



NEWS

Why some experts say Toronto needs to rethink minimum parking requirements for new towers

Rules due for an overhaul amid emergence of ride-hailing, Ryerson professor says

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Some experts say the city is overdue for an overhaul of its minimum parking standards, with a new report from a Ryerson University professor suggesting it's a welcome change to ensure the city keeps pace with changing transportation technologies and housing needs. (CBC)

Should Toronto rethink the city's minimum parking requirements for new buildings like condo and apartment towers?

Some experts say the city is overdue for an overhaul, with a new report from a Ryerson University professor suggesting it's a welcome change to ensure the city keeps pace with changing transportation technologies and housing needs.

- [Why parking lots could be a battleground amid mayor's push to build affordable housing](#)

In the report, Murtaza Haider, an associate professor at the Ted Rogers School of Management, notes "Toronto's minimum parking standards have not been meaningfully revised in the past three decades."

A lot has changed since then, he says, from the emergence of ride-hailing and car-sharing apps like Uber and Lyft to the future possibilities of autonomous cars.

With that in mind, the city needs to reconsider its [minimum parking standards](#), which currently require close to one parking space for every unit in an apartment building, Haider writes in the report, which was commissioned by the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**.

In the future, there will be "a lesser demand for parking, and therefore as we build newer buildings, we should be mindful of it and prepare ourselves," he told CBC Toronto.

And he's not the only one who thinks a change is needed.

Urban planner Sean Galbraith agrees, arguing there shouldn't be any minimum parking space requirements anywhere in the city, other than for bicycles and accessibility purposes.

"Let people figure out how much to provide, or not provide," he wrote in an email. "If you want to build more than you need, ok. If you want to provide zero, ok."

'It's really a choice we have to make'

Others, like housing and open-data advocate Mark Richardson, believe changing the rules could help boost affordable housing efforts.

Richardson — who [launched a website](#) mapping the locations of the sites for Mayor John Tory's Housing Now initiative, which aims to build more affordable units on city-owned land — says in public consultations on multiple sites currently being used as parking lots, there's already been push back from community members about losing spots.

He agrees with Haider's recommendations, including one to consider more above-ground parking lots that can be repurposed instead of pricey below-grade lots for new buildings, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars per spot.

"For every three or four parking spots you're creating, you could be creating another unit of affordable housing," Richardson continued.

"It's really a choice we have to make here in Toronto where we have a housing crisis, and these spots next to transit: are they for parking, or are they for people?"

Parking still plays a role in housing, tenant advocate says

But while certain residents have easy access to transit near their homes, making less parking necessary, it's not the case in much of the city.

"Some people don't have access to good transit, and they need a car to be able to drive around and get around to work," said tenant advocate Geordie Dent from the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations.

"And in many instances — we hear this a lot — a lot of the spaces they park in are disappearing, or not meeting the population growth."

It's a "complex" issue, Dent acknowledges, and he says while many people do want to take transit, it doesn't always make sense for them, so he believes incorporating parking is often crucial in many communities.

"If you've ever talked to somebody who's had to do a two-hour commute from Scarborough or Rexdale ... you might understand why a car might be necessary for them just to live their lives," he said.