



# STAFF REPORT

## Historic Preservation Commission

February 22, 2021

HPCA-20-00176

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**Agenda Item:** VI.D.8.

**Case Number:** HPCA-20-00176

**Property Address:** 4020 N Western Ave.

**District:** Crown Heights Historic District

**Applicant:** Verticom  
Victor McAlister  
2817 S Ann Arbor Blvd  
Oklahoma City, OK 73128

**Owner:** Cierra Merino  
Verizon Wireless  
12223 State Farm Blvd  
Tulsa, OK 74117

### A. CASE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Install 30 foot +/- tall, black, metal small cell pole in streetscape (elective).

### B. BACKGROUND

#### 1. Project Description

The applicant proposes to install a “small cell” or wireless facility on the east side of N. Western Avenue in the public right of way.

#### 2. Location

Project site is located on the east side of N. Western, between NW 39<sup>th</sup> and NW 40<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### 3. Site History

*Date of Construction:* N/A

*Zoned Historic Preservation/Historical Landmark:* 1977

*National Register Listing:* 1995

*Additional Information:*

None relevant.

#### 4. Existing Conditions

The proposed site is adjacent to the Crown Heights Christian Church, just south of the main entrance to the church between the public sidewalk and parking lot. Existing features in the area include decorative street lights and other utility poles, flag poles at the church property, a monument sign for the church, various traffic signs, and street trees.

## 5. Previous Actions

None relevant.

## C. ITEMS IN COMPLIANCE

*Unless noted below in Section D., Issues and Considerations, all other case items of this proposal comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020.\**

None.

## D. ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

*This proposal may not comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020\* as referenced below:*

### 1. Item 1, Install 30 foot +/- tall, black, metal small cell pole in streetscape (elective)

- a. Description: the applicant proposes to install a 30 foot tall, black metal “stealth” pole to serve as a small wireless facility. The pole is proposed with a 6 foot tall base that is 1’6” in diameter, topped by an 8” diameter pole. The “antenna” at the top of the pole is 2’6” in diameter and approximately 6 feet tall. The pole will sit on a small concrete pad in the grass. No other above-ground installations are indicated as part of the proposed work.
- b. References: *Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts*

### 2.9 Public Property and Right-Of-Way Improvements

**Policy:** The public spaces within historic districts; for example streets, sidewalks, parks and parkways; are character-defining features and should be preserved and maintained. The City of Oklahoma City, utility and telecommunication companies, historic property residents, and historic property owners all play roles in maintaining these features; and the introduction of new features should be as compatible as possible with the historic districts.

**Design Justification:** The existing concrete streets and sidewalks are important character defining features of the city’s historic districts. The introduction of new elements in the districts such as utility meters, small wireless facilities, switching boxes or postal service mailboxes should be carefully considered for compatibility with the streetscapes and overall character of the historic properties and districts.

**Sustainability Justification:** Maintaining parks and parkways provides permeable ground surface for rain absorption and plants for carbon dioxide generation and publicly accessible shade.

- 2.9.1: By definition, streetscape improvements are actions beyond maintenance and have the potential to alter important characteristics of the site and setting of a historic district and property. Whenever new materials, components, or features are proposed, there will likely be sustainability

considerations.

- 2.9.2: Plans for any proposed changes to or in the public right of way in or surrounding historic districts or properties, including those of telecommunications or utility providers and changes to street locations and sizes, must be submitted for review and approval using the standard application and process for a Certificate of Appropriateness.
  - 2.9.3: Planning Department staff will determine the impact on the character of the historic property and district, compatibility with preservation policy and the provisions of these Standards and Guidelines, and compliance with the applicable portions of the Historic Preservation Ordinance included in Chapter 59 of the Municipal Code.
  - 2.9.4: Utility components such as meters, transformers, switching boxes, small wireless facilities and other such elements must be located at the back of properties as far away as possible from sidewalks, curbs and curb cuts; of minimal height; designed to blend with the immediate environment and screened with appropriately scaled landscaping where feasible; unless the function of a component requires it to be in a visible location. When the function of a component requires it to be in a visible location, it should be located so as not to create a hazard for vehicular or pedestrian traffic, and should be designed to minimize visual impact, such as by matching the material, finish and color of existing, appropriate features within the block or district.
  - 2.9.11: Some proposed actions could have more drastic effects on the appearance of a historic site or district as a whole. These actions require the filing of an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness and review by the Historic Preservation Commission.
- c. Considerations: The proposed location is not located at the back of a property as far away as possible from the sidewalk or curb and is of a size and shape that screening with landscaping is not feasible. The proposed structure utilizes a design that attempts to blend in with other materials in the surrounding historic area, such as decorative streetlights. The applicant indicates that this is the only feasible location within the public right of way that meets a range of requirements, including coordination with other utilities in the right of way and being able to provide wireless service (coverage) where needed.

The proposed location is more visible than the Guidelines encourage; however, the location is adjacent to a non-historic parking lot and already contains several other utility poles and other installations. The width of the street and expanse of space between the surrounding structures may mitigate the visual impact of introducing a pole in this location.

- d. Recommended Specific Findings:
1. That the proposed location does not meet relevant Guidelines addressing location, visibility, and screening;

2. That the proposed location has been indicated by the applicant as the only feasible location for this equipment in order to provide this service;
3. That this location includes several existing conditions that may mitigate the impact of the installation, including previously existing poles and a large amount of open space.

**E. HPCA-20-00176 STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **Approve Item 1, Install 30 foot +/- tall, black, metal small cell pole in streetscape with Unique Circumstances** with the specific findings that the proposed work will not have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district or property; that the following **unique circumstances** exist; that the items do not strictly comply with all relevant Standards and Guidelines or are not addressed by them, but are nonetheless consistent with the spirit and intent of the Standards and Guidelines and are in compliance with the relevant sections of the Municipal Code, 2020\*, as referenced in the Staff Report.

**Specific Findings:**

1. That the proposed location does not meet relevant Guidelines addressing location, visibility, and screening;
2. That the proposed location has been indicated by the applicant as the only feasible location for this equipment in order to provide this service;
3. That this location includes several existing conditions that may mitigate the impact of the installation, including previously existing poles and a large amount of open space.

**Unique Circumstance:**

- 1) That the proposed location does not meet relevant Guidelines but is indicated to be the most feasible location with the least impact to the historic character of the district.

*Note: Staff recommendation does not constitute Commission action.*

*\*Relevant Sections of the Municipal Code governing HP/HL Districts are: §59.3300.1-5; §59.4150.4; §59.4250; §59.7250.1-4; §59.7300.1-7; §59.12200.1-4; §59.13300.1-6.*

*Copies of the Standards/Guidelines and Relevant Sections of the Municipal Code, 2020 are available online at [www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html](http://www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html) ; at Planning Department offices located at 420 W. Main, 9<sup>th</sup> floor, and each HP Commission Meeting.*

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