

February 3, 2026

Mayor Fillmore and HRM Council.

It has come to our attention that HRM Council will be giving consideration to some options presented by HRM staff, pertaining to paid on-street parking, in the urban cores of Halifax and Dartmouth

Specifically, the following three options have been presented for consideration:

- Increasing hourly parking on-street rates
- Introducing paid on-street parking after 6pm on weekdays
- Introducing paid on-street parking on Saturdays

The 5 urban core BIDs, whose 2,000+ members and their customers would be directly impacted, oppose all of these proposed changes. While we understand that seeking additional revenues to ease the budget constraints is part of your mandate, we do not feel that targeting this revenue stream, which already contributes millions of dollars to general revenues, is appropriate at this time. We ask you to consider the following points:

- Downtown businesses are still struggling to fully recover from the pandemic and resultant inflationary pressures. Sales and visitation data suggests that growth is still fairly weak, even 5 years after the pandemic ravaged our businesses.
- HRM did introduce a 25% increase to parking rates just 2 years ago.
- Having to find and pay for parking is already the number one complaint that downtown businesses and customers have. Making it worse will create media interest and add a negative narrative to an already negative perception.
- Unlike some of the other cities mentioned in the HRM staff report, the main competition to urban core shopping and dining (Dartmouth Crossing, Bayers Lake, Halifax Shopping Centre, Mic Mac Mall) all have ample free parking and are in close proximity to the Downtowns.
- Parking fees are not a general tax – they are a specific fee paid by downtown customers. These funds should not be used to help fill a shortfall in the broad HRM budget. It would actually be appropriate to earmark these revenues for the areas in which they are earned (note: this model has been used for decades on the waterfront by Build NS and its predecessors, to great effect)

- HRM staff are returning to HRM Council in the spring with a report on Parking Benefit Districts. This will hopefully provide a more holistic view of appropriate parking management, and that is the time to discuss changes, not before.
- Urban core businesses are already facing large tax increases in 2026-2027 (due to an overall rise in assessed value of 6.75%). Putting additional costs on their customers will not help them raise their revenues.
- 84% of Downtown businesses oppose extending paid parking hours, and 89% oppose increasing parking rates (source: DHBC membership survey, conducted by Thinkwell Research + Strategy, January 2026).
- If HRM Council is determined to increase parking revenue and promote transit usage, they could look at greatly expanding the on-street paid parking program beyond the urban core and look at ways to also earn revenue from non-downtown areas (ie, parking lot tax).

While we understand the desire to further tap into what is already a substantial revenue source, the resultant hardship to downtown businesses would be another blow to the economic heart of our municipality. We urge HRM Council to not consider making any changes for the 2026-2027 fiscal year.

Respectfully submitted,

The Business Improvement Districts of  
Downtown Dartmouth  
Downtown Halifax  
Quinpool Road and Area  
North End Halifax  
Spring Garden Area