

5 QUESTIONS WITH ... SCOTT CLEIN

## Engineer pushes for biking, walking paths

### Adopted in city's Master Plan, but changes not made

BY SHARON GITTLEMAN • FREE PRESS SPECIAL WRITER • May 4, 2008



Check out most Detroit streets on an average afternoon and you'll notice one thing missing: pedestrians.

Civil engineer Scott Klein hopes to change that.

Clein, an associate with Giffels-Webster Engineers in Detroit, helped chart out nearly 400 miles of potential routes ideal for walking and biking -- with a few changes implemented by city officials.

Though his recommendations were adopted in the city's Master Plan in 2007, Detroit's movers and shakers have been sluggish in making the necessary changes to encourage more foot and pedal traffic, he said.

In the past, community planners thought the wider an avenue the better, he said.

"Today, many people like me believe our roads are grossly oversized," said Klein, 36, a Birmingham resident. "We have too many lanes for the volumes of traffic."

Money shouldn't be a holdup in making the change, said Klein. All it would take to convert traffic lanes to pedestrian byways is some yellow paint.

"On a street like Michigan Avenue, we're saying we don't need nine lanes of traffic," he said. "Let's spend 25 cents a foot and put new markings down and designate a bike lane. They could make the changes when they make road repairs."

With few government officials willing to take the plunge, community groups and individuals will

have to take charge if they want to see more bike and walking lanes, he said.

"It's pretty clear that folks today are craving an urban experience," he said. "This will help us retain our young professionals."

**QUESTION: What would a bike path system mean for Detroit residents?**

**ANSWER:** It would provide a couple of things. The first thing that comes to mind is it would provide more opportunities from a transportation point of view.

People who don't own cars or can't afford cars would have another option. It would really provide an amenity a lot of young and professional people of all ages are looking for.

**Q: What's the toughest trail you ever pedaled on?**

**A:** I mostly do urban biking. I'd probably say, back in my youth, riding on Jefferson -- the road was in such tough shape and there was no bike lane.

**Q: Do you remember when you got your first two-wheeler?**

**A:** Yes, I do. I was about 6 or 7 years old. It was one of those Christmases that was unusually warm. My parents left the bike outside and I got to use it Christmas day. It was a red Schwinn.

**Q: If your effort is successful, do you think it could cut a dent in the auto industry?**

**A:** No, I don't. I have no illusions that people will sell their cars and start biking to work on a daily basis.

A safe and complete bike-lane system can help bind a community together and provide the quality of life and amenities people today want and deserve.

**Q: Will the addition of bike paths spur retail or restaurant developments?**

**A:** I think it would help in that it would allow people better access to get to those shops.

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