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Subject: Opposition to the Atlas Cellular Tower Project
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To Whom It May Concern; Kittitas County Community Development,

In the middle of August, I learned that Kittitas County had received an application from Atlas Tower 1 LLC to build a 100ft tall cell phone tower off Manastash Road at Blazing Sky Lane on the rural property of Victor Strand that is zoned as residential. As my family lives very near this location, I have a deep investment in this project for multiple reasons, and am writing to express my opposition to this tower.

While reading Atlas' general description of the site in their SEPA Environmental Checklist, under B: Environmental Elements, 1: Earth- bullet point A, they state it will provide critical wireless coverage to the surrounding area. It was surprising to me that they would say the coverage is critical, as it is not only not critical, but it is indeed not even deemed as essential by the county's own standards laid out in the 2021 Comprehensive Plan under Utilities, Section 6:1- Introduction: "As defined by the WUTC, some utilities are considered a critical service, namely electricity and standard telephone, and must be provided "upon demand." Per definition, standard telephone service is a "landline phone service", not cell phone service. It is not a critical service that has to be provided, but a luxury service that should not be expected if it is not the right area to build a tower.

Whether this is the correct location to build a 100ft tall cell phone tower should never have come into question or consideration. Per Atlas' Project Narrative, they state under Wireless Telecommunications Facility Characteristic on page 2: Visual Effect- "We strive to design our facilities and locate parcels that create the least amount of community disturbance. The surrounding area is largely rural with low density residential zones nearby. The proposed site is chosen to maximize visual aesthetic and distance from residential homes." This can also again be found in the Project Narrative on page 5, bullet point E: #12: "E. The proposed use will ensure compatibility with existing neighboring land uses. The surrounding area is largely rural with low density residential zones nearby. The proposed site is chosen to maximize

visual aesthetic and distance from residential homes.” There is nothing about a 100ft tall galvanized cell phone tower (per Atlas’ site plan) directly off one the main roads and thorough fairs in west Ellensburg that won’t create a community disturbance. This is an area of beautiful ridgelines on Manastash Ridge, much of which is public lands for people to enjoy and recreate on because of its beauty. To say this site was chosen to maximize visual aesthetics is false, and not shocking from a company based out of Colorado who most likely hasn’t even visited the site in person.

Many people who have moved out to this area have chosen it due to it being rural, and wanting to get away from urban areas that are characterized by city features such as 100ft tall galvanized cell phone towers. To build one in an area that is strictly zoned as agricultural and residential is 100% not in keeping with existing neighboring land uses, and shows that Atlas is not committed to their promise of maximizing visual aesthetics and distance from residential homes. A 100ft tall tower can easily be seen in all directions for miles as the valley floor is flat, with no direct hills to block it. A simple search on Kittitas Compas shows there is in fact a house directly to the south of the proposed tower location, which will not only detract from the visual aesthetics of the area for the owners, but also lower its property value, as will it do for many neighboring homes. Historically, homes near cell phone towers or large power lines have reduced values compared to homes that are not near those things, which leads me to question if the county is following their own comprehensive plan to keep the area rural.

In the 2021 Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, Section 8.4: Rural Lands, bullet point 8.4.1: Introduction, it states, “Kittitas County residents, through an extensive public involvement process in 2012, provided descriptions of “rural” that they wish to preserve. Such descriptions include many of the conclusions presented by scientific research including, “natural open spaces and streams,” “forests,” “recreational opportunities and spaces,” “agriculture lands and activities,” “mountain views,” and “development away from urban areas.” These descriptions capture the essence of “rural character” in Kittitas County, and fall squarely within the broad definition in RCW 36.70A.030. “Rural character” in Kittitas County is predominantly a visual landscape of open spaces, mountains, forests, and farms and the activities which preserve such features.” The citizens of Kittitas County have spoken and made clear what their expectation is for our rural areas, and the tower Atlas plans to build does not fit with this expectation whatsoever. It will detract from the view of our natural open spaces, it will detract from our agriculture lands as it takes away the feel of our culture of farming and introduces a very urban and commercial aspect, it will detract from our mountain views as it will be built directly in front of Manastash Ridge, and it is the exact opposite of “development away from urban areas”.

Under the Growth Management Act of Washington State, the legislature recognizes the importance of rural lands and rural character to Washington’s people. It states in RCW 36.70A.030, Definitions: bullet point (23), “Rural character” refers to the patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan.” As I have laid out in the previous paragraph, Kittitas County’s 2021 Comprehensive Plan clearly shows the cell tower Atlas is requesting to construct is in no way in keeping with the pattern of land use. This can also be backed by looking at the zoning of the area on Kittitas Compas

which shows it to be Rural Working Land Use (Agriculture 20 Zoning), and Rural Residential Land Use (Residential 11). With evidence from multiple sources to prove what our rural land is and should remain, I can easily say the proposed use by Atlas Tower 1 LLC does not ensure compatibility with existing neighborhood land uses. They state in the Project Narrative, G, bullet point (ii) that they will maintain the “rural character” of our area, but that cannot be done with what they are proposing to build. It is shocking, wrong, and incorrect for the company to say in the Project Narrative under #12, bullet point G that their cell phone tower is consistent with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan, including the policies of Chapter 8, Rural and Resource Lands.

For a company that says they will not impede on the rural character of this location of Kittitas County, it's inexcusable for them to not know there is an irrigation ditch bordering the proposed tower site. If they knew the agricultural background of our county, and knew the area, they would know there was water immediately next to it. However, they marked “No” on their SEPA Environmental Checklist as to whether there was any surface water body on or in the immediate vicinity of the site under 3: Water, bullet point a: Surface Water, #1. There is also a 100 year floodplain on the north side of the road, just opposite the build site. Because of this, the tower is required to be built a certain number of feet away from it, which they have made clear they are unaware of. When asked under 3: Water, bullet point a: Surface Water, #6 if the proposal lies within a 100 year floodplain, they marked “Unknown.” This is simple information anyone in the public can access through Kittitas Compass, but they have once again failed to do their research on this beautiful area we call home.

When looking at Kittitas County's 2021 Comprehensive Plan, it is plainly stated in 7: Capital Facilities and Utilities, 7.1.1 Goals and Objectives, #11- “Utility structures such as telephone exchange buildings, telecommunications towers, transformers stations, sewage treatment plants, and solid waste facilities should adjoin nonresidential uses wherever possible. Mitigation measures to minimize scenic impacts should be required.” While this is stated for Snoqualmie Pass, there is every reason that it should apply to the rest of the county as well. The land owner's property the tower is proposed to be built on is zoned residential, as is the property directly to the north and south of it, and many other lots around it, leading to a full intrusion of residential use. Atlas has done nothing to try to minimize scenic impacts, in fact putting the tower squarely in the view of the house in close proximity to the south of it.

While reading Atlas' site plan on page Z-3, it shows the cell tower to remain a galvanized color unless directed otherwise by Kittitas County. If they were true to their word about maximizing visual aesthetics, they would understand that galvanized is in keeping with an industrial or commercial area, not the rural country. A company that is invested in doing its best for the community would know that ours is one of natural tones- tans or light browns for example. When one looks at Manastash Ridge, it is easy to see a hardened steel color would not blend in, but care to learn this was not taken. They also state in their site plan on page Z-4 that the 50'x50' fence they plan to construct around the tower and electrical facilities at the bottom will be chain link coated in black vinyl. Again, this is in keeping with an industrial or commercial area, not one found in an area blanketed by farmland and family homesteads. Out of any color that could be chosen, black is possibly one of the worst. As anyone who lives out

here knows, black things get covered in dirt and dust that is blown in our famous Ellensburg winds, leaving them sticking out like a sore thumb once they are coated in it. A brown or tan would much better hide the dirt that comes with rural lands and farming, and better yet, wood reinforced with steel poles on the back side where the public can't see them. It is easy to look around our area and view beautiful wooden barns that grace our rural landscape, but not black vinyl coated chain link fencing. If there is any attempt to keep the area rural and visually appealing, Atlas should know this and would have selected wood.

In closing, I leave the county with their own words. "One of the main attractions of the rural residential lifestyle is the low intensity of development and the corresponding sense of a slower pace of living. Part of what creates that attraction is the rural-level facilities and services. This Comprehensive Plan supports and preserves this rural lifestyle by limiting service levels to those historically provided in the County's rural areas. Residents should expect County services, such as road maintenance and emergency responses to be limited and to decrease as the distance from a rural activity center or urban area increases." This can be located in the Kittitas County 2021 Comprehensive Plan under 8.4 Rural Lands, 8.4.1 Introduction. As Atlas will not preserve the rural lifestyle of our area if allowed to build their 100ft tall galvanized cell phone tower, I greatly urge the county to follow its own Comprehensive Plan, and reject their application.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter, and I eagerly await Kittitas County Community Development's decision.

Respectfully,

Candice Comfort