

# 'No cars' tower targets young professionals

BY JASON MARKUSOFF, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 19, 2014



A rendering of the planned pedestrian area in the East Village. (Calgary Municipal Land Corporation)

**Photograph by:** Rendering courtesy of Calgary Municipal Land Corporation

A proposed condo tower with no parking stalls fits neatly with the demographic East Village is targeting, the head of the district's city-owned development agency said Wednesday.

Mike Brown of Calgary Municipal Land Corporation said his group is still studying whether to approve a private developers' plans to build one of Canada's first no-parking condominium towers.

However, the sort of young homebuyer who may covet a downtown suite without room for a car is the same type of person CMLC imagined when it devised the East Village master plan — the culture-loving young professional "urban explorer."

"We know of that urban explorer that's out there, there's a number that don't own cars and don't desire cars," Brown said. "So it only makes sense to make allowances or produce products that meet their needs. If we can do that, we'll do that."

The land agency and city transportation planners are currently looking at parking and traffic impacts for the tower proposed directly east of the old St. Louis Hotel at 4th Street and 8th Avenue S.E. Brown said his agency is also considering how it fits in with the rest of the district's plans.

Some pieces are fitting into place to make this a possible site for those who rely on cycling, transit, walking and perhaps car sharing.

It's one of the district's closest parcels to the City Hall LRT. A supermarket is planned two blocks north in a few years, as is a new city-owned parkade on 9th Avenue.

The no-parking tower would be one of Canada's first, but by no means the largest. Condo-dwellers have started moving in to a 42-storey, 318-unit building on Toronto's University Avenue — right near the Bay Street financial district, hospitals, and 50 steps from a subway station.

There are nine parking spots in the basement, reserved for a future car-sharing program.

Toronto city planners were skeptical of the plan when it was proposed in 2009, but the local councillor championed it, said Scott Deveau, a vice-president at Tribute Communities.

The project sold 80 per cent of its units in the first week of sales to that same group of grad students and young professionals that are East Village's target market.

"They've figured out how to live their life without a car or they're currently living their life without a car, and the prospect of paying an extra \$40,000 to \$50,000 for that parking spot, paying that insurance on your car just wasn't important to them," Deveau said.

In Calgary, one parking space or more per new condo is generally the mandatory minimum. The East Village tower, if it goes forward, could get a bylaw relaxation without council approval, the city's transportation department said.

Paul Battistella, a veteran inner-city condo developer, has gradually been adding more no-parking suites to his buildings. His Orange Lofts tower in East Village a decade ago sold a couple of units without parking, and uptake has grown since then.

Roughly one-tenth of units in Pixel — near the Sunnyside LRT station and a Safeway — were sold without parking, but with memberships to the Car2Go car-sharing program. For the condos planned where the Lido cafe now stands on 10th Street N.W., up to one-third of suites may come without stalls, he said.

Underground parking spaces, with all the concrete and ventilation and other features they require, can add \$40,000 to to \$50,000 to a purchase cost in Calgary, he said.

Battistella isn't sure if he's ready to propose a full building without parking, but he encourages the city to try it, at the developer's risk.

"If they can do it, and they can make it affordable enough, then people will go to it. Because the cost of housing in this city is getting to be very expensive."

The developer, who is not involved in the East Village proposal, criticizes the city for having mandatory parking minimums.

"We don't care if a person has a parking stall. What we're trying to do is manage what happens on the street itself," he said. "So is the regulation in the right place?"

When Calgary is asked to relax parking requirements, the common concern among planners and politicians is spillover parking. In Toronto, the 42-storey Tribute tower dealt with worries by ensuring its residents were banned from getting parking permits in nearby areas.

In East Village and downtown, long-stay parking permits for the curbsides don't exist.

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