



Jubilee Theatre is a performing arts venue focused on highlighting the Black American experience. The theater is located at 506 Main St. in Sundance Square. (Camilo Diaz | Fort Worth Report)

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ARTS & CULTURE

Low-cost garage parking on the horizon for Fort Worth art patrons as free spaces expire

by David Moreno
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As free parking in two downtown garages **nears its end**, Fort Worth art patrons could see some financial relief when visiting their favorite theaters early next year.

The downtown Fort Worth tax district is finalizing a yearlong pilot program that would support garage parking validation for several performing arts venues.

Patrons who park at either 777 Main or City Center garages pay \$5 per vehicle when visiting Bass Performance Hall, Jubilee Theatre or Circle Theatre the evening of a performance. Bass Hall's resident companies — Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Texas Ballet Theater, Fort Worth Opera and the Cliburn — would also be included.

The tax district's board of directors **approved the program Dec. 8**. City staff is working to finalize contracts with the garages.

Andrea Duffie, communications coordinator with the city's economic development department, said the goal is for the program to take effect "as early in 2026 as possible." The timing will depend on coordination between the garages and eligible performing arts venues, she said.

Performing Arts Fort Worth, which oversees Bass Performance Hall, is in conversation with the garage owners to discuss payment options for patrons attending shows and events, said Jason Wise, senior VP of operations at the performing arts nonprofit. Additional details will be provided as plans are finalized, he added.

Owners of the garages participating in the program did not respond to requests for comment.

Andy Taft, president of Downtown Fort Worth Inc., said the proposed plan helps mitigate the **economic challenges facing theaters**. The downtown group administers the tax district.

In 2017, about 9.4% of American adults attended a stage play. Attendance dropped to 4.5% in 2022, according to **surveys by the National Endowment for the Arts** and U.S. Census Bureau.

"The performing arts are an anchor in downtown, and parking is a barrier to entry for customers," Taft said. "The groups don't need yet another hurdle on top of everything else."

More than 2,500 on-street parking spaces remain free on weekends and after 6 p.m. on weekdays. Patrons of restaurants and retailers in Sundance Square can **receive free parking with validation of up to two and a half hours at garages** at 345 W. 3rd St. and 201 W. 6th St.

Terms of the program



Free parking at garages such as this 777 Main garage downtown at 601 Commerce St. will be a memory after Dec. 31, 2025. (Bob Francis | Fort Worth Report)

The downtown tax district has provided some form of free evening and weekend parking since 1999. The district funds come from incremental tax dollars paid over a base year's collections.

The district uses those funds to provide amenities, such as the free parking, tourism and convention business support, and assistance with public infrastructure projects in the downtown area.

The downtown taxing district paid \$122,180 for space in the City Center garage and \$318,394 for the 777 Main garage in fiscal year 2025, according to a presentation at the Dec. 8 board meeting.

Through the new pilot program, the two garages will be reimbursed up to \$5 for each validated transaction for a combined maximum total of \$300,000 annually.

Garages will continue to charge the reduced parking rate even if the downtown tax district reaches its payment capacity. Any costs over the district-supported reimbursement will be the responsibility of the garage owners, according to the presentation.

The program could run for up to three years. The tax district's board and garage owners will assess usage and the financial impact of the program after the first year before deciding next steps, Duffie said.

Downtown arts venues feel relief



Founded in 1981, Circle Theatre is dedicated to presenting innovative and compelling theater productions while fostering a love for the performing arts. (Billy Banks | Fort Worth Report)

Council member Elizabeth Beck, who chairs the downtown tax district, said the program will support the arts by easing the transition to market-rate parking for patrons.

Jubilee Theatre’s artistic director D. Wambui Richardson, considers the pilot program a “good middle-ground” solution. Low-cost parking helps get the theater’s supporters through the doors, especially for its **45th season next year**, he said.

Tim Long, executive director of Circle Theatre, said the latest changes are a great sign of city officials, business leaders and arts groups working together to keep downtown “vibrant and welcoming.” The contemporary theater has been in Sundance Square since 1994.

“We’ve been fortunate to have free parking for a long time, and while this incremental change doesn’t solve every parking issue, it’s a strong first step that will help keep audiences coming downtown to support the arts and Circle Theatre,” Long said in a statement.

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