

**CITY OF SANTEE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
RETAINING WALL PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

Understanding Municipal Code or Building Code requirements can sometimes be difficult and hard to interpret. To assist local residents understand the circumstances under which a permit for a retaining wall is required we have prepared the following list of criteria. Even in this abbreviated form, without access to Seismic Maps or Zoning Overlay Maps it may be difficult for the average homeowner to interpret. Please contact the Engineering Division of the Department of Development Services for permit requirements prior to start of any construction that involves grading or construction of a retaining wall.

A retaining wall is any wall where the ground elevation is not the same on both sides of the wall. A permit for installation of a retaining wall is required under **any** of the circumstances listed below. Permits may be obtained from the Department of Development Services, Building 4, 10601 Magnolia Avenue. Phone (619) 258-4100 ext. 165 for Engineering Division; ext. 154 for Building Division.

A Grading Permit from the Engineering Division is required under the following circumstances:

1. If the wall is installed within five feet of your property line or the street right-of-way line. Typically the street right-of-way is ten feet from the face of curb. (Grading Ordinance)
2. If the wall height is four feet or greater measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall. (Grading Ordinance)
3. If the wall is retaining a slope that is steeper than two horizontal to one vertical (2:1). (Grading Ordinance)
4. If the wall will occur in or physically impact designated or dedicated open space or environmentally sensitive areas designated in the General Plan or shown on any approved Specific Plan. (Grading Ordinance)
5. If the wall will impact any waterway or wetland, stream, river, channel, pond, lake, marsh, bog, lagoon, vernal pool or riparian habitat. (Grading Ordinance)
6. If the wall is to be constructed in any floodway or floodplain as shown on the adopted Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the City of Santee or the San Diego River Flood Study Maps. (Grading Ordinance)

7. If the wall is to be constructed in any officially mapped zone of high geologic risk (Zone "C" and "D") as defined by the geotechnical/seismic study for the General Plan. (Grading Ordinance)
8. If the wall is to be constructed in the hillside overlay district. (Grading Ordinance)
9. If the wall is constructed in any other sensitive area such as archaeological sites, historical sites or burial grounds. (Grading Ordinance)

If no Grading Permit is required a Building Permit from the Building Division will be required under the following circumstances:

10. If the wall is retaining any slope other than a level backfill equal to the height of the wall. A three foot wall must have at least three feet of level area behind it. (Uniform Building Code)
11. If the wall is supporting a surcharge of any kind. A three foot wall installed within three feet of a structure such as a house will have a surcharge from that structure. A three foot wall within three feet of a driveway will have a surcharge from the vehicles that park on the driveway. (Uniform Building Code)
12. If the wall is used to impound flammable liquids. (Uniform Building Code)

Additional considerations:

13. If the height of the wall measured from the finished grade at the base of the wall to the top of the wall is greater than 42 inches, a fence or safety railing at least 42 inches high is required at the top of the wall. (Uniform Building Code)

DESIGN REQUIREMENTS

All retaining walls, masonry block, Keystone*, Loffelstein*, concrete or other, regardless of height must be properly engineered and designed to resist lateral earth pressures and hydrostatic pressures. Design shall include a minimum safety factor of 1.5 for overturning and 1.5 for sliding. Masonry walls which meet these standards are UBC Chapter Policy Walls 221 and 222 for heights up to four feet. San Diego Regional Standard Drawings C-1 through C-8 are available for wall heights up to eight feet. All other walls shall be accompanied by a design engineers report with supporting calculations and soils report that demonstrate the adequacy of the design.

For Keystone walls installed in accordance with the Standardized Manual prepared by Robert A. Basye for RCP Block and Brick in Class 4 soils per Uniform Build Code Table 18-I-A, a soils report that documents the soil type is required. No additional engineering design calculations are required.

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