

CASE STUDY: SYLVAN LAKE

The Ground Work

Sylvan Lake is a town of 14,816 residents, located mid-way between Calgary and Edmonton, Alberta. The town has a massive influx of summer visitors and seasonal residents, and parking for these guests often spills from visitor areas into local neighbourhoods.

Sylvan Lake's Concerns

The town needed to provide the right amount of parking, in the right place, at the right time, for both residents and visitors. There was also the desire to monetize the parking business, while not impacting residents. With a new policy in place to charge for parking, the staff knew it would be a challenge to monitor and enforce payment and citations. A lack of equipment and experience in this area meant it was time to find a partner who had advice as well as solutions that worked. Thus, enter ParkPlus System!

The Solution

In 2017, Sylvan Lake implemented two key components of the ParkPlus system to help with parking management. First, a residential parking permit program, that lets residents register their vehicles and get free parking for themselves and guests to their homes. Second, a paid, on-street program that enables the town to charge for and enforce paid zones in the popular tourist areas.

The new parking management system runs from May 15 through September 15 annually. Sylvan Lake has the ability to start and stop enforcement at their discretion, as well as set and change hourly, daily, and seasonal rates. A test environment was set up to allow for a trial and staff training, which proved to be of great value to staff.

Module 1: Residential Parking Program

ParkPlus provided Sylvan Lake with a pre-populated database so that residents can register their cars for the program and ensure they are exempt from payment. By providing the database already filled, this avoids fake addresses or multiple vehicles being registered per resident. ParkPlus matches all the addresses up with Canada Post information to ensure information is accurate.



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Module 2: On-Street Paid Parking

Hardware and software components were purchased through a partnership ParkPlus helped Sylvan Lake to negotiate. This included 10 payment machines, 2 tablets with the ParkPlus enforcement app and optical character recognition software, plus Bluetooth printers. These were calibrated and set up in the downtown core, along with appropriate signage. This enabled Sylvan Lake to purchase a turn-key solution with almost no customization and a very quick turnaround time for installment and system set-up.

Staff were provided with 3 hours of training, divided into 2 separate sessions, plus a detailed manual and FAQ document for future reference. Phone support is also included in the agreement so that there is both first and second line support should Sylvan Lake need detailed assistance.

Software

Sylvan Lake also included an online payment option and the Bylaw Information Tracking System (BITS) into their parking management solution. The mobile-friendly site allows any visitor to pay for and manage their parking session entirely through their phone (or a desktop, if desired). This is great news, as with over 50,000 visitors per summer, paid parking represents a major revenue source and a huge headache to administer without a robust system. The BITS component allows the Manager of Enforcement and other admin staff to log in, track, and report on the status of all tickets issued.

Sylvan Lake also kept the project open to a future enhancement using the ParkPlus mobile app, where anyone can download the app on demand, at no charge, and manage their parking session to the minute.

Challenges

One of the biggest problems that Sylvan Lake faced was how to ensure that people who were issued parking citations actually paid them. With ParkPlus as a partner, we were able to work with the Alberta Ministry of Transportation and ensure that any Alberta resident will be obligated to pay any outstanding fines before renewing their licence plate or registration going forward.



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Another challenge in this process was the limited budget that Sylvan Lake had available to implement and prove the profitability and effectiveness of the new parking management system. ParkPlus worked with Sylvan Lake to come up with a 4 year payment plan that fit within their budget and was ultimately approved by council.

For ParkPlus, there were two key challenges: the short 2 week implementation timeframe, and the previously untested Electronic Permitting System software. We were able to pull all of our resources together and make the Sylvan Lake deadline, and came up with an agreement that offered additional support to Sylvan Lake in exchange for being the testing ground for this new software. Both parties were winners in this deal!

Conclusion

ParkPlus System has been successfully implemented in Calgary for over 10 years, and as such was a great authority and resource for Sylvan Lake in this process. ParkPlus was able to not only provide software, but also negotiate hardware purchases, work with Canada Post to obtain legal addresses, and provide our municipal parking By-Laws to Sylvan Lake to use as a template. Over the course of this parking management system implementation ParkPlus and Sylvan Lake have become true partners, and Sylvan Lake can truly count on ParkPlus to have their best interests at heart and top of mind.