

Frequently asked questions

What is a small cell wireless facility?

A small cell wireless facility is a cell site designed to provide service coverage and capacity in areas where traditional “macro” wireless facilities either cannot reach or cannot provide users with broadband-level services. These facilities are able to reuse licensed spectrum bands more frequently, with lower output power and a shorter distance between the user and the network access point. Small cell wireless facilities have a shorter coverage area than larger macro cell sites and are usually installed closer to one another to provide a desired coverage and capacity level. The range for small cell wireless facilities varies from a few hundred feet to upwards of 1,000 feet, depending on terrain, vegetation, and the radio frequencies used. These facilities are to add capacity in high-traffic areas, dense urban areas, and suburban communities, where people are using smartphones and other devices, and are not a substitute for macrocell sites. Small cell wireless facilities can include 4G and 5G antennas and other equipment.

What does a small cell wireless facility look like?

Examples of small cell wireless facilities:



Where are small cell wireless facilities being installed?

Small cell wireless facilities are being installed on streetlights, overhead strands, and wooden utility poles that are owned by the Joint Pole Authority (JPA). In certain cases, the existing structure on which a proposed small cell wireless facility is to be installed must be replaced to accommodate the new facility or may need to be installed on a new streetlight or freestanding pole to meet the characteristics of the neighborhood. The City prefers to have wireless carriers install small cell wireless facilities on existing infrastructure, such as a streetlight. The City follows the preferred support structure hierarchy that’s listed in the City’s Guidelines for Wireless Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way. <https://santa-ana-ca.proudcity.com/documents/guidelines-for-w...lic-right-of-way/>

Can the City regulate small cell wireless facilities based on the potential safety and health effects of radio frequency (RF) energy?

No. The City is not allowed to regulate wireless installations based on the potential health and environmental effects of radio frequency emissions, if the site complies with the regulations set by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). (<https://www.fcc.gov/general/radio-frequency-safety-0>)

Can the City prohibit small cell wireless facility installation?

No. The City cannot prohibit placement, construction, or modification of a small cell wireless facility in a manner that effectively prohibits the provision of personal wireless services under the Federal Telecommunications Act.

Per FCC, effective prohibition occurs when a state or local legal requirement materially limits or inhibits a provider's ability to engage in any of the variety of activities related to its provision of a covered service.

Why are small cell wireless facilities being installed in residential areas?

Wireless providers increasingly use small cells to expand and upgrade their network capacity to serve the rapidly growing number of wireless device users. As more and more customers rely on mobile or other media streaming devices, wireless providers will need to place small cell facilities close to residential areas to fill in coverage gaps and enhance capacity. The City of Santa Ana has adopted ordinance and guidelines to establish standards for the design, placement, permitting and monitoring of wireless facilities

Who gets notified of proposed small cell wireless facilities?

Mailing notices are mailed out to property owners and residents within 150 or 300 feet of non-Eligible Facilities Request (EFR) wireless facilities. EFR wireless facilities shall meet the criteria listed per Section 1455 of Title 47 of the United States Code and Section 6409(a) of the Spectrum Act of 2012. The mailing notification radius is determined by Tier classification, per the City's Guidelines for Wireless Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way. (<https://santa-ana-ca.proudcity.com/documents/guidelines-for-w...lic-right-of-way/>)

Who will maintain the small cell wireless facility sites?

The owner of the small cell wireless facility (wireless provider) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the site. While the public streetlights are owned and maintained by the City, the upkeep of wireless facility is the responsibility of the wireless providers.

Who can I call with questions or comments on proposed small cell wireless facility?

You may contact the Public Works Agency, Development Engineering at 714-647-5039 or email Yvonne Soto at ysoto@santa-ana.org.