

Getting Ready for Home Improvements?

Answers to our most often asked questions about: Fences, Decks and Swimming Pools.

About Fences...

Fences must be kept in good repair. Decorative sides must face outward. Supporting members or braces shall be on the inside and smooth or flat surfaces on the outside. If two faces are used, each face will be of the same type and finish.

Chain-link fence is permitted. Fences **may not** have chicken wire, woven wire, barbed wire, razor wire, electric wire, hazardous wire edges or similar materials.

Perimeter fences (those located within five feet of the lot line) can not exceed six (6) feet in height and can not be forward of the front face of the house except as provided below.

Fences, perimeter or otherwise, in front yards shall be decorative only and at least 50% of their bulk must be air space and they must be not more than (4) feet in height.

While fences may be installed on the lot line, it is recommended that installation occur one (1) foot into your lot to allow for maintenance.

Building or zoning permits are not required for construction or installation of fences. **It is recommended** that you contact the Neighborhood Association regarding their restrictions, in addition to contacting the Planning Department (270-4256) to easements or other restrictions placed on your property.

If you are installing a fence yourself, please make sure you call Digger's Hotline – 811 - so they can locate underground utilities.

See Chapter 23, SmartCode Ordinance, for fencing regulations on SmartCode-zoned residential lots.

About Decks...

Building or zoning permits are required for all decks above two (2) feet high (measured from the floor of the deck to the ground). Even though a permit is not required for a deck under two (2) feet high, the Planning and Zoning Dept. would like to see a site plan to make certain your deck will not violate any setback requirements.

Decks up to four (4) feet high may intrude into rearyard setback requirements, as long as they maintain at least a ten (10) foot distance from any sideyard or rearyard lot line. Decks over four (4) feet high are considered part of the residential structure, and may not intrude into setback

areas. Setback requirements can vary; please call the Planning and Zoning Dept. at 270-4200 to find out what the setback requirements are for your lot.

Decks are required to be constructed of treated wood, or wood that is naturally durable or decay resistant - like cedar or redwood. They must be able to withstand a load of 40 lbs per square foot. Guardrails are required for decks above two (2) feet high. Such guardrails must be at least 36 inches above the surface of the deck floor, with intermediate rails spaced so the openings between rails are no more than four and three-eighths (4 3/8) inches, or as required under current building code.

Any additional construction questions should be directed to the Building Inspection Department - 270-4200.

See Chapter 23, SmartCode Ordinance, for fencing regulations on SmartCode-zoned residential lots.

About Swimming Pools...

Building and zoning permits are required for installation of in-ground and above-ground pools.

Pools shall be located so that there is a ten (10) foot minimum distance from your lot's sideyard or rear yard lot line. The measurement is made from the water's edge to the lot line.

In-ground pools must be completely enclosed by a fence not less than four (4) feet in height, or sufficient strength to prevent access to the pool, and so constructed as not to have voids, holes or openings larger than four (4) inches. Gates or doors in fences shall be closed and secured when the pool is not in use.

Above-ground pools with stationary ladders, stairs or ramps shall also be fenced in the same manner as in-ground pools. Above-ground pools with removable ladders are not required to be fenced as long as access to the pool is prevented and ladders are removed when the pool is not in use.

If portable pools (over one (1) foot in depth) are not fenced, they must be drained or covered after each day's use in such a way as to provide public safety.

*** Building and zoning permit application forms are available at Fitchburg City Hall, 5520 Lacy Road, Fitchburg, WI 53711 or on the city website.

See Chapter 23, SmartCode Ordinance, for regulations on SmartCode-zoned residential lots.