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## High-tech parking systems making inroads in Dallas offices, hotels and airport



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Strings of red and green lights line the parking garages at the Galleria Towers in Far North Dallas. These aren't leftovers from Christmas. The LED lights are part of a new high-tech parking management system owners of the 3-building office complex are installing. Green lights signal an empty space.

Galleria Towers is one of several real estate projects in North Texas that is experimenting with new parking technologies. "We have 4,500 parking spaces but parking still seems to be a big concern," said Shannon Brown, vice president with commercial real estate firm CBRE.

CBRE is leasing the more than 1 million square-foot office complex on LBJ Freeway and is overseeing a \$16 million renovation project on the buildings, which date to the 1980s. As part of the upgrades, the building owners are installing a high-tech parking management program sold by New Zealand-based Parking Sense Ltd. The system uses colored lights strung through the garages to show where available parking spaces are located. A phone app will relay the information to the drivers' mobile devices. "We are trying to combat the perception there is a parking issue," Brown said. "We think this system will help direct visitors."

Started more than a decade ago with projects in New Zealand and Australia, Parking Sense uses a combination of ceiling lights and sensors in the pavement to show drivers where to find empty parking spots. Message boards and the phone app also direct parkers to available spaces.

"Parking Sense USA has been in operation in the U.S.A. for 12 months now," said Jake Bezzant, the company's global chief operating officer. "Currently, Parking Sense USA has installed in numerous sites, but the Galleria is the first commercial office building installed." The system has been more widely used in airports, shopping centers and other public facilities. Bezzant said his firm is also expanding to Europe and South Africa. The system

being installed at the Galleria Towers "is a large leap forward in parking guidance technology," he said. "It is the most complete, accurate, reliable, and cost-effective system in the market." Bezzant said his firm's systems start in cost at less than \$100 per parking space.

A competing company based in Austria — Indect — has its U.S. headquarters in Carrollton. Indect USA has installed systems in garages at Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, at John Wayne Airport in California, at shopping malls in Virginia and at Houston's Wortham Theater Center. Indect just completed a parking management system installation at downtown Dallas' Omni Hotel. The company said the Omni is the first such hotel in the country to use the high-tech parking program. The downtown convention hotel sought out Indect after it saw the system at the airport.

"Once we did D/FW Airport it opened the door for us," said Indect USA's Derek Frantz. "People saw what it was and it made sense." At the Omni, 347 parking sensors and a network of LED signs inform drivers how many open parking spaces are available and where they can be found. "It's not just red and green lights — it's a way to direct people to the closest available space," Frantz said. "The Omni really liked that we could change the colors of lights to designate event parking. "If they have a wedding, they can change the color on 100 spaces and direct the guests there."

Frantz said his firm installed one of its parking systems at the new Nebraska Furniture Mart in the Colony. "We are just finishing the West Village in Uptown," he said. The company is talking to developers working on new office projects and is talking with large building owners downtown.

"We have shown revenue in garages goes up 22 percent with our parking guidance system and auto emissions go down," Frantz said. "I have building owners say they need to build a new garage. "But people don't know where the empty spaces are and if we can direct them to it they don't need to build."