

ORGANIZING FOR CYCLING ACCESS & EQUITY IN CHICAGO

An Active Transportation Success Story

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activist

SUMMARY

Two years ago, Belmont Cragin, a predominantly Latino community on Chicago's northwest side, was car-centric transit desert with a growing and dedicated population of at-risk cyclists. Organizing efforts brought together local residents, community partners, teens, non-profits, and later, city departments, bike share, and elected officials to mobilize for change.

BACKGROUND

Belmont Cragin is a Latino neighborhood on the northwest side of Chicago. It has one of the highest concentrations (1/3 of population) of persons under the age of 19, is heavily car-centric, and is a "Vision Zero" target area owing to the disproportionately high number crashes causing fatalities and serious injuries.

Few local teens have or could afford a car. Many use bikes. It is cheaper, faster, more reliable and convivial than other modes of transit. However it is more dangerous when there are no dedicated bike lanes.

In Sept. 2021 the Chicago Tribune reported on youths' involvement in the battle for bike lanes that began when a teen cyclist broke his collarbone when a driver carelessly swung open a car door. This helped put a spotlight on the need for bike lanes and galvanized youth involvement in the fight.

CRAGIN NEWS METRO-STATE
Belmont Cragin youth victorious after two-year fight brings bike lanes to neighborhood

The Chicago Department of Transportation plans to add more than 12 miles of bike lanes in Belmont Cragin. More lanes are coming to nearby Forest Park, as well.
By Mary Renna | Sept. 6, 2021, 1:05pm CDT



COLLABORATIVE ACTION

- Neighborhood residents and local teens identify the disparities and organize for support and action.
- Active Transportation Alliance helps build connections to city agencies.
- Local resident identifies Better Bike Share Partnership grant opportunity. NWSHC applies for and receives grant which supports youth outreach.
- The Chicago Dept. of Transportation (CDOT) took note of the local community action introduced and introduced the Neighborhood Bike Network process. CDOT worked with the local aldermen, community organizations, businesses, and community leaders to create a Neighborhood Task Force that engaged residents in roundtable discussions to collect feedback on new bike lanes, where bike lanes should be placed, as well as their concerns.

OBSERVING INEQUITY

Belmont Cragin demographics:
Tract 1908

- 82%+ Latino
- 21.23% below poverty line
- 2015 median family income \$46K
- 2021 est. median family income \$53.4K

RIDER VIEW

- no bike lanes
- few bike racks
- no DIVVY bike share
- hazardous riding conditions
- fewer riders



Logan Square demographics:
Tract 2204

- Euro-Am 65.14%, non-Euro 34.86%,
- 7.29% below poverty line
- 2015 median family income \$84K
- 2021 est. median family income \$97.7K

RIDER VIEW

- bike lanes
- bike racks
- Divvy bike share
- safer riding conditions
- many cyclists



RESULTS

- Quadrupled neighborhood bike network in one year
- Installed 13.5 miles of bikeways in 2021.
- 5 additional miles planned 2022
- Installed over 100 bike racks
- Expanded bike share into the neighborhood. Highest ridership of any community within expansion area
- Organized bike rides
- Empowered young people
- Built community relationships that will last!

