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Inside Towers

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Sprint To Sprint From American, Crown-Owned Towers

Tower giants American Tower and Crown Castle could be the latest victims of Sprint's six straight years of lousy revenues if the carrier goes through with a plan to move to government-owned towers as reported Friday afternoon. San Francisco-based *Re/code* reported Sprint's latest "radical overall" plans for its cellular network have been finalized and call for the nation's fourth-largest carrier to move its radio equipment off towers owned by American Tower and Crown Castle to government-owned structures. The savings could be as much as $1 billion, reported *Re/code*, as tower costs are a significant portion of the carrier's capital expenses. Sprint also pays about $1 billion annually to AT&T and Verizon to carry its customers' wireless calls from towers to landlines, known as "backhaul" and seeks to reduce those payments. The new plan, reports Re/code, would instead use microwave technology for this purpose, an approach previously used by Clearwire, which Sprint acquired in 2012.

But the mere notion that a government-owned tower could be less expensive raised eyebrows from one Georgia-based tower owner. He told *Inside Towers*, "I'm not sure that's true government towers have cheaper rent. The county here, in an effort to keep tenants off their tower, starts at $5,000 for a single bay translator."

For months, Kansas City-based Sprint has talked publicly about its overall plan to trim $2 billion from its expenses. Sprint CEO Marcelo Claure said he would like to make the cuts by January 30 to allow employees to take advantage of a more generous severance plan that is being ended. Re/code sources said the 117-year-old Sprint plans to make significant numbers of the cuts on January 22. But beyond axing employees mostly in its retail division, no firm whacks to its structural and physical existence have been officially announced. *Re/Code* said the process of moving to lesser expensive towers "could begin as soon as June or July."

Sprint spokesman Dave Tovar told *Inside Towers* the company was not commenting on the *Re/code* story. *Inside Towers'* calls and emails to spokesman at American Tower and Crown Castle were not returned Friday. At press time, none of the three companies had posted a response on their corporate websites.

Glendale, CA, City Council Supports Possible Cell Towers

The Glendale, CA, city council on January 12, heard a first reading of AT&T's plans to build a monopole at Fremont Park and install a monoshrub at Scholl Canyon. Both were well-received and most likely will be approved at a future meeting, according to the *LA Times*.

AT&T must sign a lease with the city, and both contracts would amount to about $36,000 a year for Glendale, which would use the funds for park maintenance. The Fremont Park monopole would stand at the northeast end of the park and "would stand at the height of nearby pine trees and be made to resemble one." The monoshrub would be installed at the southeast side of Scholl Canyon Ballfield in an open space area outside of the park.

There have been minimal residential concerns about other cell towers in the area, according to council members, and the council stated at the meeting that it would do everything to follow FCC standards and find the "least intrusive" location for both.

Atlanta Suburb Gets 195' Tower, Fills Gap

A tower supporting public safety communications in Johns Creek, GA is now online. The 195-foot tower located in sight of downtown Atlanta is covering a service gap that had been causing problems for police and firefighters in Forsyth County. Officials announced the activation last Thursday (January 14).

Johns Creek spokesman, Doug Nurse, said emergency responders will now be able to communicate inside buildings in the Shakerag community, according to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Only one tower in the county had been used by the city for communications amongst its public service personnel. A countywide public safety communications upgrade project replaced equipment on the old tower in addition to building the new one.

125' Tower Approved By Albermarle School Board

The Albermarle County School Board has approved a proposal for a cell tower, which will be built at Albemarle High School. The decision to build the tower was unopposed by the Charlottesville, VA area residents.

The tower will be 125-feet-tall at located in the back of Albemarle High School, which will help disguise it and not have it be a prominent fixture. The tower can house up to five different cellular carriers and was created by

Milestone Communications of Reston, VA, well known for its ability to disguise towers on school properties.

The proposal will now be passed to the county's planning commission. If all is approved by the commission it will be moved on to the Board of Supervisors for final review. The school division will receive $20,000 at the time of construction for use of the land. An additional amount of $5,000 will be given to the school for each carrier that uses the tower. Milestone Communications said both AT&T and T-Mobile have expressed interest in the tower.

C Spire Expands 4G LTE Coverage

The Ridgeland, MS-based wireless, mobile service said it has begun deploying more low-band spectrum throughout much of its 4G LTE+ network to help boost speeds and provide better overall coverage for consumers.

The telecom and technology services company, which operates the one of the nation's largest privately held wireless communications unit, said it is adding 700 MHz and 850 MHz low-band spectrum to more than 500 existing cell sites over the next nine months, which will help improve coverage over longer distances and inside offices, commercial buildings and homes.Much of the company's service area includes large swaths of undeveloped rural areas with lower population density – so the use of low-band spectrum will help C Spire deliver on its speed and coverage promise, said Chief Technology Officer Stephen Bye. A typical cell site that uses low-band spectrum can cover a much broader geographic area than multiple sites using mid-band spectrum, he said.

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Tower Ticker

SYMBOL	TIME & PRICE		CHG & % CHG		DAY'S LOW & HIGH		VOLUME
★ AMT	04:01pm EST	88.39	↓3.82	↓4.14%	87.86	91.63	5,333,893
★ CCI	04:02pm EST	79.12	↓4.84	↓5.76%	78.41	83.07	6,614,936
★ SBAC	04:00pm EST	91.96	↓7.52	↓7.56%	89.50	98.37	3,045,654
★ S	04:00pm EST	2.87	↓0.32	↓10.03%	2.84	3.14	28,433,777
★ T	04:02pm EST	33.99	↓0.31	↓0.90%	33.61	34.34	43,877,974
★ TMUS	04:00pm EST	37.79	↓1.60	↓4.06%	36.79	38.89	4,661,435
★ VZ	04:03pm EST	44.43	↓0.44	↓0.98%	43.86	44.55	27,417,151

Analyst: Sprint's Move Could Be Worse For Crown Castle, SBA

That only American Tower and Crown Castle were mentioned by *Re/code* could have been "an oversight" speculated EvercoreISI telecom analyst Jonathan Schildkraut on Friday. He told investors "given the varying levels of exposure, we believe this could be worse for Crown Castle (NYSE: CCI) and SBA Communications (NASDAQ: SBAC) over the short-term vs. American Tower (NYSE: AMT) because: (1) AMT has the lowest exposure to Sprint

(NYSE: S) – 12% vs. 19% at CCI and SBAC, (2) AMT has long-term co-terminus leases with S – with 5+ years left. SBAC and CCI signed a different master lease agreement and may have a shorter time frame on remaining leases (at the very least these leases are staggered and would have some potential terminations near-term), and (3) our channel checks indicate that Sprint might be moving some infrastructure to American Tower (where capacity is available due to iDen decommissioning)." Schildkraut said he is maintaining his BUY-rating on American Tower and not changing HOLD-ratings on Crown Castle or SBA Communications.

New/Street telecom analyst Jonathan Chaplin had a similar reaction. Friday evening he said, "We have been waiting for something transformative from Sprint ever since Softbank first announced its acquisition; perhaps this is it; if it is, there must be more to the story than what has been reported so far. Bottom line: we wouldn't buy Sprint or sell towers on this story (at least not yet)."

Wall Street ended Friday in battlefield red with Sprint shares falling 32 cents or 10.03 percent to $2.87; AMT slipped $3.82 or 4.14 percent to $88.39; CCI was off $4.84 or 5.76 percent to $79.12; and SBAC lost $7.52 or 7.56 percent a share to end the day at $91.96.

Zoning & Moaning

Clover, SC Story Continues to to A Conclusion

As *Inside Towers* previously reported, residents of Clover, SC, were displeased that town officials voted to erect a 180-foot tower without informing the homeowners that reside near the proposed site. Locals decided to fight the decision, claiming that the tower would violate the town's zoning code. Town officials argued that there is no requirement to notify residents, since the zoning is industrial. (Plans call for the tower to be built on private property owned by a plumbing company and rented to Verizon Wireless.)

The meeting to appeal the decision was held on January 14. *Inside Towers* confirmed it was a very lively meeting, attended by about 20 people, with several residents continuing to voice their opposition, particularly regarding property value concerns.

After a presentation by Jonathan Yates and George Davis of TowerCom, Clover's Board of Zoning Appeals found that there was no error in the initial approval of the tower on October 14. The Board voted 3-2, affirming the decision of the city staff and the company can now proceed with construction.

Tower Near Vermont Ski Resort An Uphill Battle

Negative effects on the scenery may not be enough to halt the construction of a Verizon Wireless tower in Waterbury, VT. The tower is planned to border the line between Waterbury and nearby Stowe, an area known for skiing in the winter and scenic hiking trails.

Town officials of Waterbury are directly opposing the tower, and members of Stowe and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources are also actively trying to persuade the Planning Service Board to decline the application for the tower. The Planning Service Board does have a history of approving towers in the past, at least according to the *Stowe Reporter*.

Verizon held off presenting its application until independent experts were able to decide if there would be negative aesthetic effects from the tower. These were presented on December 30, and gave approval for Verizon to continue

with its application. It was decided there may be some adverse aesthetic effects, but none that were excessive.The period for public comment will end on January 31.

Carrier Coverage

AT&T Bringing 300 Jobs to Kansas City Region

While Kansas City-based Sprint has been trimming its sails, AT&T's taken another course, hiring. Almost 300 technicians and retail support personnel can rejoice—soon 300 jobs will be available in the self-proclaimed "BBQ Capital of the World" (both Kansas and Missouri sides) region. Targeting U-Verse's digital TV, high-speed Internet and voice services, the jobs will be "linked to installation and service technicians" according to *RCRWireless*. The jobs in part came about due to the $48.5 billion acquisition last year of DirecTV, merging U-Verse services with AT&T's entertainment and Internet services business.

AT&T also announced a new offer last week for its AT&T Mobility division of unlimited data for Smartphone customers who also sign up for DirecTV or U-Verse services. Customers who qualify can "move to the carrier's Unlimited Plan priced at $100 per month for the first line of service. Second and third lines of service can be added for $40 per month, with the fourth line eligible for free."

International

Cuba Gets Green Light For U.S. Carriers, Towers

The FCC on Friday eliminated Cuba from its 54-year-old "Exclusion List," immediately opening the Caribbean nation to a slew of new services. U.S.-based carriers and tower companies can now provide facilities-based telephone and Internet service to Cuba without separate approval from the Commission. Cuba was the last remaining country on the Commission's Exclusion List.

"Removing Cuba from the Exclusion List benefits the public interest as it will likely alleviate administrative and cost burdens on both the applicant and the Commission, and will promote competition on the U.S.-Cuba route," the FCC said.

Small Cells

New Cell Communications Technology Coming to Worthington, MN

Small cells, or cell phone signal booster devices, are coming to two streetlights in Worthington, MN, after a

unanimous vote by the city council January 11.

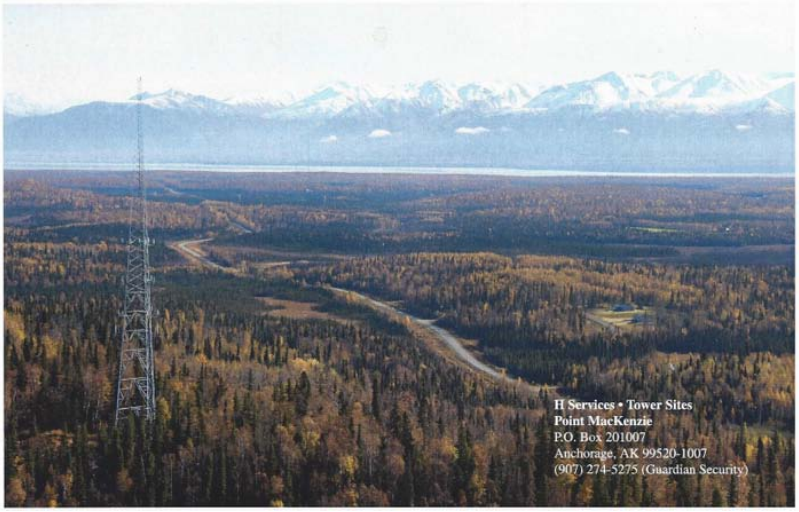
A new licensing agreement with Alltel Communications (Verizon) puts the small cells on Ray Drive and off of the U.S. 59/Minnesota 60 roundabout. Mayor Mike Kuhle said in last week's council meeting that the purpose of the small cells is "to boost Verizon's signal at targeted high-traffic areas and take some of the burden off main cell towers around Worthington." A Verizon representative who also attended the meeting said, "after the small cells are installed, Verizon customers can expect faster data speeds when using apps and other features that require the use of cellular data."

The city will be paid, according to *DGlobe.com*, $1,500 per pole initially. "Verizon will pay for the cost of the two heavier-duty poles that the small cells will require," *DGlobe.com* reports.The contract for the poles, which are given to Verizon at an "as-is" basis, is for 10 years.

Correction

A story in the January 14, issue of Inside Towers incorrectly identified NATE. It is an acronym for National Association of Tower Erectors.

Tower Shot



400' self-support tower at Point MacKenzie, Alaska. Photo contributed by Ned Hahn.
We love the view from the top and the bottom! Email your tower shots.

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