



801 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20576  
Suite 301  
Tel: 202 482-7200  
Fax: 202 482-7272  
www.ncpc.gov

### **Testimony of Dr. Patricia Elwood**

On behalf of the National Capital Planning Commission  
At the March 5, 2001 Zoning Commission's Roundtable Discussion regarding  
Antennas, Antenna Towers, and Antenna Structures

Good evening Madam Chair and members of the Zoning Commission. For the record, I am Dr. Patricia Elwood, Vice-Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission, and Chairman of the Commission's Antenna Task Force. Our Antenna Task Force is a subgroup of the Commission that has researched the effects of antennas on federal interests, and has developed guidelines for our Commission to follow in the review of antenna proposals on federal property. I am pleased to be with you this evening to share the Commission's thoughts concerning ways to provide for expanding telecommunications services without compromising the beauty or safety of our Nation's Capital. The Commission believes that with careful and timely planning, the broad streets and public spaces, grand vistas, and clean building lines characteristic of our city can, and must, survive intact in this age of wireless telecommunications.

Through its role of reviewing projects proposed for federal land and buildings, the Commission has realized that telecommunications equipment, primarily antennas, antenna towers, and antenna structures, could greatly and adversely affect the appearance of the National Capital Region, including the District of Columbia. In 1988 the Commission established guidelines for the design and installation of antennas on federal property with the goal of protecting the skyline of the Nation's Capital and the appearance of the federal public lands from the unsightly intrusion of conspicuous antennas, towers, and support structures. The guidelines sought to accomplish this by regulating the size, location, and appearance of the antennas and their support structures, and by limiting the approval period to 5 or 10 years, to encourage a periodic re-examination of the continuing need for the antennas, given changing technology.

I would like to submit a copy of the Commission's Antenna Guidelines for the record. The remainder of my testimony will summarize the criteria for the design and location of antennas and antenna structures contained within these guidelines.

Our guidelines require all telecommunications facilities to be consistent with the policies in the Federal Elements of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, which specifically address the location and design of telecommunications facilities on federal properties. In addition, the guidelines require antennas, antenna towers and poles, and antenna support structures to be designed and installed in a manner that minimizes or

COMMISSION  
CASE NO. 01-027A  
ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO. 01-02  
EXHIBIT NO. 6

eliminates visual impacts on adjacent properties, including public rights-of-way, parklands, and nearby residential areas.

Rooftop antennas and support structures should be installed at the lowest possible elevation above the roofline, set back from the edge of the building a distance at least equal to the antenna's height above the roof, and screened as appropriate from public view. Ground level antennas and their support structures should be sited in locations that minimize impacts on public views, installed at the lowest possible elevation above grade, and screened as appropriate. Materials used in the construction of antennas, antenna towers, and antenna support structures should not be bright, shiny or reflective and should be of a color that blends with the building's materials and landscape. Commercial advertising is not allowed on antennas, antenna towers and poles, and antenna support structures. Signals, lights, and illumination are not permitted on antennas, antenna towers and poles, and antenna support structures, unless required by the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Aviation Administration, or other federal government agency.

We are now in the process of updating our antenna guidelines, much as you are, to ensure that we keep pace with this rapidly evolving technology, and at the same time protect the federal interests that we are responsible for. The Commission believes that the responsibility for preserving the beauty of the Nation's Capital is shared between the local and federal governments. We would therefore be happy to work with the Zoning Commission in this effort to ensure the development of compatible regulations. We will solicit your comments on the proposed revisions to our Antenna Guidelines, and we look forward to providing comments on your proposals as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you this evening.