

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report presents a strategic parking management plan for downtown Kingston. The proposed plan forms a key component of the City of Kingston’s Transportation Demand Management strategy. The primary objectives of the proposed plan are to maximize utilization of the existing parking facilities, optimize future parking supply, and help create a vibrant pedestrian and public realm in downtown Kingston. The report consists of a comprehensive background analysis, a parking utilization study, evaluation of parking demand, SWOT analysis, and best practices review.

The executive summary is structured in two major parts: first, a background analysis including an evaluation of both the existing parking utilization and future parking demand projections; and second, a phased implementation strategy.

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

The built environment of downtown Kingston is a unique blend of employment, entertainment, and housing. It is necessary purposefully protect the unique characteristics of the area and maintain its vibrant public realm. The City has recognized this need and acted on it by initiating a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management (TDM) study. The TDM study will examine all aspects of the City of Kingston’s transportation network and recommend strategies to improve its efficiency and sustainability. One important aspect of TDM that is particularly challenging to planners, and sensitive to residents, is the provision of vehicular parking.

Study Area



The proposed plan covers the area bounded by Barrie St. in the west, Ontario St. in the east, Johnson St. in the South, and a non-linear northern boundary extending past Raglan Rd. Figure 1 shows the extent of the study area and locations of major public and privately owned parking facilities.

Policy Context

Two key policy documents regulate parking supply in the downtown: the Official Plan (OP) and the Zoning By-Laws. An updated OP was adopted in January 2010 by the City of Kingston. This current OP provides the future direction for parking supply in the city, which is supportive of progressive initiatives involving parking management. The existing zoning by-laws, however, were last updated in the mid-1990s and do not align with current policies. As a result, the zoning by-laws are not always consistent with the goals set out in the Official Plan and may need to be updated to realize the goals and objectives of this study.

Parking Utilization Study & Parking Demand

A parking utilization study was undertaken to assess current parking demand and to provide context for the project's recommendations. Parking facilities were observed at various times of the day on weekdays, weekends, and during special events in order to gain a full understanding of the parking needs in the downtown core. The findings of the utilization study showed underutilization of the existing parking capacity beyond work hours, which is consistent with the findings of previous studies commissioned by the City.

A reassessment of the parking demand projection of 1749 stalls as presented in the 2007 *Core Area Transportation Review* was carried out. The projection was reassessed based on: the length of time since the parking was lost, utilization rates, and the potential for site re-development. This resulted in figures slated for short-term and potential long-term replacement goals.

The utilization study in combination with the critical evaluation of the City's current parking projections suggests that it is unnecessary to build a new parking structure within the next five years.

Based on the comprehensive background analysis, three main guiding challenges were identified:

- There is a perception that there is a lack of parking in the downtown of Kingston,
- There is no need for additional parking structures or lots in the downtown core and,
- There needs to be an improvement of overall parking efficiency.

These three issues were applied in developing the recommended parking management strategy.

RECOMMENDED PARKING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

An overall parking management strategy was developed, which addresses the necessary changes in the zoning by-law and planning policies. This strategy consists of seven components that work together to create one holistic parking management strategy tailored to the needs of the City of Kingston and supportive of the larger TDM initiative.

WAYFINDING SIGNAGE - SHORT TERM (0 TO 2 YEARS)

Existing parking signs convey minimal information, which leads to undesirable “cruising” around downtown to search for a parking space. This in turn leads to inefficient utilization of parking garages and contributes to the common misconception of parking shortage in the downtown. Wayfinding addresses this issue by providing information on alternative parking locations, parking duration, and rates. This strategy is relatively inexpensive to implement and will generate results quickly.

- It is recommended that the City implement wayfinding signage

PARKING DELINEATION - SHORT-TERM (0 TO 2 YEARS)

The City currently employs a “cuddle-up” policy where some on-street parking stalls are not defined and it is up to motorists to determine what amount of space between vehicles is appropriate. This practice has been found to be less efficient than the one where parking spaces are delineated. This study found that delineation of parking stalls leads to more efficient utilization of parking space as drivers tend to park further apart in non-delineated spaces.

- It is recommended that the City investigate the merits of the existing cuddle-up policy and consider delineating on-street parking spaces

ADDITIONAL ON-STREET PARKING - SHORT-TERM (0 TO 2 YEARS)

Increasing on-street parking on downtown streets can help reduce the demand that is currently experienced by off-street facilities. There are two ways this could be accomplished: first by designated portions of certain downtown streets for parking and second by changing the existing minimum parking stall dimension to a maximum dimension. These changes would allow for increased on-street parking supply, improve sidewalk safety by establishing a barrier between vehicles and pedestrians, create additional parking revenue, and provide a cost effective alternative to a new parking structure.

- It is recommended that the City conduct necessary studies to designate all available streets for on-street parking
- It is recommended that the City convert existing minimum parking stall dimensions to maximum dimensions

REAL-TIME PARKING INFORMATION - MEDIUM-TERM (3 TO 8 YEARS)

A real-time parking information system takes live counts of available spaces in parking facilities and displays the information. This allows motorists to quickly and easily find parking and ensures the existing parking supply is utilized to its full potential. Adding this technology reduces the need to increase parking supply and helps overcome the misconception of a parking undersupply. A real-time parking

information system also makes utilization data more accessible, meaning that the city will have extensive data on-hand in order to better project future parking needs based on existing utilization rates.

- It is recommended that the City implement a real-time parking information system for its downtown parking garages.

CARPOOL PROGRAMS - MEDIUM-TERM (3 TO 8 YEARS)

Privately owned automobiles presently are, and will likely remain, the most common mode of transportation in Kingston. Incentivizing carpooling can cut down the total number of vehicles on the roads and reduce parking demand. For a carpooling program to be successful, added benefits must outweigh the personal freedom of travelling alone. To do this, prime parking spaces should be reserved for carpools and rates should be reduced.

- It is recommended that the City implement a pilot carpool program in the Hanson Memorial Lot for re-evaluation at a later date

PARKING MAXIMUMS - MEDIUM-TERM (3 TO 8 YEARS)

A parking maximum strategy is a policy tool used by municipalities to address parking oversupply. Introducing parking maximums in the downtown core will reduce underutilization of parking lots, create opportunities for infill development, encourage higher density development, and be supportive of other TDM strategies. Examples of where a parking maximum policy would have lead to higher quality developments in Kingston are found at Metro, Blockbuster Video, and Staples Business Depot.

- It is recommended that the City re-evaluate its existing parking minimum policy and implement a parking maximum policy

A/B STREET NETWORK - LONG-TERM (9+ YEARS)

A downtown needs to be inviting to drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The A/B street network is a proactive approach to downtown planning that recognizes the need for high quality, walkable streets as well as service and support streets. This policy would designate 'A' streets for high quality, pedestrian oriented development while 'B' streets would contain the less pedestrian friendly land uses such as restaurant drive thrus and parking facilities. 'B' street developments would also be expected to be of high quality as they are still prominent sites due to their downtown locations.

- It is recommended that the City identify 'A' and 'B' streets, and compose appropriate policies for each

CONCLUSION

The seven components of the *Downtown Kingston Strategic Parking Plan* are meant to function together to address the main challenges identified as part of the background analysis. This strategy is intended to help achieve TDM and sustainability goals in the City of Kingston by managing parking more effectively and efficiently in the downtown.