



City of Seattle  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

Department of Construction and Inspections  
Nathan Torgelson, Director

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

**Application Number:** 3024661  
**Applicant Name:** Carly Nations  
**Address of Proposal:** 1400 SW Holden Street

### **SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Application to locate a minor communication utility (Verizon) on a Seattle City Light utility pole #1359481 in the right-of-way. The project includes attaching one antenna and one equipment enclosure to the new replacement pole. Final decision on placement of antennas will be made by Seattle City Light.

**A Class II Attachment Siting, Review and Recommendation to General Manager of Seattle City Light – SMC 15.32.300C4b** is required.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### Site and Vicinity Description

The proposal site is a Seattle City Light utility pole. The utility pole is located on northwest side of SW Holden Street and 14th Avenue SW right-of-way situated between the curb and sidewalk. SW Holden Street and 14th Avenue SW are improved streets with curbs, sidewalks and gutters. There are street trees and shrubs characteristic of streetscape of the surrounding vegetation

The area is zoned Single Family 5000 (SF 5000), Multifamily Low-rise two/ Residential Commercial (LR-2) zone is located immediately east of the Single Family 5000 zone and a Neighborhood Commercial-one with 30 feet height limit further to west. 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 install one small cell minor communication utility facility consisting of one canister antenna and one outdoor rated small cell enclosure mounted on a new 42'6" replacement utility pole. The proposed new utility pole will replace the existing 33'7"

high pole in the same location in SW Holden Street right of way. The connecting cables to the antennas will be connected to the cabinet enclosure attached to the pole.

### Public Comments

Seattle DCI received did not receive any public letter during the extended comment period which ended on July 27, 2016.

### **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 Seattle DCI 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 Seattle DCI 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 Seattle DCI, 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 utility pole to be located in the SW Holden Street right-of-way within the Single Family 5000 (SF 5000) residential zone. According to the plans the height of the utility pole is 42' 6" however, the antennas is located 37' on the proposed new 42'6" utility pole. This new utility pole would replace the existing 33' 7" Seattle City Light (SCL) utility pole. The antennas would be mounted on the pole and painted to match the color of the proposed 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 would not be detrimental to the residential character of the surrounding

neighborhood. Therefore, the proposed 42'6" utility pole and the small 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:

1. Although the proposed SCL utility pole with the antenna would *be* taller at 42' 6" than the existing SCL utility pole, the height is lower than a typical 60' tall utility pole.
2. The proposed utility pole design has both a shape and overall bulk that is not larger than that of a typical round Seattle City light utility pole.
3. The proposed antennas are typical of other equipment located in single family zoned public rights-of-way. Specifically, the size and location of the antennas would make them highly visible. This is largely due to the fact that the proposed antenna would be located 8 feet taller than the existing utility 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. Painting the antennas exterior brown and accessories is adequate to minimize the visual impacts for this proposal. The site location on street planting strip street trees provide natural cover and concealment to the antenna. 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 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, the nearest commercial zone is located 405 feet west of the site along SW Holden Street that would have been recommended as an alternative site. However, while the coverage in the neighborhood commercial zone is limited and inadequate to meet the objectives of the applicant. Also, there is an existing minor communication facility much closer to the commercial zone that may create reception challenges and interference if the proposed is located in the commercial zone.

*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 new wood pole. The wood pole is designed to conceal electrical cable conduits when it is painted the same color as the pole in an attempt to conceal the proposed minor communication utility. The antenna and enclosure are designed and attached to 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 antenna canister is attached on the utility pole at 37' high of the proposed 42' 6" replacement. Although, the height exceeds the 30' height limit of the SF 5000 zone, utility poles are not restricted to height limit of the zone. The height of the existing SCL pole is 33' 7".

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 Verizon 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 nearby commercial corridor along Beacon Avenue S 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 Construction and Inspections 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.

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Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections

Date: September 15, 2016