



# BUILDING DEPARTMENT CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS



## Guide to Residential Zoning Requirements

New home construction, additions, and accessory structures must comply with the City of Rochester Hills Zoning Ordinance. This ordinance establishes residential zoning districts to classify, regulate, and restrict the height and bulk of homes, as well as the required yard area and other open spaces around them. The following information provides excerpts from the Zoning Ordinance relevant to most residential projects. The complete Zoning Ordinance is available online on the [City's Ordinance](#) web page.

### New Homes and Additions

The Zoning Ordinance outlines minimum and maximum requirements depending on the Zoning District you live in. The zoning of your parcel can be found by searching the address on the City's [Planning and Economic Development Information Map](#). Refer to the chart below to determine the specific requirements for your district for each of the following:

The **Building Height** as measured from the average grade at the front of the home to the midpoint between the bottom of the eave to the highest peak of the roof.

The **Minimum Yard Setbacks** from the property line to the front, side and rear of the house.

The **Minimum Floor Area** is gross floor area of all floors of the home excluding the basement.

The **Maximum Lot Coverage** is the gross area of the footprint of all buildings on the property.

Lots within Planned Unit Developments (PUD) may have requirements other than those listed in the chart below. If you need further assistance, please contact the Building Department at (248) 656-4615.

Zoning District	Maximum Building Height (a)		Minimum Yard Setbacks (feet)				Min. Floor Area (sq. ft.)	Max. Lot Coverage (all Buildings)
	Stories	Feet	Front	Side (each)	Side (total)	Rear		
RE	2	35	40(b)	15(c)(d)	30(d)	35(e)	1,500	25%
R-1	2	35	40(b)	15(c)(d)	30(d)	35(e)	1,500	25%
R-2	2	35	40(b)	15(c)(d)	30(d)	35(e)	1,400	25%
R-3	2	30(f)(g)	30(b)	10(c)(d)	20(d)	35(e)	1,200	30%
R-4	2	30(f)(g)	25(b)	10(c)(d)	20(d)	35(e)	912	30%
R-5	Contact the Building Department							

Exceptions may apply to the above requirements.

Please contact the Building Department for clarification if any of the following situations apply:

- (a) **Building Height Measurement** – In all districts the building height shall be measured from the average grade on the front of the building to either of the following:
  - a. The midpoint between the bottom of the eave and the highest point of the roof.
  - b. The top of the highest roof beam for flat roofs.
  - c. The deck line for mansard roofs
  - d. The mean level for a shed roof from highest point to the lowest point of the roofWhere the home has multiple roof styles, the most restrictive method applies.
  
- (b) **Average Front Setback** - If there are existing homes within 200 feet of the lot, on the same side of the street, that have an average setback that differs from the front setback as required in the ordinance by more than ten (10) feet, then the average front setback shall be used as the required front setback, provided however, that in no instance shall a front yard setback be reduced to less than twenty (20) feet.
  
- (c) **Corner Lots** - For corner lots, the side yard shall not be less than 15 feet in the R-3, and R-4 districts and 25 feet in the R-1, R-2 and RE districts.
  
- (d) **Reduced Side Yard on Narrow Lots** - If the lots or parcel is less than 60 feet in width, one side yard may be reduced to five feet providing the total of the two side yards shall be a minimum of 15 feet except as required by footnote (c), above.
  
- (e) **Rear Yards Adjacent to Parks or Open Space** – The minimum rear yard setback requirement may be reduced to 30 feet on lots that border on land permanently dedicated for park, recreation and/or open space purposes, provided that the dimension of the park, recreation, and/or open space shall not be less than 100 feet measured in a straight line and not more than 20 degrees off of perpendicular to the rear lot line. The provision applies to open space (OS) option subdivisions.
  
- (f) **Increased Building Height** – In the R-3 and R-4 districts, the maximum building height may be increased up to 35 feet when all of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The building site shall contain at least 13,500 square feet of lot area.
  - b. The minimum side yard setback, including the total of two, shall be increased by one-half foot for each one foot or part thereof by which the proposed building height is in excess of 30 feet.
  - c. If an increase in building height is proposed on a lot which shares a common side yard with a lot occupied by an existing dwelling, the increase height of the proposed dwelling shall not be more than 190 percent of the height of a dwelling on a lot sharing a common side yard.
  
- (g) **Decreased Building Height** – In the R-3 and R-4 districts, the maximum building height shall be limited to 24 feet when the following conditions are met:
  - a. The lot or parcel is 60 feet in width or less; or
  - b. The side yard setback has been reduced as denoted in footnote (d), above.

Note: Additional setbacks may be required if your property has steep slopes.

### Accessory Structures

Accessory structures such as garages, sheds, decks, gazebos, play houses, generators, pools, etc. have their own set of zoning requirements.

Accessory structures are either considered attached or detached. When an accessory structure is attached to the main building it shall be considered part of the main building and is subject to the ordinance requirements listed above. An accessory structure is considered attached when any of the following apply:

- A. The accessory structure is attached by a common wall to the main building.
- B. The accessory structure is within 10 feet of the main building
- C. The accessory structure is attached to the main building by a breezeway with a floor area of seventy (70) square feet or greater.

Detached accessory structures shall meet the following requirements:

- A. **Location** - Detached accessory structures shall be located in the side or rear yard. Such structures shall not be located in the front yard or within any public or private easement.
- B. **Area** - The combined floor area of all detached accessory structures shall not exceed the limits in the following table and the total building area of all structures does not exceed the maximum lot coverage in the table above.

Lot or Parcel Size	Maximum Permitted Combined Accessory Structure Floor Area
0.01 - 0.99 acres	1,000 sq. ft.
1.0 - 1.99 acres	1,200 sq. ft.
2.00 - 2.99 acres	1,400 sq. ft.
3.00 - 3.99 acres	1,600 sq. ft.
4.00 - 4.99 acres	1,800 sq. ft.
5.00 or more acres	2,000 sq. ft.

- C. **Setbacks** - Detached accessory structures shall not be closer than five (5) feet to a side or rear lot line on lots two (2) acres or less and twenty (20) feet on lots greater than two (2) acres.
- D. **Corner Lots** - Contact the Building Department regarding setback requirements for corner lots.
- E. **Height** - The height of detached accessory structures shall not exceed one story or fourteen (14) feet in height when the roof pitch is less than 4/12 or sixteen (16) feet when roof pitch is equal to or greater than 4/12. The roof height is measured from average grade around the structure to the midpoint between the bottom of the eave and the highest point of the roof.

### Decks and Patios

Decks and patios are considered accessory structures and shall meet the setback requirements of detached accessory structures.

- A. **Roof Structures** – Any roof structure that is 50% open or more shall be considered an accessory structure and meet requirements for an attached or detached structure. Any roof structure that is less than 50% open and located within 10 feet of the main building shall comply with requirements for the main building.

### Gazebos

Gazebos are permitted in all residential districts and are subject to the following limitations

- A. **Setbacks** – Gazebos shall comply with the yard and setback requirements applicable to detached accessory structures.
- B. **Area** – Gazebos shall not exceed 180 square feet in floor area. The area of the Gazebos will not count toward the maximum allowable area for accessory structures.
- C. **Height** – Gazebos shall not exceed one story or 16 feet in height measured from the average grade around the gazebo to the midpoint between the bottom of the eave and the highest point of the roof. If attached to the main building, the height shall be measured from the floor area to the highest point of the gazebo roof.

### Solar Energy Systems

Solar Energy systems have their own set of zoning requirements and require a building permit before they can be installed. Any system that ceases to function for more than 12-months shall be removed in its entirety within 90 days of the 12-month period.

- A. **Rooftop Systems** – Rooftop mounted systems shall not extend more than 4 feet above the roof surface and shall not extend beyond the edge of the roof.
- B. **Ground Mounted Systems** – The system, if mounted in the front yard shall meet the required front yard setbacks for the district from the table above. It shall not exceed 42 inches in height and shall be screened with an evergreen landscaping sufficient to buffer the view of the equipment from the street or nearby homes. Systems mounted in rear or side yards shall be set back a minimum of five (5) feet from the property line and shall not exceed ten (10) feet in height when oriented at maximum tilt.

### Fences

Fences may be installed or replaced within the City subject to the following. Swimming pool enclosures shall meet the requirements of the Michigan Residential Code and International Swimming Pool and Spas Code.

- A. **General** – Fences shall be installed free from defects and safety hazards. No signs, words, letters, images or other illustrations may be painted or affixed to any fence. Materials shall be wood, metal, bricks, masonry or other solid material. Fabric fences are not permitted.
- B. **Residential Fences** – Fences that are located along the side or rear lot lines shall be a maximum of six feet in height and may not extend closer to the front property line than the front of the building. Fences not exceeding three feet in height may be installed in the front yard setback provide they provide proper corner clearance. Fences are subject to HOA restrictions.