



**The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie**

C O U N C I L R E P O R T

June 23, 2025

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Peter Tonazzo, Director of Planning and Salvatore
Marchese, Junior Planner
DEPARTMENT: Community Development and Enterprise Services
RE: Parking Reforms

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

Part I – Provide Council with information on a series of proposed zoning amendments to be presented later in 2025;

Part II – Discuss Downtown parking, including the findings and recommendations of the SSM Downtown Parking Study, completed by CIMA+; and

Part III – Discuss the 7 recommendations of the Downtown Association, in response to a Council decision to lease 90 parking spaces to the North Shore Tribal Council.

Background

The Psychology of Parking

A review of online materials reveals a myriad of studies, blogs, and opinions on parking, which all lead one to understand that parking is emotional and can invoke a feeling that a particular lot is full, when there are, in fact, plenty of parking options still available. Such perceptions are often based on previous experiences. While a particular parking lot may be busier, that does not necessarily mean that it is busy, let alone full. As discussed in Part II of this report, the City has been monitoring parking lot usage in Downtown public parking lots, with counts including Monday to Friday, every second hour between 9am and 3pm, since 2014. The results indicate average peak parking demand across all lots is 59%, whereas 85% occupancy is generally understood as an appropriate threshold to ensure adequate supply, as well as efficient operations and use of land. Furthermore, monitoring information for Downtown parking lots indicates that across all lots, ideal occupancy of 85% or higher was only achieved for 1.54% of the total time that parking lots were monitored since 2014. Therefore, the perception that there is not enough parking Downtown is not supported by the data.

Perceptions of effort or convenience also play into the psychology of parking. When the first few rows or most convenient parking spaces are full, some people may perceive the entire lot to be full. This is especially prevalent with Downtown public parking spaces, whether they are on-street or located in publicly maintained lots. Interestingly, parking in the middle of the parking lot of a popular local big box store and walking to the back of the store is approximately 145m. Parking along Albert Street in the Spring/Albert parking lot and walking south through the Paul Mall Alley to Queen Street is approximately 124m. Parking at the east end of the Spring/Albert lot and walking west to Brock Street is approximately 135m, both slightly less than that of the big box store. Research indicates that 250m is an appropriate distance that drivers are willing to walk outdoors from their vehicle to their destination. Such a walk takes between 1-4 minutes for most people.

A Brief History of Minimum Parking Requirements

Dating back to the 1950's, parking philosophy is based on establishing minimum parking requirements to accommodate peak demand on the busiest days of the year, such as during Christmas and 'Black Friday', leaving parking lots relatively vacant for much of the year. Furthermore, established parking ratios for various uses were traditionally communicated as a precise number that applies to all use categories, with little regard for where a use is located or the nature of the specific use. For example, uses located in Downtowns or strategic development areas may be better served with active transportation networks, located in close walking distance of residents, or located in neighbourhoods where fewer residents own vehicles.

Beginning in the late 1990's, the philosophy determining minimum parking requirements has been evolving and changing to better meet actual demand. These changes recognize that there is no such thing as 'free parking' and in fact, excessive minimum parking requirements have a number of negative impacts.

The Costs of Parking

Parking has an inherent cost that can drive the price of development up significantly. It has been estimated that parking can increase housing costs by an average of 10%¹. Other studies claim that at-grade parking spaces cost approximately \$6,000 per space and underground parking costs approximately \$45,000 per space.² It is noted that these numbers can vary depending upon site-specific and local market conditions.

The City operates 14 public parking lots in the Downtown area as well as on-street parking, totalling 1,654 parking spaces. From 2021 to 2023, parking generated an average of \$247,824 in annual revenues with average expenses of \$467,581.

¹ Paid Parking as Progressive Social Policy - Parking Industry Insights.

² A Foundation for the Public Good: Recommendations to Increase Kingston's Housing Supply for all – Mayor's Task Force on Housing Report.

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Therefore, the City ran an average annual deficit of \$219,757. These numbers do not factor in the cost of construction or capital repairs for the parking lots.

Excessive minimum parking requirements also have opportunity costs. They eliminate development potential, which might otherwise generate greater revenues in the form of additional assessment and taxes, or higher leasable floor space that can be marketed by landowners and developers. Excessive parking areas also place greater pressure on the creation of 'people first' spaces, such as indoor and outdoor amenity areas and landscaping.

Parking also takes up a considerable amount of space. A party of 20 people can comfortably fit in a 2-car garage. As a general rule, big box and other large commercial developments consist of 25% leasable floor space (where revenue is generated from), 20% landscaping and setbacks, with the remaining 55% dedicated to parking. A review of three select local developments indicate that anywhere from 65-80% of land was dedicated to parking, higher than the general rule of thumb.

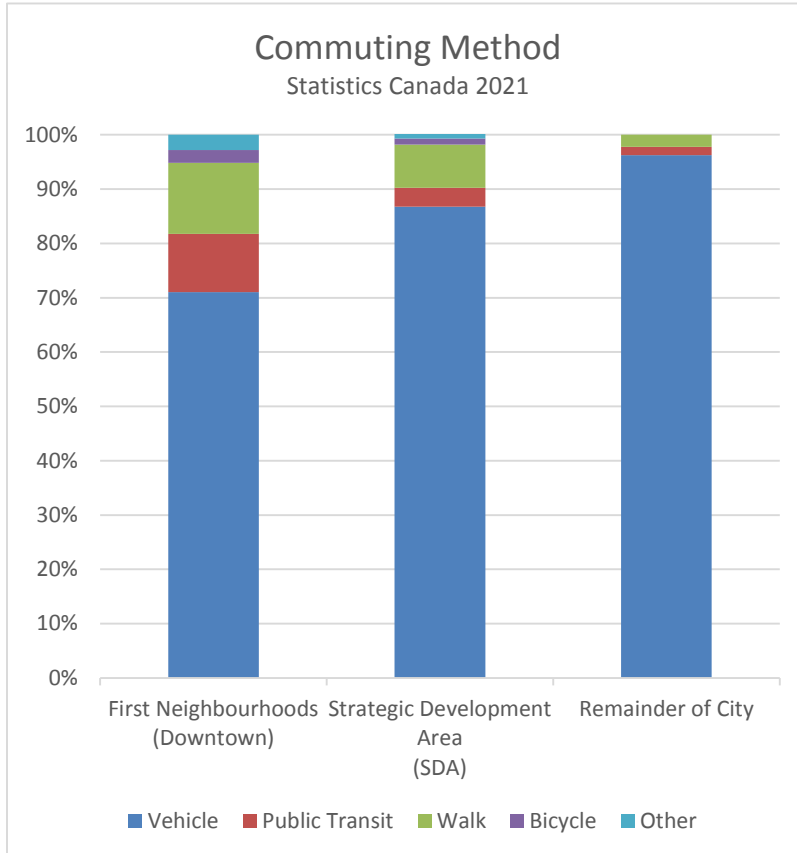
In many cases, opportunity costs are higher than the tangible costs of constructing and maintaining parking lots. Parking structures, either at or below grade, can mitigate against the opportunity costs and facilitate higher development densities; however, they are far more costly than at-grade parking lots. Furthermore, current local conditions are such that parking supply significantly exceeds demand, and there is no business case to support parking structures, even in the Downtown, where development densities are highest, yet parking supply still exceeds demand. A significant outcome of parking reforms and reduced parking requirements will be to make better use of vacant and underdeveloped lands, which facilitates higher density infill developments. Another intended outcome is to make more efficient use of existing parking, especially in the Downtown, so that supply and demand is better aligned, with the hope that at some point, a valid business case can be made to support parking structures and even paid parking programs that better reflect the true cost of parking. In an attempt to mitigate the opportunity costs associated with large, underutilized parking lots, many municipalities have 'parking maximums', which are zoning regulations that limit parking lots to a specific size. Staff are not proposing maximum parking requirements at this time.

Recognizing That Different Locations Have Different Parking Requirements

The traditional approach to parking has been to apply uniform minimum requirements throughout the City, with the exception of the Downtown, which currently benefits from slight reductions in required parking and a number of exemptions that provide further parking relief. There exist areas beyond the Downtown where data shows that automobile use is lower, and the overall development pattern supports active transportation options. These areas are identified as Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) (Appendix A – Strategic Development Areas). While not all local SDAs are alike, they all contain a mix of land uses within safe-walkable distance of each other, offering easy access to a

variety of services and amenities, such as grocery stores, schools, medical facilities, parks, public transportation, and active transportation networks.

Given the inherent connectivity of SDAs, those who may not own a car or do not



wish to drive on a regular basis often choose to live in SDAs. 2021 census data on methods of commuting to work demonstrates that those living in the Downtown have the lowest reliance on vehicles, and the highest reliance on public transit and active transportation as a means to getting to and from work. Those living in Strategic Development Areas have the second lowest reliance on vehicles, and those in the remaining parts of the Urban Settlement Area almost exclusively utilize a

personal vehicle to commute to work.

It is worth noting that this data is somewhat dated. Recent growth is largely driven by non-permanent residents and international migration – groups who tend not to own a vehicle when they first arrive. This is further evidenced by Transit ridership numbers, which continue to increase. Finally, it is generally understood that for a variety of reasons, newcomers are settling in the Downtown and other SDAs, where there exists more supply of rental housing opportunities, with easy, walkable access to various amenities.

Analysis

PART I - Parking Reforms – Proposed Amendments to Zoning By-law 2005-150

The proposed amendments have the intention of reducing and refining parking standards and requirements for various uses throughout the City, with the intent of better aligning parking supply with parking demand, unlocking development potential, enabling higher development densities, and modernizing parking regulations to be in line with municipal best practices.

1. Proposed Parking Reductions:

Area of City	Type of Development	Minimum Parking Requirement
First neighbourhoods Strategic Development Area	Non-residential uses/buildings	40% reduction of required parking from current standards No minimum parking requirement where new construction consists of less than 450m ²
	Residential Uses	No parking requirement for the first 4 dwellings. 0.5 spaces/dwelling thereafter.
Other Strategic Development Areas	Non-residential uses/buildings	40% reduction of required parking from current standards.
	Residential Uses	0.75 spaces/unit
Remainder of City	Non-residential uses/buildings	20% reduction of required parking from current standards.
	Residential Uses	No change – 1 space/unit requirement

2. Proposed amendments to barrier-free parking requirements:

- Revise the ranges at which total spaces of barrier-free parking are determined to better align with other municipalities in Ontario. The overall effect will be to have relatively fewer spaces than currently required for smaller developments, and relatively more spaces for larger developments.
- Require a higher number of barrier-free parking spaces for specific uses such as sports stadiums and medical centres.
- Require additional signage identifying the barrier-free access aisle as a no-parking zone.

3. Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness

- For all new residential developments consisting of more than 5 units, a minimum of 20% of all parking spaces shall be 'EV Ready', which means these spaces will have a conduit capable of being electrified to support vehicle charging infrastructure.

4. New Minimum Bicycle Parking Requirements

- The addition of minimum bicycle parking requirements for larger scale developments consisting of at least 10 vehicle parking spaces will trigger a requirement for bicycle parking (which can be a bike rack or other types of bicycle storage).

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Municipal Scan

Thirteen municipalities were utilized by CIMA+ and Planning Staff to assess various approaches to minimum parking requirements.

These communities were selected for a variety of comparable factors that included

Barrie, ON	Oshawa, ON
Brainerd, MN, USA	Sarnia, ON
Guelph, ON	Sudbury, ON
Kingston, ON	Thunder Bay, ON
Kitchener, ON	Traverse City, MI USA
Marquette, MI, USA	Windsor, ON
North Bay, ON	

weather, size, proximity to Sault Ste. Marie, and recent updates to parking regulations. The attached CIMA+ Report (Appendix B -

SSM_Parking_Study_Final Report) contains detailed analysis and comparisons of the parking requirements in the Downtown only.

Planning staff utilized the same 13 municipalities to compare parking requirements outside of their Downtowns. For brevity, a more detailed discussion of comparable municipal parking requirements will be included in a future report specific to Zoning By-law amendments to parking regulations.

PART II – Parking in the Downtown

Utilizing Provincial Streamline Development Approvals Funding, CIMA+ was retained to review and provide recommendations on Zoning By-law parking requirements, public parking pricing, and overall parking supply and demand in the Downtown (Appendix B - SSM_Parking_Study_Final Report).

Downtown Parking Demand and Supply

The total public parking supply within the Downtown consists of 1,308 off-street spaces across 14 lots and 346 on-street parking spaces, totalling 1,654 public spaces. It is worth noting that parking supply numbers in CIMA+'s report indicate a total of 1,552 public parking spaces in the Downtown. For the most part, analysis in the CIMA+ report is based upon this number. Upon further review, staff have determined that there are in fact 1,654 parking spaces in the Downtown, which represents an additional 102 spaces. All calculations undertaken in this report utilize the City's revised number of 1,654. The majority of the increase can be attributed to the addition of on-street parking spaces on Queen Street west of Tancred and Gore Street. In addition, alterations within various public parking lots, such as the creation of barrier-free spaces, installation of pay and display machines, and repainting the lots have resulted in minor changes to total parking space counts. To conclude, the change represents a slight increase in parking supply, especially towards the western portion of the Downtown area, and the

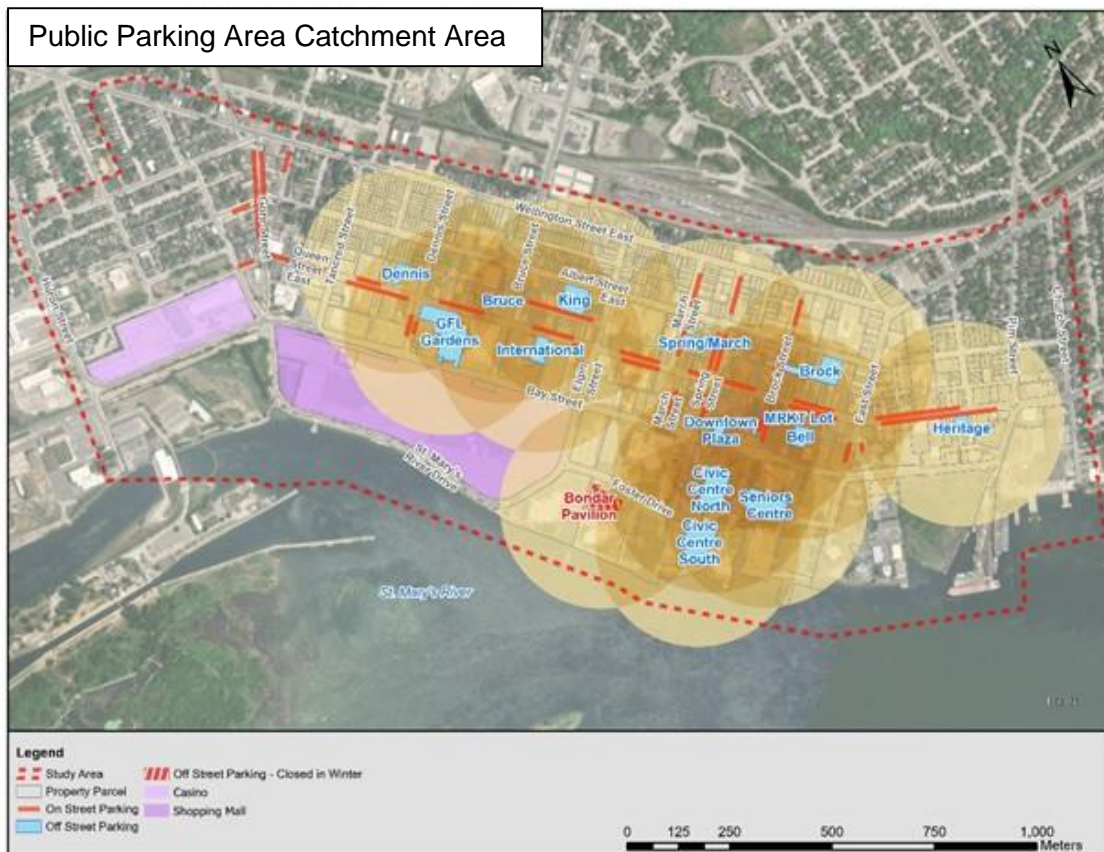
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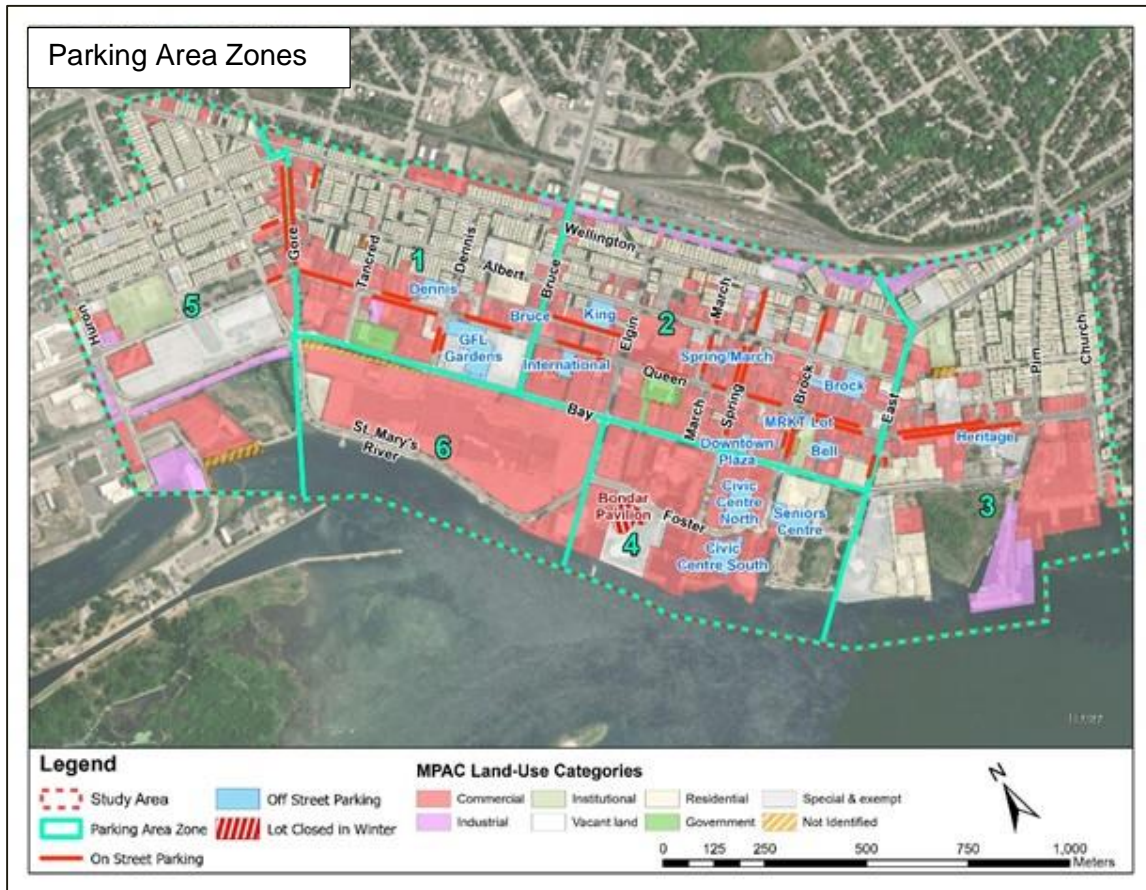
changes in various public lots are so minor that they do not affect the demand and supply analysis.

Private parking supply consists of 6,086 parking spaces, excluding the Casino and Station Mall, which are large parking lots, and it is assumed they provide sufficient parking for the respective uses. Utilizing MPAC data, which includes land use categorization and gross floor areas of all non-residential uses in the Downtown, as well as the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Parking Generation Manual, CIMA+ concluded that total parking demand for all land uses that need parking within the Downtown is 6,346 spaces. Demand for public parking spaces is the difference between total parking demand and the private parking supply, with the rationale being that public parking spaces can be utilized to supplement private parking shortages. All uses are satisfied except for Commercial with the existing supply. For Commercial, CIMA+ has determined a total parking demand of 4,985 spaces needed, with the private sector only providing 4,476 spaces. As such, public parking demand is estimated to be 509 spaces. Using the CIMA+ number of 1,552 public spaces in the Downtown, leaves a surplus of 1,043 public parking spaces.



Parking Utilization Spatial Analysis

While parking supply exceeds demand within the context of the entire Downtown, it is important to understand the spatial distribution of public parking supply in relation to demand and the resulting utilization rates. CIMA+ utilized a 250m radius catchment area as an acceptable distance that drivers are willing to walk. This generally amounts to a 1-4 minute walk for most people. As shown on the map above, the catchment areas around all city-owned parking lots cover the majority of the Downtown, with the exception of the southern portion of the Station Mall



property, which is a parking lot, and the Casino property, which is well served by a large parking area. Other areas not covered are primarily lower-density residential, where all parking needs are generally satisfied on-site. To provide further spatial analysis, CIMA+ split the Downtown into six zones for the purposes of determining parking supply, demand, and potential surpluses or deficits in each area. As shown on the table below, zone 4 has the largest surplus of public parking, and zones 2 and 3 have the lowest surpluses.

Public Parking Demand, Supply, and Surplus by Parking Area Zone						
Parking Area Zone	Total Parking Demand	Estimated Private Parking Supply	Public Parking Demand	Public Parking Supply	Public Parking Surplus	Public Parking Surplus as Percentage of Zone Demand
1	1231	1050	181	444	263	21.37%
2	2845	2559	286	604	318	11.18%
3	815	815	N/A	85	85	10.43%
4	340	298	42	513	471	138.53%
5	937	841*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	178	274*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	6346	5837	509	1646	1137	17.92%

*These figures do not include the Station Mall and casino parking lots.

Public Parking Lot Utilization Analysis

CIMA+ conducted surveys during weekdays between January 30 and February 15, 2023. These surveys were compared to data collected by the Commissionaires on public parking lots Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm, since 2014. The data collected by the City was deemed consistent with the data collected by CIMA+; however, in most cases, when referencing parking utilization rates, the City’s data has been utilized in this report. The CIMA+ surveys included additional data such as the average length of time vehicles were parked and average space turnover, which is the average number of times a space was used by a different vehicle within a given time period.

Municipality	Average Utilization*
Sault Ste. Marie	36%*
Lindsay	78%
Fenelon Falls	50%
Bobcaygeon	66%
Hamilton	80%
Orangeville	53%
Oshawa	61%
Sudbury	49%

*Sault Ste. Marie Average utilization is based upon Commissionaire counts. Remaining Utilization Rates are from CIMA+ Report

According to the CIMA+ study, industry best practices indicate that an 85% utilization rate of parking spaces represents an adequate level of service, with ample spaces available, while at the same time ensuring that parking areas are utilized efficiently. Anything below 75% is considered low utilization. Sault Ste. Marie’s average utilization of 36% is well below the average rates of other selected municipalities, which is not surprising, given the

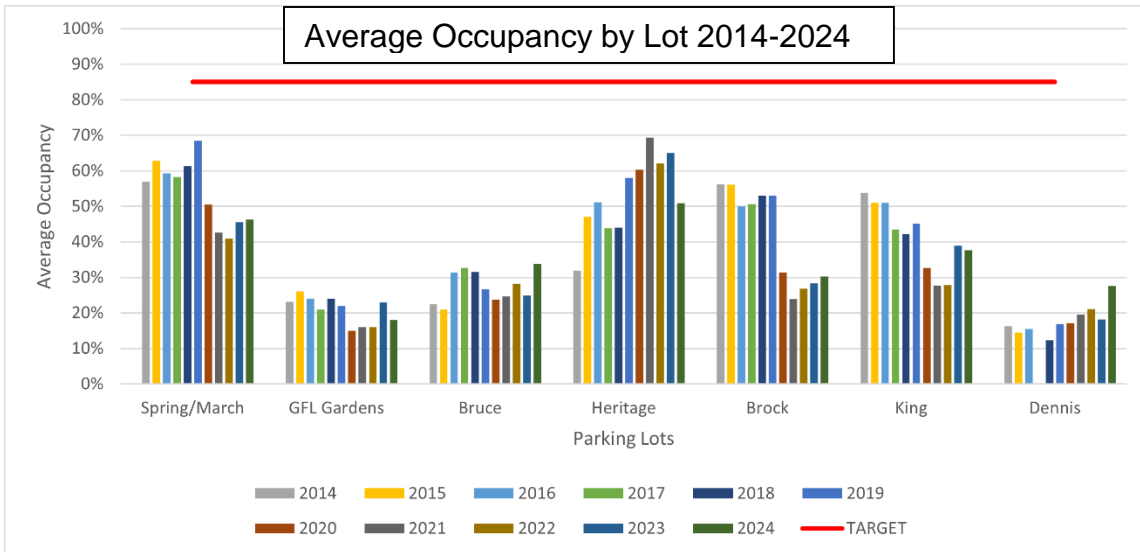
demonstrated surplus of parking located in the Downtown.

The table below utilizes parking data collected by the Commissionaires since 2014 and clearly demonstrates that average parking lot utilization remains well below the 85% target.

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It is also important to review peak occupancy rates over time. The table below calculates average peak occupancy by averaging the highest occupancy per month, from 2014 through the end of 2024. This balances outliers such as relatively high or low peak occupancies on a per-month basis. Average peak occupancies have generally decreased over time, with significant decreases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Average peak occupancies have yet to return to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. It is also important to note that the Commissionaires' data is not collected on evenings and weekends. While Planning staff has started collecting data on certain evenings and weekends, it is too early to draw any material conclusions given the incompleteness of the data. Anecdotally, parking lot occupancy appears to be lower on evenings and weekends, with the exception of certain lots around the GFL Memorial Gardens, which would certainly be full during major events, which normally occur on evenings and weekends. As noted by CIMA+ (pg. 14), the majority of land uses in the Downtown experience peak parking demand between 9am and 3pm. Therefore, peak occupancies are during weekdays, given the current mix of uses in the Downtown.

Average Peak Occupancy by Lot (%)												
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Avg.
GFL	39.6	41.5	36.9	34.5	36.1	41.1	28.8	30.4	24.2	32.5	25.3	33.7
Spring	91.5	96.5	91.9	86.7	90.6	91.8	74.1	69.9	66.4	76.7	80.7	83.4
Brock/ Albert	77.9	82.8	73.3	80.9	81.0	82.7	55.6	48.9	50.9	58.5	56.4	68.1
Heritage	59.4	80.4	78.6	78.9	79.8	86.6	88.0	90.3	89.3	85.5	71.6	80.8
King	75.1	70.9	71.4	63.2	57.8	65.8	49.0	47.0	41.0	63.4	53.6	59.8
Bruce	57.9	52.4	65.8	67.7	55.0	54.4	51.7	47.6	56.7	54.8	59.9	56.7
Dennis	36.3	25.8	33.1	N/A	23.9	29.2	27.8	29.5	31.0	28.5	34.7	30.0
Avg.	62.5	64.3	64.4	68.7	60.6	64.5	53.6	51.9	51.4	57.1	54.6	

The table below shows the number of occurrences where parking lots exceeded the 85% target occupancy rate. The Spring Street lot had the highest occurrences, with parking utilization exceeding 85% on 239 occasions out of 4,617 counts. Every other lot, except for the Heritage lot, exceeded the 85% occupancy target for less than 1% of the recorded counts.

Total Counts From 2014-2024 at or Above 85% Occupancy			
	Total Parking Occupancy Counts	Results at or Above 85%	% of Results at or Above 85%
GFL	2092	1	.05%
Spring	4617	239	5.18%
Brock	4276	27	.63%
Heritage	3160	95	3.01%
King	3850	0	0%
Bruce	3655	2	.06%
Dennis	2244	5	.22%

Downtown Parking Fees

Comparison of Downtown Parking Rates			
Municipalities	Free Parking During Weekday	Hourly Public Parking Rate	Monthly Public Parking Rate
Sault St. Marie	2-hour free	\$1.60	\$54.00
Sudbury	2-hour free (specified lot)	\$1.30	\$82.00
Thunder Bay	None Provided	\$1.50	\$65.00
North Bay	1-hour free on street (2HR Lot)	\$1.00-\$1.50	\$67.25-\$117.48
Kingston	None Provided	\$1.50 - \$2.00	\$86.75 - \$149.25
Barrie	None Provided	\$1.50	\$66-82.50
Sarnia	2-hour free	\$1.00	\$22-\$50
Windsor	None Provided	\$2.00	\$74.58-\$124.30
Oshawa	None Provided	\$1.25	\$73.00 - \$87.00
Kitchener	2-hour free	\$2.40	\$140.35
Guelph	2-hour free	\$3.00	\$77.77-184.48
Marquette, MI	15-minute free	\$1.00	\$30.00-\$65.00
Traverse City, MI	30-minute free	\$1.50	\$50.00
Brainerd, MN	3-hour parking	N/A	\$15-\$40

The average hourly parking rate of the 13 comparable municipalities was \$1.72 with Sault Ste. Marie charging \$1.60. Average monthly passes were \$151.00 compared to \$54.00 charged locally. Eight of the 13 offer some form of free parking.

At this point, no changes are proposed to the current fee structure for Downtown parking, beyond any inflationary adjustments that result as part of the annual user fee by-law review.

Downtown Parking Demand Management

The Passport Parking App has the potential to provide detailed, real-time data that could be used to provide additional parking data that can be utilized to inform various policy decisions. Furthermore, the App could be utilized to implement dynamic pricing models that would either increase or decrease pricing in real time depending upon increases or decreases in demand at multiple locations. This potential would be challenging to utilize at this time. While uptake on the Passport Parking App has been good, to fully use all the tools available, the App would likely need to be the only payment option. Furthermore, parking demand management strategies, such as dynamic pricing based upon real-time demand, would not be effective, given the significant parking surpluses that currently exist.

It is noted that Transit is due to release a mobile parking application RFP which will allow for the potential to see if there is another provider that can provide more parking information than the current Passport Parking App. This may allow for additional statistical analysis of parking in the Downtown. In the meantime, staff will continue to monitor public off-street parking lots through the Commissionaires Monday – Friday. In addition, Planning staff will supplement this data with periodic evening and weekend counts.

An important goal of the parking reforms proposed in the Downtown is to bring more people Downtown and attain more appropriate utilization rates of publicly owned parking spaces. Once the data shows that parking utilization is approaching the 85% target, various interventions can be undertaken, such as increasing minimum parking requirements, introducing a dynamic pricing model, securing additional public parking in the form of parking structures and/or new property.

Consultation To Date

As part of the CIMA+ project, two open houses were held on November 1, and 2, 2023, at the John Rhodes Community Centre and the Grand Theatre. The events were advertised in the Sault Star, Sootoday, Facebook and on the City's website. The open house at the Grand Theatre was specifically marketed to the Downtown Association and attended by members of the Board and other members. It is important to note that up to this point, all public consultation was undertaken on the basis that there would be no minimum parking requirements for any new development in the Downtown. Approximately 35 people attended the open houses, and the comments received were generally positive. The majority of people in attendance were either supportive or indifferent to what was being proposed. Concerns raised included:

- The validity of the data for the public lots from CIMA+, given that the survey was undertaken during one winter week. As previously discussed, the Commissionaires data, dating back to 2014, also forms an integral part of this project and is quite reliable, given the timeframe and frequency of data collection;

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- Others thought that parking reductions had gone too far, keeping in mind that at that time, no minimum parking requirements in the Downtown were being recommended; and
- A relatively small portion of those attending thought that the reforms had not gone far enough, supporting deeper parking reductions throughout the community and the introduction of parking maximums, which are not recommended at this time.

Parking reforms were also discussed as part of the Grow the Sault initiative, with open houses held November 14, 15, and 16, 2023. Comments were generally similar to those discussed above. A number of developers who attended these open houses were supportive of the proposed parking reductions, as well as the proposed introduction of electric vehicle readiness spaces. The developers who attended agreed that installing conduit that could be electrified in the future represented a minimal additional cost. Furthermore, such costs would be significant if market demand was such that in the future they would need to break asphalt to accommodate electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

A survey on parking reforms was conducted through the Public Input platform. A total of 671 people viewed the platform. 217 participants either took the survey or left a comment.

Selected Survey Questions	
Do you have difficulty finding a parking spot Downtown?	57% No 43% Yes
Are you able to find a parking space easily when visiting a commercial business or non-residential activity?	48% Yes 6% No 45% Sometimes 1% I do not use a motor vehicle
How comfortable are you with the proposal to reduce parking ratios throughout the City?	37% Very uncomfortable 25% Somewhat uncomfortable 17% Neutral 11% Somewhat comfortable 10% Comfortable

The survey results generally indicate that a little over half of all respondents do not experience perceived difficulties in finding parking spaces Downtown, and most respondents have very few issues finding parking spaces when visiting commercial businesses or other non-residential activities. About 62% of respondents were either very or somewhat uncomfortable with the proposed parking reductions. Having said this, many of the specific comments that were received spoke to respondents being uncomfortable with Downtown public parking spaces being removed from the current supply, which is not being recommended. Regardless, the majority of respondents were uncomfortable with the proposed parking reductions, especially in the Downtown. Again, at the time of this survey, it was

recommended that minimum parking requirements be eliminated for all new development in the Downtown, which is no longer recommended, due in part to feedback received during initial consultation efforts.

Other specific comments suggested that parking reductions are not appropriate for the City because of harsh winters and an aging population.

Part III – Downtown Association (DTA) Concerns

On June 24, 2024, Council passed a resolution to allocate 90 parking spaces to the Brock-Albert and March-Spring Lots, in support of North Shore Tribal Council occupying the former DSSMSSAB offices. A number of local business owners and nearby property owners objected to the provision of these spaces on the basis that they did not feel there were enough parking spaces available to allocate. Furthermore, many business owners felt 'blindsided' by the decision, feeling there should have been consultation with Downtown business owners.

In response to these concerns, the Downtown Association Parking Subcommittee held a Town Hall Meeting on July 4, 2024. A summary of the meeting is attached to this report (Appendix C - Downtown Association Parking Solutions to City of Sault Ste. Marie). At a DTA Board meeting on July 10, 2024, a series of seven solutions were put forward for consideration of implementation. Below is a discussion of these solutions.

1. Downtown Parking Garage/Facilities

Planning staff initiated a project with a local consultant to obtain a cost estimate to construct a two-storey parking structure on the City-owned property between Albert Street East and King Street, west of Elgin Street. The consultant determined that approximately 46 additional spaces could be added to the 127 spaces the site can currently accommodate. Based on preliminary costing (Appendix D - Albert Street Parking Garage Feasibility Review), the structure would cost \$5,460,000 to \$10,140,000.

Based upon current statistics, there is no public parking lot in the Downtown that is experiencing utilization rates (>85%) on a consistent basis that would warrant such an expenditure. It is certainly a high-level goal to get to a point where parking demand exceeds supply, necessitating intervention, which could include, among other things, constructing a parking structure to add capacity. Currently, parking demand versus supply does not warrant such an investment. Furthermore, the monetary value of parking spaces – the costs that various stakeholders are willing to charge and pay for Downtown parking – is not at the level that would warrant a parking structure, due in part to the demand/supply gap.

2. Reserved parking for Downtown business customers only, closest to businesses along Queen Street and designated parking pass areas, with visible

signage to indicate these areas and enforcement of pass holders parking outside the designated areas within the lot.

This would entail segregating the public parking lots into passholder and non-passholder areas. This would require a by-law officer to enact enforcement and staff is willing to look at this further; however, this could eliminate parking spaces that could otherwise be available. For example, some employees may still be working from home on certain days of the week, or on holidays during the summer. At these times, those passholder spaces would remain empty and unusable by Downtown business patrons. Staff will monitor passholder vs. non-passholder usage in the Brock-Albert and March-Spring lots to monitor the impacts of allocating these spaces.

3. Signage to direct parking to different available lots for passholders

Additional signage directing passholders to the Bell Avenue lot would serve to direct those drivers who cannot find a spot to the destination they are aware of already. The Bell Avenue lot is to be used as an overflow lot for passholders, as per the Council resolution and agreement that has been put in place. Staff have had preliminary discussions about updating all public parking lot signage to be consistent with the new City branding. If such a project moves forward, staff can look at opportunities to provide additional directional information.

4. Additional public transit funding to make transit a more viable option, as well as having a dedicated Downtown transit loop to get people accustomed to parking in one place and utilizing transit to travel within the Downtown.

Currently, the Downtown is very well served by Transit, with all routes originating and terminating Downtown. Furthermore, most routes traverse the length of the Downtown inbound and outbound from the terminal. Transit is undertaking a Transit Optimization Study, and the overall service level to, from, and within the Downtown will be assessed as part of this study.

However, it is hoped that over the longer term, as the community continues to grow, transit ridership will continue to increase, and demand will not only justify but necessitate further investments in Transit. It is also hoped that as the Downtown continues to get busier, people will see Transit as a viable alternative.

5. Cap the issuing of parking passes for the next 12 months and review at the end of the period.

Going forward, the City will temporarily pause issuing new parking passes at the Brock-Albert and March-Spring lots, as those were the lots to which passes were allocated. The pause would not affect the renewal of existing passes that have been allocated, including those to Northshore Tribal Council and DSSMSSAB.

With other public lots that provide two-hour free parking, staff is recommending that a policy be adopted to grant parking passes to individuals for the public lots (excluding the Brock-Albert and March-Spring lots) that allow usage on a first-come, first-served basis. They do not guarantee a spot but provide an option for either employees or tenants in the Downtown to park for a period beyond the two free hours currently permitted. It is also recommended that the City adopt a policy to sell passes for lots until average utilization reaches 75% in the various lots, which would bring them in line with the threshold to meet moderate utilization. As noted above, parking passes will not be allocated to the Brock-Albert and March-Spring lots, for at least a full 12 months after the former DSSMSSAB building has been occupied, to allow staff to track utilization rates. If utilization rates remain below 75%, additional passes may be allocated.

6. Commitment to consistent snow removal within the lots to ensure there is a full complement of available parking in each lot through the winter months.

Snow that accumulates in the City lots is removed by a contractor and has historically been stored on-site for short periods, which has not been an issue due to low lot utilization. The current standard requires snow removal within 24 hours of a snow event consisting of 6cm of snow or more. Staff will continue to monitor, especially the Brock-Albert and March-Spring Lots. If warranted, service levels for these lots can be updated as part of the annual RFP for contracted snow removal services.

7. Acquisition of land/buildings on Wellington Street to be dedicated for parking.

This suggestion has come up on a number of occasions, and the majority of areas suggested are residential. Acquiring lands to demolish dwellings for parking would be inconsistent with policies at the local, provincial, and federal levels of government, which are aimed at increasing the housing supply.

Notwithstanding the current local housing shortage, Planning staff undertook an exercise to plot parking lots on a typical residential lot on Wellington Street, as well as larger residential lots in closer proximity to Brock/Albert Streets. A typical Downtown residential lot can accommodate at most 10 spaces, and some larger lots can accommodate 18 spaces. Purchase, demolition, site preparation, and paving costs would be significant for minimal gain.

While the costs associated with establishing and maintaining these small parking lots would be substantial, the opportunity cost would be even greater. Over time, the tax generated from an occupied building is far greater than that of a 10 or 18-space parking lot. Most importantly, such a strategy would be counter to the overall goal of bringing more people Downtown.

Next Steps

Parking policy is not static. Continuous monitoring will allow for refinement and intervention when needed, to ensure that parking demand and supply for all development throughout the community is appropriately balanced. While parking reductions can be unsettling for many, staff are not aware of any communities that have implemented parking reforms and then backtracked on those reforms.

Although considerable consultation has already occurred, the Downtown Association and other Downtown business owners have raised a number of concerns. Therefore, in addition to statutory public notice, specific consultations will focus on Downtown parking reforms with stakeholders in the Downtown. Staff will also undertake an additional survey through FlashVote.

Financial Implications

While accepting this report as information will not result in any incremental impacts to municipal finances, a variety of cost implications, including opportunity costs are discussed throughout this report.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

The Vision of the Corporate Strategic Plan speaks to innovation and efficiency. The proposed parking amendments are intended to modernize parking requirements, unlock development potential, and allow for a more efficient use of land, including private and public parking lots. The Quality of Life focus area speaks to Downtown revitalization initiatives. The proposed parking reductions in the Downtown, which have been revised due to public concerns, are intended to support more development in the Downtown, which will bring more people Downtown and increase the overall tax base.

The Environmental focus area speaks to active transportation implementation and the Community Green House Plan. The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan identifies personal vehicle use as a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Parking reductions and recommended requirements for bicycle parking and electric vehicle readiness in association with larger developments will result in higher-density development and help facilitate active transportation implementation and a modal shift away from automobile dependence.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

Resolved that the report of the Junior Planner and Director of Planning dated June 23, 2025, concerning Parking Reforms be received as information, and that staff:

1. Be directed to undertake a final round of consultation and provide formal public notice to amend Zoning By-law 2005-150 to implement the parking reforms identified in Part I of this report, with the understanding that such

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- amendments may be altered as a result of the additional public consultation;
and
2. Adopt a policy to sell monthly parking passes on City-owned and operated public parking lots where two-hour free parking is available, until such lots reach 75% average utilization, excluding the Brock-Albert and Spring-March lots, until such time that the former DSSMSSAB building has been fully occupied for at least 12 months and it has been determined that average utilization rates do not exceed 75%.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Tonazzo, MCIP, RPP
Director of Planning
705.759.2780
p.tonazzo@cityssm.on.ca

Salvatore Marchese
Junior Planner
705.759.5445
s.marchese@cityssm.on.ca