



12-for-1 Parking Bike Corrals

Bike corrals give cyclists a good place to park, free up the sidewalk and increase traffic to local businesses.

by Page Buono

Bicycles are proliferating as high gas prices drive people to put their feet to the pedals and as the delights of biking are rediscovered. Bikes improve fitness and health, often replace short car trips and are a cheap, non-polluting, greenhouse gas-preventing form of transportation.

But what do you do with them all? Bikes locked to parking meters, signs, each other and everything else in sight can become serious obstructions. Without some accommodation, cyclists are forced

to compete with trees, pedestrians and newspaper racks for sidewalk space.

Bike corrals are one solution, and their use is spreading. Portland, OR and Columbia, MO have them. New York, Key West, FL and Victoria, British Columbia, Canada have them. Chicago, IL has them as a part of its Bike 2015 plan.

Bike corrals give bikes a designated place, acknowledge their importance (which cyclists appreciate) and clear the sidewalk. Shop owners like the extra traffic, and have been known to pay for their installation.

What are they?

Basically elongated bike racks, corrals can be installed in a parking space, where they allow 12 to 14 vehicles to park instead of one. The fixed element is often a staggered series of upside down U-shapes (or "staples") or a metal spiral, though there's no reason they couldn't be more imaginative. The City of Portland paints the fixtures all blue, making them recognizable to users as city structures. Corrals themselves cost around \$1,000. Labor and additions for stability and safety may bring the total to \$3,000 to \$4,000.

Sidewalk extensions are another variation on the theme. For an extra \$30,000 or so, users get a more “constructed” area, often covered, with a display point for bike safety and other materials. Portland, OR decided these are too expensive, opting for a greater number of parking space corrals, but remains interested in developing other covered options.

Safety

Safety is a concern with people and bikes in the street, so bike corral boundaries are sometimes lined with black and yellow reflective flexible poles, encouraging sidewalk access and fending off cars. Corrals are usually installed in corner parking spaces, adding the safety benefit of more visibility around the corner for pedestrians and drivers.

Sarah Figliozzi, Portland’s Bicycle Program Specialist, said businesses advocate for bike corrals at their storefronts because they clean up the sidewalk area and say, “I’m bike friendly” at the same time. She said the city tries to place corrals in predictable places near key destinations, so not all business fronts are ideal spaces.

Photo courtesy Corri Flaker-GetAbout Columbia

The City of Portland just added four bike corrals, replacing six parking spaces and bringing the city’s total to 10. Local businesses, business associations and neighborhoods paid for the first ones, but the recent additions are funded by the City’s Bike Parking Fund. Portland supports that fund with money collected from developers who opt out of the city’s bike parking code requirements.

Figliozzi says the parking structures embody the city’s goal of “making cycling in Portland irresistible.”

Columbia, MO built its first bike corral last spring with a grant from the Federal Highway Administration’s Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot program, and plans to install three more bike corrals before 2010. The city left the parking meter in place at the first corral and is asking for donations from bikers, which they hope will help fund biking infrastructure in the future.

Bike corrals are an affordable, effective and a readily available response to the growing popularity of cycling. Cyclists like and use them and business owners like the additional traffic. And pedestrians can walk on the sidewalk without fear of tripping over pedals. ♦



Photo courtesy City of Portland

Portland uses blue corrals (opposite and above) to create visual identity and send a consistent welcoming message.

Do you have stories about or photos of bike corrals in your community? Share them at CitiesGoGreen.com.

Below: The first bike corral in Columbia, MO is full most of the time, and the city plans more to accommodate the overflow.

