



## Information Presentation

Special Commission Meeting: April 29, 2020

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**PROJECT**

**Antenna Guidelines Update**

National Capital Region

**NCPC FILE NUMBER**

6947

**SUBMITTED BY**

National Capital Planning Commission

**NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER**

00:00(38.30)45098

**PRESENTER**

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The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) adopted antenna guidelines in January 1988 to address the impacts of new telecommunication infrastructure in the national capital region. The purpose of the guidelines is to protect the skyline, historic resources and scenic character of the nation's capital and provide a safe environment for employees, visitors, and residents. The guidelines were most recently updated in 2001. This update is necessary to address significant advances in technology, in addition to an increased demand for multiple types of telecommunication infrastructure.

NCPC staff reviewed the current guidelines and have identified three issues to address:

1. *Antenna Types* - Guidelines do not address the different antenna types that have emerged over the last several decades (e.g. small cells, temporary antennas, ancillary equipment).
2. *Design Review Criteria* – Standards for evaluating installations do not adequately consider location, color, cumulative effects, or priority viewsheds.
3. *Review Process* - Review process does not differentiate between temporary, permanent, and small cell antennas.

The information presentation and summary below provide an overview of the proposed changes to the guidelines based on these three major issues. Staff anticipates bringing the draft guidelines to the Commission for review in the summer. Coordination and outreach to applicant agencies and the public will continue throughout the process.

### Antenna Types

Staff proposes to organize the guidelines into three antenna categories, described below. The guidelines will describe the type of antenna and the review process.

1. Permanent Antennas – antennas installed for more than 30 days.
2. Temporary Antennas – antennas installed for 30 days or less.
3. Small Cell Antennas – small, low-powered cell antennas (an emerging technology) used to create infrastructure capable of deploying the 5G network.

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Design Review Criteria

Staff proposes to update the criteria the Commission uses to evaluate siting, material, visibility, and safety. The existing guidelines do not appropriately address several issues: including antenna visibility, lighting of antennas, and safety screening. Staff is also proposing to remove one criterion pertaining to the material of the antenna mast which is not necessary. Finally, staff is also reorganizing the criteria into clear topic areas: New building design, Rooftop antennas siting, Ground level antennas siting, Materials, Lighting, Advertisement prohibited, Health, Safety.

In addition to changes outlined above, staff has identified two other issues that need further study. First, the current guidelines do not consider a hierarchy of views when evaluating the visual impacts of proposed rooftop antennas. As such, all views are treated somewhat equally. Staff is considering whether there should be priority viewsheds in which additional design review criteria could provide greater protection. Identifying these viewsheds could help guide applicants and the Commission in determining appropriate antenna placement and screening. One possibility would be to use the viewsheds identified as part of the Urban Design Streetscape Plan and the Lighting Policy Framework Plan. Secondly, the cumulative visual impacts of multiple service providers on a single building rooftop are not described or addressed in the current guidelines. While the visual impacts of a single provider's installation may be minimal, multiple service provider installations on a single roof can lead to challenges. Staff is currently researching how to address these concerns without being overly prescriptive. One potential recommendation could include requiring an overall rooftop strategy for all anticipated antennas.

Review Process

Finally, staff proposes four updates to the review process. These changes are intended to clarify what the Commission reviews and what that review will entail.

1. Reference the review process for small cell antennas and related infrastructure on District right-of-way.
2. Define temporary antennas (those installed for 30 days or less) and clarify that NCPC review will not be required, but the agency applicant will be responsible to submit a letter of notification instead. This will allow NCPC to track these antennas but will not be overly burdensome to applicants.
3. Amend NCPC's list of delegations to include both send and receive antennas.
4. Amend NCPC's list of exceptions to include both send and receive antennas for replacements and renewals when they are replacements in kind or renewal of an existing antenna.

ATTACHED:

- Antenna Guidelines - Summary Presentation

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**PROJECT TIMELINE**

<b>Previous actions</b>	<b>September 2001</b> – Commission last amended guidelines
<b>Remaining actions</b> (anticipated)	<b>June/July 2020</b> – Draft antenna guidelines released for public comment <b>Summer/Fall</b> - Commission approval of amended guidelines