



Rancho Palos Verdes

Building & Safety Division

Retaining Wall Building Permit Requirements

Important: The Building & Safety Division and the Planning Division have separate requirements for the approval of retaining walls. These requirements apply to the Building & Safety portion only. All applicants must first obtain approval from the Planning Division.

Introduction

This handout is designed to clarify when a building permit and a geology site visit is required for a proposed retaining wall. This includes various retaining wall types such as: concrete/masonry, Verdura, Keystone, interlocking or shoring walls.

Definitions

Retaining wall: Any wall retaining soil.

Height of Retaining wall: Height of retaining walls for the purpose of determining whether a building permit is required is measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall. (This differs from how the height of retaining walls is measured by the Planning Division)

Slope: An inclined surface, the inclination of which is expressed as a ratio of the horizontal distance to vertical distance.

Stacked retaining walls: Retaining walls on slopes one above the other. Height of combined walls will be considered in determining total height of the wall for permit process.

Building Permit Requirements

A building permit is required from the Building & Safety Division for:

Any retaining wall that exceeds 48 inches/4 feet in height as measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall.

Any retaining wall in excess of 30 inches/2.5ft in height as measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall that is constructed on or within 10 feet of a slope that has a grade of 5:1 (20%) or steeper.

Geology Site Visit & Soils Reports

A geology site visit is required for **ALL** proposed retaining walls requiring a building permit. The purpose of the site visit is to determine whether the preparation and approval of a soils report is necessary in conjunction with the building permit.

The cost of the site visit is \$255.00. If a soils report is determined to be required, an additional review fee of \$1,530.00 will be required upon submittal of the soils report for review/approval.

A preliminary site plan illustrating the approximate location and heights of the proposed retaining walls shall be provided at the time of scheduling the site visit

Drainage

Provisions shall be made to relieve hydrostatic pressure via sub-drains behind the wall with installation of a 4" perforated drain line and a 12" gravel pocket. Weep holes or solid outlet piles are required to remove water from the wall area. Water is not permitted to drain onto adjoining properties or walk way areas. Separate encroachment permit required for work in the Right-of-Way.

Site Plan

If a retaining wall permit is required the applicant shall provide a fully dimensioned site plan, drawn to scale, showing the lot size, street, alley, easements, parking, walls, projections, and building locations. Delineate all project elements and show distances to property lines and adjacent structures. Your site plan shall also show the general site topography with slope, drainage patterns and current discharge location(s). Clearly show the location and dimensions of the proposed new wall(s) and provide Top of Wall (TW), Finish Grade (FG) and Top of Footing (TF) notations for each wall, at any change in construction, and at intervals of 2 ft. where changes in height of retaining wall condition(s) will exist.

Structural Design

Structural plans and calculations shall be based on the soils report data.

Structural plans and calculations shall be prepared by a State of California licensed Professional Civil or Structural Engineer for retaining walls having:

- (a) A height greater than 48 inches/ 4 feet ;
- (b) Any surcharge (vehicle loading, adjacent footings, etc);
- (c) Near a bluff top, the top or bottom of a slope and/or with sloping backfill;
- (d) All shoring walls;
- (e) When required to have a soils report.

(Walls constructed on the common property line will require a "Common Wall Agreement")

