

Permit & Development Center

809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI 53202 | (414) 286-8210 | milwaukee.gov/permits | DevelopmentCenterInfo@milwaukee.gov

New or replacement garages or other accessory buildings require plan submission and review before a building permit can be issued. Plans are reviewed to ensure they conform to the State of Wisconsin building code and the Milwaukee building and zoning codes.

Plan evaluation

Here are some of the items that the plan examiner looks for when evaluating garage plans:

- A detached garage and all accessory buildings such as sheds may occupy no more than 15% of the area of the lot.
- Garages that are attached to the house are treated as home additions, and setbacks and lot coverage may be calculated differently.
- Garage setbacks are from the wall of the garage. The eaves may project up to one third of the required setback. Gutters are not considered part of the overhang. Garages in rear yards need to be at least 1½ feet from side and rear property lines, and at least 4 feet from alleys being used for access. Corner lots require a side street setback equal to that required for the principal building, but no less than an existing principal building setback.
- A garage may be as close as 3 feet to a house when the walls are covered with one-hour, fire-resistant drywall. Otherwise, the garage must be at least 10 feet from a house.
- A garage may not be built on a vacant lot or in the front yard.
- A garage may not exceed 1000 sq. feet.
- The slab must be at least 4” thick and at least 3” above the grade of the sidewalk or alley.
- Two (2) accessory structures maximum on one lot in most zoning districts.

Submitting plans

Plans may be submitted in person or online. Online submissions may be done through Milwaukee’s Land Management System (LMS) at city.milwaukee.gov/LMS. Once on the site, you can create an account or login to apply for your permit.

Walk-in service is available for the review of garage plans. Click here and scroll down for current hours. Because we cannot predict the number of customers who will arrive for walk-in service on a given day, you may need to wait for service.

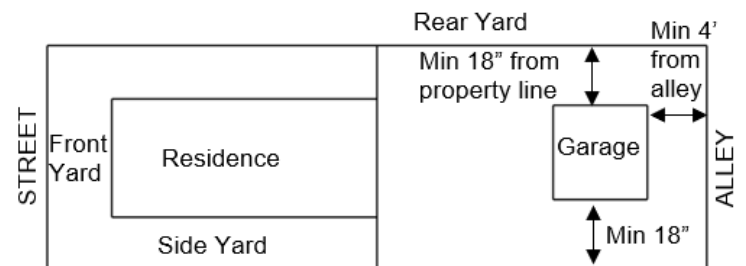
You need to submit the following materials when you apply for a building permit:

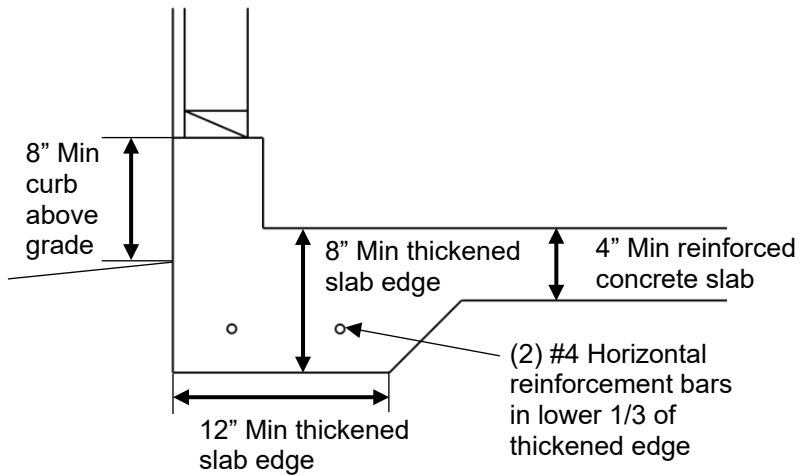
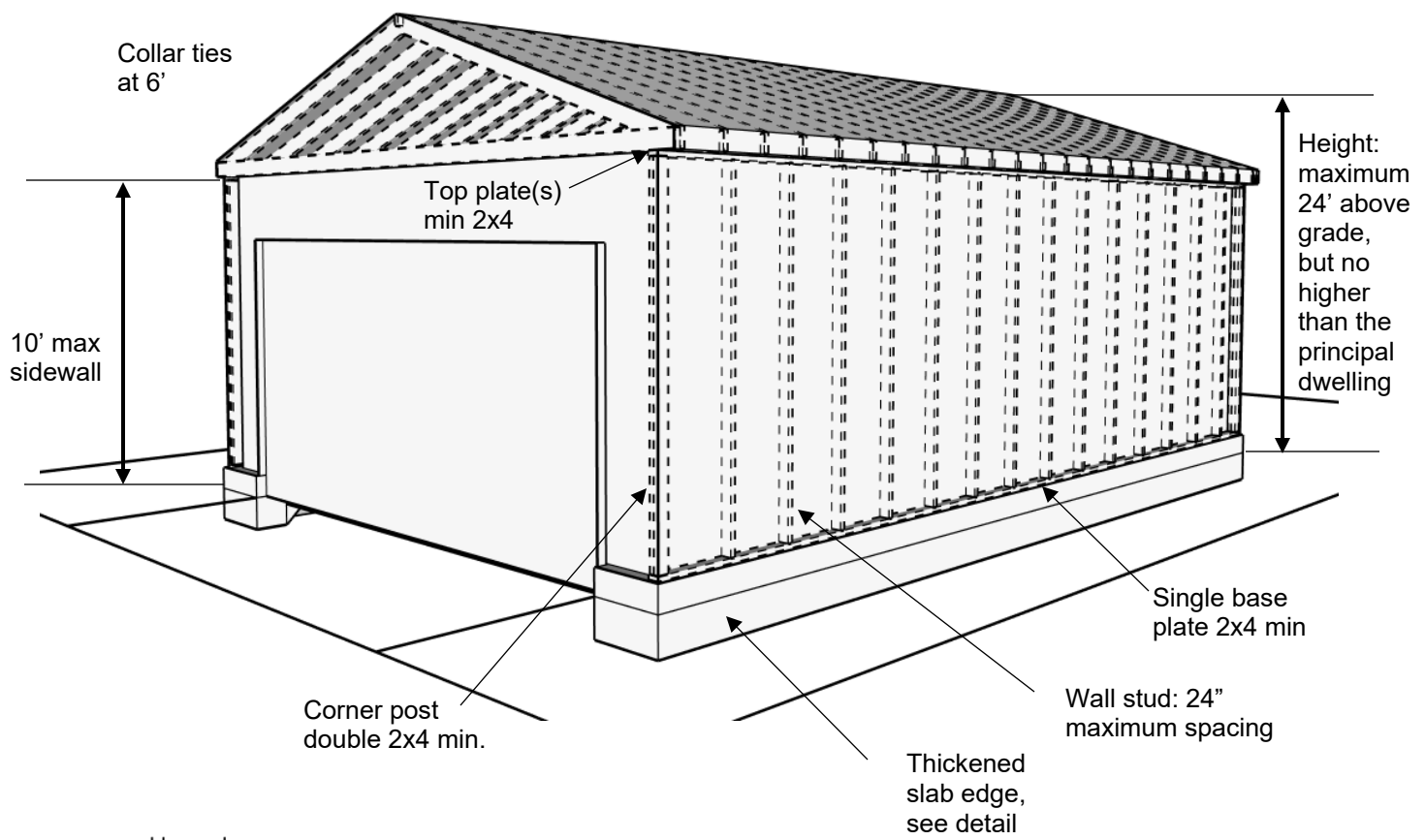
- A certified survey of your property that shows where the garage will be located, OR a scale drawing or site plan that shows your property, other buildings on the property, and the location of the garage.
- Three copies of the scope of work or plan for the garage, drawn to scale, that describes:
 - Dimensions of the garage, and overall height, sidewall height, and overhang length
 - The type of construction such as thickness of slab and wall construction.
 - Whether trusses or rafters will be used. If rafters are used, indicate the size and spacing. If trusses are used, specifications from the supplier need to be provided.
 - Type and size of header or laminated beam for the overhead door.
- Cost of garage

Plans for garage kits sold by home centers alone are often missing details like foundations, elevation drawings, total height measurements, and site plans.

Associated permits

If you need to demolish an old garage, you may also be required to take out a raze permit. An electrical permit is required if you run electrical service to the garage. If the garage is accessed from a street and requires a new driveway, a curb cut permit would be required. If you are building a garage in a locally designated historic district, you must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission before the permit is issued.





Provide a continuous floating slab of reinforced concrete not less than 4 inches in thickness. Reinforcement shall be a minimum of number of 10 (6X6) inch wire mesh or fiber reinforced concrete. The slab shall be provided with a thickened edge all around, 12 inches wide and 8 inches below the top of the slab. The thickened edge shall have 2 continuous #4 horizontal reinforcement bars placed in the lower third of the thickened edge. Exterior wall curbs shall not be less than 8 inches above the adjoining grade.