

NEW BRUNSWICK CONSTRUCTION NETWORK

Secondary Suites & ADUs

Questions about secondary suites, backyard suites, garden suites, and rental conversions in New Brunswick under New Brunswick regulations

10 Expert Answers from Construction Brain

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Can i convert the upstairs of my detached garage into a rental suite in Fredericton and what permits would i need?

Converting your garage's upper level into a rental suite in Fredericton is possible, but you'll need to navigate both zoning approval and building permits to make it legal and safe.

The City of Fredericton permits secondary suites in many residential zones under their updated zoning bylaw, but a detached garage conversion has additional requirements beyond a typical in-house suite. You'll need to contact **Fredericton Development Services at (506) 460-2020** first to confirm your property's zoning allows detached accessory dwelling units and what specific conditions apply.

Building permits will definitely be required since you're creating habitable space. The conversion must meet National Building Code 2020 standards (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB), including proper ceiling height (minimum 1.95m/6'5"), egress windows in any bedrooms, fire separation from the garage below, and adequate structural support for residential loads. Most garage floors aren't designed for furniture and occupancy loads.

The **electrical work presents a major consideration** — garages typically have minimal wiring that won't support a full dwelling unit. You'll need a licensed electrical contractor to upgrade the service, install proper circuits for kitchen/bathroom/lighting, and obtain an electrical wiring permit from NB Power (1-800-615-0522). All electrical work requires inspection by Technical Inspection Services (TIS) at 1-888-659-3222.

Plumbing is often the biggest challenge in garage conversions. Running water and sewer lines to a detached building can cost \$8,000-\$15,000+ depending on distance from your main house and depth required (remember, NB's frost line is 4+ feet deep). A licensed plumber must do this work and obtain permits from TIS.

Heating and insulation upgrades will be substantial. Most garages have minimal insulation unsuitable for year-round occupancy. With Fredericton's winters hitting -25°C regularly, you'll need proper wall and ceiling insulation plus a dedicated heating system — either electric baseboard, a mini-split heat pump, or extending your home's system with fire-rated ductwork.

For a basic garage-to-suite conversion in the Fredericton area, budget \$40,000-\$80,000+ depending on the existing structure's condition and how much plumbing/electrical work is needed. Start by calling Development Services to confirm zoning compliance — there's no point in detailed planning if your property doesn't qualify.

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Q2

What's the minimum lot size to add a garden suite in Dieppe under the current zoning bylaw?

Garden suites (secondary dwelling units) in Dieppe require a minimum lot size of 650 square metres (about 7,000 square feet) under the current zoning bylaw, though this applies specifically to detached accessory dwelling units like garden suites rather than secondary suites within the main house.

The Town of Dieppe updated their zoning regulations in recent years to accommodate secondary dwelling units as part of addressing housing needs. Beyond the lot size requirement, your garden suite must meet several other criteria: **maximum 90 square metres (970 square feet) floor area**, setbacks matching your main house requirements, and a maximum height typically around 4.5 metres. The garden suite cannot be subdivided or sold separately from the main property.

Building permit requirements are substantial since this is new construction. You'll need to contact Dieppe's Urban Planning department at (506) 877-7900 for the development permit first, then apply for your building permit. The structure must comply with the National Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB, including mandatory Tier 2 energy efficiency). This means proper foundation below the 4+ foot frost line, fire-rated separation from other structures, egress windows in bedrooms, and interconnected smoke/CO alarms.

Utility connections add complexity and cost. You'll need separate electrical service (NB Power wiring permit required at 1-800-615-0522) installed by a licensed electrician, plus plumbing connections requiring a licensed plumber and TIS permits. If you're on municipal water/sewer, connection fees can run \$3,000-\$8,000. Properties on well and septic may need system upgrades to handle the additional load.

Budget \$80,000-\$150,000+ for a basic garden suite depending on finishes and site conditions. The permit process typically takes 6-8 weeks, and construction is best scheduled May through September given New Brunswick's climate limitations.

Start by measuring your lot and confirming you meet the 650 square metre minimum, then contact Dieppe Urban Planning to discuss your specific property and confirm current zoning compliance before investing in design work.

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Q3

What are the rules for building a garden suite on my property in Moncton?

Garden suites (also called secondary dwelling units or ADUs) are permitted in most residential zones in Moncton under the city's updated zoning bylaw, but you'll need to meet specific requirements and obtain proper permits.

The City of Moncton allows secondary dwelling units in many residential zones, but the rules depend on your specific zoning designation and lot characteristics. You'll need to contact Moncton's Planning & Development department at (506) 856-4375 or info.plans@moncton.ca to confirm your property's zoning and get the current requirements, as these rules have evolved significantly in recent years.

Key requirements typically include:

- Minimum lot size (often 6,000+ square feet)
- Maximum size limits for the garden suite (usually 40-60% of the main dwelling's floor area)
- Setback requirements from property lines
- Parking provisions (typically one additional space required)
- Height restrictions (usually maximum 2.5 stories)
- Landscaping and screening requirements

Building Code and Permit Requirements

Your garden suite must comply with the National Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB, with mandatory Tier 2 energy efficiency). This means proper insulation, air sealing, egress windows in bedrooms, interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, and fire separation if attached to the main house.

You'll need a building permit from the City of Moncton before construction begins. The permit process involves submitting detailed plans showing compliance with both zoning and building code requirements. Expect permit fees of \$2,000-\$8,000+ depending on the size and complexity of your project.

Trade Permits and Inspections

All electrical work requires a licensed electrical contractor and wiring permit from NB Power (1-800-615-0522). Plumbing and gas work must be done by TIS-licensed trades with proper permits. Final inspections by NB's Technical Inspection Services (TIS) at 1-888-659-3222 are mandatory for all electrical, plumbing, and gas installations.

Realistic Costs and Timeline

Garden suites in the Moncton area typically cost \$150,000-\$350,000 depending on size, finishes, and site conditions. A basic 600-800 square foot unit with standard finishes runs \$150,000-\$220,000, while larger units with premium finishes can reach \$300,000+. Factor in site preparation, utility connections, and potential septic/well upgrades if you're in a rural area just outside city limits.

The permit approval process takes 6-12 weeks, and construction typically requires 8-12 months from groundbreaking to occupancy. Start your zoning inquiry with the city first – this determines whether your project is even feasible before you invest in architectural plans.

Next Steps

Contact Moncton Planning & Development immediately to verify your zoning compliance and get current ADU requirements. If you're in a rural area outside Moncton's boundaries, you'd work with RSC 11 (Capital Region) instead. Once you confirm zoning approval, connect with local architects familiar with Moncton's ADU requirements to develop compliant plans.

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What's the maximum size for a garden suite on a residential lot in Fredericton?

Garden suite regulations in Fredericton are governed by the city's zoning bylaw, and the maximum size depends on your specific residential zone and lot characteristics. The City of Fredericton has been updating its approach to secondary dwelling units, but specific size limits vary by zone.

Contact Fredericton's Development Services department at (506) 460-2020 to get the exact requirements for your property. They'll need to know your address to determine your zoning designation and applicable rules. Each residential zone (R1, R2, R3, etc.) has different provisions for accessory dwelling units, and factors like lot coverage, setbacks, and height restrictions all play a role in determining what's possible.

Generally speaking, most municipalities in New Brunswick limit garden suites to ensure they remain secondary to the main dwelling. Common restrictions include maximum floor areas of 40-60% of the main house size, height limits of 1.5-2 stories, and specific setback requirements from property lines. **Fredericton's rules will also specify parking requirements** — typically one additional space per garden suite.

Even if your proposed garden suite meets zoning requirements, you'll need a **building permit from the City of Fredericton** since this is new construction. The structure must comply with the National Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB, with mandatory Tier 2 energy efficiency). This means proper foundation below the 4+ foot frost line, appropriate insulation values, egress windows in bedrooms, and interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

All electrical work requires a licensed electrical contractor (TIS licence) and a wiring permit from NB Power (1-800-615-0522). Plumbing connections need a licensed plumber and TIS permit. If you're adding gas service, that requires a licensed gas fitter and TIS inspection.

The permitting process typically takes 4-6 weeks once you submit complete plans. Budget \$2,000-\$5,000 for permit fees depending on the suite's size and complexity. **Start by calling Fredericton Development Services** — they can walk you through the specific requirements for your lot and help you understand what's feasible before you invest in detailed design work.

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Q5

What sound insulation do I need between a suite and the main house in New Brunswick?

Sound insulation between a secondary suite and the main house in New Brunswick must meet National Building Code requirements, which specify a minimum Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating of 50 for separating walls and floors. This ensures reasonable privacy for both the homeowner and tenant while complying with provincial building standards.

The **NBC 2020 edition** (adopted in New Brunswick, effective May 1, 2025 for new applications) requires this STC 50 rating for all demising assemblies between dwelling units. This applies whether you're converting existing space or building new. Your local building inspector — either municipal or Regional Service Commission depending on your location — will verify compliance during the permit review and inspection process.

Wall assemblies that typically achieve STC 50 include a standard 2x4 stud wall with 5/8" drywall on both sides, batt insulation in the cavity, and staggered studs or resilient channels. For better performance, consider double-wall construction (separate 2x4 walls with a small air gap) or 2x6 framing with additional insulation. The key is breaking the direct connection between surfaces that would transmit sound vibrations.

Floor/ceiling assemblies are more challenging since they must support structural loads while blocking sound transmission. A typical approach uses 2x10 or engineered joists with 5/8" drywall ceiling below, batt insulation between joists, and resilient channels to decouple the ceiling from the structure. The subfloor above often includes additional underlayment or floating floor systems to reduce impact noise from footsteps.

Professional installation is strongly recommended for sound-rated assemblies. Gaps around electrical boxes, HVAC penetrations, or poorly sealed joints can dramatically reduce performance — even small air leaks can drop your STC rating by 10+ points. Licensed contractors understand the critical details like acoustic caulking, proper insulation installation, and maintaining continuous air barriers.

Before starting any secondary suite conversion, contact your local building permit office first. In incorporated areas like Moncton, Saint John, or Fredericton, reach out to the municipal planning department. In rural areas, contact your Regional Service Commission. They'll confirm zoning compliance and outline the specific permit requirements for your area — secondary suite rules vary significantly across New Brunswick municipalities and RSCs.

The building permit application will require detailed drawings showing your sound-rated wall and floor assemblies. Your contractor or designer should specify the exact materials and construction methods to achieve the required STC 50 rating, which the building inspector will verify during framing and drywall inspections.

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Q6

What's the approval process for a garden suite in Dieppe?

Garden suites (also called secondary dwelling units) in Dieppe require both zoning compliance and building permits through the City's Urban Planning department. The approval process involves multiple steps and can take 2-4 months depending on your property's zoning and the suite's design.

Zoning and Development Permit Requirements

First, contact Dieppe's Urban Planning department at (506) 877-7900 to confirm your property's zoning allows secondary dwelling units. Dieppe's zoning bylaw permits garden suites in most residential zones, but specific requirements vary by zone including maximum size (typically 40-60% of the main dwelling), setback requirements, and parking provisions. You'll need a development permit before applying for building permits — this ensures your proposed suite meets zoning requirements for lot coverage, building height, and separation distances.

The development permit application requires a site plan showing the proposed garden suite location, existing structures, property lines, and parking areas. Dieppe typically requires one additional parking space for the garden suite beyond what's required for the main house.

Building Permit Process

Once zoning approval is secured, you'll need a building permit from the City of Dieppe for the garden suite construction. Your application must include detailed architectural drawings showing compliance with the National

Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB, with mandatory Tier 2 energy efficiency requirements).

Code Requirements for Garden Suites

All garden suites must meet specific NBC requirements: separate entrance from the main dwelling, egress windows in all bedrooms (minimum 3.77 sq ft opening), interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms throughout both units, minimum 1.95m (6'5") ceiling height, and fire separation between units if attached (minimum 45-minute fire-rated assembly). The suite needs its own heating system or fire-rated ductwork if sharing with the main house.

Trade Permits and Inspections

Electrical work requires a wiring permit from NB Power (1-800-615-0522) and must be performed by a TIS-licensed electrician, with final inspection by Technical Inspection Services at 1-888-659-3222. Plumbing connections need a plumbing permit from TIS and installation by a licensed plumber. If you're adding gas service, a licensed gas fitter and TIS permit are mandatory.

Timeline and Costs

Development permit review typically takes 4-6 weeks, while building permit processing adds another 3-4 weeks. Total permit fees range from \$2,500-\$6,000 depending on the suite's size and complexity. Construction costs for a garden suite in Dieppe typically run \$150,000-\$280,000 for a 600-800 sq ft unit, factoring in New Brunswick's construction costs and current material prices.

Next Steps

Start by calling Dieppe Urban Planning at (506) 877-7900 to discuss your specific property and zoning requirements. They can provide the current application forms and fee schedule. Having a preliminary site plan sketch ready will help them give you more specific guidance about feasibility and requirements for your lot.

Find verified contractors experienced with garden suite construction in our New Brunswick directory to help navigate the design and permitting process.

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What are the rules for building a garden suite in Moncton?

Garden suites in Moncton are permitted as accessory dwelling units under the city's zoning bylaw, but you'll need to meet specific requirements and obtain proper permits before construction.

The City of Moncton allows secondary dwelling units (including garden suites) in most residential zones, but there are important size, setback, and design requirements. **Contact Moncton's Planning & Development department at (506) 856-4375 or info.plans@moncton.ca** to confirm your specific property's zoning and get the current requirements, as these rules have been updated in recent years.

Key Requirements You'll Likely Face

Building permits are mandatory for any garden suite construction. Moncton handles its own building inspection, so you'll apply directly to the city rather than through a Regional Service Commission. The structure must comply with the National Building Code of Canada 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications in NB), including Tier 2 energy efficiency standards for new construction.

Size and placement restrictions typically include maximum floor area (often around 40% of the main dwelling or 90 square meters), minimum setbacks from property lines (usually 1.2-3 meters depending on the side), and height limits. The garden suite usually cannot be taller than the main house and must maintain the residential character of the neighbourhood.

Essential safety requirements include separate electrical service or proper fire-rated separation if sharing electrical, independent heating system, egress windows in all bedrooms, interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms throughout both the main house and garden suite, and proper fire separation between units if they're connected.

Utility and Site Considerations

Electrical work requires permits from NB Power (1-800-615-0522) and must be completed by a TIS-licensed electrician. The final inspection comes from NB Dept. of Justice and Public Safety — Technical Inspection Services at 1-888-659-3222. Same requirements apply for any plumbing connections — licensed plumber and TIS permits required.

Parking requirements often mandate additional spaces for the garden suite, and you'll need to ensure proper site drainage since Moncton's clay soils can create foundation challenges. Consider the high water table in many Moncton areas when planning your foundation depth and basement (if applicable).

Your **next step** should be scheduling a pre-application meeting with Moncton Planning & Development to review your specific property and discuss the feasibility. They can walk you through the exact zoning requirements, required drawings, and permit timeline. Expect the full process from application to occupancy to take 3-6 months, with construction costs typically ranging \$150,000-\$300,000 depending on size and finish level in the current New Brunswick market.

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Q8

How long does it take to get approval for a secondary suite in Saint John?

Secondary suite approval timelines in Saint John typically range from 6-12 weeks, but this can extend to 4-6 months for complex projects or if you need zoning variances. The City of Saint John's Growth & Community Services department handles these applications, and processing time depends heavily on whether your property is already zoned to permit secondary suites.

Zoning is your first critical step — Saint John's zoning bylaws vary significantly by neighbourhood. Some residential zones permit secondary suites as-of-right with conditions, while others require a variance or rezoning application. Properties in older established neighbourhoods often face more restrictions than newer subdivisions. Contact Growth & Community Services at (506) 658-2835 before you start planning to confirm your property's zoning status.

The **building permit application** itself typically takes 4-6 weeks once submitted with complete drawings and documentation. However, plan review can take longer if your project involves structural changes, requires fire rating upgrades, or if the plans need revisions. Saint John requires detailed drawings showing compliance with the National Building Code 2020 edition (effective May 1, 2025 for new applications), including separate entrance access, egress windows in bedrooms, fire separation between units, and interconnected smoke/CO alarm systems.

Budget \$3,000-\$8,000 for permit fees and professional services — building permit fees vary based on construction value, plus you'll likely need architectural drawings (\$2,000-\$5,000) and potentially a structural engineer's stamp if you're modifying load-bearing elements. If zoning variance is required, add another \$1,500-\$3,000 and 6-8 additional weeks to the timeline.

Start with a pre-application consultation at City Hall — this informal meeting can identify potential issues early and streamline your formal application. Saint John's building officials are experienced with secondary suite conversions and can provide valuable guidance on code compliance strategies specific to your property type and neighbourhood.

Remember that electrical, plumbing, and gas work requires separate permits and inspections through NB's Technical Inspection Services (TIS) at 1-888-659-3222, plus electrical wiring permits from NB Power at 1-800-615-0522. These trades permits can often be obtained concurrently with your building permit to avoid delays.

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Q9

What's the process for getting a rental unit inspected in New Brunswick?

Rental unit inspections in New Brunswick fall under municipal bylaws and the Residential Tenancies Act, with specific requirements varying by municipality. Most cities have mandatory rental licensing and inspection programs, while rural areas may have limited or no inspection requirements.

Municipal Rental Licensing Programs

The City of Moncton operates the most comprehensive program - all rental properties must be licensed annually, with inspections required every three years or upon complaint. Properties are checked for fire safety, electrical systems, plumbing, structural integrity, and basic habitability standards. License fees range from \$75-\$150 per unit depending on building size. Contact Moncton's Bylaw Enforcement at (506) 856-4350 for applications.

Saint John requires rental licenses for buildings with three or more units, with periodic inspections focusing on fire safety and building code compliance. Fredericton has a rental property registration system with complaint-based inspections. Smaller municipalities like Dieppe and Riverview may have their own programs - check directly with their bylaw departments.

What Inspectors Look For

Municipal inspectors typically examine smoke and carbon monoxide detectors (must be hardwired and interconnected in newer buildings), adequate exits and egress windows, proper electrical panels and outlets, functional plumbing and heating, structural soundness, and pest control. They also verify compliance with occupancy limits and parking requirements under local zoning bylaws.

Fire Safety Inspections

Separate fire inspections may be required, especially for multi-unit buildings. These focus on fire separations between units, emergency lighting, fire extinguisher placement, and sprinkler systems where required. Contact your local fire department for specific requirements - many offer voluntary inspections even where not mandated.

Rural Areas and RSC Jurisdiction

Properties in unincorporated areas under Regional Service Commission jurisdiction typically have no mandatory rental inspection programs. However, the provincial Residential Tenancies Act still applies, giving tenants rights to safe, habitable conditions regardless of location.

Getting Started

Contact your municipality's bylaw or licensing department first to determine local requirements. If you're in a rural area, contact your RSC to confirm whether any rental property regulations apply. For complaint-based inspections, tenants can contact municipal bylaw enforcement or, in serious cases involving health hazards, the Department of Health.

Professional Guidance

Consider hiring a qualified home inspector even where not required - it protects both landlords and tenants by identifying potential issues early. Find licensed inspectors through our New Brunswick Construction Network directory who understand local rental property standards and can help ensure compliance with both municipal

bylaws and the Residential Tenancies Act.

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Can I have both a basement apartment and a garden suite on my property in NB?

Yes, you can potentially have both a basement apartment and a garden suite on your property in New Brunswick, but this depends entirely on your local zoning regulations — there's no province-wide rule that automatically allows multiple secondary dwelling units.

Zoning is the key factor since New Brunswick doesn't have blanket secondary suite permissions like some other provinces. Each municipality and Regional Service Commission (RSC) sets their own rules about how many secondary units are permitted per lot. Some areas allow only one accessory dwelling unit total, while others may permit multiple units with specific conditions.

In **Fredericton**, the updated zoning bylaw is generally more permissive about secondary suites, and you'd need to check if your specific zone allows both an accessory dwelling unit (garden suite) and a secondary suite (basement apartment) simultaneously. **Moncton and Dieppe** have varying rules depending on the residential zone — some R-zones may allow multiple units while others restrict you to one secondary unit per property.

For **Saint John**, the rules vary significantly by neighbourhood, so you'd need to verify both uses are permitted in your specific zone. If you're in a **rural area**, your RSC administers the land use plan — some rural areas have minimal restrictions while others require development permits for any secondary dwelling.

Building Code requirements apply to both units regardless of zoning approval. Your basement apartment needs separate entrance and egress, bedroom windows meeting NBC egress requirements, interconnected smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, minimum 1.95m (6'5") ceiling height, and 45-minute fire separation from the main house. The garden suite requires its own building permit, proper foundation below the 4+ foot frost line, electrical service (wiring permit from NB Power at 1-800-615-0522), and plumbing connections.

Septic capacity becomes critical with multiple units. If you're on municipal water/sewer, you'll need to verify the system can handle the additional load. On private septic, you'll likely need a system upgrade — contact TIS at 1-844-249-6533 for sewage permits, as NB Reg 2009-137 requires licensed installers and typically larger lot sizes for multiple dwelling units.

Start by contacting your municipality or RSC immediately to confirm both uses are permitted before investing in design or construction. If you're unsure whether you're in municipal or rural jurisdiction, check your property tax bill or contact your local government office. Getting zoning confirmation upfront prevents costly surprises later in the process.

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