



WOOD DEVELOPMENT GROUP
Creating Space for Life

September 22, 2023

TO: Guelph City Council

RE: Downtown Guelph Parking Master Plan
Council Meeting, September 26, 2023
Item 7.3, Report 2023-323

Mr. Mayor, Members of Council

We are providing comments on two interrelated items within the Downtown Parking Master Plan: the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment for downtown residential parking and the Cash-in-lieu of Parking recommendations.

Earlier this year, through their mark-up of OPA-80, the Province directed amendment of zoning requirements for 'Transit-supportive development' within the Major Transit Station Area (Downtown). In addition, the Downtown Secondary Plan had identified the potential for cash-in-lieu for parking policies to be developed as a means to potentially support additional commercial development 'south of the tracks'. These issues are interrelated because zoning requirements provide the basis to considering alternate means to meet on-site regulations. (If there were no regulatory requirement, there would be nothing to compel the alternate solution).

The proposed policies in the Downtown Parking Master Plan report address only residential parking zoning requirements, while expanding the cash-in-lieu scope to incorporate residential as well as commercial parking contributions. This drives a revenue stream in the parking financial model which may be influencing zoning policy.

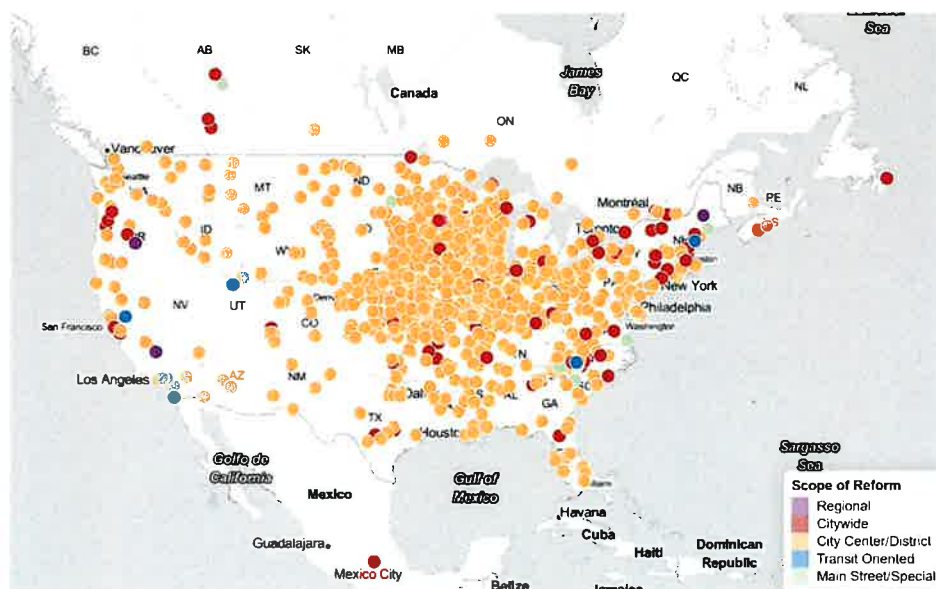
In terms of the zoning presented, the recommended 0.85 spaces per residential unit downtown is a marginal reduction of the current regulation of 1.0 spaces per unit. Reducing the existing minimum by 15% is not 'Transit-supportive'. Its based on current utilisation averages and not what would actually begin to impact current transit use. And, its only for residential uses downtown, not a comprehensive review of user needs that could be supported by better transit, and indeed, the development of transit-supportive policies should be seen in a broader city-wide context of mobility and areas identified for significant intensification.

The cash-in-lieu policy provides the option for developments to be more progressive and transportation demand managed, yet creates a contribution cost as well as additional process by needing to seek, through staff, a special Council permission. These TDM based projects are likely those that Council would like to see happen, yet they face additional barriers.

The two policies as presented are a 'betwixt and between' solution.

Downtown Guelph is a **Major Transit Station Area**, and the recipient of large investments in track and station improvements by Metrolinx in recent years, with more to come. This downtown access to higher-order transit is a big deal. Metrolinx publishes detailed guidelines for 'Mobility Hubs' which Downtown Guelph is evolving into, and is technically a 'Historic Suburban Town Centre' in their categorization. (And yes, despite the urban ambitions of the Galt plan, and a few urban streets in upper town, Guelph developed and is today an overwhelmingly suburban place with the car playing an outsized role). Metrolinx's 2011 guidance for parking maximums (not minimums!) in Mobility Hubs ranges from 'almost zero' to 'conventional' parking ratios depending on context. This guidance is well over a decade old now.

As Council is likely aware, cities across North America are eliminating regulations like 'parking minimums' altogether for transit-oriented development. This movement is gaining traction for aspirational reasons such as addressing climate change, sustainability and equity as well as recognizing the impact over-regulation of parking has had on the built environment and housing affordability. Consideration of parking reform generally relies on investments to viable alternatives to the personal vehicle being made more available in the community, and something Guelph has yet to develop effectively.

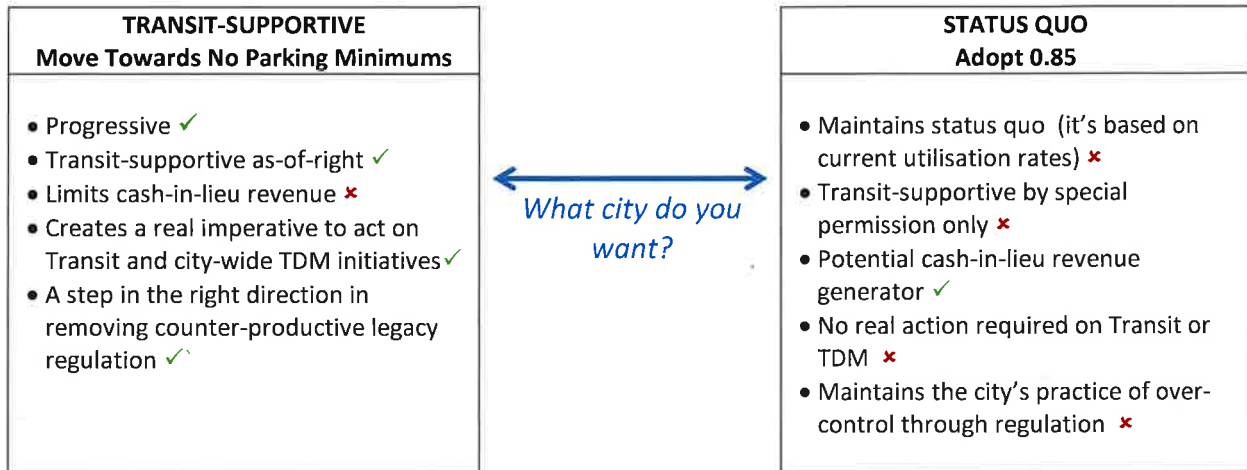


Map showing all cities across North America that have removed parking minimums in some form. (See parkingreform.org for more information)

And finally, for local context, last year Council approved a Comprehensive Zoning By-law that was the opposite of considering things like removing parking minimums, where on top of highly prescriptive built form policies, Council themselves retained the 1995 parking regulations to further entrench Guelph's parking status quo.

So the question remains: What city do you want to be building – a transit-supportive one or today's suburban one?

It comes down to this:



Our basic response to the decisions in front of Council September 26th is that the work to establish true transit-supportive development regulations has not yet taken place and deserves its own community conversation. There should be a much larger engagement around how these policies are woven together with transportation modelling and economic activity city-wide, as well as investments in more effective Transit and TDM as we intentionally grow our Major Transit Station Area.

If Council feel they need to adopt the Zoning By-law Amendment within the current staff report, then be clear about what city you represent: the status quo or the future urbanising Guelph.

Thank you for your consideration.


 Ian Panabaker, VP Development
 Wood Development Group