



Converting Attics, Basements and Garages to Living Space

Livable space or accessory dwelling unit

Following this guideline will make plan submittal and permit issuance a more streamlined process for homeowners who want to increase livable space in their single family homes by converting an attic, basement or garage or legalize existing space that was converted without permits. It is important to know that most existing attics, basements and garages were built to be used as storage rather than living space, each conversion project is unique. The conditions of your site and dwelling will determine the scope and feasibility of the project.

Requirements for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are different from simply converting space to additional living space. Refer to the “Residential Accessory Structures and Accessory Dwelling Unit” handout for additional information.

Permit requirements

Building Permit	Is required to convert attics, basements or garages to living space
Electrical, Mechanical And Plumbing Permits	May also be required, depending on the scope of the work
Permit Fees	Building permit fees are calculated based on the value of the project. Fees for electrical, mechanical and plumbing permits are based on the specific work being done. Fees are printed on the applications.

Evaluating your existing space

In unfinished areas, existing features such as ceiling heights, windows, stairs and insulation may not meet current building code requirements for living space. These conditions could make it expensive, difficult or impractical for you to change your attic, basement or garage into living space. In addition, zoning code requirements may affect your project.

Zoning Code

- **Setbacks:** Conversion of some existing garage within the side or rear setbacks may be allowed with limits on size and height. Check with Planning and Zoning before conversion.
- **Parking:** To convert your garage to living space, you may need to provide a required onsite covered parking space. Your existing driveway may not meet this requirement.
- **Roof height:** If converting attic space to living space involves raising the roof, height regulations may affect your project.
- **Exterior changes:** Depending on the Zoning designation of your property, additional review may be needed if you want to alter the exterior of your home and garage.

Summary of Building Code Standards

These standards apply only to conversions that would increase livable space for the existing dwelling, not those that would add a dwelling unit.

Minimum room area and ceiling height

- **Floor area and sloped ceilings:** Living space must have at least 70 square feet of floor area. Utility and storage rooms, closets, bathrooms or kitchens may be any size. In living space with sloped ceilings, no more than one half of the minimum required floor area may have a sloped ceiling less than 6'-8" in height with no part of the required floor area less than five feet in height.
- **Ceiling height:** Where the ceiling is flat, living space may have a ceiling as low as 6'-8". Beams, heating ducts, pipes, etc. are allowed as low as 6'-0" from the floor if they are within 2' of a wall, or as low as 6'-2" where they do not take up more than 10% of the floor area in the room where they are located.
- **Sloped bathroom ceilings:** In bathrooms with sloped ceilings, not more than 75% of the floor area is permitted to have a ceiling height less than 6'-8", provided an area of 21" deep by 24" wide in front of toilets and lavatories has a minimum height of 6'-4", measured from the finished floor. An area of 24" by 30" both in front of and inside of a tub or shower shall have a minimum height of 6'-4", measured from the standing surface of the fixture.

Stairs

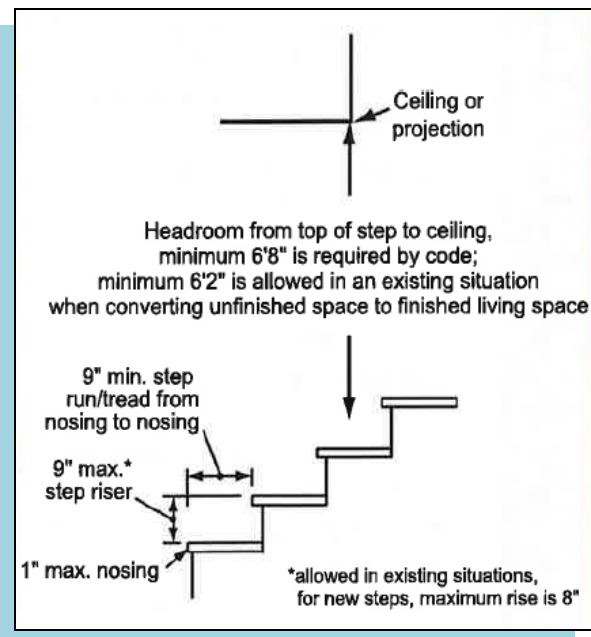
Existing Stairways: An existing stairway leading to new living space may be steeper, narrower and have lower headroom than the current code allows:

- **Rise and run:** The stairway must have treads (runs) no smaller than 9" and risers no higher than 9". The steps should be relatively even with the largest difference

between the biggest and smallest rise or run not more than 3/8".

- **Width:** Must be at least 30".
- **Headroom:** Must be at least 6'-2" measured vertically from the top of the step to the lowest overhead projection or ceiling.
- **Landings:** Are required at the top and bottom of stairs. The length and width must be at least as wide as the stairs.
- **Doorways:** Are allowed at the top of stairs as long as the door does not swing over the stairs.
- **Existing winder stairs:** which are triangular in shape, are allowed. New winder stairs must meet current code.

New stairways: If you are building a new stairway, it will need to meet current code requirements.



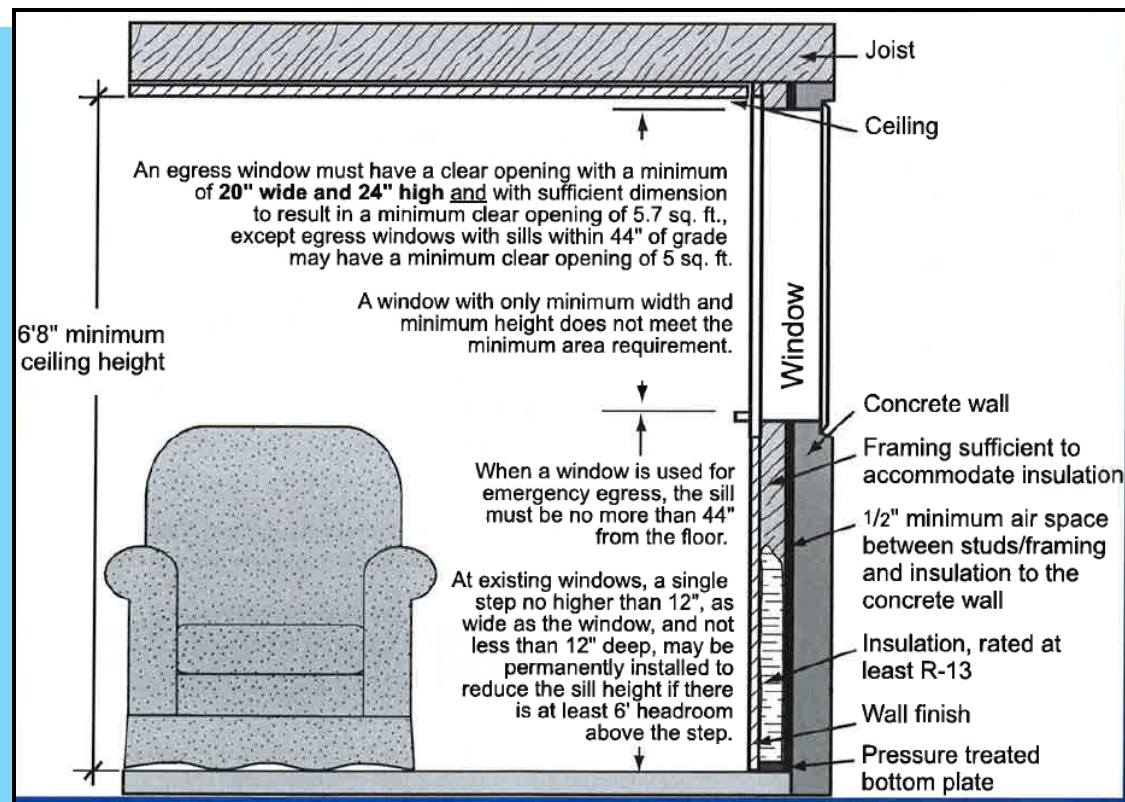
Doors and emergency escape and rescue openings (egress windows)

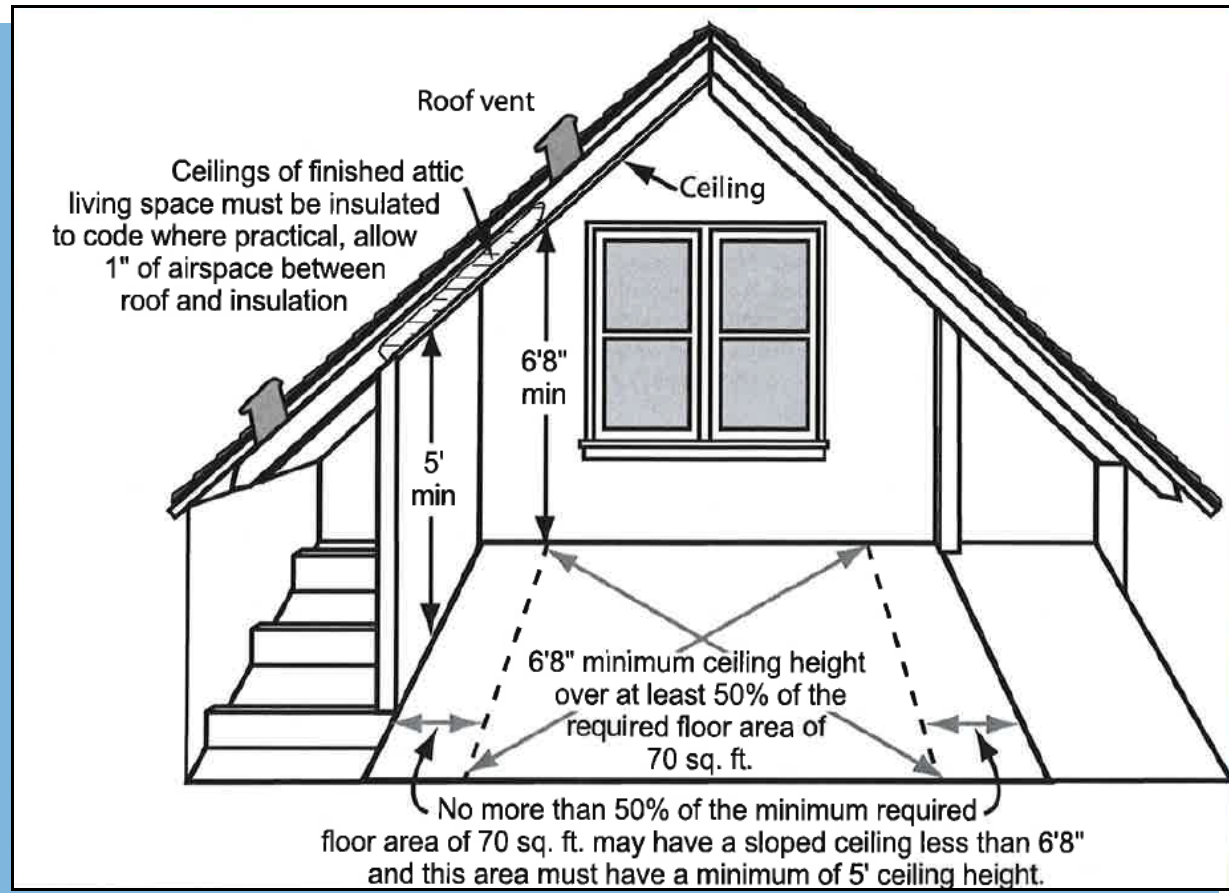
- **Basements with living space and all sleeping rooms:** must have at least one egress window or exterior door for escape or rescue in case of an emergency. An egress window or an exterior door in a sleeping room located in the basement satisfies the requirement for at least one egress window in the entire basement.
- **Door size:** The door that leads into a converted attic, basement or garage must be at least 6'-2" high and 30" wide. Exterior doors used for emergency escape and rescue must be at least the same size.
- **Sill height:** Egress window sill height must be 44" or less. A single step, not less than 12" deep, no higher than 12", and at least as wide as the window opening, may be permanently installed to reduce the sill height to 44" or less,

provided there is at least six feet from the top of the step to the ceiling.

- **Egress window:** An egress window must have a clear opening with a minimum width of at least 20" and a minimum height of at least 24" and with a sufficient dimension to result in a minimum clear opening of 5.7 square feet in area, except egress windows with sill within 44" of grade may have a minimum clear opening of 5.0 square feet.

A window with only minimum width and minimum height does not meet the minimum area requirement.





Insulation and ventilation

- **Additions** that increase the floor area of the house must be insulated as if they were new construction.
- **New windows or doors** must meet current code requirements for energy conservation. Double glazed or storm windows placed over existing single glazed windows will be approved.
- **Habitable rooms must have natural ventilation** provided by windows or doors to the outdoors with openings of at least 2.5% of the floor areas being vented, unless outdoor air is provided by a mechanical system.
- **Combustion air requirements** must be verified for all fuel burning appliances when areas containing furnaces and water heaters are finished or made smaller.

Helpful Information

General Office Hours:

Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Telephone Numbers:

(541) 664-3321 ext. 292 – Building and Planning Department Technician

(541) 664-1611 fax

(541) 664-0700 24-hour inspection request line

For more information visit us online at www.centralpointoregon.gov/cd