

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

Date: July 15, 2024

Project Description / Request:

The University of Virginia Community Credit Union (the "Applicant") is building a new headquarters at 1201 5th Street, identified as Tax Map Parcel 07600-00-00-05500 (the "Property"). The Property contains an existing building and parking lot previously occupied by the Christian Aid Mission, as well as an existing personal wireless service facility in the form of a 155.5 - foot monopole (the "Existing Monopole"). To build the new headquarters, the Applicant must demolish the existing building and a portion of the parking area and relocate the Existing Monopole to a better sited area of the Property within the existing parking lot.

The Board of Supervisors approved a Special Use Permit for the Existing Monopole on June 18, 1986 (SP 1986-009) when Virginia Power owned the property (the "1986 SUP"). The Existing Monopole was part of the company's statewide communications system as a microwave communications facility. The 1986 SUP included the following conditions:

1. Pole and antenna not to exceed 160 feet in height AGL¹; and
2. Staff approval of pole location.

Currently, the Existing Monopole is 155.5 feet in height AGL with two arrays each for AT&T and T-Mobile, and the base station equipment is located within the existing building and provides important mobile service for the nearby residents, visitors, as well as for E911 services. The monopole is gray in color, 164.5 feet from the property line adjacent to I-64, which is an entrance corridor and 276 feet from the property line adjacent to 5th Street.

The Applicant is proposing to replace the Existing Monopole with a new monopole that is a purpose-built as a wireless telecommunications monopole, and located further away from I-64 along the edge of an existing parking area, as shown in the proposed plan set prepared by Timmons Group (the "Replacement Monopole"). The Replacement Monopole would have an overall height of 165 feet to account for the grade change between the existing site and the relocated site and to ensure that the antennas on the Replacement Monopole remain at the same top elevation as the antennas on the Existing Monopole. This will enable AT&T and T-Mobile to maintain the integrity of their existing wireless network in the area and not create gaps in coverage along the important corridors of I-64 and 5th Street, nor create gaps in coverage to residential customers who receive service from the Existing Monopole. The Existing Monopole is approximately 11-12 feet higher in elevation, resulting in an increase in height of the monopole of 9.5 feet to account for the grade difference. As such, the monopole will only be 5 feet taller than the existing approved monopole, which will not appear to be any taller than the existing monopole.

The Replacement Monopole will include a single array for each of T-Mobile and AT&T, but will have space for collocation by other carriers in the future. T-Mobile and AT&T will each have ground lease areas for their equipment, and two potential future lease areas are also reserved.

¹ AGL stands for "Above Ground Level," which is a measurement of height relative to the ground surface.

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

The total lease area for the Replacement Monopole will be approximately 18feet by 82 feet, enclosed within an 8-foot-high wooden fence, and located in the corner of the existing parking lot, in the place of approximately 10 current parking spaces. Because the property already has more than enough parking spaces for the future headquarters, allocating the 10 spaces to the Replacement Monopole will not adversely impact the parking availability for the new headquarters.

The Existing Monopole is approximately 164.5 feet from I-64 and 276 feet from 5th Street, and the Replacement Monopole is approximately 462 feet from I-64 and 409 feet from 5th Street. This results in the Replacement Monopole being an additional 111.5 feet further from I-64, and 133 feet further from 5th Street, sited to be located more interior to the Property. It is anticipated that the Replacement Monopole location will be slightly less visible from I-64, and equally or less visible from 5th Street and adjacent neighborhoods than the Existing Monopole, resulting in a better sited monopole with equal or less visibility overall.

Character of the Area:

The Property will include the new headquarters for UVA Community Credit Union, existing associated parking, existing play fields, and the existing Rivanna Trail. The Property is zoned Highway Commercial (HC) and is located on the border of the County line adjacent to the City of Charlottesville, adjacent to I-64, 5th Street, and Moore's Creek. The Property contains steep slopes, none of which will be impacted by the new headquarters or the Replacement Monopole. Across 5th Street to the east is an existing retail shopping center and Holiday Inn hotel. To the north and west across Moore's Creek are single family and single-family neighborhoods within the City of Charlottesville, as well as a commercial area containing a veterinary hospital, Sleep Inn & Suites, and Burger King restaurant.

Compliance with Section 5.1.40² of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance Section 5.1.40(b) – Development Requirements for Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facilities (Items 1-12):

1. **General Design: The Facility shall be designed, installed, and maintained as follows:**
 - (a) **Guy Wires:** *The proposed monopole will not require any installation of guy wires.*
 - (b) **Outdoor Lighting:** *Lights will be determined during the building permit stage and will only be used as needed during unexpected events that require nighttime visits by the carrier's technical operations staff.*
 - (c) **Ground Equipment:** *The ground equipment will be surrounded by an eight-foot-high wooden fence which will include landscaping to the north and east and will not be visible from adjacent roads or neighborhoods.*
 - (d) **Whip Antenna:** *No whip antennas are currently proposed with this application.*
 - (e) **Grounding Rod:** *The proposed grounding rod to be mounted at the top of this monopole will comply with the County's sizing requirements for a maximum of 4 feet in length and 1 inch in diameter.*
2. **Antennas and associated equipment:**

² This application addresses the draft Zoning Ordinance dated June 5, 2024, to be heard at the County Board of Supervisors on July 17, 2024.

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

(a) Projection: *The antennas are proposed to be no more than 6 feet from the Replacement Monopole facility.*

(b) Color: *All antennas will be the same color as the proposed monopole.*

3. Tree Conservation Plan; Content:

Prior to the approval of a building permit, a tree conservation plan will be provided that has been prepared by a Certified Arborist.

4. Creation of slopes steeper than 2:1.

No slopes will be created that are steeper than 2:1.

5. Ground equipment shelter; fencing.

An 8-foot tall wooden fence will screen the ground equipment from view and prevent trespassing.

6. Screening and siting to minimize visibility.

The Relocated Monopole will be located 462 feet from the right-of-way line for I-64 Interstate, 409 feet from the right of way line for 5th Street, 212 feet from the western property boundary, and 314 feet from the northern property boundary. There are numerous mature trees that will help screen views of the Replacement Monopole from adjacent properties, the I-64 corridor, and the 5th Street corridor. No tree removal is planned with this project. Additionally, landscaping of trees is proposed adjacent to the screening fence to further shield the monopole. As described above, it is anticipated that the proposed Relocated Monopole will not be any more visible than the current location.

7. Open space plan resources.

The Existing Monopole is located along the I-64 Interstate and quite visible from this entrance corridor. It is also visible from the 5th Street entrance corridor. The new location will allow the Replacement Monopole to be set back further from the I-64 corridor and 5th Street sited further interior to the Property. The numerous mature trees located along the 5th Street right-of-way, and proposed trees will help screen the view of the Replacement Monopole.

8. Height of Monopole

This section is not applicable to Tier III facilities.

9. Color of monopole, antennas, and equipment.

The monopole and antennas on the Replacement Monopole will be the same color as the Existing Monopole - a matte grey color. All of the base station equipment that is installed to support the Replacement Monopole will be enclosed behind an eight-foot wooden security fence.

10. Placement of cables, wires, and similar attachments.

This section is not applicable to Tier III facilities.

Section 5.1.40(c) – Applicability of other regulations in this chapter (Items 1-6):

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

1. Building site exemption.

The Applicant acknowledges this exemption from the standard building site requirements for Monopole.

2. Vehicular access.

The wireless telecommunications providers will use the existing entrance off of 5th Street into the parking area where the lease area will be located.

3. Setbacks.

The location for the Replacement Monopole complies with all applicable setback regulations.

4. Area, bulk, and minimum yards.

The Applicant acknowledges this exemption that allows relief for the Replacement Monopole from the standard area, bulk, and minimum yard requirements.

5. Required yards.

The Applicant acknowledges this exemption that allows relief to the Replacement Monopole from the required yard standards.

6. Site plan.

All applicable requirements of section 32.2 will be provided at the building permit stage.

Compliance with Section 33.40 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance

Section 33.40(B) – Factors to be Considered for Special Use Permits:

In acting on a special use permit, the Board shall consider the following factors, provided that the Board is not required to make specific findings in support of its actions.

1. No substantial detriment to adjacent parcels:

This proposal will not be or create a detrimental impact to adjacent parcels, for it meets all the design criteria for a Tier III Monopole required by Section 5.1.40 of the Albemarle County Zoning Ordinance. The property is screened by a buffer of mature trees that will help to screen the Replacement Monopole from adjacent properties, 5th Street, and the I-64 interstate. The Replacement Monopole is unmanned (no water and sewer) and only requires monthly trips by a technician to maintain the facility, therefore impacts to public facilities and infrastructure will be minimal. The facility will not impact steep slopes or floodplains, nor will the proposed development create any steep slopes greater than 2:1. Lastly, the Replacement Monopole will not require any lighting on the structure or emit noise or odors which would affect any adjacent property owner's quiet enjoyment of their property.

2. Character of the nearby area is unchanged:

The proposal will not change the character of the adjacent parcels or the nearby area. The area surrounding the property is comprised of large segments of the I-64 corridor, a commercial corridor along 5th Street, which is a major collector road, and a mix of commercial, residential, and

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

open space uses. The Replacement Monopole will not disturb any of the open space areas or environmentally sensitive areas, nor will it require the removal of any trees from the property. And given that the character of the nearby area has included the Existing Monopole on the Property since 1986, the Replacement Monopole at the same top elevation as the Existing Monopole will actually maintain the character of the nearby area.

3. Harmony with the purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance:

The Replacement Monopole will be in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Highway Commercial ("HC") district. The zoning ordinance provides that the HC district is

"created to permit development of commercial establishments, other than shopping centers, primarily oriented to highway locations rather than to central business concentrations. It is intended that HC districts be established on major highways within the urban area and communities in the comprehensive plan. It is further intended that this district shall be for the purpose of limiting sprawling strip commercial development by providing sites with adequate frontage and depth to permit controlled access to public streets."

The Existing Monopole and the Replacement Monopole are both in an ideal location to allow the provision of wireless telecommunications and E911 services along this highly traveled corridor in harmony with the stated purpose and intent of the HC district.

4. Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan:

The Property is designated as Community Mixed Use within the Southern and Western Neighborhoods Master Plan. Objective 1, Strategy 1d of the Community Facilities Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan states:

"Continue to locate related or complementary services and facilities together when possible and when other goals of the Comprehensive Plan can be met. There are distinct advantages for both the service providers and the public when related and supporting facilities are in a central location. Operational economies can be achieved, capital facility and development costs can be reduced (buildings, parking, and sharing of accessory facilities), and, in some cases, cooperation and support between personnel can be provided. For example, a training academy for fire and rescue may also be appropriate for police in order to allow both of these public safety agencies to conduct emergency operations training together. However, if important County goals, such as walkability in the Development Areas, would be lost by locating complementary uses together, then, this strategy may not take priority."

The Relocated Monopole is consistent with this strategy.

**University of Virginia Community Credit Union -
Tier III Personal Wireless Service Facility
Special Use Permit Application Narrative**

Objective 10 of the Community Facilities Chapter 12 of the Comprehensive Plan is to support the provision of private utilities, including wireless service when its provision is in keeping with other aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. Strategy 10d states:

“Locate utilities to minimize impacts on the visual and natural environment. In the Development Areas, where compact urban development is expected, the location of utilities is very important. Underground electric, telephone, and fiber optic lines can improve the visual environment and the requirement to locate these utilities underground should continue. Above ground apparatuses such as electrical boxes, metering stations, and blow-off valves are sometimes installed in conjunction with a new service. These apparatuses should be located in a manner that minimizes the impact on the surrounding area and should be adequately screened when installed.”

The location for the Relocated Monopole is sited such that it minimizes the impact of visibility while also being located in the Development Area where this critical service is needed for the residents of the County, particularly for emergency services.

This proposal also supports Strategy 10e, for the Replacement Monopole has been sited to minimize its visibility from adjacent parcels and streets, including entrance corridors, without impacting sensitive environmental areas such as steep slopes and floodplain, will be equally or less visible than the Existing Monopole, in accord with the County’s Personal Wireless Service Facilities Policy.

Conclusion:

Approval of the Relocated Monopole will enable the continuation of critically important wireless telecommunications services (including emergency services) in this strategic location. The entire community will continue to benefit from these services, including nearby residents, businesses, tourists and other travelers along the I-64 interstate, and emergency services, including the County Police Department offices at the 5th St. County Office Building. This Replacement Monopole is proposed to be equally, if not less visible along the corridor compared to the Existing Monopole, and will allow vital coverage for wireless carriers and emergency service, for the benefit of the public as a whole.

Commented [LV1]: See if there are a few more places where we can emphasize the importance of emergency services; that without the new pole, they would be disrupted. Like what you did in the conclusions – just see if you can add a reference or two similar earlier in the document so readers are thinking about that all along, and not just reminded of it at the end.