



August 23, 2022

ATTENTION:
Mayor and Council, City of Prince George

cc: Downtown Prince George
Tourism Prince George
Prince George Chamber of Commerce

On June 17th the City of Prince George published a post on Facebook about downtown parking rules. This post reinforced the existing parking bylaw, showcased opportunities for pay parking and clarified the parameters around the free three hour parking. It also highlighted how the \$50 ticketing works for not abiding the parking bylaw. I've included this post at the end of my letter for your reference. I have not included responses made by the City of Prince George to comments made by followers of the post, but do encourage they be read.

This post and the existing parking bylaw are incredibly detrimental to my business.

Downtown Prince George is a special place in our community but desperately needs help. Many business owners have invested everything in creating spaces that have become some of the best things our city has to offer. They have inspired me to follow suite and be part of the group of residents that is trying to build downtown into the heart of the community. There is much to be proud of here.

The dialogue about downtown Prince George is an increasingly negative one, both online, in the media, and in so many personal interactions. Every comment and post that adds to the negative perception of downtown Prince George is damaging to the investments from businesses owners and our City alike and threatens what could make downtown a viable and appealing space in our community.

I see our City investing significantly in major infrastructure, community planning, economic incentives for developments in our downtown core, and yet we are stuck fighting these best efforts with our tone over something as minor as parking, especially when there are much bigger issues at hand.

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We need to be on the same team here in shifting perspectives and dialogue around downtown.

One of the best possible ways that we can deal with some of our downtown issues is to occupy downtown. Invite our community and visitors downtown. Get them to play, explore and own it. Make it a place they are proud of, that they are talking about with pride to others. Invite and incentivize businesses that are located downtown and are helping the area grow into its potential.

The last thing that we should be doing is penalizing people from visiting downtown. Reinforcing a confusing and ineffective parking bylaw simply gives people an excuse to not come and basically threatens them for even trying to do so. It trains our community members to develop new habits of places to visit and spend their hard earned disposable income.

Pushing our community out of downtown only perpetuates the idea that downtown is unsafe, "a ghost town" and has nothing of value, which is so far from the truth.

We need to stop giving people reasons to speak ill of downtown and not come. Parking is the least problem that downtown faces.

Over the past several months, I have lost business multiple times, including large contracts, simply due to this parking bylaw. People are scared they are going to get parking tickets. These are people who were looking to spend a significant amount of time in my business downtown, helping to keep us afloat and build a vibrant energy here.

The Makerie is an asset to our City and to our downtown. It brings creativity, community and a unique place to visit. I have been participating on the Downtown Marketing and Placemaking project committee and The Makerie checks off many boxes for what has been identified as things our downtown needs.

We barely survived COVID, and now that we can be fully open for business but are losing it due to an ineffective parking bylaw is infuriating.

I'll be damned if I'm going to stand idly by and let a parking bylaw kill my business that is an asset to this community. You shouldn't want that to happen either.

Our business is among the reasons that people might consider living in the housing being built downtown. The housing that is being built by successful developers with considerable City incentives. We go, you lose a valuable selling feature to attract new downtown residents.

It is time for our City to help its downtown businesses and dealing with the parking bylaw is low hanging fruit.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS:

- I regularly hear that people are not opposed to paying for parking, they are opposed to being ticketed for not being able to adhere to the existing bylaw that makes little sense. The City already has a payment system in place for parkade parking with the HotSpotMobile app. Add all downtown parking to this app and let people pay to park for as long as they want/ need to. It is a simple system with clear rules, understandable by anyone. Pay to play.
- Install more payment booths within an easy walk accessible to those who do not have the technology to pay via mobile app.
- Allow customer-facing businesses (retail, restaurant, experience-based businesses) located downtown to validate parking for customers, with the City reimbursing these businesses for that expense as an incentive for locating downtown and helping to build the City core.

These are simple, low cost solutions that will remove just one of the barriers that our community has in supporting downtown and its businesses.

We are all in a position of power to influence the way our community experiences and perceives our downtown. There are some small challenges with that, and some awfully large ones. Let 's deal with this small issue and have it resolved so that we can put the time, money and energy into some of the larger issues that face us all here.

Best regards,

Kim Hayhurst

Owner/Master of Creative Chaos
The Makerie Craft & Coffee Bar

#staycrafty



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City of Prince George Facebook Post
July 17th, 2022

UNDERSTANDING PARKING RULES

Downtown PG is has a three hour parking limit. This means you can park in downtown street parking spaces for three hours for free. If you move your car to a new space, the clock is still ticking. We are not chalking your tire, we are scanning your plate so even if you move, it is the total time spent downtown. If you park for more than 3 hours total in any street parking spaces over the course of the day, the fine is \$50. Yes, even if you go home and come back to a different space, the clock was ticking from the moment you parked the first time. This is so that people who work downtown can't park in front of a shop for 3 hours and then move to the shop next door and park there for 3 hours.

This bylaw came into effect in 2016. It is enforced Monday to Friday from 8am to 5pm.

See the map? That is where all of our parking lots are. You can park there for only \$1 an hour or \$6 all day. That is way cheaper than \$50.

We even have an app to help you pay for parking. You will receive reminders on your phone 15 minutes before your parking expires and you can add more time to your parking while you sit having a lovely lunch in your favourite restaurant. AND if you finish sooner than expected you will be refunded the extra time back into the app so you can use it towards your next downtown shopping and dining adventure. Download the HotSpot Parking App.

See the little red circle on 3rd Avenue? That little strip on the south side of the street is the exception to the 3 hour rule. That is a 30 minute parking zone. We had a problem with people working downtown playing parking musical chairs and leaving cars in front of those shops all day so, to help those businesses, the parking has been restricted to 30 minutes.

Questions?