



TOWN OF
QUEEN CREEK
ARIZONA

TO: PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

THROUGH: BRETT BURNINGHAM, DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR

FROM: ERIK SWANSON, PLANNING ADMINISTRATOR, LES JOHNSON, PRINCIPAL PLANNER

RE: PUBLIC HEARING AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON CASES P26-0001 (SITE PLAN) AND P25-0137 (CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT) FOR THE FORT AZ WIRELESS COMMUNICATION FACILITY, A REQUEST BY LINDA GRICE (YOUNG DESIGN) FOR SITE PLAN AND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPROVAL TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE A 65-FOOT TALL WIRELESS COMMUNICATION TOWER PROVIDING UP TO TWO WIRELESS CARRIERS AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT.

DATE: May 13, 2026

Suggested Action:

Move to approve cases P26-0001 (Site Plan) and P25-0137 (Conditional Use Permit) Fort AZ Wireless Communication Facility, subject to the Conditions of Approval represented in this report.

Introduction / Summary:

This proposal consists of a request from Linda Grice (Young Design) for Site Plan and Conditional Use Permit approval to establish and operate a 65-foot tall wireless communication tower serving up to two wireless carriers. The proposed wireless communication facility is located approximately 450 feet east of Meridian Road and approximately 170 feet north of Ocotillo Road.

Project Information:

Project Name:	Fort AZ
Site Location:	Approx. 450 east of Meridian Rd and 170 feet north of Ocotillo Rd.
Current Zoning:	R1-54
General Plan Designation:	Neighborhood
Surrounding Zoning/Land Uses:	North - R1-54 (Single-family residential) South - R-143 (Recently annexed residential property) East - R1-5 (Ironwood Crossing) West - EMP-A (former rock yard and commercial uses. Possible future convenience store, fuel station, and car wash)
Facility Area:	Approx. 1,100 sq. ft.
Total Site Acreage:	Approx. 52,400 sq. ft.
Mono eucalyptus Height:	65 feet (tower height, additional 5' for faux eucalyptus branches)

Discussion:

The proposal consists of a request from Linda Grice (Young Design) for Site Plan and Conditional Use Permit approval to establish and operate a 65-foot tall wireless communication tower for up to two wireless carriers. The applicant is proposing a mono eucalyptus design for the tower and an approximately 1,100 square foot equipment compound. This is to be located in the northwestern corner of a 1.2 acre parcel located approximately 450 feet east of the intersection of Meridian and Ocotillo roads. The applicant has represented a need for increased cellular capacity and coverage in this segment of Queen Creek as there are no existing towers in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. The nearest tower is approximately 1.1 miles southeast of the subject site. The Wireless Communication Facility will initially serve AT&T as the primary service provider, but the tower design will allow equipment for one additional carrier.

The zoning ordinance allows wireless communication towers in the R1-54 zoning district via a conditional use permit at a maximum height of 65-feet to the top of the panel array, with an additional 5-feet for the "tree canopy". The proposed tower does not meet the required minimum setback of 53 feet, having a setback of approximately 45 feet from the western property line. Such deviation is considerable through the CUP process. The proposed tower meets all other development standards. The subject property has historically been utilized as a single-family residence and for non-conforming commercial use. The close proximity to the west property line is based upon the adjacency of the proposed wireless communication facility (WCF) to the EMP-A zoned property to the west, minimizing impact to the subject property, as well as distancing the WCF from residential uses to the north, northeast, and south. The WCF location is more than 300 feet away from the closest occupied residence to the northeast. The adjacent property to the north is located in the R1-54 zoning district, however, the existing residential unit on the property has not been occupied as a residence for some time (at least two years). The subject property also has an existing single-family residence that is not occupied. Residential units also exist to the south, across Ocotillo Rd, which are more than 350 feet away.

The tower design include a mono eucalyptus exterior finish. The faux tree design includes branches extending up to 10 feet from the pole, a faux bark cladding from the pole base up to the branches, as well as antenna "socks" placed over each cell antenna in an effort to blend in with the tree design.

The mono eucalyptus will be contained within a base area measuring 22' x 50' leased from the property owner, located near the northwest corner of the 1.2 acre site. The base area will accommodate equipment needs for the two cellular carriers. Perimeter fencing surrounding the lease area includes an 8' tall block (CMU) wall and a solid metal access gate on the east side of the lease area. On the site plan, two equipment areas are identified that will straddle the tower. Access will be provided via an easement that connects to the private road along the east side of the project site, which subsequently connects with Ocotillo Rd. All utility services will be provided underground. As previously noted, the site is more than 300 feet from the nearest residential use, located within the Ironwood Crossing subdivision to the east. Surrounding properties and uses vary with former commercial uses to the west (EMP-A zoning), former residential use to the north (R1-54 zoning), residential uses to the east (Ironwood Estates), and residential uses to the south (Country Mini Farms across Ocotillo Rd/unincorporated Pinal County).

Public Participation:

A neighborhood meeting was held on February 26, 2026. No residents attended the meeting.

A notification letter was sent out to all property owners within 1,200 feet of the proposed WCF location. In addition, meeting notification was provided on site. As of April 29, 2026 no written comments have been received.

Analysis:

General Plan Review: The General Plan Land Use designation for the project site is Neighborhood. This site has been identified for residential use since being annexed in 2017. The proposed use is consistent with the General Plan Neighborhood Land Use designation.

Zoning Review: The site has been designated R1-54 since being annexed in 2017. Wireless communication facilities are allowed via issuance of a conditional use permit in this zoning district, subject to adherence to all applicable development standards. The CUP is not only necessary due to the zoning but also due to the applicant proposing placement of the tower closer than the required 53-foot setback, otherwise the tower complies with all applicable development standards.

Landscaping and Wall Review: The location of the tower is in the northwestern corner of the project site. An 8' CMU perimeter wall is proposed to surround the tower facility. Perimeter landscaping is proposed abutting the north, south, and east walls, which will consist of Texas Sage and Rubber Rabbitbrush shrubs. The west wall is not proposed to have landscaping as it will be adjacent to an existing stormwater detention area. The proposed landscaping will provide sufficient visual relief and be complimentary to the proposed perimeter CMU wall.

Conditional Use Review: Conditional Use Permits are authorized under Article 3.5 Conditional Use Permits of the Zoning Ordinance. Conditional uses are those uses that are generally compatible with the land uses permitted by right in a zoning district, but which require individual review of their location, design and configuration and the imposition of conditions in order to ensure the appropriateness of the use at a particular location within a given zoning district.

Conditional use review in the Zoning Ordinance sets forth the following criteria for evaluating a proposed conditional use:

1. The proposed conditional use shall be in compliance with all regulations of the applicable zoning district, the provisions of Article 5 of this Ordinance, and any applicable performance standards as set forth in Article 6 of this Ordinance.

Applicant's Response – The proposed wireless communication facility (WCF) is in full compliance with all regulations of the applicable zoning district, the provisions of Article 5 of this Ordinance, and any applicable performance standards set forth in Article 6 of this Ordinance.

2. The proposed conditional use shall conform to the character of the neighborhood, within the same zoning district, in which it is located. In making such a determination, consideration shall be given to the location, type and height of buildings or structures and the type and extent of landscaping and screening on the site.

Applicant's Response – The proposed WCF site is located in the R1-54 zoning district, which is in the vicinity is transitional in nature. The WCF is proposed to have a faux tree exterior (eucalyptus design) in an effort to provide aesthetic value to the structure, blend with the typical desert foliage, and minimize an institutional appearance. Additionally, the WCF does not exceed the allowed maximum height of 65 feet.

3. Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, fire protection, and other necessary facilities shall be provided.

Applicant's Response - The WCF will have access via an established drive which services the parent parcel. Access over the parent parcel will be over an existing, graveled lane. This route provides suitable access for fire protection. Utility service to the WCF site will be provided underground from existing above ground electrical and in-ground telecommunications service at the south right of way along Ocotillo Rd. The proposed use will not adversely impact drainage.

4. Adequate measures shall be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic hazards and to minimize traffic congestion on the public roads.

Applicant's Response - Trip generation in association with the WCF is minimal, subject to maximum of 2-3 trips per month to the WCF for maintenance purposes. Access is via an existing drive and

subsequent lane.

5. The proposed use shall not be noxious or offensive by reason of vibration, noise, odor, dust, smoke or gas.

Applicant's Response - The WCF does not generate odor, dust, smoke or gas. Any vibration or noise associated with the WCF are expected to be nominal. The moving parts are cooling fans located on ground equipment that produce less noise than a household refrigerator. The facility will also have an emergency, back-up generator that will cycle for about 15 minutes once per month. The noise study provided indicates less than the allowed 50 decibel level at the two closest property lines.

6. The proposed use shall not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of the property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted nor substantially diminishes or impairs the property values within the neighborhood.

Applicant's Response - The WCF will be located a safe distance from adjacent properties. The abutting property to the west is currently a landscape materials yard, and small retail businesses, but is slated for re-development as a gas station and convenience center. The property to the north is a rural residential lot and is being used for storage of excess fill dirt. Other properties in the immediate vicinity are established residential subdivisions, rural residential uses and light industrial uses. The proposed faux eucalyptus design will help provide a more aesthetically pleasing design to the WCF. The proposed use is not expected to substantially diminish or impair property values within the neighborhood.

7. The establishment of the proposed use shall not impede the orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted within the zoning district.

Applicant's Response - The WCF will not impede the orderly development and improvement of any properties surrounding or in close proximity to the project site.

8. The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the proposed use shall not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort, or general welfare.

Applicant's Response - The WCF has been designed to operate in a safe manner and will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort, or general welfare of persons in proximity to the tower. The proposed facility will provide improved 911 service to the area, which currently has a gap in service. It will also provide FirstNet Service which is lacking in the vicinity.

9. The public interest and welfare supporting the proposed conditional use shall be sufficient to outweigh the individual interests which are adversely affected by the establishment of the proposed use.

Applicant's Response - The WCF will improve cellular service to residents, businesses, and those visiting the area in which it will serve. Cellular service in this area of Queen Creek is limited and often challenging for AT&T and other carriers. AT&T demonstratively has a gap in service. This tower will also provide service for First Responders as it is designated as part of the FirstNet network.

Conditions of Approval:

1. The Site Plan and Conditional Use Permit, as submitted, shall be subject to all the applicable provisions of the Town of Queen Creek Zoning Ordinance under Article 6.9 - Wireless Communications.
2. Signage which advertises the facility, product or services shall be prohibited.
3. A sign shall be placed on the perimeter wall clearly identifying the operator and contact information for the party responsible for the operation and maintenance of the facility.
4. The applicant shall be responsible for removing the tower/pole within ninety (90) days when the operations cease to exist.
5. The mono eucalyptus shall be maintained on a regular basis in order to ensure that it remains

in a manner similar to its condition at the time of installation consistent with the exhibits and details as submitted.

6. Mechanical equipment, electrical meter and service components, and similar utility devices, if proposed at ground level, shall be screened from public view and designed to appear as an integral part of the facility.
7. The future addition of antennas in the earmarked location on the monoelm shall include the same visual treatment as the initial antennas, including placement of "socks" over all antenna units.

Attachment(s):

1. [Project Aerial Exhibit](#)
2. [Vicinity Map](#)
3. [Project Narrative](#)
4. [Site Plan and Elevations](#)
5. [Mono Eucalyptus Design](#)
6. [PowerPoint Slides](#)