

Sackmann, Debby

Subject: FW: Email - Communication - Nicole Burgess - Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association - Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives - Support for Zoning Bylaw Amendment to Remove Minimum Parking Requirements - CK 750-1

Attachments: SRHBA Letter Council on Minimum Parking Zoning Bylaw Amendment.pdf

From: Web NoReply <web-noreply@Saskatoon.ca>

Sent: Tuesday, July 9, 2024 2:28 PM

To: City Council <City.Council@Saskatoon.ca>

Subject: Email - Communication - Nicole Burgess - Saskatoon and Region Home Builders Association - Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives - Support for Zoning Bylaw Amendment to Remove Minimum Parking Requirements - CK 750-1

--- Replies to this email will go to ceo@saskatoonhomebuilders.com ---

Submitted on Tuesday, July 9, 2024 - 14:27

Submitted by user: Anonymous

Submitted values are:

I have read and understand the above statements.: Yes

I do not want my comments placed on a public agenda. They will be shared with members of Council through their online repository.: No

I only want my comments shared with the Mayor or my Ward Councillor.: No

Date: Tuesday, July 09, 2024

To: His Worship the Mayor and Members of City Council

Pronouns: She/her/hers

First Name: Nicole

Last Name: Burgess

Phonetic spelling of first and/or last name: 3063804120

Email: ceo@saskatoonhomebuilders.com

I live outside of Saskatoon: No

Saskatoon Address and Ward:

Address: 17-102 Cope Cres.

Ward: Ward 7

Name of the organization or agency you are representing (if applicable): Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association

What do you wish to do ?: Submit Comments

What meeting do you wish to speak/submit comments ? (if known):: July 31- City Council Public Hearing

What agenda item do you wish to comment on ?: Minimum Parking Zoning Bylaw Amendment

Comments:

Please see letter attached.

Attachments:

- [SRHBA Letter Council on Minimum Parking Zoning Bylaw Amendment.pdf](#) 247.95 KB

Will you be submitting a video to be vetted prior to council meeting?: No



July 16, 2024

His Worship Charlie Clark
Members of City Council
City of Saskatoon
201 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 2H7

RE: Support for Zoning Bylaw Amendment to Remove Minimum Parking Requirements

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association (SRHBA), representing over 240-member companies in the residential construction industry in our community.

Over the past year, our association has been actively engaged in discussions surrounding the proposed changes to minimum parking requirements in Saskatoon. Although these considerations are currently part of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) initiatives, it is important to note that the discussion around parking minimums began during the June 2023 public hearing when the zoning bylaw amendment on accessible parking was approved (package 6). This zoning change, which became effective January 1, 2024, required builders to increase the amount of accessible parking from 1% (which was increased to 2% a few months earlier) to 4% and to enlarge the size of accessible parking spots from 4.2m to 4.9m. It was noted at the time that other municipalities with such a high level of accessible parking typically had an open-option parking environment to support these increased provisions.

At the time of the accessible parking decision, the SRHBA expressed significant concerns about the unintended consequences this change could have on the long-term development and livability of our city, especially if minimum parking requirements were not addressed. We still maintain the importance of this issue and wish to express our strong support for the recommended zoning bylaw amendment for the removal of minimum parking requirements from the Zoning Bylaw, as directed by the council on December 20, 2023.

For reference, the letter provided during the June 2023 meeting regarding accessible parking is included below (Appendix 1).

However, beyond supporting the accessible parking requirements approved by the council, this change also offers many additional benefits. As our community evolves, it is crucial to reassess and update outdated regulations that may hinder our city's growth and prosperity. Parking minimums are one such regulation that warrants reconsideration. We believe that removing minimum parking requirements holds the key to unlocking opportunities for Saskatoon. We would like to elaborate on several points:



1. **Housing Affordability:** Reducing or eliminating parking requirements can have a significant impact on housing affordability. Right now, home builders need to buy extra land to house cars which ultimately makes housing more expensive for home buyers and renters. By embracing Open Option Parking, we decrease housing costs and make housing more accessible to all residents, fostering a more inclusive and affordable city.

2. **Sustainability and Climate Action:** Parking minimums promote car-centric development, which, in turn, contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. Encouraging walking and transit options, by reducing parking requirements, is a positive step allowing for more compact and walkable cities, aligning with Saskatoon's Low Emissions Community Plan.

3. **Efficient Land Use:** Designing our city around people, rather than parking, can result in more efficient land use. Eliminating minimum parking requirements supports infill and densification, leading to more compact and diverse neighborhoods. This, in turn, allows for more efficient use of city infrastructure.

4. **Financial Efficiency:** Parking spaces are financially unproductive, as they incur costs and generate little to no tax revenue. They can also be a deciding factor in whether a development proceeds, as restrictive and inflexible parking requirements can limit the number of units, affecting project feasibility. These requirements are often among the most common reasons for development delays or rejections, adding unnecessary cost and time to projects.

5. **Access to Essential Federal Funding:** Most, if not all, new federal funding programs will be conditional on cities changing their zoning rules to align with the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) requirements, which include addressing minimum parking requirements. For Saskatoon, this would affect the city's access not only to the \$41.235 million under the HAF but also to hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding. The Permanent Transit Fund and the new National Housing Infrastructure Fund are two examples of funds that will explicitly require cities to adopt HAF zoning to access the funds.

6. **Parking will be there for those who want it:** Open Option Parking doesn't reduce Saskatoon's current parking spaces. It means homeowners, businesses and developers decide how much parking is needed for every new development based on market knowledge, land use, consumer requests and available space, among other factors. Builders will continue to ensure the appropriate amount of parking for their projects, which often means providing more parking than what is required. Parking remains a vital component for the saleability and liveability of their developments. When other Canadian cities, (such as Edmonton, London, St. John's and Calgary, as well as American municipalities), removed or reduced parking minimums, they **report minimal to no impact on overall parking availability**. Instead, they highlight various benefits, including reduced permit processing times and increased flexibility for businesses, developers, and consumers.



7. Consumer Choice: Saskatoon's current parking minimum regulations means home builders need to buy extra land to house cars which ultimately makes housing more expensive for home buyers and renters. Developers and builders know there are an increasing number of consumers who don't drive and therefore don't want to pay for the cost parking spaces. Open Option Parking means homeowners, businesses and developers decide how much parking is needed for every new development based on market knowledge, land use, and, most important, consumer requests.

In conclusion

We urge council to consider our evolving community, the successes in other Canadian municipalities and the many benefits of removing minimum parking requirements.

We support this recommendation and believe this approach can significantly contribute to the affordability, sustainability and prosperity of Saskatoon. Together, we can create a brighter, more inclusive future for Saskatoon.

Sincerely,

Nicole Burgess, BA, CAE
Chief Executive Officer



APPENDIX 1

June 26, 2023

His Worship Charlie Clark
Members of City Council
City of Saskatoon
201 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon, SK S7K 2H7

RE: Item 6.1.4 Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw Review – Amendment Package Six - Proposed Bylaw No. 9899, The Zoning Amendment Bylaw, 2023 (No. 9) - Accessible Parking

Your Worship and Members of City Council,

I am writing you today on behalf of the Saskatoon & Region Home Builders' Association, to express concerns regarding the proposed zoning bylaw change in package 6, which suggests increasing the requirement for accessible parking from the 2% recently approved in January to 4% and increasing the size from 4.2m to 4.9m (including access aisle). We believe that while the previous change from 1% to 2% was a step in the right direction, further increasing it to 4% could lead to unintended consequences detrimental to the development and livability of our city. We do however appreciate efforts made to ensure that the proposed increase in size and amount of accessible parking should not impact the overall developable area, however there are other consequences to these changes that extend beyond the required parking footprint.

It is important to acknowledge that developers have already faced significant challenges since the previous increase to 2% and 4.2 m. They have incurred substantial time and financial costs, with some having to redesign and reengineer plans that were in progress for over a year. The lack of sufficient warning or a phased implementation of these changes has left little room for consideration of ongoing development work. Additionally, these changes did not adequately account for the real impacts on active developments, such as column placement in underground structures, creating additional hurdles for our builders.

We acknowledge the good intentions behind this proposal, but we urge you to consider the implications it will have on our city's housing situation. At a time when we are in desperate need of more housing, introducing additional obstacles and requirements will only exacerbate the problem. Furthermore, considering that this change will only apply to new developments, its impact on accessibility will be minimal at best for decades to come. However, in the meantime, it will continue to cause significant issues, costs, and frustrations, especially for multi-family developers and residents in these developments.



During the January meeting, when council directed administration to explore a higher percentage than 2%, the decision seemed to be based on presentations that contained incomplete information. For instance, while it was mentioned that London, Ontario has a 4% accessible parking standard, it was not clarified that they also have open option parking based on zoning classification, which significantly changes the situation and impact. This is also true for Edmonton, another municipality that this proposed increase is modeled after, which also has an even more progressive open option parking environment than London.

In case you are not familiar with open option parking, the concept is where municipalities remove restrictive minimum parking requirements from their Zoning Bylaws altogether and essentially allow developers, homeowners, and businesses to decide how much on-site parking to provide on their properties, based on their particular operations, activities, needs and lifestyle. In places that have moved to this best practice of open option parking, they have also been able to effectively prioritize and accommodate higher standards for accessibility, as is being proposed in this package, because other restrictive parking requirements were removed making it much easier to accommodate. However, to try to apply this same standard, but without having the flexibility and benefits provided by open option parking, will most definitely have a negative impact on future development in our city and in some cases could impact the viability of some projects.

Furthermore, the focus of the presentations made in January primarily referenced access to services. While we understand the importance of accessibility in public spaces, we fail to comprehend why the same standards should be applied to residential developments. It is essential for council members to understand the implications that these changes will have. To the best of my knowledge, there is no data supporting the need for this high of a standard in residential construction for our city. In fact, across municipalities in Canada, the accepted range for accessible parking in residential developments generally falls between 1% to 2%.

Another consideration that was presented at the January meeting, was the need to accommodate accessible vans. Our understanding is that the new proposed increase from 4.2 m to 4.9 m is intended to address this request, as 4.88 m is what is required for accessible vans. What is not clear is why there is a need to apply this size to every accessible space, considering there are only an estimated 100 wheelchair vans in Saskatoon. It is also unclear why this would apply to new residential developments.

Recommendations:

- Maintain the current accessibility parking standard at 2% and 4.2 m that was implemented in January 2023. It is important to allow developers and builders sufficient time to adapt to this change before considering any further revisions in the future.



- Request that administration explore a more balanced approach to accessible parking regulations. This could involve considering the implementation of open option parking or zone-specific open option parking requirements. Open option parking is widely recognized as a best practice, offering developers the flexibility to provide the appropriate amount and type of parking based on the specific needs of their target markets.
- A more balanced approach to accommodating accessible vans needs to be considered based on need, such as allocating a small portion of spaces for this purpose, rather than applying this high of a standard to every accessible space in the future. Further consideration should be given to the type and nature of the development in determining whether oversize spaces are required.
- Provide consideration for accessible parking requirements to be appropriate to the type and nature of the development and those who need to access it. Applying the same parking requirements across both commercial and residential areas without discrimination could have detrimental consequences to future development and the overall livability of our city.
- Any future zoning bylaw changes of this magnitude should have a phase in period that takes planning and development timeframes into consideration. During this phase in period, changes should be communicated and recommended, however not required until a future date.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that council reconsider the proposed zoning bylaw change and maintain the current accessibility parking standard at 2% and 4.2 m for new developments. Let us work together to strike a balance between accessibility and the viability of our developments, ensuring that we can continue to provide much-needed housing to our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We trust that you will carefully review our concerns and make a decision that benefits the future growth and livability of our city.

Sincerely,

Nicole Burgess, BA, CAE
Chief Executive Officer