

Excellence by a Company

Virginia-based Invisible Towers LLC receives AGL's 2007 company award for its concealment solutions and product contributions to assist tower owners in meeting difficult siting challenges.

AGL's 2007 Towering Achievement Award "for excellence by a company providing services to the antenna-siting community" will be presented to Invisible Towers LLC of Waterford, VA (principals Tim Dennis, Van Thompson and Mark Faris) at PCIA's Wireless Infrastructure Show in Orlando, FL.

Nominations praised Invisible Towers for two sites in the Sterling, VA, area. Cascades, a planned community of 6,000 homes, had sparse wireless coverage, and wireless carriers endured subscriber dissatisfaction for years. Multiple proposals to build a 190-foot lattice tower or monopole at a fire station failed to overcome opposition. Invisible Towers developed a proposal with two, shorter, disguised towers, that won overwhelming support from the community, municipal regulators and elected officials. The "Lowe's Island" site is a 110-foot clock tower built as the focal point of a shopping center expansion. The "Cascades Safety Center" is a 100-foot "hose tower" designed to match the adjoining firehouse.

John L. Chellman, senior account executive, USA Telecommunications, Springfield, VA (affiliated with Cingular Wireless/AT&T), noted that besides the designs, Invisible Towers undertook an extensive community outreach program. The company hosted public meetings, advertised in homeowners' association newsletters and contributed several informative articles to those newsletters, all to demonstrate that "Not all cell towers are the same."

Invisible Towers also used an innovative online petition to enable project supporters to register and send an email

of support to elected officials.

Barbara Pivec, owner of Atlantic Site Acquisition, Queenstown, MD, said another Invisible Towers project was "One winning tower that constitutes the complete perfection of hard work, perseverance, communication and just plain doing it the right way."

In 1992, Cellular One/SBC issued a search ring for Oakton, VA. The area includes the Difficult Run Watershed in

Eventually, major site-acquisition firms refused to accept search rings for the location because of the apparent futility.

Over a period of years, Invisible Towers built a relationship with a church to develop a siting plan for a 100-foot "monopine" tower acceptable to the church and the host community. The plan focused on the appearance of the branches, pole, fence, grading and landscaping, and assured that hardware and equipment would be hidden.

Community outreach and work with the county regulatory staff led to unanimous approval by the county board of supervisors. Its chairperson noted that Invisible Towers set a new kind of siting record for the county: It was the first time they had approved a tower without opposition.

When completed, the tree pole went into service with all five major carriers serving that area under contract.

As referenced in AGL's 2007 site concealment issue ("Too Be or Not to Be—Seen, That Is," AGL July 2007), Invisible Towers has also been in the vanguard of developing new materials for tower camouflage. The company is deploying tower wraps that camouflage new or existing towers through the use of disruptive, or fractal, coloring. The pixilated fractal patterns are printed on film with a proprietary pattern and can be used to blend the tower into the site's background. The tower wrap

is available in several colors, and can be purposed for either blending in with the sky, for isolated towers, or forest blends to visually meld a tower with surrounding trees and undergrowth.



Invisible Towers' projects employ a number of camouflage solutions designed to engage community support for antenna sites.

Fairfax County and a residential community with homes worth up to \$3 million. The area also includes parks and historical assets. Carriers tried unsuccessfully for 15 years to develop a site in the area.