



May 10, 2024

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

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

Dear Mayor Morgan and City of London Councillors,

Downtown London fully supports the free one-hour, on-street parking pilot in downtown and we strongly encourage City Council to consider and endorse this pilot. We also request City Council extend the free one-hour, on-street parking pilot for at least a period of 12-14 months in order to collect representative year-round and real-time data, and complete a best practice review of other downtown municipal parking models. This information could include patterns of the municipal parking supply/demand and seasonal changes, user frequency, compliance data, downtown customer/visitor intercept surveys, business surveys (eg. how did you come downtown?) and more actionable data and insights to assist City Council in decision making.

During this proposed pilot, Downtown London BIA offers our support to work in partnership with City Staff to collect and review data and other municipal parking best practices. Based on preliminary research conducted by Downtown London, there are many examples across Canada and North America, where BIAs and municipalities are working together to find the best parking solutions and models for their municipality, downtown businesses, patrons and other stakeholders. These are just a few examples of parking partnerships that have resulted in win-win solutions and helped solve these communities' specific downtown parking challenges:

Calgary parking revenue reinvestment in BIAs:

<https://www.calgary.ca/roads/parking-revenue-allocation.html>

Lindsay BIA manages downtown parking

<https://pub-kawarthalakes.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=d9954639-7a40-44e5-9f3d-f5fa61e928e3&Agenda=PostMinutes&lang=English>

<https://globalnews.ca/news/3929138/lindsay-downtown-free-parking-under-review/>

Houston Parking District Benefits

<https://www.houstontx.gov/parking/pbd.html#:~:text=A%20Parking%20Benefit%20District%20is,dedicated%20for%20public%20improvement%20projects.>

When customers are required to pay for parking downtown while free parking is available in suburban commercial areas, it creates a competitive disadvantage for downtown merchants and contributes to more urban sprawl and significantly more infrastructure investment. The following are a sample of municipalities in the region that recognize this disparity and offer some level of free municipal parking in their downtowns:

Downtown Guelph

[https://guelph.ca/living/getting-around/drive/parking/downtown-parking/#:~:text=Imagery-,Downtown%20parking%20rates,\(except%20during%20special%20events\)](https://guelph.ca/living/getting-around/drive/parking/downtown-parking/#:~:text=Imagery-,Downtown%20parking%20rates,(except%20during%20special%20events))

Uptown Waterloo

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/living/parking.aspx>

Downtown Kitchener

<https://www.kitchener.ca/en/parking/find-a-place-to-park.aspx>

Downtown Stratford

<https://www.stratford.ca/en/live-here/resources/Parking/Parking-Guide.pdf>

Downtown Ingersoll

<https://www.ingersoll.ca/en/live-and-play/parking-information.aspx>

Downtown Milton

<https://downtownmilton.com/parking-information/#:~:text=There%20is%20free%20on%2Dstreet,for%20parking%20rules%20and%20times>

Downtown Welland

<https://www.welland.ca/Parking/MunicipalLots.asp>

These cities, like London, are still automobile-dependent societies with infrastructure slowly coming on-line that will provide more mobility options in the future, but that is at least a decade or more away before coming to full fruition. That said, until active and shared mobility infrastructure is completed throughout our city, we strongly believe it is premature to completely eliminate free parking without fully understanding the economic impact it will have on downtown.

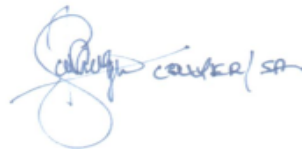
Since the elimination of free parking at the end of March, many members have shared with us their customers' frustration that paying for parking is just another reason not to return downtown in the future. With downtown commercial office vacancy rate still remaining high at over 28% in Q1-2024 (CBRE) it is evident that the downtown economy is still struggling to recover.

For the reasons stated above, we strongly urge City Council to extend free one-hour on-street municipal parking, giving us adequate time to explore other progressive downtown municipal parking models and policies that are mutually beneficial to both the municipality and BIA. We look forward to working with the City of London and finding the best parking solutions that will continue to support downtown recovery and renewal.

Sincerely,



Barbara Maly
Executive Director
Downtown London



Scott Andrew Collyer
Board Chair
London Downtown Business Association