



The City of Glendale, California

Case Study



Charge for Parking: A Major Policy Step for Glendale, California.

DPT's cutting-edge parking technology boosts revenues, lowers operating costs, improves parking availability in Glendale.

A southern California city's new approach to parking relies on an innovative management program that uses existing on- and off-street parking in a more comprehensive and integrated approach. But first, the City of Glendale had to charge for parking.

Glendale, CA, is located at the southern base of the Verdugo Mountains. With a population of 207,000, it is the third largest city in Los Angeles County. It has regional access from three freeways, linking it to neighboring communities such as Burbank, Pasadena, North Hollywood and downtown Los Angeles.

Two years ago, Glendale adopted a broad-ranging transportation and mobility plan to revitalize the city's downtown core, to move away from traditional car-centered patterns of urban growth and to better utilize its parking resources. The comprehensive Glendale Mobility Study, designed to improve the quality of life

in the downtown core, was adopted by the City Council in 2007.

A Parking Shortage Perception

A key part of Glendale's strategy was to reduce the perception that it was very difficult to find customer parking downtown and increase use of available parking resources. Part of the reason for this perception was the high utilization of free on-street parking spaces (especially by employees in the unregulated evening hours).

Glendale now has an integrated on-street and off-street pricing system that allows people to pay for parking spaces in the most convenient on-street spaces and to find short-term (90 minute) free parking in the surrounding garages.

Creating a 'Demand-Responsive' Pricing System

Evidence from other U.S. cities suggests that at any given time, drivers cruising for parking account for 30% of traffic volume on downtown streets. The Glendale system is now designed to reduce cruising for parking, allowing the user to find paid parking on-street and 90-minute free parking off-street.

Studies of peak parking occupancy rates in Glendale showed that occupancy rates varied significantly among different facilities. While public garages were never more than three-fourths full – and often only half full – on-street parking space in the heart of the commercial district on Brand Boulevard was occupied more than 90% of the time.

Rather than going into a nearby garage, drivers cruised the block, waiting for a vacant space. The core of the problem was the price of parking and the need for an integrated on- and off-street parking system.

"While the garages are not overly expensive, it is difficult to justify going into a garage to pay for something that seems to be given away for free," the Glendale Mobility Study reported. "Market-priced on-street parking will save time, reduce traffic, conserve energy, improve air quality and increase public revenue."

Changing drivers' habits required a significant shift in policy. Glendale approved a plan to

eliminate free parking on the main commercial streets downtown. On-street parking rates are now \$1 per hour. The city can monitor and adjust prices to achieve a parking space occupancy rate of 85%.

Revenue Management

Glendale recognized that such “demand-responsive” pricing required new technology for revenue management. The practical problem was how to collect and control parking revenue and how to improve the efficiency of the parking system. The city’s Traffic and Transportation Division based the selection of a revenue management solution on two major objectives: accelerating end-user acceptance and reducing total cost of parking operations.

The city selected a multi-space parking meter technology that provides users the convenience of multiple payment options (coin and credit card) – and offers significantly lower operating costs than single-space meters through reduced cost of collections and maintenance.

Officials evaluated two alternatives for parking revenue management: Pay-and-Display and Pay-by-Space. They selected a Pay-by-Space

option mainly because of the enhanced customer experience provided by an easy “park, pay, go” operation; the capability for clients to add additional time; and the increased efficiency of enforcement.

After evaluating several possible solutions, city officials selected the LUKE multi-space pay station from Digital Payment Technologies (DPT). Crucial requirements were the need to support a wide range of communications networks; ease of use and full-color high-resolution screen; and auditing and revenue control features.

From Plan to Action

Ending free parking in the downtown core was not a trivial change. Stakeholder involvement in the process was a crucial success factor. “This change was analyzed and reviewed in many ways before implementation,” said Jano Baghdanian, Glendale’s Traffic and Transportation Administrator.

Before the first multi-space parking meters went live in December 2008, the city launched a public relations campaign through local print, radio and television media that communicated the role of parking management in realizing its plans for downtown revitalization. Implementation of the multi-space parking meter system was part of an overarching program that integrated on- and off-street parking into a system.

Glendale put “parking ambassadors” on the street every day for nearly a month to answer users’ questions. For six weeks, it applied a policy of soft enforcement, issuing only warning tickets for first offenses.

Benefits

In the system’s first year of operations, Glendale has seen significant improvement in parking efficiency downtown. The parking shortage perception has changed, more prime parking spaces are available near businesses, the once under-utilized parking structures have seen an increase in occupancy, and there is improved capability to manage operations and monitor financials. (The parking occupancy rate along Brand Boulevard that was previously above 90% has been reduced to about 80%.)





The management system continuously monitors every multi-space parking meter, manages credit card transactions in real-time, and provides managers with standard reports and key performance indicators, thus eliminating a great deal of tedious work and resulting in significantly improved parking operations.

“The reporting features are used for several different purposes,” Baghdanian said. “The maintenance staff is able to log in and determine if any machines require service. The collection staff is able to see the exact coin count for each machine and identify any that are near capacity. And our administration / finance personnel are able to balance revenue reports to the money in the bank.”

Before installation of DPT’s LUKE multi-space pay stations, Glendale had used only single-space parking meters. The additional auditing and revenue reporting have provided the city with tools it has not had available in the past.

“Basing the collections on the revenue report is more efficient than collection from every machine and introduces randomness to the collection route,” Baghdanian said.

Some improvements are highly visible. For Porto’s Bakery, for example, in the heart of Glendale, it was nearly impossible to find close, on-street parking before the changes. Now, a steady stream of cars flows in and out of on-street spaces near the bakery entrance.

Merchants up and down Brand Boulevard see the same steady turnover. “For the first time in many years, customers can regularly find a parking space on Brand,” said Eric Olson, President of the Downtown Glendale Merchants Association. Its goal is to reach and maintain 85% parking space occupancy.

The city’s new approach is the first step in an integrated transportation management system.

As a result of the changes implemented, Glendale is working toward expanding on the program in several ways. Installation of multi-space parking meters in the city-owned parking lots is underway; a parking occupancy trial with StreetSmart is scheduled; and improvements to way finding signage and the transit system are in the works.

With these current projects, as well as many more on the horizon, Glendale, CA, is a city on the move.

Written by Michael Kodama, President of Michael R. Kodama Planning Consultants and a Professor at the University of Southern California. Reprinted with permission from the January 2010 issue of *Parking Today Magazine*.

About Digital Payment Technologies

Digital Payment Technologies (DPT) is an innovative leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of multi-space parking meters, parking management software, and online services for the North American parking industry. The company’s products provide complete financial tracking, control and reporting for parking revenue collected by municipalities, universities, parking management companies, and national parks, from customer payment through to bank deposit.

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