

Kick-Off Meeting Presentation

RETAINING WALL ORDINANCE

Summer 2011



Los Angeles
Department
of City Planning



Today's Presentation

- What are we trying to accomplish?
 - Gather public input.
 - Create objectives for draft ordinance.
- Discussion topics
 - Current code regulations and associated issues.
 - Regulations in other jurisdictions.
 - Preliminary ideas to address issues.



Current Code Regulations and Associated Issues



Background

- Current Retaining Wall Ordinance
 - Effective: March 9, 2005

- Follow-up to Baseline Hillside Ordinance
 - Effective: May 9, 2011



Relation to Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO)

- New Retaining Wall Ordinance needs to be consistent with BHO
- Before BHO became effective, grading was not limited
- BHO grading regulations will act as an indirect limit on the size (e.g., length) of new retaining walls
 - Thus, if the quantity of grading is now limited do you want to use your allotment on retaining walls?



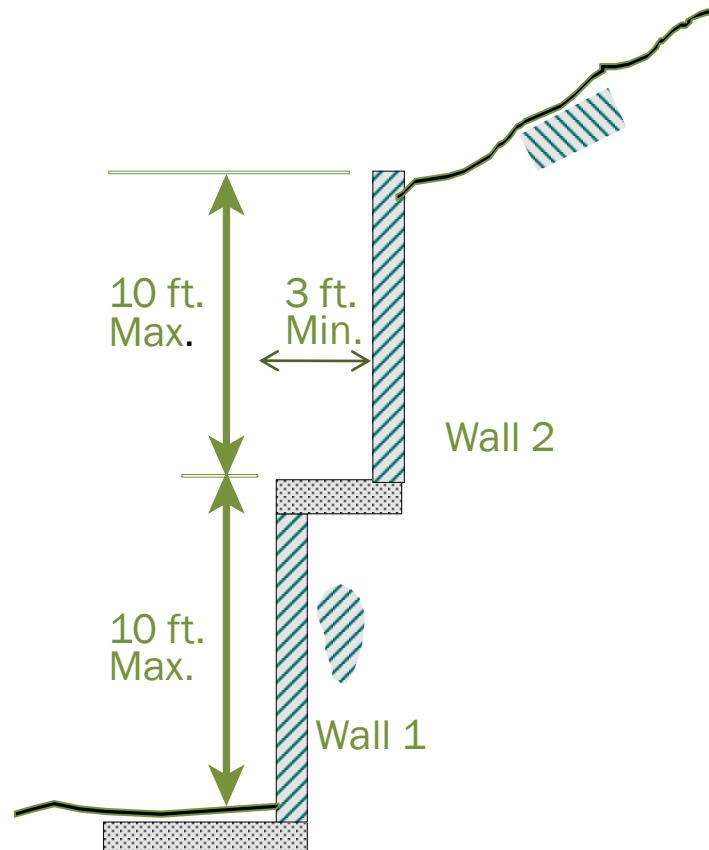
Current Zoning Code

- “Retaining wall” defined as freestanding continuous structure, as viewed from the top, intended to support earth, which is not attached to a building
- “Garden walls” not defined (but considered less than 4 ft. in height)



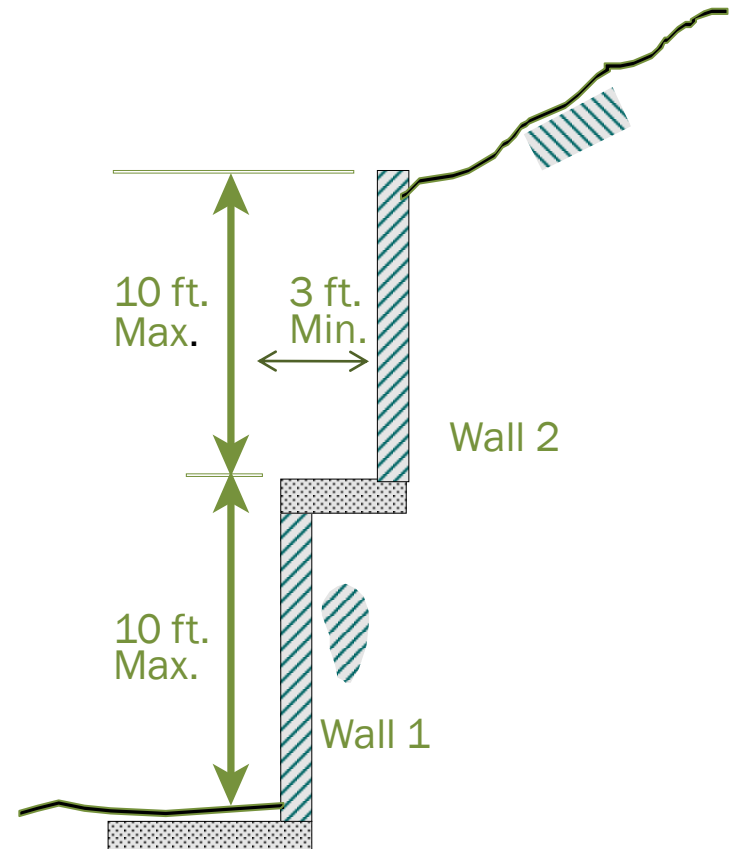
Current Zoning Code (cont'd)

- Maximum of one 12 ft. wall or two-10 ft. walls with a minimum distance of 3 ft. between them



Current Issues

- Definition is unclear and open for interpretation
- Number of retaining walls allowed (2) is too restrictive and encourages excessive grading
- Maximum length is not defined
- Horizontal distance between retaining walls does not allow for appropriate landscaping
- Maximum wall height



Other Jurisdictions



Definition

Denver

- A wall which is designed to, and in fact does, retain the earth on one side at a higher elevation than the earth on the other side.

Murrieta

- A wall designed to resist the lateral displacement of soil or other materials.

Definition

Beverly Hills

- A wall or terraced combination of walls used to retain more than 18 inches of material and not used to support, provide a foundation for, or provide a wall for a building or structure.

Oakland

- "Enclosed retaining wall" means a retaining wall located on a lot such that it is visually shielded by other permanent structures and cannot be seen from public streets and adjacent lots.



Number and Height

Anaheim

- If visible to public right of way 6 ft. max. additional 6 ft. allowed if broken into 2- 3 ft. steps; if not visible then 14 ft. max.

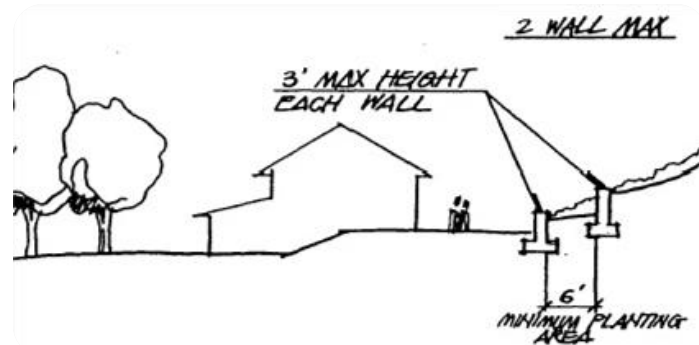
Brea

- Cumulative height other than a Loffelstein wall or similar living wall, max. 6 ft. Cumulative height will equal the combined height of any wall or series of walls required to retain a single slope.

Loffelstein (crib) wall



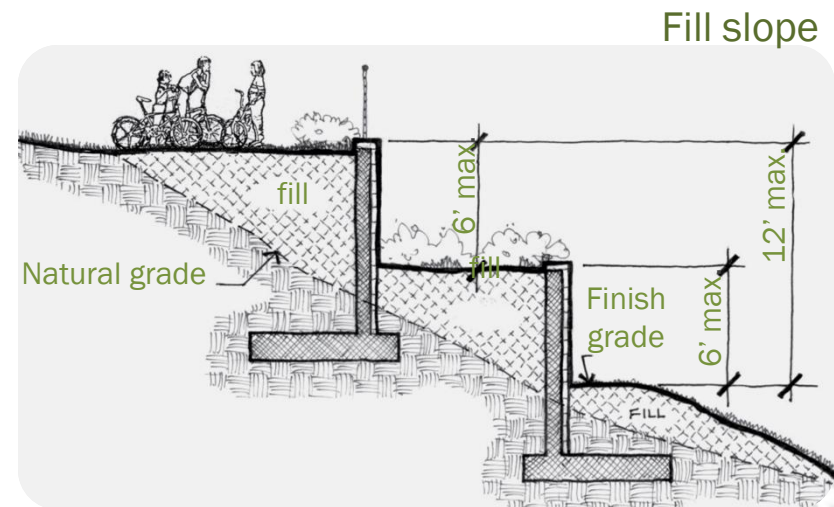
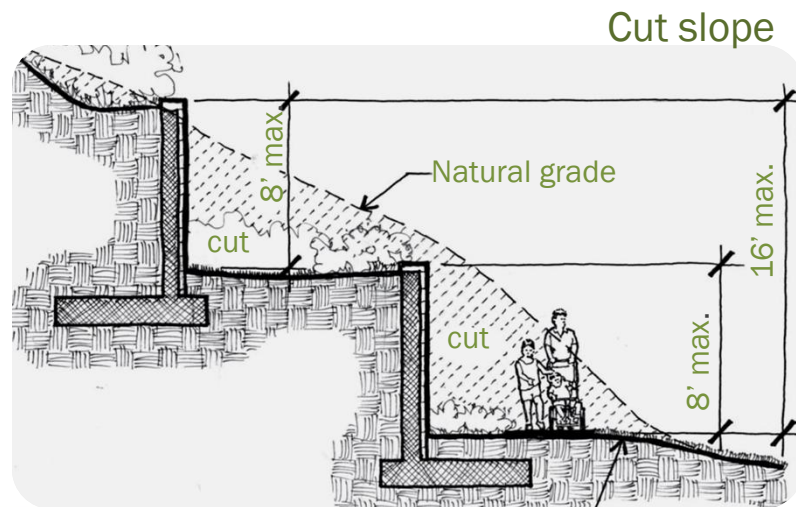
Brea



Number and Height

Santa Barbara

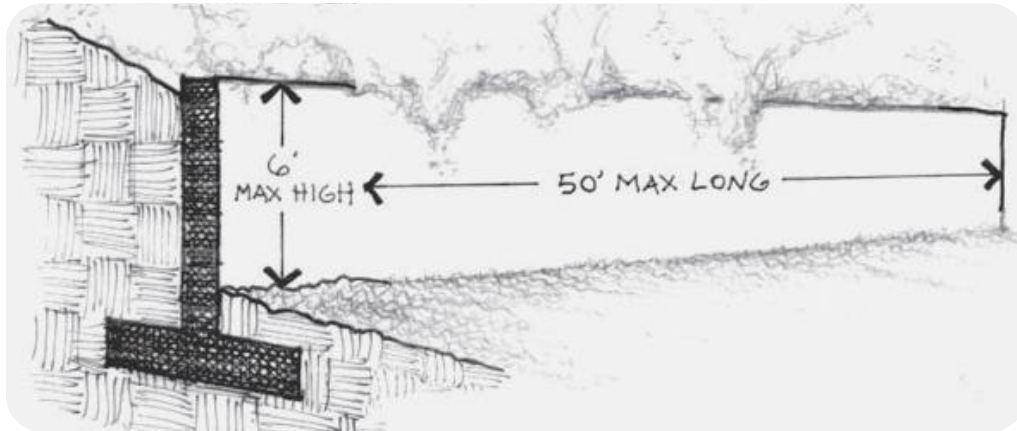
- 8 ft. wall acceptable if aesthetically pleasing;
 - 6 ft. max. for stucco;
 - Fill slope: 6 ft. max. individual; 12 ft. max. combined;
 - Cut slope: 8 ft. max. individual; 16 ft. max. combined;
 - Alternative to tall walls is stepped or terraced.



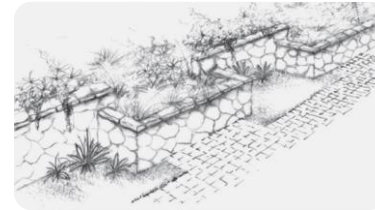
Length

Santa Barbara

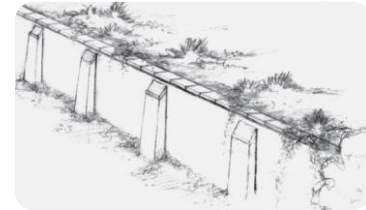
- Max. 50 ft.; continuous walls acceptable if undulated, broken up by buttresses or pilasters, and made of natural materials.



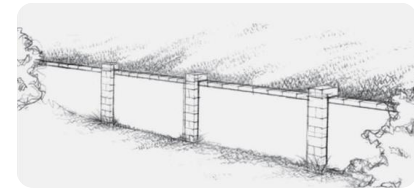
Undulated wall



Buttress wall



Pilaster wall



Length

Santa Clarita

- Maximum 100 ft.

La Verne

- In excess of 100 ft. shall employ architectural treatments such as pilasters, wall caps, or similar treatments in addition to landscaping to provide visual relief.

Horizontal Distance Between Walls

Oakland

- Minimum 4 ft. between the exposed faces of each wall.

Murrieta

- Terraced walls require 6 ft. minimum; walls in required front yard setback requires 3 ft. minimum.

Horizontal Distance Between Walls

La Verne

- 5 ft.

Santa Barbara

- Minimum distance between 2 terraced walls will equal the min. average height of two walls.

Santa Barbara



Preliminary Ideas

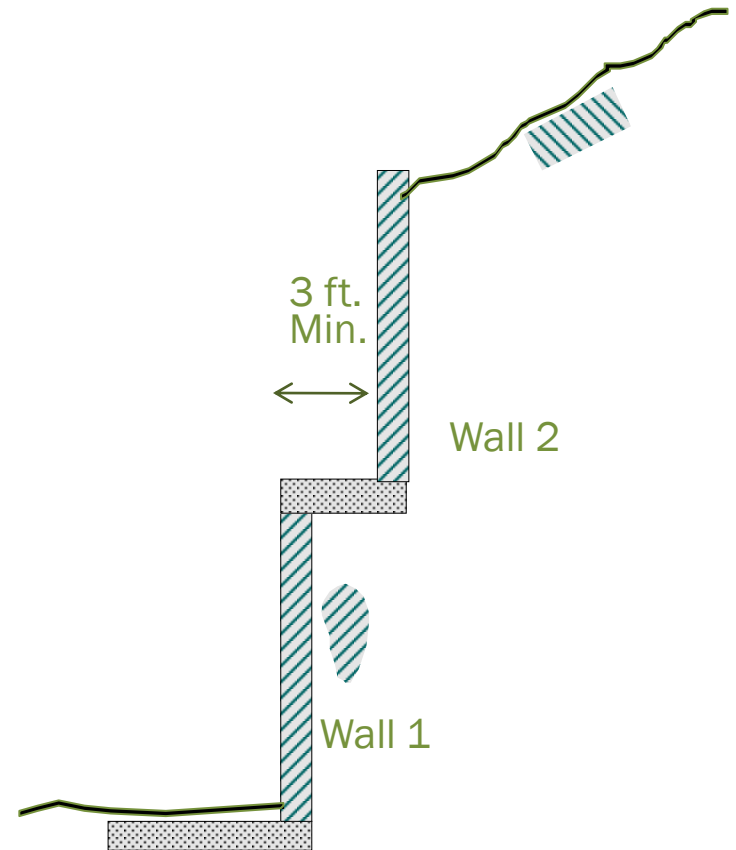
- Clarify
 - If a single wall has a return or makes an angle as it traverses the site, is it considered one wall?
 - No more than one elevation per wall.
 - What if wall is attached to a building or structure?
 - Should “garden walls” be defined? What height?

Preliminary Ideas

- Not limiting number of walls but limiting combined maximum height (cumulative height).
- Regulate length and/or surface area of wall.
 - If so, what variables should be considered?

Preliminary Ideas

- Increase minimum horizontal distance between walls.
 - What should the distance be for proper landscaping/irrigation?
 - Should minimum horizontal distance be related to the height of walls to be separated ?



Next Steps

- Compose draft ordinance
- Workshop for draft ordinance
- Public Hearing
- City Planning Commission



Thank You

For further information or
comments/questions please contact:

*David Olivo at
david.olivo@lacity.org
(213) 473-9769*

*For updates on this project and other Code Studies projects, please visit us on
Facebook at www.facebook.com/LACityCodeStudies*

