



Making a Place for Bicycles in California

Using Bicycle Parking Laws to Support Health, Business, and the Environment



Bicycling creates healthier communities, supports local business, and leads to less pollution and congestion. But people are reluctant to bike when they worry they won't find a good place to lock their bicycles. Bicycle parking ordinances provide an easy way to ensure plentiful bicycle parking and make it clear that bicycles are welcome.

Bicycle parking promotes health. Cities across the country are looking for ways to combat the growing obesity epidemic. Today, more than two-thirds of American adults and one-third of children are overweight or obese,¹ which puts them at higher risk for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, stroke, and other serious illnesses.² One way that cities can make a difference is by encouraging bicycling.

Biking is a great way to get around, and adults and children who are physically active are less likely to become overweight or obese. Many people use their cars to run errands and travel to destinations just one or two miles from home.³ For these short trips, bicycling can be a practical alternative. Likewise, for the third of Americans who live within five miles of their jobs, biking can turn a tiresome commute into healthy exercise, especially in California, where the weather is more likely to be moderate year round.



People are reluctant to bike, however, when they don't think they'll find a secure place to park. While parking for cars is usually available, parking for bikes is often scarce or nonexistent. Surveys find that lack of good bicycle parking is the number one reason even experienced bicyclists often don't ride to work.⁴

Not surprisingly, where there is bicycle-friendly infrastructure, including parking, ridership increases.⁵ Bicycle parking serves another important role, too: it lets the community know that bikes belong and are welcomed. It can also encourage people to get on their bikes, and can make biking safer by emphasizing that bicyclists are legitimate users of the road.

Bicycle parking helps local businesses prosper.

Studies have shown that bicyclists, unlike drivers, travel slowly enough to interact with their surroundings, making them more likely to stop, shop, and explore. The bottom line is that people bicycling through town spend more money.⁶ In Toronto, for example, people who biked or walked to commercial areas reported spending more money there per month than those who drove.⁷ In Davis, Calif., shops along major cycling routes rent at a premium because bicyclists bring in so much business.⁸

Adding bicycle parking can boost tourism and other business. In Madison, Wis., sales tax revenue increased 3 percent in shopping areas with new bicycle racks.⁹ Durango, Colo., boasts on its website that tourists can shop by bike or take a two-wheeled tour of local breweries: "No matter where you go in downtown, you'll find a place to park your bike nearby."¹⁰



Bicycle parking is good for streets and the environment.

Each bicycle trip to shop, work, or run an errand means one fewer car on the road. Bicycles cause virtually no wear and tear on roads,¹¹ keeping costly street repairs down. Encouraging biking by providing bicycle parking not only promotes health and supports the local economy, but also reduces traffic congestion, pollution,¹² reliance on fossil fuels, and road maintenance costs. Health, the economy, and the environment all benefit.

"More and more developers are realizing that including bicycle parking is the way to go. It's not that difficult to do, and it brings a lot of benefits to the development and the community."

~Developer David Tirman,
Executive Vice President of
JMA Ventures

Bicycle Parking Laws in California

Local governments can easily and affordably encourage bicycling in their communities by adopting bicycle parking laws. More than 150 cities and towns across the country have already taken this step,¹³ including dozens in California, and interest is growing as more and more California communities see the advantages of bike parking.

San Francisco

San Francisco, considered one of the most bike-friendly cities in California, saw a 71 percent increase in bicycle traffic over a recent five-year period.¹⁴ Thanks to city law, more than 60 parking garages around the city now have convenient spaces for bike parking,¹⁵ and monitored bike parking for large events means people can securely park their bikes at San Francisco street fairs, festivals, and parades. In addition, new development and major remodels must include bike parking.

Emeryville

As a small town, Emeryville recognized that many residents live within five miles of their workplace, school, or other common destinations, making travel around town by bicycle easy and convenient.¹⁶ But, as the city's bike plan emphasizes, bicyclists "need convenient, secure places to store their bicycles at the end of their trips."¹⁷ Emeryville now requires new and expanded buildings to include both short- and long-term bicycle parking.¹⁸

Long Beach

Long Beach launched an innovative Bike-Friendly Business District program to encourage shoppers to make trips by bicycle instead of car. Business owners have welcomed the flood of new customers who arrive by bicycle, and the program also eases traffic and congestion.¹⁹ The city program provides, among other perks, bike racks and larger, playfully designed bike parking corrals, as well as monitored bike parking at

events. Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster points out that biking introduces people to businesses they might not otherwise encounter: "I see parts of the city on my bike that I would never even notice if I was just driving."²⁰

Bicycle parking provides:

- *Healthier, more active residents*
- *Increased revenue for local businesses*
- *Less pollution and congestion on streets*

San Diego

Bicycles are one of the top objects of theft in San Diego, and bicycle components are frequently stolen even when a bicycle is securely locked.²¹ Recognizing that "many people won't use a bicycle unless they have secure parking available," the city requires bicycle parking with various types of new development.²² Showers are also required for offices, among other types of buildings.²³ As the local bicycle master plan notes, showers and clothing lockers "make bicycle commuting a viable option for many bicyclists."²⁴

Model Bicycle Parking Ordinance

Our model bicycle parking ordinance can help communities provide safe, adequate, and convenient bike parking. As with all of our model laws, it is designed so that each community can tailor the law to its own needs. The law contains three parts, and a community can choose to adopt just one or all three sections.

1. New Development and Major Renovations:

The model law requires that new commercial and multifamily developments, as well as major renovations, provide short- and long-term bicycle parking. A side benefit for developers is that they don't have to create as many expensive parking spaces for cars as they would have otherwise.

2. Parking Facilities:

The law requires licensed parking facilities to provide parking for bikes in addition to cars.

3. Large Public Events:

The law requires street festivals and other large events involving street closures to provide monitored bicycle parking. This requirement ensures that there is secure bike parking at large events and decreases congestion.

Visit www.changelabsolutions.org to download our model bicycle parking ordinance, and contact our staff attorneys for assistance.





ChangeLab Solutions

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- ²⁴ City of San Diego. *Bicycle Master Plan*, *supra* note 21, at 40.