City of Richmond, Virginia
Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: March 9, 2017
RE: **Review of encroachments throughout the Near West End and Museum District area for Verizon Wireless telecommunications equipment on Dominion Poles, 5201 Patterson Avenue; 3407 Floyd Avenue; 336 Lexington Road; 4700 Hanover Avenue; 4601 Leonard Parkway; UDC #17-10**

I. APPLICANT
Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless

II. LOCATION
5201 Patterson Avenue
3407 Floyd Avenue
336 Lexington Road
4700 Hanover Avenue
4601 Leonard Parkway

Property Owner:
City of Richmond right-of-way
Dominion Power poles
Verizon equipment

III. PURPOSE
The application is for review of encroachments of small cell antennas and related equipment on existing poles within the public right-of-way. The equipment will constitute an encroachment.

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. In addition, Staff does not find the proposed antennae to be appreciably more intrusive than the utility poles on which they are to be mounted.

Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Director of Public Works grant approval as submitted.

Staff Contact:
Joshua Son, (804) 646-3741

V. FINDINGS OF FACT
a. Site Description and Surrounding Context
This project would install small cell antennas at multiple locations to form a polygon design network.

b. Scope of Review

The project involves the provision of equipment above public rights-of-way. The City owns the rights-of-way, but the applicant will perform all of the work and will be responsible for all of the maintenance, which puts the improvements in 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 advice to the Department of Public Works.

c. Project Description

This project is to install five small cell antennas and related equipment in a polygon network at five different locations throughout the Near West End and Museum District. The goal of the project is to improve wireless communications for Verizon customers throughout the City, by relieving telecommunications load from the existing load and reducing the possibility of dropped calls.

The small antennas will be attached to utility poles owned by Dominion Virginia Power and its affiliates and Verizon Telecommunications; the plan provides for the replacement of the existing wooden utility poles and attachment of the antennas and related equipment. Power and fiber lines will be provided to the poles across City right-of-way.

Equipment to be installed includes approximately 2' by 1' antennas mounted in an array of three at the top of pole, other smaller equipment below, and an equipment cabinet mounted at elevation 11' on the pole if over sidewalk and 8' if over ground. 10% of the pole height + 2' is buried underground for stability. Existing wires will be reinstalled at their existing elevation on the new poles.

5201 Patterson Avenue: Existing 32.5' pole with existing utility lines at 23.5'; 22.5'; and 19.5' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 45.7'

3407 Floyd Avenue: Existing 42' pole with existing utility lines at 43'; 42.5'; 42'; 34'; 31.5'; 30'; 28'; 21'; and 20' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 52.7'

336 Lexington Road: Existing 31.5' pole with existing utility lines at 28.5'; 19.5'; 18.5'; and an existing guy line to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 44.2'

4700 Hanover Avenue: Existing 32.5' pole with existing utility lines at 35.5'; 26.5'; 24.5'; 22.5'; 21.5'; and an existing street light to be replaced with pole, street light, and equipment with overall height of 45.2'

4601 Leonard Parkway: Existing 32.5' pole with existing utility lines at 33.5'; 25'; 23.5' 19.5'; 18.5' and an existing guy line to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 45.2'

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 properties are part of the Far West Planning District and the Near West Planning District. Although nothing regarding utility poles is mentioned under the Far West Planning District section, a recommendation for the Near West Planning District area is that "new or expanded electrical and communication cables and any new future technology should be located underground. Existing above-ground cables should be relocated underground when possible, especially when significant repairs, maintenance, or upgrades are implemented" (page 241).

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).

The encroachment section states that "The Urban Design Committee supports the City Planning Commission's Resolution, dated February 6, 1995, which discourages new overhead wire and cable encroachments in the public right-of-way. (see Appendix 4.) All new wires and cables should be placed underground, as feasible. The Committee advocates that all existing overhead utility wires and cables should be relocated underground, as feasible, especially in neighborhood business and residential areas." (page 32).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

a. Vicinity Map
b. Application
c. Plans