



STAFF REPORT

Title: Downtown Commercial Area Parking

Meeting Date: November 19, 2018

Executive Summary:

Administration was requested to host an open house for the downtown business community to discuss options to address parking requirements for downtown businesses. A summary of the feedback and suggestions for moving forward are provided.

Background:

Administration was requested to host an open house for the downtown business community in response to concerns regarding the off-street parking requirements for new or expanded businesses within the downtown area. An open house was held on February 6, 2019 at the Best Western Hotel from 3:00pm-6:30pm. Invitations were mailed to all property owners, hand-delivered to most downtown businesses, and sent via email by the Chamber of Commerce to its members. A total of 12 persons attended.

The open house presented four options for moving forward, ranging from most prescriptive to least prescriptive, and based on approaches used in other communities. The options are summarized below:

Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo

- Under this option, new or expanded businesses in the downtown would continue to be required to provide the same amount of on-site parking as businesses in other parts of the City
- Advantages:
 - Keeps parking requirements consistent for all businesses throughout the City, regardless of location
 - Reduces pressure on on-street parking to accommodate demand
- Disadvantages:
 - Businesses in the downtown typically do not have land available to provide additional parking
 - May make the downtown area less attractive for new businesses or business expansion



Option 2: Blanket Parking Reduction for Downtown Businesses

- Under this option, new or expanded businesses in the downtown would be required to provide a reduced amount of on-site parking as compared to businesses in other parts of the City. In other communities, such a reduction in parking requirements range between 30%-60%.
- Advantages:
 - Reduces the requirement to provide on-site parking, which may make the downtown more attractive to new businesses
 - Reduces a potential barrier for existing businesses wishing to expand
- Disadvantages:
 - May put increased pressure on on-street parking
 - Potential impact to other businesses that have on-site parking
 - May be perceived as an unfair advantage by businesses outside the downtown

Option 3: Vary Parking Requirements Based on Business Scale

- Under this option, reduction of on-site parking requirements would be based on the size of the business; so smaller businesses that have less impact on parking have a lower requirement, while larger businesses, that potentially have a bigger impact, would be required to provide more parking.
- Advantages:
 - Reduces the requirement to provide on-site parking, which may make the downtown more attractive to new businesses
 - Reduces a potential barrier for existing businesses wishing to expand
- Disadvantages:
 - May put increased pressure on on-street parking
 - Potential impact to other businesses that have on-site parking
 - May be perceived as an unfair advantage by businesses outside the downtown

Option 4: Eliminate On-Site Parking Requirements for Downtown Businesses

- Under this option, new or expanded businesses in the downtown would not be required to provide any on-site parking
- Advantages:
 - Removes a barrier to locating new or expanded businesses in the downtown area



- May make some developments viable in the downtown that would not be otherwise
- Easy to administer
- Disadvantages:
 - On-street parking would need to accommodate all demand
 - Potential impact to other businesses that have on-site parking
 - May be perceived as an unfair advantage by businesses outside the downtown
 - Shifts the responsibility to provide parking from the business owner to the City

Based on the discussions with attendees and the feedback received, it appears that a less-prescriptive approach was desired, with Option 4 being the most preferred and Option 3 as the second choice. Several other questions were posed in the survey:

Question 2: Do you think stricter enforcement of the existing two-hour parking time limit would help improve the parking situation in the downtown?

Yes: 9% No: 91%

Question 3: Do you think developing the spaces behind downtown buildings to accommodate more parking for business owners and their employees would help improve the parking situation in the downtown?

Yes: 90% No: 10%

Question 4: Should the City invest in additional off-street parking in the downtown?

Yes: 82% No: 18%

Moving Forward

Administration recognizes the challenges that new or expanded businesses in the downtown area face in meeting the current parking requirements of the Land Use Bylaw. Downtown areas are not designed or intended to accommodate large volumes of vehicle traffic or parking. Administration would, therefore, recommend that the Land Use Bylaw be amended to eliminate on-site parking requirements for small-to-medium sized businesses, but that some requirements remain in place to guard against unintended consequences.

In other communities that have reduced or eliminated parking requirements in their downtown, Administration has observed some limitations:



- Many downtowns, including Cold Lake, have provisions allowing for mixed commercial/residential developments. In these cases parking is still required for the residential component of the development, as the residents would have no other alternative, other than to park on the street if on-site parking was not provided.
- Some communities list specific uses for which parking will still be required, typically those that will have a particularly high parking demand.
- In some cases, the elimination of parking is tied to the size or capacity of the business, either floor area or seating capacity. Administration has observed a cut off in the 930m²-1,850m² (10,000ft²-20,000ft²) range. The intent is to ensure that larger businesses which will have a significant impact on parking continue to meet a minimum standard while small-to-medium-sized businesses that have a lesser impact do not require parking.

Typically, where a municipality wishes to establish varied regulations within a defined area, particularly where multiple zoning districts are involved, an overlay is created to provide modified requirements within that defined area. Administration recommends that an overlay be created for the defined downtown area and, for consistency, the Lakeshore Commercial Area which would modify/eliminate parking requirements for businesses in these areas. A draft overlay is presented to facilitate discussion.

In the event that the committee wishes to proceed with the creation of an overlay to modify the parking requirements in the downtown and Lakeshore areas, it is recommended that the existing Section 10.9 of the Land Use Bylaw, which currently provides parking exceptions in these areas, be deleted.

Alternatives:

For Discussion.

Recommended Action:

For information.

Budget Implications (Yes or No):

No.

Submitted by:

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