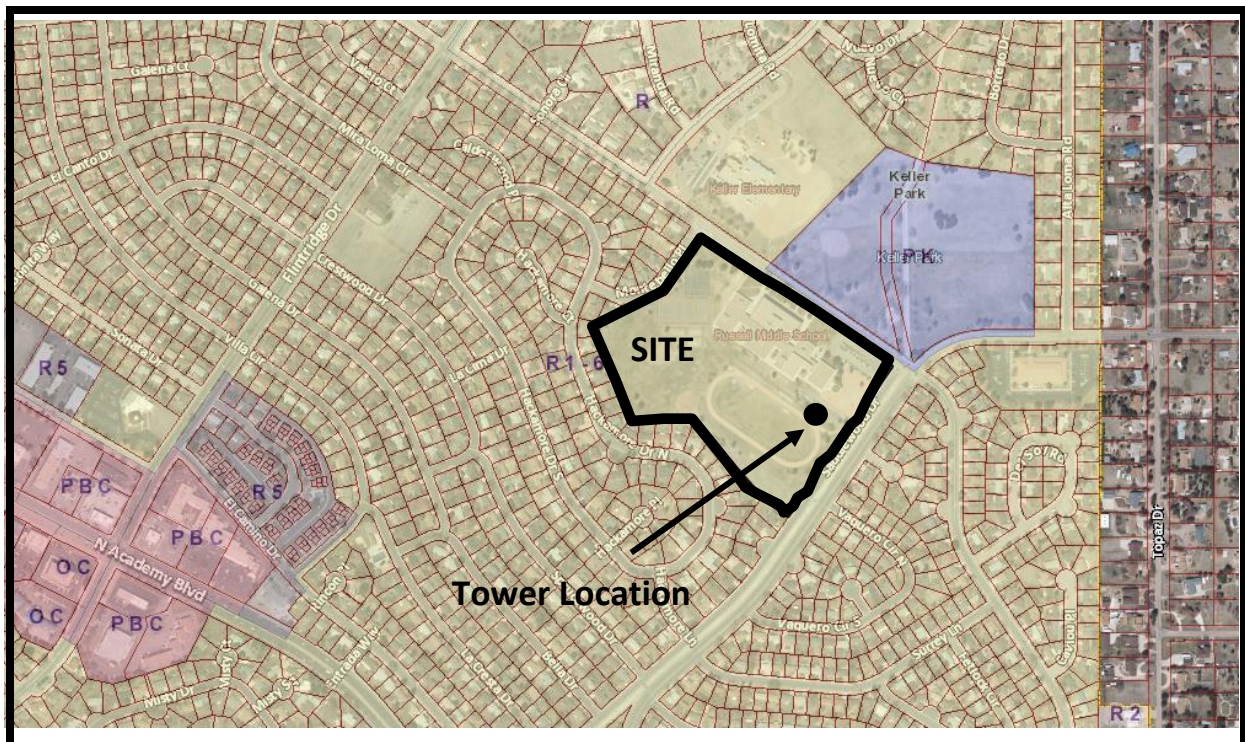


CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

STAFF: RACHEL TEIXEIRA

FILE NO:
CPC CM1 17-00136 – QUASI-JUDICIAL

PROJECT: STEALTH COMMERCIAL MOBILE RADIO SERVICE CELLULAR TOWER
APPLICANT: ADVANTAGE ENGINEERS, LLC.
OWNERS: SCHOOL DISTRICT 11



PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Project Description: The application proposes a commercial mobile radio service (CMRS) installation on the 20-acre Russell Middle School property. The CMRS is a stealth facility designed as a 60-foot freestanding concealment canister monopole with a 5-foot lighting rod and a fenced telecommunication compound for equipment cabinets. The site is zoned R1-6000 (Single-Family Residential) and is addressed as 4760 Saddlewood Drive. **(FIGURE 1)**
2. Applicant's Project Statement: **(Refer to FIGURE 2)**
3. Planning and Development Team's Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the application.

BACKGROUND

1. Site Address: 4760 Saddlewood Drive
2. Existing Zoning/Land Use: R1-6000 (Single-Family Residential)/Russell Middle School
3. Surrounding Zoning/Land Use:

North (of Montebello Drive West): R1-6000/Keller Elementary School and Keller Park
East (of Saddlewood Drive): R1-6000/Single-Family Residential
West (of Montebello Place): R1-6000/Single-Family Residential
South: R1-6000/Single-Family Residential

4. Comprehensive Plan/Designated 2020 Land Use: General Residential
5. Annexation: Garden Ranch Addition Number 24, June 1, 1970
6. Master Plan/Designated Master Plan Land Use: No Master Plan
7. Subdivision: Charles M Russell Subdivision
8. Zoning Enforcement Action: None
9. Physical Characteristics: The 20.00-acre site for the Russell Middle School with outdoor sports grounds.

STAKEHOLDER PROCESS AND INVOLVEMENT

Staff noticed 487 property owners within a 1,000 foot buffer distance at the initial application submittal and as notification of the first neighborhood meeting held on November 14, 2017. More than 29 people attended this initial meeting. Since the original posting, 15 e-mails opposing the tower were received. **(FIGURE 3)** The main concerns voiced by the residential neighborhood include health implications for neighbors and school children, negative impacts on property values, better location for the tower, interference with pacemaker, change the design of the tower and the compound for the equipment, electromagnetic radiation, and overall opposition to the cell tower in this neighborhood.

School District Eleven and the applicant held a special meeting with the neighbors to provide a discussion forum on the cellular project. The location of the cellular tower was moved from off of Montebello Place, near the tennis courts on the northwest area of the property, to off of Saddlewood Drive, near the track field on the east side of the property.

The applicant submitted the revisions for the project **(FIGURES 1 AND 4)** and then scheduled a second neighborhood meeting on April 17, 2018 to give neighbors the opportunity to review and comment on the revised plans and revised cellular tower location. Over 15 property owners and neighbors were in attendance. City Planning received one additional e-mail in opposition to the cell tower project following that meeting. **(FIGURE 7)**

Additional property posting and mailing notification to residents within 1000 feet will be completed ten days prior to the May 17th City Planning Commission Hearing.

Staff sent the plans to the standard internal reviewing agencies for comments. Those commenting agencies included Colorado Springs Utilities, Traffic Engineering, City Engineering Development Review, and Water Resources Engineering. All agency comments have been addressed for this project.

ANALYSIS OF REVIEW CRITERIA/MAJOR ISSUES/COMPREHENSIVE PLAN & MASTER PLAN CONFORMANCE

1. Review Criteria/Design & Development Issues

The conditional use request is for the installation of a 60-foot freestanding concealment canister monopole with 5-foot lighting rod and a fenced telecommunication compound for equipment cabinets. It is situated on the east side of the school property near the track field adjacent to Saddlewood Drive.

The tower will accommodate co-location of up to three carriers; with the antennas and related equipment inside the tower and within the fenced compound. The equipment compound is a 20'x50' area enclosed with an 8-foot high wooden fence. Landscaping is planned around the compound to soften the visual aesthetics of the facility. The tower is setback a distance of 160 feet from Saddlewood Drive where a minimum of 65 feet is required.

A "stealth freestanding CMRS facility", or a cellular tower designed to blend into the surroundings, is permitted in all residential zone districts. However, when the request is that the CMRS stealth facility exceeds the height for the zone district a conditional use approval from the City Planning Commission

is required. This R1-6000 zoned property has a maximum building height of 30 feet; the project proposes a 60-foot freestanding monopole tower with a 5-foot lighting rod.

CMRS conditional use applications allow for stealth and non-stealth freestanding facilities within residential zones on multi-family, institutional, or nonresidential sites including churches, schools, museums, (etc.) per the City Zoning Code Section 7.4.604. It does not permit CMRS freestanding facilities in conjunction with a single-family or two-family residential building.

The installation of the 60-foot cellular tower and ground based facilities is required to improve the existing service coverage in this residential area of Colorado Springs and to add capacity and service quality to existing service coverage for the neighborhood. There was a CMRS cellular facility application approved by the City Planning Commission about two blocks away from this site. The City Code encourages the co-location of CMRS equipment of various carriers on the same structure where feasible and where the visual impact of having one taller facility is determined to be more desirable than having two or more tower facilities constructed in the same vicinity.

City Staff has worked with both CMRS applicants, Verizon Wireless as the applicant for the tower at 5075 Flintridge Drive and T-Mobile as the applicant for the tower at 4760 Saddlewood Drive, to discuss the options of co-locating and potentially reverting back to a taller tower structure. Verizon Wireless assessed the possibility of co-location on this specific property. However, Verizon could not revise the CMRS facility design of the cupola tower design at 4760 Saddlewood Drive without impacting the size and height of the cupola structure. The additional height would be required in order to accommodate other carriers based on Federal regulations for CMRS facilities. Another option was to revert back to the original freestanding cellular tower and increase the height. This increase in height from a 45 feet to 60 feet was not feasible due to the appearance of the structure which would clearly be out of character in the residential neighborhood and the lack of cellular coverage necessary for the other cellular wireless carriers. T-Mobile RF Engineers prepared a computer model on the Verizon site at 5075 Flintridge Drive. As a result it was determined that the site at 5075 Flintridge Drive would not provide the necessary coverage and there would be some overlap from another T-Mobile tower location. After the completion of the analysis, the applicant for the 4760 Saddlewood Drive tower requested to move forward with this separate cellular tower project as the location meets their full coverage needs.

In general, City zoning can only regulate the visual impact, the location, and the height and type of the cellular telecommunications facilities. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has the exclusive power to set the standards for radio frequency emission. The City is prohibited from denying CMRS telecommunications facilities on the basis of health concerns. The wireless providers operates within the strict frequencies and guidelines established by the FCC under the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

A map of the neighborhood illustrates the existing cellular facilities located within this area of the community. **(FIGURE 6)** The coverage includes many wall and roof mounted antennas in the vicinity and two cellular tower sites situated in the Austin Bluffs Parkway and North Academy Boulevard area. Note that a screened roof mounted antennas application for the Russell Middle School (File No. AR CM3 04-00100) was submitted to the City Planning Department and was approved on May 21, 2004 as an administrative minor application. T-Mobile determined that cellular coverage is needed due to the upgrading in its network in the City of Colorado Springs to provide cellular service to the residents and visitors in the Flintridge area due to customer demand for wireless data from smartphones, tablets, and laptops.

Staff finds that the proposed conditional use meets the conditional use findings as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.704.

2. Conformance with the City Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan's 2020 Land Use Map designates this area as General Residential. The services provided by the proposed stealth tower and ground equipment facility support the existing residential neighborhood and are critical to surrounding community.

Objective CCA 1: Maintain a Positive Relationship between the Built Environment and the Natural Setting

Colorado Springs is a uniquely identifiable community due to its spectacular natural setting at the base of Pikes Peak. One of the greatest challenges facing the community is to develop a city worthy of that setting. Thoughtful design and enhancement of the community's civic buildings, public and private places, residential areas, gateways, and streets strengthen the community's identity and convey a positive visual image. Colorado Springs will maintain a positive relationship between its built environment and its natural setting and scenic qualities.

Policy CCA 101: Preserve the Character of the Community's Natural Setting

Preserve and enhance the character of the community through design that maintains views to the Front Range and other significant landmarks and integrates natural features into the land use pattern.

Strategy CCA 101b: Protect Significant Views

Protect views and view sheds of significant natural features, including stream corridors, prominent landforms and the foothills. Utilize a combination of incentives, acquisition where appropriate, and regulations such as height controls, site location criteria, and design standards.

Objective CCA 6: Fit New Development into the Character of the Surrounding Area

Often the overall character of a new development is not realized until the project is completed. This can lead to unintended impacts and incompatible development. Applicants for new developments need to clearly identify how their projects will fit into the character of the surrounding area and the community as a whole with respect to height, scale, bulk, massing, roof forms, signage, overall site design, pedestrian and vehicular access, and relation to the public right-of-way.

Policy CCA 601: New Development Will be Compatible with the Surrounding Area

New developments will be compatible with the surrounding land uses and will complement the character and appearance of adjacent land uses.

Strategy CCA 601a: Require New Developments to Provide a Description of Project Character

Development plans will include a description and visual depiction of the existing or planned physical context and character of the proposed development, including preliminary architectural design, natural features, transportation systems, and functional and visual impacts. In addition, development plans will demonstrate conformance with the intent of the applicable design standards and guidelines, as they are adapted to the specific site and context.

Staff finds that the requested conditional use conforms to the City's Comprehensive Plan 2020 Land Use Map and the Plan's objectives, policies, and strategies.

3. Conformance with the Area's Master Plan

There is no Master Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

CPC CM1 16-00136 – CMRS CONDITIONAL USE

Approve the conditional use for the CMRS at 4760 Saddlewood Drive Conditional Use Development Plan, based upon the findings that the CMRS conditional use development plan meets the review criteria for granting a conditional use as set forth in City Code Section 7.5.704 and the CMRS location and design criteria as set forth in City Code Sections 7.4.607 and 7.4.608.