



Title:
**COMMUNICATION TOWERS &
OTHER TALL STRUCTURES POLICY**

Subject: GENERAL OPERATIONS	Page: 1 of 4	Policy Number: 03.00.00
Category: DISTRICTWIDE POLICY	Approval Date: 07/06/2015	Last Revised Date: 06/13/2018

POLICY STATEMENT:

The natural scenic character and beauty of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (*the "District"*) is part of the foundation of the quality of life and economy of the region, long recognized as a uniquely special and valuable international treasure. This policy is intended to protect the District natural and historical properties and, at the same time, provide guidance for allowing certain select permanent communication systems on District property consistent with other legal, policy, and/or other regulations.

PURPOSE:

The purpose and intent of this policy is to establish guidelines to regulate the placement and design of permanent commercial communication towers in order to preserve the unique visual character of the District and ensures consistency with related laws and regulations related to the development of commercial communication towers.

AFFECTED AREAS:

The scope of this policy applies to all persons, firms, partnerships, companies, corporations, municipalities, municipal corporations, special districts, school districts, units of local government, the Federal Government, and the State of Illinois, that desire to use, build, locate, or seek ownership of any telecommunications tower and/or other tall structure on District property.

DEFINITIONS:

Communications Tower: For purposes of this policy, the term "*communications tower*" shall be defined as any structure and/or supporting facility or other equipment that transmits or receives electromagnetic communication and/or other data.

Other Tall Structures: For purposes of this policy, the term "*other tall structures*," shall include, but is not limited to, structures over 100 feet in height above ground level used for communication towers, wind energy facilities, and other similar structures used for wind energy generation, wind power, wind turbines, wireless communication facilities, or alternative energy facilities.

PROCEDURE/PROCESS:

1) **Overview:**

- a. It is the duty of the Land Use Committee to review proposals for use of District lands including new communication towers and other tall structures. The Land Use Committee must determine that each proposed communication tower, and/or other tall structure, requiring District regulatory approval:
 - Is consistent with the Cook County Building and Environmental Ordinance, the District land use ordinance, other District policies and procedures, and license rules and regulations;
 - Is compatible with the character description and purposes, policies and objectives of the land use area wherein it is proposed to be located; and

Title: Communication Towers & Other Tall Structures Policy	Page 2 of 4	Policy Number: 03.00.00
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- Will not have an undue adverse impact upon the natural, scenic, aesthetic, ecological, wildlife, historic, recreational or open space resources of the District.

2) **Procedures:**

- a. **General Policy:** No communications tower, other tall structure, or electromagnetic communication and/or data conductors of electric light or power or gas, telephone or telegraph, nor any wires, cables, ducts, conduits, pipes, poles, columns, vaults, manholes, guys or other appurtenances for or relating to the transmission of such utilities, whether above or below ground, shall be installed, constructed or placed above, across, upon or beneath the property of the District, by any person without having obtained first the approval of the District Board of Commissioners authorizing such installation or construction and a license specifying in detail the work to be done and the conditions to be fulfilled pursuant to the terms of such resolution.

- b. **Location Restrictions:** New communications towers or other tall structures located within the District:
 - Shall not be located on any District nature preserve, cultural, historical, ecological sensitive, or restoration areas; and,
 - May be located in secure, operations compounds such as golf facilities, maintenance facilities, resource management facilities, police facilities, other operational facilities that are on highly disturbed non-natural locations as may be determined from time to time, and/or other District locations where the District shall receive additional substantial benefits as determined by the Land Use Committee.

- c. **Proposals:** New tower or other tall structure proposals must be presented to the Land Use Committee with supporting information regarding the proposed facility location, alternative support infrastructure, designs and locations and future facility plans adequate to determine whether the cumulative impacts of the proposed towers and/or additional facilities will result in undue adverse impacts on the District. Proposals shall also include revenue shares, co-locator information, tower height, stealthing options, contract duration and any additional benefits to the District.
 - Applicants will be required to provide the best available data and visual representations in order to maximize District and public understanding of the proposed project.
 - Site requests must attempt to avoid undue adverse impacts, both natural and ecological, to the District.
 - Facilities must also be designed and sited to avoid or minimize impact to nearby land uses. Co-location of facilities is preferred so long as substantial invisibility is achieved.
 - Governmental emergency communication towers will be handled in the same manner, with consideration given to the health and safety needs of the public.

- d. **Substantial Invisibility:** Communications towers and other tall structures are expected to be “*substantially invisible*”. To the maximum extent practicable, a “substantially invisible” communication facility and its appurtenant support facilities and access road(s) will not be readily apparent as to size, composition, or color and the structure(s) will blend with the background vegetation, other structures or other landscape features as seen from all significant potential public viewing points and as documented by simulation and other visual analysis methods.
 - Substantial invisibility is intended to be applied on a site specific basis and may be achieved by consolidation of existing visual intrusions and/or by the development of facilities within lawfully existing buildings, and/or by providing substantial screening or concealment of the structure itself.

Title: Communication Towers & Other Tall Structures Policy	Page 3 of 4	Policy Number: 03.00.00
---	----------------	----------------------------

- Preferred methods to reduce visibility include: concealing any structure by careful siting, using a topographic or vegetative foreground or backdrop; minimizing structure height and bulk; using color to blend with surroundings; using existing buildings to locate facilities whenever possible; using architecturally compatible buildings to house ground equipment; and otherwise using best available technology that avoids or minimizes visual impacts.
 - When none of the above preferred methods achieve substantial invisibility, camouflage in scale with the surroundings may be proposed in order to blend the facility with the visual setting.
- e. **Emergency Communication Facilities:** The District recognizes that the demands of public health, safety and welfare will involve the upgrade of governmental emergency communications facilities. This policy recognizes that such factors should be taken into consideration along with the other policy guidelines contained herein.
- f. **Local Government Regulations:** Local Governments, and/or other regulatory agencies also share authority over land uses. It is the responsibility of the entity seeking to do business with the District to comply with all other laws, regulations, and policies in addition to the requirements set forth in this policy.
- g. **Security:** The base of the communications tower and related facilities shall be enclosed by a minimum six (6) foot high fence designed to preclude trespassing. A detailed plan depicting this requirement shall be submitted to the Land Use Committee for approval in conjunction with site plan review. District staff should have access to all security related facilities.

RESPONSIBILITY:

- 1) **District Employees:** District employees are required to comply with this policy.
- 2) **Land Use Committee:** The District Land Use Committee shall be responsible for: (1) the implementation of this policy; (2) communicating this policy to external entities as needed/appropriate; and (3) providing recommendations to the General Superintendent and/or his/her designee.
- 3) **Office of the General Superintendent:** The General Superintendent and/or his/her designee shall review, and if appropriate approve, recommendations from the District Land Use Committee to be placed as an agenda item before the District Board of Commissioners.

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

N/A

COMMUNICATION PLAN:

- 1) This policy should be distributed to Senior Staff, Land Use Committee members, relevant staff, and relevant entities or individuals that seek to do business with the District.
- 2) This policy should be added to the District shared drive, intranet, and website.

REFERENCES:

Cook County Building and Environmental Ordinance of 1997

Title: Communication Towers & Other Tall Structures Policy	Page 4 of 4	Policy Number: 03.00.00
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Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Title 2: Forest Preserves Lands & Property ([FPDCC Code Section 2-2-1](#))

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Title 2: Forest Preserves Lands & Property ([FPDCC Code Section 2-5: 1-8](#))

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Title 5: Public Utilities (FPDCC Code Section [5-1](#) & [5-2](#))

POLICY LEAD:

Anthony D. Tindall
Policy & Special Projects Manager

APPROVAL:

Arnold Randall
General Superintendent

POLICY HISTORY:

Approved: 07/06/2015

Revised: 04/15/2016

Revised: 06/13/2018

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions concerning District policies, please contact:

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