



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
**OFFICE OF HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION**

# FENCES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO  
HISTORIC DESIGN GUIDELINES  
FENCES POLICY GUIDE

DRAFT  
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# WHY ARE FENCES & WALLS IMPORTANT?

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The historic use of fences and low retaining walls to identify front yard boundaries and provide privacy and security varies dramatically from district to district and from block to block within San Antonio's historic districts.

The types of fences and walls that are used are similarly eclectic. Where historic fences and walls do exist, they are important character-defining features that help reinforce the age and style of the principal building and often times the block. Front yard fences and walls play a large role in defining rhythm and pattern along the street edge. In some districts, non-historic fence materials, such as chain link, have been introduced over time.

This policy document provides owners guidance on when a replacing or installing a new fence and walls may be appropriate and what types of designs and configurations are found to be consistent with the Historic Design Guidelines.

(Images to be inserted)

## NEW FENCES

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While front yard fences are common throughout many historic districts, the appropriateness of installing a new fence on a property that does not currently feature one is determined by the site-specific conditions in relation to the immediate block and the individual historic district.

Typical conditions that where installing a new fence is not appropriate include:

- Properties that do not feature any historic fences within the immediate block. Chain-link and other non-conforming fences should not be cited as a supporting condition.
- Properties within an immediate block that predominantly features long natural lawns and/or a drop in slope at the public right-of-way. This development pattern is found in some areas of Monticello Park, Monte Vista, and Greenlawn Estates Historic Districts.

# SPECIFICATIONS & DOCUMENTATION

When new fences are appropriate to the site-specific conditions of the property, applicants must also ensure that the style, height, and configuration of the fence line is also appropriate per the Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements and the Unified Development Code 35-514.

- **REAR FENCE** - Rear yard privacy fences should be no taller than 6 feet in height and feature wood construction. Historic evidence may support installing stone, masonry, or stucco walls.
- **FRONT FENCE** - Front yard fences should match the height of neighboring fences or limited to 4 feet in height and be compatible with the heights of adjacent historic fences. Historic evidence may support installing stone, masonry, or stucco walls and fence bases.
- **FENCE STYLES** - While maintaining respect to individual architecture styles and historic districts, the most common appropriate fence type includes (a) black wrought iron, (b) painted wood picket, and (c) wood-framed cattle-panel/hog-wire.
- **NONCONFORMING FENCES** - Chain-link, barbed wire, corrugated metal, and make-shift fences should be avoided. Grandfathered items may be replaced with appropriate fencing but should not be reconstructed or expanded upon.
- **PEDESTRIAN GATES** - Pedestrian gates should be located at the intersection the property's walkway and the public sidewalk. Pedestrian gates should relate to the design of the fence while maintaining the 4-foot height limit.
- **VEHICLE GATES** - Vehicle gates should be set behind the front facade plane of the house and not span across the front of the driveway. A front vehicle gate may be considered if the site features an atypical condition including: (a) a wraparound porch, (b) a narrow driveway less than 10 feet wide, and/or (c) front driveways abutting rear yards or commercial properties. Electrical, mechanical, or solar collector equipment should be concealed and minimally visible if used.

(To include sample drawings for application materials.)



# CHOOSING A DESIGN

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The fence should relate to the architectural style of the house and the context of the historic district. A measured drawing or an example photo must be submitted for the proposed fence.

**WROUGHT IRON** - Most appropriate for Queen Anne, Folk Victorian, & German Venacular houses.



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**WOOD PICKET** - Most appropriate for Craftsman, Colonial, & Folk Victorian style houses.



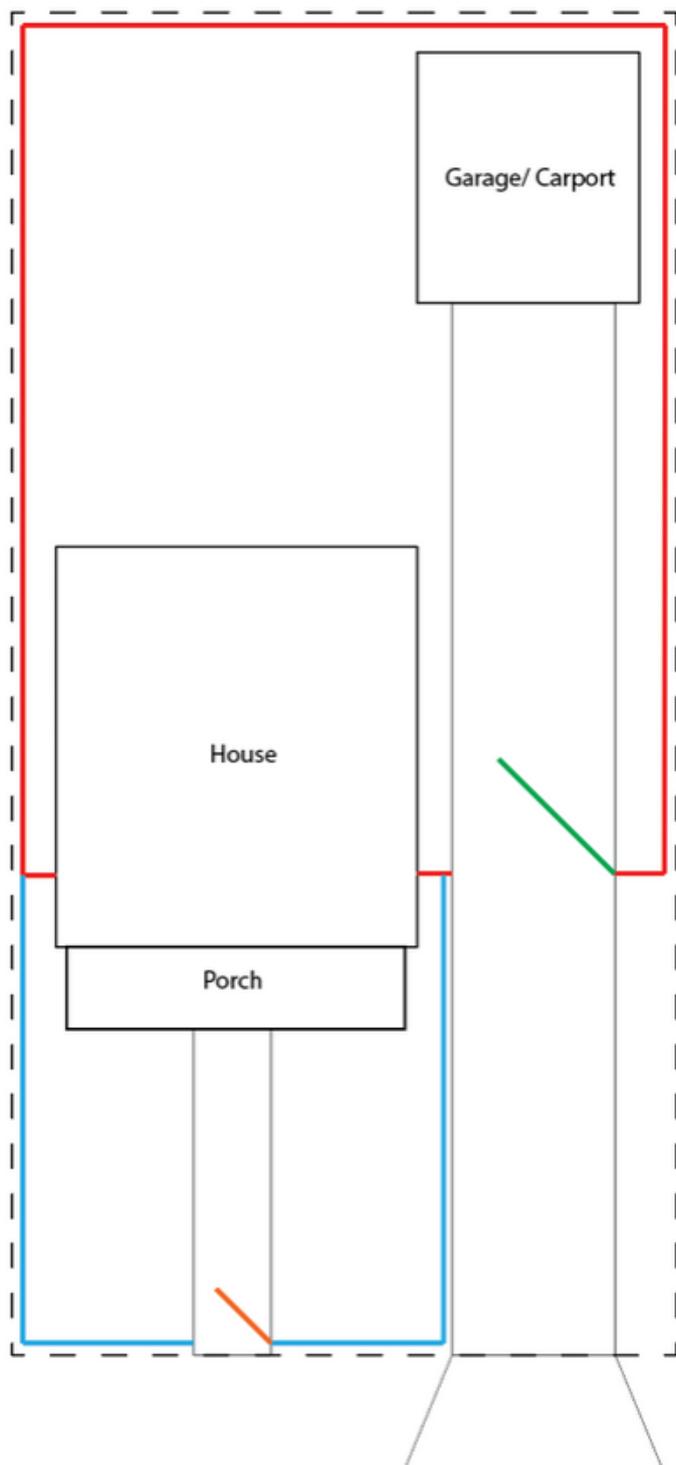
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**GARDEN LOOP** -



# DRAWING THE FENCE LINE

Applicants must also ensure that the style, height, and configuration of the fence line is also appropriate per the Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements and the Unified Development Code 35-514. An accurate and labeled site plan depicting the proposed fence line must be submitted for each fence request.



## EXAMPLE OF A SITE PLAN WITH AN APPROPRIATE FENCE LINE

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# RESOURCES

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**Office of Historic Preservation Staff.** Consult with a historic preservation specialist to receive property-specific guidance on landscaping plans and the Historic Design Guidelines.

**[www.sapreservation.com](http://www.sapreservation.com) | (210) 207-0035 | [info@sapreservation.com](mailto:info@sapreservation.com)**

**Your neighborhood association.** Your registered neighborhood association can provide guidance on landscape characteristics, assistance in design and contractor referrals, and more. To find your association, visit **[www.sanantonio.gov/nhsd/neighborhoods](http://www.sanantonio.gov/nhsd/neighborhoods)** or inquire with Office of Historic Preservation staff if you live in a historic district.