

Thomas Scheetz, MAU, April 2024

*Let's see, will there be a cat in the window of the little shingled house today?* I wonder as the cottage enters my periphery. To my delight, I see two lounging luxuriously as I pass by. Feline surprises almost always await behind the pale glass of those humble windows on Gage Street. It's one of those tidbits about town that I know because I run.

When I run, I am no car fast as I may feel, I am not moving very quickly. But my relative slowness gives perspective. It gives my mind time to wander and my eyes time to closely observe. With observant eyes a wandering mind, and time, I can realize these rewarding tidbits about town - where the cats in windows are, how the traffic lights cycle, which driveways host unique vehicles - as I run. Cars move too fast to closely observe like this. When I run, I am no car, and that's a good thing.

Running is freeing, exhilarating, and empowering, but most importantly, enriching. Over thousands of miles' course, I've discovered new places- parts of town I'd never had reason to visit before, pedestrian paths I'd stumble upon by accident, hole-in-the-wall shops I'd never noticed. I've created a mental map of every street, sidewalk, and trail in my vicinity. And I've learned so many tidbits about town.

These new deep knowledges about my community that running has brought me enable me to contribute to that community in a variety of unique ways. I developed a near-obsessive appreciation for the historic architecture that was all around me as I ran, and soon I found myself on the Town Historic Preservation Commission to protect it. I familiarized myself with the other friendly faces in my neighborhood as I ran past them on their walks, and soon I found myself helping operate the village government by volunteering to coordinate its Zoom meetings. I progressively quickened to a sub-9:30 personal record in the 3000m, and soon I found myself mentoring and teaching much younger blooming runners at youth track clinics.

Running- and these ruminations and community interactions it gives me - make me joyous as those sunbathing cats sleepily stretching in the window.

