

The City of Houston Steps Up Enforcement

Increases Efficiency and Revenue with T2 Flex™



Case Study

The City of Houston is the 4th largest city in the United States. Occupying 599 square miles, Houston is truly a Texas-sized city—and it is experiencing Texas-sized growth. “Houston is dealing with a return back to the urban center,” says Maria Irshad, CAPP, Deputy Assistant Director for the City of Houston.

In Houston, there are several densely populated downtown areas, which presents unique challenges for Irshad and her team. “We are about to roll out meters in more areas. Now that people are coming back in and we are increasing our urban density, it has been a bit of a struggle to manage parking. Houston is in a state of flux right now, and people have to adapt to the change.”

T2 Flex: The Right Foundation to Grow

After Houston became a T2 customer in 2010, Irshad was confident that she had “A foundation in place to grow as the urbanization continues.” But that wasn’t always the case.

“Our legacy system was designed for municipal court environments and traffic violations. For parking, it was like trying to fit a circle into a square hole and we couldn’t easily configure it to work for us,” Irshad said. The inflexibility of the system caused process-oriented issues for the Parking Department, like accounting for changes in ordinances. “But in T2 Flex, there is a lot of flexibility to easily update or change processes.”

For example, Houston’s booting process stipulated that a parker could be booted once they accumulated three delinquent parking citations. The ordinance was updated to include parkers with one delinquent citation that occupied a handicapped space. “When we went to change it in the legacy system, we could not make that happen,” Irshad said. Vehicle owner data was difficult to access with their legacy system, which often meant that delinquent notices were not sent to parkers. And since Houston ordinances required notice to be given to parkers before they could be booted or their delinquent citations sent to collections, booting and collections were both negatively impacted.

“We were not able to update the boot query to include the new parameters,” Irshad said. “This resulted in leaving off approximately 14,000 vehicles from the boot list.”

“We implemented the change when we moved to T2 Flex, which led to an average increase of 1,200-1,500 vehicles booted per year. Now, we’re booting 2,000-2,200 vehicles, and that has a lot to do with noticing.”

Customer Profile

Segment: Municipality

Location: Houston, TX

T2 Solutions: T2 Flex Enforcement Plus, Permit Management and Event Management; Handheld Software – Real-Time Enforcement; Pay by Cell – ParkMobile Integration; Asset Management & Maintenance; T2 Hosting; eBusiness

Population/Overview: 2.1 million

On-Street Spaces: 7,300

Department Employees: 70

Results:

- » eBusiness, Lockbox interface and Asset Management saved more than a full-time employee’s wages
- » T2 Flex’s open architecture made integrating with disparate systems easy to share data across departments simple and maximize the ROI of the system
- » T2 hosting ameliorated many PCI and data security efforts for the city
- » Aligned business processes closely with organizational goals by configuring T2 Flex to meet specific needs



“It’s just so **EASY getting data out of Flex.”**

Confident In the Cloud

“Hosting has been really valuable to us,” Irshad said. “Prior to Flex, we were self-hosted, working with IT, and it was hard for us to get the resources we needed for dedicated system maintenance and management. While there are monthly fees associated with going T2 hosted, we know that someone is always watching over our system. We haven’t had any downtime, whereas with our previous system there was downtime.” And as Houston continues to grow, Irshad remains confident in the cloud.

“I haven’t even considered any issues of scalability,” She said. “We have thousands and thousands of plates and images and customers in the system. We haven’t even thought about the notion that scalability could be an issue.”

“The city originally intended to purchase the T2 solution and self-host,” said Irshad. “Due to the costs of maintaining servers, Oracle licenses, storage maintenance, initial hardware (and eventual three year refresh), and more, the city opted to be hosted by T2. We have seen approximately .5 Full-time Employee (FTE) savings in addition to the costs associated with hardware, licenses, etc.

“Our IT department was very much in favor of the hosted solution, as it only required an Internet connection whereas self-hosting is more complex,” Irshad said. “Of course, there are never enough IT resources to satisfy all departmental needs.”

“It’s just so easy getting data out of Flex”

“It’s easy to create new reports, and the Crystal Reports library has helped us out a lot.” Irshad said, referring to the always-growing library of Crystal Reports that T2 staff and customers contribute to. “It used to be difficult just to get an aging report. Now with Flex, if the report isn’t there already, you can almost definitely find one in the Crystal Reports library which is shared by all T2 users.”

“It’s just so easy to get data out of Flex,” said Irshad. “We’re able to respond very quickly to requests from elected officials and regulators. We’re able to give them data in an instant, which really builds credibility.”



“What used to take 1.5 minutes now takes about 45 seconds per work order, resulting in labor savings of about **250 hours per year.”**

ROI and Time Savings

Asset Management Saves Over 260 Hours Per Year

The Houston Parking Department staff process 15,000 work orders for meter repairs and other items every year. Before T2 Flex, that amounted to boxes and boxes of paper and a lot of time wasted processing the work orders manually. “We want staff to be in the office for no more than 20-30 minutes a day, because time here is time not spent in the field. There were days when they would waste an hour or two completing their paperwork.”

“With asset management, we have probably saved a whole forest of paper because work orders are sent straight to staff handhelds, and we don’t have to go through that manual paper work,” Irshad said. “It’s increased efficiency for our meter shop staff and they can spend more time out in the field. What used to take 1.5 minutes now takes about 45 seconds per work order, resulting in labor savings of about 250 hours per year.”

Work Orders	Manual	Asset Management
Time spent per work order	1.5	.5
Work orders per week	289	289
Work orders per year	15028	15028
Time to complete WO	22542	7514
Hours per year spent opening/closing WO	375.70	125.23
Savings in time (hours)		250.47

eBusiness Saves Half of FTE

"Prior to Flex, online payments for citations or permits were manually entered into the system on a daily basis," said Irshad. The chance for error and the time required to process payments was significant. T2 eBusiness, which connects seamlessly with T2 Flex, automated many of the tasks that used to be manual and saved Houston half of a full-time employee's wages.

Lockbox Saves Half of FTE

"Prior to Flex, mail payments were manually processed by a full-time employee," Irshad said. "With the implementation of Flex, the City established a lockbox interface. All payments are processed daily—there is no backlog of mail anymore—and images of the payments are stored on the bank's server, to which the City has access. We saved half of a full-time employee's wages here, too."



Booting Revenue Increased by \$400K

"The Flex implementation allowed us to configure the boot query to handle both boot-eligibility parameters (three delinquent parking citations, or only one delinquent handicap citation). For the two years between our T2 Flex implementation to fiscal year 2012, we experienced a 58% increase in the number of vehicles booted and close to \$400K in additional boot revenue."

Unified Parking Permit Management Saves Time and Improves Service

Irshad and her team are able to manage residential parking permits, valet operators permits and valet zone permits, commercial vehicle loading and unloading zone permits, meter bagging permits, news rack permits, and monthly parking permits with T2 Flex—all in one place. "We are able to track permits issued per household and enforce permit limits with the permit module," Irshad said. "This was something we were unable to manage in the legacy system. And the benefits of email notifications for permit renewals increased our customer service level."

Integrating parking with other systems crucial to operations

The ability to interface with other systems is a crucial piece for Houston's Parking Department. "We have lots of interfaces," Irshad said.

- » SAP (financial imports)
- » A noticing vendor interface because (for outsourced printing and mailing of notices) Houston Police Department (to get stolen vehicle alerts on parking enforcement handhelds)
- » The bank (lockbox payments and an online payment portal)
- » Collections

"The hearing officers, who are in another department, also have access to T2 Flex to hold hearings and appeals. It's an example of one application, multiple solutions," said Irshad. "Additionally, our Finance department was given access to query manager and developed queries to pull financial data."

"Especially with the need for data these days, having all of the information in one database it makes your life so much easier."

