

Bradley Street Bicycle Co-op Final Report March 30, 2021

In January of 2020, Bradley Street Bicycle Co-op (BSBC) and Connecticut Community Bicycle Workshop (CCBW) applied to the Greater New Haven Green Fund for support in our third year of growing an inclusive bicycle program with our partners around the city. Specifically, we planned to build out a group bicycle ride program and season-long bicycle repair services at Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC). This would be built on top of our bicycle donation program that currently exists at CMHC, where BSBC and CCBW donates used bicycles, helmets, locks, and lights to clients of CMHC, free of charge to the clients.

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shut BSBC, CMHC, and our entire state down for the foreseeable future. A month later, we had a call with our team at CMHC to see what we could do. The entire hospital was in lockdown and there was no chance of starting group rides or repair clinics on-site in the spring. But CMHC was supporting a Pop-Up Homeless Drop-In Shelter on Blake Field and asked if we could adapt some of our repair clinic programming over there, where CMHC clients and folks from all over the city would be seeking services and needing help.

During the months of May and June, John spent three hours every Wednesday afternoon running a repair clinic at the Drop-In Shelter. While we did not feel safe inviting youth mechanics to help, we were able to repair 1-4 bikes at every single event across eight weeks - over 20 bikes repaired and back on the road. We supported members of the community who are experiencing homelessness, many of whom also are served by CMHC. These are folks who rely on their bicycles for transportation, and could not afford repairs at a bike shop. This repair clinic was incredibly successful and we were grateful to be able to start doing our work during such an uncertain and difficult time.





On August 12, the CMHC team decided that it was safe enough and important enough to restart our bike giveaways and repair clinics in a nearby park. Due to COVID, we planned to limit our giveaways to three bike recipients and one repair recipient per session. Because we were not able to do repair clinics at CMHC itself, we encouraged their clients to instead make appointments at the Bike Co-op itself. From August to December, more than 10 CMHC clients made appointments at BSBC for bike repair, many more than once.

September 30th marked our first group bicycle ride. We decided to focus on riding only on the Farmington Canal trail due to COVID related safety and transportation constraints, but the entire group was very enthusiastic and committed. The team rode 9 times in the following months, and only stopped when it became too cold to ride - our last ride was on January 27th!





Needless to say, the COVID-19 pandemic affected our proposed plans in many ways; we had to reduce staff and youth mechanics to limit exposure, we had numerous timeline delays, our proposed locations were changed, many of our clients were locked down or moved out of town, communication was changed... nothing was left unaffected. However, enthusiasm for our work increased from our partners in 2020, knowing that our cities' most vulnerable were struggling more than ever. We were proud to adapt and respond to the challenges of the year and ultimately be very successful.





While young mechanics were not able to participate on-site in the ways we planned, they were able to help in the shop when clients came to BSBC for service. And while we planned on 5 repair clinics and 5 bike rides, we ended up running 8 repair clinics at the drop-in shelter, 6 at the garden, and 9 rides. The funding originally allocated for the youth mechanics was spent on the additional repair clinics and rides, after discussions around what we could do with CMHC.





We planned this project as a continuation of our repair clinics and a pilot for leading group bike rides. We are proud to say that because of the Greater New Haven Green Fund's support, CMHC is supporting both continued repair clinics and group rides this coming year in 2021. The Bradley Street Bicycle Co-op and Connecticut Community Bicycle Workshop is so grateful for the support from the Greater New Haven Green Fund over the past three years, and we look forward to more collaboration in the future.

