



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
NEIGHBORHOODS, AND STRATEGIC  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

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**DATE:** September 12, 2007  
**TO:** Ray Giometti, Planning Commission Chair  
Members of the Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Erika Conkling, Senior Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **Docket- Center Downtown Code Amendment**

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**ISSUE:** How can the City simplify the regulations in effect for the downtown area?

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- Eliminate special development standards for the Downtown Core and develop a single set of standards for the entire Center Downtown (CD) zone.
- Amend the sign regulations for the downtown to be consistent with the District A Urban Center Design regulations.
- Simplify parking requirements for downtown.

**BACKGROUND:** Properties within the CD zoning designation are subject to a complex set of rules and regulations for development. Within the CD zone there are multiple overlays that affect zoning and development regulation: CD zone regulations, Downtown Core Overlay, Pedestrian District Overlay, City Center Sign Regulations, and Urban Design Regulations (District 'A'). Each layer of regulations covers a different geographical area. This patchwork of regulations is difficult to implement and enforce and gives rise to questions of fairness. Urban Center- Downtown policies in the Comprehensive Plan identify the need to plan for these different districts of Renton's downtown. It is important to review existing regulations in attempt to create a comprehensive set of regulations to effectively regulate downtown development according to adopted policy and Council direction.

*CD Zoning and Development Regulations-* This is the base zone in which the Downtown Core and Pedestrian District Overlays are applied. The land area currently mapped in the CD zone is the primary area subject to review.



## Development and Parking Standards Differences Within and Outside the Downtown Core

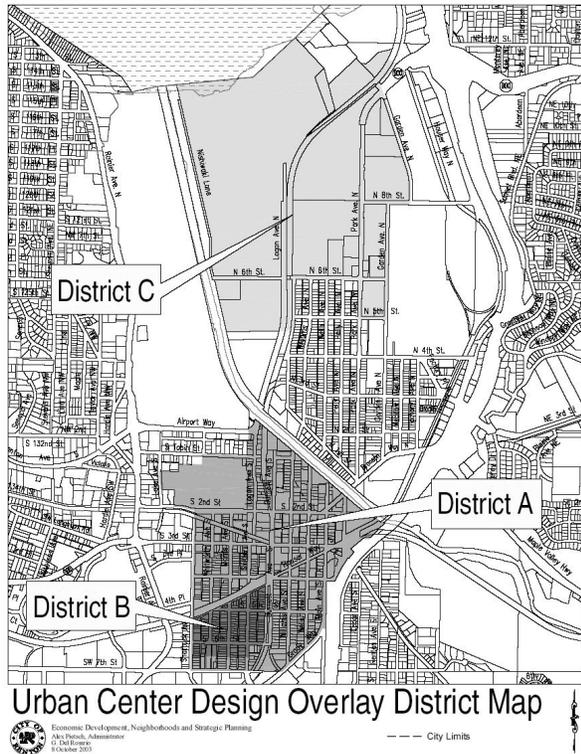
	Within Downtown Core	Outside of Downtown Core
<b>Development Standards</b>		
Lot Coverage	None	65% of lot area, or 75% if parking is within a structured garage
Minimum Front Yard	None	10 feet for the first 25 feet of height, and 15 feet for anything over 25 feet high
Minimum Side Yard on a Street	None	10 feet for the first 25 feet of height, and 15 feet for anything over 25 feet high
Minimum On-site Landscaping Width Along the Street Frontage	None	10 feet
Required parking location		If abutting an alley- parking must be in the rear with alley access
<b>Parking Standards</b>		
Bed and Breakfast houses		1 per room, not allowed in the required setback
Congregate Residences		1 per sleeping room, 1 for the proprietor and 1 for every 4 employees
Banks	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	Minimum is .4 per 1,000 square feet net floor area and Maximum is .5 per 1,000 square feet net floor area
Daycare, Adult Daycare	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	1 per employee and 2 loading spaces within 100 feet for every 25 clients
Motels	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	1 per guest room plus 2 for every 3 employees
Medical/Dental Office	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	.5 per 100 square feet net floor area
General Office	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	Minimum 3 per 1,000 square feet net floor area, Maximum 4.5 per 1,000 square feet net floor area
Eating and Drinking Establishments and Taverns	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	1 per 100 square feet net floor area
Retail Sales	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	Maximum .4 per 100 square feet net floor area

<b>Parking Standards, continued</b>		
	<b>Within Downtown Core</b>	<b>Outside of Downtown Core</b>
On Site Services, except: clothing, shoes sales and repair, furniture, hardware, household equipment, and  uncovered commercial areas	1 space per 1,000 square feet net floor area	Maximum .4 per 100 square feet net floor area .2 per 100 square feet net floor area  .05 per 100 square feet retail sales area, plus the amount required for the building
Detached dwellings		Minimum 2 per unit, tandem parking allowed. Maximum 4 vehicles on the lot unless in an enclosed building.
Attached dwellings	1 per unit	1.8 per 3 bedroom unit or larger 1.6 per 2 bedroom unit or larger 1.2 per 1 bedroom or studio unit
Attached dwellings for low income or elderly	1 per three units	(Not specified- reverts to attached dwelling standard above?)

*City Center Sign Regulations-* Much of the sign code is administered with a dual standard based on location inside or outside the “City Center.” The “City Center” designation includes a much larger area than the CD zone, but does not include the entire CD zone. There are many problems with the existing sign code. Plans are also underway for a downtown way-finding program. Any sign code changes should be coordinated with this program to ensure consistency between the plans that are underway and any future sign code changes. As a result, reworking of the sign code is a very large task best assigned its own work program. However, amendment of the “City Center” boundary to include the entire CD zone within it should be reviewed.



**Sign Regulation Boundary**



**Urban Design Regulations-** The entire CD zone is within the same Urban Design Regulation district (District ‘A’). There is no difference in standards based on location within the Downtown Core Overlay or the Pedestrian District Overlay. It is not necessary to review this section of code, unless there is serious consideration of integrating standards from elsewhere in the code to the Design Regulations for topics such as District ‘A’ does provide a useful boundary that can be used in other places in the code for the implementation of special regulations for the downtown area.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPLIANCE:** Review of the proposed changes highlights several key policy issues for further consideration.

One of the biggest changes proposed is to eliminate the distinction between lands inside and outside of the Downtown Core within the CD zone. At the current time, there are two different standards for development; the standards within the downtown core area demand a compact, urban form and the standards outside the core allow for a more suburban form of development. This is accomplished by different standards for parking, setbacks, lot coverage, etc. The Renton Comprehensive Plan clearly favors urban scale and urban form for the Center Downtown. Objective LU-NN, and supporting policies LU-211 and LU-214 direct the City to create a downtown that is consistent with the centers criteria in the Countywide Planning Policies and thus provides for urban form and capacity, as well as efficient land use. Policy LU-214 specifically notes that even in areas where the market is not ready to support urban style development, the City should plan for infill that will eventually achieve this form. If the City continues to permit suburban style infill, the downtown core will never convert into a true urban center, as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan and Countywide Planning Policies. As a result, Comprehensive Plan policies support changes to make the downtown area more urban in form and function.

Related to the issue of urban development is the issue of parking. Urban areas provide few opportunities for surface parking for individual buildings or sites. Instead, parking tends to be clustered and structured, with very few surface parking stalls, and some on-street parking. Comprehensive Plan Objective LU-SS for the Urban Center Downtown calls for efficient parking, with policies LU-235, LU-236, and LU-238 calling for structured parking, joint

parking arrangements, and a variety of alternatives to on-site parking arrangements. Reduced parking requirements would be consistent with this set of policies.

Many of the proposed changes will expand the current downtown core regulations to the entire CD zone, thus eliminating the need for a special downtown core designation. However, most of the regulations that apply “within the downtown core” read as “none.” Development regulations typically restrict the building envelope of the site, specifying limits on height, lot coverage, or setbacks. In the CD zone, those types of limits should be discouraged because they prevent the efficient utilization of the land, which is a key component of a successful urban environment. However, some standards are needed to ensure the development of a safe and pleasant environment. Urban Center- Downtown Objectives LU-VV and LU-WW and related policies direct the City to ensure high visual and physical quality in the CD zone. Likewise, the Community Design Element specifically identifies policies for creating attractive streetscapes, landscaping, signage and lighting. These policies should direct the development standards for the CD zone, which may include developing some new standards to ensure a high quality urban environment.

**CONCLUSION:** Changes to improve the development regulations affect the downtown would be an improvement over the status quo: permitting would be more efficient, regulations would encourage urban form and efficiency throughout the CD zone, and the changes would support adopted policies in the Comprehensive Plan.