

The New York Times

Private Parking Goes Deluxe

The latest trends in parking include automated garages, art-lined waiting rooms and six-figure price tags.

The Parking Club, a private garage at 185 Pacific Street in Cobble Hill can hold 150 cars. Drivers can buy a space for \$185,000 to \$200,000, plus monthly fees. Credit CreditKatherine Marks for The New York Times

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Sept. 13, 2019 Updated 2:51 p.m. ET



Parking, like so much else in New York City, is going upscale.

With their herringbone-pattern ceilings, app-based vehicle-retrieval systems and furnished waiting rooms, garages currently being constructed in residential developments seem designed to take the lowly parking spot to new heights.

Even more significant may be the fact that the facilities are often private, aimed at those who can fork over hundreds of thousands of dollars for parking rights. No day-

trippers in search of space by the hour need apply.

The latest members-only facilities — tucked into boutique buildings and full-block structures at more than two-dozen locations across the city — are arriving at a challenging time for drivers. Many surface-level parking lots have [succumbed to development](#) in recent years, while the ride-share industry continues to pour extra vehicles onto streets.

Whether or not parking spaces with price tags as high as \$800,000 will have many takers, brokers and developers believe their presence can help a new development stand out in a slow market.

“It’s sort of becoming an expected amenity for a high-end condo,” said Andrew Bradfield, a principal of [Orange Management](#), a developer that has installed automated garages in two Brooklyn condos: Waverly Brooklyn in Clinton Hill and the Symon in Downtown Brooklyn. “To not have parking hampers marketing.”

Below-ground parking garages have generally been pricey to build, since developers have to dig out so much rock. But modern automated garages, which use programmable elevators to move cars into the

equivalent of bunk beds, have helped cut construction costs. By eliminating the need for ramps and other areas like space for attendants, automated garages require far less space than traditional versions.

“I don’t think this garage would have been viable a decade ago, to be honest with you,” said Arthur Blee, a senior vice president Cape Advisors, referring to the automated facility at [Greenwich West](#), a condo he’s codeveloping in the Hudson Square neighborhood.

The 170-unit building started selling its studios to three-bedrooms last fall for an average of about \$2.7 million, or \$2,300 a square foot. (A project spokeswoman declined to say how many units have sold.) A year ago, the condo, which is slated to open in 2020, began marketing its 30 parking spaces, which range in price from \$225,000 to \$325,000, depending on their size. None of the spaces have found a buyer yet, said Mr. Blee, who remains optimistic.



The Symon, a 59-unit condo under construction at 76 Schermerhorn Street in downtown Brooklyn has a private nine-car automated garage. Credit Katherine Marks for The New York Times

“We’re not exactly pushing them out the door,” he said, adding that parking spaces are analogous to storage units, in that buyers often pick them up down the road.

Not Quite a Car Town

In a famously walkable city crisscrossed by subways and buses, the pro-car maneuvering can seem at odds not just with modern trends, but with longtime policy.

As cars began filling New York’s streets in the mid-20th century, garages attached to apartment

buildings (known as accessory garages) enjoyed a rapid rollout — consider the parade of 1960s apartment towers on the Upper East Side with parking downstairs. At the time, private developers in much of the city were required to provide a parking space for four out of every 10 apartments in their buildings. But city officials, concerned about worsening air pollution, eventually pumped the brakes.

In 1982, the city effectively banned any new public parking lots in Manhattan below West 110th Street, while also sharply limiting private garages there by inverting the old rules: Parking would no longer be required, and in fact had limits. Today, the number of parking spaces cannot exceed 20 percent of the total number of apartments in buildings from Midtown down to Manhattan’s southern tip, while a 35 percent cap applies to the Upper East and West Sides.

But efforts to discourage driving by making it tougher to park may not have had the desired effect. Indeed, cars are on the rise, or at least holding their own. In 2017, there were 225,179 non-taxi cars registered in Manhattan, on par with 2007, when there were 225,047, according to the state Department of Motor Vehicles, which counts cars used for ride-share services like Uber in its totals.

The spikes in the other boroughs have been dramatic. In Brooklyn, there were 457,980 cars in 2017, up from 387,328 in 2007, according to the data, and in Queens there were 725,906, up from 671,816.

Added congestion has meant increased demand for the dwindling number of parking spaces, advocates for garages say.

Parking for Sale

Besides Greenwich West, other recent Manhattan condos to offer hefty amounts of accessory parking include [70 Vestry Street](#) in TriBeCa, [76 Eleventh Avenue](#) by the High Line and [565 Broome SoHo](#).

Although these buildings are within the capped parking zones, some of them received special permission from the city to go above and beyond the limits, according to lawyers familiar with the projects. Developers can argue that the new parking spaces are merely replacing parking units that might have been lost to development when a tower was built on a parking lot or garage was torn down.

Most of the new crop of private parking garages sell their spaces in-house and by way of licenses, which aren't tracked in real estate databases the way deeded properties are. But brokers say current values citywide range from \$100,000 to \$800,000. Licenses, which require monthly fees ranging from \$100 to \$800, usually have to be resold to residents within a building when buyers move.

There are also garages with deeded parking, more like conventional real estate. Owners can hang onto them as long as they like and sublet them to outsiders. But like condos, they're subject to common charges and taxes of about \$100 to \$400 a month.

Deeds for the 11-space garage at [40 Bleecker](#), a 61-unit condo from Broad Street Development that's under construction in NoHo, are \$500,000 a pop. About half of the parking spaces have sold since sales began last year, a spokeswoman said.



The garage at Waverly Brooklyn, a condo in Clinton Hill has parking spaces available for \$150,000. Credit Katherine Marks for The New York Times

its location near Columbia University, where day-to-day traffic is relatively minor, the list of potential buyers for the entire garage was small. That informed Savanna's decision to hang onto the 70-space facility and use it instead as an amenity, capitalizing on the demand for private parking, said Peter Denby, the Halstead agent handling marketing.

The city still requires parking at some developments, particularly those on blocks outside the zone where it was restricted in the 1980s, such as north of West 110th Street. [Vandewater](#), a 138-unit condo at 543 West 122nd Street, is in Morningside Heights, and so outside of the limited-parking zone. Savanna, its developer, added 70 private, on-site parking spaces, which can be reached through a motor court.

If the condo, which opens next spring, were in a busy office district, Savanna might have sold the entire garage to a landlord specializing in parking, which was the typical fate of parking garages developed in apartment buildings in the past. But because of

As with other condos, the Vandewater's parking licenses, which cost \$225,000 plus a monthly charge of \$256 to cover valets, can't be folded into a home loan. Buyers typically need to fork over cash.

It's unclear how the inability to finance the spaces will impact sales in the building, which began last winter. The condo has sold about 15 percent of its apartments, which range from studios to four-bedrooms, for about \$1,700 a square foot. Mr. Denby declined to say how many spaces had sold.

Savanna could always hold on to unsold parking spaces and rent them, Mr. Denby said. They could also be used as a concession, to coax hesitant buyers. "It's another asset in the process," he said, "and it becomes a very valuable asset."

Parking in Brooklyn and Queens

In Downtown Brooklyn, where the parking requirement for market-rate buildings was reduced in 2012 from 40 percent of a building's apartment total to 20 percent, developers are also embracing garages.

[The Symon](#), Mr. Bradfield's project, is marketing nine automated spaces. Although pricing can't be locked down until he receives city approvals, similar offerings sell in the \$200,000 range, according to Orange Management, which has teamed with Lonicera Partners and the Davis Companies. The Symon's 59 one- to four-bedroom apartments, which will come to market this month, start at \$800,000.

The developers hope to attract families. Despite the popularity of ride services like Uber, families that depend on children's car seats are less likely to use them, Mr. Bradfield said: "It will be a long time before those trends in transportation supplant families' need for cars."

At another condo that opened in 2017, the 48-unit Waverly Brooklyn, in Clinton Hill — an area with a 50 percent requirement — Orange also added an automated garage. The owner of that garage, a separate commercial unit, is now selling 75-year licenses for spaces there for \$150,000, plus a \$250 monthly fee.

Parking requirements were waived a few years ago for Long Island City, Queens, a densely settled area served by several subway lines. But garages are still required for new developments in nearby Astoria, home to [The Rowan](#), a 46-unit condo from RockFarmer Properties. Although the developer had to include 23 spaces, the Rowan offers 96, thanks to automation. A parking spot costs \$90,000, plus a "nominal monthly common charge," RockFarmer says. Many spaces not purchased by condo owners will be available on a transient basis, at more typical hourly rates, by people who drive to shop at the 16,000-square-foot grocery store and another large store at the condo's base.

Yair Goldberg, an executive vice president of U-Tron, the company behind the Rowan's technology, noted that more parking spaces mean fewer cars having to circle blocks and belch exhaust while hunting for street parking. Besides, he added, "garages help differentiate a development from the rest of the products in the market."

Taking Public Garages Private

In another trend that could significantly alter the city's parking landscape, developers have bought existing parking garages that are open to the public, and taken them private.

[The Parking Club](#), a 150-space condo at 185 Pacific Street in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn, is currently selling deeds for \$185,000 to \$200,000, plus \$220 a month in common charges and taxes. Built in 1957, the building largely operated as a conventional by-the-hour parking garage until 2016, when it was purchased by Lonicera, one of the partners at the Symon, and underwent a \$500,000 renovation, including a new lounge, according to Jamie Anthony, a firm founder. About 25 spaces have sold since then, Mr. Anthony said.

Similarly, last year Iliad Realty Group paid \$9 million for a 90-space garage at 94 Laight Street in TriBeCa that offered hourly and monthly rentals. Iliad is now converting it to a [members-only facility](#) with just 60 spaces, with the assumption that more space between cars equals fewer dings. Other improvements include turning a bike area into a furnished waiting room and the addition of lockers for golf clubs and surf boards, said Simon Anderson, a Douglas Elliman agent who's marketing it.

“That’s really where you are elevating the entire experience,” said Mr. Anderson, who moved to New Jersey last year after living in New York City for 25 years and shuttling among 12 different public garages in search of cheaper parking. The parking spaces on Laight Street, which are licensed, were unveiled this summer for \$400,000, plus a \$500 monthly fee. By September, 17 contracts had been mailed out, mostly to condo owners in the upstairs River Lofts complex, but also other nearby buildings, he said.

Developers are next targeting public garages in the West Village and Sunset Park, Brooklyn, to convert them as well, said Mr. Anderson. “I think I have identified a real trend here,” he said.