

## Parking Review – Removing Minimum Parking Requirements Frequently Asked Questions

An initiative outlined in the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) application is to reduce parking requirements with a focus on affordable housing. At their December 20, 2023 Council meeting, Council considered a [report](#) on Options for the Review of Minimum Parking Regulations and resolved: That Administration undertake the work to pursue Option 3 – Remove Minimum Parking Requirements. Answers to common questions on this topic are below.

### 1. How is parking regulated now?

The City's [Zoning Bylaw](#) sets the minimum number of required parking spaces to be on a property based on the area of the City, the type of use in a building and the size of that use or building. All applications for new development in the City of Saskatoon must meet these minimum requirements (with a few processes for exceptions).

For example, the *minimum parking requirement* for a single-family home is zero (0) spaces; however, if there is a secondary suite, then the minimum parking requirement is two (2) spaces; one for the primary residence and one for the suite. These parking spaces are required regardless of potential on-street parking.

The *minimum parking requirement* for a shopping mall along 8<sup>th</sup> Street is one space per 30m<sup>2</sup> of building floor area.

The requirement outlined in the Zoning Bylaw is a *minimum* requirement. Builders can build more parking than this if they so choose.

### 2. How are Minimum Parking Requirements determined?

In Saskatoon, minimum parking requirements were added to the Zoning Bylaw from 1959-1961, with the intention of preventing street parking from becoming overcrowded and at a time of a post-war construction boom. Minimum parking requirements have become more complex over the years and are included to serve the development's needs.

Minimum parking requirements are based on several factors:

- past requirements provide a starting point for review;
- common/best practices are looked at in other cities;
- public and stakeholder engagement to provide feedback on the local context;
- study of past experiences and other technical factors; and
- The Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) publishes a Parking Generation Manual to estimate parking demand. The Parking Generation Manual estimates parking demand based on observed data of similar land uses in similar urban contexts across the United States. The Manual is based on historical data and does not provide for strategic future growth planning.

### 3. What are other cities doing for parking regulations now?

**Cities across North America are removing or reducing parking requirements.**

Cities began implementing parking requirements in the mid-1900s in response to increased ownership of vehicles. More recently, however, cities have begun to remove or reduce parking requirements in favour of meeting other strategic goals such as affordability, climate goals and better meeting actual parking need.

When cities remove parking requirements, this is often referred to as ‘open-option parking’. In this instance, cities allow developers, homeowners and businesses to decide how much on-site parking to provide on their properties, based on their needs, activities, or lifestyle.

Removing parking minimums does not mean that no parking will be provided. Rather, this approach assumes businesses and homeowners are aware of their parking needs and have an interest in ensuring they are met. This makes this approach more likely to align the amount of parking provided with the amount needed or wanted.

When this approach is taken, parking standards, like the size of parking stalls, hard surfacing and other mandatory features, are maintained. Requirements for accessible (barrier-free) parking spaces and bicycle parking also remain.

### 4. What is being proposed for parking regulations?

**At their December meeting, City Council moved to pursue removing parking minimums from the Zoning Bylaw.** This is commonly referred to as “open option parking”. For this option, parking minimums will be removed from the Zoning Bylaw and the developer, homeowner or business would decide how much parking should be provided based on market knowledge.

### 5. Has anywhere else in Canada removed parking requirements? What happened?

**A number of Canadian cities have removed minimum parking requirements in whole or in part over the last few years, including Edmonton, Toronto, Calgary, Kingston, Laval, and St. John’s Newfoundland.** Not many years have passed since implementation so the long term impact has not been established. However, across cities that have removed minimum parking requirements in North America, the trend has been that parking is still being provided, at a slightly lower rate than what was previously required.

**6. How similar are other cities to Saskatoon that are removing minimum parking requirements? What is their population and public transit situation?**

Below are some Canadian cities who have removed or reduced their minimum parking requirements. They were varied in population size and transit availability:

City	Population (2021, Census Subdivision)	Transit
Saskatoon, SK	266,100	Buses / Future Bus Rapid Transit
Edmonton, AB	1.01 million	Light rail and buses
Calgary, AB	1.31 million	Light rail and buses
London, ON	422,300	Buses / Bus Rapid Transit
Kingston, ON	132,500	Buses
Toronto, ON	2.79 million	Subway, rail and buses
Regina, SK	226,400	Buses
Laval, PQ	443,200	Subway, rail, buses
St. John's, NFLD	110,525	Buses

**7. Why are we reviewing parking regulations now?**

A comprehensive review of parking regulations has not been done in Saskatoon for at least 25 years. As other Canadian cities are examining their approaches to parking, and as Saskatoon is reviewing its Zoning Bylaw, City Council has requested that Administration undertake the work to pursue removing minimum parking requirements.

In addition, City Council has approved the [Housing Accelerator Fund Action Plan](#). One of the initiatives of this Plan is to remove parking requirements, with a focus on affordable housing.

**8. What are the benefits of removing minimum parking requirements?**

There are several benefits to removing minimum parking requirements beyond supporting affordable housing, including:

- **Increased overall affordability.** The costs of building and maintaining parking are passed onto homeowners, renters, business owners and customers, regardless of whether they drive or not. When there are parking requirements, space that could be dedicated to more shops or housing is required to be dedicated to parking.
- **Reduced development application review time / increased certainty for applicants.** Other cities have noted that removing parking requirements has resulted in efficiencies in the review of development applications, with less time spent for applicants to understand and meet requirements and less time required to review applications for staff.
- **Supports economic and business growth.** Potential for more developable space and use of space that meets prospective residents and customers' needs.
- **Supports sustainability goals and environmental leadership.** Requiring parking incentivizes car ownership over other modes of transportation that have lower greenhouse gas emissions. Surface parking itself also increases the urban heat island effect, warming Saskatoon.

- **Promotes an urban form that supports walkability and other modes of transportation.** Abundant parking requires a lot of space and impacts how the city is built. More space for parking results in buildings that are further apart and less dense, and a built environment more supportive of personal vehicle use than other modes of transportation. This, in turn, has an impact on the walkability of an area. Flexibility in site design can be gained from removing parking requirements and lead to improved walkability.
- **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 makes assumptions about resident / customer demand for parking, without considering if the resident / customer is a vehicle owner or their preference is to use alternative transportation. People will make decisions based on several factors including availability of parking, income, commute times and personal choice about 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.

## 9. What are the barriers to implementation / challenges with removing parking requirements?

There are challenges to removing minimum parking requirements including:

- Ensuring that adequate alternatives to driving are available. Car-oriented infrastructure can make public transit less viable and walking or cycling less practical, safe, or convenient.
- Opposition to change or fear of change.
- Ensuring that there is good on-street parking management in place.
- There is no incentive for developers to provide adequate parking if there are no parking requirements. If there is not enough parking supplied, it may increase on-street parking or commercial parking lots.

## 10. There is parking pressure in my neighbourhood, and I struggle to park in front of my house. Will removing parking requirements make this worse?

In situations where there is existing parking pressure, removing parking requirements is unlikely to reduce parking pressures, nor is it anticipated to increase parking pressure. Existing operations will continue to operate as they are now, and it is expected that new developments will develop the appropriate amount of parking for themselves. It would not be desirable for businesses to not have available parking for their customers and landlords to not have available parking for their tenants.

That said, the benefits of removing parking requirements occur where less parking is provided. Housing may be developed for residents whose daily needs are met without a vehicle. Flexibility in how much parking is provided, affordability by not passing on the costs of developing parking, and site design that promotes walkability, are all benefits that can occur if less parking is required to be provided.

### 11. Will there be changes to the Residential Parking Program (RPP) or other on-street programs as a result of these changes?

The RPP and other on-street programs are not being changed or reviewed as part of this work. These programs will be monitored for any impacts as a result of changes to the off-street parking requirements.

### 12. Why consider removing parking minimums before the City has a successful Bus Rapid Transit system up and running?

**Removing parking minimums has the potential for transformative change in how Saskatoon is built and how we get around. However, this change will happen incrementally as new developments are built, with many new developments expected to provide the same amount of parking as they currently do.** The incremental change of removing parking minimums is anticipated to happen in concert with improvements to public transit and active transportation infrastructure like multi-use pathways.

### 13. Doesn't the City have other priorities?

**The City will continue to balance priorities using the [strategic plan](#) as a framework.** The plan outlines goals to realize the long-term vision of Saskatoon as a great place to live, work, learn and play. The goals include:

- asset & financial sustainability
- culture of continuous improvement
- environmental leadership
- moving around
- quality of life
- sustainable growth
- economic diversity and prosperity

The City aims to balance those goals with all the initiatives happening at the City, while maintaining excellent core services. Reviewing minimum parking requirements aligns with many of the City's strategic goals, from asset and financial sustainability to environmental leadership to moving around and sustainable growth.

### 14. I have a disability and need my car to undertake my daily activities. How will removing parking minimums affect me?

**Pursuing the removal of minimum parking requirements will consider exceptions, including provisions to maintain accessible parking at current levels.** Requirements for accessible parking were increased in 2023 so that developments require more and larger spaces. These changes are intended to be maintained, even while removing the requirements for standard parking spaces.

**15. If parking requirements are removed, will parking still be built? Why should developers / business owners get to decide how much parking is needed?**

**Businesses and homeowners are aware of their parking needs and have an interest in ensuring they are met, making this approach more likely to align the amount of parking provided with how much is desired.**

**16. I still have questions. Who can I ask?**

If you have any follow up questions, please email [zoningbylaw@saskatoon.ca](mailto:zoningbylaw@saskatoon.ca).