



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC HEARING: June 12, 2007

SUBJECT: Design Overlay Review No. 987-07; Conditional Use Permit No. 655-07

APPLICANT: Royal Street Communications
Attn: Jim Fitzsimmons
2913 El Camino Real, #561
Tustin, CA 92782

REQUEST: To approve the installation of an unmanned wireless telecommunications facility on an existing SCE lattice tower within the Southern California Edison right-of-way and in the OS (Open Space) zone.

PROPERTY INVOLVED: 16810 S. Avalon Boulevard

COMMISSION ACTION

Concurred with staff

Did not concur with staff

Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Cannon			Hudson
		Faletogo			Saenz
		Graber			Verrett

I. Introduction

The applicant proposes to install cellular antennas on an existing 203-foot high lattice-tower used for high-voltage power lines. Related ground-mounted equipment cabinets surrounded by a concrete block wall are proposed to be located at the base of the tower. The antennae will be located at a height of 66 feet on the lattice tower, with a total of six panel antennae and one, two-foot wide, drum-shaped, microwave antenna. A concrete block wall measuring seven-feet in height will enclose the cabinets and the base of the tower.

II. Background

The property is one of several adjacent properties owned by Southern California Edison that run in an east-west direction and are used as a right-of-way for overhead major electric transmission lines. The subject property is approximately 0.5 acre and is located directly south of Hemingway Park, a city-owned facility.

III. Analysis

Section 9138.16(B)(8, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19) of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) defines the proposed project as tower-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. 987-07

The Planning Commission may approve Design Overlay Review No. 987-07 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 General Open Space within the Land Use Element of the General Plan. Surrounding properties to the north have General Plan Land Use designations of General Open Space and Light Industrial. Adjacent to the west of the subject property is Avalon Boulevard. The adjacent property to the south has a General Plan Land Use designation of Light Industrial. There are no specific plans for the area.

The project site is located in the north-central portion of the City of Carson near the north of Walnut Avenue and south of Gardena Boulevard. Surrounding uses include: Hemingway Park to the north; light industrial and office uses to the south and west, across Avalon Boulevard. The nearest residential property is located approximately 150 feet from the project site to the west, across Avalon Boulevard and approximately 800 feet to the east of Hemingway Park. The proposed project is compatible with these uses in that the site is adequately located away

from sensitive receptors, such as residential uses, and is utilizing existing utility structures.

- 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 telecommunication panels and related equipment, power and telephone company cabinetry will occupy a lease area of approximately 240 square feet. The subject property is 0.5 acres in size and is within the Southern California Edison high-voltage electrical transmission line right-of-way, which is approximately 160-feet in width and runs just east of Main Street then east past the city boundary at Central. The proposed lease area is located beneath the existing lattice tower. The applicant intends to construct a seven-foot high, concrete-masonry block wall enclosure, which will match the existing equipment enclosure that houses a large natural gas tank approximately 100 feet to the northeast.

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

The development site is located approximately 110 feet east of Avalon Boulevard. A private, unpaved, 30-foot wide dirt road starts east from Avalon Boulevard and continues along a path adjacent to the SCE lattice towers, which are spaced about 300 feet apart. At the subject tower the road semi-circles around the north side of the tower to provide access for trucks and other equipment. The proposed project will not generate any traffic, nor does it require parking spaces.

- 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 telecommunication panels will be colored/painted to match the existing grey, metal structure.

- 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, and 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 proposed site will be a part of a larger Los Angeles-area telecommunication services network. The applicant diligently worked to find a location that would provide seamless coverage within this network. During the site selection process a T-Mobile mono-pole located near the corner of Avalon Boulevard and Alondra Boulevard was considered. However, the pole was not co-locatable.

- 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.**

The proposed facility will occupy an existing utility structure. The telecommunication panels will be located and situated so that they will be effectively stealthed, and colored/painted to match the existing grey, metal structure. Also, the 7-foot high, concrete-masonry block wall enclosure will be constructed to match the existing equipment enclosure that houses a large natural gas tank approximately 100 feet to the northeast.

- 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 property is located approximately 150 feet from the project site to the west, across Avalon Boulevard and approximately 800 feet to the east of Hemingway Park. The proposed wireless telecommunication facility is not associated with a church.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 655-07

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 development, as proposed will lessen the potential impact of additional towers in the vicinity by utilizing existing utility structures. Also, additional panels may be added in the future, subject to Planning Commission approval, which will reduce the need for additional supporting structures. 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 0.5 acres in size, trapezoid-shaped, and flat. The project location is within the Southern California Edison high-voltage electrical transmission line right-of-way, which is approximately 160-feet in width and runs just east of Main Street then east past the city boundary at Central. The subject property is surrounded by a major street, a city park, and light manufacturing uses. The proposed use is compatible with these 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.

Access to the facility for routine maintenance or emergency repair is made possible by a private, unpaved, 30-foot wide dirt road, east from Avalon 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 facility will be compatible to the character of development in the vicinity as it will be un-staffed, generate no noise, odor, smoke, or contribute to any other adverse impacts to adjacent land uses. In addition, the proposed wireless telecommunications facility will operate in full compliance with all local, state and federal regulations including the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

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

CMC section 9138.16(F)(2)(c), states that new wireless telecommunication facilities constructed on existing structures shall not exceed the height of the existing structure. The existing utility tower is 203-feet in height. Thus, the 66-foot height of the proposed panel locations is consistent with applicable zoning codes.

In addition to the general criteria for the approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Section 9153 of the CMC outlines special criteria and limitations as indicated below that shall be considered in acting upon a Conditional Use Permit in the OS zone:

a. The use shall not detract from the intended open space character of the area.

Right-of-way and line facilities for power transmission lines are considered automatically permitted uses in the OS zone. As such, they are considered not to detract from the intended open space character of the area. The proposed telecommunications facility will be housed on the existing power transmission line lattice tower and the related equipment cabinet enclosure will be constructed within the base of the lattice tower. Likewise, the proposed development will not detract from the intended open space character of the area either.

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.

Issues of Concern

- 1) Equipment Enclosure Location: Upon initial review of the proposed development plans, staff comments included a relocation of the equipment cabinetry to the existing equipment enclosure, currently used for a large, natural gas tank, approximately 100-feet to the northeast. This requirement would include undergrounding of necessary utilities from beneath the existing tower to the existing equipment enclosure.
 - Mitigation: None. The applicant provided a letter from Scott Haney, Account Manger for Carrier Solutions for SCE (Exhibit No. 3), which stated that the request for undergrounding of needed utilities to the staff recommended location of the equipment cabinetry could not be accommodated because of fee-owned right-of-way and separate ownership issues. Also, there would be electrical grounding issues with adjacent SCE transmission towers.

- 2) Equipment Enclosure Landscaping: Upon determination that the enclosure would be placed underneath the existing lattice tower, staff recommended additional landscaping to help with the aesthetic impact of the proposed equipment enclosure.
 - Mitigation: Alternative equipment enclosure materials and color. Exhibit No. 3, states that SCE cannot accommodate a request for additional landscaping because it is their policy not to allow new landscaping around its tower facilities. This policy is in accordance with safety procedures wherein no landscaping is allowed within 100-feet of the base of the tower. This is to provide fire protection and lay-down area for tower maintenance. In light of these prohibitions, Staff worked with the applicant to provide a split-face, concrete-masonry block wall, which will soften the aesthetic impact of the equipment enclosure.

IV. Environmental Review

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Article 19, Section 15301(e), Existing Structures, the proposed addition to the existing lattice tower and accessory equipment enclosure located in an urbanized residential zone can be deemed "Categorically Exempt". A Notice of Exemption will be prepared if this project is approved.

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. 987-07 AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 655-07 FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITY MOUNTED ON AN EXISTING HIGH-VOLTAGE LATTICE TOWER LOCATED AT 16810 S. AVALON BOULEVARD."

VI. Exhibits

1. Land Use Map
2. Draft Resolution
3. Edison Carrier Solutions – Response to Comment Letter, Dated March 20, 2007
4. Proposed Plans (Submitted under separate cover)

Prepared by: _____
Steve Newberg, Associate Planner

Reviewed by: _____
John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner

Approved by: _____
Sheri Repp, Planning Manager

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