

July 26, 2024

Austin Colson
Community & Economic Development/DDA Director
City of Lathrup Village
27400 Southfield Road
Lathrup Village, MI 48076

Site Plan Review

Site: 27400 Southfield Road
Applicant: City of Lathrup Village
Plan Date: 7/21/2024
Zoning: VC, Village Center District
Parcel ID's: 24-13-351-038

Dear Mr. Colson:

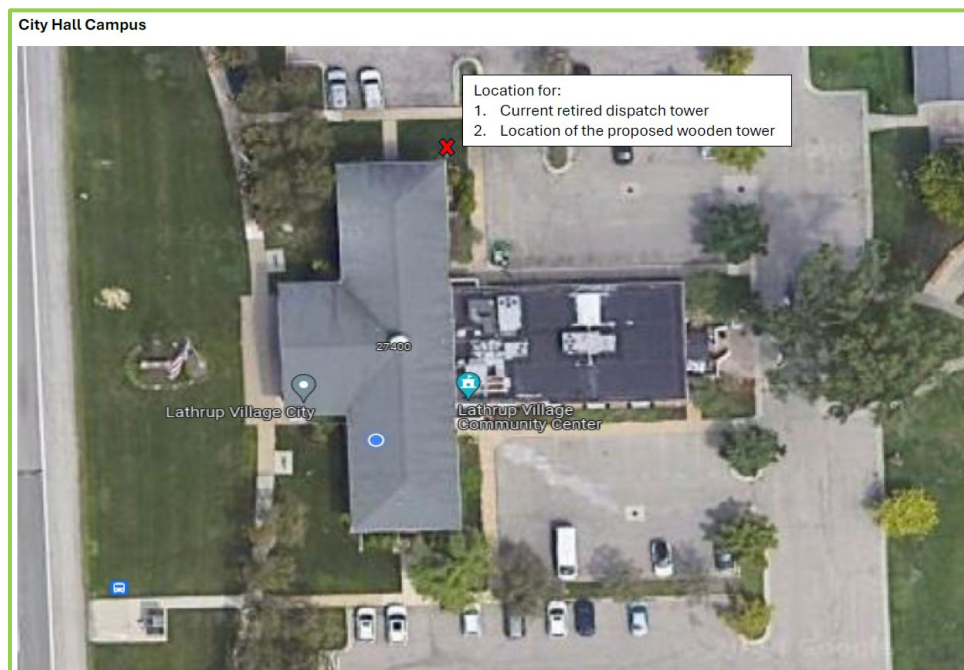
We have completed a review of the application for a new communications tower at City Hall and a summary of our findings is below. Responses to the Historic District Commission criteria are found in ***bold italics***, beginning at Item 6, on page 3 below.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Existing Conditions

1. **Zoning.** The site is zoned VC Village Center District. Properties to the north, south, and west are zoned VC Village Center, and properties to the south are zoned MX Mixed Use and R-1 Single-Family.
2. **Existing site.** The 1.77-acre site consists of a two-story office building housing the City Hall government and administrative offices of the City of Lathrup Village. The parcel includes an asphalt surface parking lot containing approximately 95 parking spaces. On the north side of the building is a decommissioned dispatch tower of an undetermined height that will be removed from the site. Abutting the site, approximately 120' to the east, is the Lathrup Village Municipal Park, which includes open space for walking paths, playgrounds, picnic and barbecue areas, and other amenities for public gatherings.
3. **Site configuration and access.** The site is accessible by vehicle from Southfield Road on the north and west, and from California Drive SE from the south. The communication tower is located closest to the north access point and parking lot.



Proposed:

4. **Use.** Upon removal of the existing metal dispatch tower, a new, 65' wooden, monopole tower will be erected in its place. According to the plans, the total height of the tower, including antennas, will be 74' from ground level. The new tower will allow for the installation of AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) technology upgrades for acquiring water meter data. These new gateway antennas will collect water meter data that is currently obtained via drive-by method. Ferguson Waterworks has submitted plans that include the dimensions of the new tower.

5. **Section 4.6.4 Permitted Uses.** The uses listed in this section are deemed to be permitted uses and shall not require administrative approval or a special use permit: Antennas or towers located on property owned, leased, or otherwise controlled by the City of Lathrup Village provided a license or lease authorizing such antenna or tower has been approved by the City of Lathrup Village.

Additionally, **Section 4.6.3.F** requires that all towers must meet or exceed current standards and regulations of the FAA, the FCC, and any other agency of the state or federal government with the authority to regulate towers and antennas, and

Section 4.6.3.G requires that towers meet the applicable state or local building codes, as well as applicable standards for towers that are published by the Electronic Industries Association.

The modifications to the existing site will not significantly alter or increase the overall appearance, height, setbacks, size, or ground equipment of the existing wireless facility. While no additional lease space on the ground or new tower will be required, the City has services that connect to the current tower that would need to be removed and reattached to the new tower.



6. **Historic District Commission.** As outlined in Section 40-29 of the Lathrup Village Code of Ordinances, the Historic District Commission has criteria for determination when evaluating a project.

40.29.D. Criteria for determination. The Historic District Commission shall review such applications giving specific consideration to the proposed action and proposed plans in light of the following criteria so that the decision will be consistent with the objectives set forth in this article:

- 1) The historical or architectural value and significance of the structure and its relationship to the historical value of the surrounding area;

The existing metal tower and proposed wooden tower bear no significant historic value of the site and surrounding area. The proposed wooden tower will be located interior to the site and will resemble other wooden electrical poles in the surrounding area.

- 2) The relationship of the exterior architectural features of the structure to the rest of the structure and of the surrounding areas;

The proposed wooden tower is similar in appearance to standard wooden utility poles that exist in the surrounding area. The tower structure type will change from lattice to monopole, which appears to result in a slight reduction in visual impact.

- 3) The general compatibility of the exterior design, arrangement, texture and materials proposed to be used;

The presence of an existing wireless tower and antennas will be replaced with a new wooden tower that is found to be relatively compatible with the exterior features of the City Hall building which includes a brick façade, faux column wraps, and metal shutters designed to match 1970s aesthetics.

- 4) Those features of the particular structure identified in the report of the ad hoc historic districts study committee of the historic district commission which supported its recommendation of the site or structure for inclusion within a historic district.

A report by the study committee was not a part of the review items for this analysis.

40.29.E. Guidelines for construction, restoration, etc. Any and all construction, restoration, alteration, modification, maintenance, repair or rehabilitation of the exterior of any house and/or structure or a part thereof in a historic district shall be done in accordance with the following guidelines:

- 1) Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use of a property which requires minimal alteration of the structure or site.

The proposed tower would replace the existing tower and will be located on the interior of the lot, in the same location as the existing lattice tower. The close proximity of the new tower to the City Hall building will allow for the removal and reconnection of any city wireless/communication services that will be maintained at the facility.

- 2) The distinguishing original qualities or character of a structure or site shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive features shall be avoided.

The site will maintain the use and condition of the existing City Hall building. The removal of the existing metal, lattice communications tower should have no impact on the physical features or materials of the building. The surrounding grounds will have minor disruption.

- 3) All buildings shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.

This criterion is not applicable. No building is being altered.

- 4) Changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.

The current tower reflects a time when the City of Lathrup Village hosted its own dispatch team, which is currently outsourced to the City of Southfield. The proposed tower will allow the City to update its technology utilizing a modernized monopole tower.

- 5) Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building shall be treated with sensitivity.

The current tower is a metal lattice tower with no specific notable qualities. The proposed wood monopole tower will intentionally consist of no stylistic features so that the presence of the tower remains discrete amongst its surroundings.

- 6) Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced whenever possible. If replacement is needed, the new material should match the material being replaced in color, composition, texture, design and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing features should be based on accurate duplications of features or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other sources.

According to the City, the proposed tower was created utilizing best-practice engineering that is also beneficial for the installation vendor. Additionally, replacement of the lattice tower with a wooden monopole tower appears to slightly lessen the visual impact on the surrounding area. The wooden tower is similar to other utility poles in the area and will simply mount communication antennae on the structure.

- 7) The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that damage the building materials shall not be undertaken. ***This criterion is not applicable.***

- 8) Contemporary design for alteration and additions to existing properties will not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural material and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property or neighborhood. ***This criterion is not applicable.***

- 9) Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired.

In the event the proposed tower was removed in the future, it would not negatively impact the essential form or character of the City Hall campus.

- 10) The Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" as presently promulgated in the Code of Federal Regulations or as they may be amended in the future. Copies of said "Standards for Rehabilitation" shall be maintained in the office of the city clerk and shall be subject to an examination by the public during normal business hours.

Respectfully,

Giffels Webster



Jill Bahm, AICP
Partner



Eric Pietsch
Senior Planner

