



DATE: October 15, 2026

TO: Orange County Zoning Administrator

FROM: OC Development Services/Planning

SUBJECT: Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit PA26-0020

PROPOSAL: Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit for the establishment of a new over-height monoecalyptus wireless communication facility to replace two existing non-stealth wireless communication structures at an existing telecommunications facility location.

GENERAL PLAN DESIGNATION: 1B -Suburban Residential and 5 - Open Space

ZONING DISTRICT: Planning Area 7B of the Newport Coast Planned Community, Low Density Residential of the Newport Coast Local Coastal Program, Second Amendment (Newport Coast LCP)

LOCATION: 10785 Lookout Drive, Laguna Beach, CA 92651 within the 5th Supervisorial District

APPLICANT: Smartlink on behalf of Verizon

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. 2026-12 (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 Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit PA26-0020 for the establishment of a new over-height monoecalyptus wireless communication facility to replace two existing non-stealth wireless communication structures at an existing telecommunications facility at 10785 Lookout Drive, Laguna Beach, CA 92651, subject to the Findings and Conditions of Approval contained within the Resolution

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

On September 30, 1999, the Zoning Administrator approved Coastal Development Permit PA99-0099 for the establishment of a County of Orange 800 MHz communication facility on property leased from the Laguna Beach County Water District. The approved facility included a 55-foot-tall, four-sided antenna support tower equipped with two 20-foot-tall whip antennas and two dish antennas, a 16-foot-wide by 35-foot-long, one-story equipment building, retaining walls, and a 1,150-gallon above-ground propane storage tank.

Coastal Development Permit PA02-0060 was approved by the Zoning Administrator on August 8, 2002, for the installation and operation of an additional wireless communication facility at the Laguna Beach County Water District's Moorehead Reservoir site. The project provided for additional wireless communication infrastructure at the existing reservoir facility.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject site is located at the Laguna Beach County Water District's Moorehead Reservoir site and contains an existing telecommunications facility with associated ground-mounted equipment. The facility currently includes two non-stealth wireless communication structures, with the existing antennas mounted at approximately 32 feet in height.

SURROUNDING LAND USES

The surrounding area consists primarily of open space, and residential uses.

Direction	Land Use Designation	Existing Land Use
Project Site	Planning Area 7B of the Newport Coast LCP – Low Density Residential	Moorehead Reservoir site, wireless telecommunication facilities and the Sheriff's 800 MHz facility
North	Planning Area 21 B of the Newport Coast LCP – Conservation	Open Space
South	Planning Area 7B of the Newport Coast LCP – Low Density Residential	Open Space and Residential

West	Newport Coast LCP – Conservation	Open Space
East	Planning Area 21 B of the Newport Coast LCP – Conservation	Open Space

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

PROPOSED PROJECT

The applicant is requesting approval of PA26-0020, a Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit for the removal of two existing wireless communication non-stealth wireless communication structures and associated facilities and the construction and operation of a new monoecalyptus wireless communication facility at the Laguna Beach County Water District's Moorehead Reservoir site.

The proposed project includes a new 40-foot-tall monoecalyptus structure designed to camouflage the wireless communication facility and resemble a eucalyptus tree. The wireless communication antennas would be mounted at a height of approximately 32 feet, which is consistent with the existing antenna height on the two structures proposed for removal. Associated ground-mounted telecommunications equipment would be installed within the existing telecommunications facility equipment area.

The applicant indicates that the existing wireless communication facility is limited by its original design and structural configuration as the existing facility cannot accommodate the heavier antennas necessary to provide a more robust wireless network to serve the community. Therefore, the applicant is proposing to replace two of the existing structures with a new, more structurally sound facility capable of supporting the necessary equipment. Although the proposed monoecalyptus structure would have an overall height of 40 feet, the antennas would be located at 32 feet, matching the heights of the existing non-stealth wireless communication structures antennas. The project is intended to replace the two existing non-stealth wireless communication structures with a single camouflaged structure while maintaining the existing wireless communication service at the site.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

The project site is designated Suburban Residential (1B) and Open Space (5) in the General Plan, which permits a range of residential and recreational uses and supporting infrastructure. The proposed wireless communications 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 of the General Plan Land Use Element, which encourages innovative planning and design approaches to address land use and site development constraints while maintaining compatibility with surrounding development. The existing wireless communication facility utilizes a monoecalyptus design that incorporates stealth and camouflage

techniques intended to minimize the visual appearance of the facility and reduce aesthetic impacts on the surrounding area.

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.

LOCAL COASTAL PLAN AND ZONING CODE CONSISTENCY

The project site is located within the Newport Coast LCP and is subject to the applicable land use and development standards established by the Newport Coast LCP and County Zoning Code. The proposed wireless communication facility is a communication transmitting, reception or relay facility that provides essential communication services and is a principal permitted use subject to a Zoning Administrator approval and compliance with applicable development standards and coastal review requirements. Because the project is located within the Coastal Zone, the Newport Coast LCP requires approval of a Coastal Development Permit (CDP). Pursuant to the Coastal Development Permit, application may be approved only after the decision-making body has made the findings that: (1) the proposed development project conforms to the certified Local Coastal Program (2) the project conforms with the public access and recreation policies and (3) approval of the application will result in a project that is in full compliance with the requirements of the certified land use plan.

The proposed development conforms to the certified Newport Coast LCP because the proposed wireless communications facility falls within the uses of a communication transmitting, reception, or relay facility, which is a principal permitted use within the Low Density Residential District, subject to Zoning Administrator approval and compliance with applicable development standards. The proposed project will not block or impede coastal access and will not adversely affect public recreation; therefore, the project conforms to the applicable public access and public recreation policies of the California Coastal Act. Although the project includes a deviation from the 35-foot height maximum height standard for Low Density Residential District, a Use Permit is being requested to allow the over-height wireless communications structure, and the proposed 40-foot height is necessary to achieve the required stealth design and maintain the appearance and proportions of a eucalyptus tree; the deviation does not conflict with the applicable LCP land use policies. Accordingly, approval of the application will result in a project that conforms to the certified Newport Coast LCP and is in full compliance with the requirements of the certified land use plan.

The County of Orange 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 communications 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 Section 7-9-109, Wireless Communications Facilities on Private Property (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 standard:

Wireless Ordinance Development Standards	Required	Proposed
Tower Height	No tower shall exceed the maximum permissible height for structures in the underlying zoning district 35 feet (Newport Coast LCP – Low Density Residential)	40 feet*

* Indicates deviation from development standards

Per the Wireless Ordinance Section 7-9-109(h)(14), no tower shall exceed the maximum permissible height for structures in the underlying zoning district, which is 35 feet under the Newport Coast LCP. The proposed project requires approval of a Use Permit to allow the proposed monoecalyptus wireless communication facility that exceeds the maximum permitted height of 35 feet within the underlying zoning district into compliance. Pursuant to Section 7-9-109(h)(20), any permit application requesting a deviation from a performance or site development standard must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the decision-making body that adherence to the applicable zoning regulations would be technically infeasible. In addition to the findings required pursuant to Section 7-9-125.6, the decision-making body must find that (a) adherence to the applicable zoning regulations would make the project technically infeasible, and (b) the proposed wireless communications facility represents the least intrusive means feasible for locating and designing the facility.

Pursuant to Section 7-9-109(h)(2), new wireless communications towers located in or within 100 feet of residential or open space districts are required to be designed as stealth facilities. The proposed monoecalyptus is intended to satisfy this requirement by incorporating the wireless communications equipment into a design that closely resembles a eucalyptus tree. To adhere to the current 35-foot height limit would make the proposed stealth design technically infeasible because reducing the overall height of the monoecalyptus to 35 feet would compromise the proposed design. Although the wireless communication antennas would be mounted at approximately 32 feet, the overall 40-foot height is

necessary to provide sufficient screening and maintain the appearance and proportions of a eucalyptus tree, while allowing the antennas to remain at the same elevation as the existing facilities. Therefore, the requested height deviation is necessary to achieve the required stealth design and effectively naturally conceal the wireless communications facility.

The proposed monoeucalyptus facility provides the infrastructure to accommodate the heavier antennas necessary to provide more robust wireless service in the surrounding area, including addressing existing coverage and capacity needs. The facility incorporates stealth design elements intended to minimize visual impacts by camouflaging the facility as a eucalyptus tree blending the facility with the surrounding landscape. The proposed wireless communications facility represents the least intrusive means feasible for locating and designing the facility. The proposed location, design, and requested height deviation represent the least intrusive means feasible to provide the necessary wireless communications infrastructure while minimizing visual impacts to surrounding residential and open space areas. Therefore, the requested deviation for the over-height wireless facility satisfies the required findings that: (1) adherence to the applicable zoning standard would be technically infeasible, and (2) the proposed design is the least intrusive means of accommodating the wireless communications facility to the extent feasible.

FINDINGS

Proposed Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit PA26-0020 is consistent with:

1. General Plan – The proposed project is consistent with (1B) Suburban Residential and (5) Open Space of the General Plan Land Use, which permits a range of residential and recreational uses and supporting infrastructure. The proposed wireless communications facility is considered a utility use that provides essential communication services to the surrounding community. Additionally, the proposed project is consistent with Goal 8 of the General Plan Land Use Element, which encourages innovative planning and design approaches to address land use and site development constraints while maintaining compatibility with surrounding development. The proposed wireless communication facility utilizes a monoeucalyptus design that incorporates stealth and camouflage techniques intended to minimize the visual appearance of the facility and reduce aesthetic impacts on the surrounding area.
2. Zoning Code – The proposed use and improvements, subject to the specified conditions, are consistent with the County of Orange Zoning Code, including Section 7-9-109 – Wireless Communications Facilities on Private Property. The project will replace two existing non-stealth wireless facilities with a 40-foot-tall monoeucalyptus, with antennas mounted at approximately 32 feet; the additional height is necessary to achieve effective camouflage and maintain the appearance of a eucalyptus tree, consistent with the stealth-design requirements of the Wireless Ordinance. The proposed monoeucalyptus facility provides the infrastructure to accommodate the heavier antennas necessary to provide more robust wireless service in the surrounding area, including addressing existing coverage and capacity needs. The proposed location, design, and height deviation represent the least intrusive means feasible to provide necessary wireless communications infrastructure while minimizing visual impacts to surrounding residential and open space areas; therefore, the required findings pursuant to Section 7-9-109(h)(20) can be made.

3. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) – The proposed project is categorically exempt (Class 1) from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301, because it provides for the minor alteration of existing private structures involving negligible or no expansion of existing use.
4. Compatibility – The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed use will not create unusual conditions or be incompatible with surrounding uses. The project will replace two existing non-stealth wireless communication structures with a single 40-foot-tall monoeucalyptus, with antennas mounted at approximately 32 feet, while maintaining the existing telecommunications use, site access, and circulation. The stealth design will minimize visual impacts by blending the facility with the existing landscape and maintaining compatibility with surrounding land uses. Additionally, the proposed 40-foot-tall monoeucalyptus will be lower than the existing approximately 55-foot-tall County of Orange communications tower located on the same property, thus maintaining compatibility with the surrounding land uses.
5. General Welfare – The application will not result in conditions or circumstances contrary to the public health and safety and the general welfare because the proposed wireless facility must comply with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) standards for radiofrequency (RF) emission.
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 any applicable development impact fees prior to the issuance of building permits.
7. Local Coastal Program - The proposed project conforms to the certified Newport Coast Local Coastal Program, Second Amendment because: (1) wireless facility falls within communication transmitting, reception or relay facilities that are principal permitted uses subject to Zoning Administrator approval within the Low Density Residential District, (2) the proposed project does not block or impede coastal access thereby conforming to the public access and public recreation policies of the California Coastal Act, (3) the approval of the application will result in a project that is in full compliance with the requirements of the certified land use plan.

Therefore, the findings can be made in support of this request for a Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit for the proposed over-height wireless telecommunication facility pursuant to Section 7-9-109 of the County of Orange Zoning Code and the Newport Coast LCP, which allows for over-height wireless telecommunication facilities, subject to the approval of a Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit.

REFERRAL FOR COMMENT

A copy of the planning application and the proposed site plan were distributed for review and comment to the OC Sheriffs (Attachment 5), Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) and the appropriate County divisions - Building and Safety, 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 and to residents within 100 feet of the subject property. In addition, all people and agencies were mailed the public notice pursuant to zoning code section 7-9-127.1(d). The notice was 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 for the minor alteration of existing private structures involving negligible or no expansion of existing use.

CONCLUSION

Staff has reviewed the applicant's request for a Coastal Development Permit and 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 Newport Coast LCP. Staff recommends approval of Coastal Development Permit and Use Permit PA26-0020, subject to the required Findings and Conditions of Approval within Resolution No. 2026-12.

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 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:

Concurred by:

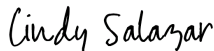
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Ilene Lundfelt, Associate Planner
OC Development Services/Planning

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Cindy Salazar, Division Manager
OC Development Services/Planning

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 2026-12
2. Vicinity Map
3. Project Map
4. Plans
5. OC Sheriff Email, May 1, 2026