existing WCF which consists of the following (Attachment 5):

- a 25-foot high monopole supporting Verizon antennas;
- a Verizon equipment shelter which supports AT&T antennas on its roof within a box screen;
- a Sprint enclosure which supports their antennas within a box screen;
- an AT&T enclosure (supporting no antennas), and;
- an unpermitted T-Mobile COW and generator adjacent to the fenced compound.

The proposed facility will consist of a 35-foot tall lattice tower, which will support Verizon, Sprint/Clearwire and T-Mobile antennas. AT&T antennas will remain on top of the Verizon enclosure and some of Sprint's antennas will remain on their enclosure. A T-Mobile equipment enclosure will be added to the compound (Attachment 7).

The project site is located at 8510 Mast Boulevard in the East Elliott Community Planning area (Attachments 1, 2 and 3). The property is zoned RS-1-8 and is designated Open Space in the community plan (Attachment 2). The Multiple Habitat Planning Area (MHPA) is mapped on the

northern half of the property; however the existing facilities and the proposed enhancements do not encroach into that area. The area where the compound is located is devoid of any significant vegetation (Attachment 6). The project will be conditioned to comply with the Land Use Adjacency Guidelines. The property is surrounded by open space. The Sycamore Landfill access road is located to the south and further south is Highway-52. A park and single family residential uses exist across West Hills Parkway to the southeast (Attachment 1).

The WCF regulations (Land Development Code Section 14.0420) permit WCF's in residential zones containing non-residential uses with a Neighborhood Use Permit (NUP), Process 2. With the exception of T-Mobile, all of the carriers exceed the maximum equipment enclosure square footage allowance of 250 square feet. To deviate from this requirement, a Planned Development Permit (PDP), Process 4 is required.

DISCUSSION

Each of these facilities was approved eight or more years ago. Verizon was the original facility, which was approved by the Planning Commission in 1994. That Conditional Use Permit (CUP) expired in 2004. When Verizon applied for a new permit in 2005, staff began discussions with the intent to develop a comprehensive solution for all of the upcoming permit expirations (Attachment 22). All of the carriers have been involved in discussions over the years and all have been cooperative and creative in this global effort. This WCF is highly visible from Highway-52, and lacks existing landscape screening, which created a challenge to find a solution that meets the carriers' technological requirements and complies with the WCF regulations (Attachment 6).

Community Plan Analysis:

East Elliott

The East Elliott Community Plan does not specifically address wireless communication facilities, however the Plan does recommend preservation of natural resources and to restore or enhance disturbed areas when possible. Additionally, the City's General Plan requires that WCF's be minimally visible and be visually respectful and compatible with the community. East Elliott is a unique San Diego community physically characterized by a significant amount of open space. Much of the visible landscape is rolling hills with native vegetation.

The existing facility stands out as a buff colored hillside fortress (Attachment 5). The proposed project will replace the monopole with a geometric lattice tower that will support three of the carrier's antennas. The existing chain link fencing will be replaced with an 8-foot high decorative wall consisting of stone pilasters linked by wrought iron fencing backed by mesh (Attachment 7). Additional native landscape is required to improve the views of this facility. Based on the project design, it can be determined that the proposed WCF is compatible with the City's General Plan and it also meets the intent of the East Elliott Community Plan to enhance views of disturbed areas.

Mission Trails Design District

The project site is located within the Mission Trails Design District Subarea 2, which consists primarily of hillside areas. The Design District's Guidelines contain the following considerations for WCF's:

- 1) All WCF's shall be fully screened from public view. The screening should be in the form of appropriate landscape when it is free standing.
- 2) Landscape should be used to screen the WCF to minimize the visual aspect of the equipment.
- 3) New WCF's should not obstruct views toward the park.

This project is highly visible to travelers along Highway 52 and West Hills Parkway. The new tower, although higher than the existing, will be painted a neutral color to blend in with the backdrop of the hillsides. The new wrought iron fence and stone pilasters will screen the existing enclosures and enhance the overall appearance of the compound along with the addition of native landscape (Attachment 7).

Project-Related Issues:

The City applies expiration dates to CUP's for WCF's in order to reassess the technology and other changing circumstances that occur over time. This is a good example of a first generation project in which the carriers and the City have worked cooperatively for a comprehensive solution to upgrade the compound and improve the views of the facility, while allowing all four carriers to continue operating at this location.

The existing monopole is 25-feet high and currently supports Verizon and Sprint antennas. The new lattice tower will be increased to 35-feet and will support all of Verizon and T-Mobile's antennas and one sector of Sprint's antennas. The height limit in the RS-1-8 zone is 35-feet. The existing equipment enclosures will remain, however, they will be repainted a neutral color to blend in with the proposed 8-foot high wrought iron fence with stone pilasters. With the exception of T-Mobile, all of the equipment enclosures exceed the maximum 250 square foot size, thus the need for PDP's. The purpose and intent of a PDP is to allow deviations, when it will result in a more desirable project than would be achieved if designed in strict conformance with the development regulations. In this case, allowing the carriers to maintain their enclosure sizes reduces the need for taller shelters resulting from having to stack the equipment to fit within the shelter limitations. The enclosures will be obscured by the proposed 8-foot high wrought iron fence with mesh backing and stone pilasters. Native landscape will also be required around the facility to help improve views from the freeway and West Hills Parkway and the Sycamore Landfill access road. A temporary water tank will be required to be located within the compound for a period of two years when it is anticipated that the landscape will be established.

During construction and demolition, the staging area will be located on the vacant, disturbed access road on the west side of the existing compound. A schedule will be included in the permit to ensure the timeliness of the removal of the old facility and replacement of the new facility including the allowance for temporary WCF's (which may consist of COW's) during

construction.

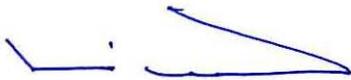
Conclusion:

Staff supports the design as proposed. The replacement of a monopole with a lattice tower is not always the best solution, but in this case, there are no existing permanent structures for these carriers to locate on and blending in with the landscape sometimes means proposing the obvious, while enhancing and complementing the existing natural environment. The topography in this area makes it difficult for most carriers to provide coverage along Highway-52, which makes this location crucial. The WCF is in a visible location, but the improvements will help to mitigate the visual impact of the existing compound with a more unified, cleaner appearance.

ALTERNATIVES

1. **Approve** Neighborhood Use Permits and Planned Development Permits **with modifications.**
2. **Deny** Neighborhood Use Permits and Planned Development-Permits, **if the findings required to approve the projects cannot be affirmed.**

Respectfully submitted,



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BROUGHTON/KLA

Attachments:

1. Aerial Photograph
2. Community Plan Land Use Map
3. Project Location Map
4. Project Data Sheet
5. Photo of Existing Compound
6. Photo Survey
7. Photosimulations
8. Verizon Permit
9. Verizon Resolution
10. T-Mobile Permit

11. T-Mobile Resolution
12. AT&T Permit
13. AT&T Resolution
14. Sprint/Clearwire Permit
15. Sprint/Clearwire Resolution
16. MTRP Recommendations
17. Tierrasanta Community Council Minutes
18. Notices of Exemption
19. Ownership Disclosure Statement
20. Corporate Officers
21. Planning Commission Notice
22. Project Plans (Verizon plans are included as they are representative of the project)

Rev 01-04-07/rh