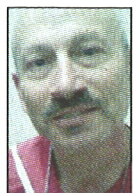


# Want more bike parking? Ask for it

BY IRVIN DAWID

As I approached the Palo Alto Trader Joe's, I did a double take. Standing before me were not three bike racks but six.

I was startled because I had just had a letter to the editor published Nov.



15 about the final draft of the Palo Alto bike plan. I bemoaned the lack of current bike parking, specifically noting the scant three racks at this market, comparing them with an

entire storefront of racks at the Davis Food Co-op that I spotted on a recent trip to that university town.

“Had my letter made a difference?” I asked myself. I was told that the decision to double the available racks for the customers by the south entrance was a result of customer requests

— verbal and written. Consequently, the store manager had asked the Town & Country Village property manager to provide additional racks. Also installed were six racks at the end of the north side of the building (toward the train tracks) that appear mainly to be used by store staff.

## Customers get involved

So, no, it was not my letter, but it was the public — those of you who patronize Trader Joe's, prefer to bike there and asked for more parking, that had caused the bike racks to multiply. I decided to investigate further by finding out why the relatively new racks were installed at Whole Foods at Homer Avenue and Emerson Street in downtown Palo Alto. Mike Folan, store team leader, informed me that



**A CORRAL FOR BIKES** — The city of Palo Alto has converted a parking space in front of Coupa Cafe, 538 Ramona St., to create its first bicycle street corral to lock up bikes. Post photo.

indeed customer requests had made an impact.

Those “customer comment” cards really do work, folks! Unlike Trader Joe's in Town & Country Village, though, the racks were placed on public sidewalks abutting the store — so the city's transportation staff worked with Folan to install the eight racks — at no cost to the store.

While customer requests were effective at these two large stores, would they have an impact at smaller ones? I decided to apply the “request” approach with Palo Alto's newest cafe, Philz Coffee, at the corner of Alma Street and Forest Avenue, less than a block from my apartment at Alma Place.

I had been eyeing the construction of the cafe with anticipation, but was

disappointed that a mere two bike hitches by the driveway on Forest were the only bike parking. On the second day after the store opened, Nov. 28, I went in for coffee and asked to speak with management about the insufficient bike parking.

## Getting a surprise

Before entering the cafe, I had noticed that the two available racks were fully parked, and additional bikes were locked to newly planted street trees outside the cafe. I was not prepared for what transpired next.

Jacob Jaber, president of Philz Coffee, without any hesitation stated he wanted more racks, but he asked if I would assist him, as he felt that without customer support, city staff might not cooperate. So I initiated contact

## GUEST OPINION

with the transportation department to see what could be done. The city's chief transportation official, Jaime Rodriguez, just so happens to be a Philz fan. He dispatched Rafael Rius, city transportation engineer, to coordinate placement of additional racks. He also informed Jaber that the city could install a bike corral like the one outside Coupa Cafe at 538 Ramona St., that converts one, on-street parking space into protected corral parking for 10 bikes on five inverted U hitches.

## More on the way

If Philz Coffee opts for the corral approach, it will be joining new ones to be installed next month at Form Fitness (Lytton Avenue and Bryant Street); Sanchos Taqueria (491 Lytton Ave. off Waverley Street); All Saints Episcopal Church (Hamilton Avenue and Waverley Street); University Cafe (271 University Ave.) and California Pizza Kitchen (531 Cowper St.).

Rodriguez explained that if a store would like bike-parking facilities, be it a rack or a corral, it should call the city transportation office (650) 329-2441. If it's on public property, the city will pay for installation, but the store must maintain it.

However, the first part in this process begins with the cyclist. When you patronize a store, where are you parking your bike? If there isn't a bike hitch available, then tell the store owner.

*Irvin Dawid is a Palo Alto resident with a background in urban planning from San Jose State University.*