

Position statement on behalf of Friends pertaining to the proposed AT&T facility on top of the Short Hills.

The County website (<https://www.loudoun.gov/index.aspx?nid=1443>) states: "rural land conservation is critical to preserving a sufficient supply of the land and water that is needed for farming. Protecting the integrity of the rural landscape also preserves essential historic resources, habitat for wildlife, and safeguards scenic views and recreation opportunities." We, the Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains positively agree with this policy.

In The Revised General Plan, Chapter 7, Rural Economy Policies, Policies 2 and 3, and repeated on Page 4 of the November 25, 2015 memorandum from the Department of Planning and Zoning: "Compatibility: The policies: of the Revised General Plan support the establishment of business uses in the Rural Policy Area that are compatible in scale, use, and intensity with the dominant rural land use pattern, preserve the rural character of the landscape, and promote opportunities for the expansion of the County's rural economic as well as environmental goals,

In fact, the proposed facility is completely out of character and scale with the surrounding countryside. The proposed footprint is the size of about three football fields. We, FBRM, urge the Board of Supervisors to consider the following the facts:

There are no such facilities of nearly that magnitude in this pastoral area. It is located in the area and view shed of farms, wineries and residences on large lots. The area is known for its natural beauty, rolling hills, the Appalachian Trail, at least 6 vineyards, several farm to table restaurants, rafting and canoe trips on the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers. This is the character of the surrounding area. In addition, they do not pay property taxes, so they do not contribute to the rural economy.

Please stick to this stated policy plan, it's a good one.

In addition to the government's conservation policy, private land owners have made enormous contributions to conserving our valuable rural resources. For example, the Leggett family donated 1,000 acres for a state park directly across from the proposed AT&T site. Other land owners along the Blue Ridge and Short Hills have placed development restrictions on about 14,000 acres. (The total preserved land in the County is more than 65,000 acres, representing almost 20% of Loudoun's land, all this according the website).

Let me explain how this program works: Typically the land owner gives up in perpetuity their right to develop residential lots at the typical density (AR-1 is 1 residential building lot per 5 acres) in exchange for deed restrictions that restrict subdivision to typically to 50 to 100 acres (along with other environmentally friendly constraints, including protection of the stream banks, size and number of buildings, protection of public view sheds, commercial activities, etc.). These "Deeds of Gift of Easements" are held by Land Trusts that are responsible for enforcing these agreements. The state compensates the owners for 40% of their loss in value in exchange for the perpetual easement.

The AT&T property is in the Mountainside overlay district. According to the 1993 revised Zoning Ordinance (Section 4-1601) The Purpose and Intent of the Mountainside Development Overlay District is to regulate land use and development on the mountainsides of the County, in such a manner as to provide for low density residential development in remote areas and to: (1) assure mountainside development will not result in substantial damage to significant natural resource areas, wildlife habitats or native vegetation areas; (etc., and (7) implement the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. I believe that the proposed AT&T facility fails this test.

Sidebar: I noticed in the public tax assessment records, the fair market value of the property, this entire 140 acre site with apparently considerable underground improvements, is zero with no property taxes noted as having been paid or billed. Apparently the AT&T site provides no real estate tax revenue to the county for this facility. Meantime the area residences and businesses, adhering to the rural economic development policy, contributing to the rural atmosphere encouraged in the comprehensive plan, provide considerable property and sales tax revenue to the county.

We believe that this AT&T proposal needs additional scrutiny and soul searching by our representatives before allowing such a use in this protected mountainous rural area of the county.