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Downtown Parking Update 2024 Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2024-57

Department(s): Office of the CAO

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Meeting Date: September 30, 2024

Recommendations

1. That Staff be authorized to advance a Request for Proposals (RFP) to finalize construction of the current granular parking lot to a paved surface to support approximately 150 spaces; and,
2. That funds in the amount of \$200,000 from the approved 2025 capital spending authority be advanced in order to design the necessary works for a paved surface parking area in 2024; and,
3. That Staff report back within 6 months with options to add an additional, minimum 50 parking spaces in the downtown to achieve the original target of approximately 200 new spaces; and,
4. That Staff make permanent the enhanced enforcement pilot project, including a dedicated by-law officer in the downtown during weekdays between 10:00a.m. and 3:00p.m. as implemented in the summer of 2024; and,
5. That Staff continue parking mitigation efforts in the downtown as described within this report (e.g. Community Centre Bookings, Park and Walk etc.); and,
6. That Staff report back annually to Council on downtown parking patterns and data gathered through the Loop ParkSense+ monitoring project and manual counts; and,
7. That while the parking study continues to advance (including developing a wayfinding implementation plan), staff develop and implement an interim communications plan highlighting parking lots in the downtown with a focus on new spaces created in 2024 and lesser-known lots; and,
8. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Executive Summary

After an extensive review of both the business case and the parking data being gathered through the on-going parking monitoring program in the downtown, Council directed staff in Closed Session on September 9th, to cancel the Request for Proposals for the modular parking structure. This report outlines the new and on-going parking inventory and management strategies for the downtown for 2024-2026. These include making permanent and paving the new parking lot (i.e., former tennis courts) adjacent to P3 to achieve 150 parking spaces, staff exploring and reporting back to Council on the creation of a minimum 50 additional surface parking spaces, and the on-going parking management strategies in response to construction disruption and major special events.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on parking inventory in downtown Newmarket and to seek direction on the overall parking inventory and management plans for the area.

Background

At the January 2024 Committee of the Whole Meeting, in Closed Session, Council was satisfied with a preliminary business plan that supported the issuance of a Request for Proposals for a modular parking structure at the former tennis court at 170 Doug Duncan Drive. The business case included a proposed scenario in which the overall project costs to achieve 200 additional parking spaces at a projected cost of \$6,215,000.00 including permitting, contingency and other relevant works, of which \$2,000,000 was already approved for parking improvements in the downtown in the 2024 capital budget.

After extensive research staff issued the Parking Structure RFP in June 2024, with the intention to award and begin work in time for a late Spring 2025 structure opening. After a thorough review of the business case and the information gathered through the RFP process, staff updated Council in closed session on September 9th, 2024. During that meeting, staff advised Council that if the Town were to pursue a modular parking structure the overall project budget originally presented at the January 2024 Committee of the Whole would be exceeded by over \$1,000,000.

The actual bid amount is the confidential business information of the vendor(s) and was submitted in confidence to the Town. It is best practice for municipalities to only share the names of unsuccessful proponents in the procurement process. In addition, disclosing any financial information may discourage other proponents from bidding on our projects in the future.

On September 9th in closed session, staff also shared with Council the general results of the downtown parking monitoring to provide an overview of the general use patterns

of the P3 and granular lot in the downtown. The data (also shared in this report) demonstrated that throughout the summer, with the addition of the granular lot, parking inventory in the downtown consistently exceeded the demand for day-to-day use, including at peak times. As a result of these discussions, Council directed staff to advise the vendor that the Town would not continue with the RFP at this time.

Discussion

Granular Parking Lot Impact on Parking

In Spring 2024, the Town removed the existing Keith Davis Tennis Court bubble and installed a temporary, granular parking lot with approximately 125 spaces to assist with managing the anticipated increase in parking demand in the summer of 2024.

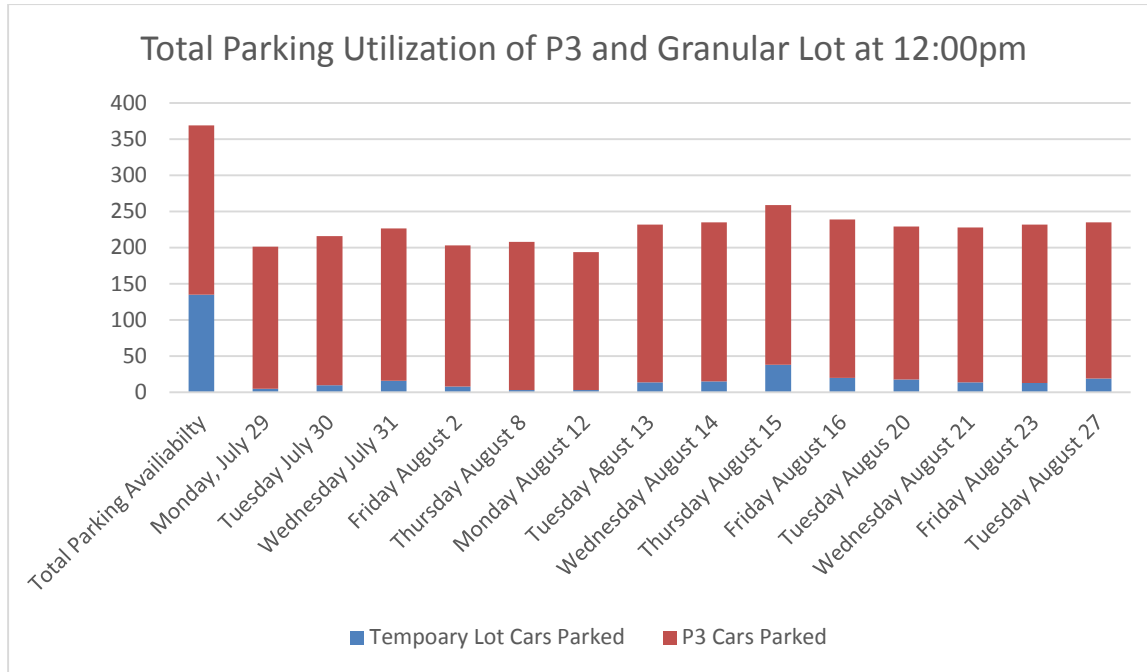
Since the opening of the temporary granular lot, staff have been monitoring both the lot itself and the impact of the lot on P3 where the ParkSense+ pilot project is underway.

During the monitoring period staff found that:

- Parking demand in P3 continues to be consistently high between 10:00a.m. and 3:00p.m., Tuesday-Friday; however, during the monitoring period, the temporary granular lot was not observed to be at maximum capacity during these hours, indicating an adequate supply of parking at these times.
- The granular lot was frequently under-utilized during the 10:00a.m.-3:00p.m. period. Staff conducted regular checks Monday-Saturday in the lot at 12:00p.m. (noon). Except for Farmers Market days, where the lot was approximately half full at noon, the lot was only observed as being more than 25% full on one day (Thursday, August 15th)
- Saturdays, both during the summer and in the period leading up to the winter holiday season, saw P3 fully utilized first thing in the morning until noon. The opening of the temporary lot did not change these results and the temporary lot was often fully utilized as well. There is no data available to determine if the lot was full because there were more people or if parking was shifting from other auxiliary lots such as AOK Park and Fairy Lake.
- During the summer monitoring periods, P3 and the granular lot were both consistently full Thursday evenings for the concert series. Anecdotal feedback shared from attendees was that it was easier to find parking in auxiliary lots and closer to the event start time.

Granular Lot Vehicle Counts at Noon each day

Municipal Enforcement Staff visited the granular lot regularly throughout the month of August to conduct vehicle counts. The chart below shows the results of these counts and estimated availability of parking in P3 at the same time. The first bar in this chart demonstrates 100% occupancy.



An analysis of the P3 parking lot data from November to May (before the granular lot was opened), shows that the times and days for full occupancy in P3 were Saturday mornings, and Thursday and Friday evenings.

Staff do not expect to be able to fully meet demand for peak occupancy times (e.g., Town-run special events or Farmers Market), but found that during regular busy periods in the downtown, the granular lot was not full and parking inventory was comfortably meeting overall demand.

The opening of the Postmark Hotel and the programming of that space as an events venue, is one of the key parking monitoring areas staff are focusing on beginning in September 2024. Currently, Town staff expect that the venue will see an average of 50-75 visitor cars for special events. Staff will be monitoring these events both with the expanding ParkSense+ AI program and visual checks by staff at key points in time. Staff will regularly report back to Council moving forward to ensure the continued increase in popularity of the downtown is supported by adequate parking for day-to-day use.

Opportunities for Increasing Parking Inventory 2024-2026

Given the business case analysis and the data being collected on the granular lot use, staff began to examine a more fiscally responsible approach to adding to the parking inventory in the downtown.

Granular Lot Paving

Staff determined that if the granular surface parking lot could be paved and made permanent, and after appropriate lighting and LID designs, and layout efficiencies with

the adjacent P3 parking lot, it could achieve approximately 150 parking spaces by early summer 2025.

Staff estimate that the cost to pave the granular lot and integrate it with P3 to achieve 150 spaces is approximately \$850,000 including LID, appropriate lighting and improved access.

The work to pave the granular lot is expected be completed by June 2025 and will take 6-8 weeks during Spring. During this time, staff will implement parking mitigation measures that have previously demonstrated success in easing the overall parking pressures for customers and visitors to the downtown area. As during previous parking lot work, staff will work with the Business Improvement Area to implement the Park and Walk program which has demonstrated success in moving employees to alternative lots with longer parking permissions. Staff will also continue to meet regularly to plan and align events, Town projects and other interruptions to not add unnecessarily to parking pressures during this period.

Furthermore, staff have confirmed that paving the granular lot, does not prevent a parking structure from being built on this site in the future. It is expected that, should Council wish to build a structure on this site in the future, excavation for strip footings to support a future modular structure similar to the 2024 tender, could be undertaken without impacting the integrity of the overall paved surface parking area.

Additional Surface Parking in the Downtown area

In addition, staff expect to be able to find space for additional spots in the downtown area in 2025. The additional minimum 50 spots are expected to have a range of costs due to differing grading, permitting and environmental work required. Staff will bring back to Council an analysis of these additional spots including expected cost per space within 6 months of receiving direction from Council through this report which will allow for work to begin on adding these spaces to the parking inventory in 2025.

Overall, the expected inventory through the approach outlined in this report would exceed the total number of additional spaces expected to be created in the January 2024 report to Council.

2024-2026 Parking Inventory

Upon successful completion of this plan, the increase in parking inventory will be as follows:

- January 2024- target set for additional 200 spaces
- June 2025 – 150 spaces including the temporary spaces (to be made permanent) and efficiencies created by connecting the granular lot to P3
- 2025-2026 – 50 minimum additional surface spaces created through efficiency designs in the downtown

Permanent surface parking spaces to be constructed in 2025/2026: minimum **200**

In addition to the new spaces mentioned above, 40 new spaces were also created on Church Street in Spring 2024.

Total additional spaces created 2024-2026: minimum **240**

The cost for these surface parking spaces will fit within the existing capital spending authority for downtown parking in 2025.

Future Parking Demand Mitigation

In addition to the above proposed surface lots, staff continue to explore and advance various measures to improve the overall wayfinding and turnover of parking in the downtown and to continue to evolve parking mitigation to the needs in the area.

Enhanced Enforcement pilot project

During the summer of 2024, staff implemented an enhanced enforcement pilot project to increase enforcement monitoring in the downtown area. A By-Law Enforcement Officer was dedicated to the downtown parking areas between 10:00a.m. and 3:00p.m. which the data shows is the busiest time for parking in the area. This project saw a significant increase in compliance to parking by-laws in the downtown and saw infractions drop from 18% to less than 10% during the monitoring period. In addition, this project demonstrated complete cost recovery, making it a fiscally responsible approach to parking issues in the area.

Advancement of the Parking Study

At the January Committee of the Whole, staff were directed to advance a parking study to implement wayfinding, explore revenue models and update time-of-use and other by-laws in response to the changing uses in the downtown. This project is expected to be completed by the end of 2025 and will improve the overall experience of finding parking in the downtown through digital and signage tools and other management opportunities being explored.

With the development of over 200 new spaces to park in the downtown between 2024 and 2026, staff expect that some members of the public will not be familiar with their locations and time of use. As such, staff will develop an interim communications plan to educate the public on parking locations with a focus on new and under-utilized lots in the area. The interim plan will aim to improve uptake in these areas using signage, parking maps and other tools.

Data Analysis and Impacts

In November 2023, staff implemented a parking monitoring pilot program in P3 using AI camera technology to assess occupancy, parking turnover and other relevant parking patterns in that lot. As a result of the data, staff have been able to better understand parking peaks. The most significant and consistent peak occupancy in P3 is around the lunch hour (12:00p.m.-2:00p.m.) Monday-Friday. Saturday mornings during the summer

also see a significant usage spike due to the farmer's market. As such, staff have been closely monitoring and managing bookings at the Community Centre during these times on a pilot basis. Based on this data and the new data becoming available through the ParkSense+ expansion, staff will continue to monitor and manage bookings at this facility for a period of one year and report back to Council in Q4 2025 on the results.

To support the above efforts, and to continue to improve the data available to inform decisions, staff have begun expanding the ParkSense+ parking program. In fall 2024, the program will begin monitoring ParkSense+ data in Market Square, Main Street South and Doug Duncan Drive, in addition to existing monitoring in P3. Staff will conduct an analysis of this data and report back annually to Council beginning in February 2025 on parking patterns.

Conclusion

The current parking inventory when augmented by up to 50 minimum, additional surface spots and the paving of the granular lot in 2025, in combination with the on-going parking monitoring and mitigation efforts will meet the needs of the growing popularity of the downtown for the foreseeable future. The plan outlined in this report is the most fiscally prudent and efficient way to ensure adequate parking availability in the downtown. Staff will continue to engage Council on the overall parking patterns and make recommendations on adaptations to this plan as required. Council can expect a subsequent report in Q1 2024 on parking monitoring and a follow-up report in 2025 on the parking wayfinding study and implementation plan.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This report supports Community and Economic Vibrancy.

Consultation

Legislative Services, Legal and Procurement Services, Engineering Services, Economic Development and Corporate Communications were all consulted in this report.

Human Resource Considerations

The recommendations in this report, as passed, will result in one contract position for enhanced parking enforcement in the downtown. This position will be fully funded by the revenue generated through the program.

Budget Impact

To begin to execute the paved surface parking area, \$200,000 from the approved 2025 capital spending authority will be advanced in 2024 for a future procurement for the design and construction of the paved surface parking lot to begin in 2024 and be completed in 2025.

Attachments

None.

Approval

Ian McDougall, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the CAO

Peter Noehammer, Commissioner, Development and Infrastructure Services

Contact

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