

Asleep at the wheel? Just maybe. How else can city officials explain missing the obvious? Even before Keep NYC Congestion Tax Free and others questioned the apparent indiscriminate distribution of parking placards, it would never occur to any real New Yorker that the city would throw freebee parking to one of Madonna's haunts, albeit a spiritual one. First the city claimed the permits were fake only to admit the truth when confronted with photographic evidence. City Hall needs to come clean about who else gets these freebee parking perks. Are there permits issued ostensibly for public good – that really benefits the placard holder rather than the public? The Public Ought to Know. City Hall ought to come clean and stop playing favorites.

http://www.nypost.com/seven/07202008/news/regionalnews/kabbalah_parking_paradise_120725.htm

NEW YORK POST

KABBALAH PARKING PARADISE

By REUVEN BLAU and KATHIANNE BONIELLO

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Mayor Bloomberg's crackdown on city-issued parking permits doesn't apply to the celebrity-studded Midtown Kabbalah Centre - even as police, firefighters and teachers are having their parking passes yanked.

The spiritual home of Madonna, Alex Rodriguez and other celebrities has 10 permits that allow for parking in the loading zone in front of the East 48th Street building.

Card sharks

As city agencies see their number of parking permits drastically reduced, religious and social-service organizations – including the Kabbalah Centre in Midtown, which has 10 placards – enjoy thousands of permits.



City clergy members	400	(reduced 0%)
Social-service organizations	5,369	(reduced 0%)
Kabbalah Centre	10	(reduced 0%)
Dept. of Housing	465	(reduced 20%)
Dept. of Transportation	535	(reduced 20%)
Dept. of Correction	583	(reduced 47%)
FDNY	6,002	(reduced 27%)
NYPD	43,113	(reduced 33%)

Last year, the city issued 5,369 permits to 883 "social-service organizations," such as Access-a-Ride, Meals on Wheels, the Red Cross, volunteer ambulance services - and the Kabbalah Centre.

There are about 400 permits given annually to clergy and houses of worship, but religious groups usually get just one or two such passes - not 10. So far, the city has no plans to cut the number of placards given to private groups as prescribed by city law, a City Hall spokesman said.

But with the city slashing the number of placards given to its workers, it's time to take a hard look at other groups who get the benefit, said Wiley Norvell of Transportation Alternatives, an advocacy group critical of placard abuse.

"There really can't be any rationale for giving parking perks to private citizens," Norvell said. "It doesn't make sense. These sorts of permits should be at the top of the chopping block."

City officials initially denied that religious institutions, including the Kabbalah Centre, got the plum passes.

"They have to be fakes," a spokesman insisted.

The following day - after The Post provided photos of the parking permits in cars left outside the center - officials admitted that the center was given the permits.

Several of the cars sat outside the center for nearly six hours, violating the permits' three-hour limit.

All told, the city chopped more than 25,000 permits in May, including thousands of NYPD, FDNY and teacher passes, after a lengthy survey found there were more than 144,000 city- and government-issued parking placards in circulation.

rblau@nypost.com