

Introduction

The City of Milwaukee regulates the installation of fences through the building & zoning codes. These regulations establish standards for fence materials, construction standards, heights and placement on the property.

Property Lines

Fences may be built up to your property line (which is a shared invisible line between two adjoining properties). A fence may not be built on neighboring property. Fences may be set back any distance from the property line.

You will need to determine where your property lines are located. Sources of property line information are:

- Surveys may be included with your mortgage papers or home closing documents.
- Visit the [Milwaukee County Plat of Survey Search](#)
- Email RECMGR@milwaukee.gov to ask if a survey exists in City permit records.
- City DPW Estimating Section can estimate where your front or side street lot line is located in relation to the curb or edge of pavement. You can email them at lotline@milwaukee.gov for front yard or side street lot line information only.
- Hire a surveyor to provide a new plat or mark lot lines. Online directories like the WI Society of Land Surveyors (wsls.org) can be referenced.

The City of Milwaukee does not arbitrate disputes between property owners.

If you have a concern about a fence and would like an inspector to investigate whether the fence was built to code or whether a permit was issued, call the DNS Complaint Line at (414) 286-2268.

Historic districts

If you live in a local historic district, call the [Historic Preservation Commission](#), (414) 286-5712, before you start building or enter into a contract with a fence company. A [Certificate of Appropriateness](#) is required before a fence permit can be issued.

Materials

Fences shall be built with approved materials (i.e., chain link, wood, vinyl, or metal, such as wrought iron). You may not build a fence with scrap lumber, chicken wire, wood pallets, or other unapproved materials. Fence posts and supports must be installed on the side of the fence that faces your own house or yard.

Height and Location (Residential Zoning)

The height allowed for a fence depends on its location on your lot and on the fence style or material.

Front Yards - The maximum fence height in a front yard is 4 feet. However:

- The height of an ornamental fence (i.e., wrought iron) can be increased to 6 feet provided the fence is at least 50% open overall.
- An ornamental metal fence may be built atop a masonry wall when the combined height of the wall & fence is 6 feet or less, and the portion above 4 feet is at least 50% open.

Side Yards - The maximum fence height in a side yard is 4 feet. However:

- A height of 6 feet is permitted when the entire fence is open (i.e., chain link or wrought iron)
- A height of 6 feet is permitted if the lower 4 feet is solid, and the upper 2 feet is at least 50% open construction, such as lattice or chain link.
- A solid fence can be built to 6 feet high when it is located more than 10 feet from the side lot line.

Rear Yards - The maximum allowable height for any fence in the rear yard is 6 feet.

Side & Rear Streets - The maximum fence height in a side street or rear street yard is 4 feet. However:

- A fence may be erected in the rear yard along the side street to a height of 6 feet.
- The height of an ornamental fence (i.e., wrought iron) can be increased to 6 feet provided the fence is at least 50% open overall.
- An ornamental metal fence may be built atop a masonry wall when the combined height of the wall & fence is 6 feet or less, and the portion above 4 feet is at least 50% open.

Code requirements for residential fences can be researched in the [Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, section 295-505-4 \(f\)](#).

Vision Setback Triangle

If you wish to build an opaque or solid fence where 2 streets, an alley and a street, or a driveway and a street intersect, the fence will be limited to a height of 3 feet within a specific vision setback area, to prevent traffic blind spots & hazards to pedestrians.

The vision setback is formed by connecting 2 points, a set distance from the intersection, to form a triangle. The two points are measured an equal distance away from the point of intersection, along the drive, walk or curb. The specific distance (10'-25') depends on your zoning district. Solid fences, coniferous trees & shrubs, hedges, signs, and other obstructions taller than 3' are prohibited within this triangle.

Beware of underground cables or pipe!

Contact Diggers Hotline, at least three business days before you dig, to mark the location of buried utilities on your property. Diggers Hotline can be reached at 811, 1-800-242-8511 or www.diggershotline.com.

Permit

You can obtain a fence permit application from the Development Center by calling (414) 286-8210 or by downloading a permit form at our website, <http://www.milwaukee.gov/DNS/permits/info>. Click on "See More" below "One- & Two-Family Homes" for a permit form.

The cost of a fence permit is a total of \$60.40 (\$25 fence permit, \$0.40 IT and Training Surcharge and \$35.00 processing fee).

If you wish to apply for a permit in person, visit the Development Center at 809 N. Broadway, first floor.

