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Ciclovía Returns to Downtown Pensacola on March 24

Last March, 10,000 people brought their bicycles, skateboards, strollers and feet, but not their cars, to downtown Pensacola for Ciclovía — Pensacola Open Streets. On Saturday, March 24, 2018, Ciclovía returns.

Pensacola's Ciclovía event, part of a unique international movement, closes downtown streets to motorized traffic and opens them up for the entire community to be active and have fun. This event encourages and promotes safe physical activity with others while exploring downtown.

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. a large portion of downtown will close to motorized vehicles and open to bicyclists, pedestrians, runners, skateboarders and more. Closures include Palafox Place from Romana Street to Plaza DeLuna, and Main Street from the Community Maritime Park to Bartram Park.

Music, vendors and fun events will be staged around the area, including a Kids Area at Plaza DeLuna, health screenings and more. All of the activities organized by Ciclovía are free.

The primary goals include promoting public health, boosting our local economy, reducing pollution, and showcasing downtown as a people-friendly space and a model for getting out of our cars and exercising.

"Over the last decade Pensacola has really reinvented itself as an urban center," said Ciclovía chairman Rand Hicks. "The return of restaurants, retail and professionals has followed public and private investment in places like the Community Maritime Park and Plaza de Luna, the renovation of many historic buildings, as well as good sidewalks and pedestrian-friendly traffic rules. This all set the stage for what's happening now: people returning to live downtown.

"Last year we drew 10,000 visitors to downtown, many for the first time in years, and they had a blast. We hope to do even better this year."

Last year, according to survey data from the University of West Florida and Visit Pensacola, 42 percent of respondents discovered a new store or restaurant; participants contributed \$597,000 in spending; and they spent an average of \$46.12 while at the event.

This year's primary partner is Humana. Substantial support also comes from Visit Pensacola, Dasani, the University of West Florida Usha Kundu College of Health, WEAR-TV, Boyett's Portable Toilets, the City of Pensacola, Pensacola Parks and Recreation, the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County, Island Docs, End of the Line Café, rideOn, Pensacola Community Action Network, and Gulf Power.

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“The obesity epidemic has underscored the value of exercise,” Hicks said. “That's a plus for downtown, because urban centers are great for people looking for sidewalks and safe places to connect. If we want to change peoples' behavior for the better, we need to show them what's available. We think that once people see how easy it is to get around downtown without cars, they won't be thinking about exercising, they will just be enjoying themselves.”

To stay updated on Ciclovía 2018 and learn more about PensacolaOpenStreets, go to PensacolaOpenStreets.com or check our Facebook page. Email us at PensacolaOpenStreets@gmail.com.