

# TAXI HYDRANT

## A CALGARY INNOVATION

### Creatively using on-street hydrant spaces increases parking efficiency throughout the city.

Like many large cities, Alberta, Canada's Calgary has a high demand for on-street, short-stay public and taxi parking space.

Calgary's taxi industry faced changing restrictions in 2010. Taxis were no longer allowed to wait for fares at the airport, but had to move to the downtown core. At that time, there were only 61 taxi stands in the area; because there was such limited parking space for taxis, the taxi industry requested additional stands downtown. At the same time, downtown businesses requested additional on-street public parking stalls for their customers.

Approximately 6,500 tickets are issued in the downtown area each year to owners of vehicles illegally parked at fire hydrants (unoccupied vehicles pose a risk by blocking access to hydrants during emergency situations). In 2010, an additional 295 tickets were issued for vehicles illegally parked in taxi stands. This indicated that Calgary motorists were less likely to park in taxi stands than blocking fire hydrants.

The City of Calgary transportation department worked with a number of key stakeholders to investigate alternatives for providing additional parking spaces for taxis in the downtown core. These stakeholders included the taxi industry, the fire department, downtown businesses and the Downtown Business Association, the Calgary Parking Authority, city council,

City of Calgary Livery Transport Services, the police department, and other city departments.

Simply adding extra taxi stalls in downtown Calgary wasn't an option, as it would have negatively affected the number of public parking spaces in the city. With an already limited supply of on-street parking in the downtown, another solution was needed.

### The Taxi Hydrant Zone Concept

After consulting with the key stakeholders, a proposal was put forward to allow taxis to use the existing spaces next to fire hydrants instead of earmarking more valuable on-street spaces for their exclusive use. These taxi hydrant zones would allow taxis to park in these stalls while the taxi driver was actively loading, unloading, or attending to the vehicle. Once those zones were established, the existing taxi stands throughout the area could be converted into short-stay public parking spaces.

Taxi hydrant zones provide several key benefits:

- Provide greater public access to taxis throughout the downtown core. Taxi drivers provide a specialized mobility option that reduces overall vehicle use and parking demand. Having better access to taxis promotes an environment conducive to attracting, retaining, and nurturing businesses.
- Make efficient use of street space. Fire hydrant space is infrequently used. More effective and integrated land use improves access for the public and business community.
- Increase public parking space. Converting existing taxi stands into public parking spaces frees up space and provides additional on-street parking. This can improve access to businesses by increasing accessibility for customers and boosting ease of deliveries.
- Reduce the need for taxis to drive in search of customers. Taxis don't need to drive around city streets to maintain legal occupancy status within the downtown. Less driving time means air quality is enhanced as vehicle emissions are reduced.
- Better protect fire hydrants from illegal parkers. As taxis must be attended, they can easily leave a taxi hydrant space during an emergency. With taxis occupying these spaces, it is less likely that other motorists will leave unoccupied vehicles parked in these spaces.



### Program Quick Facts:

- There are 238 fire hydrants in Calgary's downtown core and surrounding areas, with 137 (57 percent) of them deemed suitable for taxi parking.
- The typical taxicab length is between 16.7 and 17.4 feet (5.1 and 5.3 meters).
- The typical length of a fire hydrant space is 32.8 feet (10 meters).
- The cost to implement signage for the project was \$15,000.



# ZONES



taxi hydrant zone pilot program. Councilmembers approved the report and the pilot project was launched in June 2011, with 52 newly-established taxi hydrant zones opening in the downtown core.

Occupancy surveys were conducted over the next several months to determine how often the newly marked zones were occupied by taxis. The surveys indicated that taxis were using the new zones. Higher occupancy rates were achieved in certain areas of the downtown core than others, as the zones proved more popular close to hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

The pilot project achieved its overall goal of providing additional parking and waiting areas for taxis in the downtown core without taking up paid parking space.

The taxi industry carefully complied with the rules of the new zones by ensuring that taxis were not left unattended in taxi hydrant zones. No tickets were issued under the new Unattended Taxi in Taxi Hydrant Zone Bylaw that governed the program. Happily, there was a 37 percent decrease in the number of tickets issued to illegally parked taxis in 2011 over the previous year.

Since implementing the zones, fire hydrants have been better protected from illegal parking. Within six months of implementing the program, 484 fewer tickets were issued to vehicles parked next to fire hydrants than in the same time a year prior. The Calgary Parking Authority expects

this number to double by the end of 2012.

In March 2012, a report was provided to the city council that outlined the success of the pilot. A recommendation has been made to expand the taxi hydrant zone program to other areas near the downtown core.

## Expanding to Other Cities

As a growing city, Calgary requires innovative parking solutions to ensure access to its citizens and businesses. The taxi hydrant zone project provided additional taxi waiting areas without sacrificing valuable on-street public parking spaces.

Other municipalities facing a high demand for on-street, short-stay public, and taxi parking space can benefit from the taxi hydrant zone concept as successfully demonstrated in Calgary. 



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