

CITY OF FOSTER CITY  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
PLANNING/CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

Subject: Security Gates on Single-Family Detached Dwelling Units

Policy Number: P-03-002

Authorization for Policy: 17.06.030

Date of Approval of Community Development Director: August 13, 2003

Effective Date of Policy: August 13, 2003

Background and/or Problem Statement: On June 19, 2003, the property owner of 311 Staysail Court submitted an Architectural Review request to construct an 8' tall security gate at the front entry to the subject house. The security gate was to be aligned with the front wall of the house, set back 20' from the street. The proposed design of the security gate consisted of black metal posts with a thin-gauge black metal mesh screen.

The City currently has no regulations or guidelines to govern the installation of security gates. Because the proposed location of the security gate was not within any yards (as defined by Sections 17.04.590, 17.04.600, 17.04.610, and 17.04.620 of the Municipal Code) of the property, the City ordinance that regulates fences, Chapter 17.52, Fences, Hedges and Walls, of the Foster City Municipal Code, was not applicable to this type of proposal. Also, because the proposed security gate was 8' tall (7' is the maximum height for fences in residential zoned districts), and was to be located between two existing walls of the house and enclosing an entry area, the security gate appeared more as an architectural feature of the house, such as a wall or door, rather than a fence, which is an element typically used to enclose outdoor space.

Staff requested direction from the Planning Commission at the regular meeting of June 19, 2003 regarding security gates enclosing an entry or atrium area and posed the question: Are the security gates fences, gates or doors? The Planning Commission concurred that the security gates should not be subject to the 6' fence height limit, and that for entryway openings (up to 8' in height and 10' in width) the security gates should be visually penetrable. Staff presented the project to the Planning Commission, with the following recommended conditions of approval:

On June 23, 2003, staff approved Architectural Review Permit AR-03-120 for the installation of a security gate, subject to the following conditions of approval:

- The security gate shall not exceed a height of 8'
- The security gate shall be painted black or bronze
- The security gate shall be located between the two walls at the front entryway corridor of the house
- The security gate shall be visually penetrable and constructed of 50 percent open-air materials

Purpose of Policy:

1. To clarify the Department's position on whether security gates could be considered an architectural feature of a house.
2. To establish a written procedure that can be consistently followed by staff.

POLICY:

Security gates on single-family detached dwelling units may be installed subject to the following criteria:

- A. Security gates shall be subject to an Architectural Review Permit and an application filing fee of \$35.00.
- B. Security gates shall not exceed 8' in height and 10' in width.
- C. Security gates shall be located between existing walls of a building, enclosing an entry area or atrium, and are therefore not be located within any yards as defined by Sections 17.04.590, 17.04.600, 17.04.610, and 17.04.620 of the Foster City Municipal Code.
- D. Security gates shall be painted to match the body or trim color of the house, or may be black or bronze.
- E. Security gates shall be visually penetrable and constructed of 50 percent open-air materials.

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Richard B. Marks  
Community Development Director

Attachments:

Security gate plans submitted as part of AR-03-120 (Presented to Planning Commission on June 19, 2003)

Photos of security gates installed throughout Foster City (Presented to Planning Commission on June 19, 2003)