



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Plan Commission

FROM: Michaela Bell, Planner

DATE: November 4, 2003

SUBJECT: Case No. 1872-SU-03, Request by Verizon Wireless for a special use permit to establish a Cellular Tower use at 1501 S. Maryland Drive.

Introduction

Verizon Wireless is currently requesting approval to construct a Cellular tower on property located at 1501 S. Maryland Drive. The request is part of a cooperative effort between the University of Illinois and Verizon Wireless to improve campus security through “enhanced 911” and GPS technology. The University owns the tower site that is located directly behind the Meat Science Building and Verizon has constructed the tower prior to their application for a Special Use Permit. Telecommunications tower uses in the CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education Zoning District are permitted in this district with a special use permit.

Background

Description of the Site and Surrounding Properties

1501 S. Maryland Drive is located on the west side of Maryland Drive and lies between Pennsylvania and Florida. The property is a long and narrow lot, which is directly adjacent to the Mt. Hope Cemetery. The lot is approximately 158.5 feet wide and 280 feet deep and contains University of Illinois structures such as the Meat Science building, Taft House, and a parking lot area. The tower site is a leased tract of land approximately 2,200-square foot in area located directly behind the Meat Science building. The site is accessed off of Maryland Drive with an existing gravel drive.

The surrounding area is primarily institutional. However, there are University residential buildings within a block radius, a fraternity and dormitories. Academic buildings and the cemetery buffer the tower site.

The following chart identifies the Comprehensive Plan designation, current zoning, and current land use of the site and surrounding properties.

Survey of Comprehensive Plan Designation, Zoning, and Land Use

	Comprehensive Plan	Zoning	Land Use
Site	Institutional	CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education	Institutional-Academic
North	Institutional	CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education	Institutional-Academic
South	Institutional	CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education	Institutional-Academic
East	Institutional	R-7, University Residential CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education	Institutional-Residential and Utilities
West	Institutional	Champaign County Zoning	Institutional-Cemetery

Please refer to the attached Future Land Use, Zoning, and Existing Land Use maps for further information.

Proposal

The University contacted Verizon Wireless to help address campus security needs by improving emergency response on Campus. According to Verizon, the tower will allow the University of Illinois to offer its staff and students security options. Panic/emergency buttons systems on cell phones will allow Campus Security to utilize a Geographic Positioning System (GPS); this would allow security to identify the exact location of a distressed person’s call and their subsequent movements. The tower also is able to enhance the service coverage of Verizon wireless by providing better coverage to its clients throughout the entire community. The new tower increases calling capacity thus providing fewer instances of lost signals for cellular callers; this is an important issue facing the efficiency of the future campus security system.

The subject tower was constructed the last week in October 2003 and is currently operational. Verizon Wireless constructed the tower prior to submitting an application for a Special Use Permit. Verizon has built the 110-foot monopole tower, the equipment shelter and the propane tank. Through an administrative oversight Verizon was not aware of the municipal regulations governing new telecommunications towers in Urbana. They have halted further construction on the site until they receive a Special Use Permit from the City of Urbana. The proposal is to continue operating the telecommunications use and to complete the entire tower site plan after complying with the City requirements. Construction items that have not completed but are shown on the site plan include an eight-foot brick wall with a gate, regrading of the gravel drive access, and painting the tower a dark green color. Adequate ingress and egress to the site are important and required by ordinance. Proper screening and landscaping are also required to minimize the visual impact of the tower.

Factors of Consideration

Verizon wireless has not submitted a landscaping plan for the tower. They have proposed an eight-foot brick wall compound that would surround the tower site intended to provide security and adequate screening. The wall enclosure would be similar to that of the brick with wrought-iron fence design found across the street at the sub-station. The design is requested and preferred by the University of Illinois. The tower site is already tucked behind the Meat Science Building. The quality materials used for screening coupled with the plan to paint the tower should significantly camouflage the site. The screening plans are intended to secure the site and provide the least visually intrusive design.

According to Section V-11-4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the Plan Commission can consider factors when recommending that the City Council waive or reduce the burdens on the applicant if the goals of the telecommunications ordinance are better served. The goals of the ordinance are to protect the residential areas and land uses from potential adverse impacts of towers; encourage location of towers in non-residential areas; encourage towers to locate to the extent possible in areas where the adverse impact on the community is minimal and to configure them in a way that minimizes the adverse visual impact of the through careful design, siting, screening and innovative camouflaging techniques. The proposal meets various goals of the ordinance and minimizes the impact based on the location of the tower, its configuration and the aesthetic measures taken to camouflage the site. Staff is in support of the proposed wall as the primary screening mechanism for the tower. Staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommend to the City Council to waive any landscaping requirements in the form of plant material.

Discussion

Requirements for a Special Use Permit

According to Section VII-6 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, an application for a Special Use Permit shall demonstrate the following:

- 1. That the proposed use is conducive to the public convenience at that location.*

The location of the tower is conducive to the public convenience at this location. The location and site design minimize the impact of the tower to residential areas and the community. The tower location will fill a telecommunications need for cellular users in Urbana and will enhance the campus security at the University of Illinois by providing new GPS capability and improved emergency services.

- 2. That the proposed use is designed, located, and proposed to be operated so that it will not be unreasonably injurious or detrimental to the district in which it shall be located, or otherwise injurious to the public welfare.*

The tower use, with its supporting structures, is designed so not to cause significant visual impacts to the surrounding area and community. Considerations of the public welfare have resulted in the location of the use and the aesthetic plans to adequately screen the tower.

3. *That the proposed use conforms to the applicable regulations and standards of, and preserves the essential character of, the district in which it shall be located, except where such regulations and standards are modified by Section VII-7.*

The proposed use should comply with all development standards of the zoning ordinance. The tower will also require final inspection from the Urbana Building Safety Division to ensure all building codes are met. The tower should not alter the essential character of the district in which it is located. The use should provide services that enhance the public, educational and recreational nature of the district through improved security.

Consideration

The Plan Commission shall determine whether the reasons set forth in the application, and the evidence adduced during the public hearing, justify the granting of the special use permit; and whether the proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Ordinance, will not be unreasonably injurious or detrimental to the district in which it shall be located, or otherwise injurious or detrimental to the public welfare.

In addition, the Plan Commission shall make a recommendation to the City Council for or against the proposed special use, and may also recommend such additional conditions and requirements on the operation of the proposed use as are appropriate or necessary for the public health, safety, and welfare, and to carry out the purposes of this Ordinance, including but not limited to the following:

1. Regulate the location, extent, and intensity of such use;
2. Require adherence to an approved site plan;
3. Require landscaping and the screening of such use by means of fences, walls, or vegetation;
4. Stipulate a required minimum lot size, minimum yards, and maximum height of buildings and structures;
5. Regulate vehicular access and volume, and the design and location of parking and loading areas and structures;
6. Require conformance to health, safety, and sanitation requirements as necessary;
7. Regulate signs and outdoor lighting;
8. Any other conditions deemed necessary to affect the purposes of the Ordinance.

Summary of Findings

1. The proposed use is conducive to the public convenience at this location. It would allow for the telecommunications tower to be utilized by the public, both the University of Illinois and the general

community. The tower location will increase the efficiency and quality of cellular communication in the area and enhance the safety of all residents.

2. The proposed tower use would not pose a detriment to the district in which it is proposed to be located.
3. The proposed tower meets all applicable standards and regulations of the district in which it is located. A telecommunication tower use is considered an appropriate use in this zoning district.
4. The proposed improvements to the tower site should provide adequate screening and protection of the tower use. The use as proposed should not pose a detriment to the surrounding neighborhood.

Options

The Plan Commission has the following options for recommendations to the City Council regarding Plan Case No. 1872-SU-03:

1. Recommend approval of the Special Use Permit request as presented on the attached application without any additional conditions.
2. Recommend approval of the Special Use Permit request, as presented on the attached application, with any conditions deemed appropriate or necessary for the public health, safety, and welfare, and to carry out the purposes of the Zoning Ordinance.
3. Recommend denial of the request for a Special Use Permit.

Staff Recommendation

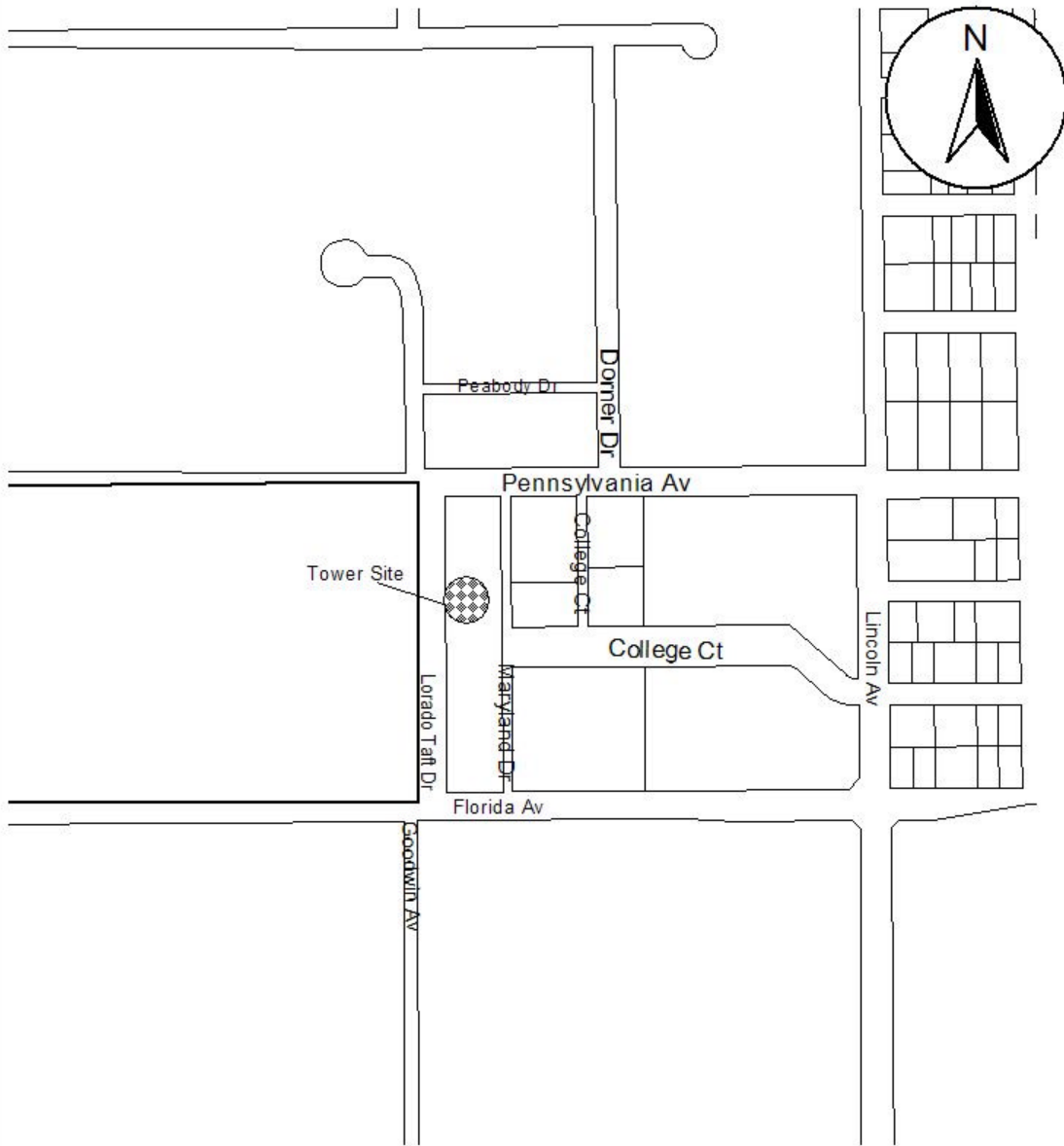
Based on the evidence presented in the discussion above, and without the benefit of considering additional evidence that may be presented at the public hearing, staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommend **approval** of the proposed special use in Plan Case No. 1872-SU-03 as presented to the Urbana City Council, for the reasons articulated above **with the following conditions** :

1. That the tower use and subsequent construction conform to the submitted site plan.
2. The tower shall meet the applicable building code requirements by obtaining necessary building permits through Urbana Building Safety and necessary inspections to verify compliance.
3. The tower use landscaping requirements shall be waived. The 8-foot wall surrounding the site should be made with brick veneer material with a wrought-iron style gate as submitted in the site plan.

Attachments: Exhibit A, Location Map
 Exhibit B, Zoning map
 Exhibit C, Existing Land Use map
 Exhibit D, Future Land Use map
 Exhibit E, Aerial Photo
 Exhibit F, Special Use Application
 Exhibit G, Additional Photos
 Exhibit H, Notice to Adjacent Property Owners

C: Verizon Wireless, Attn: Terry Sharp, 500 Maryland University, Suite 250, St. Louis, MO 63141
 Stu Harrison, 42 W. Spruce, Canton, IL 61520

Exhibit "A": Location Map

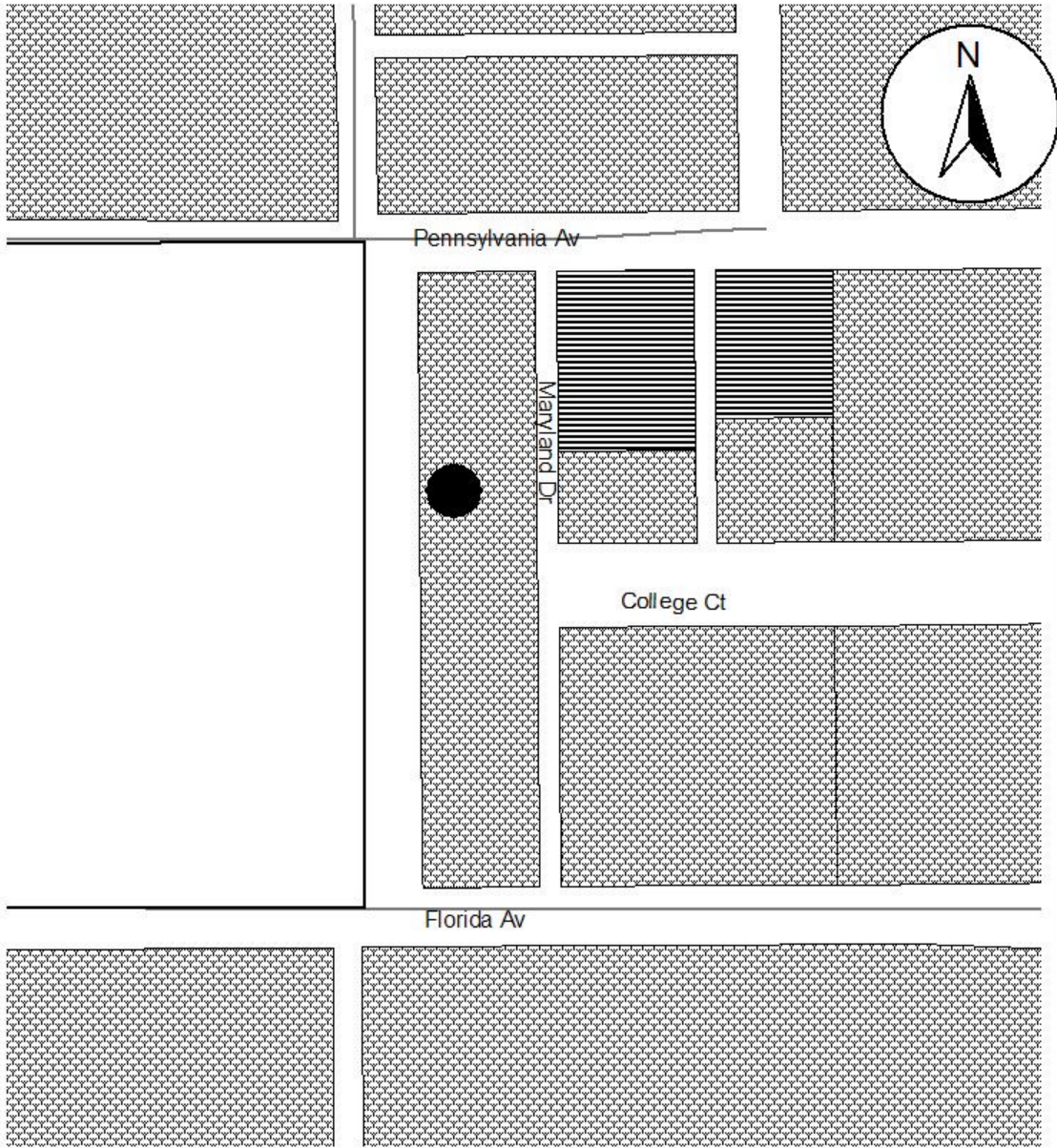


1872-SU-03
Request for 110 ft. Tower
1501 S. Maryland Drive
Petitioner: Verizon Wireless

0 250 500 Feet



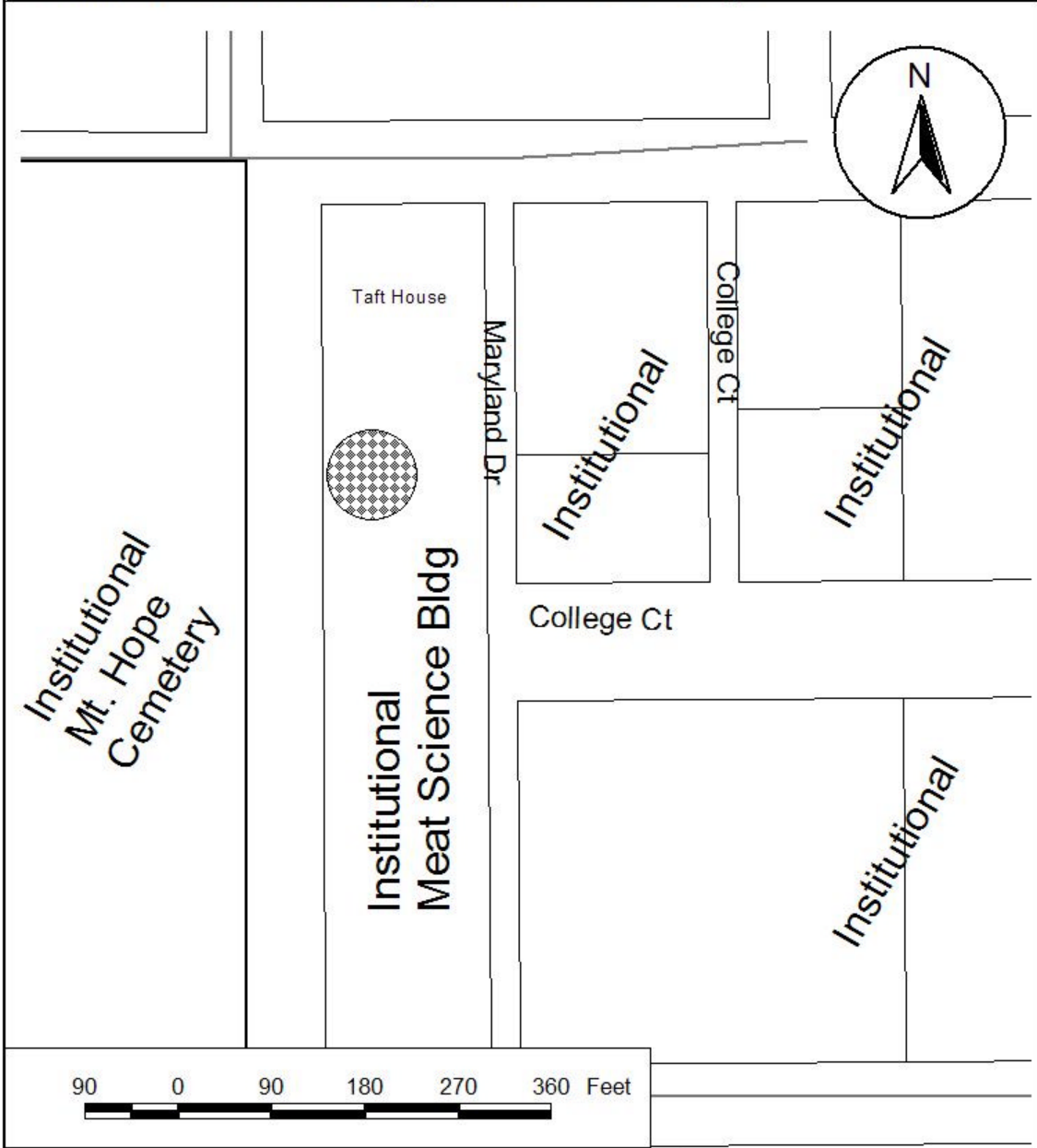
Exhibit "B": Zoning Map



1872-SU-03
Request for 110 ft. Tower
1501 S. Maryland Drive
Petitioner: Verizon Wireless

-  Tower Site
-  CRE - Conservation-Recreation-Education
-  R7 - University Residential

Exhibit "C": Existing Land Use Map

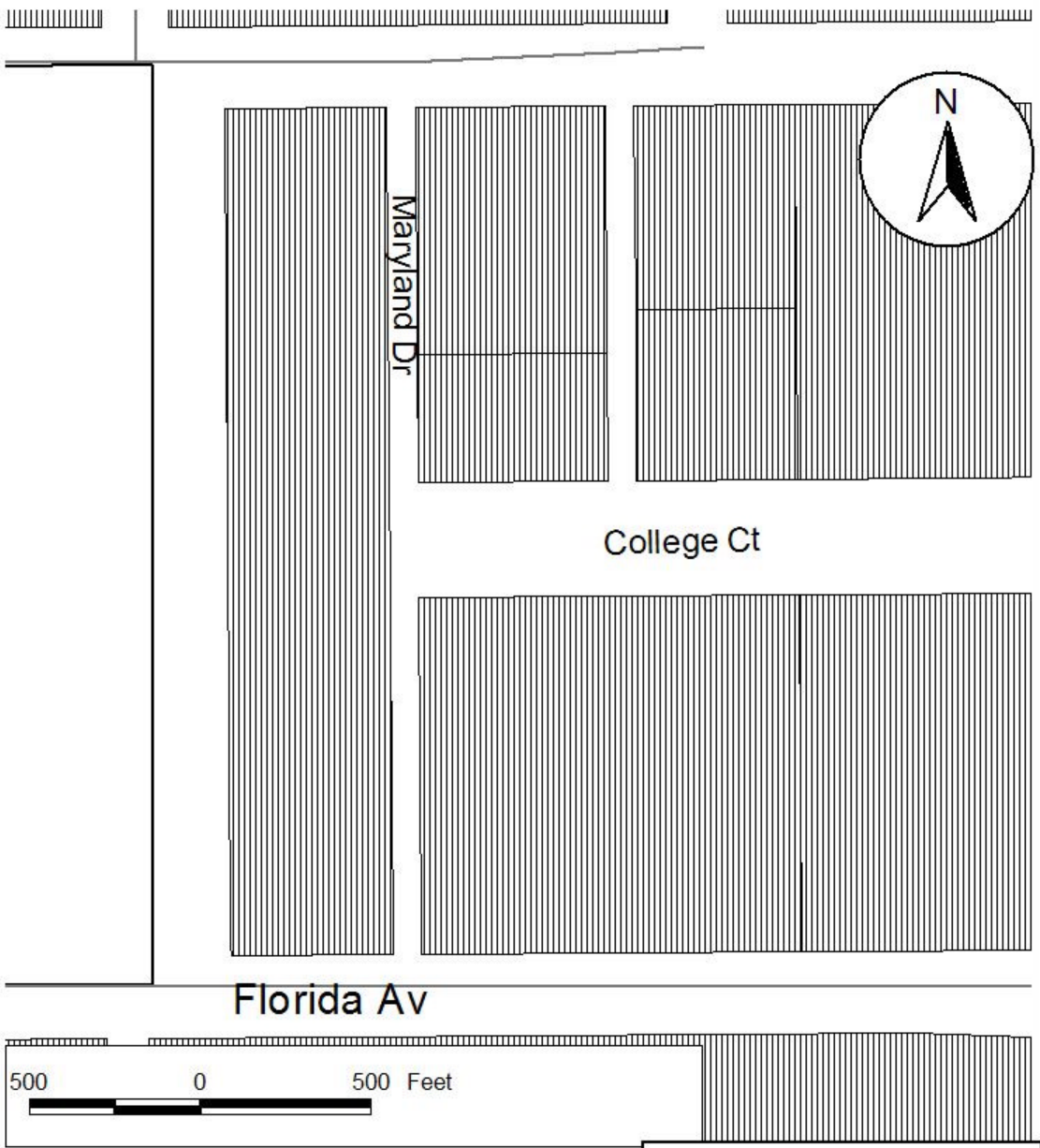


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Tower Site

Exhibit "D": Future Land Use Map



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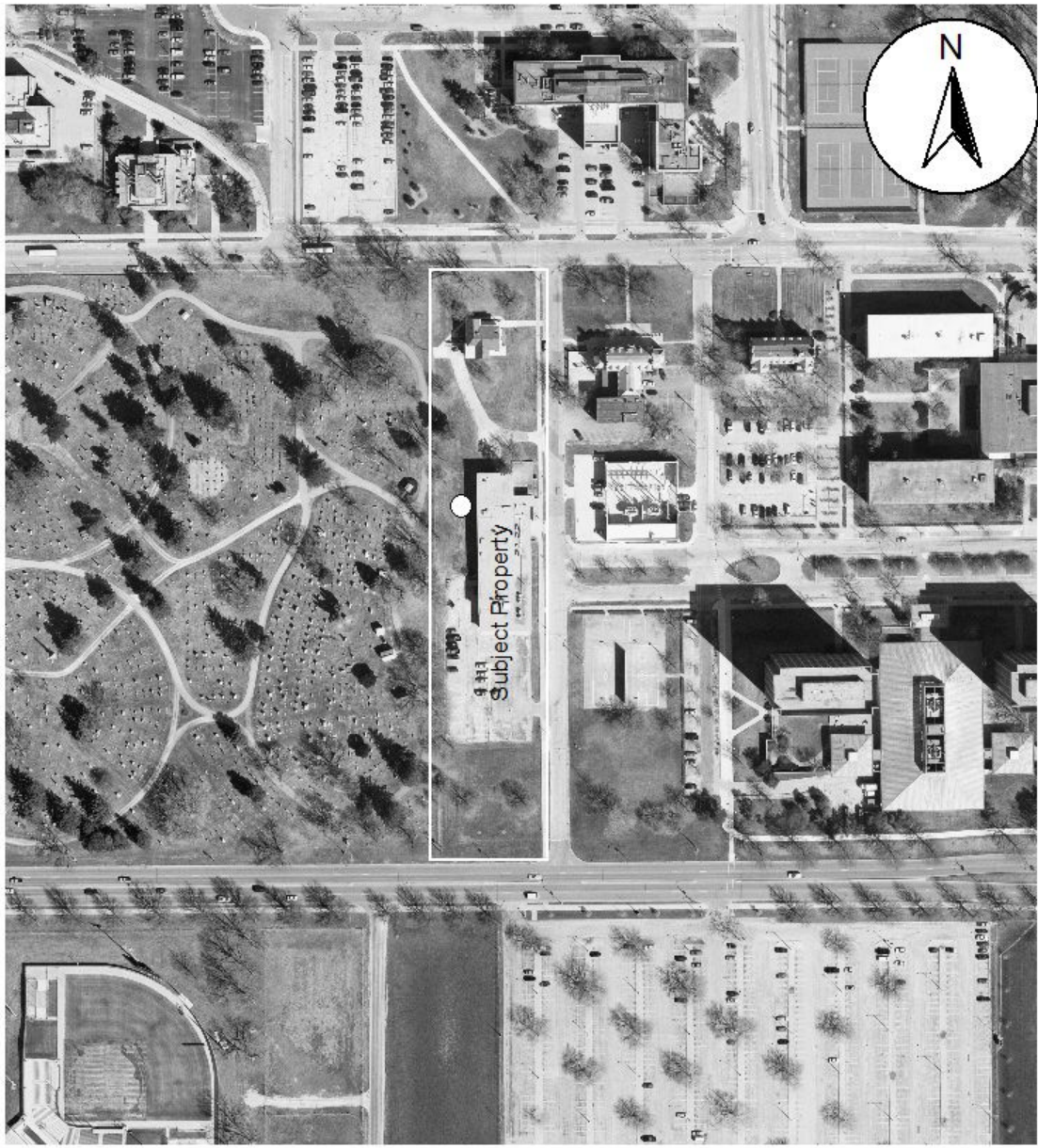
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Exhibit "E" : Aerial Photo



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Tower Site



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Planning and Economic Development Division
400 S. Vine
P.O. Box 946
Urbana, IL 61801
(217) 384-2439

October 30, 2003

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING IN REGARD TO A PROPOSED SPECIAL USE PERMIT

Dear Property Owner:

A public hearing will be held by the Urbana Plan Commission on **Thursday, November 20, 2003 at 7:30 P.M.** in the Urbana City Council Chambers, 400 S. Vine Street, at which time and place the Commission will consider a request by Verizon Wireless for a special use permit for a Telecommunications Tower at 1501 S. Maryland Drive. The request is to allow a Cellular tower to be placed at the subject property. In order to establish such a use in the CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education Zoning District, a Special Use Permit must be granted by the Urbana Plan Commission and City Council.

You have been sent this notice because you are a nearby property owner. The Urbana Plan Commission welcomes your comments at the public hearing, or in writing if received prior to the hearing. If you have any specific questions about the request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Michaela Bell
Senior Planner

Persons with disabilities needing services or accommodations for this hearing should contact the Community Development Services Department at 384-2440, or the City of Urbana's Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator at 384-2466, or TTY 384-2360. If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact my office at (217) 384-2440.

SIGMA NU FRATERNITY INC.
PO BOX 1869
LEXINGTON, VA 24450

TACCHM
PO BOX 5180 STAT A
CHAMPAIGN, IL 61820

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
258 ADMIN BLDG
URBANA, IL 61801

Sigma Nu Fraternity
1009 W. Pennsylvania
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Current Residents
1101 W. Pennsylvania
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Photo Exhibit
1872-SU-03
Verizon Wireless

Facing West from the Tower Site



Cell Tower Site-Facing North



Cell Tower Site-Facing East



Tower Site-Facing North