

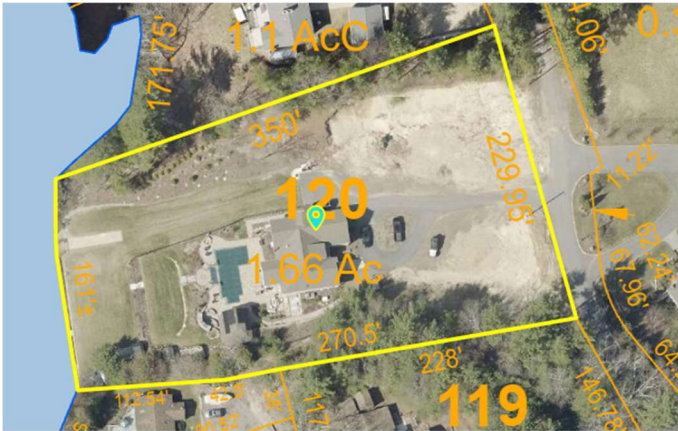


TOWN OF COVENTRY, RI
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

STAFF REPORT

Project Name:	Gormley Garage/ADU
Plan Type:	Unified Development Review (Accessory Dwelling Unit w/ associated Dimensional Variance)
Owner/Applicant:	Gregory Gormley
Address:	33 Brian Hollow Road
Plat / Lot / Zone:	AP 323 Lot 120 Zone RR-3 Lot Size 1.66
Existing Use:	Single-Family Dwelling
Proposed Use:	Single-Family Dwelling with an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) and Garage
Description:	The applicant proposes to construct a 1,288 SF, 28' x 46' one-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) as a second floor above a proposed new garage on their 1.66-acre subject parcel. Applicant seeks three dimensional variances as the ADU and garage will be placed in the front yard, will be sited within the minimum side setback, and will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirements.

I. PROJECT INFORMATION



Background and Existing Conditions

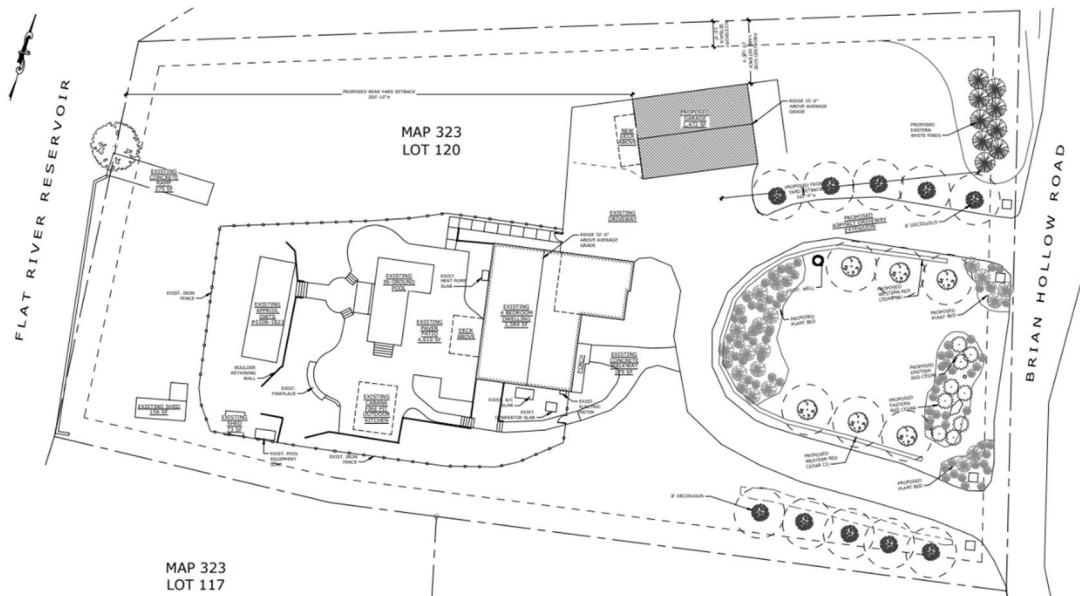
ADUs that are not allowed by-right shall utilize the Unified Development Review process and must be heard by the Planning Commission per Zoning Code § 255-920 F(2)(i). The subject lot is 1.66-acres in size and currently hosts the applicant's 2,584 SF four-bedroom single-family dwelling unit, as well as a deck, a patio, a cabana fire pit, an outdoor kitchen, an in-ground pool, two sheds, and an iron fence that circles the perimeter of the house.

The subject parcel abuts Flat River Reservoir in the rear, and a concrete ramp in the applicant's rear yard leads into the water. In addition, the rear yard is characterized by steep grade changes. The topographic conditions run from upwards of 270' in the northernmost portion of the rear yard, to below 250' in the southwestern portion. The applicant recently made grading changes in the front yard and removed the existing natural buffer.

Proposed Conditions

The applicant proposes to construct a 1,288 SF, 28' x 46' one-bedroom ADU as a second floor above a proposed 32' x 46' three-bay garage in the front yard. The ADU will consist of a living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, laundry room, home office, walk-in closet, deck, and entry. The proposed structure will be sited 102' from the property's frontage on Brian Hollow Road.

The applicant's revised site plans, submitted on December 9, 2025 (shown below), includes a landscape plan to ensure reasonable screening of views from the abutting neighbors and the public right-of-way. The proposed plantings include the following mix of vegetative types: (1) eastern white pines to the north of the driveway entrance along the property's frontage on Brian Hollow Road, (2) deciduous trees along the driveway leading to the applicant's house, (3) a combination of western red cedar, eastern red cedar, (4) smaller planting beds to the south of the driveway entrance along the parcel's frontage, and (5) deciduous trees along the property's southeastern edge.



Zoning

The applicant is seeking three (3) categories of Dimensional Variance for accessory structure placement, side setbacks, and maximum floor area requirements. Recall that per zoning code § 255-920 A(2)(d), detached accessory structures must also be "incidental and subordinate to the principal structure and maintain continuity with the architectural appearance and character of the principal structure." The subject parcel is a preexisting nonconforming lot of record with a total lot area is 72,344 SF (1.66 acres) and is subject to reduced setback as detailed below

To start, the accessory structure will require relief because it will be placed in the front yard, where zoning code § 255-920 F(2)(a)1 dictates that detached accessory structures must be placed in the rear yard or in the side yard, if side setbacks can be maintained.

The proposed accessory structure will be placed within the minimum side setback. Per RIGL § 45-24-38, which states lots of record that are nonconforming in terms of area are eligible for proportional reductions in setback/dimensional standards, the 72,344 SF subject parcel shall be held to the dimensional standards of the I-1 (Industrial) zone, rather than the RR-3 zone which is the subject parcel's "official" designation. The structure will be sited 25.5' from the side property line, where 30' is required in the I-1 zone.

The proposed accessory structure also requires relief because it exceeds the maximum allowable floor area for both the ADU and the garage. The applicant is seeking to build a 1,288 SF ADU, where the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU in this case would be 900 SF per § 255-920 A(1)(f). This represents an approximate 43.1% increase above the dimensional requirement. The applicant is also seeking a first-floor garage at 1,472 SF where the maximum unit size for a detached accessory garage is 1,200 SF per zoning code § 255-920 A(1)(f). This represents an approximate 22.7% increase above the dimensional requirement. Note that the TRC report misstated the total floor area of the first-floor garage as 1,288 SF as well as the percentage increase above the dimensional requirement.

Note that the proposed accessory structure (both ADU and garage) will comply with maximum height and maximum lot coverage requirements. The proposed structure will be 25' tall, where the dimensional standard in this case is 25' per zoning code § 255-920 A(1)(e). Note that the structure will be 7' lower than the principal dwelling structure. The proposed lot coverage will be 16,579 SF, where the maximum, per the deficiency factor, is 19,371 SF. The applicant provided calculations for lot coverage on their site plan that are consistent with recent state law changes.

Interdepartmental Review and Comments

Please see the attached report from the Technical Review Committee (dated December 8, 2025) for interdepartmental comments on this application.

II. DIMENSIONAL VARIANCE

Findings of Fact

The following section reports applicant-submitted information and corresponding Planning Staff considerations with respect to required standards set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41 for Findings of Fact for Dimensional Variance applications:

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(1) states, "That the hardship from which the applicant seeks relief is due to the unique characteristics of the subject land or structure and not to the general characteristics of the surrounding area; and is not due to a physical or economic disability of the applicant, excepting those physical disabilities addressed in § 45-24-30(a)(16)"

- Applicant provided the following answers: The property is undersized and bordered by a steep hill, limiting buildable area and preventing rear placement of the proposed garage and ADU. The requested relief for placement in the rear yard (255-920A(1)(a)) is necessary

to accommodate the ADU. The requested relief for the ADU to be within the primary structure side yard setback yard (255-920A(1)(c)) is necessary due to the rear yard restrictions. The structure is located to the side of the lot in the hill, complying within the accessory dwelling setbacks and does not take away from the main residence. The requested relief for the ADU to exceed the 900 square foot minimum (255-920A(1)(f)) is necessary due to the desired 3-car garage request. The area is the resulting space above the garage, which includes a home office in addition to the ADU. The placement of the structure is a direct response to the unique characteristics of the land and structure.

- Staff added the following considerations: The applicant stated that the ADU consists of the 855 SF living space and excludes the home office and entry area. Planning staff do not believe the home office and entry area should be permitted as a separate living area above and beyond the ADU use. Therefore, staff has structured the requested relief to be for a one-bedroom ADU seeking an area of 1,288 SF, which does not change staff's positive consideration of this size issue.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(2) states, "That the hardship is not the result of any prior action of the applicant"

- Applicant provided the following answers: The hardship is not the result of any prior action by the applicant but rather stems from the inherent physical limitations of the property. The lot is undersized and bordered by a steep hill, which restricts buildable space and prevents rear placement of the proposed garage and ADU. The applicant has worked within the zoning ordinance by applying the deficiency factor to allow the ADU and has located the structure within the accessory setbacks and buildable height. The need for alternate placement is a direct response to the site's natural constraints—not a consequence of previous development decisions or modifications. The applicant is seeking reasonable relief to accommodate a functional and compliant design that respects both the property's limitations and the surrounding context.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(3) states, "That the granting of the requested variance will not alter the general character of the surrounding area or impair the intent or purpose of the zoning ordinance or the comprehensive plan upon which the ordinance is based"

- Applicant provided the following answers: Granting the requested variance will not alter the character of the surrounding area or undermine the zoning ordinance's intent. The proposed garage and ADU are located within the accessory structure setbacks and designed to complement the existing home. Complying with the height requirements, the structure remains seven feet lower than the main residence and is built into a steep hill, minimizing its visual impact. The ADU is permitted by right through the deficiency factor, aligning with the comprehensive plan's goals of increasing housing options. The placement in front and to the side is a necessity due to the lot's constraints and does not disrupt neighborhood aesthetics or obstruct the view of the primary structure. The design respects the scale and style of nearby properties and maintains the residential character of the area.

- Staff added the following considerations: The revised site plans include proposed tree plantings and plant beds along the parcel's frontage on Brian Hollow Road and the driveway entrance into the house to provide reasonable screening from abutting neighbors and the public right-of-way. In addition, the proposed accessory structure will appear incidental and subordinate to the principal structure, as the three garage doors will make the entire structure resemble a customary garage, as opposed to an additional housing unit.

RIGL § 45-24-41. General provisions – Variances. (d)(4) states, "In granting a dimensional variance, that the hardship suffered by the owner of the subject property if the dimensional variance is not granted amounts to more than a mere inconvenience, meaning that relief sought is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use to which the property is proposed to be devoted. The fact that a use may be more profitable or that a structure may be more valuable after the relief is granted is not grounds for relief. The zoning board of review, or, [planning board] in unified development review, has the power to grant dimensional variances where the use is permitted by special-use permit."

- Applicant provided the following answers: If the dimensional variance is not granted, the property owner will face more than a mere inconvenience. The undersized lot and steep hill severely limit buildable area, making it impossible to place the garage and ADU at the rear of the home. Without the requested setback relief, the ADU above the garage cannot be reasonably accommodated, restricting the permitted residential use. The relief sought is minimal and essential to achieve functional living space while respecting site constraints. This request is not driven by profit or added value, but by the need for reasonable enjoyment of the property under existing zoning allowances.
- Staff added the following considerations: The proposed accessory structure is minimal to a reasonable enjoyment of the permitted use as it is an allowed use in the RR-3 zone and will have a proportionally modest footprint at 1,288 SF for the ADU and 1,472 SF for the garage, given the size of the lot. Furthermore, zoning code § 255-920 F(2)(a)1 mandates that the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU "may be up to 900 square feet, or 60% of the floor area of the principal dwelling, whichever is less." Similarly, per zoning code § 255-920 A(1)(f), a detached accessory structure (such as the garage) "shall be 1,200 square feet or 60% of the total floor area of the principal structure, whichever is less." The principal structure is 2,584 SF, of which 60% is 1,550.4 SF. The dimensional alternatives (900 SF and 1200 SF) is lower and therefore applies to the proposed structure. It should be noted that the accessory structure's footprint is within the 60% SF threshold, despite being held to a lower threshold per the code.

Recommendation on Dimensional Variances

Staff finds this proposal consistent with the standards for required Dimensional Variance findings of fact set forth in RIGL Section 45-24-41. Staff therefore recommends that the Planning Commission adopt the documented findings of fact and approve all of the Dimensional Variances requested as part of this application.

Conditions of Approval

1. The accessory structure's construction is conditioned upon strict adherence to the associated Dimensional Variance Application as presented and approved.
2. The certificate of occupancy for the proposed accessory structure is contingent on installation of the plantings as shown on the site plan, or the general equivalent of said plantings, as a visual screen to abutters and the public right-of-way.
3. The following items will be required upon submittal of a building permit application: (a) site plan showing the proposed structures comply with Zoning Code and/or comply with the Dimensional Variance Approval, (b) approval from Central Coventry Fire District, (c) RIDEM residential suitability determination for the additional ADU bedroom, and (d) stormwater management practices, subject to the Town Engineer's approval.

Recommendation on Accessory Structure

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission allow the proposed accessory structure to proceed to building permit stage.

Pursuant to Article XII. Appeals, Subsection A. Procedure for Appeals to the Board of Appeal of the Coventry Subdivision Regulations, the decision of the Planning Commission herein may be appealed in writing by any party aggrieved by said decision to the Coventry Board of Appeal. Any such appeal shall be made within 20 days of the day of the decision is recorded and posted in the Town Clerk's Office.



TOWN OF COVENTRY

Department of Planning & Development
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TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: December 8, 2025
PROJECT NAME: "Gormley Garage / ADU"
PROPERTIES: AP 323, Lot 120
ADDRESS: 33 Brian Hollow Road
ZONE: RR-3 (Rural Residential)
OWNER/APPLICANT: Gregory Gormley

This matter came before the Coventry Technical Review Committee at its December 8, 2025 meeting as a Unified Development Review Application for an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) with an associated Dimensional Variance. ADUs that are not allowed by-right shall utilize the Unified Development Review process and must be heard by the Planning Commission per Zoning Code § 255-920 F(2)(i).

The site plans and application materials were submitted for review on December 1, 2025. The applicant proposes to construct a 1,288 SF, 28' x 46' one-bedroom Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) as a second floor above a proposed new garage on their 1.66-acre subject parcel. Applicant seeks three dimensional variances as the ADU and garage will be placed in the front yard, will be sited within the minimum side setback, and will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirements.

The members of the Technical Review Committee reviewed the following documents related to this application when preparing the comments below:

Gormley Garage ADU - Application Packet.pdf

PRINCIPAL PLANNER DESIGNEE

- The 28' x 46' one-bedroom ADU is intended as a second floor above a proposed 32' x 46' three-bay garage.
- The applicant seeks three (3) Dimensional Variances for the proposed structure:
- Dimensional Variance #1: The structure will be placed in the front yard, where zoning code § 255-920 dictates that detached accessory structures must be placed in the rear yard or in the side yard, if side setbacks can be maintained.
- Planning staff notes that the property's rear yard is characterized by steep grade changes that restricts buildable area there. The topographic conditions run from upwards of 270' in the northernmost portion of the rear yard, to below 250' in the southwestern portion.
- Additionally, the subject parcel is also undersized for the RR-3 (Rural Residential) zone, at 1.66 acres, and abuts Flat River Reservoir in the rear.

- Dimensional Variance #2: The structure will be placed within the minimum setbacks for the principal structure. Due to recent state law changes regarding substandard lots of record, I-1 (Industrial) minimum side setbacks apply to the principal structure. The structure will be sited 25.5' from the side property line, where 30' is required.
- Planning staff notes that the proposed structure will be sited 102' from the property's frontage on Brian Hollow Road.
- Dimensional Variance #3: The structure will exceed the maximum allowable floor area requirements. The applicant is seeking a second-floor ADU at 1,288 SF where the maximum unit size for a one-bedroom ADU in this case is 900 SF per zoning code § 255-920. This represents an approximate 43.1% increase above the dimensional requirement. The applicant is also seeking a first-floor garage at 1,288 SF where the maximum unit size for a detached accessory structure is 1,200 SF per zoning code § 255-920. This represents an approximate 7.3% increase above the dimensional requirement.
- The applicant has provided snapshots of the front entrance to his property, which show that existing trees have been removed, and indicated that a new vegetative buffer will be planted. Planning staff seek additional information about the applicant's proposed landscape plan for the front yard on a revised plan, including the type, number, and height of the plantings.
- The applicant has offered to "mirror" the landscape approach of an abutting neighbor, which has a combination of small evergreen trees, shrubbery, and deciduous trees to screen their front yard. Planning staff favors the mirror approach pursuant to the details of an imminent landscape plan.

TOWN ENGINEER

General

- A) Submission of a Town of Coventry Soil Erosion and Sediment Control (SESC) Application will be required for the project.
- B) The main dwelling contains 4-bedrooms and was originally permitted for a 4-bedroom OWTS. Please provide RIDEM Residential OWTS suitability determination for the added ADU bedroom.
- C) Stormwater management practices must be provided to treat the water quality volume of runoff from the project's proposed rooftop and driveway in accordance with the State Stormwater Manual and the State of RI Stormwater Management Guidance for Individual Single-Family Residential Lot Development. Practices could consist of Qualifying Pervious Areas (QPA's), Rain Gardens or Infiltration Systems such as drywells or crushed stone trenches. Please submit stormwater management practice sizing calculations for the rooftop and driveway runoff volume (prepared by a licensed engineer or surveyor).

Plan Set

- A) Engineering requests that existing and proposed grading be added to the site plan.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

- No comments at this time.

FIRE REPRESENTATIVE

- No comments at this time.

POLICE CHIEF

- No comments at this time.

PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIR

The Planning Commission Chair recused as this item will be heard before the Planning Commission.