



Topic: Retaining Walls

I. Background and Guidelines

CDD-Engineering currently requires grading and/or infrastructure permits on private property based on excavation or fill amounts, or change in drainage characteristics including retaining walls. These permits with retaining walls incorporated are not designed and inspected to building code requirements and will therefore need to be additionally permitted with the building department on a SIMP permit (site improvement permit) or other building permit if applicable. When grading for a subdivision, excavators typically do not have retaining walls designed for expected loads for future development. This creates a situation where the future builder of the home has no idea those walls are not designed to hold surcharge from final grade, building foundation, storm-water, etc.

City of Bend has adopted authority to regulate retaining walls that are not regulated by state building code. See [Bend City Code Title 9.10](#).

II. Current Building Safety Application

Oregon Building Codes Division (BCD) and/or City of Bend Building Safety require that a design be submitted from an Oregon Licensed Design Professional and a building permit be obtained and for all retaining walls with the following exceptions:

1. Walls that retain less than 4 feet of fill and have no additional lateral surcharge other than soil*
2. Walls that retain less than 2 feet of fill and resist additional lateral surcharge*

* Examples of surcharge: walls that support a slope above with over 5% slope, hydrostatic pressure from water retention, or vehicular traffic.

This requirement is in conformance with the 2022 OSSC 101.2.1.#2 and 2021 ORSC R101.2.2#2

If project includes multiple levels of retaining walls, walls shall be separated per diagram below or shall require design be submitted from an Oregon Licensed Design Professional and a building permit be obtained.

