



## **The Metered Parking Program**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

January 21, 2019

In early February 2019, the City of Sarasota will unveil its newest parking garage on St. Armands Key, providing hundreds of additional parking spaces. At the same time, metered parking will begin in St. Armands Circle to provide more accessible parking for visitors. By the early summer of 2019, the City is also launching metered parking in its downtown to provide improved access to stores and shops. To assist the community, we have provided this list of frequently asked questions.

#### **Why is there a plan to use parking meters?**

There have been significant changes in the community the past several years. The popularity of Sarasota and its population are increasing. This has led to a high demand for on-street parking spaces. By implementing a paid parking management program with metered parking, the City is helping to make more on-street parking available for customers and the disabled who require closer parking access, improve utilization of off-street lots, and reduce traffic congestion.

#### **Why is there a parking system budget deficit?**

In 2008, a Parking Master Plan was developed that recommended the creation of a formal Parking Division that would manage parking supply and facilitate building new parking structures, as a means to improve business development in downtown. Parking garages were built and are now operating, but the revenue programs required to pay for their operation and debt were not instituted. It takes more revenue than what parking garages can produce to pay for the program, and so a combination of solutions must be considered.

#### **How will users of disabled parking permits be affected?**

Improved access is the direct benefit, and valid users of a handicap permit using metered parking spaces are not required to pay on-street meters.

#### **Would I have to pay for a whole hour even if I'm just making a quick trip?**

No. It is the intent to provide up to 15 minutes free, but Pay Stations accept coins for shorter durations. If you only need a few minutes to make a brief stop, for example, to pick up a cup of coffee or a lunch order, simply put in a dime or quarter.

#### **How much will it cost to park in metered spaces?**

In St. Armands, rates vary depending on demand and proximity, ranging from \$1.50 to \$0.75 per hour. In Downtown Sarasota only prime, most desired spaces will be metered and it is anticipated to be \$1.50 per hour.

**Where will parking meters be located?**

St. Armands is a very compact and high demand area. Most spaces are metered except on N. Boulevard of the Presidents and S. Boulevard of the Presidents, where over 180 free and unrestricted spaces will be maintained. In downtown, parking meters would only be on Main Street, Palm Avenue, and Ringling Boulevard near the Sarasota County Historic Courthouse and Judge Lynn N. Silvertooth Judicial Center. These are the busiest streets with the highest demand for a parking spot.

**As a business owner, what is the direct benefit for me?**

Paid parking is used to manage parking demand, provide customers parking options, create turnover and make spaces available in the highest used areas where today there are few available. Making more spaces available for the consumer means more foot traffic and improved economic opportunity. Moreover, after covering expenses, the revenues can be redirected back to the area where the meters are located. Then, it can pay for things like improvements to storefronts or streetscapes, wayfinding systems, micro-transit or trolley programs, just to name a few. With paid parking, customers don't have to rush away to meet a time restriction. Instead they can park as long as desired.

**Do I have to use the pay station closest to my car?**

No. This system is convenient because it allows payment at any pay station or by phone via a mobile app, and any additional payment of time you desire. So, no "backtracking" to the pay station is required.

**Do I have to put a receipt on my dashboard?**

No. Backtracking to the car is not necessary. Once you pay at the station you are finished.

**Do I have to return to the original pay station to extend time?**

No. You can go to any pay station and add time for parking or use the pay by phone app, ParkMobile, from wherever you are located.

**What are the hours of enforcement for the parking meters?**

Parking meters would generally be active and enforced Monday – Saturday beginning 10 a.m. until the peak parking activity subsides and more spaces are available, usually around 8 p.m.

**Where is the free parking?**

St. Armands free parking is located on Boulevard of the Presidents, south of Monroe Dr. and north of Madison. Nearly 89% of all spaces in downtown would be free of charge. There are free public parking spaces throughout downtown Sarasota, both off-street (garages and lots) and on-street (curbside). The [Downtown Sarasota Parking Map](#) identifies a number of these free parking locations. Signage is posted if time restrictions are enforced.

**Is there enough parking in the downtown area?**

Yes. Along with the free parking in downtown, garage parking and with paid on-street parking, there are approximately 4,000 public parking spaces.

**How will the parking revenue be utilized?**

The revenue will be used in several ways. In St. Armands, all parking revenues are dedicated to debt service for the new garage, operations, and reinvestment to the district. In downtown, the program will include allocating a percentage of gross revenues to the area where metered parking is utilized. The

allocated funds could be used for streetscape improvements, signage, landscaping, and future programs that advance the downtown business community.

**Where will downtown employees park?**

For less than \$1 per day, the employee can participate in the [Employee Parking Permit program](#) and park in the city parking garages or assigned lots where spaces are preserved for their use. Employees could park legally in any other free parking spaces but are encouraged to remain clear of the high demand parking spaces so their customers have accessible parking.

**Won't metered parking cause people to stay away?**

St. Armands and the downtown have proven to retain a vibrant setting to dine, shop and enjoy for many years. Even the development of the new mall has not detracted individuals from enjoying downtown and St. Armands Circle. Studies of other cities doing the same thing are proving retail and restaurant sales increase after deploying properly set parking rates.

**Who wants to pay to park downtown?**

Remember, the clear majority of parking spaces will still be free. While people generally don't desire to pay extra for services, the data now proves that in downtown people will pay to park close to their destination. Private parking lots on Main Street, Pineapple Ave, 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Ringling Blvd. and more already use metered parking charging \$3-5 per hour. These lots are flourishing, with more meters being installed.

**Last time the parking equipment was a major problem. How do I know this will not be repeated?**

The Parking Division performed a national search for the best parking meter technology, and then field demonstrated them to users. Survey results overwhelming found the selected equipment to be far superior than the other manufacturer's equipment. If you can use an ATM, the selected meter equipment with its simple touch screen system will be easy to use.

**Why is this the right time to install parking meters?**

Other downtown metered parking programs have shown that a properly priced program does not deter users. These programs are used for improving parking access and offsetting financial costs of other parking requirements, such as operating parking garages. Waiting for increased density or more businesses only exacerbates the current problems and expands the debate over financial deficits and can interfere with resources that provide adequate levels of services. Fact is, meters are now being successfully used in private lots in downtown.

**Won't customers stop coming back if they have to park?**

This narrative is inaccurate because only a small percentage of street parking requires payment. The vast majority of public parking is located less than one block away and remains free to customers.

**Why can't all public parking remain free?**

With this program there still are thousands of free parking spaces very near the metered spaces. It is important to understand that it costs the City and its taxpayers to manage parking, and improperly used spaces cost businesses money if their customers can't find adequate close in parking. The supply of free parking in the highest demand areas is not unlimited, and therefore is not possible to maintain free in every parking space, especially the most desired spaces.

