

Basement Rooms

Any home alteration project that involves building new walls or rooms in a basement will require an alteration permit. Two sets of plans must be submitted with the permit application. The plans will be examined by the building inspector to ensure they conform to Wisconsin building codes as well as Port Washington's building and zoning codes.

Design Considerations

Here are some issues to think about when designing your basement alteration plan:

- Exiting is a determining factor in planning a basement project. Rec rooms, hobby rooms, etc. require only one exit from the basement and are generally trouble free. However, when the alteration involves creating sleeping areas, the plan must allow for additional exiting requirements. A sleeping area is considered to be any space with a closet in or near it. So if you have a room labeled "Computer Room" or "Den" and it has a closet in or near it, the room is a sleeping area.

A walkout basement with a door or patio door will satisfy the 2nd exit requirement when sleeping areas or rooms are planned. An exit window in **each** sleeping area can also be used for the exiting requirements but in order for a window to be a legal exit, it must comply with the State of Wisconsin building code *Chapter 321.03(5)(b)*.

If you have a full basement and it has standard basement windows you can still have sleeping areas but you must provide a window well for the above code compliant window.

- Ceilings of habitable rooms and the hallway leading to those rooms must be at least 7'-0".
- Insulation is required but vapor barriers are not recommended.
- It is recommended that all bottom plates be treated lumber.

- Doors to bedrooms, bathrooms or powder rooms may need to be 2'-8" wide. This is an issue to discuss with the inspector.

Submitting plans

To apply for a permit two sets of plans, drawn to scale, must be submitted. A freehand drawing on the back of a wrinkled envelope will not suffice as a plan drawn to scale. Graph paper can be used but the plans must:

- Show the dimensions of all the rooms and areas in the basement.
- Show the size and location of doors, windows, and ceiling heights.
- Label how the room will be used (recreation rooms, office, bedrooms, etc.).
- Be complete and neat.

The inspector will review your plans and confirm that your plan meets State and local codes, or identify areas that must be changed before the building permit can be issued.

Associated permits

- A licensed electrician must obtain *electrical permits* if the project involves any electrical work.
- If a bathroom or other plumbing work is done, the owner can do the plumbing work if he/she lives in the unit. If not a licensed plumber must obtain *plumbing permits*.
- The scope of the project will determine if a heating permit is needed.