

Get used to it: Cellular phone towers are likely here to stay

With more than 84 million wireless communication subscribers in the U.S., the proliferation of cellular phone towers seems here to stay.

According to the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, ads touting free long distance, free phones, free minute and other perks draw about 28,000 new customers every day. Wireless phones operate by transmitting low energy radio waves to a local antenna site, which connects the call.

The more customers they have, the more wireless companies need towers to transmit these waves. In Farmington Hills and other communities, gaps in wireless coverage mean interrupted service or an inability to receive a cellular phone in certain locations.

Before siting new antennas, however, wireless providers are required to meet with local officials and residents, and meet standards set by local ordinances. Hills city officials believe their cellular tower ordinance,

passed in July, 1997, is among the toughest in the country.

Wireless antennas must also meet standards for exposure to radio frequency, established by the Federal Communications Commission, and are subject to inspection and government regulations. Towers are generally between 100 and 200 feet high, and in some communities, are disguised in church steeples, clock towers, light poles or trees.

Communities have also reaped financial benefits from lease and siting agreements. Last year, Plymouth Township got a \$750,000 check tower, designed to mask a steel pole. Bloomfield Hills will collect more than \$1 million for a new community building, in return for allowing 140-foot towers on the property.

If the proposed lease agreement goes through, Farmington Hills stands to rake in more than \$450,000 over the life of a lease with Nextel, based on monthly fees of \$1,500. Nextel is being encouraged to find "co-

locators," or other companies willing to lease the site, which could boost revenues.

Residents in cities where towers are proposed often worry about exposure to radio waves, though the industry would argue those worries are groundless. While television towers emit five million watts, cellular towers transmit 100 watts or less, and are emitted less than 10 watts.

Also according to CTIA, very little of that power is directed downward and exposure diminishes with distance. Typically, ordinances require setbacks from residential property, as with the 500-foot standard set in Farmington Hills.

Additional information can be found at CTIA's website: www.wow.com.com.

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Discussion lead by:
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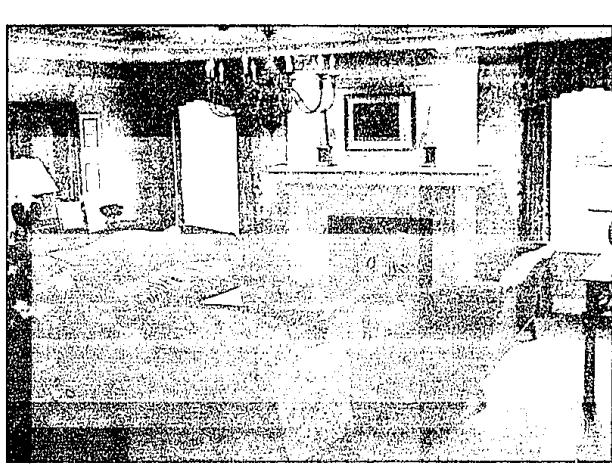
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