

More Parking For Customers, Clients, & Tourists

For more than the last three years, the DIB has been tracking consumer perceptions of downtown and the offerings available here. Not surprisingly, almost all indicators being analyzed started out favorable and have become more so – except for parking. The overwhelming perception held by most patrons and tourists that visit downtown is that downtown does not have enough parking and that it is difficult to park near where they want to go.

That perception should not exist because there are over 17,000 parking spaces available to the public within the area of downtown bounded by DeVillers Street on the west, Wright Street to the north, 9th Avenue on the east and the shoreline of Pensacola Bay on the south. With 9000 people working downtown each day and just over 1600 living downtown, there are still over 6000 parking spaces available for visitors and customers. The imbalance with this situation is easily obvious when one views the curbside space use/demand analysis. In many of the core blocks of downtown, a significant number (30% to 50+% depending upon the block) of vehicles parked in the prime curbside spaces stay in the same space for more than five hours each day. Turnover in the prime and most visible parking spaces just isn't happening like it has to for the customers, clients, and tourists to reach the downtown businesses and attractions.

As disturbing as it may sound, help is on the way. Beginning on the first day of this month, several changes to the off-street downtown parking locations have been made to encourage employees and all-day users of downtown to park their vehicles in the off-street garages and parking lots. In the Jefferson Street Parking Garage, more short-term parking has been designated and in a more convenient location within the facility. The daily maximum for short-term users has also been lowered from \$7.50 to \$4.00. More monthly parking leases have been created and are now available. To better manage the facility, the attendant booth has been discontinued in lieu of a pay-by-space automated system.

In the North Palafox Street Parking Lot, the daily maximum cost for short-term users has also been reduced from \$4.00 to \$2.00. Additional monthly parking leases are also now available in this location.

And beginning on April 1st, the Intendencia Street Parking Garage will begin accepting monthly permit parkers for the same monthly rate (\$35.00 with a one-year contract) as the Jefferson Street Parking Garage.

For those that have to pay for their own parking or who just refuse to pay to park, two new totally free parking locations have been created. On S. Jefferson Street, just east of New World Landing, all 77 spaces in the Jefferson Street Parking Lot have been designated as free parking. Likewise, 50 curbside parking spaces along W. Garden Street between DeVillers Street and Spring Street have had their time restrictions removed.

Both “free parking” locations will allow the same vehicle to stay in the same space for up to 24 hours at a time without cost.

And speaking of ticketing, a private parking enforcement company has also been employed to patrol the streets and off-street parking facilities to help ensure that the best, most visible, and easily accessed parking locations are in fact shared and most often available to those wanting to visit or conduct business in our downtown.

All of the changes to the off-street facilities have been made in an effort to bring more balance to the downtown parking system by making it easier and cheaper for all-day users of downtown to park in spaces other than the prime curbside parking spaces. As this conversion happens over the next few weeks and months, both the perception and the reality of more available parking near where visitors and customers want to go should start appearing. And with it, more attendees and customers should find their way into the businesses and attractions of Downtown Pensacola.

For information about securing a parking space in one of the off-street downtown parking facilities, please contact the Downtown Parking Management District at 850-434-5372.

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