

Making Health Easier: Active Living in Philadelphia, PA

[Henry Pyatt] I advocate for cycling for a whole number of reasons. It helps us deal with the constraints of a very small, dense city. It helps us deal with some of our health issues that are very common in our city, and it helps make our city more affordable for folks of limited means. Bicycling is cheaper than a monthly transit pass, it's cheaper than paying insurance for a car, it's quicker than walking, and you don't have to spend ten minutes finding a place to park.

When we have cycling infrastructure like lanes and sharrows, it encourages more people to use the street, which is a huge help to us because the more people are on the road, the safer the other folks that don't yet ride a bike feel.

A sharrow is a symbol that is used on lower traffic streets that tend to be narrower where there's not enough space for a bicycle lane, and that symbol is really big and really obvious and it helps to remind people that the street is meant for use by both automobiles and bicycles. When there's a lane or a sharrow it helps people feel safer in getting on that bike for the first time.

And then a bicycle corral fits onto the parallel parking lane of a street and it provides parking spaces for bicycles. A lot of folks would lock their bicycles on the sidewalk, up against a tree or up against a stop sign and that would very frequently cause problems because it takes up a lot of sidewalk space.

In the case of Philadelphia, our corrals accommodate 12 bicycles in the space of one car, and we can, in fact, afford to sacrifice the space of one car for the space of 12 bicycles. Our business owners, in fact, are really keen to do it because that's 12 potential customers instead of one. The more people do it, the more other people want to do it, which is awesome.

In order to help a colleague in another city pitch this to their clients, I'd say it's kind of a magic bullet of city planning.