



CITY of ESCONDIDO

STAFF REPORT

BACKGROUND

A Conditional Use Permit was approved in 1995 (Case No. 95-43-CUP) to install rooftop wireless communication antennas, a digital dish and construct an equipment enclosure on the Westminster Theological Seminary property. However, due to coverage limitations, elevation of existing facilities and technological advancements wireless operators have been updating and relocating facilities to provide a broader range of coverage. The project is located southeast off of Bear Valley Parkway with direct access from Boyle Avenue, addressed as 1725 Bear Valley Parkway, Escondido, CA 92027. (Location Map and General Plan are attached as Attachment 1 and incorporated by this reference).

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Verizon Wireless (VAW), LLC. ("Applicant") has submitted a request to modify the existing Conditional Use Permit (95-43-CUP) on a site within the Residential Estate (RE-20) zone and having a General Plan land use designation of Estate II (E2). The existing Verizon antennas and dish are currently located on the Seminary rooftop with a maximum height of 10 feet, and with the required equipment within an enclosure in the adjacent parking lot. The Applicant is proposing to remove the rooftop antennas and dish, and replace them with new panels on a new 62'-6" mono pole (mono-eucalyptus tree) to provide a higher elevation and service coverage for the new technology. The existing enclosure will remain in its current location but will be modified to allow for updated communication equipment. Trenching and boring is required to extend power and telecommunication lines to the new mono-eucalyptus tree location. A site plan showing general location of improvements, and proposed elevations are included as part of Exhibit "B" of the attached Resolution (see Attachment 4). Site photographic simulations illustrating the integration of the mono-eucalyptus tree are shown on Attachment 2.

SUPPLEMENTAL DETAILS OF REQUEST

1. Property Size: 8.58 acres (Westminster Theological Seminary)
2. Height: 62'-6"
3. Wireless/Pole:
 - 1) Remove rooftop wireless equipment
 - 2) Install faux mono-eucalyptus tree
4. Antennas:
 - 1) Remove five existing rooftop antennas and one digital dish
 - 2) Install 12 antennas and 6 radio units
5. Materials/Colors: The monopole, antennas and associated brackets would be painted non-reflective olive green to match tree branches and existing trees
6. Equipment: All equipment is located within the existing equipment enclosure and will be upgraded to accommodate new technology
7. Hours of Operations: 24-hour unmanned facility



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8. Landscaping: Existing landscaping will remain and be protected to the possible extent. Should damage occur during construction, landscaping will be replaced “in-kind,” including any damage to existing irrigation systems.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

1. General Plan Conformance:

The General Plan land use designation on the site is Estate II (E2), which allows for telecommunication as an accessory use, subject to Article 34 (Communication Antennas) within the zoned Residential Estates zone (RE-20). Wireless facilities have been previously approved and installed on the Seminary rooftop back in 1995. The proposed project would be designed to integrate into the existing Seminary campus, existing trees stand and circulation patterns.

2. Zoning or Specific Plan Conformance:

As noted, the project consists of the installation of a new 62’-6” mono-eucalyptus tree, this height exceeds the maximum height provisions of Section 33-107 for RE-20 of 35’-0”. However, pursuant to Article 56 Section 33-1075, which allows for wireless masts or other similar structures (subject to the provisions of Article 34 [Communication Antennas]) to 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 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 the height of existing buildings, and landscaping.

Proximity to the new mono-eucalyptus tree:

Northeast – Existing single-family residential subdivision that is approximately 500 feet away.

Southeast – Parking lot and existing sports field immediately adjacent, with rural single-family residences beyond.

Southwest – Vacant parcels fronting Bear Valley Parkway.

Northwest – Existing Seminary campus, buildings, trees and parking lots.

3. Conformance with FCC Emission Requirements:

The operation of the wireless facility would generate radio frequency electromagnetic emissions (RF radiant). A Radio frequency (RF) and Nonionizing Electromagnetic Radiation (NIER) Analysis Report was prepared for the project by Pramira on March 14, 2022, 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 concluded that project site would be compliant with FCC rules and regulations.

4. Conformance with Section 33-703 five general principles for consideration of new facilities:



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(a) Height guidelines—Utilize lowest profile technology

Given the FCC requirements related to height of facilities to provide expanded service coverage the design of the faux eucalyptus tree is 62'-6". However, pursuant to Article 56 Section 33-1075, wireless masts or other similar structures (subject to the provisions of Article 34 (Communication Antennas)) may be erected above the height limits established for the various zones.

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

The project design of the faux eucalyptus tree is located within an existing stand of trees with similar characteristics to minimize visual impacts. In addition, the proposed tree site is located away from Seminary structures and the surrounding neighborhoods. The existing equipment enclosure is integrated into surrounding campus landscaping and only the equipment inside will be updated.

(c) Stealth technology guideline—Encourage creative, unobtrusive stealth technology.

The project design of the faux eucalyptus tree incorporates stealth concepts, such as similar heights, color, materials (non-reflective) and in general leaf characteristics to minimize visual impacts. 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.

As noted above, the older telecommunication equipment, antennas and dish will be removed, replaced, upgraded and relocated onto a faux eucalyptus tree to expand service coverage requirements. The existing older telecommunication facility is located on an existing building and is more obtrusive than a faux eucalyptus that blends well with the existing conditions of the property.

(e) Emissions guidelines—Ensure that emissions do not exceed federal thresholds.

The applicant will upgrade their telecommunication equipment on the faux eucalyptus tree and within the existing equipment enclosure. All the upgraded equipment and ongoing operations will meet all federal emissions and radiation standards and guidelines.



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FISCAL ANALYSIS

The proposed project is consistent with the City of Escondido economic policies by providing 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 these upgraded of 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 3. 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 received one public comment from the public regarding the project as of the preparation of this report.

The comment raised issues regarding the placement of the mono-eucalyptus close to residential properties, impact on property values, and potential health hazards.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff has found that the proposed project is consistent with the Communication Antennas Ordinance (Article 34 of the Escondido Zoning Code) since the existing antennas/dish currently located on the Seminary rooftop are being removed and upgraded panels will be screened as part of the new mono-eucalyptus tree. The wireless equipment within the existing enclosure will also be upgraded and modified to support the new technology. 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 modified facility is located on a non-residential site in the RE-20 zone that is sufficient in size, buffered by existing buildings and distance without negatively impacting the adjacent residential properties. The facility would be in conformance with FCC emission standards.

Based on the analysis contained in this staff report, staff recommends that the Planning Commission adopt Resolution 2023-13, approving the proposed Conditional Use Permit as described in this staff report, as detailed in Exhibits "A" through "D" of Resolution No. 2023-13.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Location, General Plan Map, and Zoning Map
2. Photo Simulation
3. CEQA Notice of Exemption
4. Draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2023-13 including Exhibits A, B, C, D



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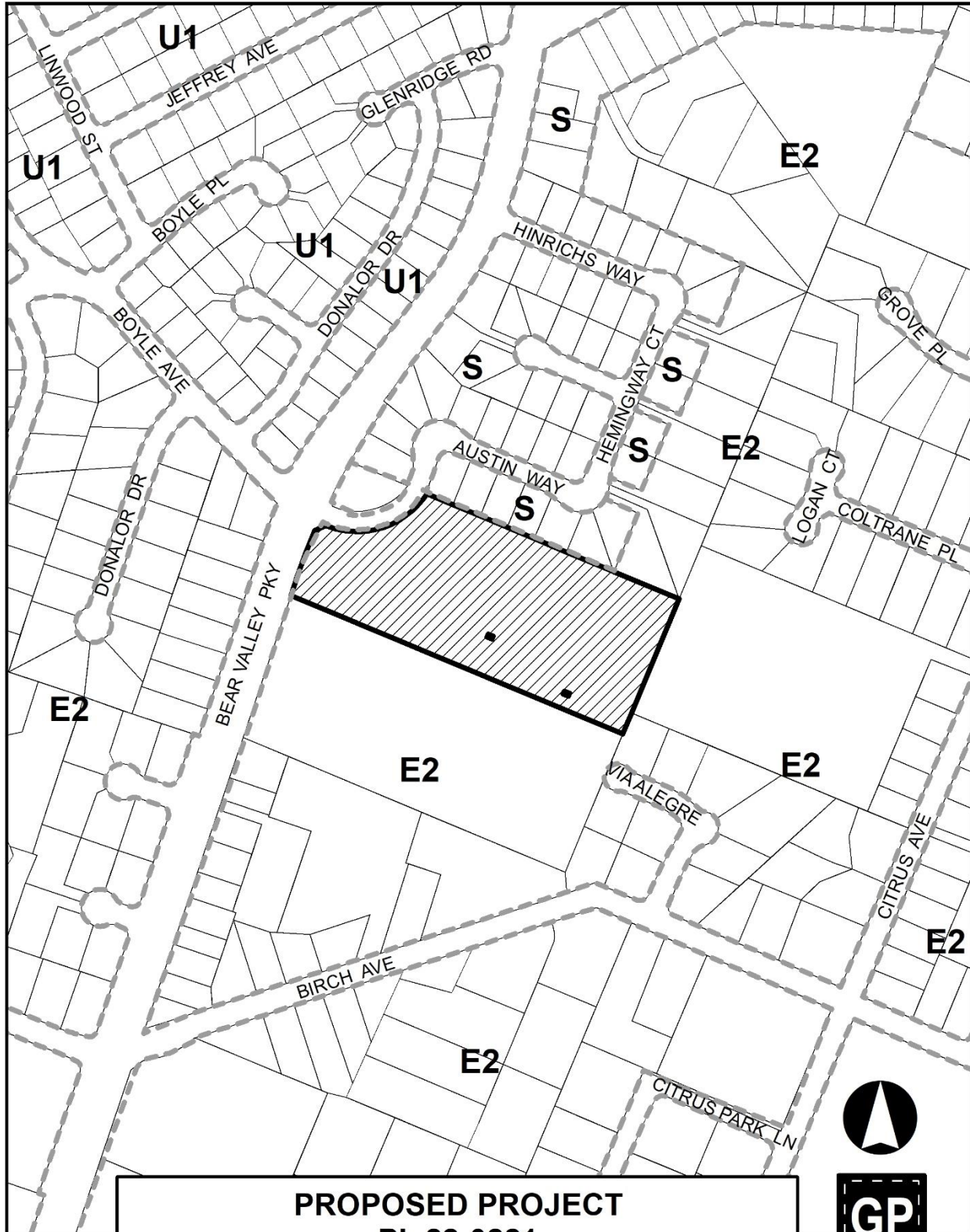
Attachment 1 Location Map, General Plan, and Zoning Map





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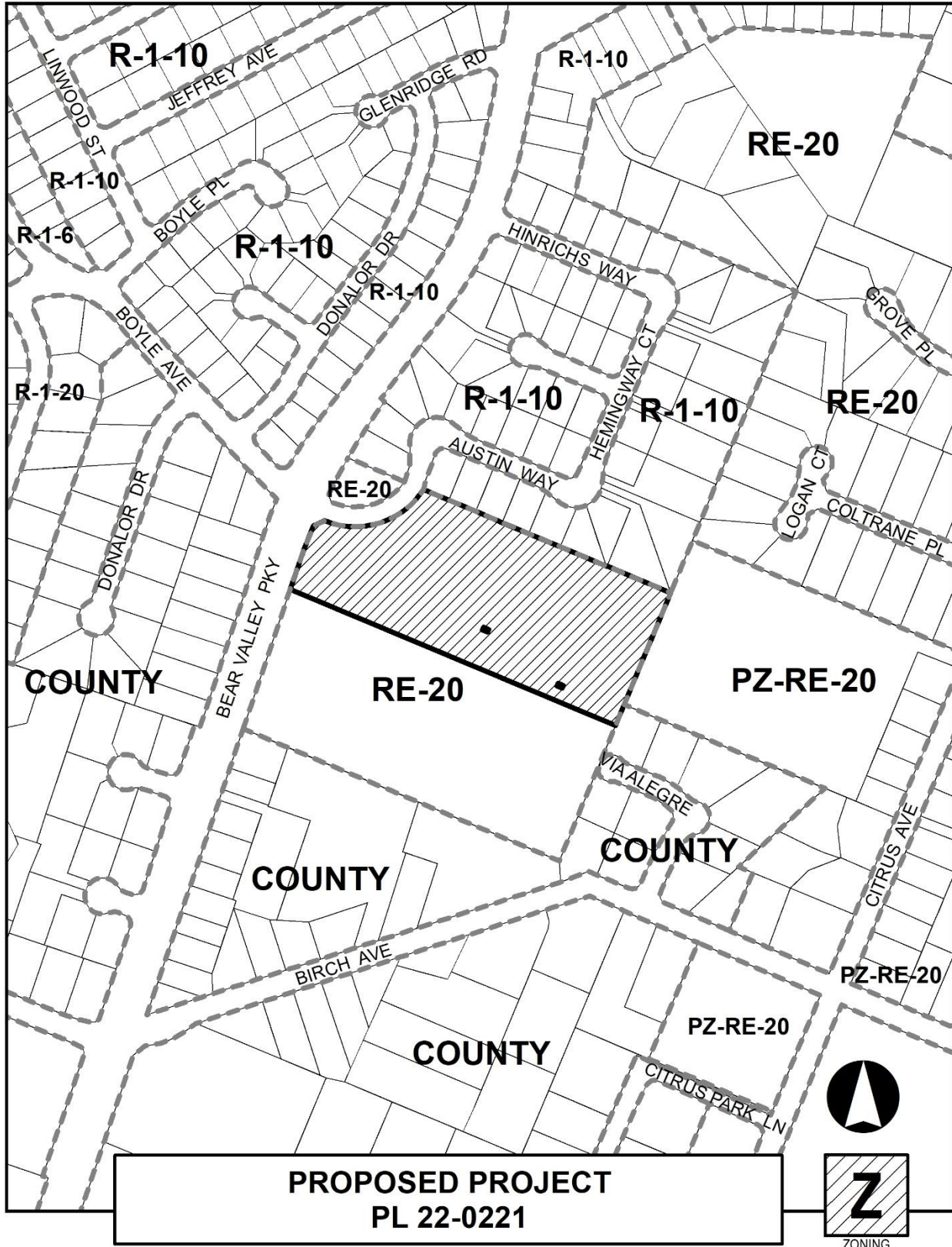
**PROPOSED PROJECT
PL 22-0221**





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ATTACHMENT 2

PHOTO SIMULATIONS



Westminster SD
1725 Bear Valley Pkwy
Escondido, CA 92027



These simulations are intended for graphical purposes only and not intended to be part of or to replace the information provided on the construction drawings

6/26/2023

PROPOSED
Photosimulation of proposed telecommunications site