



# CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE

## RETAINING WALL GUIDELINES

This guideline is divided into two specific areas, privately owned property and public right of way.

### **PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTY:**

<u>Fill height (Feet)<sup>a</sup></u>	<u>Permit Required</u>	<u>Design Required</u>	<u>Type Inspection</u>
≤4	No <sup>b</sup>	No	None
>4 - 8	Yes	Yes (Industry Standards)	NDS
>8 - 10	Yes	Yes (VA Registered Design Prof.)	NDS
>10	Yes	Yes (VA Registered Design Prof.)	Spec. Insp.

a. Load-bearing value of soil of 2,000 psf assumed.

b. Freestanding retaining walls with more than 24 inches of backfill that resist lateral loads in addition to soil, or protecting permitted structures from ascending or descending slopes requires a permit and shall be designed in accordance with accepted engineering practice.

NDS- Neighborhood Development Services (City of Charlottesville Building Inspectors)

Spec. Insp.: Inspection Special Inspector (See Special Inspections City of Charlottesville website)

VA Registered Design Professional or RDP- Virginia licensed architect or engineer.

Note: A separate permit is not required if the walls are part of a larger building project. The above design and inspection requirements are still applicable.

**CITY BUILDING INSPECTIONS:** building permits are required for new retaining walls supporting more than 4' of backfill as described below. Retaining walls attached to one and two family dwellings are part of the permit to build the home but must meet these guidelines. Commercial construction retaining walls can also be part of the general building permit but must meet these guidelines.

- Protecting a permitted building (wall next to a building protecting it from failure of a steep slope above).
- Supporting a permitted building (built on fill with retaining wall being part of the design), 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Special Inspection always required for this type of wall of any height.

### **SITE INSPECTIONS:**

- Walls with backfill exceeding 10' in height are required to be inspected by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party Special Inspector. See VA Construction Code Chapter 17. The Special Inspector will provide documentation at completion.
- Walls with less than 8' but more than 4' of backfill will be inspected by NDS building inspectors.
- Inspections include (1) the typical footing/foundation drainage system and (2) backfill material.
- Have City approved drawings on site.

**DESIGN:** Walls with backfill exceeding 8' must be designed and sealed by a registered design professional; documentation must be included with the permit application. Walls with less than 8' but more than 4' of backfill are to be designed using best engineering practices.

- Many retaining walls with difference in grade from top to bottom exceeding 30" will require a guardrail at top built per code.
- Contact Building Inspections at 970-3182 if you have questions.

### **PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY and EASEMENT:**

For further details contact Civil Engineer (434) 970-3182

### **CITY ENGINEERING DEPT:**

For further details contact Civil Engineer (434) 970-3182

**CITY HISTORIC PROPERTIES:** There are many designated historic properties and districts within the City of Charlottesville. Installation or replacement of a retaining wall on these properties requires approval from the NDS Preservation and Design Planner.