

## Building a fence

### Is a permit required?

**Yes.** A permit must be issued before beginning construction on a new fence or gate, or replacement of an existing fence, panel or post. A permit is not required for the replacement of damaged boards.

There are three ways to apply for a permit.

1. Use the ePermits option on the city website ([www.stlouisparkmn.gov/services/permits](http://www.stlouisparkmn.gov/services/permits)).
2. Email the application to the building and energy department at [inspections@stlouisparkmn.gov](mailto:inspections@stlouisparkmn.gov).
3. Drop off the application at the building and energy department located on the second floor of city hall.

No matter how you choose to submit the application, you will need to include the following information:

- Application form. The form can be found at: [www.stlouisparkmn.gov/services/permits](http://www.stlouisparkmn.gov/services/permits). Look in the “permits related to zoning ordinances” dropdown menu.
- A survey or site plan showing the existing conditions and proposed location of your fence.
- Drawing or picture that shows the design of your fence.
- \$30 fee for the permit application. This can be paid when the permit is issued.

### Is an inspection required?

**Yes.** Beginning Jan. 1, 2023, one inspection will be required.

- The inspection will be conducted after the holes are dug for the posts. If the inspection passes, then you may begin installing the posts.
- Someone responsible for the construction of the fence must be present during the inspection.
- Before scheduling the inspection, the property corner irons must be located, exposed and marked with a wood lathe or similar marker. If you are unable to locate one or more corner irons, you will need to contact a land surveyor to locate them and install new ones if necessary.
- Additionally, a string must be pulled tightly between the irons to represent the property line.
- The entirety of each post hole must be shown to be on your property.
- Call the building and energy department to schedule an inspection (952.924.2588).

***Do not schedule an inspection until the above criteria are met.***

### Where can the fence be located?

Nothing is more important than location when building a fence. An improperly located fence can result in friction between neighbors, ordinance violations, lawsuits and most likely the need to move your fence. To avoid these costly and frustrating problems, your fence must be located entirely inside your property line. It cannot be on the property line or extend over the property line onto the neighbor’s property or public property (boulevards, sidewalk area, parks, public open space, etc.). The fence can extend into the neighbor’s property if you provide written permission from the neighbor along with your permit application. It is your responsibility to know where your property line is, so make sure you have located the corner irons before you install the fence. For tips on finding the property line, see the “locating a property line” handout.

## How tall can I build a fence?

The maximum allowed fence height is determined by your lot's location, where the fence is located on your lot, and by visibility triangles (refer to illustration). The height of the fence is determined by starting from the side of the fence with the lowest grade, then measuring to the top of the fence. A retaining wall is included in the measurement when the fence is attached to the wall.

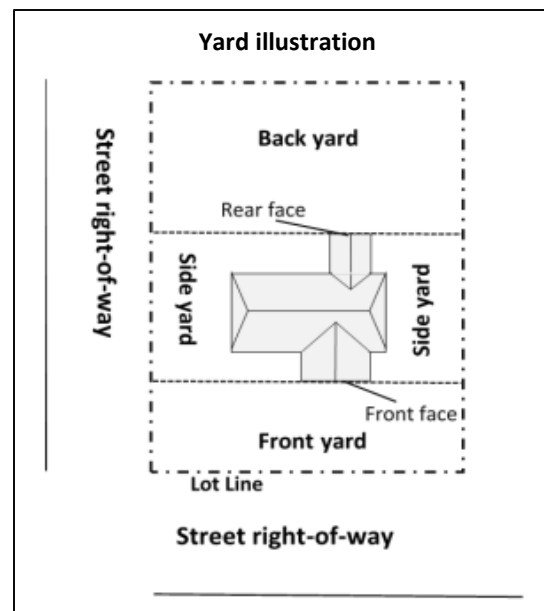
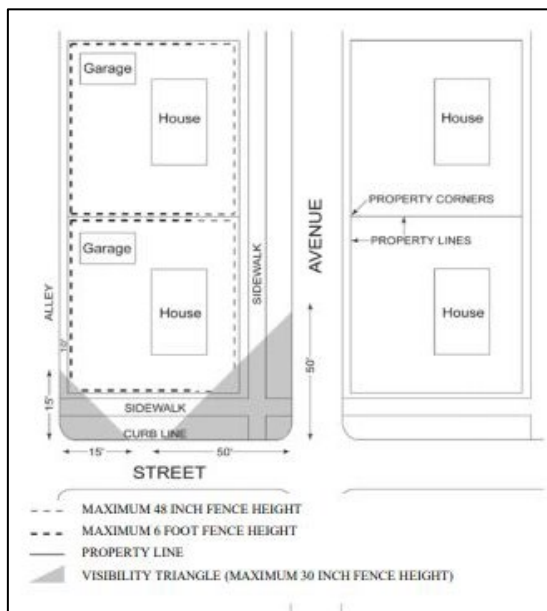
- **Height limits.**

Fences in the back and side yards can be up to 6 feet high. Fences in the front yard (between the lot line and the front face of the house) can be up to 4 feet high. See the yard illustration to the right.

- **Corner lots**

Fences on corner lots have lower allowable heights at the corner of two streets, a street and an alley, and at the intersection of two alleys. A visibility triangle is required at these intersections to maintain visibility of oncoming cars and pedestrians. The fence height in a corner lot's visibility triangle cannot exceed 30 inches.

Determining what is the front yard on a corner lot takes special care. On a corner lot, the front yard is the yard adjacent to the front face of the house. Corner lot owners should check with the planning department (952.924.2575) for help in determining visibility triangles and front yard location.



## Can a fence be taller than 6 feet?

There are some specific situations where fences can be taller than 6 feet. Fences in the side or back yard that are adjacent to state highways, schools, religious institutions, railroads and commercial or industrial property may be as tall as 8 feet. Any fence over 6 feet in height must be approved by an engineer to meet state building code requirements. You must also fill out a building permit instead of the fence permit application. Check with the planning division to see if your lot qualifies.

## What materials can I use?

Below is a list of permitted and prohibited materials.

<b>Permitted materials</b>	<b>Prohibited materials</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials designed for permanent outdoor fencing</li> <li>• Natural decay resistant wood</li> <li>• Wood treated by manufacturer to be decay resistant</li> <li>• Metal</li> <li>• Brick, stone, or masonry</li> <li>• Rigid plastic or vinyl</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Razor wire</li> <li>• Barbed wire</li> <li>• Above ground electric fence</li> <li>• Chain link or metal wire fencing finer than 11-gauge (ex. chicken wire) unless used to enclose a garden.</li> </ul>

## Fence design

Every fence must be constructed so the finished side of the fence faces your neighbor’s property. **Fences built incorrectly will be required to be reconstructed to meet code.** The structural side of your fence must face your property. Alternating board fences, which are finished on both sides, are acceptable.

**IMPORTANT: If the posts and/or two-by-four stringers are visible on one side only, then they are structural and must be on your side of the fence. Fences that use decorative boards to mimic the appearance of the two-by-four on the other side are not considered finished on both sides. The side with the two-by-four stringers is the structural side and must be on your side.**

## Pool fences

A fence surrounding a swimming pool must be constructed to keep children from entering the pool enclosure. Pool fences and gates must be at least 4 feet high. There can be no openings greater than 4 inches either through or under the fence or gate. Pool fences must be constructed without handholds or footholds. Gates must be self-closing and self-catching. Call the inspections department at 952.924.2588 with questions about pool fences.

## Questions?

This handout covers commonly asked questions and situations. It does not cover all city ordinances. If you have any questions, or think your situation is unique or not covered by this handout, please call the planning division for clarification.