

Small Cell

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Small Cell?

- Small Cell is a term to describe the antennae and equipment telecom providers plan to install in public space in order to meet the growing demand for cell phone, tablet, and other connected devices people use as part of their everyday lives.

Why is Small Cell needed? Why in the District of Columbia's public space?

- The introduction of smart phones and other wireless devices and the explosion of their use in the past decade have driven technological advances in the telecommunication infrastructure as demand strains the existing infrastructure. From the needs of individual users to be connected, through the importance of disseminating emergency information to the public and between first responders, reliable wireless telecommunications have become a universal element of everyday life.
- To address the growing demand for wireless technology across the United States, cellular providers propose to increase the capacity of their networks by deploying Small Cell, a new lower-powered antenna technology, to reduce data traffic load on roof-mounted equipment and larger cell towers. This new technology requires infrastructure to be installed in closer proximity to the users on the ground; this infrastructure will affect the aesthetics of public spaces.

What is the role of the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) in the Small Cell program?

DDOT performs two roles in the Small Cell program: one as permitting authority and the other as asset owner.

- DDOT has the authority to process and issue permits for various uses in the public space. This authority is exercised either directly for certain uses or delegated to it by the Public Space Committee (PSC) for other uses. In the case of Small Cell infrastructure, DDOT will exercise delegated authority provided applicants abide by guidelines adopted by the PSC.
- DDOT owns and maintains tens of thousands of streetlights across the District. These assets are ones that telecom companies would like to use for installation of Small Cell equipment when available. As the asset owner DDOT has the authority to exclude the use of certain assets, set limits on the uses of other assets, and review every public space permit application to ensure it complies with the general standards and limits DDOT establishes as well as with any conditions or limits specific to a particular asset.

Will Small Cells be installed in public space?

- Yes, this new infrastructure is handled like other utility infrastructure and can be installed in public space.

What are the Small Cell Guidelines?

- Intended to provide clarity and transparency to all stakeholders regarding the deployment of Small Cell equipment, the Small Cell Guidelines cover the general standards and aesthetics for the design and installation of Small Cell technology across the District of Columbia. They are comprehensive in nature while recognizing the unique characteristics and history of the District of Columbia. The guidelines cover the different areas of the District while keeping generally applicable standards based on the type of infrastructure installed.

How are the guidelines developed?

- The guidelines have been drafted with input from a variety of government stakeholders, including staff from DDOT, the Office of Planning (OP), the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), and the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC). They were informed through best practices research, technical specifications from telecom providers, and reference to the standards and conditions established for other uses of public space.

How did the Public Space Committee adopt the guidelines?

- They were only draft guidelines, meant to serve as a starting point for the conversation regarding the deployment of this next generation of utility infrastructure. They required the careful and thoughtful input of the residents, businesses, and other stakeholders of the District in order to become the best and most authoritative guidelines to ensure that the deployment of Small Cell technology is seamlessly woven into the unique character of the District of Columbia. After gathering the input from all stakeholders, the guidelines will be reviewed and amended by DDOT to address the initial concerns of the Public Space Committee (PSC).
- As with all actions of the PSC, it conducts its business in a public meeting, consistent with the Open Meetings Act. The PSC held a public meeting on Monday, October 15 in Room 200 of 1100 4th Street SW. The meeting time was set to allow people to participate with minimal disruption to their daily schedules. The meeting notice was published in the DC Register on Friday, September 7.

Did the Public Space Committee adopt the proposed Small Cell guidelines?

- Yes, at the conclusion of a Special Public Space Committee (PSC) Meeting on Small Cell Technology, the guidelines were adopted by the PSC on Thursday, March 21, 2019.

Are the guidelines the only document governing Small Cell deployment in the District?

- No, there are many documents that govern Small Cell deployment in the District. The guidelines and the Master License Agreement (MLA) are specifically tailored to this deployment. They reference other applicable standards such as the *Standard Specifications for Highways and Structures*, the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, the *Comprehensive Plan for the District*, among others. Additionally, both documents specifically note that Small Cell providers must abide by all other applicable regulatory and licensing requirements.

What is the Master License Agreement?

- The MLA is a document all Small Cell providers must execute with the District of Columbia before they can submit a public space permit application. The MLA sets certain terms, conditions, and requirements on MLA holders and articulates specific limitations and prohibitions that the MLA holder must abide by in order to install equipment in public space. It does not authorize the actual installation of equipment in public space. That requires a separate public space permit. Information on the MLA can be found at <https://octo.dc.gov/page/small-cells>.

Have public hearings been held for Small Cell guidelines?

- Yes, extensive public meetings were held, including several community meetings, two Public Space Committee meetings, and a roundtable convened by Ward 3 Councilmember Mary Cheh.

Can Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners and neighbors weigh in should they oppose the Small Cell guidelines?

- Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners (ANCs) and members of the public are always welcome to send comments and questions regarding public space permit applications to DDOT's call center at (202) 442-4670. The guidelines were adopted following an extensive public engagement process, which included multiple public meetings regarding the MLA and proposed guidelines for installations prior to their adoption. The guidelines were adopted by the Public Space Committee during its second special public meeting on Thursday, March 21, 2019, which followed public meetings which included two community meetings. ANCs and individual Single Member District (SMD) representatives were notified about the meetings and notices were published in the DC Register.
- Comments addressing applications that do not abide by the guidelines should reference the relevant guideline and include the public space permit tracking number when possible.

Can I object to the installation of a small cell on my block?

- No. However, objections based on violations of the guidelines can be considered.

Is there a standard presentation or briefing on the 5G technology and installation from DDOT?

- Presentations from all the providers are available online at ddot.dc.gov/small_cell.

Why did I receive a notice from the carrier about installation?

- According to the guidelines, adopted by the District and the MLA, prior to submitting an application for a public space permit, the MLA holder shall provide notice for the first Small Cell installations in a neighborhood to the affected SMD, adjacent property owners, the representing ANC, and the Ward Councilmember. The notice will include the proposed location, installation type, and a timeline of completion. See section 4.1.5 and 4.1.6 of the guidelines (pg. 5).

What are the application requirements?

- *Site Plan detailing:*
 - Property and building restriction lines
 - Dimensions from pole to nearest intersection
 - Dimensions from pole to back of curb
 - Dimensions from pole to nearest fixture
 - All fixtures in public space
 - All utilities in public space
 - Street names
- *Small Cell Specifications*
 - Maximum and minimum heights for installation
 - Dimensions of all equipment
 - Weight of equipment
 - Color designation of all equipment
 - Technical specification
- *Approval Letter* – From 3rd Party Pole Owner (e.g. installation on a PEPCO utility pole)
- *Photos - Proposed Site*
 - Pole identification number
 - Front view of pole
 - Left and right views of pole
- *Public Notifications* (in advance of submitting an application)
 - Councilmember – Initial Deployment in the Ward
 - ANC – Initial deployment in the ANC
 - SMD – Initial deployment in the SMD
 - Property Owners – All property owners, both sides of the street, adjacent to the proposed installation
- *Traffic Control Plan*

Who will review applications?

- All applications will be reviewed by subject matter and technical experts, prior to approval
 - Urban Forestry Division
 - Office of Planning
 - Historical Preservation
 - Commission of Fine Arts
 - National Capital Planning Commission
 - DDOT's Streetlight Division
 - Infrastructure Project Management Division
 - Traffic Work Zone Unit

Is there a deadline to issue a Small Cell application?

- Per the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s rules, jurisdictions have been granted a 90-day review period to complete the application review of all submitted Small Cell applications of a new structure. See page 56, of the FCC Declaratory Ruling and Third Report and Order, adopted on September 26, 2018.

How far must a Small Cell be from a building?

- Standalone poles shall be placed a minimum of 10' from a building. Please see section 8.2.8.5 of the guidelines.

How many can be installed on my block?

- There are strict limits on the number of installations, both for an individual carrier and for all carriers total on a block. Please see the chart below. The chart is included in the guidelines on page 17.

Chart 1, Permissible Spacing and Frequency of Installations

	Outside Areas of Special Interest		Inside Areas of Special Interest		
Blockface Length Intervals ¹	Number of Small Cell Facilities Permitted per Blockface ²	Minimum Distance between Facilities on same Blockface ³	Number of Small Cell Facilities Permitted per Blockface	Minimum Distance between Facilities on same Blockface	Limit per Carrier per Block ⁴
0'-150'	1	N/A	1	N/A	1
151'-300'	1	N/A	1	N/A	1
301'-450'	2	60'	1	N/A	1
451'-600'	2	60'	2	90'	1
601'-750'	3	60'	2	105'	2
Over 750'	3	60'	2	120'	2
¹ Block lengths should be measured along the edge of curb between the edge line extended of adjacent intersecting streets. ² This is inclusive of all types of installations and regardless of carrier. ³ In other words, the minimum distance between two facilities sharing the same side of the block. Distance should be measured in a linear fashion along the edge of curb between the two facilities' center points. ⁴ A block is defined as two opposing block faces.					

What about the proximity to the US Capitol and other sensitive buildings?

- The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has been included in the development of the guidelines, which govern adjacency to federal properties. Please see section 4.2.3.3 and section 5.1.2.4 of the guidelines.

Does Homeland Security (D.C. and federal) know about this?

- Yes.

Is there a prohibition on installing them in historic districts?

- No. The Historic Preservation Office and the Commission of Fine Arts were involved throughout the process for drafting and adopting the guidelines, which specifically address installations in historic districts. Please see section 6.2.1.

If an existing street light or third party pole, and an existing street tree are closer than 15' can a small cell fixture be installed?

- No. These items are already in conflict and does not comply with Small Cell Guidelines, section 8.4.2.

If there is an existing light pole or third party pole that is eligible for small cell fixture installations, but the limbs are growing around the pole or street light can we install a small cell fixture?

- No. Per the Small Cell Guidelines, section 8.4.3, "No tree shall be pruned related to the installation or functioning of small cell infrastructure."

Are there health concerns associated with this technology?

- Please see the FCC regulations governing the health impacts of this technology. For more information please contact the FCC at FCC.gov or 1-888-225-5322.

What about the use of foreign technology?

- Questions regarding the technology should be referred to the FCC at FCC.gov or 1-888-225-5322.

What type of small cell technology will be installed in the District?

- Class A: greater than 5 cu. ft. and up to 28 cu. ft., which includes both cabinetry and antenna
- Class B: 5 cu. ft. or fewer

Is there an additional benefit to the residents of the District?

- Yes. The Office of the Chief Technology Officer (OCTO) is requiring carriers to install an OCTO Wireless Access Point (WAP) in locations where a Small Cell installation is planned. WAPs are not the same technology as small cell. They provide free wireless access to District residents and the general public. For more information please contact OCTO at (202) 727-2277.

Note: The designs for cabinetry and stand-alone poles will not be adopted until they are approved through a design process that will include public review and comment. Information regarding the design process for cabinetry and stand-alone poles will be posted to our website shortly.

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