

For Eau Claire City Council Public Comment period at Council meeting on 9/23/24

Hello – my name is Deb Marshall and I have lived at 315 Riverfront Terrace for over 14 years. Being a founder of the social group the Phoenix Park Urbanites, I have actively promoted getting to know our neighbors. I'm speaking for several of the friends I've made to say we really like living here. We've also seen many problems and one of the most frustrating has been the NOISE from the Galloway Street parking ramp. We know to expect some urban noise, but the ramp is now an "attractive nuisance." The first year was fine as entry and exit gates encouraged use of the ramp for its intended purpose of PARKING. When the pandemic hit, that's when things got out of hand. The gates came down and it's WIDE OPEN to anyone who wanted to use it for activities other than parking.

The past 4 years have gotten progressively worse as no concerted effort has been made by the City to address the problems. Non-parking activity happens mostly at night and includes:

1. NOISE: Motorcycles and cars race up and down the ramp, revving engines, making incredible amounts of noise which is clearly in violation of the City's ordinances. We are highly skeptical that the parking app is actually sending parking bills or collecting from these scofflaws. This noise occurs all year long, almost every night, and more on the weekends. It is SO loud that car alarms are regularly triggered. Just ask the police how many times they have received calls from our residents. They investigate, but perpetrators return a half hour later and make even MORE noise in retaliation. It is a SYSTEMIC problem. Some residents have even confronted them personally – pretty risky. Excessive vehicle NOISE is NOT the intended use of the ramp.
2. SPEED: This is a VERY UNSAFE place to park after 5:00 p.m. We are afraid that a reckless driver will hit, injure, or kill someone.
3. CAMPING/LOITERING: Although this has improved, we have witnessed homeless people taking up temporary residence there, which has no toilet facilities, so you can imagine... We have had some male loiterers staring into female resident's apartments, which is VERY disconcerting. Again, NOT an intended use of the ramp.

Short of 24-hour staffing, if we expect the ramp to be used safely, here are a few ideas:

1. Enforce existing noise ordinances – this is critical.
2. Ensure PARKING ONLY signs are posted at the entrances – they are only in the stairwells now, so do no good for vehicles. Any other activity is TRESPASSING and will result in serious fines.
3. Improve video surveillance cameras that can actually identify perpetrators.
4. Install SPEED BUMPS that are clearly marked (we've asked and gotten no action on this).
5. Institute regular police patrols at least 2 or 3 times a night.
6. Consider gates again, and if so, put up motorcycle barriers at the pedestrian entrances too.
7. Keep the ramp clean! Crummy surroundings promote crummy behavior.

We want to help and would like to meet before the end of the year with the responsible City officials to create a doable action plan. Frankly, the lack of action so far is quite an embarrassment for the City.

AND FYI - As of October 1 we have everything in place to officially establish a Downtown Neighborhood Association. This parking ramp issue will likely be near the top of our list of action items, and you'll hear from us on other important issues to the 1,200+ people who live here.

See our website at www.dnaofec.org