



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS FOR

# Residential Garage Conversions

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301 SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-4101

CALL (619) 446-5300 FOR APPOINTMENTS AND (619) 446-5000 FOR INFORMATION

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN

# 142

FEBRUARY 2009

This information bulletin describes the minimum requirements for obtaining a permit to convert a garage of a Single Dwelling Unit or Duplex to habitable (or non-parking) space. It also outlines potential problems typically associated with such a conversion, allowing an applicant to evaluate the feasibility of a proposed garage conversion. This bulletin does not pertain to the temporary conversion of a garage for a real estate sales office in a new subdivision.

For clarification regarding the permit process or information contained in this bulletin, visit the Development Services Department, 1222 First Avenue, third floor, or phone (619) 446-5000.

## I. OVERVIEW OF GARAGE CONVERSION CONSIDERATIONS

The following is a list of potential problems typically associated with garage conversions.

### A. Replacement parking

Residential garages are typically constructed to satisfy a zoning requirement for off-street parking. The conversion of a required parking area to non-parking use requires the replacement of parking spaces eliminated by that conversion. The replacement of these spaces is not permitted within the front or street side yard setback areas unless all of the following requirements are met:

1. The property is in a RS zone;
2. The garage was converted prior to January 1, 1992;
3. No other on-site alternative placement options for parking are available;
4. The parking area is perpendicular to the public right-of-way and between the sidewalk adjacent to the property and the building setback;
5. The area is 8' x 18' for unobstructed space;
6. The parking area utilizes a maximum of five feet of the undeveloped public right-of-way. In no case shall the sidewalk be obstructed or encroached upon by a vehicle parked within this area;
7. The maximum parking area width cannot exceed 25 feet.

### B. Driveway(s)

An existing driveway will be required to be closed if it no longer leads to legal off-street parking. New driveways may also be required when replacement parking is provided elsewhere on the lot. Any work in the public right-of-way requires a permit and must be constructed per San Diego Regional Standards Drawings.

## Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- 2007 California Building Code, (CBC)
- San Diego Municipal Code, (SDMC)
- [Information Bulletin 112](#), Minimum Standards for Construction Specifications
- [Information Bulletin 117](#), Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension
- [Information Bulletin 118](#), How to Process Changes to Approved Plans
- [Information Bulletin 122](#), How to Prepare a Single Dwelling Unit Plot Plan and Vicinity Map
- [Information Bulletin 133](#), Roof and Floor Framing Span Tables
- [Information Bulletin 501](#), Fee Schedule, Construction Permits - Structures
- [Information Bulletin 580](#), Potential Historical Resources Review
- [Information Bulletin 581](#), Designated Historical Resources Review
- Water Meter Data Card, [DS-16](#)
- General Application, [DS-3032](#)
- 2005 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, CF-1R/MF-1R Forms
- [Building Newsletter 23-4](#)
- [Regional Standards Drawings](#)

### C. Building Setback Requirements

Zoning regulations allow a garage, under certain circumstances, to encroach into side or rear yard setback areas SDMC Section 142.0510 (e)). Portions of garages not observing the required side or rear yard setback area may not be converted to living space without an approved variance.

### D. Sleeping Rooms

For safety reasons, gas fired water heaters or furnaces are not allowed to be in rooms used for sleeping purposes. If the converted garage is to be used for sleeping purposes, the water heater and/or furnace may need to be relocated or enclosed.

### E. Historical Review

If the structure is 45 years or older on any parcel affected by your project then it is subject to Potential Historical Review. If your project involves any parcel with a designated historical resource, or is located within the boundaries of an adopted historic district then it is subject to Designated Historical Review. Please refer to Information Bulletin 580, "Potential

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Upon request, this information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

Historical Resource Review,” and Information Bulletin 581, “Designated Historical Resource Review.”

#### **F. Campus Impact Areas**

In campus impact areas, single dwelling unit development with five or more bedrooms shall provide a minimum of two parking spaces in a garage. Where an existing garage is proposed for conversion to habitable area, garage parking shall be replaced with an equivalent number of garage parking spaces on the premises (SDMC 142.0520).

#### **G. Other Applicable Codes**

All applicable provisions of the California Building Code, California Mechanical Code, California Plumbing Code, National Electrical Code, and Title 24 California Energy Efficiency Standards must be met when converting garages to living space.

### **II. OPTIONS FOR SERVICE**

Plans may be checked “over-the-counter” by appointment during normal business hours. Please Phone (619) 446-5300 to schedule an appointment. Appointments are also recommended for obtaining information prior to plan preparation.

### **III. PLAN SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans must be drawn to scale and must be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of the work proposed. Be sure to clearly label all existing and all proposed construction. Three sets of plans are required.

Plans must show, in detail, that the proposed work will conform to the provisions of the California Building Code, San Diego Municipal Code, and all other relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations. Many of the California Building Code requirements are summarized in Information Bulletin 112, “Minimum Construction Specifications.”

Land Development Code information is available at the Development Services Department, 1222 First Avenue, (619) 446-5000 and on the Web at : [www.sandiego.gov/development-services](http://www.sandiego.gov/development-services).

### **IV. FORMS**

#### **A. General Application**

All projects must be submitted with a General Application. Instructions can be found on the reverse side of the application. If you intend to obtain your permit on the same day as plan review, the application must be fully completed. Note: there are no exceptions to the Workers’ Compensation Insurance requirements. If the property owner is doing the construction work or is hiring a number of different contractors, a separate Owner-Builder Verification form must be signed by the owner at the Development Services Department before the permit can be issued.

#### **B. Water Meter Data Card**

A Water Meter Data Card must be completed if new plumbing fixtures are being added.

#### **C. Title 24 Compliance Forms**

A Certificate of Compliance: Residential (CF-1R) form and a Mandatory Measures Checklist (MF-1R) must be submitted to demonstrate compliance with California State Energy Efficiency Standards for garages converted to habitable space. Information on completing these forms is in Section VI.

### **V. DRAWINGS**

Following are guidelines for minimum drawings to include in the plans for a typical garage conversion.

#### **A. Site Plan and Vicinity Map**

This drawing shows the general layout of the lot and must include the following information:

1. Property lines and dimensions.
2. The existing building footprint including dimensions and distances to adjacent property lines. Include items such as eave overhangs, bay windows, fireplaces.
3. The proposed construction, noting the dimension of the exterior walls and the distances to adjacent property lines.
4. Any accessory structures and dimensions and the distances from these structures to adjacent property lines and to adjoining structures.
5. If plumbing fixtures are being installed, show the location of water and sewer lines and the location of the water meter.
6. Access to an off-street parking area, with the parking area dimensioned.

#### **B. Floor Plan**

For the garage conversion, show proposed rooms and all adjoining rooms. Include the following information:

1. Use and dimensions of rooms.
2. Size and type of windows, sill height and doors.
3. Size of headers above new wall openings.
4. Location of plumbing fixtures.
5. Location and energy output (BTUs) of heating equipment.
6. Location and type of any new vent fans.
7. Location of smoke alarms.

#### **C. Foundation Plan**

For slab floor construction, this drawing must show:

1. Size, depth, and location of new footings (for new wall where garage door is being removed, see Figure 1).
2. Thickness of concrete slab.
3. Any new concrete work or floor framing associated with the conversion. If constructing a raised wood floor on wood sleepers over the existing concrete slab, all wood

must be treated, including the subfloor (see Building Newsletter 23-4).

#### D. Elevation Views

This is a drawing of each new exterior wall from the outside of the building. Include the following:

1. Doors, windows and other openings.
2. Exterior finishes for the walls and roof.
3. Wall bracing or shear panel locations or other means of obtaining the required lateral bracing.

#### E. Connection Details

Sufficient details must be shown to clearly explain the method of construction and means of connection for any new walls.

#### F. Electrical/Plumbing Plans

No electrical drawings are required. Electrical requirements are checked by the Field Inspector.

The only plumbing drawings required are the plumbing fixture locations shown on the floor plans. Compliance with the City Water Utilities Retrofit Ordinance must be shown for new fixtures on the plans as follows:

1. Ultra low flush toilets.
2. Maximum 2.2 gallons per minute for faucets.
3. Maximum 2.5 gallons per minute for showerheads.

#### G. Roof Framing Plan

If you are modifying existing framing in the roof area (for example, to provide ceiling joists where the garage roof framing presently is comprised of rafter and rafter ties only), a roof framing plan must be provided. Include the following information:

1. When modifying rafters, please indicate hips, valleys and ridges for both new and existing construction. Dimensions of both new and existing roofs.
2. Rafter and ceiling joist size and spacing.
3. Any special framing at the roof area.

For information on sizing rafters and ceiling joists see Information Bulletin 133, "Roof and Floor Framing Span Tables." Any proposed framing not meeting conventional construction standards may require submittal of plans and calculations by a registered design professional licensed in the State of California.

#### VI. TITLE 24 ENERGY DOCUMENTATION

All single-Dwelling or duplex additions or alterations are required to comply with California Energy Efficiency Standards for Low-Rise Residential Buildings contained in the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 1. A number of compliance methods are described in a Residential Manual available from the California Energy Commission, phone 1-800-772-3300.

**Table 1 - Title 24 Energy Requirements**  
(Climate Zone 7)

Floor Area	<101 sq. ft.	<1000 sq. ft.
<b>Insulation:</b>		
Ceiling	R-19	R-30
Wall	R-13	R-13
Floor	R-13	R-19
<b>Glass:</b>		
Type	Dual Pane	Dual Pane
Sq.Ft.	Max. 50*	20% of FA*

\*The area of any glass removed, as a direct result of the room addition, may be added to the 20%.

Minimum acceptable requirements for the simplest method of meeting the requirements are shown in the table above. You may complete the required Certificate of Compliance Form (CF-1R) using the information shown in this table. You must also show the required insulation values and dual pane windows on your plans. Also complete a Mandatory Measures Checklist (MF-1R) by checking all the items that apply to your project. The CF-1R form and the Mandatory Measures Checklist are available at the Development Services Department.

#### VII. THE PLAN REVIEW PROCESS

Every effort will be made to approve the plans for the project during the first plan review. Questions may arise that cannot be answered immediately, or it may be necessary to refer you to other agencies for approval. A review sheet will be prepared for you detailing what you are expected to do to complete the plan review process. If the permit cannot be issued at the initial appointment, plan check and application fees must be paid (see Section VIII, Fees).

Once all clearances are approved and all questions are answered, schedule another appointment at (619) 446-5300 to complete the plan review process and receive your permit.

At your appointment, you will need to present two full sets of plans with all approval signatures, copies of any calculations, copies of all review sheets, and all completed forms. You will need a third set of plans including the site plan and floor plan for the County Assessor. This set does not need approval signatures.

#### VIII. FEES

Plan check fees must be paid at the time of initial plan review. When the building permit can be issued at the same time, the plan check fee and combination permit fee will appear on one invoice. These fees must be paid when the permit is issued.

If your garage conversion is 500 square feet or more in area, school fees will be due. Projects

under 500 square feet in area are exempt. If you are in the San Diego Unified School District, you may pay school fees at the Development Services Department by separate check made payable to the "San Diego Unified School District." If your project is located in another school district, or if you wish to pay cash, you will be directed to that school district's office to pay school fees. You must have documentation from the Development Services Department to take to the school district for fee calculation. For estimated fee amounts for San Diego Unified School District, call (858) 637-3687.

Occasionally, addition of plumbing fixtures results in a requirement for increasing the water meter size. If so, San Diego County Water Authority capacity fees will be due. These can be paid at the Development Services Department by separate check. An estimate of the fee amount will be provided when the required size of the meter is known. Upgrading the water meter usually is not required when adding only one new bathroom.

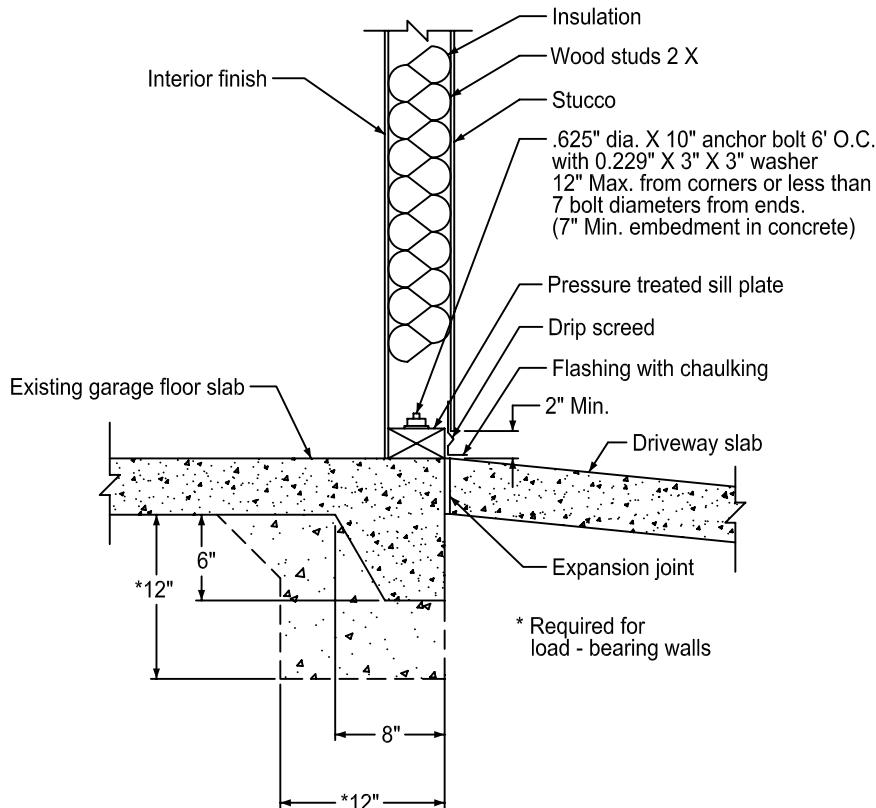
**IX. WHEN THE PERMIT IS ISSUED**

You will receive an Inspection Record card at permit issuance. The inspector signs this card as the construction is inspected and approved. If the project includes electrical work, an electric Circuit Card will also be provided at permit time. This card must be completed for the inspector prior to calling for electrical inspection. At permit issuance a stamped, approved set of plans will be returned to you. This set must be available for the Field Inspector. Your construction will be expected to conform to the approved plans. All unapproved work will be required to be exposed for test (when necessary) and reviewed for compliance.

If it is necessary to change the plans during construction, changes must be approved at the Development Services Department. For information on processing changes see, Information Bulletin 118, "How to Process Changes to Approved Plans."

**Figure 1 / Typical Garage Section Detail**

**Detail A / Stucco Finish Detail**



The permit is active for 180 days after the date of issuance. Scheduling an inspection will extend the permit for 180 days from the date the inspection passes. Additional information on permit expiration and extensions can be found in Information Bulletin 117, "Regulations Covering Permit Expiration and Extension."

The Inspection Record card, the approved plans, and the permit are important records and should be preserved.

**X. SCHEDULING AN INSPECTION**

You may schedule inspections by phoning the City's Automated Phone Inspection Line at (858) 581-7111. The Inspection Line is available seven days a week between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. The Inspection Line allows you to schedule inspections up to five days in advance; obtain the inspector's name and phone number; leave a voice message for the inspector; and obtain the status of the inspection.

**Detail B / Wood Siding Detail**

