



# CITY OF CARSON

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

**PUBLIC HEARING:** April 10, 2007

**SUBJECT:** Design Overlay Review No. 994-07; Conditional Use Permit No. 662-07; and Conditional Use Permit No. 641-06

**APPLICANT:** Royal Street Communications  
Attn: Jane Norine  
2913 El Camino Real  
Tustin, CA 92782

**REQUEST:** To construct a 60-foot high unmanned wireless telecommunication facility disguised as a pine tree (monopine) on a private facility used for public storage in the ML-D (Manufacturing, Light – Design Overlay) zone.

**PROPERTY INVOLVED:** 1421 E. Del Amo Boulevard

### COMMISSION ACTION

- Concurred with staff
- Did not concur with staff
- Other

### COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		<b>Cottrell - Chairperson</b>			<b>Saenz</b>
		<b>Pulido – Vice-Chair</b>			<b>Tyus</b>
		<b>Faletogo</b>			<b>Verrett</b>
		<b>Graber</b>			<b>Wilson</b>
		<b>Hudson</b>			

***Item 12B***

## **I. Introduction**

The applicant proposes the installation of a cellular communications facility disguised as a pine tree consisting of a pole, cellular antennas, and equipment cabinets surrounded by a concrete block wall. The cellular telecommunications industry commonly refers to this type of antenna structure as a monopine. The monopine will be 60 feet high to the tops of the faux pine branches. There will be equipment cabinets at the base of the pole. A concrete block wall measuring eight feet in height will enclose the cabinets and the base of the pole.

## **II. Background**

The property is presently a public storage facility consisting of multiple single-story storage buildings and a sales office. The existing building sizes average approximately 5,500 square feet. The property is approximately 3.5 acres. The cell facility is proposed in a southwest corner in the central part of the storage facility. This location is presently used for parking. The applicant intends to restripe existing parking spaces located adjacent to the proposed facility. There are no outstanding code violations for the subject site.

The applicant is working in conjunction with Global Tower Partners (GTP), LLC, which is a provider of outsourced antennae site facilities to the wireless communications industry. Once constructed, GTP will maintain ownership and control of the monopine by leasing space, including the location of ground equipment, to two or three co-locating cellular phone service providers. The applicant will be the first to locate on the new tower.

## **III. Analysis**

Section 9138.16(B)8-11,14,18 of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) defines the proposed project as a ground-mounted, stealth, major wireless telecommunication facility. Procedural standards contained in this Section require that a major wireless telecommunication facility shall be subject to the approval of a development plan in accordance with Sections 9172.23, Site Plan and Design Review (DOR) and 9172.21, Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

### **DESIGN OVERLAY REVIEW NO. 948-06**

The Planning Commission may approve Design Overlay Review No. 994-07 if the following findings can be made in the affirmative, as per CMC Section 9172.23(D):

#### **a. Compatibility with the General Plan, any specific plans for the area, and surrounding uses.**

The subject property is designated as Light Industrial within the Land Use Element of the General Plan. Surrounding properties to the north have General Plan Land Use designations of Open Space and Low Density Residential. Adjacent to the west of the subject property is Central Avenue. The adjacent property to the south has a

General Plan Land Use designation of General Commercial. There are no specific plans for the area.

The project site is located in the central portion of the City of Carson near the northeast corner of the Del Amo Blvd. and Central Avenue intersection. Surrounding uses include: Mills Park to the north; single family residences to the northeast and across Central Avenue to the west, approximately 200 feet from the project site; and a gas station to the south of the subject site. The proposed project is compatible with these uses in that the site is adequately located away from sensitive receptors, such as residential uses.

**b. Compatibility of architecture and design with existing and anticipated development in the vicinity, including the aspects of site planning, land coverage, landscaping, appearance and scale of structures and open spaces and other features relative to a harmonious and attractive development of the area.**

The proposed monopine and related equipment, power and telephone company cabinetry will occupy a lease area of approximately 280 square feet. The subject property is 3.5 acres in size. There are multiple single-story buildings on the site which are currently used for self-storage. The proposed lease area is located along the southern property line on the west side of the property, adjacent to the gas station parking area. An approximately 8-foot high concrete wall currently separates the property. The applicant is proposing to remove the existing barbed wire from atop the wall. The proposed lease area is currently being used as a customer parking area for the self-storage facility. As part of the development, the applicant intends to restripe the existing parking to accommodate the equipment enclosure. To the north of the subject site is Mills Park, which has a buffer of large, mature green trees along its southern property line which may help the proposed tower to be less conspicuous.

**c. Convenience and safety of circulation for pedestrians and vehicles.**

The applicant intends to remove an existing parking space and restripe new parking spaces to accommodate the proposed equipment enclosure. Staff has reviewed the number of parking spaces and determined that removing one will still provide the required number of parking spaces for the public storage facility, pursuant to Section 9162.21D3 of the CMC. The first 6 spaces adjacent to the west of the proposed equipment cabinet enclosure will be marked 'compact', which will enable those spaces to be 15-feet deep, instead of the 18-foot depth required of standard spaces. This extra space will allow for planting of required screening trees and landscaping adjacent to the proposed cellular telecommunications facility. The driveway aisle widths and parking spaces will stay code-compliant, thereby adequately maintaining the convenience and safety of circulation for pedestrians and vehicles.

**d. Attractiveness, effectiveness and restraint in signing, graphics and color.**

Apart from the required safety, directional or informational signs, no product advertising signs are proposed for the project. The proposed facility is intended to simulate a pine tree, in terms of size, shape and appearance. The use of synthetic rubber bark and pine needles will be effective in helping to stealth the facility.

**e. Conformance to any applicable design standards and guidelines that have been adopted pursuant to Section 9172.15**

The project is compliant with applicable design standards and guidelines.

In addition to the findings in Section 9172.23(D) of the CMC, the Planning Commission shall be guided by the provisions of Subsection F, Development and Design Standards, of Section 9138.16, which includes standards for setbacks, height, wiring, painting, lighting, noise and signs. Also, Subsection H, Findings, of Section 9138.16, which includes the following:

**a. The proposed site is the best alternative after considering co-location with another facility and location at another site.**

The applicant submitted a justification letter which stated that alternative locations were considered, but the proposed location was the best in terms of what land was available that could provide the widest coverage area with the greatest range of wireless telecommunication service.

**b. The proposed wireless telecommunication facility will be located and designed to minimize the visual impact on surrounding properties and from public streets, including adequate screening through the use of landscaping that harmonize with the elements and characteristics of the property and/or stealthing which incorporates the facility with the structure in which it will be mounted through use of material, color and architectural design.**

There are a total of 6 panel antennae, which are proposed to be located in 3 sectors (2 panels per sector). The synthetic tree branches, colored to simulate real branches, will feature synthetic, variegated (color) pine needles. The branches will start from approximately 10 feet above ground level and taper toward the top of the tree to a total height of 60 feet, extending 10-12 feet at most from the center pole. The pole will be wrapped in a synthetic rubber material designed to resemble bark.

**c. The proposed wireless telecommunication facility is not located on any residential dwelling or on any property which contains a residential dwelling, except as may be associated with a church, temple, or place of religious worship.**

The nearest residential properties are the single-family homes approximately 200 feet to the west, across Central Avenue and approximately 400 feet to the northeast.

The proposed wireless telecommunication facility is not associated with a church.

**CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 649-06**

Approval of a CUP is required for a freestanding Major Wireless Telecommunication Facility in a manufacturing zone. Section 9172.21(D) of the Zoning Ordinance requires that the Planning Commission, by Resolution, render its approval for a Conditional Use Permit based on the ability to make affirmative findings concerning the following:

**a. The proposed use and development will be consistent with the General Plan.**

The proposed telecommunications facility will be built to accommodate and encourage an intensification of the proposed use by allowing co-location. This will help to integrate communication facilities and reduce the need for additional towers in the vicinity. By doing so, the proposed use and development will be consistent with General Plan goals, which include promoting sustainable energy, communication, and other systems which meet the needs of the community.

**b. The site is adequate in size, shape, topography, location, utilities, and other factors to accommodate the proposed use and development.**

The subject property is 3.5 acres in size, rectangular and flat. The project location is on an interior corner of the subject property and adjacent to a gas station customer parking area. The subject property is surrounded by a major street, commercial use, park, and light manufacturing uses. The proposed use is compatible with the surroundings. There are adequate utilities to provide and maintain service to the proposed use. The applicant intends to underground required power, telephone, and other utilities to their respective sources.

**c. There will be adequate street access and traffic capacity.**

The applicant intends to restripe the parking areas in a manner consistent with applicable zoning codes. Access to the facility for routine Maintenance or emergency repair is made possible by an easement for ingress and egress that will be recorded against the subject property. This easement will provide access to the project site from Del Amo Boulevard. The proposed facility will not impact traffic in the vicinity, except for the occasional maintenance vehicle, and possibly during the construction phase of the project.

**d. There will be adequate water supply for fire protection.**

The Los Angeles County Fire Department has reviewed the proposed project. Their concerns did not address water supply adequacy. Based on their review, it is assumed that water supply to the project site is adequate.

**e. The proposed use and development will be compatible with the intended character of the area.**

The proposed use will have minimal impacts in the vicinity of the subject site, in terms of parking, traffic, noise and safety. Based on the subject property zoning, the use will be compatible with the intended light industrial character of the area.

**f. Such other criteria as are specified for the particular use in other Sections of this Chapter.**

In addition to the general criteria for the approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Section 9143 of the CMC outlines special criteria and limitations as indicated below that shall be considered in acting upon a Conditional Use Permit in the ML-D zone:

**a. Possible hazards to the surrounding area as a result of the proposed use.**

Staff has conducted an Initial Study on the proposed project, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) guidelines, and determined that the project will not have significant impacts on the surrounding area.

**b. Possible hazards to the proposed use due to proximity or interaction with uses in the surrounding area.**

The adjacent uses, and those in the surrounding area, include a gas station, park, public storage facilities, and single-family residential. The proposed use is not in proximity to other uses to which it may pose a significant hazard.

**c. Cumulative and interactive effects upon the environment and public safety resulting from the interrelation, magnitude and intensity of industrial activities in the area.**

Based on the Initial Study conducted by staff, the proposed use will not have significant cumulative or interactive effects upon the environment and public safety.

**CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 662-07**

Section 9138.16(F)(2)(d) of the Zoning Ordinance allows the Planning Commission to consider of approval of facilities to exceed the maximum height described in Section 9138.16(B)(10) subject to approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Such Conditional Use Permit for new facilities shall authorize a height limit in conformance with Subsection G, Minor Exceptions, of Section 9138.16. Subsection G provides for a twenty percent increase in the maximum height allowed by Section 9138.16(B)10, which is 50 feet in the ML-D zone. Thus, a total height of 60 feet is allowed if the Planning Commission approves a height modification. The height modification can be approved if at least one of the following findings is made based on evidence submitted by the applicant:

**a. Existing natural geographic conditions preclude an obstruction-free reception area and there is no other option, including relocation, available.**

- b. Relief from the development standards results in a more appropriate design which minimizes the visual impact of the facility.**
- c. The antennae height must be increased in order to accommodate the establishment of a co-located facility and there is no other option available.**

Current development plans call for future cell panel locations to be located at approximately 35 feet and 45 feet above grade level. Given the current gap in cellular service coverage in the proposed project area, it is anticipated that there will be future development proposals similar to this one. Thus, the proposed monopine will be useful for future cellular phone service companies who wish to co-locate, or for future expansion of the existing service as plans call for future cell panel locations. Increasing the antennae height will accommodate future co-location which will help to lessen possible aesthetic impacts of other cellular communication facilities being built in the vicinity, which is consistent with the intent of CMC Section 9138.16.

- d. Visual impacts are negligible because the facility is designed to architecturally integrate with the surrounding environment.**

The proposed project is designed to resemble a pine tree. The subject site is proximal to a municipal park which has numerous mature trees lining its southern border with the subject property. The intention is for the disguised telecommunications facility to blend in with trees in the vicinity. As such, efforts have been made to architecturally integrate the proposed project with the surrounding environment.

Based upon the information found in this Analysis section, all of the required findings pursuant to Section 9172.23(d), Site Plan and Design Review, Approval Authority and Findings and Decision, Section 9171.21(d), Conditional Use Permit, Commission Findings and Decision, as well as all other specific criteria identified for each of the discretionary permits can be made in the affirmative.

#### **IV. Environmental Review**

Upon reviewing the Initial Study for the project, the Planning Division has determined that this project will not have a significant effect on the environment. Accordingly, a Negative Declaration has been prepared pursuant to California Public Resources Code Section 15070.

#### **V. Recommendation**

That the Planning Commission:

- WAIVE further reading and ADOPT Resolution No.\_\_\_\_\_, entitled “A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF CARSON APPROVING DESIGN OVERLAY REVIEW NO. 994-07, CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 662-07 AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 641-06 FOR A FREESTANDING 60-FOOT HIGH WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITY DISGUISED AS A PINE TREE (MONO-PINE) LOCATED AT 1421 E. DEL AMO BOULEVARD.”

**VI. Exhibits**

1. Land Use Map
2. Draft Resolution
3. Initial Study
4. Proposed Plans (Submitted under separate cover)

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Newberg, Associate Planner

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John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner

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