



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: September 21, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of a proposed data node in Battery Park, 2408 The Terrace**

I. APPLICANTS

Barry Russell, Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities
Jennifer Mullen, Roth Doner Jackson, PLC

II. LOCATION

Battery Park, 2408 The Terrace

Property Owner:

City of Richmond Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Community Facilities

III. PURPOSE

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of a proposed Verizon data node to be installed in Battery Park.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This project is one in a series of five requests from Verizon Wireless to install data nodes in City parks. The City park sites were determined based on the high number of users of the sites. Data nodes are small antennas designed to increase data capacity in areas where people gather. They work with traditional cell towers to improve data and voice capacity and enhance the overall network.

The Urban Design Committee finds that the proposal is consistent with the recommendation of the Urban Design Guidelines that “new telecommunication devices shall be located on existing infrastructure”, which is intended to reduce the proliferation of stand-alone telecommunications devices. In addition, the Committee does not find the proposed antenna to be appreciably more intrusive than the utility pole on which it is to be mounted. The Committee would prefer to see an evergreen vegetative screen around the equipment enclosure, and that the enclosure is the smallest possible functional dimension. The City’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities have reviewed and approved the location and design. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval, with the following conditions:

- That the applicant works with staff from the Departments of Planning & Development Review and Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities prior to permitting to provide evergreen vegetative screening around the equipment enclosure, where appropriate.
- That the fenced equipment enclosure be made as small as possible.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Battery Park is bounded by Moss Side Avenue to the north, Montrose Avenue to the east, Wickham Street to the south and Hawthorne Avenue to the west. The 11.8 acre park is bisected by Overbrook road and contains open spaces, walking trails, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, a meeting hall (the round house) and the Battery Park pool. The park is zoned R-5 (Single-family residential) and sits surrounded by single-family detached residential dwellings zoned R-5 or R-6 (Single-family attached residential).

b. Scope of Review

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as a “park”.

c. UDC Review History

Staff was unable to document any previously UDC reviewed projects in the park.

d. Project Description

This project is one in a series of five requests from Verizon Wireless to install data nodes in City parks. The City park sites were determined based on the high number of users of the sites. Data nodes are small antennas designed to increase data capacity in areas where people gather. Per the applicant’s report, data demand has increased exponentially over the last few years, doubling from 2012 to 2013; and is expected to increase 650% by 2018 as the number of uses for mobile devices and the number of devices increases. Data nodes work with traditional cell towers to improve data and voice capacity and enhance the overall network.

The proposed data node in Battery Park would be mounted about 20’ high on the side of an existing 25’ tall metal light pole designed to illuminate the swimming pool area and located just to the outside of the fenced enclosure. The ground equipment would be placed in a 9’ wide x 6’ long x 8’ tall chain-link fence enclosure adjacent to the pool house building. The chain link will be coated in black vinyl and will have vinyl slats installed to screen the equipment from view. The slats will be installed on all sides of the enclosure. No landscaping is proposed. An easement would need to be granted from the enclosure back to the street to allow for underground utilities and access. Wires from the enclosure to the pole will be placed underground in a hand-dug trench. Once they reach the pole they will run inside the pole if there is room, otherwise they will be routed up the outside of the pole. If they are run outside the pole they can be concealed in a collar, which will be painted to match the existing pole.

All improvements will be paid for by Verizon Wireless, which will enter into a lease agreement with the City, to be approved by Council. Verizon will also provide a one-time fee of \$5,000 per site to the City Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities.

e. Master Plan

The park is located in the North Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan places the subject area in the Public and Open Space use category, with primary uses including publicly owned and operated parks,

recreation areas, open spaces, schools, libraries and other government facilities. There is no language in the Plan specific to the subject area.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Urban Design Guidelines note that “whenever possible, new telecommunication devices shall be located on existing infrastructure” and that “telecommunication devices that are able to be co-located on existing towers are encouraged” (page 16). The Guidelines also state that “Impacts to the natural landscape should be assessed and should generally be minimized when constructing man-made elements” (page 9). The Guidelines also note that “active parks should have adequate facilities (i.e. sports fields, trash receptacles, benches, running paths, etc.) to accommodate intended users” (page 9).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**