

# FENCES AND WALLS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Community Development – Planning Division  
701 Laurel St., Menlo Park, CA 94025  
tel 650-330-6702  
planning@menlopark.org



## General information

The following regulations apply to all fences, walls, hedges, and/or similar structures erected in residential zoning districts. Fences must be located on private property, outside of the public right of way (ROW). For more details, please see [Zoning Ordinance Chapter 16.64 \("Fences, Walls, Trees, and Hedges"\)](#).

## Fence heights

In all residential zoning districts, fences and walls are allowed to be a maximum of 7 feet tall and may be erected in any yard except for the following two situations:

1. Front setback: In the required front setback area, the maximum height is 4 feet. [Zoning Ordinance Section 16.04.400](#) defines the front of a property as follows:  
Lot line, front. "Front lot line" means:
  1. in the case of an interior lot fronting on a public street, a line separating the lot from the public street;
  2. in the case of an interior lot fronting on a private street, but not on a public street, a line separating the lot from the private street;
  3. in the case of a corner lot fronting on two public streets, a line separating the shorter street frontage of the lot from a public street; [note: the [Front Lot Line Election](#) process allows for the longer street to be designated as the front, if certain conditions are met]
  4. in the case of a corner lot fronting on one public street and one private street, a line separating the street frontage of the lot from the public street;
  5. in the case of a corner lot fronting on two private streets, but not on a public street, a line separating the shorter street frontage of the lot from a private street; and
  6. in the case of a panhandle lot, the shorter dimension of the lot boundaries which are contiguous to the private driveway or easement which provides access to the lot.
2. Triangular area (corner lot): In a triangular area at the intersection of the streets which border a corner lot, the maximum height is 3 feet. This triangular area is determined by measuring 35 feet from the point of intersection of the two streets, along the right of way (or property) lines of both intersecting streets. Then a line is drawn which connects the two points.

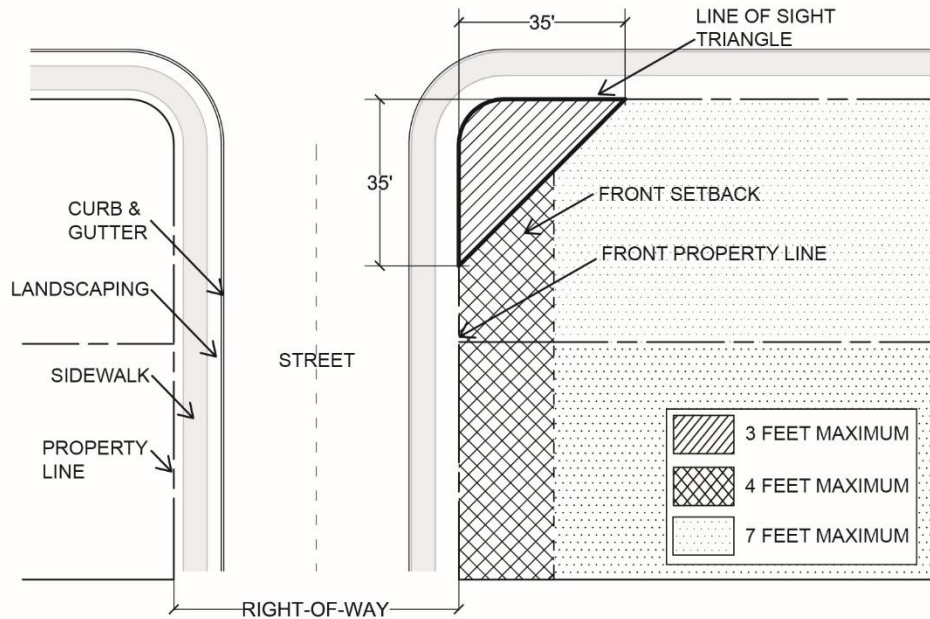
These standards are shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

Note: Properties fronting Santa Cruz Avenue may have taller front setback heights, subject to specific procedures and criteria. For more information, please see [Zoning Ordinance Section 16.64.030 \("Procedures for exceeding height limits for fences, walls, hedges or similar structures on residential properties fronting Santa Cruz Avenue"\)](#) and [Zoning Ordinance Section 16.64.035 \("Design criteria for residential properties fronting Santa Cruz Avenue"\)](#).

## How to measure height

In the triangular area, height is measured from the lowest edge of the constructed roadway or shoulder. In all other areas, height is measured from the finished ground level at the location of the fence or wall. If the finished grade varies on the two sides of the fence, the height shall be measured from the lower of the two finished grades.

**Figure 1**



**How to estimate the right of way or property lines**

First, obtain the street right-of-way and lot dimensions from the Assessor's Parcel Map. The right of way is City-owned property and generally includes the paved street, sidewalks, and landscape areas. In most residential areas of Menlo Park, the right of way extends past the curb and/or sidewalk line, into landscaped area. As a result, the curb and/or sidewalk line should not be relied upon as a marker of the property line location. Front and corner side fences on neighboring properties should likewise not be used as a guide.

Measure the street from gutter to gutter in order to find the actual width of the street. Then subtract the actual width of the street from the right of way. Divide the remainder in half, and measure that amount from the gutter towards your property and to the property line (see Figure 2 below).

Calculations can be double checked by measuring from the rear property line, forward to the front property line. Assuming that the rear fence is built on the rear property line, the distance measured forward from the rear fence is the same as the lot depth dimension listed in the assessor's parcel map.

Please be aware that these calculations are an estimate. A boundary survey completed by a licensed surveyor is the only way to assure accurate and true locations of property lines and measurements.

**Figure 2**

