



City of Long Beach  
Department of Development Services  
Building and Safety Bureau  
**Residential Fence and Garden Walls**

Information  
Bulletin  
**BU-041**  
Eff: 04-01-2014  
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The purpose of this information bulletin is to provide general zoning and building code requirements for the construction of fence and garden walls in residential areas. Under certain conditions, a building permit may not be required. In all cases, the Planning Bureau's review and approval is required to approve the location, height, and material of fence and garden walls. For fence and/or garden walls constructed of concrete masonry units greater than four feet (4'), please see Information Bulletin BU-009 for additional information

### **GENERAL ZONING CODE REQUIREMENTS**

Fences and garden walls are permitted accessory structures in all zones, subject to the conditions and requirements set forth in this information bulletin. (LBMC §21.43.010)

#### A. Height Limits

Fence and garden wall heights shall not exceed the maximum heights set forth in the Long Beach Municipal Code ("LBMC") Table 43-1. The pertinent part of this table for residential fence and garden walls areas are as follows: (LBMC §21.43.020)

**Modified LBMC Table 43-1 Fence and Garden Wall Height Limits**

Zone Districts	Maximum Permitted Height <sup>(a)</sup>
Residential	
Front yard	3 ft. <sup>(b), (e)</sup>
Other yard area	6 ft. 6 in.
Outside of required yard area	10 ft.
Abutting a nonresidential area	8 ft.
Abutting an alley/other public right-of-way other than a street	8 ft. <sup>(c)</sup>
Abutting a major arterial/regional corridor	8 ft. <sup>(d)</sup>
Corner Cut Off Area	3 ft.

(a) The limitations shall not apply in the following instances:

- i) Where a greater height is required by any other City ordinance;
- ii) Where a greater height is required by a conditional approval of a permit pursuant to this Title or is required by State or Federal law;
- iii) Where a wall return of greater height is allowed; or

City of Long Beach  
Information Bulletin BU-041 • Residential Fence and Garden Walls

- iv) Fence heights shall be measured from grade adjoining the fence on the public right-of-way side of the fence (for fences adjoining the public right-of-way) and the average grade of both sides of the fence (for fences between 2 private properties). Factors such as flood hazard zone heights or averaged lot elevations shall not apply to fences; or
- v) In corner cutoff areas, chain link and wrought iron fences above three feet (3') are allowed if they do not obstruct visibility.
- (b) In the area designated as the special fence height area, as designated by resolution of City Council, the fence height in the front yard setback shall be increased to four feet (4'), provided the additional foot of height is wrought iron or chain link.
- (c) Only applicable for rear and side lines that abut an alley or other public right-of-way other than a street.
- (d) Only applicable for a rear property line that abuts a major arterial/regional corridor as designated in the transportation element of the General Plan. Also, applicable for side property lines of a reverse corner lot that abuts a major arterial regional corridor, and is in a continuous formation with the rear property lines of the remainder of the block facing the arterial.
- (e) Fence height may exceed three feet (3') in the front yard of residential lots located in high crime areas, through approval of an administrative use permit. (See Section 21.52.231.5 for criteria.)

**B. Prohibited Materials**

In all residential zones, barbed wire or similar fencing with sharp, protruding objects capable of cutting or puncturing a person is prohibited. Such objects shall not be attached to, imbedded in, or laid upon any fence or wall. This restriction does not include decorative wrought iron. (LBMC §21.43.030)

**C. Other General Requirements**

- Gates, fences, doors, and similar objects cannot swing over the public property or right-of-way.
- A corner cut off area shall be required in at all intersections of streets, driveways, or alleys. Nothing shall be erected or allowed to grow within the corner cutoff area in such a manner as to impede visibility or accessibility from three feet to eight feet (3' to 8') in height. Corner cutoff areas shall be a minimum of six feet by six feet (6' × 6'). (LBMC §21.31.215.G)
- Fence and garden walls located in historic districts or on historic landmarks will require the approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness before issuance of a building permit.

**GENERAL BUILDING CODE REQUIREMENT**

The construction of new fence and/or garden walls may require the approval of construction documents (i.e., plans and structural details). A fully detailed and dimensioned plot plan showing the proposed location of the fence and/or garden walls on the property in relation to existing buildings, structures, and property lines is required. For fence and/or garden walls constructed of wood, chain link, wrought iron, and other similar materials measuring six feet six inches (6'-6") or less in height, OR concrete, masonry, brick, or other similar materials measuring four feet (4') or less in height, construction details may not be required. (LBMC §18.05.030)

A. Building Permit

A building permit is required to construct new fence and/or garden walls of wood, chain link, wrought iron, and other similar materials that exceed a height of six feet six inches (6'-6") OR concrete, masonry, brick, or other similar materials that exceed a height of four feet (4'). An electrical permit may be required for ancillary additions (i.e., electric lights, automatic gates, etc.) to fence and/or garden walls. (LBMC §18.04.010)

B. Common Property Line

Where the wall construction is proposed on the common property line(s), a completed "Common Property Line Wall/Fence Agreement" form between the owners of each applicable adjoining property shall be signed, notarized, and submitted prior to permit issuance. Where the wall, footings, and other attachment or support are entirely located within the property, a Common Property Line Agreement is not required. A lot survey may be required to verify the proper location of the proposed fence. (LBMC §18.07.060)

C. Utility Easement

Buried utilities can exist just about anywhere on your property; therefore, the proposed work shall not destroy or unreasonably interfere with any access or utility easement belonging to others and located on this property.

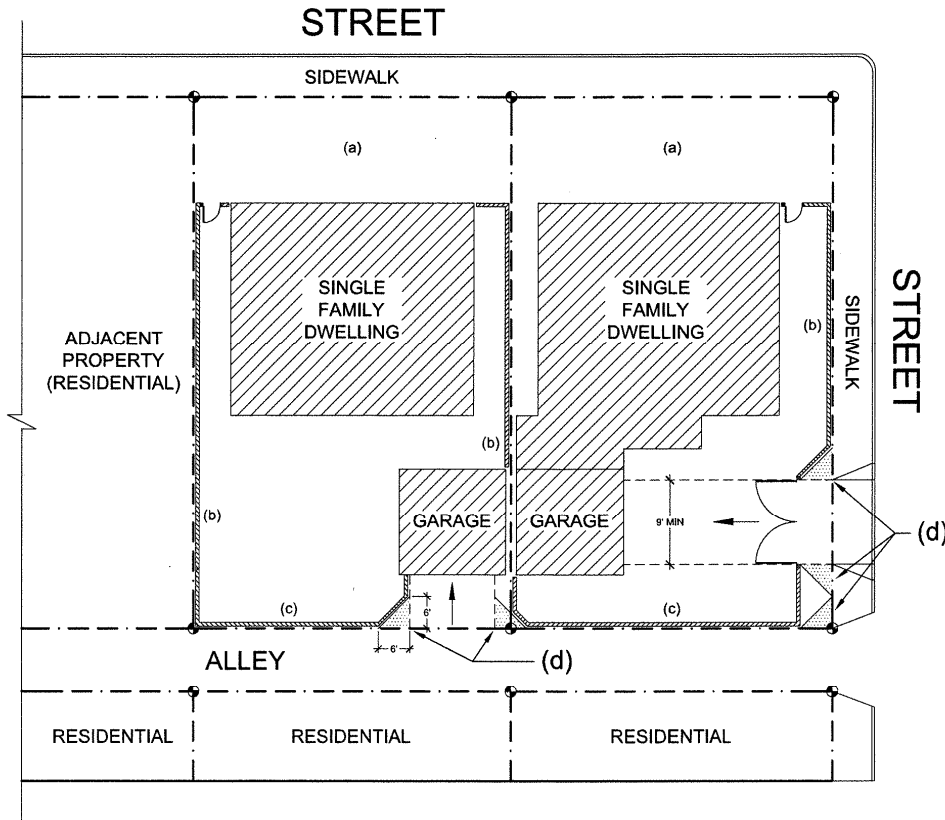
Contractors and Homeowners can prevent damage to underground utilities and avoid service interruptions by contacting DigAlert. DigAlert is a one-call notification center that serves as a communications link between the person who is digging and the owners of underground utilities. You can use DigAlert Express (<http://www.digalert.org/digexpress.html>) or call 811 at least two (2) full working days before you plan to start digging.

According to the DigAlert website, legally, the person who is doing the work must have a DigAlert in their name. If a homeowner hires a contractor, the responsibility is legally the contractor's for the notification – but the responsibility could contractually be the homeowners'. However, it would be prudent as a homeowner to also follow up with DigAlert just in case. If the contractor is negligent in this task and causes damage to buried utilities, you as the homeowner could be found liable.

In addition, Southern California Edison (SCE) should be contacted if the proposed project is in close proximity to an electrical pole.

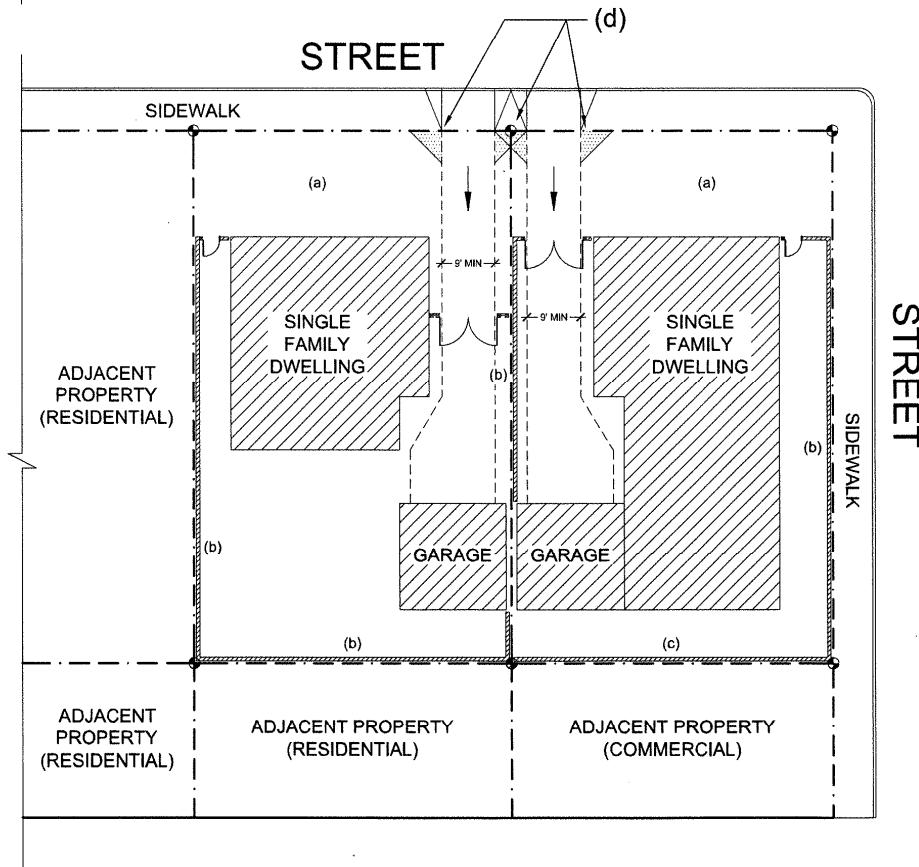
In circumstances where work does unreasonably interfere with such easement, a substitute easement(s) satisfactory to the holder(s) of the easement shall be provided to the Development Permit Center before the permit can be issued. (LBMC §18.04.050.D)

City of Long Beach  
Information Bulletin BU-041 • Residential Fence and Garden Walls



**Note:**

- (a) Fence height limited to 3' in front yard.
- (b) Fence height limited to 6'-6" abutting other yard areas.
- (c) Fence height limited to 8' abutting an alley or nonresidential areas.
- (d) Fence height limited to 3' in corner cut-off area.



**Legend:**

- Property Line
- Fence
- Corner Cut-Off