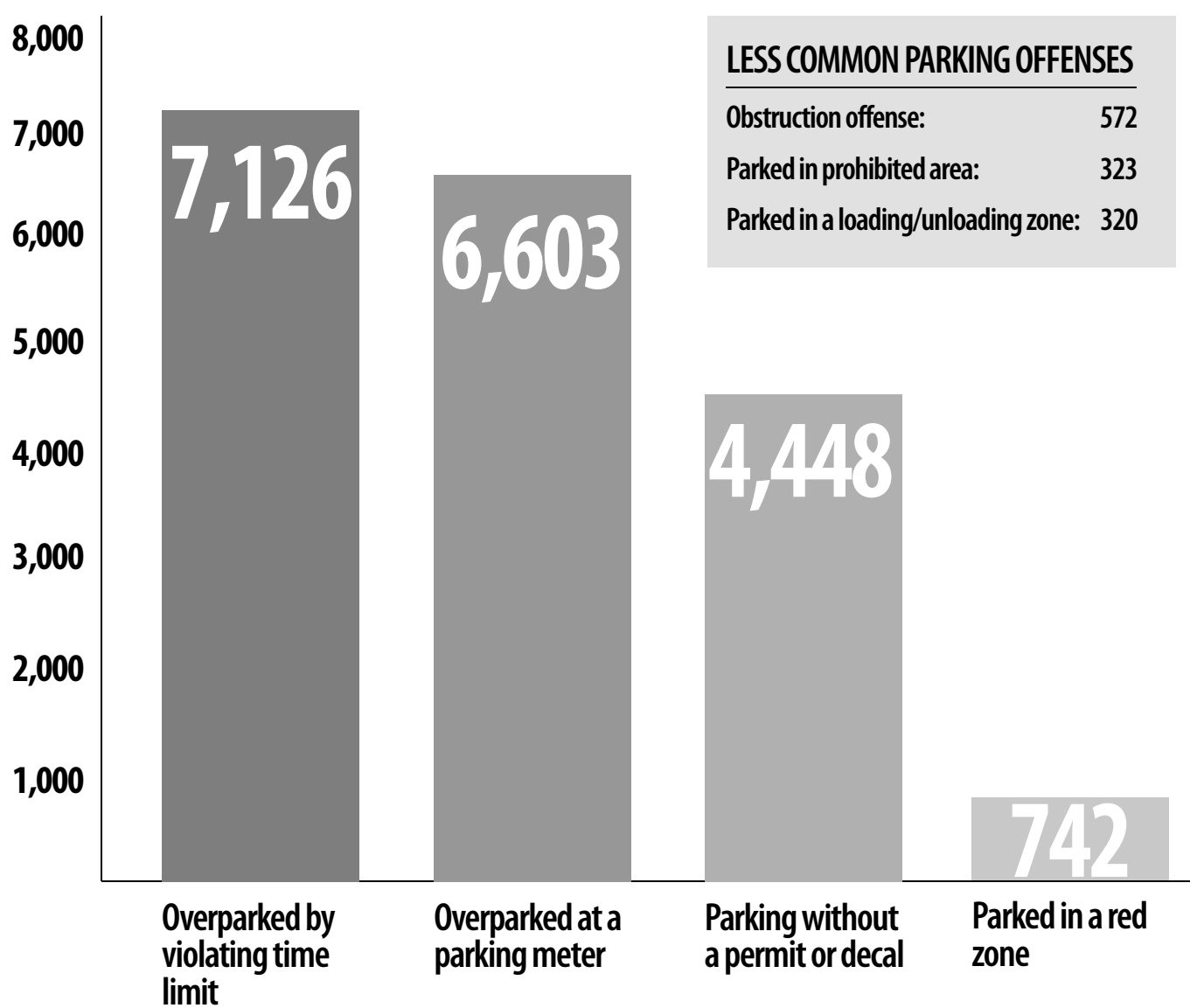


LOCAL

GALVESTON PARKING BY THE NUMBERS

The city of Galveston issued **21,923** parking-related citations in 2014. Here's a breakdown of the most commonly issued citations in the city last year, including both along the seawall and in the downtown district.



LESS COMMON PARKING OFFENSES

Obstruction offense:	572
Parked in prohibited area:	323
Parked in a loading/unloading zone:	320

REVENUE GENERATED FROM PARKING

Seawall

\$502,679

total paid in seawall parking fees last fiscal year

\$600,000

anticipated revenue from seawall parking fees this fiscal year

Downtown

\$73,178

average amount the city of Galveston made from old metered parking fees for year

\$157,600

anticipated revenue in the first year from parking fees in the new downtown program

HOW TO PARK IN GALVESTON

- 1 The first time you use PayByPhone, you will need to register. You can register one of three ways: download the mobile app, visit paybyphone.com or call 866-234-7275
- 2 You will need to provide a credit card and license plate number to register your vehicle. If you have a golf cart, you can use a registration number.
- 3 Once you have registered, you are ready to pay for parking. Load the mobile app on your device or call the PayByPhone number listed on the parking sign to pay.
- 4 Input the location code listed on the signs near your parking space. All of Galveston downtown has the code 5689. The seawall code is 5004. Also list the time that you'll need to reserve the parking.
- 5 A text message reminder will be sent to your phone five minutes before a parking session expires. You can extend the parking through the app or by calling the PayByPhone number.
- 6 Once you have paid for parking either downtown or on the seawall, you can move your vehicle anywhere within the same numbered area in one payment session.



Parking Downtown

Galveston's multi-space parking meters will soon be torn up from the sidewalks downtown. The meters were installed by a private company and went live in August 2010 after two years of free parking downtown as the coin-operated meters were torn up by Hurricane Ike.

The city's contract ended March 31 with the enforcement and meter company ABM and city officials opted to bring parking in-house. With the city takeover, downtown parking will fully transition to PayByPhone for its 630 spaces downtown.

The cost of repairing 23 broken machines and the amount of revenue given to the company made the old system unfeasible, said Michael Gray, the special projects manager overseeing the program for the city.

Moving away from meters, Gray said fewer enforcement employees will be needed to use the automatic license plate reader to check payments.

Under the new system, the parking rate goes up by 25 cents an hour to \$1.50, plus a 25 cent processing fee on each transaction, which means the first hour of parking actually costs \$1.75.

The new plan also comes with increased fines for parking violations. The basic fine goes up to \$30 from \$17 and it will be possible to earn a fine of up to \$75 for a violation such as parking in a red zone, the fourth most common parking of-

fense in the city according to citation records from 2014.

The fine for illegally parking in a handicap zone goes from \$257 to \$500. Parking within 15 feet of a fire hydrant will be another costly offense, with citations changing from \$17 to \$75.

Under the new system, parking in every spot will be free for the first 15 minutes after a license plate is scanned — in response to local worrying that the program would discourage in-and-out coffee drinkers and shoppers.

The city says 23 downtown businesses will accept cash payments from people who don't want to use a card through PayByPhone.

"We have been getting a lot of questions about the system," Gray said. "But the first month has gone smoothly, all-in-all."

Gray said that in its first month about 60 percent of parking fees were paid compared to last year in the same time frame.

"That is with zero enforcement and publicly saying we were only giving out warnings," Gray said. "A lot of people knew that and weren't paying this month, so we think that number is a good sign."

The city plans to tear up the parking meters and install more signage downtown in coming months to help explain the system.

Parking on the Seawall

In the first months of the Park Board program, no parking citations had been given out on the Seawall.

Parking ambassadors equipped with license plate readers identify noncompliant vehicles, but issue warnings without the authority to issue citations.

Eventually the park board anticipates that drivers who do not respond to warnings will be given citations, deputy Parks Director Mario Rabago said.

The ambassadors will identify vehicles whose owners do not pay the fees after the warning and alert police to the offending cars so they can be issued a citation, Rabago said.

But the park board has emphasized that the ambassadors do more than just parking enforcement, however, Rabago said.

The attendants will be certified tourism ambassadors, wildlife monitors and have basic first-aid training.

On any given day, three of the employees will patrol sections of the seawall on Segway scooters. Each attendant had to undergo Segway training and complete an obstacle course to begin work, Rabago said.

Eventually the ambassadors will be able to take cash payments from drivers who are unable or unwilling to pay with a credit card through PayByPhone. For now, however, those drivers can pay at three areas: the Ohana Surf & Skate shop, the 61st St. fishing pier and the Island Bicycle Company.

"We were anticipating being ready for a lot of people to want to pay with cash," Rabago said. "But in the first few months we're realizing not as many people have problems with paying with a card than we thought."

Rabago said the park board is pleased with the levels of compliance so far.

From March 1 to April 29 this year, Seawall parking fees generated \$92,275 in gross revenues. During the same time period last year the fees generated \$93,335.

Those numbers are encouraging, Rabago said, when taking into account the prevalence of rainy weekends this spring.

In its budget for this fiscal year, the Park Board anticipated it would make \$600,000 in revenue from the program in a year, according to this fiscal year's budget. Last year, under police the program took in \$502,679 in fees.

Spaces between 69th Street and 81st streets are now free — but are a walk from any beach. Rabago said the Park Board is discussing moving the free parking areas to a more desirable part of the seawall.

"The small things will take some trial and error to get right," he said.