

THE GEORGIA BUILDING AUTHORITY

The Georgia Building Authority (GBA) Parking and Access Services Office is responsible for 20 parking facilities that include a mix of monthly and daily parking. There are more than 6,000 parking spaces located around the Capitol Hill Complex in downtown Atlanta. The office also manages the building access control system, which consists of 11,000 access cards for state employees and contractors working within state-owned buildings in the complex. The GBA's customers include state employees, legislators, lobbyists, contractors, and visitors.



DIANE HALE has worked in the parking arena at the University of Memphis and University of Georgia, and is now director of parking and access at the GBA. She started her career as a women's volleyball coach and university teacher who got too many parking citations. To solve the campus parking problem, a university vice president decided she had to know something about parking, created a new department, and asked Hale to be the new manager. The rest, as they say, is history.

The Parking Professional: You manage parking for a number of specific groups, including state legislators, employees, and the public. What systems do you have in place to keep all of those individual groups straight?

DIANE HALE: GBA manages a building access system that stores access information and authorizes access to office workspace; it monitors 900 doors throughout Capitol Hill. The access control system also controls 17 gated locations for monthly permit holders. The web-based parking system maintains parking customer data by type of customer (employee, legislator, lobbyist, and contractor). We award space to those on a waitlist via email, collect online credit card payments, and provide customers an opportunity to update their parking accounts. Access to parking facilities for all customers is by a proximity controlled hangtag or AVI system for entering parking facilities that will open gate arms or roll up doors. The public pays a daily parking rate at our in-lane pay stations.

TPP: What new technologies have you embraced to help you manage your facilities? Are you looking at anything new for the future?

DH: GBA has embraced high-speed roll-up doors for customers to enter and exit our facilities more quickly, and has just completed the installation of three in-lane pay stations that serve both monthly permit holders and daily customers. We have replaced all lighting within our

facilities with LED and motion sensors to reduce the cost of utilities. For the future, a 1,200-space multi-level parking structure will be completed for Capitol Hill that will allow parking at the building.

TPP: What's the biggest challenge your office faces and how do you meet it?

DH: Our biggest challenge is to provide clean and safe parking at an affordable cost to the customer. Our employee rates are \$20 to \$40 per month, which compares well with other urban facilities in the Atlanta downtown area. Our employees appreciate that our parking rates have stayed low while others' have increased. I think reducing labor costs by contracting out a piece of our parking services to the private sector has helped us better utilize our full-time staff.

TPP: How do you keep your employees at the top of their game?

DH: We have initiated additional webinars and in-house training. We have cross-trained parking staff to learn more about building access control systems. They enjoy the challenge of learning something new and have good suggestions that help make systems more effective with customers. This has developed a more team-oriented approach for both office and field personnel.

TPP: You manage a wide array of facilities. How do you stay on top of management and maintenance for them?

DH: We are fortunate to be a state building authority because we have a wide array of expertise in building maintenance. Our agency has a facility department that services all of our buildings and parking facilities. Staff there maintains 36 office buildings that cover more than 7 million gross square feet of space. They maintain the Capitol Hill grounds, governor's mansion, six cemeteries, and 20 parking lots. The parking lots are cleaned nightly and anything we need is submitted through our work order system, so repairs are completed in a timely and cost-efficient manner.

TPP: What does your department do particularly well?

DH: We pride ourselves in designing operations around the following three goals:

1. Reduce paper as a method for managing processes.
2. Reduce lines so customers do not have to wait.
3. Reduce Data Entry and allow customers to enter contact information.

I think this contributed to our latest customer satisfaction rating of 90 percent.

TPP: What about your department might surprise those in other segments of the parking industry?

DH: Our department manages both parking and building access control, which is unique. Our building access control system processes access cards for 11,000 employees and contractors working on Capitol Hill. Four years ago, we established a new parking policy and standardized parking privileges there to better use our resources and meet our mission. We increased parking rates—which had not been done in 34 years—to provide funding to improve the facilities. We established an online waitlist for preferred parking that calculates years of service within state government and allows customers to select their preferred lots online. Because state government is decentralized among multiple agencies, the parking payroll deduction must be sent monthly to 35 separate agencies to receive the benefits of a pre-taxable parking deduction.

TPP: You manage your monthly parking accounts online. How does that work for customers and for you?

DH: We do manage customer contact information and waitlist selections online. Each employee can view his or her lot selection ranking online. Payroll-eligible customers register online to renew their parking each June, which provides us with the most current customer contact information. Customers can view permit expiration dates and may pay for parking online by credit card.

TPP: What do you enjoy most about parking? What keeps you in the industry?

DH: What I enjoy most in parking is being able to give my employees a chance to grow and develop. Parking provides an active playground for challenging employees. Seeing parking employees succeed on a project or accomplish a task makes me smile. I stay in parking because it is an industry that continues to change and needs good teachers. P

