



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: March 10, 2023
Contact: Lon LaClaire
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RTS No.: 15629
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20
Meeting Date: April 26, 2023
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities
FROM: General Manager of Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Parking Meter Fees in Chinatown

Recommendation

- A. THAT Council approve, in principle, amendments to the Parking Meter By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix A, that will result in on-street parking meter fees in Chinatown being set at \$2 per hour from 9 AM to 10 PM, as a pilot until December 31, 2024, with the estimated annual revenue impact of \$355,000 managed within the City's 2023 operating budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections;

FURTHER THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to prepare and bring forward for enactment amendments to the Parking Meter By-law as generally outlined in Appendix A.

Alternatives

- B. THAT Council approve, in principle, amendments to the Parking Meter By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix B that will result in on-street parking meter fees in Chinatown being set at \$1 per hour from 9 AM to 12 PM, as a pilot until December 31, 2024, with the estimated annual revenue impact of \$215,000 managed within the City's 2023 operating budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections;

FURTHER THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to prepare and bring forward for enactment amendments to the Parking Meter By-law as generally outlined in Appendix B; or

- C. THAT Council approve, in principle, amendments to the Parking Meter By-law, generally in accordance with Appendix C that will result in on-street parking meter fees in Chinatown being reduced by \$1 per hour from 9 AM to 6 PM for parking meters where the current rate is \$3 per hour or more, as a pilot until December 31, 2024, with

the estimated annual revenue impact of \$280,000 managed within the City's 2023 operating budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections;

FURTHER THAT Council instruct the Director of Legal Services to prepare and bring forward for enactment amendments to the Parking Meter By-law as generally outlined in Appendix C; or

- D. THAT on-street parking in Chinatown be free of charge after 4 PM, as a pilot until December 31, 2024, with the estimated annual revenue impact of \$785,000 managed within the City's 2023 operating budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections.

Purpose and Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with options for reducing parking meter fees in Chinatown to support revitalization efforts for the neighbourhood.

Parking meter fees in Chinatown currently range from \$1 per hour to \$5 per hour during the day (9 AM to 6 PM) and from \$1 per hour to \$3 per hour during the evening (6 PM to 10 PM). Through engagement with stakeholders in Chinatown, businesses expressed a desire for cheaper parking and less variability in parking meter fees from block to block. There was a perception that parking meter fees were \$5 per hour throughout Chinatown, but parking meter fees on more than half of the blocks are actually \$2 per hour or less. Although some businesses wanted free parking during certain times of day, others recognized that free parking would result in a lack of turnover and less parking availability for customers.

This report presents and analyses 4 options and recommends that parking meter fees be set at \$2 per hour from 9 AM to 10 PM throughout Chinatown, as a pilot until the end of 2024. This would reduce the cost of parking on the most expensive blocks and would provide clear and consistent pricing to customers, regardless of where or when they park.

Council Authority/Previous Decisions

- Parking meter fees and the methodology for adjustments are prescribed in Parking Meter By-law 2952.
- On [April 13, 2022](#), Council directed staff to develop a six-month pilot to mitigate barriers to visiting Chinatown by reducing parking meter fees in non-peak hours to encourage both visitation and curbside turnover.
- On [February 28, 2023](#), Council directed staff to include options to reduce Chinatown on-street parking rates as part of a report back on parking, with the revenue impacts of reductions to be managed within the 2023 budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections.

City Manager's Comments

The City Manager concurs with the foregoing recommendation.

Context and Background

The intent of the City's on-street parking meter policy is to help customers and visitors find parking close to their destinations, typically striving to have at least one or two parking spaces available on each block at all times. Not only does this support business activity, it also minimizes unnecessary searching for parking, which contributes to congestion, traffic safety risks and air pollution.

Parking meter fees are adjusted annually on a block by block basis based on the parking occupancies observed during the year. When the average parking occupancy of a block is greater than 85%, the parking meter fee is raised by \$1 per hour. Conversely, when the occupancy of a block is less than 60%, the parking meter fee is reduced by \$1 per hour to no lower than \$1 per hour. This policy applies city-wide and is set out in the Parking Meter By-law.

Based on these rules, parking meter fees in Chinatown currently range from \$1 per hour to \$5 per hour during the day (9 AM to 6 PM) and from \$1 per hour to \$3 per hour during the evening (6 PM to 10 PM). Street parking in Chinatown is generally busiest from 11 AM to 3 PM and from 6 PM to 8 PM. Fridays and Saturdays tend to be busier while Mondays and Tuesdays tend to be quieter. Details about the parking occupancies by hour and day of week and the parking meter fees on each block are included in Appendix D.

Discussion

Based upon current parking occupancies, five options for reducing parking meter fees in Chinatown were initially analysed:

1. Lowering all on-street parking fees to \$1 per hour from 9 AM to 12 PM;
2. Making on-street parking \$1 per hour cheaper from 9 AM to 6 PM for parking meters where the current rate is \$3 per hour or more (e.g. if it is currently \$4 per hour, make it \$3 per hour);
3. Making on-street parking free after 4 PM;
4. Making on-street parking free after 6 PM; and
5. Making on-street parking free after 8 PM.

Following engagement with businesses, associations and other stakeholders in Chinatown, another option was added:

6. Making all on-street parking in Chinatown \$2 per hour from 9 AM to 10 PM.

Financial, legal and risk implications are described in the sections below.

Staff recommend that any parking meter fee adjustments in Chinatown be in place for a pilot period until December 31, 2024. Staff will monitor the effectiveness of the adjustments and report back to Council in Q4 2024, including the potential for any lessons learned to be applied city-wide, if applicable.

Stakeholder Analysis

To gauge the level of support for the first 5 options, a letter containing a short survey about parking was mailed and hand-delivered to over 500 businesses in Chinatown. The Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Association (BIA) and the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association also emailed the survey to their membership. The survey could be completed on paper or online, in either English or Traditional Chinese.

In addition to the letter survey, staff met with representatives from the Vancouver Chinatown BIA, the Vancouver Chinatown Foundation, the Vancouver Chinatown Merchants Association, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden and the Chinese Cultural Centre to hear more deeply about the issues and perceptions around parking in Chinatown.

In total, 250 responses to the survey were received. Generally:

- 58% of respondents wanted cheaper but not free parking, as they recognized that free parking would result in less turnover.
- Businesses wanted less variability in the parking meter fees from block to block and desired a more consistent meter fee throughout the entire area. Fees of \$1 to \$3 per hour were suggested.
- 17%, 7% and 5% of respondents wanted free parking after 4 PM, 6 PM and 8 PM respectively.
- After the cost of parking, 23% of respondents said the top parking challenge was not having enough parking for customers and visitors.
- Respondents were concerned with security, safety, and vandalism when parking both on and off-street. In particular, despite ample capacity and availability, there was a perception the Chinatown Plaza Parkade was unsafe and prone to break-ins.

Feedback was also received about loading, as there is high demand for on-street loading zones, particularly in areas where there is no lane access. Specifically:

- Vehicles are often parked for extended periods in loading zones, limiting the ability for commercial vehicles to perform their deliveries.
- Loading zones could be converted to parking in the evenings to increase the parking supply.

A detailed analysis of the survey results is available in Appendix E.

Staff will undertake a review of on-street special zones in Chinatown in Q2 2023 to examine how to improve loading opportunities for commercial vehicles and increase parking supply. This may include relocating, consolidating or adding new zones, or having curb space be used for different purposes over the course of a day.

Staff will also work with EasyPark to address the perceived safety and security concerns at the Chinatown Plaza Parkade.

Staff will continue to update Council on these topics.

Options Analysis

Each option for reducing parking meter fees was analysed with the objectives of attracting more customers to Chinatown, reducing the perception that parking in Chinatown is expensive, and improving availability of on-street parking, versus the reduction in annual parking meter revenues. This is presented in Table 1. Since more respondents preferred free parking after 4 PM rather than after 6 PM or 8 PM, the latter two options were removed from the analysis.

Table 1. Analysis of Options for Reducing Parking Meter Fees in Chinatown

Option	Description	Potential for attracting daytime customers	Potential for attracting evening customers	Potential for reducing the perception of expensive parking	Potential for improving parking availability	Relative Annual Revenue Reduction
1	Lower parking meter fees to \$1 per hour from 9 AM to 12 PM	High	Low	Medium	Low	\$215,000
2	Reduce parking meter fees by \$1 per hour 9 AM – 6 PM where the current rate is \$3 per hour or more	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	\$280,000
3	Make on-street parking free after 4 PM	High	High	Medium	Negative	\$785,000
6	Make parking meter fees \$2 per hour 9 AM – 10 PM	High	Medium	High	Low	\$355,000

Options 3 and 6 are anticipated to be attractive for both daytime and evening customers, with Option 6 providing the most clarity and consistency of pricing to customers regardless of where or when they park. None of the options are anticipated to improve parking availability on-street, with Option 3 expected to have negative impacts, particularly in the evening. To address the desire for more parking, employees and customers should be encouraged to utilize off-street lots and parkades.

Risk Implications

For any option that is selected, there is a risk that other BIAs or neighbourhoods will request the same adjustment to parking meter fees in their areas as each option is a deviation from the occupancy-based Parking Meter By-law policy, which is currently applied uniformly across the City of Vancouver. If one of the options were to be applied city-wide, the potential forgone annual revenue is estimated to range from \$7.2 million to \$18.6 million.

Financial Implications

The reduction of on-street parking meter fees in Chinatown is anticipated to reduce the City’s annual parking meter revenue. The annual parking meter revenue in Chinatown in 2022 was approximately \$1.8 million, and the estimated annual revenue impact of each option is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Revenue Impacts for each Option

Option	Description	Estimated Forgone Annual Revenue	% of Annual Meter Revenue in Chinatown
1	Lower parking meter fees to \$1 per hour from 9AM to 12 PM	\$215,000	12%
2	Reduce parking meter fees by \$1 per hour between 9 AM and 6 PM where the current rate is \$3 per hour or more	\$280,000	16%
3	Make on-street parking free after 4 PM	\$785,000	44%
6	Make parking meter fees \$2 per hour between 9 AM and 10 PM	\$355,000	20%

The Council resolution from February 28 2023 directed as follows:

Council direct staff to include options to reduce Chinatown on-street parking rates as part of a report back on parking, with the revenue impacts of reductions to be managed within the 2023 budget and incorporated into 2024 revenue projections.

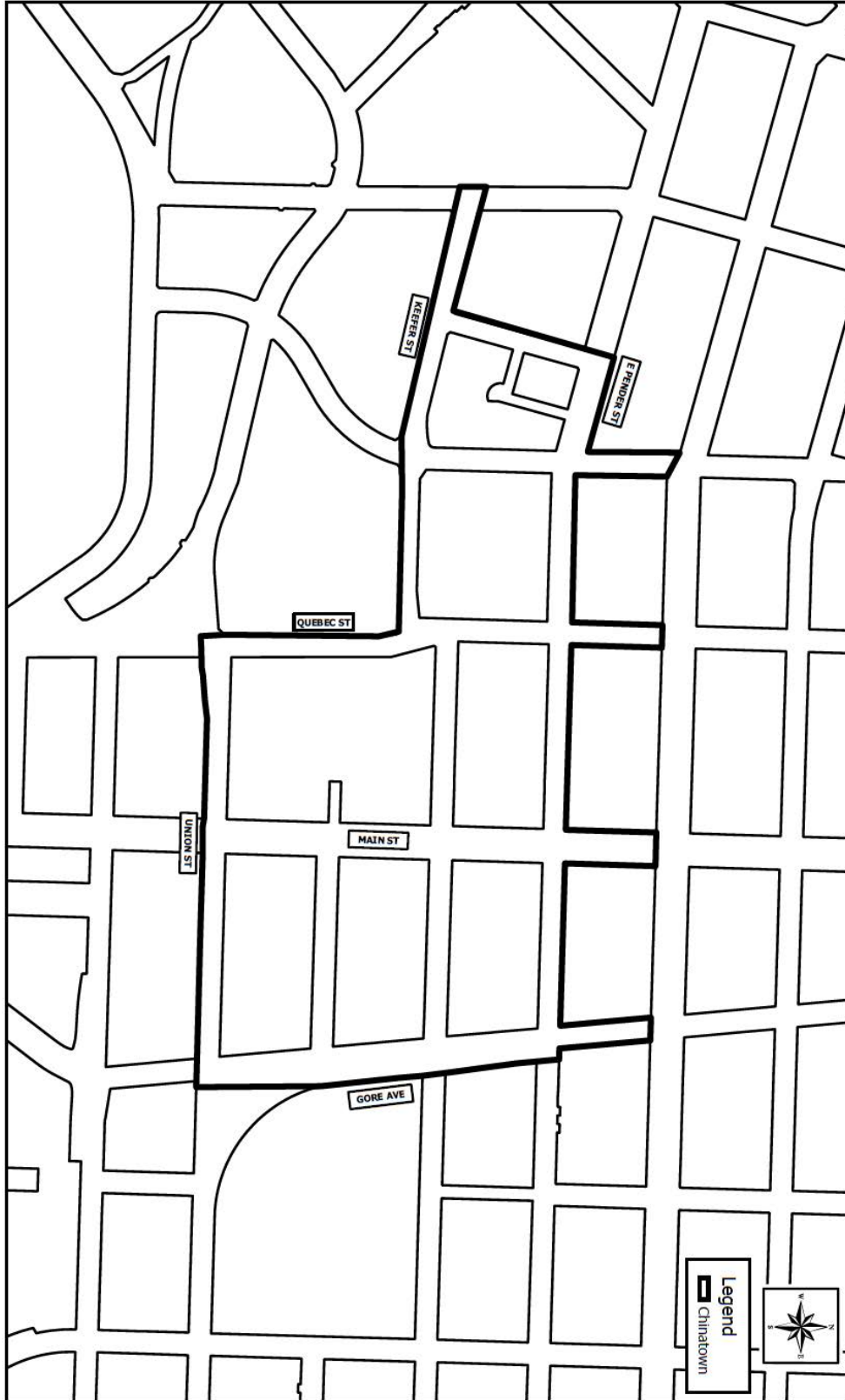
Accordingly, revenue impacts will be managed within the City’s overall 2023 Corporate operating budget; the shortfall will be offset by other increased revenues or reduced expenses, or failing that, a draw from the stabilization reserve.

The impact of the ongoing reduction in revenues will be incorporated into 2024 revenue projections, and will likely result in a need for additional revenues to be generated in other areas, or failing that, would need to rely on property tax funding.

Legal Implications

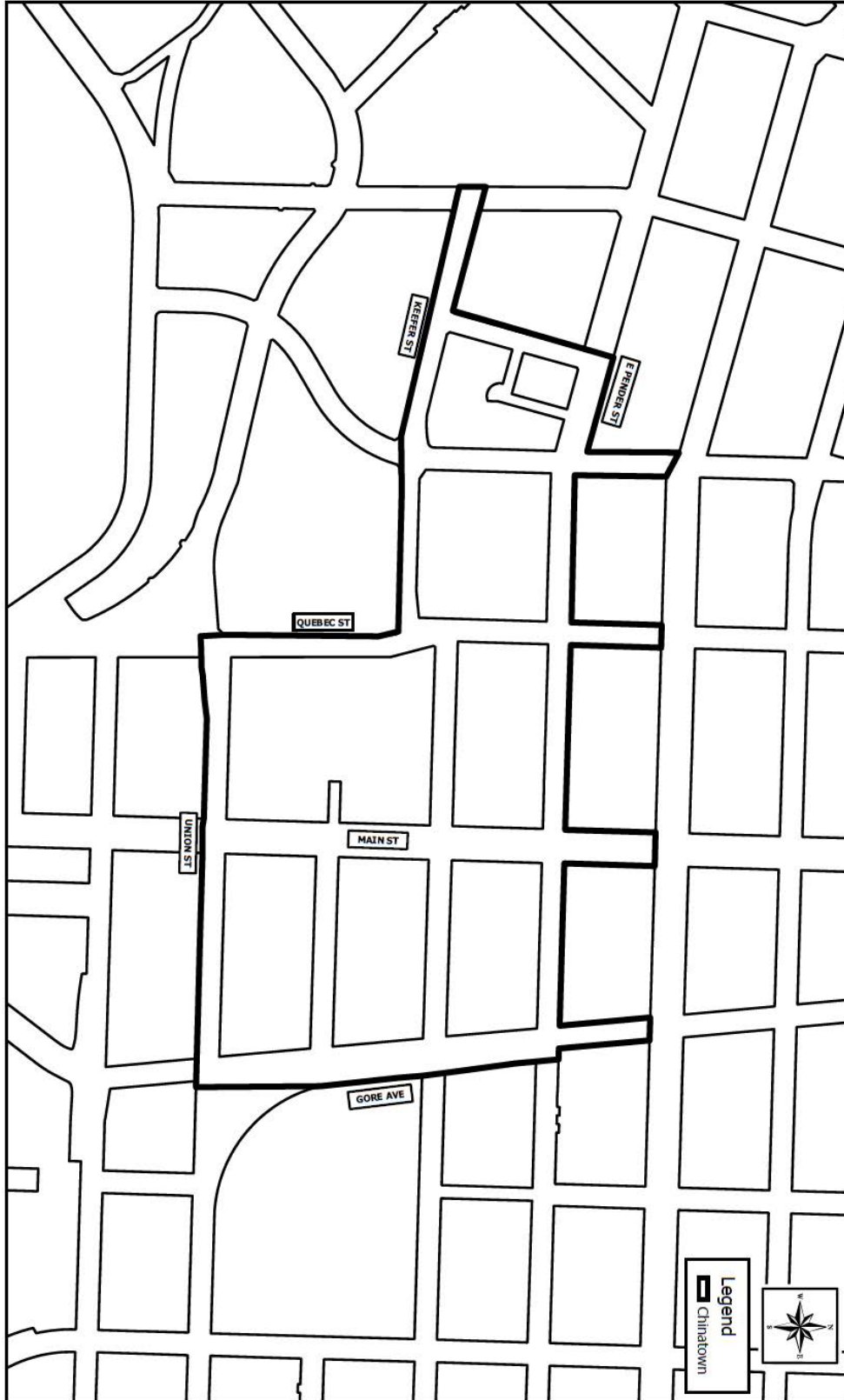
To implement Recommendation A or alternatives B or C, by-law amendments are required to the Parking Meter By-law.

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CHINATOWN
Schedule B

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CHINATOWN
Schedule B

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APPENDIX C

DRAFT By-law to amend Parking Meter By-law No. 2952 regarding Chinatown Parking Meter Rates

Note: A By-law will be prepared generally in accordance with the provisions listed below, subject to change and refinement prior to posting.

1. This By-law amends the indicated provisions of the Parking Meter By-law No. 2952.
2. Council adds the following as a new section 5B:

“5B (1) Notwithstanding Section 5A, the metered rates that are \$3.00 per hour or more in Chinatown, as defined by the area contained within bold black lines in the map attached as Schedule B to this By-law, be reduced by \$1.00 per hour between 9 AM and 6 PM from the 2023 metered rates, as a pilot until December 31, 2024. The affected blocks and their 2023 parking rates and reduced pilot rates are included in the table below:”

Block	2023 Daytime Parking Rate	Pilot Daytime Parking Rate
0 E Pender St	\$3.00	\$2.00
100 E Pender St	\$5.00	\$4.00
200 E Pender St	\$3.00	\$2.00
100 Keefer St	\$4.00	\$3.00
200 Keefer St	\$4.00	\$3.00
200 E Georgia St	\$5.00	\$4.00
600 Gore Av	\$3.00	\$2.00
500 Main St	\$3.00	\$2.00
400 Carrall St	\$3.00	\$2.00
500 Carrall St	\$3.00	\$2.00

3. A decision by a court that any part of this By-law is illegal, void, or unenforceable severs that part from this By-law, and is not to affect the balance of this By-law.
4. This By-law is to come into force and take effect on the date of its enactment.

ENACTED by Council this _____ day of _____, 2023

Mayor

City Clerk

APPENDIX D

Parking Meter Fees and Parking Occupancies in Chinatown

Figure D.1 2023 daytime parking meter fees in Chinatown

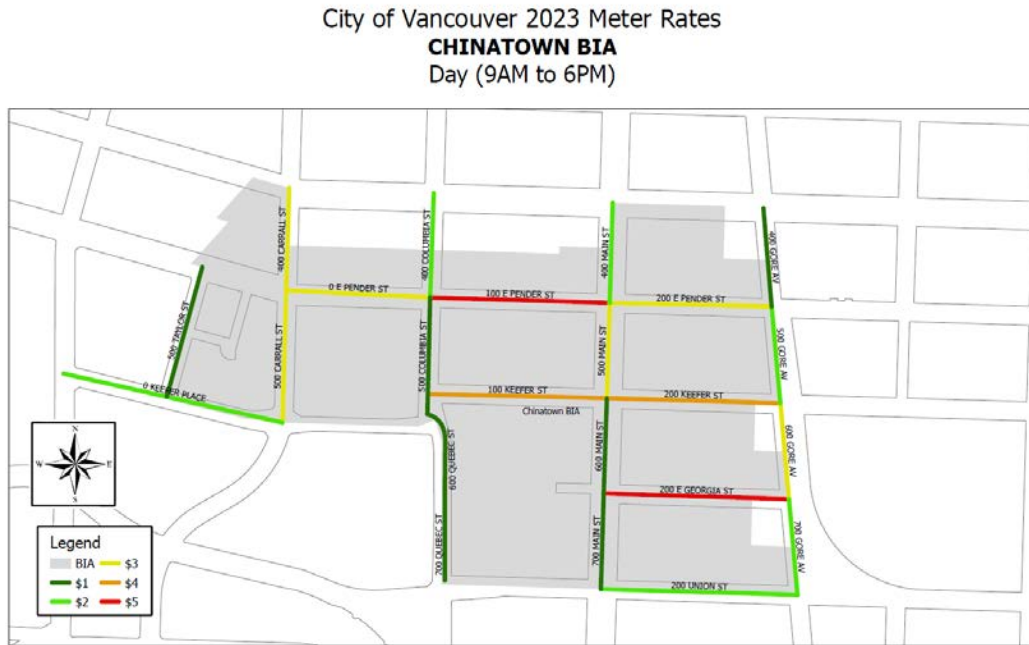


Figure D.2 2023 evening parking meter fees in Chinatown

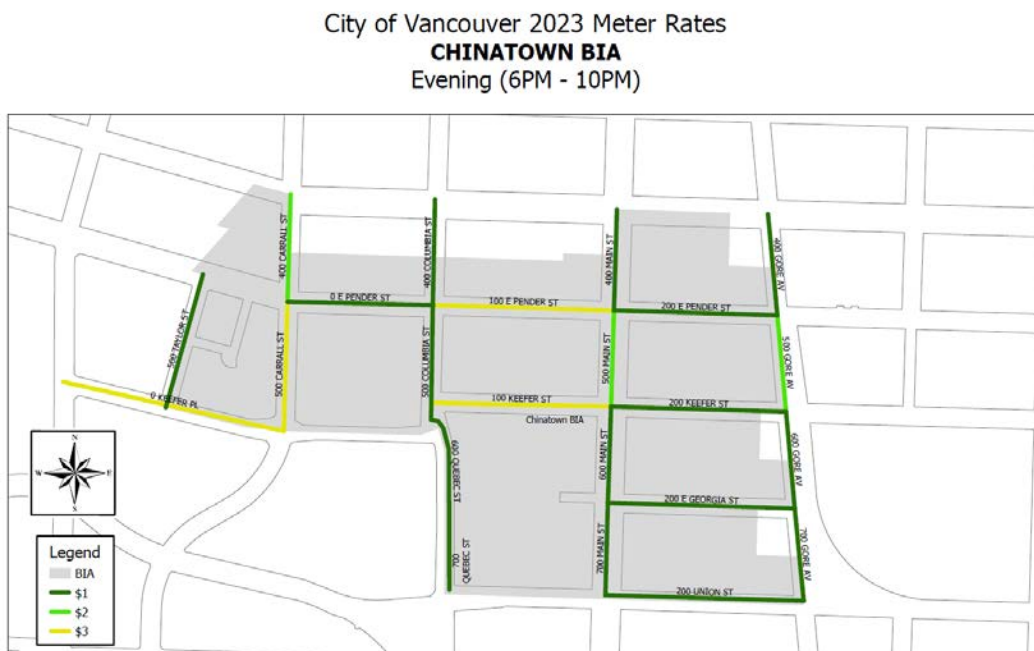


Figure D.3 Average hourly on-street parking occupancy in Chinatown in 2022

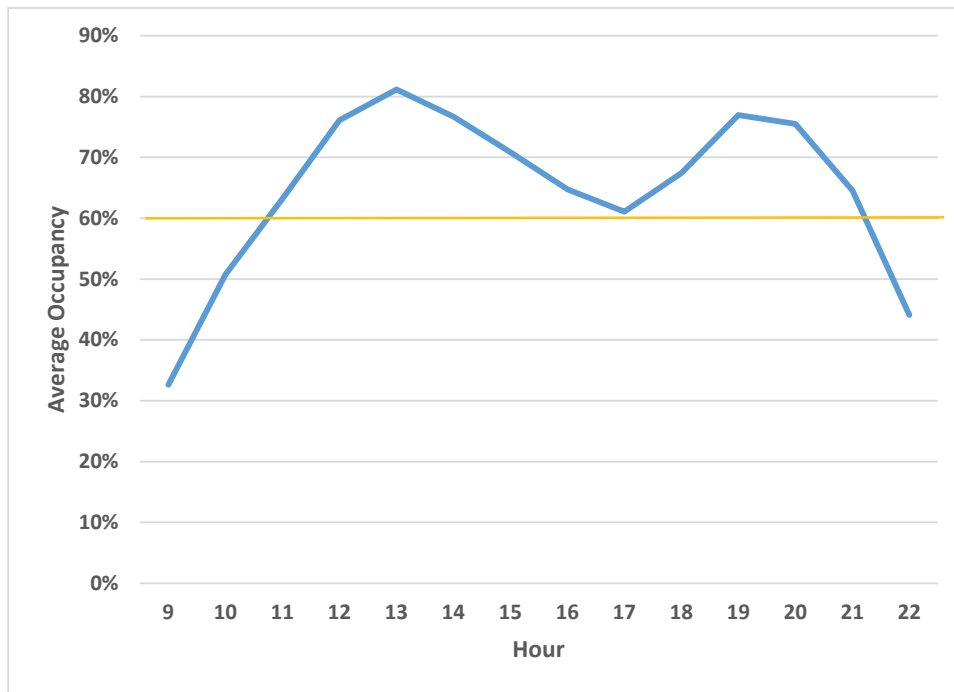
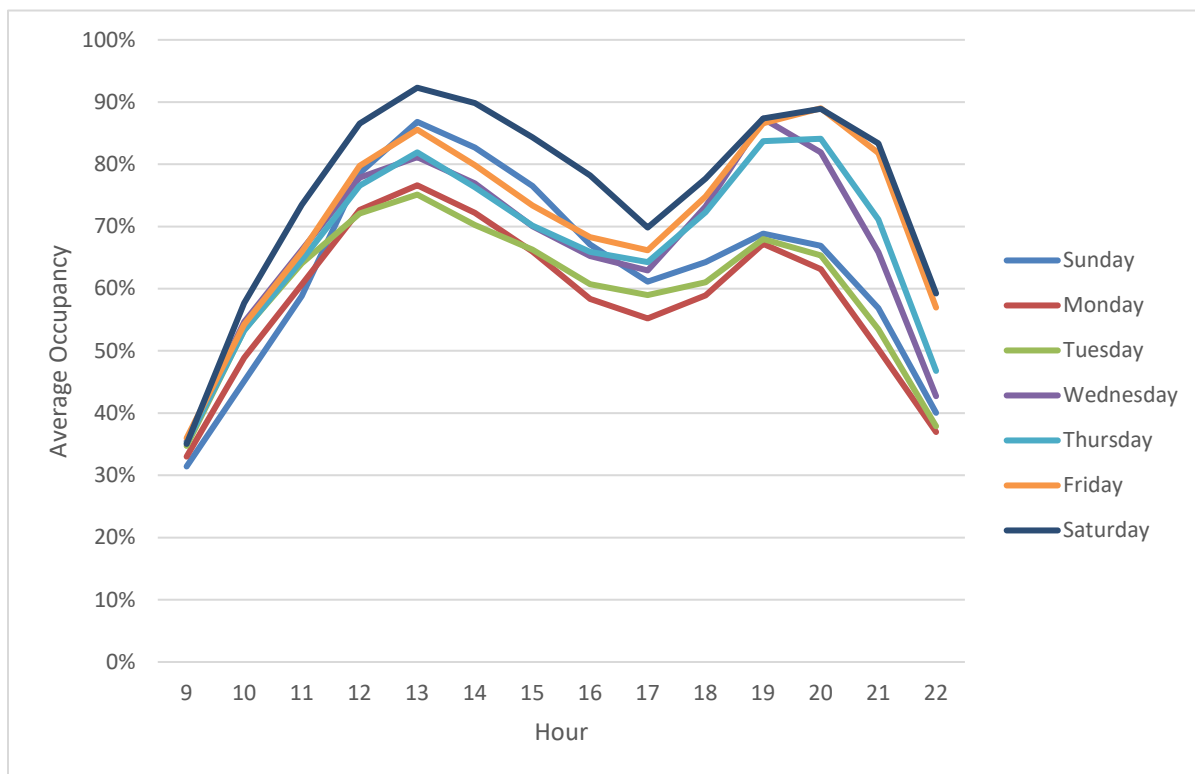


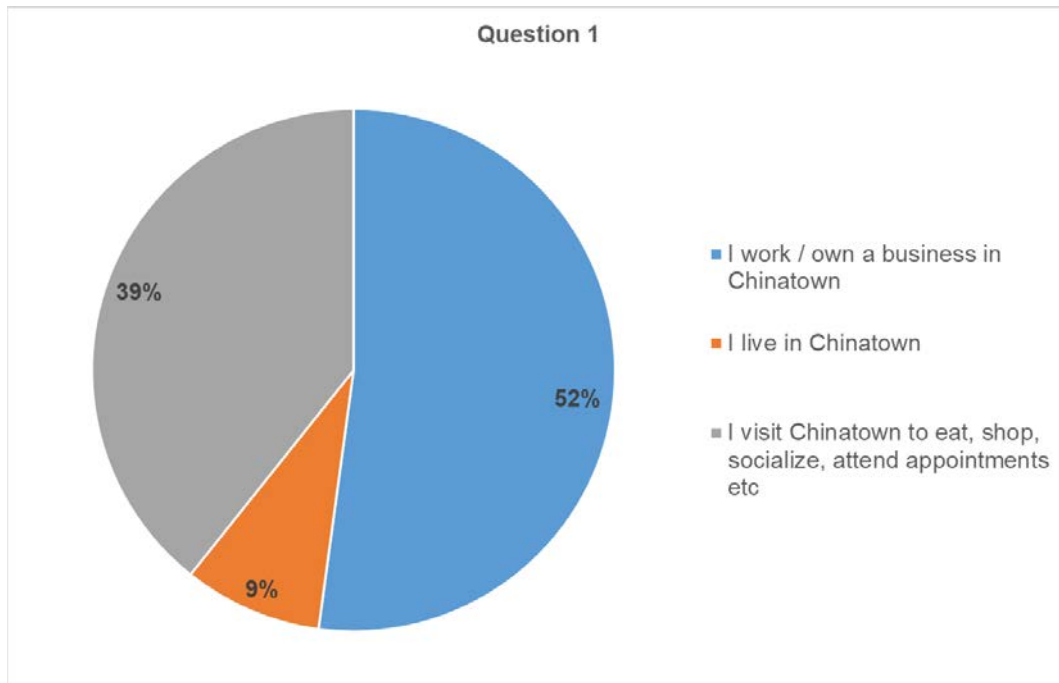
Figure D.4 Average hourly on-street parking occupancy in Chinatown in 2022 by day of week



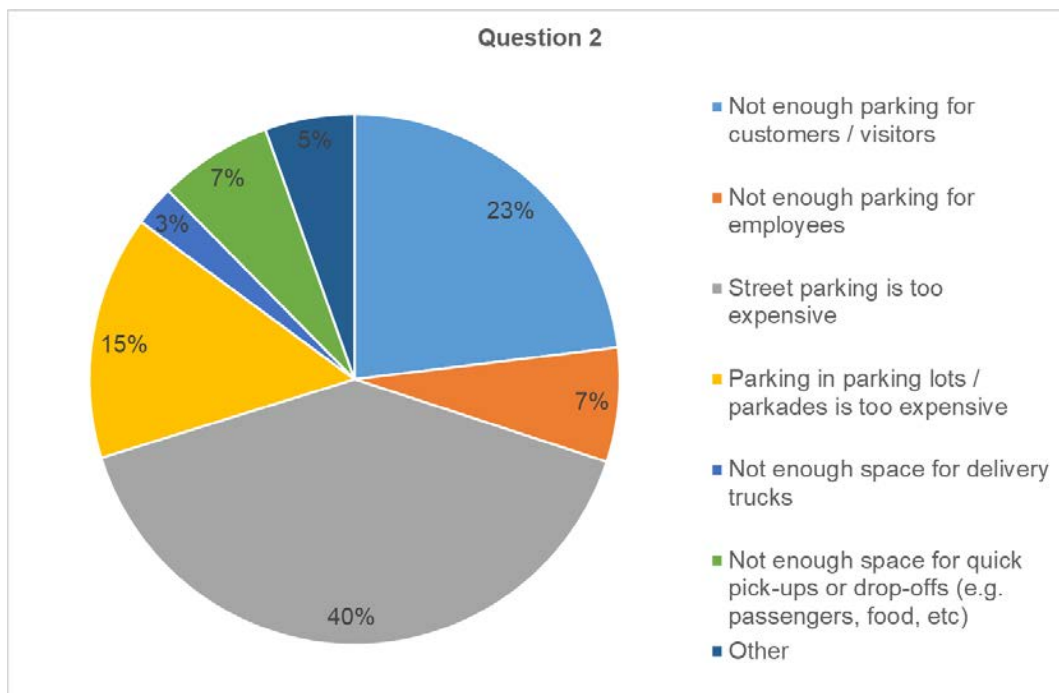
APPENDIX E

Chinatown Parking Survey Analysis

Question 1: What is your connection to Chinatown?



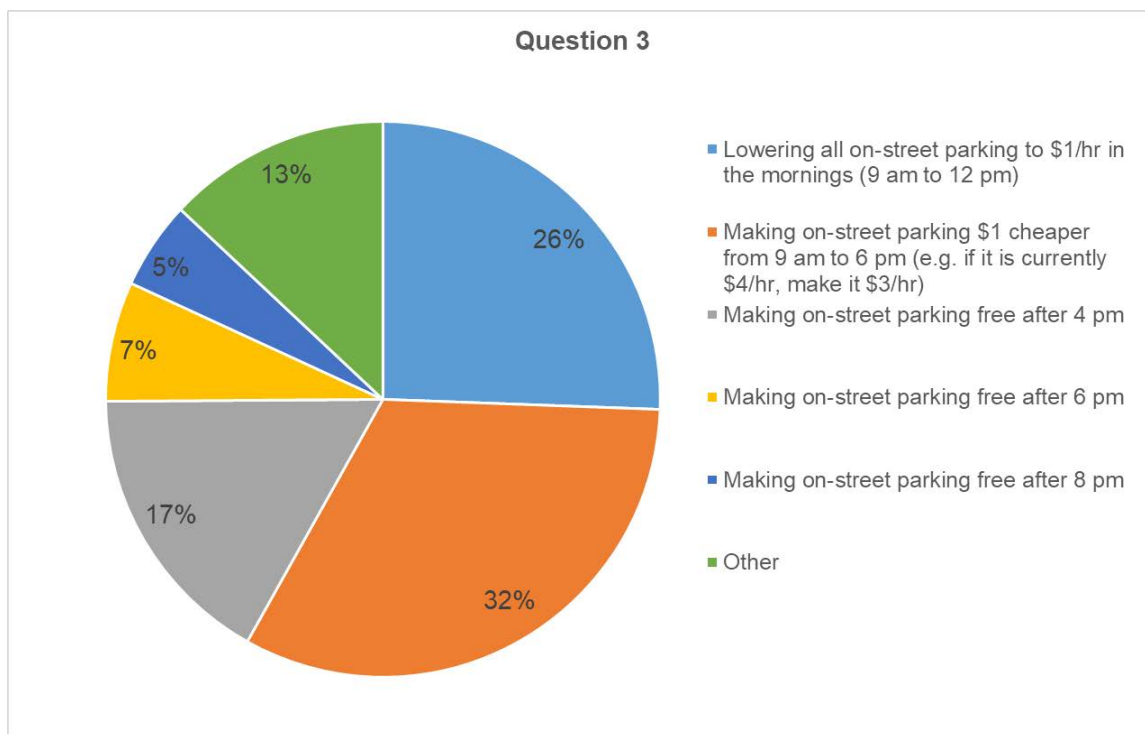
Question 2: What are your biggest challenges related to parking in Chinatown (select up to 2)?



Key insights and findings for Question 2 include:

- Street parking being too expensive was the most common answer at 40% of all responses. The on-street and off-street parking being too expensive options when combined account for 55% of all responses.
- Lack of parking availability for customers/visitors was seen as a bigger challenge than parking availability for employees.
- The most common other / write-in response was related to concerns regarding security, safety, and vandalism when parking both on and off-street in Chinatown.

Question 3: On-street parking in Chinatown tends to be busiest between 11 am and 4 pm, and having pay parking helps to ensure that parking spaces are available for customers and visitors rather than being occupied by vehicles parking all day. Which of the following do you think would be most effective at attracting customers/visitors to Chinatown? (select one)



Key findings and insights for Question 3 include:

- Making on-street parking \$1 per hour cheaper from 9 AM to 6 PM was the most popular option with 32% of respondents selecting this option.
- 58% of respondents wanted cheaper but not free parking.
- For respondents that wanted free parking, free parking after 4 PM was the most popular option.
- The most common other / write-in responses ranked in descending order of prevalence:
 - Desire for a single consistent parking rate throughout Chinatown with suggestions ranging from \$1.00 to \$3.00 per hour.
 - Cheaper parking options in the daytime beyond the \$1.00 per hour reduction option included in the question.

- Free short term parking with suggested time limits ranging from 30 minutes to 2 hours.
- Do not change existing on-street parking rates and encourage off-street parking.

Question 4: Do you have any other comments you would like to share with us regarding parking in Chinatown?

Question 4 was an open-ended written question which received over 100 responses. Each response was assigned tags or descriptors based on the general themes of the response. The most common themes from the written responses ranked in descending order based on prevalence included:

- Parking in Chinatown is too expensive.
- Concerns regarding safety, security, and vandalism when parking on and off-street in Chinatown.
- Lack of on-street parking availability.
- Desire for free or cheap (\$1 per hour or less) short term parking.
- Technological challenges for older Chinatown visitors when operating pay stations.
- Desire for increased enforcement of short term zones (e.g. passenger, loading, and commercial loading zones).
- Suggestions for either increasing or decreasing existing parking time limits.

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