



City of Seattle

Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

RECOMMENDATION REGARDING INSTALLATION OF COMMUNICATION UTILITIES ON SEATTLE CITY LIGHT UTILITY POLES

Application Number: 3022571
Applicant Name: Tanya Friese
Address of Proposal: 1715 P 28th Avenue W

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Application to locate a minor communication utility (Verizon) on a replaced Seattle City Light utility pole #1396965 within the right-of-way. The project includes attaching two antennas and one cabinet equipment to the new replacement pole. Final decision on placement of antennas will be made by Seattle City Light.

The following Master Use Permit component is required:

Class II Attachment Siting, Review and Recommendation to General Manager of Seattle City Light – SMC 15.32.300C4b

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Site and Vicinity Description

The proposal site is a Seattle City Light utility pole. The utility pole is located on southwest corner of the 28th Avenue W, Condon Way W and W Blaine Street intersection. The location of the existing utility to be replaced is a landscaped street right-of-way situated between the curb and sidewalk. 28th Avenue W, Condon Way W and W Blaine Street are improved street with curbs, sidewalks and gutters.

The area is zoned Single Family 5000 (SF 5000). Development in the area consists of a variety of one and two-story single-family houses, buildings of varying age and architectural style on a variety of lot sizes, consistent with the zoning designation.

Proposal Description

Verizon Wireless proposes to replace an existing Seattle City Light pole and to install a minor communication utility facility consisting of 2 panel (2-sector) antennas to be mounted within a 4' high shroud atop a 37'.6" replacement pole. The proposed new utility pole will replace the existing 33' high pole in the same location in Street right of way. The connecting cables to the antennas will be connected to the cabinet equipment enclosure also attached to the pole.

Public Comments

DPD did not receive any public letter during the comment period which ended on November 15, 2015.

ANALYSIS - SITING RECOMMENDATION TO GENERAL MANAGER OF SEATTLE CITY LIGHT

The Street and Sidewalk Use Chapter of the Seattle Municipal Code allows Class II Special Attachments (minor communication utilities) to be placed on utility poles owned by Seattle City Light that are located on public rights of way. Class II Special Attachments are specifically regulated by SMC Section 15.32.300. This Section allows for minor communication utilities, or other Class II Special Attachments, to extend above the electrical facilities (wires) on top of an existing pole, or the replacement of an existing pole to achieve adequate height for the applicant's purposes. Section 15.32.300 further requires that all costs of such replacements be borne by the communications provider, and that the visual impacts of minor communication utilities and other Class II Special Attachments shall be reduced to a degree acceptable to the General Manager of City Light.

Where a request for Class II attachment is made, and the proposed location is on an arterial street located within a Single Family Zone, the applicant shall apply to DPD and pay for an attachment siting review and recommendation consistent with the application, fee, notice, timeline and criteria for an Administrative Conditional Use (ACU) permit. The DPD recommendation shall be advisory to the General Manager of City Light. The specific ACU criteria can be found in SMC Section 23.57.010, subsection C2. The criteria, which must be satisfied in order for the proposal to receive a positive recommendation from DPD, are as follows:

- a. *The proposal shall not be significantly detrimental to the residential character of the surrounding residentially zoned area, and the facility and the location proposed shall be the least intrusive facility at the least intrusive location consistent with effectively providing service. In considering detrimental impacts and the degree of intrusiveness, the impacts considered shall include but not be limited to visual, noise, compatibility with uses allowed in the zone, traffic, and the displacement of residential dwelling units.*

As previously mentioned in the proposal description section, the entire proposal also includes a wood utility pole to be located in the W Howe street right-of-way within the Single Family 5000 (SF 5000) residential zone. The height of the utility pole, including the antennas, would be 35'8". This new wood utility pole would replace the existing 33' Seattle City Light (SCL) utility pole. The antennas would be mounted within a shroud and painted to match the color of the

proposed wood pole. All conduits (cables) would be connected to the cabinet equipment enclosure attached to the pole.

Certain aspects of this proposal-such as the associated mechanical equipment located within an equipment enclosure and the conduit attached to the utility pole and buried underground-would not be detrimental to the residential character of the surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, the proposed 37’-6” utility pole and the cellular antennas would not be detrimental to the visual character of the surrounding single family neighborhood. An appearance comparison chart and reasons why are noted below:

Appearance	Existing SCL Utility Pole	Proposed SCL Utility Pole
Shape	Cylinder-like shape	Wood
Color	Natural brown wood	Artificial brown wood
Width	Varies per Seattle City Light	30’ wide with a 3’6”2’ diameter shroud atop with a chase and brackets affixed to the pole
Height	33’	37’ 6” pole with a 4’ shroud atop (overall height equals 35’-8”)
Material	Solid wood	Wood
Equipment Atop of Pole	None	2 antennas within a shroud

1. The proposed SCL utility pole with the antenna and shroud would *be* 37’ 6” higher than the existing SCL utility pole the height.
2. The proposed utility pole design has both a shape and overall bulk that is not larger than that of a typical round wood utility pole.
3. The proposed antennas and the antenna shroud are atypical of other equipment, including transformers, located in single family zoned public rights-of-way. Specifically, the size and location of the shielded antennas would make them highly visible. This is largely due to the fact that the proposed antenna in the shroud would be located above the utility lines approximately 3 ft.6 inches higher than the existing utility pole. However, no portions of the antenna shield are proposed to project beyond the shape of the pole.

As proposed, the minor communications utility will not constitute a visual intrusion that conflicts with the existing residential character of the surrounding neighborhood because the antenna in the shroud enclosure is mounted on top of the new utility pole. The accessory cabinet looks like a typical city light transformer. Painting the antennas exterior and accessories is adequate to minimize the visual impacts for this proposal. Therefore, the proposed minor communication utility would not be visually obtrusive and would, therefore, not be detrimental to the residential streetscape and character of this neighborhood.

In addition, the applicant has provided a strong case that the proposed design and this particular location is the least intrusive location consistent with effectively providing service, whether in the public right of way or on private property. The applicant states that Verizon wireless RF engineers have determined a need for additional coverage in this area. A “before” plot coverage map submitted by the applicant, indicates that the existing coverage at this location and the surrounding area is poor. They have prepared a preliminary design analysis that takes into account a series of variables such as terrain data, antenna height, population density, available radio frequencies and wireless equipment characteristics. The engineers have noted the need for the utility to be at the proposed height if sited in this location. Although, the entire search ring appears to be zoned single family and the carrier feels that locating antennas atop of a Seattle City utility pole is a better alternative than constructing a new monopole.

Based on the Geocortex research conducted by the Land Use Planner, there were no commercial structures nearby on 28th Avenue W blocks of the chosen site. That would have been recommended as an alternative site.

b. The visual impacts that are addressed in Section 23.57.016 shall be mitigated to the greatest extent practicable.

The only provision contained with SMC Section 23.57.016 that applies to the proposal is subsection J. However, even that subsection applies to freestanding transmission towers. Technically, utility poles are not freestanding transmission towers. However, the similarities of the two warrant consideration of subsection J, which reads as follows:

Freestanding transmission towers shall minimize external projections from the support structure to reduce visual impacts and to the extent feasible shall integrate antennas in a screening structure with the same dimensions as external dimensions of the support structure, or shall mount antennas with as little projection from the structure as feasible. External conduits, climbing structures, fittings, and other projections from the external face of the support structure shall be minimized to the extent feasible.

The applicant has attempted to demonstrate compliance with Section 23.57.016 by proposing the installation of a wood pole. The wood pole is designed to conceal electrical cable conduits to run through it. The area of the wood pole is approximately 18” X 20”. The applicant has also proposed to paint the antennas the same color as the pole in an attempt to conceal the proposed minor communication utility in a shroud. The antenna and screening is proposed to have a round shape with a diameter somewhat larger than the width of the round pole. This design does integrate the antenna with the pole; therefore the proposed design accomplishes this to the fullest extent feasible.

c. Within a Major Institution Overlay District, a Major Institution may locate a minor communication utility or an accessory communication device, either of which may be larger than permitted by the underlying zone, when:

- i. the antenna is at least one hundred feet (100’) from a MIO boundary; and*
- ii. the antenna is substantially screened from the surrounding neighborhood’s view.*

The proposed site is not located within a Major Institution Overlay; therefore, this provision is not applicable.

- d. *If the minor communication utility is proposed to exceed the permitted height of the zone, the applicant shall demonstrate the following: (i) The requested height is the minimum necessary for the effective functioning of the minor communication utility, and (ii) Construction of a network of minor communication utilities that consists of a greater number of smaller less obtrusive utilities is not technically feasible.*

The proposed antennas will be attached to the wood utility pole that is proposed at 37' 6" high and exceeds the 30' height limit of the SF 5000 zone. The height of the existing SCL pole is 33' with the power line.

According to the applicant, the specific location of the proposed site has been selected to maximize capacity and coverage/penetration while minimizing the antenna height requirement. Significant deviation from this location will result in reduced effectiveness and possible invalidation of the proposed site altogether. In regards to the antenna height, the specified centerline is the minimum acceptable to provide the needed coverage with respect to that from neighboring cell sites. Lowering the antenna height would result in reduced effectiveness. In the applicant's opinion, strict application of the standards would preclude the applicant from providing wireless services for the intended coverage area.

Due to SCL clearance and separation requirements, it does appear that the applicant is attempting to request a height that is the minimum necessary for the effective functioning of the minor utility for this particular location. But, the applicant has provided evidence that there are no commercial properties nor are smaller less obtrusive facilities on commercial properties in and near the designated search ring and nearby neighborhood commercial and lowrise zones are not technically feasible meet Extenet service objectives.

- e. *If the proposed minor communication utility is proposed to be a new freestanding transmission tower, the applicant shall demonstrate that it is not technically feasible for the proposed facility to be on another existing transmission tower or on an existing building in a manner that meets the applicable development standards. The location of a facility on a building on an alternative site or sites, including construction of a network that consists of a greater number of smaller less obtrusive utilities, shall be considered.*

Although, the proposed SCL utility pole with antennas is not by definition a new freestanding transmission tower, the applicant has demonstrated that it is not technically feasible for the proposed facility to be sited on another utility pole since there is no commercial corridor along within the proximity of 28th Avenue W in a manner that meets the applicable development standards.

SITING RECOMMENDATION TO GENERAL MANAGER OF SEATTLE CITY LIGHT

Based on the above analysis the Director of the Department of Development and Planning recommends to the General Manager of Seattle City Light to **Approve** the application to install a minor communication utility on Seattle City Light pole in the public right-of-way in a residential zone.

Recommended Condition

For the Life of the Permit

1. Paint to match the color of the pole.

Onum Esonu, Land Use Planner
Department of Planning and Development

Date: December 10, 2015

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