



Austin, Chicago, IL

WORKING BIKES 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Giving old bikes new life

2021 BY THE NUMBERS

WORKING BIKES gives donated bicycles new life by redistributing them as **tools of empowerment in local and global communities.** Since 1999, the amazing community of WB volunteers, staff, partners, and supporters have enabled new life for over 100,000 bicycles across the globe and tens of thousands here in Chicago. Over one hundred thousand people have been empowered to access resources and opportunities that otherwise could have been out of reach – reducing waste, lessening pollution, and improving health in the process. We know that bicycles are the most reliable, sustainable, and environmentally friendly transportation option available, and we're working towards a world where everyone has access to bicycle transportation.



Collected **10,844 bikes** and countless parts and accessories from around the Chicago area and the Midwest. Thank you to [our partnering drop-off locations](#) for helping us bring in so many bikes!



Loaded **6,856 bikes** into **15 containers** for partners in Africa and Central America, the second most containers we've ever shipped in 22 years!



Donated **1,972 bikes** throughout the Midwest. **1,325 bikes** were refurbished by **346 volunteers and 11 interns**, and donated locally in Chicago. **647 raw bikes** went to our amazing community of partnering bike nonprofits around the Midwest.



The Service Department helped get **hundreds of customers and community partners** rolling this year, and lent their skills to pop-up fix it stations at community events around Chicago.



Sold **1,871 bikes** through our webstore, continuing to meet the demand for alternative transportation and sustainable recreation! Proceeds from the shop are rolled back into our charitable mission.



Scores of pizzas and [sandwiches](#), thousands of donuts, innumerable tacos, and countless gallons of [Big Shoulders Coffee](#) were consumed by volunteers and staff. Giving old bikes new life builds up an appetite!



North Lawndale, Chicago, IL

ON OUR 22nd YEAR OF OPERATIONS

Another pandemic year on the books! And along with it, added appreciation for the value of bicycles and inspiration from all the resilience, radiance, and resolve the Working Bikes Community brings to our shared mission. Through turmoil in the container shipping world, impacting incoming and outgoing supplies, and waves of coronavirus spread that have us wondering if we were just imagining summer months of mask-free-warehouse work – the Working Bikes volunteers, staff, bike donors, bike collectors, customers, donation recipients, friends, and family rolled on. All those folks who make Working Bikes so special, who know the power of reliable and sustainable two-wheeled-transport, and can tell a smile from a question in the space between a mask and a hat on a cold day in Brandon's Bike Shop, made 2021 one of the most impactful years in Working Bikes' history. Over 10,000 bicycles given new homes!

Even as we kept a bike-length between us in the shop, we grew closer to our partners in the community and our friends abroad. Customers and volunteer groups were back at the warehouse; pop-up events and rides connected WB Family with partners in Little Village, Englewood, North Lawndale, and Garfield Park; and regular virtual appearances from our international partners at WB General Meetings brought our impact abroad into focus. Whether in Chicago or abroad, we're reminded that bicycles offer safe and secure self-determination, a contrast to the tumult and precarity of so many other facets of life in 2021.

We know 2022 will bring its own set of challenges, global to local – COVID will remain a worldwide threat, January has already brought a container delay, we'll say goodbye to our inimitable Community Programs Manager Anna in February – but we know from experience that the WB Community will rise to the occasion, growing, laughing, and picking up a few grease stains along the way. Thank you all for making this work possible, let's keep it moving!



WHO WE ARE

STAFF

Aaron Brown

Production Mechanic

Al Schorsch

Production Mechanic

Alan Lloyd

Production Mechanic

Anna Henschel

Community Programs Manager

Cauria Duarte Lutton

Community Engagement Coordinator

Dan Bielawski

Production Mechanic

Derek Villanueva

Webstore, Retail, & IT Associate

Devon Snyder

Communications Consultant

Filiberto Esparza

Quality Assurance/ Production Mechanic

Gabe Cohen

Bicycle Acquisitions Specialist

Jakura Hall

Retail Wrangler

Jay Pee Perry

Production Mechanic

John Clark

Production Mechanic

Josh Korby

Bicycle Shop Manager

Mikey Young

Teaching & Service Mechanic

Sarah Fiorito

Service Mechanic

Steve Irwin

Bookkeeper & Tube Doctor

Trevor Clarke

Executive Director

Xail Hernandez

Community Bike Repairs Manager

BOARD

Phil Kaplan

President

Amy Little

Vice President

Jim Lindsey

Treasurer

Dave Gorman

Secretary

Lee Ravenscroft

Founder & President Emeritus

Angela Taylor

Caronina Grimble

Dalia Garcia

Ellen Gibbon

Jerry Cohen

Michael "Magic" Santomauro

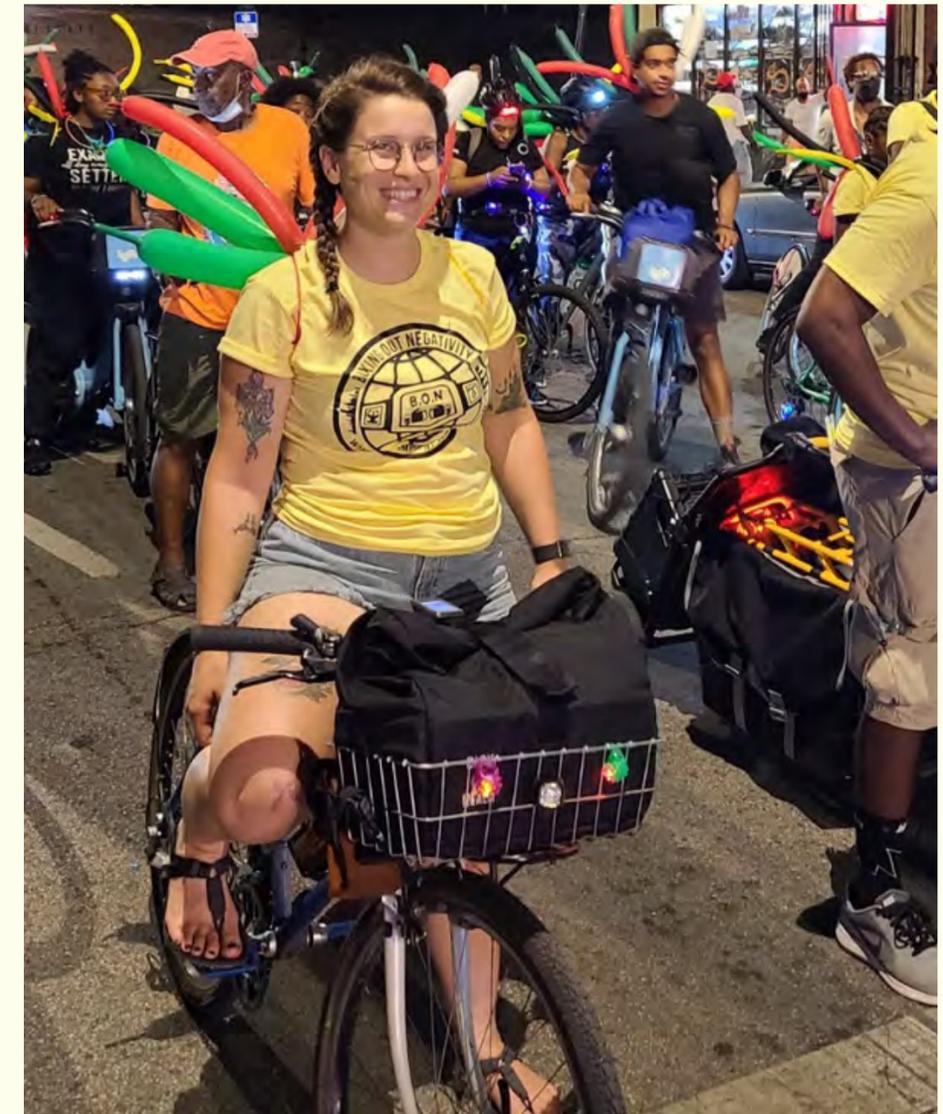
Back of the Yards, Chicago, IL

GOODBYE & GOOD LUCK, ANNA!

In January 2019 I walked into Working Bikes fresh off of a few months of bike touring with my nails painted (an idea I'd quickly regret) and never looked back. I knew it was going to be a good fit when I got to spend my days learning the ins and outs of hub overhauls and wheel truing from volunteers - huge thank you to Mitch for his patience and dedication - and tap into the wealth of knowledge that is the WB community. For the first 6 months, I'd get home from work so tired I could barely eat dinner before falling asleep! In all seriousness, I felt like part of the team from day one. I couldn't believe I was getting paid to work with the best group of volunteers in the world, all while putting smiles on folks faces each day. I would not have been able to make it through that first year without the unending patience of WB staff and the countless volunteers I had the pleasure of learning from.

Even with COVID-19 throwing us (and the rest of the world) for a loop, the last 3 years have been full of some unforgettable events. Rides with Derek Brown and the Boxing Out Negativity team, more than a couple nighttime Roll N Peace rides and fix it events, kiddie bike giveaways throughout Little Village and North Lawndale, helping to renovate the kitchen space, expanding Brandon's Bike Shop into the roomy learning paradise it is now, innumerable Conte Di Savoia sandwiches, Do Rite Donuts, and cups of Big Shoulders coffee; the list could go on forever.

When I pack up the car and head west for Washington, what I'll really miss are the sweaty days in the warehouse, lap sits from Motley the shop dog, early morning texts from volunteers offering help when I really needed it and didn't have time to ask, bouncy drives in the WB trucks, the smile on someone's face when you give them a bike, and the lightbulb moment when wheel truing all of a sudden makes sense. Maybe somewhere down the line I'll get to pass on some of those feelings to new coworkers, volunteers, or bike shop customers, but I'm sure it'll never quite feel the same.





Give old bikes **new** homes
Buy a Bike. workingbikes.org

VIARION



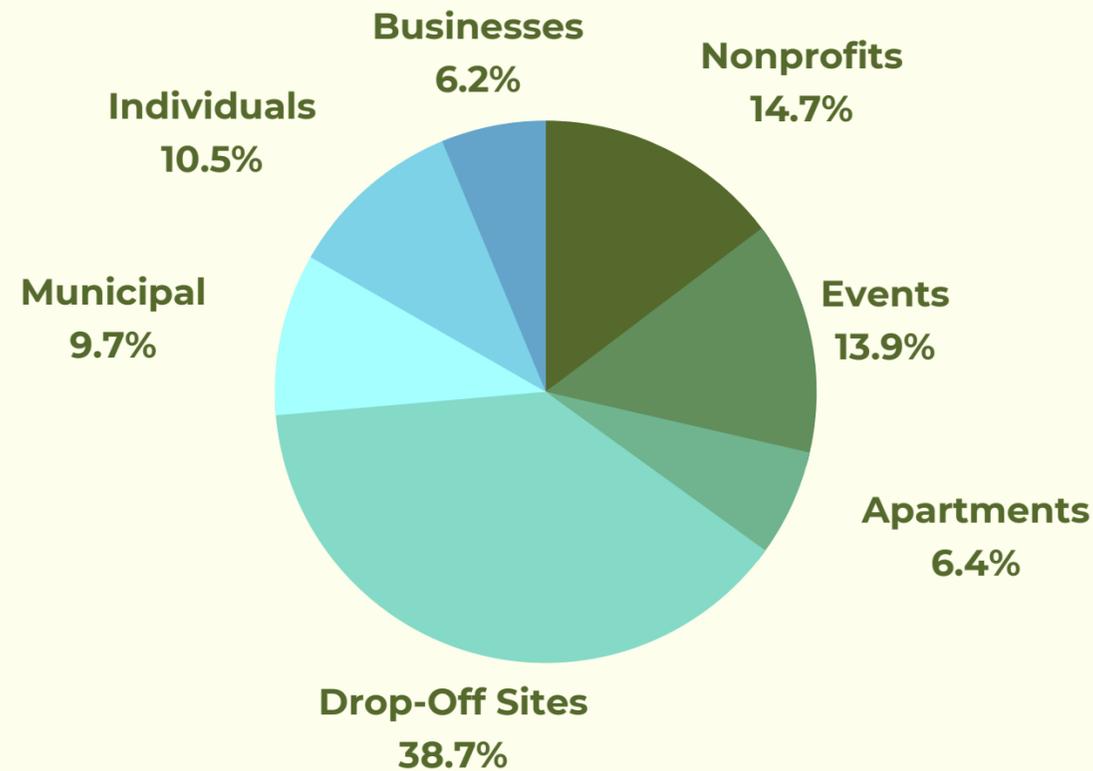
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WHERE OUR BIKES COME FROM

Working Bikes receives and processes thousands of bikes a year, collected from all over the Midwest. Bikes fuel our mission, and the additional donations of accessories, tools, and parts keep everything rolling. After most collection events were placed on hold in 2020, 2021 saw the return of many of our regular bike drives and donation events. In addition to individual donations dropped off directly at our shop, we experienced an influx of pick-up donations from our amazing partnering drop-off locations and fellow nonprofits. Our new partners at World Vision contributed almost two containers worth of nearly-new bicycles (along with masks, sanitation supplies, and essential supplies for our community partners!).



Working Bikes receives bikes from individuals, businesses, nonprofits, events, & municipal groups.



Bikes are brought to the WB warehouse or dropped-off at one of our partnering donation sites & picked-up by our drivers. At the warehouse, refurbishable bicycles are sent to one of three places.

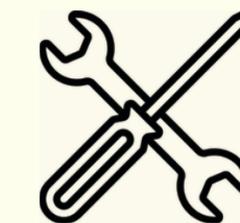
We collected 10,844 bikes in 2021!



To the dock, where bikes are stored, then prepped for shipment to one of our partners abroad.



To Brandon's Bike Shop & satellite volunteer spaces, where they are fixed-up to be donated locally.



To the production shop, where professional mechanics refurbish bikes to be sold through our storefront & webstore.



Yele Community, Sierra Leone



Makeni, Sierra Leone

INTERNATIONAL DONATIONS

While the world of international shipping was a bit unpredictable in 2021, we were still able to get out **15 containers** full of **6,856 bikes** to our international partners! Refurbishable adult and kids' bikes, parts, tools, and accessories were sent to partnering bike shops in El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, and Madagascar. These shipments, paid for in part by WB, provide the necessary materials to support locally run shops, mostly located in rural areas where access to bikes - new or used - is extremely limited. The shops create educational and professional opportunities for residents, and ensure that community members have a well-tuned bike that will get them and their families safely where they need to go, whether it be schools, nearby markets, medical or community services.

Bikes also continue to be a form of recreation, community building, and joy. Early in the year we celebrated in spirit with Isata, the first woman trained in Lunsar's bicycle mechanic program, who got married by bike! The Sierra Leone based program, overseen by Village Bicycle Project's Karim Kamara, is also preparing the Lunsar Cycling team for the country's largest bike race taking place in 2022! In the spring of 2021, the team competed in the Tour De Lunsar, some riding bikes sent right from WB in Chicago!

XAIL'S TRAVEL DIARY

Community Repairs Manager Xail on her trip to CESTA in El Salvador

“Bicycles are magic,” said Jesús López, who oversees the bicycle programs at CESTA (Centro Salvadoreño de Tecnología Apropiada). If I was in love with bicycles before, then I truly fell in awe with the impact of bicycles during my time visiting the San Marcus based organization. I met many kind and considerate bicycle mechanics that not only helped each other, but were foundations of growth in their own communities. In this visit, I was able to see the direct impact of the bikes we send out from our homebase in Chicago!

While in El Salvador, I had the privilege to learn more about the work and outreach CESTA does throughout the city and the nearby rural areas. I met with Jesús, Christian, and Edwin - who are the drivetrain of the organization. Their energy and spirit mobilized the young and old to learn bicycle mechanics and lead community rides.

I fell in love with the people, with El Salvador, and most importantly with what we do at Working Bikes. Bicycles are truly magic and powerful tools of empowerment. I am very lucky to be part of such an amazing organization that is able to share bike love both locally and throughout the world!



LOCAL DONATIONS

Working Bikes believes that bikes are tools of self-empowerment and community development. We want to do our part to support our neighbors and fellow Chicagoans as they work, play, and gather throughout the city. In 2021, we donated **1,972 bikes** to individuals, families, and partnering organizations. **1,325** of these bikes were refurbished by our amazing volunteers, and distributed through the Cycle of Power and Cycle of Peace programs. These programs are made possible by the continued partnership of local social service organizations, school, churches, and community groups who help ensure that the bikes - along with the necessary accessories like locks, lights, and helmets - go to those that need them the most. Working Bikes also responded to the needs of the growing Afghan refugee community in Chicago. Working with Refugee Community Connection, a group formed and managed by volunteers entirely through Facebook, we were able to provide dozens of bikes to sponsored families and individuals looking for a reliable form of transportation.

Bikes help recipients access critical resources and opportunities, provide a sustainable and safe transportation alternative, and bring people together! We also distributed **647 bikes** to our friends at partnering bike shops, including Free Bikes 4 Kidz in Madison and Vulture Space in Milwaukee, who manage their own educational and donation programs to support youth, individuals, and families in their communities.



LOCAL HIGHLIGHTS

New Partnerships and New Riders!

One of our biggest goals is to grow our impact every year through new partnerships and community connections. In 2021, we were so glad to add the ReVive Center for Housing and Healing to our list of referring Cycle of Power organizations. One of the center's occupational therapists shared a message with us after we dropped off bikes for clients and it really made our year!

"Lolita was overjoyed with excitement and gratitude when she received her bike. 'It's so beautiful. I love the color.' were some of her exact words. She was nearly in tears at being given the opportunity to have a bike as, this is one of her primary modes of transportation. Lolita wasted no time and immediately took off with her bike to an appointment. Thank you again for all your incredible work at Working Bikes and providing our clients with the tools to improve their quality of life!"

New local partnerships allow us to get more bikes to people who need them, and also grow Chicago's cycling community. We can't wait to get more riders like Lolita out on the roads and trails!



Near West Side, Chicago, IL



North Lawndale, Chicago, IL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Getting together and riding with our friends and partners is our favorite activity! WB attends and supports community events rain or shine. In 2021, we provided regular mechanical support for our partners at [Think Outside Da Block](#), who host slow rolls around Englewood year round. A bit closer to our home base, volunteers and staff rolled on regular rides with [Boxing Out Negativity](#), [Equiticity](#), and [Garfield Park Community Council](#). We also joined our partners [YMEN](#) at the [North Lawndale Cycle Can](#). Established last year, the [Cycle Can](#) is a neighborhood bike shop and educational space run by WB and YMEN volunteers and staff. The shop offers community members the chance to learn bike mechanics and even purchase or rent bikes!

2021 also saw lots of opportunities to engage folks through skill sharing. Thanks to a grant from our friends at [Evanston Bicycle Club](#), we provided educational materials to our at-home volunteers, community members, and local donation recipients in the [form of a growing library of videos, resources, and real time virtual trainings](#). [The Cycling Champion](#) program had another round of participants, this time from around the West and Southwest side. Champions attended virtual bike mechanic workshops, receiving a bike at the end of the program to spread enthusiasm for cycling in their neighborhoods! In late 2021, we held the first information sessions for the [Community Mechanic Training Program](#), an educational and outreach program to help train Chicago's future bike mechanics!



Back of the Yards, Chicago, IL

VOLUNTEERS & INTERNS

We might be a bit biased, but we think Working Bikes volunteers are the best out there! After having to make some safety-related changes to volunteer operations in 2020, we were so glad to see the return of many familiar (masked!) faces and meet all the new volunteers that joined us in 2021. **346 volunteers** and **11 interns** helped repair bikes for local donation, prep bikes for international shipment, organized the warehouse from top to bottom, and represented Working Bikes at events like community bike drives, Open House Chicago, Pitchfork, RiotFest, and Bike the Drive. Volunteers also continued to assist customers with used part and accessory purchases and, on occasion, give tours of the Working Bikes warehouse.

The volunteer space got a little bit bigger, with the expansion of Brandon's Bike Shop to better accommodate volunteers and make socially distancing a bit easier. Regular weekly shifts in Brandon's started up again earlier in the year as well, including Thursday's BikePOC & Queer Night. This shift is dedicated to expanding access to bike knowledge and resources for communities that are underrepresented in the bike industry. We're excited to bring new people into the Working Bikes fold, especially those that looking for a way to become part of Chicago's wrench turning cycling community!



INTERN SPOTLIGHT

The future of Working Bikes!

Throughout 2021, Working Bikes staff helped oversee the training, skill share, and community building of eleven young interns. These interns came together from different parts of Chicago and a number of partnering organizations to gain mechanical knowledge, support the Working Bikes mission, and even earn a bicycle of their own! This training created a strong new cohort of young mechanics and advocates. Anthony, Jakura (now a WB employee!), Henley, Edison, Johari, Luis, Gerardo, Sophia, Ma'ayan, Leo, and De'Quan brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm to Working Bikes, and continue to come by the shop to further develop their mechanic skills and hang out!

Staff members are working on growing this youth team with the newest members of the intern squad. De'Quan and Leo (pictured lower right) are from the Community Christian Alternative Academy, and are continuing their internship through early 2022. Sophia is also lending their new skills to help instruct participants in the new [Community Mechanics Training Program](#). We hope to keep inspiring the youth of Chicago to fall in love with bikes, so they can help us build the future of Working Bikes!





Little Village, Chicago, IL



THE SERVICE DEPARTMENT

In 2021, the Service Department continued to work hard to keep folks pedaling! Mechanics managed a steady flow of tune-ups and on-spot repairs. Conversations on quality control also improved our skill to assess and fix refurbished and Cycle of Power bikes to ensure safe and rideable bikes for all. The department focused on serving the needs of neighbors, including Cycle of Power recipients, who were provided free or at-cost service to keep them rolling. The service space got a remodel, as tools were labeled in English and Spanish, organized, and stocked to create a welcoming space for newer staff, volunteers, and interns. Education continued to be a goal as well. WB partnered with [Enlace Chicago](#) with an awesome assist from the [SAFE Ambassadors](#), to create the Bicycle Engineer Bike Club, a 10 week program taught by Community Repairs Manager Xail Hernandez. Students from [Eli Whitney Elementary School](#) attended a basic mechanics and maintenance course, with the participants earning a bike by the end of the program! The Service Department also worked to create a more inclusive space throughout the shop. Support for the Thursday [Blke POC & Queer Nite](#) helped foster a welcoming environment for volunteers looking to fall in love with bikes and gain mechanical knowledge. The Service Department team likewise established the shop's Spanish Hour, held every Wednesday to encourage staff to learn Spanish so we can better serve our immediate community in Chicago's Southwest side.



THE SHOP

In July, Working Bikes opened back our doors to walk-in customers. We were so glad that we could provide a safe and convenient shopping experience to neighborhood tinkerers, longtime hobbyists, and first time visitors. While we kept our [webstore](#) up to sell refurbished adult bikes, masked customers were welcome to browse the shop for all their used part and accessory needs. Bikes were still a hot item, as Chicagoans looked for active transportation and new ways to recreate safely with friends and family. We sold **1,871 bikes** through the webstore in 2021, with options for lifelong cyclists and new riders alike!

In preparation of opening back up, the sales floor got a bit of a makeover. Volunteers helped sort through parts and donations to make sure we had everything organized and in the best shape for folks to look through. Volunteers also helped reclaim parts from donated bikes that weren't able to be repaired but had working components to serve our community of at-home mechanics! Refurbished bikes stayed upstairs to allow for plenty of room for people to move comfortably through the space. Going into 2022, we plan on developing a hybrid layout for the sales floor that still keeps the space open for shopping but with some refurbished bike options for walk-in customers.

THE WAREHOUSE

Working Bikes saw lots of improvements and updates around our shop and warehouse. Our solar panels, installed last year, keep providing us with sustainable energy and a great reason to hang out on the roof during long summer days. The organizational efforts and updates were top to bottom this year! Thanks to efforts of volunteer Pat, basement bikes and wheels are now neatly stored for future repair and donation needs. Basements bikes were also sent out to our partners at CESTA in El Salvador, who are using these 10 speed "bicicletas clásicas" to support local riders throughout San Salvador. The kitchen also got a long overdue remodel, with volunteer and Designs for Dignity all star Ed leading the effort to replace some outdated appliances, install new cabinets, and give the space a fresh coat of paint! With the return of our Anniversary Celebration and Open House Chicago in the fall, we were able to show off these improvements to make Working Bikes an easier space to navigate as a customer, volunteer, and staff member. Looking ahead, Working Bikes plans to continue making the shop more welcoming for all visitors and community members.





Little Village, Chicago, IL

SUPPORT US & GET INVOLVED



DONATE BIKES

Bike donations sustain our organization, and help support our mission to keep folks rolling! Learn more about making a donation of a bike, parts, accessories, and tools [on our website](#).

DONATE TIME

We thrive thanks to the amazing community of volunteers that donate their time to Working Bikes. Whether wrenching on bikes at the shop, prepping bikes for international shipment, or lending a hand at a bike drive or community event - volunteers help us do what we do best! Learn more about current volunteer opportunities [on our website](#) or email us at volunteer@workingbikes.org.

DONATE FUNDS

Financial contributions help grow our local and international donation programs, bolster community partnerships, and provide critical funds for Brandon's Bike Shop, the Service Department, and our home in Little Village! Foundations, businesses, and individuals interested in providing financial support can learn more about the different giving opportunities available on our [donation page](#) or contact trevor@workingbikes.org.

2434 S WESTERN AVE, CHICAGO IL 60608 | WWW.WORKINGBIKES.ORG | 773-847-5440 |

