

# STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Kael Anderson

NCPC File No. 6706



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS,  
VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER**  
T-MOBILE WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION ANTENNAS  
50 Irving Street, NW  
Washington, D.C.

Submitted by the Department of Veterans Affairs

December 28, 2006

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## Abstract

The Department of Veterans Affairs has submitted plans for the installation of nine transmitting and receiving antennas at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center located at 50 Irving Street, NW. Three sectors of three transmitting and receiving “flush-mounted” antennas will be installed at the penthouse level of the structure. All radio equipment associated with the antennas will be located within the mechanical penthouse.

## Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of preliminary and final building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d).

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## Executive Director’s Recommendation

The Commission:

**Approves** the preliminary and final building plans for the installation of twelve transmitting and receiving antennas, and associated equipment at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, 50 Irving Street, NW, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 12.20(38.30)4123, for a period not to exceed 5 years.

**Recommends** that the Veterans Affairs secure access to the building roof areas and ensure that necessary radio frequency (RF) information signs are placed at all rooftop access points in a highly visible fashion.

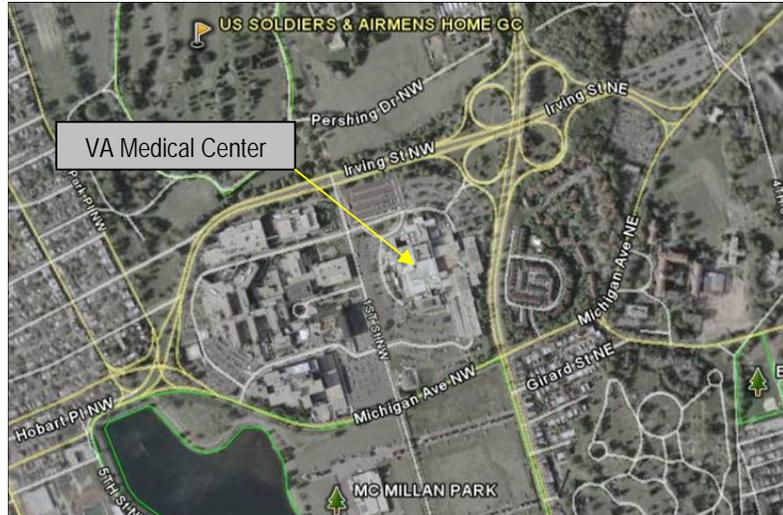
**Recommends** that the Veterans Affairs post roof drawings on the penthouse walls and/or doorways indicating areas where the antennas are located.

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## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Site

The VA Medical Center is bounded by Irving Street, NW, to the north; Michigan Avenue, NW, to the south; 1<sup>st</sup> Street, NW, to the east; and North Capitol Street, NW to the west. This site is located north of the McMillan Reservation and south of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. The proposed locations of the antennas are limited to the southwest, northwest, and northeast corners of the mechanical penthouse structure. Similar antennas were approved for another wireless carrier in 2005.

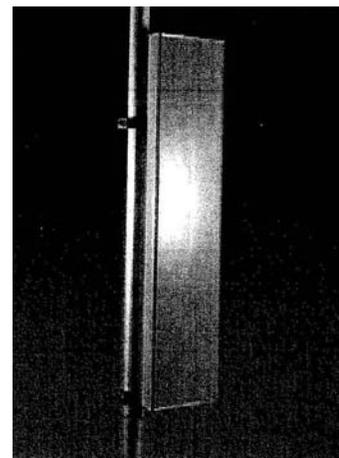


### Background

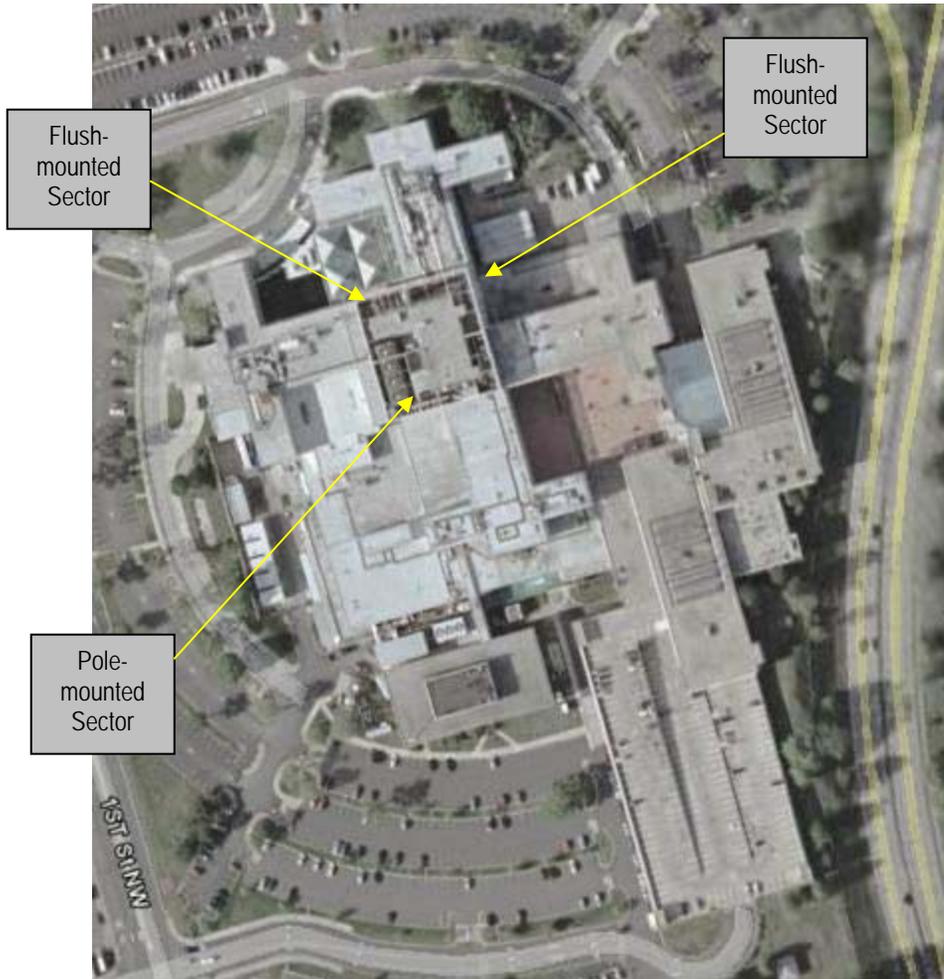
The VA has submitted plans for the installation of nine T-Mobile wireless telecommunication antennas on the Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast corners of the mechanical penthouse structure. The antennas are grouped into three sectors of three antennas each. All associated radio equipment will be located inside the penthouse and will not be visible from the outside.

### Proposal

Two sectors will be flush-mounted just below the penthouse parapet at the roof of the structure; another three-antenna sector will be pole-mounted on the roof. One flush-mounted antenna sector will face east towards North Capitol Street, NW and a second flush-mounted sector will face west toward 1st Street, NW. The final sector will be pole mounted and face southwest towards 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Michigan Avenue, NW. The height, width, and depth of the antennas are 53" x 12.9" x 3.1". The pole mounted antennas will extend 5'8" beyond the top of the existing penthouse. The associated radio equipment will be located inside the penthouse and will not be visible from ground level.

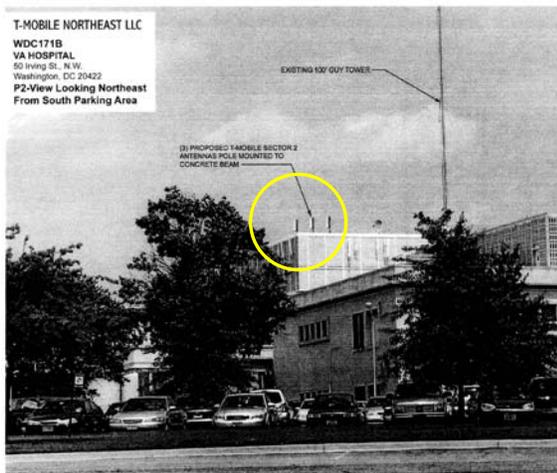


### VA MEDICAL CENTER ROOF WITH PROPOSED ANTENNA LOCATIONS

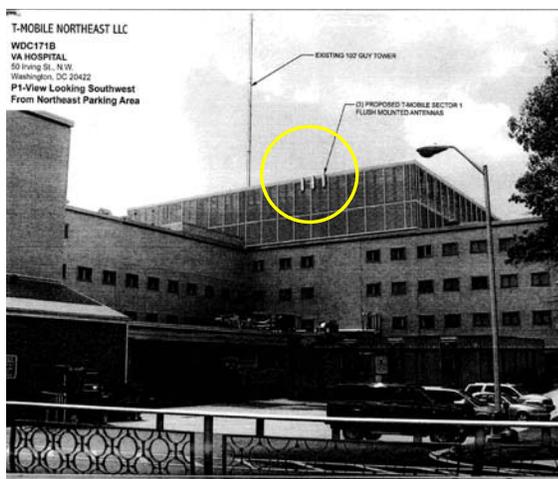


### PHOTO SIMULATION

#### POLE-MOUNTED ANTENNAS



#### FLUSH-MOUNTED ANTENNAS



## PROJECT ANALYSIS

### Executive Summary

The **staff recommends that the project plans be approved.** The applicant will locate the antennas to minimize their appearance. The associated radio equipment will be located inside the mechanical penthouse and will not be visible from the street. The proposal is consistent with the Commission's Antenna Guidelines and with the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that encourages placement of commercial antennas on federal property. Staff recommends that the antennas be approved for a period of five years, consistent with the Commission's recommendations in the Antenna Guidelines.

### Radiofrequency Radiation

An analysis determining the potential effects of radiofrequency non-ionizing radiation on the general public and occupational personnel was prepared by the applicant on September 27, 2006 for submission purposes. This analysis used a computerized evaluation program to determine the electromagnetic power surrounding the existing and proposed antennas, and measures compliance with the Maximum Permissible Exposure (MPE) limits for the general public and occupational personnel established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

No areas off the roof, either extending down toward the streets or outward beyond the building perimeter, exceed 100 percent of either the general public or occupational worker exposure levels.

Cumulative effects of any exposure levels have been factored by the evaluation program and have found to be within all standards specified by the FCC requirements. The analysis also determined that it is extremely unlikely that any personnel would come in contact with areas that exceed the occupational MPE.

## CONFORMANCE

### Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements

Staff has determined that the antenna installation would not have an adverse effect on other federal facilities or on L'Enfant Streets and is consistent with the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

### National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Pursuant to its regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, the VA conducted an independent NEPA evaluation of this project and determined that this project meets its standards for a categorical exclusion. Staff's evaluation of this project has determined that the project is also a categorical exclusion for NCPC in conformance with the NCPC Categorical Exclusion requirements under §8(C)(20) of NCPC's Environmental and Historic Preservation Policies.

National Historic Preservation Act

The District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office concurred with an independent analysis that found that the project will have no adverse affect on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or any surrounding historic districts.

NCPC staff has reviewed the photo simulations submitted by VA and has determined that no visual effects to any elements of the L'Enfant Plan or surrounding historic resources would occur.

## COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on October 11, 2006, and forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project has been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the Department of Housing and Community Development; the General Services Administration; the District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.