

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parking Meters Make a Comeback in Downtown Kent

KENT, OHIO – SEPT. 22, 2014 – After a couple of decades in retirement, parking meters are making a comeback in downtown Kent. The next phase of the City’s downtown parking plan brings back 225 parking meters (out of 1,150 spaces downtown) to help support Kent’s downtown merchants who rely on frequent turnover of customer parking.

In the 1970’s the City had as many as 400 meters in operation in downtown Kent. City Manager Dave Ruller noted that “The parking meters may evoke some nostalgic memories from downtown Kent’s former glory days, but these new meters are all about quarters for commerce today – supporting Kent’s merchants that have invested in Kent and need our help now.”

The return of parking meters is the latest phase of a comprehensive parking plan that the City developed in cooperation with downtown business and property owners that tries to match the mix of parking needs with as flexible a parking supply as possible for those who visit and work in Kent’s newly revitalized downtown.

“The beauty of the ‘mixed use’ development in downtown Kent is how the many pieces come together to make a unique destination -- but that is also the biggest challenge,” points out City Manager, Dave Ruller. “Each different use has its own unique parking needs but they all share the same space to park -- so the City’s challenge is to fine tune the parking to be as supportive as possible to as many different uses as possible.”



S. Water Street photo from the Kent Historical Society.

Satisfying the competing demands of mixed use parking has been a topic of discussion in downtown Kent for decades. A 1975 downtown parking study noted that parking meters are part of a long term parking solution that would also need to include additional parking lots and possibly a municipal parking deck. As part of the recent downtown redevelopment the City has added new surface lots and constructed 4 floors of parking in the PARTA Gateway; the parking meters are the final piece of that larger plan.

Incorporating single-space meters into the downtown parking plan adds yet another alternative to the variety of free and paid parking choices available in the City’s vibrant and bustling downtown. “Installing meters in select locations downtown will help keep our prime, on-street parking spaces available for customers,” said Heather Malarcik, Executive Director of Main Street Kent. “Free short term parking options will still be available for those who don’t mind walking a short distance to their destination.”

The new, easy-to-use, smart parking meters accept coins, credit and debit cards and offers pay-by-phone and contactless payment options. The meters provide for flexible time limits so users can purchase the amount of time that best fits their downtown parking needs. These are the same meters that Kent State University has successfully installed on their campus making the transition between campus and downtown as seamless as possible.

The installation of the meters is expected to be complete by the end of October, with the system operational in time for the holiday shopping season in November. The City is still working on finalizing the specific details for the new meter system but anticipates the rate will be \$1.00 an hour and the meters will be active during regular business hours.

For more information, including a map of the paid and free short-term parking areas, please visit www.kentohio.org.