

4th Street Garage Replacement

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did the City take down the old garage?

In late 2018, a structural engineering study determined that the 4th Street Garage (built-in 1985) was structurally unsound and unsafe for use. The garage was closed to parkers on January 1, 2019. The structure had deteriorated more quickly than anticipated and would require costly repairs that would only extend the life of the garage for a few years. City Council voted to raze the badly deteriorated garage and replace it with a more environmentally sustainable structure that would maximize the capacity for parking at that site. Demolition was a step that could be undertaken while the design of the new structure was evolving.

Why has construction work stopped at the garage site?

The design of the structure has been ongoing since November 2018. Demolition and pre-construction activities took place from September through November 2019. The original design for the replacement garage anticipated the acquisition of the property at 222 South Walnut Street as an opportunity to maximize capacity for parking without exceeding a height considered to be out of scale with the structure's environs. The Monroe County Circuit Court Judge's recent denial of the City's attempt to acquire the property has temporarily halted construction.

A timeline of events related to the City's acquisition of property at 222 South Walnut follows:

- September 2018: City staff meets with Juan Carlos Carrasquel to discuss his property at 222 South Walnut in the context of plans for the parking garage. (Carrasquel had purchased the property for \$500,000 in April 2018.)
- October 2018: City staff, construction consultant, and architects meet with the property owner to discuss the possibility of integrating 222 South Walnut into footprint for garage design.
- April 12, 2019: City staff meet with the property owner to discuss site acquisition terms.

- Late April 2019: As required by statute, City obtains two appraisals from two independent appraisers, establishing the average value of the property at 222 South Walnut of \$587,500.
- May 8, 2019: City staff and property owner discuss terms for purchase. The property owner rejects City's offer to purchase 222 South Walnut for \$587,500 and proposes a counteroffer of \$1.5 million.
- City and property owner come to an impasse on offer to purchase due to difference in appraisal and counteroffer from the property owner.
- Summer 2019: City files petition in Monroe County Circuit Court to acquire property by the mechanism of eminent domain.
- December 20, 2019: Monroe County Circuit Court Judge denies the City's petition, citing the owner's objection that the proposed garage includes commercial use and therefore the City is not seeking the property for a public purpose.
- December 30, 2019: City files a motion seeking leave to amend its legal complaint to remove the commercial space from the project.
- January 28, 2020: Monroe County Circuit Court Judge denies City's amended complaint.
- January 31, 2020: City files a notice preserving its right to appeal the Judge's decision.
- The City continues to assess all options to construct a sustainably designed public structure supporting our downtown's economic and cultural vitality. Once construction begins, it is expected that the project will require 9-12 months to complete.
- February 17, 2020: City announces its intention to present an updated design for the garage on property currently owned by the City to Plan Commission.
- March 9, 2020: Plan Commission reviews new design. Pending approval by the Plan Commission, the process of bidding the job out to prospective builders will ensue. Once construction begins, it is expected that the project will require 12 months to complete.

What is the source of funding for the Fourth Street Garage project?

Funding for the project comes from Tax Increment Finance funds with approval by the Redevelopment Commission, the statutory body that oversees the use of these funds. The source of TIF funds is the increase in property taxes generated on new development in that district. Project expenses include such things as land acquisition, design, demolition, and construction, and total costs of \$12.7 million are projected. The sale of bonds for the project was also approved by City Council.

A map of Bloomington's TIF districts can be found on the City of Bloomington website, [here](#).

Is the end of 2020 still the projected completion date for a new garage?

No, the delay in acquiring the property at 222 S. Walnut Street has caused a delay in the completion of the parking garage. Pending approval by the Plan Commission on March 9th, the process of bidding the job out to prospective builders will ensue, with the contract expected to be assigned by late June. Once construction begins, the project is expected to take 12 months to complete.

Are there negative impacts of the delay in construction?

The projected delay in the construction of the new garage will lengthen the period during which residents, employees, and visitors to downtown Bloomington will need to seek alternate locations for their vehicles. The delay also entails a cost of approximately \$2000/wk in fees relating to construction management, including securing and managing the site. Some adjacent businesses have reported a decrease in sales and visits that they attribute to parking challenges related to the absence of the 4th Street facility.

Will the garage include commercial space as originally anticipated?

Current plans for the garage will include the originally anticipated commercial space. In addition to more than 500 parking spaces, the design has designated space for the Parking Services Office on the structure's ground level along the Walnut Street facade. In addition, the garage will feature public restrooms, bicycle parking, and lockers on the ground floor.

Why is commercial space being incorporated in the garage design?

Nationally recognized planning principles hold that urban buildings be designed to create activity and interest at the street level through the provision of commercial, retail, or hospitality activities on the ground floor level. Bloomington zoning laws follow this principle, although developers may obtain waivers/variances to modify a development if warranted. The presence of public restrooms, bicycle parking, and lockers on the ground floor will also ensure regular activity along the ground floor of the building.

Would the request for a waiver have to get approval from the Plan Commission or City Council? What is the timeline for that process?

As with every development (public or private), the City of Bloomington Plan Commission must approve a waiver to modify a development. The City will take the design petition to the Plan Commission when the property dispute is resolved. It is estimated that this process could take up to 6 months to resolve.

How is the City facilitating parking during this period?

The City will pursue an extension of its lease with the County for surface parking south of 3rd Street (near the NAPA Auto Parts store), where current permit holders will continue to be able to park, until the opening of the new 4th Street Garage. Non-permit holders may park in this lot free of charge after hours and on weekends.

Is there an opportunity to turn the construction site into a temporary surface lot?

No, the site cannot safely or cost-effectively be turned into a temporary surface lot. To serve as a safe parking lot, the site would require several improvements (curb transitions, striping, lighting, and more) that would require more time and greater costs to create a minimal number of temporary parking spaces than would be fiscally prudent.

Will the upcoming convention center project impact the availability of nearby surface lots?

No, the upcoming convention center expansion project will not affect the surface lots currently used by employees, customers, residents, and visitors. The construction phase of the convention center project is expected to begin after the completion of the 4th Street Garage project.

Will the City make changes to local traffic flow during the period of delay? If so, what will those be?

Yes, the City has re-opened an additional lane on Walnut between 3rd and 4th Streets to facilitate smoother traffic flow in the area.

What additional steps will be taken to ensure the safety of the construction site?

The construction site has been secured. The City will place vehicle barricades preventing vehicle flow on the north-south alley between 3rd Street and the east-west alley off of College Avenue.

What are the other options for parking near the downtown while the garage construction project continues?

The City continues to offer public parking in the Morton Street Garage (at Morton and 6th Streets) and at the Walnut Street Garage (Walnut & 7th Streets). In addition, short-term, on-street, metered parking is available throughout the downtown. Free parking is also available in the surface lot at the southeast corner of Third Street and College Avenue after 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and all day on Saturdays and Sundays.

In addition, construction of the Trades District Parking Garage just south of 10th and Rogers Streets is underway and will be completed in late 2020 or early 2021. This will add more than 350 spaces to the overall inventory of structured parking spaces downtown.

The City is exploring other short- and long-term options for parking downtown.

What are the public transportation routes that best serve the downtown, especially those near other garages?

The City of Bloomington encourages all residents to review public transit options, especially when traveling to the downtown core. Lines serving the downtown include the 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 lines. Following is a map of the downtown Bloomington Transit routes, which can also be found at <https://bloomingtontransit.com/>.

A map of Bloomington's bike/pedestrian trail network is available [here](#). The map indicates signed bike routes, multi-use paths, bike lanes, shared lanes, trails, and neighborhood greenways.