



MEMORANDUM

To: St. Anthony Village Planning Commission
From: Stephen Grittman, City Planner
Date: Planning Commission Meeting – July 19, 2022
NAC Project No. 323.01 – 22.01
Request: Request for an amendment to the City Code related to fence height
Property Address: NA
Property PID: NA

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff has reviewed for consistency with related codes, including the building code, and practical issues related to construction styles, permitting, city review, and common building practices, both in St. Anthony and nearby communities. Staff recommends approval of the attached amendment increasing maximum height of residential fences, and establishing clearer standards for measurement.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Applicant: Mark Tomas
Address: 3308 Skycroft Drive

Deadline for Agency Action: Application Complete Date:
60 Days: August 20, 2022
Letter Sent:
120 Days: October 19, 2022

ANALYSIS

1. Background

The applicant is proposing that the City amend the current fence regulations to allow an increase in residential fence height. The amendment would alter fence height throughout the zoning districts or land uses to which it is effective. In this case, the relevant land uses are single family residential parcels in the R-1 zoning district.

The current fence ordinance has a number of issues related to permit processing, code consistency (including consistency with building code), and technical or practical aspects including measurement. The City's Code Review Committee has separately been contemplating a series of amendments to the fence regulations for these reasons. While a number of those amendments are likely to come forward with other code amendment recommendations, this resident is seeking amendments to the height regulations as a separate application. The applicant's request specifically relates to the section of the fence code relating to height. That section reads as follows:

(C) Fence size. All fence and wall heights shall be measured from the finished grade, except that the height of a railing, wall, fence, or screening affixed to a deck constructed on the ground but raised above ground level, will be measured from the elevation of the raised deck for that portion which is affixed to the raised deck. The grade at the fence line shall not be altered in any way that artificially increases the maximum permitted height of the fence.

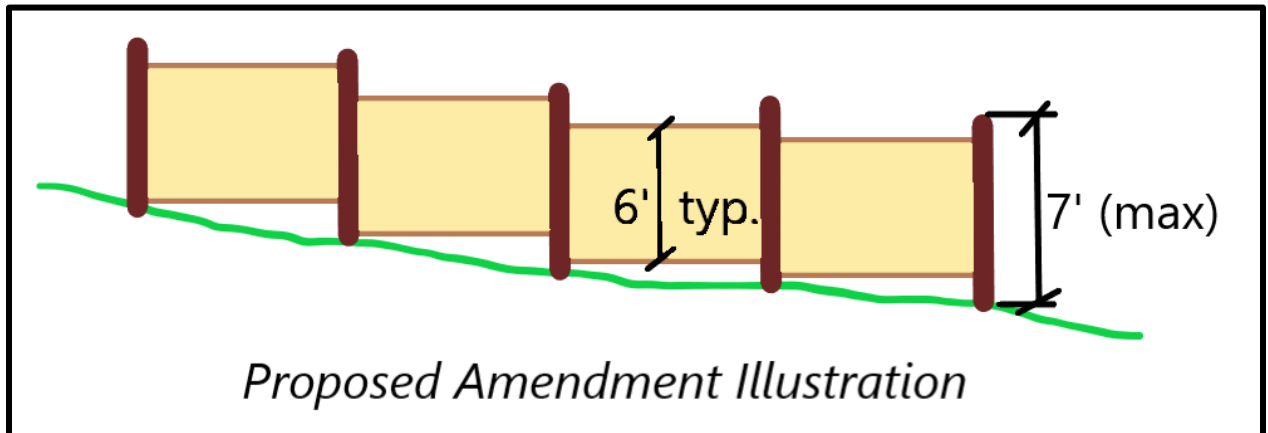
(1) Residential Uses.

a. Front Yards. No fence shall be over four (4) feet in height within a required front yard setback.

b. Side Yards. No fence shall be over six (6) feet in height. A fence up to six (6) feet in height shall be allowed on corner lots along the corner side behind the nearest front corner of the principal building.

c. Rear Yards. No fence shall be over six (6) feet in height.

When this code was written, fences of more than 6 feet in height required a building permit, with review and permitting through the Building Official. The revised building code has changed this height to 7 feet. One of the reasons for this change is an acknowledgement that fence construction often occurs over uneven terrain, and a fence that uses 6 feet tall material (a commonly available dimension) is often a few inches more than 6 feet above the ground below it. Moreover, many types of fence construction include post design where the tops of the posts extend a few inches above the top line of the fence panel.



These conditions have been prevalent for many years. Technically, such fences were required to obtain building permits, be reviewed by building inspection staff, and be

inspected by the building official. In practice, this was not happening, whether in St. Anthony or most any other locality when these variations were only a few inches above the 6 foot mark. As such, the writers of the Building Code amended that code from 6 feet to the 7 feet now in force.

The taller dimension accommodates the variations noted (terrain and post design), with the understanding that the majority of such fences utilize fence panels of 6 feet (see illustration above).

To remedy this conflict, staff believes that an amendment to the existing code is appropriate. Although the applicant has suggested that the fence height be increased to 6 feet, 6 inches, staff recommends the 7 feet dimension used by the Building Code, and thus the following amendments are proposed, with the changes shown in **redline**:

*(C) Fence size. All fence and wall heights shall be measured from the finished grade, except that the height of a railing, wall, fence, or screening affixed to a deck constructed on the ground but raised above ground level, will be measured from the elevation of the raised deck for that portion which is affixed to the raised deck. The grade at the fence line shall not be altered in any way that artificially increases the maximum permitted height of the fence. **Required fence height shall be measured and applied only at each post, and no section of fence between posts shall exceed the height of the lower of the two posts between which such fence is constructed.***

(1) Residential Uses.

- a. Front Yards. No fence, **fence post, or post cap** shall be over four ~~(4)~~ **feet fifty-two (52) inches** in height within a required front yard setback.*
- b. Side Yards. No fence shall be over ~~six (6)~~ **seven (7)** feet in height. A fence up to ~~six (6)~~ **seven (7)** feet in height shall be allowed on corner lots along the corner side behind the nearest front corner of the principal building.*
- c. Rear Yards. No fence shall be over ~~six (6)~~ **seven (7)** feet in height.*

The applicant notes in his application materials that other nearby communities have amended their fence regulations to make this change, or something similar. These include Columbia Heights, New Brighton, Fridley, and Roseville. It is planning staff's experience that many other communities have adopted similar changes.

On a separate track, there are related amendments that would be relevant to other portions of the fence code, including permitting, and the application of fence height in commercial and industrial areas. Those amendments are expected to accompany other general code updates being proposed by the Code Review Committee.

2. Representative Codes Referenced.

Title XV Land Usage, Chapter 150 Zoning Code, Section §150.70 (Fence Regulations).

3. Criteria for Consideration of a Zoning Amendment. Title XV Land Usage, Chapter 152 Zoning Code, Section §152.242 lists the process the City Council must consider for an amendment.

SUMMARY AND STAFF/PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Application 1. Staff recommends approval of an amendment to the fence regulations as identified in this report, with the following findings:

- A. The current fence regulations related to height are inconsistent with the regulations of the Building Code.
- B. The current fence permitting practices are not consistent with the procedures required by the code
- C. The current height regulations for residential fences do not comport with common construction practices, nor account for inconsistencies in grade or terrain.
- D. The amendment would be consistent with current practice, with the language of the Building Code, and the practices of many other nearby communities.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS

Decision 1. Consideration of an Amendment to Section 150.070.C. related to fence construction and height on residential property.

- 1. Motion to approve the request for an amendment to the fence regulations and direct staff to prepare an ordinance for City Council consideration.**
2. Motion to recommend denial of the amendment as requested. In the event of a recommendation for denial, the Planning Commission must state its findings related to denial.
3. Request Additional Information and Table Action, subject to the submission of additional information from staff and/or applicant.

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A: Application and Supporting Material