

CITY OF RICHMOND



RESIDENTIAL FENCES

GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS

Published by
City of Richmond Planning and Building Services Department



Richmond Fence Regulations

The City of Richmond recognizes the importance of safe and attractive fencing preserving and enhancing neighborhood character. Open fence styles, which allow landscaping to flourish, are better suited to residential neighborhoods than solid fences. Solid fences, which are perceived to increase security, actually reduce public eyes on the street and may provide a haven for criminal activity. Some fences become permanent undesirable physical features of the community disrupting the streetscape of our neighborhoods.

Street fronting fences should not be dominant features within the streetscape, and should be avoided altogether at the front property line. A pleasant neighborhood reflects harmonious relationships among the street improvements, landscaping, and building styles along the entire street frontage.



This brochure provides a summary of the City of Richmond fence standards and design guidelines for residential properties.

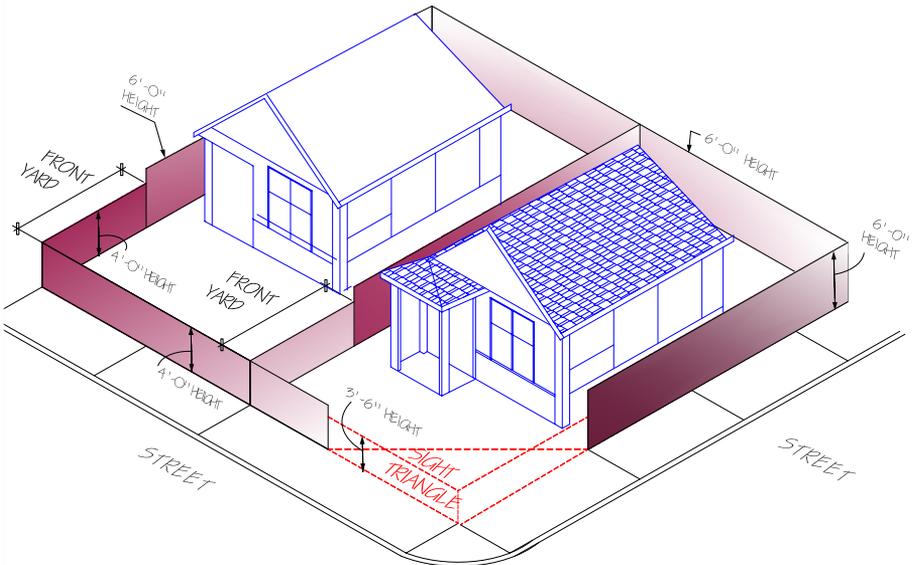


In the City, a fence permit is required to construct a new fence of any height. A building permit is required to construct a fence more than 6 feet in height which may be subject to additional documentation required by the Department of Building Regulations.

An application for a fence permit can be obtained from the Planning Department. It will be approved if it conforms to the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance as specified in the following table:

MAXIMUM HEIGHT PERMITTED

Front Yard	Side Yard	Rear Yard	Within the sight triangle * (see illustration below)
4 feet (48 inches)	6 feet (72 inches)	6 feet (72 inches)	3'-6" (42 inches)



* Richmond Municipal Code Section 14.64.050 – Obstruction to visibility at intersections prohibited.

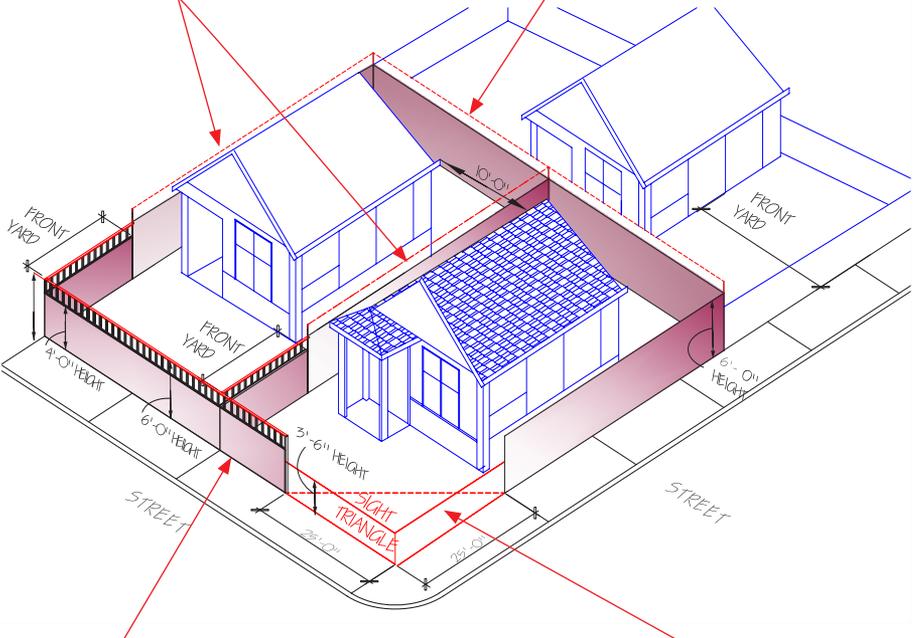


Note that exceptions to any of the above standards are subject to approval of the Zoning Administrator. Exceptions may be granted upon a finding of special circumstances after public noticing, completion of a site visit, and administrative design review.

HEIGHT EXCEPTIONS, SUBJECT TO ZONING ADMINISTRATOR PERMIT APPROVAL

Side Yard: 8 feet (96 inches)
 If both abutting residential structures have at least 10-foot side yard setback, or if a residential parcel abuts a commercial or industrial use.

Rear Yard: 8 feet (96 inches)
 Exception applicable only when rear yard is abutting an interior side yard.



Front Yard: 6 feet (72 inches)
 If nonview-obscuring (not in excess of 50% opacity above 4 feet (48 inches)).

Within the sight triangle

None



Permitted Materials

Wood, metal, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), masonry or other permanent materials. No more than two types of fencing materials shall be used in any fence or wall.

Prohibited Materials

Electrically charged wire, barbed wire and razor wire, chain link (with or without slats or vinyl or other coatings), woven wire mesh (“chicken wire”), welded wire mesh, woven wire (“hog wire”), rope, cable, railroad ties, landscape timbers, utility poles or any other similar materials or materials not specifically manufactured for permanent fencing.

Posts and Supporting Members

All fence posts and related supporting members of the fence shall be erected so that the finished side or sides of the fence shall be facing the adjacent property or public right-of-way.

Painting, Staining, and Corrosion Resistance

All wood fences should be painted or stained, except when constructed of the heartwood of a decay-resistant species such as redwood or cedar. All ferrous metal fences, except hot-dipped galvanized steel should be painted with a three-coat system consisting of a corrosion-resistant primer and two finish coats, with preparation and application as recommended by the manufacturer. All other metal fences, including aluminum hot-dipped galvanized steel, should be painted with at least a two-coat system intended for that purpose.



Historic Structures

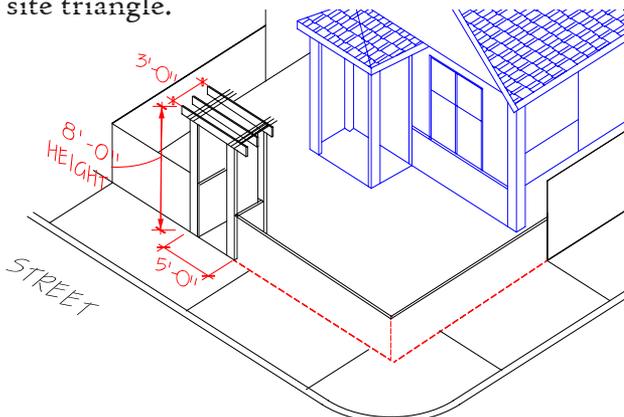
All fences in parcels with historic resources shall be consistent with the scale and character of the buildings and shall require administrative design review regardless of their height.

Wildlife Fences

An 8-foot tall vertical woven wire fence provides optimum protection. Another option is a 4-5 foot high fence, 7-strand, high-tensile, slanted deer fence. This fence, though short in height, spreads to approximately 6 feet horizontally, with individual wires spaced 12 inches apart. It slants up, an orientation that appears to provide a psychological, as well as physical, deterrent for deer.

Gates, Doorbells, and Addresses

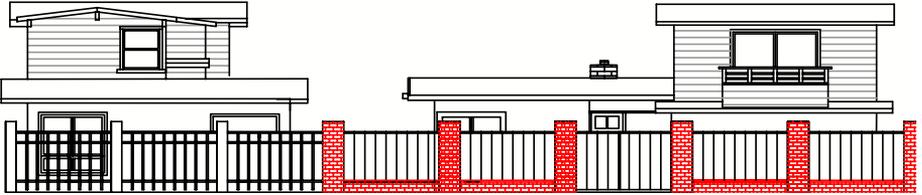
Entry features over front yard gates (e.g., open latticed arbors and trellises), not exceeding 8' in height, 3' in depth or 5' in width are allowed when located within the required front yard but outside the site triangle.



Gates with locks that are routinely locked shall be equipped with a doorbell device capable of notifying the occupants within the residential structure or a telephone number that can be used to notify the occupants.

Consistent Rhythm

Maintain a regular rhythm in the fence design. Except for gates and other special situations, the length of fence sections, between posts should be as equal as possible. Posts should usually all be the same height, except when the overall fence height changes.



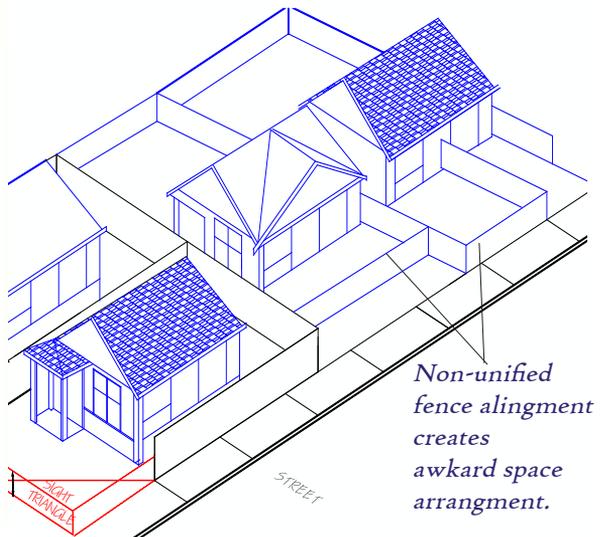
Maintaining the basic pattern of existing fences promotes a unified and well-ordered streetspace.

Neighboring Compatibility

Maintain the basic geometric characteristics of any other street fronting fences within the block face, such as overall height (except that new fences should not match the height of existing fences over the height limit), height of top rails and general rhythm of opening.

Consistent Alignment

Whenever possible, maintain the same alignment as other street-fronting fences along the block face. Hedges or other landscaping may be used to maintain a continuous line.





Design Guidelines

Dominant Fences

A front or street side yard fence should not call attention to itself, but instead focus and direct attention to the residence. Avoid the use of highly decorative fences to complement modest buildings.



Consistent Style

Front and street side yard fences and/or walls should complement and be consistent with the architectural style of the building. For example, with Mediterranean architecture, low solid stucco or brick walls or iron picket fences often work well.



Avoid Solid Fences

Avoid solid wood fences in front and the front portion of street side yards. Portion of fences and or walls that are in these yards and taller than 48 inches must be at least 50% transparent.



Fence Entry Element

Design entries to give visual prominence to the residence and direct attention to the building entry.

Fence Setback

Set street side yard fence at least 18 inches back from the edge of the sidewalk to provide a planting strip. This placement also helps to reduce the perceived scale of the fence.

Color

As a general rule of thumb, use dark color for metal fences or a color that relates to a color of a building detail, such as a trim.

Base

For wood or metal picket front and street side yard fence, consider a solid base up to one-foot high. This provides a solid architectural quality to the fence and helps relate it better to surrounding buildings.

Detail

Use of simple details, such as ornamental post caps, can help to break up the visual line of fences.



Fence Styles



Picket Fences are generally used as ornamental fences to complement landscaping. They are widely used in traditional architectural styles, particularly buildings with horizontal wood siding and shingle roof .



Curving vertical slats provides interest to a picket fence.

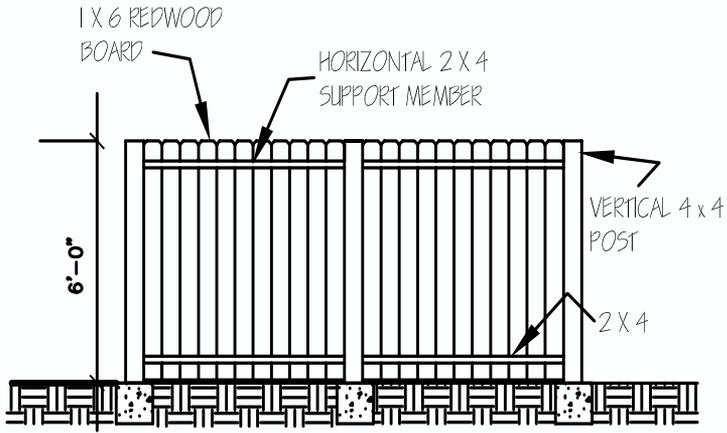
Use landscape, retaining walls and/or additional setback to improve the appearance and reduce the perceived scale of a tall fence facing a street. In addition to shrubs and plants, the 6-foot tall fence shown below is setback from a 2-foot tall retaining wall.



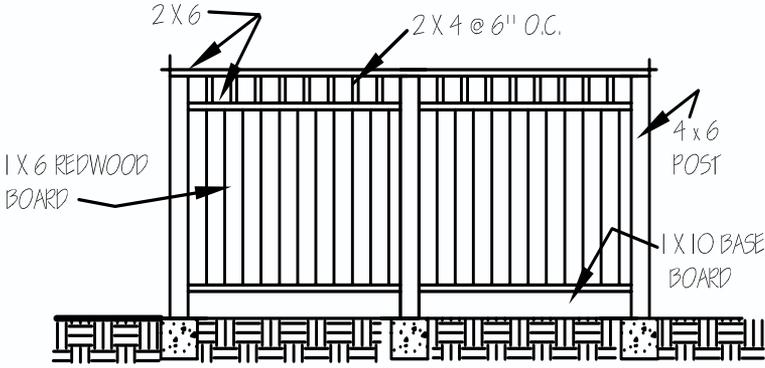
Wood Lattice Fences: They are easy to construct and can easily be transformed into a live fence. There is a wide number of drought-resistant evergreen climbing plants that complement a wood lattice fence.



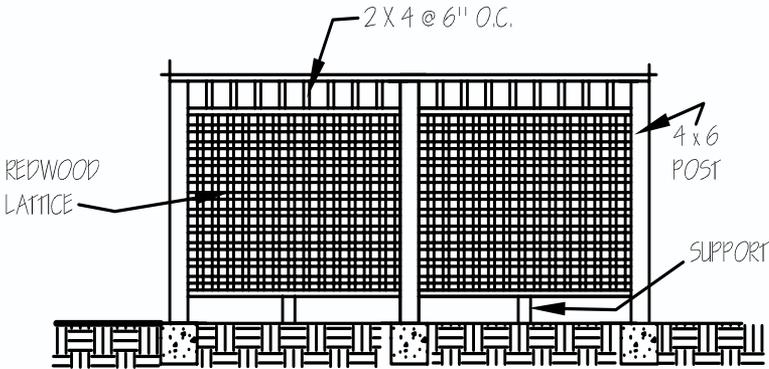
Grape Stake Cedar Fences: They complement rustic style buildings. The fence in the photograph is behind an artistically pruned ornamental ivy which enhances the pedestrian experience.



TYPICAL REDWOOD FENCE



ALTERNATIVE DESIGN



LATTICE FENCE

Brick Wall Fences: Brick is a solid, permanent and low maintenance material that provides lasting beauty and value.



A brick wall fence with columns slightly higher at different intervals provide rhythm and order. Buildings with stucco exterior are generally more compatible with brick color and texture than wood exterior.



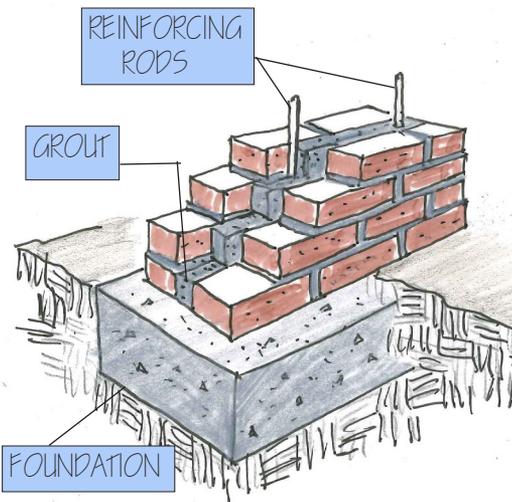
Brick columns and metal complement each other, particularly when the metal is painted dark and brick columns are wide.

Bricks should be used in their natural form as much as possible and should not be painted or stained.

Although it is more challenging, placing bricks randomly provides a more natural and organic appearance.



A brick wall fence requires an appropriate foundation if greater than 3 feet in height. On hilly terrain, it is best to consult an engineer if considering a brick wall 3 or more feet high.

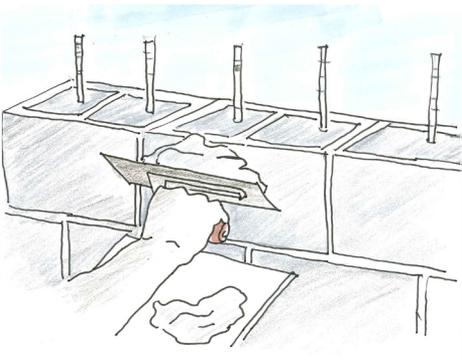


Reinforcing rods must be embedded into the foundation.

Grout mix must provide adequate adherence to be effective.

Foundation design and dimensions vary according to height of the top wall and condition of the ter-

Stucco Wall Fences are widely used in Mediterranean style architecture. Stucco can be applied to bricks, concrete blocks and even poured concrete walls. They all provide excellent surfaces to stucco. However, it is a common practice to stucco exposed poured concrete.



When using cinder blocks consider stucco as a surfaced layer with a color pigment as the last coating.



A stucco wall can be incorporated into the building facade. Round edges and forms provide additional character.

Bricks as a simple ornament on top of a stucco wall provide an excellent variation of material.



Stone and Block Walls Fences:

When located in the front yard and in the absence of appropriate relationship between width of sidewalk and wall height, stone, brick and block wall fences can have a monolithic appearance. Preserve the natural appearance, textures, and colors so that they become part of the landscape and/or resemble a land feature.



Generally, wood or metal are compatible materials to stone walls. The light blue color of some stones shown in the wall below was selected as the gate and lattice color providing a coherent design composition.



Metal Fences are usually used to enhance security by creating a deterring effect, and do not provide optimal privacy. These fences are chosen mainly for their strength and durability. For backyards, a solid, high fence provides the complete privacy and security most want in a private space.



A simple metal fence used in conjunction with masonry or brick



The use of nondefensive ornaments on a metal fence decrease the perception of confinement and increases the visual quality.



Do not use **Sharp Elements**, particularly when they are low to the ground, within reach of children.





Wrought Iron
Fence crafted as
an expression of
a living garden.



Vinyl and PVC Fences: Plastic fences are low maintenance and generally more expensive than wood. They have become widely popular and are now available in a variety of styles. Choose a material that provides a dull brightness and an uneven variation of color and texture. Darker colors are generally preferred.



Artificial materials used for fences do not increase in beauty like natural materials as they age. Rather, artificial materials may lose aesthetic value over time.



Other Fence Type:



Stucco Wall /Entry



Bamboo



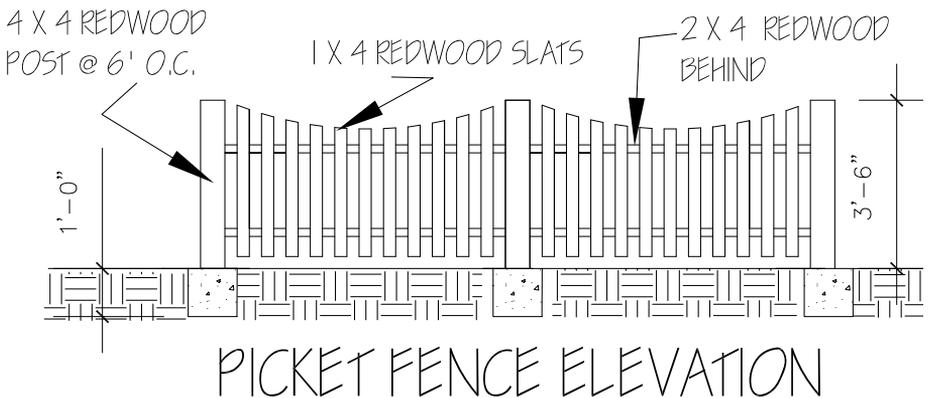
Lattice Entry
Trellis

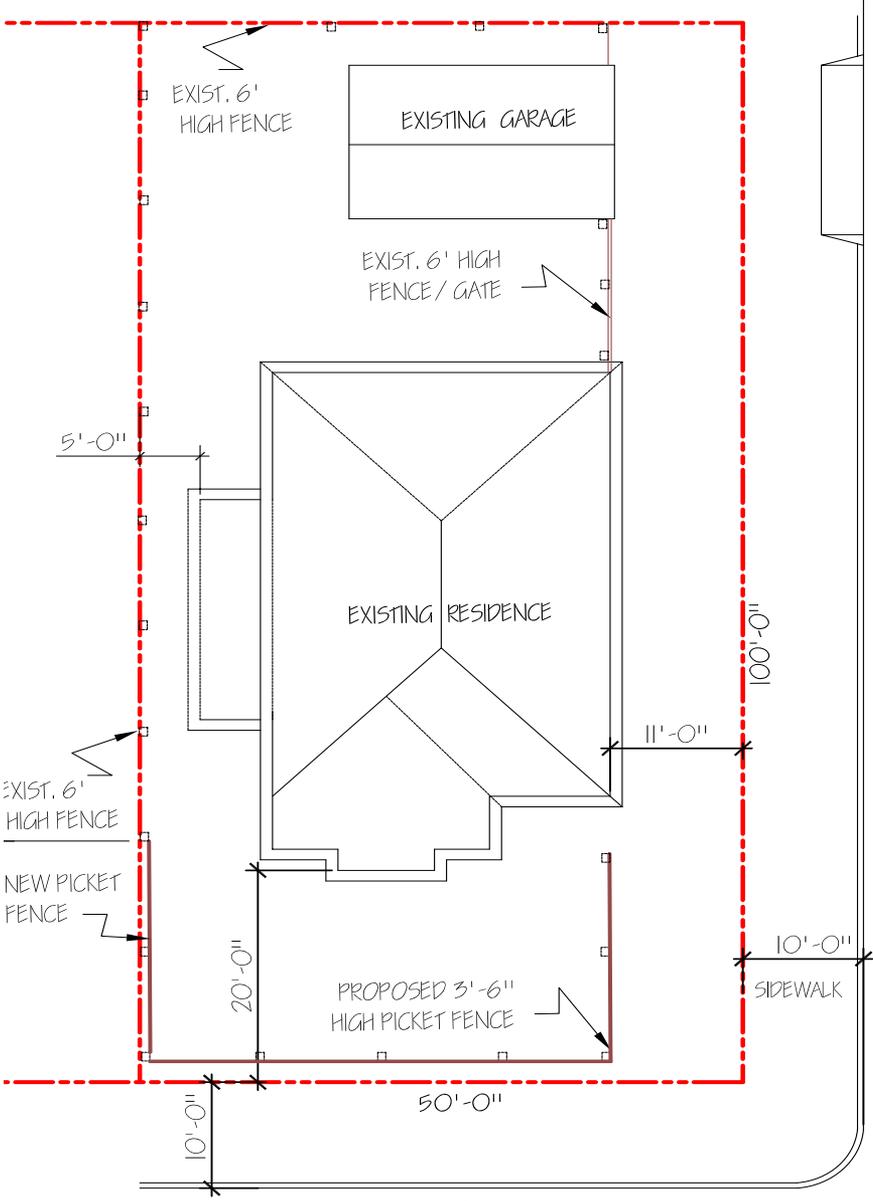


Exception to Front Yard Fence Height Requirement: The Zoning Administrator may grant an exception to the front height requirement based on the following findings:

1. The proposed fence will not create or exacerbate a public safety hazard;
2. The proposed fence is of design, materials, scale and color that are compatible and harmonious with the subject site, site improvements and other properties within the immediate vicinity;
3. Front yard fencing that prohibits access to the home shall be equipped with a doorbell device.

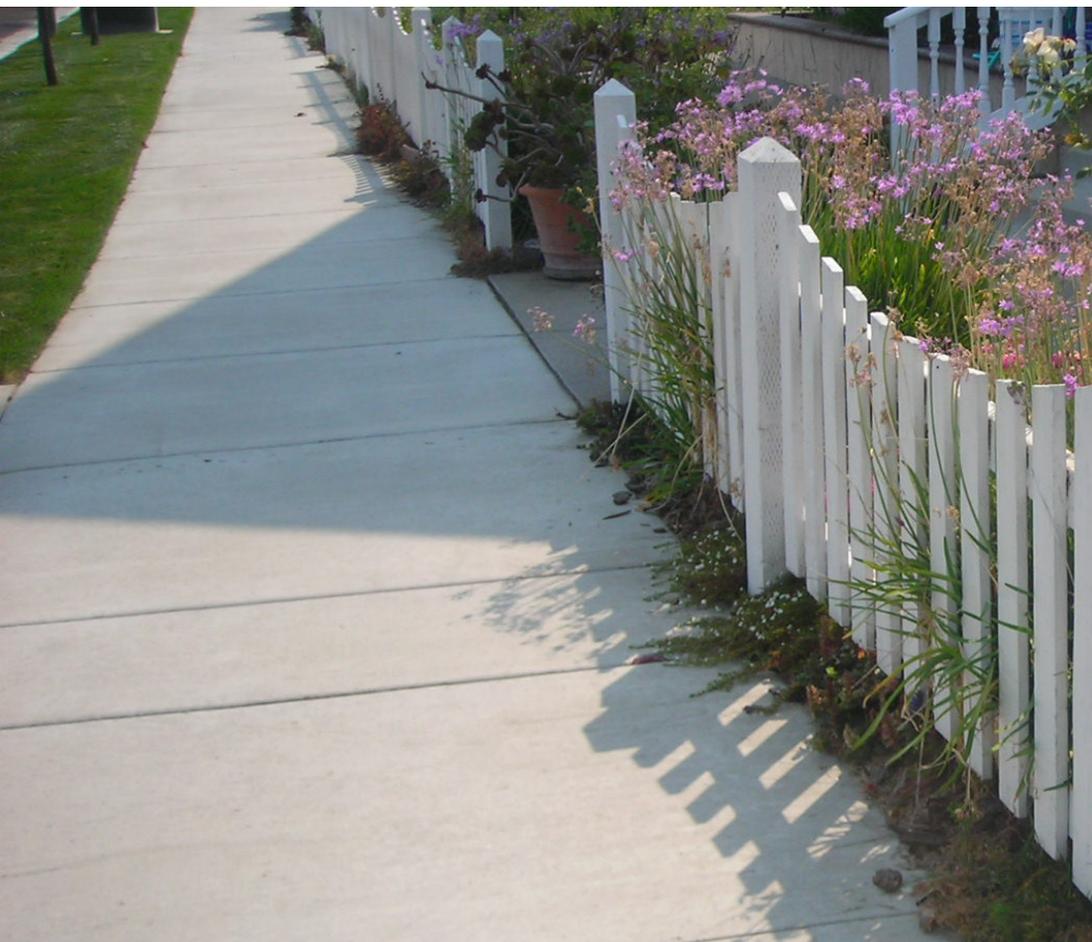
Typical Plan for Fence Permit Submittal:





SITE PLAN

Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"



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