

Bike race organizer hopes to draw fans into loop

MILFORD

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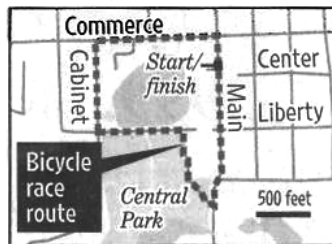
Joe Dolan has been walking the streets of his hometown Milford for years, looking for the perfect route for a bicycle race.

He found it — mapping out a nearly 1-mile course downtown. And this summer, the inaugural 2009 Milford Criterium is to fill downtown with a few hundred cyclists who will ride at speeds of up to 25 m.p.h. on the course. The Milford Village Council approved the plan at its Monday meeting.

The race is scheduled for Aug. 22.

"I love the sport, and I wanted to bring it here," said Dolan, the race director.

The course will begin and



end on Main Street. It will make its first turn into Central Park, exiting onto West Liberty. The course will then contin-

ue to Cabinet Street before cyclists turn onto Commerce Road. From Commerce, the course will head back to Main. During the race, streets could be closed for up to 10 hours.

A criterium, or crit, is a road cycling race on a short, closed-circuit track. Such races are normally held in an urban setting. Racers cycle for 45 to 60 minutes, plus two laps. Dolan said the Milford race will be 60 minutes plus two laps.

While common in cycling-mad Europe, criteriums aren't as popular in the United States — although there have been races in Ann Arbor and Traverse City.

"It's a very unique thing," said Milford Village Manager Arthur Shufflebarger.

The race is being sponsored by the Milford Athletic Club of Huron Valley.

Dolan said organizers hope to raise awareness about the sport of cycling and draw people to downtown Milford and the Milford Trail — a 1-mile loop set to open in the spring that will link up with a 3-mile trail in Milford Township.

"We see the opportunity there," said Ann Barnette, executive director of the Milford Downtown Development Authority.

The Milford Criterium will be sanctioned by the Michigan Bicycle Racing Association and the United States Cycling Federation. It will cost either \$25 or \$30 to participate, Dolan said, and cyclists can begin registering early next year on the event's Web site, which is not yet up.

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