

PLANNING
COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT



September 27, 2023

ITEM TITLE

Conditional Use Permit to Install a 55-foot Wireless Telecommunications Facility on a 2.76-acre parcel zoned R-1.

Location: 740 Hilltop Drive (APN: 574-281-41)

Environmental Notice: The Project qualifies for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption pursuant to section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) State Guidelines.

Recommended Action: Conduct a public hearing and adopt a resolution approving Conditional Use Permit (CUP22-0044), based upon the required findings and subject to the conditions contained therein.

SUMMARY

AT&T Wireless (the “Applicant”) requests approval to install a wireless telecommunications facility (“WTF”) consisting of 12 panel antennas mounted on a 55-foot mono-broadleaf tree, in addition to an eight-foot concrete masonry unit (“CMU”) equipment enclosure (the “Project”), on a developed parcel located at 740 Hilltop Drive (the “Project Site”). The Project Site is on the west side of Hilltop Drive, between J Street and Telegraph Canyon Road (Attachment 1) and is owned by Hilltop Baptist Church of Chula Vista California, Inc. (the “Property Owner”). The Project Site is zoned Single-Family Residential (“R-1”) and designated Residential Low-Medium (“RLM”) in the General Plan.

HOUSING IMPACT STATEMENT

The Project Site is zoned R-1 and is designated RLM in the General Plan, allowing residential uses. No housing is proposed as part of this Project; therefore, no additional housing units are proposed as a part of this project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed Project for compliance with CEQA and determined that the Project qualifies for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption pursuant to section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) of the CEQA Guidelines. No further environmental review is required.

DISCUSSION

On December 29, 2022, the Applicant submitted a Conditional Use Permit (“CUP”) application for the proposed Project. In accordance with the Chula Vista Municipal Code (“CVMC”) Chapter 19.89 (Wireless Telecommunications Facilities), WTFs are allowed in any zone, subject to approval of a CUP. Facilities that exceed the height limit of the underlying zone require a stealth design and Planning Commission approval. The Project Site is zoned R-1, which has a maximum height limit of 28 feet. The proposed Project would exceed the maximum building height in the R-1 zone by 27 feet.

Project Site Characteristics

The Project Site is developed with a church and paved parking. Surrounding land uses are summarized in the table below:

	General Plan	Zoning District	Current Land Use
Project Site	Residential Low-Medium (RLM)	Single-Family Residential (R-1)	Hilltop Baptist Church
North	Residential Low-Medium (RLM)	Single-Family Residential (R-1)	Single-Family Residential
South	Parks and Recreation (PRK)	Single-Family Residential (R-1)	Park
East	Public/Quasi-Public (PQ)	Single-Family Residential (R-1)	Hilltop Middle School
West	Residential Low-Medium (RLM)	Single-Family Residential (R-1)	Single-Family Residential

Project Description

The Applicant proposes to install a new unmanned WTF in the southwestern portion of the property, consisting of 12 panel antennas mounted on a 55-foot freestanding structure designed to resemble a broadleaf tree. The facility also includes an eight-foot CMU enclosure for the ground equipment associated with the tower, which includes a metal security gate (Attachment 2).

ANALYSIS

The facility is at the minimum technologically feasible height possible in order to ensure adequate coverage to the target area. Propagation maps are included and referenced in the Project application to demonstrate the improvement in coverage tied to the additional height (Attachment 3). The proposed facility will be built to comply with the WTF ordinance’s development criteria and all other applicable City zoning and building regulations. Access to the site will be kept to a minimum and conducted in a manner that does not negatively impact the adjacent neighbors or existing church.

Noise

A noise analysis verified that noise impacts from the project site are expected to be adequately controlled.

Height, Stealth Technology, and Design

The proposed facility will be placed in the southwestern portion of the property near established trees to blend in with the existing landscape and minimize visual impacts to adjoining properties. The antennas will be painted to match the mono-tree, and faux branches will obscure the antennas, effectively minimizing visibility of the facility, making the antennas as unobtrusive as possible with the most efficient technology. The Applicant acknowledges the development criteria established in CVMC Section 19.89.060 and will maintain a stealth design, including continued maintenance of the faux branches (Attachment 4).

The proposed facility is designed to cover a large footprint in an area where user density can fluctuate as customers travel to and from the nearby schools and surrounding residential areas. The proposed antennas are selected to handle the potential user traffic and are as small as are available to meet the Applicant's needs while being installed as closely together as feasible to avoid shadowing or interference. The equipment on-site will be compact and maintain minimum safety clearances between pieces of equipment.

Collocation

The Applicant searched diligently for collocation opportunities on existing towers within the area. The focus area targeted a location between two single-family homes near the intersection of Corte Maria Avenue and J Street. Several property owners were approached to enter a lease resulting in the current proposed location. Additionally, there is another wireless facility site located on the property, which furthers the goal of concentrating wireless facilities on a common site per CVMC Section 19.89.060(A)(3). The Project as proposed, is taller than a rooftop installation and will be able to accommodate additional antennas, should another wireless carrier wish to install at this location.

Parking Displacement; Setbacks

The location of the facilities will be in the southwesterly most part of the parcel, in an unimproved portion of the property; therefore, it will not displace any parking. The proposed facilities will be located not less than 33 feet from the rear yard setback, and not less than 67 feet from the side yard setback, meeting the requirements for the R-1 zone.

CONCLUSION

Staff has reviewed the Project and determined that it is consistent with the CVMC and the Chula Vista Design Manual. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the proposed resolution approving the Project, subject to the conditions contained therein (Attachment 5).

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the property holdings of the Planning Commission members and found no property holdings within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the property which is the subject of this action. Consequently, this item does not present a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under California Code of Regulations Title 2, section 18702.2(a)(7) or (8), for purposes of the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code §87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware and has not been informed by any Planning Commission member of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

FISCAL IMPACT

All costs incurred processing this application are borne by the Applicant, resulting in no current fiscal impact or ongoing fiscal impact to the Development Services Fund or the General Fund.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location Map
2. Project Plans
3. Coverage Maps
4. Photo Simulations
5. Resolution No. 2023-14
6. Disclosure Statement

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