

# The Good Neighbour Guide: For Use of Security Cameras on Private Residential Property

Property owners/occupants may choose to use security cameras for a number of reasons, such as identifying visitors and ensuring the security of delivered packages. However, it is important that cameras are installed and used in a way that considers potential privacy concerns of residents and neighbours in the surrounding neighbourhood.

This document is designed to provide guidance to property owners/occupants who have installed or are considering installing a security camera on their property by outlining best practices to keep in mind.

## What is a security camera?

For the purposes of this document, a security camera is defined as any technology that records visual footage, including still (photos) and moving (video), on private property in residential settings. This document does not address the use of security cameras in public spaces or private spaces owned by commercial, industrial and retail enterprises.

Security cameras may include "doorbell" cameras (for example, Google Nest and Ring) and other cameras that can be installed inside or outside the home for the purposes of recording footage outside. The technology may or may not record sound and/or include analytics such as facial recognition.

## Why are guidelines needed?

Providing guidelines is a helpful way to educate residents on best practices for the use of security cameras in residential private settings. These practices are aimed at ensuring that the privacy of residents and others is respected, and taken into consideration in the installation and use of security cameras. Privacy is a human right and necessary for human dignity, and people have an expectation of privacy in their home.

## Best practices for property owners/occupants:

The City of Toronto encourages property owners/occupants to consider the following best practices when installing and using security cameras on their property:

1. Property owners/occupants should make their best efforts to ensure that the camera only records footage of the property owned or rented by the occupant. The camera should be installed and operated in a way that does not capture footage or sound beyond the boundaries of the owner/occupant's property.
2. Property owners/occupants should locate and operate the camera in a way that respects the privacy of others, and consider whether less invasive alternatives are available (for example, minimizing the amount of footage being captured by turning the camera off during certain times of day).
3. Property owners/occupants should consider posting notice, such as a small sign near the camera, informing residents and visitors that video recording is taking place.

4. Property owners/occupants should give consideration to the storage and retention of video footage, such as deleting records on a regular basis and storing in a secure location with limited user access. For example, the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario suggests a retention period of 72 hours for the institutions it oversees, which provides a sufficient window of time to determine if an incident has occurred and if footage may be relevant.
5. Property owners/occupants may also want to take steps to limit cybersecurity threats, such as hacking that puts recorded footage at risk. For example, creating strong passwords (for example, using a long, complex password and storing it in a password manager if needed), and enabling two-factor authentication where possible.

### **What should residents do if they have concerns?**

If residents feel that their neighbour's camera has been installed and operated in a way that captures footage beyond the owner/occupant's property, they should consider speaking with the neighbour directly to give them an opportunity to correct the issue.

If a dispute arises and cannot be resolved, residents can access mediation services at St. Stephen's Community House through a referral by the City of Toronto's Municipal Licensing and Standards division. For more information about these services, please contact XXX-XXX-XXXX.