



## Permit Guide

CITY OF  
GRAND  
RAPIDS

# Garage Construction

### General Information

- **Site Card.** Before starting construction, post the site card (issued by the City) in a front window visible from the street.
- **Miss Dig.** Before you dig, call Miss Dig at 800.482.7171
- This handout is provided as a guide and does not preclude other designs based upon approved engineering principles.

### Zoning Ordinance Requirements

- Please see the attached Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) page.
- The Zoning Ordinance impacts the allowed placement of a garage. It is recommended that you understand the provisions pertaining to your zone district before designing a proposed garage.

### Building Code Requirements

- **Permit Requirement.** A building permit is required for the construction of a garage. Garage construction shall meet the requirements of the current Michigan State Residential Code, which is derived from the International Residential Code.
- **Special Requirements for Attached Garages.**
  - An attached garage is treated as an addition to the house.
  - Foundation footings must be a minimum of 42" below grade.
  - The garage shall be separated from the residence and its attic area by not less than ½" gypsum board applied to the garage side.
  - Garages beneath habitable rooms shall be separated from all habitable rooms above by not less than 5/8" Type X gypsum board.
  - Door openings between the garage and residence shall be equipped with solid wood doors not less than 1 3/8" in thickness, solid or honeycomb core steel doors not less than 1 3/8" thick, or 20-minute fire-rated doors. Windows are not allowed in these doors or in common walls.
- **Pole Barn Construction.** Pole barn type of construction (post) is allowed. The exterior siding and roofing must meet the exterior design criteria of the Zoning Ordinance.
- **Flooring/Drainage.** The floor must be of a non-combustible material and slope towards the overhead door opening for drainage or an approved floor drain must be installed. All garage drains shall hook to the sanitary sewer when sanitary sewer is available to the property.
- **Existing Foundation.** Existing foundations may be used if approved by the Building Inspections Division.
- **Foundation Anchoring.** ½" foundation anchor bolts must be embedded 7" into concrete or foundation anchor straps may be installed. Foundation anchor bolts may be installed no more than 72" on center and no more than 12" from the corners or ends of the foundation. Foundation anchor straps must be installed to the manufacturer's specifications, which is typically about 3' o.c.
- **Treated Lumber.** All lumber that comes in contact with concrete or is within 6" of grade must be treated.
- **Header.** Make sure the header size over the garage door is large enough to carry all roof loads. NOTE: Large overhead door openings in a load bearing wall will require a laminated beam (see lumber supplier or design professional for engineering the specific size and type), or steel beam, or girder trusses.
- **Bracing.** All corners of the building must be braced with plywood or diagonal wind bracing. See narrow wall detail if wall is less than 32" wide.
- **Fire Resistance.** Garages built within 5' of a lot line are required to have a one-hour fire-resistive rating with exposure from both sides. Projections extending into the fire separation distance shall not have less than one-hour fire-resistive construction per R302 MRC, which requires no windows and no less than 5/8" type X drywall installed on both sides of the wall. Drywall must also be applied to underside of soffits.
- **Roof Construction.** Roof construction may be truss or rafter type. The rafter size must be adequate for the span. If trusses are used they must be braced per the manufacturer's requirements. Proper tie downs are required. Only certified, engineered trusses are permitted (home designed trusses are not permitted).
- **Grading.** There must be a minimum clearance of 6" between the top of the foundation and the exterior finish grade and the exterior finish grade must slope away from garage an additional 6" in the first ten feet



# Permit Guide

## Garage Construction

away from the structure and must be landscaped to maintain these specifications.

### Application Requirements

**Building Permit Application Form.** A completed Building Permit Application is required to obtain a building permit. An application form is available on-line at [www.grcity.us/devcenter](http://www.grcity.us/devcenter).

**Plans.** The following plans also are required:

- Building Plans showing proposed structures in detail, including front, side (include foundation), and top views which depict the materials and techniques to be used in construction (i.e., rafters: 2x8 SPF @ 16" o.c., engineered trusses @ 24" o.c. ect frame)
- Site Plan showing property lines, existing and proposed structures, driveways, sidewalks, streets, easements, and overhead power lines

**LUDS Plan Review Application Form (*not required for all sites*).** If the project site is within 500' of a lake, river, stream, or drainage ditch, a completed Land Use Development Services (LUDS) Plan Review Application Form is required. Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control measures must be shown on the Site Plan.

### Who Should Apply for a Building Permit?

While homeowners may apply for permits, the City will hold the applicant responsible for the work, regardless of the party that actually performed it.

If a contractor is performing the work, it is recommended that the contractor apply for the permit. In order to apply, a contractor must be licensed with the State and registered with the City.

### Review Process

1. Applicant submits a completed Building Permit Application form and required plans
2. Development Center staff identifies required reviews
3. Applicant obtains all required sign-offs by reviewers
4. Development Center staff collects building permit fee and issues building site card
5. As applicable, applicant submits Electrical Permit Application and fees to the Development Center and obtains that permit

### How Much Time Does It Take?

The Development Center's goal is to review single family residential projects the same day a complete application (including required plans) is received. An incomplete

application form and/or inadequate plans will delay the process. Simple projects may be approved within a few minutes.

The review time frame may be extended for:

- Duplex or multiple-unit residential properties
- Projects involving a change in the use of a property (example: conversion of a store-front commercial space to a residence)
- Projects located within a Planned Redevelopment District (PRD)

### Fees

The building permit fee is based upon the cost of construction (materials and labor) stated on the building permit application form, and is calculated as follows:

- \$70 for the first \$1,000 cost of construction
- \$6.50 for each additional \$1,000, or part thereof

The City may require supporting documentation such as a copy of a contract or itemized list of materials. In the absence of such documentation, the City may use International Code Council tables to determine the construction cost.

### Inspections

Once a permit is issued, construction may begin. As the project progresses, the Building Inspections Division will need to inspect the work being performed. The following inspections are required for most garages:

1. **Footing Inspection.** After forms are placed and *before* cement is poured or blocks are laid.
2. **Final Inspection.** After completion of the garage and finish grading.

**Other Inspection.** In addition to the above inspections, the inspector may require other inspections to ensure compliance with the Code. For a finished (drywalled) garage, a **Rough Inspection** is required before hanging of drywall.

Please call the building inspector listed on the site card to request an inspection. Every effort is made to perform an inspection within two (2) business days following the request. You should have your address available when you call. Inspectors' work schedules fill up quickly at certain times of the year. Calling more than a day in advance can help to avoid potential delays in the progress of your project.

### Time Limitations

If work is not started within 180 days of the issuance of a building permit, the permit will have expired. Likewise, if



# Permit Guide Garage Construction

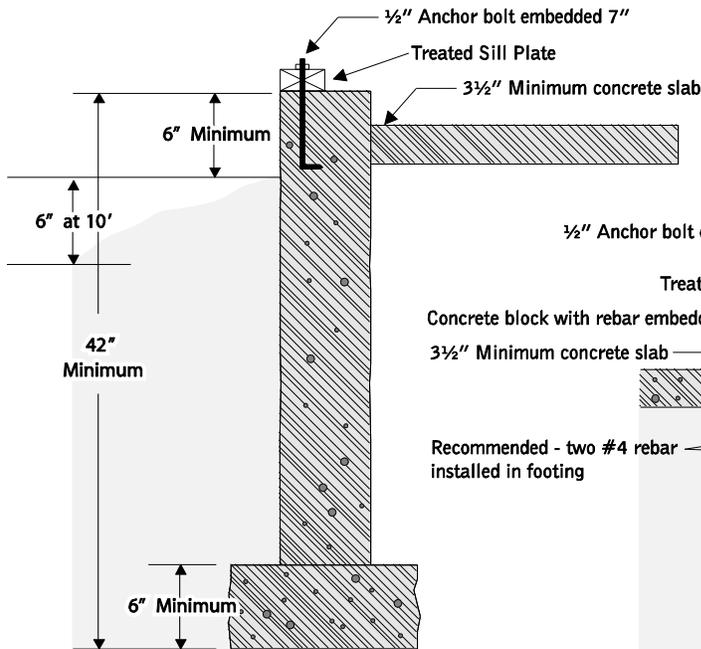
work on the project is suspended for a period of 180 days,  
the permit will have expired.

## For More Information

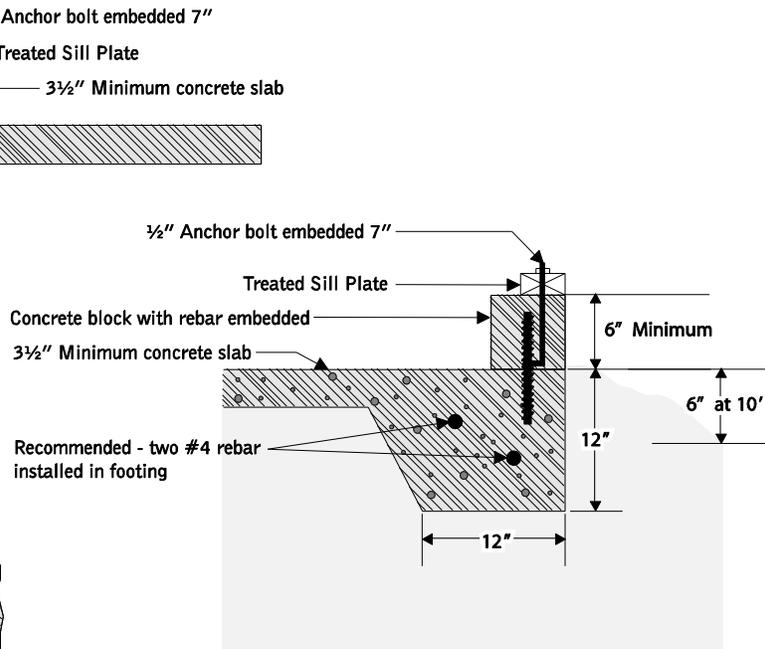
www.grcity.us/devcenter  
City of Grand Rapids Development Center

1120 Monroe Ave. NW, 2nd Floor  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
Telephone: 616.456.4100  
FAX: 616.456.4088

### Foundation for attached garage

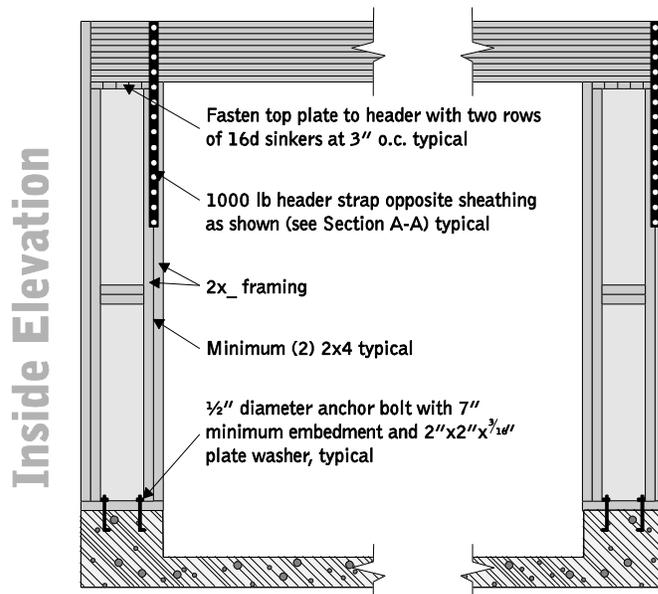
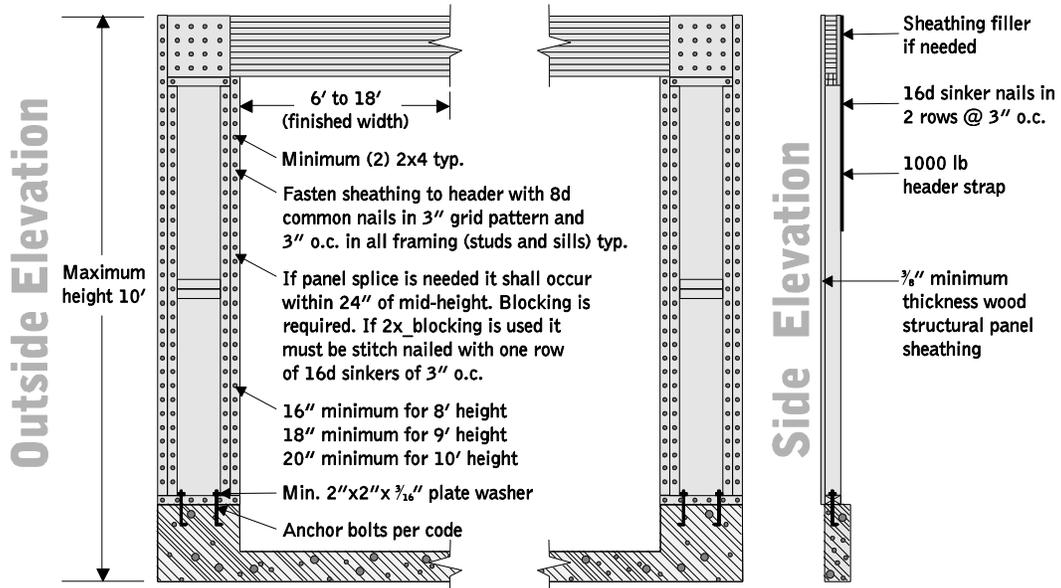


### Turned down foundations for detached garages



# Permit Guide Garage Construction

## Garage narrow wall bracing method without hold-downs (two segments shown)





# Accessory Structure Placement

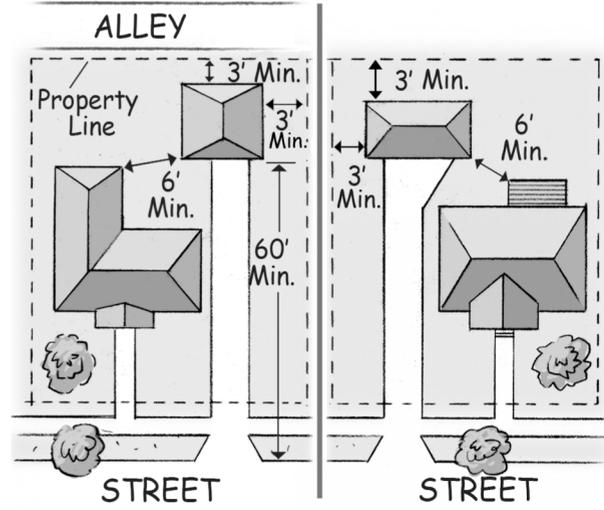
Any Zone District in:  
Traditional Neighborhoods (TN) and  
Mid-Century Neighborhoods (MCN)

Lot Area (in Square Feet)	Maximum Size (Gross Floor Area)	Maximum Height
Less than 5,000	624 sq ft	14 ft
5,000 – 7,499	832 sq ft	14 ft
7,500 – 10,999	936 sq ft	14 ft
11,000 – 21,999	1,000 sq ft	16 ft
More than 22,000	1,200 sq ft	16 ft

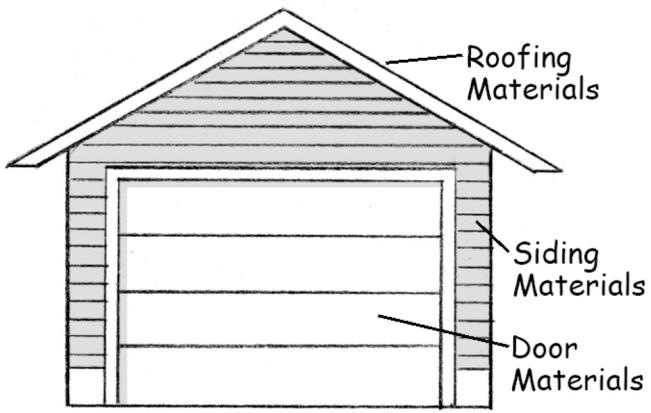
Attached garages in TN and MCN neighborhoods must be set back at least 5' behind the front of the house.

Any Zone District in:  
Modern Era Neighborhoods (MON)

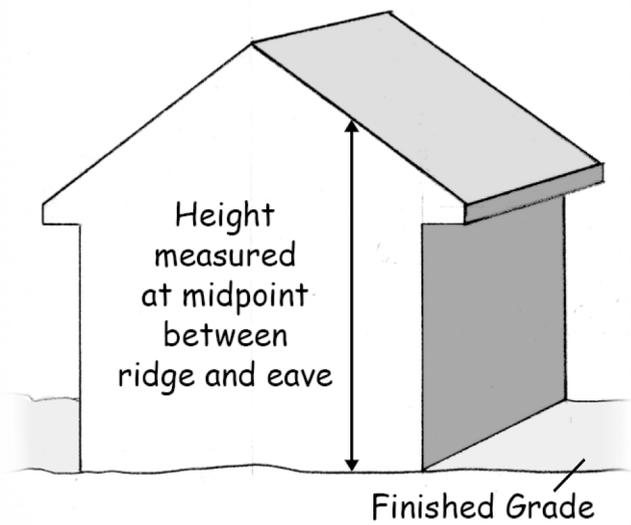
Lot Area (in Square Feet)	Maximum Size (Gross Floor Area)	Maximum Height
Less than 5,000	832 sq ft	14 ft
5,000 – 7,499	936 sq ft	14 ft
7,500 – 10,999	1,000 sq ft	16 ft
11,000 – 21,999	1,200 sq ft	16 ft
More than 22,000	1,500 sq ft	16 ft



## Detached Garage Location



Elevation showing Building Materials



Height Measurement



# Accessory Structure Placement

## Q1. What is an accessory structure?

A1. An “accessory structure” is a building or other structure that is smaller in size and secondary in purpose to the principal use of the property. It can be attached to the house or it can be a separate structure. Most often, an accessory structure is a garage or shed, but can also include carports, gazebos, and greenhouses.

## Q2. Why does the Zoning Ordinance regulate accessory structures?

A2. The Zoning Ordinance ensures that the accessory structure will be properly placed on the lot in relation to the house and the property lines, the structure will be compatible with the house and the neighborhood, and minimum greenspace requirements will be met.

If your property is located in an historic district, the structure must also be approved by the City’s Historic Preservation Officer. The zoning and historic preservation reviews can be done when you come in for the building permit.

## Q3. What types of permits are required before I can build (or add onto) my accessory structure?

A3. **Zoning Permit.** A zoning permit is required for accessory structures that are 120 – 200 sq ft in size.

**Building Permit.** A building permit is required for accessory structures that are 200 sq ft or larger in size. See the Development Center’s *Permit Guide for Residential Garages* for more information.

**Curb Cut or Driveway.** If a new curb cut or driveway is planned, the Planning Department will review the proposed location. See the City Engineer’s Sidewalk Division for more information on sidewalks and driveway approaches in the public right-of-way.

## Q4. What information must I provide for zoning review?

A4. The following information is needed:

- **Building Permit Application.**
- **Zoning Information Attachment** as required (see A3 above).
- **Site Plan** (overhead view) showing the exact locations and dimensions of all property lines, existing buildings, driveways, streets, alleys and the proposed accessory structure and any proposed driveways or curb cuts. *The site plan should be based on a survey of your property.*
- **Elevation** drawing (side view) of the proposed accessory structure identifying all building materials.

## Q5. How large can my accessory structure be?

A5. It depends on the Zone District, the size of the lot, and other accessory structures already on the property. See the back of this sheet.

## Q6. How high can my accessory structure be?

A6. It depends on the Zone District and the lot size. Height is measured from the finished grade to the mid-point of the roof (between the peak and the drip edge). See the back of this sheet.

## Q7. What other zoning requirements must be followed?

A7. In addition to square footage and height, the following requirements apply.

### All Accessory Structures:

- Must be architecturally compatible with the house.
- Must be located at least 5 ft from rear and side lot lines. Where an accessory structure is located next to an alley, it may be 3 ft from that lot line.
- Must be located at least 5 ft from another accessory building.
- Have driveway access from the alley, where an alley is present.

### Detached Accessory Structures:

- If located less than 60 ft from the front lot line, it must comply with the required side yard setbacks.
- Cannot be located in the front yard.
- Must be placed at least 6 feet from the house.

### Attached Accessory Structures:

- Must meet the setback requirements for the house.
- In certain Zone Districts, an attached garage must be placed at least 5 feet behind the front of the house.

### Other

- Corner lots have special characteristics and different requirements.
- Minimum greenspace requirements may reduce the total square footage of the accessory structure.

### For More Information:

[www.grcity.us/planning](http://www.grcity.us/planning)

City of Grand Rapids Planning Department:  
1120 Monroe Avenue NW, 2nd Floor  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
Telephone: (616) 456-3159  
FAX: (616) 456-4546