

STATE BUILDING CODE INTERPRETATION NO. I-40-99

August 25, 1999

The following is offered in response to your request for interpretation of Section 507.2 of the 1999 State Building Code. Your questions seek clarification of the circumstances under which a building or buildings of limited area may be adjacent to, and on the same lot as, a building of unlimited area.

Question 1:

May several buildings be adjacent to the unlimited area building, provided the total length of all fire walls does not exceed 25 percent of the total perimeter of the unlimited area building, and all other criteria of the exception are met?

Answer 1:

No. The code is specific in the exception to Section 507.2 in the use of the singular in the phrase "facing another building on the same lot". The code relies on the provisions of Section 503 to limit the area of buildings which do not qualify as unlimited area buildings based on Use Group and Construction Classification. These provisions provide an inherent check on the area of a building which can be constructed adjacent to an unlimited area building. To allow more than one building to be adjacent to the unlimited area building would remove the protection afforded by Section 503 and could result in the adjacent buildings being of such an aggregate size as to impose an unacceptable risk on the unlimited area building.

The primary consideration in allowing buildings of unlimited area is that the complete perimeter (in the case of the exceptions at least 75%) be open and available for fire department access and operations. Multiple buildings adjacent to an unlimited area building would compromise this theory.

Question 2:

May the adjacent building be comprised of several buildings which are separated by fire walls, provided the combined adjacent building has a minimum fire separation distance of 30 feet, in accordance with Item 3 of the exception?

Answer 2:

No, for reasons similar to Answer 1. Again, the code relies on the provisions of Section 503 to limit the area of buildings which do not qualify as unlimited area buildings based on Use Group and Construction Classification, and again the code is specific in

exception 3 to use the singular phrase “the adjacent building.” The definition of building found in section 202.0 is careful to point out that for application of the code, each portion of a building which is completely separated from other portions by fire walls shall be considered a separate building. To allow the adjacent structure to be comprised of several buildings separated by fire walls would remove the protection afforded by Section 503 and could result in the adjacent building(s) imposing an unacceptable risk on the unlimited area building.