



Freestanding Accessory Structure Location

Do you know about the Location Regulations for Freestanding Accessory Structures on Residential Lots in Fairfax County?

Article 4 of the Zoning Ordinance regulates the type, size and location of freestanding accessory structures on a lot.

What is a Freestanding Accessory Structure?

An accessory structure is subordinate to a principal building on the same lot. Examples include detached garages, gazebos, playsets, and sheds.

Location in Front Yard

In most cases, any part of a property that lies between a street and the dwelling is a front yard. On lots that contain 36,000 square feet or less of land area, freestanding accessory structures are not permitted in any front yard. There are exceptions for the following to locate in front yards:

- ◆ **Trellises**: Up to two trellises are allowed, not to exceed eight feet in height and four feet in width.
- ◆ **Gates and gateposts**: Up to two gates are allowed, not to exceed eight feet in height; and up to four gate posts are allowed, not to exceed ten feet in height. Gates and gateposts must not exceed 15 percent of the lot width.
- ◆ **Basketball standards**: Must be at least 15 feet from a front lot line or street line, and 12 feet or the side setback of the applicable zoning district from a side lot line, whichever is less.
- ◆ **Flagpoles**: On a single-family lot, the height of a flagpole is limited to 25 feet and the flagpole may be located no closer than five feet from any front lot line or street line. The flagpole is also subject to the side and rear setback regulations that are described below.

Location in Side and Rear Yards (if not greater than 12 feet tall)

A freestanding accessory structure, which does not exceed 8.5 feet in height (measured from the highest point of the structure to the lowest point of adjacent grade, may be located in any part of any side yard or rear yard.

Turn Over



A freestanding accessory structure that is between 8.5 feet and 12 feet in height may be located as close as five feet to any side or rear lot line.

Location in Side and Rear Yards (if over 12 feet tall)

In a residential (R) zoning district, a freestanding accessory structure that exceeds 12 feet in height must meet the side setback requirement of that R district. In a planned development (P) district, the side setback may be determined by proffered yards. If there are no proffered yards, the side setback is eight feet in the PRC District and, in other P districts, the side setback is either the side setback of the most similar conventional R district or it can be equivalent to the distance of the existing dwelling to the side lot line. Further information on side setbacks for P district lots can be obtained from the Zoning Permits Section at 703-222-1082, TTY 711.

In all districts, a freestanding accessory structure that exceeds a height of 12 feet must be located a minimum distance equal to the structure's height from the rear lot line. For example, a detached garage that is 15 feet tall must be 15 feet away from the rear lot line.

Corner Lot Regulations

When applying the front yard regulations mentioned on Page 1, it is noted that corner lots have two or more front yards.

The rear lot line on a corner lot is the lot line that is most opposite and parallel the shortest street line. This is the lot line from which the applicable rear setback is required.

The applicable side setbacks must be maintained from all lot lines that are not the front lot line, street lines, or the rear lot line.

More information on zoning regulations for accessory structures is available from the Planner of the Day in the Zoning Administrator Division at 703-324-1314, TTY 711.

Structures over 256 square feet in size require a building permit. Also, most plumbing or electrical lines that are run to a structure require trade permits. Permit information is available from the Permit Application Center in Land Development Services at 703-222-0801, TTY 711, or email: LDSBuildingPermits@fairfaxcounty.gov.



To report a possible violation 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.

This Fairfax County, VA Publication (published July 2021) summarizes a few regulations. See relevant codes for specific requirements.