

# **An Oral History of Kyle Kozar**

4<sup>th</sup> Street | Prater Way History Project

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Interviewer: Alicia Barber, Ph.D.

Joseph “Kyle” Kozar graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2006, the same year he co-founded the Reno Bike Project with Noah Silverman. The non-profit community bicycle shop and advocacy group is located at 541 East 4th Street. Kozar left Reno in 2011 to attend graduate school in city planning at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

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## KYLE KOZAR

Interviewed on October 10, 2011  
Alicia Barber, Interviewer

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Photo by Patrick Cummings

Barber: I am in Reno, Nevada, talking on the phone to Kyle Kozar, who is in New York City, and we’re doing a phone interview about East Fourth Street. Today is October 10, 2011. Kyle, when and where were you born?

Kozar: I was born in Reno, Nevada, in 1982 at St. Mary’s Hospital.

Barber: What part of town did you grow up in?

Kozar: When I was really young, I lived in the west part of town off of Canyon Drive, and then my parents got divorced and I moved in with my dad when my mother moved away. Then I lived up off of Manzanita, off of Skyline.

Barber: Where did you go to school?

Kozar: I went to Roy Gomm Elementary and then Caughlin Ranch Elementary, Swope Middle School, and Reno High School.

Barber: How many generations has your family been in Reno?

Kozar: I’m first generation. My parents are both from different places. My dad’s from southern California and my mom’s originally from Kansas and then from Southern California, and they moved here when I was in my mom’s belly. My older siblings were all born in other places.

Barber: What are your parents’ names?

Kozar: My dad’s name is Mark Kozar, and my mother’s name is Creda Stewart now. She was remarried about 15 years ago.

Barber: How many siblings do you have?

Kozar: I have three older siblings. I have an older brother and two older sisters.

Barber: From an early age, were you always interested in bikes? Did you have a bike?

Kozar: Yes, totally. I've always been into bikes. When I was a kid, I had a bike and I rode around town. I was always into skateboarding and snowboarding and things like that. When I got into high school I was fascinated with driving, same as all sixteen-year-old kids seem to be, but my senior year I started riding my bike to school again, and when I got into college I was always riding a bike, and that became my main means of transportation.

Barber: Up through high school, do you remember Reno being a good place to ride a bike?

Kozar: I don't know that I ever really thought about it when I was younger. When I was growing up and in high school, I just thought that Reno was generally a pretty nice place to live. I think I was kind of oblivious to what makes a place safe to ride a bike or what makes a street safe to live on or play on.

I don't think I started thinking about that until I was in college and started riding my bike more and becoming a bit more of an advocate for better roads for cyclists and motorists. I started realizing that it wasn't really a bicycle-friendly place and that there really weren't any bike lanes and there really wasn't that much ridership. I think that's when I started thinking that it would be nice if Reno was a better place to live and cycle in.

Barber: Talk about your experiences in college a little bit. How did you make the decision of where to go to college?

Kozar: I decided to go to UNR because I got the Millennium Scholarship, and I didn't quite know what I wanted to do with my life. I went to UNR and started taking core classes, and I think about a year and a half into it, I decided on a major. I studied journalism, and then about a year into that I decided to add a second major, Spanish, so when I graduated I got a dual degree in journalism and Spanish.

Barber: You were saying that you used your bike a lot in college.

Kozar: Yes. I don't even really know why, to be honest with you. I had a car, but I just enjoyed riding my bike, and I think that's one of the things about riding a bike. You might have a different reason to start doing it, but once you do start doing it, you realize all the other advantages. At first, it's annoying having to ride, but then after a while you realize that the most enjoyable part of your day is riding to work, as opposed to driving or whatever it may be. I think it's kind of addicting, and a lot of people get addicted to it for that reason, that they realize all the extra benefits that they get out of it. There was a big group of us in college who always rode our bikes everywhere.

Barber: Were you saying that you started to become an advocate for bike riding while

you were in college?

Kozar: Yes. I don't know that I was as publicly an advocate. I didn't have any way to get out and really advocate. I don't think that I realized that that's what I was doing, but I would tell people that they should ride their bikes.

Then the Bike Project started. I graduated and a friend of mine—well, a mutual friend of mine who lived in Bellingham, Washington, and went to college there, Noah Silverman—moved back to Reno. He was born here and grew up here, and he used to work at a place called the Hub in Bellingham, Washington, that was a really cool community bike shop. I had been up there and visited him and other friends and had seen what they had going on there when I was in college. I thought that was really cool.

I'd been looking for a job but couldn't really find one, and didn't really know what to do with myself. So we started the Bike Project on sort of a whim, because the two of us were hanging out and started talking about how it'd be cool if there was another group that was pushing for better biking infrastructure and a better cycling community in Reno.

Then I drafted a letter describing what we wanted to do and our vision. We emailed it to a couple of bike-shop owners who we knew, and the president of the Procrastinating Pedalers, Terry McAfee, and asked them to forward it around, and they did that and we got a pretty big response.

We sent out another email, and then decided that there was probably demand for that sort of organization in Reno. We knew nothing about nonprofit management or even that it was going to be a nonprofit. We knew nothing. We just started networking and trying to formulate the idea and learn how to make it happen.

Barber: So you were kind of testing the waters a little bit, and then did you go ahead and start physically operating the project for a bit before you secured nonprofit status?

Kozar: Yes. We started going anywhere there was any group of cyclists. We gave a presentation to the Pedalers. They had a Critical Mass, and we went down there and spoke to the group of maybe forty people before they rode. We were just trying to network as much as we could. I think a lot of people discredited us at first because we really didn't know what we were doing and we didn't have our vision well articulated, but it happened over time. We did gain enough support to hold our first event, a fundraising event. It was a bike drive and sort of a party with different events—messenger bike races, an alley cat race, and a couple other things.

Barber: Did you say alley cat race?

Kozar: Yes.

Barber: What is that?

Kozar: It's like a bike messenger race, where there are several stops and people have to go to each stop and bring a package from one spot to another.

Barber: Did you do that in central Reno?

Kozar: Yes, all around downtown Reno. Our first event was at Record Street Café, the old Record Street Café, which is now Bibo 3.

Our friend Eric Carter, who was a mechanic at a shop south of town—High Sierra Cycling—he had tools and stuff in his house, and he had a basement that he let us use. He let us start storing our bicycle donations in his backyard, and two nights a week he would let us have anybody who wanted to show up come there and work on their bikes. He was really gracious enough to let us do that.

As we were doing that, we determined that we probably needed to become a nonprofit and to secure a better space. We kept networking and meeting people who might be able to help us and would mentor us. We met Susan Clark and her husband, Don Clark, who I knew from my childhood. He is an architect at Cathexes, which is on Second Street, and they had a new building. Susan had an education-based nonprofit, and she agreed to be our fiscal sponsor, our fiscal agent. We were a nonprofit under her umbrella while we were getting our act together.

We got our first grant through them, which was a project to have different artists build bike racks around town. There's a bike rack in front of City Hall, two cement blocks with railroad ties coming out of it. That was one of the bike racks in our project; it was cool to get one there.

Barber: Who was that grant from?

Kozar: It was two grants. One grant was from the Nevada Arts Council and we got additional matching funds for the downtown bike rack in front of City Hall through a city grant. All of that was under Susan's nonprofit, and at the same time, she was working with us and we were filing for our nonprofit status. We were running the shop out of their building and renting a space from them.

I skipped over a part. We did move from Eric's basement to Noah's garage, and we were there for about six months. We were open two days a week there, and people would come and fix their bikes.

Through this whole process of moving around three times, we would have weekly meetings open to anybody at Silver Peak Brewery. We'd get good turnout. Twelve to twenty-five people would show up and it was kind of an open forum for people to discuss cycling issues and what they wanted to see happen, and to plan advocacy events and other ways that we could engage the community.

We were at the Cathexes building [250 Bell Street] for another year, I think, and then that's when we moved to Fourth Street, where we are now. We moved there because we were growing too big for the space. We had gotten our own nonprofit status at that point and we wanted a space that was little more suitable for our needs. Noah and I had shopped around a while looking for a different space, and we met our current landlord, Fred Meyer. He was really agreeable and he wanted us in there, so he helped us make some changes to the building that enabled us to do that.

Barber: Prior to moving to Fourth Street, were you doing bike sales, too, or did you just have open times for people to work on their bikes?

Kozar: We sold bikes. We were refurbishing them and selling them, but we were also having events like a ladies' night and doing some of the open workshops that we still have, and having open workstands. It was interesting because we were just learning as we went. We would do something one way and then we'd run into an issue, and people would voice their concerns about the way we were doing something, and we'd just change the policy. We really did just adapt and learn as we went, as far as how to manage the organization and how to make it most effective and reach a lot of people.

I feel like the Reno Bike Project has had a huge impact in the community, and I think it has since it started. We've done a good job of getting bicycles in the news, and I think that alone is a big part of the advocacy, getting it on people's minds and getting people thinking about alternatives to their cars. I think we've done a good job of that.

Barber: What role would you say that having a board of directors plays in getting more community support? How did you got about forming a board of directors?

Kozar: Noah and I talked about it a lot and we started trying to find people who would be interested. It's kind of weird with a startup nonprofit because the founders basically form the board and hire the board, in a way, whereas in an established organization, the board is already there and the board hires the executive director and the program director. When you found the organization, it's kind of a switch. In a lot of ways the founders are managing the board, because the founders have their vision and mission, and they have to relay that to the board, and then the board has to adopt that and take it over.

I would say that the board is really important in regard to reaching out to other demographics who we might not necessarily be reaching. That is one of the huge ways that they can really help. I think a lot of the board members we have are going through a little transition and revisioning. We picked these people because, first, they were involved in cycling or they had additional professional skills—they were a lawyer, accountant, or whatever could help guide us as far as managing. But then I think ultimately the goal for the board is to be connected to other demographics of people who don't necessarily hear our mission or see our vision, and they're working to advocate for the mission of the organization.

Barber: So they meet periodically.

Kozar: Yes. For years we had monthly board meetings. For a small organization, it's important to have an active board, so you want board members who not only want to help reach these other audiences, but also who have an interest in getting their hands dirty and coming in and helping out at an event or other activities.

Barber: *By the time you moved to the Fourth Street location, did you have a number of paid staff members?*

Kozar: When we moved there, I think we had one mechanic, paid hourly, and Noah and I were getting a stipend of about \$400 a month each.

Barber: Did you have a lot of volunteers?

Kozar: Yes. We ran for two years with no paid staff, just volunteers, and then we started paying a mechanic who could be there all the time, and then we started paying ourselves. The other part of running a nonprofit is that you have to pay people for their work. Volunteerism is huge and it has enabled us to do what we've done, but you reach a point where if you're not paying people for the hard work they do, they might lose interest or they can only stick around for so long. That was a big goal of ours, getting a paid staff and paying people living wages to compensate them for all the sacrifice that they make to make it happen.

Barber: Let's talk about Fourth Street a little bit. You talked about the space a little. Did you have any impressions of the street before moving to that location?

Kozar: Yes. We went down and met with our landlord, Fred, a couple of times and looked at the place, and Noah and I had discussed whether or not we should do it. That was one of the main concerns: "Is this going to really hurt our business? Are people going to be willing to come down to East Fourth Street at night for a workshop?" Because there are these ideas—I don't know if they're misconceptions—that East Fourth Street is kind of a dangerous, sort of scuzzy area.

We did talk about that, but ultimately we decided that the location for us is awesome and we wanted to be in a more industrial part of town. We decided that the space was really good and that if there was any problem with the façade of East Fourth Street, we were just going to deal with that and take it in stride.

Barber: What was it about this space that worked so well? You said that the landlord helped you make some changes to it. What kind of space was it?

Kozar: It was a transmission shop, and there are two buildings that were at that point connected. They were originally separate, and then they were connected, and then he helped us separate them off again, and we just took one side.

It was cheap. It's actually, I think, one of the greatest areas of town. The landlord helped us put in a front door. There was an existing structure for the front window and the front door that's there now, but it was walled up with cinderblocks. He helped us knock that down and get a storefront put in, and it's great. It has garage-door rollups and two stories, and a lot of storage, and the shape of the building is really unique. It's got a lot of wall space and that's a lot that we didn't have before. For us, storage is a huge issue and that was awesome.

Barber: You said you think it's one of the greatest parts of town. Why do you think that? What makes it so great?

Kozar: I think it's great because it has a lot of character and there's a lot of opportunity there, and I think other people in Reno are also recognizing that. It used to be a very happening area, and then it sort of got rundown, for whatever reasons. Now I think people are seeing the opportunity of Fourth Street as a main corridor that can be both a

commercial corridor and, possibly a residential and retail corridor.

It's very unique. It's got a mix of the population who live in that area, with the industrial buildings and the industrial work that's happening all around it, and now there are popping up all these different kinds of commercial businesses and bars and restaurants. It's interesting because it's kind of rough-and-tumble, but it's not as bad as I think most people think or used to think of East Fourth Street.

Barber: Would you say that your business philosophy or just the way of doing business changed once you were located on Fourth Street?

Kozar: Yes.

Barber: How did you have to adapt things?

Kozar: Because of the homeless shelters there, the Men's and the Women's and Family Drop-in Centers, and there's a bunch of different halfway houses in all those nearby neighborhoods just south of the freeway, around Lake Street, and the thrift stores and the food kitchen, St. Vincent's, and now the tent city. With all of that population around, our business, being a nonprofit and having recycled bikes that were donated to us, definitely had to cater to that population, which is something we didn't realize that we were going to have to do when we first moved there.

It was probably in the back of our minds, but we didn't realize to what extent we were going to have to embrace and interact with our new neighbors. That definitely, right off the bat, was an interesting thing because we wanted to help these people. We're a nonprofit and we want people to ride bikes, and these people clearly need transportation because the bus system isn't necessarily up to par or they can't afford the bus.

At first we started giving away a few bikes, but then we realized that we can't just be giving away all these bikes because we don't know what's going to happen to them. They might just take them and sell them because they want the money instead of the bike.

So we developed the Gift Bike Program that we have, and that was first, to be able to serve that community, being that they're our neighbors and we want to help take care of them as much as possible, but also to serve them in a way that isn't self-defeating in that they would just take the bikes that we give them and sell them, because that's not what we want to see happen with the bike.

That program definitely went through some phases. At first, we would say, "Oh, you can volunteer. If you volunteer in here, then we'll give you a bike." We did that for a while, but then we realized that's exactly what people were doing. They were volunteering and then taking our bike and selling it. People were starting to exploit the program a little bit and take advantage of us. So we had to keep adapting it. Now they have to verify that they are in a workforce program, or staying at the shelter, or volunteering for another organization. They have to volunteer, and then we give them a bike and lights and locks and some education on safe riding.

I've been gone for a little bit and I know that when I left in January we were rewriting that program a little bit for a new grant to get it funded, and it underwent a few changes. I'm a little forgetful of the exact details of what we were changing, but that program has been a huge success and we've seen tons of success stories of those people



who are incredibly grateful and got a job and kept a job because of the bike we got them.

That community comes in to the shop all the time and we help them all the time, helping them patch their flat tires or whatever it is. We know they don't have the means to pay for a patched flat tire, and that's not really our goal. Our goal is to help them be able to use that bike as transportation, and so we help them. I think we've been accepted into that community, the organization has, as a good neighbor. They watch out for us and we watch out for them. There have been some incidents when we got broken into or when a fire started. I think somebody had a fire in the alleyway behind the shop and it lit the building on fire. There have been some incidents like that where we've been taken advantage of or robbed, but for the most part I feel like that community has embraced us and we've embraced them as good neighbors that take care of each other. So that's been kind of interesting.

Barber: Have you found that any of your anxieties about other groups of folks being anxious or unwilling to come down to that area have proved to be true?

Kozar: No, it didn't, because once we moved there, our business increased tenfold. I feel like that wasn't an issue and that our concerns about that didn't come to fruition. They weren't justified. I've heard people complain, "Oh, you know, people don't want to come down there," or "Oh, that bike shop is just for bums," or whatever it is. But I think most of the time when I hear those sorts of criticisms, most of the time they're not real and they're just people being jealous or hateful for whatever reason. I just write them off. Because we do see lots of different people come into the shop, and we bring lots of different demographic types into that neighborhood, and we do have well-to-do bike collectors who might be in there digging through a bin right next to a guy who's down on his luck and living in a homeless shelter, and they're right next to each other. That's not an uncommon occurrence in there. I think it's got a pretty interesting dynamic in that way.

Barber: I'm wondering what kind of connection you feel to the surrounding businesses.

Kozar: I think the businesses down there all look out for each other. I think they're pretty specialized businesses. We're a very service-based organization and we happen to have a service that caters to low-income individuals who use a bicycle as their main mode of transportation. Club Underground I don't think really caters to that crowd so much, but at the same time, I haven't seen any issues between Club Underground clientele and the low-income population that's living there. I think a lot of the businesses that are down there are pretty specific, like Paolo Cividino; he does custom metalwork for tons of huge projects in Reno. He's done Bibo's and Chapel Tavern and any building that has major architectural metal facades. He moved his shop [Tutto Ferro] down there, and there's a motorcycle shop right across the street from us, and he's right next to them. They're all very specialized. We know all those people, and as business owners, everyone is sort of neighbors. But I think their businesses are so specialized that they don't necessarily cater to serving populations, broad populations.

Barber: Have you had any formal connections with the business organizations in the

community? There's that Reno-Sparks Corridor Business Association, and E4 is a newer group that might have formed since you left.

Kozar: Yes, I heard about it since I've left. When we were there, I know there was an association. I think Noah went to a couple of the meetings, but other than that, not really. Other than just knowing them and seeing them on the street and chitchatting. I think that that E4 thing, from what I've heard, is really trying to unite the Business Owners Association down there. But I'm not quite sure what that is.

Barber: While you were here, were you participating in any kinds of meetings with the City of Reno or anything that was involving proposed changes to Fourth Street or to bike and pedestrian planning in the city?

Kozar: Yes, I went to a couple of BPAC meetings.

Barber: What was that?

Kozar: Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee. They did a bunch of visioning workshops for bicycle and pedestrian access with the RTC and Fehr & Peers Transportation Consultants.

Barber: I'm not sure what that is.

Kozar: Shoot, I forget. But the city is in the second phase of completing their comprehensive bicycle-pedestrian plan to be adopted into the city plan, and they did these visioning charrettes at different community meetings and at various times, like at the RTC, at the bus station in Reno and the bus station in Sparks.

I went to those, and those were really cool. They were trying to get public input into what sort of changes should be made and where people wanted to see better bicycle and pedestrian infrastructures changed. I participated in those meetings, and I think the planning firm that put that plan together did a really good job. I read it not too long ago, and it's really good. I think there's always a balance in any sort of city planning between prioritizing what your budget allows and then looking at what people want and where the low-hanging fruit is as far as what can be implemented and how quickly it can be implemented versus what you can pay for, and at the same time looking for long-term changes.

I know Fourth Street was definitely always brought up as a main thoroughfare that should be adjusted to be more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. There are no bike lanes on it now and it's sort of a death trap for pedestrians and cyclists. I know that that was brought up and that was mentioned in the plan as a long-term change that might take place.

Anybody who rides it or walks up and down it knows the sidewalks are broken and in disarray, and there's not a lot of space for pedestrians. There are no bike lanes and very little street parking that can act as a bike lane, even. You basically have the gutter and then two lanes of traffic. It is a heavily trafficked road, so anybody who rides up and down it knows that cars are trying to swerve around each other to get down the street

faster, and so it's just kind of frightening. Because of the industrial buildings, too, there are a lot of heavy trucks and big semi trucks driving up and down. So I think you feel that way when you're on it just because of the huge machines that are flying by you and the lack of space.

Barber: When you think about what your ideal vision would be for that street as a cyclist but also as a business owner, what do you think they could do?

Kozar: It would be interesting to make it a slow boulevard-type street with a center median similar to what they did to Wells Avenue. Wells is a good example of a street where they created parking; they created one lane each direction, they have a turning lane and/or a median with plants and trees in it. A little bit of greenery is always nice, especially in that area that has virtually no trees, and maybe widening the sidewalks or doing big out-cuts where the sidewalk can push out, little nodes for pedestrians to feel safe while they're waiting to cross the street.

I think there's a lot of space on that street because it is sort of like a four-lane highway, and it doesn't need to have four lanes of traffic. I think they can focus on making it more user-friendly, including all modes of transportation. They could run a bus route. If they're going to expand bus rapid transit, that should be one of the main thoroughfares, and they should have that center lane be for medians, as a median with greenery or a train line or a bus line. There's a lot of opportunity there, I think.

Barber: I want to make sure we put on the record the reason that you left Reno, why you're in New York, and how moving there and what you've been doing since might have influenced some of your thoughts about Fourth Street.

Kozar: I moved to New York in January of 2011 to get my graduate degree in city planning at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. I was influenced to do that for a number of reasons, but one reason was being involved with the Bike Project and seeing the transformation that a small group of people can have in a community like that. Getting involved and wanting to see the city transform into a more livable place led me to think about city planning as something that I want to pursue more. There are a number of reasons why I moved, but that's one of them.

Barber: Has your studying of planning while you've been at the Pratt Institute influenced your thoughts about Fourth Street at all or helped you understand it from a different perspective?

Kozar: Yes, absolutely, but because I'm so busy with school and working here, I haven't sat down to really reflect on some recommendations for what could happen there, other than just the issues that I've known in the past. The traffic is kind of horrendous and there are some equity issues as well with the population that lives there versus the re-gentrification of the area that a lot of people are pushing for, which I think is good. I just think that there's a balance and that there are other people at stake, other stakeholders in that conversation who I would be concerned might be overlooked.

Barber: Who are you talking about?

Kozar: I think that it's an interesting balance if you want to make it a very hip street, where there's a lot of interaction with lots of bars and restaurants, juxtaposed against the new homeless shelter that they've built there and the new food kitchen. They basically have said this is the area for low-income individuals in Reno, and then there are other groups who say, "Well, we want this hip, young crowd with restaurants and bars and shops and stuff." I think there's a little bit of a juxtaposition there, and I think that that would be a conflict that would need to be addressed. Maybe it doesn't matter. Our shop has proven that a lot of people are willing to come down there in spite of the fact that there are those people, but I also know that a lot of people feel uncomfortable, still have the opinion that East Fourth Street is dirty. I'm not quite sure how that would play out.

Barber: How are you able to stay connected to the project? Do you have any kind of relationship with how operations continue now or are you on hiatus with that?

Kozar: I was there in the summertime for about a month and a half, and I helped a bunch when I was there. I still talk to the guys who are down there on the phone a lot and via email. I'll edit things that they write. I'm still very interested in it and I want it to succeed, being one of the founders. I am still involved, and I still post on the blog on their website, when I see an interesting article about cycling. I'm not calling the shots or doing any major work, just kind of piecemeal here and there. Where I can help out, I will.

Barber: Do you have any vision for the future of the Reno Bike Project and activities that they might do, or has it pretty much satisfied your vision?

Kozar: It's interesting. I think that the vision continually changes. I think that our vision when we first started still is the vision of the bike shop, although I can't speak for the guys who are there running it now. We want Reno to be a bicycle city, and when people think of great American bicycle cities, our goal was for them to think of Reno—Portland, then Reno, and I don't think we're even close to that yet. So the vision has not been fulfilled. We have made some huge headway, though, and I think Reno as a city has broken down some of the huge barriers that were maybe holding it back initially from moving in that direction.

Reno has come around to this idea that bike lanes and livable streets are really good for our community, and that they make this a more enjoyable place to live, which, in turn, will hopefully increase people wanting to move here and will increase economic stimulus. I can only assume that somebody has that relationship in their head in the city planning office in Reno.

It used to not be that way at all, and there is still huge opposition anytime a new bike lane goes in on a street. Arlington and California or Mayberry were perfect examples of that, where there's all this opposition from the people who live in those communities—or maybe who just drive through those communities—against having those bike lanes because it takes away one of the lanes of traffic through a residential neighborhood. You don't need three lanes or two lanes of traffic in a residential neighborhood in one direction. To us, it seems obvious, but there's still this opposition.

That being said, I remember I was at a City Hall meeting where they were discussing one of the bike lanes, the extension of the Mayberry bike lane all the way into California Avenue. I had been at meetings before where there was opposition. It was a debate on whether or not we should do the bike lane. When I went to that meeting, Chris Louis—he's the project manager at RTC—got up and gave his presentation and there was no opposition to it and every City Council member was completely in favor of the extension of the bike lane. Even [Mayor] Bob Cashell said, "You know, I live on Mayberry, and since that bike lane has gone in, even in spite of the opposition that we originally got about it, that bike lane has made our community better." He publicly said that at the City Hall meeting. I thought that was really great, and I thought that was a huge stride in thinking for the whole community of Reno, the whole city. When your officials are stating that we want bike lanes on all the streets, I think that's a huge step in the right direction.

Barber: Which do you think comes first, increasing the number of people who are riding bikes, or improving the physical infrastructure of the city to make it more conducive to riding bikes?

Kozar: Well, I think it goes both ways. In order to put the pressure on the city to want to increase the bike lanes—and this is the approach that we took at the Bike Project—we've always said, "We want to put more people's asses on bike seats. That's what we want." So we took that approach, getting people affordable bicycles, encouraging ridership, showing people that you can ride year-round, that it's fun, that it's great, and giving them the tools to do it.

Then as you increase the numbers of riders, people start to notice, "Wow, there's a lot of bike riders," and those people start to get fed up and, as a constituency, push on the political leadership to say, "Hey, we need to really change. We don't have the facilities that we need to get to work."

I think it goes both ways, then, and as more bike lanes are put in—because safety is the number-one issue that people do not ride bikes; they're concerned about getting hit by a car—and you give them space and infrastructure, more and more people see it as a safe thing and then they recognize all the extra benefits that come along with that. Then more people start riding who maybe wouldn't have initially, just from the encouragement. But now that they're encouraged and it's safer to do, they're more likely to go out and do it. I think that's the way it works. It goes both ways.

Barber: How important do you think it is to get the support of the university or college students? Have you had success in reaching that demographic?

Kozar: Yes. College students are the one demographic that you have no problem convincing to ride bicycles. I think that's true anywhere you go in the world. For some reason, college students really like bicycles. It's an interesting thing. In high school, kids don't want to ride bicycles because they want to drive cars and be cool and have the sense of freedom that they can ascertain from having an automobile. Then they get to college and for some reason—I don't know if they go hippie or what it is—everyone wants to ride a bicycle, and it's just easier and better to ride around campus and get to

town. Then maybe after that there are people who stick with the bicycle, and there are people who don't ride as much because they drive their car, they have to go far to work, or they have kids. It's more complicated not having a car when you have kids. You can do it, though.

Barber: So you've had some support for the Reno Bike Project from students?

Kozar: Yes, totally. That demographic is completely in support of the Bike Project and has been. And the other thing is, we were recent college grads when we started it, too, so we still had a lot of connections, and still do. A lot of the volunteers down there who are very involved are still college students, so they bring with them their other cohorts.

Barber: Do you think that the Reno Bike Project should stay on Fourth Street?

Kozar: Yes, totally. I don't know why they would move to another place. The only thing I could see is, if the demand were there, it would be interesting to have some offshoots, kind of satellite shops, because it is kind of hard to get to sometimes. If you're coming from other places, it might be not the best location. So maybe there could be a location in far south Reno or somewhere.

Barber: Are you thinking of coming back to Reno when you finish your degree?

Kozar: That is still up in the air. I've got a long way to go still. I still have a year and half after this semester, and I've got two big projects and a thesis that I still have to do in that year and a half. Right now I'm just focusing on school. But it's definitely crossed my mind. Lots of people ask me that, and I think there's a lot of opportunity there. I actually just started reading your book yesterday, and it's really great. I'm interested in it.

Barber: Thanks a lot.

Kozar: I think that that one of the biggest issues that Reno faces as a whole is that their economic identity is totally confused, and I think they're at a dip in the boom-and-bust cycle, where they need to figure out something new that's more sustainable in the long run.

Barber: Do you think Fourth Street could possibly be a part of that?

Kozar: Yes, I think Fourth Street definitely will be a part of that. I think the whole downtown area will be a big part of that. This whole idea of sprawling out... eventually people are going to come around to wanting to live in higher-density areas. I'm studying all this theory right now, but there's a lot of potential gain of community strength and interconnections when you live in closer quarters with people.

I think a lot of people in the economic times that we're having are coming to realize that strength comes from the unity of those connections and that community support. As we move forward, for the whole nation, the world maybe, the "American Dream" is not going to be quite so individualistic; I think it's going to be more

communal. I think condensing our living spaces a little bit is probably what's going to naturally occur, but that's my own opinion.