

Fence and Retaining Wall Requirements

APPLICABLE BUILDING CODE CBC 105.2

DEFINITIONS

Fence - A fence is constructed of wood, chain link, wrought iron, decorative steel, masonry, concrete or other similar types of materials.

Retaining wall - A wall built to support or control a mass of earth or water is a retaining wall. It may be constructed of wood, masonry, concrete, metal, or other material.

Planners are available to speak with you by phone at (408) 535-3555.
Service hours are:

Monday
10:00 a.m.-Noon
1:00 - 4:00 pm.

Tu - Wd - Th
9:00 a.m.-Noon
1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Friday
10:00 a.m.-Noon
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Hours are subject to change; visit the Planning Division web page at www.sanjoseca.gov/pbce to verify hours of service.

San José Permit Center
San José City Hall
200 E. Santa Clara St.
San José, CA 95113
408-535-3555

www.sanjoseca.gov/building

This bulletin outlines the permit and constructions requirements for fences and retaining walls. Codes and requirements change over time; be sure to check with the Permit Center or your Building Inspector to verify requirements.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

The requirements vary according to the type of property:

- **Multi-Family and Non-Residential properties** - Constructing a fence or retaining wall requires a building permit and plan review.
- **Single Family/Duplex properties** - For fences, a building permit is required if the fence height will exceed the limitations described below. The applicant must submit a plan for review and approval in order to obtain the permit. For retaining walls, a building permit is not required IF the wall does not support a surcharge and measures 4 feet or less, as measured from bottom of the footing.

All fences and retaining walls on all types of property must comply with the City's zoning regulations. Call the Permit Center and ask to speak with a planner if you have questions.

SINGLE FAMILY/DUPLEX PROPERTIES - FENCE HEIGHT LIMITATIONS

Fences for single family and duplex properties are limited to specific heights as follows:

Maximum Allowable Height

Front yard - 3 feet
Side yard - 7 feet
Rear yard - 7 feet

CORNER LOTS, IRREGULAR LOTS, AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ZONES

Fence heights for corner lots, lots with irregular shapes, and lots in Planned Development (PD) Zones may have different height restrictions – contact the Permit Center and ask to speak with a planner for complete information.

Corner Lots. For determining fence heights, these definitions apply to corner lots:

Front yard - Extends from the front of the house to the front property line.
Side yard - Extends from the front of the house along the side of the house to the rear yard.
Rear yard - Extends from the rear of the house to and across the rear property line.

Within the yard spaces defined as above, maximum allowable heights are as follows:

Side and rear yard fences (along the property and street) - 3 feet

Side and rear yard fences if set back 5 feet from property line - 7 feet

Sightlines to the street from any driveway - Side and rear fence heights must be low enough to provide sightlines to the street from the driveway

A schematic of fence height restrictions is provided on the opposite side of this bulletin.

continued>

FENCE REGULATIONS

Municipal Code Section 20.30, Part 6

Typical plan assuming single-family lot and sidewalk with planting strip.

For more information on fencing for single-family homes or **Fence Variances**, please contact Development Services Center at (408) 535-3555.

LEGEND

-  7 Foot Max. Height Fence
-  3 Foot Max. Height Fence

* The front property line will always be the short dimension of the lot even if the building entrance is on the long dimension of the lot.

