

RETAINING WALLS IN A OR R ZONES LOCATED IN HILLSIDE AREAS

To control the proliferation of massive retaining walls on residential lots within the Hillside Area delineated on the Bureau of Engineering Basic Grid Map No. A-13372, the City Council passed Ordinance No. 176,445, which places limitations on the height and the number of retaining walls on a lot, and requires landscaping or screening in front of these walls.

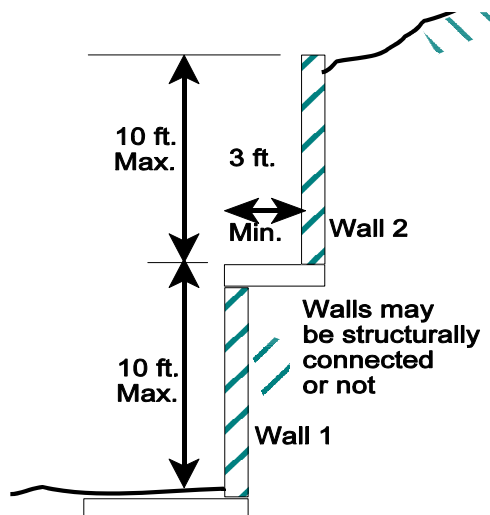
The Ordinance defines retaining walls as “a freestanding continuous structure, as viewed from the top, intended to support earth, which is not attached to a building.” According to the City Attorney’s Office, the phrase “not attached to a building” is intended to exempt retaining walls that are structurally integrated as part of the building foundation, such as a basement wall. However, the portion of the retaining wall which is attached to the building but extend beyond the footprint of the building is subject to the regulation of this ordinance.

The height of each retaining wall is measured from the top of the wall to the lower side of the adjacent ground elevation.

For permit applications submitted on or after March 9, 2005, the design of retaining walls in A or R zones (including the RA Zone) located in Hillside Area shall comply with the following:

I. Number and Height of Retaining Walls:

- A) A total of **one** freestanding retaining wall with a height of not to exceed 12 feet may be built on any lot.
- B) In lieu of one 12 foot high retaining wall as allowed in A) above, a total of **two** retaining walls with a maximum height of 10 feet each (which may be stacked for a maximum of 20 feet in vertical height) may be built on any lot, provided that they are separated/offset horizontally by a minimum of 3 feet, as shown in the diagram to the right.



Note: 1) Retaining walls which can be built without building and grading permits are exempt from this ordinance and thus may be constructed in addition to the retaining wall permitted in IA) or IB) above.

- 2) Guard rails required by Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 91.509.1 may be placed on top of the retaining wall and are exempt from the height limitation specified

herein. However, these guard rails shall be designed as open guard rails as specified in LAMC Section 91.509.3.

II. All Other Walls

In accordance with LAMC Section 12.21C8(c), walls exceeding the number or height limitations stated in IA) or IB) above require an approval from the Zoning Administrator (“ZA”).

The number and height limitations specified under Section I above do not apply to retaining walls built to comply with an order issued by the Department of Building and Safety to repair an unsafe or substandard conditions.

III. Walls in Required Yards

Height of walls located in required yards shall comply with LAMC Section 12.22C20(f).

IV. Landscaping

Retaining walls 8 feet or higher shall be covered with landscaping material. The landscaping plan for such retaining walls shall be approved by the Department of City Planning in accordance with LAMC Sections 12.40 through 12.43.