

Building Permits for Residential Basement Remodeling

Restrictions

- When considering basement bedrooms, exit requirements are critical. Most basements have only one stairway; two basement egress/rescue means are required. The typical interior stairway to the first floor counts as an exit. The other exit may be by another stairway or by an egress window in each bedroom. Bedrooms are to be provided with natural light and ventilation (openable windows). Windows in each bedroom shall provide 8% of the floor area in window area for natural light and shall be openable to provide for ventilation equal to 3.5% of the floor area. If the window is used as the additional exit-way, it shall have a clear, unobstructed opening of a least 20 inches wide by 24 inches high, a maximum sill height of 46 inches, and an outside window well three feet by the width of the window, with a maximum depth of 46 inches.
- Family or recreation rooms, sewing rooms, offices, or other habitable rooms are not required to have windows for natural light or additional egress/rescue openings as stated for bedrooms. (Enclosed rooms with closets are considered bedrooms, regardless of other intended uses because of the potential use as a bedroom). Ventilation is still required, but may be provided by installing an exhaust fan in lieu of openable windows.
- Bathrooms are not required to have a window, but shall be provided with exhaust ventilation capable of exhausting 50 cubic feet/minute.

Requirements

- Ceiling Height: all habitable basement rooms shall have a ceiling height of at least 7 feet through 50% of the room's floor area. Beams and girders or other projections may not project more than 8 inches below the required ceiling height. Dwellings originally constructed prior to June 1, 1980 may vary these requirements when approved by the building inspector.
- Stairways: new and remodeled stairways shall have a width of not less than 36 inches; headroom of not less than 76 inches; steps with a maximum rise of 8 inches and run of not less than 9 inches; be enclosed by guardrails or walls on both sides; and have a handrail 30 to 38 inches above the steps. Existing stairways in dwellings originally constructed prior to June 1, 1980 may vary these requirements when approved by the Building Inspector.
- Electrical: bathrooms and all habitable rooms in the basement are required to have room lighting operated by wall switches in lieu of pull chain lights. Habitable rooms are to have electrical outlets placed 12 feet on center. Bathrooms are required to have an outlet, protected by a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter).
- Plumbing: there are special requirements for plumbing installations for bathrooms and other plumbing such as wet bars. Caution is advised when existing floor drains are covered with carpeting. When the water evaporates in the trap, sewer gas may enter the dwelling. Access consideration is required when enclosing water meters and plumbing clean-outs. Access with enclosure clearance shall be provided to allow for maintenance and periodic removal by the City Water Department of water meters

- Heating and ventilation: a means to provide heat shall be provided to all habitable rooms. Existing furnace ductwork may be altered and/or extended to provide for heating and return air. Electrical baseboard units in each room are an acceptable heating system. Gas or wood fireplaces or stoves are considered auxiliary heating systems. Only listed (i.e. UL listed) prefab units may be installed, with installation in accordance with the specific requirements of the owner's manual.

Permit Application

Before applying for your permit, you may also want to review the [general guidelines for residential additions or interior alterations](#)

- Building, [electrical](#), heating/ventilation and [plumbing](#) permits are required.
- Only licensed electrical and plumbing contractors may secure permits for work involving electrical or plumbing work. Homeowners or agents for the owner may secure all other permits.
- Include one copy of plan with permit application to be retained by our office.
- [Permit fees](#) are due when the permit is issued.

This information details basic code requirements to consider when contemplating basement remodeling projects. Additional code requirements may apply. For further information, please contact the Village of Ashwaubenon Department of Building Inspections and Zoning.

