



Parks & Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road • Longmont, Colorado 80503
303.678.6200 • Fax: 303.678.6177 • www.BoulderCountyOpenSpace.org

TO: Raini Ott, Land Use Department
FROM: Ron West, Natural Resource Planner
DATE: May 23, 2020
SUBJECT: Docket SU-20-0001, Atlas Tower, 250 Bristlecone Way

Site Conditions

Staff has reviewed the submitted materials, and visited the site on February 11. The large (35-acre) parcel is mostly in mixed conifer forest (ponderosa pine dominating) and foothills grasslands with exposed bedrock areas. The specific proposed site is in a small, ridge-top opening surrounded by forest.

County Comprehensive Plan Designations

The site has the following designations in the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan, and from other resource inventories.

- None

Discussion

Staff has a number of concerns with the proposal. Based on the information provided in the application, the tower appears to be speculative. The elevation drawings show four sets of “Future Antennas *By Others*” (emphases added). Are there secured customers for the tower? For the tower itself, it’s described as a “Proposed 85’ Monopine Tower By Atlas Tower. *Manufacturer To Be Determined.*” If the vendor for the faux pine is unknown, what is the tower actually going to look like?

The tower seems to be proposed at 85 feet solely to allow 4 carriers. Why not build it at, say, 50 feet, and allow 2 carriers? (Or any other number of variations?) At 85 feet, the faux pine will rise 35 to 40 feet above the surrounding mature pines. It will not, as the application states, “...blend in with the surrounding mature evergreen trees thus mitigating any undue visual impacts....”

The application must include visual simulations for what the tower would look like from surrounding public road rights-of-way and nearby private parcels.

There’s an existing underground water easement and a gravel road to the site; is there an easement for the applicant’s access? A buried power supply, offset an unknown distance from the water line, would be necessary though none is indicated.

The application states that it will “provide critical wireless coverage.” Why is it critical; how is this be defined? Also, “the capacity of the closest infrastructure is reaching its limit.” Where is this, and what is its limit?

It’s stated that the “parcel itself is [already] extensively developed.” This is incorrect; there is a house and a water tank, on 35 acres.

The alternative analysis is incomplete; two other sites were examined in the application. What coverage metrics were used to conclude that these sites “failed?” There is no coverage map for the proposed location, for comparison.

The application states that, “There is not an existing tower in the area that covers the desired terrain.” The Lee Hill towers are 2.5 miles away, yet they are not mentioned. Why don’t they cover the desired terrain? The “desired terrain” itself is not even defined nor shown on a map.

The alternative discussion states that “our need [is to] provide the most expansive coverage to the Pine Brook Hills Subdivision *while adding coverage to other nearby areas* thus eliminating the need for another telecommunications tower in the immediate area” (emphasis added). What *is* the desired terrain, and are future towers being considered for other locations?

Staff has identified at least seven other alternative sites in the local area, all surrounding the Pine Brook Hills subdivision. None of the locations was included in the alternatives analysis.

Recommendations

- The above discussion items need to be addressed before the application can be deemed complete.