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# PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY SUMMARY

JUNE 2003

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# CITY OF KINGSTON PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY

## Background

In the summer and fall of 2002 the City of Kingston commissioned the BA Group Transportation Consultants of Toronto to provide a detailed profile of existing parking activity in Kingston. The BA Group are planners and engineers who apply their expert knowledge of the complex relationships between transportation, land use, and urban design to accommodate growth and enhance urban life throughout cities in North America.

The study was conducted with a view toward improving the downtown as a pedestrian friendly “people place”, and allowing movement to and from the City core while sustaining the existing parking supply, supporting downtown commercial and retail interests, and providing efficient parking services. A secondary purpose of the study was to capture representative data for the Queen’s University and Kingston General Hospital areas, and to construct recommendations regarding use of municipal parking facilities in these areas.

Study completed the following:

1. Measured occupancy, length of stay (maximum, minimum, average) and turnover in downtown areas (the areas were divided into 12 zones).
2. Observed parking stall use and produced a record of individual vehicles parking during summer and fall of 2002.
3. Produced a profile of the average parker by:
  - a) totalling the number of out-of-province license plates (August only);
  - b) locating origin-by-vehicle registry through search of in-province license plates, producing a profile of local versus visiting parkers (August only);
  - c) totalling the numbers of observed violation incidences and minor parking offences; and
  - d) producing a calculation of average parker requirements in terms of length of stay and volume of use of parking facilities.
4. Produced a zone-by-zone profile of downtown parking requirements and characteristics including:
  - a) total number of stalls utilized during time allotment periods (occupancy rates);
  - b) local numbers of stalls utilized for time segments (occupancy by block or zone);
  - c) spill-over of parkers from timed parking areas to on-street sign-controlled areas adjacent to the downtown area and Queen’s University (Queen’s) and Kingston General Hospital (KGH);
  - d) time requirement characteristics local to individual addresses or businesses;
  - e) peak periods (weekday/weekend, time of day) (global/local); and
  - f) comparisons against the 1995 study conducted by J.L. Richards and Associates, where applicable.

# CITY OF KINGSTON PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY

## Why a Study?

The study wanted to review and recommend changes to better address the parking needs of Kingston residents and visitors with the following objectives in mind:

- Optimize usage of short term parking close to the destination for customers, patients and visitors;
- Encourage longer term parking (by employees, all day users) on the periphery of high demand areas;
- Regulate parking in residential areas.

The recommendations of the Study are designed to efficiently manage the City's on and off-street parking supply, promote alternative modes of travel, and balance the needs of different users.

## How was the Study Done?

City staff gathered on and off-street survey data information during August and October of 2002, and BA Group personnel summarized and provided analysis of the data in accordance with objectives provided by the City. Where applicable, this report also compared the results with the 1995 study On Street and Off Street Parking Management Strategy; Parking Lot/Garage Market Study by J.L. Richards and Associates.

Survey data was gathered by City of Kingston staff at curb side locations, surface and garage parking lots on three representative days in August three representative days in October 2002. Additional data was collected in the downtown "spill-over areas", the Queen's and KGH core areas and in the adjacent residential areas for three days in the Fall 2002.

Information was collected by continuous foot patrol at half hour intervals in the downtown and one hour intervals in the Queen's, KGH and spill-over areas. Data collectors toured established routes throughout the survey zones. The City developed templates of each curb side and surface lot location identifying parking meters, parking stalls, obstructions, driveways, lanes, no parking zones, and other curb side fixtures as well as the land use, names, and characteristics of curb side properties (in the downtown only). The presence of individual vehicles was logged by stall and by license plate to create a record of use, from which supply, demand, length of stay, compliance, and point of origin information could be drawn.

Following the survey days, data sheets were compiled and sent to BA Group for analysis. A database was created and the data was transferred from the manual sheets to electronic media. Summary records were produced for both on-street and surface lot utilization patterns.

# CITY OF KINGSTON PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY

## What did the Study Find?

- 1. On-Street Parking Demand Peaking Earlier** On-street parking demand in the downtown core appears to be peaking earlier into the noon hour period and exhibiting a greater length of stay than was the case when last measured in August, 1995. Overall peak on-street occupancy lies in the 75 – 80% range with some individual zones being fully and some at over 100% occupancy.
- 2. Seasonal Increase** There appears to be a seasonal increase in the intensity of utilization of parking, especially in the lower Princess Street corridor, during the October survey period as compared to the August survey period, resulting in overuse of parking facilities and some traffic congestion in that area.
- 3. Underutilized Parking Spaces** There appears to be some underutilized parking space in some surface lots, and at the curb side, in some areas of the downtown and its associated “spill over” residential areas. Occupancy was as low as 49% at the 1:00 p.m. peak time in some zones. The highest average peak occupancy was only 70%. The report recommends development of a strategic plan incorporating pricing, supply and demand management to encourage greater use of off-street and peripheral areas to service the downtown.
- 4. Length of Stay Increasing** Compared to 1995, motorists are parking longer. Most vehicles are parked for approximately 2 hours.
- 5. Parking Turnover** The number of vehicles parked in any particular stall is averaged at 6.2 vehicles per day. During the summer, this increased to up to 12 vehicles per day; indicative of considerable short term activity.
- 6. Majority of Downtown Parkers from Kingston Area** Through a random selection of licence plates, vehicle origin was determined through a Ministry of Transportation search. Findings included:
  - Almost 50% of vehicles are from Kingston
  - Almost 65% are from within a half hour drive.
  - About 5% were from outside Ontario.
- 7. Long-Term Parking Needed at Queen’s** There appears to be a general need for long term permit parking at Queen’s University, but the demand is mitigated by long standing demand management practices. The BA Group believes that unsatisfied demand emerges as on-street meter parking with overflow into the adjacent residential area for longer term parking. The report suggests that Queen’s should work with the City to identify the cause and effect of this activity, and to develop a long range plan to ensure Queen’s is able to deal with its long term parking demand.
- 8. Shortage of Visitor Parking At KGH** There appears to be a critical shortage of visitor daily parking at Kingston General Hospital (KGH). An immediate plan is needed to ensure visitors and patients to KGH receive suitable access to daily parking. As there are no additional facilities available at present, the report suggests that KGH should work with the municipality to accommodate its monthly parking staff in underutilized areas, most likely the residential areas to the west of the hospital site. This may involve establishing more curb side permit parking in residential areas.

# CITY OF KINGSTON PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY

9. **Violation Instances**      The number of violations averaged between 30- 50% and it appears that parking patrons are not considering compliance with parking regulations to be a priority in making parking decisions.

10. **Parking Harmonization Required**      The scope and scale of existing parking services and related business activities (facilities and services, fees for use, penalties for misuse) do not seem to work in harmony with the observed needs of parkers in some areas. These items should be rationalized to reinforce one another in order to provide a logical, needs related, and facilities capable package of services to parking customers.

## What changes were proposed as a Result of the Report?

- **The length of stay at all regular parking meters may be increased** to at least a two hour maximum - longer in low demand areas and most off street lots. This change is geared towards better matching the supply of parking spots with the needs of parkers.
- **Incentive programs such as First Hour Free** or Buy an Hour Get an Hour Free programs are being considered for attended and off-street parking lots.
- **Installation of Pay & Display** machines which have the capability of accepting credit card payment and issuing receipts.
- **Parking fine payment and permit renewals will be accepted on-line and by telephone** with the new Electronic Service Delivery system.
- **Update of designated 15-minute meter placement, truck loading and pick up zones** to reflect changing needs of downtown business district.
- A **"friendly enforcement" program** which encourages Parking Services Officers to:
  - advise vehicle owner on appropriate parking options;
  - issue first-time courtesy warnings to shoppers, patients and visitors; and
  - accept patient passes in off-street lots if designated Cancer Clinic spaces are full.
- **Review of No Parking time zones that apply to residential streets.**
- **Review of when parking meter payment is required.**
- **The cost for parking at street meters in high demand areas may be increased** to \$2 per hour. The rationale for this change is to encourage drivers to park vehicles in off-street lots at a lower cost and increased the number of available on-street spaces available for short-term parking.
- **A standard fine rate of \$15 for expired meters** may be applied to all parking spaces and lots. The rationale is to deter parkers from misusing short-term parking spaces.

# CITY OF KINGSTON PARKING UTILIZATION STUDY

## The Study Has Helped To Shed Some Light On Downtown Parking Myths:

*A myth is defined as a fictitious or imaginary person, idea, or thing. Over the years, people have created many myths about downtown parking. The Study allows us to set the record straight.*

Myth: There's No Place to Park Downtown

**Fact: There are 5,000 public parking spaces in downtown Kingston. That's more than an average large shopping centre parking lot.**

Myth: There Are No Spaces Close To Where I Want To Go

**Fact: There are over 20 inner City Parking lots close to shops and restaurants.**

Myth: There Are No Parking Specials or Promotions

**Fact: Currently 76 downtown businesses will validate your parking through the Stamp Program. In 2003, the City of Kingston and Downtown Kingston! B.I.A. merchants provided 73,650 hours of complimentary parking to shoppers through the Merchant Parking Stamp program**

**Fact: All On-street parking is free after 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and free all day on Sundays.**

Myth: It is a real hassle having to go down to City hall to pay a ticket

**Fact: You can now pay your parking ticket or renew your parking pass online on the City of Kingston website @ [www.cityofkingston.ca](http://www.cityofkingston.ca) or via our customer service line 613-546-0000.**



Visit [www.cityofkingston.ca/parking](http://www.cityofkingston.ca/parking) for a complete review of the Parking Utilization Study data collection and graphs.

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**City of Kingston Parking**

**Park it!  
We've got a space for you.**



[www.cityofkingston.ca/parking](http://www.cityofkingston.ca/parking)