

DATE OF MEETING May 26, 2025

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**SUBJECT OFF-STREET PARKING REGULATIONS BYLAW AMENDMENTS –
DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTRE**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To present Council with amendments to the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018, No. 7266” to remove minimum parking requirements for all uses in the Downtown Urban Centre.

Recommendation

That:

1. “Off-Street Parking Regulations Amendment Bylaw 2025 No. 7266.04” (To eliminate minimum parking requirements in the Downtown Urban Centre) pass first reading.
2. “Off-Street Parking Regulations Amendment Bylaw 2025 No. 7266.04” pass second reading.
3. Council direct Staff to proceed to a public hearing for Bylaw 7266.04 prior to consideration of third reading and final adoption, as required by Section 2.3 of the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266”.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with the Integrated Action Plan (IAP), the City of Nanaimo is undergoing a comprehensive review of existing parking regulations to better align with the goals and objectives of City Plan. Through this review, Staff identified an opportunity to implement a parking strategy in the Downtown, in accordance with City Plan policy D4.3.32:

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

This change would remove the requirement for developers to provide a minimum amount of off-street parking and allow them to determine the appropriate amount of parking to provide for their development.

At the 2024-DEC-09 Governance and Priorities Committee (GPC) meeting, Staff reported on the potential bylaw amendments to the “Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266” (the “Parking Bylaw”) and at the 2024-DEC-18 Regular Council Meeting, Council approved the following motion through consent:

“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.”

The following report summarizes the land use and policy considerations that have informed Staff's recommendation to amend the Parking Bylaw. |

DISCUSSION

The Nanaimo Transportation Master Plan (2014) and City Plan provide a vision for Nanaimo to transition to a well-connected community with complete, compact neighbourhoods that support diverse mobility options. The City is actively working towards this goal through development, capital projects, and bylaw amendments to support existing City policy.

Primary Urban Centre

The Downtown Urban Centre serves as Nanaimo's Primary Urban Centre and functions as the City's cultural, economic and mobility hub, with the highest population and mix of uses. This urban centre is designated to support greater density and is generally well-served for pedestrians and transit and is improving for cyclists. Planned improvements, including the Downtown Transit Exchange, will provide increased transportation options for those visiting or residing downtown. The recently completed Terminal Avenue Upgrades, as well as ongoing work through the Design Commercial project will offer improved pedestrian and cycling circulation throughout the area. As growth occurs, the demand for on-street parking may increase; however, the downtown is well-served by mobility options and it is anticipated that the impact of eliminating parking minimums will be mitigated by various other mobility options. Removing the minimum requirements for off-street parking would not mean that no parking is provided necessarily; developers will be able to determine the appropriate amount of parking that best serves their development.

It is unclear at this time if, following its completion, the Downtown transit exchange would be designated by the Province as a Transit-Oriented Area (TOA), where residential parking minimums would be eliminated within 400m radius of the exchange. If the Transit-Oriented Area designation were applied to the future transit exchange using the same inflexible, fixed radius approach as existing TOA designated areas, the designation area would not consider local context and would not align with City Plan land use objectives.

Eliminating parking minimums for all uses in an area that is consistent with the boundaries of the Downtown Urban Centre, as established in City Plan, ensures that local context including envisioned density, building form, and transportation planning are considered. The proposed amendments provide an immediate implementation of a parking strategy in the Downtown Urban Centre to address City Plan policy. Opportunities to eliminate or reduce the parking minimums in other areas of Nanaimo may be considered through the ongoing comprehensive review of the City's parking regulations.

Existing Reduced Parking Allowances

The existing Parking Bylaw offers several mechanisms to reduce or eliminate parking in the Downtown area.

Shared Parking

Shared parking is permitted when multiple uses are located on the same lot, allowing a reduction in the total number of required parking spaces as outlined in Table 5 of the Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018 No. 7266. Within the 'Downtown-Specified Area Map' (Attachment A), up to the first 100 parking spaces otherwise required for non-residential uses are exempt from parking minimums. Most properties in this specified area are also included in a proposed amendment that would eliminate parking minimums entirely within the Downtown Urban Centre. For properties outside the Urban Centre but still within the Downtown Specified Area, the exemption for the first 100 spaces remains, excluding residential uses. Additionally, within the 'Cash-in-Lieu Parking Area Map' (Attachment B), developers may pay \$10,000 per required parking space instead of providing physical parking, with funds directed to a City reserve for transportation improvements promoting non-automotive travel. This cash-in-lieu requirement would be removed for residential developments in the Downtown Urban Centre if the proposed bylaw changes are adopted.

CONCLUSION

Eliminating minimum off-street parking requirements within the Downtown Urban Centre represents a strategic step toward aligning Nanaimo's land use regulations with the City Plan and Integrated Action Plan. The proposed amendments recognize the Downtown as the City's Primary Urban Centre, already well-supported by existing and planned mobility infrastructure, and prioritize local context over arbitrary designations. By removing these minimums, the City can more effectively support compact, transit-oriented development and encourage alternative transportation modes. Unlike other areas of the city, where higher density development is supported, there is already an on-street parking management program in place in the Downtown, along with provision of off-street public parking. This policy shift to remove parking minimums represents an evolution of a Downtown parking strategy. |

OPTIONS

1. That:

1. "Off-Street Parking Regulations Amendment Bylaw 2025 No. 7266.04" (To eliminate minimum parking requirements in the Downtown Urban Centre) pass first reading.
2. "Off-Street Parking Regulations Amendment Bylaw 2025 No. 7266.04" pass second reading.
3. Council direct Staff to proceed to a public hearing for Amendment Bylaw 7266.04 prior to consideration of third reading and final adoption, as required by Section 2.3 of the "Off-Street Parking Regulations Bylaw 2018, No. 7266".
 - Advantages of this option: Aligns with City Plan policy and integrates land use and mobility while giving certainty and incentivizing development Downtown.
 - Disadvantages of this option: May 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 Council provide alternate direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City is undergoing a comprehensive review of existing parking regulations to better align with the goals and objectives of City Plan and the Integrated Action Plan.
- City Plan policy prioritizes the elimination of minimum parking requirements in Downtown Nanaimo, which is generally well-served by transit and ongoing projects to support mobility options.
- The proposed bylaw amendments would eliminate parking requirements for all uses within the Downtown Urban Centre.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Existing Downtown Specified Area Map
Attachment B: Existing Cash-in-Lieu Parking Area Map
Attachment C: Downtown Urban Centre Map
“Off-Street Parking Regulations Amendment Bylaw 2024 No. 7266.04” |

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