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THAT'S THE TICKET: Parking violations up 63 percent since 2006, generating more than \$213,000 for city.



Photos by Ryan Soderlin/Journal staff

Parking enforcement officer Terri Furchner chalks tires Thursday near Ninth and Quincy streets. The Rapid City Police Department issued a total of 33,694 parking tickets in 2010. That is a 63 percent increase since 2006.

## Efficiency, demand drive up revenue

By Emilie Rusch  
Journal staff

The Rapid City Police Department issued 33,694 parking tickets in 2010, generating more than \$213,000 in revenue for the city to cover the cost of downtown enforcement and lot maintenance.

That is 63 percent more parking tickets than were stuck to windshields in 2006 and 28 percent more revenue, according to information provided by the police department and City Finance Office.

The main culprit?

City and downtown officials say it's a combination of increased efficiency among the parking enforcement staff and increased demand for parking downtown.

"We've become more efficient," police Lt. James Johns said. "That plays a big role in it, but I do think there is a greater demand



A windshield wiper holds down a parking ticket near Ninth and Kansas City streets Thursday.

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TICKETS: 9,431  
tickets have been  
issued since Jan. 1.

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for parking?"

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Parking ticket revenue, whether it's \$5 fines for violating the two-hour limit on Main Street or \$25 for parking in a leased lot without a permit, all goes into a separate, self-sufficient parking fund, along with the change from meters and leased parking payments, City Finance Officer Pauline Sumption said.

The fund covers the city's annual bond payments on the parking ramp, lot maintenance and improvements and the benefits and wages for its four parking enforcement officers. According to city budget documents, parking ticket revenue makes up about a third of the fund's annual budget.

"We really don't care how many tickets they wrote," Johns said. "On a perfect day, parking enforcement will go out there and write zero tickets. That means everyone is following the rules, but unfortunately that's not the case."

The jump, Johns said, can be attributed to a handful of changes that have increased efficiency for the enforcement staff over the past five years.

Since Jan. 1, the city has issued 9,431 tickets for parking violations downtown and elsewhere, according to the police department.

The city switched to e-tickets within the past five

## City parking tickets

Year	Tickets issued	Revenue
2006	20,675	\$166,686
2007	23,358	\$146,021
2008	28,115	\$167,226
2009	32,111	\$205,911
2010	33,694	\$213,347

Source: Rapid City Finance Office, Rapid City Police Department

years, allowing enforcement officers to electronically issue tickets, instead of having to write them out manually. In June 2009, the police department also put into service two T3 scooters to cut down on work-related injuries. The unit is also fully staffed now, with four full-time enforcement officers out marking tires and checking meters and permits.

"Our parking enforcement doesn't stand there and wait for the timer to hit two hours," Johns said. "They have their established routes that take them through areas at specific times and if a vehicle is there, they take appropriate action."

Demand for parking downtown, where the "vast majority" of tickets are issued, also plays a role, Johns said.

"Getting a parking ticket doesn't make you a bad person. People forget," Johns said. "Because the demand is greater, there are probably more tickets."

It's a part of visiting downtown that Dan Senftner, president of Destination Rapid City, is working hard to eliminate.

The downtown economic development group is in the midst of preparing a new marketing campaign to bring awareness to available parking options, including

the 30 new public meters on the second level of the city parking ramp. One idea, he said, is to provide tabletop cards to sit on counters at downtown businesses that read, "Park and shop for \$2 all day in downtown Rapid City."

"If you come and get your hair done and then you want to meet someone for lunch, you're downtown for four hours," Senftner said. "Most people don't realize they can park in the ramp. You can put in \$1 for four hours."

On a typical weekday, only 12 or 13 of those metered spots are filled, he said.

"You're not going to get a \$5 ticket. You don't have to worry about moving your car. We just have to educate people about it," Senftner said. "It's as close to free as you're going to get."

In the past year, Destination has also worked with the city of Rapid City to put up signs in all city-owned lots that let downtown visitors know they can park there for free after 4 p.m. weekdays and on weekends and holidays.

One such sign recently went up at both entrances to the parking lot to the City/School Administration Center on Sixth Street.

"On the weekends, there's no one parking in that lot," Senftner said. "It's



Ryan Soderlin/Journal staff

Parking enforcement officer Terri Furchner writes a parking ticket near Ninth and St. Joseph streets Thursday. The Rapid City Police Department issued a total of 33,694 parking tickets in 2010. That is a 63 percent increase since 2006.

empty and no one knows they can use it."

Downtown businesses said they do what they can, too, to tell their customers where and where not to park. At the Elks Theatre on Sixth Street, parking tickets

aren't an issue for evening movie showings.

But manager Tessa

McIntosh said that during the children's movie series during the summer, they make sure to make an announcement before the first movie to let moviegoers know that parking in the wrong spot could mean a \$5 ticket.

"Some of the movies last more than two hours, so it's best to stay in the parking garage or somewhere you can do change," McIntosh said.

Parking tickets are also a concern for the theater's employees, who are responsible for any fines they rack up during a shift. Sometimes, she said, it can feel like the parking enforcement officers are "out to get you."

"In the last couple of weeks, I've got two tickets," McIntosh said. "It's hard. As a manager you have to stay in the theater all the time, so it's hard to remember you have to move your car."

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## CORRECTION

### Parking ticket numbers

4/27/11  
In the Page A1 story "Efficiency, demand drive up revenue," published Tuesday, April 26, the Rapid City Police Department released an incorrect figure for the number of parking tickets issued in 2006. Parking enforcement officers wrote a total of 30,675 citations.