



## RETAINING WALLS



### **Do I Need A Building Permit For A Retaining Wall?**

It depends....

**NO**, if it does not support or protect a building AND is less than 4' high from bottom of the footing to top of wall.  
Per the 2017 Oregon Residential Specialty Code

**R105.1 Permits;**

*"Retaining walls that do NOT support a regulated building, do no NOT retain material which, if not restrained, could impact a regulated building."*

**YES**, if the retaining wall supports or protects a building AND/OR over 4"; it shall be designed with in accordance with accepted engineering practice to ensure stability against overturning sliding, excessive foundation pressure and water uplift; per 2017 Oregon Residential Specialty Code R404.4 Retaining Walls.

Both Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) and Oregon Residential Specialty Code (ORSC) documents are attached.

NOTE: A Right-of-Way (ROW) permit is required for any size retaining wall located within the Right of Way.

### **What are the City of Scappoose Municipal Code Restrictions;**

In addition to the above State of Oregon rules/regulations, the City's Municipal Code regulates how tall a retaining wall can be in the front yard of the property.

Municipal Code Title 17 – Land Use and Development;

**17.100.110 Fences or walls.**

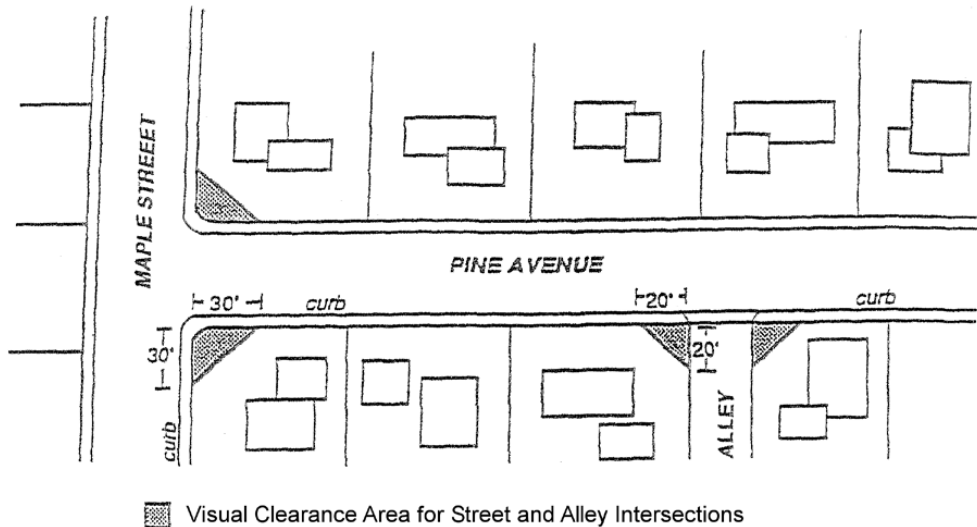
*A. Fences, walls or combinations of earthen berms and fences or walls up to four feet in height may be constructed in required front yards. Rear and side yard fences, or berm/fence combinations behind the required front yard setback may be up to 6' feet in height without any additional (planning dept.) permits.*

In addition, the City has 'Vision Clearance' requirements on corner lots abutting streets and in front yards adjacent to driveways. This is to maintain safety for pedestrians and vehicles. The Scappoose Municipal Code can be found on our city website under the CITY HALL tab then select MUNICIPAL CODE, go to

Title 12 – Streets, Sidewalks & Public Places;

**12.10.020 Visual Clearance -- Required**

*B. A visual clearance area shall contain no vehicle, recreational vehicle, watercraft, parts designed to be affixed to a vehicle of any type, hedge, planting, fence, wall structure, sign, or temporary or permanent obstruction that would impede visibility between a height of 3' and 10' feet above the center line grades of the intersecting streets or railroad. (see diagram below)*



## **Getting Started:**

- 1) Determine where your property lines are located and what setbacks are required from the property line to the edge of the retaining wall. You can either hire a surveyor to properly locate your property lines and/or contact the Columbia County Assessor for tax maps showing the dimensions of your lot. Property pins are located at every intersection of property lines; these are not to be removed. Questions, call the Columbia County Surveyor. And/or visit the Columbia County Assessor website; <http://www.co.columbia.or.us/departments/assessors-office-main/property-records-online>
- 2) Determine if you have any public easements on your property. To locate recorded easement documents, contact the County Clerk for recorded easements or your title company.
- 3) If the retaining wall is not supporting a structure AND/OR less than 4'; no permits are required but ensure it meets the City's Municipal Codes, above.
- 4) If the retaining wall is supporting or protecting a structure AND/OR over 4'; acquire the required permit application from our building dept. or via our website; [http://www.ci.scappoose.or.us/forms?field\\_microsite\\_tid=95](http://www.ci.scappoose.or.us/forms?field_microsite_tid=95)
- 5) If you need assistance in hiring a contractor, visit our website for helpful tips; <http://www.ci.scappoose.or.us/building/page/building-department-links>
- 6) Ensure your retaining wall meets the city's 'Vision Clearance' requirements; **12.10.020 Visual Clearance**, noted above.
- 7) Ensure your retaining wall meets the height restrictions if located in the front yard of the property; **17.100.110 Fences or walls**, noted above.
- 8) Submit the required permit and payment along with 2 sets of the plot/site plan and engineered details/drawings. The plot/site plan will need to show the following; property lines with dimensions, easements, adjacent street names, property addresses, north arrow, distance between buildings and property lines, location of retaining wall and its dimensions. Ensure the engineered details/drawings are stamped by an engineer registered in the State of Oregon. Once plans are approved, a permit will be issued THEN you may begin your project. (ROW permit also required **IF** within the street right of way).

**These tips have been provided for you by the Scappoose Building Department.**

**Questions, contact Elizabeth Happala at the above number or email; [ehappala@cityofscappoose.org](mailto:ehappala@cityofscappoose.org)**