

Assessment of Approaches

There are three main approaches used by municipalities to regulate the amount of parking for new homes and businesses, which in turn have an influence on the shape of the city as illustrated in Figure 1.

- *Approach 1: Minimum parking requirements:* the City determines a set number of parking spaces that must be provided. Typically, a high number of parking spaces are provided. Neighbourhoods are designed for driving and are less walkable. Homeowners and businesses have less choice in determining the amount of parking they provide.
- *Approach 2: Open option parking:* Businesses and homeowners can choose the amount of parking they provide on their property in response to market demand. There is a range of parking spaces provided, with some businesses choosing to provide more than others. There can be a range of neighbourhoods that support both walking and driving.
- *Approach 3: Maximum parking requirements:* the City sets an upper limit on the number of parking spaces that can be provided. Neighbourhoods are designed to be walkable and are less drivable. Businesses and homeowners have less choice as only a certain amount of parking stalls can be provided.



Figure 1 - approaches to parking and implications for the built environment

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Administration assessed each of these three options against the research, policy review, technical study, and public feedback received.

Minimum parking requirements

The minimum parking approach aligns with the 39 percent of Edmontonians who preferred a development scenario with abundant parking in the Values and Priorities survey, and the 31 percent of survey respondents in the Preferred Options survey who selected minimum parking requirements as their preferred option. Minimum parking requirements also align with the Values and Priorities survey finding that Edmontonians place a high priority on the availability of parking at home, and the two thirds who would not visit businesses or restaurants that did not have available parking as minimum parking requirements would guarantee some level of parking at both residences and businesses.

Minimum parking requirements do not align with the 58 percent of Edmontonians who selected more dense and walkable communities in the Values and Priorities Survey and the 64 percent of respondents who did not select minimum parking requirements as their preferred option for regulating parking. Maintaining minimums could help maintain on-street parking availability, which was ranked as the second most important priority for Edmontonians by ensuring parking is provided on private property. However minimums would not address behavioural influences to on-street parking usage, including individuals choosing to park on-street for convenience and personal choice, or due to using their parking areas for other purposes such as storage.

Maintaining minimum parking requirements would reflect the Technical Study finding that a majority of parking lots surveyed were at least partially filled at some time of the day, suggesting almost all properties have at least some requirement for parking. The study also found that existing minimum requirements were leading to significant over-supply of parking spaces. This finding suggests that if minimums are maintained, they could be reduced, however the high level of variability in parking utilization creates a challenge in determining what an appropriate minimum parking rate would be.

While retaining minimums ensures that at least some parking is provided for each development, it creates barriers to those developments which more closely align with *The Way We Grow* and the emerging *The City Plan*. Developments which support a more compact, affordable, and active transportation mode will continue to be required to apply for, and justify, parking variances. This works against policy direction calling for more walkable and complete communities. It also works against *Edmonton's Energy Transition Strategy*, which highlights the importance of mode shift and more compact development around transit in meeting the city's emission targets.

Open Option Parking

Open option parking supports a range of policies in Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan, *The Way We Grow*, including more walkable neighbourhoods by creating opportunities for more compact development that is walkable in scale. Smaller parking areas can also be easier to navigate for pedestrians and create more street-oriented buildings, supporting *The Way We Move* objectives of promoting active modes of transportation. Open option parking also supports the provision of more housing options as residents can match their needs to the amount of parking provided, and can reduce costs to support more affordable housing. Businesses are able to choose locations or development styles which suit their customers needs while not facing regulatory barriers, helping to create a more vibrant local economy. Allowing homeowners and businesses to tailor their parking needs works towards *The Way We Move* objective of providing for essential parking only. *Edmonton's Energy Transition Strategy* also explicitly calls for removing minimum parking requirements in commercial corridors and transit oriented areas.

An open option approach aligns with the Big City Move in *The City Plan* to foster a rebuildable city as redundant or underused parking spaces can be opened up to new development opportunities and activities. This approach also removes artificial constraints to allow industry to adjust at its own speed to market demand, cultural changes, and technological disruptions, such as the expansion of the sharing economy and introduction of autonomous vehicles. It also aligns with initiatives to encourage infill and missing middle development, and the provision of affordable housing by removing barriers to these types of development and reducing overall construction costs. Open option parking further supports affordable housing development by reducing costs and allowing flexibility for affordable housing providers to meet the parking needs of their residents.

Open option parking most directly reflects the findings of the technical study, which highlighted an existing surplus of parking in Edmonton. A significant majority of parking areas surveyed were less than 50 percent occupied throughout the day. While some parking lots reached over 90 percent capacity, these were a minority of cases and these were only full for portions of the day or week. This finding suggests that the existing minimum parking regulations have resulted in an oversupply of parking spaces, an inability to accurately predict and set parking requirements for a development, and the inefficient use of land.

The Technical Study also showed that there are no consistent trends between different land uses or access to transit. Even when controlling for a range of other factors, such as neighbourhood type, population density, or drive alone rate, there were no variables that could predict the level of parking demand at different sites. A clear illustration of this point relates to observed parking at 10 of the

same restaurant franchises. Even when controlling for the type and brand of business, there was significant variation in observed parking utilization on each of the sites where the same franchise is located. The variation in utilization across the same business demonstrates the challenge in determining a minimum parking requirement that would work for the wide range of uses, sites, and local contexts in Edmonton.

Open option parking reflects what was heard through two surveys of Edmontonians. In the Value and Priorities Survey, 39 percent selected areas like 124 Street and Whyte Avenue, which represent a mix of parking provision that would be possible under open option parking, as their preferred city scenario. Participants were also asked for their second choice scenario. As a second choice, more people chose the 124 Street scenario than any other (40%). In total, the 124 Street scenario was ranked first or second by 79 percent of Edmontonians. More importantly, the open option approach supports the preferences of the 39 percent of Edmontonians that preferred a development scenario with abundant parking as homes and businesses can choose to continue to provide high levels of parking.

The Values and Priorities Survey also found that just over two thirds of Edmontonians felt that either businesses, homeowners or others should determine parking requirements, rather than the City.

The Preferred Options survey showed open option parking with the highest level of support of the three approaches to regulating parking (60 percent) and was most likely to be selected as the single preferred option (47 percent).

Maximum parking requirements

City-wide maximum parking requirements do not fully align with policy direction for housing choices as households with higher parking needs may not be able to provide required parking on their property. Universal parking maximums also reduce the opportunity for businesses to meet a range of customer needs. City-wide parking maximums also do not align with the 78 percent of Edmontonians who preferred scenarios with either a high level of surface parking, or a mix of parking options, in the Values and Priority survey. Maximum parking was selected as the preferred option by 17 percent of respondents in the Preferred Options survey.

Maintaining and expanding targeted maximums in Downtown, main streets, and transit areas are supported by a range of policies in *The Way We Grow* and *The Way We Move* that call for transit-oriented development and moderating the supply of parking in transit areas. Higher intensity land use along commercial corridors and transit oriented development areas is also explicitly flagged in *Edmonton's Energy Transition Strategy* as an approach to create changes in

land use and transportation patterns that would support desired emission reductions.

Existing maximums in the downtown for both commercial and residential development could be maintained. Existing residential maximums in transit oriented and main street areas could also be maintained, and commercial maximums added. Similar to approach 1, the Technical Study did not highlight what appropriate maximums may be, however a design-driven approach could be taken to setting these numbers. This would involve limiting the quantity of surface parking in strategic areas while allowing unlimited underground parking to be provided. This approach would manage the urban design objectives of creating more compact communities and offer more options for commercial businesses, however this would not support a shift in transportation mode.

On-street parking

Changes to onsite parking regulations have the potential to influence on-street parking and is an important consideration in these changes. On-street parking provides a flexible resource for use by all Edmontonians, and the ability to park on the street at home was ranked as the second highest priorities by Edmontonians in the Values and Priorities survey.

Administration will continue to evolve on-street parking management programs to enable a balance of parking between homeowners and businesses, including paid parking, residential parking programs and time restrictions, to ensure there is a balance of parking between homeowners and businesses on public road right of way. A review of the City's Residential Parking Program Policy and Procedures is also proposed for 2020. This work will include the update of the Residential Parking Management Policy and Program to compliment the City's approach to parking on private property. The development of the Residential Parking Management Policy and Program will include a robust public engagement education campaign, and will look to co-create on-street parking management strategies with communities.

Administration also proposes to undertake an education campaign to raise awareness of the changes to parking on private property and how on-street parking resources are shared between residents.

On-street and onsite parking supply and demand will continue to be actively monitored over the next two years to identify any emerging issues. This will include monitoring the amount of parking provided at the development permit stage and on-street parking congestion to identify trends and inform changes to minimum parking requirements. Any identified changes to the development regulations for parking will be incorporated into Zoning Bylaw Renewal. This is consistent with The City Plan's call for an adaptable and responsive regulatory

framework that enables the outcomes Edmontonians seek to achieve without being overly-prescriptive about particular technological or design solutions as the city grows from 1 to 2 million over the coming decades.