

SOUTH JORDAN CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: MAY 6, 2025

FILE OVERVIEW

Item Name	Residential Front Yard Fencing Text Amendment
Applicant Address	11201 S Alisa Meadow Dr. South Jordan, UT 84095
File Number	PLZTA202400233
Applicant	Thomas & Rebekah Wiandt
Staff Author	Joe Moss, Long Range Planner

ITEM SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting to amend the code to allow for front yard fences on neighborhood streets and modify fencing development standards to allow for additional height for gates and pillars or posts. Staff is not in favor of all changes to front yard fence development standards that are included in the applicant's request shown in Exhibit A, and is recommending approval of an alternative amendment shown as Exhibit 1. The alternative still would allow for front yard fences, but at lower heights than proposed by the applicant.

TIMELINE

- **November 25, 2024** the applicant submitted a complete text amendment application to Staff for review. City Staff worked with the applicant to modify the proposed amendments for clarity prior to scheduling the item for a hearing date.
- **March 25, 2025** the item was presented to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission did not provide a positive recommendation on either version of the amendment. A vote to provide a positive recommendation of the Staff alternative in Exhibit 1 failed in a 3-3 vote. Those voting against the item cited concerns with allowance of solid fencing and the possibility of driveway gates.

The Staff alternative in Exhibit 1 has not been revised per these concerns because lower height solid fencing is already allowed in front yards on collector and arterial roadways and is commonly allowed in neighboring communities. The Current ordinance does not address driveway gates but does require clear vision areas for driveways to maintain visibility, generally meaning driveway gates have not been an issue.

REPORT ANALYSIS

The applicant originally had requested to modify two sections of the Code. Front yard fencing standards is contained in Ordinance 2025-05 and the request to modify park strip landscape requirements contained in Ordinance 2025-08. The applicant has elected to not proceed with the landscaping amendments at this time.

Overview: The applicant has requested to modify residential fencing code in [§17.40.020.H.4](#) to allow front yard fences on neighborhood streets, which are currently prohibited. They are also proposing amendments to current standards for height and column spacing. Staff has proposed an alternative amendment that would still allow front yard fencing, but with additional clarification on location, materials, and revised height limits. The applicant's request is shown in Exhibit A and the Staff drafted alternative is shown in Exhibit 1. The following analysis compares both proposed amendments to existing Code requirements:

Location:

- *Current Code:* Front yard fences are only permitted for lots that front collector or arterial streets. On neighborhood streets only side yard fencing is permitted in front yards. Fences are required to comply with clear vision area requirements in [§16.04.200.J](#) to prohibit blocking critical sight lines.
- *Exhibit A:* Allows fences along the "...front lot line to the right-of-way line or sidewalk of a neighborhood street". It would maintain the current clear vision area requirements.

- *Exhibit 1:* Permits fencing in “a front yard, side yard, or along a front or side property line.” It would maintain the current clear vision area requirements and in addition it prohibits fencing from being located between the sidewalk and the street. It also makes reference to [§12.04.070](#) which prohibits obstructions in the right-of-way and sidewalk.

Analysis: South Jordan’s current ordinance is unique in prohibiting front yard fences on neighborhood streets, as most area municipalities do permit low height front yard fences. A front yard fence can be an attractive and positive visual element in a residential streetscape when designed in an inviting and fitting way. The proposed amendment in Exhibit 1 allows a fence to be built further into a front yard, not only along a right of way or sidewalk, while also making it clear that sidewalks and the right-of-way are not allowed to be fenced. These clarifications add more flexibility for residents as to where fences should be placed, while preserving publicly accessible spaces.

Materials:

- *Current Code:* Front yard fences may be constructed of decorative wrought iron, simulated wrought iron, vinyl pickets, masonry, or solid vinyl. It also permits brick pillars.
- *Exhibit A:* Does not modify existing materials requirements.
- *Exhibit 1:* Permits all existing allowed materials with the addition of wood pickets, wood post and rail, and vinyl post and rail. It also clarifies that all allowed fencing materials may be used with or without masonry pillars.

Analysis: Exhibit 1 would expand available materials options than currently allowed or would be allowed under the applicant’s proposal in Exhibit A. The inclusion of wood pickets and post and rail style fencing would be in keeping with the residential and sometimes rural character of South Jordan’s diverse neighborhoods.

Height: Diagrams relating to this section can be found in Attachment A.

- *Current Code:* Open style fencing that is “nonobscuring” such as wrought iron can be up to four feet (4’) in height. Solid fencing is limited to three feet (3’). Gate height is not mentioned in the current code, and thus would be limited to the same as the fence panel. Posts and pillars may only extend four inches (4”) above the fence panel.
- *Exhibit A:* Keeps the existing height limits (4’ for open style, and 3’ for solid) with the following modifications:
 - Gates may be up to six feet (6’) if nonvisually obscuring or four feet (4’) if solid.
 - Posts and pillars may extend up to two feet (2’) beyond the fence panel or gate. This would permit a total maximum height for pillars of eight feet (8’) if associated with a six feet (6’) tall open style gate.
 - The proposed amendment clarifies that lighting, finials and adornments are included in the height measurement.

- *Exhibit 1:* Keeps the existing height limits (four feet (4') for open style, and three feet (3') for solid) with the following modifications:
 - Posts and pillars and gates may extend up to one foot (1') beyond the fence panel. This would permit a total maximum height for projections of five feet (5') if associated with a four feet (4') tall open style fence.
 - The proposed amendment clarifies that lighting, finials and adornments are included in the height measurement.

Analysis: The current limit of four inches (4") above the fence panel can prohibit many finials, lighting, and post caps that can add functionality and aesthetic value. Both proposed amendments clarify that finials, lighting and adornments are included in height measurements. Exhibit 1 would increase the allowed projection height above the fence panel by nine inches (9") and would be in scale with lower fence heights that are characteristic for front yards. Gates would be an allowed projection. The applicant's proposal in Exhibit A would allow for gates up to six feet (6') if open style, and their associated pillars up to eight feet (8'). Fences in these heights are not currently permitted for front yards and are typically only utilized in taller screening and privacy fences. Staff's research in surrounding cities found that front yard fences are typically limited to four feet (4') on residential neighborhood streets.

Post and Pillar Spacing:

- *Current Code:* Requires brick pillars are spaced no closer than ten feet (10') apart.
- *Exhibit A:* Reduces the minimum separation to eight feet (8').
- *Exhibit 1:* Reduces the minimum separation to eight feet (8'). It allows gate posts or pillars to be exempt from minimum spacing requirements.

Analysis: Standard fencing materials generally come in eight foot (8') lengths, but are not commonly found in ten foot (10') lengths. Reducing the spacing requirement to eight feet (8') would accommodate material availability and does not have any anticipated negative impacts. An exception for gate posts is practical since most gates are less than eight feet (8') in width.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

General Plan Conformance

The ordinance as proposed by the applicant in Exhibit A is not entirely in conformance with the following goals and strategies from the general plan, however Exhibit 1 is in conformance with the following:

- LIVE GOAL 4: Maintain existing and well-maintained single-family residential neighborhoods
- GROW GOAL 4: Develop and maintain a pattern of residential land uses that provides for a variety of densities and types and maintains the high standards of existing development

Strategic Priorities Conformance:

The ordinance as proposed by the applicant in Exhibit A is not entirely in conformance the following directives from the Strategic Direction, however Exhibit 1 is in conformance with the following Strategic Direction:

- BRE-1. Develops effective, well-balanced, and consistently applied ordinances and policies
- BRE-2. Implements ordinances and policies that encourage quality community growth and development

Findings:

Ordinance 2025-05, Residential Front Yard Fencing

The following table details front yard fencing requirements in the existing Code, the applicant's proposed text (Exhibit A), and Staff's recommended alternative (Exhibit 1).

Requirement	Current Code	Exhibit A	Exhibit 1
Location	Only allowed in front yards along collector and arterial roads (Side fences allowed)	Allows front yard fences in any front yard along ROW line or along sidewalk	Allows in front yard, prohibits between sidewalk and road.
Fence Height	3' max for solid fences 4' for open fences	3' max for solid fences 4' for open fences	3' max for solid fences 4' for open fences
Gate Height	3' max for solid fences 4' for open fences	4' max for solid fences 6' for open fences	Gate may project an additional 12" above fence panel (5' max)
Post/ Pillar Height	4" above fence panel (4'4" max)	24" above gate or fence panel (8' max)	12" above fence panel (5' max)

Requirement	Current Code	Exhibit A	Exhibit 1
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decorative wrought iron • simulated wrought iron • vinyl pickets • masonry • solid vinyl • masonry pillars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decorative wrought iron • simulated wrought iron • vinyl pickets • masonry • solid vinyl • masonry pillars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decorative wrought iron • simulated wrought iron • vinyl pickets • masonry • solid vinyl • masonry pillars • wood pickets • wood post and rail • vinyl post and rail
Pillar Spacing	10' minimum	8' minimum	8' minimum, gate pillars exempt

In addition to the requirements in the summary table the following are included in the proposed amendments:

- Both proposed amendments maintain current requirements for clear view areas.
- Both proposed amendments clarify that objects affixed to pillars such as lighting, adornments, and finials are included in the maximum height measurement.

Conclusions:

- The proposed amendment shown in Exhibit A is not in conformance with the General Plan and the City's Strategic Priorities.
- The proposed amendment shown in Exhibit 1 is in conformance with the General Plan and the City's Strategic Priorities.

Planning Staff Recommendation:

Staff is in support of the following modifications to the current Zoning Code:

- *Allowing front yard fencing on neighborhood streets.* Many neighboring cities allow front yard fencing, and it is also permitted in areas of South Jordan such as Daybreak and homes located on arterial and collector streets. Staff is in support of permitting all homes to have a front yard fence, but acknowledges that these should be done within design and development standards to ensure high quality neighborhoods.
- *Reducing minimum column spacing.* Reducing the minimum spacing to 8' from 10' in would accommodate standard fence panel sizes and staff is in support of this modification.

Staff is not in support of the following modifications as requested by the applicant:

- *Additional height for gates.* A maximum of six feet (6'). This is an increase beyond what is currently allowed in South Jordan and surrounding communities. Staff is of the opinion that this increase would create less inviting neighborhoods. Staff's proposed alternative would keep gates to a maximum of four feet (4').
- *Additional post and pillar height.* Both the applicant and Staff proposed amendments include a clarification that lighting, finials, or other adornments are included in the overall height measurement. In order to account for this, Staff is comfortable with an increase from 4" to 12", however the applicant is proposing an increase of 24" which would allow pillars up to 8' in height if associated with a 6' gate. Staff is of the opinion that this is not a reasonable height for residential front yards since 8' fencing is typically only permitted as a screening device.

In addition to the applicant's proposed changes, staff is in favor of additional clarifications to materials and location of fencing that are included in Exhibit 1.

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance as shown in Exhibit 1 based on the report analysis, findings, and conclusions listed above.

CITY COUNCIL ACTION

Required Action:

Final Decision

Scope of Decision:

This is a legislative item. The decision should consider prior adopted policies, especially the General Plan.

Standard of Approval:

Utah Code [§ 10-9a-102](#) grants the City Council a general land use authority to enact regulations that it considers necessary or appropriate for the use and development of land in the City. (See Utah Code [§ 10-9a-501](#) et seq.)

Motion Ready:

I move that the City Council approves:

1. Ordinance 2025-05, Residential Zones Front Yard Fencing Text Amendment, as shown in Exhibit 1;

Alternatives:

1. Approve the application as shown in Exhibit A.
2. Approve the application with conditions.
3. Deny the application.
4. Schedule the application for a decision at some future date.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

1. Ordinance 2025-05
 - a. Exhibit A, Residential Zones Front Yard Fencing Text Amendment
 - b. Exhibit 1, Residential Zones Front Yard Fencing Text Amendment
2. Attachment A, Fence Height Diagrams
3. Attachment B, Applicant Illustration

ORDINANCE NO. 2025 - 05

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH, AMENDING SECTION 17.40.020 (DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS) OF THE SOUTH JORDAN CITY MUNICIPAL CODE TO MODIFY THE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS FOR FRONT YARD FENCES, POSTS AND GATES.

WHEREAS, Utah Code Section 10-9a-102 grants the City of South Jordan (the “City”) authority to enact ordinances that the South Jordan City Council (the “City Council”) considers necessary or appropriate for the use and development of land within the City; and

WHEREAS, City residents Thomas and Rebekah Wiandt (the “Applicants”), who reside at 11201 S. Alisa Meadow, have requested amendments to Section 17.40.020 of the City Municipal Code regarding front yard fences, gates and posts (the “Amendments”); and

WHEREAS, City staff has reviewed the Applicants amendments and recommend alternate Amendments (the “City Amendments”) , still allowing for front yard fences, gates, and posts but differing in size and scope from those requested by the Applicants;; and

WHEREAS, the South Jordan Planning Commission held a public hearing, reviewed both proposed text amendments, and made a recommendation to the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the City Council held a public hearing and reviewed both proposed text amendments; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that proposed text amendment, set forth in **Exhibit ____**, will enhance the public health, safety and welfare and will promote the development and design standards in the City.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH:

SECTION 1. Amendment. Section 17.40.020 of the South Jordan City Municipal Code, as set forth in the attached **Exhibit ____**, is hereby amended.

SECTION 2. Severability. If any section, part or provision of this Ordinance is held invalid or unenforceable, such invalidity or unenforceability shall not affect any other portion of this Ordinance and all sections, parts, provisions and words of this Ordinance shall be severable.

SECTION 3. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall become effective immediately upon publication or posting as required by law.

[SIGNATURE PAGE FOLLOWS]

PASSED AND ADOPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SOUTH JORDAN, UTAH, ON THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 2025 BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

	YES	NO	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
Patrick Harris	_____	_____	_____	_____
Kathie Johnson	_____	_____	_____	_____
Donald Shelton	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tamara Zander	_____	_____	_____	_____
Jason McGuire	_____	_____	_____	_____

Mayor: _____
Dawn R. Ramsey

Attest: _____
Anna Crookston, City Recorder

Approved as to form:

Gregory Simonsen
Gregory Simonsen (Mar 20, 2025 15:40 MDT)

Office of the City Attorney

17.40.020 DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS

H. Fencing, Screening And Clear Vision: The fencing, screening and clear vision requirements of this section shall apply in Residential Zones.

1. Utility Screening: In nonresidential developments, all mechanical equipment, antennas (where possible), loading areas, and utility areas shall be screened from view at ground level along the property line of the subject property with architectural features or walls consistent with materials used in the associated buildings. Exterior trash receptacles in nonresidential developments shall be enclosed by masonry walls that are at least as tall as the receptacle itself, but not less than six feet (6') tall, and solid steel access doors. The color of trash receptacle enclosures (masonry walls and access doors) shall be consistent with colors used in the associated buildings.
2. Incompatible Land Use Screening: Incompatible land uses, including waterways, trails, parks, open spaces and other uses or zones shall be screened or buffered with fences, walls and/or landscaping as required by the development approval.
3. Rear And Side Yard Fencing: A maximum six foot (6') high fence and/or hedge may be installed and maintained between a dwelling and a rear or side lot line.
4. Front Yard Fencing:
 - a.** A maximum four foot (4') high, nonvisually obscuring decorative wrought iron, simulated wrought iron or nonobscuring vinyl picket fence may be constructed along a side **and front** lot line to the right-of-way line or sidewalk of a neighborhood street, except as regulated in Clear Vision Areas, according to Section 16.04.200 (J).
 - b.** A masonry or solid vinyl fence or hedge may also be constructed along lot lines to the right-of-way or sidewalk but may not be greater than three feet (3') high.
 - c.** Brick pillars **for either four foot (4') nonobscuring or three foot (3') solid fencing** may not exceed eighteen inches (18") square or be closer than ~~ten~~ **eight** feet (4⁰ 8') on center. Posts or pillars may not extend higher than **twenty** four inches (24") above the fence **or gate** panel. **Objects affixed to pillars and posts including lighting, finials, and adornments shall be included in the height measurement.**
 - d.** **Gates may be permitted up to six feet (6') if nonvisually obscuring or up to four feet (4') if solid.**
5. Clear Vision Area: Landscape materials within a Clear Vision Area shall comply with Section 16.04.200 (J).

Collector Street Fencing: Any single-family residential rear or side yard fence erected or maintained roughly parallel to and within twenty feet (20') of a collector or arterial street right-of-way in a Residential Zone shall be constructed according to section 16.04.200 of this Code.

17.40.020 DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN STANDARDS

H. Fencing, Screening And Clear Vision: The fencing, screening and clear vision requirements of this section shall apply in Residential Zones.

1. Utility Screening: In nonresidential developments, all mechanical equipment, antennas (where possible), loading areas, and utility areas shall be screened from view at ground level along the property line of the subject property with architectural features or walls consistent with materials used in the associated buildings. Exterior trash receptacles in nonresidential developments shall be enclosed by masonry walls that are at least as tall as the receptacle itself, but not less than six feet (6') tall, and solid steel access doors. The color of trash receptacle enclosures (masonry walls and access doors) shall be consistent with colors used in the associated buildings.
2. Incompatible Land Use Screening: Incompatible land uses, including waterways, trails, parks, open spaces and other uses or zones shall be screened or buffered with fences, walls and/or landscaping as required by the development approval.
3. Rear And Side Yard Fencing: A maximum six foot (6') high fence and/or hedge may be installed and maintained between a dwelling and a rear or side lot line.
4. Front Yard Fencing: ~~A maximum four foot (4') high, nonvisually obscuring decorative wrought iron, simulated wrought iron or nonobscuring vinyl picket fence may be constructed along a side lot line to the right of way line or sidewalk of a neighborhood street, except as regulated in Clear Vision Areas, according to Section 16.04.200 (J). A masonry or solid vinyl fence or hedge may also be constructed along lot lines to the right of way or sidewalk but may not be greater than three feet (3') high. Brick pillars may not exceed eighteen inches (18") square or be closer than ten feet (10') on center. Posts or pillars may not extend higher than four inches (4") above the fence panel.~~ **Fencing is permitted within front yards in compliance with the following standards:**
 - a. **Location. Fencing may be located in a front yard, side yard, or along a front or side property line. Fencing is prohibited between a sidewalk and the street. Fences may not obstruct any sidewalk or other right of way and shall comply with the Section 12.04.070 of this Code.**
 - b. **Materials. Front yard fencing is only permitted if constructed of one of the following materials:**
 - (1) **Wrought Iron, with or without masonry pillars;**
 - (2) **Simulated wrought iron with or without masonry pillars;**
 - (3) **Wood or vinyl pickets with or without masonry pillars;**
 - (4) **Wood or vinyl post and rail with or without masonry pillars;**
 - (5) **Solid masonry;**
 - (6) **Solid vinyl with or without masonry pillars.**
 - c. **Height. Except as regulated in Clear Vision Areas, according to Section 16.04.200.J. of this Code, front yard fencing heights are regulated as follows:**
 - (1) **Fences that are non-visually obscuring shall not be more than four feet (4') tall.**
 - (2) **Masonry or solid vinyl fence may not be more than three feet (3') tall.**

- (3) **Projections such as posts, pillars, and gates may not extend higher than one foot (1') above the maximum height allowed for the fence. Objects affixed to pillars and posts including lighting, finials, and adornments shall be included in the height measurement.**
- d. **Posts and pillars. Fence posts or masonry pillars shall not exceed eighteen inches (18") in width or diameter. Fence posts and pillars may not be closer than ten feet (10') on center, excluding gate posts or gate pillars.**
5. Clear Vision Area: Landscape materials within a Clear Vision Area shall comply with Section 16.04.200.J. of this Code.
6. Collector Street Fencing: Any single-family residential rear or side yard fence erected or maintained roughly parallel to and within twenty feet (20') of a collector or arterial street right-of-way in a Residential Zone shall be constructed according to Section 16.04.200 of this Code.

Current Code Diagram

Attachment
A

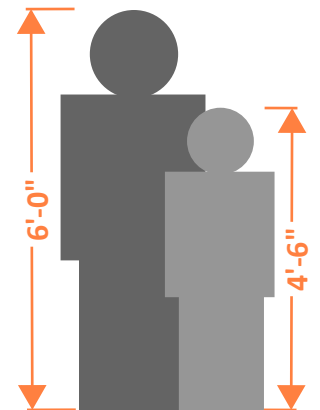
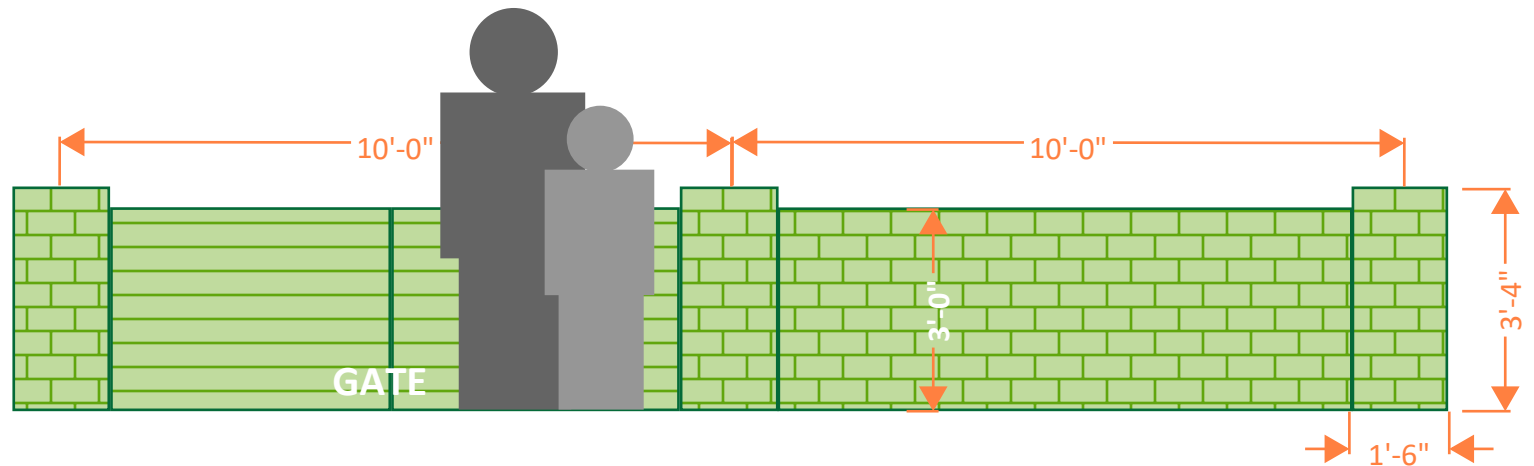
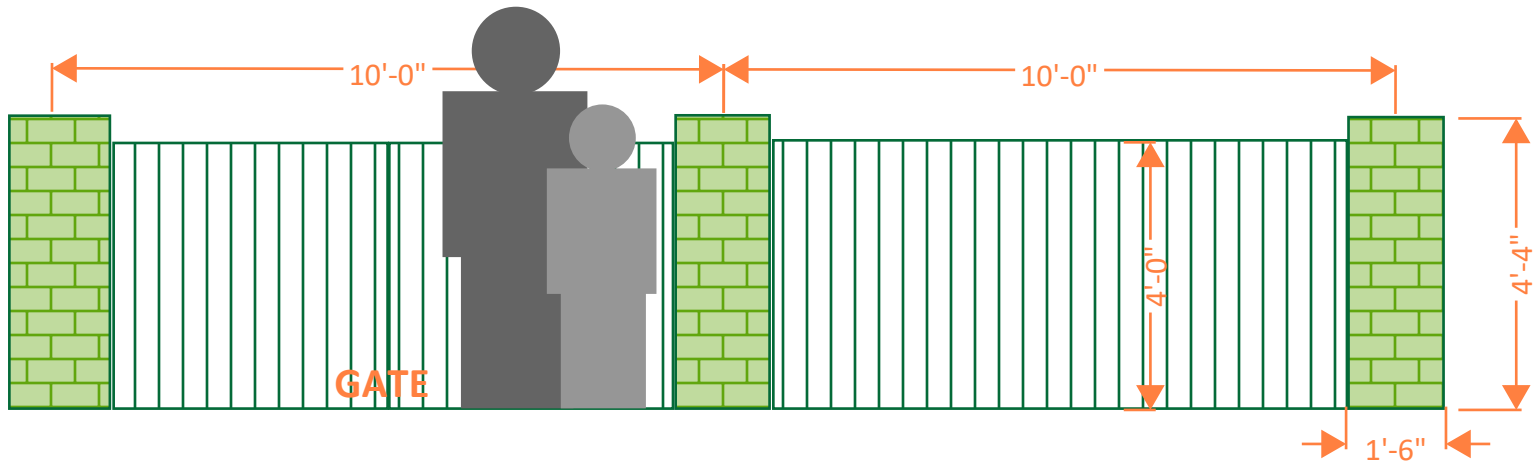


Exhibit A Diagram

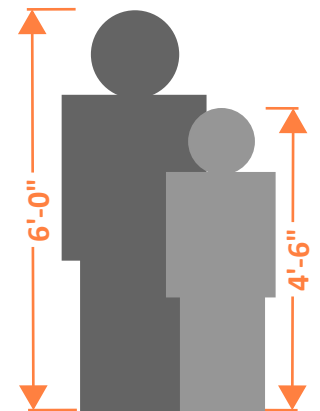
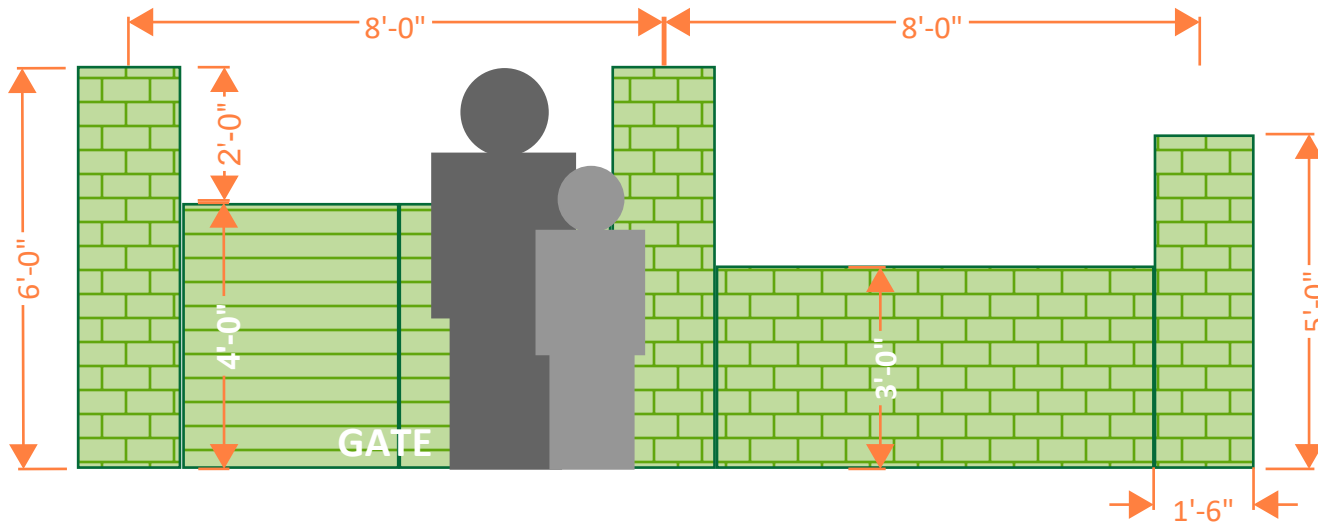
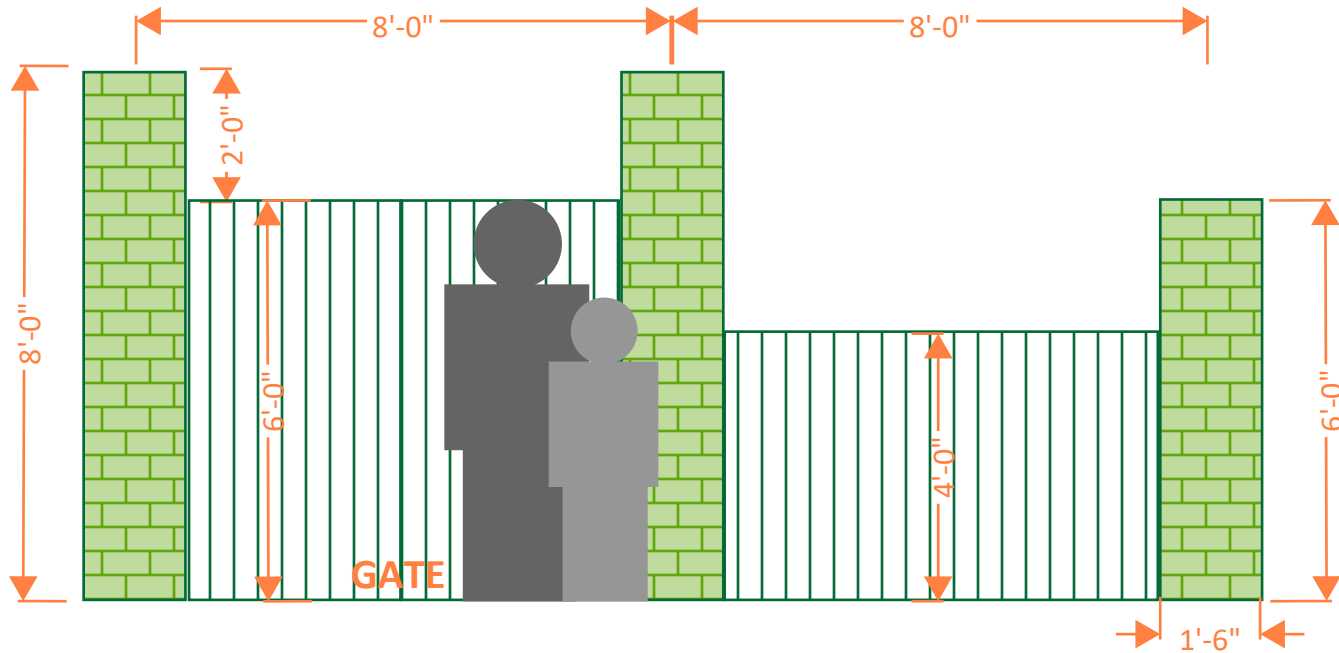


Exhibit 1 Diagram

