

City of Laguna Beach

Guidelines for Site Selection and Visual Impact and Screening of Telecommunication Facilities

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These guidelines are intended to guide the wireless telecommunications services provider with site selection criteria as well as visual impact and screening policies. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that wireless telecommunication facilities are sited and designed to be sensitive to the setting in which they are being placed.

Public and Private Property Deployments

These regulations are to be applied to all wireless facilities on public and private property in addition to the applicable standards found in the Laguna Beach Municipal Code.

Site Selection Criteria

1. Telecommunication facilities are most appropriately located in commercial and industrial areas.
2. Telecommunication facilities with transmitting antennas are strongly discouraged in residential neighborhoods or adjacent to schools.
3. Locating telecommunication facilities on and/or in existing structures, such as buildings and water towers, is encouraged.
4. Locating facilities where the existing topography, vegetation, buildings or other structures provide the greatest amount of screening is encouraged.
5. Facilities should be located in a manner that preserves view corridors from surrounding residential development.
6. Facilities should be architecturally and visually (color, bulk, size) compatible with surrounding buildings, structures and/or vegetation in the area, or those likely to exist under the terms of the underlying zoning.
7. The preferred method, in order of priority, of mounting an antenna is: (1) mount to an existing structure on the facade, roof or co-located tower; (2) mount to an existing steel or concrete pole (such as a light standard); and (3) mount to a new steel or concrete monopole.

Visual Impact and Screening Policies

1. Colors and facility designs should be integrated with surrounding buildings in the area or those likely to exist in the area, and should prevent the facility from dominating the surrounding area.
2. Any security fencing should be of a color and design that blends with the character of the existing environment.
3. Freestanding facilities, such as monopoles, should not be a dominant protrusion.

4. Certain components of a site create a greater impact than other components. For example, the cross bar or other mounting device may create a greater impact than the actual antenna. These components should be placed below the highest horizontal element of a structure and be afforded maximum screening, using existing vegetation and/or topography to minimize visual impact on the surrounding community.

5. Facilities should be architecturally compatible with surrounding buildings and land uses. This can be accomplished by designing the facility to blend in with the existing characteristics of the site to the greatest extent possible.

6. Preserving, to the greatest extent possible, the pre-existing character of a site should be thoroughly considered when locating and installing a facility on a particular site. Existing vegetation should be preserved or improved, and disturbance of the existing topography of the site should be minimized.

7. Innovative design should be used whenever the screening potential of the site is low. For example, the visual impact of a site may be mitigated by using existing light standards and telephone poles as mounting structures, or by constructing screening structures which are compatible with surrounding architecture.

8. Antennas mounted on the roof-top or above a structure should be screened, constructed and/or colored to match the structure to which they are attached. If there is no parapet, the antennas should be set back from the roofline in order to render them as invisible as possible from another property or public right-of-way, and/or a parapet should be built to serve as a rooftop screen.

9. Antennas mounted on the side of a building or structure should be painted to match the color of the building or structure, or the background against which they are most commonly seen. The mounting brackets and connecting wires should be completely boxed in so that they are invisible. Antennas should be located along any existing symmetrical lines and/or within an existing architectural feature so that they appear as much a part of the building or structure as possible.

10. Electronic equipment cabinets should blend with the surrounding building(s) and vegetation in architectural character and color.

Wireless Facilities Within Public Rights-of-Way

Aesthetic Standards

These regulations are to be applied to all wireless facilities within the public rights-of-way in addition to the applicable standards found in the Laguna Beach Municipal Code.

1. The preferred method, in order of priority, of mounting an antenna is: (1) mount to an existing or replacement streetlight or traffic signal pole; (2) mount to an existing or replacement wood utility pole; (3) mount to other existing or replacement structures; (4) mount to a new

streetlight pole consistent with the design and locational criteria prescribed by the *City of Laguna Beach Guidelines for Street Lighting, September, 2019*, unless the Director of Public Works determines during the initial application review that the area should not be served by a new street light; and (5) mount to a new pole. All existing structures within the public right-of-way and within the project vicinity should be considered before pursuing a new pole which does not constitute a one-for-one replacement. Such structures may include but are not limited to bridges, overpasses, and high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacons. Applications that involve lesser-preferred installation locations may be approved so long as the applicant demonstrates that no more preferred installation location would be technically feasible as supported by clear and convincing evidence in the written record or as otherwise provided pursuant to Guideline Nos. 25 and 26. The City moreover retains the discretion to render decisions about the hierarchy on a case-by-case basis in response to the unique project context, and applicants are therefore encouraged to attend a pre-submittal conference with City staff [LBMC 11.06.060(A)].

2. The small wireless facility shall be painted and coated to match the predominant color, texture and appearance of the support structure and the existing surrounding utility poles or street lights. The finish shall be non-reflective.

3. All antennas and associated mounting equipment, hardware, cables or other connectors must be completely concealed within an opaque antenna shroud or radome.

4. All non-antenna accessory equipment shall be installed in accordance with the following preferences, ordered from most preferred to least preferred: (1) underground or, for poletop antenna configurations, within a shroud housing both the antenna(s) and accessory equipment and not exceeding a height of three feet in a residential zone or five feet in any other zone; (2) on the pole or support structure at a minimum height of 15 feet above the adjacent grade and flush-mounted when feasible; or (3) integrated into the base of the pole or support structure and shielded from view. Applications that involve lesser-preferred installation locations may be approved so long as the applicant demonstrates that no more preferred installation location would be technically feasible as supported by clear and convincing evidence in the written record or as otherwise provided pursuant to Guideline Nos. 25 and 26.

5. As used in this section, a shroud means any concealment measure that covers and conceals and/or shields the antenna, mounting hardware, cables, and associated equipment from the public view, but still allows the propagation of a signal from the small wireless facility. Residential zones shall mean and refer to R-1, R-2, R-3, R/HP, LAG, VC, TAB, DCSP, and any other zone primarily intended to accommodate residential development at any density.

6. All cables, wires, and other connectors must be routed through conduits within the pole, and all conduit attachments, cables, wires, and other connectors must be concealed from public view. To the extent that cables, wires, and other connectors cannot be routed through the pole, applicants shall route them through a single external conduit mounted flush to the pole and finished to match the underlying support structure.

7. The diameter (or width and depth) of the small wireless facility, including any concealment elements, and the underlying support structure (if new, including replacement structures of expanded width) shall be a maximum of 12 inches at any point unless the applicant demonstrates that such a design would be technically infeasible or would dictate a significant increase in the overall facility height which is deemed incompatible with the surrounding natural and built environment, as supported by clear and convincing evidence in the written record.

8. No ground-mounted equipment, aside from the support structure, shall be allowed for any small wireless facility within the public right-of-way.

9. Except as otherwise required by law, all signage colors must be consistent with the color of the structure to minimize contrast and shall be located a maximum of two feet below the proposed antenna shroud and oriented away from adjacent sidewalks and structures.

10. To protect the unique aesthetic value of the City's coastal areas, small wireless facilities proposed to be located between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea shall be attached to an existing or replacement structure. For the purposes of this guideline, "between" shall be taken to include the full extent of the public right-of-way of the first public road.

11. Small wireless facilities shall not displace any existing landscape features unless such displaced landscaping is replaced with native and/or drought-resistant plants, trees, or other landscape features approved by the approval authority.

12. All underground accessory equipment must be installed in an environmentally controlled vault that is load-rated to meet the City's standards and specifications. Underground vaults located beneath a sidewalk must be constructed with a slip-resistant cover. Vents for airflow shall be flush-to-grade when placed within the sidewalk, and may not exceed two feet above grade when placed off the sidewalk if screened with vegetation to be maintained and replaced as necessary by the permittee. Applicants shall not be permitted to install an underground vault in a location that would cause any existing tree to be materially damaged or displaced.

13. All base-mounted accessory equipment must be installed within a shroud, enclosure or pedestal integrated into the base of the support structure. All cables, wires and other connectors routed between the antenna and base-mounted equipment must be concealed from public view.

14. Applicants that propose to install small wireless facilities on a replacement streetlight pole must remove and replace the existing streetlight with one substantially similar. However, when the City has approved a specification for a decorative street light for the neighborhood within which the facility is proposed to be located, the applicant must instead replace the existing streetlight pole with one substantially similar to the approved decorative pole. To mitigate any material changes in the streetlighting patterns, the replacement pole must: (1) be sited within three feet of the existing location; (2) be aligned with the other existing streetlights; and (3) include a luminaire at substantially the same height and distance from the pole as the luminaire on the removed pole. For existing streetlight or replacement streetlight installations, all antennas must be installed above the pole within a single, canister style shroud or radome that tapers to the pole.

15. Applicants that propose to install small wireless facilities on an existing or replacement wood utility pole must install all antennas in a radome above the pole unless the applicant demonstrates that mounting the antennas above the pole would be technically infeasible or more obtrusive as supported by clear and convincing evidence in the written record. Side-mounted antennas on a stand-off bracket or extension arm must be concealed within a shroud. All cables, wires and other connectors must be concealed within the radome and stand-off bracket. The maximum horizontal separation between the antenna and the pole shall be the minimum separation required by applicable health and safety regulations.

16. The pole diameter for a pole installation (excepting wood utility poles) shall not exceed twelve (12) inches and any base enclosure diameter shall not exceed sixteen (16) inches. All antennas, whether on a new streetlight or other new pole (excepting wood utility poles), must be installed above the pole within a single, canister style shroud or radome that tapers to the pole.

17. Fossil-fuel based backup power sources shall not be permitted within the public rights-of-way; provided, however, that connectors or receptacles may be installed for temporary backup power generators used in an emergency declared by federal, State or local officials.

18. Small wireless facilities and any associated equipment or improvements shall not physically interfere with or impede access to any: (1) worker access to any above-ground or underground infrastructure for traffic control, streetlight or public transportation, including without limitation any curb control sign, parking meter, vehicular traffic sign or signal, pedestrian traffic sign or signal, barricade reflectors; (2) access to any public transportation vehicles, shelters, street furniture or other improvements at any public transportation stop; (3) worker access to above-ground or underground infrastructure owned or operated by any public or private utility agency; (4) fire hydrant or water valve; (5) access to any doors, gates, sidewalk doors, passage doors, stoops or other ingress and egress points to any building appurtenant to the rights-of-way; (6) access to any fire escape; or (7) above ground improvements must be setback a minimum of two (2) feet from existing or planned sidewalks, trails, curb faces or road surfaces.

19. All cables and connectors for telephone, data backhaul, primary electric and other similar utilities must be routed underground in conduits large enough to accommodate future collocated wireless facilities. Undergrounded cables and wires must transition directly into the pole base without any external doghouse. All cables, wires and connectors between the underground conduits and the antennas and other accessory equipment shall be routed through and concealed from view within: (1) internal risers or conduits if on a concrete, composite or similar pole; or (2) a cable shroud or conduit mounted as flush to the pole as possible if on a wood pole or other pole without internal cable space. The approval authority shall not approve new overhead utility lines or service drops merely because compliance with the undergrounding requirements would increase the project cost.

20. To reduce clutter and deter vandalism, excess fiber optic or coaxial cables shall not be spooled, coiled or otherwise stored on the pole outside equipment cabinets or shrouds.

21. To preserve existing landscaping in the public rights-of-way, all work performed in connection with small wireless facilities shall not cause any street trees to be trimmed, damaged or displaced. If any street trees are damaged or displaced, the applicant shall be responsible, at its sole cost and expense, to plant and maintain replacement trees at the site for the duration of the permit.

22. No small wireless facility or new support structure to support such a facility, shall be located so as to obstruct pedestrian or vehicular lines-of-sight.

23. New and replacement pole installations shall mimic the spacing of existing vertical infrastructure within sight of the proposed small wireless facility. As used in this guideline, existing vertical infrastructure shall mean such structures that are located within the public right-of-way and greater than 20 feet in height.

24. The approval authority may waive some of these requirements if: (1) the applicant demonstrates that the imposition of certain requirements would effectively prohibit the provision of personal wireless services, as supported by clear and convincing evidence in the written record; or (2) the approval authority in her/his/its sole and absolute discretion determines that guideline compliance would result in a more visually obtrusive facility.

25. For the purposes of these guidelines, “technically infeasible” shall mean physically impossible, or otherwise not allowed by some other law, regulation, or order promulgated by a federal, state, or local government agency that can exercise authority within the City of Laguna Beach.

26. The Director of Community Development may at any time modify these requirements for the sole purpose of establishing a more restrictive standard than presently exists. The substitution, deletion, or relaxation of any requirement contained herein shall be subject to City Council resolution.