

Pay parking coming to North Vancouver's Harbourside neighbourhood

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News

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More than half of the 410 on-street parking spots in Harbourside are unrestricted. City council is looking to add pay parking and time limits to free up spots for short-term visits. photo Lisa King, North Shore News

The free ride may not abide in Harbourside, following council's decision to support new restrictions including pay parking between Bewicke Avenue and Mackay Creek.

In an effort to free up more parking spots in advance of an 800-unit development slated to be built at Harbourside over the next decade, council supported instituting pay parking and time-restricted spots in a split vote March 7. However, one councillor warned the change could be a disaster.

"I think we're in for a battle royal," Coun. Pam Bookham advised her colleagues. "I think we're going to hear the first outcries the moment we try to introduce this plan."

City staff weighed several options before recommending a combination of pay parking and time limits. Keeping the status quo was not considered despite the fact that keeping things as they are was the public's preferred option in a 2013 study.

The same study also found on-street parking was 97 per cent full. According to a 2015 survey, 80 per cent of parking spots in the Auto Mall loop are occupied for an average of six hours at a time, presumably due to employees parking during their shifts.

Parking spots on the street are for customers, not employees, said Coun. Holly Back.

"I believe that employers have to take some responsibility for their staff parking," she said, adding that many Auto Mall employers "didn't seem too willing to take that responsibility."

There is rampant speculation some auto dealers use their parking spots for the cars they want to sell, according to Darrell Mussatto.

"I've got assumptions, I don't have any proof," he said.

However, at least one dealership holds parking spots overnight, according to Mussatto.

"There's one dealership I will not name; at the end of the day they take their used cars and they put them on the street," he said, explaining employees swap spots with the used cars each morning.

There are 410 on-street parking stalls in Harbourside, including 138 in the Auto Mall. More than half of the spots are unrestricted. There are time limits on one-third of Auto Mall spots but the limits are rarely enforced over concerns that handing out tickets will push Auto Mall employees into the rest of Harbourside.

Hawkers Wharf, a temporary home for as many as 40 food businesses and a dining area, is set to open later this year. Harbourside is also scheduled to take on approximately 300,000 square feet of commercial development over the next 10 years.

Council voted 5-2 to institute pay parking, with Couns. Pam Bookham and Rod Clark opposed.