

Case No. 25-021-FPLAT
Case No. 25-013-CU-V
Case No. 25-022-APPEAL
Case No. 25-025-CU

Final Plat of Subdivision
Conditional Use and Major Variations
Appeal
Conditional Use Amendment

555 Howard Avenue
1705 Pratt Avenue
900 S. Des Plaines River Road
1685 E. Oakton Street



**DES PLAINES PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
June 10, 2025
MINUTES**

The Des Plaines Planning and Zoning Board held its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in Room 102 of the Des Plaines Civic Center.

Chairman Szabo called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and a roll call was established.

PRESENT: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
ABSENT: Veremis & Weaver
ALSO PRESENT: Jonathan Stytz, Senior Planner
Jonathan Mendel, Assistant Director of Community & Economic Development (CED)
Jeff Rogers, Director of CED

A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Draft May 27, 2025 minutes were not provided for review but will be provided with the June 24, 2025 agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEM

There was no public comment.

GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Assistant Director Mendel detailed the City Council's review and approval of the June 2, 2025 reconsideration and approval of the preliminary PUD and Conditional Use for an Assisted Living Facility at 2200 E. Golf Road.

ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS

Chairman Szabo stated the Minor Variation approval for 1161 Hewitt Avenue.

PENDING APPLICATIONS

Chairman Szabo introduced the cases on the agenda and noted that the case for 1345 E. Prairie Avenue was formally withdrawn by the petitioner.

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Address: 1685 E. Oakton Street (*Petitioner Requests Continuance*)

Case Number: 25-025-CU Amendment

The petitioner requests amending the Conditional Use Ordinance Z-1-25 to permit the expansion of the existing building for an Auto Service Repair Use and Auto Body Repair Use.

PIN: 09-28-101-084-0000

Petitioner/Owner: Vechean Shamaon, Shamaon Properties LLC, 9219 N Ashland Ave, Niles, IL 60714

Chairman Szabo stated the petitioner’s request to continue this case and inquired when the petitioner would like to continue. Assistant Director Mendal responded that the requested meeting is June 24, 2025.

Chairman Szabo opened public comment. No members of the public came forward.

Chairman Szabo closed the public hearing and entertained a motion regarding the case.

Member Catalano motioned and Member Fowler seconded a motion to continue the case to the June 24, 2025 PZB meeting.

AYES: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
 NAYS: None
 ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

Address: 555 Howard Road (*Continued from May 27, 2025*)

Case Number: 25-021-FPLAT

The petitioner requests a Final Plat of Subdivision to consolidate the existing two lots into one lot of record.

PINs: 09-30-400-002-0000; 09-30-400-032-0000

Petitioner/Owner: Doug Klein, 9525 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont, IL 60018

Chairman Szabo swore in Doug Klien from Bridge Industrial.

Mr. Klien stated that Bridge Industrial owns the subject property, which was formerly utilized by NuWay Industries. They have demolished the former development on site for a new industrial development. They were informed by the city that they need to dedicate a portion of the property for use as Howard Avenue right-of-way and consolidate the two lots into one lot of record.

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Chairman Szabo asked when the petitioner was before the PZB last. Senior Planner Stytz responded they were before the board back in August 2024 for the Tentative Plat approval.

Chairman Szabo asked if there were any other questions from the PZB. There were none.

Chairman Szabo asked staff for their presentation, which Senior Planner Stytz provided.

Issue: The petitioner is requesting a Final Plat of Subdivision to consolidate two lots into one lot of record.

Petitioner: Doug Klein, 9525 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont, IL 60018

Owner: Doug Klein, 9525 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Rosemont, IL 60018

Case Number: 25-021-FPLAT

PINs: 09-30-400-002-0000; 09-30-400-032-0000

Ward: #5, Alderman Thomas Merlin

Existing Zoning: M-2, General Manufacturing District
Existing Land Use: Vacant lot (former industrial building)

Surrounding Zoning: North: M-2, General Manufacturing District
 South: M-2, General Manufacturing District
 East: R-1, Single Family Residential District
 West: M-2, General Manufacturing District

Surrounding Land Use: North: Industrial buildings (Manufacturing)
 South: Industrial buildings (Manufacturing)
 East: Single Family Residences (Residential)
 West: Industrial building (Manufacturing)

Street Classification: Wolf Road is a minor arterial street under Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) jurisdiction and Howard Avenue is a local street under City of Des Plaines jurisdiction.

Comprehensive Plan: The Future Land Use map designates this property as industrial.

Project Description: *Overview*
 Petitioner Doug Klien, on behalf of Bridge Industrial, intends to consolidate the two existing parcels into one lot of record. The subject property is zoned M-2 General Manufacturing district and located at the southwest corner of the Wolf Road and Howard

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Avenue intersection and is comprised of two lots totaling approximately 11.77-acres. Approximately 789 feet of the north portion of the property extends to the centerline of Howard Avenue before stair-stepping down outside of the Howard Avenue right-of-way. The subject property was improved with two main structures totaling 291,031 square feet and multiple surface parking lots with access to both Wolf Road and Howard Avenue as illustrated in the attached ALTA/NSPS Land Title Survey. However, the applicant applied for and received a demolition permit in March 2025 to remove all existing improvements on the subject property including underground utilities. The demolition is in process as illustrated in the attached Site and Context Photos.

Proposed Improvements

The proposal includes the redevelopment of the subject property for a new Class A industrial building with surface parking areas as noted in the attached Project Narrative. The petitioner indicates that the proposed development will be constructed as either a speculative building or as a built-to-suit for a potential tenant. While the exact building size of the future development has not been finalized, the proposal does include the installation of: (i) a new 225,606-square foot industrial building with 64 truck docks and two drive-in doors; (ii) new off-street parking areas consisting of 193 automotive stalls and 19 trucks stalls; (iii) two new underground detention vaults for stormwater run-off; and (iv) curb cut and ADA improvements for the Wolf Road/Howard Avenue intersection as detailed in the attached Excerpt of Final Engineering Plans.

FINAL PLAT OF SUBDIVISION

Request Description:

Overview

The proposal includes the consolidation of the two existing lots into one 11.77-acre lot. The attached Final Plat of Bridge Point Des Plaines Subdivision shows the location, boundary, and size of the proposed consolidated lot. The plat also notes the dedication of the existing 789-foot-long by 40-foot-wide northwest corner of the subject property to the City of Des Plaines to provide a full 80 feet of right-of-way for roadway purposes.

Building Lines and Easements

The subdivision plat shows the following easements and building lines: (i) a new 65-foot front building setback line along Wolf Road

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where the proposed subdivision abuts the street; (ii) new 25-foot side building setback lines along the north and south side property lines of the proposed subdivision; (iii) a new 25-foot rear building setback line along the west boundary of the proposed subdivision; (iv) an 83-foot public utility easement and 82.5-foot perpetual right and easement for utilities across the northern portion of the subdivision; (v) a 10-foot ComEd easement along the west subdivision line; and (vi) a 15-foot public utility easement along the east subdivision line abutting Wolf Road.

Subdivision Process, Required Public Improvements

Chapter 13-3 of the Subdivision Regulations allows the City to require various right-of-way (ROW) improvements based on criteria such as traffic and effect on adjacent properties. Certain underground infrastructure is required to be installed to the standards required by Public Works and Engineering (PWE). Under Section 13-3-1, the developer is required to: (i) add new five-foot-wide sidewalk along both Wolf Road and Howard Avenue for the entire frontage of the proposed development; (ii) remove all old water services up to the city water main; and (iii) add a new looped public water main. The developer has provided PWE with an estimated cost of both private and public improvements totaling \$225,439, an amount for which PWE has approved as noted in the attached PWE Approval Letter.

PZB Procedure and Recommended Conditions:

Under Section 13-2-7 (Approval of Final Plat by Planning and Zoning Board) of the Subdivision Regulations, the PZB has the authority to recommend the City Council approve, approve with conditions, or deny the Final Plat of Subdivision request at 555 Howard Avenue. City Council has the final authority on the request.

Chairman Szabo opened public comment. No members of the public came forward.

Chairman Szabo closed the public hearing and entertained a motion regarding the case.

Member Zadrozny motioned and Member Catalano seconded a motion to recommend that the City Council approve the Final Plat of Subdivision without any conditions.

AYES: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

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Case Number: 25-013-CU-V

The petitioner requests a conditional use and variations for a proposed public utility tower in the C-3 General Commercial District, and any other variations, waivers, and zoning relief as may be necessary.

PIN: 09-333-020-006-0000

Petitioner/Owner: Commonwealth Edison Company (represented by Scott Saef, Sidley Austin LLP), 3 Lincoln Centre, 4th Floor, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

Chairman Szabo swore in Joseph Turnage of 102 Arthur, Mount Prospect, IL (External Affairs Manager for ComEd) and Scott Saef of 3 Lincoln Centre, 4th Floor, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181 (Attorney for ComEd).

Mr. Saef provided an overview of the existing electrical substation development located on the subject property and noted that the subject property was rezoned from R-1 to C-3 in 2022 because a public utility is a permitted use in this district. He displayed an aerial photo showing the anticipated location for the proposed antenna support structure and briefly outlined the conditional use and major variation requests.

Mr. Saef defined and described the terms distribution automation and voltage optimization and the role they play in the electrical grid. He noted the purpose and operation of the proposed antenna support structure and how it helps to address current Illinois laws for public utility providers. The structure operates intermittently with low energy output by sending secure communications between ComEd facilities. He displayed examples of other antenna support structures in the general area and their respective heights in feet.

Mr. Ramirez displayed and described an aerial photo of the existing electrical system coverage describing the network of existing infrastructure. He explained how the proposed antenna support structure will help split the load between existing structures and thereby improve electrical service in Des Plaines.

Mr. Saef displayed the proposed site plan identifying the location of the proposed antenna support structure and noting site constraints preventing its relocation to comply with city codes. He discussed the antenna support structure height and how the proposed height is necessary in order for the antennas to perform properly. He outlined justification for the conditional use request and multiple major variation requests.

Mr. Saef outlined the subject site configuration and layout necessitating the need for the requested major variations. Additionally, he described the functional communications need for clear line of sight requiring the proposed 104 foot height versus the maximum allowed 50 foot in the underlying C-3 zoning district. Mr. Richardo Remerez described the proposed site landscaping and described their argument for the Conditional Use for the communications tower.

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Chairman Szabo asked for questions of the petitioner from the PZB.

Member Catalano asked if photos in the packet are the subject site. Mr. Saef stated that the photos in question are taken about 100 feet to the west of the subject site and noted how the petitioner will mitigate the interference.

Member Fowler asked about the scale of the proposed tower height in comparison to the average utility pole. Mr. Saef stated typical local distribution utility poles are about 40 feet tall.

Member Catalano asked about the general height of the nearby billboards. Director Rogers stated they are about 80 feet to 100 feet tall maximum.

Member Catalano asked if the proposed tower could be disguised like a tree or similar, to mitigate the proposed tower’s presence. Mr. Saef stated that a tree disguise or such would look odder and out of place in a ComEd substation than the proposed tower.

Member Zadrozny asked if there would be any impact on the homes surrounding. Mr. Saef stated the power is low and the radiation levels are low.

Chairman Szabo asked for additional PZB questions. There were none.

Chairman Szabo asked for the staff presentation, which Senior Planner Stytz provided.

Issue: The petitioner requests the following items to install a new 104-foot-tall antenna support structure in the C-3 General Commercial district adjacent to residential uses: (i) a conditional use to allow the proposed structure in the C-3 district as a secondary principal use; (ii) a major variation to reduce to required setback of the structure from the property line from 50 feet to 28 feet; (iii) a major variation to reduce to required setback of the structure from a residential district from 100 feet to 65 feet; (iv) a major variation to allow the structure to be located on the side of the principal structure instead of behind; and (v) a major variation to increase the allowable height of the structure from 50 feet to 104 feet.

Petitioner: Sidley Austin LLP (Representative: Scott Saef, 1 S. Dearborn Street, Chicago, IL 60603)

Owner: Commonwealth Edison Company (Representative: Shemeka Wesby, 3 Lincoln Centre, 4th Floor, Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181)

Case Number: #25-013-CU-V

PIN: 09-33-302-006-0000

Ward Number: #6, Alderman Mark Walsten

Existing Zoning: C-3, General Commercial

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Existing Land Uses:	Public Utility Substation (public utility)	

Surrounding Zoning: North: R-1, Single Family Residential District
 South: R-1, Single Family Residential District
 East: R-1, Single Family Residential District
 West: C-3, General Commercial District

Surrounding Land Uses: North: Single Family Residences (residential)
 South: Single Family Residences (residential)
 East: Single Family Residences (residential)
 West: Shopping Center with Freestanding Restaurant (commercial)

Street Classification: Pratt Avenue and Sycamore Street are both local roads under City of Des Plaines jurisdiction.

Comprehensive Plan: The Comprehensive Plan illustrates this site as Transportation / Utilities / Communication / Other.

Property/Zoning History: Pursuant to City records, this property was annexed into the City in 1956 as a vacant piece of land. Since then, a public utility substation was a constructed and later expanded to the size it is today. The subject property was originally zoned R-1 Single Family Residential. However, a map amendment request was approved by City Council on May 16, 2022 through Ordinance Z-10-22 to rezone the subject property to C-3 General Commercial. Later in 2022, a minor variation was approved to allow an 11-foot-tall solid fence with one-foot of barbed wire and four 16-foot-tall camera posts to be located on the property where a maximum eight-foot-tall fence is permitted.

CONDITIONAL USE

Request Description: *Overview*
 The petitioner requests installing an antenna support structure—referenced as “Structure” in the petitioner’s attached Project Narrative—as part of ComEd’s implementation of its multi-year “smart grid” initiative, which seeks to improve reliability of the electrical grid and increase voltage efficiencies along each distribution line. See the attached Project Narrative for additional details on the proposed antenna support structure facility itself and its use.

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The subject property consists of one 1.36-acre parcel located at the southwest corner of the Pratt Avenue/Sycamore Street intersection as illustrated on the attached Plat of Survey. It is currently developed with a public utility substation with two outbuildings, gravel drive aisles, and an 11-foot-tall solid fence with one foot of barbed wire and four 16-foot-tall camera posts. The subject property borders single family residences on all sides except the west side which abuts railroad tracks and a commercial shopping center and stand-alone restaurant.

Use Classifications

The existing electrical substation is classified as a public utility use, as defined below, which serves as the principal use of the property. Pursuant to Section 12-7-3.K, a public utility use—with the functions explicitly noted in the definition—is permitted in the C-3 district.

PUBLIC UTILITIES: A building or portion thereof used for providing, monitoring, and housing utilities for public consumption or use. This term shall include, but not be limited to, operations providing water, sewer, gas, public works facilities, and other uses similar in nature and impact. "Public utilities" shall not include any use that is otherwise listed specifically in a zoning district as a permitted or conditional use (Section 12-13-3 of the Zoning Ordinance).

The proposed antenna support structure is not included within the definition of public utilities. Instead, the proposed structure is a Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facility as defined below:

COMMERCIAL MOBILE RADIO AND WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE FACILITY: An unmanned facility consisting of antennas, equipment, and equipment storage shelter used for the reception, switching, and/or transmission of wireless telecommunications including, but not limited to, paging, enhanced specialized mobile radio, personal communication services, cellular telephone, and similar technologies. A commercial mobile radio service facility may either be freestanding, roof mounted, or building mounted (Section 12-13-3 of the Zoning Ordinance).

The proposed freestanding antenna support structure is a secondary principal use since it's not part of the existing public utility use (principal use) but serves as a separate use providing communication between ComEd substations in the area.

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Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facility Regulations

The Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facility use is regulated in Section 12-8-5 of the Zoning Ordinance by zoning district, property location, height, design, and operation to minimize adverse effects on surrounding developments.

- Zoning District: This use is only allowed in certain zoning districts either as a permitted use (“P”) or conditional use (“C”) as identified in the table. Zoning districts not listed below prohibit this use due to the intended uses of those zoning districts and potential adverse effects. The subject property is located in the C-3 district, which allows a freestanding facility serving as a secondary principal use, but only through a conditional use permit and approval from City Council.

Zoning District	Freestanding (Principal Use)	Freestanding (Secondary Principal Use)	Roof or Building Mounted
C-1 Neighborhood Shopping	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	C
C-2 Limited Office Commercial	Not Allowed	C	C
<i>C-3 General Commercial</i>	<i>Not Allowed</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>P</i>
C-4 Regional Shopping	Not Allowed	C	P
C-5 Central Business	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	P
M-1 Limited Manufacturing	C	P	P
M-2 General Manufacturing	C	P	P
M-3 Special Manufacturing	C	P	P
I-1 Institutional	Not Allowed	C	P
R-4 Central Core Residential	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	C

- Property Location: Freestanding facilities serving as a secondary principal use are required to be located behind the rear of the principal building and meet the following setback requirements:
 - Minimum 50-foot setback from all property lines; and
 - Minimum 100-foot setback from all residential districts.
- Height: Freestanding facilities within commercially zoned districts are limited to 50 feet in height.

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- Design: These facilities must be designed to be compatible with neighboring buildings and uses, screened, and painted to blend or match with the host building or the environment.
- Operation: These facilities must be fully automated and unmanned except for the completion of periodic maintenance.

Antenna Support Structure Proposal

The petitioner proposes the antenna support structure between the existing control building and the substation electrical control equipment building and accessible from the two existing access points on Sycamore Street and roadway surface throughout the site as illustrated on the Site Plan. The attached Monopole Elevation Exhibit shows the overall height of the proposed structure along with details related to the proposed antennas.

The proposal also includes the addition of landscaping along Sycamore Street as illustrated in the attached Landscape Plan. It includes the addition of: (i) three new parkway landscape beds consisting of wood mulch groundcover and mixture of shrubs, ornamental grasses, and perennials; and (ii) six new wood mulch rings around existing parkway trees. All shrubs and perennials will not exceed three feet in height in conformance with Section 12-10-7 of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed ornamental grasses will be four feet in height but have been approved by the Public Works and Engineering (PWE) department. Staff have added a condition of approval to require the landscaping to be installed in accordance with the attached Landscape Plan with flexibility to allow certain deviations as approved by the Zoning Administrator.

The table below analyzes how the proposed antenna support structure aligns with Section 12-8-5 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Antenna Support Structure		
Standard	Requirement	Proposed
Minimum Setback from Site Property Lines	50 FT	North: 28 FT* East: 75 FT
Minimum Setback from Residential Districts	100 FT	North: 65 FT* East: 105 FT
Location in Relation to Principal Building	Rear of principal bldg.	Side of principal bldg.*
Maximum Height	50 FT	104 FT*

**Indicates that a major variation is required.*

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MAJOR VARIATIONS

Request Description:

Overview

As noted above, the proposed antenna support structure will require multiple major variations related to its location and height:

- Structure Setback from Property Lines: The proposed structure exceeds the minimum 50-foot-setback requirement from the east property line but is positioned only 28 feet away from the north property line resulting in a 22-foot (44%) deficit in the property line setback standard.
- Structure Setback from Residential Districts: The proposed structure would be positioned 65 feet from the surrounding residential district—as measured from the proposed structure to the centerlines of the adjoining streets—which results in a 35-foot (35 percent) deficit of the residential district setback standard.
- Structure Location in Relation to the Principal Structure: The proposed structure will be positioned to the side of the principal structure (i.e., the control room) on the subject property instead of behind the principal structure as required.
- Structure Height: The proposed structure height of 104 feet more than doubles the maximum height of 50 feet for these types of facilities in commercially zoned districts.

Request Considerations

In their assessment of these requests, the PZB should review the following considerations for the proposed antenna support structure:

- Consideration of Existing Conditions: The subject property has been developed and operated as an electrical substation for many years. The attached Existing Conditions Photos show that multiple tall electrical poles and cables are currently installed on the premises to distribute power throughout the area. The proposed antenna support structure is similar in nature and appearance to the existing equipment and utility poles in the immediate area, which arguably does not further impact the neighboring properties than the existing electrical substation.
- Consideration of Purpose and Operation of the Structure: The attached Project Narrative and the attached Petitioner Responses for Standards provide more in-depth information on the purpose and design of the structure in addition to justification and rationale for the requested major variations.

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The PZB may ask for clarification on the specific design and location requirements for these types of structures as part of their overall consideration of these requests.

- Consideration of Alternatives: An alternative location of the proposed structure could be pursued to address the location-specified variation requests. However, viable alternative locations are limited based on the current development and layout of the subject property in addition to the required close proximity of the structure to the control building. Similarly, while a reduction in height of the structure could be pursued, reducing the structure height to 50 feet may limit or prevent effective operation of the proposed antenna support structure.

Standards for Conditional Use: Conditional Use requests are subject to the standards set forth in Section 12-3- 4(E) of the Zoning Ordinance. Rationale for how the proposed amendments would satisfy the standards is provided below and in the attached Petitioner Responses to Standards. For its rationale, the Board may use the responses provided as written, modify them, or adopt its own.

1. The proposed Conditional Use is in fact a Conditional Use established within the specific Zoning district involved:

Comment: The proposed antenna support structure as presented is classified as a Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facility use. This use is listed as a conditional use as specified in Section 12-8-5.G of the Zoning Ordinance for properties in the C-3 District.

2. The proposed Conditional Use is in accordance with the objectives of the City's Comprehensive Plan:

Comment: The Future Land Use Map of the 2019 Comprehensive Plan designates this property as Transportation/Utilities/Communication/Other, land use designation with a specific focus on highways, commuter rail, and electrical distribution (i.e., electrical substations). The proposed antenna support structure would align with the Comprehensive Plan and further improve the existing substation currently operating on site.

3. The proposed Conditional Use is designed, constructed, operated and maintained to be harmonious and appropriate in appearance with the existing or intended character of the general vicinity:

Comment: The proposed antenna support structure is designed for function instead of appearance and, by its nature, is not harmonious or appropriate in appearance to surrounding residences. However, it complements the existing built environment of the substation and existing active railroad right-of-way abutting the subject property's west property line. While the proposal does add a new structure to the substation's premises, the overall design and location of the electrical substation itself will not change.

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4. The proposed Conditional Use is not hazardous or disturbing to existing neighboring uses:

Comment: Similar to the existing electrical substation, the proposed antenna support structure would not be hazardous or disturbing in its placement or operation. The existing tall fence enclosure has generally helped minimize any perceived hazardous or disturbing effects on neighboring uses. In addition, the proposed parkway landscaping along Sycamore Street will further soften the transition between the existing electrical substation/proposed antenna support structure and neighboring residents.

5. The proposed Conditional Use is to be served adequately by essential public facilities and services, such as highways, streets, police and fire protection, drainage structures, refuse disposal, water and sewer, and schools; or, agencies responsible for establishing the Conditional Use shall provide adequately any such services:

Comment: The existing electrical substation is adequately served by essential public facilities and services, which will not change with the installation of the proposed antenna support structure. Staff do not have concerns that this antenna support structure will impact the essential public facilities and services currently serving the subject property.

6. The proposed Conditional Use does not create excessive additional requirements at public expense for public facilities and services and will not be detrimental to the economic well-being of the entire community:

Comment: The existing electrical substation provides utility services to the City that directly benefit the City as a whole. The proposed antenna support structure intends to further improve the efficiency of utility services provided by this electrical substation.

7. The proposed Conditional Use does not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, equipment and conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any persons, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke fumes, glare or odors:

Comment: Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facilities by nature are designed to be automated, unmanned, and operate with little to no noise or traffic. The petitioner confirms that the proposed antenna support structure will be unmanned, unlit, and noiseless. Aside from periodic maintenance of the proposed antenna support structure, there is no anticipated increase in the amount of traffic accessing the site. In addition, these types of facilities in the City are required to be painted in a “single color, having a flat, matte, non-gloss, nonfluorescent finish” to blend or match with the host building (i.e., control building) or its environment (i.e., electrical substation) pursuant to Section 12-8-5 of the Zoning Ordinance, thus reducing any potential glare impacts. There are no perceived impacts in relation to smoke fumes or odors associated with the operation of the proposed antenna support structure as confirmed by the petitioner.

8. The proposed Conditional Use provides vehicular access to the property designed so that it does not create an interference with traffic on surrounding public thoroughfares:

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Comment: The existing vehicular access to the electrical substation is sufficient for its operation and the proposed antenna support structure. Given that there is no change in the existing access points/circulation throughout the site and no anticipated interference from the proposed antenna support structure, staff do not have concerns related to traffic interferences on the surrounding streets.

9. The proposed Conditional Use does not result in the destruction, loss, or damage of natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance:

Comment: The subject property has already been developed with the electrical substation and void of any natural, scenic, or historic features of major importance. The proposed antenna support structure will not result in any further loss of these features.

10. The proposed Conditional Use complies with all additional regulations in the Zoning Ordinance specific to the Conditional Use requested:

Comment: Aside from the major variations for location and height, the proposed antenna support structure will comply with all other requirements of the Zoning Ordinance for the C-3 General Commercial District.

Standards for Variation: The following is a discussion of standards for variations from Section 12-3-6(H) of the Zoning Ordinance. Rationale for how the proposed use would satisfy the standards as provided below and in the petitioner’s response to standards. The PZB may use this rationale toward its recommendation, or the Board may make up its own.

1. Hardship: No variation shall be granted pursuant to this subsection H unless the applicant shall establish that carrying out the strict letter of the provisions of this title would create a particular hardship or a practical difficulty.

Comment: It can be argued that Commercial Mobile Radio and Wireless Telecommunications Service Facilities, including facilities like the proposed antenna support structure, can be difficult to design and locate on many properties given that the nature of their function and specifications do not often align with setback and height standards, except on larger properties with limited existing development and additional space for their placement. In cases like the subject property, factors such as short lot boundaries, smaller lot sizes, and more expansive developments equate to limited space for these types of structures and often variation requests. Staff feel that these factors are present on the subject property and provide a hardship or practical difficulty preventing the petitioner from complying with all appropriate standards.

2. Unique Physical Condition: The subject lot is exceptional as compared to other lots subject to the same provision by reason of a unique physical condition, including presence of an existing use, structure, or sign, whether conforming or nonconforming; irregular or substandard shape or size; exceptional topographical features; or other extraordinary physical conditions peculiar to and inherent in the subject lot that amount to more than a mere inconvenience to the owner and that relate to or arise out of the lot rather than the personal situation of the current owner of the lot.

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Comment: The 1.34-acre subject property is not unique in size. However, it is an irregular quadrilateral in shape reducing in width from 210 feet at the north boundary to 133 feet at the south boundary, which is unique and could partially be the cause for the variation requests. While the northern portion of the subject property—where the antenna support structure is proposed—is wider overall than the southern portion, it also contains both the existing control building and accessory structure on the site, which limits viable areas for the antenna support structure to be placed. To add to this, existing transformers and other electrical equipment bisect the northern portion of the lot further reducing available space. Thus, the unique property characteristics and existing development substantially limit the location of the proposed antenna support structure making it difficult to comply with all requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

3. Not Self-Created: The aforesaid unique physical condition is not the result of any action or inaction of the owner or its predecessors in title and existed at the time of the enactment of the provisions from which a variance is sought or was created by natural forces or was the result of governmental action, other than the adoption of this title.

Comment: While the location, dimensions, and size are not the result of a known action by the current owner or their predecessors, the existing development and its layout can be directly attributed to the current property owner. That said, the existing electrical substation was developed several decades ago prior to the current Illinois laws for improvements such as the proposed antenna support structure, so it can be argued that while the existing development is directly caused by the current property owner it was not possible for the current property owner to have known when originally constructing the electrical substation that the improvements such as the proposed antenna support structure would be required in the future. Nonetheless, see the attached Petitioner’s Project Narrative and Responses to Standards.

4. Denied Substantial Rights: The carrying out of the strict letter of the provision from which a variance is sought would deprive the owner of the subject lot of substantial rights commonly enjoyed by owners of other lots subject to the same provision.

Comment: While it can be argued that the existing electrical substation could still operate as it does today without the approval of the proposed antenna support structure, denial of the requested variations would essentially prevent the installation of the antenna support structure, which could impact the overall efficiency of the electrical substation and prevent the property owner from abiding by the Illinois statutes referred to the attached Petitioner’s Project Narrative and Responses to Standards. As newer technology becomes available and laws are put in place to require its implementation in existing public utility facilities, it is important to consider the critical role that public utility facilities play in our communities and the need to allow the latest technological advances to be installed so these facilities can continue to efficiently provide necessary services.

5. Not Merely Special Privilege: The alleged hardship or difficulty is neither merely the inability of the owner or occupant to enjoy some special privilege or additional right not available to owners or occupants of other lots subject to the same provision, nor merely the inability of the owner to make more money from the use of the subject lot.

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Comment: Granting the requested variations would not be classified as a special privilege for the property owner as the subject property provides a critical service to the community. Not only that but the proposed antenna support structure will help to improve the communication between other substations in the area to reduce outages and optimize electrical distribution.

6. Title And Plan Purposes: The variation would not result in a use or development of the subject lot that would be not in harmony with the general and specific purposes for which this title and the provision from which a variation is sought were enacted or the general purpose and intent of the comprehensive plan.

Comment: The Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan denotes the subject property as the Transportation/Utilities/Communication/Other use type, which focuses on public utility facilities such as the existing electrical substation on the subject property. The proposed antenna support structure represents a form of development that complements the existing electrical substation while also providing improvements to the electrical distribution system.

7. No Other Remedy: There is no means other than the requested variation by which the alleged hardship or difficulty can be avoided or remedied to a degree sufficient to permit a reasonable use of the subject lot.

Comment: The *Request Considerations* section above summarizes some considerations that could be made regarding the location and height of the proposed antenna support structure. The property characteristics do substantially limit alternate locations for the antenna support structure and the 50-foot height restriction could limit the antenna support structure’s ability to effectively communicate with other substations, which is its sole purpose. Nonetheless, the PZB may ask why alternative designs are not feasible.

8. Minimum Required: The requested variation is the minimum measure of relief necessary to alleviate the alleged hardship or difficulty presented by the strict application of this title.

Comment: The variation requests for location and height would be the minimum measure of relief needed to allow the antenna support structure to be installed as specified. The proposed antenna support structure will need to follow all other portions of Sections 12-8-5 of the Zoning Ordinance.

PZB Procedure and Recommended Conditions: Under Section 12-3-4.D (Procedure for Review and Decision for Conditional Uses) and Section 12-3-6.G.2.b (Procedure for Review and Decision for Major Variations) of the Zoning Ordinance, the PZB has the authority to *recommend* that the City Council approve or deny the requests. Consideration of the requests should be based on a review of the information presented by the petitioner and the findings made above, as specified in Section 12-3-4.E (Standards for Conditional Use) and Section 12-3-6.H (Standards for Variations) of the Zoning Ordinance. If the PZB recommends and City Council ultimately approves the request, staff recommends the following conditions.

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Conditions of Approval:

1. Landscaping must be installed in conformance with the approved Landscape Plan. Minor changes can be approved by the Zoning Administrator provided that the quantity of plantings does not decrease.
2. At time of the building permit process, the antenna support structure plans may be modified as necessary to comply with all local and state requirements, provided that the total height (including the antenna) is not increased in size and its setbacks are not decreased in distance.

Chairman Szabo asked for staff questions from the PZB.

Member Catalano asked if the petitioner could add commercial cell antennas on this tower. Mr. Saef stated that they do not plan or intend to install commercial cell antennas on the proposed tower.

Chairman Szabo opened public comment. No members of the public came forward.

Chairman Szabo closed the public hearing and entertained a motion regarding the case.

A motion was made by Member Catalano and seconded by Member Fowler to recommend approval of the conditional use to the City Council, with the two conditions drafted by staff and a third condition that no commercial cell antennas would be permitted on the proposed tower.

AYES: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
 NAYS: None
 ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

A motion was made by Member Catalano and seconded by Member Zadrozny to approve the proposed major variations to the City Council.

AYES: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
 NAYS: None
 ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

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900 S. Des Plaines River Road – Appeal of ZA 3/20/25 minor variation approval with condition

Chairman Szabo swore-in the Chris Hedberg and Aaron Parks of Waldman Engineering Consultants, Inc. at 4300 Commerce Court, Suite 310 Lisle, IL 605432.

Chris Hedberg outlined, in detail, their original 2024 structural repair permit request and subsequent permit amendment and why they are appealing the Zoning Administrator’s 3/20/25 decision to approve the requested minor variation.

Chris Hedberg stated the applicant believed the existing building is non-conforming and built prior to the codification of the building materials regulations in City Code Section 12-3-11. He further stated that the proposed and installed textured fiber cement board material would be sufficiently in character with the subject property and surrounding neighborhood.

Chairman Szabo asked how many columns. Mr. Hedberg stated there are 23 columns and the columns are 10” by 10” and to encase the inner 5” column would require existing brick cutting and modification. Therefore, most of the high project cost is labor.

Member Catalano asked about the detail of the appeal request and if it is only regarding the exterior finish texture of the fiber cement boards. Director Jeff Rogers noted he will summarize the concerns in his report.

Chairman Szabo asked if the metal clad columns are original to the building. Mr. Hedberg stated the metal clad columns are original to the subject property.

Chairman Szabo asked for the staff presentation, which Director Jeff Rogers provided, outlining the background and reasoning for the staff analysis of the minor variation request.

Issue: Appeal of March 20, 2025 Minor Variation Administrative Decision Approval with condition

Petitioner: Julie McKenzie, McKenzie Management Inc., 2720 S. Des Plaines River Road, Suite 214, Des Plaines, IL 60018

Owner: Thacker House Condominium, 900 S. Des Plaines River Road, IL 60018

Case Number: 25-022-APPEAL

PIN: 09-20-206-035-0000

Ward: #2, Alderman Colt Moylan

Existing Zoning: R-4, Central Core Residential District

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Existing Land Use:	Multi-family building	

Surrounding Zoning: North: R-4, Central Core Residential District
 South: R-4, Central Core Residential District
 East: R-1, Single Family Residential District
 West: R-4, Central Core Residential District

Surrounding Land Use: North: Multi-family building
 South: Multi-family building
 East: Cook County Forest Preserve
 West: Multi-family building

Comprehensive Plan: “Multi-Family Residential” is the use illustrated in the Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning/Property History: Based on aerial imagery, the subject property was developed in the early 1970s.

Project Background:

The following is a summary of events and actions leading to this appeal request:

- February 2024 – Petitioner submitted a permit application to repair the subject property’s twenty-three ground floor exterior structural columns. In April and May 2024, the permit was approved conditionally requiring the use of masonry exterior finish on the columns in accordance with exhibits provided by the petitioner. See the attached exhibit depicting the proposed masonry. See the attached Petitioner’s April and May 2024 Permit Plans.
- November 2024 – Petitioner requested changes to the approved permit requesting textured wood grained fiber cement board as the exterior finish material for the columns. See the attached November 2024 amended permit plans. Pursuant to Section 12-3-11 (Building Design Review), fiber cement board is not a permitted ground floor exterior finish material for the subject property. Assistant Director Mendel met with the petitioner’s representative and proposed using fiber cement board with a smooth exterior finish to match the existing smooth exterior finish of the metal cladding to be replaced as part of the planned repair. Although fiber cement board for this repair would require a minor variation regardless of the texture or appearance, the Zoning Administrator is able to grant this variation with conditions, such as allowing a specific type of material like the smooth exterior finish material.
- Between November 2024 and February 2025 – Petitioner conducted repairs and finished the repair using textured wood grained exterior finished fiber cement panel without permit approval by the City.

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- February 24, 2025 – Petitioner submitted a Minor Variation application requesting a variation to keep the already installed wood grain finished fiber cement board. Please see the attached Petitioner’s Minor Variation Application Variation Standards Responses.
- March 20, 2025 – The Zoning Administrator and staff reviewed the Minor Variation request and approved the request to use fiber cement board as the exterior finish material on the subject columns with the condition that the Petitioner use fiber cement board with a smooth exterior finish instead of the wood grain exterior finish. This condition of approval was included because the smooth finished fiber cement board would most directly simulate the smooth exterior finish of the original metal cladding of the columns without appearing out of harmony with the character of the immediate neighborhood. No other wood or woodgrain finishes exist on the building. See the attached March 20, 2025 Minor Variation Decision sheet.

Request Description: As permitted by Sec. 12-3-9 - Appeals of the City Code, the Petitioner has appealed the Zoning Administrator’s March 20, 2025 Minor Variation decision to approve with the condition regarding a smooth finish. As outlined in the Petitioner’s attached Appeal Request Letter, they assert that replacement or modification of the existing cladding would constitute an additional financial hardship and overly burden the property owners who are seeking to make the necessary structural repairs to protect both the building and the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants.

Zoning Administrator decision analysis under Standards for Variation – March 20, 2025
Minor Variation approval with conditions

The following is a discussion of standards for zoning amendments from Section 12-3-4.H of the Zoning Ordinance. Rationale for how a variation from the terms of this title shall not be granted unless the reviewing authority makes specific written findings of fact directly based on the standards and conditions imposed by this section and any conditions imposed by the reviewing authority, to the extent each may be applicable.

- 1. Hardship: No variation shall be granted pursuant to this subsection H unless the applicant shall establish that carrying out the strict letter of the provisions of this title would create a particular hardship or a practical difficulty.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation permitted the fiber cement board finish in lieu of the previously approved brick on the twenty-three columns was predicated on selecting a fiber cement board material that would be indistinguishable outside the property compared to the previous columns’ smooth finished metal cladding exterior. The request was to permit fiber cement board with an exterior woodgrain finish. However, upon review, the Zoning Administrator determined a hardship existed, thereby adding a condition of approval for the minor variation that the cement fiber board exterior material must have a smooth finish exterior to mimic the original metal

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cladding’s smooth exterior finish. There are no woodgrain exterior finishes on the remainder of the building’s structural elements and this material may be out of character with the remainder of the building.

- 2. Unique Physical Condition: The subject lot is exceptional as compared to other lots subject to the same provision by reason of a unique physical condition, including presence of an existing use, structure, or sign, whether conforming or nonconforming; irregular or substandard shape or size; exceptional topographical features; or other extraordinary physical conditions peculiar to and inherent in the subject lot that amount to more than a mere inconvenience to the owner and that relate to or arise out of the lot rather than the personal situation of the current owner of the lot.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation occurred due to the unique nature of the unknown material failure of the twenty-three columns’ materials.

- 3. Not Self-Created: The aforesaid unique physical condition is not the result of any action or inaction of the owner or its predecessors in title and existed at the time of the enactment of the provisions from which a variance is sought or was created by natural forces or was the result of governmental action, other than the adoption of this title.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation accounted for the fact that the materials composing the twenty-three structural columns’ exteriors were part of the building’s original construction and not self-created by the current owners.

- 4. Denied Substantial Rights: The carrying out of the strict letter of the provision from which a variance is sought would deprive the owner of the subject lot of substantial rights commonly enjoyed by owners of other lots subject to the same provision.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation with the condition of approval accepted the fact that the strict application of the building materials regulation could deny the petitioner substantial rights in their effort to repair critical structural portions of the building while also maintaining the subject building’s exterior façade aesthetics and the longstanding character of this immediate neighborhood.

- 5. Not Merely Special Privilege: The alleged hardship or difficulty is neither merely the inability of the owner or occupant to enjoy some special privilege or additional right not available to owners or occupants of other lots subject to the same provision, nor merely the inability of the owner to make more money from the use of the subject lot.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation with condition of approval understood the proposed construction work’s structural necessity and conceded the need and appropriateness of using fiber cement board to finish the columns’ repairs, but required that the cost-effective materials mimic the smooth exterior finish of the columns’ metal cladding, if the brick approved in May 2024 would not be used.

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- 6. Title And Plan Purposes: The variation would not result in a use or development of the subject lot that would be not in harmony with the general and specific purposes for which this title and the provision from which a variation is sought were enacted or the general purpose and intent of the comprehensive plan.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation allowed a non-permitted building material, with the condition of approval that a specific smooth finish fiber cement board exterior material be used that would be harmonious with the regulation’s general and specific purpose. Requiring a smooth exterior finished fiber cement board versus the proposed and installed wood grain finished materials reinforced the subject property’s harmony with its immediate surroundings and the existing building’s finishes.

- 7. No Other Remedy: There is no means other than the requested variation by which the alleged hardship or difficulty can be avoided or remedied to a degree sufficient to permit a reasonable use of the subject lot.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation with the condition of approval accepted the alleged hardship existed necessitating the use of fiber cement board, but with a smooth exterior finish.

- 8. Minimum Required: The requested variation is the minimum measure of relief necessary to alleviate the alleged hardship or difficulty presented by the strict application of this title.**

Zoning Administrator decision analysis: Granting the Minor Variation with the condition of approval provided the minimum measure of relief necessary to alleviate the alleged hardship. In order to protect the safety of the subject property’s occupants due to the failing material composing the 23 structural columns, permitting the use of cost effective fiber cement board on the columns’ exterior alleviated the hardship related to complying with the strict application of Section 12-3-11 (Building Design Review), but requiring a smooth exterior finish on the fiber cement board would maintain the subject property’s compatibility with the neighborhood character.

PZB Procedure and Recommended Conditions:

Pursuant to Section 12-3-9.D.3.b of the City Code, the Planning and Zoning Board may affirm or reverse, wholly or in part, or modify the order of the Zoning Administrator’s March 20, 2025 decision to approve the Minor Variation with the condition of approval.

Chairman Szabo asked for PZB questions to staff or the Petitioner. There were none at this time.

Chairman Szabo asked for public comment.

Steve Afliger (resident of 900 S. Des Plaines River Rd – Subject property) outlined his position on the cost of being a resident of the building and the costs of the complying with the 3/20/25 decision.

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Greg Falara (900 S. Des Plaines River Rd. Condo Board President) stated the installed materials are not readily visible outside the property, are positive for the building and recommends approval.

Member Catalano asked if the appeal is just about the woodgrain finish. Director Rogers stated the issue is only regarding the minor variation approval condition. Mr. Hedberg stated the proposed material is readily available in stock at many normal locations.

Member Catalano asked if the fiber cement panels are easy to replace. Mr. Hedberg stated repairs could be the entire foot section if damaged.

Member Fowler suggested the petitioner buy more to supplement to do future repairs.

Member Catalano asked about the cost of using smooth finish panels. Mr. Hedberg using the smooth finished would be about \$20,000.

Chairman Szabo asked how the fiber cement board panels are adhered. Mr. Hedberg stated they are nailed to a wood frame surrounding the structural column.

Chairman Szabo asked for a motion.

Member Catalano stated the proposed material is inconsequential and should not affect the character of the subject property and the surrounding neighborhood.

A motion was made by Member Catalano and seconded by Member Zadrozny to reverse the Zoning Administrator’s 3/20/25 Minor Variation approval—with the condition requiring smooth finished fiber cement board—by striking the condition of approval.

AYES:	Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
NAYS:	None
ABSTAIN:	None

MOTION CARRIED

Additional Discussion

Chairman Szabo asked about voting for a PZB Vice Chairman could occur this evening.

Director Rogers stated today’s four member quorum is sufficient to approve a motion to appoint a Vice Chairman or vote to take this action at the next meeting. Ideally, the full PZB would be seated to make this decision, but it’s not required.

Chairman Szabo stated it would be good to take this action this evening and asked for motion to appoint a Vice Chairman of the PZB.

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A motion was made by Member Fowler and seconded by Member Zadrozny to appoint Member Joseph Catalano as Vice Chairman of the City of Des Plaines Planning and Zoning Board.

AYES: Catalano, Fowler, Zadrozny, Szabo
NAYS: None
ABSTAIN: None

MOTION CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Szabo adjourned the meeting by affirmative voice vote at 8:14 p.m.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Mendel, CED Assistant Director/Recording Secretary
cc: City Officials, Aldermen, Planning & Zoning Board, Petitioners