



**Marion County
Board of County Commissioners**

Growth Services

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**PLANNING & ZONING SECTION
STAFF REPORT**

P&ZC Date: 11/24/2025	BCC Date: 12/15/2025
Case Number:	251201SU
CDP-AR:	33433
Type of Case:	Special Use Permit for a new 185' monopole cell tower and ground equipment.
Owner	4C Family Trust, LLC (Thomas Conrad)
Applicant	'verticalbridge' c/o Dan Ausley
Street Address	No Site Address
Parcel Number	16066-002-01
Property Size	±20.00-acres (Leased space for cell tower, 10,000 sq. ft.)
Future Land Use	Commercial (COM)
Zoning Classification	Community Business (B-2)
Overlay Zone/Scenic Area	Primary Springs Protection Overlay Zone (PSPOZ)
Staff Recommendation	Approval with Conditions
P&ZC Recommendation	TBD
Project Planner	Kenneth Odom, Transportation Planner
Related Case(s)	None

I. ITEM SUMMARY

Dan Ausley, on behalf 'verticalbridge', has filed an application for a special use permit to allow for a new 185' monopole cell tower and associated ground equipment (see Attachment A), on property owned by The 4C Land Trust, LLC. Figure 1 is an aerial photograph showing the location of the subject property. The Property Identification Number associated with the property is 16606-002-01, the site currently has no address, and the legal description is displayed on the deed included as part of the application. The subject property is located within the Silver Springs Primary Protection Overlay Zone (SSPPOZ) and is also within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

Figure 1
Aerial Photograph of Subject Property



II. STAFF SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS** due to the request being consistent with the Marion County Comprehensive Plan, compatible with the surrounding area, and will not adversely affect the public interest specified in Section VI.B. of this Staff Report. The recommended conditions are being imposed to address compliance with the requirements in LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B.

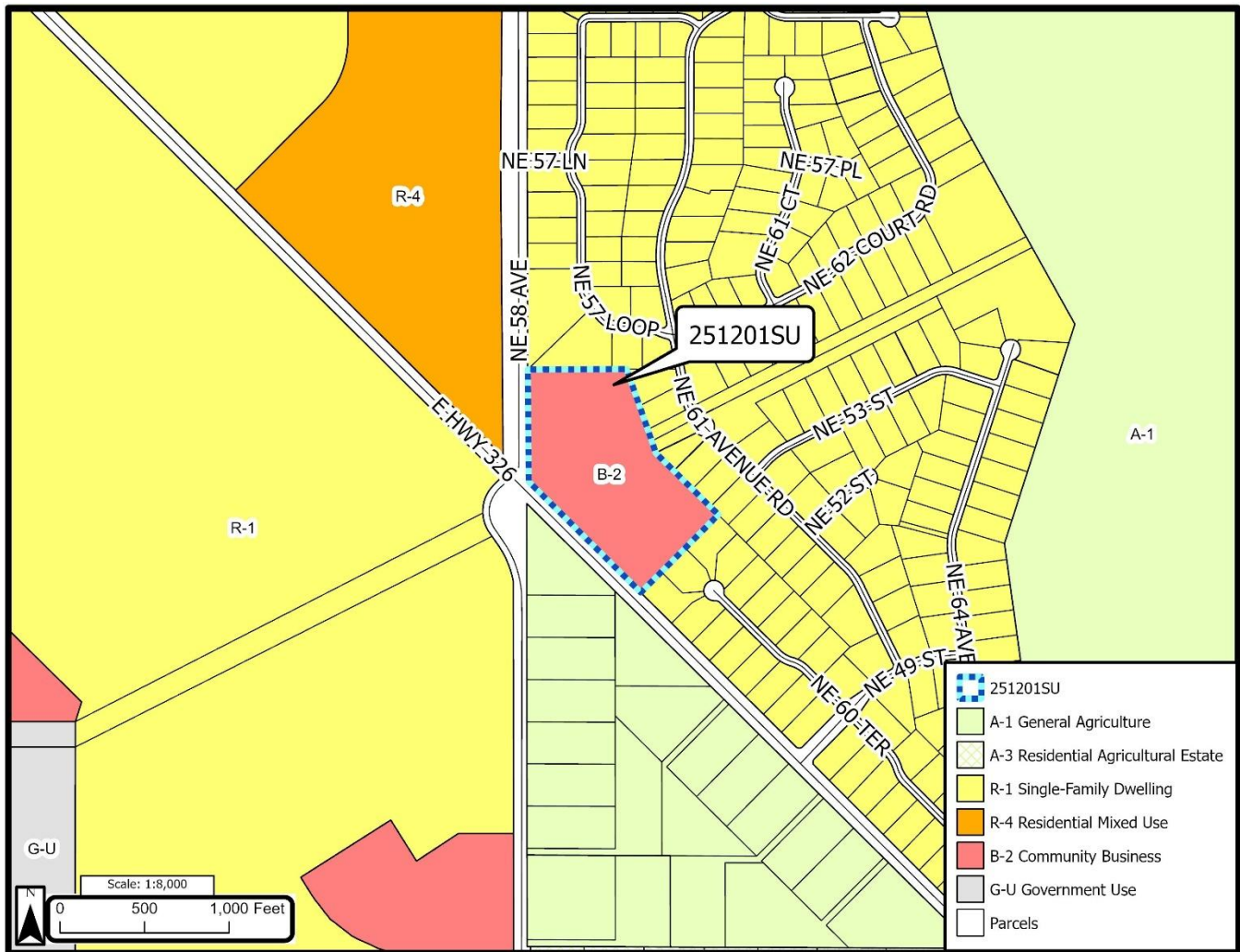
III. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Growth Services Director has interpreted the requirements of Land Development Code (LDC) Sections 2.7.3.C and 2.7.3.B to apply to SUP applications. LDC Section 2.7.3.C requires notice of public hearing be mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the subject property, and notice was mailed to (34) property owners on October 10, 2024. As of the date of the initial distribution of this staff report, no letters of opposition or support have been received. Consistent with LDC Section 2.7.3.B., public notice was posted on the subject property on November 12th, 2025 and consistent with LDC Section 2.8.3.E. due public notice was published in the Ocala Star-Banner on October 13, 2025. Evidence of the above-described public notices are on file with the Growth Services Department and is incorporated herein by reference.

IV. BACKGROUND/CHARACTER OF THE AREA

- A. *Existing site conditions.* Figure 2 provides zoning classification information, while Figure 3 shows the FLUMS designation for the area. Table 1 outlines the existing uses of the surrounding area, while Figure 4 illustrates those uses in relation to the subject property. As illustrated, the subject property is currently listed as Agricultural Acreage, specifically Silviculture, by the MCPA's office. The surrounding area is a mix of vacant and improved residential uses and conservation lands. The Silver Meadows subdivision lies to the north and east, Silver Springs Farms to the south, and Florida conservation lands to the west. The site is listed as a Timber Class IV use by the Marion County Property Appraiser, but the site has been harvested and is only lightly wooded at this time.
- B. *Zoning district map.* Figure 2 shows the subject property designated as Community Business (B-2), with all other surrounding properties being of residential uses in A-1, R-1, or R-4.

Figure 2
Zoning Classification



- C. *FLUMS designation.* Figure 3 is the FLUMS and shows the subject property as Commercial (COM). This land use designation is intended to provide for mixed-use development focused on retail, office, and community business opportunities to meet the daily needs of the surrounding residential areas, and allows for mixed residential development as a primary use or commercial uses with or without residential uses. The density range shall be up to eight (8) dwelling units per one (1) gross acre and a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 1.0, as further defined in the LDC. This land use designation is allowed in the Urban Area and allows for campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks (RVP).

Figure 3
Future Land Use Map Series

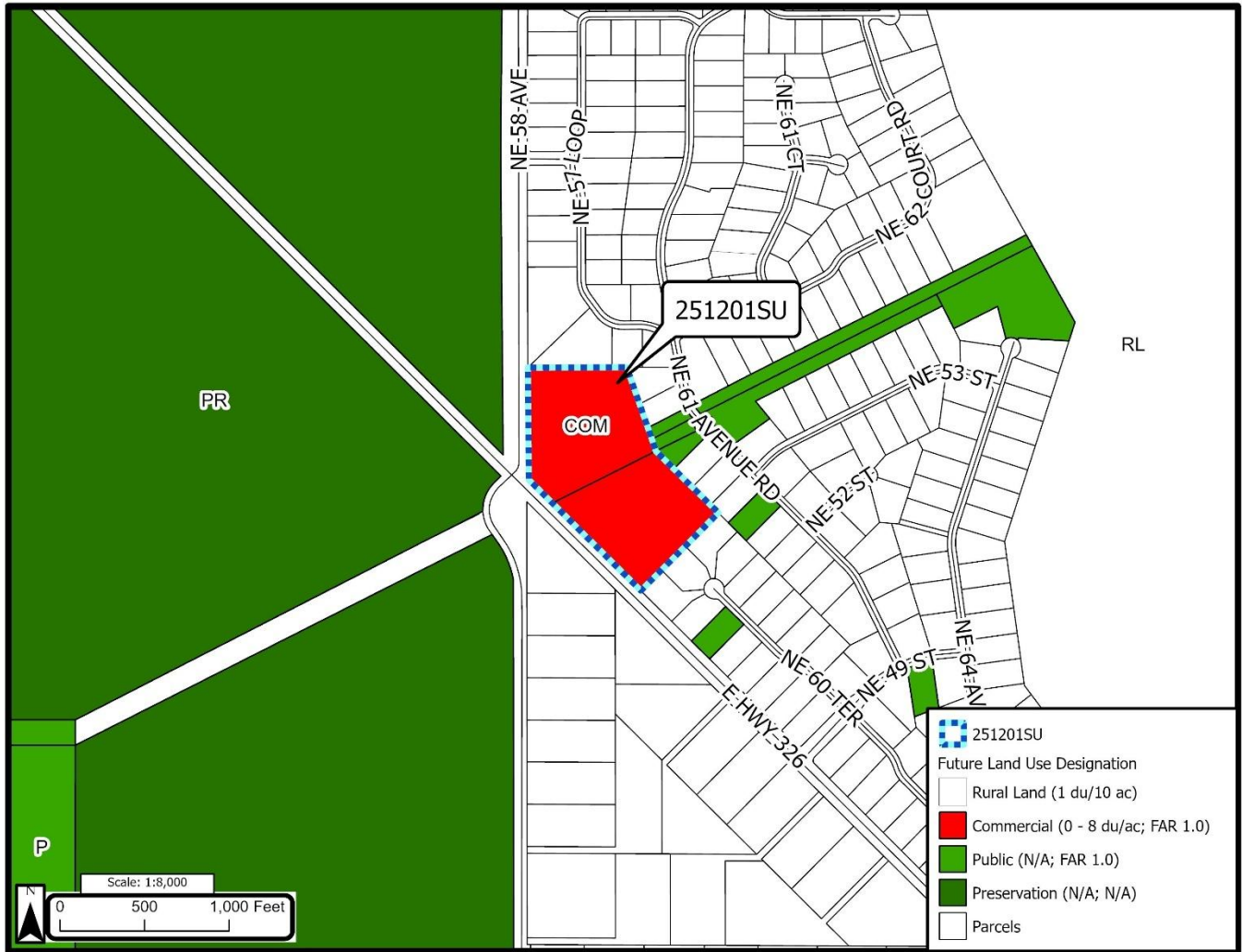


TABLE 1. ADJACENT PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

Direction	FLUMS	Zoning	Existing Use
Site	Commercial (COM)	Community Business (B-2)	Timber Class IV
North	Rural Land (RL)	Single-Family Dwelling (R-1)	Improved Residential
South	Rural Land (RL)	Single-Family Dwelling (R-1)	Improved Residential
East	Rural Land (RL) & Public (P)	General Agriculture (A-1)	Improved & Vacant Residential
West	Preservation (PR)	General Agriculture (A-1)	State Property

Figure 4
MCPA Property Uses

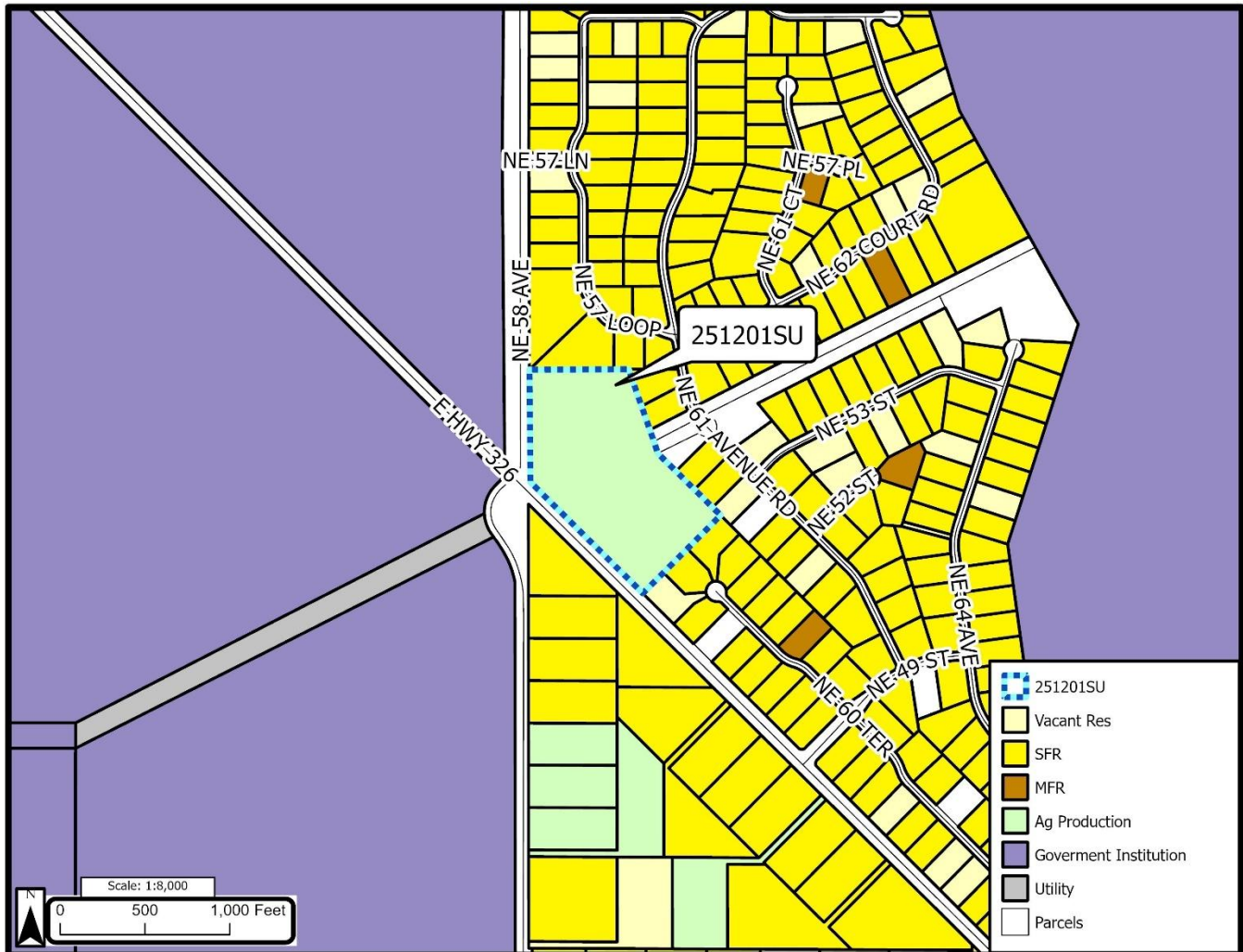


Figure 5
Conceptual Plan

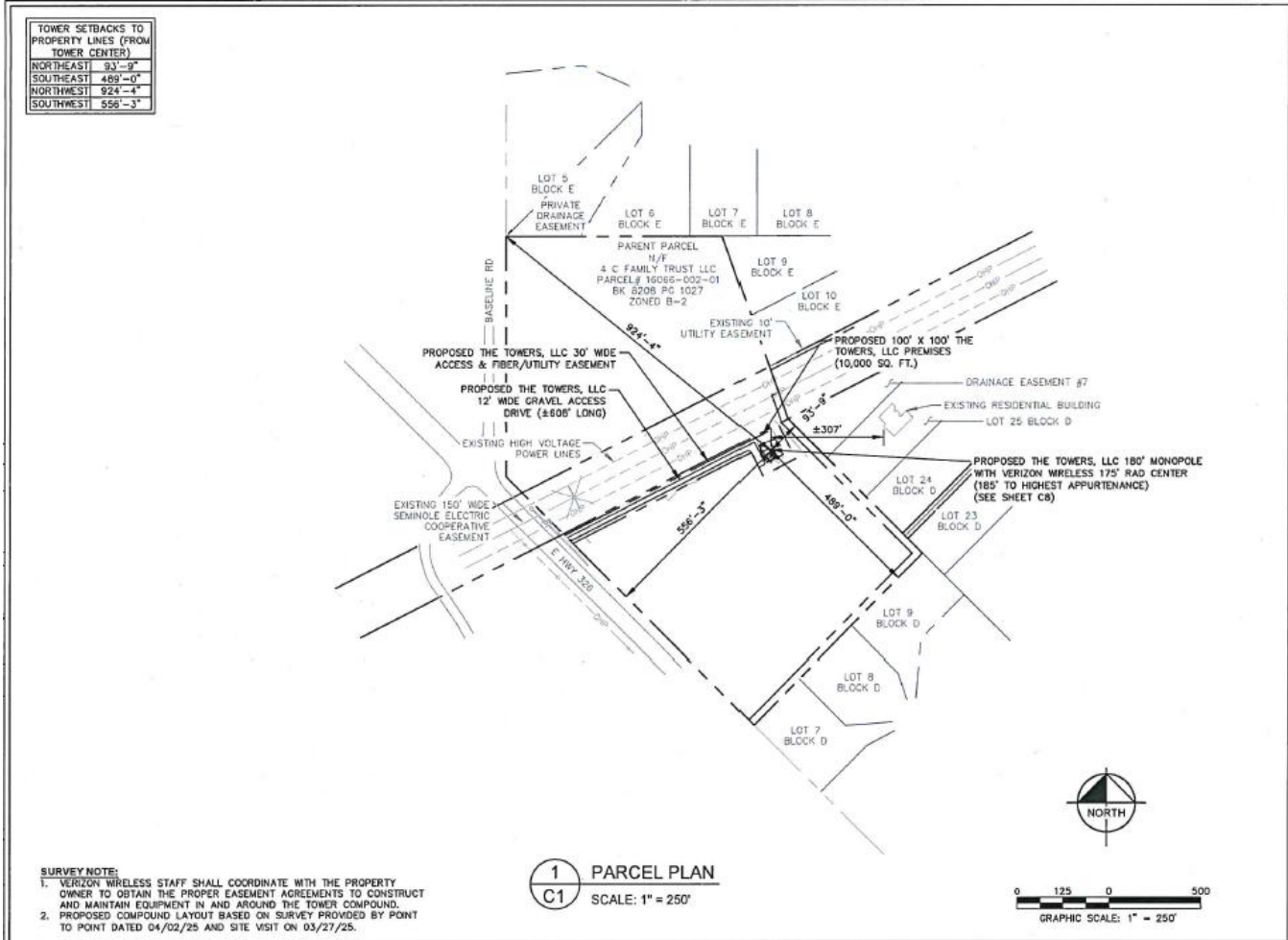
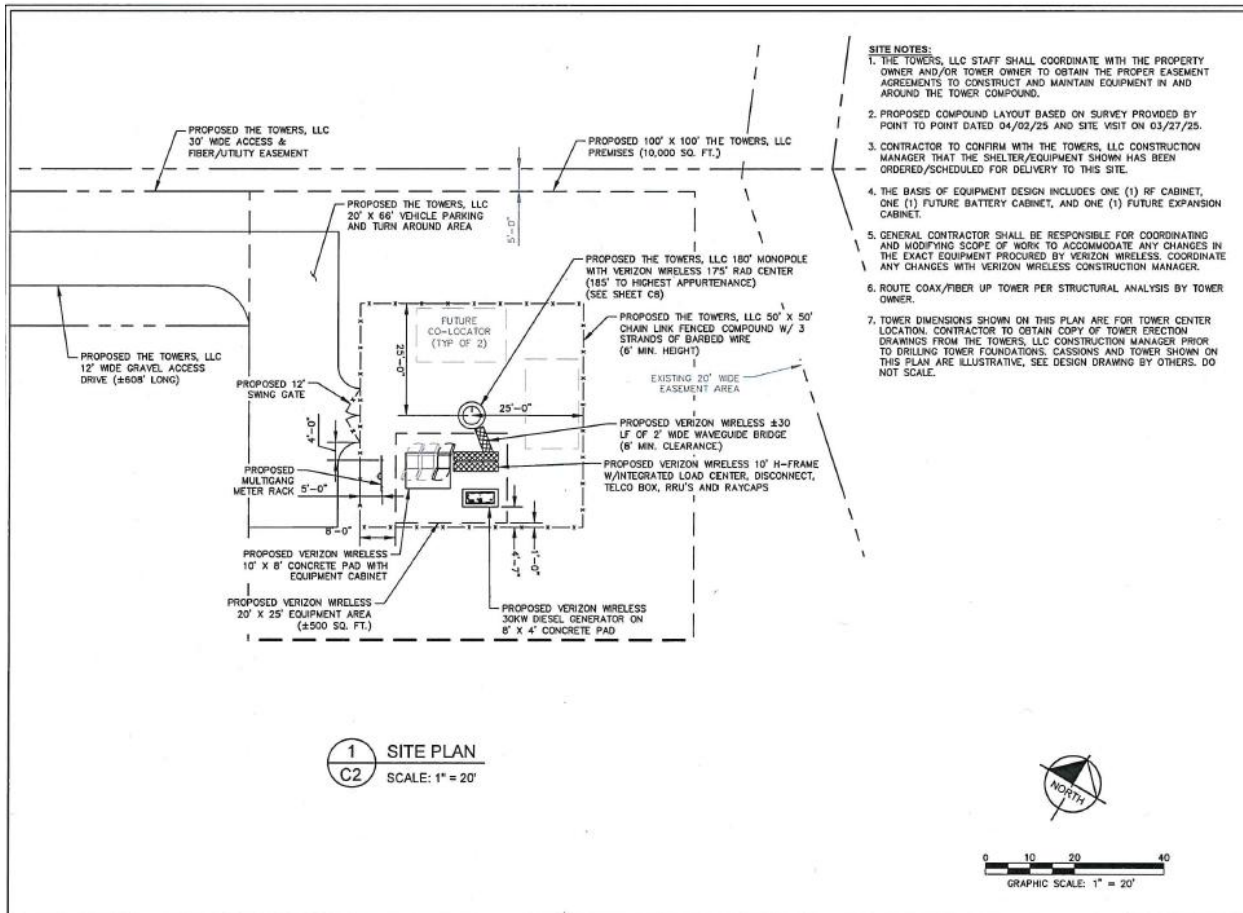


Figure 5A



V. ANALYSIS

LDC Section 2.8.2.D provides that in making a recommendation to the Board, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall make a written finding that the SUP addresses nine (9) specific requirements. LDC Section 2.8.3.B requires consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Staff's analysis of compliance with these ten (10) requirements is addressed below.

- A. *Provision for **ingress and egress** to property and proposed structures thereon with particular reference to automotive and pedestrian safety and convenience, traffic flow and control, and access in case of fire or catastrophe.*

Analysis: Access to the proposed tower compound will be via a 30-foot recorded access easement extending from the public right-of-way along the south side of the existing power line. The access drive will be improved with a stabilized surface and a turning radius sufficient to accommodate emergency vehicles, including fire apparatus, in accordance with Marion County Fire Rescue standards. The easement will be maintained year-round to ensure reliable access for maintenance personnel and emergency responders. No pedestrian traffic is expected beyond

authorized personnel. A driveway apron on the property that meets OCE's standards of development shall be required. Staff concludes that the application is **consistent** with provisions for ingress and egress.

- A driveway apron onto the property that meets OCE's standards of development shall be required.

- B. *Provision for **off-street parking and loading areas**, where required, with particular attention to the items in (1) above and the economic, noise, glare, or odor effects of the SUP on adjoining properties and properties generally in the surrounding area.*

A stabilized parking and turnaround area will be provided at the western edge of the fenced compound, sufficient to accommodate a maintenance vehicle or service truck. Because the site is unmanned, traffic is limited to periodic maintenance visits. All construction activity will occur during daylight hours and comply with Marion County's noise control regulations. After construction, the facility will generate no noise, glare, or odor. The tower is below FAA lighting thresholds, and no exterior lighting is proposed other than that required by applicable codes.

- C. *Provisions for **refuse and service area**, with particular reference to the items in (1) and (2) above.*

Analysis: This facility is an unmanned site and will not generate solid waste. Routine maintenance does not require on-site storage of refuse or hazardous materials. Any temporary construction debris will be removed upon project completion. The application is **consistent** with this provision.

- D. *Provision for **utilities**, with reference to locations, availability, and compatibility.*

Analysis: Electric service, provided by Ocala Electric, and telecommunications backhaul will be extended underground from the right-of-way to the compound, within dedicated utility easements. No overhead utilities are proposed. The utility route avoids environmentally sensitive areas and will be designed to meet county requirements for separation from existing utilities and drainage features. Staff concludes the application is **consistent** with the provision of utilities.

- E. *Provision for **screening and buffering** of dissimilar uses and of adjacent properties where necessary.*

Analysis: The compound will be enclosed by an 8-foot chain-link fence with barbed wire for security. Landscaping will be installed in accordance with the Marion County Land Development Code

buffering requirements, using native or drought-tolerant species to provide visual screening of ground equipment. The monopole will be finished in a galvanized or

neutral color to minimize visual contrast with the sky. The following condition is also imposed.

- A planted buffer around the control fenced perimeter of the control building shall be installed. This buffer shall be a minimum of four feet wide, and around the outside perimeter of the fence around the tower compound shall be established. The area shall be planted with a hedge of native or ornamental evergreen shrubs at least 30 inches in height at planting and capable of growing to at least 40 inches in height within the first growing season.
This buffer shall also adhere to all additional requirements as established in Marion County Land Development Code Sec. 4.3.25 Telecommunication Towers and Antennas E.(1)(c)(4) Landscapes and Buffers.
- This buffer shall also adhere to all additional requirements as established in Marion County Land Development Code Sec. 4.3.25 Telecommunication Towers and Antennas E.(1)(c)(4) Landscapes and Buffers

F. *Provision for **signs**, if any, and exterior lighting with consideration given to glare, traffic safety, economic effects, and compatibility and harmony with properties in the surrounding area.*

Analysis: Only regulatory signage as required by Marion County, the FAA, and the FCC will be posted at the compound gate. No advertising signage is proposed. No exterior lighting is planned except for code-required security lighting, which will be motion-activated and downward-directed to avoid light spillover to adjacent properties. It is concluded that the application is **consistent** with the signs and exterior lighting requirements of this section.

- A photometric plan shall be provided during the Development Review Phase if additional lighting is proposed to be added to the site.

G. *Provision for **required yards and other green space**.*

Analysis: The facility is designed to meet or exceed all required setbacks for the B-2 district. The monopole is engineered with an intentional break-point design such that, in the highly unlikely event of a structural failure, the monopole will collapse within the leased compound area. This ensures the "fall zone" remains entirely contained on site and does not encroach on adjacent properties. Green space around the compound will remain vegetated, and the surrounding property will otherwise be undisturbed.

H. *Provision for general **compatibility** with adjacent properties and other properties in the surrounding area.*

Analysis: Compatibility is defined in Chapter 163.3164(9) of the Florida Statutes, under the Community Planning Act, as “a condition in which land uses or conditions can coexist in relative proximity to each other in a stable fashion over time such that no use or condition is unduly negatively impacted directly or indirectly by another use or condition.”

Figure 1 is an aerial photograph displaying existing and surrounding properties. Figure 4 displays the same properties based on their use code per the Marion County Property Appraiser. The lot is larger than those surrounding it and includes both the necessary fall radius and heavy vegetation to screen the site from neighboring properties. If approved, a minor site plan review will be required through the Development Review Committee (DRC) to further ensure compatibility is being met by the proposed development. To assist in mitigating any sort of incompatibility, staff recommends the following conditions

- This communications tower site shall be developed consistent with the proposed conceptual plan.
- The Special Use Permit runs with the 4C Family Trust, LLC, and not the property.

Additionally, Table 2 below shows the required separations as provided in LDC Sec. 4.3.25. Separations from the cell tower relative to the surrounding area are all being met.

TABLE 2. CELL TOWER SEPARATIONS				
Separation Type	North	South	East	West
Required (Property Lines)	185'	185'	185'	185'
Required (Residences)	276'	276'	276'	276'
Provided	505'	489'	307'	556'

- I. *Provision for meeting any **special requirements** required by the site analysis for the particular use involved.*

Analysis: Staff notes that, unlike a variance, which runs with the land and is recorded in the public records, a special use permit is not recorded. As a result, a subsequent owner will not have notice of the requirements. The subject property will require a site plan review before additional development commences. The site plan will ensure that the development is consistent with the Land Development Code. Staff concludes that no special requirements are needed beyond the conditions provided in this report.

J. *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.*

1. Policy 2.1.5: **Permitted & Special Uses** – The county shall identify permitted and special uses for each land use designation and zoning classification, as further defined in the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning, and LDC.

Analysis: LDC Section 4.3.25(D) allows for Special Use Permits for telecommunication towers. Within section 4.3.25(C), towers exceeding 150' in height must apply for a special use permit. Thus, the application is **consistent** with FLUE Policy 2.1.5.

Based on the above findings, staff concludes the SUP is consistent with LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B, even with the provided conditions to attempt to address the ten (10) requirements imposed.

VI. ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, and make a recommendation to the Commission to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **DENY** the special use permit.
- B. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, amend the findings and conclusions contained herein so as to support the approval of the Ordinance with amended conditions, and make a recommendation to the Commission to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **APPROVE WITH AMENDED CONDITIONS** the special use permit.
- C. Enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, identify any additional data and analysis needed to support a recommendation on the proposed Ordinance, and make a recommendation to the Commission to **TABLE** the application for up to two months in order to provide the identified data and analysis needed to make an informed recommendation on the proposed Ordinance.

VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Staff recommends the Board enter into the record the Staff Report and all other competent substantial evidence presented at the hearing, and make a recommendation to adopt a proposed Ordinance to **APPROVE AS CONDITIONED** the special use permit based on compatibility in the area, compliance with the Comprehensive Plan, and a lack of adverse impacts to the surrounding area.
- B. To address compliance with LDC Sections 2.8.2.D and 2.8.3.B, the following conditions are imposed in the event that the Board chooses to agree with staff recommendation and approve the special use with conditions:

1. A driveway apron onto the property that meets OCE's standards of development shall be required.
2. A planted buffer around the control fenced perimeter of the control building shall be installed. This buffer shall be a minimum of four feet wide, and around the outside perimeter of the fence around a tower compound shall be established. The area shall be planted with a hedge of native or ornamental evergreen shrubs at least 30 inches in height at planting and capable of growing to at least 40 inches in height within the first growing season.
3. This buffer shall also adhere to all additional requirements as established in Marion County Land Development Code Sec. 4.3.25 Telecommunication Towers and Antennas E.(1)(c)(4) Landscapes and Buffers
4. A photometric plan shall be provided during the Development Review Phase if additional lighting is proposed to be added to the site.
5. This communications tower site shall be developed consistent with the proposed conceptual plan.
6. The Special Use Permit runs with the 4C Family Trust, LLC, and not the property.

VIII. PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

To be determined.

IX. BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ACTION

To be determined.

X. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

- A. SUP application.
- B. Site Photos.