

Downtown Ponoka Action Plan – Parking Management Plan

PURPOSE

Parking management is a key part of implementing the vision and desired future direction for Downtown Ponoka. Parking can be an impediment to the desire to create a compact, vibrant urban area containing many diverse activities and draws. Most visitors to Ponoka and the Downtown area use a private automobile. Provision has to be made to store the vehicles and get visitors and customers walking.

The Parking Management Plan supports the concept of “right-sizing” the supply of public parking provided in the Downtown area with the goals of:

- Reducing the consumption of land for parking facilities;
- Promoting use of modes of travel other than the single-occupant vehicle; and
- Encouraging a more intense and attractive urban form.

PLAN PRINCIPLES

- Principle 1 Consumer Choice - People should have viable parking and travel options.
- Principle 2 User Information - People should have clear information on their parking and travel options.
- Principle 3 Sharing - Parking facilities should serve multiple users and destinations to the greatest extent possible.
- Principle 4 Efficient Utilization - Parking facilities should be sized and managed so spaces are frequently occupied.
- Principle 5 Flexibility - Parking plans should accommodate uncertainty and change.
- Principle 6 Prioritization - The most desirable parking spaces should be managed to favour higher priority uses.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Management of On-Street Parking

On-Street Stall Markings

With the exception of handicap stalls, individual on-street parking stalls should not be marked. The intent is to reduce maintenance and provide flexibility in the use of the curb line based on vehicle sizes.

Streetscape Redevelopment

Curb line parking should be maintained and the number of parking stalls should be kept as close to the original number as possible as the streetscape along a block is redeveloped.

Preserving Curb Line

The Town should limit the number of new curb cuts and access points onto streets in an effort to preserve the largest amount of curb line parking possible.

Handicap Parking

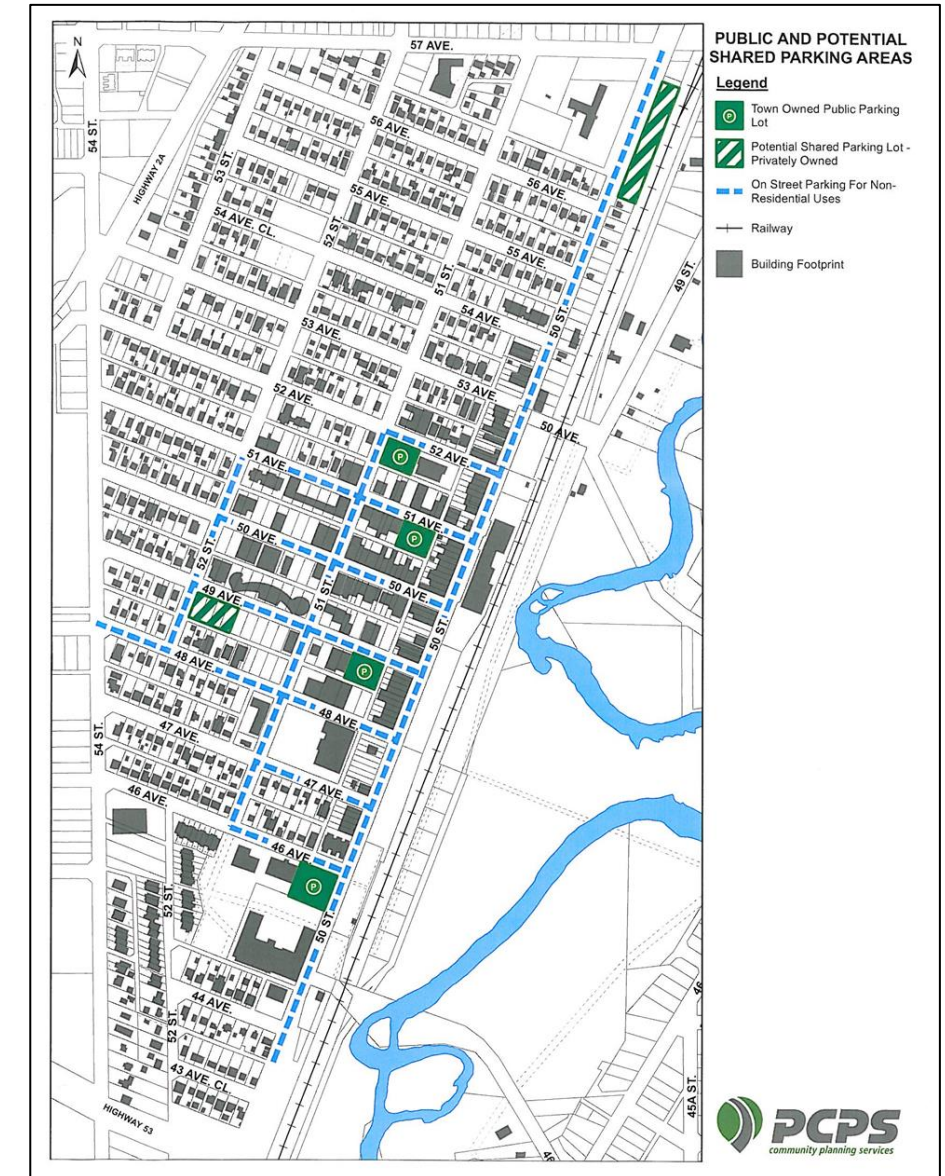
The Town should provide at least one designated handicap parking stall per block in a location where access up onto the sidewalk is provided with a para-ramp.

Large Vehicle Parking

The Town should identify areas for larger vehicle parking such as recreational vehicles and cattle liners through wayfinding signage and information materials. One possible area is the curb line parking along the east side of 50 Street between 46 Avenue and 49 Avenue and between 53 Avenue and 55 Avenue.

Encroachment into Residential Areas

Parking for commercial uses should not be allowed to encroach into adjacent residential areas as it undermines neighbourhood stability and detracts from residential character. For the purposes of this action/policy encroachment is any commercial use parking that occurs on a street not marked for on-street parking for non-residential uses on the map to the right.



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Town Owned Parking Lots

Number and Location

Existing Town parking lots are well located to serve the various activities in the commercial part of Downtown. These lots should be retained and improvements should be made to their general appearance and attractiveness. This includes more defined pedestrian connections to and from the parking lots and sidewalk network and links to a wayfinding system.

Off-Street Stall Markings

All parking stalls in paved off-street parking lots should be clearly marked.

Appearance and Design of Off-Street Parking

Appearance of Parking Areas

Parking areas should be attractive and improve the visual environment to the greatest extent possible. This can be accomplished through planting shade trees and providing a low level (maximum 3 feet high) screen fence to fill the gap between buildings along the street frontage.

Parking Structures

The economics of development in Downtown Ponoka do not support the construction of parking structures (above ground - \$15,000 per stall or below ground - \$30,000 per stall) at this point in the community's evolution. This may change in the future. If built, parking structures will be expected to have a high quality of appearance from all sides visible along a public street. This can be accomplished through a liner building consisting of retail/commercial space at grade and/or intense landscaping and/or high quality architectural appearance.

Stand-Alone Parking

The only stand-alone parking facilities should be those owned and operated by the Town. This ensures that sharing of parking will occur and avoids creating an incentive to replace building mass with private surface parking lots.



Building Facades

Where a building façade faces into a permanent off-street parking area, the façade should be as clean and attractive as possible. For rear facades the standard will be less than for side facades in recognition of the “utilitarian” aspect of rear lane access. The intent is to help make the parking area as attractive and inviting as possible.

Murals

Where blank walls face into permanent off-street parking areas, the Town should make use of the opportunity to install a mural or similar art to create an attractive edge to the parking area.

Relation to Pedestrian Circulation Network

Pedestrian Links

To succeed in getting drivers to become pedestrians in the Downtown a complete and functional pedestrian circulation system needs to be established between all major off-street parking areas and all Downtown destinations. This means pedestrian facilities on both sides of the street and continuous routes.

Attractive Walking Environment

Available parking areas and location of public parking lots must work with an attractive and safe pedestrian system if drivers are to be encouraged to park two or three blocks from concentrated areas of activity. This means providing adequately wide sidewalks, street trees for shade and visual appeal and amenities such as benches, waste receptacles and wayfinding signage.

Managing the Demand for Parking

Transportation Modes

Ponoka does not, at this point in time, have a mass public transit system that can offset the need for parking in the Downtown. The community can focus on other active transportation modes such as walking and cycling as part of its approach to managing the demand or pressure for Downtown parking.

Bicycle Facilities

The Town should provide bicycle parking facilities along streets as each street is re-constructed and business owners are encouraged to provide bicycle parking and changing facilities for their staff. At least one location for sheltered bicycle parking should be explored.

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Employee and Business Owner Parking

Encourage employees and business owners to use parking on-site where available from a rear lane or more peripheral, less used public on-street and off-street parking areas.

Signage and Communication

Regulatory Signs

The Town should review all on-street regulatory signage to ensure that sufficient signage is in place to be enforceable and provide clear communication to drivers. Regulatory signage should be consistent in appearance and there should be as few signs as necessary.

Wayfinding Signage

Clear and simple wayfinding signage should be generously distributed throughout Downtown and along the main entranceways into Downtown to assist visitors in locating parking areas. Getting drivers to parking areas should be a top priority in the overall wayfinding program within the Downtown area. Each parking area should have clear identifying signage (e.g. Free Parking Courtesy of the Town of Ponoka) and indication of permissible limits (if any).

Tone of Signs

All language and messaging on signage should be positive and friendly. For example, communicate where people can park and not just where they cannot. If a sign must say “no parking” then it should also indicate where a permissible alternative can be found. The only exceptions to this approach should be those signs that must meet an enforceability standard (e.g. no parking here to corner).

Marketing Available Parking

The Town should prepare and install directional signage to show customers and visitors where to access parking.

Parking Requirements for Development

Remove Requirements for Non-Residential Uses

The Land Use Bylaw should exempt non-residential uses in the designated commercial and mixed use areas of the Downtown from providing off-street parking.

Encourage Rear Lane Parking

Non-residential properties should be encouraged to provide parking stalls in the rear of the property where rear access is provided by a lane.

Residential Uses

Residential uses within the Downtown Area should continue to provide off-street parking for each dwelling unit.

Time Restrictions and Pricing Structures

Time Restrictions

The Town should continue with the limited amount of time restrictions that are currently in place. Introducing further time restrictions should be based on demonstrated need to encourage higher rates of turnover and accommodation of short term parking. When time restrictions have to be modified in the future the following arrangements should be considered:

- Preserve all on-street parking for short term parking (less than 2 hours);
- Limit the Town parking lots on 49 Avenue and 51 Avenue to up to 4 hours parking;
- Allow parking longer than 4 hours to occur in the Kinsmen Lot and the lot on 52 Avenue and any other peripheral locations.

Price of Parking

The Town should continue to provide free parking on-street and in Town owned parking lots as long as possible. In the event that there is a need to introduce a pricing mechanism to modify parking patterns the highest priced parking should be located in the central part of downtown and the price should gradually decrease towards the periphery of the downtown.

Sharing and Partnerships

Unbundling Parking

Where a private landowner has more on-site parking than what is needed for them or their tenants onsite, they should be encouraged to share or rent out the extra parking stalls to other users. “Unbundling” refers to avoiding regulations that prevent the desired sharing of facilities from occurring.

Partnerships

The Town should partner with the owners of existing surface parking lot to provide some public access to any surplus parking stalls that may be available.

Overflow Parking

Occasionally special events may change the nature of the available parking supply due to street closures or use of Town parking lots to host an event. The Town should work with CPR to make their undeveloped properties along the west side of the railway available as overflow parking. Similar arrangements may be needed with other owners of large private parking lots close to Downtown.

Monitoring and Enforcement

Monitoring

Periodic (every 5 years) monitoring of parking use and patterns in the Downtown should be undertaken. This should involve counts and license plate surveys to be able to gauge length of stays.

Enforcement

The current regulation of parking Downtown does not lend itself to much need for enforcement beyond illegal parking in no-parking areas. Should enforcement programs be needed in the future they should begin with an educational awareness approach first (bulletin reminder followed by warning note) followed by more significant consequences for repeat or chronic offenders.

