

# Want best parking uptown? Get behind 800 others

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Inside the Canterbury parking garage. The lot is in heavy demand with those looking for monthly off-street parking uptown. This week the city issued a call for proposals to redevelop the site for additional parking.

Photo: Mike Landry/Telegraph-Journal

**SAINT JOHN** • Demand for monthly parking in uptown Saint John is so strong, according to exclusive data obtained by the Telegraph-Journal, that the city is managing a waiting list of more than 800 for the coveted spaces.

As of Wednesday, the Saint John Parking Commission is reporting only three vacancies among its 28 monthly lots. And there's a waiting list for those free spots.

Only one of the lots doesn't have a waiting list – the Coast Guard site off Water Street. But as of Wednesday, it was at capacity, after having 18 open spots five months ago.

Even the Peel Plaza Parking Garage, which initially struggled to fill spots, has a waiting list of 17 names.

It's in the midst of this demand that the City of Saint John this week issued a call for proposals to potentially redevelop the Canterbury Street parking garage uptown.

It's a less than two-minute walk from the garage at Canterbury Street and Grannan Lane to the city's most in-demand lot. It's the lot next to the Royal Bank, off Charlotte Street at the corner of King Street East.

The waiting list for that lot has 165 names. That's up from 131 on the wait list five months ago.

The wider Trinity Royal area has a wait list of 120 right now.

The data provided by the parking commission correlates with other information from the city obtained by the Telegraph-Journal looking where parking tickets are most often issued. Of the tickets issued between 2012 and 2016, more than 30 per cent of tickets were issued in the Trinity Royal area.

"We're trying to find additional parking, but we're trying to be strategic about it," says Ian MacKinnon, CEO of the parking commission.

As to the wait list for spots, MacKinnon notes some people have their names on lists for more than one lot, so the numbers are inflated.

Still, the parking commission has been in "acquisition mode" to alleviate the demand for off-street spots, says MacKinnon, since he came on as the new CEO 17 months ago.

In addition to meeting demand, MacKinnon says the current collection of small lots cost more to maintain than single, larger garages.

The Canterbury garage is about 700 square metres, according to the city. MacKinnon said he couldn't speculate on how many parking spots could be added to the site. It has 47 spots now.

The city will be accepting proposals until July 21.

"There's been unofficial interest from the development community on any property in around that particular area," said MacKinnon.

While city addresses the off-street parking demand, MacKinnon is encouraging residents to pick up passes for on-street parking. In 2016, the city increased the areas of regulated street parking throughout the peninsula.

With the Neighbourhood Action Plan and the city's new transportation plan, MoveSJ, in the works, Mayor Don Darling said these may help address the demand placed on the city in its push to promote a dense uptown core.

Although parking is an ever-present issue for uptown businesses too, according to the CEO of the Saint John Region Chamber of Commerce, it's not a top 10 concern.

“It’s not an economic impediment,” said CEO David Duplisea.

Still, parking is a perpetual issue for uptown businesses, said Duplisea. He’s hoping apps, MoveSJ and new commercial development work together to address the present demand.

“Cities all over the world are dealing with how to become more livable cities. Are we unique? No, not at all.”

Bob McVicar is an uptown resident and a Realtor who specializes in historic property, often in the uptown area. He says parking is central to most conversations he has with prospective buyers and renters uptown. And increased development uptown has caused inconvenience for himself, too, he says.

But, for McVicar, “it’s the price of progress isn’t it?” He says the real estate market is “incredibly strong” uptown.

“It’s not always what we want it to be, from a parking perspective, but the benefits of living uptown far outweigh the challenges of parking.”

Mackinnon says the commission has provided off-street spots for those who want them “in just about all cases.” He says the city has enlisted the help of lots at Harbour Station and with Port Saint John.

### **Where's the wait?**

The current waitlist for off-street parking at city lots as of June 8.

Trinity Royal (Daily): 165

Trinity Royal Area: 120

Leinster Court: 103

Old City Hall: 97

Germain Street: 48

Sydney Street: 45

Dorchester Street: 35

Peter Street: 33

Duke/Sydney Street: 30

Paddock Street: 24

Charlotte & Queen Street: 20

Peel Plaza Parking Garage: 17

Smythe Street: 17

Waterloo/Exmouth Street: 16

Sewell/Dorchester Street: 15

Golding Street: 10

Waterloo: 10

CNR Parking Lot, under viaduct: 8

Red Rose Lot: 8

Exmouth Street: 3

Water Street at Coast Guard: 0

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Every great city has parking demand. This is a good sign!

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It's not a bad sign. These monthly spots aren't cheap - clearly a good number of people are willing to spend the money

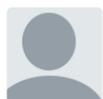
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If the city would tier the existing parking lots, it would go a long way in alleviating a lot of parking problems (look at some big cities) or if more people outside the city would learn to car pool and use commuter services to come into the city to work.. Since Irving now owns the St Joachim's land and will have so many employees traveling into town, why not a park and ride from there? There are more solutions than taking every lot created by tearing down buildings to use for parking.

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