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Long Beach Touts Nation's First Bike-Friendly Business Districts; Launches 'Bike Saturdays' Program



Merchants citywide who display the window sticker shown above signal to the Long Beach community that they offer discounts and incentives each and every Saturday to bicyclists. The program, called Bike Saturdays, is open to any business in Long Beach willing to offer a promotion of their choice. Participating businesses can be found online at <http://bikelongbeach.org>. Pictured, from left, are: Charlie Gandy, mobility coordinator for the City of Long Beach; Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association; Bob Foster, mayor of Long Beach; Rae Gabelich, 8th District councilmember; Kerstin Kansteiner, president of the 4th Street Business Association and owner of Portfolio Coffeehouse and Berlin; Rand Foster, owner and operator of Fingerprints music store. (Long Beach Business Journal photograph by Carlos Delgado)

■ By **TIFFANY RIDER**
Staff Writer

Business district leaders, city officials and local merchants last week celebrated the launch of newly designated bike-friendly business districts – the first ones in the nation – and a “Bike Saturdays” program that incentivizes citizens to ride and shop locally.

As of the launch date, Saturday, June 4, more than 60 Long Beach businesses in Bixby Knolls, the East Village Arts District and the 4th Street/Retro Row business districts were on board providing discounts on merchandise and food and other incentives every Saturday to bicycle riders who came to their store. To qualify for the discounts, riders need to show proof – such as their bicycle helmet – they came on a bicycle.

“It’s very exciting that we get to be one of the business districts that initiates this program,” said 8th District Councilmember Rae

Gabelich. She was among those at the launch event on June 1 in Bixby Knolls, the first of the bike-friendly districts.

Gabelich and other city officials noted that not only does the program help business, but it also promotes and encourages a healthier lifestyle for singles and families alike.

Natalie Gutenkauf, owner of The Factory, a farm fresh, healthful restaurant and gastropub located in Bixby Knolls, agreed. Gutenkauf’s business has exemplified this movement by encouraging bicycling since she first opened her business in December 2009. “I partnered up with New Belgian Brewing, which has this whole bike-friendly culture,” she said. “So I started doing these community bike rides because food, beer and wine always tastes great after you’ve been on a nice, long, hard ride.”

At around the same time, Long Beach Mobility Coordinator Charlie Gandy began working downtown to promote the city’s goal of becoming the most bike-friendly

city in America. “The Factory is all about promoting culture revolved around the things we enjoy in life – food, drink, riding bikes, socializing with friends,” Gutenkauf said. “With the bike rides and everything that I was doing, it was really connecting with what Charlie was doing downtown to this side of Long Beach.”

“These bike-friendly districts are part of our campaign to turn Long Beach into a lean and green place, and a mecca for bicycling. I’m proud to be a part of that campaign,” said Gandy.

Kathleen Schaaf, owner of Meow on Retro Row, said the bike racks and thriving bike culture have been great for business, particularly for 4th Street’s Last Saturdays events where businesses along Retro Row stay open late, offer discounts and host activities. “There wasn’t enough space for more bikes,” she said of the previous event. “All of the bike racks were filled.”

All three districts have received mer-



The City of Long Beach celebrates the unveiling of cargo bikes for merchants in the nation's first bike-friendly business districts, which include 4th Street/Retro Row, the East Village Arts District and Bixby Knolls. Pictured, from back to front, are: Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association; Kerstin Kansteiner, president of the 4th Street Business Association and owner of Portfolio Coffeehouse and Berlin; Rand Foster, owner and operator of Fingerprints music store in the East Village; Rae Gabelich, 8th District councilmember; and Bob Foster, mayor of Long Beach. (Long Beach Business Journal photograph by Carlos Delgado)

chant bicycles to be used for their deliveries and errands – a townie cruiser bike with a small front basket, a bicycle that has a detachable trailer and a Christiania tricycle with a large front cargo area.

According to Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, a fourth bike-friendly business district may be coming soon, this one in Cambodia Town along Anaheim Street.

“The effort here is to get businesses aligned, to have some equipment that they can deliver merchandise, deliver food products or whatever to their customers, and also provide some incentive for customers

to use bicycles,” he said. “It’s another effort on the part of Long Beach to become bicycle friendly and really give people some incentive to get out of their cars, particularly for short trips, and use bicycles.”

During the day the merchant bikes are to be locked up out front, visible to the community and to the other merchants, according to Kerstin Kansteiner, owner of Portfolio Coffeehouse and Berlin. Select merchants will keep the bikes locked inside their stores at night.

Kansteiner, president of the 4th Street Business Association, said promoting bicy-

cles not only helps create a community feel, but also slows down traffic and makes businesses more visible. “Cyclists go to local businesses rather than get in the car, drive a distance and shop possibly at an out-of-town business,” she said. “What we’ve experienced on 4th Street already is that a lot of the local people stay close to us because they can bike to us. They have a safe place to lock up their bike and do their shopping in the neighborhood, and it creates exactly that community feel that we’re hoping for.”

Kansteiner’s new neighbor in the East Village Arts District, Rand Foster, says that encouraging bicycles helps his community-based business, Fingerprints.

“Obviously, everywhere in Long Beach there are parking issues, so I think people on bikes will alleviate some of that stress,” Foster said. “But really, it makes it feel more like a neighborhood, so all the way around I think people on bikes are out, they’re interacting more, they’re not in this isolated pod. They’re interacting with the neighborhood, so I think it’s a win.”

For Fingerprints specifically, Rand said he would like to have his employees use the merchant bicycles to go look at people’s used record collections for sale and transport purchased items, “rather than have people have to drag them to us.”

Funding for the bike-friendly districts and their new sets of wheels comes from a \$72,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health’s Renew Environments for Nutrition, Exercise and Wellness program.

All businesses involved in Bike Saturdays display a green and yellow “Bike Long Beach” window sticker. If a merchant would like to participate, he or she should contact their business association office or their city councilmember. The city’s Web site, BikeLongBeach.org, provides further details and a list of the participating businesses involved with Bike Saturdays.

Bike Industry Continues Expansion In Long Beach

Long Beach bicycle shops seem to be canvassing the city, from longtime businesses such as Jax Bicycle Center and Jones Bicycles, to newer spots like Biker Mania Bike Shop, Neighborhood BMX, City Grounds and Performance Bike.

In conjunction with the celebration of the new bike-friendly business districts, Long Beach Clothing Co. owner Shawn Moore opened his sales and service bike store, The Workshop, at 4242 Atlantic Ave. “We’ll have cruisers, some stretch stuff [and] fixies,” he said. “I wanted to focus on repair because there’s a lot of repair in the



The Workshop (For Bikes) Opens In Bixby Knolls

Shawn Moore, left, owner of Long Beach Clothing Co., opened The Workshop at 4242 Atlantic Ave. in Bixby Knolls on June 7. The new business offers bike sales and repairs and is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/theworkshoplb. (Long Beach Business Journal photograph by Carlos Delgado)

area that's untouched; people with their bikes sitting in the garage and so on."

Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association, said three entities recently came to Bixby Knolls all at once looking to open bike shops. First it was Martin Howard, president of Howard CDM in Bixby Knolls and advocate for bicycles in Long Beach. Howard, an avid cyclist and former pro, rides for La Habra Cyclery with a group of about 100 riders. Because Howard owns various properties along Long Beach Boulevard, La Habra Cyclery is looking to add a second, satellite store in Bixby Knolls.

Cohn said the operator of the new shop, Brian "Turtle" Keate, is currently waiting for final approval to become a certified Giant Bicycle retailer. The location has already been renovated inside and out, with assistance from the Long Beach Redevelopment Agency. The store is slated to offer higher-end bikes and full service.

At the same time, Graham Baden, one of the leaders in the local cycling community and a founder of cycling advocacy group The Pedal Movement, came to Cohn wanting to open a full-service bike shop at the same time Moore was having discussions about opening The Workshop. Cohn connected the two, and now Baden manages

the repairs and maintenance element of Moore's business.

"All of the sudden we have this little vortex, and the timing with the bike-friendly business districts stuff, plus we have tons of bike racks . . . so it's this whole other thing that we're working on, on top of everything else," Cohn said.

Moore, a former professional bike racer, said he is potentially opening another business in Bixby Knolls in the future and is currently looking at putting another Long Beach Clothing location in Belmont Shore. ■

Online Survey

Bike Long Beach is conducting an online survey of Long Beach residents on road traffic preferences, conditions and concerns. Anyone who rides a bike, drives a car, walks or uses public transportation in the city is encouraged to fill out the survey, which is the first phase of a motorist and bicycle safety campaign being launched this summer. The survey, funded by a grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, concludes July 15. To participate in the survey, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/bikesafelb.