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Conversions & Living Space

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ADUs, loft apartments, bonus rooms, and home
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22 Expert Answers from Garage IQ

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Can I convert my garage into a hair salon in Moncton NB legally?

Converting a residential garage into a commercial hair salon in Moncton involves both building code compliance and zoning approval — it's legally possible but requires permits, inspections, and potentially a zoning variance depending on your property's zoning classification.

The building code requirements for a garage-to-salon conversion are extensive because you're changing from accessory storage use to commercial occupancy. This triggers requirements for **commercial-grade electrical service** (typically 100-200 amp minimum for salon equipment), **commercial plumbing** with proper drainage for shampoo stations and chemical disposal, **enhanced ventilation systems** to handle hair product fumes and chemicals, and **accessibility compliance** including barrier-free entrance, washroom access, and maneuvering space. The concrete slab may need modification or covering to meet commercial flooring standards, and you'll need **proper insulation and vapor barriers** since the space will be heated year-round and have high humidity from washing stations.

Fire and life safety requirements are significantly more stringent for commercial use. You'll need **commercial-grade fire separation** if the salon shares walls with residential space, **emergency egress** meeting commercial building code (minimum 32-inch door width, proper hardware, exit signage), and **fire-rated assemblies** throughout. The electrical system must include **commercial lighting levels** (much brighter than residential), **GFCI protection** for all outlets near water sources, and **dedicated circuits** for high-draw equipment like hair dryers, styling tools, and ventilation fans.

The **zoning challenge** is often more complex than the building code compliance. Most residential properties in Moncton are zoned for single-family use, which typically prohibits commercial businesses. You'll need to apply to the City of Moncton for either a **zoning variance** or **home-based business permit**, depending on the scale of operation. Factors they consider include parking availability (commercial businesses typically require one space per employee plus customer parking), traffic impact on the neighborhood, signage restrictions, hours of operation, and neighbor concerns. Some residential zones allow small-scale home businesses with restrictions on square footage, number of employees, and customer visits per day.

Practical steps for Moncton specifically: First, contact the City of Moncton Planning Department to determine your property's zoning and whether a hair salon would be permitted or require a variance. Simultaneously, consult with a contractor experienced in commercial renovations to assess the building code requirements and renovation costs — expect \$25,000-\$50,000+ for a proper garage-to-salon conversion including electrical, plumbing, flooring, insulation, ventilation, and accessibility modifications. You'll also need to coordinate with **NB Power** for potential electrical service upgrades and ensure your contractor pulls all required permits for electrical, plumbing, and

building modifications.

When to hire professionals: This conversion requires coordination between multiple trades and regulatory bodies — definitely hire an experienced general contractor familiar with commercial renovations, plus licensed electricians and plumbers. The zoning application process may benefit from consultation with a planning consultant who understands Moncton's approval process and can present your case effectively to city council if a variance hearing is required.

Need help finding contractors experienced with commercial garage conversions? New Brunswick Garages can connect you with professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network who understand both the building code requirements and municipal approval process in Moncton.

Q2

What is the process for converting a garage to a daycare space in NB?

Converting a garage to a daycare space in New Brunswick is a complex project that requires significant structural, mechanical, and regulatory changes to meet both building code and provincial daycare licensing requirements. This type of conversion typically costs \$40,000-\$80,000 and involves multiple permits, inspections, and approvals beyond standard residential construction.

Building Code and Structural Requirements

The garage must be converted to meet residential occupancy standards, which means bringing the entire space up to living space requirements. The foundation and slab must be properly insulated and moisture-protected — many existing garage slabs lack vapour barriers and will need extensive moisture remediation or complete replacement. The walls require full insulation (minimum R-20 in NB), vapour barrier, and interior finishing with drywall throughout.

Ceiling height is often a limiting factor — many garages have 8-foot ceilings, but daycare spaces benefit from higher ceilings for both code compliance and practical use. If the garage has an open ceiling to the roof structure, you may be able to gain height, but this requires proper insulation of the roof assembly and potentially new electrical and HVAC routing.

Windows and natural light are mandatory for daycare use. Most garages have minimal or no windows, so you'll need to cut window openings in the exterior walls. This requires structural headers, proper flashing, and integration with the existing siding. Plan for windows on at least two walls to provide cross-ventilation and meet egress

requirements.

Fire Safety and Egress

If this is an attached garage, fire separation from the dwelling becomes more complex when converting to occupied space. The existing fire-rated assembly between garage and house may need upgrading, and you'll need to ensure proper egress routes that don't rely on passing through the main dwelling.

Emergency egress is critical for daycare spaces — you'll need at least two means of egress, with specific requirements for door widths, hardware, and accessibility. Ground-level access is strongly preferred, and any steps or level changes must meet accessibility standards.

Mechanical Systems

HVAC is a major consideration — garages typically have no heating or cooling, so you'll need to extend the existing home system or install independent heating and cooling. Daycare spaces require consistent temperature control, good air quality, and proper ventilation. This often means installing ductwork, which can be challenging in a converted garage with a concrete slab floor.

Electrical systems need complete upgrading — from basic garage electrical (a few outlets and lights) to full residential electrical with adequate circuits for lighting, outlets, HVAC, and any specialized daycare equipment. All outlets must be GFCI-protected, and you'll need dedicated circuits for heating/cooling equipment.

Plumbing is typically required for daycare use — at minimum a sink for handwashing, and potentially a bathroom depending on the age of children and provincial licensing requirements. Adding plumbing to a garage conversion is expensive because it requires breaking through the concrete slab or installing above-floor systems.

Provincial Daycare Licensing

Beyond building code compliance, operating a daycare requires provincial licensing through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This involves separate inspections, safety requirements, outdoor play space requirements, and ongoing compliance monitoring.

The licensing process includes specific requirements for floor finishes (easy to clean, non-toxic), wall finishes (washable, durable), storage for supplies and equipment, food preparation areas if meals are provided, and secure storage for cleaning supplies and medications.

Professional Requirements and Costs

This conversion requires multiple professionals — an architect or designer familiar with daycare requirements, a general contractor experienced with occupancy changes, licensed electrician, licensed plumber, and potentially

an HVAC contractor. The complexity means this is not a DIY project.

Total costs typically range from \$40,000-\$80,000 for a complete garage-to-daycare conversion, including all structural, mechanical, and finishing work. The wide range depends on the existing garage condition, size, required plumbing additions, and level of finishing. Permit fees alone can run \$2,000-\$5,000 for the multiple permits required.

Timeline is typically 3-6 months from permit application to final inspection, assuming no major complications. The provincial daycare licensing process runs parallel to construction and can add additional time before you can begin operations.

This type of conversion is significantly more complex than a standard garage-to-living-space conversion because of the commercial use requirements and provincial licensing. Many homeowners find it more practical to build a purpose-designed daycare addition rather than convert an existing garage. For help finding contractors experienced with this type of specialized conversion, the New Brunswick Construction Network can connect you with professionals familiar with both building code requirements and daycare licensing standards.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- R.e.j Construction
- Gionetterenovations
- Thirty Four Renovations

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Q3

How do I add heating and cooling to a garage conversion in Saint John NB?

Adding HVAC to a garage conversion in Saint John requires extending your home's existing system or installing a dedicated mini-split system, with proper insulation and air sealing being absolutely critical for efficiency in New Brunswick's Maritime climate.

When converting a garage to living space in Saint John, heating and cooling become essential for year-round comfort. The approach depends on your existing home's HVAC system, the conversion's size and layout, and whether you're creating a self-contained suite or extending your main living area. Saint John's coastal location

brings unique challenges — high humidity in summer, persistent winds, and temperature swings that demand a well-planned HVAC strategy.

Extending Your Existing Forced-Air System is often the most cost-effective approach if your furnace has adequate capacity. This involves running new supply and return ducts from your main system into the converted space. A typical garage conversion (400-600 square feet) requires 2-3 supply registers and at least one return air grille. The challenge in Saint John is that most garages weren't built with HVAC in mind — you'll need to create pathways for ductwork through existing framing, often requiring soffits or bulkheads to conceal the runs. Your HVAC contractor will need to perform a load calculation to ensure your existing furnace can handle the additional square footage. If your system is already at capacity, you may need a larger furnace or a supplementary heating system.

Mini-Split Heat Pumps have become increasingly popular for garage conversions in New Brunswick because they provide both heating and cooling in one system, operate efficiently in Maritime temperatures, and don't require ductwork modifications to your main house. A single-zone mini-split system suitable for a converted garage runs \$3,500-\$6,500 installed, including the outdoor condenser unit and indoor wall-mounted or ceiling cassette unit. Modern cold-climate heat pumps work effectively down to -25°C, making them suitable for Saint John's winter conditions. The outdoor unit can typically be mounted on the garage's exterior wall or on a ground-mounted pad, and only requires a small penetration through the wall for the refrigerant lines and electrical connections.

Baseboard Electric Heating is the simplest heating solution but the most expensive to operate given New Brunswick Power's electricity rates. Electric baseboard heaters cost \$150-\$400 per unit installed and provide reliable heat, but offer no cooling capability. For a garage conversion, you'd typically need 2-3 baseboard units totaling 3,000-5,000 watts. This approach works well for occasional-use spaces like workshops or hobby rooms, but becomes costly for full-time living spaces during Saint John's long heating season.

Insulation and Air Sealing Are Critical before any HVAC installation. Garage walls typically have no insulation, and the large overhead door opening creates massive air leakage. You'll need R-20 to R-24 insulation in the walls, R-32 to R-40 in the ceiling, and complete air sealing around the former garage door opening. Many conversions involve framing in the garage door opening entirely and installing a standard exterior door and windows. Without proper insulation, even the best HVAC system will struggle to maintain comfort while consuming excessive energy.

Ventilation Requirements are often overlooked but essential for converted garages. The space needs fresh air ventilation to meet building code requirements for habitable rooms — typically 15 CFM per person plus 3 CFM per square foot of floor area. This can be achieved through the main house's HRV system (if extended), a dedicated bathroom exhaust fan, or a through-wall ventilation unit. Saint John's high humidity makes mechanical ventilation particularly important to prevent moisture problems.

Electrical Considerations include upgrading the garage's electrical service to handle HVAC loads. A mini-split system requires a dedicated 240V circuit (typically 20-30 amps), while electric heating may require multiple 240V circuits. If extending forced-air heating, you may need additional circuits for motorized dampers or zone controls. All electrical work requires permits and inspection by a licensed electrician.

Permit and Code Requirements in Saint John require that converted living spaces meet residential building code standards for heating, ventilation, and temperature control. The space must be capable of maintaining 21°C (70°F) during winter design conditions. Your building permit application should include HVAC plans showing equipment sizing, ductwork layout, and ventilation strategy.

Hire a Professional For HVAC system design, load calculations, refrigerant line installation (mini-splits), gas line connections (if applicable), and electrical connections. A qualified HVAC contractor will ensure proper equipment sizing, code compliance, and optimal performance in Saint John's climate conditions. The complexity of integrating new HVAC with existing systems, combined with Maritime humidity and temperature challenges, makes professional installation essential for long-term comfort and efficiency.

Need help finding HVAC contractors experienced with garage conversions? New Brunswick Garages can connect you with professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network who understand the unique requirements of converting garages to living space in our Maritime climate.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- R.e.j Construction
- Thirty Four Renovations
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What insurance implications does a garage conversion have in New Brunswick?

Converting a garage to living space in New Brunswick can significantly impact your homeowner's insurance coverage, potentially affecting your premiums, coverage limits, and even your insurability. Most insurance companies treat garage conversions as a substantial change to your property that must be reported and may require policy adjustments.

Coverage and Premium Changes

When you convert a garage to living space, you're essentially increasing your home's square footage and potentially its replacement value. Most NB homeowner's insurance policies are based on the dwelling's square footage, construction type, and replacement cost. Adding 400-600 square feet of finished living space through a garage conversion typically increases your dwelling coverage limits by \$40,000-\$80,000, which translates to roughly \$200-\$500 more in annual premiums depending on your insurer and location.

The type of conversion matters significantly to insurers. A basic conversion with drywall, flooring, and electrical upgrades has minimal impact, while a full apartment conversion with kitchen, bathroom, and separate entrance creates additional liability exposure. If you're converting the garage into a rental unit or accessory dwelling unit (ADU), this fundamentally changes your risk profile from a single-family dwelling to a multi-unit property, which requires different coverage and often costs 15-25% more in premiums.

Permit Requirements and Insurance Validity

Here's a critical point many NB homeowners miss: **unpermitted garage conversions can void your insurance coverage entirely**. If you convert your garage without the required building permits and later file a claim related to that space — fire damage, water damage, liability claim from a tenant — your insurer may deny the claim on grounds that the conversion was not properly disclosed or legally completed. New Brunswick municipalities typically require building permits for garage conversions because they involve changes to occupancy, electrical systems, insulation, and often plumbing and HVAC.

Insurance companies in NB increasingly verify permit status when processing claims, especially for structural modifications. The cost of permits (\$200-\$800 for most garage conversions) is insignificant compared to the risk of having a \$50,000+ claim denied. Always complete the conversion with proper permits and inspections, then notify your insurance company with documentation.

Fire Safety and Liability Considerations

Garage conversions create unique fire safety challenges that insurers evaluate carefully. The original garage was designed for vehicle storage with specific ventilation, fire separation (if attached), and electrical requirements.

Converting it to living space changes the fire load, occupancy patterns, and egress requirements. If the conversion doesn't meet current building code for habitable space — proper egress windows, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, adequate insulation — insurers may view it as a higher risk.

Attached garage conversions have additional complexity because they affect the fire separation between the garage and the main dwelling. If you convert an attached garage but don't properly address the fire-rated wall and ceiling assemblies, you've potentially compromised the fire protection for your entire home. Insurance companies understand this risk and may require documentation that the conversion meets fire safety codes.

Notification Requirements and Documentation

Most NB insurance policies require you to notify your insurer of "material changes" to your property within 30-60 days. A garage conversion definitely qualifies as material change. When you call your insurance company, be prepared to provide:

- **Building permits and final inspection certificates** proving the conversion was completed legally
- **Square footage of the converted space** and details about the improvements (kitchen, bathroom, separate entrance)
- **Intended use** — family room, home office, rental unit, or separate living quarters
- **Updated property photos** showing the completed conversion

Rental and ADU Implications

If you're converting your garage into a rental unit or accessory dwelling unit, this creates significant insurance implications beyond just the physical conversion. You're moving from homeowner's insurance to landlord insurance, which covers different risks and typically costs more. Rental properties have liability exposure from tenants, potential discrimination claims, and property damage from renters.

Many standard homeowner's policies in NB specifically exclude coverage for business activities, including renting part of your home. You may need to add an endorsement for "incidental rental" or upgrade to a landlord policy. Some insurers won't cover properties with basement or garage suites at all, limiting your options and potentially increasing costs.

When to Involve Professionals

Contact your insurance agent before starting any garage conversion project, not after it's complete. They can explain exactly how the conversion will affect your coverage and premiums, and what documentation you'll need to provide. If you're planning a rental conversion, discuss landlord insurance options early in the planning process.

For complex conversions involving structural changes, plumbing, or separate entrances, consider having the work designed by a professional who understands both building code requirements and insurance implications. The cost of proper planning and permits is minimal compared to the potential insurance complications from an improperly completed conversion.

Find contractors experienced with garage conversions through the New Brunswick Construction Network — they understand both the building code requirements and insurance implications of converting garage space to living space.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- R.e.j Construction
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- Thirty Four Renovations

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Q5

What are the accessibility requirements for a garage conversion rental unit in NB?

Converting a garage to a rental unit in New Brunswick requires full compliance with accessibility standards under the National Building Code as adopted by NB, which includes barrier-free design requirements for new residential units. This is a complex conversion that goes far beyond basic garage renovation and creates legal obligations as a landlord.

Barrier-Free Design Requirements

All new residential units in NB must meet barrier-free design standards, which means your garage conversion must include accessible features from the outset. The **main entrance must have a maximum threshold of 13mm (1/2 inch)** and be at least 850mm (33.5 inches) wide. If there's a level change at the entrance, you'll need a ramp with a maximum slope of 1:20 (5%) for the first 3 metres, then 1:12 (8.3%) beyond that. The ramp must be at least 1100mm (43 inches) wide with handrails on both sides if the rise exceeds 150mm (6 inches).

Interior doorways must be minimum 810mm (32 inches) clear width when the door is open 90 degrees. Hallways and corridors require 1070mm (42 inches) minimum width. **At least one bathroom must be fully accessible** with a 1500mm (59 inch) diameter turning circle, grab bars around the toilet and in the shower/tub area, and accessible fixtures. The toilet centreline must be 460mm (18 inches) from the nearest wall, and there must be 760mm (30 inches) clear space in front of the toilet.

Kitchen accessibility requirements include at least 1070mm (42 inches) of clear floor space in front of cabinets and appliances, with a 1500mm (59 inch) diameter turning space somewhere in the kitchen. Counter heights should accommodate wheelchair users, typically 32-34 inches rather than the standard 36 inches.

Building Code Compliance for Rental Units

Fire separation and egress are critical life-safety requirements. Every bedroom must have either a door directly to the outside or a window that meets egress requirements — minimum 3.8 square feet of opening area, minimum 15 inches wide, minimum 24 inches high, and maximum sill height of 44 inches above the floor. **Smoke alarms are required in every bedroom and hallway**, interconnected and hardwired with battery backup.

Ceiling height must be minimum 7.5 feet (2.3 metres) throughout the living areas. Many garage conversions struggle with this requirement because garage slabs are often lower than house floor levels, and adding insulation to the ceiling reduces headroom further. You may need to excavate and lower the slab or raise the roof structure to achieve code-compliant ceiling heights.

The unit requires independent HVAC, electrical service, and plumbing systems. You'll need a separate electrical panel or large sub-panel, dedicated heating and cooling (heat pump systems are popular for garage conversions), and complete plumbing rough-in for kitchen and bathroom. **All mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work requires permits and inspections** by licensed trades.

Zoning and Municipal Approvals

Check your municipal zoning before starting design work — many NB municipalities restrict accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or secondary suites. Some require conditional use permits, others prohibit them entirely in certain zones. **Parking requirements often increase** when you convert a garage to living space — you may need to provide replacement parking spaces on your property.

Setback requirements may change when a structure converts from accessory use (garage) to residential use. The converted unit may need to meet more restrictive setbacks than the original garage, potentially requiring variances or making the conversion impossible on smaller lots.

Landlord-Tenant Obligations

Converting a garage creates legal obligations under the NB Residential Tenancies Act. You become subject to rent control, security deposit limits, eviction procedures, and maintenance standards. **The unit must meet minimum housing standards** including adequate heating (minimum 21°C in living areas), hot water, weatherproofing, and pest control.

Accessibility modifications may be required during tenancy if a tenant requests reasonable accommodations under human rights legislation. While you're not required to make every possible modification, you must consider reasonable requests that don't cause undue hardship.

Professional Requirements

Hire an architect or building designer experienced with accessible design to ensure your conversion meets all barrier-free requirements from the planning stage. Retrofitting accessibility features after construction is far more expensive than incorporating them initially. **A structural engineer may be required** if you're removing or modifying garage door openings, adding load-bearing walls, or if the existing foundation needs modification for accessibility ramps.

All electrical, plumbing, and HVAC work requires licensed professionals and separate permits. The complexity of creating an independent living unit typically costs \$45,000-\$75,000 for a basic one-bedroom conversion, with accessibility features adding \$8,000-\$15,000 to the total.

Need help finding professionals experienced with accessible garage conversions? New Brunswick Garages can match you with contractors familiar with barrier-free design requirements through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- R.e.j Construction
- Thirty Four Renovations
- Gionetterenovations

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Q6

Can I convert my garage into a commercial kitchen in New Brunswick?

Converting a residential garage into a commercial kitchen in New Brunswick involves significant zoning, building code, and health department requirements that go well beyond typical garage conversion projects.

This type of conversion requires professional planning and may not be permitted in residential areas.

Zoning and Municipal Approval

The first and most critical step is determining whether your property is zoned for commercial food service operations. Most residential neighborhoods in New Brunswick municipalities prohibit commercial kitchens due to zoning restrictions designed to maintain residential character and manage traffic, parking, and service delivery impacts. Even if your garage conversion meets all building and health codes, operating a commercial kitchen in a residentially-zoned area would be a zoning violation.

You'll need to contact your municipal planning department to inquire about:

- Current zoning classification of your property
- Whether a home-based business permit or variance might allow food service
- Required parking spaces for commercial operations
- Setback requirements for commercial use
- Traffic and delivery access requirements

Some NB municipalities have specific provisions for home-based food businesses, but these typically have strict limitations on scale, hours of operation, and types of food service permitted.

Building Code and Safety Requirements

Converting a garage to a commercial kitchen requires compliance with commercial building codes rather than residential standards. This involves:

Fire separation and egress: Commercial kitchens require specific fire-rated assemblies, commercial-grade fire suppression systems, and multiple egress routes. The conversion would need to meet commercial occupancy requirements under the National Building Code as adopted by New Brunswick.

Structural considerations: Commercial kitchen equipment (walk-in coolers, heavy ranges, dishwashers) creates loads that typical garage floors and electrical systems weren't designed to handle. The concrete slab may need reinforcement or replacement, and electrical service typically requires upgrading to accommodate commercial equipment loads.

HVAC and ventilation: Commercial kitchens require engineered ventilation systems with make-up air, grease extraction, and fire suppression integration. This is far more complex than residential garage ventilation and

requires professional design and installation by contractors experienced with commercial kitchen systems.

Health Department and Food Safety

New Brunswick's Department of Health regulates commercial food operations through strict facility and operational requirements:

Facility standards: Commercial kitchens must have specific flooring (typically sealed concrete or commercial-grade tile), wall finishes (smooth, non-porous surfaces), hand-washing stations, three-compartment sinks, and adequate refrigeration and storage. Residential garage conversions rarely meet these standards without extensive renovation.

Water and wastewater: Commercial food operations require adequate water pressure and flow rates, backflow prevention devices, and grease trap systems for wastewater management. Your residential water service and septic system (if applicable) may not have capacity for commercial kitchen demands.

Permits and inspections: Operating a commercial kitchen requires food establishment permits, regular health inspections, and compliance with food safety protocols that go beyond typical residential requirements.

Professional Consultation Required

This type of conversion requires coordination between architects familiar with commercial kitchen design, contractors experienced with commercial construction, and consultants who understand NB zoning and health regulations. The complexity and cost typically exceed \$50,000-\$100,000 for a proper commercial kitchen conversion, assuming zoning approval is even possible.

For guidance on commercial kitchen construction and finding qualified contractors, contact the New Brunswick Construction Network. However, your first step should be consulting with your municipal planning department and a commercial kitchen design professional to determine feasibility before investing in detailed planning or construction.

Most homeowners interested in food-based businesses find that renting commercial kitchen space or exploring cottage food operation permits (which allow certain home-based food production under specific conditions) are more practical alternatives than garage conversion to commercial kitchen use.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

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- Gionetterenovations
- Thirty Four Renovations

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Can I convert my garage into a living space in Moncton NB?

Yes, you can convert a garage into living space in Moncton, but it requires building permits, compliance with the NB Building Code, and potentially a zoning variance depending on your neighbourhood and what you plan to use the space for. A garage conversion is one of the most cost-effective ways to add living space to a Moncton home, but it involves far more than just throwing down flooring and adding drywall — the space must meet all the requirements for habitable living space under the building code.

The first step is checking with the City of Moncton's planning and building inspection department.

Moncton's zoning bylaw dictates whether your property can have the garage converted and may impose conditions. If the conversion eliminates your only enclosed parking, some residential zones require that you maintain a minimum number of off-street parking spaces — you may need to add a driveway pad or demonstrate that adequate parking exists on the lot. If you are converting the garage into a **secondary suite or apartment**, Moncton has been increasingly supportive of secondary suites and accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in recent years, but specific zone permissions, lot size minimums, and owner-occupancy requirements may apply. Your building permit application will trigger a zoning review that clarifies these requirements.

Structural and code requirements for a Moncton garage conversion are substantial. The garage floor is typically 4 to 6 inches lower than the house floor and is sloped toward the overhead door for drainage — it will need to be levelled, and a proper subfloor system installed to create a flat, insulated surface. In Moncton's climate, with **frost depth reaching 4 to 4.5 feet** and winter temperatures dropping to **-20 to -25 degrees Celsius**, the converted space must be insulated to meet the NB Building Code's energy efficiency requirements. Walls need a minimum of **R-20 insulation**, and the ceiling (if it separates the living space from an attic or unheated space above) needs **R-32 to R-50**. If the garage slab has no vapour barrier beneath it — and many older Moncton garages do not — moisture management becomes a significant concern that may require an interior vapour barrier system or a dimpled membrane beneath the new subfloor.

The overhead garage door opening must be filled in with a framed, insulated wall section that includes at least one **egress window** — the building code requires that every bedroom or sleeping area have a window large enough for emergency escape. The minimum egress window size is **3.8 square feet of openable area** with minimum dimensions of 15 inches wide and 24 inches high, and the bottom of the opening must be no more than 39 inches above the floor. This new wall section must match the house's exterior cladding and be properly flashed and sealed against Moncton's Maritime moisture.

Mechanical systems need attention. The existing HVAC system may or may not have capacity to heat and cool the additional space — a load calculation will determine this. If the conversion includes a **bathroom**, plumbing must

be brought to the space, which may involve cutting through the concrete slab for drain lines. Electrical must be upgraded to provide the required number of receptacles, lighting, and circuits for a habitable room — the existing garage wiring (typically one or two circuits) is never sufficient.

Budget for a garage conversion in Moncton: A **basic conversion** (insulation, drywall, flooring, electrical upgrades, window installation, overhead door infill, and HVAC extension) runs **\$15,000 to \$30,000**. Adding a **bathroom** pushes the cost to **\$25,000 to \$40,000**. A **full secondary suite** with kitchen, bathroom, separate entrance, and independent mechanical systems runs **\$35,000 to \$50,000 or more**. These costs reflect Moncton-area pricing, which runs approximately 10 to 15 percent below the national average.

This is not a DIY project — garage conversions involve structural, insulation, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and code compliance work that requires professional contractors. Get matched with experienced renovation contractors through New Brunswick Garages for free estimates on your Moncton garage conversion.

Looking for experienced contractors? The New Brunswick Construction Network connects homeowners with qualified professionals:

- R.e.j Construction
- Thirty Four Renovations
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Q8

What permits do I need to convert a garage into an apartment in Fredericton New Brunswick?

Converting a garage into an apartment in Fredericton requires a minimum of three permits: a building permit, an electrical permit, and a plumbing permit. Depending on the scope, you may also need a development permit (zoning approval) and a mechanical permit for HVAC work. The City of Fredericton's Development and Building Inspection Services handles all of these, and you should begin the process with a **pre-application consultation** to understand what is permissible on your specific property before investing in design drawings.

The development permit (zoning approval) is your first hurdle. Fredericton's zoning bylaw determines whether a secondary dwelling unit or apartment is permitted on your property. The city has been progressively expanding where secondary suites are allowed, reflecting provincial and municipal housing policy goals. However, your property must meet specific criteria — zone classification, lot size minimums, parking requirements, and potentially owner-occupancy conditions. If your property is in a zone where secondary suites are permitted as of right, the development permit is straightforward. If a **variance or rezoning** is required, the process takes longer and involves public notification and a hearing before the Planning Advisory Committee. Contact the City of Fredericton's planning department early — this step determines whether the project is feasible before you spend money on design and permits.

The building permit is required for the structural, insulation, fire separation, and general construction work involved in the conversion. Your permit application will require **scaled drawings** showing the proposed floor plan, wall sections, insulation details, window and door locations, egress provisions, and fire separation assemblies. If the garage is attached to the main dwelling, the **fire separation** between the apartment and the house must meet the NB Building Code's requirements — typically a **45-minute fire-resistance rating** achieved with 5/8-inch Type X drywall, fire-rated doors, and fire-stopped penetrations. The building inspector will review the plans and conduct inspections at key stages: framing, insulation, rough-in services, and final completion.

The electrical permit covers all new wiring for the apartment — and a garage-to-apartment conversion requires extensive electrical work. The apartment needs its own **electrical panel or sub-panel**, dedicated circuits for kitchen appliances (refrigerator, stove, dishwasher), bathroom GFCI circuits, bedroom arc-fault circuits, general lighting, and receptacles meeting the minimum spacing requirements of the CEC. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors must be hardwired and interconnected. If the apartment will have its own **electrical metre**, NB Power must be involved in the service connection. All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician.

The plumbing permit covers the kitchen and bathroom plumbing — drain, waste, vent (DWV) lines, water supply, and fixtures. If the garage slab does not have existing plumbing beneath it — and most do not — the concrete must be cut and trenched to install drain lines connecting to the municipal sewer or septic system. In Fredericton, connections to the **municipal sewer system** require approval, and a backwater valve is typically required to prevent sewer backup into the below-grade apartment space. A licensed plumber handles the permit, installation, and inspections.

Fredericton's climate demands proper insulation and moisture management in any garage conversion. The city's **frost depth reaches 4 to 4.5 feet**, and winter temperatures regularly hit **-25 to -30 degrees Celsius** in January and February. The converted space must meet the NB Building Code's energy efficiency requirements — **R-20 walls minimum, R-32 to R-50 ceiling** — and a proper air and vapour barrier system must be installed to prevent condensation within the wall assembly. The existing garage slab likely has no vapour barrier beneath it,

which requires a moisture management strategy for the flooring system.

Budget for a full garage-to-apartment conversion in Fredericton runs **\$35,000 to \$55,000** including all permits, structural work, insulation, drywall, flooring, kitchen, bathroom, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and finishing. Permit fees in Fredericton are based on project value — expect **\$500 to \$1,500** in total permit fees across building, electrical, and plumbing. The permit process from application to approval typically takes **2 to 6 weeks** depending on complexity and whether a zoning variance is needed.

This is a complex, multi-trade project that benefits from a **general contractor experienced in residential conversions** who can coordinate the trades, manage the permit process, and ensure code compliance at every stage. Find experienced renovation contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com.

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Q9

How much does a full garage-to-living-space conversion cost in Saint John NB?

A full garage-to-living-space conversion in Saint John typically costs between \$15,000 and \$50,000, depending on the scope of work, whether you are adding plumbing, and the current condition of the garage. A basic conversion — insulation, drywall, flooring, electrical upgrades, and a window or two — runs \$15,000 to \$30,000 for a standard two-car garage. Adding a bathroom pushes the total to \$25,000 to \$40,000, and a fully self-contained garage suite with kitchen, bathroom, separate entrance, and independent HVAC can reach \$35,000 to \$50,000 or more.

The biggest cost drivers in a Saint John garage conversion are **insulation and moisture management**. Saint John's coastal Maritime climate brings persistent humidity from the Bay of Fundy, and the city's winters regularly dip to -20 degrees Celsius with significant wind chill. Your garage walls will need a minimum of R-20 insulation, and the

ceiling should be insulated to R-32 or higher if there is an attic space above. Closed-cell spray foam at \$3.50 to \$7.00 per square foot installed is the premium choice because it provides both insulation and a vapour barrier in one application, but fibreglass batts with a properly installed 6-mil poly vapour barrier at \$1.50 to \$3.00 per square foot are a more budget-friendly option that performs well when done correctly.

The concrete slab is often the most challenging element of the conversion. Most garage slabs in Saint John were poured without a vapour barrier underneath and sit 4 to 8 inches below the main house floor level. You will likely need to address moisture coming through the slab by installing a dimpled membrane or applying a moisture-mitigating primer before laying flooring. For the floor itself, expect to spend \$3 to \$8 per square foot depending on whether you choose vinyl plank, laminate, or engineered hardwood. If the slab is uneven, self-levelling compound adds \$2 to \$4 per square foot.

Saint John has specific considerations that affect conversion costs. **If the garage is attached to the house**, the existing fire separation wall between the garage and the dwelling must be maintained or reconfigured to meet current NB Building Code requirements — this means 5/8-inch Type X fire-rated drywall on the garage side of common walls, with all penetrations properly fire-stopped. If you are converting the entire garage to living space and removing the garage function, the fire separation requirements change, but you will need to discuss this with your local building inspector. **A building permit is required** for any garage conversion in Saint John, and electrical work requires a separate electrical permit and must be done by a licensed electrician.

Practical cost breakdown for a typical Saint John two-car garage conversion (approximately 400 to 500 square feet): insulation and vapour barrier \$2,500 to \$5,000, drywall and finishing \$3,000 to \$5,000, electrical upgrades including sub-panel and additional circuits \$1,500 to \$4,000, flooring \$1,500 to \$4,000, window installation (typically two windows for light and egress) \$1,500 to \$3,000, HVAC extension or mini-split installation \$2,500 to \$5,000, and painting \$500 to \$1,500. These numbers add up to roughly \$13,000 to \$27,500 in direct costs, with contractor overhead, profit, and permit fees pushing the total to the \$15,000 to \$30,000 range for a basic conversion.

A garage conversion is not a good DIY project in its entirety — the electrical, HVAC, and structural components all require licensed professionals. However, homeowners can save \$1,000 to \$3,000 by doing their own painting, installing shelving and trim, and handling cosmetic finishing after the professionals complete the structural, mechanical, and electrical work. Get at least three quotes from local contractors and make sure each quote includes the same scope so you can compare fairly. Need help finding a professional for your Saint John garage conversion? New Brunswick Garages can match you with local contractors for free through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Does converting a garage to living space affect my property taxes in New Brunswick?

Yes, converting a garage to living space will very likely increase your property taxes in New Brunswick, because the conversion adds finished, heated square footage to your home, which increases its assessed value. Service New Brunswick (SNB) conducts property assessments that determine the taxable value of your home, and a converted garage that adds usable living area — whether it becomes a family room, bedroom, home office, or rental suite — will be reassessed as part of the dwelling's total finished area rather than as unfinished garage space.

The amount of the tax increase depends on several factors. **Property tax rates in NB are set by each municipality** and are applied to the assessed value determined by Service New Brunswick. As a general guideline, converting a two-car garage (roughly 400 to 500 square feet) from unfinished garage space to finished living space could increase your property's assessed value by \$15,000 to \$40,000, depending on the quality of the conversion and your local real estate market. If your municipal tax rate is, for example, \$1.50 per \$100 of assessed value, a \$25,000 increase in assessment would result in approximately \$375 more per year in property taxes. The exact figures vary significantly between municipalities — Moncton, Saint John, Fredericton, and smaller towns all have different tax rates.

The reassessment does not happen instantly. Service New Brunswick typically updates property assessments annually based on market data and building permit records. When you pull a building permit for your garage conversion — which is required by the NB Building Code for changes in occupancy classification — that permit record signals to the assessment office that an improvement has been made. They may reassess your property during their next review cycle, or they may conduct a site visit. Some homeowners are tempted to skip the building permit to avoid triggering a reassessment, but this is a poor strategy — unpermitted conversions create serious problems when you sell the property, can void your homeowner's insurance, and may violate municipal bylaws that carry fines.

From a financial perspective, the tax increase is almost always justified by the value gained. A well-executed garage conversion that adds 400 to 500 square feet of finished living space typically adds \$30,000 to \$60,000 or more to your property's market value, far outweighing the modest annual tax increase. The return on investment is particularly strong in NB's current housing market, where finished square footage commands a premium. If you are converting the garage to a **secondary suite or rental unit**, the rental income — even at modest NB rental rates of \$600 to \$1,200 per month — will far exceed any property tax increase.

One important distinction: **if you are simply improving your garage** — adding insulation, drywall, floor coating, better lighting, and heating to create a workshop or hobby space, but the space retains its garage function with the overhead door intact — the assessment increase will be smaller because the space is still classified as garage rather than living area. The reassessment impact is greatest when the space changes classification from garage to habitable living space.

Before starting your conversion, it is worth calling your municipal tax office and Service New Brunswick's assessment branch to understand how the conversion will affect your specific property. Ask about current tax rates and how recently converted garages in your neighbourhood have been reassessed. This information helps you budget not just for the conversion itself but for the ongoing cost of ownership. If you need help finding a contractor for your garage conversion project, New Brunswick Garages can match you for free through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q11

Can I turn my garage into a legal secondary suite in Dieppe NB?

Yes, it is possible to convert a garage into a secondary suite in Dieppe, but you must meet both the City of Dieppe's zoning requirements and the NB Building Code requirements for a self-contained dwelling unit.

Secondary suites — sometimes called in-law suites, garden suites, or accessory dwelling units — are permitted in certain residential zones in Dieppe, but the rules around where they are allowed, how large they can be, and what building standards they must meet are specific and must be verified with the City of Dieppe's planning department before you begin any work.

The first step is confirming that your property's **zoning designation** permits a secondary suite. Not all residential zones in Dieppe allow secondary suites, and those that do may have restrictions on whether the suite can be in a detached garage versus an attached garage or within the main dwelling. Contact the City of Dieppe's planning and

development office to confirm your property's zoning, whether a secondary suite is a permitted use or requires a variance, and what conditions apply. Some municipalities require that the property owner live in one of the two units — either the main house or the suite — rather than renting both.

NB Building Code Requirements for a Garage Suite

Converting a garage to a legal secondary suite triggers the full range of NB Building Code requirements for habitable space. The suite must have **adequate ceiling height** — a minimum of 2.3 metres (approximately 7 feet 6 inches) of clear height in habitable rooms. Many standard garages have 8-foot walls, which gives you just enough height after insulating and finishing the ceiling, but it is tight. If your garage ceiling is lower than this, the conversion may not be feasible without structural modifications.

The suite needs proper **egress** — at least one window in each bedroom that meets egress size requirements (minimum 0.35 square metres of openable area, with minimum dimensions of 380 mm in height and width), plus a proper entry door. **Fire separation** is critical: if the suite is in an attached garage, the fire-rated separation between the suite and the main dwelling must be maintained or upgraded. A detached garage suite has simpler fire separation requirements but must still meet minimum fire resistance ratings for its construction type.

Insulation must meet current NB energy code standards for a heated dwelling unit — walls at R-20 or higher, ceiling at R-40 or higher, and the concrete slab must be insulated or have a moisture management system. The suite needs its own **independent HVAC system** — a ductless mini-split heat pump is the most common and cost-effective choice for garage suites in NB, typically costing \$3,500 to \$6,000 installed. Electrical service must include its own circuits, GFCI protection, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, and may require a separate electrical panel. All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician with proper permits.

Plumbing for the kitchen and bathroom adds significant cost and complexity. The garage slab will need to be cut and excavated to run drain lines to the municipal sewer or your septic system. In Dieppe, connecting to the municipal water and sewer system requires permits and may involve connection fees. Septic systems, if applicable, must have capacity for the additional dwelling unit — an undersized septic system will need to be upgraded before the suite can be occupied.

The total cost for a legal secondary suite conversion from a two-car garage in Dieppe runs **\$35,000 to \$55,000** for a well-executed project with kitchen, bathroom, proper insulation, and independent HVAC. This is a significant investment, but rental income in the Dieppe-Moncton area — typically \$800 to \$1,400 per month for a self-contained suite — provides a strong return over time.

This is absolutely a project that requires professional contractors. You will need a general contractor experienced in garage conversions, a licensed electrician, a licensed plumber, and potentially an HVAC technician. A building permit is required, and inspections will occur at multiple stages. Get matched with experienced local contractors

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Q12

What NB building code requirements apply to a garage-to-bedroom conversion in Miramichi?

Converting a garage to a bedroom in Miramichi triggers a change of occupancy under the NB Building Code, which means the space must meet all residential habitable-room standards — including minimum ceiling height, egress windows, fire separation, insulation, electrical, heating, and ventilation requirements. A building permit from the City of Miramichi is mandatory, and the work will be inspected at multiple stages to confirm code compliance.

Ceiling height is one of the first requirements to verify. The NB Building Code requires a minimum clear ceiling height of **2.3 metres (approximately 7 feet 6 inches)** in habitable rooms, including bedrooms. Most standard garages have 8-foot (2.44-metre) stud walls, which leaves just enough room after adding insulation and drywall to the ceiling — but it is tight. If your garage has lower walls or if the ceiling structure reduces the clear height below 2.3 metres, you may need structural modifications or the conversion may not be feasible.

Egress is a critical life-safety requirement for bedrooms. Every bedroom must have at least one egress window that can be opened from the inside without tools or special knowledge. The minimum openable area of the egress window must be **0.35 square metres** (approximately 3.77 square feet), with no dimension less than **380 millimetres** (15 inches). This allows a person to escape and a firefighter to enter in an emergency. Most garage doors will be removed and the opening framed in with a combination of wall framing, windows, and possibly a new entry door — at least one of those windows must meet egress requirements. In Miramichi's cold climate, choose windows with a minimum **Energy Star Zone 3 rating** and install them with proper flashing and air sealing.

Fire separation requirements depend on whether the garage is attached or detached. If the garage is attached to the house, the existing 45-minute fire-rated separation between the garage and the dwelling must be addressed. If you are converting the entire garage to living space and eliminating the garage function, the fire separation wall between the former garage and the house may be reclassified — but this must be confirmed with the building inspector. If any portion of the space retains garage use (for example, keeping one bay as a garage and converting the other to a bedroom), the full fire separation must remain intact with 5/8-inch Type X drywall, fire-rated doors, and fire-stopped penetrations. A detached garage conversion has simpler fire separation considerations but must still meet the minimum fire-resistance rating for its construction type.

Insulation and heating must bring the space up to current NB energy code standards. For a bedroom conversion in Miramichi — where winters regularly reach -25 to -30 degrees Celsius and the frost season is long — walls should be insulated to a minimum of **R-20** and the ceiling to **R-32 or higher**. A proper vapour barrier (6-mil poly on the warm side of the insulation) is essential to prevent condensation within the wall and ceiling assemblies. The concrete slab floor, which was likely poured without insulation or a vapour barrier, will need a moisture management strategy — typically a dimpled membrane topped with rigid foam insulation and then a subfloor or floating floor system. Heating can be provided by extending the home's existing HVAC system (if capacity allows) or by installing a ductless mini-split heat pump, which costs \$3,500 to \$6,000 installed and provides both heating and cooling.

Electrical requirements for a bedroom include a minimum of one duplex receptacle on each wall, with receptacles spaced no more than 3.6 metres (12 feet) apart. All circuits must have proper arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) protection, which is now required for bedroom circuits under the current code. Smoke detectors must be installed inside the bedroom and in any hallway leading to it. If the garage is attached, a **carbon monoxide detector** is also required. All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician with an electrical permit — this is separate from the building permit.

Ventilation is required in all habitable rooms. The bedroom must have either operable windows providing natural ventilation or a mechanical ventilation system. Given Miramichi's cold winters, a **heat recovery ventilator (HRV)** connected to the home's ventilation system is the ideal solution, providing fresh air without significant heat loss.

This conversion requires a building permit, a licensed electrician, and a contractor experienced with NB Building Code residential requirements. Do not attempt to convert a garage to a bedroom without permits — unpermitted bedroom conversions create serious liability, insurance, and resale problems. Get matched with qualified local contractors through New Brunswick Garages, a free service of the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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How do I insulate a garage floor for conversion to a heated space in Riverview NB?

Insulating a garage floor for conversion to heated living space in Riverview requires addressing two problems simultaneously — thermal insulation to keep the floor warm, and moisture management to prevent dampness from the concrete slab. Most garage slabs in Riverview were poured without a vapour barrier underneath and without perimeter insulation, which means ground moisture wicks up through the concrete and the slab acts as a massive thermal bridge to the cold ground below. Both issues must be solved before any finished flooring can be installed.

The most common and effective approach is a **dimpled membrane and rigid foam system**. Start by thoroughly cleaning the existing concrete slab and repairing any cracks larger than 1/4 inch with hydraulic cement or polyurethane caulk. Then lay down a **dimpled polyethylene membrane** (such as Delta-FL or a similar product) directly on the concrete, dimple side down. This creates a small air gap between the concrete and whatever goes on top, allowing any moisture that comes through the slab to drain to the perimeter without contacting the insulation or flooring above. The dimpled membrane costs approximately \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot for materials.

On top of the dimpled membrane, install **rigid foam insulation board** — either extruded polystyrene (XPS, the blue or pink board) or expanded polystyrene (EPS, the white board). For Riverview's climate, where winter temperatures regularly drop to -20 degrees Celsius and below, a minimum of **2 inches of XPS (R-10)** is recommended, though 3 inches (R-15) provides noticeably warmer floors and better energy efficiency. XPS is preferred over EPS for below-grade and slab applications because it absorbs less moisture and maintains its R-value better in damp conditions. Rigid foam board costs \$1.50 to \$3.00 per square foot for materials depending on thickness.

On top of the rigid foam, you have two options for creating the finished floor surface. The first option is a plywood subfloor — lay 3/4-inch tongue-and-groove plywood directly on top of the foam, fastened with construction adhesive (not screwed through to the concrete, as this would create thermal bridges). The plywood provides a solid surface for any finished flooring — hardwood, laminate, vinyl plank, or carpet. The second option is engineered click-together subfloor panels (such as DRIcore or similar products) that combine a moisture barrier, insulation, and an OSB surface in one panel. These cost \$3.00 to \$5.00 per square foot but simplify the installation considerably and are a good DIY-friendly option.

One critical consideration in Riverview is the floor height change. Adding a dimpled membrane (1/4 inch), 2 inches of rigid foam, and 3/4-inch plywood raises the floor by approximately 3 inches. If your garage slab is already 4 to 8 inches below the main house floor level — which is typical for attached garages in Riverview — the insulated

floor system actually helps reduce the step between the garage and the house, though you may still need a transition ramp or small step. Conversely, adding 3 inches to the floor height reduces your ceiling height by the same amount, which could be a problem if your garage ceiling is already close to the 2.3-metre (7 foot 6 inch) minimum required by the NB Building Code for habitable rooms.

Perimeter insulation is equally important. The edge of the concrete slab where it meets the frost wall is a major source of heat loss and can create a cold strip around the perimeter of the room. If possible, install rigid foam insulation on the interior face of the frost wall from the top of the slab down to the footing. This is easiest during the framing stage when the walls are being insulated — the wall insulation and floor insulation should connect to create a continuous thermal envelope.

For the floor insulation itself, this is a project that many competent DIYers can handle — laying dimpled membrane, cutting and fitting rigid foam, and installing plywood subfloor are straightforward tasks that require basic tools and careful attention to detail. Budget approximately **\$4 to \$8 per square foot** for a complete floor insulation system including dimpled membrane, 2-inch XPS, and plywood subfloor, or roughly **\$1,600 to \$3,200 for a 400-square-foot two-car garage floor**. However, if your conversion involves modifying the slab height, cutting concrete for plumbing, or addressing significant moisture problems, those tasks require professional help. Find experienced contractors through New Brunswick Garages — a free matching service through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q14

Is it worth converting a garage into a home office in Quispamsis New Brunswick?

A garage-to-home-office conversion in Quispamsis is one of the most cost-effective ways to gain dedicated work space, and with remote work now a permanent reality for many professionals in the Saint John metro

area, it is an investment that adds both daily functionality and long-term property value. A well-executed home office conversion typically costs \$15,000 to \$30,000 and can add \$20,000 to \$40,000 or more to your property value, making it one of the higher-return renovation projects available.

The case for converting in Quispamsis specifically is strong for several reasons. **Quispamsis is a bedroom community** in the Kennebecasis Valley with a high proportion of professional households, many of whom commute to Saint John or work remotely. A dedicated home office separated from the main living space — which is exactly what a garage conversion provides — is a highly desirable feature in this market. Unlike carving an office out of a spare bedroom, a converted garage offers real separation from household activity, which is especially valuable for video calls, focused work, and maintaining work-life boundaries.

A basic home office conversion involves insulation, drywall, flooring, electrical upgrades, heating and cooling, lighting, and at least one window for natural light. In Quispamsis, where winter temperatures drop to -20 degrees Celsius and below, your garage walls need R-20 insulation and the ceiling should be insulated to R-32 or higher. A ductless mini-split heat pump is the ideal heating and cooling solution for a garage office — it provides efficient heat in winter and air conditioning in summer without requiring ductwork, and costs \$3,500 to \$6,000 installed. The concrete slab floor needs a moisture barrier and insulation layer topped with finished flooring — vinyl plank is the most popular choice for home offices at \$3 to \$6 per square foot installed, offering durability, moisture resistance, and a professional appearance.

Electrical planning is particularly important for a home office. Beyond the basic lighting and outlet circuits, you will want dedicated circuits for computer equipment, a dedicated internet connection (hardwired ethernet is strongly recommended for reliable video conferencing), and enough receptacles to avoid extension cords. Plan for at least two dedicated 20-amp circuits for office equipment, plus lighting on a separate circuit. If you plan to run a laser printer, space heater, or other high-draw equipment, additional circuits may be needed. All electrical work requires a licensed electrician and an electrical permit in New Brunswick.

The overhead garage door opening is typically framed in and replaced with a combination of **insulated wall framing and windows**. South-facing or east-facing windows are ideal for natural light without excessive afternoon heat gain. If you want to preserve the option of converting back to a garage in the future — which some homeowners in Quispamsis prefer for resale flexibility — you can frame the opening in a way that allows the wall to be removed and the overhead door reinstalled later, though this does add some cost to the initial conversion.

From a financial perspective, a home office conversion in Quispamsis typically costs \$15,000 to \$25,000 for a single-car garage and \$20,000 to \$30,000 for a two-car garage. Compare this to the cost of renting commercial office space in the Saint John metro area — even modest commercial space runs \$800 to \$1,500 per month, meaning a garage conversion pays for itself in 12 to 24 months of avoided rent. There are also potential **tax benefits** if you are self-employed — a portion of your home expenses may be deductible as home office expenses,

though you should consult an accountant for advice specific to your situation.

One consideration specific to Quispamsis: **if your garage is attached to the house and you are eliminating the garage function entirely**, you lose protected vehicle parking. Quispamsis receives significant snowfall, and not having a garage means scraping and warming up your vehicle every winter morning. Some homeowners convert only one bay of a two-car garage, keeping the other bay for vehicle storage — this is a practical compromise that preserves parking while gaining office space, though it does require maintaining the fire separation between the office and the remaining garage bay.

A building permit is required for this conversion in Quispamsis. The structural, electrical, and HVAC components should be handled by licensed professionals. Need help finding contractors? New Brunswick Garages can match you for free through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q15

What ceiling height is required for a garage conversion in New Brunswick?

The NB Building Code requires a minimum clear ceiling height of 2.3 metres (approximately 7 feet 6 inches) in all habitable rooms, including any space created by a garage conversion. This is the finished ceiling height — measured from the top of the finished floor to the underside of the finished ceiling — not the height of the garage walls before insulation and drywall are added. Understanding this requirement early in the planning process is essential because it determines whether your garage can be converted at all, or whether structural modifications are needed.

Most standard residential garages in New Brunswick are built with **8-foot (2.44-metre) stud walls**, which gives you a total interior height of approximately 8 feet from the slab to the underside of the ceiling joists or bottom chord of the roof trusses. After you account for insulation and drywall on the ceiling — which typically adds 1 to 6 inches

depending on the method — and any floor insulation system on the slab — which adds 2 to 4 inches — the usable clear height can drop to 7 feet 2 inches to 7 feet 6 inches. This means many standard garages just barely meet the 2.3-metre requirement, and some fall short.

Here is how the height gets consumed in a typical conversion. If you install 2x6 ceiling joists with batt insulation and 1/2-inch drywall, you lose approximately 6 inches of ceiling height. If you add a floor insulation system on the slab (dimpled membrane, 2-inch rigid foam, and 3/4-inch plywood subfloor), you lose another 3 inches from the floor side. Starting from an 8-foot garage, that leaves you with approximately 7 feet 3 inches (2.21 metres) — which is below the code minimum. This is why careful planning of the insulation strategy is critical.

To maximize ceiling height, consider these approaches. **Spray foam insulation applied directly to the underside of the roof sheathing or between ceiling joists** takes up less space than batts — 2 inches of closed-cell spray foam provides approximately R-14 and only consumes 2 inches of height plus 1/2-inch drywall, for a total loss of about 2.5 inches compared to 6 inches for a traditional batt-and-joist assembly. **For the floor**, thinner insulation systems — such as a dimpled membrane with 1-inch rigid foam and a click-together subfloor panel — reduce the floor height addition to approximately 1.5 to 2 inches instead of 3 to 4 inches.

If your garage has **less than 8-foot walls**, or if the combination of floor and ceiling insulation brings the clear height below 2.3 metres, you have limited options. **Lowering the floor** by removing the existing slab, excavating deeper, and pouring a new slab at a lower elevation is possible but expensive — typically \$8,000 to \$15,000 for a two-car garage. **Raising the roof** is structurally complex and even more expensive, often costing \$15,000 to \$30,000 or more. In some cases, neither option is cost-effective and the garage simply cannot be converted to habitable space.

There are a few height-related exceptions to note. **Bathrooms, laundry areas, and hallways** within the converted space may have slightly lower ceiling heights — the code permits 2.1 metres (approximately 6 feet 11 inches) in these non-habitable rooms. **Areas under sloped ceilings** (such as under roof rafters in a garage with a vaulted or cathedral ceiling conversion) must have the minimum 2.3-metre height over at least 50 percent of the required floor area, with no portion of the required floor area having a height less than 2.1 metres.

Before committing to a garage conversion, **measure your existing garage carefully** — from the top of the concrete slab to the lowest point of the ceiling structure (bottom of trusses, joists, or beams). If that measurement is less than 8 feet, consult with a contractor experienced in garage conversions before proceeding, as the insulation and finishing assemblies may bring you below the code minimum. A building permit is required, and the ceiling height will be verified during inspection. Find experienced local contractors through New Brunswick Garages — a free matching service through the New Brunswick Construction Network at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com.

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Can I convert my detached garage into a rental unit in Bathurst NB?

Converting a detached garage into a rental unit in Bathurst is possible, but it requires approval from the City of Bathurst's planning department, a building permit, and full compliance with the NB Building Code for a self-contained dwelling unit. This is not a simple renovation — it is a change of occupancy that transforms an accessory structure into a habitable dwelling, and the regulatory, structural, and mechanical requirements are significant.

The first and most important step is contacting the **City of Bathurst's planning and development department** to confirm that your property's zoning allows a secondary dwelling unit in a detached accessory building. Not all residential zones permit this use, and even those that do may have conditions — minimum lot size, maximum unit size (often limited to a percentage of the main dwelling's floor area or a set maximum like 80 square metres), owner occupancy requirements (you may need to live in either the main house or the suite), parking requirements (typically one additional off-street parking space per unit), and setback requirements for the existing garage. If your zoning does not permit a secondary suite, you may be able to apply for a **variance or rezoning**, but this process takes time, involves public notice, and is not guaranteed to be approved.

Assuming zoning permits the conversion, the NB Building Code requirements for a detached rental unit are substantial. The structure must meet minimum ceiling height requirements (2.3 metres in habitable rooms), have proper egress windows in all bedrooms, meet current insulation and energy efficiency standards (R-20 walls, R-40 or higher ceiling), have a complete independent heating system, and include smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and proper ventilation. The electrical system must be upgraded to a full residential panel with separate circuits for kitchen, bathroom, laundry, heating, and general use — all done by a licensed electrician with proper permits.

In Bathurst's climate, **insulation and heating are major considerations.** Bathurst is in northern New Brunswick where winters are longer and colder than the southern part of the province, with temperatures regularly reaching -25 to -30 degrees Celsius and heavy snow loads of 3.0 to 4.8 kPa. A detached garage rental unit needs serious insulation — closed-cell spray foam at 2 to 3 inches on the walls and ceiling is ideal for the air sealing and vapour barrier properties it provides, though batt insulation with proper vapour barrier is a more budget-friendly option. A **ductless mini-split heat pump** rated for cold-climate operation (down to -25 or -30 degrees Celsius) is the most practical heating and cooling solution, typically costing \$3,500 to \$6,000 installed. You will also want a backup heat source — a baseboard electric heater or small propane unit — for the coldest nights when the heat pump's efficiency drops.

Plumbing is often the most complex and expensive element of a detached garage conversion. The kitchen and bathroom require water supply and drain lines run from the main house or connected to the municipal water and sewer system independently. Trenching water and sewer lines across the yard to a detached garage — below the frost line at 4 to 5 feet deep in Bathurst — typically costs \$3,000 to \$8,000 depending on the distance and whether the lines cross any hard surfaces like driveways. The garage slab will need to be cut and excavated to install drain lines for the bathroom and kitchen. Alternatively, a **macerating pump system** (such as Saniflo) can handle bathroom waste without cutting the slab, though these systems have limitations and higher maintenance requirements.

The total cost for a detached garage-to-rental-unit conversion in Bathurst typically runs **\$40,000 to \$60,000** for a complete, code-compliant unit with kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and living area. This is a significant investment, but Bathurst's rental market — while more affordable than southern NB — still supports rents of \$600 to \$1,000 per month for a self-contained unit, providing a return on investment over several years.

This project requires multiple licensed professionals — a general contractor, electrician, plumber, and HVAC technician at minimum. A building permit is mandatory, and inspections will occur at the framing, electrical, plumbing, insulation, and final stages. Get matched with experienced local contractors through New Brunswick Garages, a free service through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q17

What plumbing is needed to add a bathroom to a garage conversion in Fredericton NB?

Adding a bathroom to a garage conversion in Fredericton requires running water supply lines (hot and cold), drain and vent lines connected to the municipal sewer system, and cutting through the existing concrete slab to install below-grade drainage — all done by a licensed plumber with proper permits. This is

one of the more complex and costly elements of a garage conversion, typically adding \$5,000 to \$12,000 to the total project cost depending on the bathroom's location relative to existing plumbing and the complexity of the drain routing.

The drain-waste-vent (DWV) system is the most challenging component. A basic three-piece bathroom (toilet, sink, and shower or tub) requires a 3-inch drain line for the toilet, a 2-inch drain line for the shower or tub, and a 1.5-inch drain line for the sink. These drains must connect to the home's main sewer line or directly to the municipal sewer system. In an attached garage, this typically means cutting a trench through the garage concrete slab — usually 12 to 18 inches deep and running from the bathroom fixture locations to the nearest connection point on the home's existing drain system. In a detached garage, the drain lines must be trenched underground from the garage to the home's sewer connection or to a separate municipal sewer tie-in, at a depth below the frost line — **4 to 5 feet in Fredericton** — which adds significant excavation cost.

The slab cutting and below-grade plumbing work is best done **before any floor insulation or finishing** is installed. A concrete cutting contractor will saw-cut the slab along the trench path, the concrete is removed, the trench is excavated, drain pipes are laid with proper slope (1/4 inch per foot for 3-inch pipe, 1/4 inch per foot for smaller pipes), and then the trench is backfilled and the concrete patched or replaced. This slab work alone typically costs \$1,500 to \$4,000 depending on the length of the trench and the complexity of the routing.

Vent pipes are equally important and often overlooked. Every drain fixture needs a vent pipe that connects to the home's vent stack or exits through the roof independently. Venting prevents siphoning of trap seals, which would allow sewer gas to enter the living space. In a garage conversion, the vent pipe typically runs up through the wall cavity and exits through the roof — which means the vent routing needs to be planned during the framing stage. An improperly vented bathroom will have slow drains, gurgling sounds, and potentially dangerous sewer gas entry.

Water supply lines are simpler but still require professional installation. Hot and cold water supply lines (typically 1/2-inch PEX tubing in modern installations) run from the home's existing water system to the bathroom fixtures. In an attached garage, these lines can often be routed through the common wall between the garage and the house. In a detached garage, the supply lines must be trenched below the frost line — again, 4 to 5 feet deep in Fredericton — and insulated to prevent freezing. **PEX tubing** is the preferred supply line material in NB because it is flexible, freeze-resistant (it can expand slightly without bursting, unlike copper), and easier to route through existing structures. A hot water supply for the bathroom can come from the home's existing water heater (if capacity allows and the distance is reasonable) or from a dedicated **point-of-use electric water heater** installed in the garage, which costs \$300 to \$800 for the unit plus installation.

An alternative to cutting the slab is a macerating toilet and pump system (such as Saniflo), which grinds waste and pumps it through small-diameter pipes to the nearest existing drain connection. These systems allow a

bathroom to be installed above the slab without cutting concrete, which significantly reduces cost and disruption — typically \$1,500 to \$3,000 for the macerating unit installed. The trade-offs are higher ongoing maintenance, noise during operation, and dependence on electricity (no flushing during power outages unless you have backup power). For a basic half-bathroom (toilet and sink), a macerating system is a practical and code-compliant option. For a full bathroom with shower, a conventional below-grade drain system is more reliable and preferred.

Budget summary for adding a bathroom to a Fredericton garage conversion: slab cutting and below-grade plumbing \$1,500 to \$4,000, fixture rough-in and supply lines \$1,500 to \$3,000, fixtures (toilet, vanity, shower or tub) \$1,000 to \$3,000, tile and finishing \$1,500 to \$3,000, ventilation fan \$200 to \$500. Total: approximately \$5,000 to \$12,000 depending on fixture quality and complexity.

All plumbing work in Fredericton requires a licensed plumber and a plumbing permit, with inspections before the slab trench is backfilled and before walls are closed. Need help finding a licensed plumber experienced with garage conversions? New Brunswick Garages can match you for free through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Q18

How do I get the garage floor level with the house floor for a conversion in Moncton?

Most garage floors in Moncton sit 4 to 8 inches below the main house floor level, and bringing the garage floor up to match the house floor is one of the most common challenges in a garage conversion. There are several approaches depending on the height difference, your budget, and whether plumbing work is also needed — ranging from building up the floor with a sleeper and subfloor system to pouring a new concrete topping slab.

The most common and cost-effective approach for height differences of **4 to 6 inches** is a **built-up sleeper floor system**. This involves laying pressure-treated 2x4 or 2x6 sleepers flat on the existing concrete slab, shimmed to

level, with rigid foam insulation fitted between the sleepers, and 3/4-inch tongue-and-groove plywood screwed to the top of the sleepers. A 2x4 laid flat provides 1.5 inches of height, and a 2x6 laid flat provides 5.5 inches — either can be combined with varying thicknesses of rigid foam insulation and plywood to reach the exact height needed to match the house floor. This system also provides floor insulation and creates a cavity for routing electrical wiring if needed. Budget approximately **\$6 to \$12 per square foot** for a complete sleeper floor system including moisture barrier, sleepers, insulation, and plywood subfloor.

Before building up the floor, **install a moisture barrier on the existing slab**. A dimpled polyethylene membrane (such as Delta-FL) laid dimple-side-down creates an air gap that allows moisture migrating through the concrete to escape without contacting the wood framing above. This is essential in Moncton's Maritime climate, where ground moisture and seasonal water table fluctuations make slab moisture an ongoing concern. Do not skip this step — without it, the pressure-treated sleepers and plywood subfloor will eventually develop mould and rot from below.

For height differences of **6 to 8 inches or more**, you have two additional options. The first is a **conventional framed floor** using 2x6 or 2x8 joists on edge, which provides both the height needed and ample space for insulation (R-20 to R-28 between the joists). This creates a floor system similar to a standard house floor and can span the entire garage without being fastened to the slab at every point, though the joists should be anchored at the perimeter. The downside is that an 8-inch framed floor on top of a 4-inch-thick slab and frost walls consumes height from below, and you must verify that the resulting ceiling height still meets the NB Building Code minimum of **2.3 metres (7 feet 6 inches)** in the finished space.

The second option for larger height differences is **pouring a new concrete topping slab** on top of the existing slab. This is practical for height differences of 2 to 4 inches — a self-levelling concrete overlay can be poured at 2 to 4 inches thick to bring the floor up. For larger pours, the existing slab must be structurally capable of supporting the additional weight, and proper bonding agents or mechanical anchors are needed to prevent the new layer from delaminating. This approach costs \$8 to \$15 per square foot and is typically done when the homeowner wants to maintain a concrete floor (for example, with a polished or epoxy-coated finish) rather than installing a wood subfloor system. If plumbing is being added for a bathroom, the slab will be cut for drains anyway — this is the ideal time to pour a new topping slab at the correct height.

The transition point between the garage floor and the house floor is critical. Even if you bring the garage floor to the same height as the house floor, the connection must be smooth and code-compliant. Remove the old garage-to-house door and threshold, and frame the opening to match the new floor heights on both sides. If a small step remains (1 inch or less), a bevelled transition strip handles it safely. Any step greater than 1 inch should be eliminated or converted to a proper ramp if the space is intended to be accessible.

One important consideration in Moncton: if your attached garage has a slab that slopes toward the overhead door for drainage (most do, with a 1 to 2 percent slope), the floor will not only be lower than the house floor but also

unlevel from front to back. The sleeper system handles this easily — sleepers are shimmed to level before the subfloor is installed. A self-levelling concrete pour also corrects this slope but requires more material at the high end.

The floor levelling work itself is within the capability of experienced DIYers — laying a moisture barrier, shimming sleepers, cutting insulation, and screwing down plywood are straightforward tasks. However, if the project involves cutting the slab for plumbing, pouring new concrete, or modifying the structural connection between the garage and the house, hire a professional. Get matched with experienced contractors through New Brunswick Garages — a free service through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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Does converting a garage reduce property value in New Brunswick real estate?

Converting a garage can either increase or decrease your property value in New Brunswick, depending on how well the conversion is executed, whether the work is permitted, and how much demand exists for garage parking in your neighbourhood. In many NB communities — particularly suburban areas of Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John where two-car garages are the norm — removing a functional garage to create living space can reduce your home's appeal to buyers who prioritize vehicle storage and winter protection.

The key factor is whether the conversion adds genuinely usable, code-compliant living space while the property retains adequate vehicle storage. A well-executed conversion of a two-car attached garage into a legal accessory dwelling unit (ADU) or in-law suite can add \$30,000 to \$60,000 in assessed value if the work is permitted, inspected, and meets NB Building Code standards for habitable space — including proper insulation, egress windows, fire separation, electrical, and HVAC. However, if the same conversion is done without permits, with substandard finishing, or in a neighbourhood where every comparable home has a two-car garage and yours now has none, the net effect on resale value can be neutral or even negative.

NB Market Considerations

New Brunswick's real estate market places significant practical value on garage space because of the province's long, harsh winters. Homeowners in NB use garages not just for parking but for protecting vehicles from **-20 to -30 degree Celsius temperatures**, storing snow blowers and winter equipment, and keeping road salt and ice off their vehicles. A home without a garage in a neighbourhood where every other home has one is a harder sell, especially in northern NB communities like Bathurst, Edmundston, and Campbellton where winters are particularly severe. Real estate agents in NB consistently report that a missing garage is one of the top objections buyers raise during showings.

That said, the NB housing market is evolving. With increasing demand for rental income and multi-generational housing, a properly converted garage suite with its own entrance, bathroom, and kitchenette can generate \$800 to \$1,200 per month in rental income in cities like Moncton and Fredericton. For homeowners planning to stay long-term, this rental income may matter more than the theoretical impact on resale value. The conversion cost of **\$25,000 to \$50,000** can pay for itself within a few years through rental revenue.

Practical tips to protect your property value during a conversion: First, always obtain building permits — unpermitted conversions must be disclosed during a sale and can derail financing and insurance. Second, consider converting only part of a two-car garage if possible, retaining one bay for vehicle storage while converting the other into a workshop, studio, or living space. Third, maintain the exterior appearance of the garage — replacing the overhead door with a wall and window rather than simply drywalling behind the existing door preserves curb

appeal. Fourth, ensure the conversion meets all NB Building Code requirements for the intended use, including **R-20 minimum wall insulation**, proper vapour barriers for NB's Maritime climate, egress windows in any sleeping area, and fire separation if the space shares a wall with the main dwelling.

Before committing to a garage conversion, consult a local real estate agent familiar with your specific neighbourhood and a professional contractor experienced with NB conversions. They can help you assess whether the conversion will add value in your market and ensure the work is done to code. If you need help finding a qualified contractor, New Brunswick Garages can match you with local professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network for a free estimate.

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Q20

What fire code requirements apply to a garage-to-studio conversion in Saint John NB?

Any garage-to-studio conversion in Saint John must meet the NB Building Code's fire separation, egress, and occupancy requirements, and you will need a building permit from the City of Saint John's building inspection department before starting any work. The fire code requirements are particularly important when converting an attached garage because the garage shares a structural wall with the main dwelling, and that wall's fire protection must be maintained or upgraded during the conversion.

The most critical fire requirement involves the **fire separation assembly between the converted space and the rest of the dwelling**. If your garage is attached to your house, the existing common wall should already have a **45-minute fire-resistance rating** — typically achieved with 5/8-inch Type X fire-rated drywall on the garage side with all joints taped and finished. During a conversion, this fire separation must be maintained. If you are converting the garage into a studio that becomes part of the main dwelling's living space (such as an art studio or home office), the fire separation requirements may change depending on whether the space retains any garage function. If one bay

remains a functioning garage while the other becomes a studio, the full fire separation must be maintained between the garage bay and the studio space.

Smoke and carbon monoxide detection is required in any converted space. The NB Building Code requires interconnected smoke alarms on every storey and in every sleeping area, plus carbon monoxide detectors where fuel-burning appliances are present or where the space previously served as an attached garage. Even after conversion, the history of the space as a garage and its proximity to vehicles makes CO detection a prudent safety measure. Hard-wired, interconnected detectors with battery backup are the standard for new construction and major renovations in Saint John.

Egress requirements are another essential fire safety consideration. If your studio will be used as a bedroom or sleeping area at any time, the NB Building Code requires at least one egress window with a minimum opening area of **0.35 square metres** (approximately 3.77 square feet) and a minimum height and width of no less than 380 millimetres. The bottom of the egress opening must be no more than 1,000 millimetres above the finished floor. Even for a non-sleeping studio, having an operable window large enough for emergency escape is a practical safety measure and typically required for habitable rooms.

Electrical requirements for the conversion also have fire safety implications. All electrical work in Saint John requires a separate electrical permit and inspection by a licensed electrician. The existing garage wiring may not meet the requirements for a habitable studio — you will likely need additional circuits, upgraded receptacles with **arc-fault circuit interrupter (AFCI) protection** for living spaces, and proper lighting. If the studio will include any heating appliance, the circuit must be dedicated and properly sized. Any electrical penetrations through the fire-rated wall assembly must be fire-stopped with approved sealants.

Heating and ventilation in the converted studio must also meet code. If you are extending the home's HVAC system into the studio, any ductwork that passes through the fire separation must have **fire dampers** installed. The studio should be insulated to at least **R-20 in the walls and R-32 or higher in the ceiling**, with a proper vapour barrier on the warm side of the insulation to prevent condensation — essential in Saint John's Maritime climate where humidity levels remain high year-round.

Hire a professional contractor experienced with garage conversions in the Saint John area for this project. The intersection of fire separation, electrical, structural, and building code requirements makes this a complex renovation that requires multiple trades working in coordination. Getting permits and inspections ensures the work is done safely and will not create problems when you sell the property. New Brunswick Garages can help you find qualified conversion contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory.

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Q21

Can I convert half my 2-car garage into a workshop and keep one bay in Rothesay NB?

Yes, converting half of a two-car garage into a dedicated workshop while keeping the other bay for vehicle storage is one of the most practical and popular garage modifications in New Brunswick, and Rothesay homeowners do this regularly. This approach gives you a functional workspace without sacrificing your ability to park a vehicle out of the weather — an important consideration given NB's long winters with temperatures regularly dropping to **-20 to -30 degrees Celsius**.

The most effective way to split a two-car garage is to build a **partition wall** down the centre, separating the workshop side from the vehicle bay. This wall should be framed with 2x4 lumber, insulated with **R-12 to R-20 batt insulation** if you plan to heat the workshop side, and finished with drywall on at least the workshop side. If your garage is attached to your home, the partition wall does not need to be fire-rated since both sides remain garage or accessory use — but the existing fire separation between the garage and the house must remain intact and undisturbed.

Whether you need a building permit in Rothesay depends on the scope of the work. Adding a simple partition wall with no electrical changes may not require a permit, but if you are adding electrical circuits, plumbing, or changing the structure in any way, the Town of Rothesay will require permits. Since a proper workshop almost always requires additional electrical — dedicated **20-amp circuits for power tools**, improved lighting, and possibly a **240V outlet for a table saw, welder, or dust collector** — you should plan on obtaining an electrical permit at minimum. All electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician and inspected.

Planning the layout carefully is essential for making a half-garage workshop functional. A standard two-car garage is typically 24 feet wide, so each half is approximately 12 feet wide. That gives you a workshop space of roughly **12 by 20 to 24 feet** (depending on garage depth), which is adequate for a solid home workshop. Place your

workbench along the back wall under good lighting, mount a **pegboard or slatwall system** on the partition wall and side wall for tool storage, and keep the floor area clear for a table saw or other large tool that needs infeed and outfeed space. Overhead storage racks above the workbench can hold materials and seasonal items without consuming floor space.

Insulation and heating deserve careful thought for your Rothesay workshop. If you want to use the workshop year-round, insulate the workshop walls, ceiling, and the partition wall with batt insulation and a vapour barrier on the warm side. A **5,000-watt 240V electric garage heater** (\$300-\$600 for the unit plus \$500-\$1,000 for installation) can keep a 12x24 insulated workshop comfortable through NB winters. If your home has natural gas, a **gas unit heater** in the \$1,500-\$3,000 installed range is more economical to operate over a full heating season. Keep the vehicle bay uninsulated and unheated — this simplifies the project and keeps costs down while giving you a warm workshop space.

Budget for a half-garage workshop conversion in the Rothesay area typically runs \$3,000 to \$10,000 depending on the level of finishing. A basic conversion with a partition wall, improved lighting, and one or two additional electrical circuits runs \$3,000 to \$5,000. A fully insulated, heated workshop with multiple dedicated circuits, LED shop lighting, dust collection hookups, and a finished floor coating runs \$7,000 to \$10,000. The vehicle bay side needs minimal work — just ensure the overhead door, opener, and lighting remain functional.

This is a project where DIY and professional work can be combined effectively. A licensed electrician should handle all wiring, and if you are unsure about framing the partition wall, a carpenter can do it in a day. But painting, installing pegboard and storage systems, building a workbench, and organizing the space are all excellent DIY projects. If you need help finding an electrician or contractor in the Rothesay area, New Brunswick Garages can match you through the New Brunswick Construction Network.

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How do NB zoning rules affect garage conversions to accessory dwelling units in Oromocto?

Zoning rules are the first and most important hurdle for any garage-to-ADU conversion in Oromocto, and you must confirm that your property's zoning designation permits an accessory dwelling unit before investing in plans or construction. The Town of Oromocto administers its own zoning bylaws, and not all residential zones allow secondary suites or accessory dwelling units — even in a detached garage. Starting construction without zoning approval can result in stop-work orders, fines, and mandatory removal of the completed work.

The key zoning considerations for a garage-to-ADU conversion in Oromocto include **permitted uses within your zone**, lot size minimums, parking requirements, and maximum lot coverage. Most NB municipalities, including Oromocto, require that the property retain a minimum number of off-street parking spaces — typically two for a single-family dwelling. If you convert your only garage into a dwelling unit, you may need to provide replacement parking through a driveway or parking pad. Some zones require one additional parking space for the ADU itself, meaning you could need three total off-street spaces. Additionally, the maximum lot coverage (the total footprint of all structures divided by the lot area) cannot exceed the limit for your zone, which is typically 35-45% in residential areas.

Building code requirements for an ADU are substantially more demanding than a simple garage conversion to a workshop or studio. A legal accessory dwelling unit must meet all NB Building Code requirements for a self-contained dwelling, including minimum room sizes, ceiling heights of at least **2.1 metres (approximately 7 feet)**, egress windows in every sleeping area, a full bathroom, a kitchen or kitchenette with proper ventilation, smoke and carbon monoxide detection, and a separate entrance. The unit must be fully insulated to NB Building Code standards — **R-20 minimum in walls, R-32 or higher in the ceiling** — with proper vapour barriers on the warm side of the insulation. In Oromocto's climate, where winter temperatures regularly reach **-25 degrees Celsius** and heating degree days exceed 4,800 annually, insufficient insulation makes the unit uncomfortable and expensive to heat.

If the ADU is being created within an attached garage, the fire separation between the new dwelling unit and the main house must meet the NB Building Code's requirements, which typically call for a **45-minute fire-resistance rating** achieved with 5/8-inch Type X fire-rated drywall. The entrance to the ADU must be separate from the main dwelling's entrance, and the unit must have its own **independent HVAC system** or a properly designed extension of the main system with fire dampers where ductwork crosses the fire separation.

Foundation and structural considerations are significant for garage-to-ADU conversions in NB. An existing garage slab was designed for vehicle loads, not habitable space. The slab may lack insulation beneath it, and the foundation walls may not extend to the full **4 to 5 foot frost depth** required in the Oromocto area. A building inspector will evaluate whether the existing foundation is adequate for the change in occupancy. If the garage has a floating slab (not tied to frost walls), it may not be acceptable for a dwelling unit without foundation upgrades — a potentially expensive requirement that can add \$10,000 to \$20,000 to the project.

The conversion cost for a full garage-to-ADU in the Oromocto area typically ranges from \$35,000 to \$60,000, depending on the existing garage's condition, the scope of foundation upgrades needed, and the level of finishing. This includes insulation, drywall, flooring, a bathroom, a kitchenette, electrical upgrades, plumbing, HVAC, and finishing. Plumbing is often the most complex element, as extending water supply and drain lines from the main house to the garage requires trenching below the frost line if the garage is detached.

Start by visiting the Town of Oromocto's planning department to discuss your specific property, zoning designation, and the requirements for an ADU in your zone. They can tell you definitively whether the conversion is permissible and what conditions apply. From there, hire a professional contractor experienced with ADU conversions who can assess the existing garage structure, coordinate the multiple trades involved, and manage the permit and inspection process. New Brunswick Garages can help you find qualified contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com.

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