



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: PC 19-046, **Version:** 1

PLN180361 - CUERVO (AT&T MOBILITY)

Public hearing to consider the installation of a wireless communications facility consisting of a 50-foot high monopole with 8 antennas, all associated transmission cables; outdoor cabinets, and fenced perimeter. The facility is considered ridgeline development due to its location.

Proposed Location: Pine Canyon Road, King City (APN 420-071-067-000)

Proposed CEQA Action: **Categorically** Exempt per section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- Find the project is a small structure, which qualifies for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption per Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines and does not meet any of the exceptions under Section 15300.2;
- Approve a Use Permit to allow the installation of a 50-foot high communications monopole with 8 antennas and a supporting equipment shelter.
- Approve a Use Permit to allow Ridgeline Development

A draft resolution, including findings and evidence, is attached for consideration (**Exhibit A**).

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Planning File Number: PLN180361

Owner: Cuervo (AT&T Mobility)

APN: 420-071-067-000

Agent: Tom Johnson

Plan Area: Central Salinas Valley Area Plan

Flagged and Staked: Photo-simulations Provided

SUMMARY:

The proposed project is located approximately 0.75 miles off of Pine Canyon Road on a 156.7 acre parcel zoned Permanent Grazing /40 acres per unit, Rural Grazing/20 acres per unit, and Low Density Residential / 5 acres per unit. The proposed site is within the Permanent Grazing/ 40 acres per unit (PG/40) zoning category, which allows wireless communication facilities with a Use Permit pursuant to Section 21.64.310. Therefore, the project is an allowed land use for this site. The site is currently used as grazing land.

The applicant requests approval of a Use Permit to allow development of a 50-foot tall wireless communications facility (WCF) to provide phone and wireless internet service for AT&T customers along Pine Canyon Road, out Jolon Road and approximately 300 residential units within the Pine Canyon valley. This project is referred to as a “Wireless Local Loop” project and is backed and funded by the federal government as part of a program to bring service to rural homes. Because the project is sited on a ridgeline and will be silhouetted against the sky when viewed from some common public viewing areas, the project also requires approval of a Use Permit for Ridgeline Development. The proposed monopole will be briefly visible to passing motorists along Pine Canyon Road, but will not create a substantial adverse visual impact because the topography of the surrounding area and the curves of the road limit view times to only a few seconds, and at 0.75 miles from Pine Canyon road and 50 feet tall the tower will only minimally affect views of the passing motorist.

DISCUSSION:

Setting:

The proposed site is in a Permanent Grazing property, which allows a Wireless Communications Facility with a Use Permit. The property contains rolling hills, and the selected location is in an existing flat area on top of a hill. An existing access road will provide access as needed for periodic maintenance. The facility will also require a walk-in storage cabinet associated equipment, a diesel generator and perimeter fencing of 40 feet by 40 feet. The property is in active grazing use, and the nearest residence is located approximately 1,900 feet from the proposed site.

This location will allow AT&T to meet its coverage objectives serving residents in the King City area along Pine Canyon Road and in Pine Canyon Valley. Locating the tower on a hill allows the tower to meet coverage objectives at only 50 feet tall.

Alternative Locations:

Due to concerns over the visual aspect of the project's location on a ridgeline, the applicant analyzed alternative locations, including three locations on the valley floor or one location on a different peak, on the opposite side of Pine Canyon Road. Alternative locations shown in Exhibit F and cellular coverage maps for these alternative monopole locations can be seen in Exhibit G. Three separate towers could be sited on the valley floor, with two locations within King City (Alternative Location 1 and Alternative Location 2) and one located along Pine Canyon Road. This would provide coverage to some of the intended areas along Pine Canyon Road, but it would not improve coverage for the rural residences located within the opposing valley in the area outlined in the red box in Exhibit F. Because this project is specifically designed and government funded for the purposes of serving rural residences, having this area remain excluded from coverage does not meet the project objectives. Alternative Location 3, a different ridge on the opposite side of Pine Canyon Road, was evaluated to see if acceptable coverage could be achieved on a less visible peak. This location improves coverage along parts of Pine Canyon Road, but provides only minimal coverage improvement to the rural residences in the target location shown in Exhibit F, which again makes this alternative not acceptable to AT&T to meet the primary project objective of improving coverage to these rural residences.

Visual Resources and Ridgeline Development:

The subject site is not in a designated Visually Sensitive area. Visual simulations provided by the applicant show that the tower will silhouette when viewed from directly below the tower on private property. Staff's site visit showed that the facility will be visible from a small section of Pine Canyon Road. Pine Canyon road is a public road that curves through the hills of the canyon. A passing motorist may look to the side and see the tower; however, this visual encounter would be brief due to the curvature of the road and multiple surrounding hills which will block the view of the tower from most of Pine Canyon Road. Additionally, the tower will be located approximately 0.75 miles from the road. At 50 feet tall, this does not create a significant visual interruption of the passing motorist's view of the surrounding landscape.

Staff's site visit included two public parks: San Antonio Park within King City and San Lorenzo County Park outside King City in the unincorporated area. San Antonio Park is located approximately 2.5 miles from the proposed site. From this park, the ridgeline is visible across the street, but an existing tower on an adjacent peak to the proposed location could not be seen with the naked eye. This existing tower is located at a higher elevation than the proposed facility and could be seen using a telephoto lens. Staff determined the proposed facility at a lower elevation would not create an adverse visual impact from the park.

San Lorenzo County Park is located approximately 2.4 miles from the proposed site and would have a similar, limited view of the proposed facility; however, existing tall trees and topography and vegetation within this park would further limit views of the ridgeline from this location.

Monterey County Code section 21.66.020 allows approval of a Use Permit for Ridgeline Development only if the ridgeline development, as conditioned by permit, will not create a substantially adverse visual impact when viewed from a common public viewing area. Based on staff's site visit and visual simulations submitted by the applicant, the proposed development would not create a substantially adverse visual impact from any common public viewing area due to distance of the development from any viewing area and surrounding topography. Conditions have been incorporated that require non-glare color treatment, that would reduce the visual impacts in the event of technological advances, and that would require removal and restoration of the site in case of termination of use (Condition Nos. 7 and 9).

Alternative Design:

The project was originally submitted as a self-supported antenna structure, as shown in visual simulations in Exhibit E. The alternative monopole design (Exhibit D) was prepared on suggestion from staff to reduce the visual bulk of the structure and to better blend with existing telephone poles. Both options are available for Planning Commission consideration. Staff's recommendation is the monopole design. Additional alternatives, such as stealth structures made to resemble trees, were not evaluated since the natural vegetation of the immediate surrounding area does not include tall trees.

Colocation:

The applicant attempted to identify colocation alternative for the proposed facility, but no wireless facilities capable of colocation currently exist within the area that could provide coverage to the indented area. There is an existing antenna structure on the parcel adjacent to the subject site, located approximately 4,880 feet away on the next peak west of the proposed site, at an elevation approximately 400 feet higher. This tower was determined to be too far away from the coverage area to meet the project goal of providing coverage to the intended area. Additionally, there is not sufficient power available at the existing tower. The current operator uses solar power to generate power for their current use, which is for local wireless internet service to some surrounding residences. Expanding the solar footprint to serve the proposed use would require an approximately 50 square foot solar footprint, which is not feasible due to steeply sloping terrain. Additionally, the existing tower is not structurally suitable to accommodate the needs of the proposed project and would have to be replaced with a much larger tower to serve this use. The proposed tower will be designed to accommodate colocation for other providers in the future.

Archaeological Resources:

The project site is in an area designated as having high archaeological sensitivity. Per Monterey County Code Section 21.66.050, a Phase 1 inventory report (LIB 190089) was prepared. No records of archaeological resources were identified in the project vicinity and no archaeological resources were found.

The archeological report included recommendations for inadvertent discovery of cultural resources or human remains, which are consistent with Monterey County's standard Conditions of Approval. Condition 3 and Condition 4 have been added, which require work to halt within 50 meters of the find until a qualified professional archaeologist can conduct an evaluation if archaeological or cultural resources are discovered. Work is to cease and the County Coroner is to be contacted if human remains are discovered. The Native American Heritage Commission and the most likely decedent shall be contacted to provide recommendations if remains are determined to be Native American.

Electromagnetic Energy Exposure

The applicant has submitted an Electromagnetic Energy Exposure Report prepared by OSC Engineering. The report finds that the facility will comply with prevailing Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards for limiting public exposure to radio frequency energy.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The following agencies have reviewed the project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

Environmental Health Bureau
RMA-Public Works
RMA-Environmental Services
South County Fire Protection Department

The proposed project was not reviewed by any Land Use Advisory Committee because there is no Land Use Advisory Committee established in the Central Salinas Valley area.

FINANCING:

Funding for staff time associated with this project is included in the FY17-18 Adopted Budget for RMA-Planning.

Prepared by: Cheryl Ku, Associate Planner, 796-6049
Reviewed by: Brandon Swanson, RMA Planning Services Manager
Approved by: John M. Dugan, RMA Deputy Director of Land Use and Community Development

The following attachments are on file with the RMA:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution, including:

- Recommended Conditions of Approval
- Site Plan and Elevations

Exhibit B - Coverage Map

Exhibit C - Electromagnetic Energy Exposure Report

Exhibit D - Photo Simulations Monopole

Exhibit E - Photo Simulations Antenna Structure

Exhibit G - Alternative Locations Map

Exhibit H - Vicinity Map

cc: Front Counter Copy; Brandon Swanson, Interim Chief of Planning; Cuervo Holdings, Property Owner, AT&T Mobility, C/O Tom Johnson at TSJ Consulting, Inc.; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); John H. Farrow; Janet Brennan; Project File PLN180361