



Mutual Housing kicks off bike-sharing program

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from the city of Davis, two Mutual Housing California communities recently kicked off a bike-sharing program.

The “bike library” lends free bicycles, folding bikes and accessories such as trailers to residents of Mutual Housing at New Harmony and Owendale, both in South Davis.



Luis Andreula attaches a trailer to a bicycle he and his children are borrowing from the new “bike library” program at Mutual Housing California while Ayan Yousuf, an intern at the Mutual Housing, looks on. *Mutual Housing California/Courtesy photo*

An initial resident survey revealed that although people owned bikes, they weren’t using them as much as they could because they didn’t have trailers to carry their children or groceries.

“We were surprised to find that we not only needed to buy bikes, but to make them really useful, we needed to buy accessories like trailers,” said Michael Drane, a Mutual Housing community organizer who rides his bike two miles to work at New Harmony from Central Davis on bike paths.

Known nationwide as a bike-friendly city, Davis is a compact town that boasts bike lanes on 95 percent of its major streets. A total of 19 percent of Davis residents commute by bike or foot, many times the national average.

“Davis has an active, university-oriented community, which is ideal for the many residents who choose bicycles as their primary mode of travel to work, school, shop and play,” said Davis Mayor Dan Wolk.

“We support active transportation programs such as the new bike-sharing program Mutual Housing California has just instituted at their New Harmony and Owendale communities.”

Davis is one of only three cities nationwide to receive a platinum designation from the League of American Bicyclists in its ranking of bike-friendly communities.

The Mutual Housing communities’ neighbors are separated by the Drummond Avenue bike tunnel that was completed and partly funded by developer fees as part of New Harmony’s construction.

Mutual Housing California develops housing that is affordable to a diversity of households. Our housing builds strong and stable communities through resident participation and leadership development. For more information, call (916) 453-8400 or visit our website at mutualhousing.com.

continued...

“The New Harmony completion enabled the completion of the network as planned,” said Robb Davis, mayor pro tem.

Finally opened after 23 years in the planning stages, the tunnel and bike path through it were the final link in the South Davis greenbelt bike path network.

“Davis is a bike-friendly city because we spent many years planning for a bike-friendly future,” Davis said. “With more than a quarter of children in Davis walking or biking to school, this path is essential for parents and children who want to use the bike path without going on roads.

“It is a critical piece that connects parks, recreation, supermarkets and schools to each other.”

About 30 Mutual Housing residents currently use the New Harmony-Owendale bike library; more are waiting for an orientation that will allow them to do so.

“People are excited about the program because it’s not only good for their health and for the environment, but now that they have trailers, they can spend more time with their kids doing fun activities like going to the park,” Drane said.

Since residents in economically challenged neighborhoods tend to bicycle and walk 50 percent more than people in wealthier areas, Mutual Housing’s plan is to build communities near bike paths or part of transit-oriented developments whenever possible.

A bike purchase and sharing program as well as a resident-run bike repair facility are part of the plans for future communities.

“We are looking at every angle in our planning so that we can build communities that are as green and sustainable as possible,” said Rachel Iskow, Mutual Housing California’s chief executive officer.

Residents are given training on basic bike maintenance and community organizer Drane is working with local bike shops for long-term check-ups.

“We would like to see the program expand to other Mutual Housing communities someday,” Drane said, “but for right now, residents are making suggestions for this program.”

For more information, go to www.mutualhousing.com.