

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF SARNIA
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PLANNING AND BUILDING

NON-AGENDA REPORT

TO: Members of Sarnia City Council

FROM: Alan Shaw– Director of Planning and Building

DATE: July 16, 2018

SUBJECT: Downtown Parking Public Consultation

By way of this report I would like inform council of the results of our first public consultation session regarding Downtown Parking and identify next steps as we move forward.

Background

On May 15th 2018, the city conducted its first of a series of public consultation sessions directed at identifying and resolving parking issues in the Downtown core. In addition to the public meeting a survey was placed on the Smart Sarnia website seeking similar information. In all 224 responses were received.

The purpose of this session was to identify the top concerns the public has with parking in the downtown area. Once identified the city will commit to looking at these issues with the goal to resolve or minimize negative aspects associated with parking in this area. Through this step by step process the City hopes to improve people’s experience while living, working or visiting the downtown core.

People who participated in this public session were asked to identify their top three concerns when parking in the downtown area. They were further allowed to rank their input into first, second and third most important. Finally participants were asked how often they used parking downtown. An infographic has been attached to this report showing the findings of this report.

The survey identified the top issues as;

- 56% - Lack of Parking
- 24% - Location or Parking (convenience)
- 20% - Cost of Parking

In summary; the public sees the need for the city to create more parking spaces throughout the downtown core with consideration as to the cost for parking.

Comments

"Lack of Parking" clearly stood out as the number one issue for people using the downtown core. Not only did it receive the most overall responses but it was also the top priority of participants. It also received the most comments on the survey with suggestions of angled parking on the streets and construction of a multi-tiered parking structure in various locations.

Although not seen as a top priority, participants across the board viewed "location of parking" as the number two issue. As location relates to convenience or distance to available parking it appears participants put a value to being able to find parking at or near the location they are attending.

At number three, "Cost of Parking" was identified as a concern by approximately 20% of those taking the survey. This indicates that although people note the need for more parking spaces, they would prefer the creation of more low cost or free parking spaces. Many participants indicated the need to maintain free parking on the streets to encourage people to visit downtown businesses.

It should be pointed out that "Abuse of 2hr Free Parking" was a very close fourth in the survey. In fact with more top priority votes it could be argued that it should supersede "Cost of Parking" as Number three in the survey. As such enforcement will need to be incorporated in any parking proposals moving forward.

Next steps

Staff will seek public input on ways to provide additional parking in the downtown core that will be convenient to all businesses while considering the cost to the end user. Following this session a final report will be provided to council in the fall with a recommendation to create additional parking.

Loading zones

During public consultation the concerns regarding the use of loading zones was brought to staff by merchants. The source of concern was the ability of enforcement staff to identify non-commercial vehicles used by local store owner's while parked in these zones. Unable to identify merchant's cars from any other non-commercial vehicles store owners are frequently issued tickets while in these zones.

As a solution, the city will provide Loading Zone passes for each business in the downtown area. This will allow the store owner or their employee to place the pass on their dash while using the loading zones for their business. Use of loading zones will still be limited to 30min for actively loading or unloading merchandise. Each pass will be connected to a business and as

such, abuse or misuse of the passes could result in warnings and or fines to that business. Costs for implementing loading zone passes are minor and can be accommodated within the approved operating budget. This measure will provide better service to the downtown businesses while not resulting in any change in service to the public. Staff will be undertaking this measure immediately.

Attachment: Parking Infographic 1.1