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# Local Spokes Toolkit

## Edition 1

Coalición de Ciclismo del Loisaida - Barrio Chino



下東城-華埠自行車聯盟



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**Introduction:**

Local Spokes is a coalition of nine community organizations that came together in late 2010 in the Lower East Side and Chinatown neighborhoods to create an inclusive model for community engagement and development around the growing bicycle movement in New York City.

As a coalition we seek to engage low-income residents, people of color, immigrants, and youth in this process and to understand the various perspectives of the communities through multi-lingual outreach and a summer youth program.

Our community engagement around cycling is timely and relevant for other neighborhoods in New York City and the rest of the country. We have created and linked to [LocalSpokes.org](http://LocalSpokes.org):

- Neighborhood Action Plan with executive summaries in Spanish, Chinese and English
- Youth Ambassador Program videos, blog and more
- Mobile Bike Workshops, Rides and Events
- Videos and photo documentation
- Surveys and Visioning Sessions
- Social media, press kit, press links and more

*Our approach can be used as a model for community engagement.*

We have created this Toolkit as a how-to guide based on our work over the last two years. It explains our process in six steps that will highlight what we did, how and why, and will provide examples of our process. We hope that this can serve as a resource for other communities seeking to engage their communities around local planning and development issues in their neighborhoods.

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# 1. Communications

## Branding

What:

To create an identity and an easy way to unify Local Spokes’ mission, membership, events, and outcomes. Develop logo, brand, website, materials, etc.

Goal/Why:

- Address multi-lingual audience and media needs.
- Highlight liveliness of coalition and importance of mission (which was set during a retreat).
- Communications committee developed name and logo concepts, then provided resources so logo, tagline, etc can be used consistently and professionally to build the brand.
- To reduce printing costs, one color was chosen, blue (but we provide black versions for b&w documents).



(Action Plan Launch- May 2012)

How:

1. Local Spokes is new, but the coalition includes familiar organizations.
2. To highlight our mission of engaging an inclusive conversation about the future of bicycling in these diverse neighborhoods, we chose a catchy name that is friendly and infers speaking one’s mind.
3. Local Spokes sounds good in English, Spanish and Chinese.
4. We made sure LocalSpokes.org was available by checking Facebook, online, etc.

Links:

- Our website: <http://LocalSpokes.org>

- How to select a name: <http://www.fastcompany.com/1702256/how-pick-perfect-brand-name>

Future/Learned Lesson:

- Use Zazzle.com to create print-on-demand t-shirts, totes, etc.
- Plan to revamp webpage periodically
- Develop Local Spokes coalition letterhead with all coalition member logos

## Promotion

What:

Promote the coalition’s activities and outcomes in person at events, conferences, and online through social media and website.

Develop press resources and printed materials to extend recognition.

Goal:

- Make Local Spokes stand out in a crowd.
- Encourage people to get involved by sharing their perspectives and taking part in events and surveys.
- Give weight to coalition findings, reports and programs that is amplified by mainstream and social media.
- Collect outcomes through articles, photos, videos, websites, and materials.

How:

We created these resources:



(Ex: A Local Spoke Promotional Postcard)

- Website: [www.LocalSpokes.org](http://www.LocalSpokes.org) is a single, easy to manage web page (built in simple HTML) which embeds our Facebook, Flickr and video, and links to our Action Plan, event promo, press clips and youth applications, surveys, etc as needed.
- Social media: linked below, most are connected to share content
- Printed materials: postcards with space for a sticker, water bottles and buttons (made by event-goers), t-shirts
- Press Kit: Available online, updated periodically with new images, media releases

Communications Committee Development Toolkit:

[http://LocalSpokes.org/images/Communications\\_Toolkit-Intro\\_Local\\_Spokes9-12.pdf](http://LocalSpokes.org/images/Communications_Toolkit-Intro_Local_Spokes9-12.pdf)

Lesson Learned:

- Complete press contacts spreadsheet
- Clarify how to partner with and/or endorse Coalition
- Develop presentation for schools and community settings

## Intra-coalition Communications

What:

Assure that coalition members and committees can continually forward, in harmony with the progress each other is making

Why:

With so many tasks done by committee, this provides continuity and guide future decision-making and implementation.



Coalition Committee Members

How:

- One member was responsible for Coalition Administration, and managed intra-group communications, largely using Email (we could have made a listserv but opted to use a send list to accommodate personnel changes)
- With several Google Docs to sort through, our usage was improved with a Table of Contents page, clearly titled pages and organized folders
- Minutes sent by email to save paper

Future/Lessons Learned:

Decrease paper Paper reduction with 2 sided copies, paper and greater use of projection at meetings.

## 2. Youth Development & Empowerment



Youth Ambassadors 2012

### Youth Programs

#### What:

Youth Ambassadors (YA) is a 6-week summer program for high school students that either live or go to school in the community. The goal of the programs was for participants to learn how bicycling can be a way to engage and talk about issues affecting their neighborhood. The program has culminated in public art installations and community events

#### Why:

From the beginning Local Spokes believed that youth development should be a core component to our work, as young people will be the future leaders and be ambassadors to larger community. The YA program provided opportunities for the participants to learn about how their neighborhood is shaped, to become advocates for sustainable transportation, and future community leaders. Each week they met with different local community groups (many of the Local Spokes member organizations) to learn about topics like public art, land use, bike repair & maintenance and practice skills like public speaking and critical thinking. They also had the opportunity to meet with representatives from city government like the Department of Transportation, to learn about how bike lanes are planned and built. This was all coupled with group rides using the bike lane network in the neighborhood and safe spaces to become more accustomed to riding like the East River Greenway. The rides helped the youth learn the rules of the road and acclimated them to urban riding while seeing how they can

connect to different parts of the city on their bikes. By the end of the program the youth are truly advocates for cycling and public space in their neighborhood.

How:

Curriculum: Local Spokes created a curriculum outline for the YA program that balanced lessons with walking and biking tours, and was flexible enough to accommodate inclement weather. Lessons often involved a guest speaker from the different member organizations. Bike rides had to be scouted before hand to ensure the route was safe for the youth to ride. *Curriculum development began at least three months out from the program.*

Staffing:

A dedicated program coordinator and a program assistant staffed the program. These staff members served as a consistent face for the youth as there would often be guest speakers, and played the role of the ride leader and mechanic on the bike rides. The Program Coordinator worked with the Local Spokes members to implement the curriculum. *Hiring for the program coordinator took place one month out from the program, but ideally would happen earlier so the coordinator could be involved in curriculum development.*

Space:

The program had to function in a space that was flexible enough for presentations, group activities, individual work, and to store the bicycles the participants used, and also be located relatively close to the bike lane network. The ideal space ended up being a community center. In the first year it was housed at a member organizations own community center, the second year within a public park house working in partnership with the Department of Parks & Recreation. *Securing a space can be difficult if one is not readily available, begin conversations early.*

Recruitment:

Each year of the YA program, Local Spokes worked with youth who either live or go to school in the neighborhoods in which we work. To recruit participants, Local Spokes reached out to local high schools, created an application with short answer questions to ensure that YA candidates were genuinely interested in the program and asked them to express why they would want to make an impact on their neighborhood. The application was combined





with photo release forms and a liability waiver. (Youth Ambassador Sign Project)  
 Youth were required to have some rudimentary ride experience and be over 14 years of age.

Participants were recruited through the different Local Spokes member organizations by reaching out to local high schools, talking to youth at events, and reaching out through the member organizations’ networks. *Recruitment had to begin at least two months out from the program.*

Documentation:

Each participant documented and reflected on the week’s activities in a journal with their own thoughts and drawings. The youth mentor was responsible for program documentation throughout the second year of the program. This consisted of writing a weekly blog of the experiences of the group and thus being a public face for the program. The mentor also was responsible for photographing each session. The program coordinator also photographed sessions and these images were all compiled on flickr.

Lesson Learned:

It would be best to start the recruitment process of youth in the early spring. A balance between “in-class” instruction and riding is important.

**Youth Blog/Journals**

What:

A youth mentor was responsible for writing about the experience of the group throughout the summer of 2012. The youth documented lessons, places visited, and general impressions. All participants kept a journal for their own thoughts and drawings, too.



(Youth Ambassador Planning Session)

Why:

The blog served as a way for the youth to document the activities throughout the summer, and share them with the public. The youth mentor took part in 2011, and became a mentor to the 2012’s group.

How:

A free ‘tumblr’ website account was created and photos and weekly writings were added by the youth mentor. This was linked to [LocalSpokes.org](http://LocalSpokes.org) and [Facebook.com/localspokes](https://www.facebook.com/localspokes), expanding the audience.

Tumblr: <http://localspokesya.tumblr.com>

Lessons Learned:

The Tumblr blog is an easy format for keeping the rest of the coalition and the general public up to date on the summer program. Providing each student with an opportunity to write about his or her experience would enrich each youth's experience.

## Projects with Tangible Community Impacts

What: In 2012, transforming the streets through a creative process was the program's focus. The Youth Ambassadors participated in the NYCDOT community art program and created a bicycle signs that are displayed throughout the community.

Why: It was important to Local Spokes for the youth to have a direct impact on the neighborhood, and temporary public art project is a very tangible result. The youth are able to see their work and share it with the community, while also communicating a positive message about biking to the broader neighborhood.

How:

Local Spokes worked directly with the NYC Department of Transportation's public art program to realize the project. Several elements had to be predetermined before the YA program commenced, such as the format of the signs, placement throughout the neighborhood, and a general idea of the themes the artwork would contain. Through the course of the program the youth touched on many subjects that were incorporated into the themes of their artworks, and each participant chose a different idea to convey. The last 4 sessions of the program were dedicated to creating art and the youth did some initial exercises such as creating stencils and trying different mediums to get comfortable with the materials. The final art work was digitized by Local Spokes, and then printed and installed by the DOT. At the end of the program a culminating event included a bike tour for the public with stops for the youth to present their work at each sign location, and at the end of the event each participant received a copy of their sign in a recognition ceremony.

## Further Opportunities for Youth Development

What:

The Youth Ambassador Program was a primer for introducing the youth to issues affecting how their neighborhood is shaped but also provided opportunities to practice leadership skills. After the program it was important to continue providing opportunities for the Youth Ambassadors to remain involved, have an impact and take further leadership.

Why:

As high school students many of the youth have not had opportunities to participate in projects where they have ownership, contribute in a leadership capacity, or practice public speaking skills and become the public face for a body of work.

How:

It was important to develop roles toward the end of the program for the youth to use public speaking skills, such as at the culminating event, or in video documentation. After the program opportunities were provided for interested youth to be placed in internships at Local Spokes member organizations, participate and help lead community meetings. In the second year of the program youth from the first year were asked if they would participate again as a mentor for the new group of students. This provided an intermediary leadership role. The annual Youth Bike Summit organized by the Local Spokes member organization, Recycle-A-Bicycle, has become another way for youth to have opportunities to lead. They have participated in workshops, co-led workshops presenting their own work, and in 2013 one of the Youth Ambassadors will be giving a speech as the keynote speaker.

YouTube Link: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/oDjIKj3f0U0>

### 3. Needs Assessment

#### Survey

What:

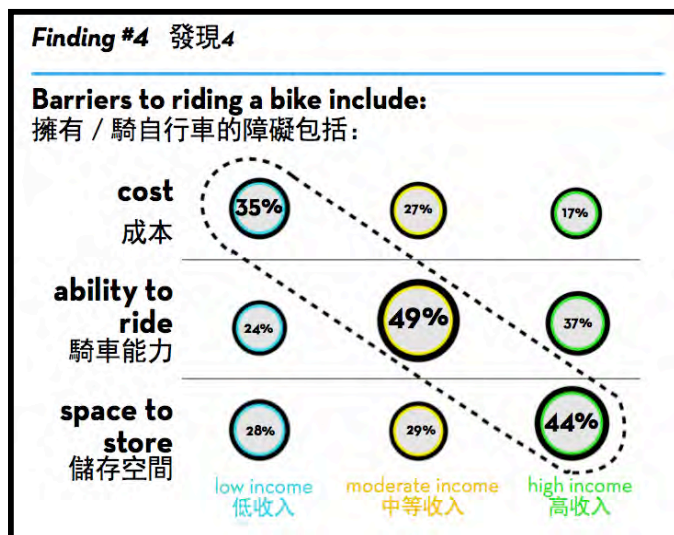
The coalition first conducted a needs assessment by developing a survey. The survey asked people about mobility in the neighborhood, access to transportation and barriers to biking and rider habits.

Why:

The survey was the first step in meeting one of the coalitions' goals of engaging and understand the community's various perspectives on cycling.

How:

The survey was conducted over the spring and summer of 2011 and led to 1,200 responses. It reflected neighborhood demographics from people who either live, work or go to school in the Lower East Side and Chinatown.



Future/Lessons Learned:

Community festivals, neighborhood parks and public spaces throughout the community provided opportunities to administer the survey. The Youth Ambassadors also assisted in getting survey responses from the public.

## Visioning

What:

The visioning process was the second part of the neighborhood needs assessment.

It included large public community meetings and smaller sessions conducted with community partners. Based on the survey findings, six issues for discussion-

- Cost
- Affordability & Economic Needs
- Health & Recreation Needs
- Ability to Ride
- Language Access
- Cultural Barriers

Minutes sent by email to save paper

Why:

The visioning process allowed the Coalition to gather qualitative information for a more complete understanding of the communities needs.

How:

As a result of the visioning sessions the Coalition was able to identify three areas to focus on:

- Infrastructure
- Education & Enforcement
- Employment Needs

## Action Plan

What:

The Plan identifies findings that address local transportation infrastructure, bicycle education and safety, and the role of bicycling plays in creating and



sustaining local jobs.

Why:

The Plan is important to document the recommendations generated from our comprehensive community outreach and visioning process. It will also serve as a strategic guide to our continued advocacy work in the community

How:

In the coming year Local Spokes will implement the activities. The Coalition will partner with the relevant public agency and organizations to advocate and implement the recommendations to improve cycling in the neighborhood.

**Action Plan**

[http://localspokes.org/images/Local%20Spokes%20Action%20Plan%20Full\\_Lo%20Res.pdf](http://localspokes.org/images/Local%20Spokes%20Action%20Plan%20Full_Lo%20Res.pdf)

**Exec Summary- English**

[http://localspokes.org/images/Local\\_Spokes\\_ActionPlan\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](http://localspokes.org/images/Local_Spokes_ActionPlan_Exec_Summary.pdf)

**Exec Summary- Spanish**

[http://localspokes.org/images/Local\\_Spokes\\_Exec\\_SummarySPANISH.pdf](http://localspokes.org/images/Local_Spokes_Exec_SummarySPANISH.pdf)

**Exec Summary- Chinese**

[http://localspokes.org/images/Local\\_Spokes\\_Exec\\_SummaryCHINESE.pdf](http://localspokes.org/images/Local_Spokes_Exec_SummaryCHINESE.pdf)

## 4. Events

### Plan

What:

Events can be indoors or out, focused on a specific age or target group or open to all community members. These can be stand-alone events or part of a larger festival.



(Action Plan Kickoff- May 2012)

Events are a great way to build engagement numbers, generate positive images and perhaps, press - and they can be lots of fun too!

Why:

Events create an environment in which to share information and build relationships in a more casual way.

Events can make your resources more newsworthy.

When bikes are part of the party, make sure there is secure parking, extra bells and lights (if at night). Try to get new riders a buddy.

Will you need a parental release for people under 18, or others? This will protect your organization in case of an accident and allow you to share photos of youth participants online. In some cases, this can be done on one sign in sheet, in other cases, each needs a separate release form (perhaps provided in advance for parents to sign)

How:

Choose the venue with the needs of bicyclers in mind. Is it OK to bring the bikes inside the space? Is there secure parking? Check for a sink, bathroom, outlet, wireless and other things you might need for your gathering to be a success.

Coordinate refreshments or hopefully have them donated. We gave out Local Spokes water bottles and provided a tap in lieu of sodas or other drinks.

Bike raffles are a great draw, too. Both youth and adult size bike giveaways attract a crowd.

We provided NYC Bike Maps, relevant materials from member organizations, bells from the DOT and had bike button making tools available. T-shirts are popular – ours were printed by the Youth Ambassadors, (who also created signage).

If a group bike ride is part of the event, plan the route by actually riding it in advance. Consider the skill level of the rider and always plan for a person to ‘sweep’ to ride at the end and collect stragglers, or fix a flat. Youth Ambassadors can design the route, too!



(YA Bike Tour)

If the riders are mostly youth or new riders, plan the route using bike lanes and car-free parks and greenways. It's OK to walk bikes through heavy traffic areas or when all the

one way streets go the wrong way. Be sure to share the sidewalk!

When you plan a group ride as part of the party, allow extra time for all the riders to get ready to ride.

Bike Repair Party:

[http://GreenMap.org/greenhouse/files/Bike\\_Repair\\_Parties.pdf](http://GreenMap.org/greenhouse/files/Bike_Repair_Parties.pdf)

Future/Lessons Learned:

Weather is always hard to plan for. Select a rain date or choose a location that has both outdoor and covered space.

**Promote**

What: Getting the word out helps a much wider audience learn about your mission and activities (even if they don't all show up at the event!)



(Youth Ambassador Celebration Invitation)

Why: Make a concerted effort to promote events as widely as possible. Promotion brings in people and spreads our message.

How:

- Through our Facebook page, we invited upwards of 300 people to attend our events.
- We post our events on the timelines of other groups' Facebook pages.
- We print flyers and hand-cards that members help to disseminate throughout the city. Include the 'draws' on the promotion - food, live music, raffle, etc.
- Youth Ambassadors, event attendee list and addresses collected from surveys receive emailed invitations with a 'please forward' note.
- Regularly post events and news on Twitter
- Create a press release that each member can customize and send to their press list. Designate a press-spokesperson, and be sure to provide them with information, images, etc as needed.

Links: <http://www.facebook.com/localspokes>

Future/Lessons Learned:

If possible check upcoming event calendars to make sure your target audience is free during the time of the party. Post your event as soon as you confirm it on calendars such as the one at <http://ecoanchornc.com> and community blogs as well.

## Implement

### What:

Event space should be arranged and prepared in advance.

- Check for a kitchen, serving tools, extension cords, broom, etc.
- Be sure to consider how to reduce waste (reusable dishes, extra containers to take leftovers home) and have composting and recycling bins at the ready.
- Having nontoxic bug repellent handy is a good idea for summer parties.
- If there are specially invited speakers (such as a Councilmember) or performers, make sure you understand what they need and when they will arrive.
- We print flyers and hand-cards that members help to disseminate throughout the city. Include the 'draws' on the promotion - food, live music, raffle, etc.
- If you have invited press or funders, create a packet of materials
- Plan fun activities that underscore your mission. This can include mapping bike routes or hazards, bike decorating, flat fixing workshop, etc.

### Why:

Events are a great way to reach new audiences as well as collaborate and learn from people already interested in bike advocacy.

They raise awareness and build community bonds both among individuals and groups. Events are also a big way in which we see our labor realized - in that sense it serves to energize the group and keep our activism going.



(Site Planning)

### How:

- Greet all guests and orient them to the party venue and plan.
- Coordinate with a bike advocacy group or shop to borrow bikes and helmets.
- Offer free/co-op bike repair
- Give a short speech about who, why and what people can do at the event and after to get more involved. Be sure to thank the venue, food and bike donors, and acknowledge all special contributions.
- Make sure riders don't get left behind with a 'sweep' who is introduced as the last person in the ride. The sweep should have a patch kit and pump and a way to communicate with the ride leader, especially on a large group or longer ride.
- Take lots of high-resolution photos to share them with participants, press etc. Involve a videographer if possible.
- Take a group photo!
- Help clean up!





Why:

The neighborhoods of Chinatown and the Lower East Side that we serve represent many different constituencies: immigrant and non-immigrant; low-income and wealthy; cyclists, straphangers and drivers. By working in coalition with one another Local Spokes has been able to bring together the many rich, multifaceted perspectives on transportation equity, and bicycling in particular, that resonates with neighborhood residents. Our process and the outcomes we are achieving are the better for it.

A coalition has also allowed us to leverage different resources, local knowledge and networks into the collective work.

How:

In forming coalitions it is important to set clear expectations and roles from the beginning.

The task of coordinating meetings, taking notes, communicating with various external stakeholders of the coalition, etc. can be centralized into one group, or shared across groups.

The important point is that these roles that are beyond the mission-oriented work of a coalition (the "overhead") be clearly assigned. It is also vital to determine what defines membership in the coalition in terms of basic commitments (e.g. regular participation in committees and events) or criteria (e.g. be located in the neighborhood or have a constituency).

## Consensus building

What:

While operating as a coalition enables a broad range of perspectives and solutions on an issue we organize around, there is work in bringing coalition members together to make decisions and to ensure that all voices are heard.

The consensus building process is one by which all perspectives and options are discussed, a group determines which decision is supported by the majority of members, and no member who disagrees with the final decision chooses to block that decision.

Why:

For matters large and small coalitions must come to decisions in order to move their work forward.



(Coalition Meeting)

The consensus model provides a mechanism for constructive deliberation and discussion to happen when there is a lack of agreement. It prevents silencing or ignoring minority opinions outright that a majority vote would require.

The consensus process also creates a sense of ownership over the decision, even among those who may disagree with the final outcome.

How:

A good consensus process requires having a dedicated facilitator who is familiar with consensus-based decision-making.

The facilitator and participants need to feel comfortable disagreeing while also respecting one another's perspectives on an issue. Participants need to feel that they are being heard and their contributions considered.

When it is time to move towards a decision, those who are not comfortable with the outcome have a right to block the final decision. At this point more discussion should take place.

At the end of a thorough consensus-based process, even those who disagree with the final outcome must be comfortable with it moving forward.

## Roles and Functions

What:

While the regular coalition meetings provide a space for all Local Spokes groups to come together to conduct joint planning and evaluation, to discuss issues and to make decisions, the work of implementation falls upon committees that are more task-oriented. Committees that have served well for Local Spokes include:

- Community Engagement
- Needs Assessment
- Communications
- Advocacy
- Youth

Why:

While the coalition should make decisions and coordinate work as collective, it is always difficult to move discrete projects or tasks forward as a collective.

A committee structure allows work to happen in between the common coalition meetings, when time for all coalition members is limited and the coalition must plan and act strategically.

How:

Committees are formed based on needs or opportunities presented on a given issue or

project.

Each committee enables a core of groups from the coalition, usually 2-5, to be accountable for seeing a project or a task through.

The coalition should develop a shared workplan that reflects the work across all committees.

This consolidated workplan can serve as a tool to communicate the work of individual committees, and to ensure that committees are accountable to their goals and objectives.

Images: Draw a diagram of Local Spokes committee structure to illustrate how we operate.

## 6. Advocacy

### Community Engagement and Outreach



(Visioning Event)

What: Develop relationships with and outreach to different stakeholder groups to develop a genuine inclusiveness in the needs assessment process, recognition of Local Spokes as a legitimate neighborhood player, and for the long term buy-in of Local Spokes' efforts.

Why:

To make the discussion relevant to people, it is important to meet them where they are.

It is not enough to just invite people to an event, but to engage stakeholders and local decision makers along the way so they feel it is relevant to their own missions or interests.

By meeting and working with other groups our needs assessment process could reach and involve a large and diverse audience.

How:

The Local Spokes Advocacy Committee did this by:

- Developing a list of local stakeholder groups and decision makers

- Making informational presentations to relevant Community Board Subcommittees (like Transportation).
- Meeting with local elected officials to introduce the coalition and inform them of our workplan, timeline, what we hope to achieve, and ask them how we can work together
- Reaching out to local stakeholder groups with a way for them to be involved like offering to host a visioning workshop with their constituents
- Creating a sign-on letter for groups to lend their support to a campaign or a plan, such as the Neighborhood Action Plan
- Making sure that these connections get tied together and followed through, that stakeholders are invited to events, and that elected officials and the Community Board continues to be involved.

## Campaigns

### What:

Through the needs assessment process Local Spokes identified achievable short-term and long-term goals for cycling in the neighborhood.

Using the Neighborhood Action Plan as a guide and an advocacy tool we developed campaigns to achieve the goals in the plan.

### Why:

An advocacy campaign is necessary for work that requires multiple outside decision makers and stakeholders to achieve the same goal.

For example: Local Spokes goals around the new NYC Bike Share program involved:

- Raising awareness amongst local stakeholders about what the program is and how it could benefit them
- Convincing city agencies that they should be working closely with groups and stakeholders on the ground
- Ensuring that the Bike Share program is accessible to low income residents, that it is affordable and relevant

### How:

Local Spokes advocacy work around NYC's new Bike Share program included:

Raising awareness amongst local stakeholders about what the program is and how it could benefit them

- Developing relationships with the different city agencies involved
- We organized initial meetings with the DOT prior to the city selecting its bike share contractor, and with the New York City Housing Authority. Then developing a relationship with the selected bike share company, Alta, by meeting with the president and as the program developed, with Alta's Education and Outreach manager.

- These relationships were each brokered by a different member organization. Working together with the Education and Outreach manager and in coordination with the different agencies, Local Spokes has advocated for the creation of discounted membership rates.
- Local Spokes has also advocated for the creation of an ambassador program that would hire NYCHA residents to do outreach and education with other local residents, and assisted in the search for qualified candidates by working with local Tenant Associations.
- We took part in public siting discussions and included recommendations in our Action Plan

Future/Lessons Learned:

Due to software issues and damage caused by Superstorm Sandy, the launch of NYC's Bike Share program has been pushed back several months until May 2013.

**We hope this tool kit has been useful to you –  
best wishes from the Local Spokes Coalition!**