

["Green" Companies Assign Priority "Hybrid-Only" Parking](#)

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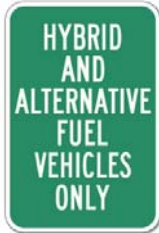
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Tuesday, 04 January 2011 09:01

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In yet another effort to “go green,” a number of businesses in Orlando, Florida, have assigned priority parking — similar to handicapped parking – to drivers of hybrid vehicles.

The Blaze writes:

An increasing number of Orlando buildings and venues are instituting front-row hybrid-only parking spaces in an attempt to earn "green" building status and reward car owners considered environmentally friendly. Places like the University of Central Florida, Ikea in South Orlando, and the Amway Center are just a few who are giving hybrids preferential treatment.

Florida's [SunSentinel.com](#) snipes:

As though owners of hybrid vehicles aren't imperious enough with their 50-plus miles to the gallon, green-construction proponents are now reserving front-row parking spaces for such drivers at a growing number of buildings.

As of now, the hybrid parking spots are not going to be policed for violators, so defenders of the parking spaces are hopeful that the public will comply amicably.

Jon Ippel, Orlando's sustainability manager, states, “Right now this is a promotional thing, so I don't think we're seeing enforcement. It's more peer pressure. Hopefully, the evil eyes violators get will force them to comply.”

Orlando city spokeswoman Cassandra Lafser adds, “There are the social-pressure aspects of it that should restrict it for those people it's reserved for.” She asserts that the “green” parking spots should be considered in the same category as parking places for pregnant women.

University of Central Florida Arena Marketing Director Melissa Schaaff maintains similar notions:

We reserve spaces for guests who have premium seating in the arena, and felt that it was important to also reserve spaces for those guests who are driving hybrid vehicles and/or carpooling to events, to recognize them for doing their part to be environmentally aware.

Orlando is not the only spot with the new parking spaces. They've been seen at a Chicago Home Depot, the Fresh & Easy Neighborhood Market in Nevada, and a North Carolina hotel. "Hybrid parking only" signs are even for sale on Amazon.com.

USA Today reports that the perks for hybrid car owners — including tax credits and special use of HOV lanes as well as the parking privileges — were introduced in 2004. Private businesses offered additional perks, which have included free valet parking for drivers at the Big Bowl restaurants in Illinois, free parking spots closer to the doors at the Lassen Volcanic National Park's visitor center in California, and reserved parking at RexCorp Realty's 70 office buildings in New York and New Jersey.

Critics of the green parking spaces view them as preferential treatment for more affluent drivers who are able to afford the increased costs of hybrid vehicles. Alexa Stone, program manager for ecoPreserve LLC, an Orlando consulting firm,

remarks, "I have heard that some people don't like it because they question whether it's fair. They think hybrids are expensive and elitist."

According to *The Blaze*, they are:

The Nissan Leaf, for example, sells for around \$32,000. That price goes down once taxpayers kick in \$7,500 in federal tax subsidies. In contrast, one could purchase a small sedan such as the Hyundai Elantra for around \$18,000.

In addition to the parking spots, critics have voiced loud opposition to the hybrid subsidies that were first proposed by President George W. Bush. [Jerry Taylor](#) of the Cato Institute labels the subsidies as government interference in the free market, and points to the ineptness of the implementation of the subsidies:

By subsidizing people who buy Toyota products...our taxpayers are supporting Toyota employees and stockholders at a time when GM and Ford are on economic life support.

Further proof of the federal government's ineptitude is the institution of the subsidies as car manufacturers are reducing production of hybrid vehicles. The [Cato Institute](#) explains that even after the subsidies, hybrid vehicles are scarce:

You haven't seen [hybrid vehicles] because there aren't many being produced. They're hemorrhaging money for both Toyota and Honda. My best guess is that Honda has already lost about \$80 million on the 8,000 Insights it has shipped to the U.S. over the 18 months of its availability. Last spring, the *Washington Post* estimated Toyota is losing even more — \$17,000 per copy — on each Prius.

Nevertheless, hybrid car owners continue to enjoy a variety of perks associated with their choice of vehicles, including the subsidies and the privileged parking spots.

Angered by the hybrid-only parking spots popping up around their city, residents in Fort Collins, Colorado, demanded that the city reverse its decision to implement such spots.

One blogster at [Edmunds.com](#) asked: "Why should drivers of any hybrid vehicle get such a privilege, especially when there are non-hybrid vehicles that can match or even surpass the fuel economy of some hybrids out there?"