

# Bici Flats

Des Moines, Iowa

**BICI FLATS**, a 154-unit multifamily development in Des Moines, Iowa, is located at the intersection of three paved trails that connect pedestrians and bicyclists to downtown. With a planned opening in 2016, Bici Flats will capitalize on its location by catering to prospective tenants who desire active lifestyles and access to urban amenities.

“Although Bici Flats is on the edge of downtown Des Moines, we will be able to charge downtown core rental rates because of the access that the trails provide to the urban center as well as the entirety of the metro.”

>> Alexander Grgurich, development analyst, Nelson Construction & Development

## QUICK FACTS

### Location

1405 SE First Street,  
Des Moines, Iowa

### Status

Under construction;  
opening November 2016

### Type of Project

Multifamily

### Site Size

6 acres (14.8 ha)

### Building Size

154 units; 160,000 square feet  
(14,900 sq m)

### Rental Rates

\$750–\$1,200

### Project Cost

\$17.3 million

### Developers

Nelson Construction & Development  
and Titan Development &  
Investments

### Architect

Studio Melee

### Lender

First National Bank of Omaha

### Equity Partner

Titan Development & Investments

### Bike Amenities

In-unit bike storage, bike repair  
room, bike washroom, wide  
hallways, bike storage room

### Nearby Bicycle Infrastructure

Meredith Trail, Des Moines River  
Trail, John Pat Dorian Trail

### Health Features

Fitness center, yoga room



Bici Flats' location in the Two Rivers District of Des Moines will give residents access to the urban core via a network of trails. (PUSHpixel)



## Context for Development

When planning for Bici Flats, developer Nelson Construction & Development looked to experiences with their existing properties and identified a market for multifamily housing just outside of the center of Des Moines. Residents at Nelson’s developments noted that they were looking for locations with opportunities for walking, jogging, and bicycling.

Mike Nelson, president and owner of Nelson Construction & Development, explains that the “urban active” segment of the market is “attracted to trail access and bicycle-friendly amenities that allow them direct connections to downtown and other nearby recreational amenities.”

The location of Bici Flats in the Two Rivers District, at the meeting point of the Meredith, John Pat Dorian, and Des Moines River trails, gives prospective tenants the option of a scenic walk or bicycle ride to downtown Des Moines, as well as access to open space.

All three trails provide views of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers. The 3.1-mile (5 km) Meredith Trail connects Bici Flats to downtown Des Moines and forms a portion of 8.8 miles (14.2 km) of paved downtown loop trails. The trails also form connections to many of the 52 miles (84 km) of trails within city limits and 550 miles (885 km) in the larger region.

Alexander Grgurich, development analyst at Nelson Construction & Development, notes that “although Bici Flats is on the edge of downtown Des Moines, we will be able to charge downtown core rental rates because of the access that the trails provide to the urban center as well as the entirety of the metro.”

## Active Transportation–Friendly Features

In order to capitalize on the project’s nearby trail infrastructure, Nelson Construction & Development worked to create a building that accommodates bike ownership. Active transportation–friendly features include the following:

- >> **Bicycle storage room.** There will be keycard-protected space for 125 bikes in the basement of the building.
- >> **In-unit bicycle storage.** Front closet “mud rooms” will be able to accommodate bikes both horizontally and vertically, or residents can choose to store bicycles on the patios or balconies included in every unit.
- >> **Wide hallways.** At 82 inches (208 cm) wide, hallways will be ten inches (25 cm) wider than the standard size, and tenants will be able to easily transport bicycles through the building.
- >> **Bike workroom.** A room that provides residents with access to work stands, basic bike repair tools, and air pumps will be included.
- >> **Bike washing station.** Tenants will be able to clean their bikes before rolling them through the building.



Directly adjacent to Bici Flats, the Meredith Trail provides scenic views of the Des Moines skyline. *(Tony Webster)*



Bici Flats is located at the intersection of three trails that connect walkers and cyclists with downtown Des Moines. *(PUSHpixel)*

## Development Lessons

Bici Flats will be marketed primarily to recreational cyclists, but by facilitating bike ownership and access to active transportation routes that connect shops, restaurants, and employment centers, the development also reflects an expansion of the bicycle culture in Des Moines.

The city of Des Moines received a Bronze Award from the League of American Bicyclists in 2015 in recognition of the creation of new trails, bike parking, and bike-related events. The award, however, noted that the city has far to go in improving its on-road bicycle facilities. To that end, Des Moines approved \$500,000 to add bike lanes, trail connections, and shared-lane pavement markings to downtown streets in 2015.

Bici Flats’ bike-oriented development features and the local investments in bicycle infrastructure reflect the growing demand for active transportation in Des Moines.

Grgurich explains, “We look to learn from this development and how tenants will interact with the bicycle amenities and trails.” As opportunities for bicycling in the area continue to grow, Nelson Construction & Development will take note of how residents make use of the bike amenities at Bici Flats and will consider adding similar features to future projects.