

# TOWN OF OAK RIDGE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD

SP-21-03 P&Z Hearing Date: December 16th, 2021

Communications Tower Group, LLC Ballantyne One, 15720 Brixham Hill Avenue, Suite 300, Charlotte, NC 28277 (Dale Finocchi, Representative) is submitting a site plan for approval of a new Stealth Wireless Communications Facility (Monopine Tower) and associated equipment.

The property (2309 Oak Ridge Rd.) is located at the intersection of Highway 68 and Oak Ridge Rd. Being Guilford County Tax Parcel 166211 consisting of approximately 39 acres, Zoned PI (Public and Institutional), Scenic Corridor Overlay Greensboro (GW-III) watershed. Owned by Oak Ridge Foundation Inc.



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Map Scale  
1 inch = 333 feet  
1:33,300



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## Staff comments:

This is a technical review only. Wireless telecommunications facilities are permitted in the PI (Public and Institutional zoning district provided they meet all development standards. Please see below for staff comments.

Sec. 30-1096. - Wireless communications facility.

### (a) *Where required:*

- (1) AG, GB, GO-M, HB, CP, LI, HI, and PI districts: Stealth design or camouflage design required.
- (2) All other districts: Camouflage design required.
- (3) Scenic corridor overlay district: Camouflage design required.

**Staff comment:** *In the PI zoning district, stealth design and or camouflage design is required. Since this location is also within the Scenic corridor overlay district: Camouflage design is required. Please see next section for a definitions of stealth and camouflage design.*

### (b) *Definitions:*

- (1) *Stealth design:* Wireless communications facilities that use alternative mounting structures rather than tower mounts.
- (2) *Camouflage design:* Wireless communication facilities that, in the judgment of the planning and zoning board, do not have discernible antennas or ground mounted equipment, and have support structures and infrastructure that could be reasonably expected to exist regardless of the presence of a wireless communications facility.

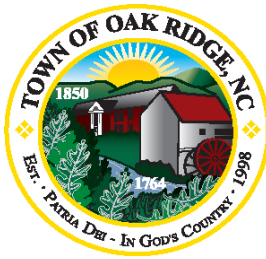
**Staff comment:** *The applicant has chosen to construct Pine branches on the tower to camouflage the facility. Existing vegetation will completely screen the view of the equipment enclosure from public right-of-way and neighboring properties.*

### (c) *Additional standards:*

- (1) The principal use of the structure to be used for the placement of the antenna shall be for a use not associated with the wireless communications facility as determined by the planning and zoning board, unless the structure is a new support structure designed to mimic structures normally expected to occur within a given built environment. Examples include antennas attached to water towers, telephone/power poles, power transmission lines, sign support structures, and similar structures or uses which create no additional visual obtrusions, and which appear in context within a given landscape. New support structures designed to mimic structures normally expected to occur within a given built environment must appear, in the judgment of the Oak Ridge Planning and Zoning Board, in appropriate context with respect to the landscape.

**Staff comment:** *The applicant is constructing a new support structure, so the last sentence of the previous paragraph applies to this application. Pine trees are prevalent in the vicinity of the proposed facility; therefore it seems that the structure appears in appropriate context with respect to the landscape. A detailed photo simulation of the proposed facility has been provided for the Board's consideration.*

- (2) In addition to the height limitations of the underlying zoning district, the antennas mounted on alternative mounting structures shall conform to the following requirements:



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- a. All panel antenna shall be no more than five feet measured to the outermost point of the panel antenna from any surface of the existing structure at the point of attachment;
- b. All whip antenna shall be no more than ten feet measured to the tip of the whip antenna above the mounting surface of the existing structure at the point of attachment; and
- c. All parabolic or dish antenna shall be no more than five feet measured to the outermost point of the dish from any surface of the existing structure at the point of attachment.

**Staff comment:** *The applicant is proposing a new support structure, as opposed to an alternative mounting structure. Therefore, this section is not applicable. However, antennas that are clearly visible would likely not be consistent with the definition of a camouflage facility.*

- (3) Equipment enclosures shall be camouflaged or screened from view by a Type A landscape yard or other such measures that appear, in the judgment of the planning board, to provide equal or better performance in providing screening of the equipment enclosure.

**Staff comment:** *The equipment enclosure will be screened from view by existing vegetation and a proposed landscape plan surrounding the impacted area. This appears to provide equal or better performance in providing screening of the equipment enclosure.*

- (4) Where a buffer is provided to camouflage the wireless communications facility, the buffer shall remain undisturbed until the wireless communications facility is removed, except for any access drives and utilities necessary for the wireless communications facility and other improvements or timbering activities that do not alter the visual effect of the buffer as determined by the planning and zoning board.

**Staff comment:** *The installation of landscaping around the equipment enclosure will provide for a undisturbed buffer should any future development occur on the property. Vegetation located off-site cannot be guaranteed to remain.*

- (5) If the camouflaged wireless communications facility is intended to have the appearance of vegetation native to the North Carolina Piedmont, the wireless communications facility shall be located and designed so as to appear to be a naturally occurring tree which is not noticeably dissimilar to nearby vegetation in terms of height, scale, texture, or color.

**Staff comment:** *The applicant's proposed facility is 180 feet tall. The trees in the vicinity are roughly 65 and 116 feet tall. Photo simulations have been provided for the Board's consideration.*

- (d) *[Information request.]* The planning and zoning board may request information from the applicant sufficient to make a determination if the proposed facility meets the definition of a stealth or camouflage facility. This information could include, but is not limited to, a digital or artist's rendering of the proposed facility, an on-site balloon test to approximate height and visibility, or examples of similar facilities at other locations.

- (e) *[Site plan requirement.]* A site plan meeting the standards of appendix 2 shall be required for all wireless communications facility requests. Stealth design and camouflage design facilities incorporated into existing structures must satisfy all applicable North Carolina Building Code requirements.

**Staff comment:** *The site plan as presented contains several omissions that were communicated to the applicant but not included on the set distributed to the Board. Those omissions include the Tree Survey of the Property and the type of vegetative tree that is similar to the prevalent trees on the property. The applicant will be providing a revised set including these details at the P&Z meeting. Otherwise, the site plan as presented meets the requirements of the Oak Ridge Development Ordinance, pending the Board's approval of all discretionary items in the preceding section of the staff report.*



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- (f) *[Prior tower approval.]* Any existing tower or any tower approved for erection on or before the effective date of this amendment is exempt from nonconforming use of land and nonconforming structure provisions in subsections 30-303(b) and (c).

**Staff comment:** Not applicable.

**Staff recommendation:** Pending the resolution of items noted in the staff report and pending any discretionary decisions of the P&Z Board as noted in the staff report (appearance of the faux tree, effective screening, etc.), staff recommends **conditional-approval until all technical and discretionary requirements are met as set forth by the Planning and Zoning Board.**