



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 2/20/2025

File #: 25-286

To: Planning Commission

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

VB BTS II, LLC Conditional Use Permit
Record No.: PLN-2023-18298
APN: 511-111-063
McKinleyville area

A Conditional Use Permit for the construction of a new telecommunications facility consisting of an approximately 100-foot tall tower together with an equipment compound in a fenced 50'x50' lease area. To help disguise the facility, the proposed tower includes stealthing designed to obscure the visibility of antennas and other equipment by making the structure look like an evergreen tree complete with faux branches on its "trunk". The tower will be capable of hosting equipment from multiple different wireless carriers. Though not proposed at this time, a back-up generator may be installed in the future. An exception to the accessory structure height limit is requested.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Planning Commission:

1. Adopt the resolution (Resolution 25-__), (Attachment 1) which does the following:
 - a. Finds the Planning Commission has determined that the project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15303(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, and as a Responsible Agency, agrees with the lead agency's findings; and
 - b. Makes all of the required findings for approval of the Conditional Use Permit; and
 - c. Approves the VB BTS II, LLC Conditional Use Permit as recommended by staff subject to the conditions of approval (Attachment 1A).

DISCUSSION:

Project Location: The project is located in the McKinleyville area, on the South side of Norton Road, approximately 0.2 Miles from the intersection of Central Ave and Norton Road, on the property known as 1777 Norton Rd.

Present General Plan Land Use Designation: CR/AP - Commercial Recreation, Airport Safety Review; McKinleyville Community Plan; Density: unspecified; Slope Stability: Relatively Stable (0).

Present Zoning: RS/X-Q-AP-N-WR - Residential Suburban with combining zone overlays Airport Safety Review (AP), Noise Impact (N), Qualified (Q), Streamside Management Areas and Wetlands (WR), and Recreation (X).

Environmental Review: Project is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to Section 15303(c) - New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures. This project seeks to construct a 100-foot tall wireless tower and related ground-based equipment compound within an approximately 2,500 square foot lease area.

State Appeal: The project NOT is not located within the Coastal Zone.

Major Issues: None.

Executive Summary

A Conditional Use Permit is requested to authorize the erection and operation of a 100-foot tall Wireless Communications Facility at the Beau Pre Golf Course. The structure would be located within an approximately 2,500 square foot fenced lease area designed to host the tower and related ground-based equipment. The tower site and lease area are proposed to be located approximately 1000 feet south of Norton Road and would be situated near the south end of the existing driving range and in-between fairways associated with Holes 1 and 2.

The proposal is part of a joint-venture between Vertical Bridge (VB BTS II, LLC) and T-Mobile USA, Inc. Vertical Bridge would hold the master lease on the tower site and T-Mobile is expected to be the initial tenant at the site. The tower and lease area will be capable of hosting equipment for up to three different wireless carriers. Stealthing is included to help disguise the facility and obscure the visibility of antennas and other equipment by making the structure look like an evergreen tree complete with faux branches on its "trunk".

T-Mobile plans to install a variety of equipment on the tower, including twelve (12) 8-foot antennas, six (6) remote radio units, one (1) microwave antenna, and (1) GPS antenna. Other improvements include antenna cabling, HCS jumpers, two (2) ground mounted radio cabinets, (2) raised concrete pads, a cable ice bridge, utility backboard and a multi-meter utility service mounted on an H-frame within the 50' x 50' fenced lease area. The proposed tower site and lease area are accessible from the existing internal road system on the property. Approximately 450 feet of trenching will be required to extend power to the lease area from the nearest utility pole. Though not proposed at this time, an emergency back-up generator may be installed in the future.

The height limit is 26 feet for detached accessory structures on residentially-zoned parcels over 20,000 square feet in size. Exceptions to the height limit in any zone may be granted with a Special Permit, normally conditioned upon proportional increases in the required yard. The proposed tower exceeds the required 30-foot SRA setback from property lines by over 500 feet and only seeks to exceed the height limit by 79 feet. The height requested is necessary to allow for consistent and reliable service and ensure opportunity for co-location opportunities by other carriers. The faux-tree design of the proposed tower will help it blend in with the surrounding environment and nearby mature conifers which range from 65 to 107 feet tall. The exception can be authorized under the Use Permit, as provided for under the concurrent permitting provisions found in 312-3.3 of the zoning code.

The project can be found categorically exempt from further CEQA review pursuant to the Class 3 exemption (15303(c) of the CEQA Guidelines) which covers new small facilities or structures including the construction of commercial buildings not exceeding 2,500 square feet.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project was referred to responsible agencies and all responding agencies have either responded with no comment or recommended approval or conditional approval. (Attachment 3)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on a review of Planning Division reference sources and comments from all involved referral agencies, Planning staff concludes that the applicant has submitted evidence in support of making all of the required findings for approval of the Conditional Use Permit. Staff recommends that the Planning Commission find the project exempt from further environmental review pursuant to Section 15303(c) of the State CEQA Guidelines, as there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Commission could elect to add or delete conditions of approval. The Planning Commission could deny the permit request if unable to make all of the required findings. Staff has prepared Conditions of Approval for the project and concluded that with them the required findings in support of the proposal can be made. Consequently, staff does not recommend further consideration of these alternatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution
 - A. Conditions of Approval
 - B. Project Location and PlanSet
2. Applicant's Evidence in Support of the Required Findings
 - A. Project Narrative

- B. Coverage Objective & Justification
 - C. Analysis of Alternative Sites
 - D. Photo-simulations
 - E. Cumulative RF Report
3. Referral Agency Comments and Recommendations

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