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General News

Group rolling out bike racks

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OKLAHOMA CITY – Pedaling a bicycle around town for health or gasoline savings loses its appeal once the rider realizes he’s got nowhere to park his bike, Jeff Bezdek said.

The Urban Neighbors downtown neighborhood association, of which Bezdek is a member, is working to solve that problem and help reinforce a sense of community in the city’s core by installing dozens of specially designed bike racks downtown. The first is expected to be installed this weekend.

“There are a lot of people who already live and work downtown, and the confluence of the city’s bike trail master plan is expected to bring more – all roads lead to downtown in that plan,” he said. “So we think ridership is on a steady increase as downtown becomes more accessible. ... Bike racks are important to that development because there are a limited number of places where you can safely leave your bike. You can’t lock up to a parking meter, for example.”

Bezdek stressed that Urban Neighbors is a true neighborhood association, not just a group working on general tourism or economic development. The bike rack project coincides with the association’s first anniversary.

“We’re like any other neighborhood association, except that we’re tasked with certain unusual issues because we’re downtown,” he said. “We’re tasked with improving the quality of life downtown. Because of our density environment, we are challenged to develop our pedestrian infrastructure. Installing these racks is a direct improvement that will make it more enjoyable and a safer place to participate as a pedestrian.”

The bike racks were funded through a \$20,000 Oklahoma City government grant and the group partnered with Downtown OKC Inc. to raise more funds. Bezdek said the association’s window of opportunity was closing quickly to get the racks; the grant money had to be allocated before the end of the month or be lost. But private donations will still be accepted for additional work.

The grant money was split between two rack designs. The first, which Bezdek refers to as the standard design, is a large, metal spiral that lies on its side and connects to form a complete circle. Bikes fit between the coils.

“They were designed specifically for Oklahoma City,” he said. “You really won’t see them anywhere else. People will easily recognize that design as something unique to the area.”

The other half of the money has gone to individually designed racks with more artistic flair. The Bricktown Urban Design Commission recently approved the first one, which will be installed at the AT&T Bricktown Ballpark on Reno Avenue. Riders will be able to park their bikes among the stand-up, capital letters, “RACK UP,” which is a reference to Downtown OKC’s “Looking Up” promotion.

The architect for the racks is Stan Carroll at Beyond Metal in Oklahoma City. Carroll has worked on several local projects, including the renovation of the MidContinent Life Building and the design of the Momentum Conference Room, 111 N. Harrison, which was recognized last year by the American Institute of Architects.

The racks are expected to be installed over the next few months, he said.

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