

ALTOONA

FENCES, WALLS, AND HEDGES



General Regulations

- Permits are required for new fence installations, existing fence replacements, and fence relocations. Minimal spot repair of fences, such as replacing a broken or warped picket for maintenance, does not require a permit. Permits are also not required for “invisible” pet fences.
- Property owners listed as title holders per the Polk County Assessor are allowed to obtain fence permits. Any other entity obtaining a fence permit must be a contractor currently registered through Iowa Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing. Fences on rental properties require written owner permission if applicant is not the property owner.
- Fence installations require final inspections by a City inspector. It is the homeowner's duty to call 515-957-5128 to schedule a final inspection when fence installation is complete.
- Neither barbed wire fencing or similar product nor electric fencing shall be constructed, placed, or maintained.
- Fences and walls shall not exceed 6’ in height in residential districts or 10’ in height in commercial/industrial districts. Height restrictions apply depending upon placement on the lot.
- Posts, supporting rails, and other such supporting elements shall be on and face the property upon which the fence is located, while the “good side” of the fence shall face outward. Alternating pickets/shadowbox fences are allowed, as well as design fences.
- Confirming property lines, buried utilities, easements, restrictive covenants, and association requirements are strictly the responsibility of the owner and/or contractor. Prior to the placement of a fence, please check all covenants to verify the size, type, location, and intended materials are acceptable and allowed for your property. The City does not keep restrictive covenants on file; copies of restrictive covenants are available through the Polk County Recorder. Contact Info: recorder@polkcountyiowa.gov or 515-286-3160.
- The information herein is not intended for swimming pool barrier requirements. See the Swimming Pools & Hot Tubs Handout for pool barrier information.

Easements

- An *easement* gives another party the legal right to access or utilize a specific portion of your property for a designated purpose. Typical easements include such uses as public utilities, drainage, storm, sanitary, landscaping, gas, access/ingress, and electric. While the easement grants another party rights to access, install, maintain, and perform repair work on the infrastructure within the easement, the property owner still holds fee title to the land and can use it for purposes that do not interfere with the easement. As such, permanent structures are not allowed in easements.
- Fences within easements are inherently at risk, and any cost associated with removal therefrom for purposes related to the easement shall be borne by the property owner.
- Drainage/flowage easements aid stormwater management in a development. In order to keep heavy rains from flooding houses, some developments are graded to accumulate water in a small ditch that runs along the edge of several properties. Drainage easements are used along these corridors to make sure property owners do not disrupt the intended flow of water. In these easements, a solid fence shall allow for the passage of water under the fence. The City’s recommendation is to allow a 3” clearance between the bottom of the fence and the final grade. Any fence found to be blocking water flow is subject to removal at owner expense.
- Most properties have one or more easements, which can often be found on the plat and are legally recorded with the Polk County Recorder. You can search for and download them from the Recorder’s website. You can also use a tool on the City website to start your search for easements on your property by visiting Altoona's Property Information Viewer. Contact our office and we would be happy to assist you with locating easement information for your property.

Ordinance Sections Regulating Fences are Sections 167.01 & 167.02

Property Lines

- It is the responsibility of the property owner to locate property pins. The City of Altoona does not verify or locate property lines or property pins/markers. If you cannot find them, you may need to hire a surveyor.
- It is encouraged that the affected neighbor(s) be consulted if the fence panels will be placed directly on the property line or if two or more fences will be joined structurally. Fence posts shall be kept on the owner's property in their entirety.
- No portion of a fence is allowed to project onto a public right of way.
- You cannot build a fence on a neighboring property. If you believe your neighbor's fence encroaches your property, you may initiate private legal action. The City of Altoona does not arbitrate these private, civil issues.

Iowa One Call

- When you have a project that requires digging, your first step is to contact Iowa One Call. Iowa law requires you contact Iowa One Call at least 48 hours in advance (not including the day of notice) for the locating of underground facilities (electric, gas, water, sewer, telecommunications, etc). Call 811, 1-800-292-8989, or file your locate requests online at www.iowaonecall.com. This is a free service.

Allowable Fence, Wall, & Hedge Heights

- Residential rear yard: A fence or wall shall not exceed 6' in height.
- Residential side yard (on a non-corner lot): A fence or wall shall not exceed 6' in height.
- Residential front yard: A fence/wall/hedge located in any front yard or in the street side yard (aka second front yard) of a corner lot shall not exceed 4' in height. For corner lot height exceptions, see below.

Corner Lots

- Corner lots have two front yards. Only if the corner lot **abuts a major street as outlined in City Code 167.02.7** is the lot is allowed to have a 6' tall fence that projects into the second front yard adjacent to the major street. The fence is to be set back 15' from the property line adjacent to the major street and shall not extend closer to the minor street (the street in front of the home) than the rear wall line of the house. One tree and three shrubs must be planted every 25', or major fraction thereof, in the 15' buffer between the property line and the fence for the length of the fence, not for the depth of the lot. See Through Lots below for specific landscaping requirements.

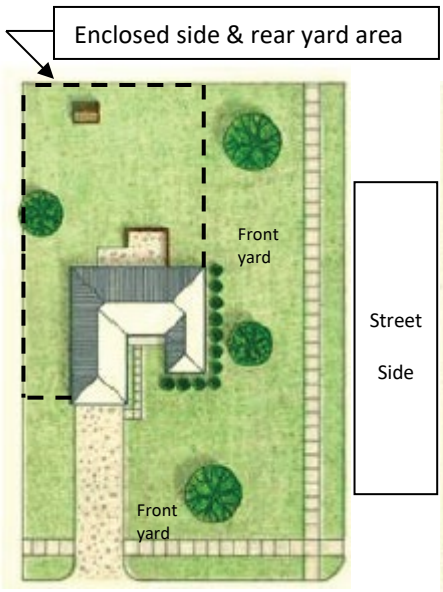
Through Lots

- A *through lot* is generally described as one that has a street in front of and a street behind the lot. Fence installations on through lots in plats recorded after February 7, 2003 have additional landscaping requirements:
  - The rear fence on a through lot cannot be installed on the rear property line; instead, the fence must be installed at a minimum of 15' from the rear property line. Within that 15' buffer shall be planted one hardwood, deciduous tree at least 1.5" in caliper from the City Council-approved tree list and any three shrubs at least 18" to 24" in height for every 25 linear feet, or major fraction thereof, of lot width along the major street or highway. The Approved Trees for Fence Landscaping handout can be found on the permit portal under Permits > Download Handouts.
  - The property owner is required to maintain the trees and shrubs while the fence remains installed.

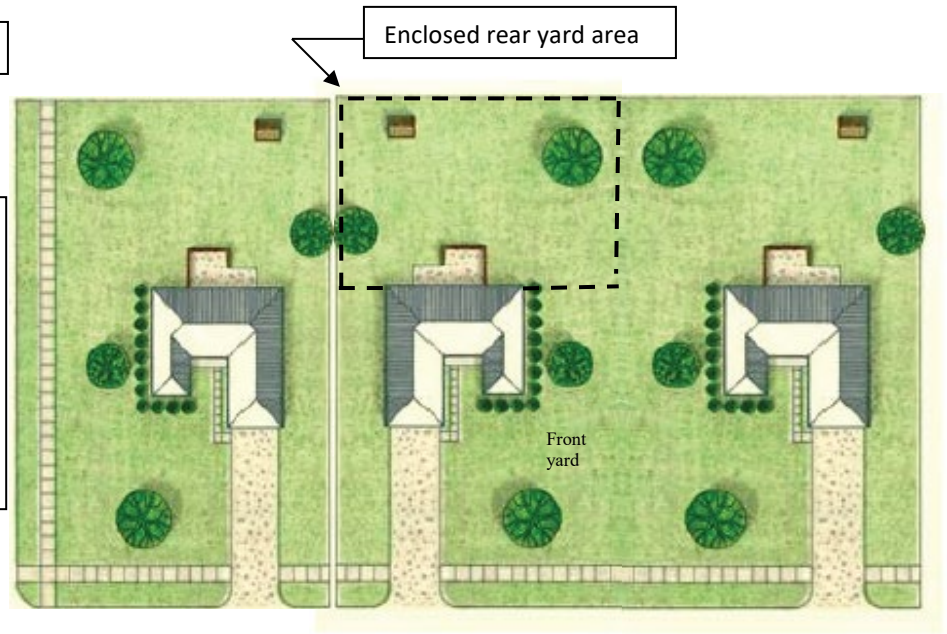
To Apply

- Fence permits can be obtained on our online portal at www.citizenserve.com/altoona. Under Permits, click Apply for a Permit > Fence Permit > Residential or Commercial, depending on lot type.
- You will need to upload an aerial site plan with the fence location drawn/marked in relation to the property lines. An aerial can be obtained online through Altoona's Property Information Viewer. If your property is new construction not yet reflected on the current aerial, please contact our office; we can provide you with the new construction site plan, which will show where the builder intended to place the house on the lot in relation to lot lines and easements. Permits can take up to five business days to process.

TYPICAL CORNER LOT

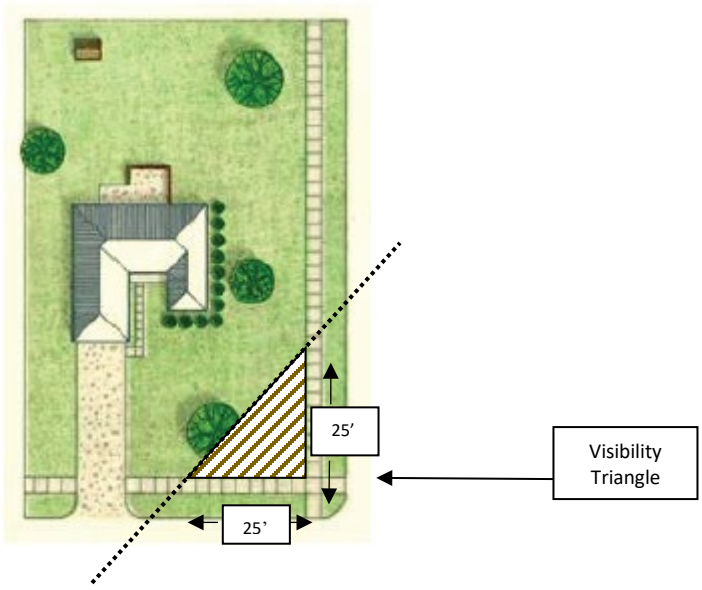


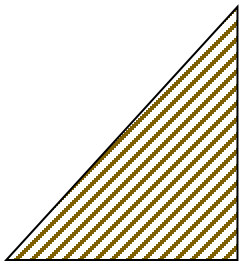
TYPICAL NON-CORNER LOT



Corner Visibility

On residentially-zoned corner lots, nothing can be located, planted, erected, placed, or allowed to grow as to materially impede vision between a height of 2 ½' and 10' above the centerline grades of the intersecting streets in the area bounded by the street lines of such corner lots and a line joining points along said street lines 25' from the point of intersection of right of way lines.





Anything with a height between 30" & 10' above center of street is considered a violation.