



# STAFF REPORT

DATE: 01/09/2024

PL23-0304 – AT&amp;T Wireless Service Facility

**PROJECT NUMBER / NAME:** PL23-0304 – 960 West El Norte Parkway/AT&T Wireless Communication Facility

REQUEST: A request for a Conditional Use Permit to construct a 65'-0" high wireless service facility designed as a mono-eucalyptus. The facility consists of various antennas, surge suppressors, and cables to support the wireless facility. The request also includes the construction of a ground level enclosure surrounded by an 8'-0" tall CMU wall to house a diesel generator, and other accessory equipment for the wireless facility.

PROPERTY SIZE AND LOCATION: The 1.09-acre site is located on the north side of W El Norte Parkway within an existing commercial center and is addressed at 960 W El Norte Parkway. (Assessor's Parcel Number: 226-350-65-00)

APPLICANT: Harold Thomas Jr. on behalf of AT&T

GENERAL PLAN / ZONING: General Commercial (GC)/  
General Commercial (C-G)

PRIMARY REPRESENTATIVE: Harold Thomas Jr. (MD7)

DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS REQUESTED: Conditional Use Permit

PREVIOUS ACTIONS: N/A

CEQA RECOMMENDATION: Categorical Exemption – CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval

REQUESTED ACTION: Approve Planning Commission Resolution No. 2024-01

CITY COUNCIL HEARING REQUIRED: ☐ YES ☒ NO

REPORT APPROVALS: X Dare Delano, Senior Deputy City Attorney

X Veronica Morones, City Planner



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### BACKGROUND

The subject property is located within an approximately 11.34-acre commercial shopping center anchored by a Vons grocery store. The shopping center is comprised of various parcels and all are held under separate ownerships. The subject property is an approximately 1.09-acre parcel located at the southeast corner of the shopping center, and is developed with a drive-through facility (Wendy's).

### SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Harold Thomas Jr. ("applicant") on, behalf of AT&T Wireless, request approval of a Conditional Use Permit for construction of a 65'-0" high wireless communication facility designed as a mono-eucalyptus ("project"). At the antenna level, the project includes the installation of various panel antennas, surge suppressors, and DC cables. At the ground level, the applicant intends to construct an eight foot (8'-0") high CMU wall enclosure to house a diesel generator, emergency shut off switch, surge suppressors, and other various accessory equipment to support the wireless communication facility.

The project site is located on the north side of W El Norte Parkway (refer to Attachment 1), and is addressed at 960 W El Norte Parkway. The project site has a General Plan land use designation of General Commercial (GC), and is within the General Commercial (C-G) zoning district (refer to Attachment 2).

### SUPPLEMENTAL DETAILS OF REQUEST

1. Property Size: 1.09-acres
2. Height: 65'-0"
3. Wireless/Pole: Install faux mono-eucalyptus tree
4. Antennas: Install 12 antennas and 9 radio units
5. Materials/Colors: Antennas, and associated brackets would be painted to match tree branches and existing trees.
6. Equipment: All equipment will be located within an 8'-0" high CMU enclosure.
7. Hours of operations: 24-hour unmanned facility
8. Landscaping: Plans indicate the removal of two shrubs, and one tree. Applicant will be responsible for replacing shrubs and trees. New location of the tree and shrubs are shown on the plans.

### PROJECT ANALYSIS

1. General Plan Conformance:



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The General Plan land use designation on the site is General Commercial (GC), which allows for wireless communication facilities, subject to Article 34 (Communication Antennas) within the Commercial (C-G) zoning district.

### 2. Zoning Conformance:

The General Commercial zoning district permits for wireless communication facilities through the Conditional Use Permit process. As noted, the Project consists of the installation of a 65'-0" high mono-eucalyptus tree. The C-G zoning district limits the height of buildings through the use of the Uniform Building Code. Pursuant to Section 33-1075 of Article 56, wireless masts or other similar structures (subject to the provisions of Article 34), may be erected above the height limits established for the various zones provided that no portion of the structure is in excess or be deemed as an excessive or unreasonable use of the space that creates an unnecessary aesthetic impact on surrounding properties, as determined by the Director of Development Services. The proposed height of the mono-eucalyptus tree is consistent with height of existing buildings, and landscaping and therefore does not create adverse aesthetic impacts to surrounding properties.

### 3. Conformance with FCC Emissions Requirements:

The operation of the wireless facility would generate radio frequency electromagnetic emissions (RF radiant). EBI Consulting prepared a Radio frequency (RF) and Nonionizing Electromagnetic Radiation (NIER) Analysis Report on June 06, 2023, to determine whether the proposed communication facility complies with the FCC Rules and Regulations for RF emissions for "Occupational" and "General Public" classifications per OET Bulletin 65, Edition 97-01. The study concludes the project is compliant with FCC rules and regulations.

### 4. Conformance with Section 33-703 (Personal wireless service facilities guidelines—Five General Principles) five general principles for consideration of new facilities:

#### (a) Height guidelines – Utilize lowest profile technology

Given the FCC requirements related to the height of facilities to provide expanded service coverage, the design of the faux mono-eucalyptus tree is 65'-0". The structure is located in the C-G zoning district and is only limited in height by the Uniform Building Code. The project conforms with the zone's height standard, and is similar in height to the existing surrounding trees. The proposed design of the wireless communication facility is intended to look like a eucalyptus tree, and blends in with the strand of trees adjacent to W. El Norte Parkway as shown in the visual simulations (see Attachment 3).

#### (b) Location Guidelines – Avoid proliferations that create or compound undesirable visual impacts, but also encourage co-location where appropriate.

The project site is located within a commercial zoning district, and is approximately 230 feet away from the nearest residential use. The design of the structure fully integrates the facility into the existing landscaping on-site in order to minimize visual impacts to surrounding properties. As of today, the subject property contains no other wireless service facility, and is not inundated with other antennas/structures.



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### **(c) Stealth Technology guideline – Encourage creative, unobstructive stealth technology**

The structure is camouflage designed as a mono-eucalyptus, and is consistent with the height of the existing trees and landscaping on site. Telecommunication equipment, panels, wiring, and radio units within the tree will be visually compatible with natural colors of the surrounding trees.

### **(d) Older facility guidelines – encourage older facilities to upgrade using less obtrusive technology**

The project is for the construction of a new wireless communication facility. The proposed structure will consist of newer technology that is consistent with the five principles for wireless communication facilities.

### **(e) Emissions guidelines – Ensure that emissions do not exceed federal thresholds**

All the equipment and ongoing operations will meet all federal emissions and radiation standards and guidelines as discussed in the report prepared by EBI consulting.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

The proposed project is consistent with the City of Escondido economic policies because it would provide support, updated communication services, expanded wireless coverage, and installation of new telecommunication systems for local residents and businesses. There are no direct fiscal impacts associated with the proposed telecommunications services.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS**

California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guideline's list classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and as a result are exempt from further environmental review under CEQA. The Project qualifies for an exemption under CEQA Guidelines sections 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structure). The required CEQA Notice of Exemption prepared for the project is incorporated into this staff report as Attachment 4. The Notice of Exemption demonstrates that the project qualifies for this exemption and will not have a significant effect on the environment.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

The project was noticed consistent with the requirements of both the Escondido Zoning Code and the State Law. Staff has not received any correspondence from the public regarding the project as of the preparation of this report.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The proposed project is consistent with the Communication Antennas Ordinance (Article 34 of the Escondido Zoning Code), and the project design conforms to the five guiding principles for wireless communication facilities. The project would not result in any adverse visual impacts since the panels would be screened/camouflaged within the proposed tree structure, coordinated panel color, have no reflective surfaces, and be located within an existing stand native trees of similar height and texture. The proposed facility is located on a non-residential site in the C-G zone that is sufficient in size, and adequately buffered by existing buildings and distance without negatively impacting the adjacent residential properties. Further, the facility would be in conformance with FCC emission standards.



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Based on the analysis contained in this staff report, staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution 2024-01, approving the proposed Conditional Use Permit as described in this staff report, as detailed in Exhibits "A" through "D" of Resolution No. 2024-01.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Location Map
2. General Plan Land Use Designation and Zoning District
3. Visual Simulations
4. CEQA Notice of Exemption
5. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2024-01 including Exhibits A – D





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### Attachment 1

### Location Map



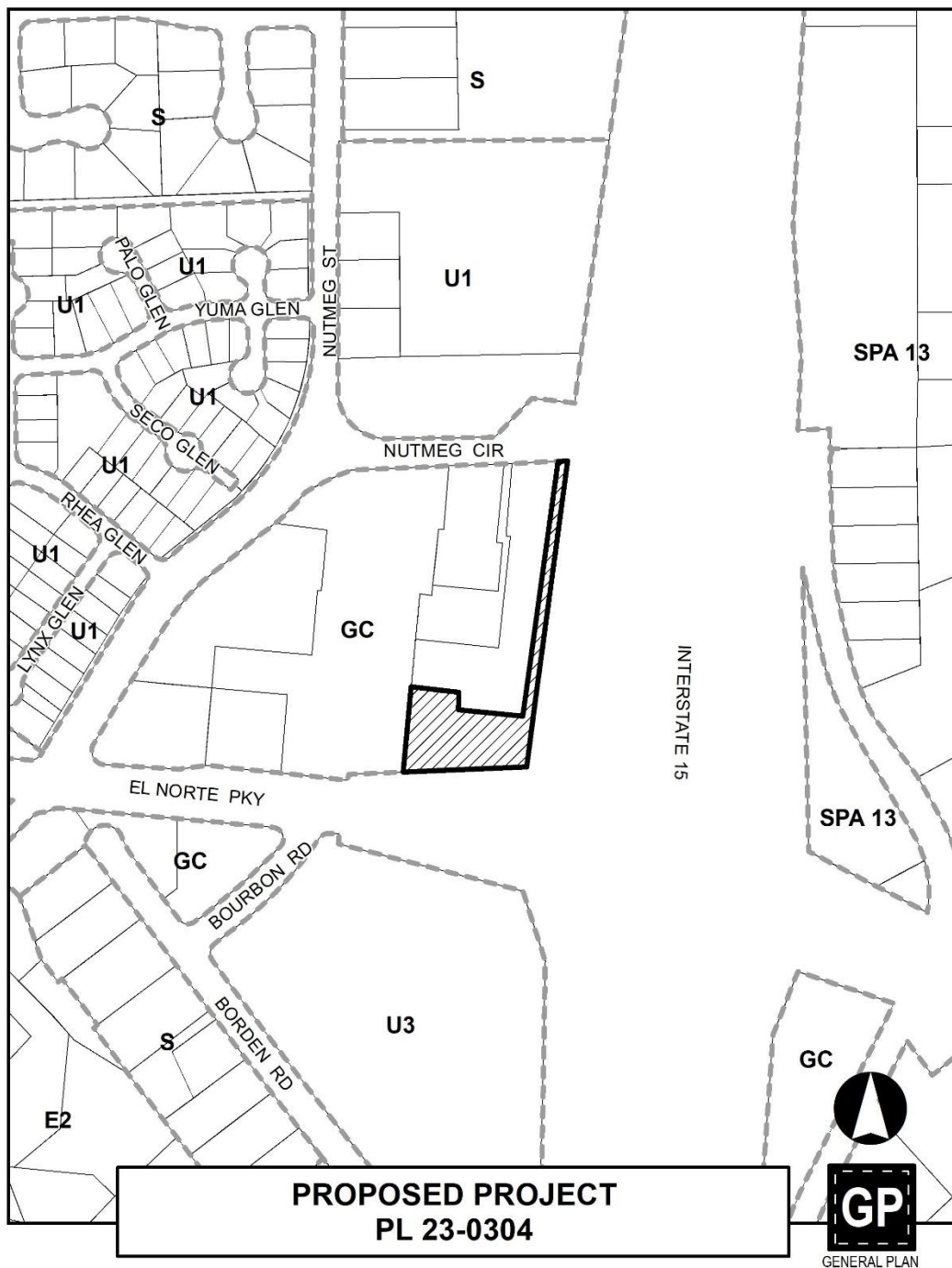


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### Attachment 2

### General Plan Land Use and Zoning District







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