



City of Plymouth, MN

www.plymouthmn.gov
Ph. (763) 509-5000

-Information Handout-

Fences & Retaining Walls for Single-Family Homes and Two-Family Homes

This information condenses the provisions in Section 21130.01 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Fence/Wall Permit Required

A “no-fee” **Fence/Wall Permit** is required from the City Planning Division prior to installation, alteration, or relocation of a Fence or Retaining Wall. (*E-mail is: Planning@plymouthmn.gov*)

Exceptions:

- Fences higher than 7 feet shall instead require prior approval of a **Building Permit** from the City Building Division. (*E-mail is: Inspections@plymouthmn.gov*)
- Retaining Walls higher than 4 feet shall instead require prior approval of a **Building Permit** from the City Building Division. Such Retaining Walls must be designed by an engineer and must include a safety fence at the top that measures at least 3.5 feet in height.
- Fences 2 feet high or lower that directly surround a garden do not require a **Fence/Wall Permit**, provided they are set back at least 6 feet from lot lines. Such fencing is exempt from the Fence Design and Materials standards provided herein.
- Hedge Rows/Plantings that effectively form a Fence do not require a **Fence/Wall Permit**, and there is no height limitation on such Hedge Rows/Plantings. The centers (roots) of such Hedge Rows/Plantings: 1) should not be placed within easements that contain pipes; and 2) should otherwise be set back at least 3 feet from lot lines. Related foliage shall comply with Traffic Sight Visibility regulations (from intersections and driveways), as set forth in *Section 21105.05* of the Zoning Ordinance and described later in this handout.

Application Requirements for a Fence/Wall Permit

--Completed “Fence/Wall Permit Application Form.” Please see:

[Fence/Wall Permit Application Form](#)

--Lot Survey or Scaled Site Drawing (based on a plat map or aerial photo) showing the proposed location of the Fence or Retaining Wall, together with the locations of all easements on the property. **Note:** The Fence Contractor’s estimate/sketch layout does not meet this requirement.

--Drawing or Photo showing the design, materials, & height of the proposed Fence or Retaining Wall. ***For any materials provided to the city electronically, PDF files are preferred.**

Fence/Wall Location

Private Fences and Retaining Walls are not allowed on public land (e.g., street boulevards, street rights-of-way, trail outlots, parks, etc.). Additionally, they shall not: 1) be placed within a wetland or required wetland buffer; 2) cross over a rain garden/filtration basin/infiltration basin; or 3) extend below the Ordinary High Water Level of any lake, stream, or water-quality detention pond.

Fences may extend to the lot lines (no setback required), except as follows:

- Fences shall not be placed within a Utility Easement that contains publicly maintained water or sewer pipes, nor shall they be placed within a Pond Access Easement, unless otherwise permitted via City-approved encroachment agreement.
- Fences shall not be placed within 3 feet of public sidewalks or trails.
- Fences for tennis courts or other recreational courts shall not be located within a required front yard area, and shall be set back at least 6 feet from side and rear lot lines. Refer to the Zoning Ordinance or consult with city staff regarding specific height and design regulations for such fences.

Retaining Walls shall not be located within a Drainage Easement, unless otherwise permitted via City-approved encroachment agreement.

Drainage

Fences & Retaining Walls shall be designed, constructed, and maintained in a manner that does not impede or increase off-site drainage flow.

Installation & Maintenance

When installing a Fence or Retaining Wall, no physical damage of any kind may occur to neighboring properties unless allowed by agreement with the affected neighboring landowners.

Fences & Retaining Walls shall not be allowed to become or remain in a condition of disrepair or danger, nor shall they constitute a nuisance.

Both sides of any fence shall be maintained in a condition of reasonable repair and appearance by its owner. Prior to installation, consider how you would gain access to maintain (repair, paint/stain) both sides of the Fence in the long term, as well as how you would maintain your yard areas on both sides of the Fence.

Fence Design, Materials, & Color

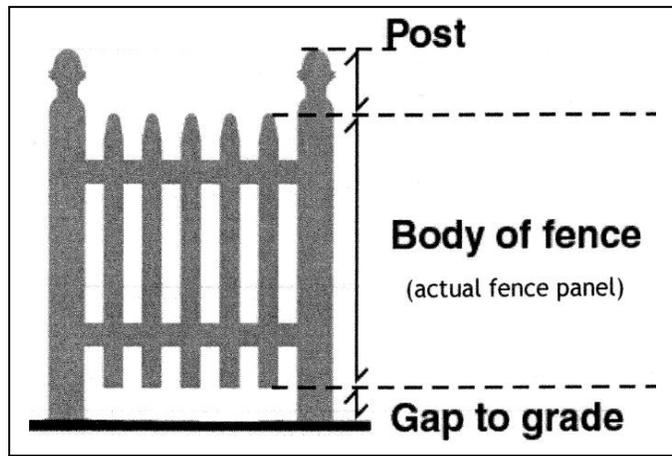
- If the design of the Fence is such that support posts or stringers would be visible, the posts and stringers must be located on the inside of the Fence – such that the finished side of the Fence faces outward toward neighboring properties or rights-of-way.
- Chain link fences shall include a top rail with barbed ends toward the ground.
- Fences shall not be constructed of chicken wire, welded wire, plastic deer fence netting or similar, snow fence, branches, or materials originally intended for other purposes.
- Metal T- or U-posts are prohibited, except for agricultural uses in the FRD zoning district.
- Fences shall be the same color on each side. Except for white, other bright colors (e.g., neon or florescent) shall not be permitted excluding allowable temporary/safety fencing.

Fence Height

“Fence Height” – The distance between the finished ground elevation adjoining the outer side of the fence and the fence’s highest projection, including any support posts or post caps. *See graphic.*

“Fence Opacity” – See description and graphic provided later in this Information Handout.

“Equivalent” Side or Rear Yard – Corner lots and through lots (lots with street frontage on opposite ends) have more than 1 front yard, as the area between the home and each street is defined as a front yard. If the front yard area located at the side and/or rear of the home abuts an Arterial Roadway, Major Collector Roadway, or other public street where driveway access has been prohibited, such front yard areas qualify as an “Equivalent” side or yard for purposes of determining allowable fence height. A “Road Classification Map” showing Arterial and Major Collector Roadways is provided at the end of this Information Handout.



“Equivalent” Side or Rear Yard – Corner lots and through lots (lots with street frontage on opposite ends) have more than 1 front yard, as the area between the home and each street is defined as a front yard. If the front yard area located at the side and/or rear of the home abuts an Arterial Roadway, Major Collector Roadway, or other public street where driveway access has been prohibited, such front yard areas qualify as an “Equivalent” side or yard for purposes of determining allowable fence height. A “Road Classification Map” showing Arterial and Major Collector Roadways is provided at the end of this Information Handout.

“Visibility Triangle” – Fence Height shall not exceed 3.5 feet if located within a required visibility triangle, as described later in this Information Handout pursuant to *Section 21105.05* of the Zoning Ordinance.

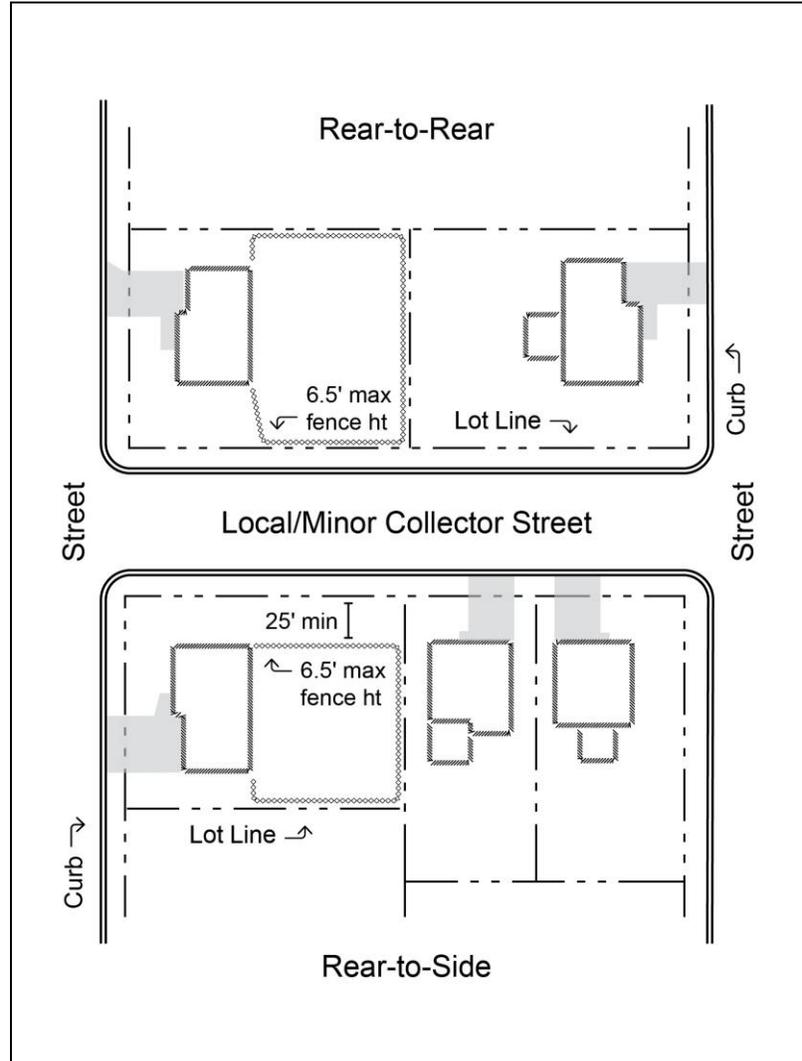
--MAXIMUM FENCE HEIGHT ALLOWED IN FRONT YARDS (*excludes front yards that qualify as “Equivalent” Side or Rear Yards, as described above*):

- Fence height for Fences located within the “required front yard setback area for the home” (which is 25 feet min. for Local Streets/Collector Roadways, & 50 feet min. for Arterial Roadways) are limited as follows:
 - If the opacity of the Fence is 50 percent or more, the Fence Height shall not exceed 3.5 feet – provided the body of the Fence (actual fence panel) does not exceed 3 feet in height.
 - If the opacity of the Fence is less than 50 percent, the Fence Height shall not exceed 4.5 feet – provided the body of the Fence (actual fence panel) does not exceed 4 feet in height.

(Continued on next page.)

--MAX. FENCE HEIGHT ALLOWED IN FRONT YARDS (continued):

- For corner lots, if the rear wall of the home (wall opposite the wall where the home is addressed) faces the rear wall of the home on the abutting lot behind it, Fences located in the required front yard area that lie between the side wall of the home & the abutting side street, and that also lie between the rear wall of the home & the rear lot line may be up to 6.5 feet in height – provided the body of the Fence (actual fence panel) does not exceed 6 feet in height. *See Graphic.* These Fences can be of any opacity.



- Fence height for Fences not located within the “required front yard setback area for the home” (which is 25 feet min. for Local Streets/Collector Roadways, & 50 feet min. for Arterial Roadways) may be up to 6.5 feet in height – provided the body of the Fence (actual fence panel) does not exceed 6 feet in height. These Fences can be of any opacity.

--MAXIMUM FENCE HEIGHT ALLOWED IN SIDE YARDS, REAR YARDS, & “EQUIVALENT” SIDE OR REAR YARDS:

- Fence height shall not exceed 6.5 feet – provided the body of the Fence (actual fence panel) does not exceed 6 feet in height. These Fences can be of any opacity.

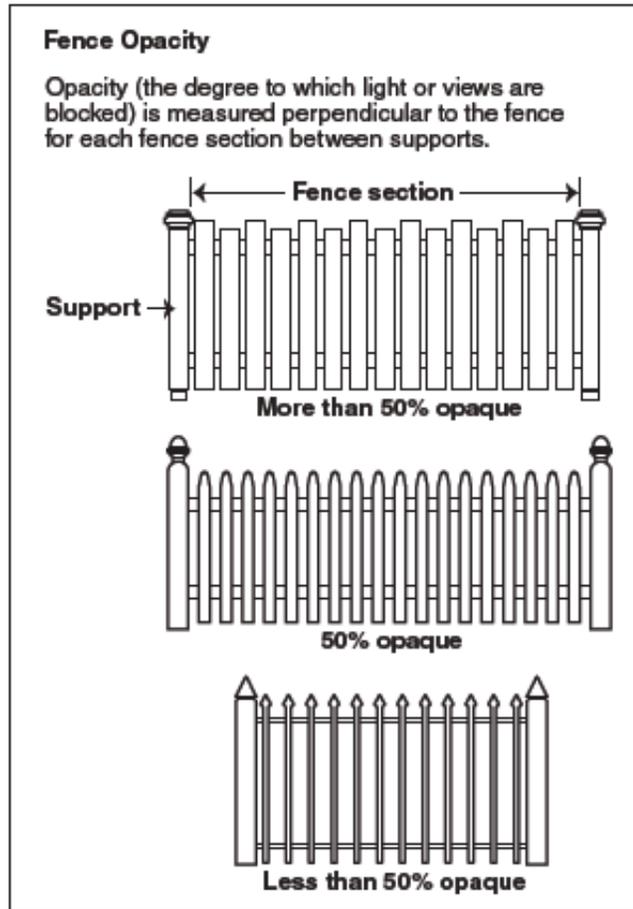
Fence Opacity

“Fence Opacity” – The degree to which light or views through the fence are blocked. A solid board fence has an opacity of 100 percent, whereas a wrought-iron fence typically has an opacity of less than 50 percent. *See graphic.*

Fence Opacity determines the allowable fence height within the “required front yard setback area for the home”, as previously described in this Information Handout.

Swimming Pools

Access to private residential pools shall be controlled through the use of fencing or walls. Such structures shall be: 1) at least 5 feet high; and 2) constructed without hand- or foot-holds that would enable climbing over it. Any entrances shall be equipped with self-closing/self-latching gates capable of being locked.

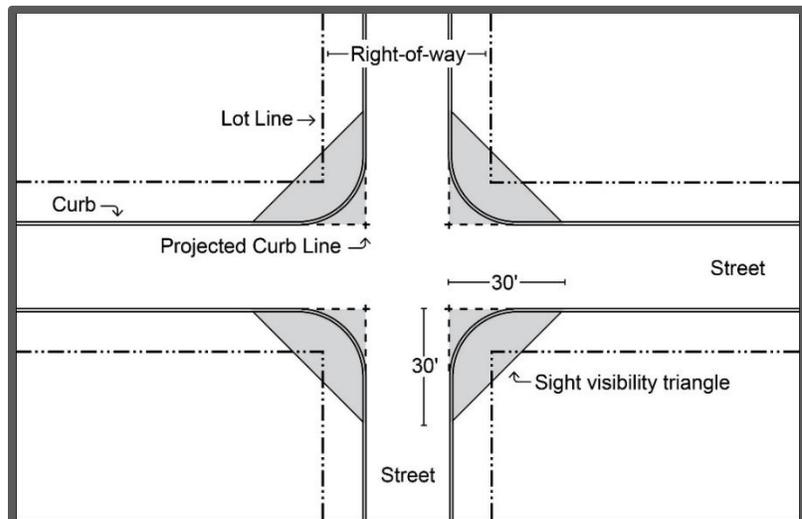


Traffic Sight Visibility

As previously stated, in no case shall Fence Height exceed 3.5 feet if located within a required “visibility triangle” for an intersection or driveway.

--From Intersections:

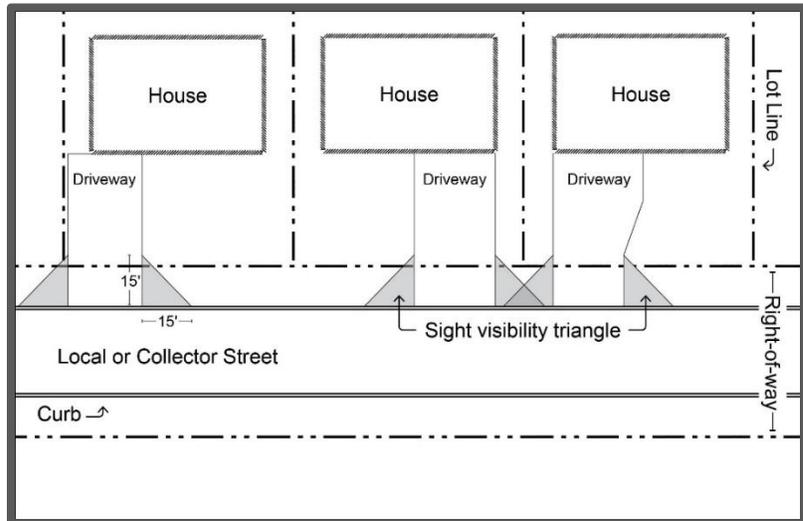
For lots located at the intersection of 2 or more streets or roadways, the “visibility triangle” is formed by measuring 30 feet back from the projected curb lines along each street curb or roadway, and then connecting the points. *See Graphic.*



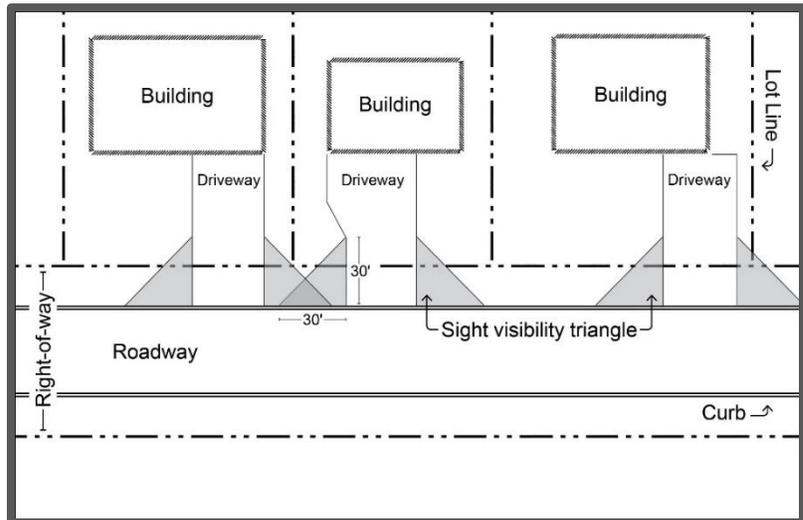
Traffic Sight Visibility (*continued*)

--From Driveways:

- For driveways that access Local Streets or Collector Roadways, the “visibility triangle” is formed by measuring **15** feet back in each direction from the point where the edge of the driveway meets the Local Street or Collector Roadway, and then connecting the points. *See Graphic.*



- For driveways that access Arterial Roadways, the “visibility triangle” is formed by measuring **30** feet back in each direction from the point where the driveway edge meets the Arterial Roadway, and then connecting the points. *See Graphic.*



*Tips for Locating Lot Lines

Unfortunately, locating lot lines is not a service the City is able to provide. If you are unable to locate your lot lines, you should contract with a Licensed Surveyor to locate the lot lines for you.

If you are able to locate the Monument Irons that were installed at lot corners/lot bends prior to home construction, pull a taut string between the Monument Irons to locate the lot lines.

*Tips for Locating Lot Lines (continued)

Use a copy of your Lot Survey, a metal detector (free Apps available on your smartphone), and a long tape measure to assist in locating the Monument Irons and lot lines. If you do not have a Lot Survey in your property records, the City may have a copy of the “proposed survey” from when the home was originally constructed. To check on whether the City may have a copy of the “proposed survey” for your lot, go to the City’s website at: www.plymouthmn.gov – Then click on ‘Property Info’ in the upper right corner of the homepage; then enter your property address on the Address line and click ‘Search’; then click on the “Building Department” tab to see if there is a survey in the ‘Attachments’ section. If so, click on ‘View’ to the right of the survey. Note: Microsoft Edge or Google Chrome work well.

Front lot lines are not located at the street curb. Although homeowners are responsible for mowing and maintaining the street boulevard (public street right-of-way area for snow storage, etc.) between their front lot line and the street curb, front lot lines are generally located 11 feet to 15 feet (or more) behind the curb.

Gopher State One: Stay Safe! Call 811 before you Dig. Gopher State One will locate & mark underground utilities. This is a free service. www.gopherstateonecall.org

