
County of Loudoun
Department of Planning

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 1, 2010
TO: Loudoun County Planning Commission
FROM: Jane McCarter AICP, Project Manager
SUBJECT: **September 8, 2010 Planning Commission Work Session**
T-Mobile Northeast at the Baha'i Faith Center; CMPT 2008-0016

BACKGROUND:

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on this application on July 28, 2010. There were seven members of the public that spoke against the application. Concerns included the visual impact to parcels both adjacent to the property and across Route 7; consideration of alternative sites; impacts to resale value for homes close to cellular telecommunications sites; and potential electromagnetic frequency impacts to health. Discussion from the Planning Commission included questions regarding alternative locations for the proposed antennas; visual impacts upon nearby parcels; holding a community meeting for surrounding residents; and limiting the total number of antennas on a structure. Commissioners were divided as to whether there was a significant visual impact from two rooftop antennas to the neighboring communities. To allow for further discussion, the Commission voted 7-1-1 (Keirce opposed and Ronis absent) to forward the application to Work Session.

PLANNING COMMISSION DISCUSSION / QUESTIONS

The following questions were raised by the Commission. A Staff response follows each.

- 1. What alternative sites were considered and were any other buildings such as the Dominion High School or Seneca Ridge Middle School along Algonkian Parkway or the church site on Cascades Parkway considered?**

Section II, A. Location Policies, Countywide Location Policies, Policy 5 of the Strategic Land Use Plan for Telecommunications Facilities states "An applicant will evaluate the feasibility of using existing or approved towers, monopoles or other structures greater than 50 feet in height within a one mile radius of any proposed site in the Eastern Loudoun Urban Growth Area and within a two mile radius elsewhere in the County."

T-Mobile evaluated three alternative "potential coverage solutions". Within those three sites T-Mobile evaluated two alternatives which involved expanding or improving the existing sites to the east and west of the Baha'i Faith Center.

Prior to pursuing the rooftop co-location at the Baha'i Center T-Mobile the Applicant looked at two alternatives. These two locations were (1) expanding or improving existing site WAN222, which is a building rooftop co-location on the Old Dominion University building and is located to the west of the Baha'i Faith Center and (2) expanding or improving existing site WAC081, which is a building rooftop co-location to the east of the Baha'i Faith Center near Dranesville Road.

T-Mobile's Radio Frequency (RF) engineers also evaluated installing microcells onto the utility poles in the area, but determined that microcells would not be able to cover all sectors and could not add the additional capacity needed in the search area. The "microcell evaluation" was conducted before the Baha'i Faith Center was built. Microcells can be used in rare situations when there are no opportunities to install antennas onto a tower or a building AND the coverage area is targeted and concentrated.

To provide the service needed T-Mobile evaluated the three alternative "potential coverage solutions" before evaluating and confirming that the Baha'i Faith Center would allow for adequate coverage.

2. Visual impacts of the antennas in concealment canisters.

Section II, B. Design Standards, Countywide Visual Impacts, Policy 1 of the Strategic Land Use Plan for Telecommunications Facilities states "The visual impact of commercial public telecommunication facilities should be mitigated so as to blend with the natural and built environment of the surrounding area."

The visible portion of the concealment canisters above the parapet are 6.5 feet high and 2.2 feet in diameter and painted a light grey to blend with the sky and coordinate with the Baha'i Faith Center building and surroundings. Typical antennas generally include a pole mount and exposed antenna, absent the concealment canisters, such as those seen on a Countryside Medical Building along Route 7 or an Orbital building along Atlantic Boulevard. The purpose of the proposed concealment canisters are stealth technology designed to look like a conventional rooftop structure and screen multiple antennas within each canister.

3. Community meeting recommended.

Section II, D. Implementation Policies, Policy 5 of the Strategic Land Use Plan for Telecommunications Facilities states "Applicants for proposed new towers should notify in writing and meet with citizens in the vicinity of the proposed site at least three weeks prior to the Planning Commission public hearing."

The Applicant is proposing a telecommunications facility approximately 10 feet tall and atop the Baha'i Faith Center. While not a new tower to comply with this policy the Applicant held a community meeting August 16, 2010 at the Eastern Loudoun Regional Library. Notice of the meeting was provided to residents of the surrounding communities of the Baha'i Faith Center including Cardinal Glen 1 and

2; Cardinal Glen 3 and 4; Richland Forest Homeowners Association; and Westerley. The Applicant presented an overview of the project and addressed questions from community members and representatives. Discussion included limiting the number of telecommunications providers or services on any one structure, increasing the height of the parapet walls to further mitigate visual impacts, and consideration of alternative locations as proposed by the community residents. Each of these concerns has been discussed in items 1, 2, and 4 in this item.

4. Limiting the number of antennas on any given structure.

The Strategic Land Use Plan for Telecommunications Facilities does not address the maximum number of antennas permitted on any structure. Mitigation of visual impacts has generally been a case by case review of individual proposals. This proposal was not viewed by staff to be more intrusive than other recently processed requests for antennas mounted on existing buildings.

5. Impact on home resale values proximate to telecommunication facilities.

The County Tax Assessor's Office stated with the information provided and identification of like properties in the marketplace there has been no evidence substantiating the installation of antennas or like structures having a detrimental impact upon the market value of surrounding properties.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve the commission permit based on the attached findings for approval and forward this application to the Board of Supervisors for ratification.

SUGGESTED MOTION:

1. I move that the Planning Commission approve CMPT 2008-0016, T-Mobile Northeast, with the attached Findings for Approval and forward to the Board of Supervisors for ratification.

OR,

2. I move that the Planning Commission forward CMPT 2008-0016, T-Mobile Northeast, to a subsequent Work Session for further discussion.

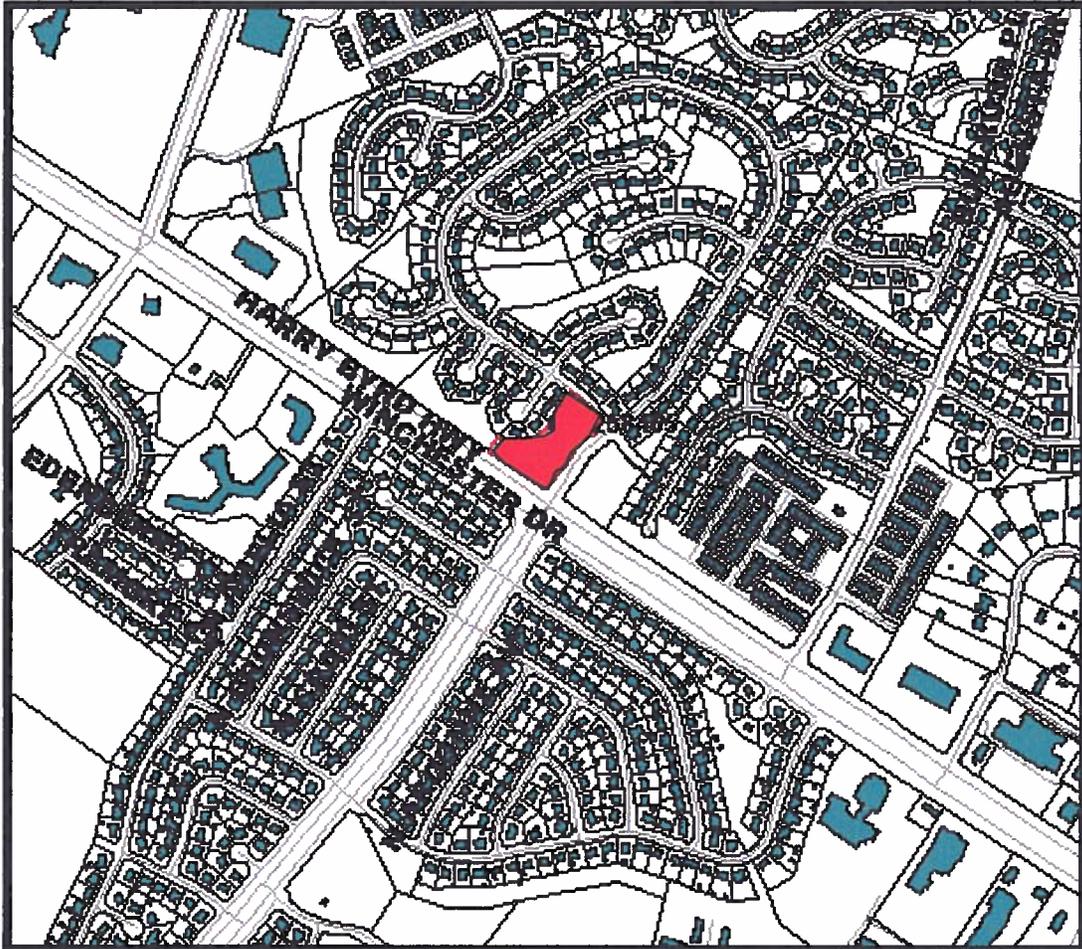
OR,

3. I move that the Planning Commission deny CMPT 2008-0016, T-Mobile Northeast.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Findings for Approval
3. Current On Air Coverage Map

VICINITY MAP



Directions: From Leesburg, proceed eastward on Harry Byrd Highway (Route 7) approximately 11 miles to the intersection of Route 7, Cardinal Glen Circle (Route 846), and North Sterling Boulevard (Route 846). Turn right (north) onto Cardinal Glen Circle. The property is located on the left at the Spiritual Assembly of Baha'I building at 21415 Cardinal Glen Circle.

FINDINGS FOR APPROVAL

1. Commission Permit (CMPT) 2008-0016 is in conformance with the general location and design policies outlined in the Revised General Plan and Strategic Land Use Plan for Telecommunications Facilities which identifies co-location on existing tall structures as a preferred location for telecommunication antennas.
2. The proposed project would not create an unnecessary visual impact on the nearby properties, provided that the proposed telecommunication facility is constructed as proposed.
3. Subject to subsequent approval of the Minor Special Exception to permit location on a building of less than 40 feet in height the proposal conforms to the requirements of the Revised 1993 Zoning Ordinance.

Map Legend

-76 dBm (Indoor Residential Coverage)

-84 dBm (In Vehicle Coverage)

Current On Air Sites

Development Sites



Current on Air Coverage

