

## Retaining Walls

### Q: Am I allowed to build a retaining wall on my property?

To answer this you must first check the following:

- **Does your property title have any restrictive covenants that regulate retaining walls?**  
On steep sloping land, there may be covenants that outright prohibit the construction of retaining walls. Covenants registered on other properties may permit retaining walls only if it is demonstrated that there is no impact on adjacent lands. *Note: Your property title can be searched through the Land Title Office (88 6th Street, New Westminster, 1-877-577-5872 or [www.ltsa.ca](http://www.ltsa.ca)). Your lawyer or notary can assist you with this.*
- **Is your property located in an Environmental Development Permit Area in the Official Community Plan (OCP)?**  
If so, you may be required to apply for, and obtain, a Development Permit (Environmental) prior to constructing the retaining wall. The OCP contains Development Permit guidelines which may be accessed from the City's website. An application form is available at the Planning Services Division, or can be downloaded from the City's website at [www.abbotsford.ca/devapplications](http://www.abbotsford.ca/devapplications).

### Q: Do I need a building permit to build a retaining wall on my property?

A: If the retaining wall is to be 1.2 m (3.9 ft) in height or greater, or you have a series of retaining walls with a total height of more than 1.2 m (see drawing on reverse page), you will need to obtain a building permit. You will also need to retain a geotechnical and structural engineer to design and oversee the construction. The engineer will ensure the wall is properly constructed for site conditions. To apply for a building permit, contact the Building Permits & Licences Division at City Hall.

### Q: How high can I build my retaining wall?

A: Residential retaining walls should not have an exposed face higher than 1.5 m (4.9 ft), but terracing may be permitted. Terraced walls are not to be spaced less than 1.0 m (3.3 ft) apart. Walls that are proposed to be higher than 1.5 m (4.9 ft) may be considered in certain circumstances at the discretion of the General Manager, Engineering in accordance with the Development Bylaw.

### Q: Are there restrictions on the type of materials used to construct retaining walls?

A: Within a multi-family development, large concrete lock blocks are strongly discouraged where a retaining wall is proposed in a front yard adjacent to a public roadway. The use of creosoted railway ties is strongly discouraged.

### Q: If there is a retaining wall between my house and my neighbour's, who is responsible for repairs/maintenance?

A: The owner of the property that the retaining wall is located on is responsible for the retaining wall. If the retaining wall was a structural requirement of the lot grading, the location will likely be shown on the approved lot grading plan. Otherwise, a Site Survey (showing the location of buildings and structures on site) may be available in the Building Permits & Licences Division.

### Q: Can I build my retaining wall right on my property line?

A: If a retaining wall is less than 1.2 m (3.9 ft), or shown on an approved lot grading plan accepted by the City, it can be constructed anywhere on site. A retaining wall added after the lot grading has been approved is not considered a structural requirement of the grading and must therefore be set back from lot lines in accordance with the Accessory Buildings and Structures setbacks of the zone.

#### PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



##### Building Permits & Licences

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