

E&R2012-07
**Resolution on Proposed Changes to Telecommunication Policy of the
Comprehensive Plan**

1. WHEREAS the Fairfax County Planning Commission is proposing changes to the telecommunications policy language in the comprehensive plan because it has become obsolete as technology has changed;
2. WHEREAS providers need more capacity to provide for increases in data transmission and to rectify coverage gaps in residential areas;
3. WHEREAS in 2011 the MVCCA adopted a resolution that telecommunications towers should be approved only if micro-cell or miniaturization technology such as the Distributive Antennae System (DAS) is not technically feasible;
4. WHEREAS the Planning Commission's proposed changes advocate the use of distributive antenna system (DAS), micro-cell or other miniaturization technology as one of several measures to mitigate visual impacts;
5. WHEREAS, our goal as residents is to encourage the industry to develop and use the smallest and least intrusive telecommunications facilities possible in order to preserve viewsheds and natural areas, and to require industry to remove facilities that are no longer in use, while also providing adequate telecommunications coverage;
6. WHEREAS the draft policy would give preference to locating telecommunications facilities on public lands, thereby exempting the installation from Special Exception procedures and from review by our local elected officials;
7. WHEREAS the draft policy states that visual impact of telecommunications facilities should be mitigated by locating them near or within areas of mature vegetation and trees but this rarely mitigates visual impacts, and may result in loss of trees and habitat;
8. WHEREAS the draft policy addresses design issues and focuses almost exclusively on the visual impacts of a structure, to the neglect of other considerations, including impacts on wildlife;
9. WHEREAS the draft policy would ensure protection of "historically significant landscapes" and would avoid areas of "environmental sensitivity", but these terms are undefined and vague;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the proposed changes to the telecommunications policy language in Objective 42 in the Comprehensive Plan be modified to:

- a. Add a new Policy a (to be inserted first in the list) that gives preference to micro-cell or miniaturization technology such as the Distributive Antennae System (DAS) (or a subsequently improved and even lower impact technology) over the construction of telecommunications towers;
- b. Add a new Policy b, “Ensure that a public hearing is held on proposals to install telecommunications towers on public or private land, but grant more expedited approvals to installations of DAS or other lower impact technologies on public or private land;
- c. Modify Policy d to state, “When multiple sites provide similar or equal opportunity to minimize impacts, public lands should be considered by special exception”;
- d. Add a sentence to Policy h to say, “Ensure that guidelines for the design and construction of communications towers developed by the U.S. National Fish and Wildlife Service to reduce bird mortality are followed, (see www.fws.gov/habitatconservation/communicationtowers.html)”;
- e. Modify Policy i to say, “Design, site and/or landscape proposed telecommunication facilities to minimize size and number of facilities, impacts on wildlife and birds and the character of the property and surrounding areas, and hold a public hearing to allow public input.”
- f. Modify the first bullet under Policy k to say, “Locate proposed telecommunications facilities in open spaces near or within areas of mature vegetation and trees that effectively screen or provide an appropriate setting for the proposed structure, provided that healthy trees are not lost,” and place this item last in the list.
- g. Modify the fourth bullet under Policy k by adding, “provided that the increase in height and changes in design are consistent with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife guidelines for the design of telecommunications facilities to reduce bird mortality.”
- h. In Policy l, define what is intended by “historically significant landscapes” and clarify whether this includes neighborhoods with a historical designation;
- i. In Policy m, clarify the meaning of “environmentally sensitive area” and add wetlands, forests, preserves, and refuges to the list.