City of Nelson Downtown Parking Strategy – January/February 2019 Public Survey

Summary Report

Between January 24th and February 18th, 2019, around 903 responses were received to Nelson's initial downtown parking strategy online survey, entitled "Share Your Ideas".
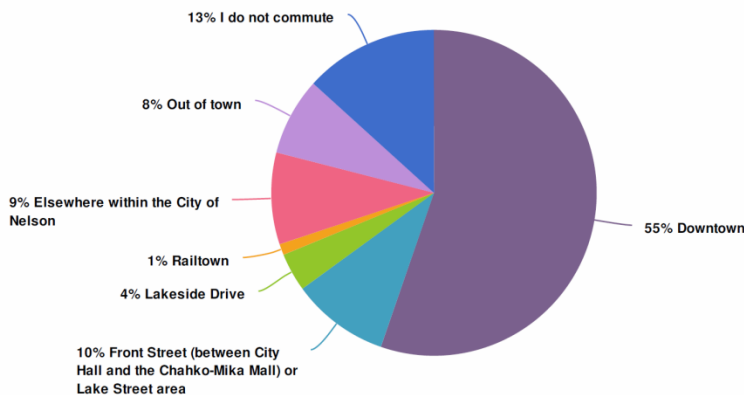
Who Responded?

68% of respondents report living within City limits. Approx. 12% of all respondents live within the downtown area.

> **Do Respondents Park Downtown?**
> A slight majority "rarely" park downtown for more than four hours at a time during parking enforcement hours.
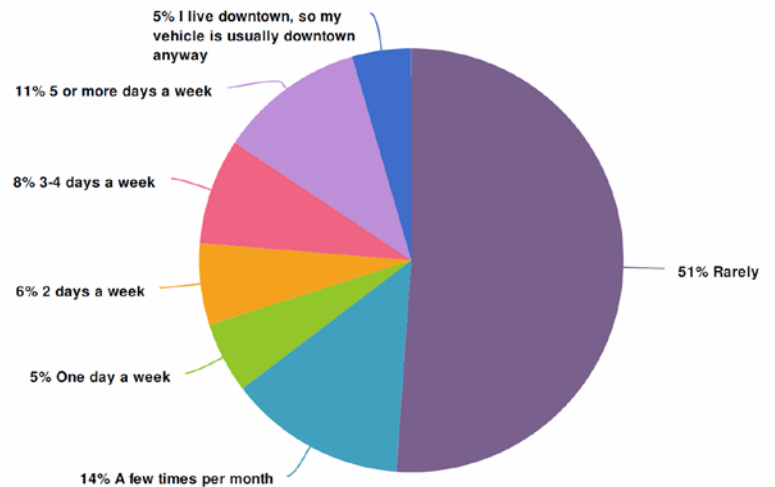
Over half of respondents commute to the downtown most days:

> Most days, just over half of respondents commute by car (alone or with others). 23% of respondents typically use alternative transport to commute or a combination of means that included walking or transit, with cycling being common in the summer. The majority of respondents make use of other means of transport at least once per week.

"What do you think is working well, or well enough, with respect to parking in and around downtown Nelson?"

45% of responses to this question were positive.

- 24% of all respondents said that parking is overall adequate in the downtown.
- 10% appreciate the current parking meter durations, and the variety of meter durations (i.e. 15-min., 2-hour, all-day, etc.).

- 8% said that they can usually find parking within a reasonable distance of their destination.

31% were written in a more neutral tone, pointing out particular aspects that they appreciate.

- 13% appreciated the new parking spaces recently created downtown, as well as the new angle parking and the new paid commuter parking.
- 6% appreciate the availability of some free parking still.
- 4% like the new paystation and the ability to pay with cards.

23% said that they think nothing is working well.

> *Nothing is working. If it was working...we wouldn't be talking about it.*

> *I feel that the city caters too much to parking. I understand that people are upset and want more BUT I personally feel we should almost have less and not make it so available. I use my car every day because of convenience. I should walk more and many others should too.*

> *I don't think what we have now is working. … I have been in businesses where one employee has said "I am going out to plug me meter anyone else need there's plugged."*

> *Finding parking is rarely difficult…. I personally have never seen a beautiful community with a vibrant core that has a ton of parking. The very nature of a person centric downtown area mean that real estate for vehicle parking is minimal. I think nelson could do with less parking than it currently has and still thrive.*

> *Too many residential parking spots that are empty during the day and could be used by the workers that have to commute and park in Nelson during business hours*

> *I have lived both in and out of town. I think that parking is fine, it's the people that need to shift their ideas around convenience. … Walking should become more of a normal alternative. What DOES need to change is our public transit. I have heard multiple people say they drive because our transit is so out of whack.*

> *Nothing, you have increased rates so people now park in residential spots to avoid paying your high fees, you remove parking spots for wasteful renovations on streets, you poorly design parking lots for aesthetic reasons and not to maximize spots. You could easily reduce the charge but then increase the timetable to include 9 pm to catch dinner service to offset the revenue loss, while driving people back to paid spots instead of my front yard.*

> *metered parking is still reasonably affordable for a town the size of nelson. we have a parkade which I don't use but most small towns don't have one! and its a nice option. we have 2 hour free parking within blocks of downtown which is great. just do a couple laps and there's always a spot.*

> *I don't think you're doing enough (or visibly, anything to be honest) to encourage people to get to downtown by means other than vehicle. Bike- and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and incentives are the solution to the parking problem, IMO.*

> *I think the current arrangements work fine. I can usually find a parking spot and the traffic in the city seems manageable. As someone who lives out of town in an area with inadequate bus service I rely on a car to get into town. The current situation, with ample affordable parking in the downtown area, is very welcome. If parking was less available (or significantly more expensive) I would likely skip the downtown for the mall.*

"And what isn't working? In your opinion, what are the top 5 parking issues in Nelson? (Leave blank if unsure)"

The most common theme was the lack of commuter, all-day parking, which was cited by the vast majority of respondents. There was lots of interest in a shuttle or park-and-ride system. There was also tension between City of Nelson residents and non-residents, often with each group believing that they should have easy or free parking whereas the other should have to pay.

- 90 people (10% of total respondents to the survey) said that parking is too expensive and/or should be free.
- 86 people (10% of total respondents) want better transit.
- 74 (8% of total respondents) want better bike infrastructure.
- 66 (7% of total respondents) said that long trucks (often with snowmobiles) parked in angle stalls are a problem.

Other responses supported by at least 30 respondents:

Need better snow clearing, esp. for sidewalks	There are too many cars and/or keep more cars out of downtown
Keep commuters' cars out of downtown core	Bylaw Enforcement not strict enough (esp. in Uphill)
Parking is too easy and/or too cheap in Nelson	Angled parking is dangerous
Unhappy with paystation	Bylaw Enforcement too strict (and tickets too expensive)
There are too many patios taking up parking	

> ❝❞ *Ineffectual parking violation fines. People just laugh at getting a parking ticket in the "2 hr only" parking zones...and why wouldn't they when they get to park there all day for months but get ticketed seldom. It's the cheapest "paid parking" in town! I have my principle residence at* ▮ *Vernon St & pay sizeable taxes to the City. However, I do not have off street parking. In recognition that a healthy downtown core area will only remain that way with a mix of commercial and residential properties I ask that the city provide clear direction thru the signage mentioned above and also install "residential parking only" in front of the residences east of the yellow deli, along with "no idle" signage as Nelson is an idle free city. People need to be reminded of that!*

"To prepare a strategy, we need to talk about solutions. ... One goal of the strategy could be more reliable, better allocated parking, so that people know where they can go to find parking and they can be sure that a parking space will be waiting for them there. Do you agree?"
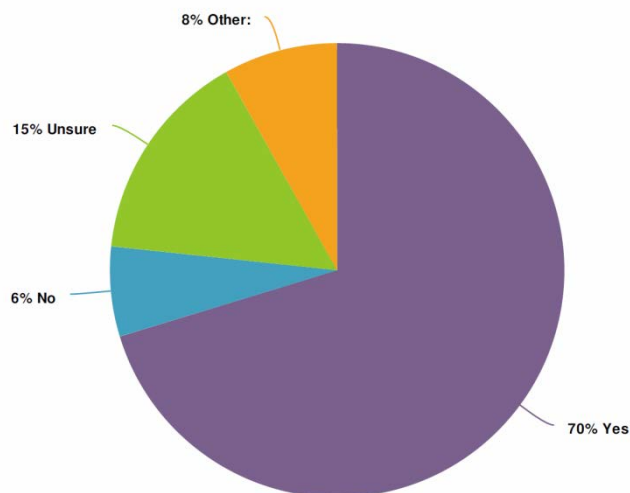
Of the 69 "other" responses, the most common theme was to invest in improving transit, walking, and cycling infrastructure.

"What makes sense for commuter parking? What are your thoughts on where and how downtown workers should park, and at what price?"

There was a fairly even split between those who are calling for free versus paid commuter parking.

The most common answers to this open-ended question were the following (percentages are of total respondents):

Designated commuter parking out of downtown	20%
Park and ride	18%
Build new parkade, without increasing taxes (user-fees)	11%
Don't spend on parking, but transit and alternative transport	9%
$5 daily rate is good	7%
Promote 'airbnbing' private parking	2%
Status quo / new parking provision should be left to private sector	2%

- *Build more parking out of core, keep cars out of core and do shuttle*

- *As someone who is guitly of this i feel really bad parking in front of people's houses etc. But i'm honestly left with no option! i love this discussion and hope the city can work towards a solution for the benefit of ALL*

- *More buses. Please do NOT encourage more driving.*

- *We need a parkade; I am not exactly a believer of the estimated costs of a parkade @ $20-30k per spot. That cost seems to me inflated by the private sector, who would be building the parkade; the City is a captive client.*

- *$5 per day for a day rate is far too inexpensive.*

- *Downtown workers help keep our downtown alive and help business owners stay in business.*

- *Don't care. That's the businesses problem for their employees. Tax payers shouldn't be paying for that*

- *Ask homeowners with off street parking to rent their space to downtown workers.*

- *Like the day rate spots. Would prefer the city not spend MILLIONS to build a parkade. If that money needs to be spent, spend it on transit and bike infrastructure and charge a premium for parking spaces.*

- *Employers and city should provide incentive for ridesharing and purchase carshare memberships for their staff to use their vehicles for errands needed during the day.*

- *The business owners should be prepared to see their staff get to and from work if they want customer allocated parking for their revenue.*

- *I think transit needs to become a quality option for commuters. More buses, streamlined routes, running longer. I do not like the idea of paying $5 a day to go to work. I travel from out of town and already pay in gas to get to work. $25/week, or $100/month affects my budget too much as I don't get paid especially well. I will always need a free spot to park to make working in Nelson viable.*

"Do you think that commuter/employee parking should be ... (Check all that apply)"

Most "other" responses were in favour of free parking. There was a key interest in diversity of options: some reservable parking, some not, and some all-day and some 4-hour parking for part-time workers.

made available/charged on an hourly basis? (Only pay for the amount of time you use)		25.8%	214
made available/charged on a daily basis? (Only pay for the days you use, without paying days when you do not drive)		49.3%	409
made available/charged on a monthly permit basis?		45.7%	379
reservable?		24.5%	203
first-come-first-serve?		22.3%	185
sold using an online/smartphone permit platform?		41.0%	340
physical paper permits sold at City Hall?		18.6%	154
Other ideas:		18.7%	155
Unsure		10.5%	87

❝ *Don't make it so easy such that reservable spots sit vacant while occasional users get shut out.*

❝ *Free permits for residential city of Nelson's property owners who can prove they work full time downtown. I pay enough in taxes to pay the same to park as tourists and RDCK peeps.*

❝ *Don't increase the quantity of parking downtown, as it reduces incentives to take other modes of transportation.*

"What do you think about using parking revenue to invest in more frequent public transit and park-and-ride in Nelson?"

- 13% Unsure
- 7% Other:
- 11% I don't like this idea
- 69% I like this idea
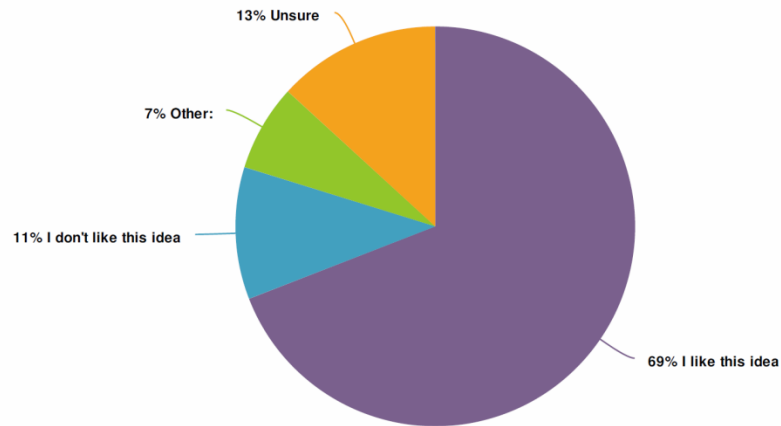
❝ *I love this idea, it makes sense. as nelson is such a mini big city.,.. you have to resort to an urban solution to this problem as this town is busting out at the seems*

❝ *I like the idea in principle but I am unsure how practical it use, such as will it actually be used if implemented (people may say they will use it, but when it really comes down to it convenience of your own vehicle is hard to give up), and would this money be better spent on additional parking options at or near the downtown core?*

"Do you have ideas on how to make park-and-ride and transit attractive and cost-efficient for our city?"
Respondents generally expressed that park-and-ride needs to be <u>free and frequent</u>, with bus or shuttle service running every 10 to 30 minutes, with peak hours between 8am and 9am and then 4pm and 6pm. Many people suggested that small shuttle buses or vans should be used instead of full-sized buses; ideally, they would be electric. There is lots of interest in having secured bike parking at the park-and-ride where regular commuters can store their bicycle, so that some ride buses and others ride bikes into town.

Other ideas included:

- Use and improve existing bus routes that integrate with park-and-ride
- "Ask downtown businesses to chip in", because they will benefit from more available parking for customers
- Have a quality carpool website and incentives for carpooling

❝ *Must be SUPER easy to use and SUPER convenient. Faster to take than it takes to find a parking spot.*

❝ *For regulars coming into the city to work and attend to errands the park and ride seems like an extra step to their day. Many will find this a hassle and most likely avoid it. Increasing the bus routes and perhaps giving discounted rates on bus fare/passes to those who work in the downtown / city area would be an appeal.*

❝ *Work with Rideshare (I'm involved in this project) to create a commuter app for connecting commuters so they can share rides between home and the park-and-ride, and from the park-and-ride downtown.*

❝ *Park and ride seems to me the only viable solution. If it were in Railtown, most commuters could walk to downtown. It would be beneficial to the Chamber too.   In a historical city, I cannot see another option. Nelson is wonderful for all the reasons that make it challenging. Cars and traffic are ugly, no need to clog up downtown by trying to add more parking.*

❝ *Free bus tickets for park and ride users would probably cost less that maintaining downtown parking with attendant monitoring and meter costs and encourage people to use the bus. Also more bike racks that are secure. Bike and pedestrian paths and trails might help and create an attractive alternative to driving. The roads into downtown either have heavy traffic or you have to cross highways which is a big disencentive to bike or walk. Also snow removal from side walks is important.*

❝ *Make parking downtown expensive, so that drivers have a reason to leave parking spots earlier and allow others to use them; start consistently ticketing those who park in 2-hour parking areas in the Uphill areas surrounding Baker Street for longer than 2 hours.*

"Do you have any tips on under-utilised parking spaces, or parking that could be better and more efficiently managed? Where could we easily add more parking or make small changes to make parking better? Do you have any other street- or block-specific suggestions?"
Dozens of individual situations were raised by this question that staff will look into further.

❝ *Add $5/day commuter parking in the 700-block of Victoria Street (near KSA), as you did on Cedar.*

❝ *Improve pedestrian access/lighting to Railtown*

❝ *I think the angle parking on Baker St is a big problem. There is not enough room and big trucks always park there, making the street too narrow, blocking sight lines and it is unsafe for cyclists.*

- ❝❞ *marked parking spaces on side streets so that space isn't wasted.*

- ❝❞ *Maybe residents who are away most of the day could 'rent' out their parking permits using an online application*

- ❝❞ *Areas where there are businesses with large parking lots should leave them open to the public during their closed hours. People going to eat out in the evening should be able to park in the bank parking lots.*

- ❝❞ *Encourage and subsidize car sharing everywhere that gets rid of a bunch of cars.*

- ❝❞ *Add more places to lock up a bike.*

- ❝❞ *Victoria, Silica, Carbonate and Mill Street home owners should be encouraged to park in the lanes (on their property) and the city could support that by maintaining those lanes properly. If you are able to park back there great, you must do so. Perhaps an incentive of a tax discount for creating parking in their back yards. The same thought for front yards. Better use of space in the close to downtown urban area will become a must and lawns are not a good use of space.*

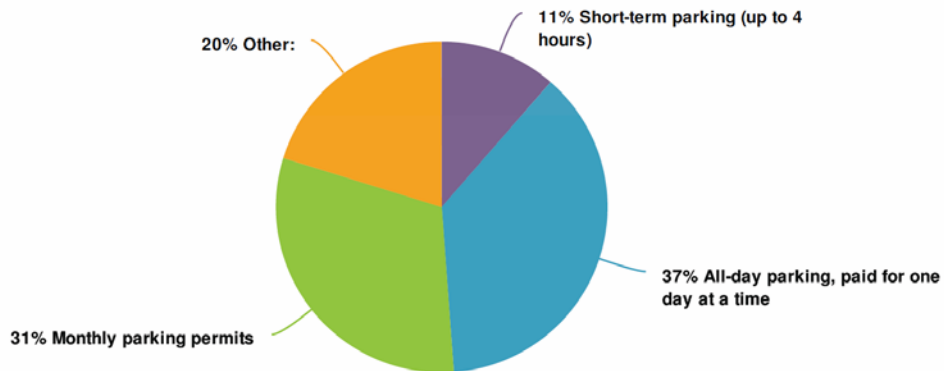## "Do you ever use [the parkade]?"
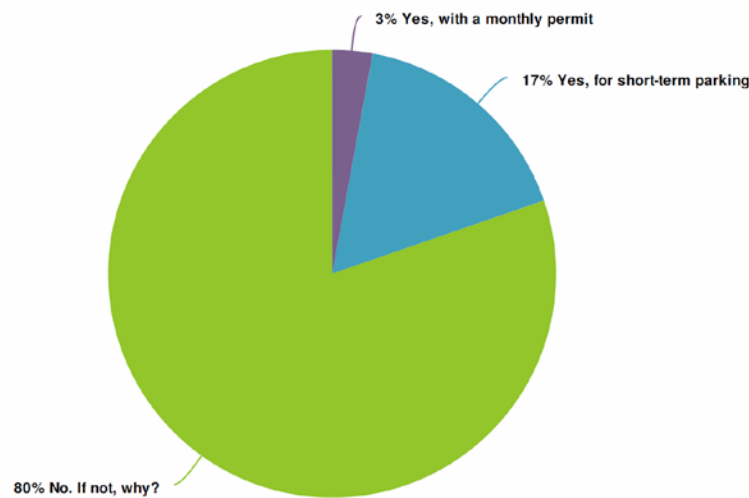
Common responses for why not:
- "It's a non-inviting building to say the least. A bit dark and scary."
- "I used it on occasion, but it became so regularly full that I stopped checking."
- "I'd rather walk than pay"

"Do you think that the parkade should be used primarily for"

"Other" responses were generally "all of the above": in support of a mix of all options.

Many respondents expressed frustration with the current monthly permit situation, as people see many empty parking spaces despite the parkade being fully sold out:

> *Users have had permits for years not fair make it buy use every month to let more drivers have chance at getting a spot*

> *Too many empty monthly spaces not being utilized that could be used for daily.*

There is also an interest in beautification of the parkade, calling it a "huge eyesore".

> *It needs a green wall or beautification along the front, it's a huge eyesore.*

> *Is there bike parking in there? An EV charging station? If not, why not?*

> *From a female perspective, one feels isolated and unsafe in the parkade, even during the day.*

> *Would like to avoid another one due to cost and how they aren't the most attractive*

> *Id prefer to see such services provided by the private sector and the fees for parking to reflect the cost of providing that service*

> *The parkade seems like it's always empty, even when there's a sold out sign. How many lots are sold monthly in here? Seems crazy that there's such huge parking congestion in town but this parkade sits mostly empty most of the time. There really should not be any monthly parking available. It should be more of a daily or hourly parkade.*

> *Have a sign that tells you how many spaces are free so do not have to drive all levels*

"Do you live on a block with "2hr Parking" or "Resident Only" parking, where residents require a parking permit?"
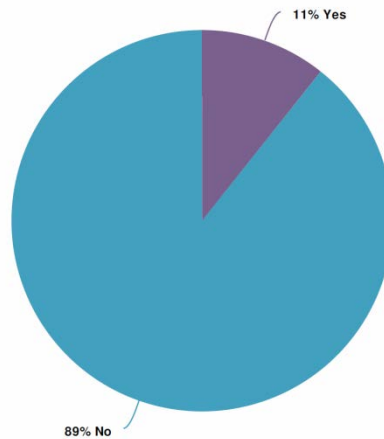
"Overall, do you agree with the current residential parking permit program?"
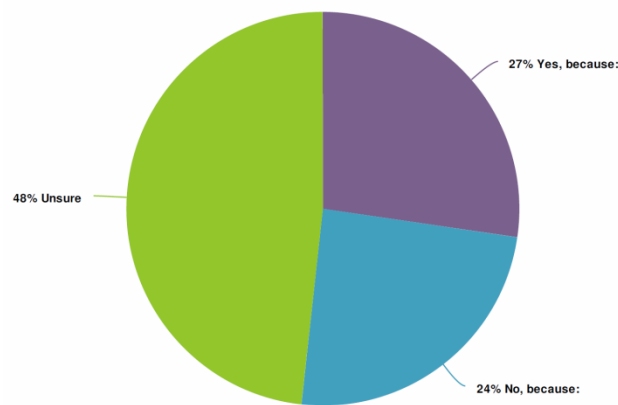
Of those who <u>agree</u> with the current policy, about 90% like it because they think it's fair and about 7% like it because they see it as a disincentive to own a second vehicle.

> ❝❞ *It is currently working, but the permits should not be free. There should be a charge for them. Say $25-$30 per year helps with some revenue that should go into road maintenance.*

> ❝❞ *It seems like a good balance between providing parking for downtown visitors and residents.*

> ❝❞ *one permit per unit if fair and reasonable. Units with off-street parking should not be issued parking passes as homes without off-street parking have priority*

> ❝❞ *this allows some free street parking while still protecting some spots for local residents, which is often a good compromise*

> ❝❞ *It promotes a limit on the amount of cars the city takes responsibility to accommodate. If people want more cars it should up to them to figure it out-There are consequences to owning a vehicle. And it isn't an automatic right to be able to park more than one vehicle in front of your house, or even on your street*

Of those who <u>disagree</u> with the current policy, 30% want to allow for more permits per household, 10% said that the current system is bureaucratic or otherwise undesirable, 9% want to limit the number of permits issued per block (no overbooking), and 6% believe that people should be responsible for providing private off-street parking and not rely on street parking.

Other suggestions include: more frequent parking enforcement in residential areas, not restricting residential permits to a specific block, plowing alleys in order to maintain winter access to off-street parking, and better accommodation of residents' guests.

> *Residential on street parking permits should not be free of charge. Also, it is now common for multiple, adult roommates to share a house, with new roommates often here for only a season or two. So, on street parking should not be free of charge and shouldn't be limited to 1 permit per household, but should instead permit up to one driver to have one on-street parking space for a single licensed vehicle. So, if there are 4 drivers with a total of 4 cars, there would be 4 paid permits.*

> *Don't issue permits when there is no space*

> *It penalizes people who have off street parking and rewards those that don't.*

> *Landlords sell or use the parking to others or themselves that don't reside at the residence*

> *Residential on-street parking should not be free of charge, it should be a pay-per-use system if people decide to have a vehicle. There should be as many paid permits per household as are required, but they should be paid for individually per vehicle.*

> *Nobody should be able to store cars on-street, use storage facilities for that*

Of the 11% who indicated that they live in a residential parking permit area:

- 49% do not agree with the current policy
- 29% agree with the current policy
- 17% are unsure

Opinions of those who live on a residential permit block

	Agree	Disagree
Only one permit per household	43%	51%
Only issue a permit if that household has no off-street parking at all	51%	38%
Residential parking permits should be free	81%	10%
There should be no limit to the number of permits issued	40%	37%

"Do you have ideas on how to improve the residential parking permit system to better meet people's needs and ensure that they have a parking space to come home to?"
The consensus amongst respondents is to limit the number of permits issued per block and to consider issuing second or even third permits if space is available (after ensuring that each household has at least one permit, even if they have one off-street parking stall).

Other ideas include:

- Improve visitor parking (perhaps 1-hour) and have some designated commuter parking on blocks that can handle it. Issue each household a handful of visitor day passes per year.
- Issue a second class of residential permits that are not valid Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm.
- Improve lane access in the winter, or have winter-only permits in some cases.
- Making one side of the street residential-only and the other side available for visitors and commuters.

> *charging for residential parking permits would promote building more off-street parking*

> *You choose a house with no parking that's your choice. I do t think we need to guarantee parking*

- *They shouldn't be free. Their houses are valued less because they do not have parking.*

- *Up to two permits per household. So families with two vehicles (common) and only one or no off-street parking space can still efficiently park two vehicles. NO PARKING in Uphill without a permit, thereby forcing commuters to use park-and-ride or use pay-to-park spaces downtown.*

- *Allow more than one residential parking permit per unit/household. Housing is so expensive here in Nelson. Many people have roommates that need resdential parking as well.*

- *I often have trouble parking on my street due to people WITHOUT permits parking there. Bylaw needs to come by more often and ticket/tow those with no permit so that residents actually have the ability to park on their own block.*

- *Having resident only spots sit empty all day needs to stop!*

- *There absolutely needs to be a limit on the number of permits issued for an area because it is ridiculous for there to be more permits than spaces on some blocks. There needs to be more parking tickets given out and at higher prices to prevent people who don't have a permit getting away with taking up spots that are needed for residents. Residents need free and reliable parking that can't be taken up by people who are going downtown*

- *It's more equitable if all residents are charged for parking permits. Residents that live on the edges of town drive to work shouldn't be expected to pay for parking that other residents get for free (especially because they already live within a closer walking distance to all amenities).*

- *Ensure? Needs? - No. I think the expectation of being somehow entitled to park on the street and not only that but outside ones home needs to shift. These are outdated small-town expectations even before one adjusts the view to consider Nelsons 2050 Climate Zero Carbon Strategy*

- *make 1 side resident only if enough residents in that block. Other side 2-3 hr for commuters.*

"What are your thoughts on the use of parking technology in Nelson? For example, paystations replacing coin-operated parking meters, online parking permits, or pay-by-phone."

The consensus amongst respondents was to implement pay-by-phone technology and to not rely on only one way to pay. Lots of respondents are not pleased with the current Hall Street pay station and say that if the City is to have pay stations, there needs to be more of them so that they are easier to get to.

- *Pay stations work if they're close to the parking spot. If you have to cross a street to use one, they become challenging.*

- *love the convinance of getting out of car and paying the meter right there.*

- *Is it necessary? Is there a strong cost/benefit argument for it? Seems like unnecessary expensive infrastructure.*

"Do you have any final comments or ideas for improving downtown parking?"

See full survey report