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Bicycle and the built environment to accommodate these wheels

May 09, 2013 - Appraisal & Consulting

Good highway exposure, vehicular accessibility, frontage, adequate parking are all characteristics of marketability and feasibility for development of commercial real estate of all property types to varying degrees. Zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations have set dimensional thresholds which can be restrictive for owner/developers when the objective is maximizing the buildable envelope. The marketplace can be brutally punishing in valuation for properties with dimensional deficiencies that are considered more subjectively determined. Bicycles are becoming the next wheels. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was essential to providing accessibility, convenience, safety and dignity for disabled Americans in commercial property. The market place might well need a local regulatory push to enhance the built environment for the bicycle and the riding public.

ADA has been phased in by federal legislation and regulations. The commercial real estate market and practicing professionals have complied with costly design modifications and enhancements that have dramatically improved the built environment for the disabled. The rationale was equality for disabled persons. The economic benefit was less apparent. However, the accessibility to buildings, floors, rooms, and related specialized services has enhanced marketability to those who are disabled and all that are associated with them in any way. This segment is a very large market for consumption and employment and housing. The injuries from military and terrorist activities and the aging of America have emphasized how important ADA is to our society and the global community. Building for bicycles will have a different impact on society and the community. The advocates for equality and safety for bike riders are supported by extraordinary and compelling economic arguments that are already apparent. Riders use bikes instead of cars, gas, buses, trains and gyms. Bikes are a serious, cost-effective and fun way to transport oneself. Bicycles thrive with bike paths, bike lanes and even shared bike lanes, all of which require a public regulatory endorsement. The private and institutional sectors are hustling to accommodate the current bicycle trends. The cost for the private sector to make the built environment more bike friendly is more than the pails of road paint for lines and more traffic congestion resulting from dedicated and shared bike lanes. However, the benefits are compelling enough for the private sector to voluntarily pay the cost burden to make the riders come! Riders are using bicycles for commutation and shopping as well as exercise and entertainment, lifestyle choices that are all dramatically increasing in volume. The employee has direct impact on jobs, and job holders have more currency in commercial property metrics than leisure seekers or fitness enthusiasts. Of course, the bicycle has varied impact on individual urban and suburban communities and on different property types.

So, hooray for the bicycle and the built environment to accommodate these wheels. The benefits are only starting to be counted, measured and enjoyed!

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