City of Richmond, Virginia
Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: December 7, 2017
RE: **Review of encroachments throughout the Downtown area for AT&T Wireless telecommunications equipment, 1200 E. Clay St.; 910 E. Byrd St.; UDC File No. 2017-40**

I. APPLICANT
New Cingular Wireless PCS LLC d/b/a AT&T Mobility

II. LOCATION
1200 E. Clay St.
910 E. Byrd St.

Property Owner:
CITY OF RICHMOND, RIGHT-OF-WAY

III. PURPOSE
The application is for review of encroachments of new 30' metal poles for the attachment of wireless communication antennas and associated equipment within the public right-of-way. The new poles and equipment will constitute an encroachment.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION
The applicant is proposing to establish new Small Cell telecommunications facilities on new 30' tall metal poles within public right-of-way. Small Cell antennae are used to "densify" the carrier's network in high use areas providing additional phone and data coverage where needed. A single Omni-Directional antenna contained within a painted canister will be mounted to the top of the pole. The application is proposing to install these new facilities in two locations in the downtown area.

Staff does not find the proposed antennae to be appreciably more intrusive than the surrounding utility and light poles around which they will be installed.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Director of Public Works grant approval with the following conditions:

- That the proposed poles be no more than 12" in diameter
- That the color of the poles are black or match the prevailing color of surrounding utility or light poles
- That the pole proposed for 1200 E. Clay St. be installed on the north side of the existing light pole for more efficient use of public right-of-way
- That the pole proposed for 910 E. Byrd St. be located closer to the S. 9th and E Byrd St. location if it is found that the proposed location may negatively impact the root system of the closest existing tree, as determined by the Urban Forestry division

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

There are two sites proposed for the telecommunications encroachments. Both consist of the installation of a Small Cell telecommunications facility attached to a 30' tall metal pole installed by the applicant within the Right-of-Way. One is located approximately 45' northeast of the intersection at N. 12th St. and E. Clay St. The other proposed location is approximately 41' northwest of the intersection at S. 10th St. and E. Byrd St.

The zoning designation for both sites is B-4 (Central Business District), the land use vary between institutional and downtown office.

b. Scope of Review

This project involves the placement of new telecommunications equipment into new locations in the City right-of-way.

All of the telecommunications equipment will be installed and maintained by the applicant, and as such they fall into the category of encroachments. The encroachment process is administered through the Department of Public Works, which has requested that the Urban Design Committee (UDC) provide design advice on certain types of encroachments. The UDC does not have the authority to approve encroachments, but rather provides aesthetic advice to the Department of Public Works.

This type of encroachment requires approval of an ordinance by City Council. The review process requires consideration of the request by both the Planning Commission and the Urban Design Committee. The Department of Public Works is responsible for drafting the ordinance that permits the use of the right-of-way.

c. Project Description

This proposed project is seeking to establish two new Small Cell telecommunications facilities attached to new 30' poles at two locations. Small Cell antennas are used to "densify" the carrier's network in high use areas providing additional phone and data coverage where needed. A single Omni-Directional Antenna contained within a painted canister will be mounted to the top of each pole. Two small cMRO radios will be housed within the cabinet base of each pole. There will be no overhead wires or cables. These facilities will be located in city Right-of-Way in close proximity at the following locations:

1200 E. Clay St.: The proposed location is adjacent to the VCU Health building, along a sidewalk with existing light poles. The proposed pole is designed to be similar in design, color, and scope as the existing black metal light poles in the area. There are currently other utility poles and street light poles in the area that do not match the black metal.

910 S. Byrd St.: The proposed location is adjacent to the RMA parking deck, along a sidewalk with existing light poles. The proposed pole is designed to be similar is design, color and scope as the existing black metal light poles in the area. There are currently other utility poles and street light poles in the area that do not match the black metal.

If both locations are approved, AT&T Mobility will enter into an encroachment agreement with the City of Richmond, to install and operate the communications facility and pole.

d. UDC Review History

The Urban Design Committee has reviewed a number of telecommunications projects over the last two decades, including the installation of collocated equipment on new monopoles and upgrades to existing equipment.

e. Master Plan

The subject locations are part of the Downtown Plan. Although nothing regarding telecommunication poles is mentioned in the Downtown Plan, aspects of the design details mention how overhead utilities clutter the air and imply burying utilities when possible (page 4.11).

f. Urban Design Guidelines

The Public Facilities section of the Urban Design Guidelines states that "whenever possible, new telecommunication devices shall be located on existing infrastructure" and further that "telecommunication devices that are able to be co-located on existing towers are encouraged" (page 16).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

a. Vicinity Map
b. Application
c. Plans