



FENCE GUIDELINES AND ZONING COMPLIANCE APPLICATION

City Code requires permits for the placement and type of fences on private property (see page 3 of this handout). The diagrams and guidelines below help explain the requirements. Your permit application should provide enough information about your proposed fence for the city planner to determine if it meets the requirements.

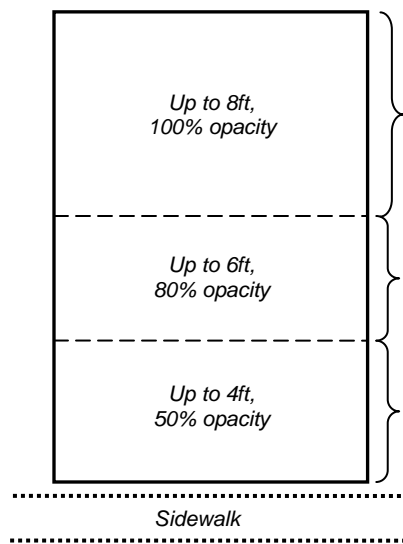
Residential Zoning Districts – Height and Opacity Limits

Front open space: Any fence within this area may be up to 4 feet in height and no more than 50% opaque (i.e. must be at least 50% open, such as chain link, wrought iron or picket fencing). Front open space dimensions vary by district: R1A=40 ft; R1B=30 ft; and R1C, R1D, R2A & R2B = 25 ft.
Exception: On a corner lot, a fence may be no higher than 30 inches within the first 25 feet on either side of the corner intersection.

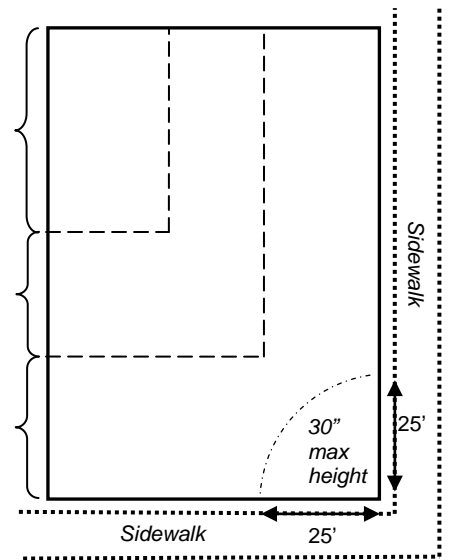
Middle 25 ft: Any fence within this area may be no more than 6 feet in height and no more than 80% opaque (i.e. must be at least 20% open, such as board-on-board fencing).

Rear Yard: Any fence within this area may be up to 8 feet in height and 100% opaque (e.g. a stockade fence). Note that a building permit is required for fences over 6 feet in height.

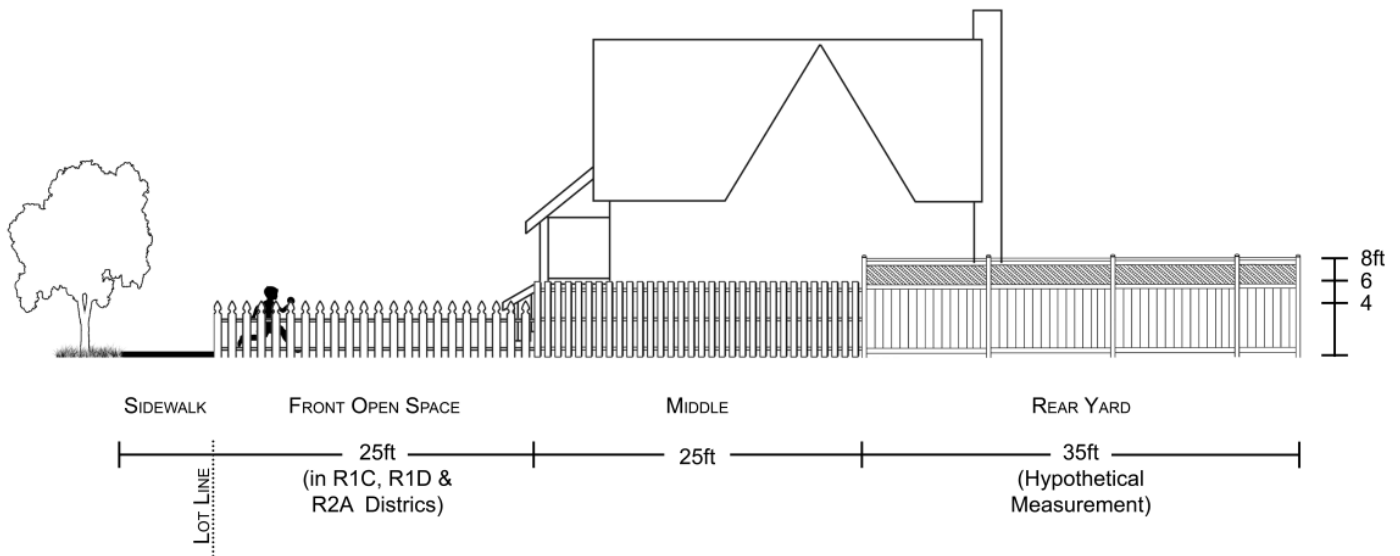
Typical Residential Lot



Corner Residential Lot



Side-View of a Typical Residential Lot



Other Important Information

- Opacity is how “open” a fence must be. It is measured “head on” or perpendicular to the fence.
- All distance measurements are taken from property lines. The front property line is typically adjacent to the front sidewalk.
- There is no minimum setback requirement – fences may be located up to the property line as long as the entire fence is located on your property.
- The City cannot locate or identify the property lines – if you do not know where your property lines are, look for concrete or metal markers at the lot corners. If these cannot be located, you should have a licensed surveyor locate them for you.

What if My Property is in a Historic District?

When repairing or maintaining historic residential fences and walls, or when building new fences and walls on historic residential property, the following guidelines should be followed:

Appropriate:

- Repairing and maintaining historic fences and walls using standard preservation practices to retain their historic materials and appearance.
- Installing fences and walls that meet Chapter 104 of the Code of the City of Ann Arbor, and that are no more than three (3) feet in the front yard and no more than six (6) feet in the middle and rear yard.
- Locating new fences and walls on lot and setback lines whenever possible.
- Using wood (picket or alternating board), wrought iron or metal (wrought iron style), or chain link (rear yards only) for fencing.
- Using brick or stone for new walls. Custom masonry products will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Installing custom designs which will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Using hedges in place of fencing, and planting vegetation along fencing.

Not Appropriate:

- Removing a repairable historic fence or wall.
- Installing fences or walls over three (3) feet in height in the front yard and over six (6) feet in height in the middle and rear yard.
- Impeding clear vision at intersections by exceeding a height of thirty (30) inches in height within twenty five (25) feet of an intersection.

What if My Property is in the Floodplain?

In some cases, fencing is not permitted in the floodplain. Fences may be permitted in the floodplain depending on the type and location of fence. Any proposed fence in a floodplain requires floodplain review, issuance of a zoning compliance permit for fences from the City of Ann Arbor Planning and Development Services Unit, and may require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ).

To learn more about the standards for fences in floodplains, please refer to the [Floodplain Fencing Requirements](#) guidance document, or contact Jerry Hancock, Stormwater and Floodplain Programs Coordinator, at 734.794.6430 ext. 43709 or JHancock@A2Gov.org.

How to Find out if a Property is Located within a Historic District or Floodplain

To determine whether a property is located within a historic district or floodplain, go to www.a2gov.org/permits and click “PARCELS.” Next, type the property address into the search string and double click on the search result that appears. Select the “Land Use” tab and refer to the “Flood Zone” and “Hist Dist” fields.

For more information about City Code Chapter 104 that regulates fences on private property, please contact a city planner in the Planning & Development Services Unit at 734.794.6265 or planning@a2gov.org.

City of Ann Arbor Code
Chapter 104: FENCES

8:431. Definitions.

The following definitions shall be applicable to the interpretation of this chapter.

- (1) *Fence*. Any artificial permanent fence, partition, structure or gate erected as a dividing marker, barrier or enclosure.
- (2) *Opacity*. The degree to which a fence is impervious to rays of light. This condition will be measured by observation of any 2 square yard area of fence between 1 foot above the ground level and the top of the fence. The observation shall be from a direction perpendicular to the plane of the fence.
- (3) *Residential district*. Those districts classified as residential in subdivisions 5:21(2) through 5:21(6E) of Chapter 55 of Title V of this Code.

8:432. Requirements.

It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to construct or cause to have constructed any fence upon any property within the corporate limits of the City of Ann Arbor, except in accordance with the requirements and restrictions herein provided.

8:433. Permit.

Any person desiring to build or cause to be built a fence upon property within the corporate limits of the City of Ann Arbor shall first apply to the planning and development services unit for a permit to do so. Application for such permit shall contain any and all information, including drawings, required and necessary for the determination of whether the erection of such fence would be contrary to the provisions of this chapter or the laws of the State of Michigan. A fee in the amount prescribed in Chapter 100 shall be paid for such permit. Fee for the permit shall be established by resolution of the city council upon the recommendations of the city administrator.

8:434. Restrictions.

The following requirements shall be observed:

- (1) Fences located in residential districts
 - (a) In the required front open space shall not exceed 4 feet in height and 50% opacity.
 - (b) Shall not exceed 6 feet in height and 80% opacity in any part which is 25 feet behind the front setback line.
 - (c) Shall not have a height of greater than 8 feet at locations other than those described in subsections (a) and (b).
- (2) In other than residential districts, fences may be extended to 12 feet in height without restriction as to solid matter or closed construction.
- (3) Fences located within 25 feet of the intersection of 2 or more street lot lines where a setback is required for a building shall not be higher than 30 inches above the sidewalk grade.
- (4) Except on top of fences having a height of 10 feet or more, there shall not be attached, affixed or placed any spike, nail, barb (including barb wire) or other pointed instrument, and all cleaved selvages and sharp points on wire fences shall be removed or bent to eliminate any sharp extrusions.
- (5) No fence shall be constructed or maintained which is charged or connected with an electrical current.
- (6) Temporary construction fences and fences required for protection around excavations shall comply with Article 13 of the Basic Building Code. Such fences shall not be maintained for a period greater than a year without special approval of the zoning board of appeals.
- (7) In determining the maximum height of a fence which separates 2 adjoining lots and which runs within 2 feet of the lot line, the maximum height at any point shall be determined from the highest grade at that point within 2 feet on either side of the lot line.
- (8) Fences not within a required open space established by Chapter 55 of this Code may be the building height limit for the district in which they are located and shall not be subject to opacity restrictions.

8:435. Maintenance of nuisances.

Fences shall be maintained so as not to endanger life or property. Any fence which, through lack of repair, type of construction or otherwise, endangers life or property is hereby deemed a nuisance. If an unsafe condition exists in regard to a fence, the planning and development services manager or designee shall serve on the owner, agent or person in control of the property upon which such fence is located, a written notice describing the unsafe condition and specifying the required repairs or modifications to be made to render the fence safe or requiring the unsafe fence or any portion thereof to be removed, and shall provide a time limit for such repair, modification or removal.

8:436. Power of the board of appeals.

Upon appeal in writing by any person directly or indirectly affected hereby, the zoning board of appeals of the City of Ann Arbor may, after a hearing in accordance with the established procedure of the Board, in its sound discretion and in the interests of the public health, safety or welfare of the inhabitants of the community, reduce or remit the requirements of this chapter in individual cases.



City of Ann Arbor
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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p. 734.794.6265 | f. 734.994.8312 | planning@a2gov.org

PAYMENT COVER SHEET

NAME: _____

COMPANY/PROPERTY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ **ZIP CODE:** _____

CREDIT CARD NUMBER: _____

EXPIRATION DATE: _____

SIGNATURE: _____