

When we look to the parking lots that cover our suburban cities empty spaces scatter the landscape. Minimum Parking Requirements (MPRs) are said to be responsible for this oversupply of parking, requiring developers to build parking spaces based upon the ratio of gross leasable floor area to parking spaces. MPRs were introduced by cities in the early 20th century during the early stages of parking lot development. The intention of MPRs was to provide a sufficient amount of parking to prevent spillover onto nearby streets. Today, parking lots are still necessary in our automobile dominated transportation system, but massive overdoses of it are not. The fact is, that at some point there are too many parking spaces and not enough buildings to create a vibrant city.

A parking lot is said to be most efficient when at least 85 per cent of its capacity is occupied. Researchers estimate that in most situations, especially suburban developments, even at peak periods parking occupancy is at most 65-80 per cent of capacity. There may only be a couple of hours during the year when peak demand is approached or at times reached. The purpose of this study is to examine the parking demand of three commercial parking lots in the City of Barrie to determine if the MPRs set out by the City of Barrie provide an oversupply of parking spaces. The three sites included in the study are:

Site #1: 450 Bayfield Street

Site #2: 11 Bryne Drive

Site #3: 555 Essa Road

This study aims to answer the following questions by conducting parking occupancy studies at the three study sites:

- 1. Do the minimum parking requirements developed by the City of Barrie fail to meet the industry standard for parking lot efficiency of at least 85 per cent occupancy and subsequently create an oversupply of parking?*

2. *What parking policy alternatives are available to the City of Barrie to balance the under and over-supply of parking in suburban commercial shopping centres?*

This study relied on a literature review including the examination of previous parking studies conducted by consultants and municipalities to explore different parking occupancy study methods as well as parking policy alternatives. Six (6 hour) site visits were conducted for each parking lot to determine parking demand. Each site was visited on weekdays and weekends for the span of 6 hours (9am- 3pm or 3pm-9pm). Each hour an occupancy count was conducted.

Upon completion of the parking occupancy studies [at the three sites] over the span of five months, it was found that not once did the parking demand surpass 60 per cent. In fact, all three sites provided more parking spaces than required by the City of Barrie's MPRs and did not ever meet the parking demand of the required minimum parking spaces.

The existing policy framework of the City of Barrie was explored and a disengagement of policy goals was found between MPRs and current City policies. Accordingly, alternative policy options to MPRs to reduce the oversupply of parking are provided in Chapter 5 and case studies of cities that have chosen to adopt said policies are included.

The policy options include:

- 1.) Reductions to parking standard ratios in MPRs
- 2.) Maximum parking requirements
- 3.) Shared parking
- 4.) Site-specific parking requirements
- 5.) Cash in lieu

The City of Barrie is precipitously expanding with the introduction of Park Place, a large commercial center in the south-end, and is currently home to two GO Transit stations (the first opening in 2007 and second in 2012). In addition, Barrie has a

rapidly increasing population and recently annexed the Town of Innisfil, further expanding opportunities for new development in the future. With increasing development and population growth it is important that the land-use is managed effectively for a prosperous future. Pragmatic parking policy reform is one of the building blocks that can help to achieve this.

The preliminary recommendations for parking policy reform were divided into short, medium, and long-term policy recommendations.

Short Term

1. Educate decision makers, residents, and businesses about the costs of oversupplied parking. This will help to generate the required support for parking policy change
2. Explore the policy options provided in this report to determine what would work best for the City of Barrie.
3. Re-evaluate the parking standards to reflect parking demand by conducting parking occupancy studies. Make reductions to MPRs where deemed necessary.
4. Align parking policies with the goals and objectives of the City of Barrie Official Plan.

Medium Term

1. Monitor the impacts of reductions in MPRs on parking usage.
2. Introduce more flexible parking policies to encourage more efficient use of land
3. Research parking design guidelines developed by other cities to determine what would work best for the City of Barrie

Long Term

1. Continue to monitor MPRs and other policy changes to ensure policy goals are being achieved.
2. Make modifications to policies as the population and demographics of the City evolve.
3. Develop parking design guidelines to improve the pedestrian experience, the urban design of the city, encourage active transportation and discourage automobile centric design.

The final conclusion of this report is that as the City of Barrie explores the policy options outlined in this report and considers the recommendations provided, the City can create dynamic parking policies that meet the demands of the growing and changing population. In doing so they will be equipped with the resources to create a city that encourages all forms of transportation and improves livability by providing their residents with more transportation options and seeks to achieve community goals.