



**DATE:** June 4, 2026

**TO:** Orange County Zoning Administrator

**FROM:** OC Development Services/Planning

**SUBJECT:** Use Permit PA25-0068

**PROPOSAL:** A Use Permit to allow for the relocation of equipment from an existing 69-foot stand-alone monopalm wireless telecommunication tower, located at the northwest corner of the property, to the rooftop of the Santa Margarita Water District headquarter office building on the same property with the height of 39 feet and 7 inches.

**GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION:** 1B Suburban Residential

**ZONING DISTRICT:** Las Flores Planned Community – Neighborhood Center

**LOCATION:** 26111 Antonio Parkway Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688 (APN: 988-014-93) within the Fifth Supervisorial District

**APPLICANT:** Reliant Land Services for AT&T

**STAFF CONTACT:** Ilene Lundfelt, Associate Planner  
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**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

OC Development Services/Planning recommends the Zoning Administrator:

1. Receive staff report and public testimony.
2. Adopt Zoning Administrator Resolution No. 2026-07 (Attachment 1) to:
  - a. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Class 1 (Existing Facility) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15301.
  - b. Approve Planning Application Use Permit to allow for the relocation of equipment from an existing 69-foot stand-alone monopalm wireless telecommunication tower, located at the northwest corner of the property to the rooftop of the Santa Margarita Water District headquarter office building on the same property with the height of 39 feet and 7 inches, subject to the Findings and Conditions of Approval contained within the Resolution.

**INTRODUCTION**

**BACKGROUND**

Site Development Permit PA96-0106 was approved on August 19, 1996, to allow the installation of four personal communication services (PCS) antennas and two base transceiver stations (BTS) on the roof of the existing 35-foot-high, two-story Santa Margarita Water District building located at 26111 Antonio Parkway. Changed Plan CP99-0082 was approved on November 18, 1999, to modify the existing installation by adding two additional antennas. Changed Plan CPO2-0016 was approved on April 12, 2002, to add two new BTS equipment cabinets behind the parapet wall. Changed Plan CP12-0024 was approved on October 17, 2012, to further modify the existing wireless telecommunications facility. Changed Plan CP23-0057 was approved on May 1, 2024 to remove all T-Mobile equipment from the roof top of existing wireless communications facility.

Site Development Permit and Use Permit PA01-0135 was approved on April 11, 2002 by the Zoning Administrator to construct an over-height stealth communication facility consisting of a 69-foot stand-alone monopalm with attached antennas and transmission equipment. The facility has undergone multiple changed plans to modify the existing tower equipment.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The subject site is located at 26111 Antonio Parkway and contains two buildings that serve as the Santa Margarita Water District administrative offices with a previously approved rooftop telecommunications facility. The project site is within Planning Area 8 of the Las Flores Planned Community (PC Las Flores) and has a land use designation of “Neighborhood Commercial.”

**SURROUNDING LAND USES**

The surrounding area consists primarily of commercial uses, open space, and parks and recreational uses.

Direction	Zoning Designation	Existing Land Use
Project Site	PC Las Flores	Santa Margarita Water District Facility
North	PC Las Flores	Commercial Center
South	Open Space (OS)	Open Space
West	Open Space (OS)	Open Space
East	PC Las Flores	Church

A vicinity map (Attachment 2) and project map (Attachment 3) are included, illustrating the project site in context with surrounding areas.

**PROPOSED PROJECT**

The proposed project is a request for a Use Permit to modify an existing wireless communication facility located at 26111 Antonio Parkway by relocating an existing AT&T facility from a 69-foot stand-alone monopalm (approved under PA01-0135) to the roof of the Santa Margarita Water District headquarters office building. The existing monopalm is to be demolished under a separate Changed Plan application (see Condition 9).

The proposed installation will consist of two sectors with a total of six antennas, which will be housed within a new roof cupola and screened behind fiberglass-reinforced panel (FRP) material, as shown on the plans (Attachment 4), along with three antennas to be installed in the location of the previously removed T-Mobile telecommunication equipment (removal of the previous rooftop wireless facility was approved under CP23-0057). The proposed new roof cupola will exceed the district height limit of 35 feet, with a height of 36 feet, 8 inches. Additionally, on the south side of the building, new antennas will be installed on the existing parapet, with a maximum height of 39 feet, 7 inches and all exposed equipment will be painted to match existing elevation; the proposed antennas will not exceed the previously approved height of 41 feet and 6 inches. Ground equipment will be located within the existing equipment shelter previously used by the former telecommunications tenant.

## **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

### **GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY**

The project site is designated Suburban Residential (1B) in the General Plan, which permits a range of residential uses and supporting infrastructure. The proposed wireless communication facility is considered a utility use that provides essential communication services to the surrounding community and is consistent with the goals and policies of the General Plan.

The proposed project is consistent with Goal 8 Creative Design Concepts Policy, which encourages innovative planning approaches to address land use and site development constraints. The project incorporates a creative design solution by relocating an existing wireless telecommunications facility from a stand-alone monopalm to the rooftop of an existing building, thereby reducing visual clutter and eliminating the need for additional ground-mounted infrastructure.

The integration of antennas within a roof cupola and the use of fiberglass-reinforced panel (FRP) screening represent innovative design measures that effectively conceal the facility and maintain the architectural character of the building. This approach minimizes visual impacts while allowing for the efficient provision of wireless services.

Additionally, the project makes use of existing developed areas, including a previously utilized equipment enclosure, which promotes efficient land use, reduces construction impacts, and avoids unnecessary site disturbance. By co-locating the facility and incorporating design features that screen and blend the equipment into the existing structure, the project demonstrates an innovative and environmentally sensitive solution that enhances functionality while maintaining compatibility with surrounding development.

Accordingly, the project fulfills the intent of the Creative Design Concepts Policy by applying thoughtful and efficient design strategies that address site constraints, reduce impacts, and support the provision of essential infrastructure.

### **SPECIFIC PLAN AND ZONING CODE CONSISTENCY**

The project site is zoned Las Flores Planned Community in the Neighborhood Center Planning Area. Community facilities including public uses and public utility building, structures and facilities are allowed uses subject to an Area Plan or Site Plan. Approval of the proposed Use Permit is consistent with the requirements of the Neighborhood Center Planning Area, as the Use Permit is a discretionary planning application that serves as the applicable entitlement for the proposed use.

The County retains broad land use authority to regulate the placement, construction, and modification of macro wireless communication facilities under the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 (47 U.S.C. §332 (c)(7)(A)). This authority includes the ability to require discretionary permits, apply zoning and aesthetic standards, and evaluate technical information submitted by applicants. The County may process macro wireless communication facility applications provided the decisions are supported by substantial evidence and consistent with federal limitations.

This authority to regulate the placement, construction, and modification of wireless communication facilities is exercised through the County of Orange Zoning Code, including the County of Orange Wireless Communications Facilities on Private Property Ordinance (Orange County Codified Ordinances 7-9-109, hereinafter, “Wireless Ordinance”). When an applicant demonstrates compliance with the applicable standards and requirements of the Wireless Ordinance and the Zoning Code, the application may be approved subject to findings and conditions necessary to ensure consistency with those standards.

Pursuant to the Wireless Ordinance, any permit application that includes a request for a deviation from any site development standard required by the Wireless Ordinance shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the approving authority that: (1) adherence to applicable zoning regulations will make the project technically infeasible and (2) the proposed wireless communications facility is the least intrusive means by which to locate and design the facility to the extent feasible.

The proposed project complies with the development standards required by the Wireless Ordinance except for the applicant’s requested deviation from the following wireless facility design standards:

**Project Comparison with Planned Community Las Flores and 7-9-109 Wireless Communication Facilities**

<b>PC Las Flores Development Standards</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Setbacks	Front: 20 feet Side: 20 feet Rear: 20 feet	Front: 350 feet (existing) Side: 340 feet (existing) 108 feet (existing) Rear: 18 feet 9 inches (existing)
Maximum height	35 feet	Maximum height of 39 feet, 7 inches from the ground (proposed)*
<b>7-9-109 Wireless Communication Development Standards</b>	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Ground-mounted equipment enclosure fence height	6 feet	12 feet (existing equipment storage area)

\*Indicates deviation from the development standard

### Ground-mounted equipment enclosure fence height

Per the Wireless Ordinance, equipment enclosure fencing shall not exceed a maximum height of 6 feet unless the applicant demonstrates a valid safety consideration that justifies a taller fence. The applicant will occupy an existing and previously approved ground equipment storage area enclosed by a 9-foot-high CMU wall with an additional 3-foot railing on top, where the wall functions as a retaining wall, resulting in a total enclosure height of 12 feet. While the Wireless Ordinance limits equipment enclosure fencing to 6 feet, the effective fence height, as measured from the higher adjacent grade, is consistent with this requirement. Due to the downward slope in grade, the enclosure height measures up to 12 feet at the lowest point.

### Use Permit

The proposed project requires approval of a Use Permit to allow for the modification to an existing wireless communications facility that includes a structure exceeding the maximum permitted height of 35 feet within the underlying zoning district. Pursuant to Section 7-9-109 of the County of Orange Wireless Communications Facilities Ordinance, wireless facilities may be permitted subject to discretionary review where necessary to accommodate essential communication infrastructure, provided the facility is designed as the least intrusive means to achieve its intended purpose. The proposed parapet and associated antenna installations exceed the height limit; however, additional height is necessary to ensure proper signal propagation and system performance. The project incorporates stealth and camouflage techniques, including architectural screening, a roof cupola, and FRP materials, and is located on an existing developed site to minimize visual impacts. As such, the project meets the intent of the ordinance by balancing the need for reliable wireless service with the preservation of community aesthetics and is appropriate for approval of a Use Permit. Therefore, the findings can be made in support of this request for a Use Permit to modify an existing wireless communications facility pursuant to Section 7-9-109 of the County of Orange Zoning Code, which allows wireless communications facilities subject to discretionary approval and applicable development standards.

### **FINDINGS**

Proposed Use Permit PA25-0068 is consistent with:

1. General Plan – The proposed project is consistent with the applicable Orange County Land Use Element Goal 8 – Creative Design Concepts, because it encourages innovative concepts which contribute to the solution of land use problems.
2. Zoning Code – The use, activity or improvement(s) proposed, subject to the specified conditions, is consistent with the provisions of the Zoning Code, inclusive of the County of Orange Wireless Communication Facilities 7-9-109 and the Las Flores Planned Community. It has been demonstrated that adherence to applicable zoning regulations shall make the project technically infeasible and the proposed wireless communications facility is the least intrusive means by which to locate and design the facility to the extent feasible.
3. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – The proposed project is Categorically Exempt (Class 1) from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to Section 15301, because it provides the minor alteration of existing private facilities and structures involving negligible or no expansion of use.
4. Compatibility – The location, size, design and operating characteristics of the proposed use will not create unusual conditions or situations that may be incompatible with other permitted uses

in the vicinity because the project does not include new buildings, does not alter existing land uses, and will not impact public access, recreational amenities, or circulation.

5. General Welfare – The application will not result in conditions or circumstances contrary to the public health and safety and the general welfare.
6. Public Facilities – The approval of the permit application is in compliance with Codified Ordinance Section 7-9-711 regarding public facilities (fire station, library, sheriff, etc.) because the proposed project would be required to pay into development impact fees prior to the issuance of building permits.

Therefore, the findings can be made in support of this request for a Use Permit to allow for the relocation of an over-height wireless telecommunication facility pursuant to Section 7-9-109 of the County of Orange Zoning Code and the Las Flores Planned Community, which allows for over-height wireless telecommunication facilities, subject to the approval of a Use Permit.

### **REFERRAL FOR COMMENT**

A copy of the planning application and the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to the Orange County Fire Authority and the appropriate County divisions - Building and Safety, OC Sheriffs (Attachment 5) and Environmental Planning. Staff has reviewed all comments received, and where appropriate, has addressed the comments through recommended Conditions of Approval.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notices were mailed to all owners of record within 300 feet of the subject property, posted at the project site, published in a local newspaper, and posted at the posting kiosk at the County Administration building located in Santa Ana, CA at least ten days prior to this public hearing, as required by established public hearing posting procedures.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA**

The proposed project is categorically exempt (Class 1) from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, because it provides the minor alteration of existing private facilities and structures involving negligible or no expansion of use.

### **CONCLUSION**

Staff has reviewed the applicant's request for a Use Permit and finds the proposed project to be consistent with the County of Orange General Plan, the County of Orange Zoning Code and the Las Flores Planned Community.

Staff recommends approval of Planning Application PA25-0068, subject to the required Findings and Conditions of Approval within Resolution No. 2026-07.

### **APPEAL PROCEDURE**

Any interested person may appeal the decision of the Zoning Administrator on this permit to the Planning Commission within 15 calendar days of the decision upon submittal of required documents filed online at [myoceservices.ocgov.com](http://myoceservices.ocgov.com) or in person at the County Service Center, located at 601 N. Ross St., Santa Ana. If you challenge the action taken on this proposal in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this report, or in written correspondence delivered to OC Development Services.

Submitted by:

DocuSigned by:

*Ilene Lundfelt*

Ilene Lundfelt, Associate Planner  
OC Development Services/Planning

Concurred by:

DocuSigned by:

*Cindy Salazar*

Cindy Salazar, Division Manager  
OC Development Services/Planning

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Zoning Administrator Resolution No. 2026-07
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Map
4. Plans
5. OC Sheriff Email