

Revised: 6-2-16

Prepared by members of the City of Gahanna's Department of Planning and Development, Department of Public Service and City Attorney.

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In response to a 2015 cell tower request, a group of residents worked together to organize their concerns and presented them in a public meeting. The City appreciates their thoughtful organization and Gahanna's Department of Public Service, Department of Planning and Development and the City Attorney's office used this document as somewhat of a reference when modifying Gahanna's Personal Wireless Service Facilities code. The following is a summary of our interpretation of residents' concerns and, where relevant, how the modified code relates.

**1. Tall cell towers are yesterday's technology.**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – Technology is always changing, and smaller Distributed Antenna Systems (DAS) or dense network technology is becoming more common place and can be especially useful in residential areas. However, these smaller towers are only capable of communicating at a range of  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and still need the larger towers in order to communicate over long distances.
- b. Gahanna's Revised Code – Encourages the use of DAS by allowing administrative approval of these type of structures in the right-of-way and many zoning districts with height limits.

**2. Height restrictions are desired for new cell towers.**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – Gahanna recognizes that a balance is needed when regulating tower height. Residents' ever increasing use of wireless technology from both the numbers standpoint and amount of data transmitted requires effective wireless data transmission. At the same time, aesthetics and safety concerns weigh heavy on the minds of residents and regulators.
- b. Gahanna's Revised Code – Sets the following height restrictions:
  - i. Public Right-of-Way: Co-locations are permitted; Limited to 50' Alternative Structures only
  - ii. Residential Districts: Co-locations are permitted; Limited to 80' Alternative Structures only; New Towers Not Permitted
  - iii. Restricted Institutional Districts: Co-locations are permitted; Limited to 100'
  - iv. All other zoning districts: Co-locations are permitted; Limited to 120'

**3. Cell towers are risks to human life due to tower falls caused by high winds, fires, lightning strikes, etc.**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – These are some of the same risks we associate with other objects in our environment such as large trees. (It is worth noting that modern towers are being designed so that they collapse on themselves to help minimize danger related to these isolated events.)
- b. Gahanna Revised Code – Has specific setback distances from principal structures and residential property lines that are designed to create a buffer zone in the event that one of these events were to occur.

- i. General setback required (with the exception of alternative structures located in the public right-of-way) is equal to the height of the pole.
- ii. Towers located on properties zoned Restricted Institutional require a minimum setback of 300' from the property lines of any adjacent properties zoned residential.

**4. Are variance applications allowed in the cell tower code?**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – As the regulating body of a City that has a limited amount of undeveloped property, Gahanna recognizes that the best option for a wireless communication facility may not align 100% with code. It is in everyone's best interest to allow variance requests. This gives the governing board the ability to hear the request and determine if granting the variance would result in a more effective and possibly a more palatable installation.
- b. Gahanna Revised Code – Yes, applicants that propose a tower that does not comply with code may apply for a variance. Planning Commission would be the governing body to hear and evaluate the variance request and make a determination as to whether or not the variance should be granted.

**5. Does Gahanna City Code guard against cell towers in inappropriate locations, and are cell towers permitted in residentially zoned areas and districts?**

- a. Gahanna Revised Code – Revised code is specifically designed to guard against the installation of towers within inappropriate zoning districts:
  - i. New, traditional towers, are not permitted in residentially zoned areas.
  - ii. An increased setback of 300' to residential property lines is required in districts that permit new towers but are adjacent to residential districts.
  - iii. Additionally, code encourages shorter towers, and the use of "stealth" or camouflaged towers.

**6. Are siting considerations taken into account for cell tower locations to make sure they are placed in a safe and acceptable area?**

- a. Gahanna Revised Code – Very specific siting requirements are provided with the code to address required setbacks, landscaping and screening of signage and equipment. Additionally, building permits are required for the installation for all new cell towers to ensure that they meet all applicable federal, state, and local requirements to ensure the safety of our community.

**7. Cell Towers impact property and home values.**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – This is another area where Gahanna recognizes that a balance is needed. The volume of data being transmitted wirelessly increases exponentially each year. This goes well beyond cell phones and now includes streaming video, full length movies, etc. It is the City's belief that residents want safe, aesthetically pleasing properties that accommodate the use of current technology. Gahanna acknowledges the concerns of residents, recognizes the needs of residents and strives to create an environment that satisfies both.

**8. Gahanna's City Code is designed to protect the health and wellbeing of our Citizens.**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – The City's commitment to this responsibility has historically and continues to be the overriding philosophy as we continually review and revise all of our codes.

**9. Are there health risks associated with cell towers?**

- a. Gahanna Administration Comments – The health risk of cell towers has been debated for years. The City of Gahanna is, of course, not an expert in this area; however, the City is not aware of solid evidence that would support eliminating cell towers from our City.