

Why cell phone towers are being installed 30 feet from your home

by: Aaron Rosenzweig
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1) 60% of people below the poverty line have smart phones and that is their only connection to the Internet. This is stated as fact from Crown Castle when they lobbied to the FCC a few years ago. Not sure if it is true. If it is... that's a sad statistic. I'd rather people below the poverty line pay for food than a smart phone.

2) Crown Castle sees this as a way to checkerboard the entire nation with 5G wireless internet. These cell towers are not for voice, they are for data only. It's one-more-flavor of Internet. We got flavors ABC and D... now they want to give us flavor E.

3) Fiber optic is superior but it is slow to roll out to everyone's home and costly. Put up a monopole every 1,000 feet... that's easy by comparison. Because they argue that "so many" people are using smart phones and tablets without a permanent connection in their home... the FCC bought it and said "this is the future." Of course it doesn't help that the head of the FCC is a proponent for this change... he was basically hand picked to make this happen. Tom Wheeler was appointed by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate in November 2013. Prior to working at the FCC, Wheeler worked as a venture capitalist and lobbyist for the cable and wireless industry, whom the FCC is now responsible for regulating. Holding positions including President of the National Cable & Telecommunications Association (NCTA) and CEO of the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association (CTIA). So - obviously - this is more than a little conflict of interest here. Watch Tom Wheeler speak:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMxfffqyDtc>

4) Verizon has stopped deploying fiber optic. I guess they figure flat rate unlimited plans don't make as much money as wireless "pay-per-gigabyte" plans. As a nation much of our country doesn't have a solid Internet option. Compared to South Korea and elsewhere we are in the dark ages. The FCC says that 5G checkerboard across the nation is the answer to become #1 again.

5) 5 years ago Crown Castle could not get towers built. Local government would either say no or just not reply to their request to use the right-of-way. They cried to Tom Wheeler. Tom put down the hammer and said that if local government doesn't have clear rules about where these poles can go that he now grants Crown Castle the ability to install at whim. If Crown Castle requests to install in front of your house and Montgomery county doesn't reply fast enough, they can just erect it. Also, if Montgomery County can't point to rules and zoning that prohibits that placement... their rejection letter will be legally ignored. The rejection letter, according to Tom Wheeler, cannot include words about "health" nor "property values." It can only include words about distance from home and the way it looks (how tall, color, shape, etc.) After all, it's "safe" according to the FCC and if everyone has a tower, property values will level out. It's the "new telephone line" is his mantra. There's a grain of truth there. People didn't like unsightly telephone poles being erected and fought them too once-upon-a-time. In

my community, all the telephone lines are underground, it's in our regulations.

6) Montgomery County in conjunction with a handful of cities from California and Texas decided to sue the FCC saying "that's not constitutional" to tell us we can't use reasons of "health" and "property value" to reject the cell towers. The courts ruled in favor of the FCC saying that they do have that power to mandate this and what they've done is legal because local government still has control of looks and placement. So, in my view (Aaron's view) this is both a loss and a win. While it would be great if we could reject for whatever reason we like... at least the courts upheld we can place them a good distance from our home and control their size and shape. That's enough that we can do something... like Spokane Washington did.

7) Westleigh (where I live) was targeted because of the following (my opinion, I can't know for sure):

- a) We have no HOA - perhaps no means to organize and fight back (in their view)
- b) We are fairly affluent, part of the Wooton Cluster - it would be a big payout from Verizon if Crown Castle made it happen.
- c) Under Gaithersburg rule... Gaithersburg is less organized than Montgomery County - it should have been like taking candy from a baby by comparison
- d) If we fell easily - it would set a precedent for everywhere else. Go for the easy candy and everything will fall into place.

8) Several people in Westleigh, including myself, wouldn't stand for it. We pulled out everything - news, public meetings, freedom of information act - dirty laundry of council members was brought to the table too... We uncovered that the city actually signed an agreement with Crown Castle and had been in talks for over a year. Because a staff member, not the council, had signed the contract - on a technicality we pressured the city to make the document "null and void" because it wasn't signed by someone with authority.

9) At this moment there is an "unspoken moratorium" on the residential cell towers in Gaithersburg. I had asked for an official one, until we rewrote our laws, but we got an unofficial one. The city un-officially has hired the same lawyer the county used to sue the FCC called "Best Best and Krieger" - they have many interesting documents but here is a good one:

<http://www.bbklaw.com/88E17A/assets/files/Documents/SEATOA2013GKarish.pdf>

10) I believe that if Montgomery County passes their zoning text amendment... the city of Gaithersburg will do the same. Robert Wu thinks that won't happen... but he is one vote out of 5 and he was outvoted on the recent monster cell tower installed in the baseball field of Summit Hall ES where 65% of the children are on free lunch programs. Again, targeted a community they thought wouldn't mobilize against them.

11) This is a national issue. They are going for the most lucrative choices first. The hit California first now they are hitting us. If they really wanted to do good, they would offer this as a solution where there is no fiber optic Internet. But that's not what's happening. They are installing it in old neighborhoods which aren't growing in density and already

have adequate cell phone coverage. We already have fast internet in our homes and really don't need to watch youtube videos while walking our dogs outside. Look at what happened in California. Feel like deja vu?

<http://fox5sandiego.com/2015/06/29/la-jolla-residents-battle-cell-phone-tower/>
<http://www.lajollalight.com/news/2015/jun/30/DAS-cell-tower-fracas-LaJolla/>

In summary - the only safety net we can hope for is the Kirk Wines approach which I outlined in this petition and in person at city hall:

<https://www.change.org/p/cityhall-gaithersburgmd-gov-cell-towers-need-stricter-rules>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YGy2iZq5U8>

Note - look how after I gave that speech Robert Wu wanted to tell those in attendance about the cell towers. All the other council members said "That's not appropriate at this time."

So... in a word... Gaithersburg turned out to be "hard candy" if you will. They still want to put towers here too and may ultimately do so.

You can share this message with everyone - we all need to know what's going on. It's something to crow about.