



HOW TO OBTAIN A PERMIT FOR A RETAINING WALL OR FENCE

City of San Diego
Development Services Department

INFORMATION
BULLETIN

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This Information Bulletin describes the procedures for obtaining a permit to build a retaining wall or fence when using City of San Diego standard drawings and specifications.

I. WHEN IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

- A. Fences require permits if they are over seven feet in height. Fence height is measured from the lowest grade level on either side of the fence to the highest point on the fence.
- B. Retaining walls require permits when any of the following conditions exist:
 - 1. The wall is over three feet in height. Wall height is measured from the top of the footing to the top of the wall.
 - 2. The wall supports a sloping backfill with a slope steeper than 1.5 horizontal:1 vertical.
 - 3. The wall supports surcharge loads. Examples of surcharge loads are driveways, walk ways, structure footings, fences, etc.
 - 4. The wall impounds flammable liquids.
 - 5. Tiered walls where the height measured from the bottom-tier-wall's top-of-footing to the top of the top-tier-wall is greater than six feet or the footing of any tiered wall crosses the slope stability plane of a lower tier wall. Slope stability planes are assumed to project upward from the bottom edge of each footing's heel at a slope of 2 horizontal : 1 vertical, see Figure 1.

When wall caps are installed on masonry fences or retaining walls, the wall/fence height shall be measured to the top of cap.

II. OPTIONS FOR SERVICE

Over-the-counter plan review is available for simple retaining walls meeting the specifications of Information Bulletin 221, "City of San Diego Standard Cantilevered Masonry Retaining Walls". Fences meeting the specification of Information Bulletin 222, "City of San Diego Standard Fences", are exempt from permitting; therefore, plan review for these fences is not required. Retaining walls and fences not meeting the above requirements shall be submitted for plan review.

III. SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS

The following items must be supplied:

A. Site Plan

Three copies of a site plan are required. Refer to Information Bulletin 122, "How to Prepare a Site Plan and Vicinity Map," for instructions.

In addition to the required site plan information identified in Information Bulletin 122, plans for retaining walls and fences must clearly show:

- 1. Location of the retaining wall or fence on the property. All elements of the wall or fence, including the footing and drainage system must be located on private property owned by the individual(s) listed as the property owner(s) on the permit application. If the wall or fence is at the front of the property, a "curb-to-property" verification card (DS-689) must be submitted with the permit application. DS-689 cards are available in the Development Services Department (DSD) website and from the Records Section. The Records Section phone number is (619) 446-5300.
- 2. Dimensions of the retaining wall or fence, including length and height of wall or fence.
- 3. Distance from the wall or fence footing to all adjacent structures, embankments and property lines.
- 4. Site and wall drainage arranged to discharge to a storm water collection system and/or a means to prevent storm water from flowing onto adjoining properties.

B. Wall or Fence Plan

Provide two copies of the Information Bulletin that describes the proposed wall or fence. Mark on the bulletin the applicable structural specifications such as height, reinforcing, footing size, material properties, etc. When a retaining wall is located on a slope, plans shall include a cross section showing the slope of grade, retaining wall location, footing depth, wall height, and a setback from slope conforming to CBC section 1808.7.2.

C. Parcel Information Checklist (DS-302)

This form is used to determine planning, zoning, and building regulations applicable to the project. A completed DS-302 form is required for every project.

IV. FEES

Plan check fees are paid at initial plan check. Permit fees are paid at permit issuance. For the amount due, refer to Information Bulletin 501, "Construction Permits - Structures".

V. SPECIAL INSPECTION

Special inspection is not required for retaining walls and fences constructed in accordance with Information Bulletin 221 or Information Bulletin 222.

Documents Referenced in this Information Bulletin

- **Curb-to-Property Verification Card DS-689**
- **Parcel Information Checklist DS-302**
- **Information Bulletin 501, Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures**
- **Information Bulletin 122, How to Prepare a Site Plan and Vicinity Map**
- **Information Bulletin 221, City of San Diego Standard Cantilevered Masonry Retaining Walls**
- **Information Bulletin 222, City of San Diego Standard Fences**
- **California Building Code**

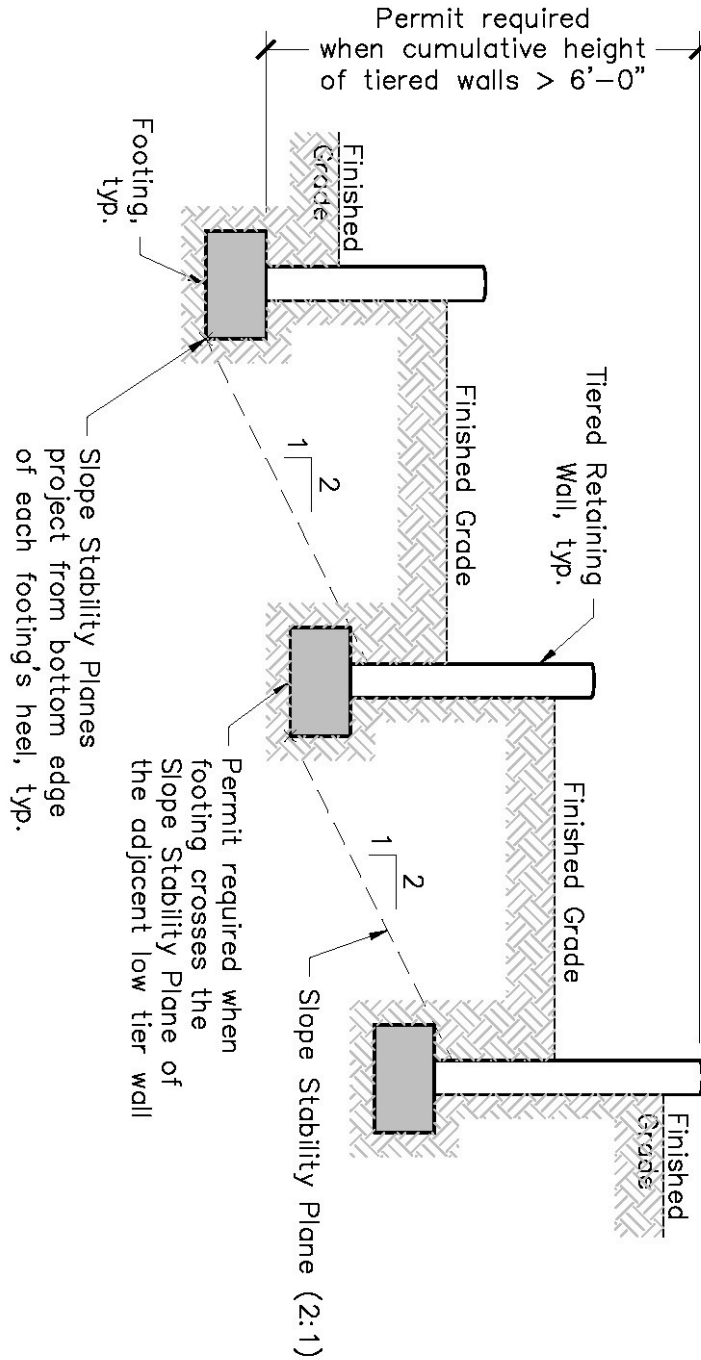


Figure 1 / Tiered Walls