Proposed Amendments to the General Commercial (C1) Zone

Amenity Space and Parking Requirements

September 8, 2025

Kentville
A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

- A Request for Decision initiated by Council in the spring of 2023 regarding amenity space requirements in the General Commercial (C1) Zone. The recommendation in the RFD was that "…we amend this bylaw so that it does not apply to any pre-existing buildings in the Downtown Core. This will allow any potential Developers to convert some of the upper levels of these older buildings into more residential units."

- The initial 2023 review and recommendation from staff was to make no changes to the requirements in the Land Use Bylaw. The Council Advisory Committee voted against staff's recommendation but did not provide further direction at that time.

- Staff has provided options and recommendations to facilitate further discussion.

Feedback from Public Participation Meeting - June 17

Several questions regarding the degree to which National Building Code (NBC) requirements for accessible parking and building design may trump the intent of the proposed changes to the Land Use Bylaw.

- Barrier-free units are required when 25+ units are being created. For most development in the C1 zone this will not apply.

- 1 parking stall for persons with a disability is required for each barrier-free residential suite; or, when between 1-10 parking stalls are provided, 1 stall for persons with a disability shall be required

Feedback from Public Participation Meeting Kentville Business Community (now Downtown Kentville) Correspondence

1. Parking Requirements

While the KBC strongly supports adding residential spaces on the second floor of commercial properties, the KBC does not support the elimination of parking requirements for new residential developments in the downtown at this time.

Rationale:

- *Kentville is a rural town, and most residents and visitors rely on personal vehicles. Unlike larger urban centres, public transit and active transportation infrastructure are not robust enough to offset demand for parking.*

- *Eliminating parking minimums would shift the burden onto the Town, requiring already-scarce public parking to serve both residents and customers.*

- *This could have a negative impact on businesses whose customers depend on convenient parking access—particularly important as many are destination-based and compete with big-box alternatives with ample free parking.*

Feedback from Public Participation Meeting

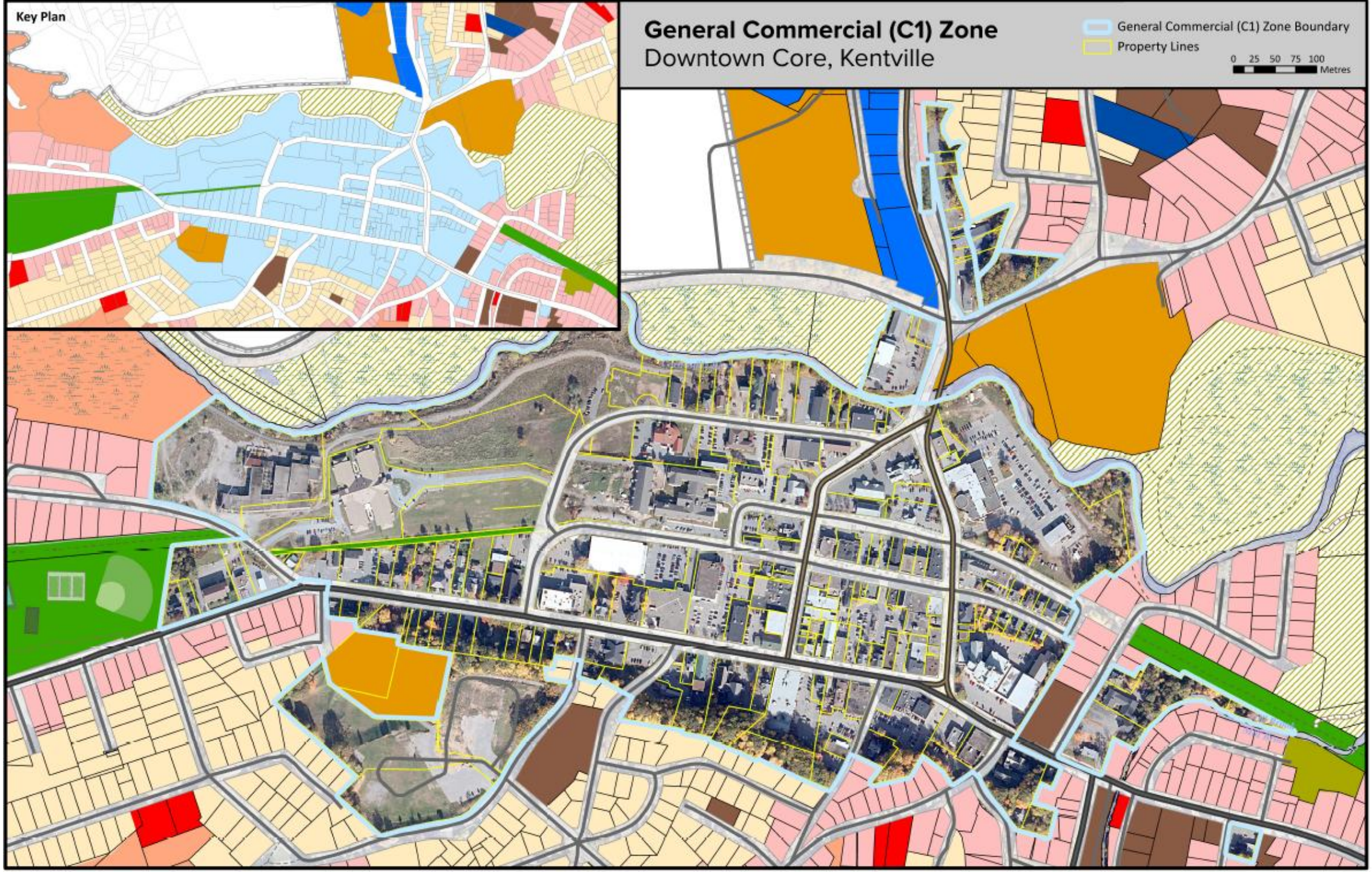
KBC's Position: Developers should continue to provide on-site parking wherever possible for upper-level residential units.

As Kentville evolves, we support exploring long-term parking solutions, such as shared parking strategies, municipal parking structures, or incentivized alternatives—but these must be in place before reducing parking requirements.

Feedback from Public Participation Meeting

2. Amenity Space Requirements

The KBC board is in support of the proposed amendment that would allow the Development Officer discretion to waive amenity requirements if a project is located within 400 metres of a public open space.


Key Plan
General Commercial (C1) Zone
Downtown Core, Kentville
General Commercial (C1) Zone Boundary
Property Lines
0 25 50 75 100
Metres

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Context:

- Older downtowns often have smaller lots, heritage buildings, and a more compact urban design, which can make standard amenity requirements challenging to provide.

- These areas were developed before the car became dominant, so traditional parking ratios (e.g. 1–1.5 spaces per unit) sometimes clash with the downtown built form. The Kentville planning documents have considered this by limiting parking requirements to 0.5 spaces/ residential unit.

- There is a greater movement to reform parking standards by removing the requirement entirely for several communities in North America, in our comparisons with other municipal units, lowest requirement is to reduce it to .25/bedroom.

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Section 4.2.17 Parking (Excerpts from Preamble)

- *A parking study undertaken in 2011 found that there were sufficient parking spaces for the needs of the businesses and merchants of Kentville, and also supports Councils desire to reduce the off street parking requirements within the General Commercial (C1) Zone.*

- *As part of its efforts to revitalize the downtown, it is an objective of Council to encourage new development and the reuse of existing structures in the downtown area.*

- *These cases where adherence to minimum on-site parking requirements is unachievable, flexibility should be considered.*

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Policy GD-25 It shall be the intention of Council to waive all off-street parking requirements for the expansion or change of use of all non-residential development in the General Commercial (C1) Zone.

Policy GD-26 It shall be the intention of Council to accept Cash-in Lieu of Parking in the General Commercial (C1) Zone where the applicant can demonstrate that the provisions of onsite parking, except for new residential developments, is not physically possible, or the applicant can demonstrate the existing parking supply can accommodate the on-site parking deficiency.

Policy GD-27 It shall be the intention of Council to establish reduced minimum parking requirements for residential development in the General Commercial (C1) Zone, in accordance with the Land Use By-law.

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Staff Recommendation Regarding Parking Requirements:

Remove residential parking requirements in the General Commercial (C1) Zone.

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Policy Section 5.7 Amenity Space (Preamble continued)

- *However, in certain areas of Town it may not be economically viable to require that new multiple unit residential developments set aside large areas of land for recreation purposes. This is particularly true in the downtown area where lot sizes are small and land values are quite high.*

- *Given that the Town is actively seeking to attract multiple unit residential development to the downtown area, it is important that the amenity space provisions allow for some flexibility.*

- *Specifically, the Land Use By-law should allow the option of providing such space in the form of internal recreation facilities, such as exercise rooms, pools or balconies rather than outdoor amenity space at grade.*

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Policy RS-21 It shall be the intention of Council to require that any new multiple unit residential development include provisions for recreation and amenity space. The Land Use By-law shall allow for the provision of such space either externally or internally to the building, and that such space may consist of common or individual unit space.

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Staff Recommendation Regarding Amenity Space Requirements:

Waive amenity space requirements at the discretion of the Development Officer if the proposed development is within a 400 m route to a public open space.

Summary and Options

Amenity Space:

1. Status Quo Requirements
2. Waive amenity requirements at the discretion of the Development Officer if a project is within a 400 m route to a public open space.
3. No amenity requirements for developments consisting of up to eight (8) units (vs. three (3) as per current requirements)
4. Allow cash-in-lieu for amenity space

Parking:

1. Status Quo Requirements
2. No parking requirements for developments consisting of up to eight(8) units
3. Reducing residential parking requirements in the C1 zone (.25/bdr)
4. Removing residential parking requirements in the C1 zone.
5. Deferring parking discussion pending completion of parking study

*Recommended options

Additional option

Next Steps

CAC – Proposal Introduction – April 14

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Public Participation Meeting – June 17

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CAC Review and Recommendation – July 14

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Council First Reading – July 28

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Public Hearing– Sep 8

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Council Second Reading – Sep 29

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Publish Notice of Approval

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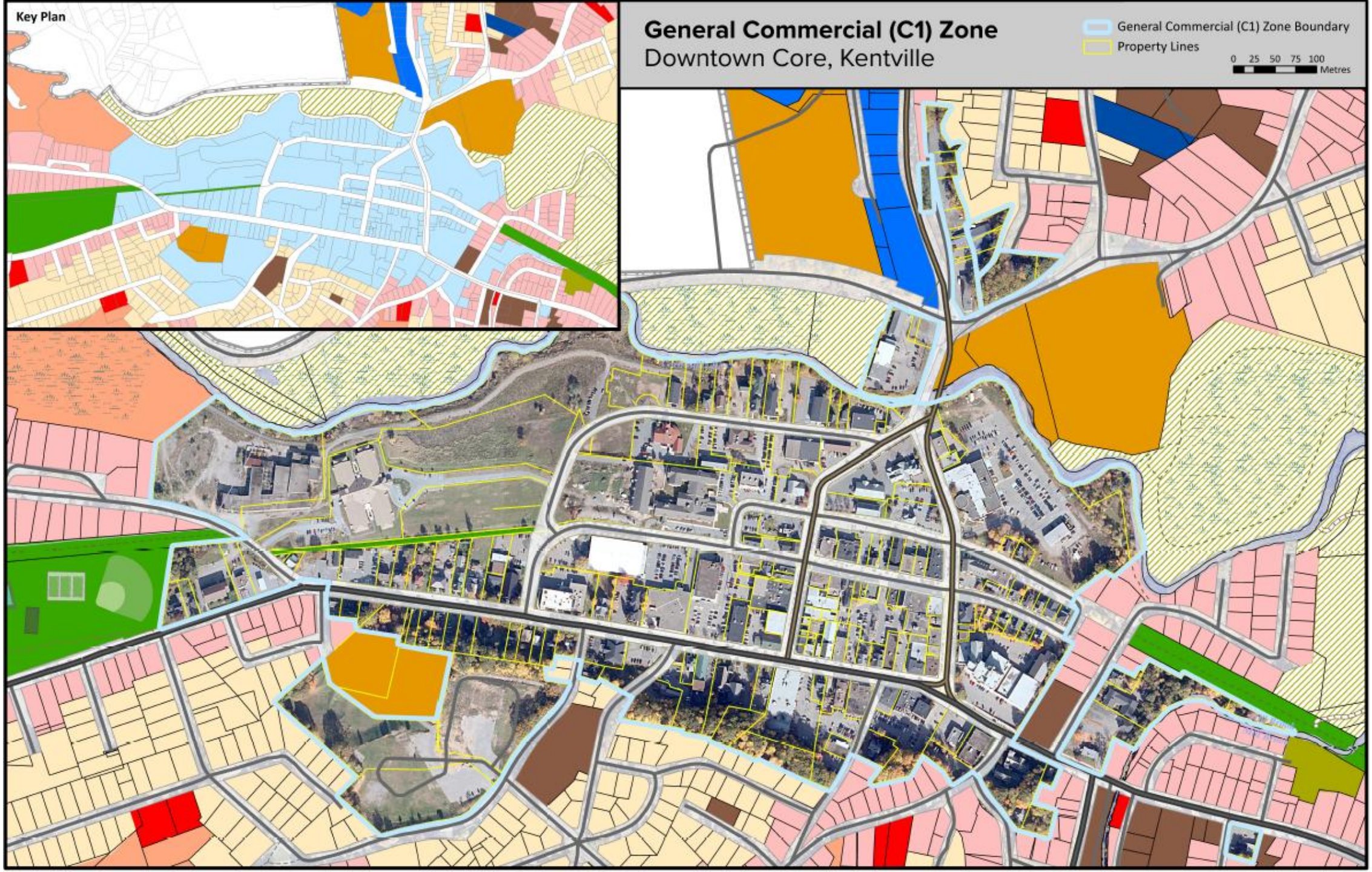
14-Day Appeal Period


Key Plan
General Commercial (C1) Zone
Downtown Core, Kentville
General Commercial (C1) Zone Boundary
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Attachment 3: Comparative Municipal Units

	Parking	Amenity
Amherst	1-3 units at 1 parking space/unit; >3 at 1.25/unit	7.1.4 Amenity Space Requirements In any zone, a development permit for a building containing 3 or more units shall provide 20 m2 per unit of amenity space and is subject to the following requirements: (a) Amenity space may include a combination of balconies, indoor recreation rooms, saunas, sundecks, patios, tennis courts, swimming pools as well as any landscaped open area with a finished grade of less than 8%. (b) Where a dwelling unit is provided with a balcony at least 6 m2 in floor area, the 20 m2 amenity space requirement shall be waived. (c) Amenity Space shall not include any parking areas, hallways, foyers, utility rooms, or laundry areas.
Antigonish	1 parking space/unit, plus 0.25 spaces/bedroom over one in the unit, plus 0.25 visitor parking spaces per unit	8.3.1 o) Amenity area requirements for Multi-Unit Dwellings may be reduced or waived at the discretion of the Development Officer if a project is within an accessible 400 m route to a public open space.
Bridgewater	0.5 vehicle spaces per dwelling / rental unit; 0.5 bicycle space per dwelling / rental unit; Cash-in-Lieu of Parking option	4.1.7 All new multi-unit residential developments containing five or more dwelling units shall provide on-site amenity space in accordance with the following requirements: between 15-30 m2/bedroom
Truro	Multiple Unit Dwelling (three units or more); Converted Dwelling (three units or more) - bachelor 0.25 spaces/bedroom; one or more bedrooms 0.25 spaces/unit + 0.25 spaces/bedroom	A development that includes three or more dwelling units shall be required to provide amenity space in accordance with the following requirements...
Yarmouth	For every building or structure to be erected, occupied or enlarged, or where there is a change in use to a building or structure in any residential use, one (1) on-site parking space shall be provided	No amenity requirements for developments consisting of up to 8 units; Developments consisting of more than eight (8) units per lot shall only be considered through the Development Agreement process.
Kentville	4.2.8 Commercial General (C1) Zone Parking Requirements- Residential Uses 0.5 spaces per unit;	4.1.3 a) All new Multi-Unit Developments containing four or more dwelling units shall provide On-Site Indoor or Outdoor Amenity Space in accordance with the following requirements...

General Commercial (C1) Zone
Further Reduction of Parking Requirements

4.2 Parking and Loading

4.2.1 General Requirements

a) For every building or structure to be erected or enlarged, or for which application for a development permit involving a change of use is made, off-street parking having unobstructed access to a public street shall be provided and maintained in accordance with Table 4.2;

b) Notwithstanding Section 4.2.1(a) minimum parking requirements shall be waived in the General Commercial (C1) Zone for all new development~~. , excluding any residential component. In this instance, only the minimum off-street vehicular parking spaces for the residential component of the development shall be required;~~

c) All off-street parking shall be provided on the same lot as the use of building for which it is required;

d) Notwithstanding Section 4.2.1(c), in any Commercial/Industrial zone, off-street parking for Commercial purposes may be located on a different lot than the use or building in question provided that the parking area is not located more than 300 ft (91.44 m) away from the subject building, and the land owner provides written notice of a shared parking arrangement to the Development Officer; and

e) Minimum off-street parking requirements shall not apply to any use which was established before the effective date of this By-law.

General Commercial (C1) Zone Amenity Space and Parking Requirements Review and Recommendations

Table 4.2 *Parking Requirements*

Land Use	Parking Requirement
Residential Land Use	
Dwelling Units (<4 dwelling units)	1 parking space per dwelling unit
Multi-Unit Dwellings (>4 dwelling units)	1.25 parking spaces per dwelling unit
~~Multi-Unit Dwellings in the (C1) Zone~~	~~0.5 per dwelling unit~~
Home Based Business	1 space in addition to the space required by the dwelling unit
Bed and Breakfast	1 space per rental units in addition to the space required by the dwelling unit.

~~4.2.8 Parking Requirements in Commercial General (C1) Zone Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 4.2.2, Table 4.2, parking in the Commercial General (C1) Zone shall be provided according to the following schedule:~~

~~Table 4.5 Commercial General (C1) Zone Parking Requirements~~

~~Residential Uses~~	~~0.5 spaces per unit~~
~~All C1 Uses~~	~~1 space per 400 ft2 (37.16 m2) of floor area~~

General Commercial (C1) Zone
Amenity Space Proposed Amendments

4.1.3 Amenity Space (proposed amendments in red)

a) All new Multi-Unit Developments containing four or more dwelling units shall provide On-Site Indoor or Outdoor Amenity Space in accordance with the following requirements: Bachelor and One Bedroom 200 ft2 per unit 18.58 m2 per unit Two bedroom Three or more bedrooms 225 ft2 per unit 20.90 m2 per unit 255 ft2 per unit 23.69 m2 per unit
b) Amenity space may include decks, balconies, gardens, landscaped open space, gyms, pools and other
c) Useable outdoor recreation amenity space shall be located in the side or rear yards and the recreation space must be usable space, meaning it shall be cleared, levelled, and grassed or otherwise landscaped to create an attractive outdoor recreation space for the amenity of the residents on the lot.
d) Amenity space shall be waivered for all residential conversions.
e) Notwithstanding Section 4.1.3(a), amenity requirements in the General Commercial (C1) Zone may be waived if the subject property is within a 400 m route to a public park or open space.