



# Ordinance Fact Sheet

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL  
**FROM:** CITY MANAGER  
**SUBJECT:** AMEND GRADING ORDINANCE

**DATE:** November 16, 1998

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PASADENA AMENDING SECTION 14.05.250 OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE TO AMEND THE STANDARDS FOR EXCAVATION AND GRADING IN HILLSIDE AREAS. (RETAINING WALLS).**

## **PURPOSE OF ORDINANCE:**

The ordinance will allow retaining walls to exceed 8 feet in cumulative height on developed lots in hillside districts.

## **SUMMARY OF ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS**

Currently retaining walls are limited to a height of 8 feet total. This ordinance would allow walls of any height under certain conditions.

The ordinance will allow property owners to stabilize deteriorating slopes on developed properties. This will permit property owners to reinforce failing slopes that are endangering pool fences, landscaping and neighboring properties. The larger retaining walls will only be allowed on developed lots, thereby not encouraging disturbance of undeveloped hillside areas.

In order to utilize the walls of more than 8 feet in height, the slope must first be deemed subject to failure by the Building Official. The retaining wall must blend in with the terrain in both contour and color. The wall must provide for irrigated landscaping. And the wall must comply with all the structural requirements mandated by the Building Code.

## **REASONS WHY LEGISLATION IS NEEDED**

It is not uncommon for hillside lots to experience some sort of geological failure over a period of years. Our current ordinance prevents the satisfactory repair of many of these problems. This ordinance will allow the property owner to preserve the lot, while mandating that the aesthetics of the surroundings be respected.

MEETING OF 11/16/98

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9.A.1.

**PROGRAMS DEPARTMENTS OR GROUPS AFFECTED**

The Permit Center Division of the Planning and Permitting Department will be the contact point for persons wishing to take advantage of this ordinance. Structural review and inspections will be performed by staff in that division. The Planning Manager will be responsible for review of plans in regard to their compliance with appearance and landscaping standards.

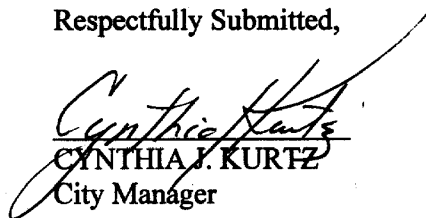
**FISCAL IMPACT**

Fiscal impact will be limited to the revenues generated by the permits for the additional retaining walls that would be permitted. Since this is a new requirement, we have no history on which to base a reliable estimate. A permit for a moderate size wall (value \$15, 000) would be in the \$250.00 range. The permit will cover the cost to administer the program.


**POLICY CHANGES**

No significant policy changes would be necessary to implement this ordinance.


Respectfully Submitted,

  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
City Manager

Prepared by:

  
Bob J. Fowler  
Building Official

Approved by:

  
Darrell L. Lewis  
Director of Planning & Permitting

Introduced by Council member:

ORDINANCE NO.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF PASADENA AMENDING SECTION 14.05.250 OF THE PASADENA MUNICIPAL CODE TO AMEND THE STANDARDS FOR EXCAVATION AND GRADING IN HILLSIDE AREAS. (Retaining Walls).

The People of the City of Pasadena ordain as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 14.05.50 of the Pasadena Municipal Code is amended by adding subsection "C" to read as follows:

"C" Cuts or fills which were created prior to September 1, 1998, and which in the opinion of the Building Official are failing or are in danger of failing, may be supported by retaining walls of heights exceeding 8 feet, provided the following requirements are met:

1. The retaining wall shall be designed by a licensed professional; shall be constructed of either:

- a. shot crete complying with Section 1922 of the Pasadena Building Code, or
- b. concrete cribbing, or
- c. other materials approved by the Building Official.

2. Provisions shall be made for drainage from the supported slope. Drains shall be placed at intervals not to exceed 30 feet measured vertically.

3. The retaining wall shall follow the natural contours of the slope and all materials used to construct such retaining wall shall be of an earth tone color which as closely as possible matches the surrounding hillside.

4. Landscaping approved by the Planning Manager shall be installed on such walls and provisions shall be made in such walls to accommodate the planting and maintenance of such landscaping.

5. Planting areas described in paragraph 4 above shall be provided with an irrigation system. Such irrigation system shall be approved and inspected prior to constructing the wall.

6. Plans for such walls shall be submitted for approval to the Director of Planning and Permitting, and only upon approval of such, a permit issued.

SECTION 2. The City Clerk shall certify the adoption of this ordinance and shall cause this ordinance to be published in full text.

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall take effect 30 days after its publication.

Signed and approved this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 1998.

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Chris Holden  
Mayor of the City of Pasadena

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing ordinance was adopted by the City Council of the City of Pasadena at its meeting held \_\_\_\_\_, 1998, by the following vote:

YES:

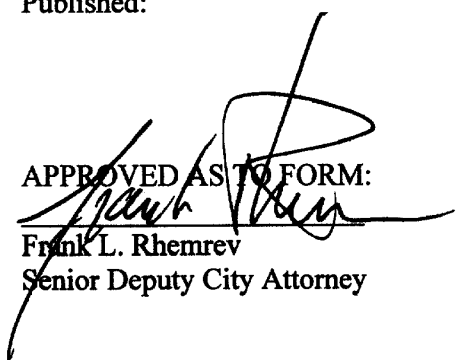
NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

Published:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

  
Frank L. Rhemrev  
Senior Deputy City Attorney

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Jane Rodriguez  
City Clerk