



TO: Development Services Customers

SUBJECT: **INFORMATION BULLETIN 223**  
Residential and Commercial Fences

DATE: May 18, 2016

CREATED BY: Plan Review Division

---

**Purpose:**

As a customer service initiative, the Development Services Department (DSD) has created this information bulletin to describe the process and the minimum requirements for obtaining residential or commercial fence permits. This bulletin defines, clarifies, and sets specific requirements and guidelines for both DSD customers and DSD employees. Certain items are required to be submitted to DSD for review and other items are responsibility of the property owner.

Fence installations and modifications typically impact a variety of city divisions including: Building Plan Review, Code, Traffic, Fire, Tree Protection, Historic, and Zoning. Therefore, it is highly recommended that customers consult with a professional fencing contractor that is familiar with City Ordinance Section 35-514 of the Unified Development Code and consult with the appropriate city division when permitting fences.

**Scope:**

The permitting process for fences applies to **new** fence construction and installation within the City limits. A permit for an existing fence is required when the proposed fence replacement or repairs exceed 25% of the length of the existing fence. Fences installed prior to permitting will be subject to double permit penalty fees and will still need to comply with the requirements for new fences.

**I. Construction Materials**

Residential and commercial fences shall be made of wood, chain link, stone, rock, concrete block, pre-cast concrete panels, masonry brick, decorative wrought iron, or other materials which are of similar durability.

Fences shall not be made of cast-off, secondhand, or items not originally intended to be used for constructing or maintaining a fence. Fences shall not be made of plywood less than 5/8 inch

thickness, low grade plywood, particle board, paper, visqueen plastic, plastic tarp, razor wire, sheet metal, roll metal, and corrugated metal, or other similar materials.

**II. Residential Fences Requirements**

The [Residential Fence Permit application](#) should be used when fences will be installed on a lot being used for a single family residential dwelling, two family residential dwelling (duplex), or three family residential dwelling (triplex), whether zoned residential or commercial property. Fences located within Historic, corridor overlay or a neighborhood conservation districts are required to validate compliance with these provisions prior to permit issuance. Residential fence permits shall include the following submittal documents:

- ❖ Residential Fence Permit Application
- ❖ Basic Site Plan, to include location of existing structures
- ❖ Location and specific heights for each newly proposed/modified fence section

A copy of neither a recorded plat nor platting is required for permitting. However, the applicant is responsible for verifying that their new fence will not be installed over a property line into someone else’s property. Fences installed on corner lots, alley intersections, or street intersections are subject to additional requirements regarding allowing motorist the ability to see other approaching cars. These Clear Vision requirements will be verified by the Traffic Section prior to issuance of a residential fence permit and must comply with the Unified Development Code.

An existing single family residential dwelling, two family residential dwelling (duplex), or three family residential dwelling (triplex) built on one property will be exempt from the tree preservation requirements and trees may be removed by the property or home owner per City Ordinance UDC Section 35-523 (a)(4).

The Unified Development Code limits the heights of residential fences. These limitations are based on where the fence will be located in relation to the structure, design methods, and the type of construction materials used. The following table outlines the maximum heights permitted for residential fences located within the setback line. Residential fence inspections will not be required. However, the Code Enforcement Division may issue a citation for a fence that is not built in accordance with city requirements.

**Table of Heights  
Maximum Permitted Fence Heights**

<i>Permitted Use</i>	<i>Front Yard</i>	<i>Side Yard</i>	<i>Rear Yard</i>
Single-Family <a href="#">or Mixed Residential</a> Use	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined or predominantly open fence Except as provided by (b)(2)	6'0"	6'0"

### **III. Commercial Fence Requirements**

The [Commercial Fence Permit application](#) should be used for fences when they are not installed with the use of single family residential dwelling, two family residential dwelling (duplex), or three family residential dwelling (triplex). Fences located within Historic, corridor overlay or a neighborhood conservation districts are required to validate compliance with these provisions prior to permit issuance. Commercial fence permits shall include the following submittal documents:

- ❖ Commercial Fence Application
- ❖ Building plans (include fence and footing details)
- ❖ Two copies of the Site Plan detailing existing structures, easement location, gates
- ❖ Location and specific heights for each newly proposed/modified fence section
- ❖ Tree Affidavit

Typically, platting is not required for the permitting of a commercial fence. However, the applicant is ultimately responsible for verifying that their fence will not be installed over property lines into another's property. Fences are required to be engineered by a Registered Professional Engineer licensed by the State of Texas when materials of stone, rock, brick, masonry brick or CMU fences over six feet are used or for fences over eight feet for other lighter or open materials.

Commercial fences that will block a driveway or access to a property shall be installed with a minimum setback, with a turnaround provided in order to prevent car stacking at gate entrances that might interfere with street traffic. Generally, the gate must be set back at least 20-feet from a two lane roadway or set back at least 40-feet from a 4-lane roadway. A very high volume and higher speed roadways may require more than 40-feet. If there is a card reader or some other device is used to open the gate, the 20 and 40-foot distances are measured from the curb-line to the card reader rather than to the face of the gate. These installation requirements will be verified by the Traffic Review Section prior to issuance of commercial fence permits. Fences installed on corner lots, alley intersections, or street intersections are subject to additional requirements related to motorist being able to see other traffic. These Clear Vision requirements will also be verified by the Traffic Review Section prior to issuance of a commercial fence permit.

All commercial fences and gates installed across a fire lane must comply with the Fire Department requirements for emergency access. Fences may not restrict access across lots by the Fire Department within a Fire Lane. Any installation of fences crossing a fire lane at an entrance to the development will require preliminary coordination with the Fire Department to ensure minimum compliance requirements. If a gate at a driveway entrance that serves as a fire lane is being proposed that would block the driveway into a property, then the gate needs to meet the following requirements.

- ❖ If a gate is blocking a fire lane, a Knox Box or Knox Pad-lock is required to be installed on the gate which allows the Fire Department to open the gate and gain

access to the property for emergency events. Contact the Fire Department at 1901 S Alamo for a required Knox Box permit and inspection requests.

- ❖ The gate must have a minimum 20-foot clear opening for passage of a fire truck on a single lane driveway. For a divided two way driveway, the gate width shall not have an opening less than 14-foot clear.
- ❖ Gates shall be a swinging or sliding type.

Trees on any non-residential lot are protected and may not be removed, damaged, or the root protection zoned disturbed during construction of a commercial fence without a separate permit and approval. A Tree Affidavit and or a Tree Permit Application is required to be submitted with each commercial fence application whether there are trees in the vicinity or not.

<http://docsonline.sanantonio.gov/FileUploads/dsd/TreeAffidavit.pdf>

The Unified Development Code limits the heights of commercial fences. These limitations are based on where the fence will be located in relation to the structure, design methods, and the type of construction materials that will be used. The following table outlines the maximum heights permitted for commercial fences.

**Table of Heights  
Maximum Permitted Fence Heights**

<i>Permitted Use</i>	<i>Front Yard</i>	<i>Side Yard</i>	<i>Rear Yard</i>
Multi-Family Use (see also subsection 35-514(f) below)	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined or predominantly open fence	6'0"	6'0"
Commercial & Office Use	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined or predominantly open fence	6'0"	6'0"
Industrial Use (Footnote 1)	8'0" (Footnote 1)	8'0"	8'0"
Governmental Facilities, Churches, Schools, Swimming Pools, Storm water Management Facilities, Parks (Public property, includes parks, require HDRC review)	8'0"	8'0"	8'0"
Vacant Lots, Parking Lots	3'0" solid fence 6'0" combined or predominantly open (see also subsection 35-514 (b)(3) above)	6'0"	6'0"

Gate equipment installed that requires modifications to existing or new installations of electrical systems may require a licensed/registered electrical contractor to secure a separate electrical permit.

There is no City inspection of fences, however, the Code Enforcement Division may issue a citation for a fence that is not built in accordance with city requirements.

#### **IV. Administrative Exceptions and Other Uses**

Fence variances for the use of barbed wire or other special requests can be found in Section 35-482 of the Unified Development Code and Information Bulletin 124.

<http://docsonline.sanantonio.gov/FileUploads/dsd/IB124.pdf>

Electrified Fence permitting requirements can be found in Chapter 10 City Code Amendments Article VI Section 10-53(d) and shall be permitted using the Commercial Site Permit Application.

<http://docsonline.sanantonio.gov/FileUploads/dsd/BuildingPermitApplication-site.pdf>

**Summary:** This Information Bulletin is for informational purposes only.

**Prepared by:** Andrew Espinoza, CBO, MCP

**Reviewed by:** Richard Chamberlin, PE

**Authorized by:** Terry Kannawin, Assistant Director



## Residential Fence Permit Application

(For Commercial – See the Commercial Fence Permit Application)

All work must conform to current Building Codes and City Ordinances.

**\*\* Fence repairs equal to 25% or less of the length of the existing fence do not require a fence permit \*\***

Residential retaining walls – complete Site Work Permit Application and see Information Bulletin 171

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Owner Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Fence Height: Front Side Side Rear

**Fence Material Type:** Refer to *IB223 – Commercial Residential Fences* for detailed information on materials and installation requirements

Wood Chain Link Wrought Iron Pre-Cast Concrete Panels  
 Brick Masonry Stone Other:

**Detailed site plan required:**

Must show lot size, location of existing structures, locations of easements, and proposed fence location with height and material of each new/repared fence section. See provided example for assistance.

The following list will help ensure proper permitting and installation verifications by the appropriate City reviewers.

Corner lot	Yes	No	
Historical District	Yes	No	<b>Residential Fence Fee: \$26.50</b>
Flood Zone:	Yes	No	(includes 3% technology fee & 3% Development Services fee)
Vacant lot:	Yes	No	
Overlay or Conservation District	Yes	No	

**\*\* NOTE: If you checked, "Yes" to any of the above, the appropriate City division will need to review your fence permit application prior to permit issuance. Please see Additional Approvals page at end of application. \*\***

<u>Permitted Use</u>	<u>Front Yard</u>	<u>Side Yard</u>	<u>Rear</u>
Single-Family or Mixed Residential Use	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined or predominately open fence	6'0"	6'0"
Vacant Lot	3'0" solid fence 6'0" combined or predominately open fence	6'0"	6'0"

Contractor/Homeowner: \_\_\_\_\_ Contractor ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Registered Lic. Holder: \_\_\_\_\_ City Lic. Reg #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Authorized Agent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ COSA ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Escrow: Yes No Other ID# on permit \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing the application as the home owner or contractor, I certify that I have read and understand the requirements for fence installations. I further certify that the information I have provided is true and correct and hereby agree that if the permit is issued all provisions of the City Ordinance will be complied with whether herein specified or not and that compliance with the Unified Building Code is required. I understand that the permit belongs to the property owner and I am an authorized agent.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# PLOT (SITE) PLAN

(SAMPLE ONLY)

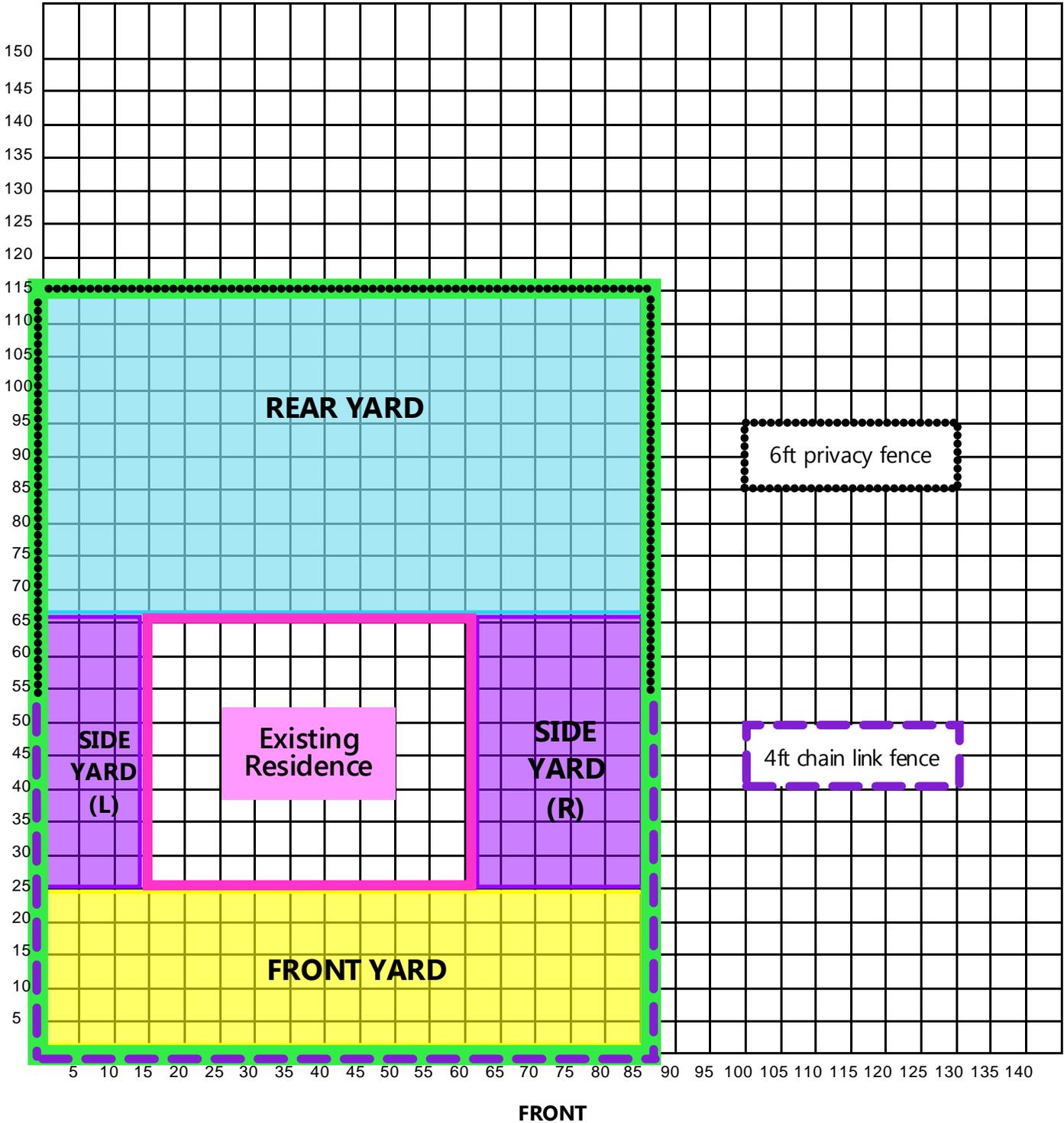
Address:

Lot:

Block:

NCB:

**REAR**



I certify that the above plot plan shows all improvements on this property and that there will be no construction over easements. I also certify that I will build in compliance with the UDC and the 2015 IRC.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Additional Approvals

(Residential Fence Permit Application)

If "Yes" was checked to any of the following on the Residential Fence Permit application, listed division approvals are required before a permit can be issued.

<p><b><u>Corner Lot</u></b></p>  <p>Traffic Division review</p>	<p>Approval Signature/Stamp:</p>   <p>Date: _____</p>
<p><b><u>Historical District</u></b></p>  <p>Office of Historic Preservation review</p>	<p>Approval Signature/Stamp:          (Historic Certificate of Appropriateness acceptable)</p>   <p>Date: _____</p>
<p><b><u>Flood Zone:</u></b></p>  <p>Transportation &amp; Capital Improvements (Storm water) review</p>	<p>Approval Signature/Stamp:</p>   <p>Date: _____</p>
<p><b><u>Vacant Lot:</u></b></p>  <p>Tree Preservation Division review</p>	<p>Approval Signature/Stamp:</p>   <p>Date: _____</p>
<p><b><u>Overlay or Conservation District</u></b></p>  <p>Zoning Division review</p>	<p>Approval Signature/Stamp:</p>   <p>Date: _____</p>



## Commercial Fence Permit Application

(For Residential – See the Residential Fence Permit Application)

All work must conform to current Building Codes and City Ordinances.

Commercial retaining walls – complete Site Work Permit Application and see Information Bulletin 171

Electrified security fences and barriers – complete Building Permit Application and see Chapter 10 City Amendments 10-53(d)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Owner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Fence Height:    Front                      Side                      Side                      Rear                      Fence Valuation (Materials + Labor): \$

**Fence Material Type:** Refer to *IB223 – Commercial Residential Fences* for detailed information on materials and installation requirements

Wood                      Stone                      Wrought Iron                      Masonry                      Chain Link                      Brick  
 Pre-Cast Concrete Panels                      Other :                      (Razor wire is prohibited)

**Submittal Documents Required:**

- ❖ Two (2) copies of the building plans including details on fence and footings
- ❖ Site plan detailing existing structures, easement locations, gates, fence locations and heights
- ❖ Tree Affidavit/Tree Permit Application

The following list will help ensure proper permitting and installation verifications by the appropriate City reviewers.

Corner lot	Yes	No	Historical District	Yes	No
Flood Plain	Yes	No	Gates	Yes	No
Overlay or Conservation District	Yes	No	Salvage Yard	Yes	No

Note: If you checked, "Yes" to any of the above questions, the appropriate City division will need to review your fence permit application prior to permit issuance. Please see Additional Approvals page at end of application.

Masonry, stone, brick, CMU over 6'                      Yes\*                      No  
 Wood, chain link, wrought iron over 8'                      Yes\*                      No                      \* If Yes: stamped and sealed engineered plans required

**Barbed wire fence:** Must attach approved Administrative Variance per IB 124. See Zoning division for copy or additional information.

<u>Permitted Use</u>	<u>Front Yard</u>	<u>Side Yard</u>	<u>Rear</u>
Multi-Family Use	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined fence or predominantly open	6'0"	6'0"
Commercial and Office Use	3'0" solid fence 5'0" combined fence or predominantly open	6'0"	6'0"
Industrial Use	8'0"	8'0"	8'0"
Government Facilities, Churches, Schools, Swimming Pools, Storm Water Management Facilities and Public Parks	8'0"	8'0"	8'0"
Vacant Lots, Parking Lots	3'0" solid fence 6'0" combined or predominately open	6'0"	6'0"

Contractor/Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Lic. Holder: \_\_\_\_\_

City Lic. Reg #: \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Agent: \_\_\_\_\_

COSA ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

Escrow:                      Y                      N

Other ID# on permit: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing the application as the contractor, I certify that I have read and understand the requirements for commercial fence installations. I further certify that the information I have provided is true and correct and hereby agree that if the permit is issued all provisions of the City Ordinance will be complied with whether herein specified or not and that compliance with the Unified Building Code is required. I understand that the permit belongs to the property owner and I am an authorized agent.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Additional Approvals**

(Commercial Fence Permit Application)

If "Yes" was checked to any of the following on the Commercial Fence Permit application, listed division approvals are required before a permit can be issued.

<b><u>Corner Lot Gates:</u></b>  Traffic Division review	Approval Signature/Stamp:   Date: _____
<b><u>Historical District:</u></b>  Office of Historic Preservation review	Approval Signature/Stamp: (Historic Certificate of Appropriateness acceptable)   Date: _____
<b><u>Flood Zone:</u></b>  Transportation & Capital Improvements (Storm water) review	Approval Signature/Stamp:   Date: _____
<b><u>Overlay or Conservation District, Salvage Yard:</u></b>  Zoning Division review	Approval Signature/Stamp:   Date: _____