



General Guidelines for Fences, Walls and Gates Atherton Municipal Code

**Town of Atherton
Building Department
150 Watkins Avenue
Atherton, California 94027
Phone: (650) 752-0560
Inspection requests:
(650) 752-0542**

Fences, walls, gates, gate posts, and columns are regulated by section 17.46 of the Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) and the 2019 California Building Code. All fence, wall, gate and column heights are measured from the natural grade upon which they are located, except certain fences along regulated streets (see section 17.46.030) which are measured from the crown of the road. Maximum heights, locations, and fees are stated according to category.

Fences fall into four separate categories and require Planning Department approval unless specifically exempted. A building permit is required for all fences over 6 feet in height:

Right of Way Fences:

Prior to construction of any fence within 10 feet of any right-of-way (along a public street) the builder must first obtain a building permit from the Town of Atherton Building Department. The fence height is limited to 6 feet maximum, except those areas listed in AMC 17.46.030. Fences greater than 6 feet in height, up to maximum of 8 feet in height, must be shielded from public view by plants installed at the time of construction. Plants or screening required must reach maturity within three years of planting. When plants or screening are required a permit is also required for the installation of an adequate irrigation system or proof must be provided showing the availability of sufficient water from natural springs.

Interior Fences such as between two neighbors:

Fences that are not within 10 feet of the right-of-way and that do not fall into any of the following categories do not need to be reviewed by the Planning Department or a building permit. Interior fences may not be over six feet in height.

Corner Fences:

Fences at the corner of two right-of-ways, including gates, gate posts, and columns, must be located at least 30 feet back from the corner intersection. Any fence, wall, or vegetation within the 30 foot triangular area bounded by the two rights-of-way cannot exceed three feet in height.

Gates, Posts & Columns:

Gates, gate posts, and columns are considered to be accessory structures and are required to have a building permit prior to construction. They may be set at or inside the property line. *They cannot encroach into the right-of-way.* The maximum height for all entry gates, posts and columns is 10 feet. (Light fixtures are limited to 18 inches and are included in the 10' maximum.) Vehicle gates are required to have a minimum clear opening width of 16-foot in the open position. Gates cannot open over the public right of way.

Plan submittals for walls, gates, gate posts and columns must include a building permit application and three sets of plans that include the following:

- A site plan, including tree protection details;
- Complete architectural details, including elevations, dimensions, and heights;
- Complete structural details including two sets of structural calculations, for any structure over six feet in height.



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Atherton Municipal Code §17.46.030: Maximum Height of Fences and Walls

Location of Fence or Wall	Maximum Height ¹
Generally along all property lines, unless otherwise indicated below	6 feet
Coincident to Town boundary ¹	8 feet
Along lot lines adjoining a public or private school or the railroad right-of-way	8 feet
Along regulated streets ²	6 feet/8 feet ²
At front lot line or along public streets	6 feet
At street intersections within clear visibility area: see chapter 17.60	3 feet
Retaining walls ³	6 feet
Wing walls ⁴ on other parts of a lot	6 feet
Interior fences or walls	6 feet

Notes:

1. Lot boundaries coincident to the town's boundary but facing a street must be a maximum of six feet high.

2. On those lots adjoining any of the following streets, a fence or wall may be constructed to a height of six feet above the elevation of the natural grade upon which it stands or eight feet above the elevation of the centerline of the adjacent pavement or such boundary, whichever is higher:

- A. El Camino Real
- B. Marsh Road
- C. Middlefield Road
- D. Valparaiso Avenue
- E. Alameda de la Pulgas
- F. Bay Road
- G. Ringwood Avenue