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**Parking meter rate increases in line
with recent improvements**

LEXINGTON, KY—Parking in downtown Lexington has always been risky business: search for a space, fumble for quarters and race to return in an hour. And while parking rates are rising, those risks are decidedly dropping.

Beginning January 5, rates for on-street parking meters will rise from 25 cents to a dollar per hour. But Gary Means, Executive Director of LEXPARK (the Lexington and Fayette County Parking Authority), believes downtown visitors, residents and workers are getting more bang for their meter buck. Means said the rate increase is in proportion to recent initiatives to make downtown more accessible and inviting by improving LEXPARK's equipment, enforcement and services as well as increasing the 1 hour time limits to 2 hours.

“We have upgraded to electronic meters to give people more payment options, while at the same time, we’re reducing street clutter by adding multi-space meters,” Means said. “We’ve also added a team of Outriders, officers who provide consistent parking enforcement as well as maps and friendly advice for visitors.”

But the proof is in the parking, Means said. “All these features support our main goal, and that’s making more parking spaces available throughout the day.”

Launched in July, LEXPARK's equipment and enforcement improvements have made a noticeable difference for people visiting downtown to shop, dine or conduct business, according to Renee Jackson, President of the Downtown Lexington Corporation.

“Before LEXPARK began enforcement it was almost impossible to find a spot after 8 a.m. due, presumably, to the metered spots being occupied all day by people who work downtown,” Jackson said. “I have since received a number of compliments about LEXPARK from merchants who now have parking available for their customers.”

More improvements are on the way. The **LEXPARK SMARTCARD**, available in early 2009, will allow parking patrons to quickly and safely pay for parking with a personal card that contains a tiny transmitter.

“And coming this spring is a program that will really help folks who get caught in a time crunch,” Means said. “It’s called Park-by-Phone, and we’re looking forward to offering this service.

“Downtown leaders appreciate **LEXPARK**’s improvements,” said Harold Tate, President and Executive Director of Lexington’s Downtown Development Authority. “**LEXPARK** has brought downtown Lexington into the 21st Century by using solar-power parking meters that accept credit and debit cards,” Tate said. “I believe the parking rate increase is justified.”

Lexington’s meter rates have remained unchanged for more than 25 years, last increasing in 1983 from a nickel to a quarter per hour. The upcoming increase will bring city-owned meters in line with meters at the University of Kentucky and Rupp Arena.

Even with January’s rate increase, Lexington’s metered parking rate is below the national average of \$1.48 per hour. That figure comes from a 2008 survey of more than 50 U.S. cities, with hourly rates ranging from \$0.25 to \$8.00 an hour.

The new rates are a welcome trade-off for downtown business owners, according to Gene Williams, owner of Natasha’s Bistro Boutique. “The increase in price will be worth it,” he said. “Paying a couple of bucks for parking will easily offset the tickets customers used to get with the old one-hour meters, and they won’t have to waste time circling the block.”

Williams believes **LEXPARK**’s improvements have enhanced the downtown business climate. “The new parking system has eliminated the biggest barrier to marketing downtown: being unable to find a parking spot,” he said. “Downtown is open for business!”

Parking rates in some Lexington areas will see a smaller increase, to 50 cents per hour. Those areas include Old Vine (with Shreve Avenue and Grand Boulevard); all areas east of Old Vine, Clay Avenue, Walton Avenue and South Ashland Avenue; and all meters on and north of Mechanic Street.

For more information about parking rates, locations and payment options, visit the **LEXPARK** office at 114 N. Upper St., call 231-PARK (7275) or log on to www.lexpark.org.

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