

Finishing Basements

Frequently Asked Questions:

Do I need a permit?

Yes,

- You need a building permit to finish or partially finish a residential basement

Is there anything special for a bedroom?

Yes,

- Bedrooms, just like every habitable room, must have an area of at least 70 square feet, and cannot be less than 7 feet in any dimension
- Bedrooms, habitable rooms, hallways, etc. must have a minimum ceiling height of 7 feet
- Bedrooms are also required to have an emergency escape window. It shall be operable from the inside without the use of special knowledge, tool, or extra force, beyond that required for normal window operation. The window must meet these requirements:
 - Maximum sill height: 44"
 - Minimum clear opening **width**: 20"
 - Minimum clear opening **height**: 24"
 - Minimum clear opening **area**: 5 sq. feet at grade; 5.7 sq. feet below grade

- A smoke detector must be located within 15 linear feet of all bedroom entrance doors **and** inside each bedroom. This smoke detector must also be interconnected with the rest of the alarms throughout the house

What are the stairway guidelines?

Often, existing stairways need to be modified:

- Risers must be solid or have a toe board which limits the riser opening to less than 4"
- A continuous graspable handrail shall be provided along one side of the stair located 34" to 38" above the nosing

Is there anything else I should know?

Yes,

- All plumbing, mechanical and electrical work must be performed in accordance with the International Building Codes, Illinois Plumbing Code, and City of O'Fallon Ordinances. If hiring outside help, plumbers must be licensed by the State of Illinois.

- On basement renovations it is very important to identify both existing and new construction. Show basement room layout and identify use of each room/space by name and indicate both new and existing walls, as well as, furred and insulated concrete foundation walls
 - *Rooms which resemble a bedroom, or that could easily be converted to a bedroom in the future will be reviewed for bedroom requirements regardless of the room name presented on the drawing
- The rest of the specific guidelines can be found in

Attachment Sheet 2;
Finishing Basements. Please refer to this sheet for more specific questions

What is the next step?

Next, you need to:

- Complete and submit your permit application with:
 1. Two separate complete sets of detailed building construction plans drawn to scale and containing:
 - Floor plans
 - Wall sections
 - Other sections and details

PLEASE NOTE: These guidelines are not a comprehensive presentation of all the ordinances involved in finishing or partially finishing a basement. For more specific guidelines refer to Attachment Sheet 2; Finishing Basements.

If you have questions or concerns please contact the O'Fallon Planning and Zoning Department at (618) 624-4500 ext. 4