



Toronto to consider ending minimum parking space requirements in new developments

Trevor Dunn · CBC News · Posted: Nov 24, 2021

Citing concerns about a changing climate and the changing habits of urban dwellers, Toronto city council is set to decide if it will keep requiring a minimum number of parking spaces to be built with new developments.

Council's Planning and Housing Committee will debate a staff report Thursday on parking requirements for new developments. Full council will hear the item in December.

Among other recommendations, such as expanding bicycle parking and electric vehicle infrastructure, the report calls for the elimination of most minimum parking requirements.— as part of an effort to lessen the impact of motor vehicles on the climate and support a more densely populated city.

"By not requiring parking minimums it encourages people to seek out other ways, such as walking, cycling and transit," Michael Hain, a transportation planner with the city, said in an interview. "We are making big investments in non-auto infrastructure."

Housing affordability

The policy also seeks to improve housing affordability. Building parking is expensive and the cost gets passed on to buyers, whether they need the parking space or not.

"What we're trying to avoid is telling developers to build more parking than people are willing to pay for," Hain said.

Right now, the amount of parking required in a new development varies depending on the size of the unit and its location. For example, in downtown Toronto, the standard ranges from 0.3 of a parking space for a bachelor apartment to an entire (1.00) parking space for every unit that has three or more bedrooms.

According to the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), recent sales data shows that in new condo projects an average of 33 per cent of parking stalls were left unsold.



Building parking spaces in high-rise residential buildings is difficult and expensive, especially in downtown Toronto, and can add more than \$100,000 to the cost of a unit, the Residential Construction Council of Ontario says. (Evan Mitsui/CBC)

"Millennials and younger generations, they've done the math on owning a car, and if you live and work in downtown Toronto, it just doesn't make sense," RESCON president Richard Lyall said in an interview.

Building underground parking spaces, especially in downtown Toronto, is difficult and costly, and in some cases can add more than \$100,000 to the price of a unit, RESCON says.

"The deeper in the ground you go, the more expensive it gets," Lyall said.

RESCON has written to the city expressing support for removing minimum parking requirements. Lyall says that doesn't mean parking will no longer be included in new developments. If minimum requirements are ended, Lyall says developers will be free build parking based on the market demand for it.

Where will people park?

There is opposition to the move, or at least to the way city staff are approaching it.

The Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations (FoSTRA) is an umbrella group representing several resident associations in five downtown city wards.

In a letter to the Planning and Housing Committee, FoSTRA chair Richard Green writes that while the organization recognizes the need to adapt to climate change and supports the reduction of private car ownership, "abruptly" eliminating minimum parking standards "simply won't work."

"Torontonians need time to adjust to owning fewer cars," the letter says.

Green says the city's approach is a "one-size-fits-all solution" that needs more study. "Trying to apply this without the proper background research is going to penalize some areas," he said in an interview with CBC Toronto.



A condo building in Toronto's Liberty Village is pictured here. A group called the Federation of South Toronto Residents Associations says there's a serious shortage of parking spaces in the downtown neighbourhood, and it has written a letter to the city opposing the abrupt removal of minimum requirements. (Ed Middleton/CBC)

As an example, Green says there's already a "serious" shortage of parking in the Liberty Village neighbourhood. "More development with fewer parking spaces is only going to exaggerate an existing problem."

The planning committee has heard from other residents and business owners concerned about the lack of parking.

"People can't find places to park. We don't want people with no place to park winding up on the streets," Don Young, the Ward 11 director for FoSTRA, said in an interview.

If passed by council, Toronto's parking policy would still maintain minimum requirements for accessible and visitor spaces at all new developments.