

AUGUST 16, 2022 - **NYC RESIDENT PARKING PERMITS** IN THE NEWS - By Marie-Rose Sheinerman

Car Owners Say It's 'Virtually Impossible' to Find Street Parking in New York City

A spike in car ownership, dining sheds and the comeback of alternate-side parking are making it tougher than ever to find spaces.

Now more than ever, New York City car owners watching "Seinfeld" on Netflix can relate to George Costanza's apoplectic rage over parking spots.

As with so much else, the pandemic is to blame for supercharging a problem that was painful even three decades ago during the "Seinfeld" heyday. With some New Yorkers shunning the subway in the wake of the Covid outbreak, one measure of car ownership in the city surged 224% in 2021.

Even as that pace has slowed this year, the work-from-home trend means many cars aren't being moved at all, and pandemic-era dining sheds continue to eat up street space. What's more, New Yorkers are contending with the return of a rule mandating drivers move their street-parked cars twice a week during the day to allow for sanitation sweeps. For two years, drivers were only required to do so once a week. It's all come together to exacerbate the parking headache.

While travails over parking were played for darkly comic effect on "Seinfeld," the problem is anything but funny for those dealing with it in real life today.

"Before Covid, it was bad enough," said Dawn Kelly, a 61-year-old housing attorney and resident of Crown Heights, Brooklyn. But now, "it's virtually impossible for me to find parking because nobody's moving their cars," she said.

For Kelly, simply getting rid of her car isn't an option: A recent back surgery has limited her mobility, so she drives to work every day, and to visit family members in a nursing home each week. Alternatives like parking lots and paid monthly garages are too expensive, and aren't even an option in her neighborhood, she said. Sometimes that means planning her entire weekend around parking her car.

Since alternate-side parking went back into effect in early July, the app Parkaroo — which helps users mostly on the Upper East Side and Upper West Side find street spaces — has seen 20% spikes in engagement. On the UES, the average monthly garage payment comes out to \$453.80, according to Spacer, an online service for browsing parking spaces. Garage search engine Spot Hero shows a majority of places in the pricey enclave charge upward of \$700.

Last year, new vehicle registrations rose by 579,811, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles. As of July 2022, another 421,758 vehicles have been registered.



As car ownership in New York City surges, parking spaces dwindle. *Photographer: Jeenah Moon/Bloomberg*

It's "still early days" to gauge the overall growth in demand for monthly parking garages, said Nadir Naqvi, the regional vice president of Propark Mobility, a national firm with 50 garages in the tri-state area. But since the parking rules went back into effect, he said he's seen a 5% to 10% increase in overnight parking use on the nights before street cleaning.

Some New Yorkers are now galvanizing around the return of alternate-side parking, which reigned over the city for decades prior to the pandemic.

A petition to return to once-a-week sweeping has drawn almost 5,000 signatures as of mid-August. Denise Burnham, a mother who's lived on the Upper East Side for almost a decade and one of the petition's signatories, said her family has now resorted to paying for a garage after making do with street parking throughout the pandemic.

She said her family is "not thrilled" at the reality of shelling out the equivalent of a car payment on parking.

Others are looking to take action themselves. **Renee Baruch**, a retired lawyer living on the Upper West Side, is organizing in her neighborhood to get behind a program that would dole out parking permits to local residents by district. But Baruch says she was ignored when she raised the issue to her local community board.

Continued online.