



Guidelines for the Reduction of Parking Requirements for Affordable Rental Housing

Introduction

The City of Belleville has identified existing parking requirements for residential development as a significant barrier in incentivizing development of affordable rental housing¹. **Affordable rental housing, for the purpose of these guidelines, is defined as purpose built housing that is either at, or below, the average market rent, as defined by the County of Hastings.** Below average market rental housing includes social housing, low-income housing, and rent geared to income housing. Typically a federal, provincial, or municipal government provides a subsidy for this type of housing. Purpose built rental housing is typically financed and constructed by the private sector. In order to benefit from the reductions included in these guidelines, the City and the proponent will enter into an agreement to ensure the units created will remain at, or below, average market rent.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to the Committee of Adjustment for granting variances for the reduction of parking spaces for affordable housing. In an effort to ease parking requirements, as part of an overall affordable rental housing strategy, these guidelines provide

direction on best practices for the reduction of parking requirements with respect to housing type, built form, availability and suitability of on-street parking, layout of on-site parking, and additions of second units to primary dwelling units.

These guidelines consist of four parts:

1. Four case studies of affordable housing in southeast Ontario. These case studies include examples of affordable housing developments at different scales in both urban and suburban contexts. More specifically, the case studies show how various approaches to reduced parking requirements were incorporated to make the projects more feasible;
2. A discussion on parking requirements in Ottawa and Peterborough for converted dwellings and second units;
3. An overview of the existing parking regulations in Belleville and their impact on affordable housing developments; and
4. Guidelines for the City of Belleville on granting parking variances based on best practices.

1. Rental housing is a type of tenure and residential land use includes many different types of tenure. Zoning regulations can only regulate land use activities. However, for the purpose of these guidelines, only case studies of rental housing were considered. Potential variances to parking requirements could apply to residential land uses regardless of tenure type (i.e. rental, ownership, housing co-operative, etc.).

Case Studies

Case Study 1: Infill Development

Location: Peterborough

Housing Type: 3-storey apartment building

Number of dwelling units: 28

Number of parking stalls: 19

Parking Ratio: 0.68 (parking stalls/unit)

This development is located at 198 Edinburgh Street in Peterborough, Ontario. The developer of the building applied for a site specific zoning for the development in 2015. The site was previously zoned for medium density housing and the property formerly had two boarding houses that had been damaged by fire. The development was marketed to seniors and the rent would be capped at 80% of market value for 20 years. The building is located in a central area of Peterborough with many amenities within a walkable distance.

The application called for a reduction in parking requirements from 42 parking spaces (1.5 spaces per unit) to 19 parking spaces (0.68 spaces per unit). A parking study prepared by a transportation engineering firm concluded that the on-site parking requirements could be accommodated with 14 parking spaces (0.5 spaces per unit). However, after consulting with the community, the developer increased the proposed number of parking spaces from 14 to 19 to alleviate area residents' concerns about lack of parking. The project was approved in 2015. At the time this case study was prepared, information on how many parking spaces were actually utilized was not available.



The Loyola, 198 Edinburgh Street, Peterborough, ON

Case Study 2: Redevelopment

Location: Belleville

Housing Type: 3-storey apartment building

Number of dwelling units: 18

Number of parking stalls: 23

Parking Ratio: 1.25 (parking stalls/unit)



24 Starling Street, Belleville, ON

24 Starling Street is an affordable rental housing building located in Belleville. The units are offered to tenants at 80% of the average market rate. The development met the city's requirement of 1.25 parking stalls per unit. However, the owner of the

building has stated that since the building's completion in 2009, there have never been more than 3 tenants with cars. This means that only 3 of the building's 23 parking stalls have been utilized. This is equal to a 13% parking utilization rate.

Case Study 3: City Core

Location: Ottawa

Housing Type: 3-storey apartment building

Number of dwelling units: 26

Number of parking stalls: 8

Parking Ratio: 0.31 (parking stalls/unit)



376 Blake Boulevard, Ottawa, ON

This building, located at 376 Blake Boulevard, was purchased by Multifaith Housing Initiative (MHI) in 2008 and converted to an affordable rental housing building. The building has 2 bachelor units, 6 one-bedroom units, 9 two-bedroom units, and 9 three-bedroom units. A number of the larger two-bedroom units were converted to three-bedroom units to accommodate families. The building is located

in the central neighbourhood of Vanier, which is highly walkable with many amenities within walking distance. The area is also relatively well served by public transit. Although the parking ratio for the building is relatively low (0.31 parking stalls/unit), there is currently no wait list for on-site parking.

Case Study 4 – Suburban

Location: Ottawa

Housing Type: Townhouses and low-rise apartment buildings

Number of dwelling units: 98

Number of parking stalls: 81

Parking Ratio: 0.83 (parking stalls/unit)

The Haven, located at 455 Via Verona Avenue, is a recently constructed (2017) affordable housing development developed by MHI. It is located in the Ottawa suburb of Barrhaven. The development features 98 housing units: 30 one-bedroom units, 38 two-bedroom units, 26 three-bedroom units, and 4 four-bedroom units. 10 of the units are fully accessible barrier-free units.

The development is located within 500 metres of a rapid bus line. Most of the parking in this development is utilized. The development was granted a reduction in on-site parking requirements from 106 to 81 representing a reduction of 25 parking stalls. Most of the townhouse units are occupied by families with children and most of the families own motor vehicles. Occupants of the smaller apartment units have fewer motor vehicles.



The Haven, 455 Via Verona Avenue, Ottawa, ON

Discussion: Converted Dwellings and Second Units

Converted Dwellings

Location: Ottawa

Prior to 2014, converted dwellings in Ottawa were exempt from bylaws that applied to new purpose built buildings. Converted dwellings generally consisted of large older homes in mature neighbourhoods that were converted into multi-unit apartments or existing buildings that were renovated and expanded to include additional dwelling units. These types of conversions were popular in central areas located close to post-secondary institutions and many of the converted dwellings were rented to students.

Conversions were not required to provide any additional parking even if the number of dwelling units was greatly increased. However, new purpose built residential buildings were required to provide on-site parking for tenants. This discrepancy of parking requirements for conversions versus new builds led to many conversions in specific neighbourhoods and concern amongst some residents about lack of parking on public streets.

In 2014, the bylaw was amended so that converted dwellings had to comply with the same zoning regulations as new attached housing and low-rise apartments. However, as part of this amendment, parking regulations were relaxed so that duplex dwellings, three-unit dwellings and low-rise apartment dwellings were not required to have more than two parking stalls. Additionally, these parking stalls could be tandem parking stalls instead of the previously required side-by-side parking requirement.

This zoning change does not target affordable housing specifically. However, it does reduce parking requirements for new low-rise multi-dwelling housing in central neighbourhoods. This may result in a larger supply of market rental housing in neighbourhoods with high housing demand. This also gives developers more flexibility for housing projects on constrained building sites.



Example of a converted dwelling in Belleville, ON

Second Units

Location: Ottawa and Peterborough

Second units are housing units that are accessory to a primary residential dwelling. Examples include basement suites, garage suites, and coach houses. Second units are not permitted to be bought and sold separately from the primary residence.

In Ottawa, second units are permitted on lots with single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, and duplex dwellings. Coach houses are also permitted on properties with townhomes that have direct pedestrian access to a public street.

The City of Ottawa has relaxed zoning requirements with respect to second units in an effort to encourage this form of housing, particularly in lower density neighbourhoods. Although these dwellings are not below market housing, they can provide a more affordable rental option for people that cannot afford to rent a larger home. The City relaxed the zoning by no longer requiring additional on-site parking for second units.

Other cities have relaxed parking requirements for second units based on their location or their accessibility. For example, the City of Peterborough does not require any additional on-site parking for second units located in the city core.



Example of a dwelling with a second unit in Belleville, ON

Existing Parking Regulations in Belleville

The existing Belleville Zoning By-law (10245) requires provision of 1 parking space per dwelling unit for single detached dwellings, semi-detached dwellings, and street facing multiple attached dwellings. 1.25 parking spaces per dwelling unit are required for larger apartment style developments. The Thurlow Zoning Bylaw (3014) requires provision of 2 parking spaces per dwelling unit. The Sidney Zoning By-law (2076-80) requires provision of 2 parking spaces for each dwelling unit in single detached dwellings, mobile homes, duplexes, semi-detached dwellings and row housing where each unit fronts on a public street and has its own garage and driveway. 1.25 parking spaces are required for all other dwellings.

The ratio of 1.25 parking spaces per unit in Belleville and Sidney and 2 parking spaces per unit in Thurlow is significantly higher than the parking ratios for the housing developments discussed in Peterborough and Ottawa. The table below shows how many parking spaces would have been required for these developments using the existing bylaws in Belleville, Sidney, and Thurlow.

If similar developments were proposed in Belleville, existing parking requirements would add significant land cost because a larger site would be needed to meet the parking requirements.

Development	Current # of Parking Stalls	# of Parking Stalls Required (Belleville)	# of Parking Stalls Required (Sidney)	# of Parking Stalls Required (Thurlow)
Peterborough	19	35	35	70
Ottawa - City Core	8	33	33	66
Ottawa - Suburban	81	123	123	246

Guidelines for Granting Parking Variances for Affordable Rental Housing

These guidelines are designed to provide guidance on both purpose built affordable rental housing (i.e., below market rental rates) and other types of market housing that may contribute to the supply of affordable housing such as conversions, purpose built market rental housing, and secondary dwelling units.

Below Average Market and Average Market Purpose Built Medium and High Density Rental Housing

High parking ratios have the effect of increasing the cost of dwelling units. Surface parking stalls constrain the area available for constructing housing units. Structured parking, such as underground or above-ground parking, is very expensive and increases the per unit construction cost significantly. Therefore, the City of Belleville should consider the following guidelines in an effort to incentivize purpose built affordable rental housing:

- Grant a variance to medium and high density affordable rental housing that achieves between 0.5 – 0.75 parking spaces per unit **in walkable and transit accessible neighbourhoods**, which would bring the number of parking spaces in Belleville closer to the parking provided in the case studies.
 - Walkable neighbourhoods should be defined as neighbourhoods that have amenities that may meet the daily needs of a tenant within a 5 to 10 minute walk (400 – 800 metre radius) of the proposed development. Amenities considered to meet daily needs could include grocery stores, schools, community facilities, and retail plazas that include businesses that carry food products;
 - Transit accessible neighbourhoods are neighbourhoods that offer transit within a 5 to 10 minute walk (400 – 800 metre radius) of the proposed development; and,
- In neighbourhoods that are less walkable (more than 800 metres to amenities) and less transit accessible (more than 800 metres to transit), parking variances should be granted at a ratio that achieves between 0.75 – 1 parking spaces per unit.

Second Units

As mentioned, second unit dwellings are not necessarily below market housing, however, they can provide a more affordable rental option for people that cannot afford to rent a larger home, since second units are typically modest in size. Currently, second units in the City of Belleville are required to have their own on-site parking space. As shown in the case study section of this document, other municipalities have reduced parking requirements depending on factors such as location. The City should consider the following for parking variances for second units:

No additional on-site parking requirement for a second unit meeting the following site criteria:

- Located in walkable (5-10 minute walk of amenities) neighbourhoods; [OR](#),
- Located in transit accessible areas (5-10 minute walk to high frequency transit); [AND](#),
- Where street parking is permitted on at least one side of the street to accommodate visitors.

Conclusion

This document deals primarily with reducing parking requirements for affordable rental housing when variances are being sought at the Committee of Adjustment. However, it should be noted that parking requirements must be considered in combination with other factors. Land use and transportation are intrinsically linked together. Therefore, considerations of reductions in parking requirements should be linked to improvement in mobility options for all residents. Improving public transit, walking infrastructure, and cycling infrastructure can lessen the need for private motor vehicle ownership.

Additionally, people living in employment rich and amenity rich locations typically rely less on private motor vehicles for their transportation needs. Therefore, the City of Belleville should attempt to locate more affordable housing close to employment centres and amenities.

The guidelines in this document should be viewed as an interim measure until the Zoning By-law consolidation and update is concluded. The Zoning By-law update should incorporate similar changes to on-site parking requirements to reflect contemporary mobility patterns and better match parking supply to demand and need.