



Fence Regulations Amendment

Business, Housing & Zoning Committee
September 8, 2026



Introduction

The amendment would impact the following chapter of the zoning code:

- Chapter 550, Development Standards

The proposed amendment will include the following:

- Additional flexibility for fences in corner side yards
- Additional flexibility for fences in front yards
- New setback requirements for fences adjacent to structures where an entrance to a dwelling unit faces an interior side property line



Current Context

- Enforcement is almost completely complaint based
 - No permits or site plan review currently required for fences under 7 feet tall
 - Homeowners may find out that their fence is not in compliance with code after it has been built
 - Fence contractors may sometimes build fences out of compliance with code with homeowner approval/contract signature.
 - Once installed, property owners have the choice of altering the fence to gain compliance or seek a variance.



Current Context

- Property owners must obtain a variance to install a fence that does not comply with code
 - Safety against crime is not considered a circumstance “unique” to the property
 - High traffic roads and lack of rear yard have been supported by staff previously
 - Seeking a variance increases project costs and time
 - Outcomes are unpredictable

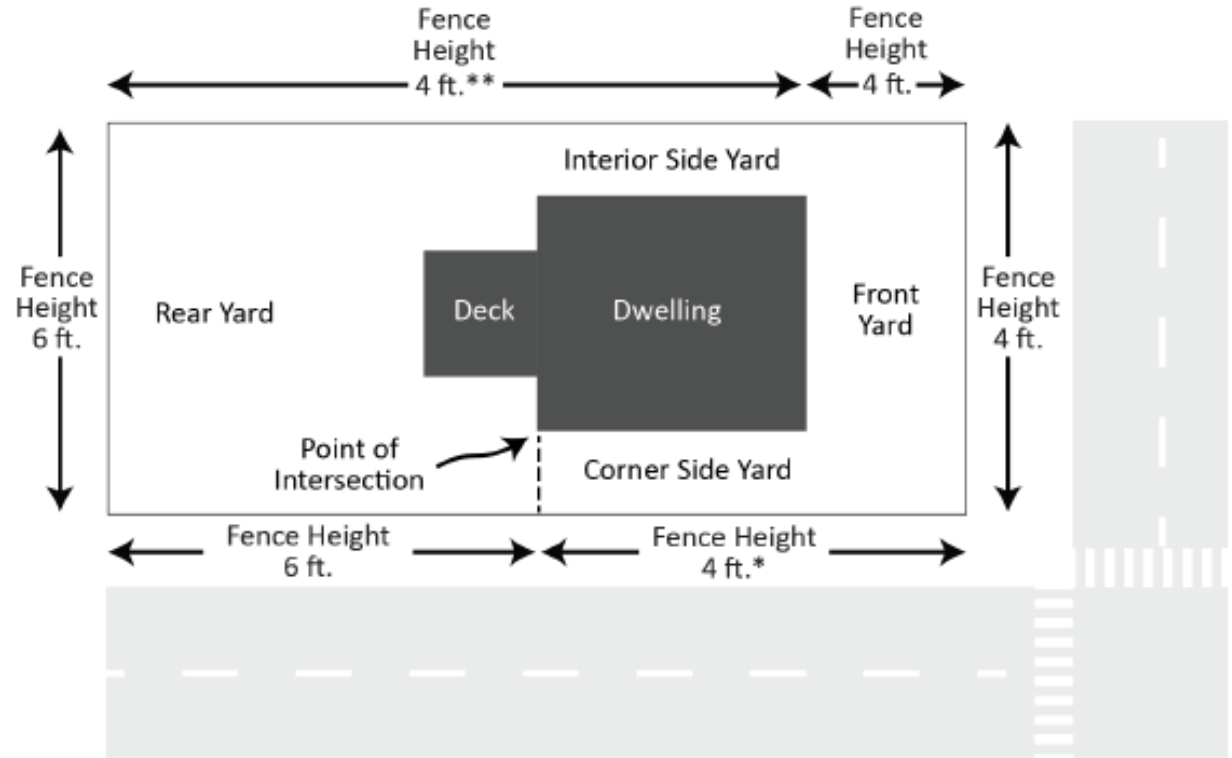


Existing Regulations

Design and/or Location	Front Yard Max	Corner Side Yard Max	Interior Side Yard Max	Rear Yard Max
Entire fence within the applicable yard is open, decorative, ornamental and at most 60% solid	4 ft.	4 ft., except as allowed below	6 ft.	6 ft.
Entire fence is 60% or more solid	N/A	4 ft., or may be 6 ft. on corner lots, where the additional height is only authorized as far forward as necessary to enclose an entrance facing the corner yard	4 ft., or 6 ft. between the rear wall of the neighbor's house on the adjoining property and the rear lot line, or 6 ft. when the fence is 5 ft. or more from neighbor's house	6 ft., but may be 4 ft. if rear lot line abuts an interior side lot line
Beginning at the rear wall of the house to the rear lot line	N/A	6 ft.	Please see above	N/A

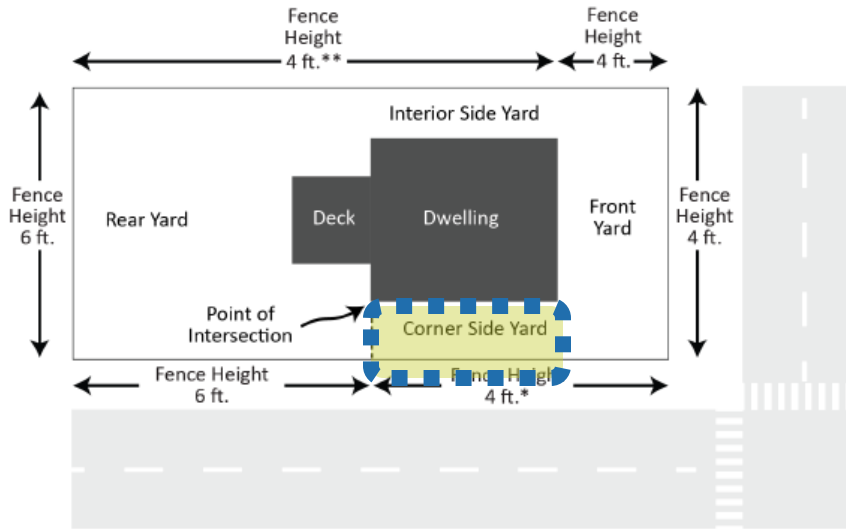


Existing Regulations



*Except as allowed in section 550.1550(2)

**Except as allowed in section 550.1550(3)



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Proposed Changes Corner Side Yards

The proposed amendment to the fence ordinance would allow:

- A six-foot-tall fence to be constructed up to the front wall of a house if the additional two feet of height are constructed of open, decorative, ornamental fencing materials that are less than sixty (60) percent opaque
- Open decks and porches would not be considered part of the principal structure when determining the front wall of the house



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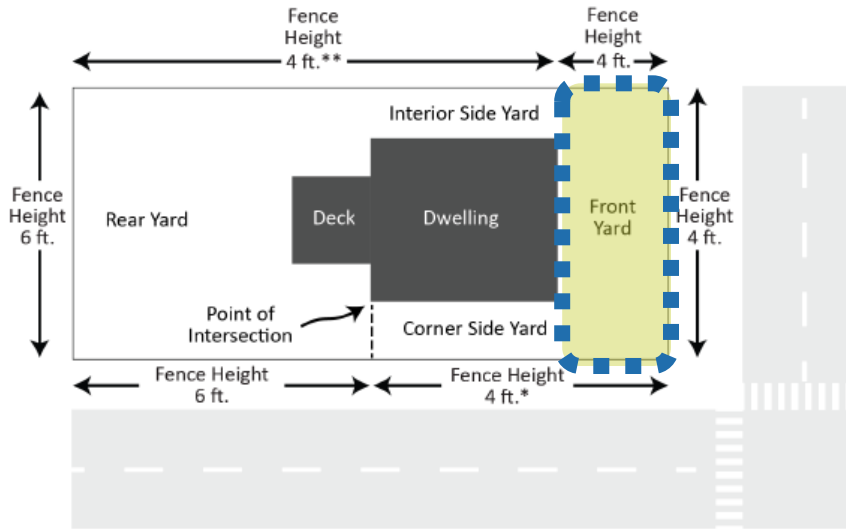


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Proposed Changes – Front Yards

Prior to the Land Use Rezoning Study, adopted in 2023, two kinds of fences were allowed in the front yards of residential properties:

- Opaque fences, a maximum of three feet tall
- Open and decorative fences, a maximum of four feet tall

The proposed zoning code amendment would again allow opaque fences up to three feet tall, providing more flexibility.



Proposed Changes – Front Yards



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Currently allowed

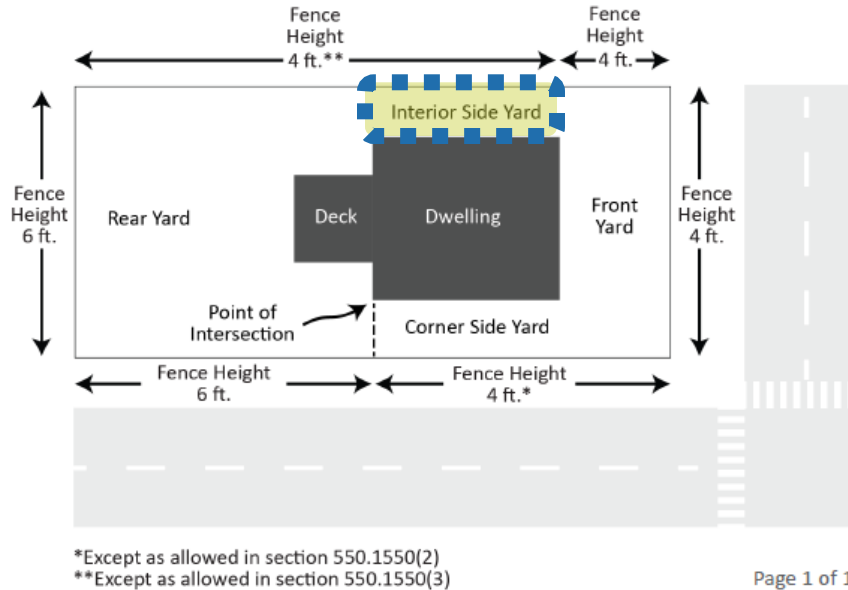
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Proposed Changes – Fences in Side Yards



- The fence ordinance contains a small number of prohibited fence locations, included to prevent fences from being built in locations that may endanger public safety.
- Staff are proposing to include a provision for a minimum entrance door clearance along interior side yards. This provision would prevent a fence from being constructed that inhibits the opening of an existing door to a dwelling unit on an adjacent property.
- In general, minimum setback requirements prevent this, but there are limited instances where existing structures are very close to the property line, and construction of a fence on the property line could prevent use of an existing entrance/exit door.
- Staff expect that this provision will be applicable in very rare instances.

Recommendations

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the City Council adopt staff findings to amend Title 20 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, as follows:

- A. Text amendment to Title 20, Zoning Code, to amend fence regulations.

Recommended motion: That the City Council **approve** the text amendment to amend fence regulations.

Chapter 550 related to the Zoning Code:
Development Standards

