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**City of Oakley Zoning Assistant - Residential Fences**  
**Making Sense of the Residential Fence Code**

Regulations for residential fencing within the City of Oakley are included in [Section 9.1.1110 of the Oakley Municipal Code](#). The purpose of the Zoning Assistant is to provide narrative explanations and additional information to specific portions of the Zoning Ordinance that commonly apply to residential property improvements. Residents are encouraged to refer to this Zoning Assistant as a supplement to the code. Please contact the [Planning Division](#) directly if further explanation or additional answers are sought.

Oakley Municipal Code	Explanation and Additional Information
<p><b>9.1.1110 Fences and Other Structures.</b></p> <p>A. Residential Fence Regulations:</p> <p>1. Standard Lots. In residential zoning districts R-6 to R-15 with a front setback of 15 to 20 feet, open and closed fences and solid forms of landscaping shall be subject to the following</p>	<p>Residential zoning districts are often labeled “R – (number).” This number usually represents the minimum lot size in 1,000 sf. allowed in that district. (E.g. R-6 allows for minimum 6,000 sf. lots). The “front setback” is the minimum distance the main home must be from the front property line.</p>

<p>limitations:</p> <p>i.) Between the front property line and the front yard setback line, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 3 feet in height;</p> <p>ii.) Outside the front yard setback but within the front yard, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 6 feet in height. Open forms of landscaping, including heavy growths of trees, may exceed 6 feet in height in the front yard;</p> <p>iii.) From the front yard setback line to the back property line, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 7 feet in height. Fences over 6 feet in height shall require a building permit;</p> <p>iv.) On lots located in a cul-de-sac, from the front yard setback to the front property line, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 3 feet in height;</p> <p>v.) If a fence crosses a driveway located between the front of the residence and the front property line, any gate in the fence for</p>	<p>Front property lines are hardly ever located at the back of the sidewalk. On most residential streets, the front property line is located approximately 10 feet behind the face of the curb. This means there is usually an area within the landscaped portion of a front yard that is technically within the public right-of-way and fences are not allowed within that area. Maintenance of the landscaping, sidewalk, and trees is still the responsibility of the property owner adjacent to that right of way area.</p> <p>(To learn more about where your front property line is located, you can contact the City of Oakley <a href="#">Public Works Department</a> at (925) 625-7000).</p> <p>“Outside the front yard setback but within the front yard” means between the house and the setback line in the case the house is set further back on the lot. (Note: This does not include area outside of the front property line.)</p> <p>This is the same as part A.1.i, but is separately called out for formatting consistency, because the standards for cul-de-sacs are not similar for the larger lots as shown in parts A.2.i and A.2.iv.</p> <p>This is to allow vehicles to remain off of the street and sidewalk while a gate opens.</p>
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<p>vehicular access shall be located 20 feet from the front property line, regardless of the height of the fence and gate; and</p> <p>vi.) The addition of decorative entry features to a fence or solid landscaping form shall not result in a total height in excess of 8 feet. Decorative entry features shall not be wider than 4 feet.</p> <p>2. Large lots. In Residential Zoning Districts (R-20 to R-40) with a required front yard setback of at least 25 feet, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall be subject to the following limitations:</p> <p>i.) Between the front property line and the front yard setback line, closed fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 3 feet in height. Open fences in the same location shall not exceed 7 feet in height and shall comply with fencing guidelines contained in the Residential Design Guidelines, Estate Neighborhoods, and shall be subject to the review and approval</p>	<p>The 4 foot wide standard is a total for all features on a single lot. An example of a decorative entry feature may be a stucco column with a light or a statue. Ornamental spikes on a wrought iron fence and similar fence styles are not considered decorative features (I.e. It is not the intent of this allowance to install an 8 foot tall wrought iron fence and individually count the width of each post up to 4 feet as a decorative feature).</p> <p>Note that this subsection applies to “large lots”, and references the R-20 and R-40 Districts. There may be lots of a 20,000 square feet or more that are not zoned R-20 or R-40, rather R-6, R-7, etc. Although larger in size, those lots would be subject to part A.1.</p> <p>Notice that taller open fences are allowed in the front yard setback of the R-20 and R-40 zoned lots. Also notice the front yard setback is 25 feet, rather than 15-20 feet.</p> <p>The Residential Guidelines (Estate Neighborhoods) states fencing materials may include wood, wrought iron, or masonry. Rustic styles, such as split rail or three-rail fences may also be acceptable.</p>
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<p>of the Community Development Director;</p> <p>ii.) Outside the front yard setback but within the front yard, fences and solid landscaping forms shall not exceed 7 feet in height. Open forms of landscaping, including heavy growths of trees, may exceed 7 feet in height in the front yard;</p> <p>iii.) From the front yard setback line to the back property line, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 7 feet in height. Fences over 6 feet in height shall require a building permit;</p> <p>iv.) On lots located in a cul-de-sac, from the front yard setback to the front property line, fences and solid forms of landscaping shall not exceed 3 feet in height;</p> <p>v.) If a fence crosses a driveway within the front setback adjacent to a public right of way, any gate in the fence for vehicular access shall not open outward toward the street; and</p> <p>vi.) The addition of decorative entry features to a fence or solid landscaping form</p>	<p>As with the R-6 through R-15 Districts, fences on cul-de-sac lots in R-20 and R-40 are limited to a lower height in required front yards.</p>
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<p>shall not result in a total height in excess of 8 feet. Decorative entry features shall not be wider than 4 feet.</p> <p>3. Environmental Mitigation. The height of a fence may be established upon approval by the Planning Commission or City Council of the mitigation measures of a mitigated negative declaration or environmental impact report to mitigate adverse noise or visual impacts.</p> <p>4. Driveway Visibility Triangle: The visibility triangle of a residential driveway crossing a residential street property line may not be blocked by a fence or solid form of landscaping above a height of three feet (3'). The visibility triangle is made up of the following three lines: 1) a 15 foot line along the back of sidewalk starting where the edge of driveway intersects the sidewalk (Line A-B in Figure 1); 2) a five foot line along the side of the driveway starting at the same point the sidewalk line starts (Line A-C in Figure 1); and 3) a line connecting the two end points of the sidewalk line and the driveway line (Line B-C in Figure 1). Where another street intersects the sidewalk less than 15 feet from the driveway, that point shall be used for the end point of the sidewalk line. Where there is no</p>	<p>“Environmental Mitigation” is adopted through the California Environmental Quality Act, which uses thresholds to determine the significance of impacts. Impacts are identified during analysis of a discretionary land use project, and mitigation is adopted in conjunction with project approval.</p> <p>The main purpose of the Driveway Visibility Triangle is prevent situations that may block views of pedestrians using the sidewalk. Figure 1, the diagram in the Zoning Code, is included at the end of this document.</p>
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<p>sidewalk, the edge of pavement shall be used as the appropriate measuring point.</p> <p>5. Fence height measurement and variation. The height of fences and landscaping forms shall be measured from the highest adjoining grade. When a freestanding fence is constructed on top of a retaining wall because of a grade differential, and if building permits are issued for the combined freestanding fence/retaining wall, the fence height measurement shall not include the height of the retaining component. If a solid landscaping form is attached to a fence located in a residential front yard setback, its height may exceed the limits imposed by this ordinance by ten percent (10%).</p> <p>6. Fence Materials.</p> <p>i.) Open fences in the front yards of properties smaller than one acre may consist of wrought iron, split rails, wooden pickets, and similar designs and materials. On properties one acre and larger, open front yard fences may additionally be made of chain link. If such a front yard chain link fence contains slats of vinyl or other materials, it shall be treated as a closed</p>	<p>As an example, if your backyard is higher than your neighbor's backyard and the fence is located at the top of the slope or a retaining wall, the fence height would be measured from your yard. While this may result in total height above 7 feet for your neighbor (fence plus retaining wall, or fence plus appearance of slope), you would still be allowed a 7 foot tall fence.</p> <p>As defined in the Zoning Ordinance, "Open Fences" contain at least 2/3 open space. Notice the materials here are tied to the property size rather than the zoning district. Also, in the event where the zoning ordinance and Design Guidelines are inconsistent, the Zoning Ordinance takes precedence.</p>
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<p>fence;</p> <p>ii.) On properties smaller than one acre, chain link may be used in side and rear yard fences between the front of the residence and the rear property line, in front yards if it contains slats of vinyl or other materials, and in the construction of front yard gates. Chain link shall be considered an open fence material, unless it contains slats of vinyl or other materials, in which case it shall be treated as a closed fence;</p> <p>iii.) Fences on residential properties may not contain barbed wire or razor wire or any variation thereof;</p> <p>iv.) Fences adjacent to public right of way shall be constructed of materials that resist decay and deterioration; and</p> <p>v.) Any fences constructed after adoption of this section of the code shall comply with the fencing provisions in the Residential Design Guidelines.</p> <p>(Sec. 2, Ordinance No. 13-08, adopted July 8, 2008)</p>	<p>Barbed/razor-wire is not allowed within any residential district. AL (Agricultural Limited) is a residential district. This prohibition applies to all residential properties as well, even those that are not residentially zoned, but grandfathered in.</p>
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Summary of Residential Fence Regulations					
Minimum Front Yard Setback	Maximum Height of Open Fences Between Front Yard Setback Line and Front Property Line	Maximum Height of Closed Fences between Front Yard Setback Line and Front Property Line	Maximum Height of Fences between Front Yard Setback Line and Back Property Line	Maximum Dimensions of Decorative Entry Features for All Fence Types	Minimum Distances of Fences from Front Property Line if Crossing Driveway
20 feet	3 feet	3 feet	7 feet <sup>1</sup>	8 x 4 feet	20 feet
25 feet	7 feet <sup>2</sup>	3 feet	7 feet <sup>1</sup>	8 x 4 feet	N/A
<sup>1</sup> Fences higher than 6 feet require a building permit.					
<sup>2</sup> Materials and design require approval of the Community Development Director.					

Figure 1. – Driveway Visibility Triangle Diagram

