

UPCOMING DATES

JANUARY

- 20 Brampton Committee of Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Georgina Council (Public Planning), 7:00 p.m.
- Halton Regional Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Hamilton Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Mississauga Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Richmond Hill Council Public Meeting, 7:30 p.m.
- 21 Caledon Special Council meeting, 5:00 p.m.
- Hamilton General Issues Committee (Budget), 9:30 a.m.
- 22 Brock Special Council, 9:00 a.m.
- Hamilton General Issues Committee (Budget), 9:30 a.m.
- 25 Ajax Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Brock Council, 5:00 p.m.
- Clarington General Government Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- King Council/Committee of the Whole, 6:00 p.m.
- Mississauga Planning & Development Committee, 6:00 p.m.
- Markham Development Services Committee, 9:30 a.m.
- Oakville Council, 6:30 p.m.
- Oshawa Council, 9:30 a.m.
- Pickering Council, 7:00 p.m.
- Scugog Special Council, 6:30 p.m.
- Vaughan Committee of the Whole, 1:00 p.m.
- Vaughan Committee of the Whole (Closed Session), 4:00 p.m.
- Whitby Council, 7:00 p.m.



CITY TO UNDERTAKE REVIEW OF PARKING REQUIREMENTS

SHIFTING GEARS ON PARKING



Rob Jowett

Reducing parking requirements in new residential developments could help the **City of Toronto** bring down housing costs and get units built faster while encouraging a modal shift away from car travel.

At its meeting January 19, the Toronto planning and housing committee approved undertaking a review of the city's parking requirements. The review will examine the city's parking requirements for residential development projects with the goal of finding ways to reduce number of parking spaces included in new developments in order to reduce housing development costs and to help promote non-car-oriented transportation modes. The findings of the review and planning staff's recommendations on changes to the parking requirements are expected to be presented to council in the fourth quarter of 2021.

"Through the review, we expect the automobile parking regulations to shift from being largely based around parking minimums to being more focussed on parking maximums," Toronto transportation planning program manager **Michael Hain** told *NRU*. "The shift will support the city's objectives to reduce the environmental impacts of transportation and encourage land [-efficient] and cost-efficient development. We would also like to make the parking requirements easier to interpret and more flexible to encourage missing-middle housing types."

The city-wide zoning by-law 569-2013 includes minimum parking requirements for development of almost 90 different land uses. The specific amount of parking required in a new development varies greatly depending on the zoning category and the location of

the proposed development. There has been concern that the minimum required number of parking spaces is higher than necessary in many areas of the city, especially downtown where public transit is widely available, and that the minimum does not reflect changing transportation patterns which increasingly favour transit and active transportation over car-oriented travel.

High parking minimums can significantly increase the costs and timelines of development projects. Underground parking garages are often needed to accommodate the city's parking minimums for a development, which means developments have to dig deeper, often running into the water table, which creates an additional set of costs and challenges. These additional costs are then passed

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NRU PUBLISHING STAFF

Ian A.R. Graham, Publisher
iang@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 222

Irena Kohn, Editor
irenak@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 223

Marc Mitanis, Senior Reporter
marcm@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 225

Rob Jowett, Reporter
robj@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 226

Peter Pantalone,
Planning Researcher
peterp@nrupublishing.com

Jeff Payette
Design/Layout
jeffp@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 228

Samantha Lum
Sales and Circulation
samanthal@nrupublishing.com
Ext. 224

NRU PUBLISHING INC

SALES/SUBSCRIPTIONS
circ@nrupublishing.com

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Corporate Office
1200 Bay Street, Suite 1101
Toronto, ON M5R 2A5
Tel: 416.260.1304
Fax: 416.979.2707

Billings Department
NRU Publishing Inc.
PO Box 19595 Manulife PO,
Toronto, ON M4W 3T9

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SHIFTING GEARS ON PARKING

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

on to the end user. The city is facing a housing affordability crisis and is looking for new ways of reducing housing prices and of getting housing built faster.

“Our current parking requirements for automobiles and bicycles do not do as much as they could to support the city’s policy objectives, particularly in the areas of travel demand management and affordable housing,” says Hain. “A key element of the review will be to develop a monitoring program to assess the effectiveness of the city’s parking policies going forward. The data gathered through monitoring will simplify future reviews of parking policies and other related matters. Throughout the review, it will be critical to consider the interrelationships between the city’s various policies and regulations related to parking to ensure that any changes to the zoning by-law will have their intended effect.”

The prospect of reducing the city’s parking requirements is also viewed by staff as a way of incenting development of missing middle housing typologies such as duplexes and townhouses. The minimum parking requirements for these forms of housing often make their development impractical

for landowners, who often choose to develop housing on sites that allow for high enough densities to offset the costs of providing parking spaces and who often avoid developing on sites where some intensification is permitted but would require expensive new parking spaces.

“I think [a review] is long overdue,” Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) president Richard Lyall told NRU. “We’re looking [at an increase of] \$80 to \$100 grand a unit [for] a parking spot... and then we’ve had situations where you’ve had condo developers who have built buildings and the people don’t want the parking.”

RESCON submitted a communication to the city expressing its support for the review.

Lyall says he supports the idea of parking maximums—allowing landowners to provide as much parking space as they feel is needed up to a certain amount—as it gives developers the flexibility to determine what is needed on a particular site. He says he believes the rise of autonomous vehicles and increased use of car-sharing services mean that most people will not need dedicated parking spaces in the near future. He adds that the city should also be looking at allowing more

above-grade parking spaces that can be converted to housing in the future.

“I don’t think we need the rules,” says Lyall. “I think the market can determine and the proponents of a project can determine what they’re marketing and how much parking they want to have in that building and market that and just leave it at that, run the experiment.”

There has been growing interest both from municipalities and developers in reducing or eliminating parking from buildings. Recently, the **City of Brampton** eliminated its minimum parking requirements in its downtown area to spur a modal shift and to drive down housing prices. In western Canada, the **City of Edmonton** eliminated parking minimums in June. South of the border, the **City of Miami** also eliminated parking minimums in its downtown in 2010, which Lyall says has been a major success.

In an early attempt to get on board with the lowered parking requirements trend, **King Financial** is proposing a 74-storey mixed-use development at 372 Yonge Street which includes no parking spaces (*see NRT September 4, 2020: Building on Heritage*). In the fall, King Financial CEO **Dani Cohen** told *NRU* that he believes parking at the development will be unnecessary given the building’s proximity to transit and available bicycle parking.

“People are changing

the way they use vehicles,” **Bloor East Neighbourhood Association (BENA)** president **Linda Brett** told *NRU*. “Many of the younger people that are within my association—instead of owning an automobile and putting it down into a parking lot that they may use on a weekend, once a month, or whatever, they use car share or rent a car.”

BENA also submitted a communication to the city expressing its support for the review.

Brett says she supports reducing parking minimums and says that she wants to see a small increase to the amount of guest parking available in buildings to ensure that the parked cars of building visitors do not spill out onto the surrounding streets, as well as requirements for residential developments to accommodate bike parking. She also believes there should be temporary spaces for service vehicles so they also do not interfere with roadways when parked at buildings. 🌳