

NEIGHBORHOOD STANDARDS

The Neighborhood Standards Division of Community & Economic Development is responsible for inspecting ordinance violations that cover the exterior, non-structural maintenance of the property.

This brochure explains some common ordinance complaints such as:

- Inoperable and abandoned vehicles
- Vehicles parking on the grass
- RV, trailer and boat storage
- Excessive garbage
- Fencing
- Tall grass
- Signs and banners
- Other Zoning Ordinances

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Excellence in Services

Inoperable and abandoned vehicles

City of Rockford's Property Maintenance Code Section 302.8 regarding inoperable vehicles states:

All inoperable vehicles whether on public or private property and in view of the public, have been declared a public nuisance and are therefore prohibited.

A vehicle is considered inoperable if there it is not currently registered or if the vehicle is visibly inoperable (missing or flat tires, missing or no engine parts, etc).

Inoperable vehicles pose threats to the community as they:

- May become a home for rodents, mosquitoes, insects, and other vermin.
- May be a fire hazard if they contain flammable substances.
- May pose a danger due to loose, sharp, or jagged parts, to the public, particularly small children who are often attracted to junk motor vehicles.
- Contain fluids that, if leaked, may contaminate the environment.

Options for Storing Inoperable Vehicles

Many individuals park inoperable vehicles on their property with the eventual plan to make them road-worthy. Unfortunately, they reduce property values and pose a threat to the public.

Below are some options available to homeowners to prevent an ordinance violation:

- The vehicle may be placed in a closed garage.
- Contact a local towing company and have the vehicle towed away.
- Repair or remove your vehicle from the property.

Off-Street Parking \ Parking on Grass

City of Rockford's Zoning Ordinance 40-002F regarding off street vehicle parking states:

Automobiles, motorcycles, vans and trucks with passenger car or "B" plates must be parked on a paved surface in side and rear yards, and must be parked in a drive-way in front yards of 1 and 2 family residences or in a parking lot of multifamily residences (3 or more units).

Improper parking of your vehicle:

- Can be a general health hazard if the vehicle is not parked on a paved surface. Vehicles contain fluids that may contaminate the environment if leaked.
- Can also create a visibility hazard for police and fire.
- Is unsightly and takes away from the beauty of our city.

Tips for Proper Storing of Vehicles

- A paved surface may be constructed so the vehicle can be parked in compliance with the ordinance. (permit required)
- Vehicles that are no longer used may be towed away or stored at an off-site storage facility.

Gravel is not considered an acceptable surface. However, when the parking ordinance was changed to eliminate gravel as driveway material, any current gravel driveways were allowed to remain as they were with the understanding that when the gravel driveway became in need of repair, blacktop or cement material would replace it. Gravel driveways cannot be maintained by adding more gravel onto them.

Recreational Vehicle\Boat & Trailer Storage

City of Rockford's Zoning Ordinance 40-002F states:

Motor homes\recreational vehicles (RV), campers, and travel trailers up to 30 ft. may be stored in side and rear yards. Side yard storage must be a minimum of 6 ft from the property line. RV's may not be used for residential purposes.

When upon trailers made for the purpose of hauling; boats, snowmobiles, waverunners, jet skis, ATV's and golf carts may be stored in side and rear yards. Side yard storage must be a minimum of 6 ft from the property line.

Any vehicles exceeding 2,000 pounds must be on a paved surface.

All other vehicles including utility, car hauling, box type utility commercial or any other trailer whose sole purpose is to haul are prohibited on the premises.

RV's, campers, travel trailers, boats and other vehicles can be a general health hazard if the vehicle is not parked on a paved surface because:

- They contain fluids such as gasoline, propane and raw sewage that, if leaked, may contaminate the environment.
- They can also create a visibility hazard for the police, fire and other drivers.
- They can take away from the beauty of our city.

Options for Storing Recreational Vehicles, Boats & Trailers

- Consider adding an additional paved parking surface in the side or rear yards.
- Storing these vehicles at an off-site storage facility.

Tall Grass\Weeds

City of Rockford's Property Maintenance Code Section 302.4, and City of Rockford Code of Ordinances, Section 17-1 and 17-2 Weed Control states:

All premises and exterior property areas shall be maintained and free from weeds, grasses, plant growth and vegetation in excess of 10 inches in height.

Weeds shall be defined as all grasses, annual plants, vegetation, overgrowth, and underbrush other than trees or shrubs. This does not include cultivated crops, flowers and gardens. All noxious weeds are prohibited.

In addition, section 26-17 of the City of Rockford Code of Ordinances requires that you maintain any vegetation growth on the right of way abutting your property.

Tall grass and\or weeds:

- Are a general nuisance that become a home for mosquitoes, rodents, snakes and other vermin.
- Can hide debris, vehicles and lower your property values and those of your neighbors.
- Are not pleasant to look at and take away from the beauty of our city.

The City will give a two day written notice for the *first* occurrence of violation. No further notice will be sent during the next 36 months for recurring violations. If the property is still in violation after 2 days, a City contractor will mow the property and the costs will be billed to the property owner. If the property becomes in violation again during the next 36 months, the City shall contract the same service without further notification prior to the cutting.

To make a complaint, contact the Weeds Hotline at 815-967-6768.

Yard Maintenance Tips for Homeowners

- Make sure that you have a properly working mower and take the time to mow your property when needed. In a typical summer, most property owners mow their lawns once a week.
- Local hardware companies usually can sharpen your mower blades.
- Mowing your property includes the public right of ways adjacent to your property. Such as parkways, terraces and approaches to alleys.
- Owners who live out of town can hire a private contractor to mow the property. Your telephone yellow pages can give you the names private lawn maintenance contractors.

Fencing

City of Rockford's Zoning Ordinance Article 55 explains fencing ordinances. Because of the variety of fencing issues, the information in this pamphlet is to be used only as a guideline. More information can be found from Neighborhood Standards or Construction & Development Division.

General Fencing Regulations - Zoning ordinance 55-001-B states:

All fences require a permit from the Construction & Development Division. This includes a detailed fence plan with construction and elevation details drawn to scale and must be submitted with the fence permit application to the Zoning Officer.

All fence permits shall be valid for 120 days (four months) from the date of approval by Zoning staff. If any fence permit expires prior to the completion of the construction of the fence, then another fence permit must be obtained and another fee paid.

Any fence erected prior to obtaining a fence permit shall be removed if it is in violation of this ordinance. If the fence meets all the restrictions of this ordinance, it may remain only if a fence permit is obtained within 30 days after notice from the City at double the regular fee.

All fences shall be installed with the finished side facing the adjacent property or public right-of-way, and fence posts must be located on the inside of the fence facing the property on which the fence is located, unless the fence is designed and constructed to look the same on both sides of the fence.

Barbed wire fence, spiked railing or any guard or barricade with barbed wire or sharp\pointed devices that are liable to injure residents are not allowed in any residential or commercial zoning district. Electric fencing is not allowed within the City.

Approved fencing material includes, but is not limited to, masonry block, wood, trex board, chain link/metal (no less than 11 gauge thickness), wrought iron, aluminum, PVC, concrete or steel deck.

Fencing, continued

Basic Fence Height Restrictions in Residential and Commercial Zoning

Exceptions do apply for various property conditions such as corner lots, arterial street and alleys. Be sure to bring your site plan and permit application for approval prior to constructing.

HEIGHT IN FRONT YARDS

Fences measuring a maximum of 4 feet in height, as measured from existing grade, are permitted in the front yard up to the property line. However, any fence located within a front yard must be a decorative fence—wood, masonry, wrought iron but not chain link.

HEIGHT IN SIDE AND REAR YARDS

Fences measuring a maximum of 6 feet in height, as measured from existing grade, are permitted up to the property line in a side or rear yard

Dumpster Enclosures

All dumpsters used to service multi-unit residential buildings, commercial, and industrial uses must be screened on all sides by approved fencing material to create a permanent sight obstructing fence with a minimum height of 6 feet. One side of the storage area may be furnished with an opaque, lockable gate.

No fencing is required when the applicant can demonstrate to the Zoning Officer that all trash facilities will be enclosed within a principal building or within an accessory structure such as a garage. Where feasible, all dumpsters and trash facilities must be located behind a building and setback so refuse trucks are completely off the public right-of-way when servicing the facility.

Signs & Banners

City of Rockford's Zoning Ordinance Article 51 addresses Signs and Banners. Because there are many types of signs and banners, the information in this pamphlet is intended to be used only as a guideline. For more specific information regarding the ordinance regulating signs and banners, please call the City of Rockford Current Planning Office at 987-5585.

Permits are required for most signs and banners and can be obtained through the Construction & Development Division.

Signs Not Permitted

- Signs which change messages by rotating or swiveling
 - Strobe lights
 - Mobile signs – any sign designed to be moved easily and not permanently affixed to the ground or to a structure or building
 - Searchlights, except by temporary permit
 - Signs erected on public property
 - Signs posted on fences which are located on property lines
 - Signs posted on utility poles, trees, or on other natural features
 - Sign erected on rooftops
 - Sandwich signs – a folding mobile sign
 - Signs attached to or painted on a vehicle parked on a adjacent to a public thoroughfare for the sole purpose of advertising
 - Signs carried, waved or otherwise displayed by persons either on public rights-of-way or in a manner visible from public rights-of-way intended to draw attention for a commercial purpose.
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Garage, Yard or Rummage Sale Signs

No permit is required if the proposed sign does not exceed the following limitations:

Garage, yard or rummage sale signs not larger than 2 feet by 2 feet, 4 square feet to be displayed only on private property for no more than 4 days in any 6 month period are permitted. Such signs shall be removed the day following the sale.

Garage, yard or rummage sale signs are limited to one per zoning lot in residential districts. Such signs are not permitted on property not used for residential purposes.

Banners

Banners or inflatable signs and advertising devices are permitted in Commercial and Industrial Districts for not more than 7 calendar days in any one 6 month period. There is a limit of 2 and a temporary sign permit is required.

Political Signs

Residential Property

Political signs on a residential property shall not exceed five (5) square feet in size. There are no restrictions on the number or duration of said signs.

Commercial and Industrial Districts

Political signs on commercial and industrial zoned property shall not exceed five (5) square feet in size, no more than two (2) signs per candidate or issue, may not be posted more than ninety (90) days prior to the election and must be removed within five (5) days after the election.

Additional political signs are subject to the same regulations as any temporary sign or inside window sign. Additional political signs are permitted only to the extent allowed under the zoning regulation.

Real Estate Signs

No permits are required for signs that meet the restrictions below

In residential districts: “For Sale”, “For Rent”, or “Open House” signs are permitted up to 5 square feet in size. Such signs are limited to one per zoning lot, except corner lots may display one sign visible from each street frontage, and may be displayed as long as the property is for sale or rent. Property directional signs are not larger than 2 square feet may be installed at the head of a cul-de-sac or an arterial street leading to the property during sale or lease period, but must be private property (e.g. not within the parkway between sidewalk and curb) and have that land owner’s permission.

In commercial and industrial districts: Signs up to 32 square feet on property up to 5 acres in size and up to 64 square feet on property of 5 acres or more. Such signs are limited to one per zoning lot, except corner lots may display one sign visible from each street frontage. Signs must be located in minimum of 5 feet from property line, located outside of the sight triangle and not distract the view of traffic. Signs must be removed within 14 days of sale or lease.

Get More Information

Neighborhood Standards was formed in 1998 by the City of Rockford to offer residents a single point of contact for all environmental issues and complaints.

If you would like to make a complaint or have a question regarding a City Ordinance, contact information is listed below. Our website contains forms for listing complaints as well as this brochure and more violation information.

All complaints are kept confidential. Your name will not be asked. When inspectors respond to a complaint they generally inspect the surrounding neighborhood for other violations.



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