

Sight Distance Obstructions on Corner Lots

Do you know about Fairfax County's Zoning Regulations for Sight Obstructions on Corner Lots?

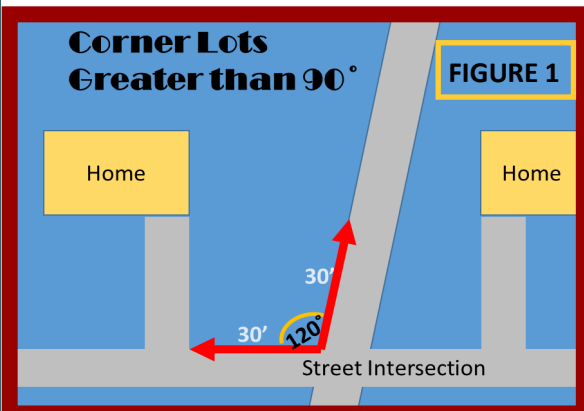
Motorists approaching an intersection should have a clear and unobstructed view of approaching traffic in order to see, react, and take appropriate action. The minimum area to provide this view of approaching traffic is called the "sight distance triangle" or "sight distance area."

Article 5 of the Zoning Ordinance limits uses on corner lots in order to establish adequate sight distance.

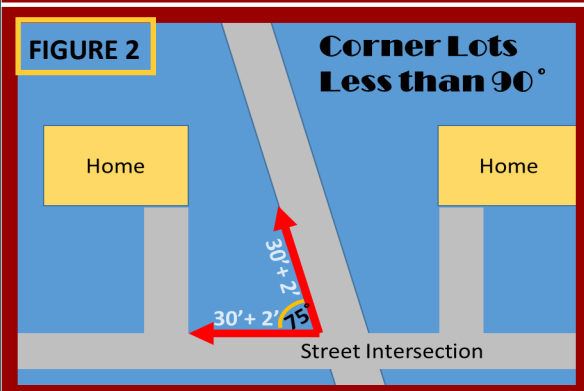
Establishing the Sight Distance Triangle

A plat of your lot can be helpful in this effort. The sight distance triangle is formed by creating points on the street lines of a lot and connecting those points. The red and green-dashed lines in

Figure 3 on the next page provide an example. The following also applies:



- ◆ For a lot having an interior angle of 90 degrees or more at the street corner, points must be made 30 feet from the property lines extended (refer to Figure 1).



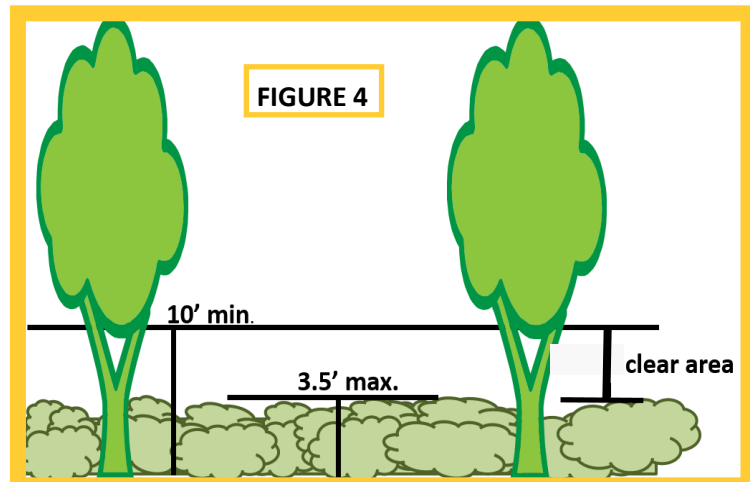
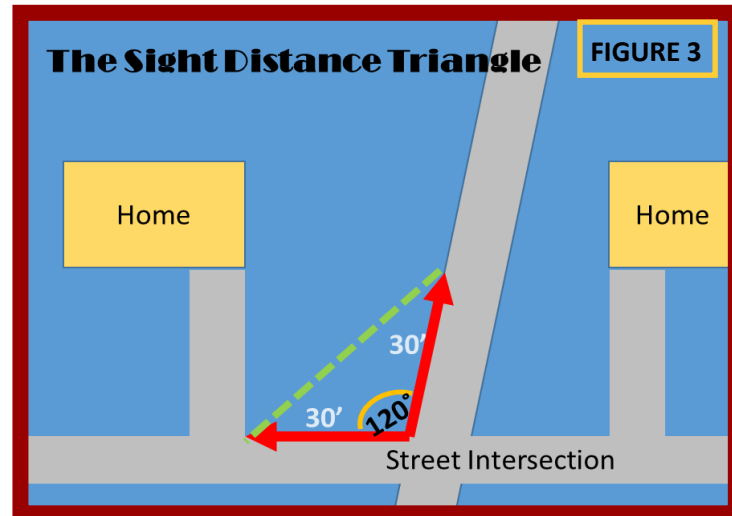
- ◆ For a lot having an interior angle of less than 90 degrees at the street corner, points must be made 30 feet from the property lines extended, plus one foot for every ten degrees or fraction by which such angle is less than 90 degrees. For example, 75 degrees would be rounded up to 80 degrees and the points would be set at 31 feet; but 74 degrees would be rounded down to 70 degrees and the points would be set at 32 feet (refer to Figure 2).

Turn Over



Determining if a Sight Obstruction Exists

- ◆ On a corner lot, the sight distance area is that area within the sight distance triangle that is regulated by the Zoning Ordinance to minimize sight obstructions at intersections and preserve an unobstructed line of sight.
- ◆ The sight distance area must be maintained clear of structures and plantings, except for a post, column, or trunk of a tree (not to include branches or foliage) equal to or less than one foot in diameter.
- ◆ The sight distance area must be maintained between two horizontal planes, one of which is three and one-half (3.5) feet, and the other ten feet above the established grade of either street (Figure 4).
- ◆ This creates a six and one-half (6.5) foot clear area for a line of sight that is above the three and one-half (3.5) foot plane and below the ten foot plane (Figure 4).



Bringing a Property into Compliance

To comply with sight distance regulations, you may have to:

- ◆ Remove, relocate and/or lower a fence or other structure that is located in the sight distance area;
- ◆ Remove bushes, trees, or limbs of a tree that are lower than ten feet from grade; and/or,
- ◆ Prune bushes so that they are no taller than three and one-half (3.5) feet in height and/or not located in the sight distance area.
- ◆ Keep plants and other vegetation within the sight distance area regularly cut and/or trim.



To report a possible violation OR for more information contact:

Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance
12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035
Phone: 703-324-1300, TTY 711
Web: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code



To request this information in an alternate format, call the Department of Code Compliance, 703-324-1300, TTY 711.
This Fairfax County, Va. Publication (February 2023) summarizes a few regulations. See relevant codes for specific information.