A Guide to Basement Finishing Construction

September 15, 2026

Rochester Hills Building Department
1000 Rochester Hills Dr.
248-656-4615

ROCHESTER HILLS MICHIGAN

IAS ACCREDITED Building Department

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Reference Material

The following forms and handouts for a basement finishing are available at our service counter or on the Building Departments web page at www.rochesterhills.org.

- Permit applications are required only for hard copy or in person applications.
  - Building
  - Mechanical
  - Electrical
  - Plumbing
- Permit Fees Schedules
  - Building
  - Mechanical
  - Electrical
  - Plumbing
- BS&A Online Permit Application and Inspection Scheduling Tutorials
- Standard for Electronic Plan Review Submission
- Codes Currently in Effect
- Contractor Registration
- Guide to Basement Finishing Construction Inspections

Surveys

We are always striving to improve our service, please use the following forms to give us your feedback, comments and suggestions.

- Electronic Submittal Survey
- Customer Satisfaction Survey

INTRODUCTION
Basement Finishing

Finishing a basement can be a stressful process for both the homeowner and builder. As the permitting and inspection process tends to vary slightly from city to city, the Building Department has prepared this Guidebook to help all parties understand these processes when building within the City of Rochester Hills. We have included information on areas that have generated confusion or construction delays in the past.

We recognize that in order for your project to be a success, all parties involved need to work together towards the final goal; a safe, well-built finished basement. We take great pride in being part of your success story and encourage you to keep all lines of communication open from the start to the finish. If this guide does not answer your specific questions, please feel free to contact the Building Department at 248-656-4615. We want to know how we can help!

This Guidebook is only intended to be a guide and is not all inclusive of the Michigan Residential Code or requirements of City Ordinances. The information in this Guidebook is subject to change.

FROM APPLICATION TO COMPLETION

Basement Finishing

A General Guide through the Entire Process

Step 1 – The Building Permit

State law requires that a building permit be obtained for basement finish construction. The permit allows the code official to review the plans for basement finishing and perform inspections during construction to confirm that the requirements of the Michigan Residential Code are being followed. By meeting the requirements of the Michigan Residential Code, the completed project will meet minimum standards of life safety, health and welfare as established by the State of Michigan.

Applications for the building permit are usually submitted by the builder; however, homeowners may submit a permit application for work on their property. Any contractors hired by the homeowner for a contract price of $600 or more shall be licensed in accordance with State of Michigan Residential Builder Laws.

When the building permit application is submitted, it will be reviewed to confirm compliance with the Michigan Residential Code.

Submitting a complete set of documents containing all the necessary information will expedite the plan review process. Prior to applying for a building permit the applicants should prepare the following documents. These documents shall be prepared using the guidelines set forth in the Building Department's Standard for Electronic Plan Review Submission.

1. **Construction Drawings** with a floor plan, elevations and details. Refer to Construction Drawing Requirements section and sample drawing of this guide for additional information.

   * Forms are available online at www.rochesterhills.org or at the Building Department counter.

Registration of Builders License

Prior to applying for a building permit residential builders shall register with the City of Rochester Hills Building Department.

1. Builders can submit their registration form in person or email. A completed Contractor Registration Form may be emailed to the Customer Service staff at Building@rochesterhills.org. Include "Contractor Registration" on the subject line.
   a. The registration fee can be paid in person or with the permit application fee.
2. When registering the builder shall supply:
   a. A completed Contractor Registration Form with an original signature by the license holder.
   b. The original or a copy of the Builder's License.
   c. A copy of the license holder's driver's license, if not presented in person.
3. Builders who are still actively working in the City are required to renew their registration with the City when the builder's license is renewed.

   A Contractor Registration form is available online at www.rochesterhills.org or at the Building Department Service counter.

Applying for the Building Permit

The Building Department is now accepting applications for all permits online at www.rochesterhills.org.

The BS&A Online Permit Application Tutorial is available to help with the process.

1. Plans and Approved Process
    a. The permit application documents are reviewed in the order they are received. When the Building Department's work load allows, basement finish permit documents will be reviewed and processed within 5 working days.
        i. If the Plan Examiner determines that due to the complexity of the project, a more in-depth review is required, the applicant will be notified that their project cannot be reviewed within the 5 working day period.
    b. Documents that contain all the necessary information and details will help speed up the review process.
    c. The construction documents are reviewed for compliance to the Michigan Residential Code.
    d. The applicant will be notified by email if the information provided does not meet the Michigan Residential Code requirements or if any other information is required.
    e. If needed he applicant then resubmits corrected documents for review.

2. Fees

    Fees are due at various stages of the permitting process.
    a. The application and base plan review fees shall be paid before the permit application will be fully processed and the review process begins.
    b. Final plan review and permit fees will be determined during the plan review process and shall be paid prior to issuance of the building permit.
    c. Applicants may pay in person at the City Hall or online by following the link in the email they receive to the online payment portal. Fees can be paid online by credit card or eCheck.

    Forms and fee schedules are available at the Building Department service counter or online at www.rochesterhills.org.

3. Permit Ready
    a. The permit applicant will receive an email when the building permit is ready, with a link to the online payment portal.
    b. Building permit fees are due prior of the issuance of the building permit. Permit fees can be paid in person or online.
    c. Once all fees are paid the applicant will receive an email with the building permit.
    d. The building permit shall be secured within 6 months of the application date or the application may be canceled.
    e. Issued permits that have no activity for more than 6 months may be canceled. A new permit may be required to finish the project.

4. Revisions
    a. Revisions to the plans for the basement finishing after issuance of the building permit will require re-submittal of revised plans, approval from the Building Department, and the payment of any additional review and permit fees.

5. Trade Permits – Plumbing, Mechanical & Electrical
    a. These types of permits are required and can be applied for and obtained after the building permit has been issued.
    b. All items to be installed shall be listed on the appropriate permits.
    c. Items not listed can be added to the appropriate permits prior to the final inspection.
    d. A final approval cannot be issued until all fees have been paid.

    Forms and fee schedules are available at the Building Department service counter or online at www.rochesterhills.org

Step 2 – Construction

When the building permit has been obtained, construction may begin. All basement finishing construction shall be inspected for conformance to the approved plans and the Michigan Residential Code. For a complete explanation of inspections please review the Guide to Basement Finish Inspections available online at www.rochesterhills.org.

1. Inspection Request and Results

    All request for inspections are to be scheduled online through BS&A Online using the account information that was established when applying for the permit.

    Inspections that have been requested and verified before 3:00 p.m. will be scheduled for the next business day between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The Inspection may be done earlier or later in the day depending on the Inspector's work load. Inspections may be available outside normal business hours by special arrangement. Additional fees for any after-hours inspection will need to be paid in advance.

    Please make sure your project is ready for inspection when scheduled. Requests to cancel an inspection should be made by calling the Building Department at 248-656-4615 prior to 9:00 a.m. on the day of the requested inspection. If an Inspector arrives at the project and it is not ready for inspection, an inspection will not be performed and a re-inspection fee may be charged.

    The following items shall be completed, in place, or available at the time of each inspection:
    - All construction materials and debris are contained on the property.
    - There must be safe access to the job site and throughout the area to be inspected.
    - Approved plans are on site and available.

    Once an inspection has been performed the permit holder will receive an email stating either the inspection was approved or not approved with a list of items that require correction. A re-inspection fee will be charged for any items not corrected at the time of the second inspection. Inspections shall be approved before proceeding with the next phase of construction. If there are any questions regarding the inspection you can call the Building Department between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. or 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. and ask to speak with the Inspector who performed the inspection.

    During construction the basement finishing should be inspected for any of the following that apply.
    - Rough Plumbing
    - Rough Mechanical
    - Rough Electrical
    - Rough Building

- Insulation

Step 3 - Closeout

Prior to the basement finishing construction being completed and final approval can be given, the final inspections shall be completed and any corrections need to be completed for any of the following that apply.

- Final Plumbing
- Final Mechanical
- Final Electrical
- Final Building

CONSTRUCTION DRAWING REQUIREMENTS

Basement Finishing

A set of construction drawings is required for basement finish and shall be submitted with the permit application. To aid in the review process the documents should be prepared utilizing the Standards for Electronic Plan Review Submission guide available online at www.rochesterhills.org. Please see refer to the Sample Plans in the Appendix.

The construction drawings shall meet the following requirements:

1. General
    a. Drawing shall be in a scale of not less than 1/8" = 1'-0".

The information below is provided in a "user-friendly" format as a general guide to help you apply the standard building code requirements to your project. It covers the most common types of projects. The actual building code language may contain additional requirements that may apply if your project is beyond the scope of this Guidebook.

Your basement finish will be reviewed and inspected in accordance with the requirements of the State of Michigan Residential Code. Refer to the example drawing in the Appendix.

Documents should include the following:

1. Floor Plan
    a. Rooms and spaces, and use of all rooms, all fully dimensioned.
    b. Draftstopping (to be installed in the floor/ceiling assembly so that the area does not exceed 1,000 sq. ft. and should be divided into approximate equal areas.)

2. Wall (Cross) Section
    a. Type of Framing and Wall Finish (if wood, a treated wood bottom plate is required.)
    b. Ceiling type and height (7'-0" minimum.)
        i. A gas pressure test will be required for existing gas piping if concealed by drywall.

3. Fire Blocking
    a. Required at all basement perimeter wall top plates and extend to basement foundation wall **and** 10 feet on center maximum horizontally back to basement perimeter wall.

4. Vapor Retarder
    a. Latex or enamel paint vapor retarder (Class III) can be installed on the interior side of gypsum board at framed walls. Use un-faced insulation in wall cavities, that cover below grade concrete or masonry walls.

5. Emergency Egress Window
    a. An emergency egress window is required in each sleeping area that is being added as part of the basement finishing.
    b. The sill height cannot exceed 44" above the finished floor.
    c. The minimum clear opening size shall be 5.7 sq. ft. clear.
    d. The minimum clear window openings shall be a height of 24" and width of 20".
    e. Egress windows under decks and porches shall have a path no less than 36" clear to a yard or court.
    f. Egress windows wells (if required) shall be a minimum 9 sq. ft. in area. The minimum horizontal projection and width shall be 36". The emergency egress leading to the

window well must be able to fully open. Window wells deeper than 44" shall have permanent ladders or steps.

6. Smoke Alarms
    a. Smoke alarms shall be installed in each sleeping room and outside of each separate sleeping area in the vicinity of the bedroom(s) (if applicable). If no sleeping areas exist, smoke alarms are required within the dwelling area of the basement. **Please be advised, a Basement Finish project will require the updating of smoke alarms that comply with regulations in the Michigan Residential Code throughout your residence.**

7. Carbon Monoxide Alarms
    a. Carbon monoxide alarms shall be installed outside of each separate sleeping area in the vicinity of bedroom(s) (if applicable).

Appendix

PHONE DIRECTORY
CITY OF ROCHESTER HILLS

Common City of Rochester Hills telephone numbers to refer to as needed during the review, permitting, and building processes.

Office Hours: Monday – Friday (except holidays) 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Building Department Inspector Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 pm – 4:30 pm.

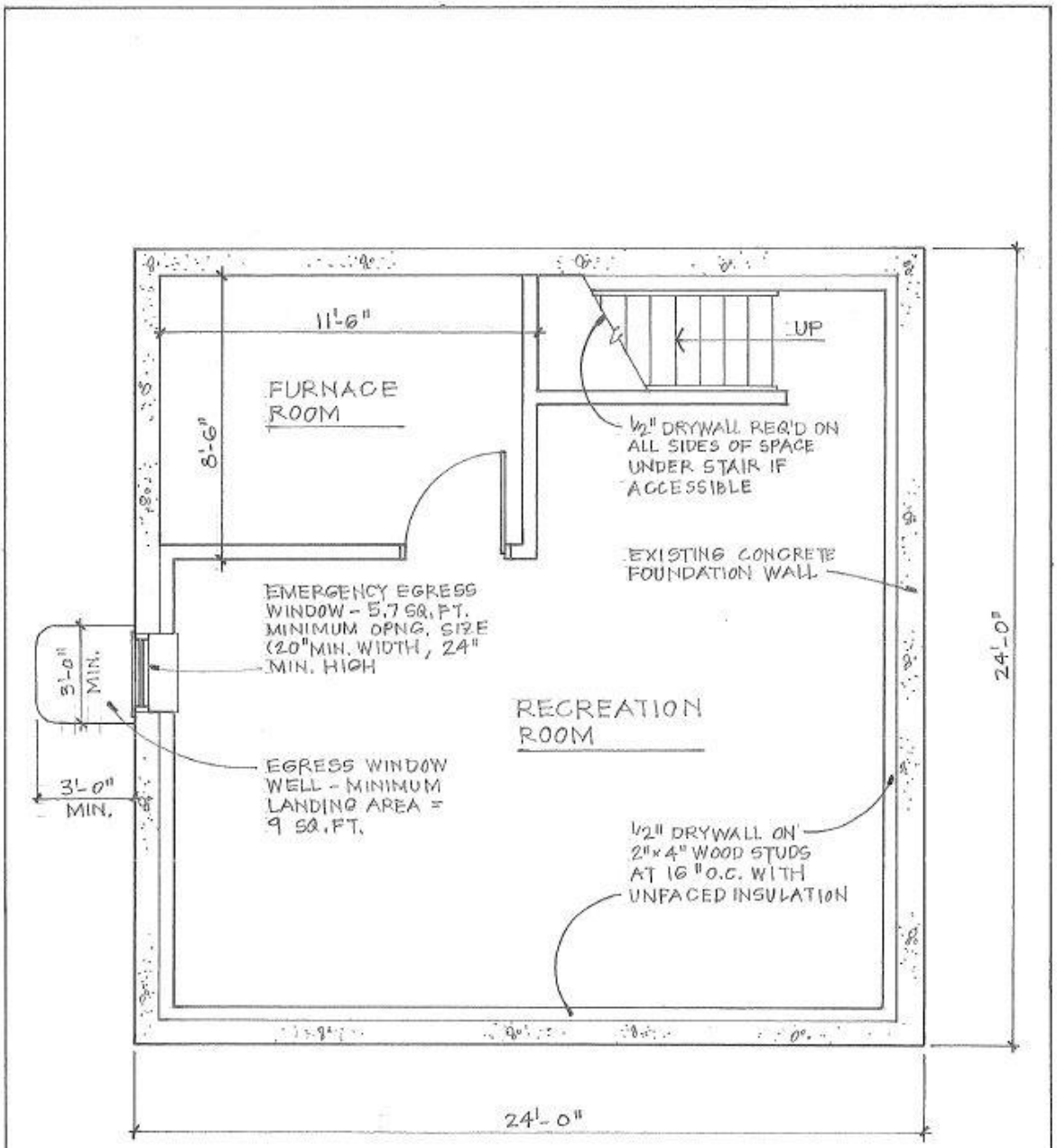
CITY DEPARTMENT:

	PHONE	FAX
Accounting	(248) 656-4632	(248) 608-8178
Assessing	(248) 656-4605	(248) 841-2585
Building	(248) 656-4615	(248) 656-4623
Inspection Request Line	(248) 656-4619	
City Clerk	(248) 656-4630	(248) 656-4744
Engineering	(248) 656-4640	(248) 656-4758
Facilities	(248) 656-4658	(248) 656-4670
Fire Prevention	(248) 656-4717	(248) 656-4726
Mayor	(248) 656-4664	(248) 656-4603
Parks, Forestry Division	(248) 656-4673	(248) 841-2576
Planning	(248) 656-4660	(248) 841-2576
Public Service	(248) 656-4685	(248) 656-4758
Water/Sewer Billing	(248) 656-4688	(248) 608-8178

City Website: www.rochesterhills.org

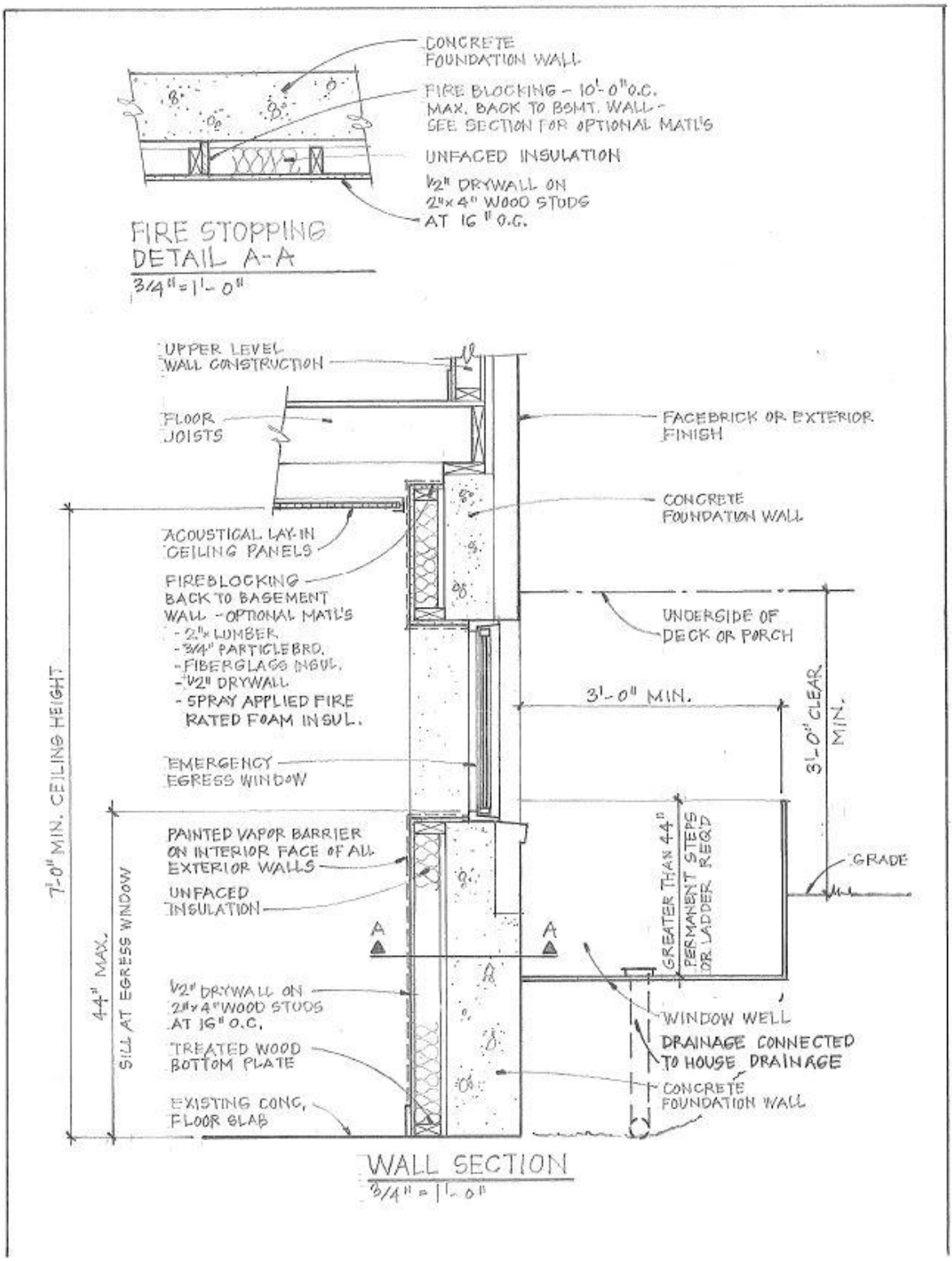
OUTSIDE AGENCIES, PERMITTING AGENCIES:

AT&T (telephone)	1-800-244-4444
Cable:	
Comcast Cablevision	1-800-266-2278
Wide Open West	1-800-848-2278
Consumers Energy	1-800-477-5050
DTE Energy	1-800-477-4747
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality	1-800-662-9278
Michigan Department of Transportation	(248) 483-5100
Michigan Department of Natural Resources	(734) 953-0241
MISS DIG	1-800-482-7171
Oakland County Customer Service	(248) 858-0720
Oakland County Water Resource Commissioner	(248) 858-1105
Oakland County Health Department	(248) 858-1280
Road Commission for Oakland County	(248) 858-4804



BASEMENT PLAN

1/4" = 1'-0"


CONCRETE FOUNDATION WALL
FIRE BLOCKING - 10'-0" O.C. MAX. BACK TO BSMT. WALL - SEE SECTION FOR OPTIONAL MATL'S
UNFACED INSULATION
½" DRYWALL ON 2"x4" WOOD STUDS AT 16" O.C.
FIRE STOPPING DETAIL A-A
3/4" = 1'-0"
UPPER LEVEL WALL CONSTRUCTION
FLOOR JOISTS
FACEBRICK OR EXTERIOR FINISH
CONCRETE FOUNDATION WALL
ACOUSTICAL LAY-IN CEILING PANELS
FIREBLOCKING BACK TO BASEMENT WALL - OPTIONAL MATL'S
- 2"x LUMBER
- 3/4" PARTICLEBRD.
- FIBERGLASS INSUL.
- ½" DRYWALL
- SPRAY APPLIED FIRE RATED FOAM INSUL.
UNDERSIDE OF DECK OR PORCH
3'-0" MIN.
3'-0" CLEAR MIN.
EMERGENCY EGRESS WINDOW
7'-0" MIN. CEILING HEIGHT
PAINTED VAPOR BARRIER ON INTERIOR FACE OF ALL EXTERIOR WALLS
UNFACED INSULATION
GRADE
A
A
GREATER THAN 44" PERMANENT STEPS OR LADDER REQ'D
44" MAX. SILL AT EGRESS WINDOW
½" DRYWALL ON 2"x4" WOOD STUDS AT 16" O.C.
TREATED WOOD BOTTOM PLATE
WINDOW WELL DRAINAGE CONNECTED TO HOUSE DRAINAGE
CONCRETE FOUNDATION WALL
EXISTING CONC. FLOOR SLAB
WALL SECTION
3/4" = 1'-0"