

Hillandale Citizens Association, Inc.

Comments on Montgomery County Zoning Text Amendment 16-05

Regarding Telecommunications Towers — Small Cell Sites

September 2, 2016

The Executive Committee of the Hillandale Citizens Association has discussed ZTA 16-05 and recognizes that administrative pressures and technology changes have required the Council to consider changes to the code regarding small cell sites. Given the pervasive use of mobile cell technology, we appreciate that having improved communications is a common goal, but we also ask that this ZTA provide additional guidance for locating small cell sites and provide the opportunity for input by property owners.

Although not currently being proposed for this small cell technology, Hillandale locations could be considered for this approach in the future. Hillandale neighborhoods have both “classic” wooden utility poles and underground utility service. And, there is some community sensitivity to cell tower issues. Several years ago, Hillandale experienced a contentious Special Exception case for a traditional cell tower. (That approved tower has not been acted upon to date.) With this as the background, HCA’s Executive Committee suggests the following additions to the ZTA 16-05

1. Currently the Montgomery County Tower Committee informally directs providers to locate small cell equipment on existing utility poles when feasible. We ask that this ZTA incorporate this practice into the code.
2. Where traditional utility poles do not exist and/or when a new small cell site is proposed, we ask that any new pole placement not be mid-property, but at lot lines between homes. This will reduce concerns that any new pole will cause visual clutter for homeowners.
3. Please add a provision that at the time of application to the Tower Committee, notice must be given to property owners adjoining the right-of-way where any small cell facility is proposed. Then, upon receiving notice, the property owner is given 30 days to examine the proposed design and request any change/modification of the placement of the facility. The Tower committee must then take the requested modifications into consideration of any final approval.

We ask for your support of our ideas to improve this ZTA to make small cell sites better fit into existing residential neighborhoods.

Thank you.

Submitted by HCA’s Executive Board

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