

Homes & Real estate

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Tips to make home bike-friendly

You can start by getting rid of other stuff to make room for your bikes. If furniture or clothing you haven't used for years are taking up space in your garage or basement, donate them.

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Ecoconsumer

Cars rule in America because our society set itself up around cars years ago.

Houses were built with garages, and then multiple garages. The interstate highway system that was started in the 1950s cemented the pre-eminence of cars. Here in Seattle, the I-5 freeway and its ramps blast a swath 15 lanes wide through the heart of the city at some points, and we hardly even realize it.

Now the tide is turning. Our streets are filled with bike commuters along with cars, and local governments have sought to improve mass transit and make the streets safer and more welcoming for cyclists.

Today let's take that trend inside and look at how we can make our own homes more bike-friendly. The easier it is for us to store and care for our bikes, the more we'll ride, and the sooner bikes will become equal partners with cars on the road.

Make room for two wheels

The goal is to have convenient access to your bike at home without having it in the way when you're not riding. This isn't as simple as it sounds, especially because many households have more than one bike.

Not to be too obvious, but you can start by getting rid of other stuff to make room for your bikes. If furniture or clothing you haven't used for years are taking up space in your garage or basement, donate them.

If you're still tight on space, take advantage of the increasing selection of wall racks for bikes. According to the website WallBikeRack.net, which features 10 different brands, most wall bike racks are sold fully assembled and are easily installed. They generally range in price from \$15 to \$300.

Racks come in a wide range of styles, with some holding multiple bikes and providing storage space for accessories. [Independent Woodworks](#) in Seattle offers a handsome "bike shelf," made of walnut and other woods, which holds a bike flush up against the wall.

Hang it high

Also consider bike hoists that use ropes to raise your bike and hang it from the ceiling. Costco offers a package of two bike hoists for \$30.

If possible, store all your household's bike-related accessories in one place near the bikes. Because some bike accessories such as detachable lights are much smaller now than they used to be, you may not need a large area.

Set up a workbench or rack to work on your bike if you have room, and store all your tools together. The SingleTracks mountain-biking blog suggests using a fishing tackle box for essential tools such as wrenches and tire levers.

With our climate, serious bike commuters and year-round riders may also want to set up a drying area for bike clothes, near the bike storage and workshop area.

Get small

Cyclists with small apartments face the greatest bike-storage challenges and often come up with creative solutions. To avoid having to wedge your bike behind the couch or stand it up in a closet, consider bike storage when you're looking for an apartment.

Ideally your building will have a convenient, secure bike-storage room or area so you won't have to keep your bike inside your apartment, or worse yet, on the street. Some apartment and condominium complexes in our region now promote themselves as bike-friendly and offer special accommodations for bikes. Always lock your bike and remove your lights in a shared bike-storage area.

If no storage options work very well, you can approach the problem differently and get a folding bike. Dozens of brands of folding bikes are now available, usually ranging in price from \$150 to \$2,000. In addition to saving space at home, some of these collapsible bikes can be folded so compactly into the size of a suitcase that they will fit in the overhead bin on an airplane.

Although we can do a lot in our own home, we should also encourage businesses and governments to make it more convenient to own, store and ride a bike. An increasing number of workplaces offer bike storage rooms. In Vancouver, B.C., the city and its partners recently launched a pilot program providing do-it-yourself bike repair stations in public spaces.

It's been a long, sometimes bumpy road, but it's finally getting easier to experience the world on two wheels.

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