

## Current Context for Parking Regulations

### Policy Direction and Strategic Vision for Parking, Transportation and Sustainable Growth

#### [Bylaw No. 9700, The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2020 \(OCP\)](#)

The OCP addresses considerations related to parking and transportation, through the lens of the City of Saskatoon's (City) vision and strategic goals. The strategic goals of sustainable growth, moving around, economic diversity and prosperity, as well as environmental leadership, all address parking considerations.

Sustainable growth includes the following considerations:

- Investing in improved levels of service for all modes of transportation to employment areas from nearby residential and mixed use areas;
- Encouraging a form and density that supports walking, cycling and transit; and discourages large areas of surface parking;
- Creating a safe, comfortable pedestrian environment between places of work and transit stops;
- Developing areas which support all modes of transportation and are walkable and accessible; and
- Maintaining a parking plan for the City Centre to address supply and demand of parking, parking rates and the provision of parking lots, structures and on-street parking.

Moving around includes:

- Developing an urban form and land use pattern which will promote transportation options and be accessible to all users, as well as encourage walking, cycling and public transit use and help promote a balanced transportation network;
- A focus on parking management - Development should provide adequate off-street parking, and [Bylaw No. 8770, Zoning Bylaw, 2009](#) (Zoning Bylaw), will contain appropriate vehicle and bicycle parking standards for all forms of development;
- The City may introduce parking maximums to reduce an over-supply of parking spaces in a defined area, when needed, and to support the vision of the area;
- Promote land use and development patterns, which support an efficient and effective public transit system. Development should be oriented to the street at a pedestrian scale and encourage a mixture of uses and sufficient density to support high-quality, high-frequency transit service; and
- When considering applications to amend the Zoning Bylaw, the ongoing need to promote a compact and efficient city form and providing a range of transportation choices are salient criteria.

Economic diversity, prosperity and environmental leadership address monetary and environmental costs:

- Cost of developing parking and the impacts this has on supporting development and business growth in the region;
- Support for energy-efficient land-use planning and urban forms, which reduce energy consumption;
- Increase community and City resilience by adapting current services, practices and infrastructure to withstand current and projected future climate conditions and to mitigate the impacts of climate change through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Automobile use is the second highest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, after buildings.

### The Growth Plan

In 2016, The Growth Plan recognized the existing major corridors generally consist of low-density, commercial activity designed to support automobile access and noted the following:

- Buildings are set back from the street with an expanse of parking in front. These forms of development typically consist of large-scale blocks, that are neither walkable nor accessible for transit or cycling, and have limited pedestrian connections to neighbouring areas of the community.
- Extensive parking is required, and an abundant supply of free parking is provided. Modest scale and density of development, where a large amount of free parking is required, typically leads to a suburban pattern of land use designed for automobiles. In fact, the design of streets serving auto-oriented land use patterns encourages people to drive; and
- On the other hand, limited pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities restrict choices for sustainable modes of transportation. Together, these systemic land use and transportation relationships perpetuate the suburban character of Saskatoon's streets.

The Growth Plan encourages Transit-Oriented Development along major corridors, which recommends a balanced approach to parking.

### The Comprehensive Downtown Parking Strategy (Parking Strategy)

The Parking Strategy of 2016 (the Strategy) addressed the parking considerations for the City Centre at that time. It is noted the Strategy has not been adopted by Council. The Strategy notes there are minimal to no parking requirements in the City Centre, and peak occupancy levels for each sub-area were well below the threshold typically considered to indicate a parking supply shortfall. In addition, many private parking facilities had significant parking vacancies not available to the public.

The Parking Strategy specifically noted:

- In the B6 District, which does not have minimum parking requirements, most new developments provide only enough parking to meet approximately half of their actual needs, creating substantial additional demand for new off-site parking;
- Three potential solutions are proposed; substantial increase in public transit as envisioned by the Growth Plan, parking resources managed more efficiently as considered in the Strategic Plan 2022-2025, or providing more parking; and
- Recommendation to increase the minimum parking requirement in the B6, from 0 to 1 per 37m<sup>2</sup> gross floor area, as well as consider implementing payment-in-lieu of parking. Upon further research, neither recommendation was pursued.

### **Minimum Parking Requirements in the Zoning Bylaw**

Section 6 of the Zoning Bylaw contains regulations for required parking, loading and vehicular circulation provisions for all developable sites in the City:

- There are a variety of measures used to regulate parking such as gross area, building floor area, unit, students at design capacity, seats in main assembly area, residents under care, etc. Minimum parking requirements may also vary based on the Zoning District in which a particular use is located.
- Some uses do not have minimum parking requirements in most districts, such as one- and two-unit dwellings, as well as accessory buildings. For example, a single-family home in most districts can provide no parking on the property, may build a garage (accessory building) or develop a driveway and accommodate as many or as few parking spaces as desired and as the site allows.
- Some Zoning Districts have no parking requirements:
  - The B6 – Downtown Commercial District and the MX2 – Downtown Warehouse Mixed Used District have no parking requirements. A residential apartment or office could be developed, for example, and the builder can choose how much parking to provide; and
  - The B5, B5A, B5B, and B5C – Inner-City Commercial Corridor Districts, including the Broadway commercial corridor and the Riversdale commercial corridor, have limited parking requirements with no parking required for commercial and office uses.
- Some uses and districts in the Zoning Bylaw require on-site space to be dedicated to parking. For example, multiple-unit dwellings in residential districts require 1.625 parking spaces per dwelling unit (1.5 spaces per unit plus 0.125 visitor spaces per unit) or offices in the B4 – Arterial and Suburban Commercial District require 1 parking space per 30 m<sup>2</sup> of gross leasable floor area. This requires sites to be developed with areas devoted to surface parking, or parking being provided in a structure at grade or below ground.
- Parking reductions are built into the Zoning Bylaw in several ways, such as:
  - Multiple-unit dwellings may have a lower requirement for parking if they are smaller in size, along high-frequency transit corridors or include accessible dwelling units;
  - The minor variance process in the Zoning Bylaw may be used in established neighbourhoods to vary the parking and loading requirements by up to 25% of the bylaw requirements; and
  - Parking reductions may also be applied through zoning agreements.

## **Amendments as part of the Comprehensive Review of the Zoning Bylaw**

As part of the comprehensive review of the Zoning Bylaw, several amendments have been made related to parking and loading regulations, including, but not limited to:

- Clarifications were made to improve the consistency of parking regulations for multiple-unit dwellings and dwelling groups;
- Regulations were added to introduce bicycle parking requirements to be provided for residential, commercial, institutional and industrial uses;
- Requirements for accessible parking spaces were increased, both in number and in size; and
- Exemption for the adaptive re-use of an existing building in an Established Neighbourhood for changes to parking requirements.

## **Zoning Agreements**

An application may be made to amend the Zoning Bylaw, subject to an agreement for a specific development proposal on a site, sometimes referred to as zoning by agreement or contract zoning.

Regulations, including parking, are evaluated and may be included as part of the Agreement. These agreements will typically align their development standards with similar uses in similar zoning districts, including parking requirements; however, there is the potential for the relaxation of development standards, including required parking.

## **How Are Minimum Parking Requirements Determined**

A comprehensive review of parking rates across Saskatoon has not been done in at least 25 years. Many of the rates are based off the best determination of requirements from the repealed Zoning Bylaw No. 7800, which was approved in 1998. These rates have been used as a basis and influenced determinations made on new parking requirements. More recently, in the Corridor Districts added to the Zoning Bylaw in July 2023, parking requirements were reduced.

Several methods are used to determine the minimum parking requirements in the Zoning Bylaw.

*Institute of Transportation Engineers - Parking Generation Manual (Manual):*

- [Institute of Transportation Engineers](#) produces the Manual, which is a tool used to estimate parking demand of a proposed development, based on observed past data of similar land uses in similar urban environments across the United States.
- The information is based on parking generation studies submitted by public agencies, developers, consulting firms, student chapters and associations. They do not include recommendations on the best course of action or appropriate application of the data, and it is for information purposes only; and
- Municipalities use the Manual as a tool to determine appropriate parking rates; however, it should be noted the Manual is based on historical data and does not provide for forecasting or strategic future growth planning.

### *Other Methods*

Other methods that play a role in the determination of minimum parking requirements are:

- A municipal scan conducted at the time of implementation;
- Public and stakeholder engagement; and
- An administrative determination based on the local context.

### **Development Permits:**

- Between 2018 and 2022, the City reviewed an average of 1,245 development permits per year to ensure compliance with the Zoning Bylaw, in addition to preliminary reviews prior to permit application, and responses to enquiries around development standards. It was noted development officers spend a fair amount of time on regulating parking; and
- Once a development permit is issued and site development has progressed, bylaw inspectors inspect the site to ensure required off-street parking and other details, such as site landscaping, have been completed in accordance with Zoning Bylaw requirements.

### **Development Appeals Board**

The Development Appeals Board hears applications for development permits which do not meet requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. Since 2020, the Development Appeals Board has heard 85 appeals related to parking. Of those appeals:

- There were 36 appeals related to developments, which did not meet minimum parking requirements of the Zoning Bylaw. Of these appeals, 24 were granted and provided a variance to reduce the parking requirements either in total number or hard surfacing requirements.
- Parking was referenced in 29 other appeals, though meeting a minimum parking requirement was not the zoning deficiency. In these cases, the primary reason for the appeal was typically relating to issues including the size of a proposed garage and placement of signage; and
- There were 20 applications related to landscaping, setback or site deficiencies where these deficiencies were a result of meeting parking requirements. Of these appeals, 16 were granted.

### **Parking Complaints and the Residential Parking Permit Program**

The Community Standards Department receives complaints related to on- and off-street parking. In situations where insufficient off-street parking is provided, which is determined by minimum parking requirements, this may result in users choosing to park on-street.

#### *Off-Street:*

- Since 2018, there have been an annual average of 135 complaints related to off-street parking infractions;
- The vast majority of these (89%) are regarding vehicles parked on lawns;
- Less than 1% of complaints related to the number of parking spaces provided or being used on a site; and
- There are other parking complaints received; however, if there is no bylaw infraction, it is not logged.

### *On-Street:*

- Since 2018, Parking Services has received an annual average of 16 complaints related to on-street congestion;
- Over the past year and a half, 23 parking related congestion complaints have been received; 6 of which (26%) are related specifically to the Fringe Festival; and
- There may be other on-street parking related complaints received as part of discussions with other administrative groups; however, they have not been quantified.

### *Residential Parking Program ([RPP](#)):*

- The RPP provides on-street parking permits for residents of certain areas in Saskatoon that experience on-street parking congestion, usually generated by nearby businesses or institutions. The intent of the RPP is to minimize congestion by limiting non-resident parking to a maximum amount of time;
- Presently there are RPP or Limited RPP zones in the Caswell Hill, City Park, Pleasant Hill, Riversdale, Silverwood Heights, and Varsity View neighbourhoods; and
- The RPPs provide permits for low-density dwelling units, such as one-unit dwellings, two-unit dwellings and semi-detached dwellings, which do not have minimum parking requirements, as well as multiple-unit dwellings if the parking provided on-site is lower than what is currently required by the Zoning Bylaw. If there are changes to minimum parking requirements for multiple-unit dwellings or other land uses in proximity to residential areas, there may be an increase in demand for on-street parking, creating the need for RPP policy amendments, additional RPP zones or further parking regulation.