

## **Downtown Parking Strategy**

April 6, 2017

### **Committed to the Economic Vitality of the Downtown**

As the commercial and cultural heart of Nelson, the City of Nelson is committed to ensuring that the downtown continues to be vibrant and progressive. A sustainable parking strategy is fundamental to creating a positive downtown experience for residents, businesses, tourists and shoppers. The City has been assessing the parking needs for the downtown (Downtown Parking Study, August 2016), and is developing this parking strategy to enhance the residential and commercial activities in the downtown and support a healthy, safe, convenient, inviting and friendly downtown.

The City of Nelson has 1,529 on-street parking stalls (including 191 in the parkade) in the downtown core parking area. In addition, there are over 1,300 stalls located in private, off-street parking lots situated throughout the core area.

In a parking study undertaken in August 2016, it was determined that the average occupancy of public stalls throughout the entire downtown core parking area was an average of 75%, however key locations on Baker, Vernon, Victoria, Kootenay and Josephine Streets were well over 85% during the hours of 10am to 4pm. Optimal parking stall occupancy is considered to be 85%. At an average of 75% utilization rate, Nelson's downtown core is slightly below optimal use. However, as identified, at certain times of the day and in certain locations, parking is difficult to find and complaints about parking continue to escalate. The main issues related to parking include:

- businesses feel like they are losing sales because customers complain that they can't find a place to park, and shoppers are frustrated because they can't find parking close to where they want to shop
- the one hour parking limit on Baker Street may be an insufficient amount of time for some shoppers
- there are limited places for employees that work in the downtown to park for a full day, so many will park in lower Uphill (two hour zones) and move their vehicles every two hours
- Bylaw Enforcement has old technology and limited resources, resulting in an inability to frequently and effectively enforce parking rules, resulting in use of the zones that was not intended i.e. parking all day in a two hour zone – many of these two hour zones are in residential areas, putting additional pressure on residents who can't find parking close to their homes
- there is a significant amount of two hour parking just outside the downtown that is unpaid, reducing resources that could be going into the parking system
- there is currently limited follow up on those with parking fines, also reducing resources that could be going in the parking system.

*Downtown Core Parking Area*



## **A Sustainable Vision for Nelson's Downtown**

The provision of a new parkade represents a major cost to The City and to residents. Furthermore, the provision of a significant influx of parking could result in reduced efficiency of alternative modes (walking, ridesharing and public transit use), and increased traffic problems. Better parking management with more efficient use of existing parking resources is the focus of this parking strategy. When appropriately applied, parking management can reduce the number of parking spaces required in a particular situation, providing for a variety of economic, social and environmental benefits.

The guiding principles for the development of the parking strategy will:

- provide for more efficient use of existing stalls by providing a more strategic balance of short and long term stalls
- increase parking supply by exploring opportunities for angled parking
- improve parking technology to make it more user friendly and more efficient for Bylaw Enforcement
- focus on the provision of alternative modes of transportation to reduce motor vehicle use
- support and promote residents in the downtown core through the provision of residential parking while still accommodating non-residential users as much as possible
- ensure that the parking system is self-sufficient and sustaining
- promote a safe and inviting downtown parking environment through a comprehensive and inclusive planning process

## **Guiding Principles, Strategies and Actions**

The following identifies the City's key principles in managing parking in Nelson's downtown core area, as well as a series of strategies and actions to achieve these principles:

1. The City will provide a balance of strategically located short and long term parking to support higher turn-over and efficient use of existing parking spaces; and, where possible, develop new short and long term stalls. The City's primary role in parking management should be to provide an appropriate supply of affordable, secure, accessible, and convenient short-term public parking, including the protection of existing on-street space, with a secondary role of governing and planning for long-term parking.
  - Strategy: develop a comprehensive parking zone strategy that provides diverse parking opportunities and structure rates to favor short-term uses in core areas and encourages longer-term parkers to shift to other locations:
    - increase one hour paid parking on Baker Street to two hours to provide for a timeframe that more accurately accommodates peoples' shopping experience/needs
    - increase two hour paid parking zones
      - 400 and 500 blocks of Hall Street
      - at Vernon Street and Kootenay Street
      - look at ability to put in 2 hr paid parking on Vernon Street in front of Le Grande Fromage
      - on Carbonate Street between Stanley and Ward Streets expand the 2 hour restricted parking to south side of the street
      - on the 100 block of Josephine Street (outside of Ellisons)
      - 500 block of Lake Street (north side)
      - 400 block of Falls Street (east side)

- provide for more angled parking in the downtown where possible
  - 700 block of Baker
  - 600 block of Lake Street
  - Lakeside Drive
  - 300 block of Victoria
  - from Downtown Urban Design Strategy (Colin, Megan?), angled parking north side of Baker between Hall and Hendryx; Ward Street between Baker and Silica; east side of Josephine between Baker and Victoria and east side of Stanley between Baker and Silica
- provide for additional 4 hour paid parking zones
  - along Vernon Street from Baker to Kootenay Streets,
  - 100 block of Baker Street,
  - 200 block of Victoria Street,
  - 600 and 700 blocks of Kootenay Street,
  - 200 block of Hall Street,
  - 200 and 400 block of Cedar street
- provide for 8 hr paid parking in key locations to encourage commuter parking for employees and free up parking in the two hour and four hour zones
  - convert parking along Lakeside Drive to angled parking and provide for 8 hr paid parking
  - provide a portion of the paid parking along Lakeside Drive to accommodate airport activities i.e. Baldface, etc.
  - explore potential for 8 hr paid parking in Nelson Curling Club parking lot during the day (offset from use by curlers during the night)
  - provide for 8 hr paid parking on the 700 blocks of Ward and Josephine Streets
  - provide for 8 hr paid parking in Railtown (Coke and Gasworks building vacant lot, along Railtown Street, adjacent to Cottonwood Park)
- vary parking rates by zone i.e. two hour parking along Baker Street and adjacent side streets should be priced higher than four hour zones and 8 hour zones further out
- review need for 15 minute parking stalls; look for potential to convert to two hour paid parking
- review number of church stalls required; look for potential to reduce number of stalls and to restore stalls to public parking full time or days other than Sunday
- look at converting monthly permits to daily permits to maximize use of parking stalls and to encourage alternative modes of transportation
- explore conversion of the City parkade into employee-only parking to reduce on-street stalls being utilized by employees
- explore free or subsidized transit service for downtown employees and discounted or preferential parking for carshare vehicles
- Strategy: provide motorists with current, easily accessible information on parking and travel options in the downtown
  - increased signage and parking map that shows parking options – explore website presence, brochures, etc.
- Strategy: work with owners of public/private parking lots to make use of stalls during off-use hours (i.e. during evenings and weekends)

- allow public parking after hours on surface parking lots (public and private) i.e. City Hall, Central School, WorkSafe BC, etc
    - for private lots, encourage use of incentivized rates for shared use spaces i.e. \$60 per month for a shared space or \$100 for a reserved space
  - Strategy: monitor ongoing parking needs through regular parking surveys that track utilization and turnover rates; adjust rates as needed to maintain optimal utilization (i.e. 85% peak occupancy)
2. Focus on customer service, friendliness and fairness in parking practices by providing options, technologies and information. Parking enforcement is an important tool for managing and maximizing the downtown parking supply. Additional payment options, improved signage, fair practices and real-time information make parking more accessible, easier to find, eases (or lessens) enforcement requirements and supports active business areas and balanced neighbourhoods.
- Strategy: in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and businesses in the downtown core, explore new technology in parking management that enables enforcement officers to manage and enforce short-term parking regulations more frequently, more effectively and more considerately. Improving enforcement and control supports parking management by increasing regulatory and pricing effectiveness.
    - pilot new parking technology in 2017 - implement pay by phone (mobile) parking on the 400 and 500 blocks of Hall Street as a pilot project for 2017
    - replace parking meters with new parking technology in conjunction with infrastructure upgrades (i.e. Baker street infrastructure upgrades over the next five years)
3. Parking will be used to support a balanced transportation system. Parking is part of the larger transportation picture. Inexpensive and plentiful parking will not encourage people to use transit, walk or cycle. Promote, establish, and maintain programs and facilities that encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation including public transit, car/van pooling, taxis, auto sharing, cycling, and walking.
- Strategy: expand dedicated and shared-use bike lanes where possible in alignment with the goals of the Active Transportation Plan, the Railtown Sustainable Neighborhood Plan and the Downtown Urban Design Strategy
    - along Railway Street as per the Railtown Sustainable Neighborhood Plan
    - along laneways and streets in the downtown as identified in the Downtown Urban Design Strategy
  - Strategy: incorporate electric vehicle and electric bike charging stations in the downtown area where possible
    - work with the Community Energy Association to install potentially up to three electric vehicle charging stations in the downtown area
    - over time work to implement the 8 chargers in the downtown area as per the Downtown urban Design Strategy
    - implement requirements for electric bike charging stations, where possible, through new development (i.e. Nelson Commons provision of electric bike outlets as a condition of development)
  - Strategy: improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment and connections throughout the downtown area
    - work to implement the actions in the Downtown Urban Design Strategy and the Railtown Sustainable Neighborhood Plan i.e. increase the quality and number of bicycle

facilities in the downtown including the provision of bicycle storage and changing facilities

- Strategy: encourage transit use over vehicle trips by implementing a pricing strategy that is more favorable to transit (transit trips are currently \$2 per direction, while parking is \$1 per hour)
4. Support and promote residents in the downtown core through the provision of residential parking while still accommodating non-residential users as much as possible.
- Strategy: provide for flexible permitting for streets adjacent to residential in the downtown core
    - on the 900 block of Vernon Street, convert upper half of the block to residential only parking to accommodate for limited off-street parking
    - on the 800 block of Victoria Street, convert the north side to residential parking only to provide for contiguous on-street parking for residential development limited off-street parking
    - continue practice of ensuring that all new dwelling units provide off-street parking
    - continue practice of providing one parking permit per dwelling unit that has no off-street parking and that abuts a restricted parking zone (i.e. residential only, or a two/four/eight hour zone)
    - explore eliminating parking passes for illegal dwelling units (i.e. do not meet building code, do not have building permit) regardless of whether they pay additional water/sewer fees
    - the provision of 8 hr paid parking on the 700, 800, and 900 blocks of Ward and Josephine Streets should attract downtown commuters and help to alleviate their use of the adjacent streets that directly front the residential areas
5. The parking system will continue to pay for itself (will operate under a user-pay cost recovery model) including funding for new infrastructure, maintenance, equipment, enforcement, upgrades, customer service applications, replacement of existing infrastructure, management, promotion of alternative modes of transportation, etc.
- review and update the parking meter rates
  - review and update the short and long term parking rates for the parkade and surface lots
  - review and update parking fines
  - investigate tiered parking zone rates to encourage turn-over and accessibility
  - explore converting the 2 hr unpaid parking to paid
6. The City will work with institutions, businesses, and developers and downtown residents to plan solutions for parking management. Parking policies must support the private and institutional sectors to ensure efficient and economical ways to address parking and transportation overall.
- Strategy: undertake an inclusive planning process to develop a downtown parking plan that identifies solutions to increase capacity and efficiency of parking and support easier parking for residents, businesses, and visitors.
    - establish internal parking committee to develop downtown parking plan
    - develop parking principles and implement actions to achieve principles
    - work with Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce, downtown businesses, developers and downtown residents to provide input into the plan and implementation of new technology