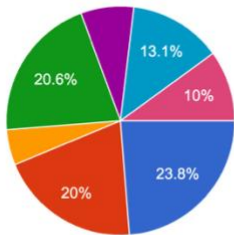


City of Sarasota Business Parking Impact Survey

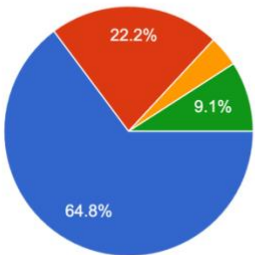
174 City of Sarasota Businesses

What type of business do you operate?
160 responses



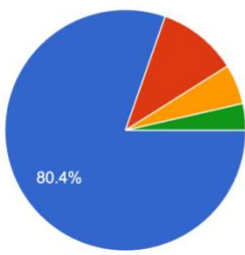
Where is your business located?
176 responses

- Restaurant / Bar
- Retail
- Arts / Gallery
- Professional Office
- Hospitality
- Personal Service
- Health & Wellness



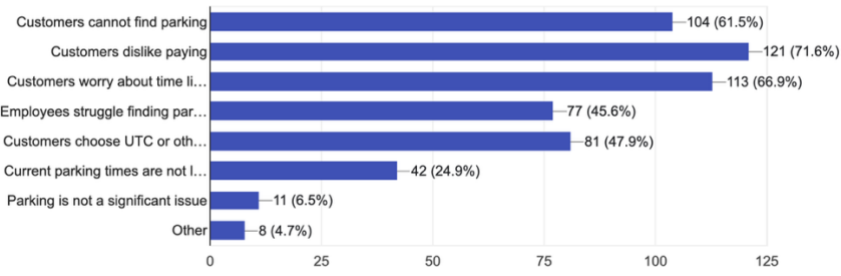
- Downtown
- City of Sarasota (not Downtown)
- Other
- I do not have a business

How often do customers mention parking as a concern?
168 responses

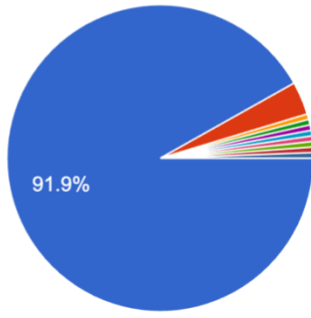


Which parking challenges affect your business?
169 responses

- Frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never



Would you support the City Commission suspending the recently enacted parking regulations while they pursue a meaningful plan?
172 responses



- Yes
- No
- would support going back to previous...
- yes, paid parking is good as long as it...
- Don't care
- How many times do you have to look...
- NO OPINION
- Remove the meters. Go back to 2hr p...

Summary of Responses

- **Impact on Local Business:** Respondents report a significant decline in patronage and revenue, attributing this directly to current parking policies, aggressive enforcement, and fees. Many customers are opting to visit areas like UTC or Waterside that offer free, convenient parking, leading to concerns that downtown is becoming less accessible and economically unviable for local businesses.
- **Frustration with Parking Policy and Enforcement:** The complexity, inconsistency, and expansion of paid parking hours—including weekends—are major pain points. Business owners and residents find the current system confusing, citing issues with unreliable kiosks, difficult mobile apps, poorly maintained garage infrastructure, and excessive ticketing that discourages visitors.
- **Proposed Solutions and Strategic Improvements:** Suggestions to improve the situation include implementing a first-hour or 15-minute free parking period, providing affordable parking permits for downtown employees and residents, and utilizing parking revenue strictly for infrastructure improvements rather than general fund generation. Many advocate for a return to time-limited, free parking zones to encourage space turnover and improve the overall visitor experience.
- **Infrastructure and Management Concerns:** There is widespread criticism regarding the reduction of available public parking due to new development and infrastructure projects, such as the Legacy Trail extension. Furthermore, participants expressed dissatisfaction with the allocation of existing parking resources, noting that city vehicles often occupy spaces intended for customers, and urged the city to address the lack of reliable public transit.

Actual Responses (anonymized)

It needs to get better!

Downtown is overbuilt. The infrastructure was not planned and improved prior to the approval of oversized apartment buildings and condo buildings. Too bad. Downtown use to be a nice place to go. Small town feel is gone. Now a wind tunnel between high rise buildings and concrete.

For gods sake invest in reliable quality public transit! Its not rocket science!

There is a hidden downside to the continued difficulties with parking in downtown. We do a lot of business at lunch and we like to do it at the restaurants downtown. When parking is a challenge, people are less willing to come downtown to meet. In turn, I believe this has reduced the number of restaurants open a lunchtime. If people can't find parking "right outside," why take on the risk of opening for lunch?

I'm not a business owner but I live in Downtown Sarasota and am aware of angst about parking...the expanded hours, the cost, the predatory enforcement, cost for people who work here. It's a driving factor -- a factor driving people away from our delightful downtown.

Downtown Sarasota should encourage people to spend time shopping, dining, and enjoying everything the area has to offer—not make them worry about parking meters and tickets.

The current parking policies and 24-hour enforcement make downtown feel less welcoming and more expensive. I recently received a ticket just minutes after my parking expired, which left a very negative impression. Visitors shouldn't feel like they're racing the clock while trying to support local businesses.

Small businesses and locally owned, parking should encourage people to stay longer, especially during evenings and weekends when people come to dine, shop, and enjoy events. Right now, the parking experience discourages that. The City's policies should support local businesses, not create another reason for people to stay away. I also hope the City places as much emphasis on improving public safety and addressing homelessness as it does on parking enforcement.

Sarasota's charm comes from its vibrant, walkable downtown, and I hope future decisions prioritize making it easier—not harder—for residents and visitors to spend time there. The city is NOT supporting small businesses, policy issues are driving people away from our downtown because there are other options.

I have been in Palm Ave for 10 years. The cost of parking is only part of the issue. My clients are frustrated with the actual technology. The meters are not user friendly and regularly do not work properly. Many don't want to mess with loading the app. It's intimidating to the older crowd who really need to park close.

I liked to eat, shop, use the library, attend the theatre, visit government and many more things . I no go downtown.

Parking spots keep taken away for other projects and no alternatives are offered. For example, the extension of the legacy Trail on Ringling Boulevard is eliminated over 40 parking spots.

Current Parking Policy keeps people from coming downtown!

The current parking program is having a significant and measurable negative impact on my business and many other small businesses throughout downtown. Every day, we hear from customers who choose not to visit because they don't want to pay for parking, can't easily find a space, or fear receiving an expensive parking citation. Instead of encouraging people to shop, dine, and spend time downtown, the current system is driving them elsewhere. Small businesses and locally owned restaurants are the heart of our downtown. We create jobs, contribute to the local economy, generate sales tax revenue, attract tourism, and help make our city a destination. Yet we are being asked to overcome barriers that are entirely avoidable. At a time when small businesses are already facing rising operating costs, inflation, and increased competition, the City should be supporting us—not implementing policies that discourage customers from walking through our doors. I urge the City to suspend the current parking program or implement immediate changes that prioritize the success of local businesses. This could include free parking periods, lower parking rates, customer parking validation, more convenient parking options, improved signage, and a fairer citation process. Parking should be designed to encourage commerce, not penalize the very people who support our local economy. A vibrant downtown cannot exist without thriving local businesses. If customers continue to avoid downtown because parking is expensive, confusing, or punitive, the long-term economic consequences will far outweigh any short-term parking revenue. I encourage the City to work collaboratively with the business community to develop a parking solution that supports economic growth, strengthens our downtown, and makes it easier—not harder—for residents and visitors to shop, dine, and invest in our city.

Go to UTC at lunch or dinnertime. The stores and restaurants are full. Free parking and plenty of it. Come back downtown at the same times and find a ghost town these days.

I understand when times are busy like in the "season" that we have more issues with parking. But when times are slow like in the summer we should encourage people to shop downtown and spend money in the local businesses and abolish parking meters entirely.

While I'm not located downtown anything that affects people's choices to coming into the general area will ultimately affect all surrounding businesses. Plus eventually they will increase the scope of the paid parking footprint. IE the free two hour spots will be next.

I have lived here since 1978 and I cannot tell you the confusion and constant changing of the parking rules in Sarasota. It feels like more money is spent on buying parking meters changing parking rules, enforcing parking rules, changing parking signs, then literally making any money off of people parking. The saddest thing of all is it affects our tourism. All these changes are very confusing to people here trying to enjoy our city and vacation. People that live here can hardly understand what the hours are now with the fees are now what's the method in pain now more or less a tourist who doesn't speak English very well I think it's absolutely ridiculous. What has happened with our parking rules and changes over the years. And for those of us who lived downtown, I don't even know what rules pertain anymore. One time I got three tickets in one day because I parked on the street when I came home for lunch then again when I parked on the street to get my haircut then again when I parked on the street to go to my law office, the reason I got three tickets in one day was because of a rule I never even heard of that you can't park more than once within a block of each other. I went to the Citi and I discussed it with the city manager and sure enough it was in the Sarasota charter. I'd like to see one set of parking rules and have those rules consistent for many years.

Go back to time limited parking...enforce with cameras

I do not own a business downtown, but I support and frequent many businesses downtown. The solution is to install speed cameras and ticket speeders. No extra cost for employees, vehicles, insurance, fuel, uniforms. Higher fines and income for Srq and SAFER walkable downtown!!

I think free parking is a silly issue to fight over. The real issue is the continued removal of public parking, which allows private lots to charge ridiculous rates. Most people do not mind paying \$4 for a couple of hours of parking when they are already spending significantly more on dinner or shopping. What they care about is whether they can find parking and how close it is to the businesses they want to visit. Paid parking also discourages people from leaving their cars in prime downtown spaces for long periods of time. A better approach would be to use parking revenue to expand downtown public parking, offer the first 15 minutes free (for delivery drivers and takeout customers), and provide reasonably priced parking passes for downtown employees.

I don't own a business downtown, but I am a patron of downtown businesses. The parking fees are an added burden and definitely inform my decision whether to shop/dine downtown or go elsewhere.

It sounds like most of the parking revenue is used to support the parking enforcement division. not actually help to improve parking.

Parking fines and fees should only be used to support parking. Spaces should be reduced like the wider sidewalk proposal that removes over 100 parking spaces on Main St. The Parking program should not be for profit generation and a parking garage for the Business end of Main St needs to be explored to attract more business to downtown and give Employees and place to park affordably.

Our responses are based on the seasonal months from October through May for our Shibui at Home location at 401 S. Pineapple.

Parking meters are often not working

For my business, I check numerous downtown condos in different locations. It's expensive and inconvenient to deal with paid parking for each location. As a City of Sarasota resident who also does business downtown, a free or low-cost parking pass would be the right thing to do to support tax-paying residents/business owners. Offer free parking in City with annual business tax.

I do as little as possible Downtown because parking is always a problem

The city needs revenue from whatever sources are available and if the state moves to end property taxes, services for residents are in trouble. I do not see the cost for on-street parking a burden at a few cents per hour. If people can not afford the cost of a parking meter then they probably could not afford a steak or lobster tail. I'd like to see Main St set as a pedestrian way initially during the weekends. All too often I see a few bad actor drivers on busy main street adding noise and or aggressive driving endangering people as they try to have a peaceful experience dining or walking.

My customers don't mind paying to park it's the Nickle and diming the patrons all morning and night long that creates negative energy for our area and aggressive ticket giving.

I am hopeful that I will be able to speak at the meeting on Monday

I took a parking ticket myself because I didn't notice that Sundays are not free anymore. I called to complain and someone at the City told me that they did their due diligence advertising it on social media (I'm not on social media, but read the Observer and didn't read anything about it/when the City closes S. Pineapple Ave for events, there are flyers on every light pole/the new hour sticker was of the same color of the post, not allowing people to see any difference). Also, I was not told that if you pay the ticket within 24 hours you get a \$5 reduction. I find it totally unnecessary to charge on Sundays.

I would be willing to contribute funds to hire legal representation to sue the city to return palm avenue and main street to 2 hour free parking

my office company is privately owned but people will start parking in our lot to avoid paying. but this city has become nothing but money hungry as a resident myself the parking has gotten out of hand and i promise you the city will feel the effects when people stop coming to SRQ as a whole.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital employees utilize the alley parking once used by business owners to access their own businesses. We are not allowed to use the parking structures yet they take spots for business owners and employees behind Hillview Plaza. SMH has said there's no way to stop their people from taking these valuable spots. The City needs to issue parking decals for business owners and employees only, thus making SMH employees park in the parking structures built for their use only. This is a huge problem. Easy solution. Protect the people who have to access their own business property.

Have full-time residence pay amount for parking downtown and have a sticker that they can use all year long

I have customers state they will not return to St. Armands Circle due to the cost and time changes for parking.

As a business owner I am so tired of people saying not to come downtown but to go to UTC. None of those tax dollars stay in our City. Make some streets permit parking and give permits to residences and some businesses . And leave the core downtown streets at 2 hour parking. The City would make their money on the permits. And leave the patrons and businesses happier. Or let the residences and businesses park for free in the parking lots by permit if there are not enough streets available for permits. But not the core streets.

The city parks their huge pick up trucks and all their cars in the parking garage so the customers have no place to park. The city gets paid for employees to park as well. No parking for the customers. The parking spaces that are available are not marked clearly, so the customers get tickets. It's been an ongoing situation for 25 years that I know of. It's ridiculous! I'd love to have a count on how much transportation the police force have. Boats horses. Cars, motorcycles, golf carts, bicycles, air boats parking enforcement cars volunteer cars. The list goes on and on. It's outrageous at the city builds a parking garage and then parked their own vehicles on it. What good does that do the community? The company I rent from manages the entire block and won't join the downtown Association for \$200 Also, a lot of people support Whole Foods and they won't join the down Town Association for \$200. Same goes for the banks They're so listing business from Downtown but they don't care enough to join the downtown Association. It's a damn shame!!!

Why can't they do a parking pass like they used to do for the garages? As someone who sometimes forgets to repay the meter or goes in somewhere less than 10 minutes and they've already got my car. It makes wanting to shop and dine in downtown less favorable when there's other places that have free parking or parking lots.

I have already submitted comments to the Herald Tribune.

Bad news - parking is a problem. Good news - a lot of people want to come to town.

We all know people who won't shop downtown because of the parking. 10's of thousands of tickets issued annually. Many of those people will never come back. Seniors have trouble downloading apps and the complexity of it. We have had people come in asking for change for the parking meter. The parking rules are aggressively enforced. Very little effort is made to help people with the parking scheme. The parking is the biggest threat to downtown businesses. Your new plans for Main St will make parking even worse. I know businesses that will close and move to UTC and similar areas if you decide to go through with tearing up Main St. It's hard to make it today with high rents and costs rising on every front and the City of Sarasota is just making it worse. One hour free parking would turn over the spaces faster and enable more people to find parking.

I started and have owned Mercantile Home & Apparel for the past 12 years. I have seen a lot of change to the parking downtown over the years. I also have 12 years of sales figures that I refer to for the facts. Historically, Sunday's downtown have always been an excellent day, even in the summer. The locals knew that parking was free and would take advantage of the free parking to roam downtown and shop downtown businesses. That has stopped. Sundays are now the slowest day of the week per my sales. This has never been the case in 12 years. While summers are always slow, this year is proving to be exceptional. The new parking change has a very apparent effect on my sales. We already saw snowbirds being in town for shorter periods (during season) as well as less tourism (during season) for the 2026 year. January - May, I am down (about 4.25% from last year). June was a bit higher of a decline (11% down from June 2025). But, then the new parking times were rolled out; July is down 30% from last July. It is unheard of in the past 12 years for my numbers to drop that drastically. There is a clear and direct correlation to the new parking plan. Happy to sit down and share my numbers. I am operating deep in the red. We hardly see anyone shopping and those we do are the few tourists in town. We have lost the support of our local regulars. They have been extremely verbal about it, you are welcome to come spend the day in the store with me and experience (the feedback, complaining, etc) it for yourself.

What a joke. UTC is eating our lunch; new and trendy businesses and eateries and free parking. Downtown has too many homeless people who are allowed to loiter, empty and dated storefronts and costly parking.

This is killing our business especially as opposite is under construction so our catchment area is local but we won't see the benefit of Mira Mar until it is finished and by then our lease will be up! We are pushing the population to UTC.

I have lost business in the past year due to parking enforcement, lack of parking, & customers not wanting to pay for Main St or parking garages, there are limited 2 hour parking spaces. They don't want to rush in doing business & with UTC and Waterside areas in LWR offering no cost, unlimited hour parking, I have lost SO MUCH REVENUE

1 hour free parking wouldn't help as I own a Pilates studio where the classes are an hour. Also not enough time for dining establishments. We want to encourage people to stay and hang out downtown.

Business is being driven away from downtown Sarasota

The street should remain paid parking and garages should be free to drive people to the garages as was the original design.

Main concerns: Extended times for paid parking (past 8pm and weekends now) is a huge negative for downtown business. We've had a lot of negative feedback by patrons.

I own a business but it's not downtown. I used to patronize downtown businesses a lot but stopped entirely when the paid parking began.

Parking is a very hot topic. I believe that the new changes and the reduction of free parking stresses out the consumer and the business owner. I constantly see the parking police and it doesn't send a friendly vibe to anyone. Visitors- residents - business owners. I feel like the city is using the parking as a quick money grab. The parking authority is constantly present and makes us feel like we are always being watched. It's not a good look for any of us.

My employees cannot afford to be paying daily for parking. Some pay \$10 a day which is roughly half of the total yearly contribution to an IRA. It's absurd. Also, the lots you can get parking passes for are always full from 12pm-12am most days.

I believe customers having to pay for parking hurts business.

I believe that is okay that the city charges for parking. We are now a metropolitan draw and I don't know of a "real" city that doesn't charge. That said, I believe that they could make it a lot more user-friendly. The kiosks are confusing, the app is difficult and the broken elevators at the State Street Garage for months and months on end are ridiculous. I certainly understand that the retail stores might benefit from a first hour free and would support my fellow business owners in that. Retailers are the ones who most stand to lose money to Lakewood Ranch or other shopping areas where parking seems "more convenient" to the customer. I think people will pay or walk a bit if they insist on finding free parking for restaurants and other services, but we have been so inconsistent with our parking policies that no one has gotten used to it fully. We will definitely have to train the public and perhaps we need a public awareness campaign of the different options available to them and why paying for it supports a more vibrant downtown.

Though our business is not in downtown, we are on the periphery and have clients in downtown Sarasota and know parking is an issue. Our building has a private lot

Customers struggle with the meters working properly, Customers express frustration with tickets and elevators not working and or not being able to extend parking

Parking has been a longstanding problem in this area due to the simple fact that there has never been enough parking to meet demand. Instead of addressing that shortage with meaningful solutions, the response has been to charge for parking, creating an even greater deterrent for residents and visitors.

Paid parking doesn't solve the underlying problem—it shifts the burden onto the people who support local businesses. Faced with parking fees, time limits, and the constant concern of returning to feed a meter or risk a ticket, many people will simply choose to go somewhere else. Why would anyone willingly spend their money in an area where their visit is dictated by a parking meter when they can drive a few extra minutes to a place with free, convenient parking?

If the goal is to encourage economic activity, attract visitors, and support local businesses, policies should make the area more accessible—not less. There are many other avenues for generating revenue that don't discourage customers from coming in the first place. Solving the parking shortage and creating a welcoming environment would do far more for the local economy than relying on parking fees that ultimately drive people away.

The cities and the counties, will be stressed going forward should the amendment for additional homestead being acted. This will force the hand finally of the consolidation of the city government and county to operate more efficiently. The city has wasted funds. I don't know how and where, but all I know is that. Over the last 10 years, hundreds of millions of new added revenue have come to the market. In new tax property tax revenue, and they still cannot provide efficient services. I am hoping once the homestead amendment comes to fruition. They will have no choice but to consolidate hallelujah.

2 hour free parking

Southside village is having so many issues as well its horrible- we are losing guests and our staff has no where to park, its really bad

This new program has definitely hurt my business. I hear all day long they will be going to other locations to shop, dine, ect That has free parking.

I do like the first hour free idea but I don't know if that fixes any issues with balancing the need for revenue generation to pay for the bonds vs the annoyances of paying for parking. There must be a balance between the two competing priorities, understanding the parking is limited. I have had a retail establishment downtown Sarasota for 20 years free two hour parking encourage turnover.

1 hour free parking or validating parking for customers who spend \$xxx would be huge. Even 15 min free parking would be extremely helpful.