

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

**MUNICIPAL  
CODE SECTIONS:**

RMC Section 4-3-100B3 and B5, Applicability of Design Regulations; RMC Section 4-3-100J Design Regulations, Signage; and RMC Section 4-4-100E5g, Additional Signs Permitted in Commercial and Industrial Zones; Motor Vehicle Dealership Over One Acre of Contiguous Ownership Located Outside of the Auto Mall

**REFERENCE:**

N/A

**SUBJECT:**

Determination regarding which of several conflicting sign-related code provisions apply in the case of an auto dealership located outside of the Auto Mall area.

**BACKGROUND:**

A sign industry representative who was having difficulty navigating the City's signage regulations contacted the City regarding the applicable rules to be applied to his commercially-zoned (CA) auto dealer customer. The City has placed its signage regulations in several different chapters of Title 4 of our Municipal Code (RMC).

RMC Section 4-4-100E5g, which is located within the City's sign regulations, permits auto dealers with a lot size of over one acre to have the following signs:

***4-4-100E5. Additional Signs Permitted in Commercial and Industrial Zones:*** Except in the City Sign Regulation Area, the following shall apply in all commercial and industrial zones:

***g. Motor Vehicle Dealership Over One Acre of Contiguous Ownership or Control Located Outside the Auto mall Area:***

***i. Wall Signs:*** Each motor vehicle dealership located outside the Automall area is allowed its appropriate wall or under marquee sign as stated in the Sign Code; and

***ii. Freestanding Signs:*** Each motor vehicle dealership located outside the Automall area is allowed:

*One freestanding, roof, ground, or projecting sign per street frontage not to exceed an area greater than one and one-half (1-1/2) square feet for each lineal foot of property frontage, up*

*to a maximum of one hundred fifty (150) square feet per sign face and a maximum of three hundred (300) square feet including all sign faces; or*

*One freestanding sign per street frontage not to exceed an area greater than one and one-half (1-1/2) square feet for each lineal foot of property frontage, up to a maximum of one hundred (100) square feet per sign face and a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet including all sign faces. In addition, each dealership is allowed a maximum of two (2) accessory ground signs per street frontage, each for a separate business activity located on the property which can reasonably be related to the primary business. These signs shall not exceed a height of ten feet (10') and a total sign area of twenty five (25) square feet if single faced or fifty (50) square feet including all sign faces. The accessory signs must also maintain a minimum twenty foot (20') setback and be no closer than one hundred fifty feet (150') to any other accessory ground sign. (Ord. 4707, 2-9-1998)*

However, RMC Section 4-3-100B5, Applicability of Urban Design Regulations, reads in part as follows:

*RMC 4-3-100B5. This Section shall also apply to all development in the Commercial Arterial (CA) Zone. For the purposes of the design regulations, the zone shall be in District 'D.'*

RMC Section 4-3-100J, the sign portion of the Design Regulations, limits signs in the CA Zone, and several other overlay areas, as follows:

**RMC 4-3-100J. SIGNAGE:**

***Intent:*** *To provide a means of identifying and advertising businesses; provide directional assistance; encourage signs that are both clear and of appropriate scale for the project; encourage quality signage that contributes to the character of the Urban Center and the Center Village; and create color and interest.*

***1. Minimum Standards for Districts 'C' and 'D':***

***a. Signage shall be an integral part of the design approach to the building.***

***b. Corporate logos and signs shall be sized appropriately for their location.***

*c. Prohibited signs include (see illustration, subsection J3a of this Section):*

*i. Pole signs;*

*ii. Roof signs;*

*iii. Back-lit signs with letters or graphics on a plastic sheet (can signs or illuminated cabinet signs). Exceptions: Back-lit logo signs less than ten (10) square feet are permitted as are signs with only the individual letters back-lit.*

*d. In mixed use and multi-use buildings, signage shall be coordinated with the overall building design.*

*e. Freestanding ground-related monument signs, with the exception of primary entry signs, shall be limited to five feet (5') above finished grade, including support structure. All such signs shall include decorative landscaping (ground cover and/or shrubs) to provide seasonal interest in the area surrounding the sign. Alternately, signage may incorporate stone, brick, or other decorative materials as approved by the Director.*

*f. Entry signs shall be limited to the name of the larger development.*

*2. Guidelines Applicable to Districts 'C' and 'D':*

*a. Alteration of trademarks notwithstanding, corporate signage should not be garish in color nor overly lit, although creative design, strong accent colors, and interesting surface materials and lighting techniques are encouraged.*

*b. Front-lit, ground-mounted monument signs are the preferred type of freestanding sign.*

*c. Blade type signs, proportional to the building facade on which they are mounted, are encouraged on pedestrian-oriented streets.*

**RMC Section 4-3-100B3, Applicability of Design Regulations, states in part:**

***RMC 4-3-100B3: "Where conflicts may be construed between the design regulations of this Section and other sections of the Renton Municipal Code, the regulations of this Section shall prevail."***

**JUSTIFICATION:** For consistency in implementation of sign regulations, a determination is needed regarding which of the conflicting code sections prevails. The conflict between the sign regulations and the design regulations is decided by RMC Section 4-3-100B3.

**DECISION:** An auto dealership located outside of the Auto Mall, but within the CA Zone, is subject to both the regular sign code restrictions of RMC 4-4-100 *and* the Design District regulations, including signage restrictions. The basic sign regulations of the Sign Code are applied first and then the Design District overlay regulations are applied on top of those. Conflicts resolved in favor of the more restrictive Design District regulations of Section 4-3-100J.

**PLANNING  
DIRECTOR  
APPROVAL**

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C.E. "Chip" Vincent

**DATE:** June 29, 2009

**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**

**DETERMINATION:** See Attachment A