


# BICYCLES IN CITIES



Vol. VIII

## BICYCLE PARKING

 Streets are only half the urban automobile equation; parking is the other half. Eugene has found that this is also true of its bicycle network.

But can't riders just lean their bicycles against the nearest fence, railing, building or tree? The urban cyclist who uses the bicycle for transportation is often forced to do these things, but they are far from ideal. Even assuming that a city is willing to put up with the clutter and unsightliness of helter-skelter bicycle parking, it is clear that this approach will keep many people off their bicycles and is not a good practice for cities trying to encourage cycling.

Bicycles have characteristics that require well-thought-out parking facilities. They are easy to steal, are a nuisance for pedestrians when parked around building entrances, and are singularly uncomfortable to ride after sitting in the rain or snow. The perfect bicycle parking facility continues to elude designers. Ask a group of ten Eugene cyclists which of the City's facilities they prefer and you will get ten different answers. Each cyclist's priorities are slightly different.

**LOCATION.** One aspect of bicycling most valued by cyclists is its ability to get them close to their destinations. So, the first step is to identify cyclists' destinations. Eugene officials and businesses have simply observed the places where bicycles cluster -- the hospital, the library, a downtown shopping mall, city and county offices -- and provided parking in these places.



**County Office Building and City Hall attract bicycles.** The County facility (left) was designed as part of the building it serves; the free-standing City design (right) occupies two car-parking spaces.

**SECURITY.** Racks in out-of-the-way places such as rarely-used alleys don't get used. It is an old cycling proverb that the best lock is your eye. While not foregoing locks, cyclists like to reinforce them by leaving the bicycle in a well-travelled location where a thief at work would likely be observed.

**PROTECTION FROM WEATHER.** Particularly in a rainy climate like Eugene's, weather protection ranks high on the list of desirable characteristics. This can be accomplished in several ways. Some bicycle parking structures in Eugene have been designed with their own cover to keep bicycles out of the rain. Both public and private businesses have had success putting parking under existing building overhangs.

**THE IDEAL BICYCLE PARKING STRUCTURE.** Bicycle parking facilities should be inexpensive, easy to use, esthetically pleasing, be easily maintained and resistant to vandalism, provide protection from weather and a means for locking bicycles securely. Each rack design is strong in some of these areas and weak in others; each city has to make its own choices from among the commercial racks available or design its own. Eugene has followed both routes; the winning rack in a city design competition features a curved fiberglass roof and handlebar hangers (see photos, pages 1 and 3). A city staff member refined this design which gets high marks under most of these criteria, especially weather protection and ease of use, but locking the rear wheel is difficult. The roof dimensions are the same as a single automobile parking space.



**Protection from weather and theft (above).** This simple design is located under a building overhang and in view of building occupants. A well-traveled covered walkway (below) provides the same benefits at the county courthouse. Limited car parking for downtown employees encourages bicycle commuting.

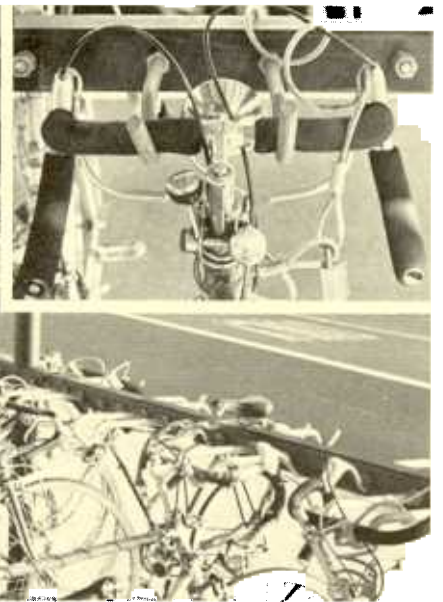


**Existing structures can be adapted for bicycle parking.** A metal fence provides secure parking and keeps bikes off the window glass of City Hall.



**Located under a front entrance overhang,** these stalls are filled by Federal Building employees.





**City-provided parking** ranges from inexpensive, commercial racks like these placed under an overhang at the library (above left) to a more elaborate, free-standing, covered rack designed in a city-sponsored competition (above, right and inset). At this site, three fibreglass-roofed units are placed end-to-end at a bus-bike connection to a local community college.

**Businesses see the benefit of providing parking** for employees and customers. Clockwise from upper left: shopping mall uses concrete berms to protect an island of bicycles in a sea of cars; restaurant provides covered parking; hospital employees get dry bikes on rainy days; Eugene's major newspaper purchased concrete "Bikekeepers" that blend with building's architecture.

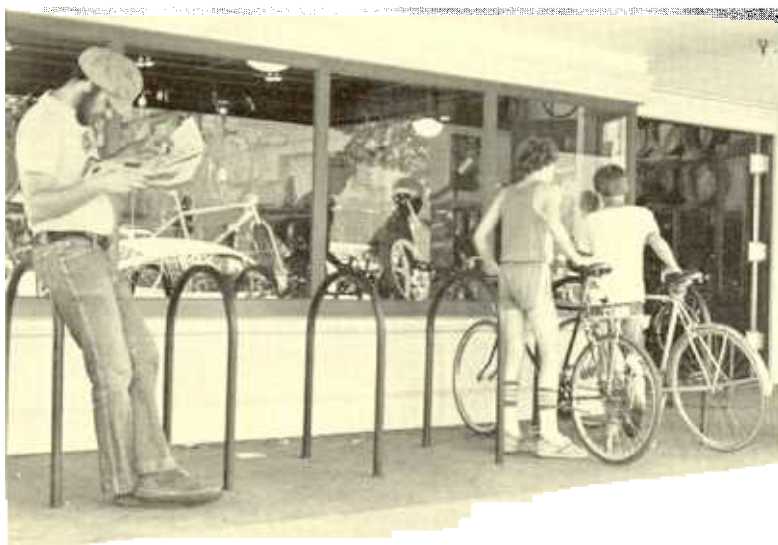



**BENEFITS OF GOOD BICYCLE PARKING.** The role of the bicycle in easing downtown automobile parking problems has not been lost on Eugene's officials. As many as 14 bicycles can be parked in the space needed to park one car. Consequently, several public buildings have been designed with bicycle parking included and city planners point out the need to developers. The Eugene zoning ordinance requires that bicycle parking be provided with new apartment construction. Though not required for other uses, some businessmen have seen the advantage of providing bicycle parking, both for esthetic and economic reasons -- Eugene's large cycling population tends to patronize businesses that provide convenient, secure parking.

**A CHECKLIST OF BICYCLE PARKING CONSIDERATIONS.** Here is a checklist to use when choosing and locating bicycle parking:

- 1) Is the location convenient to a destination used by large numbers of cyclists?
- 2) Is the facility in a well-travelled, visible location that will discourage theft?
- 3) Does the facility provide appropriate weather protection for the area's climate?
- 4) Will the rack hold bicycles without kickstands upright?
- 5) Can a cable or chain be used to lock the bicycle frame and both wheels to the rack?
- 6) Does the facility fit with its surroundings?
- 7) Is it sturdy enough to resist vandalism?
- 8) Does it create maintenance problems?
- 9) Can it be provided at reasonable cost?

**How do they rate against the checklist?** The design used by a Eugene bicycle shop (below, left) rates high in all categories. A well-used wood structure with blue canvas roof at a downtown office building (below, right) ranks particularly high in esthetics and location, but bicycles without kick-stands sag in the wheel supports.



No city making a serious effort to encourage cycling can afford to overlook the parking side of the cycling equation. While hard core cyclists will continue to ride in spite of a lack of parking facilities, that next layer of riders teetering on the brink can be turned into regular users if secure, convenient parking is available. 

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