



POTOMAC  
CHAPTER  
AMERICAN  
SOCIETY OF  
LANDSCAPE  
ARCHITECTS

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2017-2018**

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October 4, 2018

Kathryn Roos  
P3 Manager  
District Department of Transportation  
Operations Administration  
55 M Street, SE, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20003  
[Kathryn.Roos@dc.gov](mailto:Kathryn.Roos@dc.gov)

Dear Ms. Roos:

The Potomac Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) recently became aware of the Small Cell Infrastructure Proposal for Washington, DC. Our association represents more than 400 landscape architects in the District, Northern Virginia, and suburban Maryland.

Our request is that this proposal be studied carefully and allow more time for public engagement through presentations and public hearings. This process may enable the public and other agencies to collaborate on solutions that lessen the impacts to city trees caused by the added infrastructure. Our understanding is that the 5G cells are not yet ready to be installed until carriers are ready to implement the technology. Thus, there should be no rush to implement any changes at this time.

There are several areas of concern regarding the impacts of this infrastructure on the city tree canopy. Aesthetically, the reduction and damage to tree canopies in one of the most beautiful, and walkable cities in the U.S. will have negative impacts not only to the urban fabric, but also harm property values. Several studies indicate healthy urban trees increase leasing rates and real estate values compared to similar areas without healthy trees. Environmentally, the District's stormwater, air quality and heat island reduction goals will also be severely impacted by damage to city tree canopy. Trees are known to contribute positively to environmental and public health. Research has shown a 60% reduction in particulates from car exhaust fumes on streets lined with trees. A single mature tree can absorb CO<sub>2</sub> at a rate of 21.6 KG/year and release enough oxygen back into the atmosphere to support 2 humans.

Trees reduce stormwater runoff by capturing and storing rainfall in the canopy and releasing water into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration. In addition, tree roots and leaf litter create soil conditions that promote the infiltration of rainwater into the soil and promote bio-diversity. For every 5% of tree cover in a community, stormwater runoff is reduced by 2%. Trees prevent stormwater runoff from reaching waterways with harmful chemicals collected from roads and sidewalks.

Trees have also been proven to have a positive impact on the reduction of skin cancer, asthma, hypertension, and other stress related illness by filtering out polluted air, reducing smog formation, providing shade from solar radiation, and providing an attractive, calming setting for recreation.

Other issues to be explored are the potential health risks of living or working near these small cells. We have read that exposure to 5G signals has been demonstrated to cause brain cancer and would like to learn more about how this potential risk would be mitigated.

Because these small cells need to be clear of physical barriers between each cell, the impact on the valuable tree canopy could be extreme. Unfortunately, there are many examples throughout the city where trees have been removed or improperly pruned resulting from poor coordination with utilities. Furthermore, cells placed underground may result in soil and root damage.

With so many unanswered questions and unaddressed concerns and 5G not ready to be rolled out, we ask that you allow more time to study this proposal and share it with the public, while looking for the best way to implement such a program in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen K. Cook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Stephen K. Cook, ASLA, LEED AP O+M

Senior Landscape Architect

Potomac Chapter ASLA President