



THE CITY OF  
**SAN FERNANDO**

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# Zone Text Amendment (ZTA 2023-001) to Section 106-970, Walls and fences

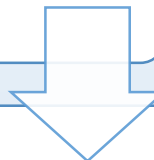
Planning and Preservation Commission Meeting, April 10, 2023

PRESENTED BY:  
**MARINA KHRUSTALEVA,**  
**ASSOCIATE PLANNER**

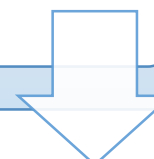
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# Background

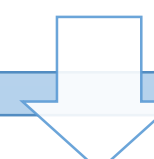
The San Fernando Municipal Code (SFMS), Chapter 106 – Zoning, was adopted in 1957. In 1985, Section 106-970, Walls and fences, was added.



December 2, 2002 – Amended San Fernando Municipal Code (SFMC) Section 106-970, Walls and fences.



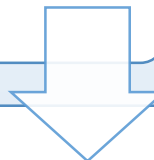
December 2015 – Created application form for residential walls and fences (Form # CDD-024.1) containing permitted and non-permitted fence design.



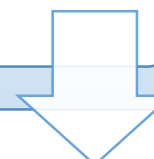
In 2022, multiple residents requested approval for front yard walls and fences to be higher than permitted three feet.

# Background

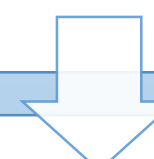
August 15, 2022 – the City Council adopted a Coyote Management and Co-Existence Plan that includes best management practices and strategies for managing coyotes in the City, including a recommendation to consider revising the height limits for fences and walls on residential properties.



November 14, 2022 – the Planning and Preservation Commission discussed potential modifications to fence and wall height for residential property. The Commission was supportive of allowing the installation of coyote rollers above the permitted 6-foot high wall or fence.



March 13, 2023 – the Commission discussed and provided feedback for proposed updated regulations for walls and fences. The Commission supported suggestions provided by staff, requested visual information for workshop discussion, and continued the discussion to the next meeting (April 10, 2023).



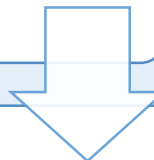
The Commission expressed support of Option 1, which was to update regulations for standard height, design, and materials for walls and fences, to be approved at staff level.

## Option 1 - Staff Suggestions, March 13, 2023

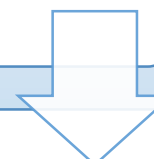
- Allow 4 foot high non-view obscuring front yard fences and street-facing side yard fences on corner lots.
- Allow 4 foot high front yard vegetative hedges and hedges along a street-facing side yard on a corner lot (excluding a sight clearance triangle).
- Define a non-view obscuring fence as a fence with solid components constituting not more than 50 percent of the total surface area of the face of the fence.
- Allow a combination of a fence and a wall in the front yard where a wall does not constitute more than 1/3 of the total height.
- Allow the installation of coyote rollers above the permitted 6-foot high wall or fence in a side or rear yard.
- Prohibit vinyl fences.

# Analysis

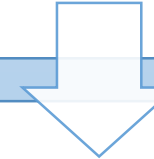
The majority of existing fences in residential neighborhoods in the City do not comply with the current design standards provided in the Zoning Code and with the application form showing permitted and non-permitted types of fences.



Recent applications requesting approval of fence design that deviates from the Code do not meet requirements provided by the Special Fence Review option. Therefore, the Special Fence Review process cannot be used to accommodate these applications.



The majority of front yard fence type in residential zones in San Fernando is a combination of a brick or plastered wall and a wrought iron or tubular iron fence about four or five feet high, usually with protruding pillars.



Fences demonstrate a wide range of decorative elements – radial elements, spikes, cones, lights, lions, etc. These elaborate fences make up the neighborhood character of residential zones of the City.

# Analysis

Additionally, staff researched wall and fence ordinances in other cities in the Greater Los Angeles, including Burbank, Eastvale, Glendale, San Gabriel, and South Pasadena.

The research shows that many cities have minimal design standards for fences that are objective and easily comprehensible for residents and staff. Additional standards for the maintenance of fences provide guidance for Code Enforcement.

Standard	Burbank	Eastvale	Glendale	San Gabriel	South Pasadena
Height of front fence / side fence on a corner lot	4 feet / 6 feet	4 feet	No front fences	4 feet	3 feet
Height of the lower part of the wall	2 feet	---	---	---	
Decorative elements above the fence	18 inches	120% of the height of the fence	---	---	6 inches
Higher front fence with a special permit	no	no	no	no	no
Non-view obscuring front fence	yes 50% open	---	---	---	---
Non-view obscuring side fence	---	---	---	---	---
Vinyl fences prohibited?	no	no	no	no	no



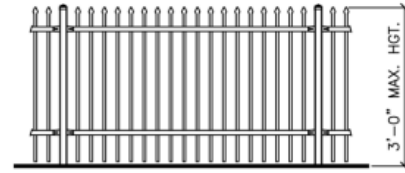
# *FANCY FENCES WORKSHOP*



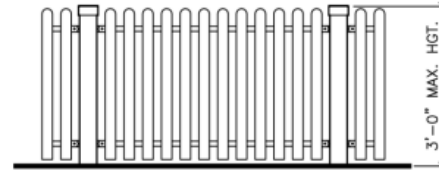
*START*



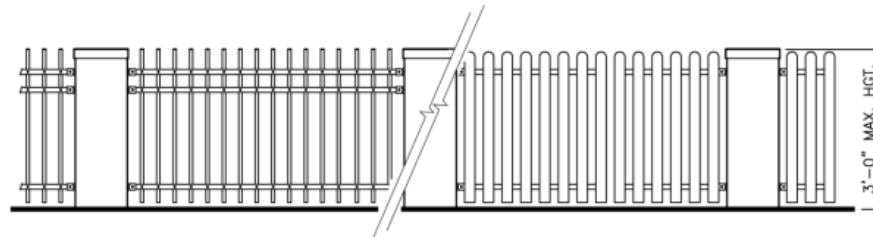
## Residential Walls and Fences Application Form



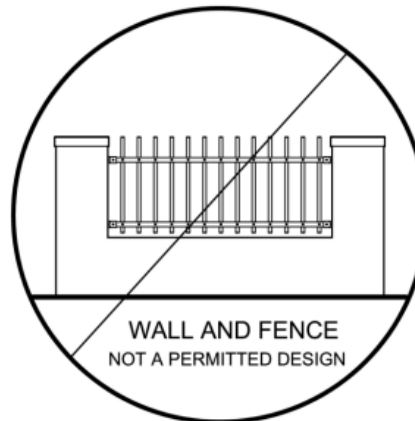
WROUGHT IRON FENCE



PICKET FENCE



FENCE AND PILAR COMBINATION



## 1. HEIGHT OF THE LOWER WALL



For a combination of a wall and a fence, shall there be a design standard for a height of the lower wall part?

Shall it be defined as 1 foot, 1 foot and 4 inches, or 1/3 of the total height of the fence?



## 2. HEIGHT OF DECORATIVE ELEMENTS



Can pillars, gates, and decorative elements be higher than the main part of the fence (4 feet)?

Shall there be a limit for the height of decorative elements (i.e., shall not exceed 120 percent of the height of the fence)?



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## 2. HEIGHT OF DECORATIVE ELEMENTS



Shall there be a minimum height for the gate arch (7 feet, if allowed?)

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### 3. FIVE-FOOT FENCE (WITH A SPECIAL FENCE REVIEW)



Should the residents be able to apply for a five (5) feet fence in front yard or street-facing side yard setback under a Special Fence Review, when a certain percentage of existing fences on the block approved by the City is higher than four (4) feet? If so, what is that percent?



## 4. DEFINITION OF A VIEW-OBSCURING FENCE



Is it crucial for the front fence to be non-view obscuring?

Can a non-view obscuring fence be defined as a fence with view obscuring elements between posts or pillars not exceeding fifty percent of the total surface area of the fence?



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## 5. VIEW-OBSCURING SIDE FENCES



The existing Code requires side fences within a required front yard setback to be non- view-obscuring.

On regular (non-corner) lots, can they be solid for privacy reasons?



## 6. VINYL FENCES – PROHIBITED?



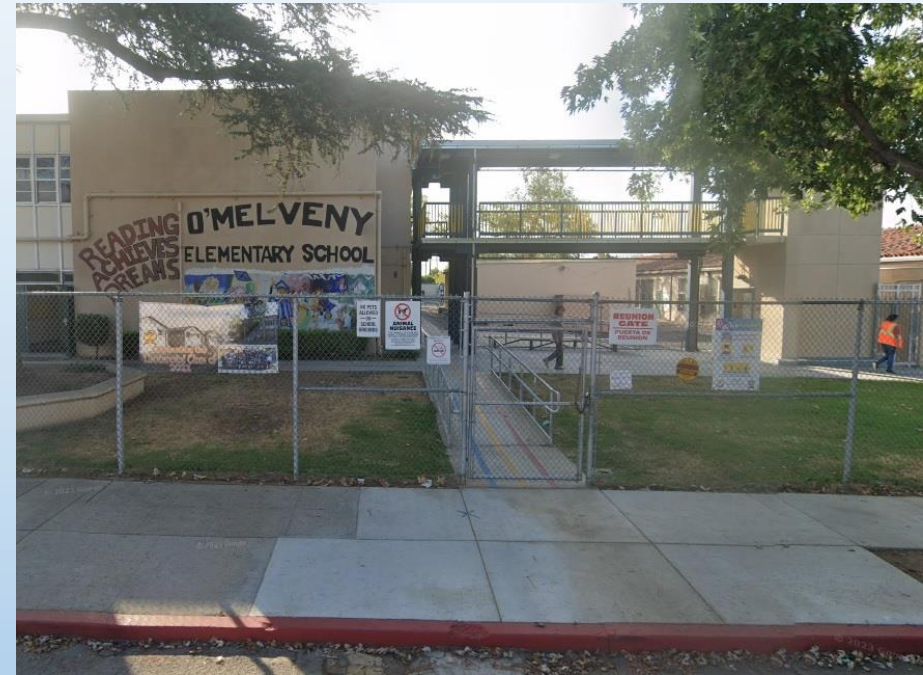
Shall vinyl fences be included in the list of prohibited materials?

## 6. VINYL FENCES – PROHIBITED?

Shall vinyl fences be included in the list of prohibited materials?

PROs	CONs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cheaper than an iron fence</li><li>• Do not need repainting as a wood fence</li><li>• Easy to install</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Easily get broken</li><li>• Get yellowish under the sun</li><li>• Limited lifespan</li><li>• Burden on the landfills (don't decompose)</li></ul>

## 7. SIX-FEET FENCES FOR SCHOOLS AND INSTITUTIONAL FACILITIES



Should schools and institutional facilities in residential zones be able to have six (6) feet non-view obscuring fences for safety reasons? Or eight (8) feet, as permitted in commercial zones?

Most of schools in the City have existing 6 to 8 feet tubular iron or chain link fences installed prior to adoption of the current Code, or approved through a Variance process.



## 8. SPECIAL FENCE REVIEW – ELIMINATED?

If Commission does not support Option 5, shall the Special Fence Review process be eliminated?

A Special Fence Review process (SFMC Section 106-970(j)(3)) allows to build a fence or wall that deviates from the standard requirements under certain circumstances:

1. A retaining wall not to exceed 30 inches.
  2. A non-view obscuring fence not to exceed a height of six feet and located in the street facing side yard on a corner lot only.
  3. A non-view obscuring fence not to exceed a height of six feet and located in the secondary front yard on a through lot (lot with street frontages on front and back of house) only.
  4. A higher fence or wall where applicable building codes or other regulations require a fence or wall exceeding the height limitations (such as a higher retaining wall on a hillside property).
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## 8. SPECIAL FENCE REVIEW – ELIMINATED?

1. A retaining wall not to exceed 30 inches. The height of a retaining wall is determined by the actual grade present on the site and shall not be limited by Code. Therefore, this Special Fence Review option can be removed.
  2. A non-view obscuring fence not to exceed a height of six feet and located in the street facing side yard on a corner lot only. This option could be relevant for multifamily apartment buildings. It could become a standard and be permitted by right.
  3. A non-view obscuring fence not to exceed a height of six feet and located in the secondary front yard on a through lot (lot with street frontages on front and back of house) only. There are very few through lots in residential zones in the City, most of them are used for institutional facilities and will be covered by Option 7. For single-family properties, this option could become a standard and be permitted by right.
  4. A higher fence or wall where applicable building codes or other regulations require a fence or wall exceeding the height limitations (such as a higher retaining wall on a hillside property). Where building code requires a higher fence, the building code prevails. Therefore, this Special Fence Review option can be removed.
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## 8. SPECIAL FENCE REVIEW – ELIMINATED?



Now, a non-view obscuring fence not to exceed a height of six feet in the street facing side yard on a corner lot can be permitted with a Special Fence Permit.

This option could be relevant for multifamily apartment buildings. It could become a standard and be permitted by right.



# *FANCY FENCES WORKSHOP*



*END*

## RECOMMENDATION

- Staff recommends that the Commission discuss and provide feedback for proposed Zone Text Amendment (ZTA 2023-001) to Section 106-970 of the San Fernando Municipal Code to update regulations for walls and fences.
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Questions?

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## 9. SHALL WOOD FENCES BE PAINTED?





## 10. SHALL PLANKS BE VERTICAL OR HORIZONTAL?



## Current Applications for Fences Deviating from the Code

- 4 to 5 foot high front yard fences to address an ongoing trespassing issue or to prevent young children, elderly relatives, or dogs from leaving the property.
- A side yard fence in a required front yard setback that is solid (view-obscuring), for privacy reasons.
- A solid (view-obscuring) side yard fence on a corner lot that is higher 3 feet, for security and privacy reasons.

Do not qualify for the Special Fence Permit process because they do not meet the special circumstances.

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## Pending Fence Review Applications

#	Address	Date	Project
1.	563 S Huntington St	07/16/2022	Legalization of the 4' front yard fence and wall combination built without a planning approval and building permit to address an ongoing trespassing issue.
2.	1227 Hollister St	1/24/2023	Application for a 4' front yard vinyl fence, to address ongoing trespassing issue and protect a resident with a medically proven anxiety and insomnia.
3.	1926 Seventh St	2/28/2023	Legalization of the 5' front yard non-view obscuring fence built without a planning approval and building permit to prevent a single elderly resident from leaving the property.
4.	401 N Hagar St	3/8/2023	Application for a 5' front yard and side non-view obscuring fence within a street-facing side yard setback for an existing public-use building in a residential zone to protect the parking area from trespassing.

## Previously Approved Special Fence Review Applications

#	Address	Date	Project
1.	509 Fermoore St	April 25, 2013	Two retaining walls, 14" and 22" (36" total instead of 30")
2.	2021 Warren St	April 8, 2016	View obscuring 36" side yard fence within the front setback
3.	642 N Huntington Dr	August 16, 2016	View obscuring 36" side yard fence within the front setback
4.	223 N Alexander St	January 21, 2020	5' front and side fence
5.	225 Harding Ave	March 5, 2021	4' front fence
6.	425 Orange Grove	April 16, 2021	3'6" front fence
7.	2012 Knox St	October 28, 2021	4'6" front fence