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Developers Cater to Two-Wheeled Traffic in Portland, Ore.

By LINDA BAKER

PORTLAND, Ore. — Christian Ettinger, the owner of [Hopworks Urban Brewery](#) here, is a longtime bicycle enthusiast. He grew up riding around the Portland suburb of Lake Oswego, and now owns six bicycles — “two if my wife is asking” — and races in cyclocross events. So when he decided to open a second brewpub this summer, he settled on a location that reflected his passion: North Williams Avenue, one of the most-used commuter cycling corridors in a city already mad for all things two-wheeled.

Some 3,000 riders a day pass by Mr. Ettinger’s new brewpub, which he calls the Hopworks BikeBar. It has racks for 75 bicycles and free locks, to-go entrees that fit in bicycle water bottle cages, and dozens of handmade bicycle frames suspended over the bar areas.

Portland is nationally recognized as a leader in the movement to create bicycle-friendly cities. About 7 percent of commuters here travel by bike (the national average is under 1 percent) and the city has an [ambitious plan](#), adopted last year, to increase that proportion to 25 percent by 2030.

Until recently, Portland’s bike initiatives focused on improving the transportation infrastructure, said Roger Geller, the city’s bicycle coordinator. But as businesses awoken to the purchasing power of cyclists, “bicycle-supported developments” are also beginning to appear around town, Mr. Geller said. These are residential and commercial projects built near popular bikeways and outfitted with cycling-related services and amenities.

“The change is coming from the private sector,” Mr. Geller said. “Cyclists are a great potential market for businesses that want people traveling at human-scale speed and will stop and buy something.”

The North Williams business cluster, about two miles northeast of downtown, is the most prominent example of this type of development. In addition to the BikeBar at 3907 North Williams, a two-block stretch of the street houses the [United Bicycle Institute](#), which teaches bike repair and frame building, at No. 3961; the [Friendly Bike Guest House](#), a hostel that

caters to cyclists, at No. 4039; and [EcoFlats](#), an 18-unit rental apartment building with a 30-unit bicycle rack in the lobby but no dedicated vehicle parking. The BikeBar is on the ground floor of the EcoFlats building, which also has a shower for commercial tenant commuters. At No. 3901 is [Pix Patisserie](#), featuring an on-street bike parking corral, one of 67 that have been installed by the city, typically at the request of businesses owners.

“The vision is businesses oriented toward bicycles,” said John Baxter, the administrator of the United Bicycle Institute.

But not everyone is unreservedly enthusiastic about the district’s new orientation. Located in a historic African-American community, the North Williams businesses are almost exclusively white-owned, and many residents see bicycles as a symbol of the gentrification taking place in the neighborhood.

“North Williams has grown to be a bike neighborhood out of gentrification,” said Debora Leopold Hutchins, the chairwoman of the North Williams Stakeholder Advisory Committee, a group helping oversee proposed traffic changes. Ms. Hutchins, who organizes an African-American women’s cycling group, said she loves cycling. But, she said, “The process has not been inclusive of the people who live there.”

A proposal this summer to remove a lane of automobile traffic for bikes on North Williams set off an outcry from residents. That proposal has been tabled while the city conducts more outreach with the neighborhood.

And as businesses and developers around the city jump on the bicycle bandwagon, other concerns about the fledgling bike-friendly projects are emerging: namely, that there is a bit of “bikewashing” going on as cycling becomes a marketing tool in a city where the vast majority still get around by car.

“People say: ‘I own piece of land. I want to build a bike building,’ ” said Jean-Pierre Veillet, the developer of the \$3.4 million EcoFlats complex, which was fully leased within a month of opening last March. “Well, you can’t just throw up a building; you have to go where the bikeways and the people on bikes are going to be.”

Located in North Portland, an area that has one of the highest rates of biking for work trips, North Williams Avenue parallels Interstate 5 and is one of the area’s flattest cross-town bike routes. As a result, “the bike traffic is just phenomenal — it’s just one cyclist after another going by,” Mr. Baxter said.

Mr. Ettinger said he was so taken with the mass of cyclists that he installed a sidewalk bar so

patrons could watch what he calls “Cat 6 commuter racing.” (Amateur bicycle racing in America is divided into categories, with Cat 1 events for the elite riders and 5 for beginners.)

Christopher Frick, a Portland real estate agent, said the number of cyclists helped persuade him to convert a duplex he owned last year into the Friendly Bike Guest House, a 2,025-square-foot space that includes indoor bike parking and a 500-square-foot “repair area, bike lock and gear dump.” The guest house is aimed at students enrolled in the United Bicycle Institute.

Other new developments around Portland are acknowledging the city’s bicycle craze. Two miles northwest of the North Williams Avenue district is [Killingsworth Station](#), a 60,000-square-foot mixed-use project built by the [Winkler Development Corporation](#) that has alcoves for bike parking on each floor and a bike lobby with a hard floor surface, access to a repair station and easy bike entry. “You hit a button and the door opens,” said Shawn Sullivan, the development manager for Winkler.

And in Southeast Portland, the national homebuilder [D. R. Horton](#) is building a 29-unit condominium complex advertised on city buses as “a whole new kind of neighborhood,” with a picture of a bicycle substituting for the final syllable.

Some view these projects with a critical eye. “Have you seen the ‘Portlandia’ sketch ‘put a bird on it’”? asked Kirsten Kaufman, a real estate agent, referring to the IFC cable show that pokes fun at Portland life. “Well, this is a case of ‘put a bike on it.’”

Ms. Kaufman, who has carved out a niche showing clients homes by bike, said the complex lacked sufficient bike storage, especially “for people with cargo trailers run errands on their bike.” The project is located a few blocks from a popular bike boulevard on Clinton Street.

Jessica Hansen, a Horton spokeswoman, declined comment.

In addition to the bike amenities, Killingsworth Station includes 57 car parking spaces — one for each housing unit. “It’s an ironic twist,” said Mr. Sullivan, adding that the spaces were a concession to neighbors who did not want residents or visitors at the condominium parking in front of their homes.

As the city presses forward with more ambitious bike transportation projects, some of the contradictions associated with the current crop of developments may be resolved. Ten years ago, Portland pioneered the return of the streetcar, an effort that has since helped generate several billion dollars in private development, including office space, condos and affordable

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housing. That kind of deliberate “transit-oriented development” has yet to be replicated with bicycles, Mr. Geller said.

But, he said, the city’s Bureau of Transportation is now considering working with the Bureau of Planning on such bicycle-oriented developments, possibly connected to “cycle tracks” — physically separated bike lanes that have some of the permanence of a streetcar line.

Mr. Veillet, of EcoFlats, said the developments on North Williams were a step in that direction. “The bikeway started exploding,” he said. “It was the perfect place for a bike building.”

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: September 22, 2011

An article in the Square Feet pages on Wednesday about bicycle-oriented development in Portland, Ore., omitted one of the developers of the EcoFlats apartment and retail complex, which has racks for bikes, but offers no parking for vehicles. Besides Jean-Pierre Veillet, Doug Shapiro of Hoyt Street Properties also developed the project.