

Report on the Commercial Parking Study

Planning Services Division

August 31, 2020

BACKGROUND

The City of Greater Sudbury adopted a Nodes and Corridors Strategy in September 2016 (See Reference 1). This Nodes and Corridors Strategy is intended to help revitalize and better connect our Downtown, the Town Centres, strategic core areas and corridors of the City. The strategy will also help create new and distinctive corridors and town centres, all featuring mixed uses, public realm improvements and public transit.

The LaSalle Boulevard Corridor Plan and Strategy (the “LBCPS”) was endorsed by the City in July, 2018 (See Reference 2). It introduces policy recommendations to standardize land uses and zoning, to provide additional amenities for transit, cycling and walking, and to enhance the street through landscaping, bringing buildings closer to the street and creating distinct nodes of activity.

During the course of undertaking the LBCPS, the consultant (WSP) conducted a number of key stakeholder interviews regarding redevelopment on LaSalle Boulevard. These interviews highlighted the commercial parking standards in the City’s Zoning By-law as a potential barrier to redevelopment. To further investigate this issue staff commissioned a study that examined best practices for commercial parking ratios. The study identified opportunities to update certain commercial parking ratios to bring them in line with other municipalities and to encourage and facilitate investment and redevelopment along the LaSalle corridor and other commercial zones. The study was undertaken to complement the LBCPS, the Transportation Master Plan, the Transit Action Plan, the Complete Streets Policy and other Active Transportation initiatives.

The Commercial Parking Study findings were presented to Planning Committee in February, 2020 (See Reference 3). A decision on the matter was deferred pending further information, which was presented in July, 2020 (See Reference 4). In July, 2020, Council directed staff to initiate an amendment to the zoning by-law to implement the findings and recommendations of the study no later than the end of Q3, 2020.

Study Findings

The City commissioned the study entitled “Best Practice Review: Commercial Parking Requirements” (the “Study” - See Attachment A) which;

- compared Greater Sudbury’s parking standards to other municipalities;
- examined Greater Sudbury’s experience with parking;
- considered Greater Sudbury’s recent initiatives regarding active transportation and the Transit Action Plan;
- outlined parking strategies used elsewhere; and,
- provided parking management strategies for the City’s consideration.

The Study found that Greater Sudbury’s requirements for commercial parking spaces are higher than the requirements in comparator municipalities, particularly for retail uses, restaurants, personal service shops and shopping malls (see Table 1 on page 5 of the Study).

The Study recommended that the City maintain its current parking strategies, including the reduction of spaces for underground spaces, the provision of parking spaces on another lot, and cash-in-lieu of parking.

The Study also identified other best practices from other municipalities for the City's consideration. These include:

- reducing the number of vehicular parking spaces when a bus lay-by or bicycle parking are provided;
- allowing reductions on a site specific basis, based on an approved parking study; and,
- including shared parking provisions which takes into consideration the mixed use and multiple use nature of sites (e.g. shopping mall example).

As mentioned in the February, 2020 report, these strategies will have to be balanced with the current zoning requirements (e.g. zoning currently requires bicycle parking in certain circumstances) and operational considerations (e.g. bus lay by on City or on private property; impact of additional on-street parking, etc) (See Reference 3).

In addition to the above, staff recommended that the City consider a 10% percent reduction of parking for properties fronting onto Routes 1 and 2 (the Main Line and Barry Downe – Cambrian, respectively) (See Reference 6). This recommendation is based on the findings of the Study, which examined transit supportive parking reductions in other Ontario municipalities. Staff have prepared a draft amendment to the City's Zoning By-law (Attachment B) based on the above.

Other Considerations

During the July Planning Committee Meeting there was discussion around achieving land use planning objectives through further changes to the City's parking regulations, primarily the elimination of minimum parking requirements and the introduction of maximum parking standards. Specifically, the Committee discussed:

- reducing the minimum parking standards for properties within 200 metres of the City's Nodes and Corridors by 50%;
- establishing a maximum parking standard for properties within 200 metres of the City's Nodes and Corridors that is 110-150% percent of the minimum parking requirements;
- harmonizing reductions to minimum parking standards for commercial land uses by up to 25%, consistent with the LaSalle Boulevard Corridor Plan and Strategy;
- eliminating minimum parking standards for multi-residential uses in the C5 Zone.

In investigating these concepts, staff has found that there are approximately 20,000 properties in or within 200 metres of a node or corridor. These include all types of zoning, from residential, commercial, institutional to industrial.

As noted in the July, 2020 report, the elimination of minimum parking standards is uncommon in North America and only one major Canadian municipality (Edmonton) has taken this policy approach. The imposition of a maximum parking standards was also found to be somewhat

uncommon, with the July review uncovering that determining the correct maximum is problematic and could lead to many requests for variances. Staff also found that the path that many municipalities take to reducing parking requirements is a phased approach that sees the elimination of parking in the core areas first, followed by the reduction of parking requirements along major transit corridors.

Greater Sudbury is currently following this approach as parking requirements have been eliminated in the City's downtown and parking requirements have been reduced to facilitate affordable housing projects. The City is now taking another step with the proposed amendment by reviewing and updating its commercial parking ratios to ensure they are in line with other municipalities and is introducing the concept of parking reductions along major transit corridors.

Public Consultation Strategy

Staff recommends that the City now proceed to a public hearing as the proposed changes to the Zoning By-law are minor and technical in nature. This approach would be similar to the steps taken with recent zoning by-law amendments associated with Brewpubs and Recreational Cannabis.

Staff would recommend a more robust consultation strategy should we receive direction to implement the elimination of minimum parking standards or introduce a maximum parking standard. Since these changes would represent a significant change to the City's land use planning policy framework, per the City's Official Plan, public consultation would consist of a minimum of two open houses and a public meeting.

PPS and GROWTH PLAN for NORTHERN ONTARIO.

These recommendations are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, 2014 (2014 PPS) which states that land use patterns within settlement areas shall be based on densities and a mix of land uses which efficiently use land and resources, support active transportation and are transit-supportive. The 2014 PPS also promotes public streets that meet the needs of pedestrians and facilitate active transportation. A reduction of commercial parking standards would also promote the use of active transportation and transit in and between residential, employment and institutional uses (See also Section 2.1 on page 1 of the Study).

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

The Commercial Parking Review was commissioned to address the concerns from stakeholders that the City's commercial parking ratios were a technical barrier to commercial development. As a result the Study was focused on those uses that may be located in commercial plazas (i.e. suburban, strip-mall and shopping centre-type development). In July 2020, Council directed staff to initiate an amendment to the zoning by-law to incorporate the findings and recommendations of the Study. The proposed by-law represents a technical amendment to bring certain commercial parking ratios in line with comparator municipalities. Staff recommend that they receive direction to initiate the required Planning Act process to adopt the draft by-law.

RESOURCES CITED

1. Nodes and Corridors Strategy
<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&lang=en&id=992&itemid=11977>
2. LaSalle Boulevard Corridor Plan and Strategy
<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=8&id=1227>
3. “Report on the Commercial Parking Study”, report presented at the February 19, 2020 Planning Committee Meeting
<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=11&id=1443>
4. “Supplemental Information Regarding the Commercial Parking Study”, presented at the at July 6, 2020 Planning Committee Meeting
<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=11&id=1452>

Attachments

- A. Commercial Standards Parking Study
- B. Draft Proposed Zoning By-Law Amendment