



# President's Parking Space

by Shawny DeBerry, Ph.D., MBA



Dr. Shawny DeBerry  
MPA President

Welcome to MPA 2013!

We have endured the challenges and concerns of 2012 in our professional lives as well as our personal lives. We now have another opportunity to improve where neces-

sary, to increase where necessary, to develop where necessary, and to overall become a better association.

I am looking forward to the wonderful, exciting things that the MPA shall do in this New Year!

At the beginning of 2012, we established goals and objectives that we wanted to achieve. Some of our 2012 accomplishments include:

- Increased Membership by approximately 10%
- Changed Membership Fee Structure
- Frequent E-blasts
- New MPA Logo
- Shared Parking Enforcement Training with IPI
- Updated Website
- MPA 30th Anniversary Conference on Mackinac Island

These are just some of the things that we were able to achieve in 2012. It is our ultimate goal to continue to expand our efforts in providing outstanding support services to our members.

During the Fall Conference, our members expressed an interest in seeing more training sessions available for staff. We have made training one of

our priorities for 2013. We are planning our first training session for April 2013. The topics for this session will include: Excellence in Customer Service; Broadening Safety Awareness; Effective Communication Skills; and Professionalism. This is a great opportunity to provide some targeted training for your frontline staff and supervisors. Stay tuned for more information.

As we embark upon a new year with MPA, we strongly encourage our members to get involved and help to make this association the best ever. We want to hear from you.

If you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to [deberrys@detroitmi.gov](mailto:deberrys@detroitmi.gov) or you can submit them on the website. It's a good time to be a part of the Michigan Parking Association!

## River East, Chicago – the Numbers Are In ...

I think it's safe to say that a good thing is worth waiting for. That's exactly the case with the relighting project at the River East Parking Garage at Navy Pier in Chicago.

A call to ECO Parking Lights from the Chicago Impark office back in 2009 alerted the company to a possible lighting project at the large four-level parking garage that they managed. After being introduced to the potential of large energy and maintenance savings through relighting projects, Impark did what a great operator should do: They recognized the opportunity and advised their customer, Intercontinental Real Estate Corp., of the potential financial windfall of a relighting project.

Served by T12 lighting technology, the property suffered severely from rapidly depreciating lamps, significant energy consumption (243 watts per fixture), high-maintenance requirements, and lamps that experienced reduction in output from the brutal cold Chicago weather, even though the facility has underground parking.

After a comprehensive walk-through of the facility, Impark was presented an installed relighting project that included supporting the Chicago economy by subcontracting the installation to a local contractor and by manufacturing their Induction lighting fixtures in their Chicago factory.

Intercontinental agreed to a demonstration installation, pitting five of the 100-watt induction fixtures against five T8 linear fluorescent fixtures. The fixtures were installed in the darkest and poorest lighted sections of the garage, which serves day commuters, the Embassy Suites Hotel, and the River East Condominiums.

Despite having an extremely attractive pay-back of only 2.5 years when considering the ComEd rebate of \$70 per fixture and the \$.60/sq ft EPACT 2005 tax incentive (see Sidebar), the owner sat on the proposal and the demos for nearly two years.

Once the demos were installed, the residents of the River *continued on back page*

# Stolen Spaces: How handicap drivers are cheated in metro Detroit



By Jennifer Dixon, Jim Schaefer and Kristi Tanner, Detroit Free Press Staff Writers

On a busy Saturday at the Meijer in Westland, Michael Harris scopes the parking lot, looking for a space he can use. "I'm not seeing anything," he said, exasperated.

Harris finally takes a spot far from the store and parks at an odd angle. He has learned that this is the only way to make sure he's not boxed in too tightly to get back in the car from his wheelchair.

"This is where the frustration sets in," said Harris, a 55-year-old ex-Marine who is paralyzed from the chest down.

Too often, he said, unthinking, uncaring and undeserving drivers illegally take a handicap spot, discouraging or preventing people with disabilities from shopping or taking care of their everyday business.

It's a widespread problem affecting thousands of Michiganders -- while others get away with breaking the law.

At a time when the number of handicap parking permits has exploded in Michigan, a Free Press examination found that enforcement of handicap parking laws is haphazard at best with little control or oversight by the Secretary of State's Office.

The examination included a review of more than 41,000 parking tickets from 21 law enforcement agencies or courts, in-person observation, interviews and a survey of 10 other states' handicap parking programs.

As it stands, the system in Michigan invites fraud and abuse. Other states are much more aggressive about protecting handicap parking spaces for the people who need them.

Harris of Westland, executive director of the 500-member Michigan Paralyzed Veterans of America, said that after health care, handicap parking "is our No. 1 issue, by far. We get so frustrated -- you can't do anything if you don't have the proper spots."

Parking, he said, "is a critical element of providing independence for our members."

More than that, parking is a safety issue. People in wheelchairs worry about being hit by drivers who cannot see them, a risk that rises the farther they must travel to enter a store.

The Free Press examination of records, tickets, regulations and actual spaces for handicap parking in Michigan found the problems facing disabled drivers are compounded in many ways:

- Able-bodied drivers freely take up spaces, many by using handicap placards or license plates that are not registered to them.
- Police in metro Detroit don't often ticket for such fraud, according to records produced by the communities surveyed. Some communities leave ticket-writing to civilians and volunteers, who generally are not permitted to access law enforcement data to check permit registrations.
- The Michigan Secretary of State's Office, which issues handicap parking permits, only began tracking when permit holders die last October.
- Unlike other states, Michigan does not track or audit the doctors or other medical professionals who sign handicap permit applications. Critics say some doctors dispense the applications like aspirin.
- Unlike other states, permit-holders in Michigan do not have to provide the state with periodic medical updates.
- The number of handicap plates in Michigan has surged in recent years -- from 93,357 in late 2000 to 249,047 as of May.
- Placards, which are hung from rearview mirrors, can easily be tampered with because the expiration date is handwritten. A 2013 expiration date can become 2018 with the stroke of a Sharpie.
- Michigan's fines for handicap parking violations are lower than some states; the worst scofflaws are not singled out for harsher penalties.

## Markets, Malls

Free Press reporters fanned out across metro Detroit in recent weeks, interviewing drivers who parked in

handicap spots, tracking down chronic violators and riding with ticket-writers. It was not hard to find people parking illegally.

At Somerset Collection in Troy, a young mother in a late-model Yukon used her son's permit to take a handicap space at Nordstrom, although her son wasn't with her. That's a violation.

At Papa Joe's Gourmet Market in Birmingham, a man in a tie bopped out of a \$100,000 Mercedes-Benz after parking in a handicap spot. When he emerged 30 minutes later, he confessed he shouldn't have parked there, and wouldn't give his name.

Such examples are vexing for disabled people, who say they aren't sure whether able-bodied drivers realize the problems they can cause by taking up a handicap space.

"It's the most frustrating experience there is," said Angela Hoff, executive director of the Blue Water Center for Independent Living in Port Huron. "It limits my ability to work; it limits my ability to be independent."

## **Aging Americans**

Marilyn Golden, senior policy analyst with the California-based Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, said that with the graying of America, the problem is only going to get worse.

"As a wheelchair user, it is often very difficult to find accessible parking," Golden said. "The fact that there's abuse by people who don't really need the parking is a very key reason for that."

Disability rights advocates say the system needs an overhaul.

"We want people to be independent. We want them to shop and be part of society, we want them to work and pay taxes and spend money and be part of the economy -- and yet we don't facilitate that," said Mike Zelle, chairman of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission and president of the Disability Network in Flint.

## **How it works**

Michigan residents can apply for a handicap license plate, a placard to hang from the rearview mirror, or both. There is no extra cost for a handicap plate.

The application process involves filling out a two-page form, and getting it signed by a medical provider. To qualify, a person must fall into one of seven disability categories. Generally, that means being blind and requiring a driver; using a wheelchair, having problems walking, or having certain lung and heart issues. Permit-holders can be drivers or passengers.

Once a health provider certifies the form, an employee in a Secretary of State branch approves it. Unlike other states, including Illinois and, soon, Florida, Michigan does not require people with permanent disabilities to periodically reapply for their permits and update their health information. New York City even has its own doctors to review applications.

"In this day and age, there ought to be technology to make a better product," he said.

Massachusetts, for example, issues laminated placards that include a photo of the permit holder.

A month after the Free Press asked Secretary of State officials about tampering issues, a spokesman said the department planned to start ordering placards with preprinted expiration dates.

Spokesman Fred Woodhams said the new system would "further secure the document" but insisted the department remains "confident in the placards in circulation."

Michigan also puts holds on motorists who have two or more unpaid handicap parking tickets, meaning they cannot renew their driver's licenses until they pay. But the state is notified only if two unpaid tickets were handled by the same court; there's generally no tracking multiple tickets in multiple cities.

A ticket for illegal parking in a handicap space carries a maximum penalty of \$250. Fraudulent use of a placard is a misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of \$500 and 30 days in jail.

Critics say those penalties aren't tough enough. The Illinois General Assembly this year made using a dead person's placard a misdemeanor punishable by loss of driver's license for a year and a \$2,500 fine.

In Michigan, state Rep. Jim Ananich, D-Flint, has introduced legislation that would double the maximum fine for parking without a placard to \$500. The minimum fine would also double, to \$200. Local communities set the fine.

Activists say other changes are needed and the state could start by requiring plate and placard owners to periodically submit updated information about their disabilities. As it stands, once a doctor says someone is permanently disabled, that person never has to be checked again.

"There definitely should be a reapplication process," said Lisa Nygord, executive director of the Arc Dearborn, an organization for children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. "That's the biggest concern."

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## River East - from page 1

East condos moved their best vehicles and located them under the new induction lighting, which had previously been the darkest section of the garage.

Intercontinental agreed to meet with ECO Parking Lights at the Boston NPA show to discuss the project.

After considering the success of the now two-year-old demo induction installation compared with the fluorescent installation, which did not perform well under the spacing of the existing fixtures like the induction; and after rejecting a late entry of an imported Chinese induction fixture, Intercontinental agreed to do the lighting retrofit with the ECO Parking Lights induction solution. The installation was completed in September 2011.

Asked by ECO how the project has performed over the first year of installation, Al Paraharm, Senior Project Manager for Impark at the River East property said, "The energy and maintenance savings you predicted are exactly as you said they would be. ... We are spending less than half of what we used to on energy, and we haven't paid a dime on maintenance since the new fixtures were installed."

Art Isom, Property Manager for Intercontinental, added: "This is the first time we have ever been able to see across the entire length of the garage."

Asked by ECO if Impark had seen increased revenue due to the lighting change out, Paraharm said, "Not only have we seen a measureable increase in parkers, we have had many unsolicited comments from parkers indicating that they now choose to park in River East over other garages because they feel safer with the new lighting."

Citing their confidence in the work that Impark has done for them from the lighting retrofit to increased revenues, Intercontinental recently extended the contractual relationship with Impark without offering the parking facility out for competitive bids.

One of the mysteries of lighting is why owners delay and choose instead to continue to pay huge sums to utilities and to their maintenance budgets. Here is a good "rule of thumb." If the project pays off within the warranty period of the equipment, including financing costs, thus eliminating all risks and obstacles, and if doing the project enhances your facility, do the project.

As the slogan goes, a lighting retrofit is "Green That Makes Cents!"

Note also that all induction is not alike. Insist on a U.S.-manufactured induction fixture that includes lamps and ballast from North America, such as the Sylvania Icetron lamp and the ballast used by ECO Parking Lights.

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To view the project summary, visit [http://www.parkingtoday.com/s\\_article.php?id=559](http://www.parkingtoday.com/s_article.php?id=559).



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