

TO: Mayor, Council, and CAO

FROM: KDCL

DATE: July 8, 2016

SUBJECT: YOUR PARKING SOLUTION

Introduction

Kentville Development Corporation Limited has been tasked with providing its recommendation to Council to address various issues relating to parking in downtown Kentville. The availability of convenient parking for customers and clients is vital to the success of Kentville's downtown businesses and is often referenced as a key factor regarding the retention and recruitment of businesses and customers. Parking in Kentville has been discussed and debated by councils, merchants and the Board since KDCL's inception more than 36 years ago. The current Board of Directors of KDCL believes the timing is finally right to fix this enduring problem once and for all. We are committed to doing our part to make this happen.

Downtown Kentville's Parking Assets

In September 2013, Lindsay Young presented a report and recommendation on parking prepared by her and other Town staff (see attached). The Parking Report and recommendation determined that there are adequate, if not ample, parking spaces to accommodate Kentville's downtown business owners and employees, and to satisfy the needs of all would-be customers and clients of the current business community (we look forward to dealing with the problem of insufficient parking to meet increased demand).

The Problem

Whether through ignorance of the need, indifference to the problem or society's general need for ever greater convenience, several downtown business owners and their employees choose to use the most convenient, on street parking spaces for themselves. Exacerbating the problem, these business owners and employees take advantage of the historic enforcement and current non-enforcement of a two-hour time limit on parking by moving their vehicles to the next available spot periodically throughout the day. This "abuse" by non-customers not only reduces the ability for potential and actual customers to find a convenient place to park in Kentville, it creates the perception that it is always difficult to find parking in Kentville. This is a serious disincentive for potential customers who can easily choose to shop in New Minas, HRM or, worse yet, online.

In addition, many visitors and business owners have told KDCL members that the current 2-hour time limit for parking in that elusive on-street parking space does not provide customers and clients with sufficient time for all of the shopping/appointments/tasks they want to complete while visiting Kentville.

Why Now? The Opportunity

The recent unveiling of the Town of Kentville's new branding strategy: Kentville, a breath of fresh air!

KDCL embraces this brand completely and believes that it provides the perfect tagline to help motivate and educate Kentville's parking abusers of the benefits and opportunities associated with creating a downtown that is truly "open for business". KDCL plans to undertake a marketing and education campaign aimed at making downtown Kentville a "customer-friendly zone". In addition to highlighting the importance of making the shopping experience in downtown Kentville as easy and enjoyable for customers as possible, we will emphasize the lost opportunities for making business connections and supporting your fellow merchants and businesses when you choose to park at the doorstep of your workplace. There are many benefits and opportunities associated with the short walk from your car to work, including, simply: A Breath of Fresh Air!

The Recommendation

Subject to the following recommendation regarding enforcement of parking time limits, KDCL supports the change of all current 2-hour parking spots to a 3-hour time limit.

We have heard from members and are confident that the extra hour will provide most customers with adequate time to fill their needs. Businesses, whose customers may be downtown for more than 3 hours, will be provided with all the resources they need to point those customers to the most convenient all-day parking spots.

KDCL also recommends that the Town of Kentville resumes enforcement of the new time limit for parking with the added restriction that no vehicle can park in ANY 3-hour parking spot in downtown Kentville for more than 3 hours in a single day. The purpose of this recommendation is to prevent those abusers who are not persuaded by KDCL's marketing campaign and continue to "spot hop" throughout the day. The more inconvenient we can make it for the abusers, the more quickly the problem will go away.

Obviously, this recommendation is contingent upon an investment in a new handheld device that will allow the parking enforcement officer to track the vehicles that are parked in Kentville on any given day. We understand that this technology is widely available and details were researched for the previously mentioned Parking Report and Recommendation in 2013.

The possibility that some customers may be ticketed under this proposal stills exists; however, first-time offenders can be issued friendly warnings of the new rules and the likelihood is greatly diminished by the increase in the time limit and the fact that downtown business owners will have been educated, and we are confident they will embrace this change.

A change to the parking situation in downtown Kentville is needed in order to fully embrace and become our new brand. KDCL believes its recommendation is on the path to Kentville truly becoming "A Breath of Fresh Air!"