

Glenmorris St | Garden Suite Proposal

Cambridge



Property Type: Existing Detached Garage on a Duplex Lot

Scope of Work: Proposed Conversion of 480 sq. ft. 1-Storey Detached Garage into a Legal Garden Suite (ADU)

Project Overview:

Located in Cambridge, this project was a unique attempt to **repurpose an existing 1-storey detached garage**—approximately 480 sq. ft.—into a fully self-contained **Garden Suite (Accessory Dwelling Unit)**. The main lot already contained a legal non-conforming duplex, which made this potential third unit a valuable opportunity to increase density and long-term cash flow.

Unlike other projects where the challenge lies in building code compliance, **this one was all about navigating zoning bylaws.**

Although the structure already existed and the building envelope was not changing, the City of Cambridge required the project to conform to **current zoning setbacks**—as the garage was being converted into a new residential use.

Scope & Strategy:

- Proposed conversion of existing detached garage into a **fully livable, code-compliant garden suite**
- Maintained the existing building footprint and height—**no exterior additions**
- Designed a **self-contained unit with kitchen, bathroom, and open living/sleeping space**
- Applied Ontario Building Code standards for new residential dwellings

- Identified and addressed zoning deficiencies related to **setbacks and lot coverage**

Challenges Solved:

- Engaged with municipal zoning staff to confirm the need for minor variances
- Assisted property owners through the **Committee of Adjustment** (CofA) process
- Owners represented themselves at the hearing, but despite efforts, the application was **denied**
- Demonstrated that **existing structure compliance does not guarantee zoning relief** under current policies

Investor Insights:

- This project highlights a **critical nuance in Ontario zoning regulations**—converting an existing structure to a dwelling triggers current zoning compliance, even if the shell remains unchanged
- While cities like **Hamilton and Toronto allow direct permit applications** in similar situations, **Cambridge required a minor variance**, creating added hurdles
- Outcome: Application denied; project is currently **on hold** until further zoning relief is obtained or project strategy is modified

Current Status:

Project is on hold following **unsuccessful minor variance approval**. This serves as a cautionary example for investors: **zoning interpretation and municipal differences matter**—even when the structure already exists.