

CITY OF BATH, MAINE

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ATTIC CONVERSIONS

People sometimes want to convert attics to habitable rooms. Below are listed some of the code related considerations applicable to these projects:

1. **Access to the attic.** To be converted to habitable space, the attic must have code complying access, which is typically stairs. New stairs built for this purpose must meet the code requirements for new stairs. Existing stairs can be used if they are close to meeting the requirements for new stairs, as judged by the codes official.
2. **Egress from the attic.** The new room or rooms in the attic must have code complying egress facilities, which typically requires an egress sized window in any rooms other than kitchen, storage, or a bathroom. An egress sized window has a clear opening of at least 5.7 square feet in size, a minimum width of 20" and a clear height of at least 24". (Note that 20" x 24" is nowhere near 5.7 square feet. These minimums make it so you can't have a window that's too short or narrow to be used.) The sill can be no more than 44" above the floor. The clear opening is to be achieved by the normal means of operating the window. Removing the sashes does not count.
3. **Floor structure.** To convert from storage to habitable space, the floor structure must meet current code requirements for structural adequacy. Floors in single family houses must be able to safely support 40 pounds/square foot, or 30 pounds/square foot for bedrooms. If the attic floor is inadequate to support those loads, it will have to be improved.
4. **Room sizes.** New rooms must meet the following minimum size requirements:
 - Habitable rooms other than kitchens must be at least 70 square feet in size (this does not include bathrooms).
 - Kitchens must be at least 50 square feet in size.
 - Habitable rooms and kitchens cannot be less than 7' in any horizontal dimension.
5. **Ceiling height.** Room(s) in the converted space must have a ceiling height of at least 7' 6" for at least 50% of the required areas specified above. Up to 50% of the room can have a sloped ceiling of less than 7' – 6" in height. Sloped ceiling areas less than 4' high do not count toward the required room area.
Exceptions:
 - Kitchens, bathrooms, storage rooms, and hallways can have a ceiling height of not less than 7'.
 - Beams 4' or more on center can project up to 6" below the ceiling.

These are some of the threshold issues to consider. The project will need to meet all applicable code requirements, including, building, plumbing, electrical, heating, etc., with applicable permits secured for the work.

Let us know if you have questions or need more information.

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