

**Department of Community and Economic Development
Planning Division
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY/CODE INTERPRETATION**

**MUNICIPAL
CODE SECTIONS:**

RMC 4-4-040D.1.a, RMC 4-4-040 D.2.a, RMC 4-4-040D.2.c,
RMC 4-4-040D.5, RMC 4-4-040D.6, and RMC 4-4-040D.7

REFERENCE:

N/A

SUBJECT:

Consistency of fence regulations in residential zones

BACKGROUND:

Historically, all residential fences were subject to the same height limits and standards. Several years ago, City code was amended to provide for different standards for residential fencing based on zone. This has proven to be overly complex for staff to consistently implement/enforce and there appears to be no necessity for the standards variations.

RMC 4-4-040 D.1.a addresses fence height limitations in front yard setbacks for interior residential lots. The fence height specified for the R-10 and R-14 zones in front yards is a maximum of 36 inches; for all other residential uses fences in front yard setbacks this height may be a maximum of 48 inches.

RMC 4-4-040D.2.a addresses fence heights in front yard setbacks for residential corner lots. Front yard fences in corner lots in the R-10 and R-14 zones may be a maximum of 36 inches in height. Fence height in the front yard setback for all other residential uses may be a maximum of 42 inches within any part of the clear vision area; or, 48 inches within any part of the front yard when located outside of the clear vision area.

RMC 4-4-040D.2.c addresses fence heights for corner lots with side yards abutting a street. The fence height in the R-10 and R-14 zones for the first 15 feet of the fencing as measured from the front façade may be a maximum, of 36 inches; the remainder of the fence may be a maximum of 72 inches in height. Fences, walls, and hedges in side yard setbacks along a street for all other residential uses may be a maximum of 42 inches and 48 inches in height elsewhere.

RMC 4-4-040D.5 specifies locations of fences within the R-10 and R-14 zones. Such fences must be located a minimum of one foot from the parcel line to allow for plantings. No such requirement is specified for any other residential use.

RMC 4-4-040D.6 specifies fencing materials which may be used in the R-10 and R-14 zones. Fences may be constructed of wood, iron, or masonry. Solid fences and chain link are prohibited. No such requirements are specified for any other residential uses.

RMC 4-4-040D.7 specifies special design features for fences in the R-10 and R-14 zones. Front yard fences must be decorative and help define the semi-private area in the front of the home. The fence must provide a balance of solid surfaces and voids, such as picket fences or Kentucky rail style fences. No such requirement is specified for any other residential uses.

Current fence regulations for the R-10 and R-14 zones can create an odd mixture of fence heights on individual lots, particularly for corner lots in those zones. Additionally, inequities are evident in the fence regulations for the R-10 and R-14 zones in comparison with fence regulations for all other zones. A case can also be made that fence regulations in the R-10 and R-14 zones are far more restrictive than fence regulations for all other residential uses.

JUSTIFICATION: Residential fences are intended to provide privacy and security to the homeowner. In providing these benefits fences should be aesthetically pleasing to the surrounding community and not be a hazard to vehicular traffic on surrounding streets by impeding the views through clear vision areas. Removing the fence regulations which are specifically pertinent to the R-10 and R-14 zones would maintain the intended purpose of signs as well as providing equal aesthetic and traffic considerations for all residential zones.

DECISION: Fence regulations contained in the Renton Municipal Code should be consistent for residential uses in all zones. Fences in the R-10 and R-14 zones shall be regulated in the same manner as fences for all other residential uses; fence heights, location, etc.

**ADMINISTRATOR/
PLANNING DIRECTOR
APPROVAL:**

C. E. "Chip" Vincent

DATE: May 28, 2013

**APPEAL
PROCESS:** To appeal this determination, a written appeal--accompanied by the required filing fee--must be filed with the City's Hearing Examiner (1055 South Grady Way, Renton, WA 98057, 425-430-6515) no more than 14 days from the date of this decision. Your submittal should explain the basis for the appeal. Section 4-8-110 of the Renton Municipal Code provides further information on the appeal process.

**CODE
AMENDMENTS
NEEDED TO**

IMPLEMENT

DETERMINATIONS: RMC 4-4-040D Standards for Residential Uses should be amended to read as shown on Attachment A.

Subsection 4-4-040D.1.a Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Height Limitations for Interior Lots, Front Yard Setbacks, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby amended to read as follows:

D. STANDARDS FOR RESIDENTIAL USES:

1. Height Limitations for Interior Lots:

- a. Front Yard Setbacks: Fences, walls or hedges a maximum of forty eight inches (48") in height may be allowed within the required front yard subject to these provisions, ~~except that in the R-10 or R-14 zone, fences in the front yard shall be a maximum of thirty six inches (36").~~

Subsection 4-4-040D.2.a Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Height Limitations for Corner Lots, Front Yard Setbacks, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby amended to read as follows:

2. Height Limitations for Corner Lots:

- a. Front Yard Setbacks: Fences, walls or hedges a maximum of forty two inches (42") in height may be allowed on any part of the clear vision area. Fences, walls, or hedges a maximum of forty eight inches (48") in height may be allowed within any part of the front yard setback when located outside of any clear vision area on said lot, ~~except that in the R-10 or R-14 zone, fences in the front yard shall be a maximum of thirty six inches (36").~~

Subsection 4-4-040D.2.c Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Height Limitations for Corner Lots, Side Lot Line Abutting a Street, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby amended to read as follows:

- c. Side Lot Line Abutting Street: Fences, walls or hedges a maximum of forty two inches (42") in height within any clear vision area and forty eight inches (48") in height elsewhere in the front yard setback, ~~except that in the R-10 and R-14 zones, the maximum height of the first fifteen feet (15') of the fencing as measured from the front facade shall be a maximum thirty six inches (36") in height.~~ The remainder of the fence or hedge shall be a maximum seventy two inches (72") in height.

Subsection 4-4-040D.5 Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Location of Fences in the R-10 and R-14 Zones, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby deleted:

~~5. Location of Fences in the R-10 and R-14 Zones: Fences shall be located a minimum of one foot (1') from the parcel line to allow for plantings.~~

Subsection 4-4-040D.5 Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Fencing Material in the R-10 and R-14 Zones, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby deleted:

~~6. Fencing Material in the R-10 and R-14 Zones: Fences shall be constructed of wood, simulated wood, iron, or masonry. Solid fences and chain link are prohibited.~~

Subsection 4-4-040D.5 Fences and Hedges, Standards for Residential Uses, Special Design Features for Front Yard Fences in the R-10 and R-14 Zones, of Chapter 4 (City-wide Property Development Standards) of Title IV (Development Regulations) is hereby deleted:

~~7. Special Design Features for Front Yard Fences in the R-10 and R-14 Zones: Front yard fences shall be decorative and help define the semi-private area in the front of the home. The fence shall provide a balance of solid surfaces and voids, such as picket fences or Kentucky rail style fences.~~