

**ORDINANCE NO. 95-21**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AMERICAN CANYON  
REPEALING SECTIONS 12402, 12402.5, 12403, & 12406 OF THE EXISTING AREA,  
YARD & HEIGHT STANDARDS CONTAINED IN THE EXISTING COUNTY  
ORDINANCES ADOPTED BY THE CITY UPON INCORPORATION, AND  
ADOPTING A NEW ZONING ORDINANCE CHAPTER PERTAINING TO  
AREA, YARD & HEIGHT REGULATIONS**

**Sections:**

- 1. Purposes**
- 2. Applicability**
- 3. Measurement Of Site Area and Yards**
- 4. General Yard Provisions**
- 5. Yards Adjacent to Residential Districts**
- 6. Projections into Yards**
- 7. Accessory Structures, Equipment and Uses**
- 8. Fences and Walls**
- 9. Distance Between Buildings in Residential Districts**
- 10. Height Limits**

**Section 1. Purposes**

The purposes of this Chapter are:

- A. To provide for open areas around structures where needed for access to and around buildings;
- B. To protect access to natural light, ventilation, and direct sunlight;
- C. To ensure the compatibility of land uses;
- D. To provide space for privacy, landscaping, and recreation;
- E. To improve public safety; and,
- F. To preserve neighborhood character.

**Section 2. Applicability**

- A. These requirements shall apply to all development and lots, except where specifically superseded elsewhere in this Title.
- B. Except as otherwise provided by this Chapter, required yards are to be unobstructed by any building, structure or other improvement constructed on, over or under the ground.

**Section 3. Measurement of Site Area and Yards**

**A. Point of Measurement**

Except as otherwise provided, required yards shall be measured as the minimum horizontal distance from the appropriate property or street/alley right-of-way line of the site to a line parallel thereto on the site (see Figure A-1).

**B. Precise Street Plans**

Where a precise street plan has been adopted by the City Council, site area and required yards shall be measured from the plan line, and no provision of this Chapter shall be construed to permit a structure or use to extend beyond such line.

**C. Partially-Improved Streets**

Where a site abuts a street having only a portion of its required width dedicated or reserved for street purposes, site area and required yards shall be measured from a line drawn on the boundary of the additional width required for street purposes abutting the site.

**D. Irregularly-Shaped Lots**

On corner lots, through lots, lots with three or more frontages, flag lots, and irregularly-shaped lots where the provisions of this Chapter do not clearly establish the location of yards and lot lines, the Planning Director shall make such determination.

**E. Flag Lots**

1. The area of a flag lot's access corridor shall not be included in determining the site area of the lot (see Figure A-2).
2. The corridor of land which provides access to a street for a flag lot shall have a minimum street frontage of 16 feet and a minimum width which is less than the required lot width but not less than 16 feet (see Figure A-2).

**F. Width of Residential Corner Lots**

The minimum width of corner lots in a residential district shall be a minimum of 10 percent greater than the minimum width for the district specified in the *Schedule of Zoning District Regulations*.

**G. Depth Adjoining State Highway or Railroad**

A lot whose rear lot line abuts a state highway or railroad right-of-way shall have a minimum depth that is at least 20 percent greater than the lot depth standard for the applicable Zone District.

**Section 4. General Yard Provisions**

Except as otherwise provided by this Chapter and specific district regulations, the provisions of this Section apply to the placement of principal structures. Refer to Section 19.03.070 for provisions related to the location of accessory buildings, equipment and uses.

**A. Front Yards**

*Partially-developed blocks.* The minimum front yard of a vacant residential lot situated between lots improved with residences may be the average depth of the front yards on the adjoining improved sites. Where the vacant lot is not situated between lots improved with residences and where lots comprising 50 percent of the frontage on that side of the block are improved with residences, the

Figure A-1  
Yard Measurements

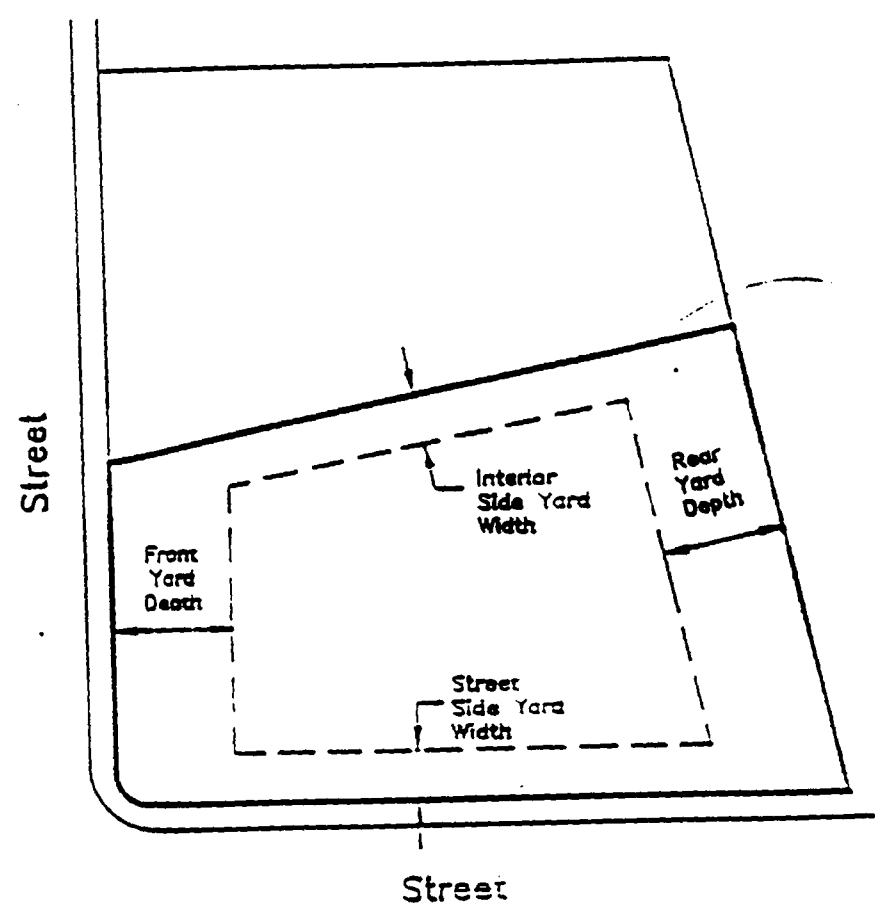
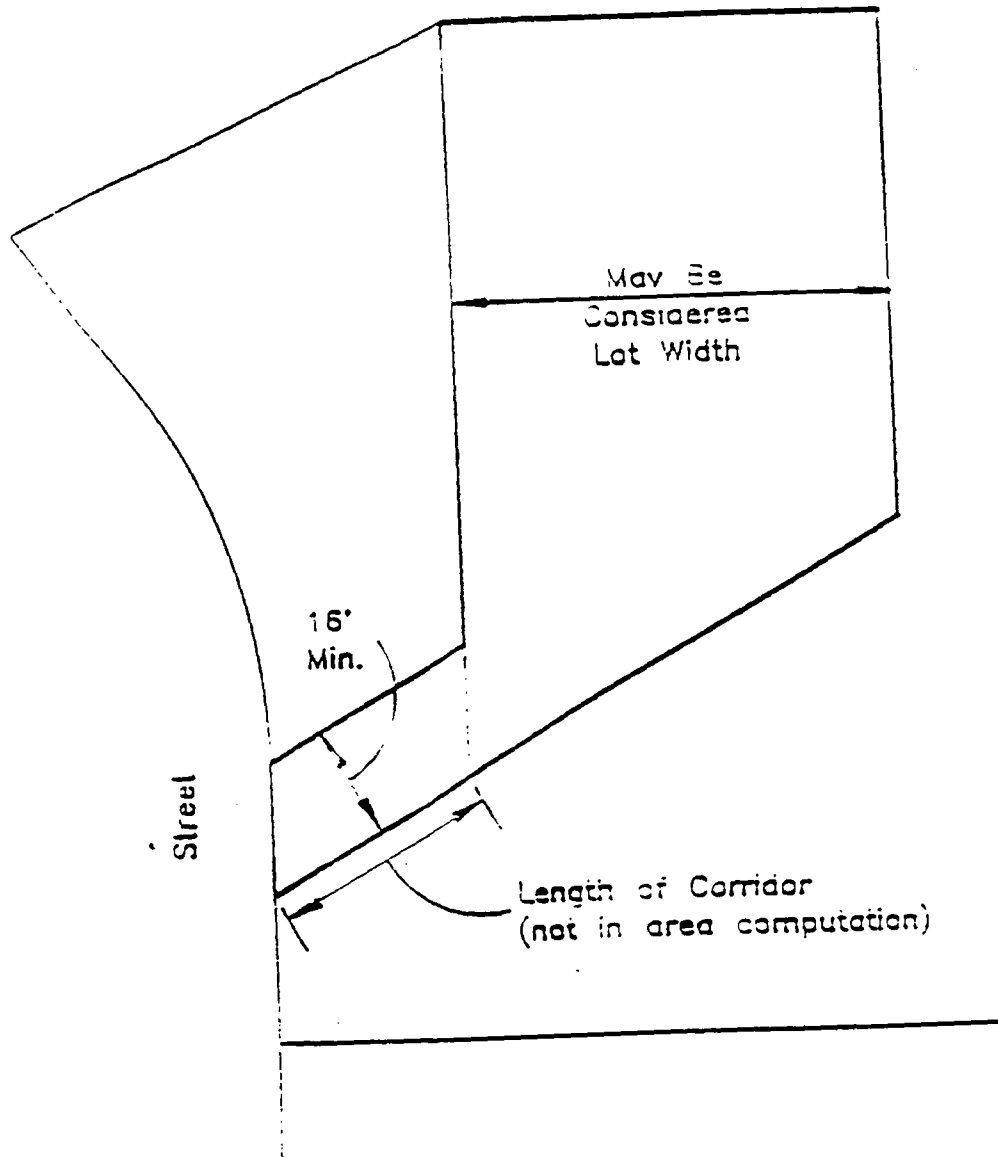


Figure A-2  
Flag Lots



minimum front yard may be the average of the existing front yard depths on the block. In computing average front yard depths, a depth 10 feet greater than the minimum required front yard shall be used in lieu of any greater front yard depth.

1. *Key lots.* The depth of a required front yard on key lots shall not be less than the average depth of the required front yard of the adjoining interior lot and the required side yard. (See Figure A-3)
2. *Parking.* No vehicular parking shall be permitted in a required front yard in a residential district, except on an area permanently surfaced (with continuous surfacing to point of access from a public or private street) for parking by paving, gravel, brick, grasscrete, concrete pavers or similar materials. No more than 50% of the required front yard for lots with 60 feet or more of street frontage may be paved and used for vehicular parking. An increased percentage of paved area may be permitted on lots with lesser frontage to allow up to a 30 foot wide driveway including flag lots where the entire flag access corridor may be paved.

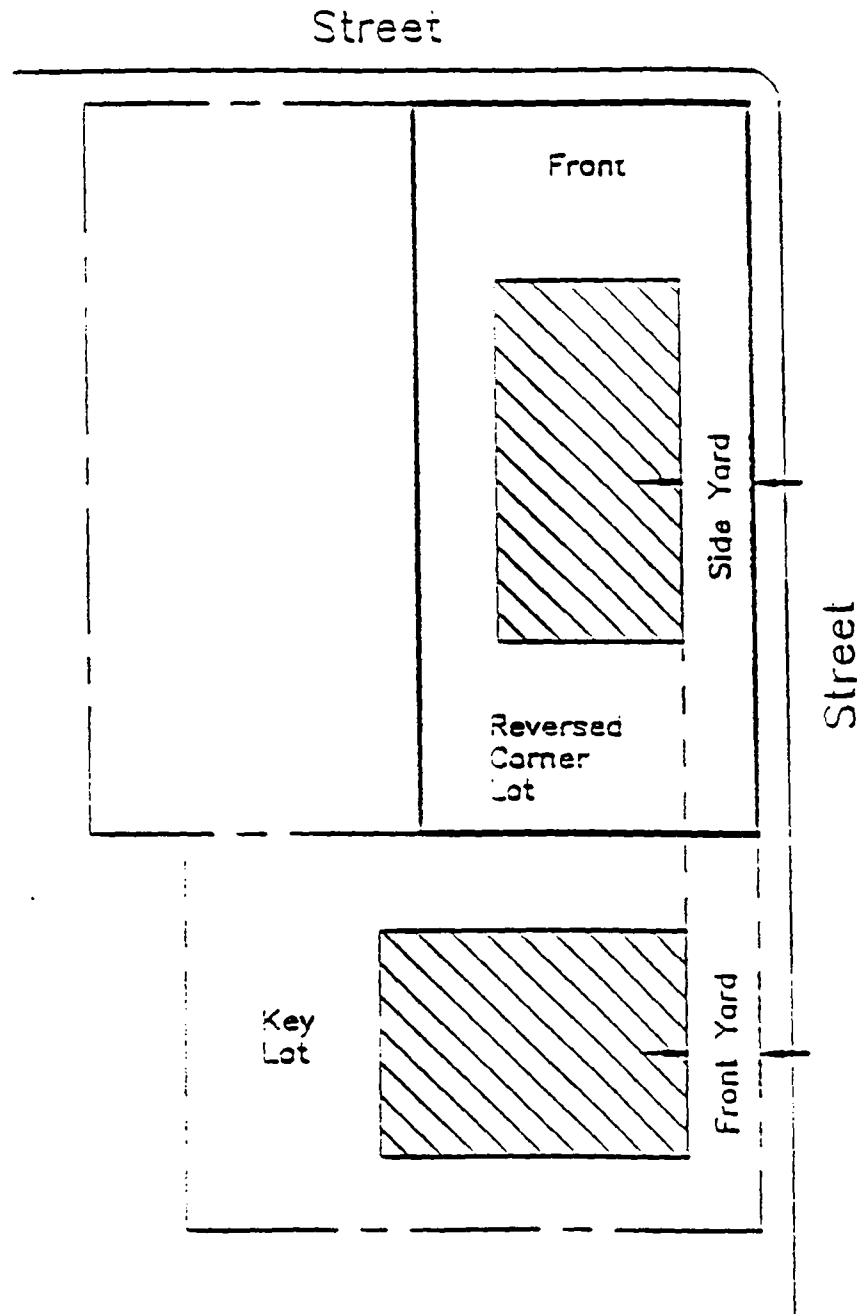
Section 5. Yards Adjacent to Residential Districts

- A. Where the *Schedule of Zoning District Regulations* does not require a rear or side yard for a lot and where the rear or interior side lot line of such lot abuts any portion of a residential district (either within or outside the City), there shall be provided on the former lot, along that portion of the lot line, a yard with a minimum depth equal to the side yard which would be required on the lot if it were located in the abutting residential district.
- B. Where the *Schedule of Zoning District Regulations* does not require a rear yard for a lot and where such a lot abuts the rear lot line of a lot within a residential district (either within or outside the City), there shall be provided on the former lot, along the abutting portion of its rear lot line, a rear yard with a minimum depth equal to that which would be required on the former lot if it were located in the abutting residential zone, provided that any structure, or portion thereof, which does not exceed 12 feet in height may extend without limit into such rear yard.

Section 6. Projections into Yards

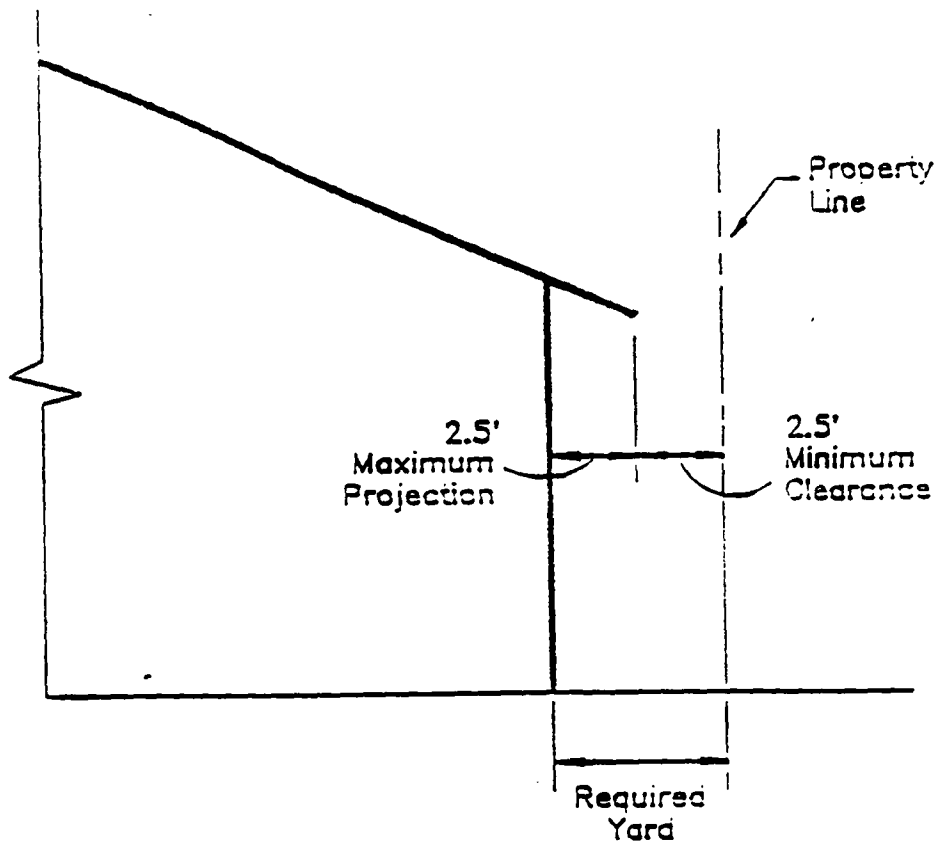
- A. Projections are permitted into yards required for principal buildings as follows, subject to the provisions of the Municipal Code (Building Regulations).
  1. *Eaves and cantilevered roofs* may project up to two and one-half feet, provided:
    - a. That such eaves or cantilevered roofs are not closer than two and one-half feet to any lot or street line.
    - b. That no portion of such eaves or cantilevered roofs are less than eight feet above grade.
    - c. That there are no vertical supports or members within the required yard (see Figure A-4).
  2. *Fireplace structures, buttresses and wing walls* may project up to two and one-half feet, provided:

Figure A-3  
Corner Sideyard on Reversed Corner Lot



- a. That a minimum 5 feet is provided on the side yard where front yard access is provided.
  - b. That such structures shall not be utilized to provide closets or otherwise increase usable floor area.
  - c. That such fireplace structures are not wider than six feet measured in the general direction of the wall of which it is a part (see Figure A-5).
3. *Bay and greenhouse windows* may project up to two and one-half feet, provided:
- a. That such windows are not closer than two and one-half feet to any lot or street line.
  - b. That there are no vertical supports or members within the required yard.
4. *Uncovered porches, platforms, landings, and decks, including access stairs thereto* may project up to three feet into required interior side yards, and up to five feet into required front, rear, and corner side yards, provided:
- a. That such projections shall not be closer than two feet to any lot or street line.
  - b. That such projections are open and unenclosed; provided, however, that an open-work railing not to exceed three and one-half feet in height may be installed.
  - c. That such projections do not exceed any average height of one foot.
  - d. That such projections do not extend above the level of the first floor.
5. *Awnings and canopies* may project up to two and one-half feet into required interior side yards and five feet into required front, rear, and corner side yards, provided:
- a. That such awnings or canopies are not closer than two and one-half feet to any lot or street line.
  - b. That such awnings or canopies have not vertical support within such yard.
  - c. That such awnings or canopies extend only over the windows or doors to be protected, and for not more than one foot on either side thereof.
6. *Covered patios attached to a dwelling unit* may project into a required rear yard, provided:
- a. That such patio is not closer than five feet to any lot line.
  - b. That such patio shall remain permanently unenclosed on at least two sides. This provision, however, shall not preclude the placement of detachable screens.
- A free-standing patio shall be subject to the same requirements as accessory buildings in rear yards as provided by Section 19.03.070.
7. *Rain conductors, downspouts, utility-service risers, shutoff valves, sills, capitals, bases, cornices, and belt courses* may project up to one foot into a required yard.

Figure A- 4  
Eaves and Cantilivered Roofs in Required Yards





8. *Water heaters, water softeners, and utility meters, including service conduits and pipes, enclosed or unenclosed.* May project up to two and one-half feet into a required interior side or rear yard, provided that such structures or equipment are not closer than two and one-half feet to any lot line. Gas meters, if enclosed or adequately screened from view by a structure permitted in the yard, may project up to two and one-half feet into a required front or corner side yard.
9. *Wall and window-mounted air conditioners, coolers, and fans.* May project into any required yard, provided that such equipment is not closer than two and one-half feet to any lot line.

Section 7. Accessory Structures, Equipment and Uses

Accessory structures, equipment and uses are permitted in required yards of residential districts as provided herein:

A. Accessory Structures

1. Accessory structures may be located no closer than 3 feet to the side and rear yards required for the primary structure, provided that in the aggregate, no more than 50 percent of the required rear yard area shall be covered by accessory structures. Accessory structures are permitted only on lots having a primary dwelling.
2. On a reversed corner lot, an accessory structure shall not be located closer to the rear property line than the required side yard on the adjoining key lot, and not closer to the side property line adjoining the street than the required front yard on the adjoining key lot.
3. Maximum height of an accessory structure shall be 15 feet.

B. Planters

Planter boxes and masonry planters are permitted in all required yards not to exceed a height of three and one-half feet.

C. Swimming Pools

A swimming pool is permitted in a required rear yard provided it is not closer than five feet to any lot line.

D. Railings

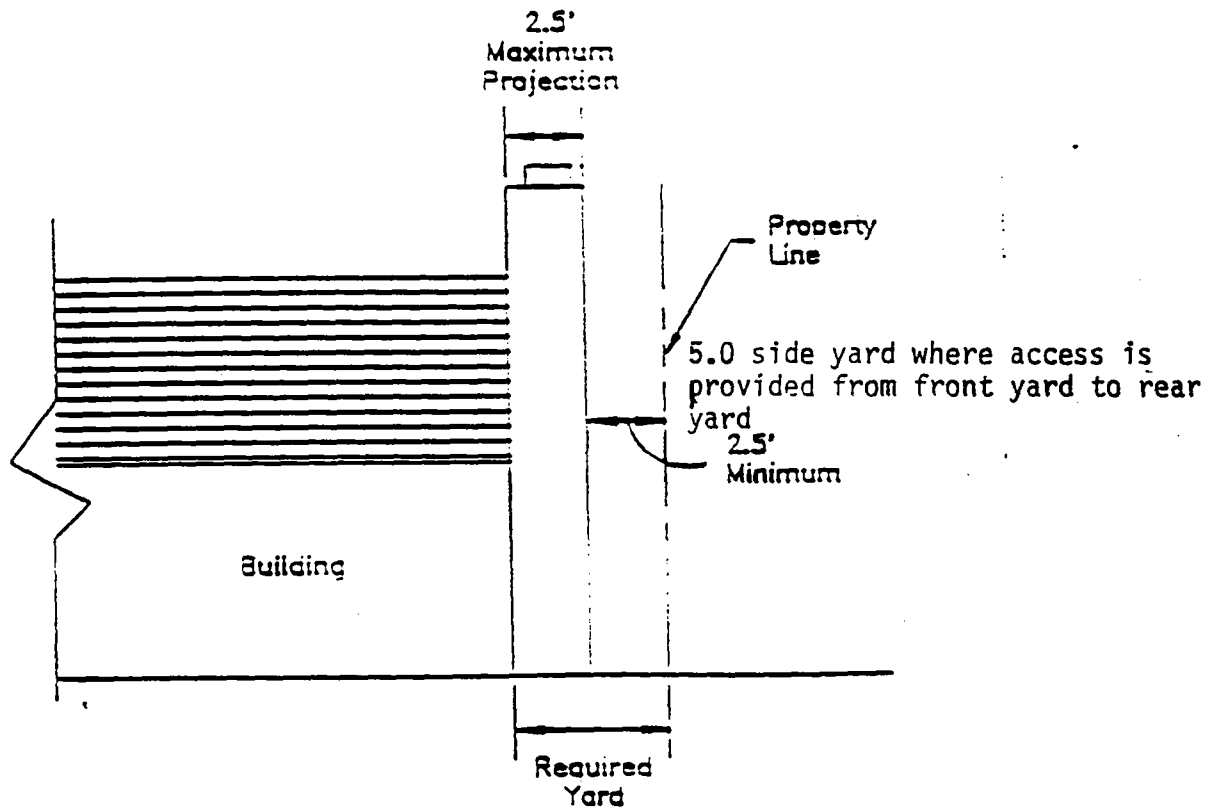
Guard railings or fences for safety protection around depressed ramps may be placed in any required yard, provided:

1. That an open-work railing or fence is used.
2. That such railing or fence does not exceed a height of three and one-half feet.

Section 8. Fences and Walls

Fences and walls in residential districts may be erected and maintained in required yards subject to the requirements specified herein. All height restrictions applying to fences and walls shall also apply to hedges planted within yards and forming a barrier serving the same purpose as a fence or wall.

Figure A- 5  
Fireplace Structures in Required Yards



A. Location in Yards

1. *Front yards.* Fences and walls within a required front yard shall not exceed a height of 42 inches.
2. *Corner side yards.*
  - a. Fences and walls within a required corner side yard shall not exceed three and one-half feet in height where closer than ten feet to the street line, nor exceed six feet in height where ten feet or more from said street line, notwithstanding the provisions of the following subsection related to vision clearance.
  - b. On a corner lot, no fence, wall, hedge, or other artificial obstruction within a triangular area formed by the street property lines and a line connecting points on the street property lines equal to the front setback (for the applicable Zone District but no less than 20 feet) from the street intersection shall exceed a height of three (3) feet above established grade at the edge of the existing or proposed pavement, provided that trees pruned to eight feet above street grade shall be permitted (see Figure A-6).
3. *Interior side and rear yards.* Fences and walls within a required interior side or rear yard shall not exceed six feet in height. When not within required setbacks, maximum fence height shall be 10 feet.
4. *Lots of 20,000 s.f. or more.* On lots of 20,000 square feet or more, a six-foot (6') high, fifty (50) percent see-through fence (when viewed at a 45-degree angle) may be located within the required front yard setback, if the wall/fence is located within the property line of the subject parcel. If gated, gates for vehicles must be set back a minimum of twenty (20) feet from the property line.

B. Retaining Walls

1. Retaining walls not exceeding six feet in height are permitted in all yards.
2. Where a retaining wall protects a cut below the natural grade and is located on a front, side, or rear lot line, such retaining wall may be topped by a fence or wall of the same height that would otherwise be permitted at the location if no retaining wall existed. Where such retaining wall contains a fill, the height of the retaining wall built to retain the fill shall be considered as contributing to the permissible height of a fence or wall; providing, however, that in any event an open-work non-view-obscuring fence of three and one-half feet may be erected at the top of the retaining wall for safety.
3. Where a wall or fence is located in a required yard adjacent to a retaining wall containing a fill, such wall or fence shall be set back from said retaining wall a distance of one foot for each foot in height, to up to five feet; provided, however, that this does not permit a wall or fence in required yards higher than permitted by this Section. The area between such wall or fence and said retaining wall shall be landscaped and continuously maintained in an orderly, neat fashion.

**C. Exempted Fences and Walls**

Where a fence or wall exceeding the maximum heights specified by this Section is required by any law or regulation of the State of California, a fence or wall not exceeding such required height is permitted.

**D. Measurement of Fence and Wall Height**

The height of a fence or wall shall be measured from the highest adjacent grade. In order to allow for variation in topography, the height of a required fence or wall may vary an amount not to exceed six inches; provided, however, that in no event shall the average height of such fence or wall exceed the maximum height specified.

**E. Fence Heights in Commercial/Industrial Districts**

Fence heights in commercial/industrial districts shall be established pursuant to terms of a use or design permit.

**F. Minor Variation to Fence Height Restrictions/Conditional Fence Permit**

1. The Planning Director, after providing notice to adjacent property owners, may consider approval of a Conditional Fence Permit to allow fence heights up to 2 ½ higher than those specified in this section for residential districts based on the following criteria:
  - a. The proposed increased fence height will not create negative shading impacts on adjacent properties or impacts are mitigated through use of open fence design features.
  - b. The proposed increased fence height incorporates appropriate architectural details and materials that assure compatibility with existing fences and fence patterns.
  - c. The proposed increased fence height in a front or exterior side yard area does not create traffic hazards or detract from the neighborhood character by creating visual obstructions to open front yard patterns on an established neighborhood street.
2. Any action by the Planning Director on a Conditional Fence Permit is appealable to the Planning Commission.

**Section 9. Distance Between Buildings in Residential Districts**

The provisions of this Section shall apply where more than one building is placed on residentially-zoned property.

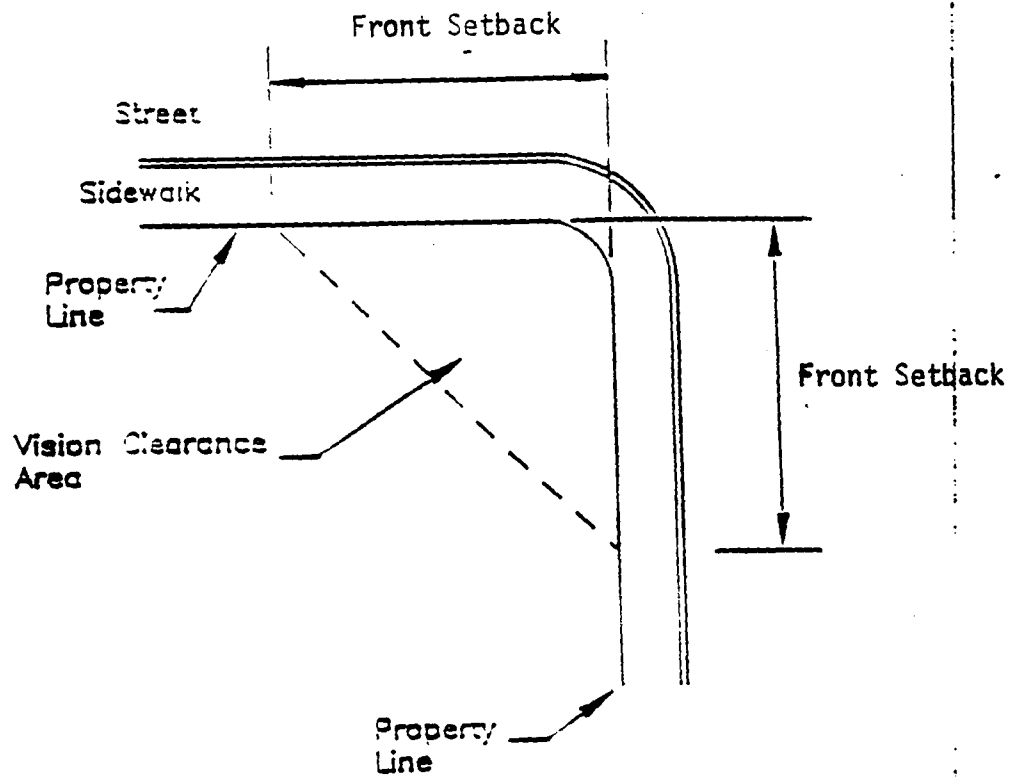
**A. Distance Between Main Buildings**

A minimum distance of 10 feet shall be maintained between all primary residential buildings established on the same lot or parcel of land.

**B. Distance Between Accessory and Primary Buildings**

Except where a greater distance is otherwise required by this Chapter, a minimum distance of six feet shall be required between any primary residential building and an accessory building established on the same lot or parcel of land.

Figure A-6  
Corner Lot Vision Clearance



**C. Projections Between Buildings**

1. The following projections are permitted within the required distance between buildings, provided they are developed subject to the same standards as, and not closer to a line midway between such buildings, than is permitted in relation to a side lot line within a required interior side yard:
  - a. Eaves and cantilevered roofs.
  - b. Fireplace structures, buttresses, and wing walls.
  - c. Rain conductors and spouts, water tables, sills, capitals, cornices, and belt courses.
  - d. Awnings and canopies.
  - e. Water heaters, water softeners, gas or electric meters, including service conductors and pipes.
  - f. Stairways and balconies above the level of the first floor.
2. Uncovered porches, platforms, landings, and decks, including access stairs thereto, which do not extend above the first floor are permitted within the required distance between buildings without distance restriction.

**Section 10. Height Limits**

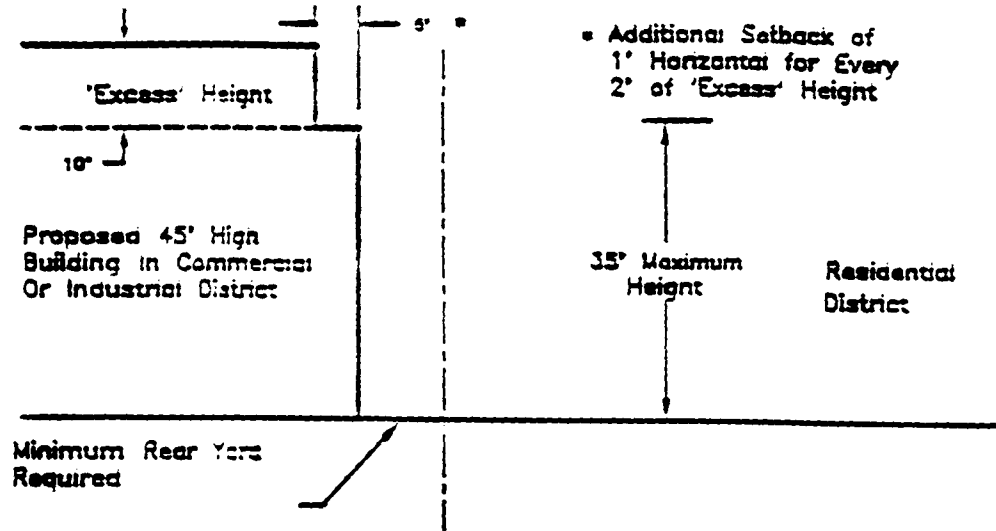
A. Height Adjacent to Residential Zones. Where a rear lot line of a lot in a commercial or industrial district abuts a residential district either within or outside the City, no building or other facility structures on such lot shall exceed the maximum height prescribed for the abutting residential district unless such building or other facility, or that portion thereof which exceeds said height, is set back from any minimum rear yard required by this Chapter a minimum horizontal distance equal to one foot for each two feet by which such building or other facility or portion thereof exceeds said height (see Figure A-7).

1. Where an interior side lot line of a lot in a commercial or industrial district abuts a residential zone either within or outside the City, no building or other facility constructed on such lot shall exceed the maximum height prescribed for the abutting residential district unless such building or other facility, or that portion thereof which exceeds said height, is set back from any minimum side yard required by this Chapter a minimum horizontal distance equal to one foot for each four feet by which such building or other facility or portion thereof exceeds said height (see Figure A-8).

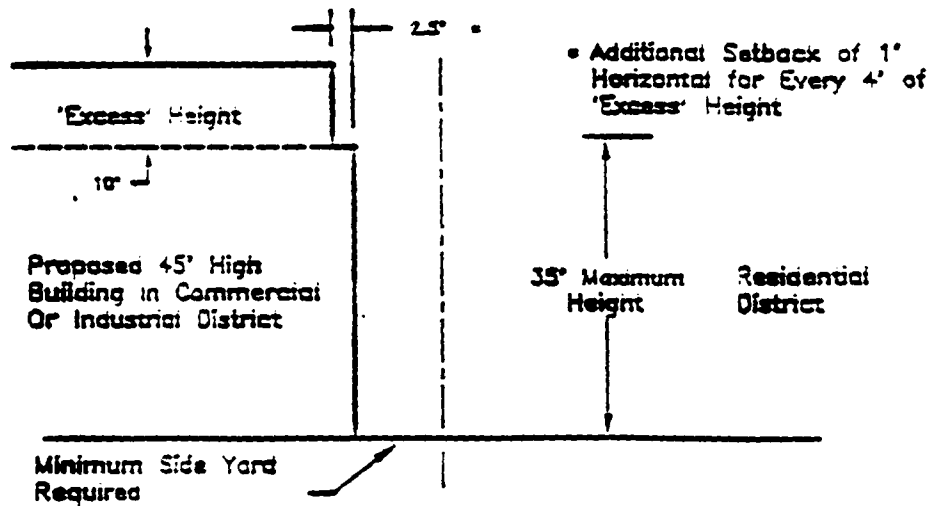
**B. Height Measurement**

The height of a structure shall be measured vertically from the average elevation of the natural grade of the ground covered by the structure (see Figure A-8) to the highest point of the structure or to the coping of a flat roof, to the deck line of a mansard roof, or to the mean height between eaves and ridges for hip, gable, or gambrel roofs.

Figure A- 7  
Additional Setbacks for "Excess Height"

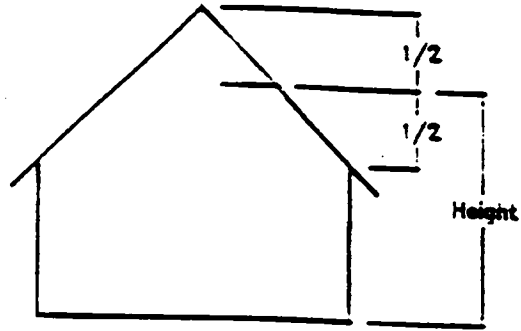
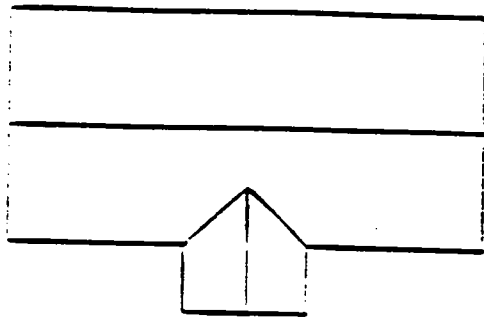


Commercial Or Industrial Lot Line  
Abuts Residential District



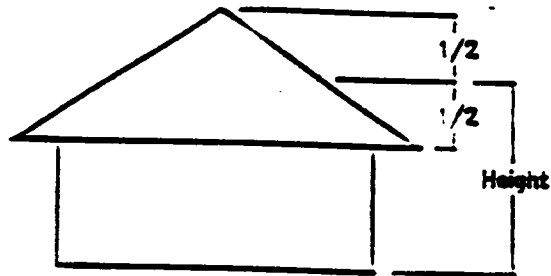
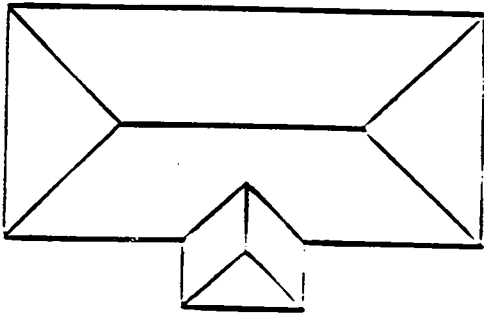
Commercial or Industrial Interior Side Lot Line  
Abuts Residential District

Figure A-3  
Building Height Measurement



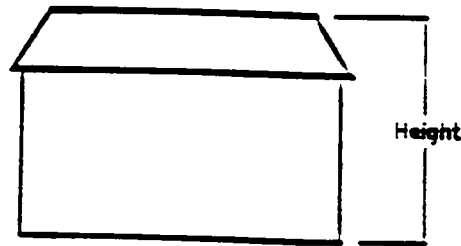
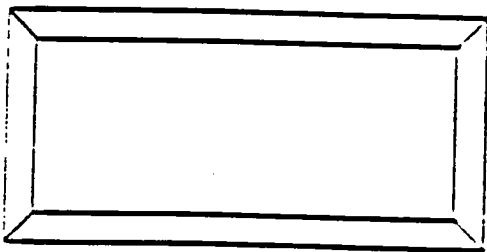
Gable Roof

Average Elevation of Grade



Hip Roof

Average Elevation of Grade



Mansard Roof

Average Elevation of Grade

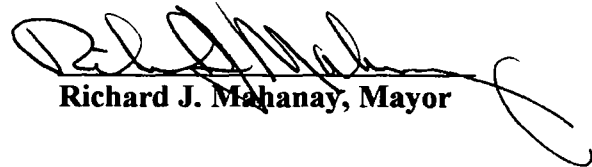


C. Projections Above Permitted Height

1. Architectural projections such as mechanical equipment enclosures and other appurtenant roof-top structures or penetrations such as skylights, stairwells, and ventilation atria; spires, cupolas, chimneys, and other design elements integral to the overall design character of a building and intended to distinguish its design may be permitted above the height limits where not in conflict with the intent of this Chapter, but may not exceed 20 percent of the horizontal area of the floor area below or 10 feet in height above the main roof above which they are situated.
2. Utility poles and towers shall not be subject to the height limits prescribed in the district regulations.

**PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED** by the City Council of the City of American Canyon on the 2nd day of November, 1995 by the following vote:

<b>AYES:</b>	<b>Councilmembers Cypher, Orlando, Winters, Mayor Pro Tem Anderson and Mayor Mahanay</b>
<b>NOES:</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>ABSTAIN:</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>ABSENT:</b>	<b>None</b>

  
Richard J. Mahanay, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

  
Ralph Freedman, City Clerk

  
William D. Ross, City Attorney