

## The Break Room: X Pellicer, Mobility Manager, December 3, 2024

Narrator:

You've tuned in to another edition of The Break Room, a weekly conversation about how the city of St. Augustine works from those who do the work every day. Hosted by the city of St. Augustine's communications director, Melissa Wissel, The Break Room offers a closer look at the different city departments and provides updates on current and upcoming projects and events. And now your host, Melissa Wissel.

Melissa Wissel:

Welcome to The Break Room and thanks for tuning in. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the city of St. Augustine. This week I have invited X Pellicer back. He is our mobility manager. Normally we're here talking about shuttles and star circulators, but we have some exciting news. X, you've brought a friend with you to The Break Room. Why don't you introduce who you've got? And welcome back

X Pellicer:

Ian Guthrie. He's the owner of Drifters and they're our new bike share rental program that the city is going to be kicking back into gear again. We, we had it for two or three years back and we had some problems with one company, was bought out by another company and then it got real sticky and so finally we just shut it all down and then we went out, we resolicited it. Drifters put in a good proposal and we selected Drifters as our new bike share program.

Melissa Wissel:

So welcome, Ian.

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah, thank you for having me.

Melissa Wissel:

We're glad to have you. So I do want to, before we talk about Drifters, I do want to just recap for our listeners because this was actually a really successful start when it was implemented. So can we just sort of recap where this came from? We had some funding for it or we got some.

X Pellicer:

no funding for it.

Melissa Wissel:

Come back and remind me how we got here.

X Pellicer:

Well, it's a mobility device and so we're pushing all types of mobility in the city of St. Augustine. As everybody knows, that's one of the biggest complaints is there's no place to park. And so we, we've got the parking garage downtown and we're working on other shuttling things, but there's, there's all kinds of new devices coming out and everything. And so we want to get bicycles. A lot of the roadways is the DOT roadways and stuff. You see the bike sharers and stuff out in the road and, and so we're, we're promoting.

Melissa Wissel:

And more bikers. I see more bicycles. Let's not say bikers. Bicyclists.

X Pellicer:

Bicyclists, yeah. And so, and then with the congestion of all the people and everything downtown, it Just makes sense to have another type of mobility solution. Yeah, Solution for moving people around downtown.

Melissa Wissel:

And so the bike share, when we had it, the idea was we had these bike racks with bikes that you have a mobile app and you go register and you unlock a bike. We're not doing those scooters, right? No scooters. No scooters.

X Pellicer:

Our city commissioners told us point blank they did not want the scooters.

Melissa Wissel:

No scooters.

X Pellicer:

So these are bicycles. That's meant to be a transportation device, not a toy.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

X Pellicer:

So that's what. That's the way those scooters tend to be. They kind of come across as a type of a toy. Now sometimes you will see scooters around. Somebody might own their own scooters. That's a private thing. But this is a transportation device, a mobility device that the city has brought drifters along to help us push. Bike. Bicycles.

Melissa Wissel:

Let's get those bikes out.

X Pellicer:

We're creating more and more bike trails and stuff like that around and through the city. So we're trying to start in the downtown area and work our way out. And so this is. This is a

start. Well, we. Where we left off at one time, it was. It was progressing and we're expanding. They went bankrupt. And so they went. Another company bought them, but it just didn't work out. And so we just closed it all down. Was the cleanest way to do it. And then go out and resolicit. And then we got. Drifters came aboard as the company that we wanted.

Melissa Wissel:

Which is the good news. People wanted it. They were upset when it went away. And so now we're here to say it's coming. But you were telling me not until spring, but let's talk a little bit about it now. Welcome back, Ian. Or welcome. Welcome for the first time.

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. No, thank you. No. I really appreciate the opportunity to get on here and talk about this. The city and drifters have been working hard these past few months to. To really create something awesome and unique. And unique is something that we need in this city for it to actually work. So there's a real mindful approach behind this whole mobility initiative.

Melissa Wissel:

So tell us about that with drifters.

Ian Guthrie:

Yes. I mean, I guess a brief history on it. I started back in 2017 as just a delivery based rental goods service with beach goods and bike rentals and over the years expanded and offering other things. But with that expansion, I started a outpost program where it was basically a boutique style of a city bike mobility program where the idea is to have it in locations where you want to eat, drink, shop and get some entertainment and really just it be kind of a guide for tourists of knowing where to go.

Melissa Wissel:

And if I come out of my hotel, maybe it's near my hotel and then I can get from downtown to the beach or at least to the island. Easier than having to walk, right?

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah, just easy access. And with my little boutique style outpost bike share, I was limited to what I could do. So a lot of it was, it was designed to have that overall option but you'd be bringing it back to the same location. So with this like a one way car run. Exactly. So I mean you park, you can get in the bike, you can go explore, but you're coming back to your vehicle or where you're staying or that was the idea. And it's been working out great. I've had that running for four years now. It's still current and active and with over seven, eight locations and 20 plus bikes, it's still actively going every day. And right now with this contract with the city, we're able to basically bring these two things in together and create a great service not only for our tours coming in, but a full circle of the businesses seeing the traffic directly from this mobility program. So people can basically use this app not only as a bike share program, but for it to be kind of a self guided tour so they know where to go, what to do, what's happening in town. And it basically be a link in the chain connecting our visitors from these bikes to their doorstep into their small business.

Melissa Wissel:

But also residents.

Ian Guthrie:

Oh yeah, residents too. Yeah. We'll be providing memberships, creating a very feasible option for people to not have to worry about buying a bike, keeping up with it. And this system, you're able to go point to point so you can go from downtown to beachside and all around and be able to have multiple docking stations. So for residents, we'll have annual and monthly memberships.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay, if you're just now tuning in, you're tuning into The Break Room. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director. I have X Pellicer here this week with us. He's our mobility manager and our recently contracted new vendor, Drifters Rentals. Ian Guthrie talking about the new returning reestablished bike share program for those just tuning in. We had a bike share, we lost our vendor, there was some complication, we kind of shut it down, took a breath and now we're working with drifters. Talk a little bit with me. For residents, one of

the things when we lost this. People were upset because people were using it. They were a resident. I don't have a bicycle, but I can go walk up to the bike rack, let's say somewhere conveniently on the island.

X Pellicer:

Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

And I can get on my bicycle. They got baskets, hand sanitizers. Tell me about the gizmos and gadgets on the bikes.

X Pellicer:

They have some baskets. But when you're saying for the residents and the tourists and for the Flagler college kids and stuff too. I'm going to rattle off a bunch of names.

Melissa Wissel:

Please do.

X Pellicer:

And these are locations where we had them before.

Melissa Wissel:

Oh, great.

X Pellicer:

And we're looking to expand that, but they're in key places. And a lot of these names of street names and places will sound very familiar to the locals.

Melissa Wissel:

Okay.

X Pellicer:

And the VIC parking garage was one of our main places. The downtown plaza on Cathedral Place. Hypola, Cordova, Valencia near Sevilla Street. The Lightner Building, which is where City hall is on Cordova Street. Malaga street near Valencia street, or at Valencia street, which is kind of down there near the college dorm. West King street near Bog Brewery.

Melissa Wissel:

I'm sure people know where Bog is.

X Pellicer:

And then the Lincolnville Museum, which is deep in our Lincolnville. It's right on Martin Luther King Avenue. The city Marina, right next to the miniature carpet Cough. And then heading out along Anastasia Boulevard towards the east of the Bridge of Lyons, we've got a rack that we'll establish at Arredondo Avenue. At the lighthouse, we'll go out to the amphitheater, or as the young kids.

Melissa Wissel:

Oh, great.

X Pellicer:

Kids like to say, the amp.

Melissa Wissel:

The amp.

X Pellicer:

That's right.

Melissa Wissel:

To the young kids.

X Pellicer:

Yeah. And then. And then we're going out the north. North end of town, out along San Marco Avenue, along at Cincinnati Avenue and at the county library, we'll try to get one established there, which is San Marco at May Street.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

X Pellicer:

And then we'll have all the way out on the north end of San Marco Avenue. We'll have a bike share out in that area, which is kind of near where our shuttle. The shuttle program is.

Melissa Wissel:

Right.

X Pellicer:

So that's. That's where we used to have them, but we'll. We'll reestablish those. That'll be our first Bike Cubs that we'll reestablish. And then as the program progresses, we hope to expand it and reach it out.

Melissa Wissel:

Ian, will we be able to also be using your already established locations?

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. Yeah. So the idea is, I mean, it's within the city. What we're launching initially is going to be the for those 14 locations that X just listed out. And with mine, I'm modifying mine currently and kind of cutting some back just off of analytics over the past four years to where I know what works, what needs to be there, what doesn't. So we will be absorbing some of my existing spots and keeping that same mindful approach of these places being inconvenient spots for not only accessibility but also promoting places to go of our small businesses in town of, you know, places to eat, drink, shop and stay. So that way when they look at it, they're it's great to get on a bike and explore, but at least this will give them some direction of where to go and what they need to check out. Because these, these small businesses in town are vital part of what our town really is about and experience. Oh yeah. Yeah. So it's I guess a simple way kind of be how our community collaboration equals sustainability for a lot of things. And we being a small business community, we really do thrive on just kind of promoting each other and keeping each other up and letting visitors know, oh, you've got to check out this place and do this. So that's what we're wanting this app to do.

Melissa Wissel:

I always want to plug it in for the residents because I know we like to make sure we take care of our visitors. But we as the city, which is this is a city program which we're really proud of. X, I know when this first got started to help our residents be able to walk from their neighborhood to that street corner, hop on a bike. Now I mentioned just a quick question before we wrap up. Are there baskets? Are these electric bikes?

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. So these. It's going to be a mix. It's going to be a larger portion of this will be pedal bikes. And with the design of these, the bikes that we'll have here in town are custom built. So the ones that we have here will only exist here in St. Augustine. I'm working with a group of guys and they own a business, Priority Bicycles out of New York. And I've been working

with them for the past few years and it's evolved into a relationship to where now we are creating from top to bottom, inside and out, a custom bike specifically for St. Augustine.

Melissa Wissel:

That's great.

Ian Guthrie:

So yeah, it's really exciting. So they'll have baskets, all the safety features for, you know, bells, lights and we'll, we'll have basically we're aiming to have double the amount of docking locations as bikes. So there's, you're not going to be stressing on being have, you know, having a spot to be able to dock up. So.

Melissa Wissel:

So that was my question. Can. Is it a one way rental too, though? I don't have to go back.

Ian Guthrie:

No, no, you can go wherever you want. You can go to any of the locations. So. And within the app, it'll show you how many bikes are available as well as how many docking locations are.

Melissa Wissel:

So I can bike somewhere, have a few drinks, enjoy myself and then Uber home because I probably shouldn't get back on a bike.

Ian Guthrie:

Exactly. Right. Well, that's highly recommend. Yeah, that method is the ideal.

Melissa Wissel:

I don't have to do that, you know, I don't want to have to get on my bike now. What do I do with this bike?

Ian Guthrie:

Well, you don't have to Uber both ways. You can go to town and dock up and then enjoy the bike and then enjoy the car.

Melissa Wissel:

St. Augustine is such a beautiful town to bicycle around.

Ian Guthrie:

It's great. And nothing's that far away. So from historic downtown, going into the state park, exploring around the lighthouse, going up to the alligator farm. I mean there's a million places that are not far at all and best access on the bike.

Melissa Wissel:

And I might not want a bicycle in the dark. I mean truly, whether I've got lights or not, I may not want to

Ian Guthrie:

And yeah, the options is, yeah, we can get you there in the daylight and you can just Uber home.

Melissa Wissel:

Well, I love the idea that they're, that they're custom made. That's super cool.

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. Yeah, it really is going to be unique to this city. That, and that's something I'm really excited about is providing not only a mobility program that's much more than just bikes around town, but having the intention of it really working with our small businesses and having a focus of driving traffic there. And the bikes are only going to be here in St. Augustine, so it's really special.

Melissa Wissel:

You don't have the mobile app yet. This is going to get launched real quick before we run out of time. We got springtime probably, right?

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. Looking to roll out late. Yeah. Spring 2025. So the bikes again, being custom built, they're. We're in the process of the. The design is finalized now we're going to production, so the rollout will fall around that, that time frame of spring.

Melissa Wissel:

Santa's got other bikes he's got to be building too. So we got to give Santa time to do the other bikes and then he'll come back to our bikes. Well, that's awesome, guys.

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah.

Melissa Wissel:

So any other quick, last minute things you want to plug? It's a great city program. Drifters Rentals. Ian Guthrie, thank you for coming, X.

X Pellicer:

And we're excited to get this back up and running again.

Melissa Wissel:

All right. And don't forget shuttles on Saturdays in December. I gotta throw that out there. And between Christmas and New Year's and.

X Pellicer:

There'S a lot of people downtown with nights of lights

Melissa Wissel:

and Saturday, January 4th, because we're anticipating lots of people coming in on those shuttles.

X Pellicer:

That'll be the last. Yeah, that's. Yeah, that'll be our last shuttling day.

Melissa Wissel:

All right. Keeping you busy in mobility. Thank you guys for stopping by.

Ian Guthrie:

Yeah. Thank you so much.

X Pellicer:

Thank you, Melissa.

Melissa Wissel:

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Narrator:

You've been listening to The Break Room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the city of St. Augustine. Join us each week as the city's communications director, Melissa Wissel, has in depth conversations with the people who make our town work to meet the needs of our community. See you at this time next week for another edition of The Break Room.