

Holiday parking: Free for 2023 promo popular with businesses and shoppers

by **Jim Brown**

December 22nd, 2023

The City of Evanston “Holiday Parking: Free for 2023” promotion began Nov. 22 and will extend until Jan. 1.

So far, the promotion has proved to be popular with shoppers, retailers and restaurants alike. To access the deal, shoppers can use code “HOLIDAY2023” on the [Park Evanston app](#). The discount is valid for two hours of free street parking a day in parking zones across all of Evanston.

The Holiday Parking Promotion first came up during a First Ward town hall meeting with Council Member Clare Kelly. Business owners at the meeting were looking for a solution to help promote shopping and dining in Evanston during the critical holiday season. Someone suggested offering free parking, and city officials, working with members of the [Economic Development Committee](#) and [Downtown Evanston](#), developed the holiday concept.

“The response from Evanston retailers and restaurants to the free holiday parking promotion has been positive,” said Andy Vick, Downtown Evanston director. “This initiative is a great example of the City of Evanston listening to business owners and collaboratively developing a solution that benefits the community.”



Downtown Evanston parking Credit: Bob Seidenberg

Vick also noted that “accessing free parking through the Park Evanston App is much easier for shoppers compared to holiday parking discounts the city offered in past years.”

“We’ve improved upon our annual free holiday parking campaign, ensuring wide accessibility for community members and visitors, encouraging them to experience the holiday charm of Evanston while contributing to our local economy,” said City Manager Luke Stowe.

As of Dec. 19, shoppers in Evanston had redeemed \$63,261 worth of free parking.

“Following the holidays, our team will analyze data on retailer sales revenues, city tax revenues, the free parking cost to the city, and then execute an objective assessment of the overall impact of the promotion,” said Paul Zalmezak, the city’s economic development manager. “The City Council wants to understand the impact of the promotion on sales taxes and increased shopping frequency in Evanston, with the possibility of executing free parking promotions at other times of the year.”

“We also anticipate that the free parking promotion will increase downloads and usage of the Park Evanston app, both with Evanston residents and residents from surrounding municipalities,” he added.

The **app** is a quick and convenient way to pay for parking from a mobile device. After downloading the app from the Apple or Google Play stores, users can find their parking zone by looking for the unique zone

number on Park Evanston signs and decals, enter parking session information, choose a payment method, and manage their parking on the go.

Eric Kirshbaum

December 25th, 2023 at 5:57 PM

My wife and I lived in Evanston for 27 years but moved to Glenview two years ago because of Evanston's increasingly high taxes, poorly run city departments, and barely any restaurants or fun bars downtown to grab a patio beer in the summer. What a shame that other neighboring suburbs have fun and lively downtown areas that are also family friendly. Evanston needs competence and courage to lead it out of its sorry state of affairs.

The political babble by the city manager in this article is all you need to read to understand the b.s. When someone in charge of managing a potentially great city like Evanston speaks like a political robot you know things will only get worse. Vote them all out and do better!

Anna Marie Crovetti

December 25th, 2023 at 12:15 PM

Truly a wonderful RELIEF and it encouraged shopping & dining in Evanston even more. But, the parking force and drones were still out, and within seconds of an expired meter, I received the gift of a seemingly "mean" parking ticket. Happy Holidays to you, yep.

And to support all other comments here, Evanston businesses and other venues would surely benefit and welcome more to the city. Perhaps alderpersons that growled about this should pay attention outside of their bubbles.

And so it goes.

Laura McDougall

December 24th, 2023 at 10:08 AM

Just imagine how much Evanston stores and restaurants would benefit from completely FREE parking ALL YEAR ROUND! The paid parking scheme is nothing but a money grab for the city. Imagine how many businesses could have been helped earlier. Evanston is a shadow of its former glory now... too many empty storefronts! Gaslighting Evanston residents that paid parking is a benefit to our community is low. We deserve better. We deserve accountability of these poor decisions.

Richard Weiland

December 24th, 2023 at 10:05 AM

Nice idea. The value of the free parking is, of course, grossly inflated, since it takes credit for two hours of parking, even if the parking session is just 10 minutes.

I wonder how well the free parking is being promoted to shoppers who live outside Evanston. I got a couple of emails from Evanston establishments advising of free parking, and nothing from public sources. Hope it's working, though.

Marti DeBoer

December 24th, 2023 at 8:25 AM

Although cumbersome, I used the discount and definitely went downtown more to shop and eat. Generally I avoid shopping unless there is free or inexpensive parking everywhere in Evanston. Since downtown Wilmette offers free 2 hour parking we frequently prefer to dine there. I hope Evanston will rethink the exhorbinate rates and loss of free 1 hour parking everywhere. The businesses would surely benefit.

SUSAN ANI

December 23rd, 2023 at 6:47 AM

I tried to use the free holiday parking on Park Evanston a few days ago. I typed in the code, the app displayed my total fee for 2 hours was going to be \$0, and when I tapped the checkout icon I got a message that my “card” had been declined and thus I was denied my parking approval.

Dennis Miller

December 22nd, 2023 at 6:38 PM

Does the Holiday Parking extend to the public garages?

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