

#D-106 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

General Description

The City received a request to consider amendments to the Renton Municipal Code to revise the permitting requirements for wireless communication facilities. The requested amendments include adding language to allow efficient permitting of “small cell” technology, addressing the new federal legislative requirements for municipalities regarding wireless communication facilities, and updating the use provisions in all zones to address height, setback and screening of wireless communication facilities.

The following summarized key revisions to RMC 4-4-140, Wireless Communication Facilities, RMC 4-2-060, Zoning Use Table – Uses Allowed in Zoning Designations, RMC 4-2-080, Conditions Associated with Zoning Use Tables, RMC 4-4-095, Screening and Storage Height and Location Limitations, RMC 4-11-230, Definitions W, and RMC 5-19-5 Telecommunications Franchise, are proposed:

- Revised the purpose statement of RMC 4-4-140
- Introduced additional exceptions to RMC 4-4-140 (e.g., satellite dishes, maintenance, emergency services facilities and lightning rods)
- Introduced allowed alterations and collocations per the new federal legislation (Section 6409(a) of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act).
- Introduced standards for generators
- Revised the setbacks for towers
- Introduced new standards for “concealed wireless communication facilities”
- Introduced new standards for “camouflaged wireless communication facilities”
- Introduced new standards for “stealth towers”
- Revised standards for all other towers
- Introduced additional application submittal requirements
- Deleted the many definitions within RMC 4-11-230 for terms that were unused in Title – IV
- Added definitions for new terminology, and revised existing definitions in RMC 4-11-230
- Revised RMC 4-2-060 to eliminate several antenna types from allowed uses (revised standards will not evaluate the type of antenna but rather the visual effects of all elements of a wireless communication facility)
- Revised RMC 4-2-060 to require a Conditional Use Permit be approved by the Hearing Examiner for all monopole towers, an Administrative Conditional Use Permit for all new stealth towers, and allow camouflaged and concealed wireless facilities outright in any zoning district.
- Revised RMC 4-2-080 to reflect proposed changes to RMC 4-2-060 and RMC 4-4-140.
- Revised RMC 4-4-095 by deleting the exemption to provide screening for roof-top mounted wireless facilities.
- Added a provision to RMC 5-19-5 that any utility pole replacement shall be equal in height to adjacent utility poles and that utility poles located in right-of-way abutting

residentially zoned property or on private property within a residential zoning district be no taller than 45 feet.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

None

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

Not applicable

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

None

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

Several Plan objectives are being met or furthered by the proposed revisions, specifically the following:

Objective CD-A: The City's unique natural features, including land form, vegetation, lakeshore, river, creeks and streams, and wetlands should be protected and enhanced as opportunities arise.

Objective CD-I: Protect and enhance public views of distinctive features from public streets and other focal points within the City and the surrounding area.

Objective CD-M: Well-designed landscaping provides aesthetic appeal and makes an important contribution to the health, safety, economy, and general welfare of the community. The City of Renton should adopt regulations that further the aesthetic goals of the City.

Objective U-J: Promote the timely and orderly expansion of all forms of telecommunications services within the City and the remainder of its Planning Area.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

None

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

Not applicable

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The proposed revisions are consistent with the GMA and multi-county planning policies of Vision 2040, specifically:

MPP-PS-14: Plan for the provision of telecommunication infrastructure to serve growth and development in a manner that is consistent with the regional vision and friendly to the environment.

MPP-DP-33: Identify, protect and enhance those elements and characteristics that give the central Puget Sound region its identity, especially the natural visual resources and positive urban form elements.

MPP-DP-34: Preserve significant regional historic, visual and cultural resources including public views, landmarks, archaeological sites, historic and cultural landscapes, and areas of special character.

The proposed revisions are consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies, specifically:

PF-16 Plan for the provision of telecommunication infrastructure to serve growth and development in a manner consistent with the regional and countywide vision.

The proposed revisions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, specifically:

Policy CD-55. Landscape buffers, additional setbacks, reduced height, and screening devices such as berms and fencing should be employed to reduce impacts (e.g. visual, noise, odor, light) on adjacent, less intensive uses.

Policy CD-76. Development should provide appropriate landscaping and façade treatment when located along designated City arterials or adjacent to less intense developments in order to mitigate potentially adverse visual or other impacts.

Policy U-10. Where appropriate require reasonable landscape screening of site-specific aboveground utility facilities in order to diminish visual impacts.

Policy U-30. New or reconstructed structures, towers, and transmission lines should be designed to minimize aesthetic impacts appropriate to their surroundings whenever practical.

Policy U-100. Require that the siting and location of telecommunications facilities be accomplished in a manner that minimizes adverse impacts on the environment and adjacent land uses.

Policy U-101. Require that cellular communication structures and towers be sensitively sited and designed to diminish aesthetic impacts, and be collocated on existing structures and towers wherever possible and practical.

Policy U-102. Pursue the continued development of a wireless Internet communication grid throughout the City for the use and enjoyment of Renton residents, employees, and visitors.

Effect on other considerations

None

Staff Recommendation

Amend Renton Municipal Code as described to minimize adverse visual impacts within the City, comply with federal legislation, and promote alternative siting requirements through a revision of the permitting requirements.

Implementation Requirements

Adopt an ordinance amending RMC 4-4-140, Wireless Communication Facilities, RMC 4-2-060, Zoning Use Table – Uses Allowed in Zoning Designations, RMC 4-2-080, Conditions Associated with Zoning Use Tables, RMC 4-4-095, Screening and Storage Height and Location Limitations, RMC 4-11-230, Definitions W, and RMC 5-19-5 Telecommunications Franchise.