

Commercial Communications Towers Guidelines

Resolution No.7042

Adopted 5/19/97

Ordinance No. 3366

Adopted 7/7/97

Effective 8/7/97

I. Introduction

Mesa has grown to become the third largest city in Arizona, and one of the 60 largest cities in the United States. Reasons for the continued increases in population include such things as the warm climate, increased employment opportunities, good schools, a broad range of residential options, and plentiful retail and entertainment choices. The City of Mesa also has a reliable utility network, and works with other utility providers to furnish a high quality of service to its residents and communities. Communications options are part of this partnership.

With the reallocation of frequencies by the Federal Communication Commission, the wireless communications industry has been reinvented in a revolutionary manner. Starting with the success of the cellular phone industry, industry analysts have projected a continued demand for wireless personal communications. Including the two existing cellular providers in the Phoenix-Mesa area, it is anticipated that there could be eight or more two-way communication carriers and several other paging and data transmission companies in the near future. Because of present technology, all of these companies have some need for placing sending and receiving equipment at heights above the normal height of most developments within the City. If every provider constructed a separate tower to achieve the necessary height, significant aesthetic impacts would be made on the community.

Communication towers are considered as a height exception under the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. For agricultural and residential zoned properties, any commercial communication tower application is reviewed through a Special Use Permit process. On properties zoned for industrial uses, a Special Use Permit is required only if the tower exceeds the maximum permitted height of the district. An option also exists for conventionally designed towers to be reviewed through a Special Use Permit process, or to have communications equipment mounted on or within architectural forms on existing buildings reviewed by the Design Review Board. Mounting equipment on existing structures would be reviewed by Planning Division staff on an administrative basis (i.e. without the need for a public meeting) if the existing structure stays substantially the same height. These Guidelines are to be used by the staff, citizen boards, the communications industry and the public as a means to evaluate requests by a standard method. The intent is to keep the number of monopoles necessary to a minimum, encourage multiple utilization of facilities, and provide for a means to develop creative and more aesthetic ways to place wireless communication equipment at the heights necessary to function.

II. Application of the Guidelines

A. Under these Guidelines, communication providers proposing to locate new towers in Mesa would be able to do so after obtaining a Special Use Permit or, as appropriate, a height exception for each site as specified in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. The guidelines contained in this document are to be applied as representative examples of the quality and type of facilities and amenities which should be provided by those applying for such a permit. These Guidelines should be used on a case-by-case basis, and may be modified as deemed appropriate by the Zoning Administrator, Board of Adjustment, or Design Review Board to ensure that the proposed facility will operate efficiently without detriment to adjacent land uses. Other Ordinance requirements, adopted policies, and local site specific conditions may also be considered in the evaluation of each request.

B. Whether these Guidelines are applied as written or modified to suit a particular situation, the restrictions and requirements established as part of the approval of a Special Use Permit should be objective and measurable. Measurable requirements such as those contained herein can be readily understood and followed by the facility operator, as well as provide observable criteria to determine future compliance with the use conditions established through the permit process.

C. For sites involving a designated Town Center (TC) zoning district, the authority of the Planning Director is assumed by the Redevelopment Director, and the authority of the Design Review Board is assumed by the Downtown Development Committee.

III. Issuance of Permits

A. All requests for Special Use Permits, height exceptions, or administrative review shall follow the procedures set forth in Chapter 18 "Administration and Procedures," of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance.

1. Any request for the placement of communications equipment which may involve construction of a new tower, placement on an existing structure, or placement on an existing tower shall require a pre-application meeting with Planning Division and/or Redevelopment Division staff. This meeting is intended to provide significant preliminary information on the project, discuss development alternatives, and determine the appropriate review procedure.

2. Requests which may be approved in an administrative manner (i.e. without the need for a public hearing) shall be made in writing to the Planning Director. The request should include a written document outlining the proposal and summarizing how the project will comply with these guidelines, and be accompanied by site plans, floor plans and elevations (drawn to scale) which accurately depict the proposal. Additional information may also be required, such as site line diagrams and color samples, as needed to complete the review of the project.

3. A request involving the placement of communications equipment on or within architectural forms added to existing structures and which may involve a height exception which requires review by the Design Review Board shall be made in accordance with the submittal procedures adopted by that board and Section 11-18-8 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance.

4. A request which requires a Special Use Permit shall be made in accordance with the submittal procedures adopted by the Zoning Administrator and the Board of Adjustment and Sections 11-18-4, 11-18-5 and 11-18-6 of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance.

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B. Communication towers and associated facilities approved through a Special Use Permit must comply with all provisions of the Mesa City Code and any specific conditions designated by the Zoning Administrator and/or Board of Adjustment. Failure to comply with any conditions of approval of the Special Use Permit will be grounds for revocation pursuant to Section 11-18-6 of the Mesa City Code.

C. Small modifications to existing structures may be approved by the Planning Director or Zoning Administrator provided the modification is consistent with these Guidelines and with the Conditions of Approval for the Special Use Permit (if applicable). The use of a single tower by multiple carriers may be considered as a small modification unless conditions of the Special Use Permit specify otherwise.

D. Requests for building mounted equipment may be approved by the Planning Director provided the request is consistent with these Guidelines and in compliance with other applicable City requirements, and the height of the proposed application increases the height of the existing structure by no more than 10'. Building or roof mount applications which include structures which exceed the height of the existing structure by more than 10' shall require a Special Use Permit, or be approved as a height exception through the Design Review Board.

E. Requests for placement of communications equipment on or within an architectural form which requires an exception to a height limit and which requires review by the Design Review Board will be made in accordance with paragraph 11-13-2 (H). Such a building or structure approved as a height exception shall be consistent with the findings of the Design Review Board and any conditions of approval made by that Board.

IV. General Policies

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A. Initial plans for area-wide wireless communication systems (such as cellular or PCS systems) should be designed to utilize sites used for commercial, industrial, or public facility purposes. Plans which have multiple search areas which lie primarily in residential areas are discouraged.

B. New communications towers should be justified on an as-needed basis. Any possibility to place equipment at the required height on existing facilities within a given search radius should be explored. All reasonable efforts should be made to place antennas and other elevated appurtenances onto existing structures which already have the necessary height.

C. If an existing structure cannot be utilized to gain the necessary height, then exploration should be given to development of new structures which would be allowed as an exception to a height limit without being defined as a wholly separate commercial communications tower. This could include church steeples, athletic field light standards or other exceptions to height limits, including those reviewed by the Design Review Board under Paragraph 11-13-2 (H) of the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. (Figures 4-10)

D. Communications equipment mounted on existing structures will not be held to the locational aspects specified by items F, G and L below.

E. If items B and C above are not available to be utilized within a specified search radius, a new commercial communications tower may be considered. Singular monopoles are encouraged. Lattice-type structures or structures which require the use of guy wires are discouraged. Development of the tower should be done in such a manner so as to permit one or multiple other carriers to co-locate on the structure.

F. Commercial communications towers should be located away from residential properties by a minimum distance of two feet (2') for each one foot (1') of tower height. (Figure 1)

G. Commercial communications towers should avoid locations which are immediately adjacent to a public right-of-way. Towers should be set back from the right-of-way at least one foot (1') for each one foot (1') of tower height. (Figure 1)

H. The natural color of a galvanized metal tower may be used. Other colors proposed should be designed to minimize the contrast of the tower against the horizon. Structures designed in an architectural fashion should utilize colors and materials that are compatible with adjacent development.

I. The design of a communications tower and associated equipment shelters should permit the placement of future antennas and equipment even though the initial installation may not include these items.

J. The design of control buildings should be compatible with the adjacent buildings, and should not encroach into required building setbacks or landscape areas. Mechanical equipment should not be visible from beyond the boundaries of the site. (Figure 2)

K. Equipment and antennas on the tower should be mounted as close to the tower as possible.

L. Location of commercial communication towers.

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1. Towers should be placed primarily within properties zoned for commercial or industrial purposes, or placed on sites with existing public facilities.
2. If a property zoned for a residential or agriculture purpose is needed, the site should be of sufficient size so as to meet the setbacks suggested by these Guidelines. Sufficient area should be provided to allow multiple control buildings on the same site.
3. Location of stand alone communication towers within City park areas will not be permitted. However, consideration will be given to co-locating communications equipment on athletic field lighting poles provided the equipment does not interfere with the primary purposes of the lights and does not detract from the overall aesthetics of the facility. Action on these requests will be through the Parks and Recreation Board.

M. Building mounted or roof top mounted equipment should be placed in such a manner as to be compatible with the existing structure. There should be as little contrast as possible between the architecture of the structure and the communications equipment. Integration of the communications equipment into the architecture of a structure is encouraged.

N. Trees, landscaping and other screening devices should be used to help screen the tower from adjacent residences. Placement of the landscaping or screening devices should be done so as to minimize the view of the tower from residential sites. (Figure 3)

O. Radiation from the antennae shall not interfere with any existing communications sites.

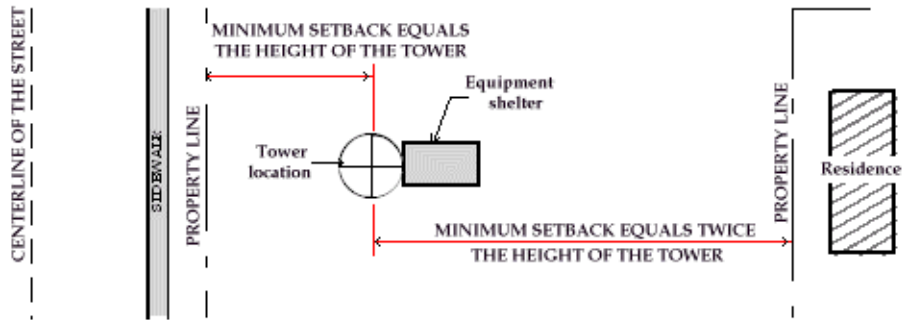
P. Small increases in the height of existing towers approved by Special Use Permit may be approved by the Planning Director on an administrative basis provided:

1. The increase in height is used to facilitate the co-location of another communications provider on the same structure; and
2. The increase in the height of the tower structure is 10' or less.

Q. Equipment placed on communications towers, mounted on or within buildings or structures, or placed on rooftops should be screened with architectural devices that are visibly opaque and provide a monolithic or sculptural appearance, but still permit the communications equipment and antennas to function.

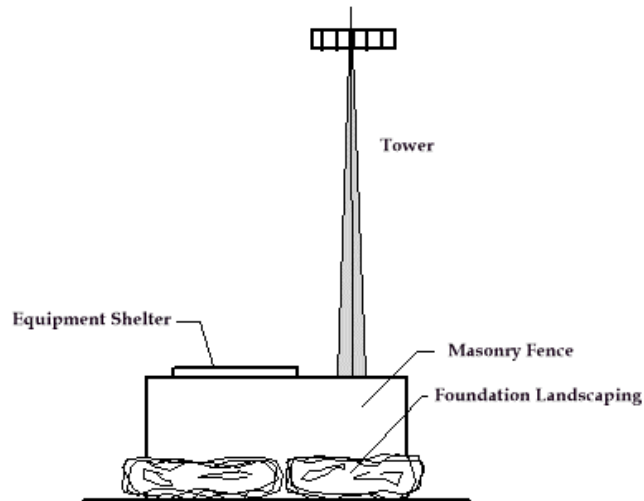
SETBACKS

Fig. 1



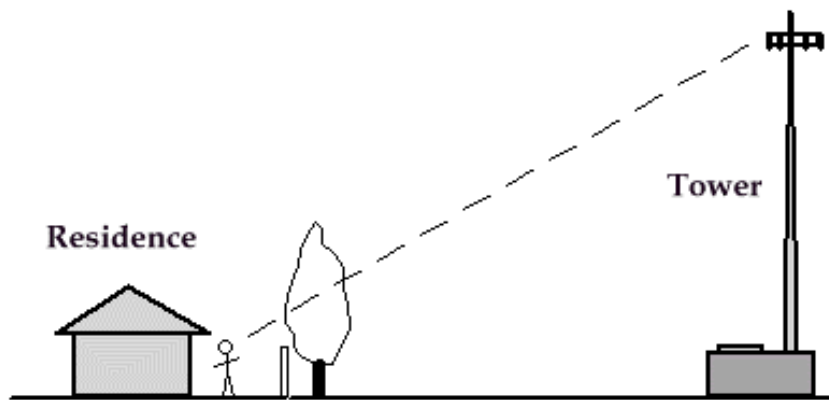
GROUND MOUNTED EQUIPMENT SCREEN

Fig. 2

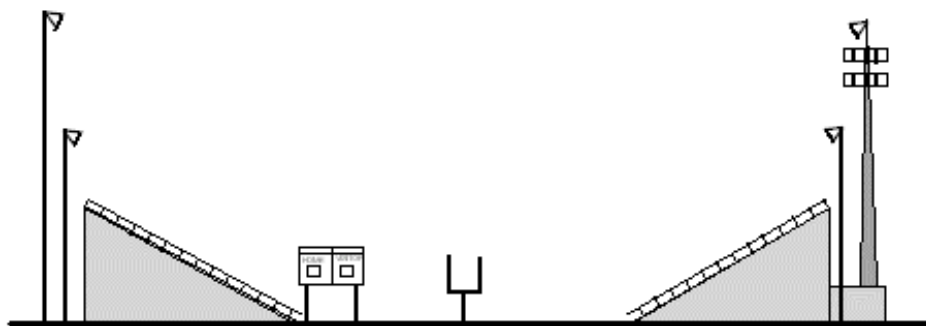


PERIMETER LANDSCAPE SCREENING

Fig. 3



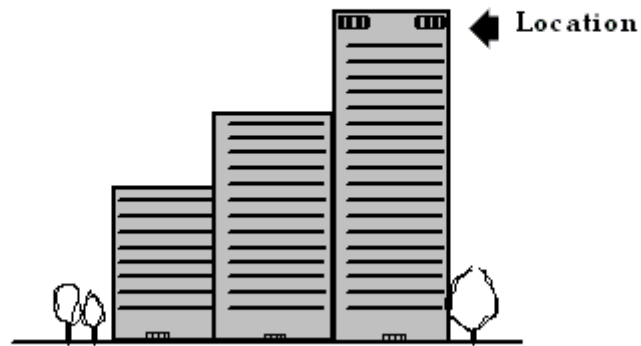
**The use of existing vertical elements
to mount communication equipment.**



ATHLETIC FIELD STANDARDS

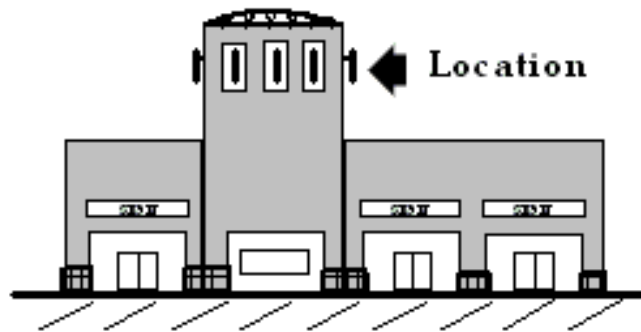
Fig. 4

**The use of existing vertical elements
to mount communication equipment.**



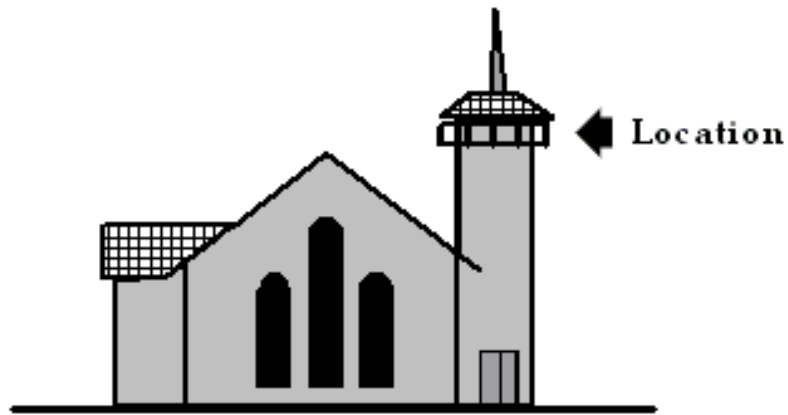
TALL BUILDINGS

Fig. 5



**COMMERCIAL
ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

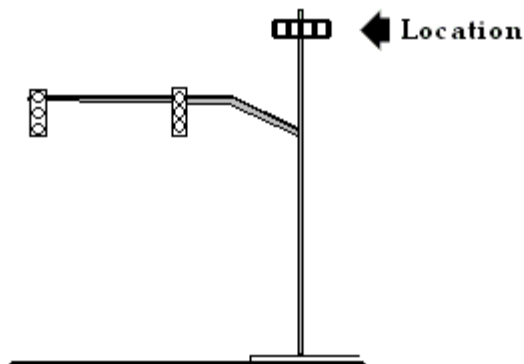
Fig. 6



CHURCH STEEPLES

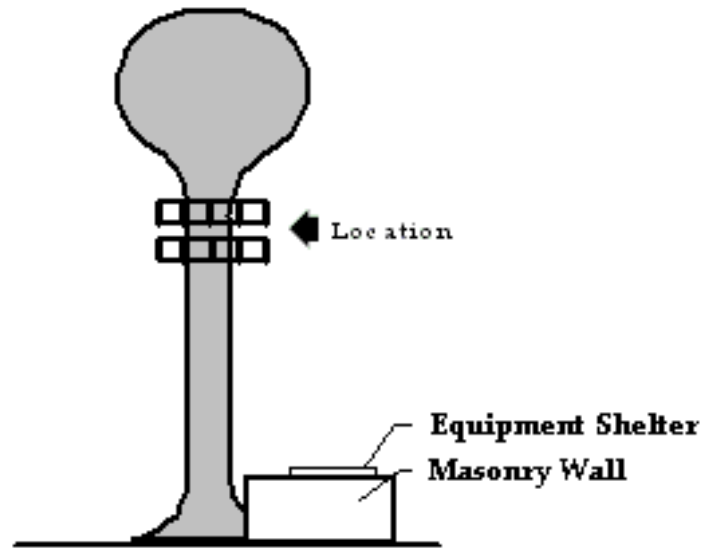
Fig. 7

**The use of existing vertical elements
to mount communication equipment.**



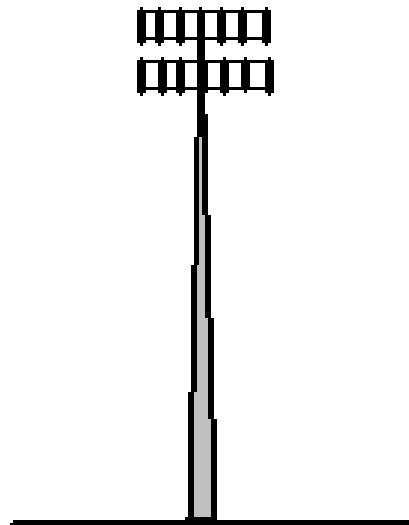
**STREET LIGHTS &
SIGNAL STANDARDS**

Fig. 8



WATER TOWER

Fig. 9

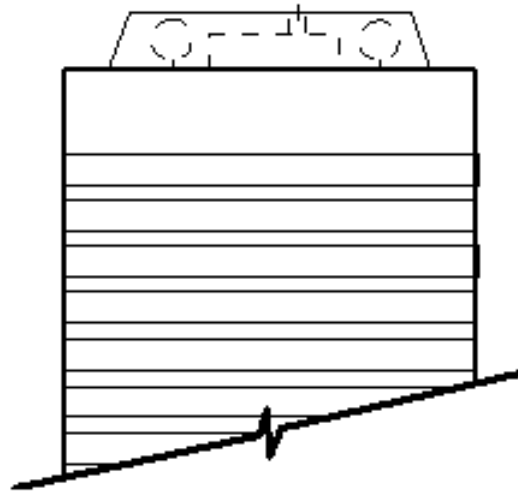


**EXISTING COMMUNICATION
MONOPOLES**

Fig. 10

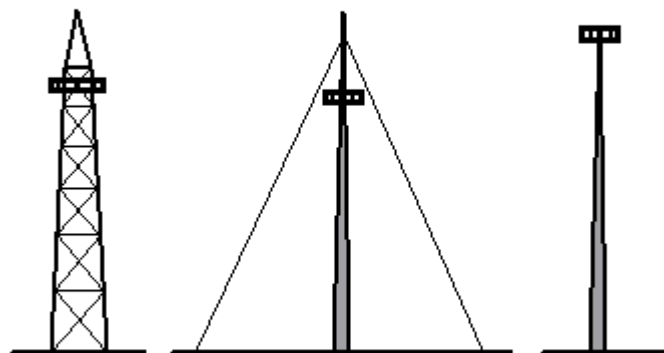
Screening of Rooftop Mounted Equipment

Fig. 11



Tower Design

Fig. 12



Lattice Tower
(Discouraged)

Guyed Tower
(Discouraged)

Monopole
(Suggested Alternative)