

Thursday 8 March 2007



A.B. Watson's Crypt in Oakhill Cemetary - Southtown | © Brian Kelly

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Development News

February 8, 2007

Innovative gadget makes city parking more convenient

A year ago, the City of Grand Rapids Parking System Department introduced a new gadget to make it easier than ever to find convenient parking in the city.

That gadget saves drivers money by allowing them to pay only for the time they are actually parked, instead of paying for time left on the meter when they drive away. It eliminates the chance the meter will run out before more money can be added. And the gadget eliminates the need to tote buckets filled with quarters to park around the city.

That gadget is the In-Car Parking Meter.

"It looks like a Palm Pilot that hangs by a hook from your rearview mirror," said Pam Ritsema, parking system director. "It comes with a debit card that drivers can get in any amount from the city office."

It works like this:

Let's say you park at a curbside meter and you want to use your in-car meter. First, you enter a parking zone code provided by the parking system department. You insert your special debit card into the in-car meter to start the timer, you hang the in-car meter on your rearview mirror, and you go about your business. When you leave the parking space, you insert the debit card to stop the timer. The parking fee is automatically calculated and deducted from the special debit account you set up when you picked up your gadget from the city office. Simple, convenient, and easy.

It also practically guarantees parking that's closer to a driver's destination than parking in a ramp or a surface lot. And with over 2,400 meters throughout downtown and the city, that's a lot of convenient parking.

"It's popular with vendors, realty companies, and people who have a lot of meetings downtown," Ritsema said. "Seventy meters are currently in use, and we have more available."



Use of the in-car meter is free, but requires a \$65 deposit that is refunded when the meter is returned.

Source: Pam Ritsema, Grand Rapids Parking System Director

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