Converting a garage or carport to a habitable room

Can I convert my carport or garage to a habitable room?

A carport or garage may be converted to a habitable room if there is sufficient space elsewhere on the property to provide parking of vehicles. It is recommended that the materials and finish of the proposed alteration match the existing dwelling.

What is a habitable room?

The *Residential Design Codes* (R-Codes) is a State planning document that applies development controls over all residential developments in Western Australia, including habitable rooms. The R-Codes define a "habitable room" as:

"A room used for normal domestic activities that includes:

- *A bedroom, living room, lounge room, music room, sitting room, television room, kitchen, dining room, sewing room, study, playroom, sunroom, gymnasium, fully enclosed swimming pool or patio; but excludes;*

- *A bathroom, laundry, water closet, food storage, pantry, walk-in-wardrobe, corridor, hallway, lobby, photographic darkroom, clothes drying room, verandah and unenclosed swimming pool/ or patio and other spaces of a specialised nature occupied neither frequently nor for extended periods."*

Will I need a development (planning) application?

A habitable room is required to comply with the requirements of both the R-Codes and the City's *Residential Development Local Planning Policy*.

Converting a carport or garage to a habitable room on a single house may require development (planning) approval where it does not meet the deemed-to-comply criteria of the *Residential Design Codes* (R-Codes), or the City's *Residential Development Local Planning Policy*.

Generally, a conversion will require development approval where it is:

- Not complementing the dwelling where visible from the street in respect to scale, roof design, detailing, window size, materials and colours;

- Proposed to contain a major opening to a habitable room and set back less than 1.5 metres from a side or rear lot boundary;

Additional requirement may also apply if the property, where the garage is to be located, is within a structure plan area.

The City's online mapping system can be used to confirm if a structure plan applies to a property as well as the lot sizes, boundary dimensions and recent aerial imagery. The online mapping system can be accessed at **joondalup.wa.gov.au**.

All conversions to grouped dwellings, multiple dwellings, commercial developments or caravan parks will require development approval.

How do I get development (planning) approval from the City?

To obtain development approval, a development (planning) application is required to be submitted to the City to convert a garage or carport to a habitable room.

Application forms, development application checklists and information on lodging an application are available on the City's website.

Fees are in accordance with the City's Schedule of Fees.

Any application will also need to demonstrate that parking bays are contained within the property boundaries and provided in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard.

It is also recommended that you speak to your neighbours that may be impacted by the conversion and have them sign the plans as a way of their consent to the proposal.

Will I need a building permit?

A building permit application is required to convert a carport or garage to a habitable room.

How do I make an application for building permit?

Please refer to the City's Building Application Checklists for information required to be provided with a building permit application, available at **joondalup.wa.gov.au**.

Building permit application forms (certified or uncertified) are available from the Building Commission's website **buildingcommission.wa.gov.au**

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Certified building permit applications must be accompanied with a Certificate of Design Compliance.

Please refer to the City's Uncertified Building Application Checklist – Dwelling and Habitable Additions (Class 1a) for information required to be provided with the building permit application (BA2 form).

Fees for a building permit application are in accordance with the City's Schedule of Fees.

Are there any construction requirements to convert a garage or carport to a habitable room?

The *National Construction Code – Building Code of Australia* (BCA) is a uniform set of technical provisions for the design and construction of buildings and other structures throughout Australia. The purpose of the BCA is to achieve acceptable standards of structural sufficiency, safety, health and amenity for the benefit of the community.

Some provisions include the following:

- The walls of the new addition must maintain a continuous cavity with the existing dwelling.

- The floor to ceiling height must be a minimum of 2.4 metres.

- Noting that generally, carport floors are constructed without a waterproof membrane or termite barrier, the building permit application must indicate how the proposed works will prevent the ingress of moisture into the new room. The existing slab may need to be drilled to install a termite barrier;

- Natural light and ventilation must be maintained to all existing rooms;

- Hard wired smoke detectors must be installed to protect all existing and proposed bedrooms of the house;

- Applications may also require engineering details; and

- Power meter box - Any existing meter box within the proposed enclosure must be relocated to an external wall.

What if I need further information?

Copies of the R-Codes are available for viewing at any of the City's libraries or online at **planning.wa.gov.au**.

Further information, such as planning and building documents, checklists and requirements, including copies of structure plans and local planning policies visit the City's website or contact the City's Building Services on **9400 496**1 (for building permit queries) or Planning Services on **9400 4100** (for planning queries) or email at **info@joondalup.wa.gov.au**