

City drivers pay the price to park

Spaces cost thousands

By Charisse Jones
USA TODAY

Has Dick Delaney got a deal for you. For roughly \$25,000, you can purchase a piece of prime Chicago real estate — a parking space in the Field Harbor parking garage.

"We actually sold three stalls to a gentleman from London," says Delaney, executive vice president of Mark Goodman & Associates, a real estate management and brokerage firm that represents the garage's owner. "Most people can't buy a \$325,000 condominium, but you sure can buy a \$25,000 parking space."

With parking space at a premium in San Francisco, Chicago, New York and metropolises in between, drivers are paying six-figure sums for a slot in which to slip their cars.

In some instances, the would-be owner can take out a mortgage to buy the spot. There are deeds, condominium charges and taxes for this sliver of real estate, just like any other piece of property. Owners can even will spaces to their children.

In the past year, 120 of the Chicago garage's 400 spaces have been sold.

A few decades ago, "parking was free, like air and water, and it was everywhere," Delaney says. "Fast forward thirty years and you see every city is more dense. ... Parking has become a big issue for people who want to own a car and still be in the city."

At the Brimmer Street Garage on Boston's tony Beacon



By Brett T. Roseman for USA TODAY

Space for sale: Dick Delaney, right, Paulette Rodriguez and Josh Singer of Mark Goodman & Associates show parking in Chicago.

Hill, a spot went on the market last month for \$200,000. And that price may not be over the top considering that last August, a space there sold for \$167,500, says Debra Taylor, president of LINK, a Boston real estate tracking service.

For roughly that price, "you can buy a studio apartment" in most Boston neighborhoods, says Michael Albano, managing partner of ERA Boston Real Estate Group. But those able to af-

ford a home in one of the city's ritzier districts aren't likely to miss the tens of thousands of dollars it can cost for convenient and secure parking.

"The motivation is 'I need a space to put my Hummer or my Porsche,'" Albano says. "Why would you pay that much for a parking space unless you have a really nice car and live in a really nice apartment in a really nice neighborhood? And that's most peo-

Parking at a premium

How much it costs to buy a parking place in selected major cities (estimates of ranges):

Boston

\$40,000 to \$200,000

New York

\$75,000 to \$250,000

San Francisco

\$15,000 to \$75,000

Chicago

\$20,000 to \$80,000

Source: USA TODAY research

By Adrienne Lewis, USA TODAY

ple who live in Beacon Hill."

Many motorists opt to rent parking spaces. But for those willing and able to buy, space is more often sold along with a condominium. The value is reflected in the overall cost of the unit — although the parking space can be priced separately, experts say.

In Lower Manhattan's Grabler Building, where lofts sell for \$1,295,000 to just less than \$3 million, each of the 14 parking spots costs \$169,000.

"I have to tell you that the parking places are as sought after as the lofts," says Barrie Mandel of the Corcoran Group, a real estate firm. "People are enamored with the idea they can own a space in their own building."

In San Francisco, parking spaces can range in price from \$15,000 in some neighborhoods to \$75,000 in such upscale enclaves as Russian Hill and Pacific Heights, says John McInerney, managing broker for TRI/Coldwell Banker.

At the city's Four Seasons, which has condominiums above the famous hotel, a single parking spot goes for \$35,000, while two tandem spots — one behind the other — sell for \$50,000, says Janet Krahling, a sales associate with

TRI/Coldwell Banker. Spaces also come with a storage locker and valet service.

In Boston, a tandem spot in an alley will cost you at least \$40,000 — and the only prerequisite is having a piece of pavement to call your own, says Taylor of LINK.

"Parking is worth so much money because if you don't have it, you'll pay anything for it," says Richard Golembeski, a Boston real estate broker. He says prices really skyrocketed after a foreclosure sale two summers ago in which two parking spaces reportedly sold for \$173,000 and \$180,000.

In comparison, a spot in Chicago's Field Harbor garage may look like a real bargain.

Many who are buying the spaces see them as investments. "We're selling it one stall at a time," says Delaney, who acknowledges that offering the spaces, which are not attached to condominiums, is a bit novel.

"I tell my friends I'm selling parking spaces and they can't believe it," says Paulette Rodriguez, who is helping oversee the sales and marketing of the Field Harbor spots. "But it's fun, because it's low maintenance. I don't have to worry about the carpet or the granite."