

1.6 Bicycle Parking

Public bicycle parking facilities were also observed as part of the parking utilization analysis. Observations of the bicycle parking facilities took place on Saturday September 22nd throughout the study area between the hours of 8AM and 5PM. In general, bicycle parking events took place primarily along Main and State Street.

Morning observations revealed a significant number of bicycling enthusiasts using the downtown area as a meeting place. These users were observed to have little need of bicycle facilities as they primarily stayed with their bicycle. However, upon returning from their trips (beginning at 10 AM), the demand for parking facilities, located around Peet's Coffee (southern blockface on State Street between First and Second Street), exceeded the supply as several bicycles were observed leaning against park benches, newspaper stands, trees, buildings, etc. These bicycles were not locked as their owners were observed staying nearby. The extreme of these observations included the blocking of the sidewalk and occupying an on-street parking space. Similar, but less extreme observations were noted at the Starbucks located at the corner of Main and Second Street.

Family bicyclists, parents and children arriving at the downtown together, were observed parking their bicycles at the public racks if it was convenient to their destination. More of these users were seen locking their bicycles as compared to the bicycle enthusiasts; however, in general few bicycles were observed locked. When bicycle racks were not present, owners parked their bicycles against available structures including trees, poles, buildings, etc. A large number of these observations took place on the corner of Main and Second Street (Shown in Figure 1-18) where the highest activity occurred between 12PM and 2PM. Although bicycle racks were present, perhaps a block or two away, these informal parking events still took place. Users may have found that the nearest available rack was inconvenient to their destination.

Figure 1-18 Informal Bicycle Parking at Main and Second Street



Bicycles that were observed in the plazas behind storefronts were typically locked and remained locked for several hours. These bicycles were assumed to be employee bicycles (Shown in Figure 1-19). A lack of bicycle facilities behind the storefronts could be the cause of these informal bicycle parking events.

Figure 1-20 graphically illustrates the observed location of bicycle racks throughout the study area. The majority of the bicycle racks along Main Street and the racks in front of Pete's Coffee were heavily

used, particularly at the corner of Main and Second Street. The racks located at this intersection were used throughout the day by various users. The rack located along First Street between Main and State Street was observed having the same bicycle parked throughout the day, which was assumed to be an employee; aside from this single bicycle, no other bicycles used this rack. The two racks north of State Street along First and Fourth Street were not observed to have heavy usage; similarly the racks along Third Street were also not heavily used. The racks located on the block with parking Plaza 6 (surrounded by Main, State, and Third Street), were also used throughout the day, similar to the racks on the corner of Main Street and Second Street, but were used less heavily.

Figure 1-19 Informal Employee Bicycle Parking



Overall bicycle users were observed using the public bicycle facilities if available. Frequent informal parking observations took place during the peak hours of approximately 10AM to 2PM while adequate parking was observed during off-peak hours. Observations revealed that two locations, Peet's Coffee and the corner of Main Street and Second Street, had a high number of informal bicycle parking which used trees, poles, buildings, etc. to lean their bicycles. Bicycle enthusiasts seldom used the parking facilities prior to departing on a ride, but were observed to occupy the entire supply of the parking facilities upon returning from their trip. Due to the absence of parking facilities in the parking plazas behind storefronts, employees were found to informally lock their bicycle to trees and/or poles.

1.7.4 Bicycle Parking

- The Los Altos bicycling community is varied and ranged between serious enthusiasts to more casual and family riders.
- During times of peak bicycle parking, any nearby structure was used to park/lean bicycles and owners stayed nearby. Casual bicyclists (including employees and families) were more likely to lock their bicycles. Bicyclists have also express concern of the existing u-shaped bicycle racks having the potential to damage their bicycle frame.
- Bicycle enthusiasts seldom used the parking facilities prior to departing on a ride, but were observed to occupy the entire supply of the parking facilities upon returning. Due to the absence of parking facilities in the parking plazas behind storefronts, employees were found to informally lock their bicycles to trees and/or available poles.
- Throughout the day majority of bicycle parking observations took place along Main and State Street between First and Third Street, particularly at the corner of Main and Second Street. Bicycle racks not located within this area (along Main and State Street between First and Third Street) were seldom used, with the racks located on the block surrounded by Main, State, and Third Street used more heavily.

2.1.4 Other Parking Recommendations

As part of developing a comprehensive parking management strategy for downtown Los Altos the following section covers various other parking recommendations outside from what has been discussed previously.

2.1.4.1 Bicycle Parking

The City of Los Altos currently provides bicycle parking facilities throughout the downtown area. Bicycle parking observations have shown that majority of parking take place along Main and State Street. Distributing bicycle racks where demand is at its highest would increase the use of bicycle racks throughout the Downtown. Figure 2-6 on the following page illustrates the locations of proposed U-shaped bicycle racks within the study area that would best serve the existing demand. Increasing the capacity of on-street bicycle parking along Main and State Street will assist in serving bicycle users arriving in the downtown area; which would reduce the amount of informal bicycle parking taking place.

In addition, two potential locations for bicycle corrals have been identified in the central core of the downtown. The first location is along State Street, which could replace an existing parking space between First and Second Street, and the second could be incorporated into parking Plaza 4. These corrals would primarily serve the observed high demand for bicycle parking in this area. While one corral would be sufficient to address the existing demand of the area, a second corral could address potential future increase in demand. Locating a corral in a parking space along State Street, where the bicycle enthusiasts tend to congregate, would be the preferred location as it would provide the most convenient parking for visitors and free up sidewalk space. Providing convenient bicycle parking for these users, while they may not lock their bicycles, would allow them to utilize the parking facilities more effectively.

A bicycle corral, which replaces a single 22-foot parking space, can provide enough space for seven U-shaped racks; approximately 14 bicycle parking spaces. Figure 2-5 shows an example of U-shaped bicycle racks occupying a parking space in the City of Palo Alto.

Figure 2-5 On-Street Bicycle Parking²³



²³ <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2012/07/30/palo-alto-choked-by-famously-free-parking-may-consider-pricing-the-curb/>

DOWNTOWN LOS ALTOS PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN



Figure 2-6: Bicycle Parking Possibilities

An alternative option from the U-shaped bicycle racks is the use of the Bike Arc products. Several stakeholders have expressed concern of U-shaped racks having the potential to damage the frame of their bicycles. Bike Arc offers modular bike parking in a unique design for parking and organizing bicycles, shown in Figure 2-7. The Rac Arc provides parking for a single bicycle and in a 22-foot parking space the Rac Arc can provide parking for up to twelve bicycles (three rows of four Arcs). Other Rac Arc products include the Half Arc, which provides weather coverage for Rac Arcs, and Umbrella Arcs, which provides covering for eight Rac Arcs in a circular design.

Figure 2-7 Bike Arc's Rac Arc²⁵



²⁵ www.bikearc.com/homepage.html