

Montgomery Planning


THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION


MCPB

Item No. 9

Date: 4/8/2021

Shady Grove Metro Railyards, New Communications Tower, Mandatory Referral MR 2021003

 Nkosi Yearwood, Planner Coordinator, Mid-County Planning, nkosi.yearwood@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-1332

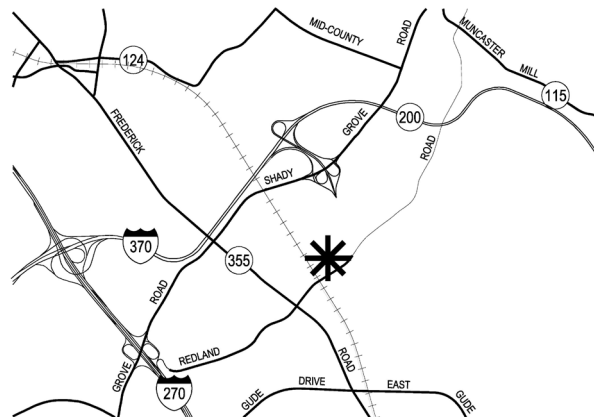
 Jessica McVary, Supervisor, Mid-County Planning, jessica.mcvary@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4723

 Carrie Sanders, Chief, Mid-County Planning, carrie.sanders@montgomeryplanning.org, 301-495-4653

Completed: 4/01/2021

Description

- Mandatory Referral for the construction of a new communications tower for the WMATA Shady Grove Station area;
- Location: 15903 Somerville Drive;
- Zone: IM 2.5 H-50;
- Master Plan: 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan*;
- Size: 42.6 acres;
- Application Accepted: February 18, 2021;
- Applicant: Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).



Summary

- Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral and transmittal of comments to WMATA.
- The proposal is exempt from Chapter 22A, the Forest Conservation Law and does not require a Forest Conservation Plan.
- The Planning Board review of the Mandatory Referral is advisory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval and the transmittal of the following comments to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA):

1. There should be no outdoor storage of equipment or other items.
2. Install a sign, not more than two feet square, affixed to the equipment compound identifying the owner, operator, and maintenance service provider of the support structure and the emergency telephone number of a contact person.
3. Submit documentation on the tower's height and location to the Department of Permitting Services prior to final inspection of the building permit.
4. Certify that the tower is operating within the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards on an annual basis. Additionally, provide an actual radio frequency (RF) measurement after the communications tower is installed, and after each co-location on the subject tower.
5. The owner of the tower is responsible for maintaining the tower in a safe condition.
6. Remove the tower and equipment compound within twelve months of cessation of the facility's use.
7. Signs or illumination on the antennas or support structure are prohibited unless required by the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration, or the County.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates communications networks for daily and emergency communication systems, including WMATA rail, buses, and Transit Police. WMATA is tasked with ensuring that these emergency responders have effective and reliable radio coverage throughout areas serviced by the transit agency. The proposed tower will accommodate an upgrade to the current service from 490 Megahertz (MHz) to 700 MHz. New base stations are required to implement the latest technologies.

Surrounding Neighborhood

The Shady Grove WMATA railyard is located west of the CSX rail tracks and north of the Metrorail station entrance. A variety of light-industrial properties are located to the immediate west, including the Montgomery County Transfer Station and Recycling operations, a United States Postal Service Center, and a CarMax automotive sales center. The CarMax property is within the City of Gaithersburg. A vacant property is located at the intersection of Frederick Road (MD 355) and Shady Grove Road. The emerging Shady Grove Station, Westside mixed-use neighborhood is located to the east and across the CSX tracks. Further south is the WMATA surface parking area, the Bainbridge at Shady Grove, a multifamily residential development in the City of Rockville, and commercial properties along MD 355.

Site Description

The WMATA Shady Grove railyard is composed of several service maintenance buildings, approximately 22 rail tracks, and parking areas. There are eastern white pine trees along the northern and eastern property boundaries and some vegetation surrounding the elliptical rail tracks (Figure 1). A driveway from the Metrorail Station entrance provides primary access to the railyards.

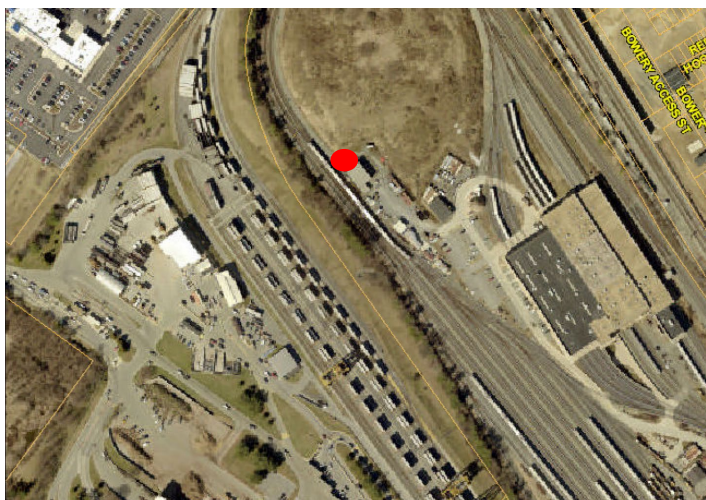
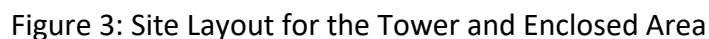
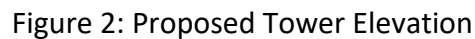


Figure 1: Shady Grove Railyards. Approximate Location of Proposed Tower is Highlighted in Red.

WMATA proposes to locate a communications tower within the Shady Grove railyards to comply with federally required communication upgrades (Figure 2). The tower will be placed in an enclosed area, of approximately 4,454 square feet, along with an equipment shelter and a propane tank (Figure 3). Additional space within the enclosed area and on the tower will allow space for future collocation opportunities.



ANALYSIS

Master Plan Conformance

The proposed Mandatory Referral is within the 2006 *Shady Grove Sector Plan* area. The 2006 Sector Plan and the Planning Board's Draft of the Shady Grove Sector Plan Minor Master Plan Amendment (2020) recommended confirming the industrial zone for the WMATA railyards property.

Zoning Analysis

The proposed tower is considered a "Public Use (Except Utilities)," defined in Section 3.4.9 of the Zoning Ordinance and it is a permitted use in all zones, including the IM zone of the subject property. As a publicly owned structure intended to support public safety radio communications, the proposed tower is considered a Public Use and not a "Public Utility Structure," which supports the provision of public utilities or a "Telecommunications Tower," which supports wireless communications. The definition of each of these uses is referenced in the table below.

Zoning Ordinance Section	Definitions of Uses
Section 3.4.9	<i>Public Use (Except Utilities) means a publicly-owned or publicly operated use. Public Use (Except Utilities) includes County office buildings, maintenance facilities, public schools and parks, post office, State and Federal buildings. Public Use (Except Utilities) does not include a Public Utility Structure (see Section 3.6.7.E, Public Utility Structure).</i>
Section 3.6.7.E	<i>Public Utility Structure means a utility structure other than transmission lines or pipelines. Public Utility Structure includes structures for the occupancy, use, support, or housing of switching equipment, regulators, stationary transformers, and other such devices for supplying electric service or other public utilities.</i>
Section 3.5.2.C	<i>A Telecommunications Tower means any structure, other than a building, used to provide wireless voice, data, or image transmission within a designated service area. Telecommunications Tower includes one or more antennas attached to a support structure, and related equipment, but does not include amateur radio antenna, radio or TV tower, or an antenna on an existing structure.</i>

Although the proposed use is a Public Use and not a Telecommunications Tower, the proposed use, character and physical impacts on adjacent uses are similar to those of a Telecommunications Tower, a limited use in the IM zone. As the Zoning Ordinance does not provide review standards for a Public Use, staff consulted the limited use standards associated with the Telecommunications Tower to inform this Mandatory Referral review. Staff has applied this rationale for the review of similar uses at other locations, including the Public Safety System Modernization at Damascus (MR2020011) and Brookeville (MR2020012) as well as the WMATA Glenmont Tower (MR 2020004) and included a summary of the most pertinent standards of §59.3.5.2.C.2.a below.

- i. *Signs or illumination on the antennas or support structure are prohibited unless required by the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration, or the County.*

Staff recommends including this provision in the comments transmitted to WMATA.

- ii. *In the LSC, IL, IM, and IH zones, the tower is a maximum height of 179 feet with a setback of one foot for every foot of height from the property lines of all properties zoned Agricultural, Rural Residential, or Residential.*

The proposed height is approximately 200 feet. While the structure exceeds the maximum permitted height, it is important to note that the proposed tower is a Public Use and is not subject to the limited use review standards of the Telecommunications Tower, including maximum height. The proposed tower also meets the setback requirements of the limited use standards because properties zoned Agricultural, Rural Residential and Residential are not located within 200 feet of the proposed tower location.

While not required by the limited use standards, staff also notes that the County's Transmission Facility Coordinating Group has reviewed the proposed tower and supports the implementation of the proposed facility as a Mandatory Referral (Attachment 2).

Neighborhood Compatibility

Light industrial and commercial uses, including the Montgomery County Transfer Station, a United States Postal Center, and a CarMax automotive center are some of the existing uses that surround the area of the proposed tower. The Shady Grove Station, Westside community, which is east of the CSX tracks, is more than 700 feet from the proposed tower. Based on the submitted tower simulation, the tower will be visible from several surrounding areas, especially to the east given the minimal differences in topography (Attachment 1). The tower's compatibility is balanced with its height, which is an inherent feature, with the need to provide important public communications for WMATA.

Environmental Analysis

The site contains no streams or stream buffers, wetlands or wetland buffers, 100-year floodplains, known occurrences of rare, threatened or endangered species, or significant or specimen trees. Planning staff confirmed a Forest Conservation Exemption (#42021081E) for this project on February 9, 2021. As proposed, the project complies with Chapter 22A, Forest Conservation, and is in conformance with the Planning Department's *Environmental Guidelines*.

Transportation Analysis

The facility will not generate any trips and is not subject to a Local Area Transportation Review (LATR) study. There is no impact on master-planned roadways because the facility's location is internal to WMATA's existing railyard.

Community Outreach

The Shady Grove Advisory Committee and surrounding civic associations received notification regarding the submitted proposal. As of the date of this memorandum, no comments were received on this proposal.

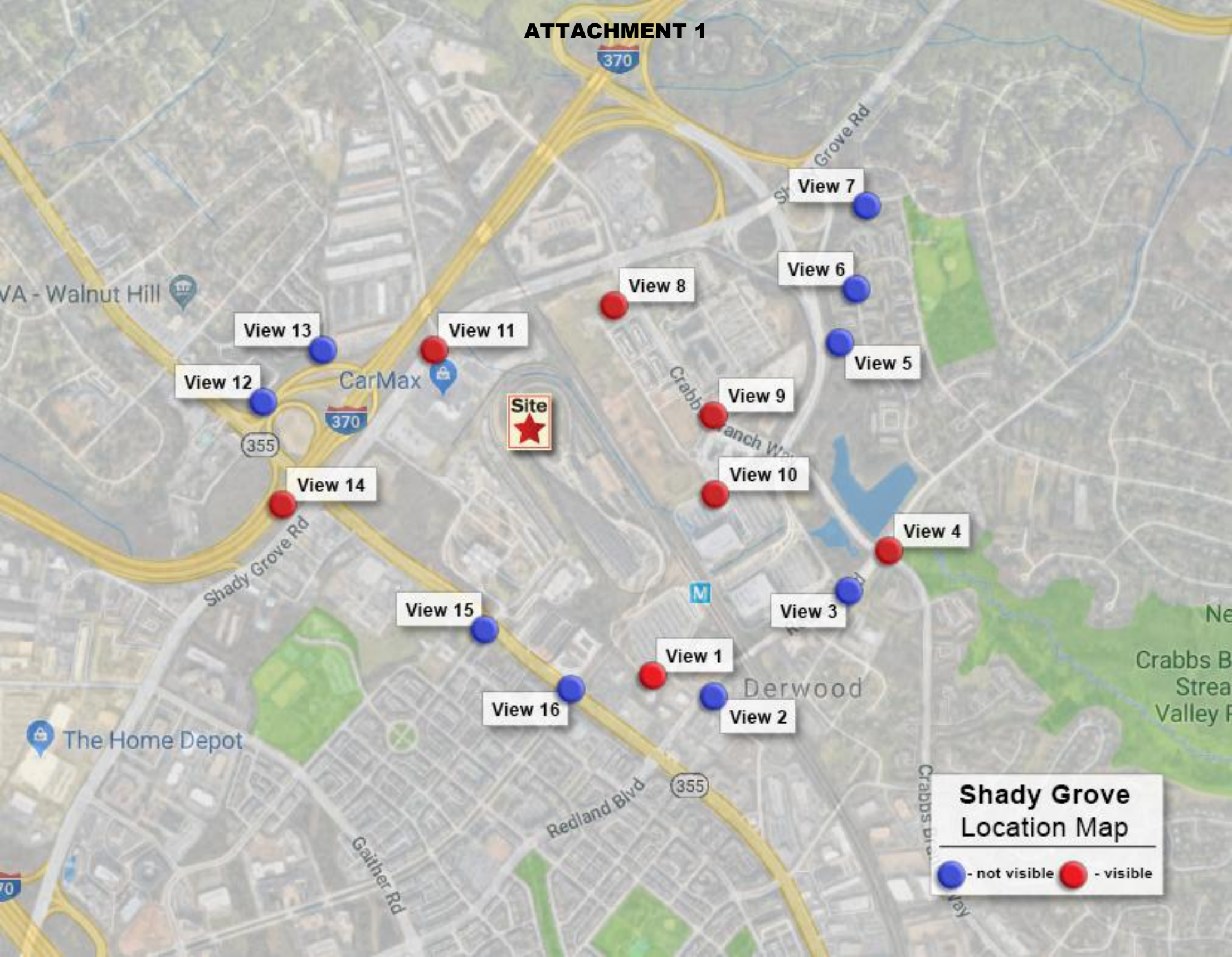
Conclusion

Staff recommends the approval of the submitted Mandatory Referral and the transmittal of comments to the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Attachments:

1. Tower Visibility Exhibits
2. Transmission Facility Recommendation

ATTACHMENT 1



**Shady Grove
Location Map**

● - not visible ● - visible



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 1 - 15910 Somerville Dr
View from the Southeast
Showing the Existing Site

NB-CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 1 - 15910 Somerville Dr
View from the Southeast
Showing the Proposed Site


NB+CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 2 - Somerville Dr & Redland Rd
View from the Southeast
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 3 - Redland Rd &
Metro Entrance
View from the Southeast
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 4 - Redland Rd &
Crabbs Branch Way
View from the Southeast
Showing the Existing Site

NB+C
TOTALLY COMMITTED.




Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:

View 4 - Redland Rd &
Crabbs Branch Way
View from the Southeast
Showing the Proposed Site


NB+C
TOTALLY COMMITTED



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 5 - Needwood Rd &
Breezy Down Terrace
View from the East
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 6 - Needwood Rd &
Havenside Terrace
View from the Northeast
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NB-C
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 7 - 7716 Timbercrest Dr
View from the Northeast
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NB-CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 8 - Crabbs Branch Way &
Shady Grove Rd
View from the Northeast
Showing the Existing Site

NB+CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 8 - Crabbs Branch Way &
Shady Grove Rd
View from the Northeast
Showing the Proposed Site

NB+CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 9 - Crabbs Branch Way &
Gramercy Blvd
View from the East
Showing the Existing Site

NB+C
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 9 - Crabbs Branch Way &
Gramercy Blvd
View from the East
Showing the Proposed Site

NBIC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 10 - Columbus Ave &
Metro Access
View from the Southeast
Showing the Existing Site

NB-CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 10 - Columbus Ave &
Metro Access
View from the Southeast
Showing the Proposed Site

NB-C
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 11 - Shady Grove Rd &
Oakmont Ave
View from the Northwest
Showing the Existing Site

NB-C
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 11 - Shady Grove Rd &
Oakmont Ave
View from the Northwest
Showing the Proposed Site

NB-CTM
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 12 - 200 Skidmore Blvd
View from the West
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.

Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 13 - Swarthmore Ave &
Goucher Terrace
View from the West
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 14 - Shady Grove Rd &
Frederick Rd
View from the Southwest
Showing the Existing Site


NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 14 - Shady Grove Rd &
Frederick Rd
View from the Southwest
Showing the Proposed Site


NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 15 - Frederick Rd &
Ridegmont Ave
View from the South
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.



Site Name: Shady Grove
Wireless Communication Facility
15903 Somerville Drive
Rockville, MD 20855

Photograph Information:
View 16 - Frederick Rd &
King Farm Blvd
View from the South
SITE NOT VISIBLE

NBC
TOTALLY COMMITTED.

ATTACHMENT 2



DEPARTMENT OF TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Harash (Sonny) Segal
Chief Information Officer

MEMORANDUM

March 5, 2020

TO: Distribution

FROM: Margie Williams, Tower Chairperson
Transmission Facility Coordinating Group (TFCG)

SUBJECT: TFCG Notice of Action

Montgomery County TFCG has **Recommended** the following applications at its March 4, 2020 meeting:

Application Number: 2019121057 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 12/9/2019
Revised: 1/29/2020

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Site Name/Location: Brink Water Tank/21701 Ridge Rd, Germantown

Zoning Standard: AR ***Property Owner:*** WSSC

Description: Remove and replace three RRHs at 119' on an existing 124' water tank.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended on condition the applicant provides written approval from WSSC at the time of permitting. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws

Application Number: 2020011094 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 1/29/2020

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Site Name/Location: Summit Hills Apartments/8484 16th St, Silver Spring

Zoning Standard: CR-2.5 ***Property Owner:*** Summit Hills LLC

Description: Remove six antennas and nine RRHs. Add nine antennas and six RRHs at 105'/108' on an existing 98'10" building.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended on the condition that DPS verifies that the rooftop does not exceed its maximum allowable telecom rooftop capacity at the time of permitting. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020011092 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 1/29/2020
Revised: 2/4/2020

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Site Name/Location: World Building Tower/8121 Georgia Ave, Silver Spring

Zoning Standard: CR-3.0 ***Property Owner:*** World Building LLC

Description: Remove three RRHs. Add three antennas and three RRHs at 131'/140' on an existing 117'4" building.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended on the condition that DPS verifies that the rooftop does not exceed its maximum allowable telecom rooftop capacity at the time of permitting. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020021096 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 2/3/2020
Revised: 2/10/2020

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Site Name/Location: Woodmont Triangle Garage/7730 Woodmont Ave, Bethesda

Zoning Standard: CR-5.0 ***Property Owner:*** Montgomery County

Description: Remove six antennas and nine RRHs. Add nine antennas and six RRHs at 55'/56'/57'/58' on an existing 64' building.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020021099 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 2/5/2020
Revised: 2/10/2020

Applicant: AT&T Wireless

Site Name/Location: Fire Station 31/12100 Darnestown, Gaithersburg

Zoning Standard: R-200 ***Property Owner:*** Montgomery County

Description: Remove nine antennas and six RRHs. Add six antennas and nine RRHs at 151' on an existing 161' monopole.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020011071 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 1/30/2020
Revised: 2/12/2020

Applicant: AT&T Wireless

Site Name/Location: Barnhart Property/ Hawkins Crmry & Laytonsville Rd, Gaithersburg

Zoning Standard: AR ***Property Owner:*** Ruppert Family 2012 Trust

Description: Remove six antennas and three RRHs. Add six antennas and nine RRHs at 116' on an existing 125' monopole.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020021100 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 2/11/2020

Revised: 2/19/2020

Revised: 2/20/2020

Applicant: Verizon Wireless

Site Name/Location: Village Square Apartments/12011 Veirs Mill Rd, Silver Spring

Zoning Standard: R-30 ***Property Owner:*** Grossberg Louis C ET AL

Description: Remove nine antennas and six RRHs. Add six antennas and six RRHs at 46' on an existing 42' building.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020021102 ***Type:*** Minor Modification ***Received (date):*** 2/14/2020

Revised: 2/24/2020

Applicant: Sprint/Nextel

Site Name/Location: Pepco 702485-0235/ Montevideo Rd, Poolesville

Zoning Standard: AR ***Property Owner:*** Montgomery County ROW

Description: Remove and replace one antenna at the top of an existing 43'4" wood pole. Relocate the existing cabinet on the wood pole at approximately the same vertical height. Install a new equipment cabinet at ground level on a concrete platform; place one RRH and one mini macro radio inside the new ground cabinet as well as one GPS antenna on top of the proposed cabinet.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended on the condition that the applicant receives written approval from M-NCPPC's Rural Rustic Road's Program at the time of permitting. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020011080 ***Type:*** Colocation ***Received (date):*** 1/14/2020

Revised: 1/30/2020

Applicant: Sprint/Nextel

Site Name/Location: Earhart Monopole/18920 Earhart Ct, Gaithersburg

Zoning Standard: IL-1.0 ***Property Owner:*** Storage Portfolio LLC

Description: Attach six antennas and six remote radio heads (RRH) at 90' on an existing 100' monopole. Equipment to be installed within the existing storage unit rooms.

Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.

Application Number: 2020011089 ***Type:*** New ***Received (date):*** 1/29/2020

Revised: 2/25/2020

Applicant: WMATA

Site Name/Location: WMATA - Shady Grove/15903 Somerville Dr, Rockville

Zoning Standard: IM-2.5 ***Property Owner:*** Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority

Description: Construct a 200' self-supporting lattice tower and install three antennas at 193'. Install an 12' x 34' equipment shelter, a 1,000-gallon liquid propane tank, 50 kW generator and a 9' chain-link fence with barbed wire at ground level.

Notice of Action

March 5, 2020

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Tower Coordinator Recommendation: Recommended on the condition that the applicant goes through the Mandatory Referral process and receives a recommendation from the Planning Board. Recommendation is subject to compliance with all applicable laws.