

AGENDA**ITEM NO. 2.****DATE: October 26, 2021****PLANNING DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT****SUBJECT****CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT NO. 21-03****CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION****APPLICANT:** Jessica Grevin on behalf of AT&T**LOCATION:** 3540 E Cameron Avenue

REQUEST: The applicant is requesting the approval of a conditional use permit to install a 60-foot tall freestanding wireless telecommunications facility located within the Valencia Height Water District property. The proposed wireless telecommunications facility will be located adjacent to Heritage Park. The telecommunications facility would be disguised as a eucalyptus tree. Equipment cabinets will be installed within a 817-square foot leased area, which will be screened by an 8-foot high concrete masonry unit block wall enclosure.

BACKGROUND

Item	Description
Zoning and General Plan	Zoning: Residential Single Family (R-1) General Plan: Neighborhood - Low Density Residential (NL)
Surrounding Land Uses and Zoning	North: Single-Family Residential (R-1) East: Unincorporated Los Angeles County (Single-Family Residential) South: Single-Family Residential (R-1); City-Owned - Open Space West: Single-Family Residential (R-1); City-Owned - Heritage Park
Current Development	Valencia Heights Water District (Water Storage Tank Facility)
Legal Notice	Public Hearing Notices have been mailed to 21 owners and occupants of properties within 300 feet of the subject site.

DISCUSSION

The proposal consists of a conditional use permit to allow the installation of a wireless communications facility designed as a 60-foot tall eucalyptus tree at the Valencia Heights Water Towers. The tree would be located on the south-west side of the grounds, adjacent to Heritage Park. The monoecalyptus tree would include 12 panel antennas arranged on three arrays (four antennas per array). The lease area

would be 817 square feet. In addition to the panel antennas, the wireless facility includes additional equipment: 1 dish antenna, 36 remote radio units, 6 DC surge suppressors, 3 DC12 surge suppressors, an equipment structure, 1 20kw AC Generac generator with a diesel fuel tank, and one GPS antenna.

The proposed wireless facility would be located on the Valencia Heights Water District property. The property is surrounded by single-family residences and Heritage Park to the west. South Hills High School is also located to the north of the project site. The property is approximately 1.26 acres in size and has two existing water tanks with a small storage building.

Wireless Facility Design

The proposed wireless facility is designed as a 60-foot tall eucalyptus tree. The monoecalyptus would have three "limbs" that extend from the main pole. Each limb would have four antennas each, located at 56 feet 9 inches feet at centerline. An additional carrier would be able to co-locate at this facility at a height of 41 feet at the centerline. Faux Branches and leaves stealth the antennas and arrays and provide the appearance of a eucalyptus tree, in an effort to substantially reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts from the surrounding public-rights-of-way and adjacent properties. High-quality "sock" covers would be required as a condition of approval to provide additional stealthing on the antennas. The antenna layout indicates the foliage of the tree would extend past the proposed antenna arrays.

The proposed monoecalyptus is surrounded by several mature trees, including weeping willow trees. As a condition of approval (2) new 24-inch box eucalyptus trees will be planted along the west fence adjacent to Heritage Park to provide additional screening. With the installation of the new eucalyptus trees, the proposed monoecalyptus would fit within the existing landscape.

Wireless Facility Location

The centerline of the monoecalyptus pole will be located 155 feet 4 inches from the front property line, 176 feet 5 inches feet from the east property line, 94 feet 8 inches feet from the south property line, and 533 feet 4 inches from the west property line.

The Zoning Code requires that freestanding wireless telecommunications facilities be located a minimum of one-half mile (2,640 feet) away from any other freestanding wireless telecommunication facility. The nearest existing wireless telecommunications facility, located at Temple Ami-Shalom/Lighthouse Church addressed at 3508 E Temple Way, is approximately 5,808 feet away from the proposed monoecalyptus.

The applicant is proposing a 12-foot wide non-exclusive access from a private street to the site. The site is surrounded by an existing chain link fence, which will remain. No trees will be removed as part of this request.

Separation from Residential Uses

The Zoning Code requires that antenna support structures be at least 100 feet away from residential uses. The property on which the telecommunications facility is to be located is adjacent to residential zoned properties to the north, east, south, and west. The proposed wireless facility would be located to the far southwest side of Valencia Heights Water District property. The residential uses are more than 100 feet away from the antenna supporting structure. Specifically, the nearest residential property, located on a private street in unincorporated LA County on the east side of the proposed property, is located approximately 176-feet from the proposed wireless facility. The proposed wireless facility is located approximately 211 feet from the house itself. Therefore, the proposed wireless facility is in compliance with the municipal code separation requirement of 100 feet.

Equipment Enclosure

The proposed monoecalyptus wireless facility will be located within a 358-square foot equipment enclosure. The enclosure will feature 8-foot high solid concrete masonry block walls. The installation of new climbing vines will surround the west fence adjacent to Heritage Park for additional security and screening. The finished structure, including the tower element, will match the existing buildings in materials and color, and will also provide security by separating the tower from public access.

Justification Study

The Municipal Code Section 26-685.997 requires that prior to siting a new wireless communication facility, a justification study be prepared to identify alternatives that reduce visual impacts and number of structures. The applicant prepared an analysis evaluating the wireless carrier requirements for the installation of a cell site to close a “significant gap.” Radio signals need adequate signal strength to achieve consistent, sustainable, and reliable service to customers at a level that is sufficient for outdoor, in-vehicle and in-building penetration with good voice and data quality. In addition, a greater gap is created when other nearby sites become overloaded due to wireless voice and data service usage.

Community Outreach

The applicant held a community meeting on August 23, 2021, via Zoom (Attachment No. 6). Notices of the meeting were mailed to 18 property owners and occupants within 300 feet of the property. No members of the community attended the meeting.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Findings necessary for the approval of a CUP are as follows:

a. That the proposed use at the particular location is necessary or desirable to provide a service or facility which will contribute to the general well being of the neighborhood or community.

The proposed location of the telecommunications facility is both desirable and necessary to meet the demand for telecommunication service within the vicinity of the site. It will reduce the “coverage gap” that currently exists in the vicinity to provide better service. In addition, the additional telecommunication facility will allow private utility service providers to willfully and efficiently serve West Covina’s homes and businesses. It will also reduce the load on existing wireless facilities in order to meet capacity needs, and provide new LTE service to the surrounding area.

The cellular antenna structure is designed as a eucalyptus tree, located in a landscaped area to the southwest side of the Valencia Heights Water District property. The minimum distance required is 100 feet from any residential property. The proposed tower and equipment structure will be located approximately 176-feet from the nearest residential property, and because of the existing landscaping and the proposed landscaping surrounding the proposed facility, the proposed location is a good location for such a facility.

b. That such use will not, under the circumstances of the particular case, be detrimental to the health, safety, peace or general welfare or persons residing or working in the vicinity or injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity.

The proposed telecommunication facility will not be detrimental to the health, safety, peace or general welfare of persons residing in the vicinity in that it is located at least 100 feet from the nearest residence in a residentially zoned property, and is less visually obtrusive than it otherwise would be because it is surrounded by landscaping and is in a faux-eucalyptus design. A structure will screen the cabinets and equipment necessary to support the wireless telecommunication facility. The proposed equipment associated with the tower does not emit fumes, smoke, or odors that would be considered offensive and operates virtually noise free.

c. That the site for the proposed use is adequate in size and is so shaped as to accommodate said use, as well as all yards, spaces, walls, fences, parking, loading, landscaping, and any other features necessary to adjust said use to the land and uses in the neighborhood and make it compatible therewith.

The site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the proposed project and does not require any adjustments to the land to make it compatible with the surrounding area. The monoecalyptus wireless telecommunication facility design will limit the visual impacts of the project and help the wireless communication facility installation integrate with the surrounding visual landscape. In addition, conditions of approval have been included requiring the applicant to install vines along the fence adjacent to Heritage Park and two new eucalyptus trees to allow the structure to blend with surrounding landscaping and setting. The project is an unmanned wireless facility which will not result in requiring additional parking or affecting existing onsite parking.

d. That the site abuts streets and highways adequate in width and improvements to carry traffic generations typical of the proposed use and the street patterns of such a nature exist as to guarantee that such generation will not be channeled through residential areas on local residential streets.

The subject site's access streets are adequate in width to accommodate the proposed use. The proposed wireless facility is unmanned and therefore is not anticipated to have an increase in the amount of traffic or to alter existing traffic patterns once construction is complete. The subject site gains access from Cameron Avenue onto a private street. A new driveway will be constructed on the site. The unattended facility will require periodic maintenance checks, however, these checks will not substantially alter surrounding traffic levels or circulation patterns on Cameron Avenue and the private street.

e. That the granting of such conditional use permit will not adversely affect the general plan of the city, or any other adopted plan of the city.

The granting of the conditional use permit will not adversely affect the West Covina General Plan since the proposed use is consistent with Policy 2.3a that directs staff to "invest in infrastructure to improve the public realm" and Policy 6.24 "Ensure that new development does not expose surrounding land us to excessive noise." The proposed wireless facility would provide service for residents who are increasingly reliant on their electronic devices for many day-to-day tasks. Additionally, approval of the facility could prevent the loss of life, serious injuries, and facilitate emergency response during an act of God or a catastrophic event. Therefore, the proposed use is consistent with the goal and intent of the City's General Plan. The proposal does not conflict with any other plans in the city.

Section 26-685.998 of the Municipal Code requires the following additional findings for approval of a wireless telecommunications facility:

f. The facility structures and equipment are located, designed, and screened to blend with the existing natural environment or built surroundings so as to reduce visual impacts to the extent feasible considering the technological requirements of the proposed telecommunications service and the need to be compatible with neighboring residents and the character of the community.

The proposed telecommunication facility will be located, designed and screened to limit the visual impacts and help the wireless facility to integrate with the surrounding visual landscape. The proposed antenna structure will be disguised as a stealth facility, as the antennas will be hidden within the branches of the monoeucalyptus tree. The tree will blend with the surrounding landscape, which includes several mature weeping willow trees, and the required installation of two eucalyptus trees.

g. The facility is designed to blend with any existing supporting structures and does not substantially alter the character of the structure or local area.

The proposed equipment structure will be designed to be consistent with other structures on the grounds of the Valencia Heights Water District property. The enclosure will feature 8-foot high solid concrete masonry block walls. The installation of new climbing vines will surround the west fence adjacent to Heritage Park for additional security and screening. The finished structure, including the tower element, will match the existing buildings in materials and color, and will also provide security by separating the tower from public access. High-quality sock covers will be required as a condition of approval.

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The proposed project is consistent with the General Plan. The proposal is consistent with the following General Plan Policies and Actions:

Policy 2.3a Invest in Infrastructure and improve the public realm.

Policy 6.24 Ensure that new development does not expose surrounding land uses to excessive noise.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed project is considered to be categorically exempt, pursuant to Class 3 (Section 15303 - New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) in that it consists of the installation a new wireless facility with equipment enclosed within a small structure.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. 21-6101 approving Conditional Use Permit No. 21-03.

LARGE ATTACHMENTS

Plans - Due to COVID-19, the set of plans are available for review with a scheduled appointment. Please contact the Planning Division at (626) 939-8422 to schedule an appointment.

Submitted by: Camillia Martinez, Assistant Planner

Attachments

Attachment No. 1 - Resolution

Attachment No. 2 - Justification Study

Attachment No. 3 - LTE Justification Plots

Attachment No. 4 - Collocation Study

Attachment No. 5 - Radio Frequency Report

Attachment No. 6 - Community Meeting Flyer

Attachment No. 7 - Photographic Simulations