



## ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### Review of Minimum Parking Requirements

#### Description

City Council, at its meeting on June 28, 2023, resolved:

“That the Administration report at the appropriate time about options to review parking minimum regulations.”

In preparation of this report, Administration undertook limited, targeted engagement to gain perspectives from a broad group of industry and area representatives, as well as a sample of residents through a survey of the City of Saskatoon’s (City) Citizen Advisory Panel.

#### Using What We Learn

Respondents offered valuable feedback, which has been included in this report. The feedback provided offered a gauge of community understanding and level of support for various options presented for the review of parking minimums. The discussion to date will inform future engagement on this topic in terms of what methods of engagement are effective, questions to ask and background information to have available.

#### What We Did

Who we had conversations with	How we gathered input
Internal City Stakeholders (Planning and Development, Community Standards, Transportation, Solicitors, Communications and Engagement)	Meetings with relevant internal departments were held to gather information on relevant issues, complaints, trends, options and communication and engagement strategy.
Municipal Scan – Planners and Administrators	Shared information and had virtual meetings with administrators who had recently amended their bylaws to remove or reduce minimum parking requirements from Toronto, Edmonton, Kingston, London, Calgary and Regina.

Who we had conversations with	How we gathered input
<p>Combined Business Group, which includes North Saskatoon Business Association; the Business Improvement Districts of Downtown Saskatoon, Broadway, Riversdale, Sutherland and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street; as well as Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce; Saskatoon Construction Association; Saskatoon and Region Homebuilders' Association; Saskatchewan Realtors' Association; Saskatchewan Landlords Association; and Discover Saskatoon (formerly Tourism Saskatoon).</p>	<p>Information on options for the review of minimum parking requirements was shared with members of the Combined Business Group by email or phone asking about preferences. Responses were received July through September 2023.</p> <p>On September 28, 2023, Administration attended the Combined Business Group meeting to discuss the report and recommendation.</p> <p>Some Combined Business Group members also shared the questions with stakeholders who are external to the group.</p>
<p>Citizen Advisory Panel</p>	<p>A Citizen Advisory Panel survey was undertaken in July and August 2023 to ask Panel members for their perspectives on transportation, parking and affordability.</p> <p>The Citizen Advisory Panel is a survey list of subscribed residents who receive occasional questionnaires on a variety of topics. There are approximately 1,600 participants, which receive requests for feedback. The survey received 610 responses.</p> <p>The survey was also shared on social media by some Citizen Advisory Panel members.</p>

## What We Heard – Internal City Stakeholders

We organized what we heard into themes and summaries. Note: The language below is not word for word comments provided by stakeholders but is paraphrased for clarity:

- Planning and Development Officers note, in their experience, parking regulations can often take the most time on a review, and typically developments do not provide more than the required parking spaces;
- Meeting minimum parking requirements for the re-use of existing infill sites in established neighbourhoods may be challenging, as a change in use of a building will trigger meeting the current Zoning Bylaw requirements, including parking;
- Concerns about impacts to on-street parking with a change to off-street parking; and
- Supportive of removing and/or reducing parking requirements as it supports multi-modal transportation options.

## **What We Heard – Comments Received Through the Combined Business Group**

An email was sent to the Combined Business Group asking for their preferences for the review of minimum parking requirements in July 2023, with responses received July through September. If no response was received a follow-up phone call was made.

Administration attended the monthly Combined Business Group meeting on September 28, 2023, to discuss the options and the recommendation. The meeting was attended by the North Saskatoon Business Association (NSBA), Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association, and all Business Improvement Districts (BID) except the Broadway BID. Support for the recommendations and concerns identified were expressed, as outlined in the responses below.

At the time of this report, responses have not been received from Discover Saskatoon, or the Saskatoon Construction Association. The Downtown BID solicited and passed on input from additional anonymous stakeholders but, as there are no parking requirements currently in the B6 – Downtown Zoning District, did not provide an official response. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street BID solicited their members but received no response or preferences.

Members were given four broad options and asked for their preference, concerns and if there were any options they did not want to pursue.

The broad options were:

- The removal of all minimum parking requirements;
- Removing parking requirements for certain areas or for certain uses;
- Standardization and significant reductions in parking requirements; and
- A review of parking requirements with only minor reductions.

While there was variation on which option the Combined Business Group members preferred, many of the responses expressed a preference for the option to remove minimum parking requirements or reduce parking requirements throughout Saskatoon.

We organized what we heard into themes and have summarized below. Note: The language below is not word for word comments provided by stakeholders and has been paraphrased for clarity

### Support for removal of minimum parking requirements throughout Saskatoon

The Saskatoon Landlords Association, The Broadway BID, Saskatoon and Region Home Builders' Association, NSBA, Saskatchewan Realtors Association as well as anonymous stakeholders external to the group expressed support for the removal of all minimum parking requirements and implementation of 'open option' parking. Reasons for supporting this approach included:

- Designing projects around parking instead of people can result in wasted, unproductive space and overlooked business opportunities;

- Elsewhere, parking minimums were identified as significant barriers which add burden and extra costs, to the extent of impacting feasibility of new developments, both residential and commercial, and developers simply chose to not proceed with project proposals;
- Supply demand economics will solve parking for the market. Developers to provide appropriate amount of parking for tenants, sometimes more than required, and sometimes it will be less or no parking;
- With Ride Share, driverless vehicles and improved public transportation, the need for parking is shifting;
- The optimal policy would be to allow builders to develop to their parking needs, unencumbered by City rules, unless their decision adversely affects their future neighbours in a significant way. Removal of parking requirements in some areas and reductions in others is the next best strategy;
- Removing required parking minimums is the most desirable, as the market would drive demand for parking. The cost of parking is the biggest deterrent in large building projects; however, there is still a high demand for parking in Saskatoon;
- We support businesses and developers determining the parking amount required for their business or development. Developers are most aware of what the market requires, not the City;
- By eliminating the City-regulated parking minimums, businesses and developers would have flexibility to add parking as required or requested through community consultation on new buildings; and
- While satisfied with current zoning, the City should leave ultimate decisions on what a property needs to developers and their tenants.

#### Support for Reductions or Removal of Parking Requirements in Some Areas or Some Uses

Support of removing minimum parking requirements for commercial uses in specific areas has been received from the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and anonymous stakeholders external to the group. Comments received included:

- Remove parking requirements altogether in some areas and reduce in others. Simplifying requirements across the board would go a long way, as well;
- Removing minimum parking requirements in some areas and reductions in others makes the most sense; and
- Good to review parking. Eliminate requirements in some areas of the city and simplify and reduce requirements everywhere else.

#### Support for Substantial Reduction in Parking Requirements

The Sutherland BID, Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and anonymous stakeholders external to the group agreed with standardized and major reductions to minimum parking requirements to require some parking on site:

- Overall, there was support to significantly reduce parking minimums in all areas of Saskatoon, and a reduced minimum for commercial uses. If the goal is for an affordable housing inventory, reducing minimums will help achieve it. The market will dictate what is required above some minimum requirement. Developers do not build products they cannot rent or sell and will ensure enough parking is provided to be successful. Status quo should be avoided.

- Standardization and major reductions in parking is the most relevant option; and
- Supportive of maintaining a baseline ‘fence’ requirement to ensure that developers do not take advantage of a “no” parking requirement.

General comments received through the Combined Business Group and anonymous stakeholders contact by Downtown BID

*Benefits Expressed of Removing or Reducing Parking Requirements:*

- Keep residential units more affordable and accessible;
- Allows for installation of parking patios on private parking, or for businesses to expand or contract their business footprint;
- Allows business and developers to advise how much parking makes sense for their development;
- Decrease indirect parking costs and pass savings onto consumers, businesses, homeowners and tenants;
- Encourage more active modes of transportation rather than driving and creates an urban form that encourages walking, cycling and transit;
- Enable spaces to be designed for people rather than vehicles;
- Align with the Low Emissions Community Plan, to reduce energy consumption, improve energy efficiency and shift to low carbon energy sources, specifically in transportation and land use;
- Reducing parking minimums allows developers to respond to changes in consumer demand and reduces red tape and regulatory burden for the municipality; and
- As we transition to a city with less cars per capita, reducing parking minimums will allow better land utilization on housing and other types of development, rather than parking lots.

*Enhancing User/Builder/Developer Choice:*

- Developers should be able to decide how much parking to provide, based on demand and experience. The downside is sometimes not enough will be provided, which impacts adjacent sites;
- Requirements to pave additional unneeded parking can collapse a potential development and make adaptive re-use of buildings impossible; and
- Specific examples in Sutherland point to parking requirements being oversubscribed.

*Concerns with Reductions in Parking Provided:*

- Mixed feelings on removal of all minimum parking requirements due to existing complaints about parking;
- Current bylaws and zoning provide an adequate mix of parking for residents and commercial customer parking, on and off street;
- Parking standards should remain but should be consistent across a zoning district;

- Downtown and Commercial districts should continue to have no parking requirements, but parking requirements should continue along major corridors with public transportation;
- For commercial cases, both tenants and customers want abundant parking and are very vocal about the need for parking or loss of parking;
- Parking is the single most fundamental deal breaker for businesses in Saskatoon, as exemplified by Downtown business activity losing ground to car-friendly suburbs. Commercial uses in Downtown should be required to provide parking. Saskatoon desperately needs more development with parking Downtown. Wall-to-wall development is unattractive, too hot and inconvenient to promote the use of the Downtown as a place to live and do business. If a suburban office requires parking, then why shouldn't a Downtown office?
- Public uses, such as libraries and rinks should provide more parking than commercial uses;
- Builders should be required to provide parking if it is already a challenge for neighbours. While this is a complicated benchmark for policy makers, since it is ever changing and prone to subjectivity, it is worth the effort; and
- Developers would probably not build enough parking, creating crowded streets and putting the onus on more public parking.

*General Support for the Review of Parking Requirements:*

- Status quo option not worth pursuing and a review of parking requirements would be welcome.
- Recommendation to periodically perform a study to identify areas where parking is a challenge and enforce parking minimums in those areas.
- If the City has data on problem neighbourhoods, streets or uses, requirements could be maintained there. For sites that tend to be overparked for their use (i.e., industrial buildings), requirements could be eased in those areas.
- An ideal solution may be for minor changes for known pain points, along with the implementation of a streamlined variance review process. Allow applications to request parking variances for minor or major cases, which may be cumbersome but could help maintain reasonable regulations, while providing a mechanism for flexibility where practical.

## **What We Heard – Citizen Advisory Panel Survey Results**

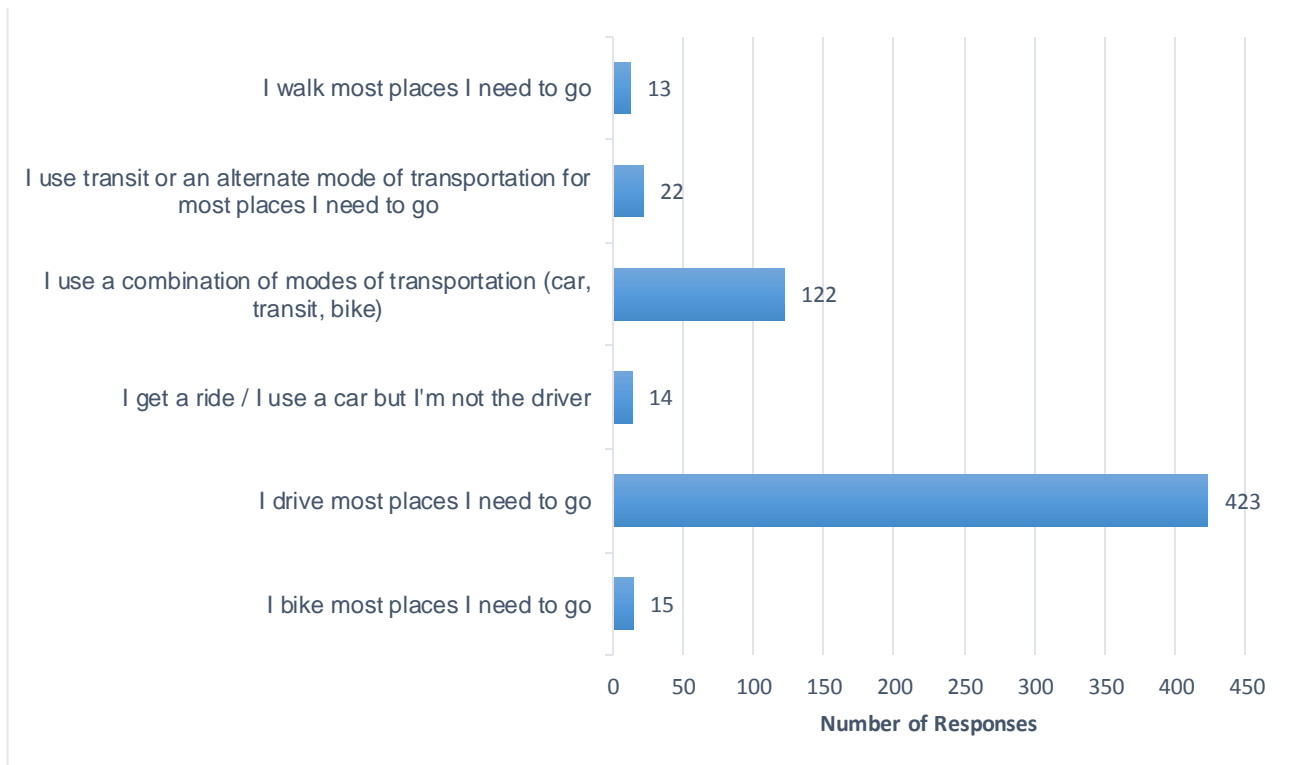
A Citizen Advisory Panel survey conducted in July and August 2023, asked panel members for their perspectives on how they navigate the city, who they think should be responsible for providing parking, their transportation challenges and where they think reductions in parking would be appropriate. A total of 610 respondents completed the survey. As a random sampling method was not used, the results of this survey should not be considered statistically representative of Saskatoon's population.

Survey results are below. *Note: The language below is not word for word comments provided and is paraphrased for clarity.*

Answers provided which were outside of the set categories in the survey were categorized by Administration based on the best available options.

### Navigating the city

Survey respondents were asked how they get around Saskatoon. The majority chose driving (69%) with the second most popular response being a combination of modes (20%).



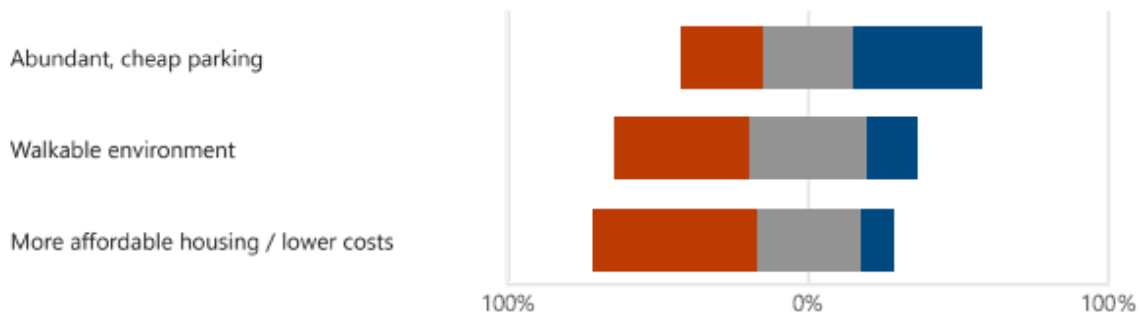
### Choices Around Developing Parking.

Survey respondents were asked to select their priorities:

- A walkable environment;
- Access to abundant cheap parking; and
- More affordable housing and lower costs.

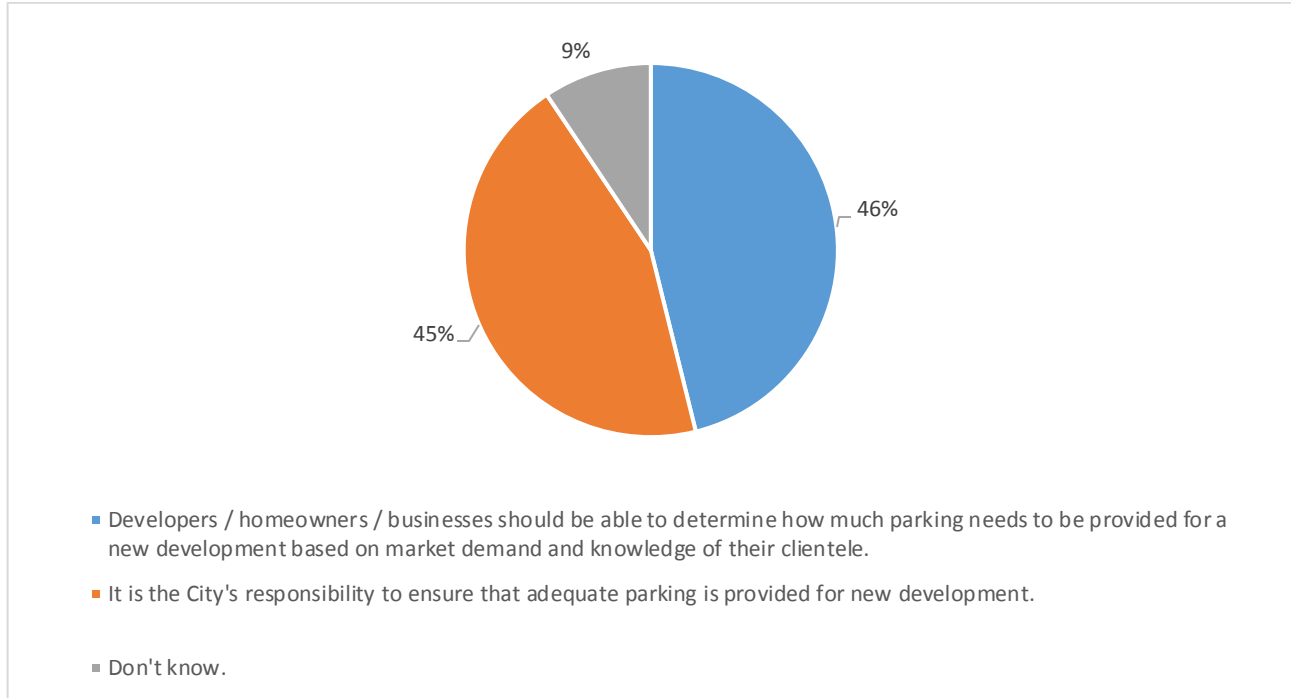
Of the respondents, 55% listed affordable housing and lower costs as the highest priority, 45% listed a walkable environment highest, and abundant, cheap parking was the highest priority for 28% of respondents.

■ Highest Priority   ■ Medium Priority   ■ Lowest Priority



Responsibility for Ensuring Adequate Parking.

Survey respondents were asked whose responsibility it should be to ensure adequate parking. The response was split almost equally, with 45% believing it should be the City's responsibility; 46% thought it should be developers, businesses or homeowners; and 9% were unsure.



Transportation Challenges

Survey respondents were asked for information on their transportation challenges for both residential and non-residential contexts.

*Residential*

For transportation challenges in a residential context, 48% of respondents did not experience any of the challenges listed. The next highest response, at 12%, was 'non-residents parking where I want to park'. Note: respondents could select more than one response for this question.

	# of Responses	% of Responses
I don't experience any of these	353	48%
Non-residents parking where I want to park	89	12%
No close bus stops	74	10%
Cannot find available parking at or near my residence	60	8%
Not enough accessible parking spaces	43	6%
Other	29	4%
Too many empty parking spaces	28	4%
Infrequent bus service / poor transit schedules	25	3%
Poor cycling / walking infrastructure or maintenance	24	3%
Winter maintenance / Drainage	9	1%



*Non-Residential*

For non-residential transportation challenges, 33% the respondents were not able to find available parking near or at their destination, while 24% did not experience any of the challenges listed.

	<b># of Responses</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Cannot find available parking at or near my destination	248	33%
I don't experience any of these	183	24%
Not enough accessible parking spaces	89	12%
No close bus stops	85	11%
Infrequent or unreliable bus service / poor transit schedules	40	5%
Too many empty parking spaces	36	5%
Poor cycling / walking infrastructure (including bike parking) or maintenance	41	5%
Other	20	3%
Cost of Parking	4	1%
Parking not available at certain times of the day / Maximum times too short	5	1%
Safety / Crime	3	0%

Where Parking Reductions are Appropriate

Survey respondents were asked where and for what uses reduced or no parking requirements should be considered:

- 39% of respondents chose that parking requirements should apply everywhere; and
- 41% chose that parking requirements should remain for every type of use.

More specifically, survey respondents were asked for their input specific to areas and uses. Responses for each of these were as follows:

*Areas*

For areas, “in close proximity to transit” (16%), “locations in or near City Centre” (14%) and “should apply nowhere – parking requirements should remain” (26%) also received substantial responses.

	<b># of Responses</b>	<b>% of Responses</b>
Should apply nowhere - parking requirements should stay	240	26%
Should apply everywhere (in all circumstances)	120	13%
In close proximity to transit/future Bus Rapid Transit	146	16%
Location in/near City Centre	129	14%
In close proximity to Confederation Mall, Midtown Plaza, Market Mall and Centre Mall	74	8%
In residential areas	93	10%
In residential areas only if affordable housing units or supportive housing units are being created	66	7%
Other	37	4%
I don't know / Not clear on the question	27	3%

### Uses

For uses, reduced parking should apply “no where – parking requirements should stay” (34%) received the highest number of responses, followed by “should apply everywhere” (19%) and “residential” (15%) were the second and third most common responses.

	# of Responses	% of Responses
Nowhere - Parking Requirements Should Stay	252	34%
Should Apply Everywhere	139	19%
Residential	115	15%
Retail / Shopping	70	9%
Office Buildings	70	9%
Industrial Buildings	46	6%
Other	51	7%

### General Comments

We received many general comments about parking and the potential to reduce or remove minimum parking requirements. Out of 610 total respondents, 301 (54%) left additional comments. Comments that were not relevant to the topic have not been included. Common themes among additional comments included:

- Considerations for more convenient, robust or dependable transit;
- The need to maintain parking in the Downtown, suburban residential neighbourhoods and a variety of other specific areas;
- The need to remove parking requirements for affordability, to improve mode share and for the environment;
- Considerations for electric vehicle infrastructure;
- Reducing the reliance on motor vehicles for economic or environmental reasons;
- The challenge in finding accessible parking;
- Need to make other transportation options more attractive at the same time as reducing parking;
- Unclear about what “parking requirements” means and the affect this has on Saskatoon;
- Need for park and ride options; and
- Wider streets needed to accommodate on-street parking.

### **What Went Well:**

- The Citizen Advisory Panel was an opportunity to gauge perspectives from residents in a timely fashion before a Saskatoon-wide engagement plan is undertaken. There were 610 completed survey responses received with many additional comments, demonstrating an engaged audience.
- Responses were received by email from the Combined Business Group, in a timely fashion, despite no meetings over July and August; and
- Hearing from a broad spectrum of industry representatives and Business Improvement Districts with unique experiences, provided a range of perspectives on current regulations and potential direction.

### **What We Can Do Better**

The level of engagement completed for this report was intentionally limited. Further engagement is expected, following direction from the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services and City Council. A discussion on minimum parking requirements is a more in-depth topic than simply whether there is parking available or not. Providing the audience appropriate content, an opportunity to ask questions and providing explanations on how parking is regulated and the effect the amount of parking provided has on affordability and walkability can be improved and refined.

### **What's Next**

Based on the direction of Council, further engagement will be undertaken related to the option for the review of minimum parking requirements taken.

