
PLANNING/ZONING INFORMATION

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ZONING AND LAND USE

Title 19 of the Sunnyvale Municipal Code specifies the zoning regulations for the City. Each property is located within a specific zoning district which determines the allowable land use and applicable development standards. Allowable land uses include use type as well as density/intensity of such uses. The development standards regulate building characteristics such as setbacks, lot coverage, building height, etc.

There are eight different residential zoning district types in the city. Each district requires different minimum lot sizes, densities (units per acre), and building setbacks and heights. This book contains general information on the five residential zoning districts that typically contain single family homes. The information provided is intended to assist with remodels and additions to single family homes. For specific information regarding a property, please contact the Planning Division for more detailed information.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided for clarification of various terms that are used in this section.

Accessory Living Unit

Any one-bedroom dwelling unit which provides independent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking and sanitation, for one or more persons, and which is structurally attached to the principal dwelling unit by a minimum ten-foot long common load bearing wall, or which is internal to a single-family dwelling sharing the same lot. A mobile home shall not be erected as an accessory living unit.

Accessory Structures

A detached subordinate structure, with or without a foundation, the use of which is incidental to that of the main building or to the use of the land on the same lot.

Antenna

Any system, external to or attached to the exterior of any building, consisting of wires, poles, rods, discs or similar devices used for the transmission and/or reception of radio, television or other communication signals.

Antenna, Dish

Any antenna, external to or attached to the exterior of any building or structure, which is parabolic or semicircular in cross-section.

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

A ratio, expressed as a percentage, of the gross floor area of all buildings (including covered parking) on a given lot, to the net area of the parcel on which such building or buildings are located

Gross Floor Area

The sum of the areas computed from the outside dimensions of a building. Garages are included in floor area calculations. Basement area may be exempt from the calculation as long as it is located no higher than 2 ft. above grade. Any area with an interior ceiling height exceeding 15 feet shall be counted twice for the purpose of calculating gross floor area. See 19.12.080"G" for a complete definition of gross floor area.

Lot Coverage

Land area covered by all buildings on a lot. Measurements are taken from the outer walls of each building, including corridors, supporting columns, unsupported wall projections and enclosed or unenclosed patios where the roof is more than 50% solid.

Property Line (General Location)

The property line for the front yard and the reducible front yard is determined in most cases by measuring 11 feet from the face of the curb toward the house.

Reducible Front Yard

Located only on corner lots, this frontage is the longer of the two yards next to the street. Because this yard is visible from the street, it is considered a front yard (not a side yard) and has certain conditions attached to it to maintain the appearance along the street.

Required Front Yard

This yard is determined in most cases by measuring 20 feet toward the house starting at the front property line, including the area between the side property lines.

Required Rear Yard

This yard is determined by measuring 20 feet toward the street starting at the rear property line, including the area between the side property lines.

Setback

The minimum required distance between any structure and the property line in a front, rear or side yard.

RESIDENTIAL ZONING STANDARDS

The following is general information residential zoning districts. Please contact the Planning Division to find out in which zoning district your property is located.

R-0

1 st Story Front Setback- 20 ft	Max. Height - 30 ft 2 stories
2 nd Story Front Setback - 25 ft	Max. Lot Coverage - 40%*
Minimum Side Setback - 4 ft min. for 1 st story, 7 ft. for 2 nd story.	Floor Area Ratio** - 45%
Minimum Combined Side Yard Setbacks - 20% of lot width*** not to be less than 10 ft. for the 1 st story. 2 nd Story shall add 6 ft. to the combined 1 st story setback requirement.	Min. Lot Area - 6,000 sq. ft.
Rear Setback- 20 ft	Max. Density - 1 unit/ 6,000 sq. ft.

* Maximum lot coverage of 45% is allowed for single story homes

** Floor Area Ratios above 45% or where the gross floor area exceeds 3,600 square feet must be reviewed by the Planning Commission

*** Lot width is measured 20 ft. back from the front property line.

R-1

1 st Story Front Setback- 20 ft	Max. Height - 30 ft 2 stories
2 nd Story Front Setback - 25 ft	Max. Lot Coverage - 40%*
Minimum Side Setback - 4 ft min. for 1 st story, 7 ft. for 2 nd story.	Floor Area Ratio - 45%
Minimum Combined Side Yard Setbacks - 20% of lot width*** not to be less than 15 ft. for the 1 st story. 2 nd Story shall add 6 ft. to the combined 1 st story setback requirement.	Min. Lot Area - 8,000 sq. ft.
Rear Setback- 20 ft	Max. Density - 1 unit/ 8,000 sq. ft.

* Maximum lot coverage of 45% is allowed for single story homes

** Floor Area Ratios above 45% or where the gross floor area exceeds 3,600 square feet must be reviewed by the Planning Commission

*** Lot width is measured 20 ft. back from the front property line.

R-1.5

1 st Story Front Setback- 20 ft	Max. Height - 30 ft 2 stories
2 nd Story Front Setback - 25 ft	Max. Lot Coverage - 40%
1 st Story Side Setback - 4 ft min. 12 ft total	Floor Area Ratio - 50%
2 nd Story Side Setback - 7 ft min. 18 ft total	Min. Lot Area - 4,200 sq. ft.
Rear Setback - 20 ft	Max. Density - 1 unit/4,200 sq. ft.

R-1.7/PD

1 st Story Front Setback- 20 ft	Max. Height - 30 ft 2 stories
2 nd Story Front Setback - 20 ft	Max. Lot Coverage - 40%
1 st Story Side Setback - 4 ft min. 12 ft total	Floor Area Ratio - 50%
2 nd Story Side Setback - 7 ft min. 18 ft total	Lot Area-2,600sq.ft. min-4,000sq.ft. max.*
Rear Setback - 20 ft	Max. Density - 1 unit/2,600 sq. ft.

* Minimum lot size for entire development is 2 acres

R-2

1 st Story Front Setback- 20 ft	Max. Height - 30 ft 2 stories
2 nd Story Front Setback - 25 ft	Max. Lot Coverage - 40%*
Minimum Side Setback - 4 ft min. for 1 st story, 7 ft. for 2 nd story.	Floor Area Ratio** - 45%***
Minimum Combined Side Yard Setbacks - 20% of lot width**** not to be less than 10 ft. for the 1 st story. 2 nd Story shall add 6 ft. to the combined 1 st story setback requirement.	Min. Lot Area - 8,000 sq. ft.
Rear Setback- 20 ft	Max. Density - 1 unit / 3,600 sq. ft.

* Maximum lot coverage of 45% is allowed for single story homes.

** Floor Area Ratios above 45% or where the gross floor area exceeds 3,600 square feet must be reviewed by the Planning Commission.

*** Maximum Floor Area Ratio for duplexes or multi-unit properties is 55%.

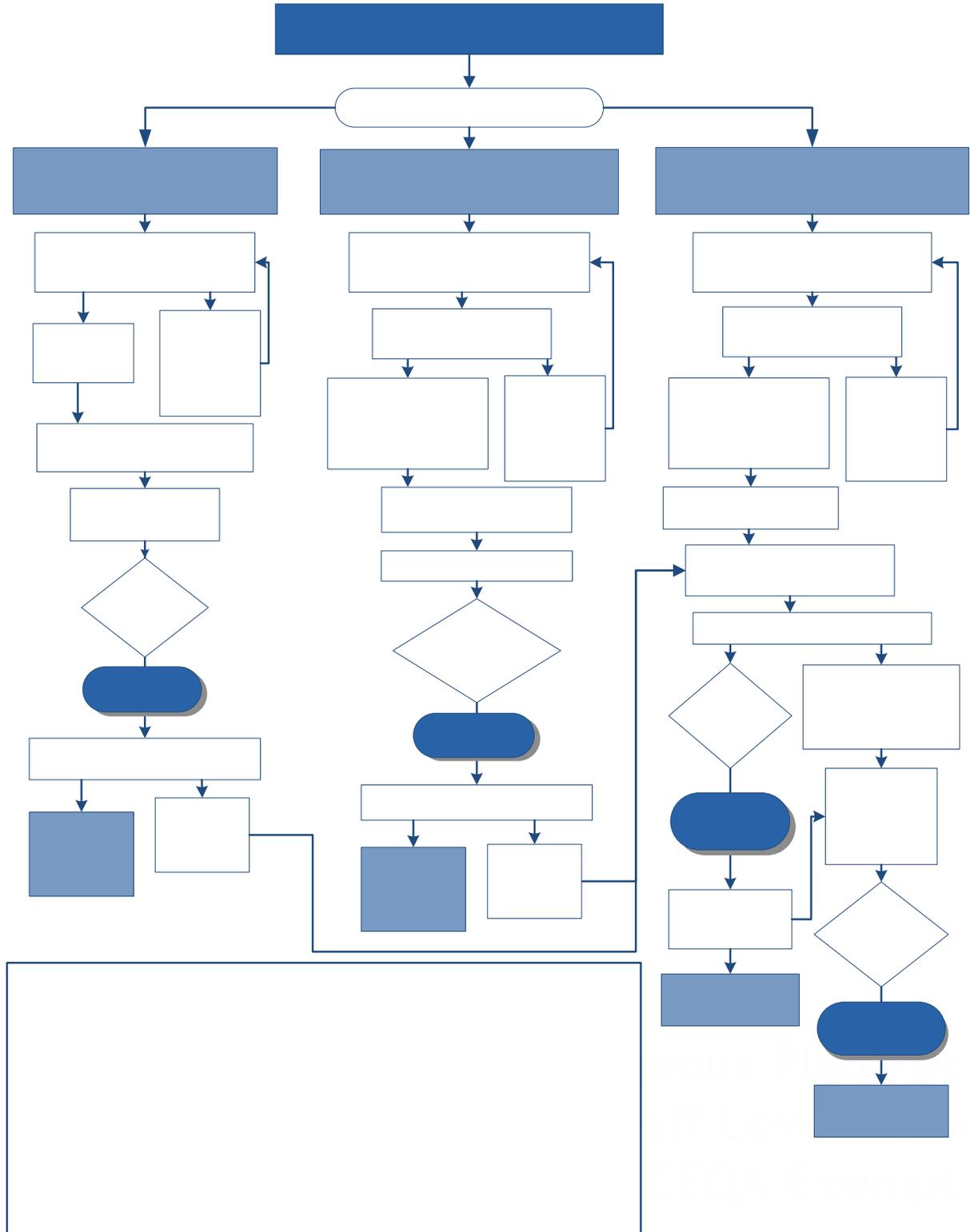
**** Lot width is measured 20 ft. back from the front property line.

REAR YARD SETBACK EXCEPTION

There is an exception to the rear yard setback for single story building additions or detached structures. A single-story structure may be located up to ten feet from the rear property line but can only cover 25% of the required rear yard.

PLANNING PERMITS AND PROCESSING

The following table is a list of the typical planning permits that may be required for various types of projects. Consult with the Planning Division to determine the type of permit that may be needed for a specific project.



Staff review of project and submitted materials for

NEW SINGLE FAMILY HOMES AND ADDITIONS TO EXISTING SINGLE FAMILY HOMES

The following is a list of standard requirements related to residential additions or new construction.

DESIGN REVIEW

Any projects resulting in a significant change in the appearance of the exterior, an addition with a second-story component or any residential addition greater than 20% of the existing floor area (including the garage) is subject to the Single-Family Home Design Techniques or Eichler Design Guidelines, as applicable. These techniques are policy statements on neighborhood compatibility, architectural detail and privacy. A copy of these guidelines is available from the Planning Division. Important design considerations include (but are not limited to):

- **Compatibility with the neighborhood.** The appearance of the house must be compatible, both in size and architectural features, with the established character of the neighborhood.
- **Compatibility with the existing house.** Additions should match the existing residence's style and have the same or compatible exterior colors and materials.
- **Window placement and design.** All new second story windows will be reviewed to minimize visual intrusion into adjacent properties. In some cases, frosted glass or privacy windows may be required.

All additions that involve a second story component require noticing of property owners within 200 ft. For additions or homes that are equal to or less than the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or square footage threshold for each zoning district, the application may be reviewed at the staff level. Projects that exceed the threshold FAR or 3,600 sq. ft must be reviewed at a public hearing by the Planning Commission.

PARKING

A minimum of two covered spaces and two uncovered spaces are required for a single-family residence. Existing homes with sub-standard parking (less than two covered spaces and two driveway spaces) are required to upgrade the parking to meet the minimum standards whenever an addition is proposed that will result in either four or more bedrooms or total square footage of 1,800 square feet or more (including the garage).

The required minimum area for a two-car garage or carport is 400 square feet. A one-car garage or carport cannot be smaller than 200 square feet. Existing garages smaller than these dimensions are considered legal non-conforming and may not be reduced in size.

The interior dimension of a two-car garage cannot be reduced to less than a 17 feet width or 18 feet depth, exclusive of water heaters, appliances, shelves, etc. A one-car garage may not be reduced to less than 8 ½ feet in width or 18 feet in depth. In addition, permanent structures such as stairs and walls may not extend into this required area. Carport dimensions are measured from inside the support columns.

To convert an existing garage or carport to living space, an equivalent number of covered parking spaces must be provided on the property.

Effective January 1, 2005, all recreational vehicles, trailers, and boats parked or stored within the required front yard (front yard setback) in all residential zones, shall be parked or stored perpendicular to the street.

SOLAR ACCESS

New two-story additions and construction shall not shade more than 10% of the roof area of any adjoining properties. If an adjoining dwelling has existing solar panels, new two-story additions and construction may not shade any portion of the solar panels. A solar access study showing projected shadow patterns on adjoining roofs is required when plans are submitted for design review. The shadow study should be conducted for December 21, the shortest day of the year, between the hours of 9:00 AM and 3:00 PM. See the Planning Division to discuss solar access study requirements.

BUILDING PERMITS

All additions require building permits. Consult the *Building Construction Information* section of this book for building plan check, permit, and inspection requirements.

ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

The following is a list of standard requirements related to accessory structures.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The area of an accessory structure is calculated by measuring the area of the outside walls. The height of an accessory structure is measured from the highest point of the structure to the finished grade (ground level) within five feet of the structure, or within five feet of the main building, whichever is less. The size and height of the accessory structure determines where it may be placed on the property.

STRUCTURE TYPES

- **Detached habitable spaces.** An accessory structure which is detached from the main structure and meets the minimum requirements of the building code for human occupancy, such as an office, artist's studio, or game room. If a detached habitable space has cooking and/or eating facilities, it is regulated as an accessory living unit and must comply with development standards as per SMC 19.68.
- **Detached required parking.** An accessory structure which is detached from the main structure and is designed to meet the parking requirements for the property. Garages or carports that are not intended to meet required parking are classified as utility buildings (see below).
- **Open garden feature.** An accessory structure which does not have solid walls, is less than 50% covered, and is primarily intended as a decorative garden feature. Garden features which are 50% covered or more are classified as utility buildings.
- **Open outdoor equipment.** Accessory equipment or structures which are not roofed, do not have solid walls and are primarily intended for recreation or outdoor

cooking. Play houses and other enclosed equipment is classified as utility buildings as defined herein.

- **Temporary Utility Tents.** These structures are built with lightweight poles, typically plastic or aluminum, that are covered with a tarp or other similar temporary materials. They may be freestanding or embedded into the ground. Temporary utility tents may not be installed for longer than 90 days in a one-year period.
- **Utility Building.** An accessory structure which cannot be categorized as any of the above. Utility buildings include detached patio covers, tool sheds, storage sheds, workshops, greenhouses, animal shelters, gazebos, enclosed play houses, and other similar uses.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Permit requirements for accessory structures 450 sq. ft. or less are listed below. Any accessory structure greater than 450 sq. ft. requires a Use Permit.

Structure Type	Location	
	Front or Reducible Front Yard ¹	All Other Areas Including Side and Rear Yards
Open Garden Feature 8 ft. or less in height	No planning permit req.	No planning permit required
Greater than 8 ft. - 15 ft.	MPP with Notice	MPP with Notice
Open Outdoor Equipment, Utility Buildings and Detached Habitable Spaces 8 ft. tall or less	Prohibited	No planning permit required
Greater than 8 ft. - 15 ft.	Prohibited	MPP with Notice
Detached Required Parking	MPP with Notice	MPP with Notice

1. Includes any areas where the structure is visible between any face of the building and the street.

SETBACK REQUIREMENTS

Structure Type	Required Setback		
	Front Yard and Reducible Front Yard	Side	Rear Yard

Structure Type	Required Setback		
	Front Yard and Reducible Front Yard	Side	Rear Yard
Open Garden Feature Up to 8 ft. in height and up to 120 sq. ft.	0 ft.	0 ft.	0 t.
Greater than 8 ft. in height up to 15 ft. or greater than 120 sq. ft.	20 ft.	Zoning Setback	10 ft.
Open Outdoor Equipment, Utility Buildings and Detached Habitable Spaces Up to 8 ft. in height and up to 120 sq. ft.	Prohibited	0 ft. *	0 ft. *
Up to 8 ft. in height and more than 120 sq. ft.	Prohibited	Zoning Setback*	10 ft.
Greater than 8 ft. in height up to 15 ft.	Prohibited	Zoning Setback *	10 ft.
Detached Required Parking Garages	20 ft.	Zoning Setback*	10 ft.
Temporary Utility Tents up to 15 ft. in height.	20 ft.	Zoning Setback	10 ft.

***Additional Setbacks**

Utility buildings, detached habitable spaces and detached required parking structures are also required to meet the setback requirements of the building code. When these structures are located less than 5 ft. to the property line, a one-hour fire rated wall is required. No fire rating is required when the structure is located 5 ft. or more from the property line. Please contact the Building Division staff at the One-Stop Permit Center for further information.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The following are additional requirements for sheds.

- If the total floor area of all accessory utility buildings exceeds 450 square feet, the property owner must maintain covered parking on the property for at least 2 cars.
- The combined total of all accessory utility buildings on a lot cannot exceed 800 square feet.

BUILDING PERMITS

Building Permits are required for certain types of accessory structures and patio covers in order to insure safety of the structures. Accessory structures used for storage and utility purposes and free-standing patio covers greater than 120 sq. ft. require a building permit. Patio covers, gazebos and detached garages require a building permit regardless of size. Consult the *Building Construction Information* section of this book for building plan check, permit, and inspection requirements.

ACCESSORY LIVING UNITS

An accessory living unit (also known as a granny flat, in-law quarters or secondary dwelling unit) is a one-bedroom unit that provides independent living accommodations for one or more persons. It can be “attached” (structurally connected to a single-family residence by a minimum ten foot long common load bearing wall) or “detached” (a separate structure from the main house or not attached to the main residence).

Accessory living units are allowed in R-0, R-1 and R-2 zoning districts and in Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) residential sub-districts and are reviewed through the Miscellaneous Plan Permit (MPP) process. The chart below shows the minimum lot size requirements for accessory living units.

ACCESSORY LIVING UNITS	
Zoning District	Minimum Lot Size
R-0	9,000 square feet
R-1	9,000 square feet
R-2	5,000 square feet
DSP Blocks 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 17	5,000 square feet

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The following is a list of the requirements for accessory living units.

- The maximum accessory living unit size is 700 square feet.
- The accessory living unit may contain only one bedroom.
- Detached accessory living units may not be located in front of the main residence.
- The primary residence or the accessory living unit must be occupied by at least one property owner.
- At least one parking space must be provided on-site for the accessory living unit in addition to the two covered and two uncovered parking spaces required for the primary dwelling.
- Lots located in the R-2 Zoning District and DSP must provide a total of 1,000 square feet of usable open space.
- The entrance or stairway to an accessory living unit may not be located on any building side facing a street.
- The design of an accessory living unit will be reviewed to ensure it matches the design of the main residence.
- Conversion of covered parking (garage or carport) to an accessory living unit is not allowed unless covered parking can be provided elsewhere on the site and all applicable zoning ordinance requirements can be met.
- Mobile homes and trailers may not be erected as an accessory living unit.

- All other applicable municipal code requirements must be met including, but not limited to: landscaping, irrigation, open space, setbacks, lot coverage, building height and solar access.
- No more than one accessory living unit may be located on any lot.

BUILDING PERMITS

All accessory living units require building permits. Consult the *Building Construction Information* section of this book for building plan check, permit and inspection requirements.

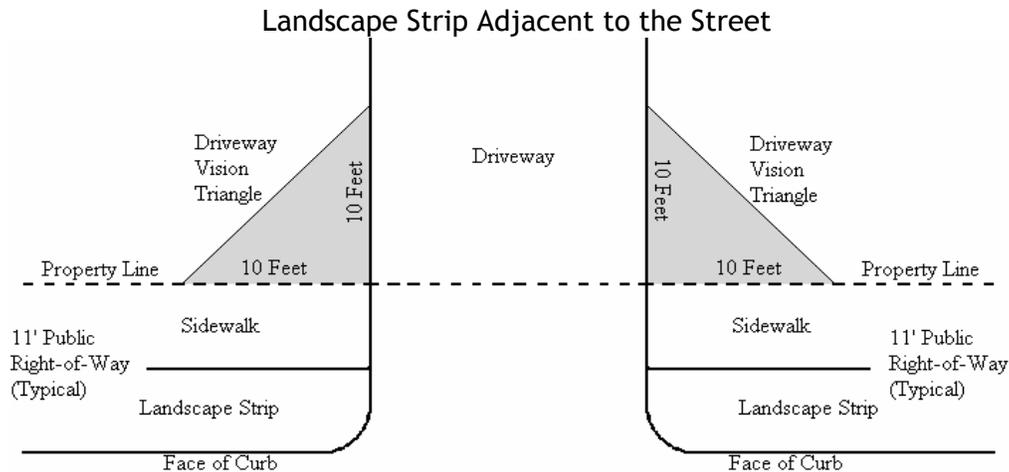
VISION TRIANGLES

Keeping vision triangles free of obstructions promotes safety by providing drivers a better view of pedestrian and vehicular traffic while exiting a driveway or approaching a corner. Well-maintained vision triangles provide a better line of sight for drivers, reducing the potential for accidents and possible injuries.

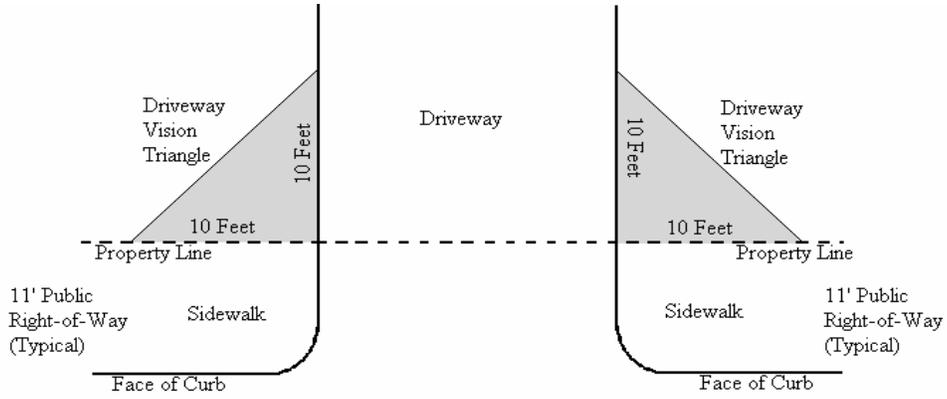
Only natural or structural objects three feet or less in height may be located within a vision triangle. Trees are permitted only if the foliage between three feet and eight feet in height is removed.

DRIVEWAY VISION TRIANGLE

All lots must maintain a ten foot driveway vision triangle. The driveway vision triangle is created by measuring ten feet along the outer edge of a driveway and ten feet along the back edge of a public sidewalk from the point where the driveway and sidewalk meet. Connecting these two lines with a diagonal line completes the triangle and forms the driveway vision triangle.



Sidewalk Adjacent to the Street



CORNER VISION TRIANGLE

All corner lots must maintain a 40-foot corner vision triangle. The corner vision triangle is formed by measuring 40 feet along each property line from the corner where the two street sides of the property meet. Connecting these two lines with a diagonal line forms the corner vision triangle.

