



August 11, 2015

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Dear Planning Board Members,

We respectfully request that you NOT support the application for the conditional use permit to install a cell tower at 601 West Strong Street which fronts on Cervantes Street, and which is identified as a "Neighborhood Activity Corridor" and which this proposed project is to occur near 'A' Street which is a "Major Residential Gateway" in accordance with our City Planning Board, and City Council approved Westside Redevelopment Plan and Westside CRA District. A 86-foot high cell tower with all its associated mechanical equipment and outbuildings which will grow as additional antennas are added in accordance with Verizon's stated intention of leasing to additional cell companies, will forever mar this large parcel of Residential/Neighborhood Commercial property along Cervantes Street. Furthermore, it will diminish the property values of nearby existing residential homes, many which are historic, and it will cripple this area's opportunities for additional homes to be built on the vacant, scattered residential sites throughout this area. Such a cell tower installation along a major gateway into our City will also diminish the possibility of attracting new development to our commercial properties along this corridor where the Westside Redevelopment Plan identified opportunities for shops, offices, grocery stores, and other businesses to serve the many residential neighborhoods which connect to Cervantes Street. No other downtown corridor has a monopole cell tower along their street, adjacent to historic districts, or adjacent to residential neighborhoods. The installation of cell tower, will degrade the aesthetic of our neighborhood's western entrance in addition to degrading the entrance to the Westside Garden District.

In order to approve this application, the project must adhere to Sections 12-2-44, 12-2-78, 12-2-79, 12-2-81, and 12-2-82 of the municipal code which it does NOT.

Pride in the Past – Faith in the Future

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1. We ask that you review this cell tower application IAW requirements set forth in Section 12-2-78 of the Municipal code.

(D) Standards for approval

- (1) The proposed use shall be in harmony with the general purpose, goals, objectives and standards of the City of Pensacola Comprehensive Plan, the land development regulations, or any other applicable plan, program, map or regulation adopted by the city council.
 - a. *The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area for Residential/neighborhood commercial land use district which was established for the purpose of providing for a mixture of residential housing types, professional uses, and certain types of neighborhood convenience shopping retail sales and services. This tower is not a permitted use in this zoning district or identified as a use allowed in this zoning district by the Comprehensive Plan, thus the requirement to seek Conditional-Use approval. The proposed cell tower is not in harmony with the predominant land use in this area which is single family residential or meets criteria set forth in Section 12-2-7 of the Municipal Code which states that when the R-NC zone is established in older sections of the community in which by custom and tradition the intermixing of such uses (meaning residential & commercial), has been found to be necessary and desirable, the zoning regulations are intended to provide for infill development at a density, character and SCALE compatible with the surrounding area.*
This area is a historic area of single-family homes. An 86-foot high cell tower is not in character, scale, or compatible with the surrounding area.
 - b. *The proposed cell tower is NOT in harmony with the general purpose, goals, objectives of the Westside Redevelopment Plan, which was adopted by the Planning Board AND the City Council. Significant public involvement was involved in the establishment of the Westside Redevelopment Plan in the form of numerous public meetings, workshops, public hearings with stakeholders and the entire community from April 2003 through March 2007. Since that time, the plan has continuously been implemented and updated, a Tax Increment Financing and CRA district established, tax dollars spent on improvements, and a steering committee established in the form of the Westside Redevelopment Board. You may recall our most recent improvements in this area being all the tax dollars to landscape 'A' Street from Main to the city limits ending at our beloved Pensacola High School with street trees to enhance the boulevard aesthetic for this described "Major Residential Gateway". In June 2014, the City issued the "Reaffirmation of Blight Report for the Westside Community Redevelopment Area which reports about the deteriorated commercial corridor of Cervantes Street. Furthermore, this proposed cell tower application never went to the Westside Redevelopment Board for their review. As the steering committee for the redevelopment plan for this area, which reports to the City's Community Redevelopment Agency, which is comprised of our entire City Council, one would think that in addition to this Planning Board review, it would have also gone to the Westside Redevelopment Board first for their review and written recommendations to YOU to help you in your deliberations before ultimately going to the City Council upon your approval or upon appeal if denied. We reviewed the records of the Westside Redevelopment Board and spoke with members who confirmed they never were briefed on this proposed project or consulted.*
 - c. *The Westside Redevelopment Plan adopted April 2007 Future Land Use Map located on page 12, maintains the north side of Cervantes as R-NC ,and limits more intensive commercial uses of C-1 only on the south side of Cervantes for 2 blocks in the area where the Family Dollar Store was recently constructed. In this plan, "the Primary Commercial Corridor is Pace Boulevard, with Cervantes identified as a Neighborhood Activity Corridor where our neighborhoods connect to each other, which is designed to encompass mixed-use, live/work opportunities, wider pedestrian sidewalks, bike lane, traffic calming, and with the*

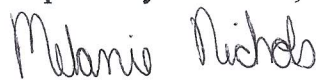
ability to utilize tax increment financing funds to finance these improvements and encourage QUALITY infill development." The stated objective the Cervantes Street Neighborhood Corridor is to "transform the functional and VISUAL character of Cervantes Street as a primary neighborhood corridor and establish the neighborhood center to stimulate quality development in the Westside Redevelopment Area; and to capitalize on the location and economic development opportunities to integrate the redevelopment area at a SCALE that is pedestrian friendly and compatible with the residential neighborhoods. Verizon's application stating that "The site appears to be situated outside relevant protected areas, such as the Airport/Military base zones, and the Downtown Districts" is inaccurate. The site is immediately adjacent to and would be within visual site of a nationally recognized 'protected' neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places and this region along 'A' street is also recognized as part of the location of American Revolutionary War battlefields sites which also has protections; and it is within the Westside CRA which is a protected district, not to mention routinely considered to be still in the Downtown District.

- (2) The proposed use will not adversely affect the public health, safety, or welfare.
 - a. *Studies have shown that 79 percent of people in the market to buy or rent a home would not do so near a cell tower or even blocks away from one. This could have a negative impact on the public's welfare in devalued home values, diminished property tax revenues, and diminished opportunities for additional redevelopment in this area. Our City Government has spent numerous tax dollars to reverse the declining population trend with the City limits and to encourage additional residents back to the City. This area compromises numerous residential lots and historic homes within site of this proposed tower.*
- (3) The proposed use shall be compatible with the surrounding area and not impose an excessive burden or have substantial negative impact on surrounding or adjacent uses.
 - a. *Excessive Burden - This tower is not compatible with the surrounding area of single-family residential homes and one small neighborhood commercial shop. It would have substantial negative impact to the adjacent home values. Professional realtors have estimated between 25 and 35% reduction in home values. According to the City's Reaffirmation of Blight Report for the Westside Community Redevelopment Area dated June 2014, "Housing values in the Redevelopment Area are nearly half those for the City as a whole. According to the 2014 estimates, the median home value in the Westside Neighborhoods is \$77,170, compared to \$146,044 for the City, accounting for a difference of nearly \$69,000 between the two markets." To further inflict harm and reduce the value of citizens' property by the installation of an industrial aesthetic of a nearby 86-foot high cell tower would be an excessive burden in our opinion on those least able to survive it.*
 - b. *Excessive Burden - The Greater Little Rock Baptist Church who wishes to lease property for the installation of the cell tower is a substantial property owner in the district with a total of 14 properties valued at over \$1.5 million, 11 of which are exempt from any taxes, 12 of which are vacant and not for sale. If the generation of additional church income is driving the desire to build a cell tower, they have the ability to sell vacant, unused property for capital, whereas as the existing residents, who are not tax exempt, must bear the burden if property values are diminished. The property owners in this Westside CRA have every right to enjoy the increased property values which WILL come and are currently being enjoyed by property owners in Pensacola's first CRA District that has been successfully managed since 1982 and has resulted in the renaissance of the highly successful Redevelopment district immediately east of this CRA district. The tax dollars to fund the Redevelopment efforts adopted by our City for this area are coming from us, the residents and taxpayers, not the church which pays NO TAXES, and is the ONE AND ONLY property owner in this district who will benefit from the lease agreement. The cell tower does not add any jobs and has no positive economic*

impact whatsoever to the neighborhood where we see a continuous area of 4G LTE cell service, with no gaps whatsoever as evidenced by numerous residents surveying the entire area around the site (north, south, east, and west). Strong 4G LTE signals were maintained throughout the area with only a minor dip in the low lying area near Main Street.

2. The requirements for the site plan have not been met in accordance with Section 12-2-79 of the Municipal Code listed in subsection (E). Items c, e, f, g, h, i, j, l, m (tower only shown, not outbuildings). Section 12-2-79 (E) c. being the BIG ONE in that it **REQUIRES a description of the need for the proposed facility, including a precise description of any area in which service would NOT be available without construction of the proposed facility.** The application lists no gap where service is not available. The application lists the "desire to build coverage, sub-lease space to additional carriers, and to improve download speeds."
3. Furthermore, also stated in the same Section 12-2-79 of the Municipal Code in subsection (E) titled Conditions in granting a conditional use permit (2) **ALL CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS SHALL INCLUDE APPROPRIATE STEALTH TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS.** There are no plans in this package for any stealth technology for the tower, outbuildings, or equipment cabinets. Numerous nationwide examples of churches installing cell towers with their steeples, crosses, and bell towers exist for your review. Such an installation would put the tower within the church's footprint and not be visible to the public, and would not destroy the commercial potential for this extensive lot fronting Cervantes Street. The Planning Board may recall the incidence with the installation of an inappropriate cell tower near Bayou Texar which set off a firestorm to adjacent residential neighborhoods and caused the City Council to enact stricter regulations for the placement of towers near neighborhoods. These stricter, enhanced codes have been in place since 2002 and call for the City to place restrictions which have NOT been met by this application.
4. This proposed project is one block outside of the North Hill Preservation District's boundary, a nationally recognized historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. The tower is an industrial aesthetic in a neighborhood of turn of the century single-family homes. It is not compatible with the surrounding area, would have an excessive burden and substantial negative impact on surrounding residential uses and the potential for future quality commercial development in this area. Our Executive Committee, who is authorized by our bylaws to conduct the emergency business of the Association between regular scheduled board meetings, convened and drafted this letter to you on August 10, 2015, with no involvement or contact with non-Executive member, Kyle Owens, who serves on your Board. We join with our nearby, sister neighborhood, the Westside Garden District and respectfully ask that you vote NO to this application. We appreciate your hard work, time, and effort that you donate as volunteers to this very important City Board. As volunteers ourselves, we understand intimately the amount of time you are giving to the City in pursuit of a better community for all residents.

Respectfully submitted,



Melanie Nichols, President

North Hill Preservation Association, Inc.

cc: NHPA Board of Directors
President, Westside Garden District

