



To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: May 20, 2019
RE: **Conceptual Section 17.05 review of Small Cell Antenna Pole Attachments, city-wide; UDC 2019-14**

I. APPLICANT

Alfred Scott, Department of Public Utilities (DPU)

II. LOCATION

Citywide within right-of-way

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for conceptual approval of Small Cell Antenna Pole Attachments on DPU owned poles.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

The application sets a precedent for the proliferation of small cell facilities on city-owned poles that will simultaneously enhance the wireless services throughout the city while impacting the public realm. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling mandates that cities and towns authorize the installation of small cell facilities on City or Town owned structures located inside and outside the right of way. This application presents options for how these facilities may least impact the surrounding communities. Developing a set of design standards for the collocation of small cell facilities on DPU owned poles will allow for an expedited process from application submittal to implementation. This will further facilitate the placement of small cell facilities in a more considerate, inconspicuous manner.

Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission approve the conceptual design with the following recommendations to be addressed in the final review:

- that small cell installation on city-owned poles with cantilevered luminaires match in color and material when possible and be administratively reviewed
- that small cell installation on city-owned poles topped with luminaires be reviewed by the UDC to establish a design standard, once a design standard is determined, review will proceed administratively

Staff Contact:

Josh Son // (804) 646-3741 // joshua.son@richmondgov.com

Alex Dandridge, (804) 646-6569 // alex.dandridge@richmondgov.com

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The applicant is requesting approval of attachments to City poles where local conditions allow.

b. Scope of Review

The proposed pole attachments are subject to design review under Section 17.05 of the Richmond City Charter as “public appurtenances”.

c. 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. Equipment proposed to be placed in the City right-of-way is reviewed as an encroachment.

At the regular December 2017 meeting of the UDC, Small Cell Antennas (UDC 2017-40) came for review as encroachments. The UDC recommended 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 be 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

d. Project Description

This application proposes the conceptual guidelines for the design and installation of small cell facilities on DPU-owned poles. The small cell facilities will be in the form of a cantenna, a tool used to increase network range. The collocation of a cantenna on poles in densely populated areas is currently the industry standard for enhancing network coverage of service providers. The intent of this application is to propose guidelines that provide typical designs and locations for the purpose of collocating cantennas on poles with luminaire attachments on various types of poles that include, but are not limited to, wood, aluminum roadway, steel roadway, Hanover, and Granville.

The FCC ruling requires cities and towns to; (1) authorize the installation of small cell facilities on City or Town owned structures located inside and outside the right-of-way; (2) allow service providers to place small cell facilities and networks hardware on City or Town owned facilities or on poles owned by a service provider located in the right-of way; and (3) provide service providers with access for attachments of small cell facilities.

The ruling also provides requirements for local utilities for pole attachments that address: (1) access to facilities, which also address capacity, terms for attachments, notice; and timelines for applications; (2) contractors to perform surveys and make-ready work; (3) modifying facilities and replacing poles, including assignment of costs; and (4) determining rates for attachments.

e. Master Plan

The Master Plan does not provide specific language regarding Small Cell Antennas; however, 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 collocated on existing towers are encouraged” (page 16).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

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