

New Detroit bicycle shop only sells electric bicycles

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Jason Hall, cofounder of the massive group bicycle ride known as Slow Roll Detroit, had a flip response the first time someone asked whether he wanted to try their new electric motor-assisted bicycle, called an e-bike.

"No way."

His attitude has since changed completely. No longer a skeptic, Hall became an [e-bike](#) evangelical once he actually rode one, and now has a job showcasing e-bikes to potential buyers at a soon-to-open Midtown Detroit e-bike shop, Electric Avenue Bikes, 3613 Woodward Ave., in the newly renovated Orchestra Place building.

It will be the first bike shop in Detroit that only carries e-bikes. It will be the eighth location in the American Cycle and Fitness chain of stores and the first under the company's "Electric Avenue" brand.

Prices for the store's e-bikes range from \$1,500 to as much as \$7,000, with the store's best-selling models retailing for about \$2,500. The top speed is

20 mph on some of the bikes, 28 mph on others. Battery range can be anywhere from about 80 miles to 30 miles, depending on how the person rides their e-bike, according to Michael Reuter, co-owner of American Cycle and Fitness.

"You can get 80 miles out of it," he said, "but if you ride it at 28 mph, you're probably going to get 30 miles out of it."

Nationwide, e-bikes are growing in popularity and sales are up nearly 60% year-over-year through June, according to market research firm NPD Group. E-bikes now represent 6% of all bicycle sales, compared with 2% two years ago.

E-bikes are especially popular among [older adults](#), who often find that they can continue their cycling hobbies for more years thanks to the bikes' pedal assist features. However, younger riders also are buying e-bikes, Reuter said.

"When you first think of an electric assist bike, you might think 'Oh, that's for old people. That's for heavy people,' whatever. But you can make a use case for an e-bike for just about anybody," he said.

For Hall, who works in sales at Electric Avenue Bikes and also leads bike tours, his e-bike conversion experience happened after riding one across the city to a meeting on a hot 90-degree day. If he had used a standard bike, he would have arrived dripping in sweat and in need of a change in clothes. Instead, he said, "I got there 15 minutes early—bone dry."

He is now a true believer.

"When I'm commuting or I'm out on a ride with my friends and I want to have a conversation, this is the perfect thing for it," said Hall, who is 45.

Electric Avenue is hoping to appeal to Detroit residents as well as visitors to the city.

"There are a lot of people moving into the city, and a lot of them don't want a car," Reuter said. "They realize that that's a very difficult proposition, so you see a lot of them on scooters, you see a lot of them on bikes, but this takes it to a new level where they can go anywhere in the city on the e-bike."

He added, "For the cost of auto insurance in a year, you can buy an e-bike. Sure, there are days when it snows and days when it gets really cold. But those days are (fewer) than you would imagine, and there are other forms of transportation if you get into that situation."

The company considered downtown locations for its Electric Avenue shop but decided on Midtown because the area's streets are better for test rides, Reuter said, particularly the protected bike lanes on Cass. The store also rents e-bikes and offers e-bike tours of the city.

The store is the first retailer to open in Orchestra Place, which previously contained just office space.

Birmingham-based Broder & Sachse Real Estate bought the building in 2017 from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and decided to create four Woodward-facing ground-floor retail spaces. Two other retail tenants will be Real Estate One and a to-be-announced bank. The fourth space is still available.

"When we purchased Orchestra Place, the whole Woodward frontage was really not activated in any way: dark windows, sort of foreboding and not welcoming at all," said Broder & Sachse CEO Richard Broder. "And we theorized that if we opened up the ground floor to retail, like the building across the street, it would attract retail."

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