
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

9611 SE 36TH STREET | MERCER ISLAND, WA 98040

PHONE: 206.275.7605 | www.mercergov.org



PLANNING COMMISSION

To: Planning Commission

From: Robin Proebsting, Senior Planner

Date: January 30, 2020

RE: ZTR19-004 – Small Cell / Wireless Code update. Second meeting, discussing community engagement and policy direction for code amendment.

SUMMARY

At its February 5, 2020 meeting, the Planning Commission will begin discussion of the substance of new code standards for Wireless Communication Facilities (including small cell facilities).

BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission last discussed the Wireless Communication Facility code at its November 20, 2019 meeting, at which the Commission received an introductory presentation by staff and provided a recommendation on the scope of the code update. The Planning Commission recommended that the scope of work include:

- Adding definitions for new terms not already in the City Code;
- Conducting a comprehensive review of existing City wireless communication facility standards to identify potential conflicts with FCC rules;
- Reviewing interim design standards; and
- Exploring limited provisions for adjusting wireless communication facility location.

Staff presented this item to the City Council on January 21, 2020 and requested confirmation on the scope of the code update. The Council decided to keep the scope items recommended by the Planning Commission, together with the addition of one further item: “Explore and identify the maximum permissible level of local control in the development of new code standards for small cell facilities”.

With the scope of work now confirmed, the next phase of the code update process is to begin discussion of the topic areas that will be addressed in the wireless code. Based on a survey of codes from jurisdictions that have already updated their codes to be consistent with the FCC rules pertaining to small cell facilities, topics addressed by wireless codes typically include:

- Support structure location and type (e.g. existing vs. new structures, poles vs. buildings);
- Aesthetics/design (e.g. camouflaging, height); and
- Noise.

At the February 5, 2020 meeting, staff will facilitate a discussion on the topics above with the aim of getting the Planning Commission's consensus on direction. Staff will then use this guidance to create a first draft of revised code. To help inform the conversation, attached is a matrix of example standards from peer jurisdictions, showing how they have addressed the above topics.

NEXT STEPS

At our Feb. 5, 2020 meeting, please be prepared to discuss and provide policy guidance on the above topics. Please email me ahead of time if you have information requests or questions. Staff also intends to describe an approach to community engagement regarding this subject, and will be seeking Planning Commission guidance on approach.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Peer jurisdiction Small Cell Facility code matrix