



LANDSCAPE WALLS & RETAINING WALLS

City Code Sections: [78-570](#), [78-1279](#), [78-1405](#), [78-1606](#), [78-1684](#), [86-66](#)

Planning & Zoning Department: 952-249-4620 or planning@ci.orono.mn.us

Planning related documents may be found at:

<http://www.ci.orono.mn.us/473/Planning-Related-Documents>

City of Orono website: www.ci.orono.mn.us

PERMIT INFORMATION:

A **Residential Accessory Structure Building Permit** is required for any wall which is:

- 4 feet or more in height, measured from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall, even if it replaces an existing wall. *All walls with a height that exceeds 4 feet will require engineered plans.*
- A tiered wall which exceeds 4 feet in total height. Tiered walls are considered as one wall unless they are separated by a horizontal distance twice the height of the lower wall. Separation will be measured from the back of the lower wall to the face of the upper wall.

A **General Zoning Permit** is required for walls which:

- Exceed two feet in height above existing grade; or
- Require more than 20 cubic yards of imported fill; or
- Are located less than 5 feet from the property line.

No Permit Required. Retaining walls not requiring a permit are those walls which:

- Do not exceed two feet in height above existing grade; and
- Are located within the property and at least five feet from any property line; and
- Include less than 20 cubic yards of imported fill.

HARDCOVER:

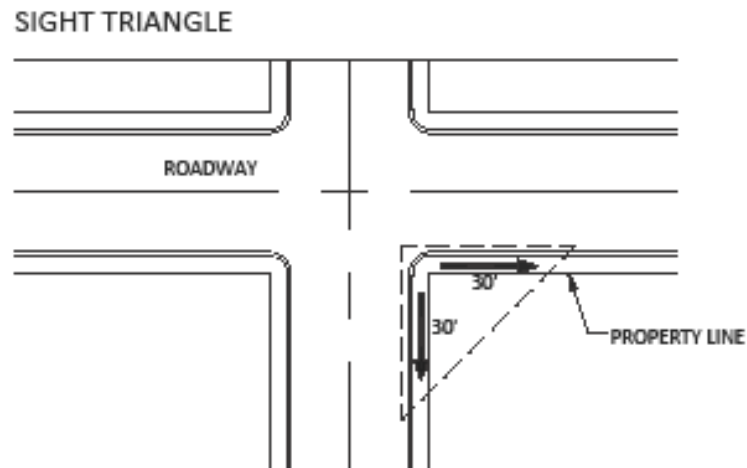
- Retaining walls are considered a hardcover exclusion, however are not permitted within 75 feet of lakes, tributaries, and creeks.
- Retaining walls in Commercial zones may have additional location, permit, and plan requirements.

LOCATION: Retaining walls, planters, and similar structures may be located in all required yards when all of the following conditions are met:

1. The structure is located at least 10 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway; and
2. The structure is not located within a drainage, utility or other easement, except upon approval in writing for an encroachment agreement from the City; or similar approval from another regulatory and/or utility agency; and
3. The structure creates no impacts to drainage direction, rate or volume for adjacent properties; and
4. The structure is two feet in height or less above existing grade.
5. Structures exceeding the allowed height of a fence shall be located so as to meet the required accessory structure setbacks established for that yard.

PROHIBITED LOCATIONS: Walls **may not** be located:

- Within the shore setback zone, which is typically 75 feet of the Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) of a lake or a creek, without a variance per City Council approval.
- Within the average lakeshore setback, walls which exceed 42 inches in height from the existing grade – [Section 78-1279](#);
- Within a wetland or wetland buffer without a wetland permit and a/or conditional use permit.
- Within a public right-of-way or easement without a right-of-way permit and/or an encroachment agreement.
- Within a sight triangle without the approval of the City Engineer. The sight triangle is depicted on the right, and is defined as follows: Beginning at the intersection of the projected curblines (or edge of pavement if no curb) of two intersecting streets; thence 30 feet along one curbline; thence diagonally to a point 30 feet from the point of beginning on the other curbline; thence to the point of beginning. (See image below).



SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMITS: ([citizenserve portal link](#))

- Plan review fee (building permit only)
- Permit escrow & escrow agreement (amount varies based on project)
- A **site plan or survey** showing the location of the proposed wall(s) with existing and proposed contours extending at least 50 feet in all directions beyond the limits of the wall construction. **Top and bottom elevations** must be provided for each proposed wall, as well as earthwork calculations if applicable.
- Plans for the retaining wall prepared and signed by a professional engineer (building permit only).
- Hardcover calculations for properties in Tier 1 through Tier 5 within the [Stormwater Quality Overlay District](#). Generally this is within 1,000 feet of a lake or 300 feet of certain creeks.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Inspections 952.249.4600

Planning and Zoning Department 952.249.4620 or planning@ci.orono.mn.us

City Engineer 952.249.4600

Last Updated: January 2023

Note: This is an information sheet only, every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the information contained herein; however, if any information is not consistent with provisions of the City Code, the Code provisions will prevail.