

# Rolling with the changes: 5 places to bike in the 'burg

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As gas prices continue to rise, so too do the number of people incorporating a bicycle into their day-to-day travels. Whatever your goal, from getting groceries to simply enjoying a ride, here are five of the best places to bicycle in Spartanburg.

## Spartanburg County Public Library

For county librarian Todd Stephens, it's a point of personal pride that the library is a bike-friendly destination. Perhaps this is because his commitment began with a personal experience.

"My son and I were on a bike trip while out of town, when we were caught in a thunderstorm," Stephens said. "The only place to retreat was the public library. There we were, out-of-towners, but because of the library, we had a place to chain our bikes, shelter from the storm, clean restrooms, and a computer to check how long the bad weather would last."

Under Stephens' guidance, the library recently gave up some of its car-parking spots and added high-quality bike hitches and a skateboard rack.

Stephens likewise pushed to alter the Palmetto Trail route so it passes by the library, and he hopes that the near future sees a well-defined bike lane connecting the library to other points in the city.

## Cottonwood Trail

If you're seeking some "off-road" riding without leaving the city, this trail is the perfect cycling destination. The trail's four-plus miles cover a variety of terrain in the Edward M. Griffin Preserve.

Cyclists can take a scenic ride along Lawson's Fork Creek or venture off onto some of the side trails. For those looking for a low-gear grind, some of the sections offer loose sand. Those seeking a faster pace will enjoy the hard-packed straightaways of other areas. With climbs,

loops, open areas and a wide array of scenery, the Cottonwood offers enough diversity to satisfy any cyclist.

### **Downtown**

Along with the other changes wrought by downtown's renaissance, it also is morphing into a prime bicycling destination. Take, for instance, The Hub City Farmers' Market at the Magnolia Street train station.

Market planners have made it a priority to be cyclist-friendly. In the previous season, the market hosted a "bicycle beauty pageant," organized a day during which a bike mechanic was on site to offer free bicycle maintenance advice, and held a "Bike to Market Day."

"Spartanburg's newly revitalized downtown is intentionally bicycle-friendly," said Laura Ringo, executive director of Partners for Active Living. "In the last year, the city has added 14 bicycle racks around Morgan Square and East Main Street, and more are on the way." Ringo also notes that downtown's roads were designed with wide shoulders to accommodate bicycle riders.

### **The Mary Black Rail Trail**

This nearly two-mile-long trail is an asphalt-surfaced section of the Hub City Connector, a local section of the Palmetto Trail that spans the state. Reaching from East Henry Street to Country Club Road, it offers cyclists a safe place to bike, as well as a fortuitous route to the businesses that neighbor it.

"It's really been an amazing thing to watch," said Gervais Hollowell, owner of a coffee roasting company that borders the Rail Trail.

"You would not believe the number of people that bike and walk on that trail. I am especially impressed by the number of families that strap on their helmets and take to the trail on their bikes," he said.

Hollowell sees the Rail Trail as a possible catalyst for a more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly Spartanburg, and says he hopes for a day when various restaurants and businesses line the Rail Trail to further serve the large number of people already attracted to the route.

### **Duncan Park**

Curt McPhail, chairman of the mayor's Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission, says it's hard to beat Duncan Park as one of the city's top bicycling destinations.

"For one thing, it's not a cut-through, so it's typically very low traffic. And because it's such a popular bike destination, most of the area's drivers know how to behave in the company of cyclists," he said.

McPhail also cites the neighborhood's varied terrain and natural beauty as reasons to explore the area by bike.

"It's really unusual to find so many features in such a relatively small space. You can take the road and bike around the lake, or you can utilize the park's new trail to get off the road and still bike on an even surface."

"If you're a cyclist in Spartanburg, it's an exciting time," he said.