Why Bicycle Parking Matters

The City of Omaha Master Plan encourages the use of active forms of transportation. Traveling by bicycle promotes healthy lifestyles, environmentally friendly transportation decisions, and a higher quality of life.

Providing secure and convenient bicycle parking is a key ingredient in efforts to support bicycling in the city. These Bicycle Parking Guidelines will assist developers, business owners, and cyclists in understanding the requirements and recommended practices for providing bicycle parking in Omaha.

The Basics of Bicycle Parking

There are two broad categories of bicycle parking: Short-Term Bicycle Parking and Long-Term Bicycle Parking.

**Short-Term Bicycle Parking** is generally intended for bicycle riders that will be at a location for 2-to-3 hours. Short-Term bicycle parking is best located in commercial areas where uses include grocery shopping, retail shops, banks, restaurants, coffee shops, etc.

**Long-Term Bicycle Parking** is intended for people who will be storing a bicycle at a location for a longer period of time which may include all day, overnight, or longer. Long-Term bicycle parking is best suited for employee parking garages, transit centers, park and ride centers, and residential areas.

The needs of these two types of bicycle parking differ; Short-Term Bicycle Parking requires proximity and visibility, while the biggest concern for Long-Term parking is protection from theft and weather. Design considerations are illustrated on page 3 to show how to successfully design for each context.

What the Law Says

Bicycle parking regulations can be found in Section 55-739 of the Omaha Municipal Code, which is available through the City of Omaha planning website. The code allows for some of the required automobile parking spaces to be substituted with bicycle parking. If you have questions you can contact the Planning Help Desk at (402)-444-5150 x2063.

What to Submit

New developments are encouraged to include indoor and/or outdoor bicycle parking facilities. A site plan will need to be submitted with an enlarged plan of bicycle parking locations, and the specifications of each bicycle parking stall.

Short-term bicycle parking is a cost-effective and space-efficient way to improve access to local businesses/institutions.
Bicycle Parking Performance Criteria

Most of these criteria apply to both short-term and long-term bicycle parking, although some are only relevant to short-term parking:

DO make sure that the bicycle rack:

1. Is securely anchored to the ground through a permanent, stable, secure foundation.
2. Is made of durable, long-lasting materials, such as steel with thermoplastic coating or stainless steel.
3. Supports a bicycle by at least two points of contact to prevent the bicycle from tipping over.
4. Accommodates a variety of bicycle locks including U-locks, cables, chains or any combination. The rack should allow for locking both the frame and at least one wheel with a U-lock.
5. Is placed in a location visible to the building entrance it serves (within 50 feet).
6. Is easy and intuitive to use for a first-time user.

DO NOT provide a bicycle rack that:

1. Allows the bicycle to tip or fall over which can block pedestrian access or damage bicycles.
2. Does not accommodate a variety of bicycle styles, frames or sizes.
3. Has rack tubes with a cross-section larger than 2” in diameter, which can make using U-locks difficult.
4. Suspends bicycles in the air, requires users to lift the bicycle off the ground, or requires users to operate moving parts.

The City of Omaha has a limited number of bicycle racks to distribute freely to existing businesses and organizations each year. To request a bicycle rack please contact the Planning Department at (402)-444-5150 or fill out our online request form.

The City will supply and install the rack free of charge if it is to be located on public property (e.g. in the public right-of-way/sidewalk). The City cannot provide for the installation of racks on private property, but can supply the rack for free, in some cases. The property owner will need to agree to an installation on private property. Racks will be inverted “U” racks.

The “Staple” rack or U-Rack is the most common form of bicycle rack that offers two points of contact and supports multiple bicycles.

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AVOID

These bicycle racks do not allow for contact with the frame, can damage wheels, and lead to bicycles falling.

The “wave” rack (left) provides only one point of contact with the bicycle and can be difficult to use. The “coathanger” rack (right) has a top bar that limits the types of bikes it can accommodate.

The “circle” rack (left) and “post-and-ring” rack (right) provide multiple points of contact and are easy to use. Products exist for converting unused parking meters into post-and-ring racks.

If artistic rack designs are used, they should be intuitive and allow for multiple points of contact with the frame.

This art bike rack (left) is not an intuitive or practical design. The “coil” rack at right is difficult to use and does not adequately keep bikes upright.

CONSIDER

These indoor bicycle facilities provide ample protection from theft and weather elements.

AVOID

Putting a bad bicycle rack in a locked cage does not constitute a good long-term bicycle parking practice.

Bike storage should be in an accessible location that does not require carrying bikes up/down stairs.

Individual bicycle lockers protect the bicycle from weather and theft, and are easy to access.

Does not provide full protection from weather or theft.

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Bicycle Parking Placement Guide

The City of Omaha bases its bicycle parking placement standards upon the recommendations of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP). The below diagram is based upon APBP’s “Essentials of Bike Parking.” These placement guidelines apply to common bike racks that accommodate two bicycles centered on each side of the rack, such as the inverted U-rack, staple rack, circle rack, or post-and-ring rack (all of which are recommended rack types pictured on the previous page).

1. Sidewalk bike racks (including bicycles locked to them) should not block the pedestrian through-zone, which must be a minimum of 5 feet wide. The racks should be placed in line with existing sidewalk obstructions, such as benches and street trees.

2. Racks should be placed at least 5 feet from adjacent crosswalks, curb ramps, driveway ramps, and loading zones.

3. Where there is on-street auto parking, racks should be placed between parking stalls to prevent conflicts with opening car doors.

4. Bike racks can be placed parallel, perpendicular, or at an angle from the curb. In all cases, the nearest vertical component of the bike rack to the street curb must be at least 2 feet from the curb (3 feet where there is on-street auto parking).

5. Bike racks adjacent to a wall should be 3 feet (2 feet min.) from the wall. When multiple rows of adjacent bike racks are provided, they should allow enough room for walking aisles between the rows.