

Wichita is a city on move, so hop on



BY BECKY TUTTLE

Wichita has it going on! There are so many ways in our community to be active and have fun doing it. While many think being active is hard work and has to be mundane, Wichita makes it easy to be active where we live, learn, earn, play and pray.

Studies show that regular physical activity reduces the risk for depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and certain kinds of cancer. That, coupled with the stress-reducing benefits of moving more, there are so many reasons to explore all that Wichita has to offer.

Bike Share ICT is one of our great city's newest amenities. With 105 bikes in 21 locations, getting around Wichita has become even easier. Bike Share ICT is Wichita's very own bike transportation system that is mainly located in the city's core. An annual membership costs less than a tank of gas and provides the community with convenient, affordable access to bicycles as an easy, fun, healthy and eco-friendly means of transportation and recreation. Become a member and enjoy the ride!

Everything looks different at 10 mph versus 40, so consider hopping on one of Wichita's more than 100 miles of bicycle paths, lanes and other bicycle facilities. Many of the paths travel through and along scenic areas, such as the Arkansas River.

If you are looking for more ways to be active outside, don't forget about Wichita's 144 parks, including 5,007 acres of park land. Whether you are into tennis, shooting hoops, pickle ball, swinging or swimming, all facets of recreation can be found in Wichita's parks that add beauty and enrichment to the lives of all of our residents.

Be a change agent in your own part of Wichita! Walk like a Wichitan and start a walking club where you work, participate in Wheels to Worship during National Bike Month in May, be sure to attend our community's second annual Open Streets ICT on Sept. 23 in downtown. Walk with our city's mayor for Walk-A-Longwell the last Wednesday of the month and give your suggestions on how to make Wichita more walkable. Suggest that kids in school be rewarded with extra recess or walking breaks instead of snacks for being caught "doing the right thing" or just commit to trying a new Wichita adventure every month in 2018.

Wichita is making it easier for daily opportunities to be active and most of them are free or affordable. Try something new, don't miss a thing, and make plans to celebrate Wichita's 148th birthday on July 25 by being outside. Look for more information soon at www.hwcwchita.org. Now get out and get moving!

Becky Tuttle is chairwoman of the Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita.



MIKE HUTMACHER The Wichita Eagle

Bike lanes along Mt. Vernon, west of Broadway. There are about 115 miles of bikeways within the city.

City builds on its status as bike-friendly

BY MELINDA SCHNYDER
Eagle correspondent

Once or twice a week, Kim Neufeld commutes to work by bicycle, riding 11 miles from southeast Wichita to the northwest part of the city. It's a way to fit in an hour of exercise on a route that is fairly painless, thanks to the naturally flat landscape and improvements by the city of Wichita.

"It's completely changed within the last year," she said. "My route used to be all on streets and now it is 90 percent on some type of protected infrastructure, either a designated bike lane, through a park or on a side path. Motorists are friendlier and getting used to seeing us. It is amazing, I can just roll right on into work."

MORE MILES, MORE CONNECTIVITY

In the past year, the city installed approximately six miles of new bikeways bringing the total within the city to 115 miles of bikeways, according to Scott Wadle, a senior planner who oversees bicycle and pedestrian

trails and currently serves as Wichita's interim transit director. He said more than one-third of those miles have been added since 2012, when an effort began to formalize a Wichita Bicycle Master Plan.

In 2013, the Wichita City Council endorsed the plan, which incorporated input from more than 4,000 people and set priorities for bicycle programs and projects for the ensuing decade.

"The city is actually ahead of schedule. We are ecstatic at the progress they are making," said Neufeld, who serves as the executive director of Bike Walk Wichita, a nonprofit organization that consolidates advocacy and education efforts for biking, running and walking.

Increased connectivity of the existing paths and routes is as important as additional miles, Neufeld said. Wichita's increasingly interconnected network of bikeways makes her commute safer. A bikeway is a route, way or path that is specifically designed or designated for bicycle travel. The Wichita area has a mix of bicycling options ranging from on-

street bike lanes and bicycle boulevards (low-speed and low-volume on-street designated routes) to paths that offer paved, gravel and off-road riding.

A BIKE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

One of the goals established in the master plan was to achieve Bicycle Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists. In 2017, the city joined four other Kansas cities and 427 communities nationwide by earning a bronze level designation. That label indicates the community's efforts to make bicycling easier, safer and more convenient.

Private donations and volunteers drive some of the efforts to create a bicycle-friendly culture. For instance, there are now three free bicycle repair stations in Wichita funded by organizations or businesses and a new bike share program launched in 2017 with support from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas, the Wichita Community Foundation and other partners.

BikeShareICT started in May and early success has organizers planning an

expansion this year, said Becky Tuttle, director of Community Development at the Greater Wichita YMCA. The initiative currently has 105 bikes in 21 locations - mostly in the city's core - that can be rented for \$3 an hour or through an annual membership that costs \$30, \$20 for college students. Through early February, riders had borrowed the cruiser bikes for 8,282 trips. Demographics show that 85 percent of the bike sharers reside in Sedgwick County and the most popular stations are the Pop Up Park, Downtown YMCA, Keeper of the Plains Plaza and Sedgwick County Park.

Neufeld said it's been surprising that so many locals are using the bikes but that supports what she's also noticed: more Wichitans are interested in bicycling for recreation and for transportation. BikeShareICT is convenient for those who don't own bicycles or those who simply don't want to load up their bicycles yet want to explore a new area of town.

"This program started about four years earlier than we thought it would, so it's great to see that our community is so excited about it," Neufeld said. "I think a lot of that success is because the infrastructure the city is putting in makes biking in Wichita so easy. The next phase should really expand it out to make it even easier for students and more residents to use the bikes."

COMING IN 2018

Wadle said this year the city will continue to work

on priorities established by residents who weighed in during the creation of the master plan. Expect the addition of as many as eight miles of bikeways in 2018. The projects touch every part of the city, including the completion of a paved, 10-foot wide multi-use path on the east bank of the Arkansas River from Kellogg to the Lincoln Street Bridge. That half-mile section is currently a dirt path and is part of the popular Arkansas River Path.

Volunteers will continue their work on the two rail-trails that touch Wichita: the Prairie Sunset Trail out west and the Redbud Trail in the east. In May, volunteers will hold a ribbon-cutting event to celebrate the completion of a section of the Andover-Augusta Rail Trail Initiative, which ties into the Redbud Trail. Also in May, National Bike Month, Bike Walk Wichita will hold its first Women's Bike Summit at Wichita State University.

Special events are one way the bicycling community will continue to educate bicyclists and motorists. Another is a street safety campaign that Wadle said the city will introduce this year through multiple media channels.

"Everything we're doing is in response to citizens telling us they want bicycling in Wichita to be easier, safer and more convenient," Wadle said, "and that creates more opportunity for people to be healthier, to save money and to have a higher quality of life almost right outside their doorstep."

HAVE A BICYCLE TO DONATE?

ReCycle @ Bike Walk Wichita takes donations of used bicycles and bicycle parts and volunteers turn them into usable bikes that are given away through several programs, including Earn-A-Bike, where adults trade 15 volunteer hours for a bicycle, and NorthEastICT, which gives away bicycles to kids. Since starting these programs in 2016 and 2017, respectively, the organization has given 150 bikes with helmets to kids in northeast Wichita and 90 bicycles with helmets, lights and locks to adults across the city.

"The ReCycle program has really taken off," said Kim Neufeld, executive director of Bike Walk Wichita. "In addition to those programs, we also partner with agencies like the Wichita Police Department Homeless Outreach Team to provide bicycles that can give individuals a mode of transportation."

Visit bikewalkwichita.org if you're interested in donating or volunteering.

— MELINDA SCHNYDER

Wichita retail: unique products or entertainment

BY JOE STUMPE
Eagle correspondent

Retailers that focus on doing one thing well and retail centers that offer something besides shopping will probably play a bigger role in Wichita. That's the view of real estate agents and others who pay attention to retail trends.

"Retail has changed so much with Amazon," Brad Saville, president of Landmark Commercial Real Estate, said about the impact of online shopping. "Now there's so much more emphasis put on the entertainment aspect, whether it be a sports complex, entertainment venture or something like that."

It's already happened in Wichita at Greenwich Place, the retail and hotel complex at K-96 and Greenwich that's anchored by the Sports Forum, a \$14 million facility with trampoline park, indoor soccer field, volleyball courts and more.

Greenwich Place is considered one of the hottest commercial developments in the city, and it's likely to become even more so thanks to a \$22 million upgrade of the nearby Stryker soccer complex. When finished, the city believes it can attract up to 150,000 visitors a year to youth sporting events.

"The youth competitive sports has changed so much from when we grew up," Saville said. "Now

everybody's making the weekend a family sports vacation. That's going to drive hotel and restaurant sales because there's so much more of that going on in the Midwest."

The desire by shoppers to stretch their dollar can also be seen in Greenwich Place, where most of the stores — including Stein Mart, DWS and Bed Bath & Beyond — are known for their discount or competitive pricing.

Just as Stryker and the Sports Forum cater to active youngsters, a new establishment opening at 13th and Greenwich this year targets active adults: Chicken N Pickle is a restaurant with indoor and outdoor seating, local craft beer, pickleball courts and lawn games.

Dorothy Harpool, a lecturer in Wichita State University's marketing department, expects to see more segmentation and specialization in the retail field.

"I think smaller stores that are very product specific, there are opportunities there" selling items

"that people want to talk to somebody about, want to touch, taste, whatever," Harpool said. "I think stores are getting away from being massive, because (shopping in them) is such a big hassle."

Big or small, she said, successful retailers will probably be those that embrace online and in-person sales. "They are recognizing that the Internet is going to be around forever and selling online is certainly a viable option, but there's still a need, right now, for that brick and mortar. Not every consumer is going to want to buy every single item on line."

Another retail principle Harpool believes in — "people shop where they live and work" — is playing out on WSU's campus. The school expects to attract national and local retailers to Braeburn Square, a 20-acre development on school's new Innovation Campus. A Starbucks has opened there, and a 123-room hotel by Westin has been announced for the property.

Some other possible retail developments to look for in Wichita in 2018:

- What Stephanie Wise of John T. Arnold Associates calls the "obvious places" will continue to be hot spots for new stores, restaurants and more. That's anything north of 21st Street on the far east side and property north of New Market Square on the west side. But also, Wise noted, College Hill, downtown Wichita and Delano are attractive to retailers wanting to locate in areas with an older, urban feel.

- As highway construction finishes on Kellogg at Webb, that intersection seems prime for retail, restaurant and hotel development.

- Similarly, the completion of work on ramps connect I-235 and Kellogg could signal the redevelopment of commercially zoned properties just to the west.

- Further development of the booming dining scene at Maple and Ridge, although the remaining available property is tight.