



City of London
300 Dufferin Ave, 2nd Floor
London Ontario
N6A 4L9

April 25, 2024

RE: Downtown One-hour Free On-Street Parking Extension and Related Research

Dear Chair Pelosa and Community and Protective Services Committee Members;

Downtown London thanks London's City Council for their support and request to the Civic Administration to report back at the April 29th, 2024 Community and Protective Services Committee Meeting with a funding amount and source for issuing free one-hour on-street parking in the Core Area. That said, Downtown London supports the extension of the free one-hour on-street parking downtown.

Downtown businesses continue to struggle with ongoing impacts of the COVID pandemic, increasing office vacancies, loss of foot traffic and ongoing construction both within and at major entry points into the downtown. Continuing one-hour free parking will provide needed relief for our members and one less hurdle for Londoners and visitors to shop, dine and visit downtown.

The Downtown London BIA area is a significant economic driver and revenue generator for the City of London with property tax revenues collected in 2023 of \$38.5 million and tax assessment value eight times more per square kilometre than any other area of the city. In addition, the City benefits from approximately \$2 million each year of private sector investment through the BIA levy, paid by LDBA members, helping to cover costs for enhanced cleaning, maintenance and beautification of municipally owned properties downtown. That said, parking revenue losses related to free one-hour on-street parking would be a small but important City contribution, that would assist in the reduction of business closures and commercial vacancies by creating less barriers for customers and visitors to come downtown.

Lastly, to ensure we are not simply "kicking the can down the road", Downtown London also requests that adequate parking data be collected during this free parking extension and calls for a further timeline extension of the free one-hour on-street parking to a minimum of 12-14 months. This extension will allow for data gathering that represents the year round seasonal variability in parking supply and demand, and to complete the required analysis. City Administration could then bring back a staff report with recommendations based on parking data and research, allowing City Council to make informed and evidence based decisions on municipal parking in downtown, beyond just the impacts on City parking revenues.

Should City Council support Downtown London's requested amendments, our staff would be pleased to work with City Administration on this research. Information and data collection on parking that other municipalities have carried out include:

- Real-time customer and visitor feedback on current modes of mobility downtown, satisfaction and intention surveys
- Community and business engagement/surveys of their parking needs and ideas for solutions
- Data on the impacts and contributions that free parking has on downtown renewal and its economy
- Examination of the advantages and disadvantages of other municipalities offering free short-term parking in their downtown (Waterloo, Kitchener, Guelph)
- Research on municipal parking best practices and other successful municipal and downtown parking policies and programs and joint City/BIA partnerships (eg. Parking District Benefits - <https://www.calgary.ca/roads/parking-revenue-allocation.html>; <https://www.houstontx.gov/parking/pbd.html>)

From the preliminary research Downtown London staff have examined and in the absence of an updated City of London downtown parking strategy, we lag behind many other cities on progressive and innovative municipal parking models and policies; and yet parking is one of the top 4 concerns that LDBA members, downtown visitors and our community have brought forward as a top barrier to shop, dine, visit and start a business downtown. This is further detailed in the City staff report, [City of London Strategy for the Core Area - SPPC November 21, 2023](#). Without more detailed data collection and research on parking, City Council will be challenged to make the best decisions that best serve our downtown and community.

Sincerely,



Barbara Maly
Executive Director
Downtown London



Scott Andrew Collyer
Board Chair
London Downtown Business Association