



Planning Commission Staff Report

September 24, 2008
Item 6.d.

SUBJECT: PAP-26 (PDRW-6)

APPELLANT: Phil Blank, Planning Commission Chair

APPLICANT: Town Consulting

PROPERTY OWNER: System Capital Real Property Corporation

PURPOSE: Appeal of the Zoning Administrator's approval for design review to redesign the existing tower to house a wireless facility for T-Mobile to be located at the existing McDonald's building

GENERAL PLAN: Retail/Highway/Service Commercial/Business & Profession Office

ZONING: PUD-C (Planned Unit Development – Commercial) District

LOCATION: 3001 Bernal Avenue

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit A, Conceptual Plan
2. Exhibit B, Zoning Administrator's Approval Letter, with Conditions of Approval
3. Exhibit C, Location Map

BACKGROUND

Section 18.20.010.B.11 of the Pleasanton Municipal Code (Design Review) allows the Zoning Administrator to take action on design review of commercial and non-commercial tower, cupolas and similar structures. On September 2, 2008, the Zoning Administrator approved a design review application (PDRW-6) for a wireless telecommunication facility at the McDonald restaurant located at 3001 Bernal Avenue subject to conditions of approval. The proposal has met the requirements specified in Section 18.110 of the Pleasanton Municipal Code (Personal Wireless Service Facilities).

On September 8, 2008, Planning Commission Chair Blank filed an appeal of the Zoning Administrator's approval, citing the site's sensitivity and that the project should be thoroughly

evaluated in public concerning the change in architecture by a height increase. He was also concerned about its compatibility with the existing building.

SITE DESCRIPTION

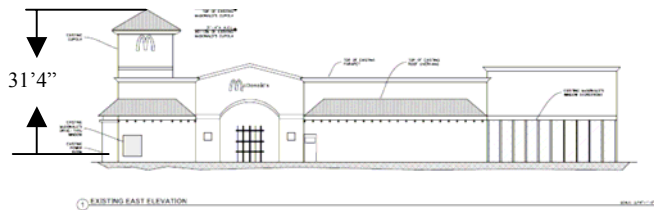
The subject site is located at the southwest corner of Stanley Boulevard and Bernal Avenue. It is approximately 1.75-acre in size and is surrounded by commercial uses. The nearest residents are located in the California Reflections development, approximately 1,000 feet to the west.



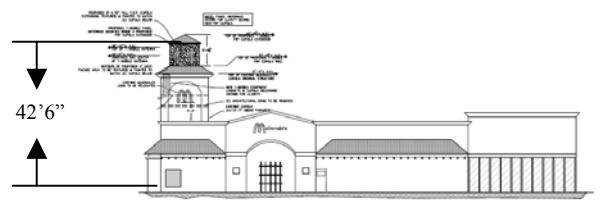
Location Map

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant, Town Consulting, proposes to utilize the existing tower of the McDonald restaurant for a wireless telecommunication facility for T-Mobile. The proposal would redesign the tower so that it could completely house the wireless facility that includes the antennas and the supporting equipment. This design however would increase the existing tower height by approximately nine feet.



Existing Tower



Proposed Tower

DISCUSSION

The Original Proposal

The proposed location for a wireless telecommunication facility is ideal for cellular coverage. The height of the existing tower would allow only 25% of the coverage that T-Mobile wishes to provide in the area due to impacted line-of-sight. As such, a design review application was submitted in July 2007 to increase the height of the existing tower by nearly 11 feet, bringing the existing tower to a new height of 46'-9". The proposed location would provide full coverage and capacity.

In consideration of the site's high visibility and its gateway location to the City, staff did not support the originally proposed tower height increase because it would add unnecessary emphasis on the southeast corner of the building, be out of scale, and not complement to the Mission/Spanish Revival style.



The Revised Plan Approved by the Zoning Administrator

The revised proposal dated "Received August 25, 2008" was a result of several discussions with Planning staff and the Director of Planning and Community Development. This plan shows a redesigned tower that has a less dominant visual presence and is in better proportion with the existing building.

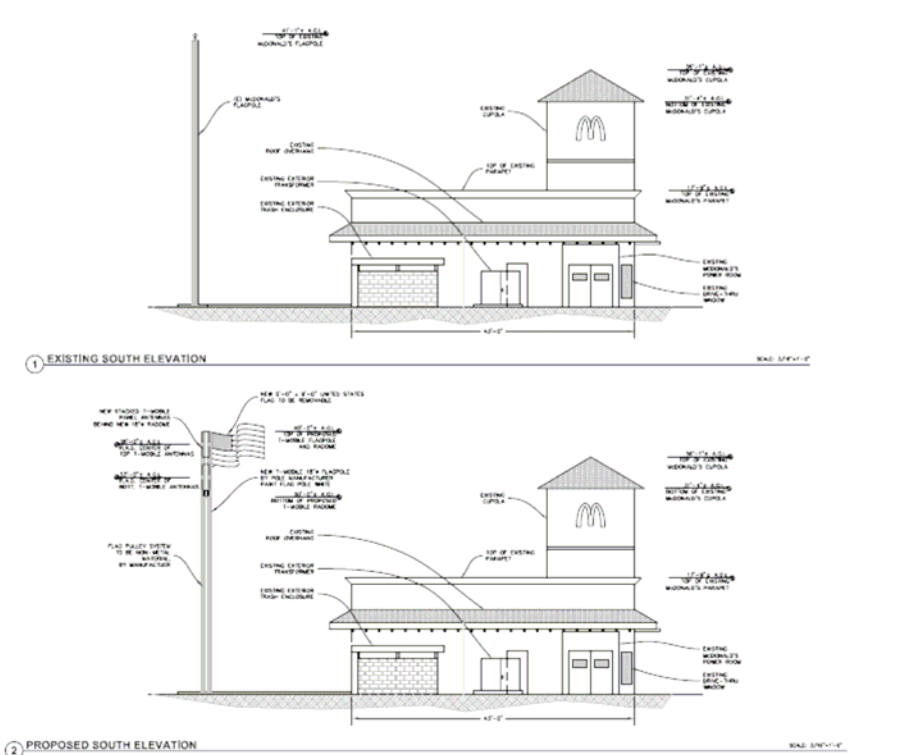


Additionally, the existing tower has a flat stucco finish. The redesigned tower would add an arched relief which enhances and completes the architecture of the existing building. The top half of the redesigned tower is smaller in size which reduces the massing.

The Zoning Administrator therefore approved Case No. PDRW-6, subject to conditions of approval.

Alternative Considered

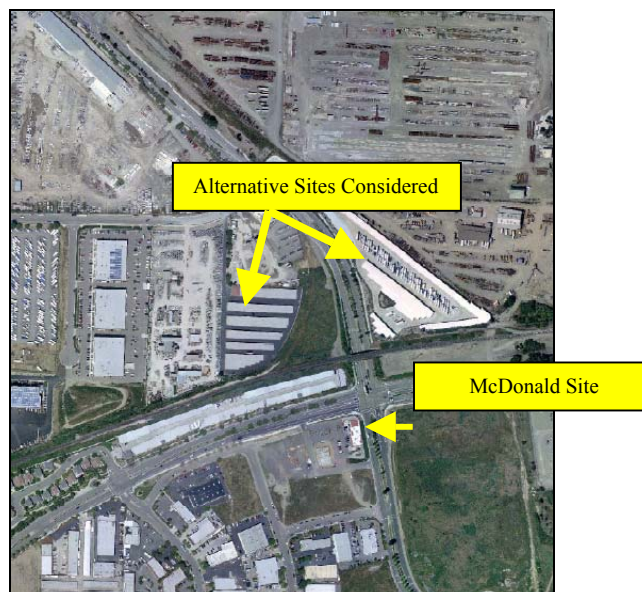
The site has a freestanding flagpole. The design review approval of the restaurant building (Case No. PDR-118) required the flagpole height be reduced from the proposed 60 feet to 40 feet (Condition No. 34). The applicant has considered utilizing the existing flag pole for the antenna. The proposal included increasing the flagpole diameter from the existing eight inches to 18 inches, and to construct an underground vault to house the supporting equipment.



Staff did not find this alternative supportable as: 1) the proposed 18-inch diameter pole would be out of proportion than a normal flag pole and would attract attention to itself, and 2) the underground vault would result in the removal of some existing landscaping along Stanley Boulevard.

The applicant has considered two other locations for as the wireless site. However, neither location was found to be superior to the proposed McDonald site for the following reasons:

- the coverage would be less than 70% when compared to the McDonald’s site; and,
- neither sites would be able to carry the capacity which the McDonald site is capable to (i.e. the tower design is able to house eight antennas while the stealth monopole may only be able to carry three antennas).



Alternatives for the Planning Commission to consider are to:

1. Deny the Zoning Administrator’s approval, and direct the applicant to locate the wireless facility to a less visible location;
2. Uphold the Zoning Administrator’s approval of PDRW-6, thereby deny Case No. PAP-126. The Planning Commission may choose to modify the conditions of approval of the Zoning Administrator’s approval if it wishes;
3. Allow the existing flagpole to be modified and underground vault be constructed to serve as a telecommunication site.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice of this appeal was sent to all property owners and occupants within 1,000 feet of the subject property. No one has contacted staff at the time this report was being prepared.

CONCLUSION

Staff believes that the proposed tower as approved by the Zoning Administrator has minimal visual impacts and that it is compatible with the building design.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This project is categorically exempt from Section 15301(a) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Thus, no environmental report is accompanied this staff report.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission deny the appeal Case No. PAP-126, thereby upholding the Zoning Administrator's approval of Case No. PDRW-6.

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