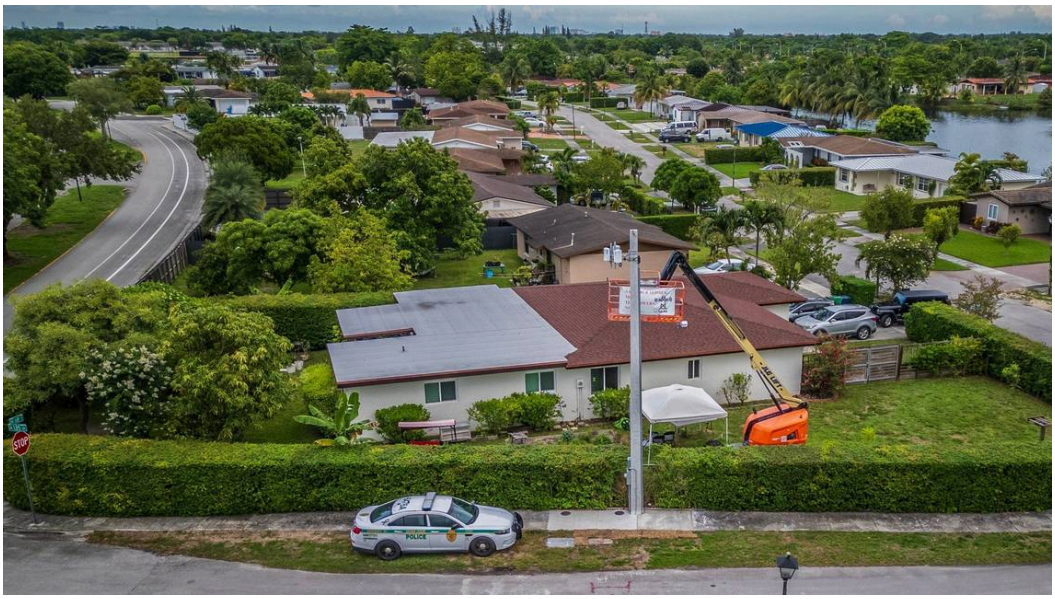
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KENDALL

5G towers are popping up in Kendall — and residents are not happy about it

BY **JOANNE HANER**
JULY 19, 2024 5:00 AM | 2



A Miami-Dade Police patrol is seen next to a cell tower in Kendall on Friday, July 5, 2024. Residents are concerned over 5G towers popping up in Kendall neighborhoods. PEDRO PORTAL *pportal@miamiherald.com*

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When Lissette Monzon came home on April 1, she found a pamphlet on the front door of the Kendale Lakes house where she has lived for 10 years. The notice from Crown Castle, a telecommunications company, mentioned something about infrastructure updates to her neighborhood.

By the end of the next day, a 35-foot cement pole had gone up on a sidewalk mere inches from her backyard.

The small cell towers, which are smaller than traditional cell towers, are intended to increase connectivity and enhance wireless coverage in the surrounding area. According to a Crown Castle spokesperson, the company has over 2,000 existing small cell towers in Miami-Dade, with permits for 166 new towers in the Kendall area. Crown Castle received permits from the state back in 2019 and began construction in Kendall in 2023.

Monzon and other Kendall residents have been battling the construction of the towers for months, saying they worry about the potential health risks and effect on property values. While Crown Castle's website promises to "involve your local community and government leaders in every step of the process — ensuring that your unique needs are met, and that you can continue to live life the way you've come to expect for many years to come," residents don't feel as though that's been the case.

State legislation says that local government officials may not regulate the installation of the towers on public rights-of-way, meaning that the county can take limited action when it comes to the construction of the towers. The only tangible part of the construction the county is allowed to weigh in on is compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, according to District 7 Miami-Dade County Commissioner Raquel Regalado, who has been outspoken about the need for more transparency surrounding the towers.

"The neighbors, with good reason, are up in arms about these things just popping up. They're not in character with the neighborhood, they're very intrusive, they're very near homes," Regalado told the Miami Herald.



A group of residents concerned over 5G towers popping up in Kendall neighborhoods poses next to a pole behind a house at 11495 SW 101 Terrace on Friday, July 5, 2024. Pedro Portal *pportal@miamiherald.com*

Crown Castle said the locations for the 5G towers are determined by wireless carriers and mobile phone companies they work with. Crown Castle added that it works with those companies in areas within their networks that need increased coverage or capacity, including the Kendall area.

"Since 2022, Crown Castle has continuously met with County Commissioners, other elected officials who represent the community and Miami-Dade County Public Works to discuss the Kendall area project," Crown Castle told the Herald. "In

addition, Crown provided informational materials (in English and Spanish) to residents in the area, including contact information for anyone with questions. Crown Castle continues to engage with various homeowner association groups and respond to community inquiries."



A group of residents concerned over 5G towers popping up in Kendall neighborhoods poses next to a pole next behind a house at 11495 SW 101 Terrace on Friday, July 5, 2024. Pedro Portal *pportal@miamiherald.com*

BATTLE OF THE BOOMS

On June 2, community members gathered around Monzon's house and the newly constructed 5G pole to protest the construction. Monzon acquired a piece of construction equipment with a lift and a platform, known as an aerial boom lift, for the event and kept it on her property afterward.

On June 18, workers returned to install an antenna at the top of the tower with their own boom lift, clashing with the lift on Monzon's property, which they said was in their way. When Monzon refused to move, police threatened to arrest her and she ultimately complied.

5G small cell poles are going up in Kendall residential areas. Residents are upset with the lack of notice and communication.

Community members like Monzon say there has been a lack of communication from Crown Castle and the county with the residents affected by the towers. Besides the door hanger she received, Monzon says she never had any notice about the construction that would shortly ensue near her home. Through a public records request, she was able to find permit requests for the tower construction dating back to 2022.

“Our commissioners, basically, they’re able to say they wash their hands of this because of the way that the [legislation] is written, and it does remove local authority,” she said. “But you know what? They knew this was coming for years.”

Silvia Gutierrez, 58, lives in the Glen Cove neighborhood of Kendall. One of the poles went up about three houses down from her in February. Since the area has underground wiring, she says the 5G towers are an eyesore and further stick out in the community.

“[Crown Castle] makes the claim that they involve the community every step of the way. There is zero involvement,” Gutierrez said. “And that’s very frustrating.”

At least three small cell towers have gone up in the Glen Cove area so far. According to Gutierrez, residents have started grassroots efforts to gather information about the poles and contact their local elected officials.

“I think it’s unbelievable that inside your own neighborhood, these types of installations can take place with no regard to aesthetics, to better placement opportunities,” she said.

Some residents say they have concerns about the warning labels on the 5G poles. A node box placed at eye level, for example, contains a warning sticker about Chromium, a chemical compound linked to birth defects, reproductive harm and cancer.

In addition to the eye-level sticker, the towers have two other signs warning about radio frequency waves that are posted about 10 feet and 20 feet above the ground. Some residents have complained that those stickers are too small to act as a real warning.

Crown Castle told the Herald that there are no known health hazards from exposure to radio frequency emissions within the established Federal Communications Commission guidelines, which it follows.

At a June 11 county meeting, Regalado, the District 7 county commissioner, co-sponsored an item that would create an online platform and email system for residents to view and be notified of permit applications, allowing residents to have more advance notice for construction of things like 5G cell towers. Regalado and other officials in the county are also involved in conversations at the state level to find workarounds to the legislation.

Those conversations have resulted in a variety of concessions from Crown Castle, according to Regalado. Most notably, Crown Castle has agreed to change the manufacturer of the node box. Until recently, the part had been manufactured in California, which has strict laws that required the warning sticker.



View of a 5G antenna next to the Alper JCC Miami located at 11155 SW 112th Ave., Miami, as residents that are concerned over the 5G towers with popping up in Kendall neighborhoods are protesting and asking the county to stop the installation, on Friday, July 5, 2024. Pedro Portal *pportal@miamiherald.com*

Gutierrez and other Kendall residents hope to continue garnering attention from local and state officials and ultimately work toward removing the towers altogether.

“If the county really wants to help the residents, it really needs to take this on in a very proactive approach,” Gutierrez said.

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ALL COMMENTS 2 NEWEST

CO **Commentary** JULY 19, 2024

These small towers throw off a lot of radiation. My daughter lived in a major city and had a small tower like this attached to her apartment building right above her bedroom window. We had the radiation measured, and it was off the chart. We ended up buying her a special kind of bedroom curtain to block the radiation rays. As soon as her lease ended, she fled.

REPLY 0

U2 **User 2748984** JULY 19, 2024

Residents of Kendall should remember State Legislatures who voted to take away local authority on these kinds of issues. Bravo to Mazzon for taking stand. This tower is definitely any eye sore. Why they have to install these towers where they already have FPL poles which could have accommodate those cells. Utility companies have too much influence over our elected officials and deep pockets with taxpayers hard earned dollars

REPLY 2

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