



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: September 21, 2015
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent review of a proposed data node atop the Powhatan Hill Community Center, 1006 Williamsburg Road**

I. APPLICANTS

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

II. LOCATION

Powhatan Hill Community Center, 1006 Williamsburg Road

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 atop the Powhatan Hill Community Center.

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. The Committee finds that the proposed rooftop equipment enclosure, to match the existing building materials, to be an acceptable concealment. 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 as submitted.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Powhatan Park is bounded by Goddin Street to the north, Union Street to the east, Williamsburg Road to the south and Fulton Street to the west. The 10 acre park is zoned R-5 (Single-family residential) and contains open spaces, tennis and basketball courts, a baseball field and gathering spaces. Powhatan Hill

Community Center is located across Northampton Street from the park, next door to the Powhatan pool. The community center is the subject of this proposal.

The surrounding areas to the north, east and south are developed primarily with single-family detached dwellings in the R-5 and R-6 (Single-family attached residential) districts. The area to the west of Williamsburg Avenue is located in Henrico County and is developed with manufacturing/warehouse uses

b. Scope of Review

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

c. UDC Review History

The Urban Design Committee reviewed and the Planning Commission approved the plans for the construction of the community center in 1989.

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 Powhatan Park is to be located atop the Powhatan Hill Community Center, with the antenna and equipment concealed in a stealth enclosure designed to match the exterior building material. The existing building contains a parapet wall that is 26’ above grade, and the proposed enclosure, set back a distance of 14’ from the parapet, will be 34’ above grade. Overhead utilities to the equipment will be run from an existing pole along Williamsburg Road, and an electrical meter will be mounted to the northern building façade.

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 East 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**