

# FUTURE TALK

## Will driverless cars bring the demise of the garage door? A debate on the future of the industry

**A**t the 2018 International Builders Show (IBS) in Orlando, Mark Boud presented some stunning predictions that affect the garage door industry.

Boud, who is senior vice president and chief economist of Metrostudy, presented the National Housing Forecast at IBS. He warned that homebuilders must be prepared for a “paradigm shift” coming to the housing industry.

### The thesis

“Driverless cars [will] have a big impact on our industry,” he said, as he discussed how this new technology will change the design of our homes.

“There’s a lot of talk that garages [will] shrink,” he said, noting that a typical 2,000-sq.-ft. home might soon have no garage or just a one-car garage that becomes a hobby space or living area.

“When you come to your house in your car, your car drops you off,” he predicted. “You hit a little button on your app, and your car goes and parks itself at an off-site parking facility that’s probably going to be controlled by the homeowners’ association.”

### Future shock

In other words, the future home may not have a garage. And if there’s no garage, there’s no garage door. Say goodbye to the garage door industry.

Residential garage door manufacturers will go out of business. Those left will have to shift their focus to the commercial/industrial market. For door dealers, their residential business will end up focusing solely on garage door service work until the remaining homes seal up their car-less garages.

To initiate further discussion on this (shocking) prediction, I engaged in a short debate with Jean-Francois Morin of Garaga.

### Debate: Wadsworth refutes the thesis



**TW:** Will people really be willing to park their cars at an off-site location, away from their homes? Assuming that they will continue to own a car (driverless or not), I think they will want to keep their \$20,000-\$30,000 investment under their own roof, not the homeowner’s association’s or anybody else’s.

*continued on page 71*



Plus, I doubt that people will prefer to be dropped off outside their garage-less homes. I think they will prefer to have their usual garage that shelters them (and their car) when they exit the vehicle. Because of cold winters, hot summers, and rainy weather, I think that people will gladly hang onto their garages—and their garage doors.

**“I doubt that people will prefer to be dropped off outside their garage-less homes.”**

**— Tom Wadsworth**

And when someone wants to run to the store (or wherever), will they want to wait for their driverless car to arrive, and then run out into the weather and hop in?

In short, I have a hard time believing that “driverless cars” = “no garages.” I see few benefits to killing the garage. Rather, I see a loss of many valued conveniences, such as shelter for the car (and stuff) and a protected arrival space for the homeowner.

The scenario of driverless cars dropping off humans at their homes might apply to city dwellers. But most of them don’t have a garage—or a garage door—now. In short, I don’t see people getting rid of their cars or their garages.

**Debate: Morin says, “Not so fast.”**



**JFM:** I think you underestimate the potential for fewer personal vehicles. Today’s younger generation has already demonstrated a diminished desire for personal cars.

As time goes by, I think they will prefer the low cost of public transportation (buses, subways, trains) and ride-sharing by Uber and

Lyft. This will be true in cities and suburbs, which are growing and becoming more densely populated. This will result in fewer personal vehicles and fewer garages.

In addition, custom-built homes are becoming less popular, home ownership is declining, and condos and apartment buildings are increasing. Again, this means fewer garages.

In the areas outside of cities and suburbs, it’s well documented that lot sizes are becoming smaller. The garage space is increasingly being used for storage, pushing the car outside. So, whether you live in cities, suburbs, or rural areas, garages are becoming less important.

So, “driverless cars = no garages” could be true in the very near future. ■

**“The garage space is increasingly being used for storage, pushing the car outside.”**

**— Jean-Francois Morin**

*What do you think? This is an important conversation that affects us all.*

*Send your thoughts to the editor at [trw@tomwadsworth.com](mailto:trw@tomwadsworth.com).*

*Jean-Francois Morin has been with Garaga since 1986. He holds a bachelor’s degree, and he served as Garaga’s sales and marketing director for 23 years. He is now semi-retired.*

*Tom Wadsworth worked in marketing for Raynor from 1989 to 1999 and has been the editor of this magazine since 1999. He holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees and is now a doctoral student.*

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