



# BIKES NOT BOMBS

*Using the bicycle as a vehicle for social change*

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## **Bikes Not Bombs Doubles Bicycle-Based Training and Employment Opportunities for Black and other Marginalized Youth**

Through a recently formalized, multi-tiered Youth Pathways program, young people living in Boston's most disenfranchised neighborhoods develop life and work skills under the mentorship of professional bike mechanics.

### **Boston, July 28, 2022:**

Bikes Not Bombs, a decades-long leader within the Boston cycling community, is reimagining new ways to use the bicycle as a vehicle for social change to achieve economic mobility for Black and other marginalized youth hailing from Boston's most under-resourced neighborhoods. Through a recently formalized, multi-tiered Youth Pathways program, Bikes Not Bombs is addressing the critical need for safe, supported spaces where young people can connect, build hands-on skills, and develop meaningful, long-term employment plans. The longtime fixture in Boston's bicycle community will broaden its reach by expanding its physical footprint and deepening its impact on young people by



integrating case management and therapeutic support into its youth development model. This work is unfolding at a time when the COVID-19 epidemic has significantly amplified experiences of isolation and self-doubt among young people everywhere, particularly Black and other marginalized youth.

In 2022, Bikes Not Bombs is thrilled to be teaming up with Children's Services of Roxbury (CSR) to open a new Bike School "Hub" on Dudley Street in Roxbury this spring. Bikes Not Bombs program staff and mechanics are collaborating with CSR therapeutic support staff to design learn-and-earn bike programs through which young people build connections, learn basic bike mechanics, engage in wellness activities, all while earning a bike of their own. BNB is also implementing Bike School programming in Boston Public Schools, providing a bicycle-based curriculum to young people searching for hands-on alternatives to traditional academic learning. Bike School



graduates are able to progress on to paid Youth Apprenticeships, where, over the course of three years, they work with professional mentors to develop critical workplace skills, build a robust employment portfolio, and establish post-secondary plans that set the foundation for long-term economic success and thriving futures. A new Advanced Mechanics program is dramatically expanding BNB's capacity to offer professional-level mechanics training for all Youth Apprentices, which they put to work teaching others as Bike School co-instructors, providing sales and repair service in a mission-driven full-service Bike Shop, helping to manage the bike recycling and international shipping operations, and organizing for transportation equity in Boston's most disenfranchised neighborhoods through Bicyclists Organizing for Community Action (BOCA) initiatives.

None of this would be possible without a network of stakeholders who trust in the work and believe in the mission and work of Bikes Not Bombs. A broad base of grassroots donors and a network of foundations and government agencies are making this work possible. Top funders for 2022 include the Barr Foundation, The Devonshire Foundation, City of Boston Department of Environment, Conine Family Foundation, Boston Children's Hospital Collaboration for Community Health, City of Boston Department of Youth Engagement & Employment, Boston Public Health Commission, and Boston Public Schools.

Executive Director Elijah Evans has worked with key organizational stakeholders to clarify a vision for Bikes Not Bombs' future. He began his journey as a teenager at BNB, working his way up the ranks after building his first bike and discovering the vibrant bicycle community at age 14. Now, under his leadership, young people from across Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan are recognized for their potential and given a safe place where they can develop passions, build friendships, and hone marketable skills that set the stage for long-term success. *"Our approach engages young people in their own development because they have assets, they have strengths. They are not coming to us as empty vessels, and that's really important. We have to value them, so they can see the value in themselves."*



## **Bikes Not Bombs History**

For 38 years, BNB has recognized the potential for bicycles to serve as vehicles for personal, social, and economic change. Launched in 1984, BNB founders shipped 18 reconditioned bicycles to healthcare workers and teachers in Nicaragua, increasing access to economic and social opportunities during a violent civil war. At that time, their mission was literally “Bikes Not Bombs.” They have since come to see “bombs” as representing racism, sexism, classism, and the systemic inequities that prevent Black and other marginalized people from accessing the health, educational, and economic opportunities they deserve. In 1990, BNB created bicycle-based learning and vocational training programs to address the pressing needs of Boston youth. More than 4,000 young people have participated in their bicycle-based training and employment programs.

*Want to support this work? Sign up for the [35th Annual Bike-A-Thon](#). For more information about Bikes Not Bombs, please contact Gary Chin, Director of Community Engagement at [gary@bikesnotbombs](mailto:gary@bikesnotbombs) or (617) 522-0222 x104. You can also visit [bikesnotbombs.org](http://bikesnotbombs.org) to learn more about the organization and its affiliated programs.*