



(File photo) These two bicycles were among five meant to be used by the community in downtown Hutchinson as part of a Public Bike Project. All five bicycles have been stolen.

Bikes meant for sharing are instead stolen

By Edie Ross - The Hutchinson News - ecross@hutchnews.com

Organizers of downtown Hutchinson's Public Bike Project expected some of the bikes might be stolen.

Their feeling was - if someone really needed a bike and truly was going to ride it, they were OK with replacing bikes that rode off never to return.

But after all five of the colorful bikes included in the project turned up missing one morning last week, organizers say they wonder if there is something more sinister going on.

The Public Bike Project was introduced to the community at May's Third Thursday event.

The bikes stayed out over the weekend and then in one night seemed to all go missing, said Danny Brizendine, who has been helping with the project.

"They are aluminum-framed bikes so we are wondering if someone is cutting them down to sell," he said.

The idea behind the project is to make available to the community around 10 bicycles that can be ridden from business to business in the downtown area and left in bike racks for the next person to

use.

The bikes were painted by local artists to make them clearly identifiable as bicycles in the project.

A laminated "manifesto" - or a disclosure - also was attached to each bike alerting riders that they are riding at their own risk and that the bike is community property that should be treated with respect and left in the condition in which it was found.

Brizendine said the project would continue to replace the bikes - at least for now.

"We'll put out more, but we're going to stop at 20," he said. "If one was gone and then sometime later another disappeared, that's one thing. But for them to be gone all at once - it felt like a sweep to me."