

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

**MUNICIPAL  
CODE SECTIONS:**

RMC 4-4-100E.4.a and RMC 4-4-100L.1.b, Size, Number and Height of Permanent Signs and Location, Permit, and Insurance Requirements for Signs Projecting into Setbacks or Right-of-Way.

**REFERENCE:**

RMC 4-4-100E.4.a states that freestanding signs for Churches, Apartments, Subdivisions, and Existing Legally Established Nonconforming Businesses within Residential Zones shall be no higher than 6 feet above grade and shall be no closer than 10 feet to any street right-of-way or 5 feet to any side property line. RMC 4-4-100L.1.b states that ground signs which are 6 feet or less in height may be installed within the front yard setback in the landscape strip.

**SUBJECT:**

Applicable setbacks for signs within residential zones.

**BACKGROUND:**

There is a conflict in the sign code. RMC 4-4-100E.4.a requires freestanding signs in residential zones to be no more than 6 feet in height and no closer than 10 feet to a street right-of-way and 5 feet from any side property line and RMC 4-4-100L.1.b permits ground signs with a height of 6 feet or less within the landscape strip of a front yard setback. The requirement for a 10-foot setback from the street right-of-way is also impractical, as the minimum setback required in RMC 4-2-110A from a right-of-way for primary structures in many residential zones is also 10 feet. For consistency purposes, it makes sense to allow freestanding signs with a height of 6 feet or less to be located within the landscape strip and require that a 5-foot setback be measured from the property line and not from the edge of right-of-way, which is inconsistent with how setbacks are to be measured per RMC 4-11-190 Definitions S.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

Setbacks are intended to separate buildings from other structures, property lines, and streets. There is a conflict in the sign code with regard to the required setbacks for freestanding signs 6 feet or less in height. In addition, many residential zones require a 10-foot setback from the street property line, which conflicts with the 10-foot setback requirement for sign located in residential zones as specified in the sign code. Freestanding signs 6 feet or less in height should be allowed within the landscape strip provided a 5-foot setback is maintained from the property line.

**DECISION:** Revise the sign code regulations for signs located within residential zones to specify that a 5-foot setback should be measured from the property line and not the right-of-way boundary. Also revise the provisions allowing signs within setbacks to specify that signs within residential zones shall be permitted within the landscape strip, provided a 5-foot setback is maintained from the edge of pavement.

**ADMINISTRATOR  
APPROVAL:**

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C. E. "Chip" Vincent

**DATE:** April 15, 2014

**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:** Sections 4-4-100E.4.a and 4-4-100L.1.b of the Sign Regulations will need to be amended to read as shown:

**E. SIZE, NUMBER AND HEIGHT OF PERMANENT SIGNS:**

**a. Churches, Apartments, Subdivisions, and Existing Legally Established**

**Nonconforming Businesses within Residential Zones:** Churches, apartment buildings, subdivision developments, existing legally established nonconforming businesses within residential zones and similar occupancies located in residential and mixed-use zones may have two (2) on-premises identifying signs of not over thirty two (32) square feet in area on one (1) face. The signs may be illuminated but not animated, shall be for location identification only and shall display no copy, symbol or device other than that in keeping with the development. Freestanding signs shall be not higher than six feet (6') above any established grade and shall be no closer than ~~ten five feet (105')~~ ten five feet (105') to any street right-of-way or five feet (5') to any side property line.

**L. LOCATION, PERMIT, AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR SIGNS PROJECTING INTO  
SETBACKS OR RIGHT-OF-WAY: (Amd. Ord. 4832, 3-6-2000)**

**1. Maximum Sign Projection into Setback:**

a. Signs may project within a legal setback a maximum of six feet (6'). (Ord. 3719, 4-11-1983; Amd. Ord. 4720, 5-4-1998)

b. Ground signs located outside of Residential zones which are six feet (6') or less in height may be installed within the front yard setback in the landscape strip; provided, that the area described in subsection C6 of this Section is kept clear. Signs located within Residential zones may be located within the front yard setback in the landscape strip provided a minimum setback of 5 feet is maintained from the property line. (Ord. 4720, 5-4-1998)