

PARKING ENFORCEMENT IN DOWNTOWN LINDSAY

PURPOSE

The Lindsay Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) supports a parking system that is **free to use, clearly time-limited, and consistently enforced**. While no parking model is perfect, the BIA's decisions and advocacy are guided by what best serves the overall health of Downtown Lindsay—balancing the needs of **customers and visitors, employees, and downtown residents**, while supporting a vibrant and accessible core.

HISTORY

- **Pre-2014:** Downtown parking was managed through aging, coin-operated meters with varying time limits and longer-term permit options.
 - **2015:** The municipality proposed removing the old meters and installing **pay-and-display machines** across the downtown.
 - The BIA raised concerns about:
 - usability and convenience for visitors,
 - potential negative impact on the downtown experience,
 - and the significant cost to taxpayers.
 - The BIA proposed a **one-year trial of free parking** with enforced time limits:
 - **2 hours on downtown streets**
 - **4 hours in municipal lots**
 - permits for longer-term needs
 - Council approved the trial, and the meters were removed in **Fall 2015**.
 - Over time, the BIA observed growing gaps in consistent enforcement, which reduced parking turnover and created concerns for downtown businesses and visitors.
 - **2018:** Council approved a model where the **BIA would provide enforcement services on behalf of the municipality**, supported by a modest staffing subsidy.
 - Under this model:
 - the BIA hires and manages staff,
 - staff operate using Municipal By-Law equipment and authority,
 - and **all ticket revenue remains with the municipality**.
 - This model also enabled added value beyond enforcement, including reporting on parking lot/street conditions, supporting delivery/loading solutions, flagging snow removal and accessibility concerns, and liaising with Public Works and other municipal departments.
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CURRENT MODEL

The parking model remains largely the same:

- **Free parking** continues throughout the downtown system.

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- **Time limits remain in place:**
 - **2 hours** on-street in core areas
 - **4 hours** in most municipal lots
 - **Enforcement is delivered by BIA-managed staff** operating within the municipal parking by-law and its regulations.
 - The BIA's operational focus is on maintaining fair access and turnover in high-demand areas, while recognizing the realities of a downtown that serves multiple user groups.
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WHY PARKING IS ENFORCED THE WAY IT IS (REASONING & PRINCIPLES)

A. Turnover protects access for customers and visitors

Downtown's most convenient spaces are limited and highly shared. Without enforcement, longer-stay vehicles naturally occupy prime spots, reducing turnover and making it harder for customers to park near businesses. That outcome is frustrating for visitors, hard on businesses, and ultimately harms the downtown experience.

B. The BIA seeks balance across visitors, employees, and residents

The BIA recognizes that parking needs vary:

- **Visitors** want convenient, easy-to-understand options.
- **Employees** need reliable longer-term parking solutions.
- **Residents** require reasonable access near home.

A model that benefits one group exclusively almost always creates a larger issue for another. The current approach aims for the most balanced outcome overall.

C. Why the 2-hour on-street limit remains in place

The BIA recognizes that **2 hours may not feel like enough** for visitors who want to shop, dine, and explore. While **4-hour parking is available in municipal lots**, many visitors may not be aware of these options.

At the same time, extending the on-street limit would likely reduce turnover in the most in-demand spaces. The BIA also acknowledges that some downtown employees choose not to purchase permits and instead move vehicles throughout their shifts to stay within time limits. A longer on-street limit would almost certainly increase long-duration use of prime spaces—making it harder for visitors to find parking where they most expect it: on the street near downtown destinations.

For now, **2 hours on-street remains the most workable balance**, with longer stays better supported in lots and through permit/day-pass options.

D. Discretion, tickets, and the visitor experience

The BIA understands that receiving a ticket can create a negative impression of Downtown Lindsay, and that is not the outcome anyone wants. However:

- without adequate enforcement, the alternative is often **even less available parking**, which also leaves a negative impression and discourages return visits.
- BIA enforcement staff may have (limited) flexibility in how they approach situations, but **once a ticket is issued it cannot be cancelled by the BIA.**
- The municipality's By-Law department is often **reasonable when contacted**, particularly for first-time issues or understandable circumstances, and can advise on available options.

E. Day passes and permits

Day passes and permits are available through municipal processes and can be helpful for employees and residents. However, they are not always ideal for one-time visitors, particularly because they typically apply to **municipal lots** (where many spaces already have a **4-hour** limit) and may not be easy to obtain spontaneously.

FUTURE PLANS & SOLUTIONS

A. The long-term solution is additional parking inventory

The BIA strongly believes that the most sustainable improvement is **more parking supply**. As the community grows, demand grows with it. The BIA continually advocates for the municipality to explore and implement additional inventory and long-term parking strategies and recognizes that municipal departments are actively evaluating future options.

B. The near-term priority is better information and wayfinding

In the meantime, the most immediate improvement the BIA can help drive is **better communication**, including:

- clearer wayfinding signage to municipal lots,
- improved visibility of time limits and expectations,
- visitor-friendly guidance on where longer stays are best accommodated.

Helping people park successfully (the first time) is a key part of making downtown navigation a positive experience.

C. Learning from other downtowns

No downtown has a perfect parking system. Downtown Lindsay is among the few communities of its size offering **free parking**, and the BIA-managed enforcement approach is relatively uncommon and frequently of interest to other communities exploring options. The BIA will continue to seek best practices and learn from peer downtowns while refining a model that reflects Lindsay's specific needs.

D. Could paid parking return in the future?

Possibly—especially if significant new inventory is required and the financial burden to taxpayers becomes substantial. Pay-and-display and mobile payment systems have improved over the last decade and may be easier for many users than it was when first proposed by the municipality in 2014. However, the BIA remains cautious about moving away from free parking too quickly, recognizing that not all residents and visitors are comfortable with mobile technology and that paid parking can introduce new barriers. The BIA's preference is to first pursue improvements through inventory planning, signage, and communication before considering major shifts.

CLOSING STATEMENT

The BIA Board of Directors, Committees, and Staff are committed to continuously improving the parking experience for **visitors, employees, and residents**. Parking will always involve trade-offs, and no approach will satisfy every need equally. While enforcement can be controversial, the BIA supports it as the most practical way to protect turnover, maintain fairness, and keep downtown accessible for the greatest number of users.

The BIA remains open to input from all stakeholders and will consider any suggestion that achieves a clear overall benefit to Downtown Lindsay as a whole.