

City of Davis

This is the ninth in a series of articles featuring local governments using Blueprint Project principles in built projects, plans or general plans.

The City of Davis has done it again. In September 2005, the League of American Bicyclists named Davis as the first recipient of the Platinum Award as the most bicycle-friendly city in the United States. As if to underscore the point, the City recently received another award, from *Bicycling* magazine, as the best small town for cycling in its list of America's best biking cities.

Why all of these accolades? A lot of the credit goes to a proactive and long-term public works director, Dave Pelz, whose 1950s bike tour of Europe convinced him that bicycle transportation could become a viable and important component of a thriving community.



The city's orientation as a college town, flat topography and temperate climate (hot summer days excepted) contribute to the popularity of biking, but these factors alone don't make a bicycle mecca. The foresight of city leaders, dedicated public works staff, and vigilant citizens are all responsible for building an enviable bicycle infrastructure.

What else did it take? First of all, a Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, last updated in May 2001. This plan puts bicycles on par with motor vehicles, not as an afterthought. Bike lanes and paths are routinely included in all new developments and improvements to

older parts of town are continually made.

Davis has also hatched some innovations—the bicycle signal heads tested out on bike-heavy intersections near UC Davis have now gained approval by the California Traffic Control Devices Committee. These signals provide separate phasing for bicyclists and have dramatically reduced the number of bicycle-auto collisions.

Another innovative project was the \$4.7-million Putah Creek Bicycle Undercrossing that links the southern part of the city to the northern part through a path that travels underneath I-80, Chiles Road, and the UP right-of-way. This complex project, along with Davis' 26 other grade-separated bike crossings, 50 miles of dedicated bike lanes, and 51 miles of bike paths, makes it possible for anyone in the city to bicycle wherever they want to go. The city has even dis-

pensed with school buses because of safe access by bicycle and foot to local schools.

Davis' emphasis on biking has made a real impact on commuter choices, with 22 percent of residents choosing to bike over other modes, compared with 4 percent regionally.

To quote Davis Mayor and SACOG Board Member Ruth Asmundson, "We couldn't be prouder of these bicycling awards. The foresight of the Davis citizens, starting 40 years ago, produced a bicycle network that is now recognized and emulated throughout the country. We are now looking to some of the European bicycling capitals, such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen, for our inspiration."

One last word—be sure to visit the Dave Pelz Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing of I-80 next time you're biking in Davis. The view is of the Sierra Nevada is terrific.

