



RETAINING WALL PERMIT

For more information, refer to Snohomish Municipal Code Section 14.240.060(H)

WHAT IS A RETAINING WALL?

A retaining wall is a structure that holds back any material (usually earth) and prevents it from sliding or eroding away. It is designed to resist the pressure of the material that it is holding back.



IS A PERMIT REQUIRED?

- Retaining walls that are 2' in height or less do not require a permit.
- Retaining walls that are greater than 2', but less than 4' require a **Type 1** permit.
- All other retaining walls require a **Type 2** permit.
- A **Type 2** permit is also required for a series of retaining walls/rockeries four feet or less in height where the slope measured from the bottom of the lowest retaining wall/rockery to the top of the highest retaining wall/rockery is greater than 1.5 feet horizontal to 1.0 feet vertical. See SMC 14.240.060(H)(4)(b).
- A building permit is required for all building foundation walls acting as retaining walls.

ARE THERE SETBACK REQUIREMENTS?

Retaining walls are not subject to zoning setbacks from property lines. However, they may be subject to other setback requirements such as from buildings or critical areas. Retaining walls may not be located in the right-of-way.

ARE THERE DESIGN REQUIREMENTS?

Retaining walls must comply with the design standards set forth in *Historic District Design Standards* or the *Design Standards and Guidelines (Outside the Historic District)*. Both are available for review at City Hall or on the City's website:

<http://www.snohomishwa.gov/173/Code-Compliance>.

DO I NEED TO HIRE AN ENGINEER?

Even if a permit may not be required, retaining walls must be designed to ensure stability against overturning, sliding, excessive foundation pressure and water uplift. Some manufactures of retaining wall systems may provide pre-engineered guidelines and installation requirements.

Specific to **Type 1** permits, the Building Official may require a structurally engineered design and geotechnical evaluation based on the location, intended use or proximity to other structures.

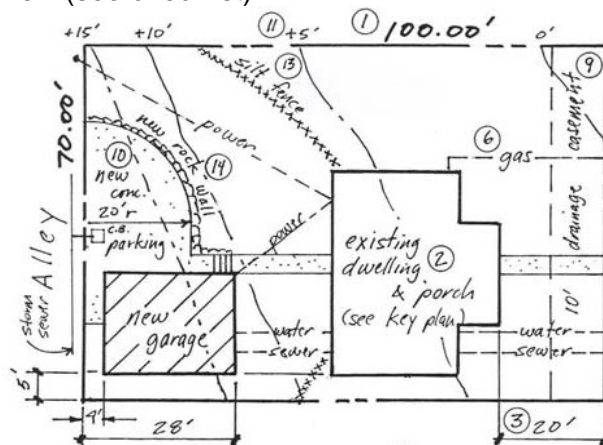
For **Type 2** permits, structural plans and supporting calculations, geotechnical studies and/or reports and drainage systems must be provided and prepared and wet-stamped by a professional engineer licensed to perform that work. Also, the City Engineer has the authority to require additional submittal items.

ARE GUARDRAILS REQUIRED?

Generally a guardrail is required when the retaining wall is located more than 30" above grade and a walking surface is within 3' of the wall. Guardrails do not count as part of the retaining wall height.

CAN I DRAW MY OWN SITE PLAN?

If the retaining wall is 4' in height or less, you may draw your own site plan as long as it is readable and contains all the details required to complete the review (see checklist).



Elements of an acceptable hand-drawn site plan