

Implementation Scenarios for Open Option Parking

Open Option Parking is an important step towards ConnectEdmonton's goals of Healthy City, Urban Places, Climate Resilience and Regional Prosperity, and to realize the urban form envisioned by the emerging City Plan policy. Parking spaces, and in particular an oversupply of parking spaces, have substantial negative impacts on how the city develops and the viability of options for people to move around the city. Abundant free parking is incompatible with the vision for Edmonton to become a compact, walkable, and vibrant urban city.

Open Option Parking shifts the responsibility of determining the right amount of parking from the City to the developer or property owner. It is important to note Open Option Parking does not necessarily mean a decrease in on-site parking.

All Open Option Parking scenarios will result in incremental change. The primary risk for all of the Open Option Parking scenarios is that on-street parking may become more congested over time. The change to the parking supply in any neighbourhood is dependent on the rate of development or redevelopment, the success of a development and the match of parking provision to need. In response to on-street pressures, the City can choose to implement parking management techniques, such as time-limited, passholder only, or paid parking for the on-street parking supply in areas where the demand for on-street parking exceeds the supply.

The minimum parking requirement for persons with physical disabilities is regulated by the Alberta Building Code 2019, as a proportion of the required on-site parking stalls. The changes to the general parking regulations as presented in the May 7, 2019, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report *CR_6707 Comprehensive Review of Parking Regulations in Zoning Bylaw 12800* propose to interpret this requirement as an equivalent based on the floor area of the development, in the absence of minimum parking requirements. Provision, management and enforcement of on-street parking spaces falls under a separate bylaw and policy which are not being amended through this report.

Scenario One: Full implementation of Open Option Parking

What it does

Scenario One removes all minimum on-site parking requirements city-wide in one step. Requirements for parking lot design (including landscaped islands, parking space dimensions, safety, etc.) are retained. Other requirements that are tied to minimum parking requirements, such as bicycle parking requirements and parking spaces for use by persons with physical disabilities, are retained and converted to a per floor area requirement.

Opportunities and benefits

Scenario One is supported by the technical findings and public input, as presented in the May 7, 2019, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report *CR_6707 Comprehensive Review of Parking Regulations in Zoning Bylaw 12800*. This Scenario streamlines the development permit review process, removes barriers to economic development, and is the optimal approach to determine the “right amount” of parking for a site or activity.

City-wide application keeps regulations simple, understandable, and predictable. Scenario One represents cost-savings for Administration in regulating the Zoning Bylaw and for the Development industry in delivering projects. It creates consistency for all developments across the City, and is a direct tool to transform Edmonton into a vibrant, walkable, urban city.

Challenges and disadvantages

Open Option Parking represents transformative change, and change at this scale is not without its challenges and uncertainties. A notable concern Administration has heard is a general distrust that the free market will reliably supply residential and non-residential developments with adequate on-site parking.

Open Option Parking relies on a well-organized on-street parking system that manages the supply and demand for on-street parking spaces and enforces the rules for improperly parked vehicles. A necessary step in the implementation of Open Option Parking is to review the current management and enforcement objectives for on-street parking resources to ensure its philosophy and assumptions are compatible with Open Option Parking. If Scenario One is selected, on-street parking management and enforcement, and in particular, the residential parking programs must be updated to align with Edmonton’s strategic and long-range planning objectives. This work would coordinate with the on-street parking program and service review planned for 2020.

Risks, magnitude of risk, range of impacts, and mitigation

If Open Option Parking were approved, Edmonton would be the first major city in Canada, and one of only eight municipalities in North America to completely

eliminate minimum parking requirements. As such, comparables are lacking and there are many unknowns. The data shows that approximately one percent of development permits in Edmonton are approved with a parking variance, and that many motorists will not go to a destination that does not provide “free” parking. As a result, Administration expects that the market will respond accordingly and provide enough parking to serve its own interests.

If developers choose to build less parking than the site would generate, there may be increased demand for on-street parking in some areas. A similar concern is if a developer chooses to provide lower levels of on-site parking in areas where transit or other infrastructure are not yet in place to support alternative travel modes. On-street parking management tools such as pricing and time-limited parking may be employed to respond to these situations, and that could come into conflict with the current expectations that Edmontonians have in regard to parking availability and price on the street. Over time, additional resources may be required to manage on-street resources.

Economic and financial implications

There is substantial positive economic potential in Scenario One, as explored below.

Benefits to Edmontonians

The primary benefit to Edmontonians is increased choice. Open Option Parking means people can make choices based on their own needs, lifestyle, financial means, and values. Where someone wants to open a restaurant that caters to the neighbourhood, and assumes people to primarily travel by foot, they will be allowed to do so. It will no longer be against the rules to open a restaurant that has no parking. Or, if someone chooses to live close to their work to avoid a lengthy commute, they no longer will have to pay for a parking space to be developed which they will not use.

Parking is a significant cost-driver when building affordable and permanent supportive housing, or any housing model that is typically used by those who do not or cannot drive - whether by choice, or by economic constraint. The cost of supplying parking or obtaining development permit variance approvals can translate directly into lost opportunity to provide more affordable or supportive housing units.

Benefits to City Builders

Parking spaces are expensive to build and maintain. A parking space can cost between \$7,000 and \$60,000 to build (suburban surface lot and downtown underground parkade, respectively). Amortized over 15 years, including interest, maintenance, and other operational expenses (snow clearing, towing/enforcement, lights and heat, etc) that translates to between \$60 and

\$500 per month. So every empty parking space represents an inefficient use of land and resources that could be better allocated for other purposes, such as higher densities, better amenities, or higher quality design.

Additionally, the ability for builders to choose the right amount of parking for a site means cost savings on technical studies such as parking impact assessments, which would otherwise be required as part of rezoning and development permit applications proposing variances to minimum parking requirements.

Impacts on Administration

A parking review occurs with every development application. Commercial and mixed use developments require detailed calculations, tracking, adjustments and rationale to be completed. Substantial time and resources are invested to compile and maintain the information. Variances and appeals also require Administration to prepare evidence for the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board.

With Open Option Parking there is the potential that some sites may not meet on-site demand for parking; therefore, additional resources may be required for on-street parking management.

Overall assessment and recommendation

Overall, it is much more efficient and cost-effective to manage existing parking supply than to create new parking supply. Minimum parking requirements are a subsidy to drivers, the costs of which are baked into the goods and services that we obtain on a daily basis.

With Open Option Parking, development would no longer be required to provide dedicated, on-site parking. This does not mean that parking will not be provided; but rather, developers can build the right amount of parking for an area.

Administration recommends Scenario One. It introduces several unknowns, but will support Edmonton's transition to a more walkable, vibrant, and urban place.

Scenario Two: Phased approach to Open Option Parking

What it does

Scenario Two represents a continuation of a decade-long process to gradually remove and reduce minimum parking requirements. The process started in 2008 when Administration commissioned the 2010 Parking Study Final Report, which had several recommendations to change how parking is regulated and managed in Edmonton. The first phase was to substantially reduce (to effectively eliminate) minimum parking requirements in the Downtown Special Area zones.

Subsequent phases saw reductions for main street areas, transit areas, affordable housing and assisted living, child care services, eating and drinking establishments, religious assemblies, and low density residential uses. To consolidate and reduce the minimum parking requirements that remain in Zoning Bylaw 12800 is a step towards the “right amount” of parking across Edmonton.

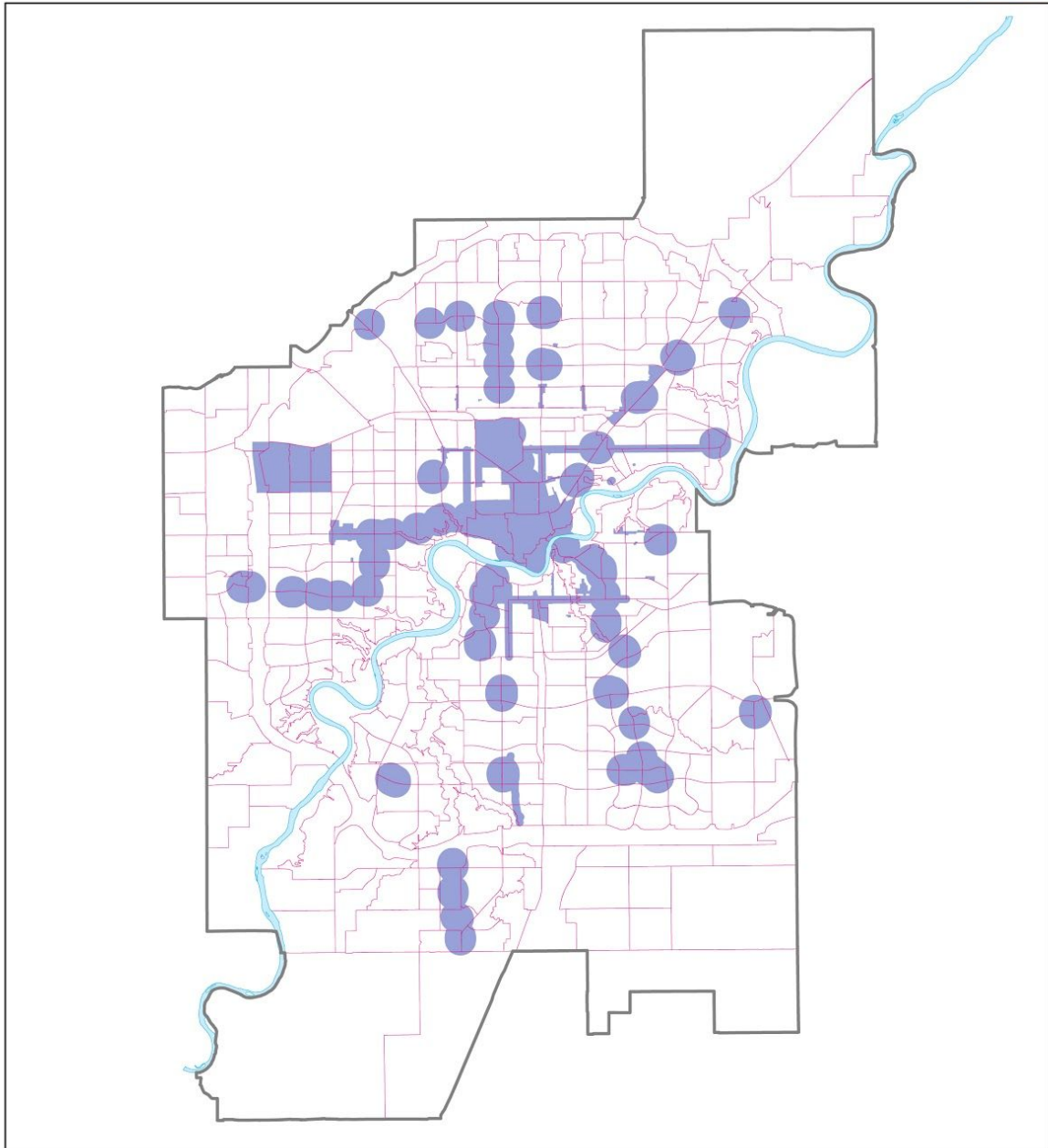
Scenario Two is a multi-step approach that transitions to full implementation of Open Option Parking over a defined period of time, based on established milestones. Timing and specifics of this project would need to be defined at a later date.

Phase 1: Apply Open Option Parking in defined areas

Phase 1 removes minimum parking requirements in walkable, transit-supportive areas where for the most part, parking reductions are already in place. This uses existing defined geographies, which include:

- Areas included within the Main Streets Overlay, as defined by Zoning Bylaw 12800. These areas are currently subject to reduced parking requirements in accordance with Section 54.2, Schedule 1(C) of Zoning Bylaw 12800.
- Areas within a 600 metre radius of current and future LRT stations and Transit Centres. These areas are currently subject to reduced parking requirements for residential development in accordance with Section 54.2, Schedule 1(C) of Zoning Bylaw 12800.
- Business Improvement Areas.
- City Centre, as defined by the draft City Plan land use concept.

Map 1: Scenario Two, Phase 1 Open Option Parking Boundary



Map Compiled by:
Zoning Bylaw,
Development Services

November, 2019

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 Open Option Parking Boundary
for Scenario Two, Phase One



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Phase 2: Consolidate Parking Requirements as part of Zoning Bylaw Renewal

For the balance of the city, minimum parking requirements would be consolidated into fewer categories (from 127 to less than 20) and reduced. This work would be done as part of the Zoning Bylaw Renewal project. This would simplify regulations which should offer resource savings to developments and the City in the review process.

Phase 3: Expand Open Option Parking to Broader Areas of the City

This phase focuses on selecting broader areas where the Open Option Parking can be applied, and expanding the program area to include those geographies. Phase 3 would introduce a parking monitoring and evaluation program that will identify areas for expansion in conjunction with future policy work coming out of the district planning process intended to follow the adoption of The City Plan. Administration would report back to Council with monitoring results and adjust approach if and as necessary. Open Option parking would be expanded gradually over a number of years based on the results of this monitoring and evaluation process.

Phase 4: Reach Full Implementation of Open Option Parking

Phase 4 would enable full implementation of Open Option Parking in the City.

Opportunities and Benefits

Scenario Two has the same opportunities and benefits as Scenario One, except that benefits are realized over a longer period of time. Gradual expansion of areas that have no minimum parking requirements provides time to monitor the effects of the change and for Edmontonians to adjust to the concept. Furthermore, the City has more options available to intervene on emergent issues. If implemented now, Administration has the opportunity to generate case-studies to observe, learn from, and adjust through the Zoning Bylaw Renewal process.

Challenges and disadvantages

The primary disadvantage of Scenario Two is that it slows the realisation of a more compact, walkable, and transit accessible Edmonton. Maintaining minimum parking requirements perpetuates the complexity, costs, and delays in the development permit process while often resulting in more parking being built than is necessary. It creates tiers of development opportunity and cost, which may create inflated land values or pressures for development, based on whether land is subject to Open Option Parking. It also requires that both On-Street Parking interventions be resourced along with ongoing development permit process approvals.

Given that this Scenario requires a series of steps toward full implementation of Open Option Parking, Administration, the development industry, and the public

would have a number of adjustments to make over the years as requirements continually change. This can lead to challenges with change management as users of the Zoning Bylaw are required to adapt to the continual changes. This also creates a number of transition periods that can introduce uncertainty for those designing new homes and businesses as the minimum parking requirements may shift throughout the project design and planning process.

With any geographic requirement, a boundary is required to define the area of application. Properties on one side of the boundary would have different parking requirements than those on the adjacent lot or across the street. This may create an inequity or perceived injustice to those trying to develop on one or the other side of the boundary.

A phased approach requires several more reports and bylaws, which has an opportunity cost for Administration. Scenario Two will divert resources from the Zoning Bylaw Renewal project.

Risks, magnitude of risk, range of impacts, and mitigation

There are different risks for each phase of the implementation.

Phase 1: Apply Open Option Parking in defined areas

Administration will still need to determine whether a property qualifies for the reduction for each development permit review because the geographic areas defined in Phase 1 are not contiguous, and the area within 600 metres of LRT stations and Transit Centres is not parcel specific. Phase 1 is a good first step, but no cost savings for Administration will be realized.

Phase 2: Consolidate Parking Requirements a part of Zoning Bylaw Renewal

Maintaining minimum parking requirements is not supported by the technical analysis. To date the data shows that minimum parking requirements based on use accounts for only 17 percent of the variation in parking demand observed across sites. However, this Phase still represents a general benefit in that it improves choice for Edmontonians, and does not require an oversupply of parking for most sites.

Phase 3: Expand Open Option Parking to Broader Areas of the City

Phase 3 may be delayed indefinitely due to uncertainty, resources, inertia or changing priorities. Development projects may be delayed due to the uncertainty as to what parking requirement would apply, or to wait until their area is included in the expanded area prior to proceeding with a project. Since the expansion of Open Option Parking will occur over several years, there is potential risk of uneven or inequitable selection of new areas. This risk can be mitigated by creating a set policy and procedure manual that will indicate thresholds and types of areas that will retain the minimum parking requirements.

Phase 4: Reach Full Implementation of Open Option Parking

Has the same risks as Scenario One - full implementation of Open Option Parking.

Economic and financial implications

Each phase will require two reports each, one for Urban Planning Committee, and one for City Council Public Hearing. Additionally, each report will require research to identify broad boundaries and then consultation with affected external groups. The resources required for each phase will be about the same as a typical Zoning Bylaw Text Amendment project, and represent an opportunity cost for other projects that could be completed instead. Resources to complete additional reports and changes will be required to fully implement, and the workload capacity will have implications for the Zoning Bylaw Renewal project.

Furthermore, in order to adequately monitor the situation in between phases, resources will be required to set up and maintain a data tracking system for parking supply in each development permit. Individual site counts could also be completed, to build on the dataset already started; each survey (three counts per site, about 100 sites) costs about \$25,000 to complete. An annual or biennial report will need to be prepared that includes results of the monitoring data as well as the boundary expansion. Depending on the level of public consultation to determine the boundary, this could be a substantial commitment.

Overall assessment and recommendation

Scenario Two represents an incremental approach to achieve the city building goals of a compact, walkable, vibrant urban place. There are risks that the project will not complete all the phases, and will necessitate a dedicated resource over several years to monitor the program and complete the reporting and analysis. There will be limited to no cost savings for the development industry and Edmontonians over the initial phases of the program, and Administration will see increased costs to develop the program, monitor impacted areas and roll out parking management tools. Overall, Administration does not recommend this approach. The resources to implement would be more effectively utilized for other initiatives.

Scenario Three: Zone-based Parking Minimums

What it does

Scenario Three changes the minimum parking requirements from a per-use format to a per-zone format. For example, all properties zoned General Business Zone (CB2) would have the same parking requirement based on the floor area of the building. The number of required parking spaces would be set at an amount that primarily achieves the desired built form as described in the zone, the appropriate surrounding amenity (i.e. landscaping), and finally the minimum parking is what amount of parking would fit in the remainder of the lot. In other words, Scenario Three considers the development regulations in the zone to ensure that on a typical lot in that zone, the minimum parking requirement can be met. In order to advance Open Option Parking, some zones could have no minimum parking requirement.

Opportunities and benefits

The benefits to this approach include:

- Alignment with the philosophy of the Zoning Bylaw Renewal
- Priority is placed on the spaces for people (buildings, landscaping) and not on private vehicle storage.
- There is no need to keep detailed parking space transaction information for multi-tenant sites, making this option easy to administer and cutting down on development permit review times.
- The parking requirement can align with the purpose of the zone, which is related to the context in which the property is situated.

Challenges and Disadvantages

This approach retains the one-size-fits-all philosophy, except instead of regulating parking by use, it is regulated by zone. Given the data shows that minimum parking requirements are not correlated with utilization, the result is likely to be that some sites may not have enough parking required as a minimum, while others may be required to provide more than what would be needed.

Economic and financial implications

The new parking requirements would be assessed alongside all other development regulations as part of the Zoning Bylaw Renewal project. The scope of that project would need to be expanded to include the parking review, and so there may be resource or budget implications for doing so, however, fewer resources would be required compared to Scenario Two.

Overall assessment and recommendation

To maintain minimum requirements in some areas while not in others slows down the realisation of a more compact, walkable, and transit accessible

Edmonton. The minimum parking requirements would be better aligned with the purpose of the zone, and lowered in priority to meet the city building and placemaking objectives. However, this option may not achieve full implementation of Open Option Parking and requires extensive research if developed. Administration does not recommend Scenario Three.