



Bella Terra Monopole Cell Tower
Zoning Staff Report
for
Planning, Zoning and Design Board

PROJECT NAME: Bella Terra Monopole Cell Tower

CASE TYPE: Amendment to Commercial Planned Development

CASE NUMBER: DCI2023-E002

PLANNING, ZONING AND DESIGN BOARD MEETING: March 12th, 2024

SUMMARY OF REQUEST

Amendment to Commercial Planned Development to add the use of Wireless Communication Facility for a 178-foot AGL Monopole Wireless Facility on Bella Terra property at 19980 Bella Terra Blvd and Corkscrew Road.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval with conditions (See Attachment C.)

The Planning, Zoning and Design Board will make a recommendation on this request to Village Council.

Changes Since Public Information Meeting

At the Public Information Meeting on September 12, 2023, the Planning, Zoning, and Design Board asked the applicant if the proposed tower could be moved further west on the parent parcel. The applicant responded that the tower would need to be located as far north as possible to maximize space on the property for future development. The proposed site plan now shows that the monopole will be located further north on the northeastern portion of the property.

Another issue discussed at the meeting was the need for cell service in the southern portion of Bella Terra. Subsequent to the PZDB meeting, the applicant has modified the request to increase the tower height from 148 feet to 178 feet AGL, in order to achieve stronger signal strength and less ground scatter. According to the applicant, the tower height increase would provide better and more reliable coverage to the residents in the southern portion of the Bella Terra Community.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Owner

Bella Terra of SW FL Inc.

Applicant

Broadus Towers, LLC.

Authorized Agent

Mattaniah S. Jahn, Esq.

Location

19980 Bella Terra Blvd

STRAP Number

20-46-26-E3-010C1.00CE

Size of Property

12.44 acres entire Commercial Planned Development. The proposed cell tower is located in a small, leased area within the CPD.

Surrounding Zoning

North	Unincorporated Lee County, then WildBlue Community
East	Bella Terra Blvd, then condominiums within Bella Terra – Residential Planned Development (RPD)
South	Bella Terra Community Center – Residential Planned Development (RPD)
West	Water retention area, then The Preserve at Corkscrew Community Center – Commercial Planned Development (CPD)

Zoning

Commercial Planned Development (CPD)

Comprehensive Plan Land Use Category

Village Neighborhood 1

Project History

Bella Terra was rezoned in 1986 from AG to Commercial Planned Development on the front 12 acres and Residential Planned Development on the remaining 990 acres (Resolution Z-86-112.) Bella Terra known at the time as The Habitat, was a Development of Regional Impact (DRI) which was also approved in 1986 under Resolution Z-86-112.

Public Information Meeting

A public information meeting was held by the Planning, Zoning and Design Board on September 12, 2023. The applicant provided a summary of the proposed project which is attached. The location and height of the tower have changed since the Public Information Meeting.

REQUEST

The applicant is requesting an amendment to the Commercial Planned Development zoning designation to add the use of Wireless Communication Facility and is requesting three deviations from the Land Development Code for a 178-foot-tall tower in Bella Terra off Corkscrew Road.

Project Description

The applicant requests an antenna supporting structure (monopole) 178 feet high to provide wireless cellular service for Verizon. The proposed Monopole Wireless Facility will be located off Corkscrew Road at 19980 Bella Terra Blvd. Bella Terra is zoned Residential Planned Development with a 12-acre parcel on Corkscrew Road zoned Commercial Planned Development. The commercial portion is vacant, except for a small Hotwire building and a 4,900-square foot lease area is proposed on the northeast side of the subject property. The facility will include the monopole with antennas, a 4 x 8-foot concrete pad for a generator, three 10 x 15-foot lease areas, all of which will be enclosed by an eight-foot chain-link fence with barbed wire surrounded by a fifteen-foot-wide landscape buffer. Additional equipment areas are proposed within the lease area for collocation purposes. Ground lighting is existing, and the applicant has stated that tower lighting is not proposed. The applicant has stated that the monopole will be completely dark at night and configured as a dull grey structure with external antennas on a minimal head frame to minimize visual impacts.

According to the applicant, the facility is necessary to improve the coverage and capacity of Verizon's cellular service and close a gap in service in the Bella Terra, WildBlue, and The Preserve at Corkscrew communities. Collocation space will be made available on the monopole for three other providers, including T-Mobile. Two future lease areas, each 10 x 15 feet, are proposed as equipment areas for the additional providers. Several revisions have been made based on comments made at the Public Information Meeting.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Height Details, Photo Simulation, and Balloon Study

The applicant revised the application on January 18, 2024, increasing the height of the proposed Monopole Tower from 148 feet to 178 feet to the top of the lightning rod. Documentation provided by the applicant shows the 178-foot monopole (175-foot pole, topped with a 3-foot lightning rod) in photo-simulations from numerous points in the surrounding area. (See Attachment D.) The applicant increased the height after the Public Information Meeting because of comments that service would still be lacking in the southern portion of Bella Terra.

The site is located in an area adjacent to The Preserve at Corkscrew development which includes residential units to the west and within the Bella Terra residential development to the east. The WildBlue development in Lee County is located north of the site across Corkscrew Road. South of the site is the Bella Terra Club House. The PZD Board suggested the applicant move the proposed tower further west on the parent parcel, however, the applicant stated that it would not be possible, and it would limit future development plans.

A Balloon Study was held on January 7, 2024 (See Attachment D.) The applicant has provided a Balloon Test Affidavit stating that the photo-stimulations provided accurately represent the location and height of the balloon as it would have been viewed from their respective locations. (See Attachment E.) The results of the Balloon Test show that the tower will be visible to some residents of Bella Terra and the WildBlue Community in Lee County. The residences in Bella Terra that are closest to the proposed monopole facility are located approximately 370 feet away to the east. The photos show the tower is not visible from Villa Preserve Lane, approximately

1,330 feet southwest of the proposed site or Cypress Shadows Blvd, approximately 1,925 feet west of the proposed site.

Transportation Analysis

Access to the site is through a new 12-foot wide turfstone paver access road off Bella Terra Boulevard. The proposed facility will be located adjacent to the Hotwire building. According to the applicant this is an unmanned facility with maintenance occurring approximately once a month. Vehicle trips are considered de minimis.

Environmental Analysis

The site is in the X flood zone which is described by FEMA as an area of minimal flood hazard. The facility will not impact environmentally critical or sensitive areas. The proposed facility will be located in partially cleared land with an existing Hotwire Communications maintenance building (approximately 192 sq. ft.) and asphalt parking area surrounded by grassy open space. The new facility will include a 15-foot landscape buffer consisting of sabal palms and a double row hedge of native shrubs.

Utilities

Power will be provided by FPL. Water and wastewater are not proposed as the facility will be unmanned. A generator will be present for use during loss of electric power to maintain service.

Comprehensive Plan Considerations

The site is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Village Neighborhood 1. (See Attachment A.) This designation consists primarily of low-density residential uses with the potential for commercial uses of a minor commercial or neighborhood center scale. Wireless facilities are not specifically discussed in the Comprehensive Plan, however compatibility between uses is a consideration to protect existing and future residential neighborhoods. For example, one of the guiding principles of the Future Land Use Element of Estero's Comprehensive Plan is ensuring compatibility of new development, to protect the integrity of existing and future residential neighborhoods, as outlined below:

Neighborhoods

Estero is a Village of neighborhoods...some large, some small, some more established, some newer. Ensuring compatibility of new development to protect the integrity of existing and future residential neighborhoods is a key to sustaining the quality of life.

Policy FLU-1.11.2 of the Plan, Residential Development Standards, provides several factors that should be evaluated to ensure that development proposals address whether the proposed use is compatible with adjacent uses, and other factors. One of the factors is whether the proposal contributes to the overall design, landscaping, and aesthetics that make up the community's character as a harmonious place with beauty, spaciousness, and a diversity of high quality residential and commercial development that positively contributes to the quality of life of Estero's residents.

The proposed tower location will be visible to several residents of Bella Terra on the north and northeast side of the community, some residents of The Preserve at Corkscrew located on the northeast side of the community, and some residents of the WildBlue Community across Corkscrew Road in Lee County.

This is a case when staff must balance the need for provision of adequate service and protection of residential areas. By moving the tower further north, the impacts to residences in Bella Terra

are less. WildBlue is located across and north of Corkscrew Road and is a considerable distance from the tower.

Staff would prefer a location further south, but Bella Terra would prefer to maximize their future plans for recreational uses for its residents on the 12-acre parcel.

There is no perfect location for a cell tower in this area. The applicant has tried to minimize impacts to residences with the location and design, while providing adequate cellular service.

Land Development Code Considerations

The LDC provides a hierarchy of zoning districts for locating Wireless Communication Facilities. Industrially zoned areas are preferred before commercial areas are evaluated. LDC Section 4-243E.4. states that the applicant shall adequately demonstrate that siting alternatives within higher ranked districts are not reasonable or feasible. There are no available parcels in any industrial zoning district nearby (See Attachment B.)

The proposed location is adjacent to residential areas in the Residential Planned Development zoning district. The applicant stated that there are plans for additional development on the subject property to provide amenities for the Bella Terra community. This is the reason the tower is proposed adjacent to Corkscrew Road.

Section 4-243 of the LDC contains additional standards for a Wireless Communication Facility. In part, this section provides that no antenna-supporting structure shall be permitted unless the applicant demonstrates that the proposed antenna cannot be accommodated on an existing building, structure, or antenna supporting structure.

The applicant has stated that there is a lack of existing towers and tall structures within the search ring that Verizon could collocate upon. Therefore, the proposed facility location is necessary to fill a gap in coverage and capacity in the area.

The Code requires that:

Antennas shall be configured in a manner that is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and development, and shall be of a color that blends with the structure to which it is attached, so that adverse visual impacts on adjacent properties are minimized. Antenna concealment screening shall also be used, when possible.

The applicant has stated that the proposed monopole will have a galvanized grey finish and be completely dark at night. All cabling will be contained within the monopole itself. However, LDC 4-243.4.E requires the monopole to be taped using reflective sheeting, starting at 20 feet above the surface, and at 10-foot intervals.

The proposed location is adjacent to a residential development on two sides: across a water retention area, then, The Preserve at Corkscrew, approximately 1,306 feet to the west and the Bella Terra community, approximately 451 feet to the east. The monopole will be moderately visible to come residents as shown in the attached photo-simulations. (See Attachment D.)

Staff would prefer that the monopole be designed to resemble a tree, to make it more compatible. The applicant has stated that this design precludes collocation opportunities and the Bella Terra HOA supports the monopole design.

Conclusion

Communication facilities are utilities that serve the public and provide a necessary service, however, they must also be found compatible with the adjacent neighborhoods. The applicant stated that the 178-foot monopole will be dull grey in color with external antennas on a minimal headframe. This design is comparable to other monopoles and consistent with the camouflage and screening requirements set forth in LDC 4-243.F.4. The tower will be moderately visible to approximately two dozen homes in Bella Terra, between 350-600 feet away.

Staff finds that, on balance, and with the recommended conditions, the requested Amendment will be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Deviations

The applicant requested the following deviations for the Monopole Wireless Facility:

1. Deviation 1 is a *Turfstone Deviation* from LDC Section 5-304 to allow the use of turfstone pavers in lieu of a paved access road to the Monopole's compound. The applicant stated that this deviation would allow the access drive to be better integrated with the anticipated green spaces of the planned development of the parent parcel while achieving the stabilized access envisioned under the LDC.

Staff agrees because the use of the road will be minimal. As such, staff recommends approval.

2. Deviation 2 is a *Tower Code Setback Deviation* from LDC Sec. 4-243.G.1 to allow a setback of 99 feet to the North in lieu of the required setback distance equal to the tower's height, 178 feet AGL. The applicant stated that this deviation would facilitate future development of the parent parcel as a recreational facility for the Bella Terra community. According to the application materials, the monopole has been designed to withstand winds up to 156 miles per hour. (See Attachment G.) LDC Section 4-243G.1 requires that the monopole be located a distance equal to the overall height from all lot lines of the property on which it is proposed, which would be 178 feet.

Staff would prefer that the structure be setback further from Corkscrew Road and is concerned that if the structure were to fall in a hurricane for example, it could protrude into the turn lane. The applicant has provided Engineering analysis that this would not happen. Additionally, Lee County did not provide any adverse comment pertaining to their right of way on Corkscrew Road. As such, staff recommends approval.

3. Deviation 3 is a *Fall Zone Deviation* from LDC Section 4-243.G.1 which requires the fall zone radius to be equal to the tower height. The applicant stated that this deviation will allow future development of the parent parcel as a recreational facility for the residents of Bella Terra. The applicant revised the plan to show a fall zone radius of 35 feet, which they state will accomplish the sound planning objective outlined in Section 4-243.G.I. The revised proposal shows that an existing Hotwire structure is located within the new fall zone radius. Hotwire has provided a notarized letter of written consent to allow the reduction of the proposed monopole tower setback to 45-feet to Hotwire's property. The applicant provided an Engineer letter that stated that in the event of winds in excess of the design wind load (3-sec. gusted wind speed of 156 mph), the pole would yield/buckle in half and would most likely remain connected and hang from the standing section.

As such and for the reasons stated above, staff recommends approval.

Other Comments

- Federal Airways & Airspace: The FAA determined that the proposed structure would not be a hazard to air navigation. However, that determination was made for a 155-foot AGL monopole. The proposed monopole height has since been increased to 178 feet AGL. Approval will be needed prior to issuance of a limited development order.
- Lee County Mosquito Control: Comments will be needed prior to issuance of a limited development order.
- Lee County Port Authority: Lee County Port Authority staff has reviewed this project and approved a Tall Structure Permit for the proposed monopole. However, the approval was granted for a 154-foot AGL monopole. The monopole height has since increased to 178 feet AGL. Approval will be needed prior to issuance of a limited development order.

REVIEW STANDARDS

Staff has proposed the following:

1. The Planned Development Amendment as conditioned will be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The Planned Development Amendment as conditioned will comply with all applicable zoning district standards.
3. The Planned Development Amendment as conditioned will not conflict with any portion of the Land Development Code.
4. The Planned Development Amendment will address a community need. The proposed amendment will improve the coverage and capability of cellular service for the area.
5. The Planned Development Amendment as conditioned will be compatible with existing and planned uses surrounding the subject land.
6. The Planned Development Amendment as conditioned will not result in significantly adverse impacts on the natural environment, including but not limited to water, air, noise, storm water management, wildlife, vegetation, wetlands, and the natural functioning of the environment.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Future Land Use Map
- B. Zoning Map
- C. Proposed Conditions
- D. Applicant Photo Simulation & Balloon Study
- E. Balloon Study Affidavit
- F. Applicant Summary of Public Information Meeting
- G. Applicant Submittals