



News Release

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Latest Progress in Downtown Pensacola Parking

Equipment and technology upgrades, additional free parking options and enhanced security inside the Jefferson Street Garage announced, the first of a long list of improvements being rolled out by the Downtown Improvement Board in the first 30 days since taking over downtown parking management duties on September 16

PENSACOLA, Fla. (Oct. 25, 2018) — Pensacola’s Downtown Improvement Board (DIB) has approved a recommendation from its Parking & Traffic Committee to select a new digital parking platform partner, a move designed to cut down on invalid tickets, provide the DIB with real-time access for assisting customers and eliminate multiple “convenience” fees currently charged to users who use the app to add time to their parking session, among other improvements.

The new app, **Passport**, is used in cities all over the world and has been mentioned in *TechCrunch*, *Fast Company*, *Wall St. Journal* and other media. Following a phased, three-month launch and testing period, iOS and Android versions of the app will be available for download beginning in early 2019. Until then, parkers may continue to use the Premium Parking app, or any pay machine or parking meter to pay to park at DIB-managed lots and on-street parking and the Jefferson Street Garage. The new app is a win-win for the DIB and for downtown visitors, according to executive director Lissa Dees. “Passport is a superior platform that also offered a better price,” she said. “But most importantly, it enables us to improve the overall parking experience and lower the cost for downtown workers, merchants, residents and visitors.”

The Downtown Improvement Board voted in August to cancel its contract with its out-of-state parking management vendor and bring those responsibilities in-house, following an in-depth

review and recommendation from then-acting executive director Dees. “A decade ago when the City asked the DIB to manage downtown parking, we needed the expertise, guidance and connections that a professional parking management company provided,” she said. “Now we have the experience, the knowledge and the people who can more effectively manage parking on a local level. “And,” she added, “Our decisions will impact us personally, because we live, work and play here every day, too.”

Dees is aggressively addressing parking issues that have plagued downtown over the years and says that removing the “middleman” enables the DIB to more quickly respond to issues and enact improvements, while also saving an estimated \$150,000 per year. The savings will be reinvested into walkways and sidewalks, lighting, cleaning, repairs and maintenance, safety features and improvements that will add value for all downtown stakeholders, she said. Revenues generated from public parking funded the recent purchase and installation of LED lighting throughout Jefferson Street Garage. The high-performance LED lighting is brighter and more energy-efficient, creating a greener and more secure garage. And just this month, the DIB hired a new employee to patrol the Jefferson Street Garage after hours, providing a late-night presence and a further boost to security.

In early October the DIB launched a project to upgrade 40 obsolete parking meters in the downtown district—many of which have been out of service and in various states of disrepair for years. Maintaining the district’s parking equipment formerly was the responsibility of the DIB’s third-party parking management vendor. Weather permitting, the DIB plans to have new equipment installed by the end of October.

The DIB has stepped up its efforts to communicate the free parking options available to the public. Within the district, parking is currently free along downtown’s main corridor, Palafox St., as well as on Tarragona St. and Garden St., among other locations. There is a two-hour limit in place to generate regular turnover so that free parking is accessible and not monopolized. A little-known, free parking site is the two-story garage at **Harbourview on the Bay** at 25 W. Cedar St., just off Palafox and Main, where free covered parking is available after 6pm each day and all day on weekends.

Dees says the DIB continues to strive to raise the bar for downtown parking. Other improvements are in the works, including a signage plan designed to eliminate the clutter of unnecessary signs, simplify information and ensure that DIB parking signs are consistently branded to distinguish DIB-managed parking from privately-run parking. “Most people assume that all downtown parking falls under the DIB,” said Dees. “But the DIB manages only about 18.7 percent of the parking that is available downtown.” The rules, costs and penalties of the rest are determined and enforced by a handful of private companies and organizations.

Many of the improvements currently underway originated from suggestions provided by downtown merchants, DIB parking ambassadors, experts such as “parking guru” Donald Shoup and the community. “Our goal is to create a positive, intuitive parking experience—one that is virtually forgettable because it is so seamless.” Dees said. She understands that it will take time and many small steps to turn things around to her satisfaction. “This is not a recent problem and there is not a quick and easy fix,” she said. “The forward momentum is promising, but we are just getting started.”

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About the Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board

The Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board (DIB) consists of 40 blocks that encompass the urban core of Downtown Pensacola. The DIB is governed by a five-member Board of Directors and guided by volunteer committees comprised of downtown property owners and businesspeople. To learn more about the DIB and all that is going on in Downtown Pensacola, visit www.downtownpensacola.com