Update on 5G Small Structure-Willo Historic Neighborhood

Location: 5th Avenue and Coronado

A meeting was held on Friday, April 11th hosted by the City of Phoenix near the Orpheum Theater Courtyard on Adams Street. The City selected the location and, invited me, Tom Doescher (Willo Zoning Committee Chair) and Opal Wagner, Willo Board Member (3.5 Traffic & Safety Action Committee Chair), and 4 Verizon representatives. The meeting was held outside, and all social distancing measures were in place.

Summative points to share:

1. The phrase “Cell Tower” is not correct, and the proper definition is “**Small Structure”** per the Verizon representatives.
2. The planning of this site at 5th Avenue/Coronado has been **temporarily** halted.
3. Willo is the first Historic Neighborhood to have 5G Small Structures installed, and plans are to install 5 structures in total.
4. We explained our frustration to the city in for the lack of communication strategy, not being asked to collaborate on the design of the “small structures,” and very surprised to learn the initial planning began back in October.
5. We also reminded the City and Verizon of the Willo Historic District Preservation Plan, a document the City approved when they formed the Neighborhood.
6. Legally, the cell companies have full authority to select locations, and do not necessarily need to engage any Historic Neighborhoods; however, Verizon is willing to work together.
7. The picture posted on some sites of 7th Avenue/Encanto Blvd is **NOT** a cell phone tower, and is a transmitter for the Fire Dept.
8. I specifically asked the City what the overall plans for other cell companies in the future are…the answer was “we do not know yet.”
9. We respect today’s environment as we are using communication to work and attend school. We are all impatient and expect our communication devices to work with speed.
10. Willo has no plans to engage the City, State, or the FCC in a legal battle.
11. **Willo’s optimal strategy is to work with all parties in a collaborative fashion in order to attempt to make everyone happy……. we will do our best as a team.**

Action Steps:

1. We work with the City, and Verizon on a collaborative design for the “Small Structure” and ask Verizon to consider a design to “blend” with the neighborhood.
2. We asked the City to communicate to the Streets Department regarding the 3rd/5th Avenues design study currently underway.
3. Tom Doescher, Willo Zoning Chairperson, will work with the residents directly impacted.
4. We hope to share design(s) when Verizon and the City present them to us for initial consideration, and collaboration.
5. Communication Strategy: I asked the city for a communication strategy going forward to eliminate wrong information, and to provide clear, and concise action steps for the future not only for Willo, but other neighborhoods as well. For example, disclosing the other locations in Willo, timelines, and potential designs. What are the “Best Practices” from other Historic Neighborhoods across other parts of our county?

In closing, this issue has many stakeholders: The City, State, Historic Preservation, Willo Residents, FCC, and Verizon. We will continue to do our best to navigate through the process to protect Willo in a professional and collaborative approach.

Please stay safe, and healthy.

Dr. Robert Cannon, President

Willo Neighborhood Association

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