

DATE OF MEETING DECEMBER 09, 2024

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**SUBJECT                    UPDATING OFF-STREET PARKING REQUIREMENTS  
DOWNTOWN**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present potential amendments to the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” and minimum parking requirements in Downtown Nanaimo. |

### **Recommendation**

That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to amend the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” to eliminate all minimum parking requirements for all uses within the Downtown Urban Centre.

## **BACKGROUND**

Through the development of the Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (2014), and most recently City Plan (2022), Nanaimo has maintained the vision to transition to a well-integrated city with more compact and vibrant areas and mobility options. A key aspect of this vision is the integration of land use and mobility. Recent changes to Provincial legislation have further emphasized the need to advance these objectives to support the creation of housing.

Despite the progressive goals outlined in each of these plans, and recent successes in achieving pedestrian-friendly and multi-modal areas within the City, enhancing the built environment has been slow and this has hampered changes in community travel patterns.

The City has begun a comprehensive review of on- and off-street parking bylaws with the goal of updating and enhancing these regulations to meet the objectives of City Plan and the Integrated Action Plan (IAP). The review has concluded Phase 1 (Background Review) which is summarized in the accompanying report on the same agenda “Nanaimo Parking Review and Bylaw Update - Parking Conditions Report”. This process has identified several factors that will need to be considered during Phase 2 (Engagement) which relate to a broader consideration of changes to parking requirements.

In addition to the comprehensive parking bylaw review, Staff have been exploring options for a more immediate implementation of a parking strategy in Downtown Nanaimo with City Plan encourages relaxing parking requirements per Policy D4.3.32:

*“Support the removal of off-street parking minimums for all uses in the Downtown Urban Centre.”*

Review of eliminating parking requirements was further reinforced by a Council motion on 2024-SEP-09 which was in response to a delegation presentation by “Strong Towns Nanaimo”:

*It was moved and seconded that Council direct Staff to include in the report for the upcoming Governance and Priorities Committee Meeting on parking minimums a review of the recommendation put forward by Strong Towns Nanaimo delegation and options for Council to consider.*

The delegation identified concerns with mandatory parking minimums and recommended two opportunities to eliminate parking requirements:

1. Expand Transit Oriented Areas
2. Eliminate minimum parking mandate city-wide

Staff have reviewed the information and provide the following discussion and three options for consideration by the Governance and Priorities Committee to eliminate minimum parking requirements in Downtown Nanaimo in the context that broader consideration of eliminating parking requirements should occur through the comprehensive parking bylaw review.]

## **DISCUSSION**

The Strong Towns Nanaimo delegation presented the perspective that if parking requirements were changed to recommendations (vs requirements) that parking supply and demand would self regulate/correct as needed. The delegation outlined that this would include an increase in demand for on-street parking which would then be managed by the City through regulation and enforcement. Examples of this spill over to street parking are already taking place in multiple locations across the City. This approach places additional load on municipal operating resources as well as affected businesses and neighbourhoods.

It is important to note that the locations that are currently experiencing tension over parking are generally poorly served for walking, rolling, or transit thereby leaving residents with no mobility option other than a car. Areas that are well served, such as downtown may have a different experience.

Downtown, the City’s Primary Urban Centre, is generally well-served for pedestrians, is improving for cyclists, and is experiencing densification with a mix of uses. An integrated Transit Exchange will be operational in the near future.

The Strong Towns Nanaimo delegation suggested that the City should expand Transit Oriented Areas (TOAs). Provincially mandated TOAs in Nanaimo include Woodgrove, Country Club, and Vancouver Island University. Council has already eliminated residential parking minimums in these areas. TOAs, which are based on concentric rings radiating out from a transit exchange, do not reflect the refined, contextual considerations that informed City Plan land use designations. Broadly speaking, City Plan supports land uses and densities that promote transit-oriented development, particularly in Urban Centres and Corridors. Primary and Secondary Urban Centre designations in City Plan support greater densities and building heights than are supported in Provincial TOAs and do so in a manner that reflects local context.

As such, expanding TOAs in Primary and Secondary Urban Centres would not fully align with and would not fulfill City Plan land use objectives. It is recommended that more contextual consideration of eliminating parking requirements in these areas be considered through the comprehensive parking bylaw review.

When the Downtown Transit Exchange becomes operational, it is unclear at this point what the process is for inclusion of the exchange as a Provincially designated TOA. If the exchange were designated as a TOA by the Province and no flexibility provided to establish a context appropriate TOA area, residential parking minimums would be eliminated within 400m of the exchange.

Walkability and high level of service for active mobility Downtown and densifying land uses drove City Plan goal (D4.3.32). In addition to City Plan, the Parking Bylaw has maintained a designated area (Downtown Specified Area) where minimum parking requirements do not apply to commercial uses (for the first 100 spaces), and the downtown core (Area 5) has the lowest minimum parking requirements for multi family development within the City. As a result, Staff recommend focusing on the elimination of parking minimums in the Downtown to align with City policy and proactively address the anticipated TOA designation.

## **OPTIONS**

Pending direction from the Governance and Priorities Committee, proposed amendments to the Off-Street Parking Bylaw will be brought forward to Council in early 2025. Three potential options for creating parking exempt areas in Downtown are:

1. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to amend the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” to eliminate all minimum parking requirements for all uses within the Downtown Urban Centre. (Attachment A)
  - **Advantages:** Aligns with City Plan policy; integrates land use and mobility; and generally captures the area around the future Downtown Transit Exchange to address anticipated Provincial direction.
  - **Disadvantage:** Will increase demand for parking on-street and within Downtown parking facilities.
  - **Financial Implications:** Higher municipal operating costs to regulate and enforce increased on-street parking demand.
  
2. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to amend the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” to eliminate minimum parking requirements for all uses within a 400m radius of the future Downtown Transit Exchange. (Attachment B)
  - **Advantage:** Aligns with anticipated Provincial direction and partially supports City Plan policy.
  - **Disadvantage:** Will increase demand for parking on-street and within Downtown parking facilities. Does not consider the context of City Plan.
  - **Financial Implications:** Higher municipal operating costs to regulate and enforce increased on-street parking demand.

3. That the Governance and Priorities Committee recommend that Council direct Staff to amend “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” to eliminate minimum parking requirements for residential uses only within a 400m radius of the future Downtown Transit Exchange. (Attachment C)
- **Advantage:** Aligns with future anticipated Provincial direction.
  - **Disadvantage:** Will increase demand for parking on-street and within Downtown parking facilities. Does not consider the context of City Plan.
  - **Financial Implications:** Higher municipal operating costs to regulate and enforce increased on-street parking demand.

### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The City has begun a comprehensive review of on- and off-street parking bylaws to update and enhance regulations to meet the objectives of City Plan and the Integrated Action Plan (IAP).
- The bylaw review has concluded Phase 1 (Background Review) which is summarized in the accompanying report on the same agenda “Nanaimo Parking Review and Bylaw Update - Parking Conditions Report”.
- City Plan policy prioritizes the elimination of minimum parking requirements in Downtown Nanaimo which is generally well-served for pedestrians, transit and non-vehicular mobility.
- Staff recommend eliminating minimum parking requirements for all uses in the Downtown Primary Urban Centre to reinforce a livable downtown; integrate land use and mobility and proactively address the anticipated Transit-Oriented Area designation.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment A: All Parking Minimums Within Downtown Urban Centre  
Attachment B: All Parking Minimums Within a 400m Radius of the Future Downtown Transit Exchange  
Attachment C: Residential Parking Minimums Within a 400m Radius of the Future Downtown Transit Exchange

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