

FENCES AND RETAINING WALLS

I want to: Install a fence or retaining wall in public space next to my property.

Do I need a permit? Yes, any use of the public right-of-way, which is defined as the space outside the private property line, requires permission from the District Department of Transportation.

Where do I go to get this permit? The public space permit office at 1100 4th Street, SW, 2nd floor, between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:15 pm, weekdays except Thursday when hours are 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. DDOT electronic permit kiosks are available to simplify the permit application process. These kiosks are located at the Permit Office as well at all seven Metropolitan Police Department District Stations or you may enter your application information, and submit your application online from your home or office computer at <https://tops.ddot.dc.gov>

What do I need when I apply for this permit?

1. Register yourself as a user on the DDOT Transportation Online Permit System (TOPS) at any of the DDOT electronic permit kiosks or online at <https://tops.ddot.dc.gov>.
2. Complete an on-line application at any of the DDOT electronic permit kiosks or online at <https://tops.ddot.dc.gov>.
3. If applicable, Fine Arts Commission and/or Historic Preservation Review Board approval must be obtained before the permit application is submitted.
4. For a retaining wall:
 - a. Four (4) copies of the site plan, drawn to scale, showing:
 - i. Dimension from curb to retaining wall and to the property line
 - ii. All dimensions of the wall (length, height, thickness)
 - iii. Footing and elevation details
 - b. If the wall is near a sidewalk, a damage deposit will be required
 - c. The wall will require an inspection fee based on the new or replacement wall length at \$50 per hour of inspection
 - d. Maximum allowed height of the wall is 42 inches tall (if taller, see below)
5. For a fence:
 - a. Two (2) copies of the site plan, drawn to scale, showing same dimensions shown above for retaining walls
 - b. Must be at least 50% open and no more than 42 inches tall (if taller, see below)
 - c. If fence is located on top of a retaining wall, the combined height may be no more than 42 inches tall (if taller, see below)
6. If a retaining wall, fence or a combination of the two is greater than 42 inches, the application requires Public Space Committee approval. Fences may be placed on retaining walls, but the total height may not exceed the maximum of ten (10) feet. Applications requiring Committee attention must provide:
 - a. Fifteen (15) copies of the site plan drawing, to scale
 - b. Same dimension requirements as shown above for a retaining wall
 - c. Distance between elements (if more than one)
 - d. Elevation views of the proposed location of the fence/wall
 - e. Three (3) 8 x 10 photographs showing front view and views from the right and left of the space proposed for the structure.
 - f. Please submit one (1) copy of the site plan and completed application to a public space committee coordinator at the public space permit office for review before submitting the full package of 15 site plans.
7. A separate public space occupancy permit is generally required while the work is being performed.

How much will the permit cost? The cost of the permit varies by type, but generally cost between \$50 and \$135 plus any applicable inspection fee or surcharge. Checks or money orders should be made payable to “DC Treasurer.” Discover, MasterCard and Visa accepted. Public Space Committee approved structures are issued for the duration (life) of the permitted fence or wall. If less than 42 inches tall, the permit will be issued for up to 180 days duration. If more time is required to do the work, the permit may be renewed.

How long will the permit application process take? Permits to replace an existing fence or retaining wall up to 42 inches tall can be approved the same day. If the wall replacement involves new footings, it is a new wall. Permits for new fences or walls up to 42 inches tall take approximately 3 weeks. For applications requiring Public Space Committee attention the average timeframe is 45 to 90 days.

What if I need additional information?

Please call the Public Space Permit Office at (202) 442-4670.