



Creating a 'culture of cycling' in Boulder, Co.

By Jack Chesnutt, NBC News Producer

BOULDER, Co. - As real estate agent Matt Kolb recently toured several properties, he wore a helmet. It wasn't a hard-hat fit for a construction site but a bicycle helmet. Kolb sells homes from the back of a two-wheeler.

"Boulder is in the top-five bicycle-friendly cities in the world," said Kolb. "On a bike, you can get anywhere in town in 20 minutes or less."

Real estate firm Pedal to Properties has teamed up with a non-profit called **Community Cycles**, which supplies low-cost bikes and maintenance to local businesses as a way to encourage emission-free transportation.

'Outdoor deficit disorder'

Community Cycles, which was founded by a handful of Boulder bike-riders two years ago, has become a driving force in getting people out of cars and onto bikes. "We started out with a plan to distribute bikes," said Rich Points, Community Cycles' executive director. "But now we want to address larger issues."

For Points, getting out of the office and onto a bike "combats outdoor deficit disorder. You are more involved in the changes in the environment. You are more involved with your own community," he said. Even with the onset of winter, Points is not willing to give up the bicycling. He just shifts over to studded bike tires on snowy days.

Community Cycles also features a program called "earn-a-bike" - aimed at the



Community Cycles bike technician Peter Allen works on the fleet of bikes at the Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo.

homeless or jobless - where participants who attend 15 hours of instruction on bicycle mechanics receive a like-new rebuilt bike. They also refurbish donated bikes and unclaimed bikes from the Boulder Police Department and give them away to children who need them.

But the program that financially sustains Community Cycles is the growing number of partnerships with local businesses to provide mechanical upkeep for their bike fleets. Even scientists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, which is based in Boulder, are taking advantage of the two-wheeled transport. Community Cycles supplied the center with a fleet of 20 custom-painted bikes, including many with hurricane-related nicknames like "Rita," "Hugo" or "Andrew."

"Perfect names for a bunch of atmospheric scientists," chuckled Kimberly Kosmenkos,



Real estate agents Matt Kolb and Scott Sweeney of "Pedal to Properties" ride bikes to check out a property in Boulder, Colo.

the center's manager of sustainability programs.

"The program has grown over the last few years," said Kosmenkos. "And we couldn't do this at all without Community Cycles to keep the fleet running."

Once a week, a mechanic from Community Cycles pedals over to the office, towing a small trailer loaded with tools and a workbench to keep the fleet running. Some of the bikes are checked out for weeks at a time by visiting scientists - others are simply left in the rack so that anyone can jump on for a quick errand or trip to lunch.

'Creating a culture of cycling'

For Points, Community Cycles' executive director, riding a bike is about more than saving on gas costs. "When I ride, I nod and wave to other bikers. That's not something you do from inside a car," he said. "Our old motto was, 'Your bicycling community at

work,' but now it's, 'Creating a culture of cycling.' And we mean that. We no longer just distribute bikes, we want to change a culture."

Kosmenkos agreed. "If the bikes were not available, people wouldn't get away from their cars so much," she said. "People who have office jobs can spend 90 percent of their time indoors. The free bikes encourage exercise and improve health."

Even though gasoline has slipped from over \$3 a gallon to below \$1.80 in most parts of the country, the use of bikes for basic transportation is growing.

In October, Congress passed the Bicycle Commuters Act as part of the bailout plan. Beginning in January, it will give companies a tax credit of up to \$20 each month per cycling employee - a few greenbacks to encourage a greener way to get around town.

For real estate agent Kolb, the tax rebate is less important than what their participation says about his firm.

"People hear about us in connection with cycling and think, 'Hey, these guys think outside the box.' And they like the way we bring them into the community. It has definitely closed some sales for us."

For more information:

Community Cycles
2805 Wilderness Court, #1000
Boulder, CO 80301
(720) 565-6019
www.communitycycles.org