

March 6, 2023

Mayor and Council
City of Vernon
3400 30th Street, Vernon, B.C., V1T 5E6

Re: Drive-Thru Services in Vernon

Your Worship and Council

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce wishes to comment on a proposal to prohibit new drive-thru uses, which has been discussed with the Chamber at the transportation and economic development advisory committees.

The proposal focuses on banning drive-thrus in the city centre which covers the area from Highway 6 to 43rd Avenue and from 27th Street to 35th Street. This is a large and significant section of the community.

It's important to consider the economic impact of businesses that feature a drive-thru, whether it's a restaurant, bank, car wash, automotive service or liquor store. They provide meaningful employment, pay taxes to the City and have a community impact by supporting local charities and sports organizations. In terms of restaurants, more than 60 per cent of a business' revenue can come from customers using a drive-thru. It isn't feasible to think that those business models could sustain a 60 per cent reduction in revenue potential or remain competitive with grandfathered businesses that currently operate with drive-thrus.

It is also important to note that drive-thrus played a significant social and economic role during the pandemic, as it was one of the only ways that restaurants could operate for several months and it allowed individuals and families to continue to support local businesses.

The proposal to prohibit drive-thrus has been put forward by City administration as a way of reducing vehicle emissions, and there is no question that the issue of climate change is one we should all consider important. However, it is important to consider these following points if the number of drive-thrus are restricted:

- With a growing population, there will be increased congestion at existing drive-thrus and that will add to emissions;
- If customers adapt, they will do so by sitting and idling in parking lots with pick-up apps or use food delivery services with increased commutes for drivers, which will increase emissions;

- Adding drive-thrus is efficient when parking is unavailable, and parking is a rare commodity. Customers circling congested parking lots to find a spot will increase emissions;
- Parking and walking into a restaurant or a bank are not feasible for those with mobility issues, including many seniors. Vernon has a higher percentage of seniors than most communities;
- There is excellent walkability in downtown Vernon already but the biggest complaints are regarding parking because residents either don't want to or are unable to walk long distances.
- Many newer vehicles already stop idling while stopped in drive-thrus.;
- Drive-thru businesses are typically anchors which attract customers to surrounding businesses;
- In order to accomplish our environmental sustainability goals, we must continue to invest in infrastructure to support and encourage electric vehicle (EV) use and not deter business from investing in our communities.

Currently, the proposed prohibition of new drive-thrus in the city centre, but a Dec. 12, 2022 staff report indicates that “Any lots that have existing drive-through services within the impacted zoning districts could continue to operate until redeveloped or lapse of the use for more than six months.” That means that even existing drive-thrus could be lost depending on what is meant by redevelopment. Are renovations or an expansion of a restaurant considered redevelopment?

There is also a concern that the proposed ban would expand from just the city centre to include all of Vernon. That would send a message to investors that their business is not wanted in Vernon, and they will either set up shop in an adjacent community or bypass the region altogether. We need to keep the doors to business open if the community is to progress.

Voting to restrict drive-thru uses would only be a symbolic measure when it comes to reducing emissions while having little effect. However, there would be significant consequences for business vitality and sustainability in Vernon.

We urge council to consider this matter with extreme importance.

Thank you for your time.

Yours truly,



Dan Proulx
General Manager
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce