

Bike sharing program spins into action

By Victoria News

Published: **March 22, 2017 08:00 AM**

Updated: **March 22, 2017 08:58 AM**

When Karen Jawl looks at downtown Victoria, she sees a lack of parking and a heavy investment in cycling infrastructure.

So after seeing bike sharing networks in European cities, along with Vancouver and Montreal, Jawl and the rest of staff at Jawl Properties came up with a plan to do the same in Victoria.

Last week, Jawl Properties puts its plan into action with the launch of its new private automated bike-sharing program that lets employees and tenants borrow a bike free of charge for up to three hours. Any hour after that comes with a \$5 fee.

Ten bikes have been placed in three stations around the Atrium building on Yates and Blanshard, and another 10 are at Selkirk Waterfront by the Gorge at 2940 Jutland Rd. The properties, noted Jawl, are mainly office buildings with retail on the ground floor.

"I think it will be a real nice amenity for people. You can just hop on the bike and go for a ride," said Jawl, director of property management, adding there's nothing else like it in the city at the moment. "I think a bike share network really helps to respond and take advantage of those conditions (downtown)."

So how does bike-sharing work? According to Jawl, each tenant has access to a special app on their mobile phone. They simply walk up to the bike that has an identification number and enter that number on their phone. The app then gives them an unlock code to access a specific bike that's supplied by NextBike — a German company that develops and operates public bike-sharing systems.

The bikes are designed to be anti-vandal proof, noted Jawl, making it difficult for thieves to take off different components, but are easily adjustable to fit different sizes.

As for plans to expand the program to other properties, Jawl said the company will see how things roll out with the first batch of bikes.

"We've had some very positive feedback and lots of excitement around it," she said.

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