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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: June 8, 2017  
RE: **Review of encroachments throughout the Near West End, the Fan, and Monroe Ward for Verizon Wireless telecommunications equipment on Dominion Poles, 19 W Main St., 420 E Cary St., 4201 Park Ave., 1200 W Cary St., 8 S Harrison St., 1309 W Main St., 900 W Franklin St.; UDC No. 2017-22**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless

**II. LOCATION**

19 W Main St.  
420 E Cary St.  
4201 Park Ave.  
1200 W Cary St.  
8 S Harrison St.  
1309 W Main St.  
900 W Franklin St.

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond right-of-way  
Dominion Power poles  
Verizon equipment

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for review of encroachments of data node 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:**

Josh Son // (804) 646-3741 // [joshua.son@richmondgov.com](mailto:joshua.son@richmondgov.com)

**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

This project would install data node cell antennas and related equipment 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 seven small data node antennas and related equipment in a polygon network at seven different locations throughout the Near West End, the Fan, and Monroe Ward. The goal of the project is to improve wireless communications for Verizon Wireless customers throughout the City, by alleviating some of the overloaded sectors in the existing network especially in heavily populated areas where a macro installation might not make sense.

The proposed data nodes 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.

The proposed equipment to be installed includes an antenna that is approximately two feet tall and ten inches in diameter. The antenna will be painted brown to blend in with the pole and a sheath will be installed to cover the cables between the bottom of the antenna and the top of the pole making for a very uniform aesthetic. The equipment cabinet will be pole mounted at an elevation of eleven feet if over a sidewalk or road or eight feet if over any other ground area. It will also be painted brown to blend in with the pole and other equipment. The utility pole mounted installations are very standard, in part due to Dominion's strict safety standards. Clearances from the lines are sternly adhered to giving each installation an almost identical look.

**19 West Main Street:** Existing 29' pole with existing utility lines at 19.5' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 41.7'

**420 East Cary Street:** Existing 31.5' pole with existing utility lines at 29.5'; 24.5'; and 20.5' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 42.2'

**4201 Park Avenue:** Existing 32.8' pole with existing utility lines at 32'; 26.5'; 18.5' and an existing street light to be replaced with pole, street light, and equipment with overall height of 46.7'

**1200 West Cary Street:** Existing 29' pole with existing utility lines at 28.5'; 27.5'; and 27.5' to be replaced with pole, street light, and equipment with overall height of 42.1'

**8 South Harrison Street:** Existing 34.5' pole with existing utility lines at 35'; 31'; 28'; 26.5'; 22' and 20.5' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 51.1'

**1309 West Main Street:** Existing 38.5' pole with existing utility lines at 39.5'; 37.5'; 32.5'; 29.5'; and 28' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 51.2'

**900 West Franklin Street:** Existing 33' pole with existing utility lines at 32'; 26'; and 25' to be replaced with pole and equipment with overall height of 46.6'

**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, the Near West Planning District, and the Downtown Plan. 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). Additionally, the Downtown Plan notes "Removing the clutter of overhead utility lines and equipment from the visible public right-of-way will enhance the streetscape...this can be achieved by burying utility lines, requiring utility boxes to be located off the public right-of-way, and ensuring that utility companies maintain their rights-of-way" (page 4.58).

**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**