



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT REPORT

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DATE: April 18, 2002

TO: Orange County Zoning Administrator

FROM: Planning and Development Services Department/Current Planning Services Division

SUBJECT: Public Hearing on Planning Application PA 01-0044 for a Site Development and Use Permits.

PROPOSAL: To construct a wireless telecommunication facility consisting of a 105 foot high antenna with an obelisk stealth design and an equipment building at the base.

LOCATION: 11844 Eastern Transportation Corridor, within the Third Supervisorial District.

APPLICANT: The Consulting Group, Inc. for the Irvine Company, property owner.

STAFF CONTACT: Marta B. Crane, AIA, AICP, Project Manager
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SYNOPSIS: The Current Planning Services Division recommends Zoning Administrator approval of the site development and use permit for subject to the attached findings and conditions of approval.

BACKGROUND:

The proposed facility is part of a network of communication facilities planned to serve the Eastern and Foothill transportation corridors. The majority of antennas in the system are located within Caltrans' right of way, however, the proposed antenna is located within the jurisdiction of the County of Orange. The project site is directly adjacent to the right of way area for the interchange ramp connecting the two transportation corridors, (Highway 133 and the 241 toll road) and agricultural lands. The land is zoned A1 "General Agricultural" with an Open Space land use designation in the General Plan. The site is located within the City of Irvine sphere of influence.

Communication transmitting, reception or relay facilities are principal permitted uses in the A1 District subject to approval of a site development permit. The height limit in the A1 District is 35'. However, Zoning Code Section 7-9-129.2 "Antennas" provides that this limit may be exceeded with approval of a use permit by the Zoning Administrator.

SURROUNDING LAND USE:

The subject property is bounded by two toll road highways, the 133 Laguna Freeway and the 241 Eastern Transportation Corridor to the north and west. These roads intersect at the north side of the site,

which has a triangular shape and is surrounded by vacant open space to the south, zoned A1 “General Agricultural” District.

REFERRAL FOR COMMENT AND PUBLIC NOTICE:

A Notice of Hearing was mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject site. Additionally, a notice was posted at 300 N. Flower, at the subject site, and as required by established public hearing posting procedures. A copy of the planning application and a copy of the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to various reviewing Orange County Divisions and to the City of Irvine. These agencies reviewed the project, provided comments, and did not express any objections. The City of Irvine correspondence, on file in the project records, states support for the current obelisk design. As of the writing of this staff report, there are no issues raised by any Orange County Divisions.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Negative Declaration No. PA 01-0044 was prepared for this project and was posted for public review from 6/29/01 to 7/19/01. Prior to project approval, the Zoning Administrator must find this Negative Declaration adequate to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Appendix A contains the required CEQA Findings

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:

The applicant is proposing to install a wireless telecommunication facility at the intersection of Highways 133 and the 241 Eastern Transportation Corridor. The antenna is proposed as a three-sided obelisk stealth design, intended to screen all antenna panels from public view, thereby minimizing visual impacts. The design of the structure will coordinate with other facilities that are also part of the system of antennas to be installed along the transportation corridor. This design has been reviewed and agreed upon by the Aesthetics Committee of the Transportation Corridor Agencies (Exhibits 1 and 2).

The proposed facility has a capacity to serve up to eight (8) different wireless carriers. At this point there are only four (4) carriers identified, however, the antenna has been designed to accommodate increased demand for communication service anticipated in the near future. By accommodating several carriers, the number of antenna installations throughout the transportation corridors will be minimized.

As a result of the facility’s multi-user co-location, the height of the antenna is 105 feet, which is over the 35 foot height limitation for antennas in the A1 zoning district. However, Zoning Code Section 7-9-129.2 “Antennas” provides that this limit may be exceeded with approval of a use permit by the Zoning Administrator. The excessive height is offset by the benefits of consolidating several carriers in a single site, and by its stealth design. Due to the physical characteristics of the site, the actual height of the antenna will not appear to be as high because the grade level at the base of the tower is 45 feet lower than the highest grade level of the adjacent highway. Although the grade elevation varies along the highway interchange ramp, the antenna will only rise approximately 60 feet above the transition ramp level. The antenna structure is steel covered with panels finished in a bone-white color.

It should be noted that condition of approval number 8 has been included as requested by Cal Trans and the Airport Land Use Commission. Because MCAS El Toro presently remains under Federal

ownership, condition of approval number 8 will remain applicable until the Airport Land Use Commission and the FAA determine otherwise, even though the County General Plan no longer recognizes a commercial airport use at the former air station.

This project also includes the construction of an equipment area at the base of the tower, which will support up to two (2) Base Transceiver Stations and other related support utilities. A support building will also be constructed to house the necessary equipment for up to a maximum of seven wireless telephone carriers. The two equipment buildings are attached and finished with ledger stone over precision concrete block.

As stated above, the proposed site has an Open Space land use designation in the Land Use Element of the General Plan. The antenna project is consistent with this designation, which provides for opportunities for low-intensity, high technology facilities that do not require a commitment of significant infrastructure. Wireless telecommunications facilities are based on technical requirements, which include service area, geographical elevations, alignment with neighboring sites and customer demand components. The proposed site's characteristics meet all these requirements, thus enabling effective provision telecommunications service in the area in addition to being part of a countywide effort to provide adequate communication services throughout the transportation corridors.

CONCLUSION OR SUMMARY:

The combination of a stealth design, the physical characteristics of the site, and the relative isolated location of the project will result in minimal or no visual impacts to the surrounding area. Should the site development and use permits be approved as conditioned, the proposal will comply with all required development standards applicable to the project. Based on the analysis above, staff supports approval of the application, provided the applicant agrees to comply with the conditions of approval recommended for this project as stated in Appendix B of this report.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Current Planning Services Division recommends the Zoning Administrator:

- a. Receive staff report and public testimony as appropriate; and,
- b. Approve Planning Application PA01-0044 for a site development and use permit subject to the attached Findings and Conditions of Approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Chad G. Brown, Chief
CPSD/Site Planning Section

APPENDICES:

- A. Recommended Findings
- B. Recommended Conditions of Approval

EXHIBITS:

- 1. Applicant letter of justification.
- 2. Photo simulation
- 3. Set of Full Scale Plans (Site Plan, Floor Plans and Elevations).

APPEAL PROCEDURE:

Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Zoning Administrator on this permit to the Orange County Planning Commission within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents and a filing fee of \$ 745.00 filed at the Development Processing Center, 300 N. Flower St, Santa Ana.