

# Review of Accessible Parking Permit Program

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Submitted to the City of Kelowna  
November 2021

Prepared by Watt Consulting Group



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# REVIEW OF ACCESSIBLE PARKING PERMIT PROGRAM

## Executive Summary

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**City of Kelowna**

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## Introduction & Background

The City of Kelowna has and continues to have a robust parking management framework. Having adopted its Parking Management Strategy in 2013, it has released several parking studies and plans since that time, including the South Pandosy Area Parking Plan (2014), Hospital Area On-Street Parking Plan (2016), and Downtown Area Parking Plan (2019). All these planning documents provide valuable direction on how the City could more effectively manage and enforce its parking.

Even though parking management has been an important part of the City's planning and transportation efforts, the topic of accessible parking has received less attention. Several concerns have been raised in the past including the misuse of accessible spaces, abuse of permits, and the quantity and design of accessible spaces on City property. These concerns, along with other conversations about accessible parking, prompted the City to undertake a review of its accessible parking permit program to:

1. Review the existing policy and planning directions around parking management to understand existing parking conditions for accessible parking spaces in City-operated off-street parking facilities and on-street;
2. Better understand the experience of accessible parking users including barriers and solutions for the management and design of accessible parking;
3. Review of best practices to understand how other municipalities in North America manage, enforce, and design accessible parking; and
4. Recommend actions for the City of Kelowna to improve the management of accessible parking and improve the overall experience of accessible parking.

## Public & Stakeholder Consultation

Accessible parking users and organizations representing the disability community were invited to share their experiences using the City of Kelowna's accessible parking supply. The goal of the consultation was to understand the barriers for accessible parking users and identify potential solutions to improve the accessible parking experience. The consultation consisted of two methods. First, an online survey questionnaire was conducted among the public using Get Involved Kelowna, the City's online engagement



platform. 158 responses were received in the first survey conducted in the fall 2020 to understand barriers and potential solutions, and 97 responses were received for the second survey in the summer of 2021 to receive feedback on the proposed recommendations. Second, interviews were conducted with select organizations in February 2021 to gain additional insights on the experiences heard from the public, specifically on the usage, design, and misuse and enforcement needs of accessible parking. A summary of the key issues and opportunities from the consultation is shown below.





## Parking Conditions

Parking conditions of City-operated off-street and on-street parking supply at four select locations—Downtown, South Pandosy, Hospital Area, and Parkinson Recreation Park—were evaluated to provide an objective assessment of the demand for accessible parking in the city. This represents the first time the City of Kelowna has collected dedicated data on parking occupancy and duration for accessible parking. Four key findings emerged based on the data collected:

1. Parking occupancy was generally well below the “practical limit” of 85% in contrast to the findings of the public and stakeholder consultation where the lack of accessible parking was identified as a top issue for the community. As the data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, it may have contributed to lower occupancy numbers. However, the occupancy rate was still consistent with typical use of accessible spaces in other communities after applying a conservative adjustment to account for impacts of COVID.
2. Utilization for accessible parking spaces in the Downtown was consistent between the summer and fall weekday period. In contrast, the Downtown Area Parking Plan found higher demand for standard parking spaces in the summer relative to the off-season, which informs the current seasonal parking rate pricing.
3. In South Pandosy, utilization for accessible parking space was busier in the fall compared to the summer. No seasonal data for standard parking is available from the South Pandosy Area Plan.
4. Average on-street parking duration was two hours or less for the Downtown and South Pandosy, while off-street duration was up to 2.5 hours. In some cases, vehicles were observed to be parked up to 10 hours in the Downtown.

Five hypotheses were developed to reconcile what was heard from the consultation with the data collection in terms of parking availability:

1. Accessible parking supply has high demand that was not captured in the data.
2. Accessible parking supply is being misused by non-permit-holders for illegal commercial and passenger loading needs, particularly in high-demand areas such as the Downtown.



3. Accessible parking is available but are functionally unusable due to design deficiencies and/or the community may be unaware of their location due to wayfinding issues.
4. Accessible parking is available, but the spaces are too far away from people's destinations to be usable.
5. Accessible parking is available for the City-operated supply, but there may be deficiencies or lack of accessible parking at private developments.

The study concludes that it is likely a combination of existing deficiencies with the design and location of parking that make the City's current accessible parking supply difficult or impossible to use, and experiences among accessible parking users on private property that the City is not responsible for.

### **Strategic Directions & Actions**

Three strategy areas are presented to guide the City's approach to accessible parking management, design, and enforcement. The recommended 16 actions were developed based on the City's guiding parking principles and findings from the parking data collection, the public and stakeholder consultation, and best practice review.

#### **Strategy Area no. 1: Accessible Parking Management**

- 1A: Future of Parking Permit Program
- 1B: Implement an Accessible Parking Monitoring Program - Indicators & Targets
- 1C: Implement an Accessible Parking Monitoring Program - Occupancy
- 1D: Reduce Barriers to Using Standard Parking Spaces
- 1E: Introduce Pay Parking for Accessible Parking
- 1F: Update Maintenance and Snow Clearance Policy
- 1G: Conduct Curbside Management Review

#### **Strategy Area no. 2: Accessible Parking Design**

- 2A: Adopt New International Symbol of Access
- 2B: Adopt Blue Paint Curb Standard
- 2C: Designate Van Accessible Off-street Spaces



- 2D: Designate Van Accessible On-Street Spaces
- 2E: Increase Awareness of Access Aisles

### **Strategy Area no. 3: Accessible Parking Enforcement & Education**

- 3A: Increase Fine Amount for Misuse
- 3B: Update On-street Signage to Show Fine Amount
- 3C: Undertake a Parking Enforcement Blitz
- 3D: Launch an Accessible Parking Awareness Campaign

### **Summary**

The Review of the Accessible Parking Permit Program has taken a comprehensive approach to consider the trade-offs involved in the management, design, and enforcement of accessible parking to develop a set of 16 actions to improve the accessible parking experience in Kelowna.

Additional details about the state of accessible parking today, details for each recommended action, and the implementation strategy can be found in the full report.



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