

# Smart Parking Lots: Tech Hubs of the Future

By Rita Azrelyant, MA, CAPP

**P**ARKING LOTS ARE OFTEN THOUGHT OF AS VAST WASTELANDS of bituminous pitch for the sole purpose of lodging vehicles—vehicles that sit idle for hours, days, weeks, and possibly months—but what if we alter our concept of parking lots and envision them as technological hubs of the future? Parking lots are invaluable in terms of land use and sustainability opportunities, and every inch of unusable asphalt, earth, and open space is an opportunity for smart, green, sustainable growth.

Every day, technology revolutionizes our lives, altering the way we travel, communicate, eat, live, and so forth. What was once a simple vehicle that would transport individuals and/or goods from one place to another is now capable of autonomously driving the individuals and wares and soon, flying the same cargo with a simple flip of a switch. The evolution of communication has gone from a fixed phone to a portable computer that can make phone calls, take verbal commands, and purchase items with a simple click or swipe of an application. Even simple toys and recreational uses of the past such as skates and bicycles have been electrified and transformed into alternative modes of transportation.

## Getting Smart

Smart technology is all around us, and parking lots need to be smart to be at the epicenter of that movement. The notion of parking needs to go beyond smart meters and plate readers. Parking lots are prime real estate, centrally and strategically located for their accessibility. On average, individuals frequent parking facilities as much as their home, work, and/or school, thus the perfect setting to bring together all of the various sustainability initiatives into one coordinated site(s). Charging stations, smart benches, rainwater collectors, smart features such as book lending machines, and even smart trash cans illustrate how municipalities, universities, and hospitals around the world have invested in progressive sustainable initiatives transforming the way we live.

The most important part—the missing link that connects all of these smart initiatives—is the need to have an accessible and central location to refuel and recharge vehicles, electric bicycles, hoverboards, e-skates, etc. The need for parking lots will not decrease, but their use and the demand will change and shift to accommodate the needs of the community.

## Rethinking Parking

As parking lots undergo transformations, their use, expenses, lack of green initiatives, and sustainability measures are being called into question, and it is important to envision parking lots in a smart sense. Asphalt, bump outs, landscapes, and smart meters must include green walls, charging stations, smart benches, smart receptacles, smart traffic lights, recycled water, and more. Investing smart and sustainable practices in parking lots results in growth, sustainability, and promotion of green standards for the community. Everyone will be invested and more conscientious of how humans can contribute to the environment. [P](#)



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## Envision a Parking Lot Like No Other:

