

Verizon/Sequoia Deployment Communication
Tower

PLN25-0133; CUP25-0009; EI25-0001

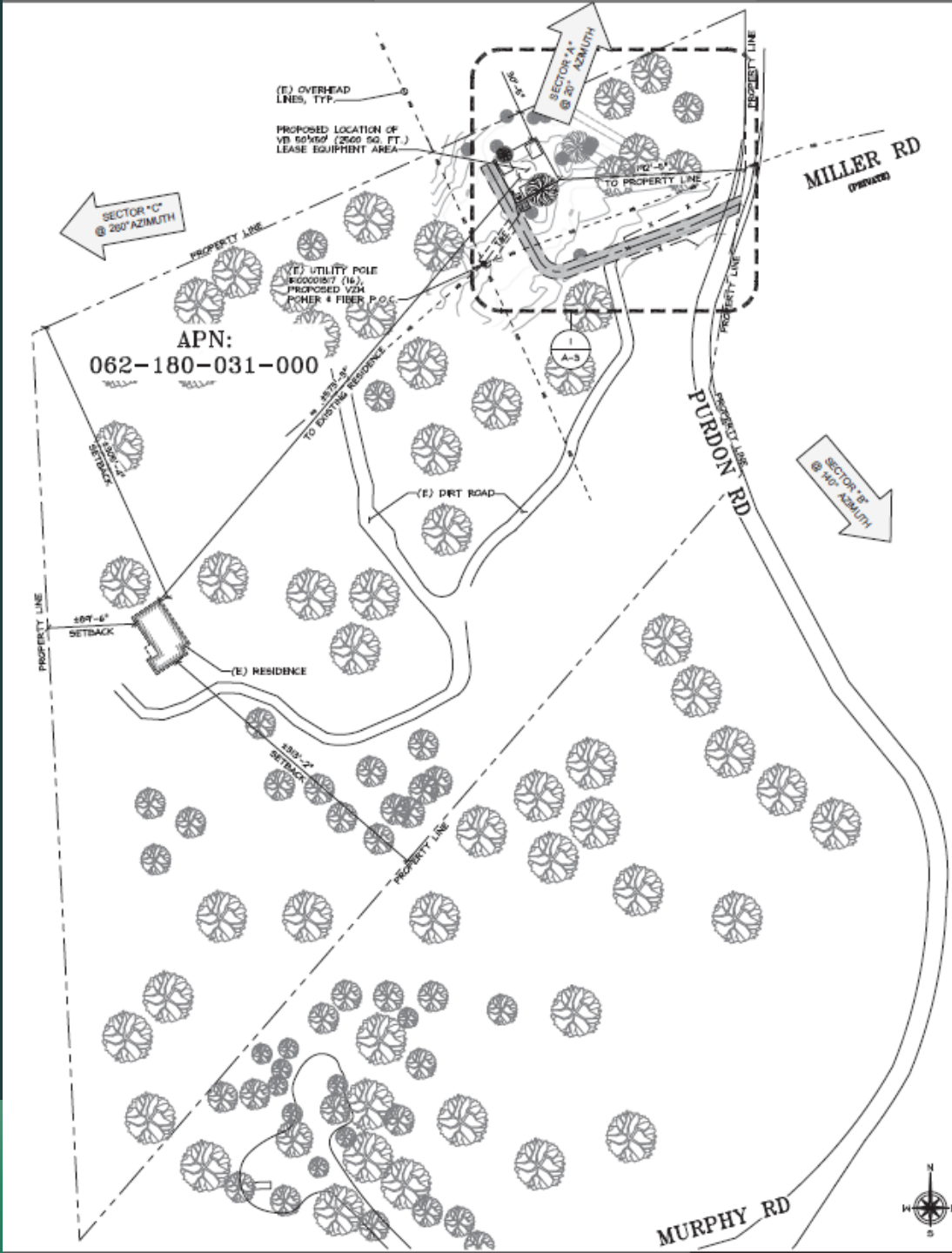
22044 Purdon Road, Nevada City, CA 95959

Nevada County Board of Supervisors:
August 11, 2026
Project Planner: Aleena Church



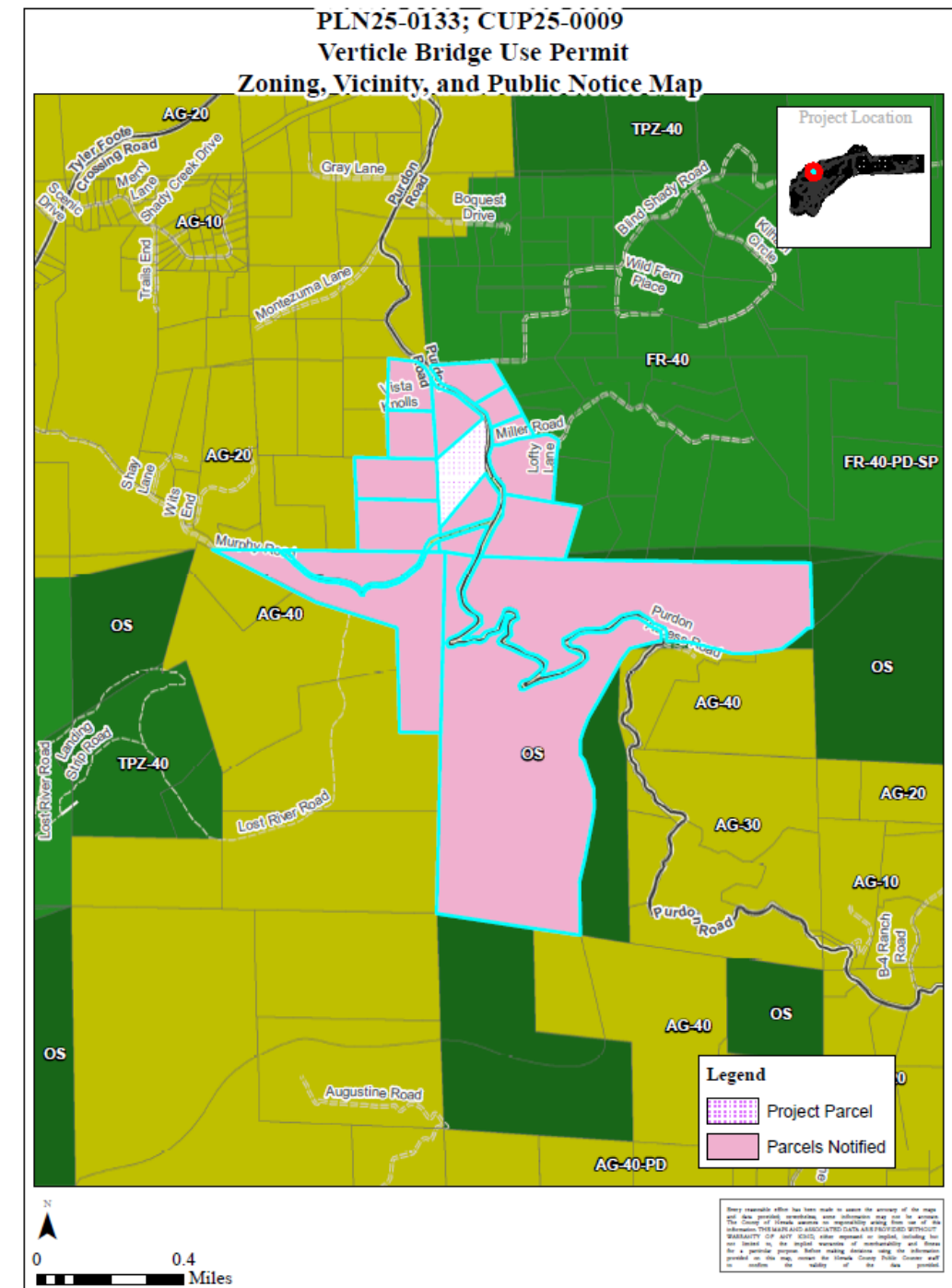
Project Description

- The proposed facility will be designed as a one-hundred and fifty (150) foot tall faux pine tree (monopine).
- The facility will be contained within a 2,500 sq ft Verizon lease area that will be surrounded with eight-foot tall chain-link fencing with a gate and a Knox Box entry system. The lease area will contain three equipment cabinets, a diesel generator, a PG&E transformer, and other communication-related equipment.
- The site will be accessed by an existing 15-foot wide dirt driveway. Vegetation thinning to reduce fire hazard will occur along the access road and around the tower lease area.



Existing and Surrounding Land Uses:

- Forest (FR-40) zoning with a General Plan designation of FOR-40.
- The subject parcel is developed with a residence, well, and septic system. The parcel is surrounded by low-density development consisting of single-family residences, forest, and agricultural uses.
- The proposed communication facility will be situated in foothill oak and pine woodlands on a flat area in the north east corner of the property.



Appeal Argument 1

The appeal states:

“California Law Requires the County To Provide Documents to Anyone Who Requests Public Records, As Well Requires All Local Meetings to be Open and Ensure Public Participation.”

- During the May 13, 2026 hearing, County staff utilized a presentation to summarize the project, applicable findings, and staff's recommendation. The applicant also presented informational materials regarding radio frequency (RF) exposure and potential property value impacts in response to questions and concerns raised by members of the public.
- Although the visual presentations were not distributed prior to the public hearing, the majority of the information presented summarized material already contained within the publicly available administrative record and project application materials.
- Following the hearing, the appellant requested copies of the presentation materials on Friday, May 15, 2026. Staff provided the requested presentations to the appellant later that same day.

Appeal Argument 2

The appeal states:

“Granting Vertical Bridge's Application for Its Proposed Wireless Telecommunication Facility Would Violate Applicable Laws and the Legislative Intent Upon Which They Were Enacted..”

- Pursuant to Nevada County Code section 12.02.030, communication towers are allowed in Forest zoning districts with a Use Permit.
- Nevada County Code section 12.03.080 establishes design requirements for communication facilities to promote availability of public services while ensuring compatibility with adjacent land uses. The Conditions of Approval that ensure that the construction and operation of the proposed communication tower would not conflict with or detract from the surrounding uses.

Appeal Argument 3

The appeal states:

“The Proposed Tower Will Have a Severe Detrimental Impact on the Aesthetics and Character of the Area, As Well As Cause a Significant Decrease in Property Value.”

- The project was evaluated for compliance with the applicable siting, design, screening, and compatibility standards of Nevada County Code Section 12.03.080, which is intended to preserve the rural character of the community, and was determined to comply with those requirements. Including the preparation of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration to mitigate impacts to less than significant.
- The proposed tower is setback 192' from the front yard, along Purdon Road and is screened with seven (7) trees between the tower and the road.
- The Visual Impact Assessment does show a photo simulation that the proposed monopine viewpoints do blend in with the existing treetops.

1

GPS-locked stationary drone,
to pinpoint the exact height and placement

Proposed 150 ft monopine



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Existing

Nevada City West

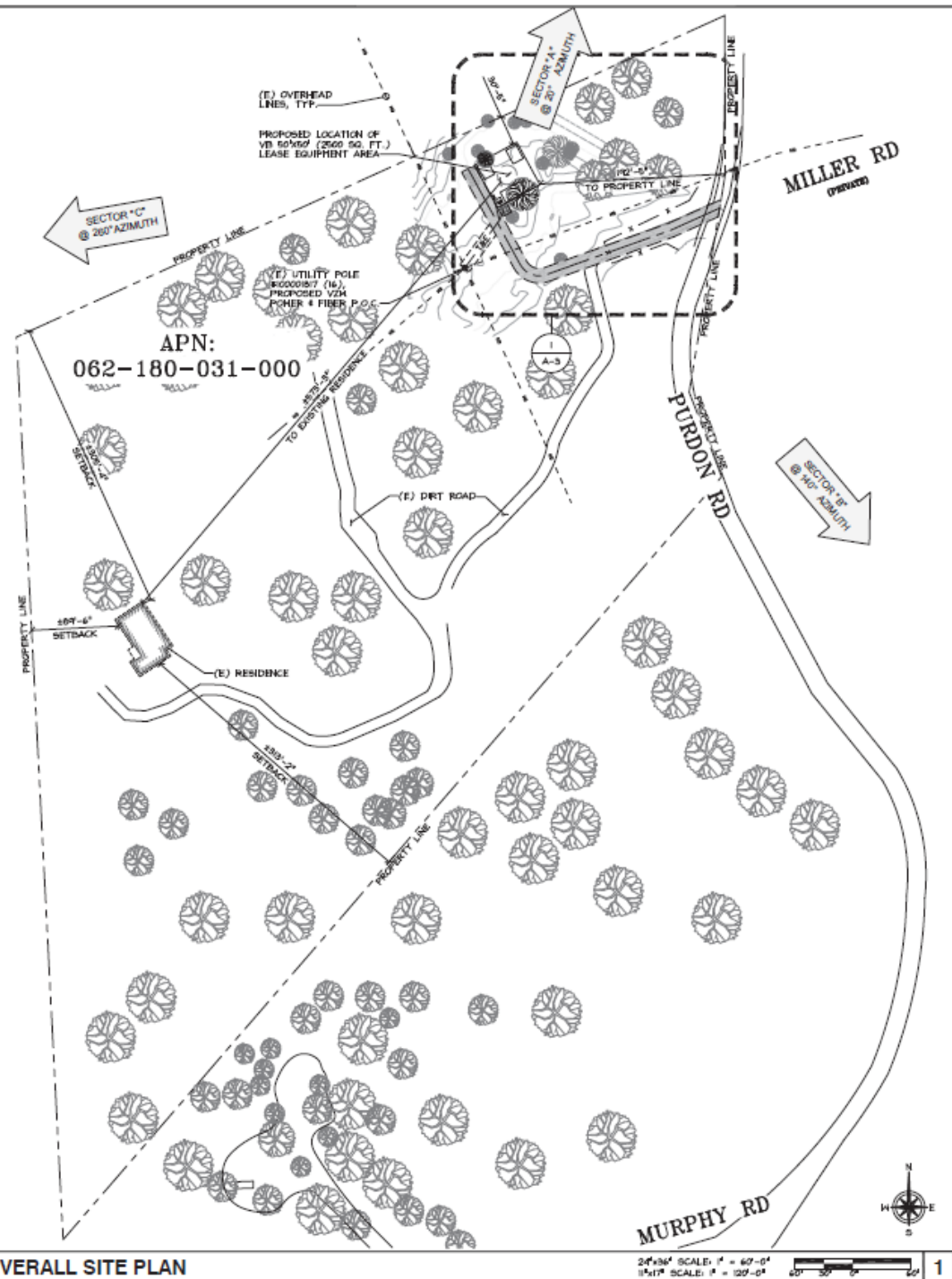
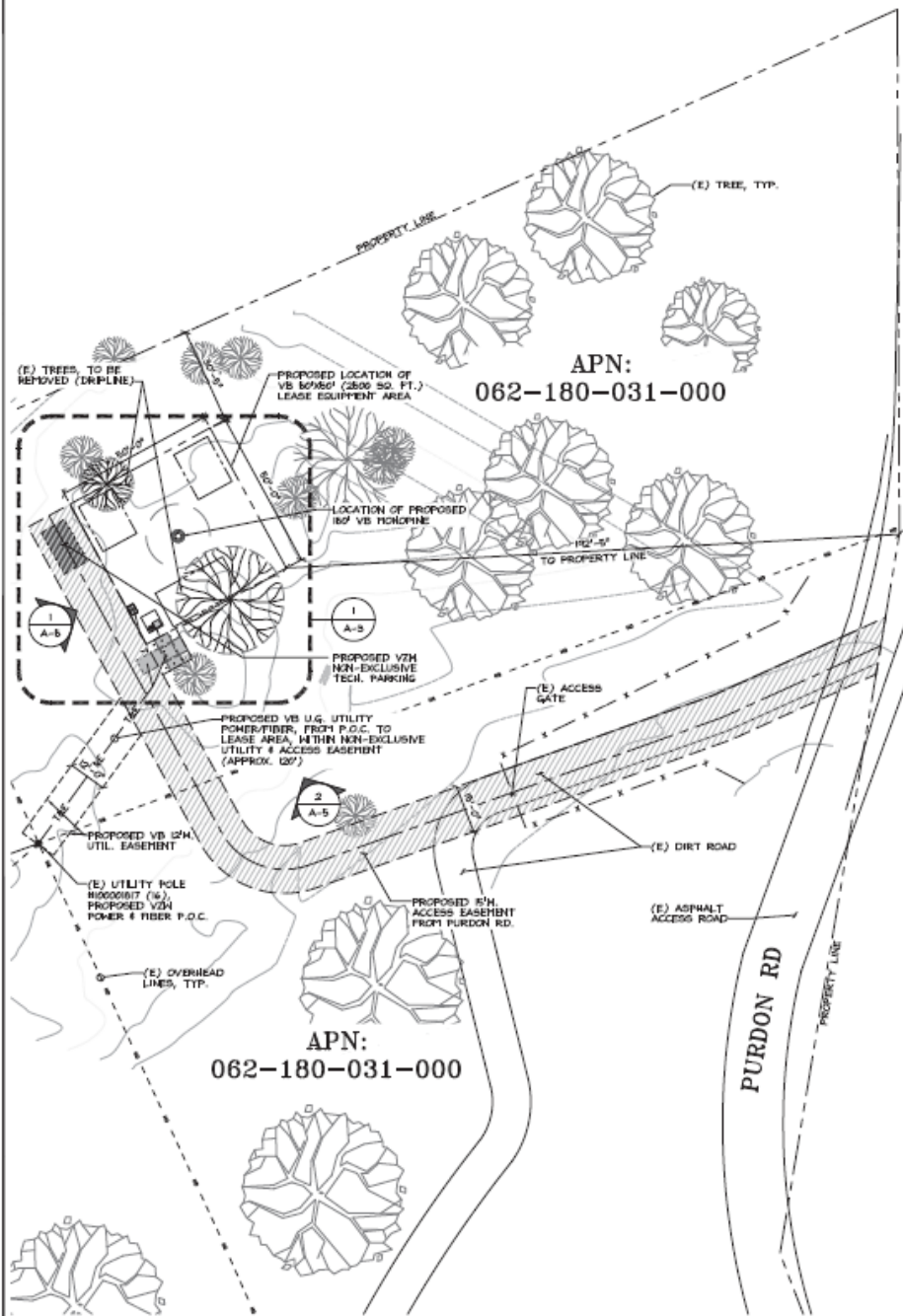
21938 Purdon Rd
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verticalbridge

Proposed



Comparison: Monopine Height vs Tree Heights
(Figure 18: Canopy Comparison Diagram)



4

Existing

Photosimulation of the view looking south-southeast from Oak Tree Road, just uphill from Mother Truckers.

Nevada City West

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verticalbridge

Proposed 150 ft monopine



Proposed

3

Existing

Photosimulation of the view looking northeast from Murphy Road, at a clearing in the tree canopy.

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verticalbridge

Proposed 150 ft monopine

4

Existing

Photosimulation of the view looking north-northwest along Purdon Road, through a rare gap in the dense canopy of trees.

Nevada City West

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verticalbridge

Proposed 150 ft monopine



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Proposed

Appeal Argument 4

The appeal states:

“§ 6409(a) of the Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 Would Allow Vertical Bridge to Increase the Height of the Proposed Facility Without Further Zoning Approval.”

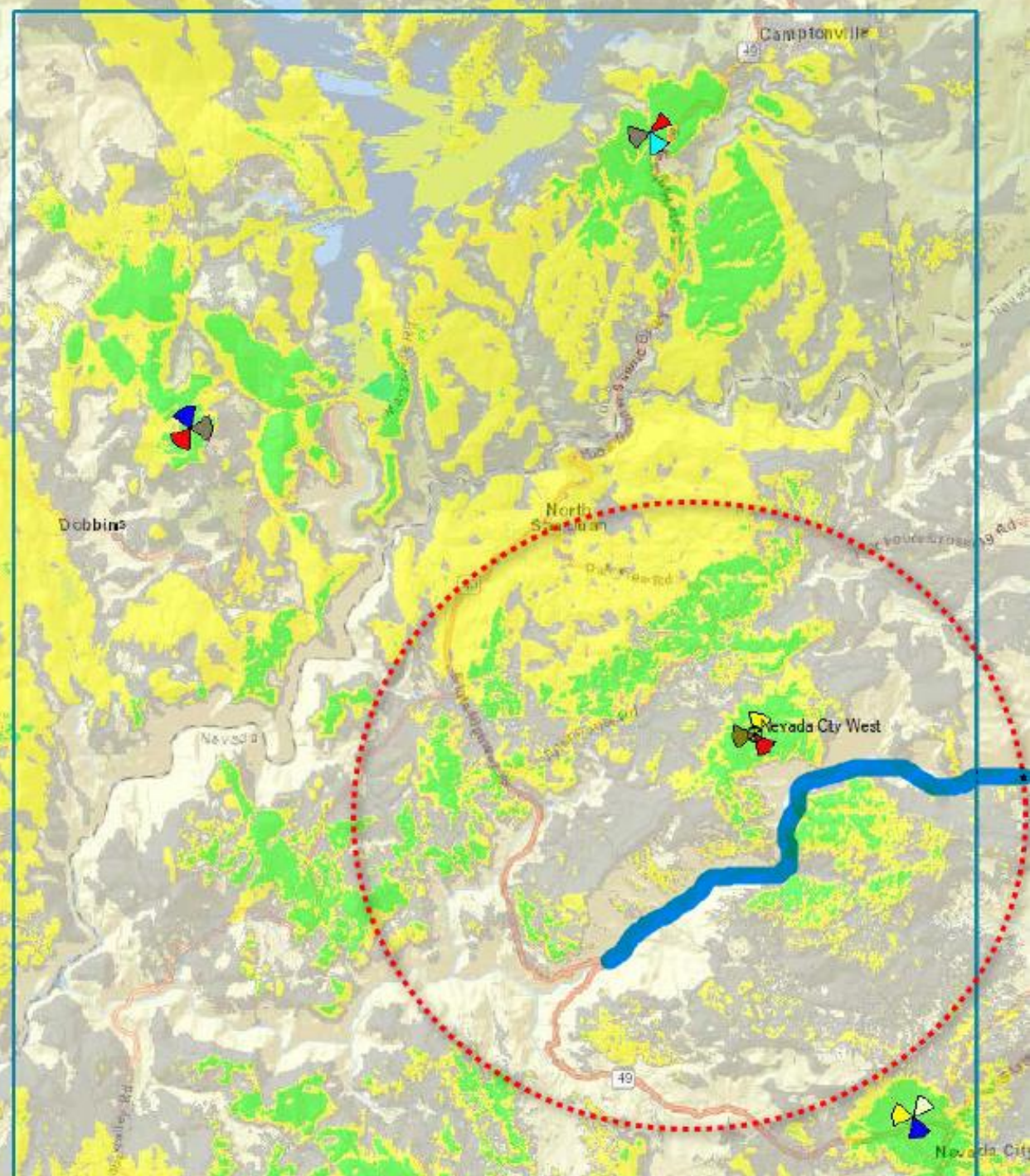
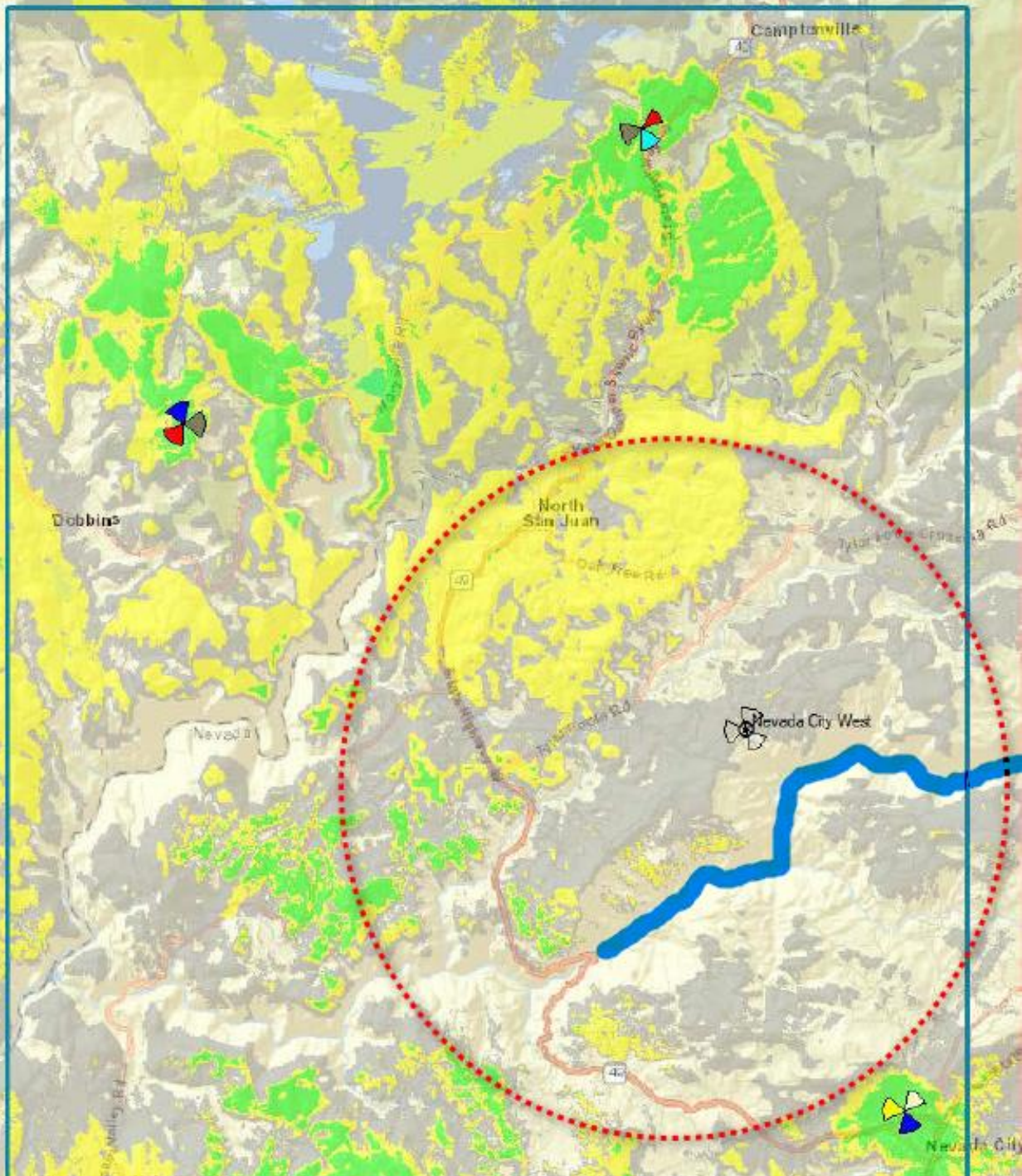
While federal law provides a process for certain modifications to existing wireless facilities, any future request to increase the height of the tower would be limited by the applicable provisions of federal law and would be reviewed for compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local requirements in effect at the time of the request. Accordingly, the possibility of a future modification is not a basis for denying the proposed Use Permit.

Appeal Argument 5

The appeal states:

“Vertical Bridge Has Failed to Proffer Probative Evidence Sufficient to Establish a Need for the Proposed Wireless Facility at the Location Proposed, or That the Granting of Its Application Would Be Consistent With the Smart Planning Requirements of the City's Code.”

- Verizon Wireless identified a gap in its LTE wireless service west of Nevada City and evaluated nine alternative locations within the search area. Based on radio frequency propagation, topography, elevation, available utilities, access, site availability, and the presence of a willing property owner, Verizon Wireless determined that 22044 Purdon Road was the most feasible location to address the identified service gap.
- Nevada County Code Section 12.03.080 does not require an applicant to submit the specific forms of data identified by the appellant, including dropped-call records or drive-test data.
- Additionally, the proposed tower increased coverage within the South Yuba River Canyon near the Purdon Crossing Area that would be beneficial for emergency services.



Appeal Argument 6

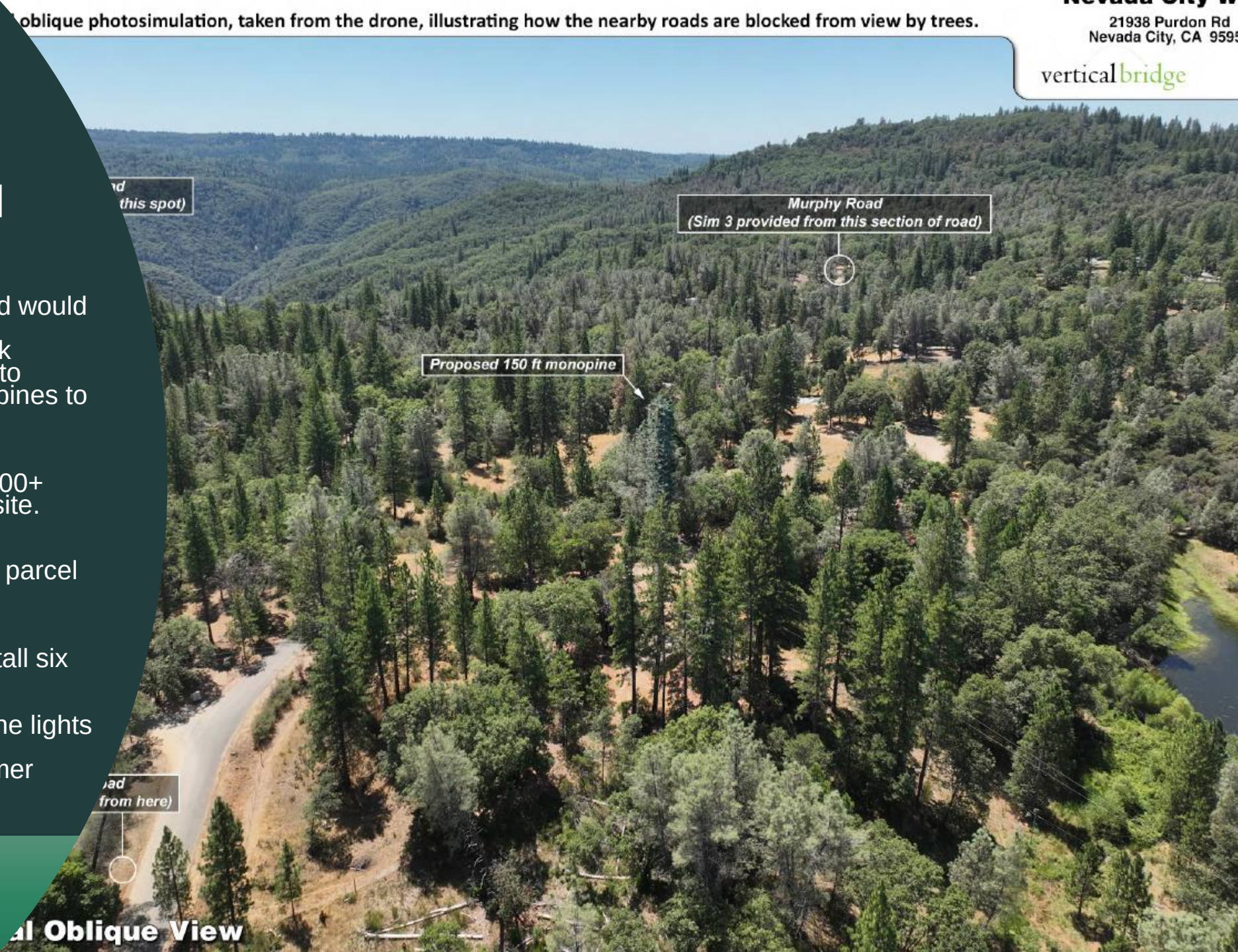
The appeal states:

“To Comply With the TCA, Vertical Bridge's Application Should Be Denied in a Written Decision Which Cites the Evidence Provided Herewith.”

This section discusses the legal requirements applicable to a denial under the Telecommunications Act of 1996 but does not present information that changes staff's analysis or the findings supporting approval of the project. Staff reviewed the project for compliance with the applicable provisions of the Nevada County Code and determined that the project satisfies the required findings for approval of a Conditional Use Permit. Accordingly, the Zoning Administrator approved the project consistent with staff's recommendation.

Public Comment - Visual Analysis and Lighting

- The cellular tower as proposed would be a monopine with faux branches/foliage and faux bark materials which are designed to blend in with the surrounding pines to the greatest extent possible.
- Nearest off-site residence is 600+ feet away from the proposed site.
- Trees surrounding the subject parcel are approx. 99 – 128 ft tall.
- The applicant proposes to install six LED service lights that will be downcast and used during maintenance activities only. The lights will normally be off and will be controlled by a 4-hour twist-timer switch.



Public Comment- Noise

- A 30kW emergency back-up generator is proposed for use during extended power outages. This is anticipated to exceed the County noise nighttime standard of 40 decibels by generating 50 decibels at the northern property line.
- Therefore, Condition A.27 is proposed to require that the generator be installed with a Level 2 sound enclosure and Condition A.28 is proposed to require that testing and maintenance only occurs during daytime hours.



Public Comment - Radio Frequency

- The FCC has developed and adopted standards for human exposure to RF radiation with the support of expert scientists and engineers.
- The Radio Frequency – Electromagnetic Fields Exposure Report prepared by Dtech communications, predicted that for a person standing in accessible areas on the ground, the proposed Verizon site has exposure levels below the FCC's most stringent General Population MPE limits. If additional carriers were to seek co-location on this tower, they would be subject to the FCC permitting and compliance.



Public Comment – Fire Danger Concerns

The Office of the Fire Marshal is requiring as a Condition of Approval that the applicant provide defensible space around all communication equipment and the tower itself and the driveway access to the tower. This defensible space will be required to be verified through an inspection.

A comment from the Fire Marshal includes: “This cell phone tower will improve cell phone service to help locate and receive emergency calls in an area that lacks vital cell phone coverage. CAL FIRE ground resources currently use a system that is supported by Verizon networks in CAL FIRE engines and command vehicles. This system gives critical updates to emergency personnel responding to and locating emergencies.

Lithium batteries have been an issue with cell tower fires in other jurisdictions. This cell phone tower has no lithium batteries. Lithium batteries only provide a short-term backup (2 to 8 hours). It will be supported by a diesel generator that will provide long-term power during extended blackouts.”

Environmental Review

- The Planning Department prepared a draft Initial Study and a proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for the proposed project (Attachment 3).
- Based on the technical information submitted with this application, review of pertinent policy and regulatory documents, and consultation with appropriate local, state, and federal agencies, all of the potential impacts that were identified have been mitigated below levels of significance.

Recommendations

- I. Adopt the Resolution to deny the appeal and uphold the decision of the Zoning Administrator to approve Conditional Use Permit application (CUP25-0009) proposing the construction and operation of a new 150-foot-tall monopine wireless communication tower within a 2,500 square foot fenced lease area located at 22044 Purdon Road, Nevada City, in southeast Nevada County.



NEVADA COUNTY

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Recommendations

- I. Adopt the Resolution to uphold the appeal filed by Nels Atkinson overturning the zoning administrator's May 13, 2026 approval of conditional use permit CUP25-0009 for the construction and operation of a new unmanned wireless communication facility located at 22044 Purdon Road, Nevada City, APN 062-180-081.
- I. WHEREAS, a large number of public comments expressing aesthetic objections were voiced from neighboring property owners as well as objections that the cell tower is inconsistent with the rural, residential setting of the area; and
- I. WHEREAS, the project was found inconsistent for approval under Conditional Use Permit for wireless communication towers pursuant to Nevada County Code Section 12.03.080 and Section 12.05.060; and
- I. WHEREAS, the aesthetics of the tower were found to adversely impact the rural quality of the neighborhood; and
- I. WHEREAS, the aesthetic impacts of the tower will have a potentially detrimental impact on the property values of the surrounding are; and