

New six-story parking garage opens on Monday

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CHAMPAIGN – The city's new 600-space parking deck opens Monday and, to encourage people to try it, the city is making drivers' first hour of parking free every day through May.

Stacy Rachel, administrative services supervisor for the city, said city officials believe the parking deck, which cost \$10.6 million, should prove an attractive option for downtown visitors. It's located behind the M2 building, at the intersection of Randolph and Hill streets.

"It's a new option for people, and we want to give people an opportunity to try it out," Rachel said. "Hopefully, they'll like it."

A ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at the Hill Street entrance to the deck at 2 p.m. today, with free coffee and cookies available. Attendees can park in the deck for free during the ceremony by entering through the Randolph Street entrance.

The six-level deck is well-lighted and includes an elevator. The first three levels are open to the public for hourly parking, which, after the first hour, will cost 75 cents per hour. Visitors can pay by cash, credit or debit cards, and there will be a manual lane with an attendant available from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday. The garage will only charge for parking between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. on weekdays. Hourly spaces are free on weekends, Rachel said.

Rachel said those who use the garage and stay after 11 p.m. will have to pay by credit or debit card, as the attendant won't be there. Signs will indicate that payment after 11 p.m. is only by credit or debit card, Rachel said.

Rachel said city staff plan to develop a validation program in the near future where permit holders with passes will automatically see the gate rise for their vehicles when they enter or leave.

Elizabeth Hannan, administrative services manager for the city, said the deck should help bolster downtown Champaign.

"The new parking deck will make it easy and convenient for people to take advantage of everything that downtown has to offer," she said.

Permit parking will be available on the top three floors of the deck. Daytime, residential and reserved permit parking options are available.

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