



Department of Building Inspections INFORMATION BULLETIN 104 Garage Conversions for One- and Two-family Dwellings

This information bulletin provides zoning and building code information for property owners considering converting existing garage space into habitable living space. **You are required to maintain a two car garage on property by ordinance.**

1. The zoning ordinance requires that exterior walls of residences be constructed of masonry construction with 100% masonry for the front façade and 75% for the sides and rear excluding door and windows.
2. The building codes (building, mechanical, electrical and plumbing) must be considered when a garage is converted to habitable spaces. While it is not possible to list every code related item, the following is a listing of the more common issues that arise when a garage is converted into habitable space:
 - A. The requirement for electrical outlets around the wall space is much more restrictive for habitable spaces (bedrooms, game-rooms, dens, etc.) than garages.
 - B. Personnel doors require exterior light fixtures at the exterior doors.
 - C. Habitable spaces require glazed openings (windows) for natural lighting, ventilation and emergency rescue. Bedrooms have minimum area and height above floor requirement for windows.
 - D. The building code requires retrofitting of the entire residence for smoke detectors as required in the current code. Existing construction may be retrofitted with battery backup smoke detectors while areas of new construction require smoke detectors to be wired to the premise wiring system.
 - E. If water heaters are located within the existing garage, special precautions may need to be considered or from what type of rooms through the water heaters may be accessible.
 - F. Addition of bathrooms or enclosures of laundry facilities require exhaust fans to be installed.

In order to apply for a building permit for a garage conversion, the applicant must submit for review the following:

- A. Completed building permit application form.
- B. Construction plans – Two (2) sets of construction plans (max size 11 x 17) drawn to scale, which indicate the location, nature, and extent of **all** proposed work. The drawings must contain sufficient detail for the plans examiner to determine conformity with the provisions of all codes, ordinances and regulations. Drawings must be legible and contain the following information:
 - a. Elevations – elevation view of the entire width of the structure affected with windows and doors (existing and proposed) indicated. Show details of exterior materials proposed.
 - b. List the uses of room(s) adjacent to the garage conversion (bedroom, den, closet, etc.) proposed.
 - c. If a water heater is located in the existing garage, indicate if the water heater is gas-fired or electric.
 - d. Provide a scaled floor plan showing all proposed walls, doors and windows, plumbing fixtures and electric lights, switches and receptacles.

Other items as required by the plans examiner to clarify the proposed construction.