



Retaining Walls

What is a Retaining Wall?

A retaining wall is a wall or structure designed and constructed to support soil at a slope steeper than can naturally be supported.

While retaining walls are primarily designed to support soil, they may also be placed under a stress from other factors such as buildings, footings, vehicle loads, driveways, water and wind loads on dividing fences.

Most walls are designed to support soil only, these walls are termed 'non-surcharged'. It is very important to ensure the wall you intend to construct is designed to support any surcharge that may be placed upon it.

A fence should not be used to retain soil unless it is designed to do so.

When is a Retaining Wall Required?

An embankment with a slope ratio that exceeds those described in the following table must be retained or appropriately stabilized.

B.C.A Table 3.1.1.1
Notes: For the purposes of this Table:

- Retaining walls or other types of soil retaining methods must be installed where—
 - the slope ratio is more than that described in Table 3.1.1.1; or
 - the soil type is not described in this Table.
- Embankments that are to be left exposed at the end of the construction works must be stabilised by vegetation or similar works to prevent soil erosion.

SOIL TYPE (*see Part 3.2.4 for material description)	EMBANKMENT SLOPES H:L	
	Compacted fill (see Part 3.2)	Cut
Stable rock (A*)	2:3	8:1
Sand (A*)	1:2	1:2
Silt (P*)	1:4	1:4
Clay		
Firm clay	1:2	1:1
Soft clay	Not suitable	2:3
Soft soils (P*)	Not suitable	Not suitable

• For further information, please contact Council's Building Services on 9397 3000



Responsibility for Construction

The owner who alters the natural lie of the land is responsible to provide a retaining wall. However, where both property owners alter the levels, they would be jointly responsible. Each landowner has an obligation to retain soil where necessary resulting from earthworks on his/her property. Adjoining owners who have both undertaken earthworks are advised to attempt to negotiate a proportional base agreement when retaining walls are required along common boundary for dividing fencing or landscaping works.

The sharing of costs for the retaining is a civil matter that must be negotiated between neighbours. If both parties cannot reach an agreement as to who is responsible for retaining the difference in ground levels it may be necessary to seek legal advice.

Building Approval Required?

A building permit is required where a proposed retaining wall is greater than or equal to 500mm in height or is associated with other building work, or with the protection of land adjoining the land on which the retaining wall is located.

When the wall is situated on common boundary, and is a retaining wall as described above, neighbours consent is required. This is dealt with by using a BA20 form which can be obtained from the Building Commission website.

For retaining walls greater than or equal to 500mm in height The City requires that such walls are designed by a Structural Engineer, therefore applications are to be accompanied by signed Structural Engineer's drawings.

Positioning of Dividing Fences and Retaining Walls

A dividing fence up to 1800mm high can be positioned on the higher side of a retaining wall which abuts a common boundary.

Retaining walls abutting common boundary are to be constructed entirely within one property; they are not to straddle the boundary, unless neighbours consent is obtained via the form BA20 referred to above.

To seek a Building Approval

- Prior to erecting a retaining that requires a building approval, an application for a building permit is to be submitted to Council, and must include the following:
 - Site Plan - 2 copies showing proposed location and height of the retaining walls
 - Structural Drawings - 2 copies designed/certified by a Structural Engineer when ≥ 500 mm in height
 - Proximity of adjacent buildings/structures
- Prior to constructing a retaining wall on a residential lot that will increase the level of your site by a minimum of 500mm at the boundary of your neighbours lot, an application for a planning approval is to be submitted to Council, and must include:
 - Site Plan - 2 copies showing proposed location & height of retaining walls at the boundary
 - Neighbour comments regarding the proposal
- Required Forms
 - Building Permit Application (Form BA2)
 - Planning Application if required (Schedule 6)
 - Adjoining Property Owner Consent Form (Appendix 4)
 - BA20 Form (If applicable)
- **All above information and fees must be submitted at time of lodgment**
- *For further information, please contact Council's Building Services on 9397 3000*