

Wireless Communications

Digital or cellular phone service, otherwise known as wireless communication, has become an essential element of modern day communication, and the demand for wireless communication technology is increasing. Although wireless communication services are not publicly owned utilities, their inclusion in this plan is appropriate given their necessity and scope of use. Appropriate locations for such facilities are becoming more difficult to find, and telecommunication towers have special land use implications because of their potential visual impact on surrounding properties. These realities place a premium on determining the most efficient distribution of wireless infrastructure on the whole, rather than solely for individual service providers.

The citizens and businesses of the county will continue to demand services that will improve the quality of life and economic development of the community; however, the manner in which these services are provided must be sensitive to the aesthetic, health, safety and property values of the community. Striking a balance between the desires for state-of-the-art, cost-effective communications infrastructure while being aesthetically sensitive to residential and commercial areas will be necessary. This will require careful consideration not only on a case-by-case basis but may also warrant an in-depth, countywide network analysis given the continued evolution of the industry and related technology.



SITE SELECTION GUIDELINES

The Telecommunications Act established a role for three (3) parties in the future development of wireless communications services: the communications industry, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and local government. Within the confines of FCC licensing and administration and local government regulations of land use and zoning, each provider is free to design its own network or system. Wireless communications service providers are not treated as public utilities or franchises, but are competitors in an open market. Although the free-market approach is intended to result in the best communications services for the least cost, it also results in an increase in the number of wireless communications antennas and towers.

In order to balance the interest of providing quality wireless service with the interests of the public health, safety and welfare, community aesthetics and promoting the integrity of the county's residential neighborhoods, preserving the residential character of the community is especially crucial. Thus, the following site selection guidelines should be considered for the location of new wireless communication facilities:

LOCATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Existing Communication Towers - Co-location opportunities may still exist on some existing towers in the county. New towers should be designed to allow co-location.
- Entergy has several large power transmission corridors which cross the county. These corridors consist of easements and rights-of-way that offer opportunities for co-location of transmission towers and communications antennas.
- Buildings - Wireless service antennas can be mounted on the roofs or sides of taller buildings.
- Churches - Many churches in the county present telecommunication service providers with the potential for locating antennas inside existing steeples or building a steeple for a church that does not presently have one.
- Public Sites - County government sites appropriate for locating commercial wireless communications facilities include selected fire stations, libraries, schools, parks, post offices, water tanks, towers erected for public service use, and other public facilities. These facilities are often large enough to allow sufficient separation from surrounding residential uses, or are located adjacent to industrial land uses.



LOCATIONAL/SITING POLICIES

The following policies should be used to determine appropriate sites for the location of wireless communication facilities:

- Discourage towers in areas zoned or planned for residential uses.
- Discourage towers in private cemeteries.
- Encourage stealth tower design when towers are requested adjacent to or in close proximity to residential areas.
- Only consider new locations for towers when co-location or replacement of existing towers is not adequate and feasible. Consider county-owned, state-owned, or federal properties and facilities that encourage proper siting of wireless communications towers provided.
- New telecommunications sites in areas zoned or planned for industrial, commercial or agricultural properties with no residences should be initially constructed or designed to be extended to a height of 199 feet. Reduced tower height may be more appropriate in sensitive locations.



ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the standards listed above for the selection of appropriate locations for wireless communication facilities, the following policies should be applied to guide the county's decisions regarding wireless communication facilities:

- Encourage appropriate provision for telecommunications systems in the design of new development.
- Encourage, where appropriate, the placement of antennas on existing structures including but not limited to existing towers, utility poles, water tanks, building rooftops, and other tall structures.
- Encourage, where appropriate, the upgrade or replacement of lower towers with taller towers designed to maximize co-location opportunities.
- Expedite the permitting of wireless communication towers that have minimal visual impacts and meet all regulatory standards.
- Maintain an inventory of tower sites and all existing telecommunication facilities to determine co-location opportunities.
- Coordinate with adjoining localities when a tower request is proposed near the county boundary.
- Encourage providers to submit their "build-out" coverage grid for the entire County.
- Obtain industry and citizen input in the future development of local wireless communications regulations.
- Ensure ground-mounted equipment does not generate noise in excess of 50-decibels at the property line of the parcel on which the tower is located.
- Encourage the consideration of stealth tower designs for all applications.
- Use monopoles rather than lattice towers.
- If co-location opportunities are not possible, encourage siting of towers at locations within wooded areas or remote sites away from residential structures. While such locations may not obscure from view the entirety of the tower, they may reduce the visual impact.
- Locate towers at the lowest possible point along ridge lines.
- Ensure new towers or antenna structures do not block the county's microwave paths or interfere with the county's public safety radio system.
- Use monopoles rather than lattice towers.