

Feedback

Bicycle Friendly Community Application

University Heights, IA

Spring 2012





The League of American Bicyclists has designated **University Heights, IA** as a Bicycle Friendly Community at the **Bronze** level, because University Heights exhibits a strong commitment to cycling that is still in its beginning stages. The reviewers felt that there is still “room to grow”, but that notable steps are being made in the right direction:

- *Engineering:* Every destination has bike parking. Most public buses are equipped with bike racks. Cyclists are accommodated at busy intersections through loop detector markings.
- *Education:* University Heights has recently educated motorists and bicyclists on sharing the road safely through public service announcements. Cycling Skills classes and Commuter classes are offered regularly in the community.
- *Encouragement:* University Heights promotes National Bike Month through commuter breakfasts.
- *Enforcement:* University Heights has an identified law-enforcement point person to interact with cyclists. Officers have received specific training on the relationship between bicycling and law enforcement. Completion of Smart Cycling course by Police officers. There is a ban on texting while driving.
- *Evaluation & Planning:* Very high bicycle mode share (9.8%). University Heights has low number of cyclist/motor vehicle crashes. The community has a bicycle master plan and meets annual targets for bike plan implementation.

Reviewers were very pleased to see the current efforts, potential and commitment to make University Heights a great place for bicyclists which can be seen in the growing number of cyclists. The BFC review team expects great things in the future given the good local team and the coming improvements to the network and programs.

Below, reviewers provided recommendations to further promote bicycling in University Heights in the short and long term. Further increasing bicycle use can [improve the environment](#) by reducing the impact on residents of pollution and noise, limiting greenhouse gases, and improving the quality of public spaces; [Reduce congestion](#) by shifting short trips (the majority of trips in cities) out of cars. This will also make cities more accessible for public transport, walking, essential car travel, emergency services, and deliveries; **Save lives** by creating safer conditions for bicyclists and as a direct consequence improve the safety of all other road users. [Research shows](#) that increasing the number of bicyclists on the street improves bicycle safety; **Increase opportunities** for residents of all ages to participate socially and economically in the community, regardless of income or ability. Greater choice of travel modes also increases independence, especially among [seniors](#) and [children](#); [Boost the economy](#) by creating a community that is an attractive destination for new residents, tourists and businesses; **Enhance recreational opportunities**, especially for children, and further contribute to the quality of life in the community; [Save city funds](#) by increasing the efficient use of public space, reducing the need for costly new road infrastructure, preventing crashes, improving the health of the community, and increasing the use of public transport; **Enhance public safety and security** by increasing the number of “eyes on the street” and providing more options for movement in the event of emergencies, natural disasters, and major public events; [Improve the health and well being](#) of the population by promoting routine physical activity.



The key measures University Heights should take to improve cycling in the community are:

- Expanding the bicycle and pedestrian manager's time focused on bike projects would help in scaling up your BFC efforts. Current work of the BPAC and TDM staff could be complemented by a staff person devoted to acquiring bike/ ped grants and making the community bicycle-friendly. See this report on the importance of Bicycle & Pedestrian program staff.
http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/pdfs/why_bike_ped_staff_april_2010.pdf
- Ensure that bicycle-safety education is a routine part of public education and that the school property and the surrounding neighborhoods are particularly safe and convenient for biking. Work with your Bicycle Advisory Committee and local bicycle advocates to develop and implement a [Safe Routes to School program](#) that emphasizes bicycling for your elementary school.
- It is vital to make motorists and cyclists aware of their rights and responsibilities on the road. Continue to expand public education campaigns to promote the share the road message and the rights and responsibilities of all users, e.g. through share the road street signs or a dedicated bike page on community website. Consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development and manpower. See a motorist education video at <http://www.bikelib.org/safety-education/motorists/driver-education/>.
- Expand encouragement efforts during National Bike Month in partnership with local bicycle advocacy groups. Have the Mayor and/or the City Council proclaim May as Bike Month. Host, sponsor and/or encourage bicycle-themed community events such as community rides, a bicycle festival or a commuter challenge. Ensure to widely advertise all bicycle-themed community events. You and the local bicycle community can increase your efforts on Bike to Work Day/Week, for example by offering breakfast for bike commuters or by having the mayor or council member lead a commuter convoy:
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/>
- Promote, host, sponsor and/or encourage a variety of bicycle-themed, fun and family-friendly community events year-round, such as a bike movie festival, a 4th of July bike parade, an "increase-your-appetite" Thanksgiving community ride, a dress-like-Santa community ride before Christmas, a kids triathlon, a bicycle fashion show (fashionable alternatives to lycra), a Halloween bike decoration competition, a bike to the arts event, etc. Work closely with local bicycle advocacy groups, bike clubs, bike shops, bike teams and schools. Provide appropriate safety measures such as road closures or police escorts.



Reviewers provided the following menu of recommendations to further promote bicycling:

Engineering

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Adopt a [Complete Streets](#) or Bicycle Accommodation policy and offer implementation guidance. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your community a better place to live.
- Ensure that new and improved bicycle facilities conform to current best practices and guidelines – such as the [NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#), [AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities](#) and your DOT's own guidelines. Consider innovative bicycle infrastructure such as bicycle tracks, contra-flow bike lanes or colorful bike lanes.
- Ensure that the standards for bike parking conform to APBP guidelines:
http://www.apbp.org/resource/resmgr/publications/bicycle_parking_guidelines.pdf
- Install way-finding signage at strategic locations around the community. Here are some best practices from the Washington, DC area Council of Governments:
<http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/t1dZW1k20070516090831.pdf>
- Improve the coordination and communication between city departments and state paving and rehabilitation projects and facilities maintenance. Consider offering oversight to state DOT staff and contractors working within municipal boundaries. Ensure that facility design follows current best practice and that they are properly installed.
- Consider measuring the bicycle level of service (LOS) on community roads and at intersections, to be able to identify the most appropriate routes for inclusion in the community bicycle network, determine “weak links” in the network, prioritize sites needing improvement, and evaluate alternate treatments for improving bike-friendliness of a roadway or intersection: [http://www.bikelib.org/bike-planning/bicycle-level-of-service/\(roads\)](http://www.bikelib.org/bike-planning/bicycle-level-of-service/(roads)) and <http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/library/details.cfm?id=4425> (intersections).
- Consider road diets in appropriate locations to make streets more efficient and safe. Use the newly created space for bicycle and pedestrian facilities:
<http://www.walkable.org/assets/downloads/roaddiets.pdf>



Long Term Goals:

- Continue to expand the bike network and increase network connectivity through the use of bike lanes, bike tracks, shared lane arrows, signed routes and bicycle cut-throughs. Since arterial and collector roads are the backbone of every transportation network, it is essential to increase the number of wide shoulders or [bike lanes](#) along these roads to allow bicyclists of all skill levels to reach their destinations quickly and safely. On-street improvements coupled with the expansion of the off-street system will continue to increase use and improve safety. These improvements will also increase the effectiveness of encouragement efforts by providing a broader range of facility choices for users of various abilities and comfort levels.
- Increase the amount of [secure bicycle parking](#) at popular destinations such as schools, recreation facilities, retail and office clusters and churches throughout the community. Regulations that require bike parking, e.g. as part of new developments, can secure private funding for bike parking. See bicycle parking ordinances of [Madison, Wisconsin](#) and [Santa Cruz, California](#).
- Develop a system of bicycle boulevards that creates an attractive, convenient, and comfortable cycling environment welcoming to cyclists of all ages and skill levels. See more on how to do it at <http://www.ibpi.usp.pdx.edu/guidebook.php>

Education

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Improve the reach of the community's bicycle safety campaigns. Use valuable information from the League's Ride Better Tips in your outreach education and encouragement efforts. See the Ride Better Tips pages at <http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/better/index.php> , PSA's <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/psas.php> and the downloadable Bicycle Safety Tips for Adults video at <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/shortversion.wmv>. Again, consider taking advantage of your local bicycle advocates for content and strategy development and manpower.
- Host a League Cycling Instructor seminar to increase the number of certified League Cycling Instructors in your community, who can teach both adult and child classes. Having local instructors will enable your community to expand cycling education, recruit knowledgeable cycling ambassadors, deliver education to motorists, provide cycling education to adults, and have an expert to assist in encouragement programs. Contact the League office or visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/education/> for information.
- Team with a local advocacy group, bicycle shop, or League Cycling Instructor to offer regular public maintenance classes to residents at public parks, libraries, community centers and in



conjunction with city events. A short tutorial on how to change a flat tire can empower a person to ride their bike more often. You can find local instructors and bike shops here: https://members.bikeleague.org/members_online/members/findit.asp

Encouragement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Reach children with bicycling education outside of school through recreation programs, bicycle repair co-ops, family-friendly community bicycle events and through youth bike clubs. Here is an example from Portland, OR - <http://www.communitycyclingcenter.org/index.php/programs-for-youth>
- Encourage local businesses to promote cycling to the workplace and to seek recognition through the *Bicycle Friendly Business* program. Businesses will profit from a [healthier, happier and more productive workforce](#) while the community would potentially profit from some bicycle-active businesses as well: increasing the bicycle mode share, less commuter traffic, better air quality, public bike parking in prime locations provided by businesses, new and powerful partners in advocating for bike infrastructure and programs on the local, state and federal level, and public bike events, skills and maintenance classes hosted or sponsored by businesses. The city should be the model employer for the rest of the community. For more information about the free program please visit <http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/bicyclefriendlybusiness/>.
- Encourage local institutions of higher education to promote cycling and to seek recognition through the [Bicycle Friendly University](#) program. College and university campuses are unique environments for their high density, stimulating atmosphere and defined boundaries. These factors make them ideal environments to incorporate bikes. Many colleges and universities have built upon these good conditions and embraced the enthusiasm for more bicycle-friendly campuses by incorporating bike share programs, bike co-ops, clubs, bicycling education classes and policies to promote bicycling as a preferred means of transportation. The community could potentially profit as well: Communities near a BFU such as Stanford or University of California at Davis have a very high number of regular bicyclists (as many students bike to campus, shops and restaurants), less congestion around campus, safer streets and university-hosted public bicycle events, programs and classes." See what Stanford University is doing for cyclists: http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bicyclefriendlyamerica/communities/bfc_stanford_university.php
- Actively involve the local bicycle community in community planning efforts, policy development and public outreach.



- Set up and promote bicycle-themed community celebrations and/or rides each time the community completes a new bicycle related project. This is a great way to show off the city's good efforts and introduces new users to the improvement.
- Consider offering a 'Ciclovia' or 'Summer Streets' type event, closing off a major corridor to auto traffic and offering the space to cyclists, pedestrians and group exercise events.
<http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html>
- Consider partnering with a local bicycle advocacy group or bike club to launch a bike buddy or bicyclist mentorship program for inexperienced riders. A bike mentorship program that teams experienced cyclists with newcomers is a great way to encourage and educate novice commuters. See what Spokane, Wash. and Charlotte, N.C. are doing
<http://groups.google.com/group/bikementor>,
<http://www.spokanebicycleclub.org/bikebuddy.htm>

Long Term Goals

- Develop a series of short (2-5 mi.) (themed) loop rides around the community and provide appropriate way-finding signage. Integrate these rides into local bike maps.
- Recreational bicycling can be promoted through facilities and programs like mountain bike parks, cyclocross course or similar bicycle amenities. Ensure that the facilities are accessible by bicycle, so that there is no need to drive to ride.

Enforcement

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Invite a police officer to become an active member of the bicycle advisory committee.
- Actively facilitate stronger connections between bicycle advocates, the wider bicycling community and law enforcement. Ask police officers to use targeted information and enforcement to encourage motorists *and* cyclists to share the road. This could be in the form of a brochure or tip card explaining each user's rights and responsibilities. Have information material available in Spanish, if applicable. Also increase the number of police officers patrolling multi-use paths *and* streets on bike, as it gives officers a better understanding of the conditions for cyclists and keeps secluded multi-use paths safe.
- Enforcement practices could also include positive enforcement ticketing. Police officers could team up with local stores to reward safe cycling practices by handing out gift certificates to cyclists who are "caught" following the law. See what Tewksbury, MA is doing: <http://www.wickedlocal.com/tewksbury/news/lifestyle/x1837747400/Tewksbury-police-reward-young-cyclists-for-wearing-their-helmets#axzz1WdjHHfMo>



- Pass laws or ordinances that protect cyclists, e.g. implement specific penalties for motorists for failing to yield to a cyclist when turning, make it illegal to park or drive in a bike lane (intersections excepted), implement penalties for motor vehicle users that 'door' cyclists and ban cell phone use while driving.

Evaluation/Planning

Low hanging fruit and fast results:

- Regularly conduct research on bicycle usage beyond the U.S. Census' Journey to Work report to more efficiently distribute resources according to demand. Conduct yearly counts using automated and manual counters in partnership with advocacy organizations. We also strongly encourage you to participate in the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project: <http://bikepeddocumentation.org/>.
- Consider implementing a trip reduction program/ordinance. See good examples at <http://bikepeddocumentation.org/> and <http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=43801>
- Consider conducting an economic impact study on bicycling in your community. See what Portland, OR has done: http://www.altaplanning.com/App_Content/files/fp_docs/2008%20Portland%20Bicycle-Related%20Economy%20Report.pdf

Long Term Goals

- Ensure that there is dedicated funding for the implementation of the bicycle master plan.
- Integrate the implementation of the bike plan into the master plan, all land use plans, zoning ordinances and larger development projects.
- Allow and encourage a mix of uses, a well connected street network and compact development patterns throughout the community to shorten the distances people need to bike.

For more ideas and best practices please visit the [Bicycle Friendly Community Resource Page](#).