

Available Literature About Reducing or Removing Minimum Parking Requirements

There is an extensive body of literature regarding the reduction or removal of parking minimums. Key themes of benefits and barriers to implementation, described in the documentation, are outlined below, as well as the implications for Saskatoon, generally, are noted.

Benefits

While removing parking requirements entirely would result in the most benefit, the surveyed municipalities did comment that significantly reducing parking requirements also resulted in the benefits outlined below, albeit to a lesser degree.

Several benefits identified in the research are:

<p>Increased overall affordability</p> <p>There are costs associated with building and maintaining parking. This cost is passed on to the eventual homeowner, renter, business owner or customer, regardless of car ownership. For example, parking requirements in commercial areas means space that could otherwise be allocated to more commercial space must now be allocated to providing parking. Similarly, parking requirements in residential areas means space that could otherwise be allocated to providing additional homes must now be allocated to meeting the parking requirements.</p>
<p>Reduced development application review time / Increased certainty for applicants</p> <p>All development applications reviewed by the Planning and Development Department are reviewed to ensure minimum parking requirements are met. This adds time to the review process and can lead to back-and-forth discussions with applicants to ensure sites are meeting requirements. In some cases, this can also result in a Development Appeals process, which increases the time and uncertainty for applicants. Development applications will be reviewed to ensure general parking standards are met, such as surfacing requirements, parking space dimensions, as well as meeting requirements for accessible parking and bicycle parking.</p> <p>All surveyed municipalities commented that removing or significantly reducing parking requirements has resulted in efficiencies in the review of development applications.</p>
<p>Supports economic and business growth</p> <p>Parking is costly to build and maintain. Off-street parking requirements have an impact on the economic viability of a project, sometimes resulting in a project being financially unfeasible. By removing or reducing parking requirements, the amount of parking is determined by the individual business or developer, based on market needs.</p> <p>Further, this has potential to increase the developable space on a site.</p>

Supports sustainability goals and environmental leadership

Requiring a certain amount of parking incentivizes car ownership over other modes of transportation, which, in turn, has an impact on the environment.

Surface parking has an impact on the heat island effect and stormwater quality.

A principle of the City of Saskatoon's [Low Emissions Community Plan](#) is to improve operations, land use and transportation networks to optimize functionality, reduce waste and use land more sustainably. Specifically, removing or reducing parking requirements supports the following Low Emissions Community actions:

- Build complete, compact communities through infill development, mixed use building and compact housing; and
- Implement a vehicle pollution pricing program in high traffic areas.

Promotes an urban form that supports walkability and other modes of transportation

Walkability can be defined as the accessibility to amenities by walking. Improved walkability has far-reaching health, economic and environmental benefits.

Abundant parking requires lots of space which has an impact on the way Saskatoon is built. More space for parking results in buildings that are further apart, have less density and which build a more supportive environment of personal vehicle use over other modes of transportation. This, in turn, has an impact on the walkability of an area.

Removing the requirement for developers to provide a specific amount of parking can also provide more flexibility with site design and can promote developments, which better support walkability. It also allows developers to invest in other forms of transportation, such as bike parking, transit passes for tenants and pedestrian-friendly street improvements, instead of allocating these costs to building or maintaining parking.

Reduces the risk of parking over-supply

Sites can have an over abundance of parking supply due to parking requirements not representing the actual parking need. A common example used to demonstrate over-supply of parking is the parking requirement as it relates to affordable housing or supportive housing. The number of required parking spaces is based on requirements of zoning bylaws and not based on market demand or the needs of clients. This can result in underutilized parking, which is costly to build and reduces space on a site that could otherwise be used for homes.

Further, requiring minimum parking can result in an excess of parking spaces which results in a less compact urban form and may compel residents to take more trips by car.

Encourage infill development

Minimum parking requirements tend to encourage sprawl as developers move to areas, which are less expensive and less complex to develop.

Further, site constraints such as parking requirements on smaller, infill lots can be restrictive and, in some cases, can make projects unviable.

Supporting personal choice

Minimum parking requirements make assumptions about resident/customer demand for parking, regardless of if the resident/customer is a vehicle owner or their preference is to use alternative modes of transportation. People will make decisions based on a number of factors, including availability of parking, income, commute and personal choice regarding vehicle ownership.

Gradual and balanced change

Removing or reducing parking minimums does not result in an immediate change or reduction in available parking. Developers and businesses will continue to build parking based on market need. Changes to parking availability over time are incremental as people move to using alternative modes of transportation as they become more available.

The surveyed municipalities also echoed these benefits as reasons why they pursued reducing or removing parking minimums from their zoning bylaws.

Barriers to Implementation

The review also identifies barriers to the implementation of changes for parking requirements including:

Ensuring that adequate alternatives (transit, cycling, walking) to driving are readily available

Car-oriented infrastructure, such as abundant parking, can make public transit less viable or desirable and walking or cycling less practical, safe or convenient. Reducing available parking may make for a difficult transition while alternative modes of transportation are developed and strengthened.

Opposition to change or fear of change

Ensuring that any changes have a good communication strategy in place is important for the public to understand the recommended changes and trade-offs.

Ensuring that there is good on-street parking management in place

The City has a Residential Parking Program (RPP) in place for areas experiencing significant on-street parking congestion, usually generated by nearby businesses or institutions:

- Areas with RPPs are continuously patrolled by Parking Enforcement and minimize congestion by limiting non-resident parking to a maximum amount of time. The current RPP zones are in Caswell Hill, City Park and Varsity View; and
- Limited RPP zones are not continuously patrolled by Parking Enforcement. Limited RPP zones also exist for J.J. Thiessen, Pleasant Hill, Riversdale and South Caswell Hill.

No disincentive for developers to provide adequate parking if there are reduced parking requirements or no parking requirements

If not enough parking is supplied, this could result in spill over, which may increase on-street parking or commercial parking lot uses.