

Concerns Over Downtown E.C. Parking Ramp Highlight Continued Parking Issues

downtown residents form Downtown Neighborhood Association due to North Barstow parking ramp complaints

[McKenna Scherer](#) | July 10, 2025



RAMPED UP. The North Barstow parking ramp, pictured at left, is located in the heart of downtown Eau Claire. Downtown residents formed the Downtown Neighborhood Association last fall in order in hopes of better addressing disruptive activity occurring in the ramp. Many of the group's members live in the Riverfront Terrace apartments, some of which are pictured at right.

If there were a fifth season, "construction season" – occurring in tandem with Summer – would be a strong contender in the midwest.

While downtown Eau Claire typically sees construction increase during the warmer months, this year has brought a significant amount of construction projects to the area. In the North Barstow District, construction began on May 27 and aimed to wrap up

around June 20, though that timeline has been [extended](#) to early-mid July; downtown business owners voiced their concerns that significantly decreased foot traffic to their storefronts would be an unintended result of the weeks-long construction.

In an effort to counter the temporary absence of street parking during construction, particularly on and near Barstow Street, the City of Eau Claire opened the North Barstow parking ramp for free parking. While the fee removal may have alleviated immediate street parking concerns, the parking ramp has been a sore spot for neighboring residents long before this summer.

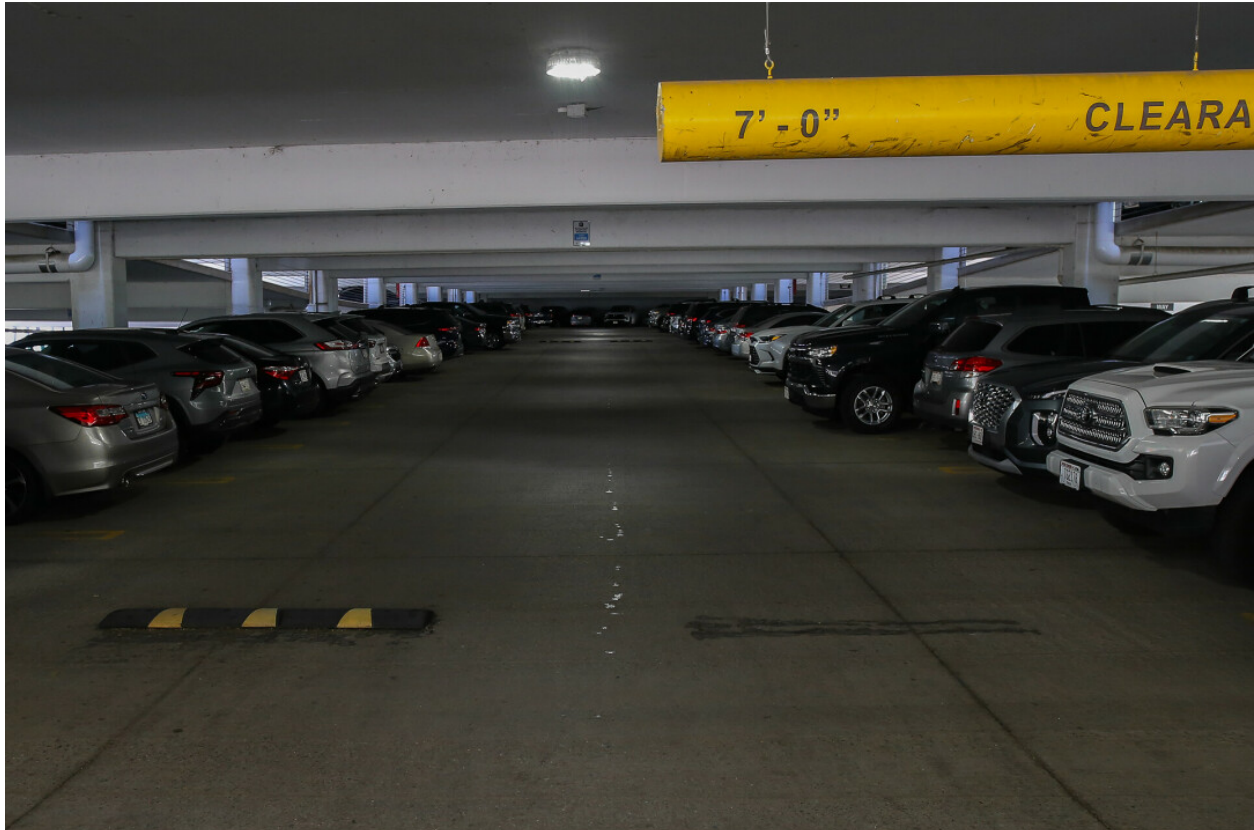
The Downtown Neighborhood Association

The [Downtown Neighborhood Association](#) (DNA) officially formed in October 2024 as a result of ongoing issues related to the North Barstow parking ramp. Many of DNA's members live in the Riverfront Terrace apartments, located near – and for some units, parallel to – the parking ramp, including Deb Marshall.

Marshall, a 15-year downtown Eau Claire resident and DNA chair, has appeared in front of Eau Claire City Council on a number of occasions to discuss the group's concerns related to the ramp. The most distressing of which, is exhibition racers – both cars and motorcycles – speeding through the ramp during the nighttime and early morning hours, Marshall said.

In the past year, Marshall has attended five-plus council meetings in order to speak to those issues during public comment. At a September 2024 meeting, Marshall described the uptick in issues nearby residents have noticed in recent years, particularly since 2020.

“The past four 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,” Marshall's public comment statement reads.



Rubber speed bumps were placed in the North Barstow parking ramp's first and second levels, though roughly half of them have since been removed. City staff is unsure if removal was intentional or not.

While meant to deter speeding and potential exhibition driving in the ramp, the Downtown Neighborhood Association continues to receive complaints from residents about related noise at all hours of the night.

The observation was echoed by Lieutenant Bridget Coit in an article published this spring by the [Leader-Telegram](#). "Our communications center and officers have noted a few complaints of vehicles squealing their tires and driving erratically in the ramp since 2018; however, the amount of complaints of incidents increased in 2024."

Since 2024 – and as recent as the June 23 council meeting – Marshall has attended city council meetings to speak at public comment, citing revving engines, speeding and racing up and down the ramp's four levels, and camping/loitering as significant concerns from the DNA. Marshall and the group suggested some potential solutions or methods to deter the non-parking activities: installation of speed bumps, regular police patrols at night, and reinstalling parking gates, among other things.

During a recent phone call, Dave Solberg said the city is discussing how to bring a number of recommendations from the Downtown Parking Study to life, including the hiring of an official parking administrator. However, funding for the new role would most likely need to come from funds gained by first implementing paid street parking, Solberg said – something some residents and business owners are against.

Marshall, vice chair Dianne Lueder, and other members of DNA have also initiated conversations and meetings with various city staff, in hopes to find a solution or create a plan to address the increased amount of noise and non-parking use of the North Barstow ramp.

In April, the city [closed](#) the North Barstow parking ramp's fourth level in hopes of deterring such activities. Rubber speed bumps were also glued along the first two levels of the ramp at some straightaways and ramps, and several have since been removed. It has not been confirmed whether they were forcibly removed or not.

"It is painfully apparent to me and all who live near the ramp that the only true solution is controlled entry. That means gates and good cameras," Marshall said.



The fourth level of the North Barstow parking ramp was closed in April of this year, in hopes of deterring non-parking related activity. Downtown Neighborhood Association members say those activities have moved to and continue on the third level.

The City's response

Currently, parking-related duties are split among a few city departments and individuals, including the Neighborhood Services Department, Engineering Department, and the Eau Claire Police Department.

In the most recent [Downtown Parking Study](#) – which includes [recommendations](#) for paid street parking, efficiency measures, and more – the parking consultant strongly encouraged the city create a singular parking department or one position to handle all parking-related duties.

The recommendation is something DNA agrees with, as Marshall spoke to her own experience witnessing “finger-pointing and confusion” among city staff as a result of the present setup, which does not clearly define parking leadership.

Dave Solberg, deputy city manager, said he often acts as the “intermediary” person between the public and those at the city, related to parking issues.



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As for efforts to address the DNA’s concerns and complaints regarding the North Barstow parking ramp, Solberg pointed to the city’s installation of speed bumps, upped police patrols, and the I.T. Department’s current efforts to address issues related to the ramp’s security software.

The ramp, though utilizing a number of security cameras and the Passport parking payment software (which was implemented in [2023](#)), is not able to capture license plate numbers and automatically issue tickets to those who may be seen not paying for

parking, or are using the ramp for non-parking purposes. (Notably, the Passport app is not designed to act as ramp security software.)

Solberg said another potential strategy to discourage people from using the ramp for non-parking purposes – should additional speed bumps and software updates prove ineffective – is to install proximity gates. The gates would serve as speed control, acting as a barrier at each of the ramp's entrance/exit points (there are currently zero gate arms in the ramp).

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DAVE SOLBERG

DEPUTY CITY MANAGER



The North Barstow parking ramp is currently offering free parking to all downtown Eau Claire visitors due to heavy street construction. The ramp does not have exit or entry gates, as pictured above, at any time.

“If reinstalling the speed bumps and adding more doesn’t work, then we’d go to those ramp arms. If those don’t work, then we’ve talked about if there’s an opportunity for ramp attendants (or) are there things that we can put inside (the ramp) that would be sound dampening, that would not be subject to vandalism,” Solberg said. “City staff wants to solve this as much as the neighbors down there.”

Of the DNA’s repeated appearances at council meetings and outreach to city staff over the years, Solberg said the organization has been helpful in illustrating the severity of issues at the ramp.

Councilman Charlie Johnson – also a Riverfront Terrace resident near the North Barstow ramp, which he acknowledged has received noise-related complaints for a few years – echoed Solberg's sentiment.

“I would rather (people share their opinions and concerns) versus, we’re making decisions and we’re hearing from no one. I think that would not signify a healthy and engaged citizen base, which I think Eau Claire does really have.”

The bigger picture for downtown parking

The North Barstow parking ramp (303 Galloway St.) – host to over 750 parking stalls over four levels, some of which are rented to neighboring businesses JAMF and Royal Credit Union – is the newest of downtown Eau Claire's parking ramps.

As pointed out in the [Downtown Parking Study](#), downtown's two other parking ramps – the Gibson Street ramp alongside The Lismore hotel and the Riverside ramp on Graham Avenue; totaling over 500 parking spaces – are at the end of their useful lives, slated for demolition within the next three years.

At that point, the city will need to decide whether to replace both parking ramps – which could cost upward of \$20 million, according to the parking consultant – or not. Either way, the North Barstow ramp will continue to be a necessary resource in downtown Eau Claire, and potentially grow into its most vital one.

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CHARLIE JOHNSON

AT-LARGE MEMBER, EAU CLAIRE CITY COUNCIL



Councilman Charlie Johnson pictured, pictured at right, during an early 2025 council meeting. (Photo by Andrea Paulseth)

Looking ahead, Solberg said he hopes city council will make an amendment to the [2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan](#) (CIP) to allocate funding to the North Barstow parking ramp – intended for potential updates such as to its camera and security issues – before November, when the city's full operational budget will be approved.

Councilman Johnson said the city is still in contact with John Forster, the parking consultant who presented the Downtown Parking Survey results and recommendations, as city council continues to discuss the future of downtown parking.

Johnson described two options currently being considered: the first would include rolling out paid street parking in phases, which would allow time for residents to familiarize themselves with the new model but would not allow immediate hiring of a parking administrator; the second option would implement paid street parking across downtown all at once, allowing for the more immediate hiring a parking administrator.

"It's kind of a Catch-22 where, if we are going to do paid parking and if we want to address these parking concerns, we do need a designated parking individual or section of the city where all of this can be handled," Johnson said. "I do firmly believe that if we had that, these parking ramp issues would have been resolved by now – but we just don't have the funding for it. That's what paid parking would accomplish."

View the City of Eau Claire's [2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan](#) in full online • The City of Eau Claire's Engineering Department publishes a weekly street closures report each Friday, with the latest report from July 3 [now available](#) • Eau Claire City Council meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, which you can learn more about at eauclairewi.gov/government/city-council