

The District • Downtown Community Improvement District
11 S. Tenth Street • Columbia, Missouri 65201 • (573) 442-6816
discoverthedistrict.com

July 29, 2026

Mayor and City Council
City of Columbia
701 East Broadway
P.O. Box 6015
Columbia, Mo 65205

Honorable Mayor Buffalo and City Council Members,

On behalf of The District Board of Directors, I am writing to express our concerns, and respectfully oppose, the proposed amendments to Chapter 14 that would increase municipal garage parking rates, reduce the duration of free garage parking, and eliminate free Saturday parking in the municipal garages.

These proposed parking rate increases come at a time when retailers, restaurants, and other businesses are already facing significant economic pressures from rising operating costs and persistent inflation. Increasing the cost of parking risks discouraging visitors from extending their stay, patronizing multiple businesses, and spending more throughout The District. Likewise, preserving free Saturday parking provides an important incentive for guests to shop, dine, and attend events without the added burden of parking fees.

The proposed changes also do little to encourage employee use of the parking garages. In fact, higher garage rates may have the opposite effect by pushing employees to compete for limited on-street parking or making employment within The District less attractive. Maintaining affordable employee parking is an important component of supporting local businesses, attracting and retaining a reliable workforce, and preserving convenient parking for customers.

The District believes there are several alternative strategies the City should evaluate before implementing across-the-board rate increases. These include:

- Expanding or offering customer parking validation programs.
- Implementing dynamic pricing during special events and other periods of peak demand.
- Modernizing the parking system by removing meters and transitioning to app-based payments, with or without kiosks.
- Increasing rates for long-term or 24/7 garage parking rather than short-term customer parking.
- Consistently enforcing the existing 72-hour limit for hourly garage spaces to improve turnover and availability.

The District also believes additional revenue opportunities may exist within the current parking system. Before increasing rates, we ask that the City conduct a more comprehensive review of garage utilization, occupancy trends, and parking fee revenue to identify opportunities for improved efficiency. While we understand that parking citation revenue is deposited into the City's general fund, we also encourage the City to evaluate how those revenues are allocated as part of the broader financial picture for parking operations.

Affordable, convenient parking is essential to maintaining a vibrant business district, supporting local employers, and fostering continued economic growth. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the City Council to reconsider the proposed parking rate increases, preserve free Saturday parking, and

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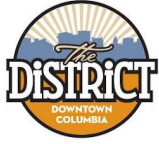
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work collaboratively with businesses and property owners to identify more effective, data-driven, and sustainable long-term parking solutions for The District.

Thank you for your consideration of these concerns. We appreciate your willingness to work collaboratively with The District and the business community to develop parking policies that strengthen our local economy and serve the best interests of all stakeholders.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lara P".

Lara Pieper, Chair
Downtown Community Improvement District

Cc: Greg Cecil, Parking Advisory Committee Chair

