

Five ways to make parking in downtown New Bedford great again

Recently, the City of New Bedford announced a **\$5 million dollar upgrade to the Elm Street parking garage** and a **new parking app** to end the frustration of feeding the meters. These go a long way to making parking downtown better, but don't address the biggest issue: people don't feel safe parking in the Zeiterion or Elm Street garages at night. Here are five ways to make parking downtown great again.

1. Turn the Custom House Square urban park back into a 60-space, long-term parking lot. We wrote an article addressing this issue **here**. The closer you can park to the business you are visiting, the better.

2. Provide paid security at the Elm Street and Zeiterion parking lots from 9pm to 3am on Friday and Saturday nights and during major events like Summer Fest. There is no security at the two garages, just people issuing time tickets and collecting money on the way out. The workers head home around 6-7pm. Paid security walking around the garages at night would supplement the future security cameras and go a long way in making people feel safe to park there late at night and early mornings. A small increase in parking fees should allow for new security.

3. The New Bedford Police Department should increase foot patrols downtown from 9pm to 3am on Friday and Saturday nights. Driving around isn't enough. Having a strong police presence during peak hours will go a long way in making people feel safe, especially women walking to and from their cars late at night.

4. People who visit downtown need to report crime. Ignoring

crime when you see it is a sure way to ensure it continues. If you see something suspicious or an actual crime, report it to the police. When criminals feel they can't get away with crime in a certain area, they move on. Minding your business shouldn't be an option.

5. Downtown businesses should consider setting up a fund or be willing to pay a small tax increase to help pay for the security. A more secure parking garage will allow for the possibility of valet parking there. Collectively, businesses could negotiate a deal with the city. While the streets are full during peak hours, the garages are empty and only a few minutes away from most businesses downtown.

Downtown **New Bedford** has added a ton of new restaurants and **businesses over the past few years** and the street parking has become crowded. New Bedford has plenty of parking downtown during nightlife hours, but most of it resides in the empty parking garages. If businesses step up, and the City and police department increase security, the downtown business district will thrive even more.