

Retaining Wall Guidelines and Requirements

City of Salem, Virginia Office of Community Development

	Permit and Site Plan Required?
Less than 3 feet	No
Three feet to 6 feet	Yes
Greater than 6 feet to 10 feet	Yes*
Greater than 10 feet	Yes**

* Standard manufacturer designs are acceptable for walls up to 6 foot in height or fill.

Walls exceeding six foot in height require the stamp of a Virginia Registered Design Professional.

** Walls exceeding 10 foot in height or unbalanced fill require stamp of a Virginia Registered Design Professional and must meet the requirements of the Special Inspections section of the building code.

Minimum Design Plan Requirements

- Must comply with current Virginia Construction Code section for retaining walls
- Minimum scale ¼ inch=1 foot; all dimensions must be shown.
- Specifications for construction materials.
- Specifications for the backfill material and compaction requirements.
- Wall elevations and multiple cross sections of each retaining wall, to include structural details. The actual ground slope at the top and the toe of the retaining wall.
- Bearing capacity of the foundation soil.
- Method for drainage.
- Plans indicating walls which extend across multiple properties must include a description of provisions to be made to provide access and maintenance of the wall.
- Permitted retaining walls with a walking surface at the top require a guard