



Attic Projects -- One and Two Family Homes

809 N. Broadway, 1st Floor / Milwaukee, WI 53202-3617 / 414-286-8211

You must submit plans for an alteration project that involves building new rooms in an attic, including bathrooms, before a building permit can be issued. The plans will be reviewed by a plan examiner to ensure they conform with the State of Wisconsin building code and the Milwaukee building and zoning codes.

Plan evaluation

Here are some of the items the plan examiner looks for when evaluating plans for attic alterations:

- There must be two legal exits from the attic. This is one of the most difficult issues involved in attic renovation. Second floor attics in single family houses can typically utilize adequately sized windows as a second exit, where third floor attics require two exits by means of stairs that comply with the building code. See the State of Wisconsin building code for specifics.
- The rooms may need to have ceilings at least 7'-0" high., depending on how the room is to be used. Windows must be sized in proportion to the size of the room to provide adequate natural light and ventilation.
- Existing floor joists must be sufficient to support the new rooms and may need to be reinforced.

In some neighborhoods, where homes are built on narrow lots, zoning regulations present challenges. In cases where the new rooms are located in a third floor attic or require dormer additions, you may need to seek a variance and have a hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals before your building permit can be issued.

Submitting plans

Please make an appointment to present your plans and discuss your project with a plan examiner. To make an appointment, call (414) 286-8210. During the appointment, the plan examiner will confirm that your plan meets State and local codes, or identify areas that must be changed before the building permit can be issued.

You need to bring the following materials to your appointment:

- 1) Two copies of the plans for the project. The plans must:
 - Be drawn to scale.
 - Show the location and size of the rooms involved.
 - Show the size and location of doors, and windows, and ceiling heights.
 - Indicate how the rooms will be used (bedroom, sitting room, office, etc.).
- 2) Cost of the project

The plan examination fee is \$0.08 per square foot of the area being altered, with a minimum plan examination fee of \$35. The fee for a building permit is 1% of the cost of construction, with a minimum fee of \$50; plus a \$3 permit processing fee; plus the Property Record Maintenance Charge at 0.25% of the construction cost; minimum fee of \$10.

Associated permits

A licensed electrician must obtain *electrical permits* if the project involves electrical work. If a bathroom is installed, the homeowner or plumber must obtain *plumbing permits*.