

Do I need to get a building permit for a fence?

You will need obtain a building permit for any fence regardless of height or construction material. A permit is required when a fence is being replaced; however no permit is required to repair an existing fence.

Why are there fence standards?

The fence standards promote the positive benefits of fences such as privacy and security without negatively affecting the community or endangering public or vehicle safety. These standards apply to walls, fences, trellises, arbors and screens of all types.

Can I have razor wire or an electric fence?

Barbed, Constantine or razor wire fencing is not allowed with the City of Spokane, except in the RA (Residential Agriculture) zone, where up to three strands of barbed wire are allowed for agricultural uses. Electric fences are only allowed in the RA zone, and then the use is permitted for the containment of livestock only. Commercial and industrial zones allow barbed wire subject to the conditions listed in SMC 17C.

Where can the fence be located and how high can it be?

Fences up to forty-two inches high are allowed in required front setbacks.

A six foot fence can start at the end of the front yard setback. Your front setback is determined by averaging the building setback of the homes on either side of your lot. In no case does your six-foot fence need to be set back more than twenty feet from the property line, however it cannot be any closer than fifteen feet to the front property line.

In some cases a front yard adjoins a rear yard of an adjacent lot. In that case the fence must be either forty-two inches high or less, or may be placed on a diagonal of the yards. Some of these guidelines can be hard to understand so please know that Planning Services staff will be happy to assist you in determining where your fence can be located on your property.

Can the fence be placed at the edge of the sidewalk?

The edge of the sidewalk is typically still within the public right-of-way. Any structure placed in the right-of-way is subject to the height requirement for the adjoining setback and must have an approved covenant (Fence Encroachment) signed at the time of permit application.

A fence can never be closer than twelve feet to the curb of an arterial street. On a residential street, the fence may be placed at the back edge of the sidewalk. If there is no sidewalk, the fence needs to be set seven feet back from the curb.

What is a clear view triangle?

A clear view triangle is the area at the intersection of two streets that needs to remain unobstructed to ensure pedestrian and vehicle safety. Any fencing located within the clear view triangle needs to be three feet high (36 inches) or less. Landscaping needs to be below 2 ½ feet (30 inches) high to allow for growth.

There are three types of clear view triangles:

- A triangle having sides of fifty feet measured along the curb line of each intersecting residential street.
- A triangle having a fifteen-foot side measured along the curb line of the residential street and a seventy-five foot side along the curb line of the intersecting arterial street. When the arterial street has a speed limit of thirty-five miles per hour, the triangle has a side along such arterial of one hundred twenty-two feet.
- A triangle having sides of seven feet measured along the right-of-way line of an alley and the inside line of the sidewalk, or if there is no sidewalk, a line seven feet inside the curb line.

Are there special requirements for fencing around pools, hot tubs or ponds?

A body of water eighteen inches or deeper must be enclosed by a fence which will make the pool or water feature enclosed and inaccessible by children.

The pool enclosure must be at least four-feet high and may be a fence, wall, building or other structure approved by the building department. If the enclosure is a woven wire fence, it is required to be built to discourage climbing. No opening, except a door or gate may exceed four inches in any dimension.

Any door or gate in the enclosure, except when part of the occupied dwelling unit, must have self-closing and self-locking equipment to keep the enclosure secure. In accordance with the 2006 International Residential code, any latch on the outside of the door or gate must be at least fifty-four inches above ground.

For more information contact:

Planning Services Department
3rd Floor, City Hall, 808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
Spokane, Washington 99201
(509) 625-6060
www.spokaneplanning.org