



# LEADER of the

# BRAND!



### **It's all in the Name!**

Sixteen years ago, the city of Portland, Ore., arrived at an innovative idea: to develop a brand identity for its municipal parking operations. In 1993, Portland Public Parking became SmartPark. And since then, parking in downtown Portland hasn't been the same.

### **Always Park Smartly!**

Since people don't go downtown to park — but rather to attend a business function, shop, dine or see a movie — the city of Portland decided to make a name for itself, so-to-speak, in an effort to create a low-cost, short-term parking option. As in 1993, SmartPark today offers incentive parking by charging drivers \$1.25 per hour for up to four

hours of parking. After four hours the parking rate increases to an average of \$3 per hour.

Economics impacts every aspect of our lives, from what we eat, to how we dress, to where we live ... and, yes, even where we choose to park! From a parking patron's perspective, it is truly smart to park at a SmartPark facility as literally hundreds of participating merchants will pay for your first two hours of parking when you spend at least \$25.

And since the average stay of a transient parker in downtown Portland is 3.2 hours, clear and effective signage is displayed at entrances — loudly proclaiming the hourly rate for the first four hours!

Not only has SmartPark forged a positive relationship with its parking customers and

local merchants alike, but one year after the SmartPark brand's launch, parking revenues shot up an amazing 22.5 percent. After this first year spike in revenues, Portland then witnessed parking revenues climb an average of 7.5 percent per year, each year over a ten-year period — *without a single rate increase!*

### **Brand Maintenance**

In 2008, the city initiated a major makeover of the SmartPark brand identity. Primary goals of the revamping were identified:

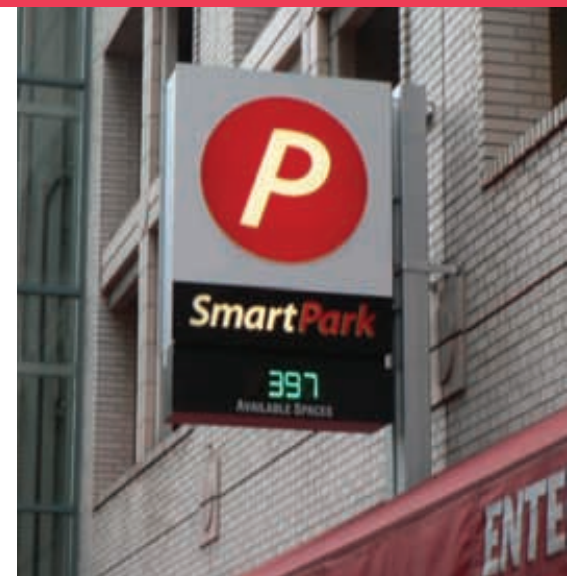
- Improve visibility and recognition of parking facility entrances.
- Improve visibility and legibility of parking rates.
- Create "Welcome" and "Thank You"



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- Improve vehicular and pedestrian way-finding signage within facilities.
- Communicate SmartPark’s green initiatives through clear and effective signage (for example, bicycle parking areas, motorcycle parking areas, Zipcar parking stalls, and the like).
- Modernize the overall look of all existing SmartPark graphics and signage.

Nearing the completion of the brand overhaul, the city implemented a parking guidance system that assists parking patrons to find available parking spaces. “Our new Available Parking Space program has really been instrumental in curbing the

misperception that finding parking in the central city was impossible. Now, patrons can visit our Web site before visiting downtown to find real-time available parking updates and, while driving, they can see the available space counts displayed on our new entry signage. We’re certain that this program will reduce ozone emissions while simultaneously driving additional business to our downtown merchants,” stated Charles Dummett, SmartPark general manager.

#### Branding Trends in Parking

It seems that the SmartPark story has caught the attention of other cities throughout North America. In 2001, the city of Vancouver, British Columbia, followed

suit and designed a brand identity program for its 38 parking facilities — EasyPark. The University of British Columbia soon followed, with UBCParking for each of its six parking decks. Today, a multitude of municipalities and university parking operations are considering similar efforts. And why not? The return on investment is proven, and the positive relationships built with parking patrons and merchants make the branding of your parking operations a smart initiative! ■

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