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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: December 8, 2016  
RE: **Location, character, and extent review of new public safety communications facilities at four sites; UDC 2016-49, East End Site 1201 N 38<sup>th</sup> Street**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Stephen Willoughby, Department of Emergency Communications

**II. LOCATION**

1201 N 38<sup>th</sup> Street

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for location, character, and extent review of a new emergency communications tower and a compound with associated equipment on land owned by the Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities.

It is part of a larger network of new and improved emergency communications facilities that involves the construction of three new sites, co-locating at one site, relocating to a new tower at an existing site, and reusing two of the City's current sites.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

Staff 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 by providing for future colocation opportunities. Furthermore, Staff supports the removal of blighted vacant property as part of this project, as well as the limiting of new access road construction. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant approval as submitted.

**Staff Contact:**

Kathleen Onufer, (804) 646-5207

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

This project would install a new communications tower and associated outbuildings at 1201 N 38<sup>th</sup> Street. The parcel is owned by the Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and was previously used for maintenance facilities and was a dumping facility; it is currently vacant except for a monopole leased for private telecommunications. The neighborhood to the west and north of the site, uphill from the site, is zoned R-5 single-family; the downhill areas are zoned for manufacturing. There is a vegetated buffer between the site and the houses & Franklin Military Academy adjacent.

**b. Scope of Review**

The project is subject to location, character, and extent review as a public building and structure under Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

**c. UDC Review History**

The UDC has reviewed a number of equipment installations on public facilities and property over the last few years, as well as installation of collocated equipment on new monopoles and upgrades to existing equipment.

**d. Project Description**

It is part of a larger network of new and improved emergency communications facilities that involves the construction of three new sites, co-locating at one site, relocating to a new tower at an existing site, and reusing two of the City's current sites.

This project uses an existing access road into the site, with expanded access drive and turnaround to the compound.

The vacant building on site will be demolished and becomes the primary location of the 100' by 100' compound with an aggregate base surface, surrounded by a fence. The compound contains equipment for the tower, including generator shelter, 1000 gallon diesel tank, and equipment shelter. All of these items will be on concrete foundations. Future lease areas are designated within the compound area in order to allow for future collocation.

Trees will be removed in a 30' buffer around the compound. The fence is proposed as either galvanized 8' chain link security fencing, or 12' fencing. There will be a 16' vehicular gate as well as a 4' pedestrian gate for each site.

The tower itself will be 300' tall and self-supporting design of steel materials on a concrete foundation. Communications equipment and antennas will be installed at elevation 178', 195', 279' and 299' along the tower.

**e. Master Plan**

The subject properties are part of the East Planning District. The Master Plan for this area recognizes that undeveloped land in the areas is frequently "environmentally challenging land-usually steep slopes, floodplains, or former landfills or other industrial sites" (159) The Plan designates the site as public and open space, as it does for most of the hillside.

**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**