

6.7.B Retaining Walls

1. All references for "cross-section" in this section shall mean a vertical section along a line perpendicular to the general horizontal line of the face of the wall at the point of application.
2. All references to the "height" of a wall shall mean the difference in elevation along a particular cross-section between the finish grade [ground elevation] adjacent to the wall on the high side and the finish grade adjacent to the wall on the low side.
3. Retaining walls up to, and including, 4 feet in height are permitted by right with no permit required.
4. Retaining walls greater than 4 feet in height require the submittal to and approval by the Zoning Enforcement Officer of a design, encompassing both structural and drainage components, stamped and signed by a Connecticut licensed professional engineer prior to zoning signoff on any building permit therefore.
5. Retaining walls greater than 4 feet and up to, and including, 8 feet in height:
 - a. Are allowed by Zoning Permit if not proposed as part of a site plan application to the Commission.
 - b. Face of wall shall not be closer in cross-section than 5 feet to a site bounding property line.
 - c. The change in elevation in cross-section between an adjacent site bounding property line and the finish grade at the wall shall not exceed 0.75 feet for 5 feet of separation and 2.5 feet for 10 feet of separation; and the limit shall be linearly interpolated for separation distance in between.
6. Retaining walls greater than 8 feet and up to, and including, 16 feet in height:
 - a. Site plan approval by the Commission is required.
 - b. Face of wall shall be no closer in cross-section than the height of the wall to a site bounding property line unless a special permit is obtained for the wall; but, in no case shall the wall be closer than 5 feet to a site bounding property line.
 - c. The maximum change in elevation in cross-section for the initial 3 feet away from the exposed edge of the wall and the finish grade at the wall in each direction shall be 0.5 feet.
 - d. Where the grade approaching the high side of the wall slopes towards the wall, the grade at 3 feet from the exposed edge of the wall shall be between (inclusive) 0.1 feet and 0.5 feet below the finish grade at the wall, and proper drainage shall be provided above the wall.
7. Retaining walls greater than 16 feet in height:
 - a. Special permit approval is required.
 - b. All provisions of (6) above apply.

8. Additional special permit criteria: The Commission shall consider the demonstrated positives of the proposed retaining wall(s) in the context of the proposed use, grading scheme, utility, and overall development scheme for the site versus the demonstrated negatives as associated with wall visibility from public highways, frequented [by the public] public spaces, buildings, or yards or courtyards associated with a building, or outdoor area where multiple persons, on a reasonably frequent and regular basis, gather, or are expected to gather, for reasonably identifiable and specific events or purposes; (e.g. performance, ceremony, or other event venues, organized recreation venues, etc.) This criteria shall be considered to be met where the Commission determines that such positives outweigh such negatives.