



Major Residential Alterations and Additions

Informational Guide

The Major Alteration and Addition Ordinance

On June 13, 2018, the Portland City Council amended Section 24.55.210, “Major Residential Alterations and Additions,” of Title 24, Portland’s Building Regulations. Effective July 1, 2018, the definitions of major residential alteration and major residential addition (MRAA) have changed. In addition, major alteration projects that use heavy machinery to demolish walls must implement dust suppression techniques described in Section 24.55.205.C.3.

Where do the Major Alteration and Addition Requirements Apply?

The requirements apply to all residential structures that have a residential Comprehensive Map Designation. They do not apply to properties, including multifamily commercial properties or residences, in non-residential comprehensive plan map areas.

There are some types of residential structures and projects that are exempt from the MRAA ordinance:

- **Non-habitable accessory structures**, such as detached garages, are exempt from the major alteration/addition regulations. If the building under remodel is considered an accessory structure, the project will not be designated as a major alteration or addition even if it is converted to habitable space as a result of the remodel. NOTE: an attached garage is considered part of the main house. If you are altering or adding to a house that has an attached garage, the garage will be treated as part of the house in determining whether the work is a major alteration or addition and whether the MRAA ordinance requirements apply.
- **Conversions that don’t remove exterior walls or expand the structure’s footprint or envelope:** Existing permitted areas such as unfinished basements and attics that are converted to habitable space without removing exterior walls or expanding the structure’s footprint or envelope, are not considered major alterations or additions even if the project adds new interior living space in excess of 500 square feet.
- **Detached accessory dwelling units (ADU’s):** The ordinance does not apply to new construction of detached ADU’s.

What Qualifies as a Major Alteration or Addition?

The ordinance defines the following as a **major alteration**:

- **Removing 50% or more of the exterior walls above the foundation.** For purposes of determining whether 50% or more of the exterior wall has been removed, BDS will include any portion of any exterior wall above the foundation that remains, calculated in linear feet by story.

The ordinance defines the following as a **major addition**:

- **Adding more than 500 square feet of new interior space and expanding the structure’s footprint or envelope.** The new interior space does not include areas of existing space within the building envelope. To qualify as a major addition, the project must both increase the interior space and expand the footprint or envelope.

1 Major Alterations

Have I Removed 50% or More of the Exterior Walls Above the Foundation?

A. What does “removed” wall mean?

To calculate removed exterior walls, first determine the total lineal feet of the existing exterior walls above the foundation, then calculate the exterior walls that will be removed. Removed walls include the portion of each wall that will be entirely replaced.

Existing exterior walls = the total sum of linear feet of the exterior walls of each story prior to remodeling.

Removed walls are permanently removed, torn out, rebuilt in the same location, or become an interior wall as a result of the project. See section 1C for additional details.

B. Example wall calculations for a major alteration project

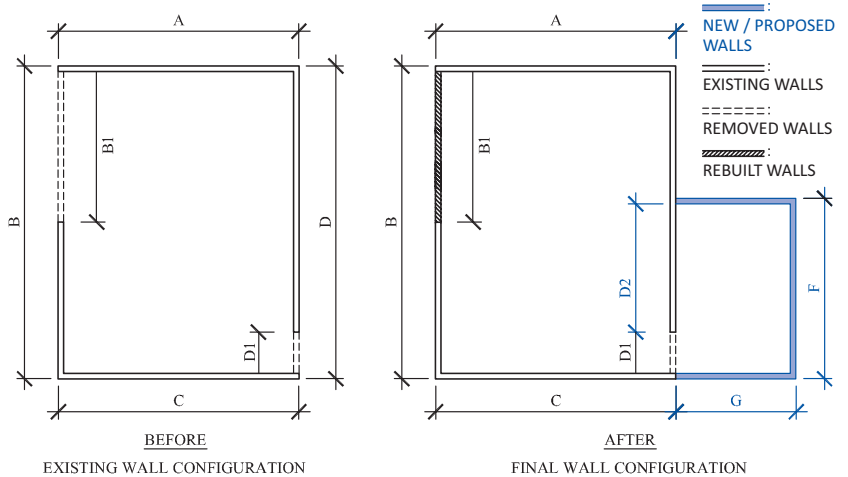
Use Figure 1 to determine if you have a major alteration based on the amount of walls in linear feet you are removing and/or rebuilding.

To determine the amount of removed exterior walls, for each story, add the following:

- Exterior walls rebuilt in same location (B1)
- Permanently removed exterior walls (D1)
- + Exterior walls converted to interior walls (D2)
- = Total removed walls (B1 + D1 + D2)

If the total removed walls in linear feet is greater than or equal to 50% of the existing wall area (A + B + C + D), then the work qualifies as a major alteration.

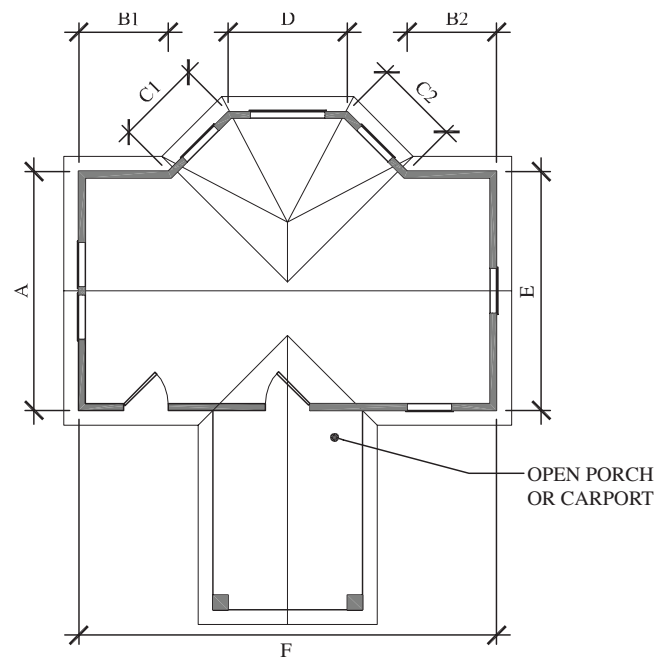
Figure 1: Example of Removed Walls



C. How is exterior wall length determined?

- Exterior wall length is measured from corner to corner on the exterior side of the wall siding. (See Figure 1.)
- Where there are jogs in the wall because of bump outs or angle changes, the length of each wall segment is added together to determine the total exterior wall length. (See Figure 2.)
- Portions of walls with a sloping top plate that are less than 7' tall are excluded from the calculation of the wall length.
- The linear length of a wall along a sloped grade will be determined at the line of the average grade plane along that wall.
- Walls that form basements (as defined in the Oregon Residential Specialty Code), are excluded from the calculations.
- Windows and doors that are moved, removed, or replaced are not considered removing the wall, so long as the rest of the wall remains. Replaced windows need to remain relatively the same dimensions as the existing windows.
- Removing siding or sheet rock does not constitute removing a wall. (See BDS Administrative Rules, Demolitions, Section 4.2.)

Figure 2: How to calculate area for exterior walls with bump-outs



Note for Figure 2: the length of the walls is calculated by adding the length of $A+B1+C1+D+C2+B2+E+F$

D. How are garages, carports and porches counted?

- A garage and a house with connected foundations will be considered as a single structure for determining wall length. (See Figure 3.)
- A garage with a foundation that is not shared with the house is not included in the calculations for the house. (See Figure 4.)
- Attached carports and covered patios that are not enclosed by walls do not count toward wall length. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 3: Garage and House Foundations Connected

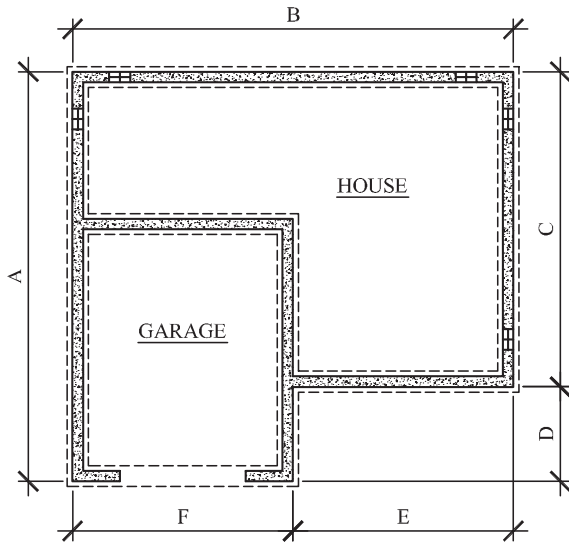
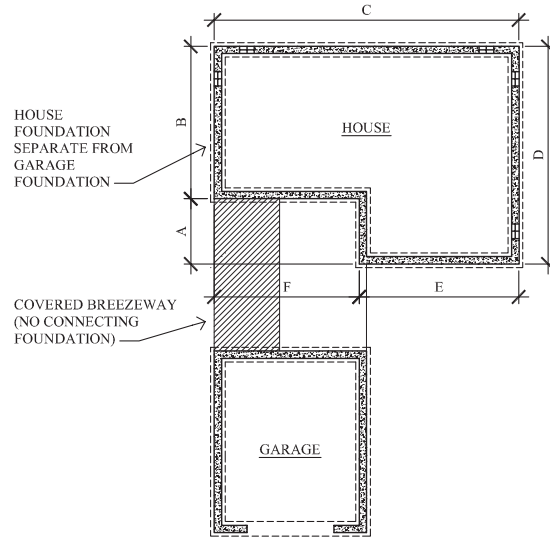


Figure 4: Garage and house foundations separate



Note for Figure 4: the garage and house foundations are separate. (The breezeway is not considered a connection for the purposes of the MRAA ordinance.) The separate garage is considered an accessory structure and is EXEMPT from the MRAA ordinance requirements.

2 Major Additions - Have I Added More than 500 Square Feet of New Interior Space and Expanded the Structure's Footprint or Envelope?

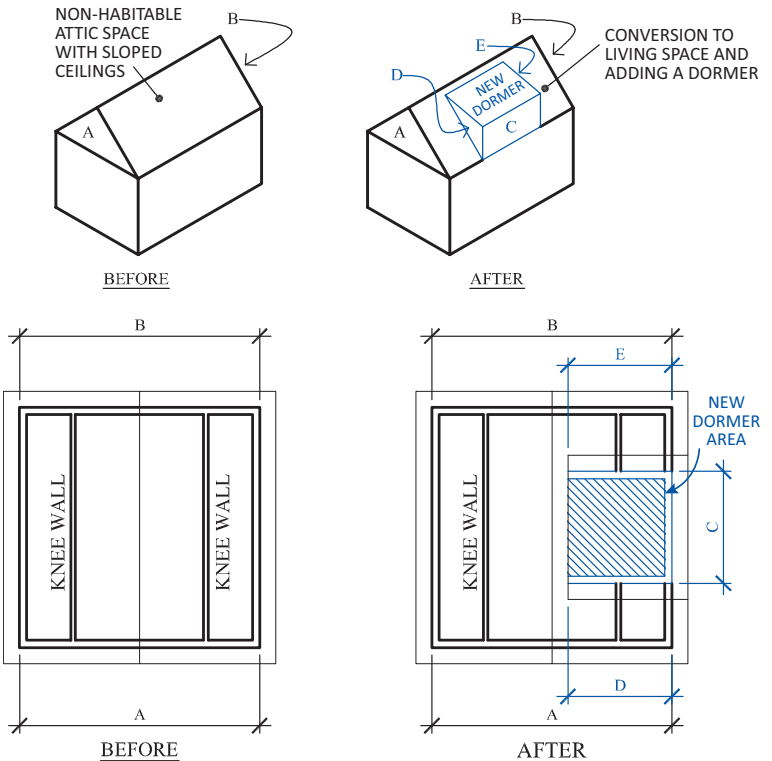
Adding more than 500 square feet of new interior space and expanding the structure's footprint or envelope qualifies the project as a major addition. The new interior space does not include areas of existing space within the building envelope.

Example 1: 200 square feet of additional floor area is being added to the 2nd floor, 250 square feet on the first floor, and the basement is being expanded by 100 square feet for a total of 550 square feet. This qualifies as a major addition.

Example 2: a 501 square foot open porch is enclosed to become an interior room. This qualifies as a major addition.

Example 3: Adding a dormer that expands the envelope qualifies as a major addition if the area under the new roof exceeds 500 square feet. See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Dormer addition to an existing top story



Note for Figure 5: Qualifies as a Major Addition if the area added ($C \times D$) is greater than 500 square feet.

Triggering a Change to Major Alteration or Addition or Demolition Status After the Permit Is Issued

- **Project changing from a minor to a major alteration or addition:** Changes to the scope of work after a permit has been issued require either a permit revision or a new permit, depending on the type of project change. Table 6 specifies the permitting requirements when the project changes to a major alteration or addition after the original permit has been issued. Though the permit type (alteration or addition) may not change, the requirements for MRAA permits will be triggered when changing from a minor alteration or addition to a major alteration or addition.

Table 1: Permitting requirements for projects that change from a minor to a major alteration or addition

Type of change	Example of change	Required Permit Change
Changes to scope of work don't change the project type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor Alteration to Major Alteration • Minor Addition to Major Addition 	Applicant submits plan changes as a revision to the existing permit (If the project is in the FIR program, check with your FIR Inspector)
Changes to scope of work do change the project type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor Alteration to Major Addition • Minor Addition to Major Alteration 	Applicant must submit a new permit application (If the project is in the FIR program, applicant must check with their FIR Inspector)

- **Project changing from a major alteration or addition to a demolition:** A change in the scope of work may shift the project from a major alteration or addition to a demolition. If your project changes from a major alteration or addition to a demolition, you'll need to stop work on the project, obtain a demolition permit, and meet the requirements for demolition projects.

Table 2: Permitting projects that change from major alteration/addition to demolition

Type of change	Required Permit Change
Project permit not issued under the FIR program	Applicant must submit a new permit application under the BDS new single family permit process
Project permit is issued under the FIR program	Project leaves the FIR program and applicant must submit a new permit application under BDS new single family permit process

- **Enforcement:** If a Building Inspector determines that modifications to the project scope have changed a project to a major alteration or addition, or to a demolition, without the required permit revision or new permit, the Inspector will issue a **Stop Work Order** for the project until the changes have been approved under the proper permit.
- **Notification is the best prevention!** Make the required notifications at least 35 days in advance of starting work if there is ANY possibility that your project could become a major alteration or addition. This will prevent your project from being delayed and your neighbors will appreciate the courtesy, even if the project doesn't change status.

Major Alteration and Addition Permit Requirements

Permit applicants for major residential alteration or addition permits will need to meet the delay and notification requirements below before their permit can be issued. The requirements are intended to notify Recognized Organizations (such as neighborhood associations) and surrounding neighbors about the project.

Delay

- **35-Day Delay:** Notifications to Recognized Organizations and neighbors must be sent 35 days prior to the date when the permit is issued. Notification can take place prior to permit application. In addition, you can have your plans reviewed and approved during that 35-day notification period. The permit will not be issued prior to the end of 35 days. Work on the project cannot start until the permit is issued.
- **No delay extension:** Unlike demolition permits, interested persons can't appeal to have the delay time extended on a major alteration/addition.

Notification

- **Notification to Recognized Organizations:** At least 35 days prior to permit issuance, applicants must send an email notice regarding the permit application to Recognized Organizations whose boundaries include the site. “Recognized Organization” means the neighborhood association and district coalition.
- **Door Hangers:** At least 35 days prior to permit issuance, the permit applicant must place door hangers on the 10 properties abutting and across the street from the site of the project.

Dust Suppression

- If heavy machinery is used in a major alteration or addition project, the dust suppression measures described in Portland City Code section 24.55.205.C.3 must be implemented during the mechanical demolition activities.

Forms and documentation required before a major residential alteration/addition permit can be issued

- **Sent e-mail copy:** A copy of the sent email and a list of the names and email addresses of all Recognized Organizations that received the notification, along with the date the notifications were emailed, certified by the owner or owner’s agent, must be submitted to BDS.
- **Door hanger copy:** The applicant must submit a copy of the door hanger and a list of addresses of all properties that received the notification along with the date the notifications were posted, certified by the owner or owner’s agent.
Note: The Door Hanger and Neighborhood Notice Certification are available online at the BDS webpage for Major Residential Alteration and Additions - Overview and Criteria (www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/67058). Copies of these forms can also be obtained from the Development Services Center at 1900 SW 4th Ave. Call 503-823-7310 for hours or visit www.portlandoregon.gov/bds.

Asbestos and Lead-Based Paint in Remodel Projects

Please note that certain State and federal regulations apply to asbestos and lead-based paint in residential remodel projects. The Toxic Substances Control Act and 40 CFR 745 regulate lead-based paint for residential property renovations, repairs and painting projects that disturb lead-based paint in pre-1978 homes and requires that any such work be performed by a Certified Renovator working for a Certified Firm and that work practice standards be implemented to prevent lead contamination. OAR 340-248 governs asbestos abatement, handling, and disposal requirements in residential projects, including remodels. Asbestos-containing waste must be disposed of in accordance with these laws and regulations. In addition, asbestos and lead based paint are toxic substances and potential airborne contaminants that need to be properly contained to protect the safety of the workers on your job site. As such, OSHA has additional, and often more strict, regulations governing safety for employees working with asbestos and lead-based paint on residential remodel projects. The State of Oregon requires that, if your home has lead-based paint or asbestos, it must be remediated for the safety of your workers on site and the surrounding neighbors. Please familiarize yourself with the requirements cited above.

If you have questions regarding asbestos requirements for surveying, removal or disposal, please contact the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) at: (503) 229-5982 or email at: deqnwrasbestos@deq.state.or.us.

If you have questions regarding lead-based paint requirements for renovation, repair or painting projects done by a contractor, please contact the Oregon Construction Contractors Board (CCB) at: (503) 934-2229 or visit their website at: www.oregon.gov/ccb.

If you have questions regarding lead-based paint requirements for renovation, repair or painting projects not done by a contractor (e.g., a homeowner, property owner doing your own work, rental agency, etc.), please contact the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) at: (971) 673-0440 or visit their website at: <http://public.health.oregon.gov>.

For worker safety issues regarding either asbestos or lead-based paint, please contact OSHA at: (503) 229-5910 or visit their website at: www.osha.org.