

# Terms of Reference: Parking Study

## Study Description

Parking is a critical component of the City of Waterloo's overall transportation network. Providing an adequate parking supply contributes to the efficiency of land use, the viability of developments, and good urban design. The supply influences travel behaviours and the choice of transportation. Furthermore, the City recognizes that every development is different, and site-specific approaches to parking may be necessary. If an applicant wishes to deviate from the minimum parking requirements of the City's Zoning By-law, a Parking Study will be required for consideration. Overall, the Parking Justification Study will:

- Identify the proposed deviation from the City's parking requirements and provide context for the City to assess alignment with the policy and by-laws.
- Provide sound planning rationale for the deviation between planned parking supply and parking requirement (number and size of parking spaces) from the applicable Zoning By-law regulations.
- Identify possible approaches and strategies to support the parking reduction or mitigate parking supply, to be implemented by the applicant.
- Provide justification that will ensure the parking requirements are adequate for each phase of development and the ultimate final development.

Parking studies should be completed using good engineering and planning judgement founded in demonstrated research and robust understanding in how parking influences the built environment and transportation network.

A Parking Study is based on establishing parking rate(s) for land use(s) and supplemented by available local survey data or experience. A Parking Study understands the general principle that the parking demand generated by a development or re-development should be accommodated by on-site parking or acceptable alternative strategies to satisfy demand.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Terms of Reference (“TOR”) is to establish clear expectations and requirements for the preparation of Parking Studies submitted to the City of Waterloo. Compliance with these guidelines will help to expedite review times and mitigate the need for further revisions and submissions. Failure to satisfy the requirements set out in this TOR may result in an application being deemed incomplete. If an application is deemed incomplete it will be returned to the applicant to satisfy the necessary submission requirements.

## When is it Required?

A Parking Study or Letter of Justification may be required for the following Planning Act applications that are requesting an amendment to the parking regulations of the City’s Zoning By-law:

- Zoning By-law Amendment (Standard or Minor)
- Minor Variance Application
- Other planning applications, as determined by the City.

The need for a Parking Study as part of a complete application will be identified as part of the pre-application consultation review. In the instance where a planning application being advanced does not have a mandatory pre-application consultation process (e.g., Minor Variance), the applicant is encouraged to contact the City’s Planning Division to discuss the nature of the proposal and to determine if a Parking Study is required. Depending on the magnitude of the request, the City may accept a Letter of Justification in lieu of a Parking Study. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of the City. In such instances, the City will determine requisite information to be contained in the Letter of Justification, in consultation with any applicable external agencies through the pre-consultation process.

## Pre-Consultation

As the Parking Study or Letter of Justification will be prepared in connection with a development application, consultation with City staff is necessary to determine:

- Identification of the level of study (Parking Study versus Letter of Justification);
- Proxy sites provided by the Applicant (if applicable) for City review and comment. The City will be reviewing sites for appropriateness with preference given to sites within the City and/or Region. Applicant to provide sufficient detail about proxy sites to demonstrate their suitability to the requested parking modification, and the approach of parking survey; and

- Applicant to discuss potential use of the Cash-in-Lieu of Parking program/agreement.

## Qualified Persons

A Parking Study shall be prepared by a qualified and competent professional in good standing, with experience in parking studies and transportation. This experience should be relevant for the development. The responsible individual is required to have one of the following certifications:

- Registered Professional Planner (RPP/MCIP)
- Licensed Professional Engineer (P.Eng.)
- Professional Transportation Planner (P.T.P.)

The report must identify and be signed by the author(s) and, where prepared under the direction of a qualified professional, the signature of the reviewer of the report. The qualified professional that has signed the report shall take professional responsibility for its contents and the accuracy of the information contained therein.

## Applicable Legislation

The authority to require or request information or material to evaluate and make a decision on proposed planning applications is provided by the Ontario *Planning Act*, the Provincial Policy Statement, and City of Waterloo Official Plan Section 12.2.14 (“Complete Applications”).

This Terms of Reference document is to be applied in conjunction with all applicable regulations, by-laws, and guidelines, including the City of Waterloo’s Urban Design and Engineering Manuals.

Parking is a major piece of the transportation network in all parts of the City, which will impact the built form for years to come. The requirements for parking are established in the Zoning By-law (ZBL) and the directing guidance of parking are referenced in several layers of policy. As such, analysis and discussion of parking must consider several existing plans and guidelines, including but not limited to, the following:

- City of Waterloo Official Plan
- Transportation Master Plan
- Urban Design Manual
- City of Waterloo Station Area Plans
- City of Waterloo Corporate Climate Change Adaptation Plan
- Northdale Land Use and Community Plan Study: Urban Design and Built Form Guidelines

## Parking Study Report Contents

This TOR document sets out the minimum requirements that must be included in all reports. More specific scoping of the Parking Study may be identified by appropriate staff during the pre-application consultation process.

A Parking Study must be completed as a standalone document, though the data used in the Parking Study can also be used for a Planning Justification Report. The Parking Study should include, at a minimum, the following components:

- A. Study Overview
- B. Site Description & Parking Review
  - a) Site Context
  - b) Property Description
  - c) Parking Description
- C. Parking Surveys
  - a) Method
  - b) Results & Analysis
- D. Justification and Considerations
  - a) Cash-in-Lieu of Parking
  - b) Site Design Considerations
  - c) Transportation Network Considerations
  - d) Existing Shared Parking Agreements with Adjacent Properties (if applicable)
- E. Conclusions and Recommendations

The description of each section is provided below.

### **A. Study Overview**

- Type of development application
- Reasons that the Parking Study is necessary for this application (e.g., what is being evaluated)
- Conclusions or desired outcome

### **B. Site Description & Parking Overview**

#### *Site Context*

- Municipal address(es), nearest major intersections, and surrounding land uses
- All access driveways to the site and to surrounding uses
- Surrounding multi-modal transportation infrastructure (bike paths, transit stops/stations, etc.)
  - The ZBL accounts for mode share – proximity to transit and cycling

and pedestrian considerations – when establishing parking rates. Therefore, rationales for parking reductions should not solely rely on multi-modal transportation infrastructure. If transit, cycling, and/or walking are being used to justify reduced parking, please demonstrate how the site is being designed to encourage the use of these specific modes and how the proposal is different from what may have already been anticipated in the Zoning By-law. This rationale is to be provided in Section 4(b) of the Parking Study.

- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures are commonly used as a rationale for reduced parking requirements. While TDM measures align with the City’s transportation policy framework, and the Region of Waterloo TDM Checklist can be appended to the Parking Study, challenges arise when implementing, securing and enforcing proposed TDM measures. TDM measures and desired outcomes should be clearly described but cannot be assumed to be sufficient to replace the quantitative data and infrastructure installations to support parking deviations. This rationale is to be provided in Section 4(c) of the Parking Study. The consultant must identify the ways to secure and implement TDM measures and indicate the appropriate tools and stage in the development process.

*Property Description*

- Total building size and building locations, including Gross Floor Area (GFA) in square metres
- Land use summary (by GFA) for each land use, highlighting those used in the calculation of parking requirements or calculation of demand.
- Unit/Use types and total number of units proposed within the development, highlighting those used in the calculation of parking requirements or anticipated utilization.
- Hours of operation of proposed uses (where shared parking is proposed).
- Current and proposed zoning (as applicable), including all relevant ZBL parking standard(s). Refer to Section 6.0 of the Zoning By-law.
- Additional information can be provided as it supports the application:
  - Tenant information, number of occupied units, current vacancy by unit type (if applicable)
  - Date of occupancy and approximate hours of operation (if applicable)
  - Planned phasing of the development (if applicable)

*Parking Description*

- Existing parking and any proposed modification to existing parking
- Required parking, based on the requirements of the Zoning By-law, including all relevant parking standards.
- Proposed on-site parking supply and layouts.
- Nearby on-street and/or municipal parking supply and location(s)
  - Applicants must connect with the Parking Program Manager at the City to acknowledge and validate any municipal lot parking options.
  - Existing on-street and/or municipal parking may not be used as justification for reduced parking rates.
  - As streets are being reconstructed, the City is reducing road widths. This has the potential to remove on-street parking on one or both sides of the street, creating fewer on-street parking opportunities across the City. The City will not provide on-street parking permits to compensate for a lack of provided on-site parking.
- Off-site parking agreements with registered agreement provided for review (if applicable)
- Planned phasing of the development parking (if applicable)
- Any previous amendments to the parking regulations in the ZBL (either through a ZBL Amendment and/or Minor Variance application)

**C. Parking Surveys**

The applicant should confirm survey locations, dates and times, number of survey iterations, number and locations of proxy sites, duration of the survey(s), locations and the type of survey(s) to be conducted with the City in a pre-submission consultation meeting prior to conducting a parking survey(s) to ensure that the proxy site is a suitable match for the development. The following information and method should be included and summarized.

*Method*

Describe the survey method, including the proxy sites selected days, times, intervals, weather condition, assumptions made and any special circumstances that may affect the survey results.

Survey Locations/Proxy Sites

Proxy sites should only be used where the contexts are similar (including land uses/zoning, nearby multi-modal facilities, etc.). Proxy sites should be selected with and reviewed by the City prior to



conducting surveys. A minimum of one (1) and a maximum of four (4) proxy sites are required; the number of proxy sites will be determined at the pre-consultation or in consultation with Planning staff. When selecting proxy sites, quality should be prioritized over quantity; in other words, providing fewer (yet **very similar**) proxy sites is better than analyzing a larger amount of **less comparable** proxy sites. Preference should also be given to proxy sites within the City or Region of Waterloo. If sites from other municipalities are used as proxies, it is critical that sufficient context and justification are provided.

This section of the Parking Study should summarize:

- Addresses of the proxy sites
- Land uses (including GFA for each land use on the property)
- Vacancy (number of unoccupied units, or amount of unoccupied GFA)
- Characteristics, including transportation context (i.e., access, surrounding land uses or neighbourhood characteristics, walkability, public transit access, etc.)
- Comparability between the proxy site and the proposed site (i.e., why they will generate similar parking demand), including:
  - Strengths/Justification of the applicability of the site as a Proxy
  - Weaknesses of the applicability of the site as a Proxy and mitigation

#### Timing

This section outlines the timing of parking surveys. Parking surveys should not be undertaken during holidays, or all days of the week leading up to, or following, holidays. Parking surveys should also not be undertaken when a major development or road reconstruction is occurring within the study area.

The survey timing as summarized below should be reviewed by City staff:

- Dates of the Parking Surveys
  - At least two (2) different days of data collection (from days where significant utilization is expected) are required and should be confirmed with City staff.
  - While parking surveys ideally occur during all four seasons to assess seasonal variability, data from each season are not required for the purpose of this Parking Study. Survey data must be collected when schools (elementary, secondary, and post-secondary) are in session at a minimum. If data from



multiple seasons cannot be provided, the applicant must explain how parking utilization will change depending on the season.

Survey Timing

- Surveys should be conducted during at least two (2) different 3-hour intervals.
- Appropriate time periods should, at a minimum, be chosen to cover typical operating hours and peak demand, and the hours leading up to and following operating hours, or peak demand.
- For specific sites and in specific contexts, survey timing may need to be adjusted appropriately.

Survey Area

- If on-site parking exists, the survey will include utilization, free or charged parking, and will determine the capacity/demand for resident and visitor parking.
- Surveys should capture off-site parking, including on-street parking and off-site municipal parking lots, in the area where adjacent roadways and site access points will be noticeably affected (a 300-metre radius from the development). Parking restrictions (e.g., “parking prohibited from December to March”) should also be considered.

Survey Type

- Typical parking demand surveys counting the number of vehicles on-site for each interval will suffice.
- Depending on the nature of the development and desired outcome from the Parking Study a more detailed parking survey may be necessary and should be selected accordingly and verified with Staff.
  - *Parking turnover study* – For certain sites or applications, understanding parking turnover may be important to understand if the proposed supply is appropriate. This is commonly the case for very high turnover uses, or for understanding illegal parking activity.
  - *Parking trace study* – For certain sites or applications, understanding who the users of parking spaces or areas are may be beneficial. This may apply for sites with multiple uses, multiple tenants or patrons, on-street parking activity, illegal parking activity, etc.
  - *Parking demand by parking space/area* – For certain sites or applications, it may be pertinent to understand parking demand by area of the site or for specific parking spaces (i.e., large sites or sites with multiple types of parking





spaces/uses).

### *Results & Analysis*

The results of the parking surveys should be summarized in the Parking Study with the detailed or raw survey data included in an appendix. The summary should include the following information:

- Days of the survey
- Total on-site parking supply, including all types such as barrier free, reserved, visitor, resident, electric vehicle charging, etc.
- Actual – accounting for obstructions
- Total
- Observed parking demand, including legal, illegal, on-street, off-site, visitor, resident, etc.
- Observed peak parking demand
  - The time peak parking demand occurs
  - The duration of the peak
- Peak utilization rate, including percentage of parking demand over the total parking capacity
- Peak parking demand ratio, including per unit, per 100 m<sup>2</sup> of occupied GFA, per employee, etc. for each observation period
  - Peak parking demand should be modified based on best practices such as; the ITE *Parking Generation Manual, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.* Or ULI *Shared Parking, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Peak parking demand should also be verified or reviewed by City staff.
- Adjusted peak parking demand, utilization rate, and demand ratio
  - Adjustments must be made based on the vacancy of the proxy site or subject site, and for seasonal variation, if applicable.
  - Adjusted peak parking demand should be modified based on best practices like the ITE *Parking Generation Manual, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed.* or *Shared Parking, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* from the ULI. Adjusted peak parking demand should also be verified or reviewed by City staff.
- Future projected parking demand
  - Projected by applying the peak adjusted parking demand to the development as proposed
- Assessment of the proposed parking supply
  - Determine if the proposed parking supply is adequate to accommodate the projected demand



#### **D. Justification and Considerations**

This section addresses strategies that are commonly proposed to rationalize a deviation of parking supply and requirements.

##### *Site Design Considerations*

The applicant must articulate how the site design accommodates all transportation modes and balances the considerations of personal vehicle users, transit users, cyclists, and pedestrians.

##### *Transportation Network Considerations*

If the applicant is proposing a significant oversupply of parking, the City must be provided with proof to demonstrate how this oversupply will not create pressure on the surrounding road network surrounding the site.

If the applicant is proposing an undersupply of parking (below the ZBL requirement), the broader neighbourhood context must be considered rather than independently assessing each site. Therefore, if a parking undersupply is being proposed, the applicant must ensure that excessive pressure is not placed on the system (such as surrounding sites and parking facilities). Cash-in-lieu of parking is designed to support development if the provision of parking is challenging.

##### *Cash-in-Lieu of Parking*

Section 40 of the *Planning Act* (Agreement Exempting Owner from Requirement to Provide Parking) allows for Cash-in-Lieu of parking to be available. The price of cash-in-lieu is determined at the municipal level. If the cash-in-lieu approach is pursued, pricing must be discussed with the City at a pre-submission consultation meeting. Proposed Cash-in-Lieu pricing should consider:

- The cost of constructing parking on the site or adjacent sites
- The cost of area transit, cycling, walking and curbside management improvements as they will serve the site

##### *Existing Shared Parking Agreements with Adjacent Properties (if applicable)*

List any existing shared parking agreements with adjacent properties. Agreements should be appended to the Parking Study and/or be available upon request.



### E. Conclusions and Recommendations

A summary of the key findings of the Parking Study should be provided, including:

- The proposed development
- The applicable Zoning By-law parking requirements
- The parking reduction proposed
- Parking survey method
- Parking survey findings
- Parking recommendations
- Justifications and considerations

## Letter of Justification Contents

If, through consultation with City Planning staff, a Letter of Justification is deemed sufficient to support the requested relief from the regulations of the City's Zoning By-law, then the following section applies. The general structure and contents of the Letter of Justification must adhere to the following:

### A. Development Overview

- Type of Development Application
- Stated Zoning By-law parking requirements and statement of suitability to the application

### B. Site Description & Parking Review

#### *Site Context*

- Municipal address(es), nearest major intersections, and surrounding land uses
- All access driveways to the site and to surrounding uses
- Surrounding multi-modal transportation infrastructure (bike paths, transit stops/stations, etc.)

#### *Property Description*

- Total building size and building locations, including Gross Floor Area (GFA) in square metres
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- Current and proposed zoning (as applicable), including all relevant ZBL parking standard(s). Refer to Section 6.0 of the Zoning By-law.
- Additional information can be provided as it supports the application:
  - Tenant information, number of occupied units, current vacancy by unit type (if applicable)
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*Parking Description*

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  - Proposed on-site parking supply and layouts.
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    - Applicants must connect with the Parking Program Manager at the City to acknowledge and validate any municipal lot parking options.
    - Existing on-street and/or municipal parking may not be used as justification for reduced parking rates.
    - As streets are being reconstructed, the City is reducing road widths. This has the potential to remove on-street parking on one or both sides of the street, creating fewer on-street parking opportunities across the City. The City will not provide on-street parking permits to compensate for a lack of provided on-site parking.
  - Off-site parking agreements with registered agreement provided for review (if applicable)
  - Planned phasing of the development parking (if applicable)
  - Any previous amendments to the parking regulations in the ZBL (either through a ZBL Amendment and/or Minor Variance application)

**C. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The key findings of the Letter of Justification should be provided, including:

- Parking recommendations
- Justification and considerations



## **Additional Information**

*Note 1:*

If City staff consider the submitted Parking Study to be incomplete, unsatisfactory, inconsistent, insufficient, authored by an unqualified individual, or if it fails to satisfy the requirements set out in this TOR in any other manner, the associated development application may be deemed incomplete and returned to the applicant.

*Note 2:*

Deeming an application complete does not guarantee that the contents of the study are acceptable to City staff and/or that the application will be approved.

*Note 3:*

If a request for a Parking Study is not made at an earlier stage in the development process, this does not preclude the City from requesting a Parking Study at a later stage. Once an application has been deemed “complete”, the City may require additional information, reports, and/or studies following a more detailed review to assess the implications of an application for approval.

*Note 4:*

The City of Waterloo is committed to complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). In our everyday work with businesses institutions, and community partners we anticipate the same commitment to AODA compliance. Therefore, the Parking Study must be AODA compliant and must meet the current provincial standard for compliance.

*Note 5:*

The City reserves the right to request an updated study, or an addendum thereto, should staff determine that changes in the development proposal or changes to legislation warrant further/modified planning analysis.

*Note 6:*

City staff reserve the right to require a peer review of submitted materials by an appropriate agency or qualified professional, the cost of which will be borne by the applicant.

*Note 7:*

Documents and all related information submitted to the City as part of a complete development application are considered public documents once submitted.

*Note 8:*

The Parking Study shall be submitted in conjunction with the applicable development application(s), unless otherwise agreed to by the City.

*Note 9:*

This Terms of Reference document is intended to be used for guideline purposes only, and will be used to provide technical direction throughout the planning and development process. Completion of a report in alignment with the requirements of this Terms of Reference will not guarantee approval of the development application in question.

*Note 10:*

This TOR is relevant at the time of publishing and will be updated as necessary to reflect current policy, best practices, and accepted standards. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the report is prepared in accordance with the most recent version of the TOR issued by the City.

*This Terms of Reference was prepared by a qualified external consulting firm. For clarification of any information contained within this document, please contact the City of Waterloo staff assigned to the pre-consultation process.*

