

KIMLEY-HORN  
*Parking Planning White Paper Series*



# VALET Parking Program DEVELOPMENT



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# VALET PARKING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The development of a valet parking program is not as simple a proposition as it might seem, especially if the operation is to be run in-house, by staff that has never previously performed this function. A number of programming and physical assessments must be evaluated.

## Programming

- » What is the nature of the clientele and the owner's expectations for service?
  - Will the service be limited or open to anyone?
  - Will some customers receive the service for free?
- » Given the physical layout of the drop-off area(s), how many vehicles can be accommodated? Physical limitations can often be overcome by additional staffing.
- » What are the service-level expectations of the facility served? (What is the minimum acceptable wait time for patron vehicle retrieval?)
  - What provisions can be made to make the wait more pleasant?
- » What physical changes in traffic flow and parking might be required to make the system function well?

The worst thing that can happen is that an institution invests significant resources to market and implement a system that generates more customer complaints than compliments.

## Operational Issues

The following operational issues should be included in a review of valet operations.

1. Evaluate parking layout:
  - a. Efficient utilization of available space
  - b. Ease of vehicle storage and retrieval—minimizing the number of vehicle movements
2. Plan vehicle circulation routes to reduce conflicts and delays in the parking and retrieval of vehicles.
3. Develop revenue control/ticket control procedure (not applicable if service is to be free) for:
  - a. Effective revenue control
  - b. Efficiency in ticket issuance, vehicle tracking, and vehicle retrieval.
  - c. Special procedure or “stacked” spaces.



4. Staffing
  - a. Planning and scheduling
  - b. Contingency plans
5. Ensure effective communications between valet staff and client facilities operational staff.
6. Ensure effective communications between valet starters and runners (radio or cellular phone systems) to:
  - a. Minimize lost time
  - b. Minimize wasted travel time and energy
  - c. Improve customer service
7. Proactively develop plans for restaging of parked vehicles to take full advantage of predictable departure patterns to reduce retrieval times.
8. Critically assess valet staging and queuing areas to:
  - a. Minimize congestion and delays
  - b. Minimize confusion and errors
  - c. Determine physical configuration and dimensions of the available staging area for workability
  - d. Develop operational procedures
  - e. Determine contingencies for oversized vehicles
  - f. Determine special provisions for, and control of, short-park vehicles not put into storage area (if applicable)
9. Evaluate typical “trouble areas,” both physical and operational, which may be affecting operational efficiency and liability. For example:
  - a. Unusual delays in vehicle retrieval
  - b. Retrieval of the wrong vehicle
  - c. Customers failing to leave keys
  - d. Lost keys incidents
  - e. Vehicles “lost” in the system
  - f. Vehicles retrieved out of sequence
  - g. Actual damage incidents
  - h. Claimed damage incidents
  - i. Actual theft incidents
  - j. Claimed theft incidents
  - k. Stolen vehicle incidents
10. Thoroughly assess potential liability issues:
  - a. Maneuvering hazards in the facility
    - i. Blind spots
    - ii. Pedestrian/vehicular conflicts
  - b. Customer liability
    - i. Transferring of patients from vehicles to wheelchairs
    - ii. Custody documentation procedures and practices



- iii. Legal language on signage and tickets
- iv. Procedures for noting and recording damage
- v. Procedures for vehicles with valuables exposed
- vi. Physical security within the facility

- 11. Carefully review potential customer service issues:
  - a. Identification and alignment of client expectations and operator objectives
  - b. Special demands of the specific location
  - c. Customer expectations vs. service provided
  - d. Marketing the service – getting the word out

## Operations Checklist

The following is a detailed operations checklist that may be valuable when considering the creation of a new valet parking operation or the evaluation of an existing program. This checklist provides an indication of the level of detail that needs to be addressed before a valet operation is implemented.

### Physical/Functional Issues

- 1. How close is the primary vehicle storage area?
- 2. How long does it take a runner to walk the distance? How long to run it?
- 3. Is the valet area separate from self-parkers to avoid damage?
- 4. If the valet storage area is separate from self-parkers, how is it controlled? Does that control keep self-parkers out of the valet area?

### Valet Stack Parking

- 5. Is “valet vehicle stacking” required to achieve sufficient storage?
- 6. If stacking is used, what is the pattern?
- 7. What is the minimum number of vehicles that must be moved to retrieve a single car that is “buried”?
- 8. What is the maximum number of vehicles that might have to be moved to retrieve a single car that is “buried”?
- 9. What percentage of stored vehicles are “buried” when the valet storage area is full?
- 10. What is the “normal” filling level of the valet storage area and, under normal filling, what % of stored vehicles are “buried” vs. first car accessible?

### Operational Issues

- 11. What is the maximum number of vehicles that are likely to arrive within any given 30-minute period?
- 12. What is the normal number of runners available at peak times?
- 13. How much queuing space is available at the front drive?





14. Do self-parkers also end up on the front drive?
15. If so, can something be done to remedy that?
16. Given the number of runners on duty, how many arrivals at one time will it take to fill the front drive (after all runners have taken a car)?
17. If the primary storage area is too far away, is there an intermediate stacking area available for “emergency” overloads of the front drive?
18. Develop procedures to ensure that customers do not drop off their cars without leaving their keys.
19. Does the starter have possession of the keys or car (with keys) before giving the customer the receipt?
20. Discourage leaving cars in the drop-off area with keys still in the cars.
21. Ensure that keys are secured at all times and that key access is restricted.
22. Develop strong policies for tracking tickets and keys.
23. Develop procedures to “re-stage” (repark) cars for more expeditious vehicle retrieval, especially during peak demand periods.
24. Develop effective procedures for tracking vehicle location changes if “restaging” is used.
25. Perform periodic verification of ticket locations against vehicle locations.
26. Ensure that procedures are in place requiring the starter or runner to check vehicles for damage prior to taking custody. One best practice for larger operations is to utilize video to document vehicle conditions upon drop off.
27. Ensure vehicle inspections occur consistently to reduce liability.
28. Develop effective policies and procedures regarding documentation of valuables left inside cars at the time the valet accepts custody.
29. Ensure that during busy periods valet staff control where arriving parkers stop their cars to maintain traffic flow and patron safety.
30. Have contingency procedures in place to address abnormally high in-bound traffic volumes.
31. Whenever possible, develop procedures to improve operational efficiency such as delivering vehicles to storage and returning a vehicle for pick-up using a single trip.



32. When establishing routes from the drop-off area(s) to the vehicle storage areas, identify the shortest and most effective routes possible. Avoid intersections or high traffic areas that can introduce complications and delays whenever possible.
33. Select valet uniforms that are appropriate for local/seasonal weather conditions.
34. Create a defined policy on solicitation of gratuities.
35. Create a defined policy on staff uniforms and grooming.
36. Develop strong pre-employment hiring policies regarding background and driver's license checks.
37. Require all starters and runners to submit an updated driving record every six months.

### **Vehicle Damage/Liability**

38. Ensure that valet tickets provide a graphic aid for noting damage upon vehicle acceptance. All damage noted should be confirmed with the customer before the vehicle is accepted.
39. Create a defined policy regarding discipline and employee retention related to damage to customer vehicles.
40. Create defined procedures to address the reporting of damage to vehicles including policies on what to do when damage is not properly reported.
41. Create a defined procedure for when a customer reports damage to their vehicle.
42. Create a defined procedure for when a customer reports damage to their vehicle after the vehicle has left the premises.
43. Whenever possible utilize video-recording camera systems to document pre-existing vehicular damage.

### **Valet Management Systems and Special Programs**

44. Leverage new automated valet parking management systems to track and manage keys, tickets, and revenues.
45. Ensure that high-quality operational and customer service staff training programs are in place.
46. Evaluate the benefits of enhanced customer service features, such as:
  - a. A "Valet Express Park" program – Allows customers to notify valet attendants that they are returning to expedite the vehicle retrieval process.
  - b. A "First Visit Complimentary Valet Program" – Generally used for complex or challenging facilities or campuses to provide a positive first impression and education on how to park on future visits.
  - c. VIP Parking Program – Generally used to reward regular program users and to promote customer or vehicle identification through patron name recognition and the offering of special perks.



- d. Operations tracking and monitoring – This management strategy can be employed even without an automated parking system, but it is much easier with one. Tracking data on vehicle arrival/departure patterns and volumes, vehicle processing times, damage claims, individual valet staff productivity, etc. can be very valuable and lead to significant program operational enhancements.

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