

## Norfolk curbs some parking restrictions

By Janie Bryant  
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### NORFOLK

Parking changes that begin today are aimed at bringing more visitors downtown over the weekend - and keeping more commuters around after work.

City spokeswoman Lori Crouch said officials hope the changes will lead downtown businesses to extend their hours.

Norfolk is battling a perception that parking is a problem, which keeps some people from making the trip, she said.

"We've got plenty of parking down here," Crouch added - there are about 19,000 spaces in downtown parking garages.

Here's a look at the changes:

- On-street, two-hour parking at meters is now free on Saturdays.

Free two-hour parking was already available every day after 6 and all day on Sundays.

- Downtown workers and others with monthly passes for parking garages can now stay until 9 p.m.

Previously, they had to pay for time after 6 p.m.

- The city has removed all parking meters within the arts district north of Brambleton Avenue. Free two-hour parking is now available at all times there.

- At parking garages, patrons may now use credit cards as well as cash for the collect-on-entry method used during parades and special events.

Kevin Murphy, president of the Downtown Civic League, said parking was one of the big problems that he and other residents hoped to alleviate when they organized.

He predicts free Saturday parking will boost activity downtown.

It's not just feeding the meter that people saw as an obstacle, Murphy said. It

sent the wrong message when people going to a restaurant or shopping saw plenty of spaces on the block and still had to pay to park.

"And then to get a ticket on top of that," he said, creates one of those "never again" moments for visitors.

"We're trying to take away those moments."

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