

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June Brings More Parking, Free Parking, and Free Pedicab Rides to Royal Oak



Photo courtesy of Skoop Inc.

New Parking Garage to Open, Royal Oak DDA funds Free Parking in Structures Every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to Celebrate. DDA also funds free pedicab rides.

Friday, May 17, 2019— Royal Oak, MI— Royal Oak is about to bring a lot more parking online. A 581-space parking garage is scheduled to open by June 1st. To celebrate the grand opening of the new parking garage, the Downtown Development Authority approved a resolution at its recent board meeting on May 15th to fund free parking in all parking structures every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday in the month of June, beginning June 6th. Combined with the free parking on Sundays, visitors to downtown Royal Oak will be able to park in any structure for free four days per week, every week, in the month of June.

“Starting in June, we will have more parking, free parking, and a free pedicab service that will take pedestrians from the garages to their favorite spots in downtown for free,” said



Downtown Manager Sean Kammer. “The City and DDA have invested a significant amount into parking infrastructure. Clearly, it’s a priority.”

Next to the Royal Oak Public Library at 11 Mile Road and Williams Street, the new parking garage expands the parking options downtown by 581 additional spaces. It will be accessible from 11 Mile Road and eventually a second entrance will open that is accessible from Second Street. The new garage is expected to be open by June 1st.

Beginning June 6th, parking in any parking structure will be free all day every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday during the month of June. This includes all four parking structures in the downtown: North Lafayette, South Lafayette, Center Street and the new 11 Mile garage. The goal is to introduce people to parking in the garages who would otherwise limit themselves to looking for surface lot or on-street parking spots only.

“This is one way that we are trying to encourage people to choose to park in the structures before looking for a spot on the street. It will help calm congestion and give people a free and safe option to park their cars when they visit downtown,” said DDA Chair Jay Dunstan.

However free parking comes at a price. Since many parts of the parking system were built on borrowed money from bonds, relieving users of the charge to park is not as simple as it seems.

“The city isn’t able to give away free parking because of the bond restrictions on the parking system,” said City Manager Donald Johnson. “If there is free parking, the parking system has to be paid by someone. The DDA has chosen to compensate the parking system for the lost revenue from the free parking days in June.”

Some downtown business owners were also excited to see the DDA approve the resolution to promote free parking. Johnny Prepolec, owner of Mr. B’s Gastropub, and its downstairs speakeasy known as Johnny’s, was pleased to see the results of the DDA board meeting.

“If you invest millions of dollars into a major asset, such as a parking structure, you need to spend at least a fraction of that to advertise it,” said Prepolec. “This was a good move. We need to let people in the area know that there’s more than enough parking in Royal Oak and that it’s easy to use.”

Drivers will be able to park in all parking structures for free on the following dates:

- June 6, 7, 8, and 9
- June 13, 14, 15, and 16
- June 20, 21, 22, and 23
- June 27, 28, 29, and 30

The free parking dates coincide with the Royal Oak Chamber’s Art of Fire: Clay, Glass and Metal art fair on June 8th and 9th and the new Rock ‘N’ Rides festival on June 20th through the 23rd.

DDA Resolves to Fund Free Pedicab Service

The DDA also approved a resolution to fund a private pedicab service, Skoop, that will provide free rides in downtown during the free parking promotion. Skoop currently operates a fleet of electric bike taxis in East Lansing and plans to bring a portion of their fleet to Royal Oak for the duration of the promotion.

"My team is super pumped to come to Royal Oak," said Josh Cooper, Skoop founder and CEO. "Skoop supports economic growth in so many ways. We're not just moving passengers but we are driving traffic to as many local businesses as possible with our unique marketing capabilities. We have the power to create an exciting culture."

Skoop also specializes in mobility advertising as a source of revenue. According to Skoop's website, each vehicle has digital advertising displays attached to the exterior and interior. Its screens are always on the move displaying advertising content around town, subsidizing the cost of the ride for the passenger. Skoop is designed so that commuters will never have to worry about a walk being too far or a short ride being too expensive.

Three pedicabs will operate in June on Thursdays from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Fridays from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and then 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m., and finally Sundays from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The fleet begins operating in downtown on June 6th. They are available to take pedestrians to and from the downtown parking garages and their destinations in downtown Royal Oak. The rides are completely free of charge, courtesy of the Royal Oak DDA.

About the Royal Oak DDA

The Downtown Development Authority's (DDA) mission is to promote economic growth and revitalization in Downtown Royal Oak. The DDA will accomplish this mission by improving and maintaining a solid and user-friendly infrastructure, marketing Downtown Royal Oak to consumers and businesses, and encouraging preservation of Royal Oak's downtown. By fulfilling this mission, and DDA will enhance not only downtown, but the entire City of Royal Oak.

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