

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee

From: Scott Mathers, MPA, P.Eng.
Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic
Development

Subject: Core Area Parking Incentives Extension

Date: April 29, 2024

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development, the following actions be taken with respect to free parking in the City's Core Area:

- a) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to implement a free 1-hour on-street parking program for the Core Area until the end of 2024;
- b) The financing for a free 1-hour on-street parking program for the Core Area, in the estimated amount of \$300,000, **BE APPROVED** from the Economic Development Reserve Fund.
- c) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to implement a free 1-hour parking pilot program for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 in Old East Village until the end of 2024;
- d) The financing for a free 1-hour parking pilot program for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 in Old East Village, in the estimated amount of \$30,000, **BE APPROVED** from the Economic Development Reserve Fund; and
- e) This staff report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Executive Summary

Parking demand in the Core area is closely linked to economic activity, building vacancy rates, employment numbers and other indicators. At Municipal Council's April 2, 2024 meeting resolved the following actions be taken:

- a) *it **BE NOTED** that the Community and Protective Services Committee considered the implementation of a parking incentive as a pilot project until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application;*
- b) *the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to report back to the next Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with a source of funding for issuing free 1-hour on-street parking and the ability to suspend free 1-hour on-street parking during special events in the Core Area for the 2024 calendar year; and,*
- c) *the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to implement a parking incentive as a pilot project until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application and report back to Community and Protective Services Committee with a source of financing. (AS AMENDED) (5.1/5/CPSC)*

This report provides a proposed source of financing, a discussion on suspending fees, and an option for a parking pilot program for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 in Old East Village.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The 2023-2027 Strategic Plan identifies Council's priorities and includes the following outcomes of the Economic Growth, Culture and Prosperity as well as the Mobility and Transportation strategies: London's Core Area is a vibrant neighbourhood and attractive

destination; and Londoners of all identities, abilities and means can move throughout the City safely and efficiently. It also specifically addresses the following strategies:

- Economic Growth, Culture, and Prosperity strategy 4.1 a) “Decrease commercial vacancy through new programs and initiatives.”,
- Economic Growth, Culture, and Prosperity strategy 4.3 e) “Explore and implement strategies to support the retention of existing businesses”,
- Economic Growth, Culture, and Prosperity strategy 4.3 d) “Update the Downtown Parking Strategy”,
- Climate Action and Sustainable Growth strategy 2.1 a) “Implement the Climate Emergency Action Plan with a focus on actions up to 2027 that will contribute towards achieving 2030 emissions reduction targets.”,
- Mobility and Transportation strategy 1.2 a) “Complete and implement the Mobility Master Plan.”, and
- Housing and Homelessness 1.1 “a) Increase the supply, range, and depth of affordability of quality housing options where people feel safe.”

Discussion

1 Background

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

Planning and Environment Committee – October 7, 2019 – 185 Queens Avenue Parking Lot Redevelopment

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – October 28, 2019 – Core Area Action Plan

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – April 28, 2020 – COVID-19 Financial Impacts and Additional Measures for Community Relief

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – May 18, 2021 – Comprehensive Report on Core Area Initiatives

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – November 30, 2021 – Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy

Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – May 30, 2023 – Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy

Civic Works Committee – June 13, 2023 – Core Area Parking Initiatives

1.2 Core Area Parking Initiatives

A report was submitted to Council in June 2023 providing details on the various parking initiatives supporting the Core Area. The report made a series of recommendations including extending the temporary free municipal parking program to the end of Q1 in the Core Area.

At Municipal Council’s April 2, 2024 meeting resolved the following actions be taken:

- a) *it **BE NOTED** that the Community and Protective Services Committee considered the implementation of a parking incentive as a pilot project until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application;*
- b) *the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to report back to the next Community and Protective Services Committee meeting with a source of funding for issuing free 1-hour on-street parking and the ability to suspend free 1-hour on-street parking during special events in the Core Area for the 2024 calendar year; and,*
- c) *the Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to implement a parking incentive as a pilot project until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application and report back to Community and Protective Services Committee with a source of financing. (AS AMENDED) (5.1/5/CPSC)*

The following sections provide the information requested by Council.

2 Core Area On-street Free 1-hour Parking Program

An estimate has been developed to provide on-street free parking for 1-hour in the Core Area through the use of a promotional code using the HONK mobile parking payment application. Implementation of the program would occur following Council's approval. Using 2023 parking data as a basis, it is estimated that the program would result in lost revenue of \$300,000 for a 1-hour on street free parking program for the period of May 15th to December 31st, 2024.

3 Special Events in the Core Area

Another component of the Council resolution requested the ability to suspend free 1-hour on-street parking during special events. Reviewing the functionality of the HONK application, there is the ability to suspend the use of a promotional code for specific days.

Parking data provided by the HONK Application is only available in the form of a monthly total. Based on these monthly totals, the average daily revenue per day has been calculated and used to estimate the savings related to implementing a promotional code. Making a high-level assumption that peak days are approximately twice as busy as average days the following table has been developed.

There are many events that happen in London every week and are promoted by Tourism London (<https://www.londontourism.ca/events>). Applying the suspension of fees to the many different events would be administratively difficult to implement. In order to address the intent of the resolution, Civic Administration has identified a list of several of the large special events that are planned in the Downtown in 2024 for Council's consideration:

- London Children's Festival: June 14 - 16, 2024,
- London International Food Festival: June 21 - 23, 2024,
- Sunfest: July 4-7, 2024,
- Rock the Park: July 10-13, 2024,
- The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival: July 19 - 21, 2024, and
- London Ribfest: August 1 - 5, 2024.

In reviewing the use of the parking exemption in 2023, there is not a significant difference between the use of the parking exemption during large events versus the use of the parking exemption on a typical week or weekend day. Use of the discount is highest during the week, lower on Saturdays, and does not apply to Sundays as parking is free on Sundays. As such, the following table provides an estimate of the revenue if the proposed free parking program is suspended during large special events

Table 1: Estimated Free Parking Program Savings if the program is suspended for large special events (based on 2023 average daily costs).

Large Special Event	Days	Total
London Children's Festival: June 14 - 16, 2024,	3	\$3,500
London International Food Festival: June 21 - 23, 2024,	3	\$3,500
Sunfest: July 4-7, 2024,	4	\$4,100
Rock the Park: July 10-13, 2024,	4	\$4,100
The Great Outdoors Comedy Festival: July 19 - 21, 2024, and	3	\$3,100
London Ribfest: August 1 - 5, 2024.	5	\$5,600
Total:		\$23,900

As noted in the table above, an estimate for the cumulative impact of suspending the use of a promotional code for large special events for 2024 is \$23,900.

4 Municipal Lot #1 and #2 in (Old East Village) 1-hour Free Parking Pilot Program

On April 2, 2024 Council also resolved that a pilot program be implemented until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application.

c) the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to implement a parking incentive as a pilot project until the end of Q3 2024 for Municipal Lots 1 & 2 utilizing the existing HONK mobile application and report back to Community and Protective Services Committee with a source of financing.

To expedite this request, there is the opportunity to align the program for core area 1 hour on-street free parking with a pilot Old East Village Municipal Lots 1 & 2 parking incentive program. Aligning these programs would allow the existing “CORE” promotional code building on the past marketing of this code and increasing the likelihood that the free parking would be used. This option would extend the offer of 1-hour free parking for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 as the requested “Pilot project”. This recommendation would be administratively simpler to implement and would extend to Q4-2024. Based on last year’s parking data the cost for a 1-hour on-street parking program for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 from May 15th to December 31st, 2024 is estimated at \$30,000.

5 Financial Implications

Municipal Council’s resolution also asked Civic Administration to provide a source of funding for the free-parking programs. It is Civic Administration’s understanding that Council’s intention is developing a parking incentive program to support local businesses in Old East Village and Downtown London. In that respect, the Economic Development Reserve Fund is an appropriate funding source. After the approval of the 2024-2027 Multi-Year Budget, the Economic Development Reserve Fund has an uncommitted balance of \$4.8 million for 2024.

6 Next Steps

Following the approval of the programs outlined, the program will be implemented immediately following Council approval. The new program will be marketed working with the Old East Village and Downtown London BIAs.

Conclusion

This report provides the information and proposed source of financing requested at the April 2, 2024 meeting of Council. It also presents an option for a free 1-hour parking pilot program for Municipal Lot #1 and #2 in Old East Village until the end of 2024. Upon Council approval the free parking will proceed immediately and will be scheduled to conclude following December 31, 2024.

Prepared and Recommended by:

**Scott Mathers, MPA, P.Eng.
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