Small Cell Technology
Frequently Asked Questions

TOWN OF CASTLE ROCK COLORADO

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The Town is updating its Municipal Code to provide for construction of small cell facilities in Castle Rock, as allowed by State and Federal laws. Following are answers to some frequently asked questions about this topic.

What is a small cell facility?

A small cell facility is an antenna, along with accessory equipment, that provides cellular and data coverage to smaller geographic areas, usually benefitting high-use or poor coverage areas within the larger cellular network. Because of their smaller coverage area, use of small cells requires a greater number of facility sites than traditional cellular towers.

Small cell antennas are generally the size of a suitcase and must be under 20 cubic feet in total volume, per State law. They typically are located on streetlights or traffic signals. Like other utilities, the equipment is allowed in public rights of way, per State and Federal laws.

What is the Town's role with regard to small cell facilities?

The Town's Municipal Code is being updated to provide regulations for small cell facilities, including processing applications; setting priorities on where the facilities are located; and establishing design standards.

Why is there increased interest in installing small cell facilities?

Mobile data traffic has grown significantly and is expected to continue increasing at a rapid rate with the proliferation of mobile

devices. Wireless carrier companies say that existing infrastructure has become congested and cannot meet their customers' needs. Small cell facilities can help address this issue.

How is the Town handling small cell facilities proposed in Town rights of way?

Town staff will review applications in accordance with State and Federal laws, as well as Town Code and technical documents. State law requires the Town to consider applications from all providers equally, and to provide bulk processing of permit requests in 90 days or less, rather than requiring an individual permit process for each small cell facility. A hearing before Town Council would not be required for small cell facilities under the proposed Code.

Can the Town limit or standardize small cell facilities?

The proposed Code encourages locating small cell facilities within public rights of way and on public property, and in nonresidential areas, and attempts to minimize the number of facilities needed. Further, it attempts to minimize the visual impact of the facilities through careful design, siting, landscape screening and innovative camouflage techniques.

Within the proposed Code, the Town's preference is that small cell facilities in the right of way be located on an existing streetlight or on a new pole before being located on a traffic signal. In addition, the code contains spacing requirements between facilities that is consistent with the current spacing of streetlights. The height of any new poles constructed would be limited to 40 feet or less.

For a facility to be located in the right of way, the provider would need to enter into a lease agreement with the Town, through which the Town could impose additional requirements.

Can small cell facilities be installed on existing poles or buildings on private property?

This is possible, however, space on existing poles is becoming scarce – especially as infrastructure is increasingly being located underground rather than overhead. Providers also say that negotiations with individual private property owners is too complex and time-consuming to deliver on customers' current needs. Additionally, the technology currently being used often requires separation between facilities to avoid signal interference.

Will large cell towers still be needed as small cells come online?

The large cell towers that have provided cellular service for years are a different form of cellular technology that will still be necessary for service, even if small cell facilities are available. The larger towers serve larger geographic areas and are good for voice service, but their data signal can degrade over distance. Small cells provide strong voice and data service within a limited geographic area. The proposed Code update provisions relate to large "macro" cell towers as well.

Who can I contact for more information?

Contact the Town's Development Services team at 720-733-3566 or planning@CRgov.com.

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