



# **Policy: Free Parking for Downtown Restaurant/Retail/Service Workers at the Lakeview/College Street Garage**

March 17, 2021

## Table of Contents

- 1 - Overview
- 2 - City Goals
- 3 - Business Eligibility
- 4 - Employee Eligibility
- 5 - Funding
- 6 - Funding Audit
- 7 - Program Execution

## 1 - Overview

A free parking program for retail/restaurant/service employees has been an express goal under the Downtown Parking and Transportation Management Plan since 2015. It is recognized by downtown merchants as a valuable tool to attract and retain the front line employees while simultaneously making prime parking spaces available for visitors in order to keep Downtown Burlington vibrant, dynamic and welcoming.

During the holiday seasons of 2018, 2019 free-parking for restaurant and retail employees was funded by grants from Brookfield, a former developer of City Place Burlington. Coupons were created by DPW and personally distributed by the Burlington Business Association for parking at Lakeview/College Street Garage. The goal of this program was to reduce parking pressure from employees and increase capacity for customers at the Marketplace Garage, as well as increase utility of the Lakeview/College Street Garage.

After the 2019 holiday season, there were remaining funds available to continue the promotion. Therefore, in 2020 an updated program was launched that allowed merchants to produce their own validations for employee free parking. Before COVID-19 hit and garage operations were suspended in March of 2020, there were over 40 merchants using the program.

When garage operations resumed in June, the free parking program was re-implemented as a COVID-19 relief effort, still funded by remaining Brookfield funds. These funds sustained the program through February 2021, supporting the employees of 64 downtown merchants. After the Brookfield funds were fully utilized, program funding during March 2021 has been provided by Downtown Improvement District assessment funds earmarked for validation programs.

Beginning on April 1, 2021, The City of Burlington will begin to fund this program with a portion of the increased revenues resulting from the removal of “2 Hours Free” at the Marketplace Garage. This provides a sustainable and ongoing parking solution for the Restaurant/Retail/Service workers that are critical contributors to the vitality of Downtown Burlington. This program is known as the “Employee Free Parking” program.

## 2 - City Goals

1. Support the retail, restaurant, and service businesses of Downtown Burlington which are key to the City’s economy at large.
2. Increase appeal and retention of retail, restaurant, and service jobs in Downtown Burlington by reducing the cost of parking for these workers.
3. Increase parking availability for customers and visitors to Downtown Burlington in the Marketplace Garage and on-street parking by encouraging the use of the nearby Lakeview/College Street Garage for commuters employed by the retail, restaurant, and personal service industries.
4. Increase the utility of the Lakeview/College Street Garage.
5. Maintain a sustainable financial model to support this program.

## 3 - Business Eligibility

Eligible businesses/merchants must be:

1. Physically located within the boundaries of the Downtown Improvement District
2. Conduct primary business transactions within the boundaries of the Downtown Improvement District

The boundary of the Downtown Improvement District can be found here: [Link to DID Map](#)

The following types of businesses located in the Downtown Improvement District are eligible (examples are not exhaustive):

- **Retailers:**
  - Hard Goods – equipment, tools, furniture, décor, etc
  - Soft Goods – clothing, footwear, etc.
- **Restaurants:**
  - Sit down dining
  - Take out
- **Personal Services:**
  - Salons and Spas
  - Massage Therapists
  - Nail Care
  - Fitness
  - Hotel Hospitality

The following are NOT eligible:

- **Ineligible Businesses:**
  - Professional Services
  - Consulting Services
  - Technical Services

Eligibility criteria is subject to change as necessary to achieve the stated goals of the program.

## 4 - Employee Eligibility

For eligible businesses, the following defines the eligibility of their employees:

- **Restaurant, Retail, Service Workers, examples:**
  - Service Staff
  - Reception
  - Sales Associates
  - Customer-Facing Managers
  - Janitorial

The Following are NOT eligible:

- **Ineligible for this program**
  - Business Owners
  - Non-Customer Facing Management
  - Independent Contractors

Eligibility criteria is subject to change as necessary to achieve the stated goals of the program.

## 5 - Funding

This program was created in coordination with the removal of the “2 Hours Free” program at the Marketplace Garage and the opportunity cost for this program is expected to be covered by the increased revenue generated by transient parking for 2 hours or less. The following summarizes this expectation:

Historical Value of “2 Hours Free”		
At the Marketplace Garage (Conservative)		= \$400,000
Program Budget, Conservative Estimate:		
Revenue:	Increase Due to Removal of “2 Hours Free”	= \$300,000
Expense:	Employee Free Parking value: \$15,000/Month*	= <u>\$180,000</u>
	Balance of Revenue Increase	= \$120,000

\*Estimated based on program adoption in 2020 and 2021.

## 6 - Funding Audit

This program will be audited annually and presented to the Public Works Commission as part of the annual Parking Garage Reporting requirement. This report will show:

- 1) Total revenue at the Marketplace Garage from parking for less than 2 hours
- 2) Total cost of monthly permits issued under this program
- 3) Total number of ALL permits issued at the Lakeview/College Street Garage
- 4) Occupancy assessment at the Lakeview/College Street Garage to ensure it is not exceeding capacity
- 5) Assessment of the impact of Free Employee Permits on the ability to sell regular permits

## 7 - Program Execution

1. Parking Services will advertise the program via ParkBurlington.com and other avenues.
2. Initial requests for Business Eligibility for Employee Free Parking will be made via ParkBurlington.com.
3. Business Eligibility will be confirmed by Parking Services staff.
4. The Eligible Business will provide Parking Services with the following information for each Eligible Employee:
  - a. Name
  - b. Title
  - c. Job Duties
  - d. Email
  - e. License plate number
5. All businesses and employees are subject to eligibility audit.
6. A parking permit at the Lakeview/College Street Garage will be created for each Eligible Employee.
7. Parking Services will issue new Permits to the Eligible Employer for distribution to Eligible Employees
8. DPW will not coordinate directly with Eligible Employees.
9. Permit will be valid for 7 days per week for one month
10. Permit will expire monthly
11. Permit will be renewed upon request of the Eligible Employer via a form provide by Parking Services.
12. All renewal requests must be made by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the current month to renew permits for the following month.