



Memorandum

To: Mayor Nelson and Members of the City Council
From: Daniel R. Buchholtz, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer
Date: February 27, 2025
Subject: Sight Triangle Ordinance Amendment

Background and Importance of Sight Distance Triangles

Sight distance triangles play a critical role in ensuring public safety at intersections. These regulations help maintain clear visibility for motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians by restricting obstructions that may hinder sightlines. Properly defined and enforced sight distance requirements reduce the risk of collisions and enhance overall traffic flow.

The City's current zoning code contained inconsistencies regarding sight distance triangles, leading to confusion for property owners and enforcement staff. The proposed ordinance aims to resolve these inconsistencies by establishing a uniform standard for defining and maintaining sight triangles at intersections.

Summary of Proposed Ordinance Changes

The proposed amendment, Ordinance 501, revises Chapter 16 of the City Code to create a clearer, enforceable standard for sight distance triangles. Key provisions include:

- *Updated Definition:* The sight triangle is now defined as two sides measuring 30 feet along the curb lines from an intersection, with the third side connecting these points. This replaces previous conflicting descriptions.
- *Height and Transparency Standards:*
 - No structure, fence, wall, tree, shrub, or other obstruction may exceed 48 inches in height within the sight triangle.
 - Fences and structures must maintain at least 75% transparency to ensure visibility.
- *Consistency in Measurement:* The ordinance shifts from measuring from property lines to curb lines, making compliance easier for residents.

The Planning Commission reviewed these changes and, after incorporating feedback from its initial consideration in November 2024, recommended approval of the revised ordinance at its January 27, 2025 meeting.

Impact on Non-Conforming Sight Distance Triangles

A key concern discussed during the February 3, 2025 Council meeting was the impact of the ordinance on existing non-conforming sight distance triangles. As stated during the meeting, properties with permanent structures that currently do not conform to the new ordinance are grandfathered in place, meaning they will not be required to make immediate changes unless modifications are made to the existing structures.

However, enforcement will differ depending on whether the obstruction is a permanent structure (e.g., fences, walls) or a natural obstruction (e.g., trees, shrubs):

- *Permanent Structures*: If a non-conforming fence or wall is replaced or reconstructed, it must comply with the new ordinance. Existing fences that remain unchanged may continue as they are.
- *Natural Obstructions*: Property owners may be required to trim or remove trees and shrubs that exceed height limits within the sight triangle, as these obstructions can grow over time and create safety hazards.

At the City Council's request, staff is seeking feedback on any concerns regarding the proposed language and recommendations to ensure the ordinance aligns with the Council's vision.

IF you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Building Official Baker or I at 763-784-6491.