

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS TOOL LIBRARY **2016 IMPACT REPORT**

From fixing up homes and planting trees to fighting blight with public art and cultivating community gardens, the Tool Library provides citizens with the tools to improve the world around them.





Our Mission...

**WE PROVIDE
COMMUNITIES
WITH THE
TOOLS THEY
NEED TO
CREATE
THE CHANGE
THEY WANT.**



The University Heights Tool Library was founded in 2011 in response to quality of life issues such as absentee landlords, deteriorating housing stock, vacancy, and a lack of coordinated service events in Buffalo's University District. From the humble beginnings of a few dozen tools and a handful of members, the organization has grown to include an inventory of thousands of tools and hundred of members from across Buffalo and Erie County.

Operated as a program under the University Heights Collaborative, a nonprofit community group, the Tool Library is run by an all-volunteer staff of residents and students. A membership to the Tool Library gives individuals, organizations, and businesses access to an inventory of thousands of tools for one small annual fee. Members can borrow tools on an as-needed basis, attend workshops, host events, and volunteer for service events and community projects.

706 MEMBERS



Membership has steadily increased over the past year from **562 members to 706 members**, averaging about **12 new members each month**. Of the 706 total members, 489 of them were active during 2016. During 2016, membership renewal (including payment) became available online and a tiered membership structure was created to allow individuals and organizations to reserve a larger number of tools while also increasing revenue and the Tool Library's longterm sustainability

1,850 TOOLS

TOP 8 BORROWED TOOLS

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Cordless Drill | 5. Belt Sander |
| 2. Miter Saw | 6. Pressure Washer |
| 3. Circular Saw | 7. Air Compressor |
| 4. Cordless Chainsaw | 8. Reciprocating Saw |

11,135 LOANS

8,365 Tools loaned in 2015

11,135 Tools loaned in 2016

**33% increase
over 2015**

5,381 HOURS

*Value of Volunteer Hours**:

\$129,897

2016 Volunteer Statistics

Service Events	32
Volunteer Shifts	520
Volunteers	1,101
Volunteer Hours	5,381

The Tool Library's inventory **increased by nearly 300 tools** over the course of 2016. Many of these were individual donations, but the Tool Library also received a **\$500 donation of Craftsmen tools** from the ToolMade Project. Thanks to myTurn, the Tool Library's lending platform, the organization has been able to target tool replacement and purchase to those tools that are in highest demand by members. Home improvement power tools continue to be the most popular items checked out by members.

Transactions at the Tool Library have steadily increased over the past year. The number of tools loaned out **increased by over 33% in 2016**. This is thanks, in part, to the Tool Library's growing number of partnerships with block clubs, neighborhood associations, and other nonprofits who now look to the Tool Library as a resource center for their large scale service events. There are many weekends during the spring and summer where hundreds of tools go out the door at once.

As an all-volunteer organization, the strength and success of the Tool Library lays in the dedicated individuals willing to donate their time to a cause they believe in. Over a dozen volunteers help keep the Tool Library's shop doors open 6 days a week (more than almost any other tool library in the country). **Over a thousand volunteers** regularly join the Tool Library on service projects out in the community like ReTree the District, Bailey Fights Blight, University Blooms, and the Tyler Street Community Garden.

195,000 DOLLARS

415 trees planted

1,101 volunteers engaged

2 murals painted

1,000 bulbs planted

4 gardens maintained

The Tool Library believes there is no better investment in a community than direct action through service learning, civic engagement, and volunteerism. Taking into account project costs, volunteer time, and operational funding, the Tool Library has invested nearly \$200,000 into the City of Buffalo during 2016. **That's over a 1,000% return on investment** from public funds received by the Tool Library over the course of the same year!

*Note: Value of volunteer hours (\$24.14/hr) according to Independent Sector, a coalition of charities, foundations, corporations, and individuals that publishes research important to the nonprofit sector.

TOOLIN' AROUND TOWN



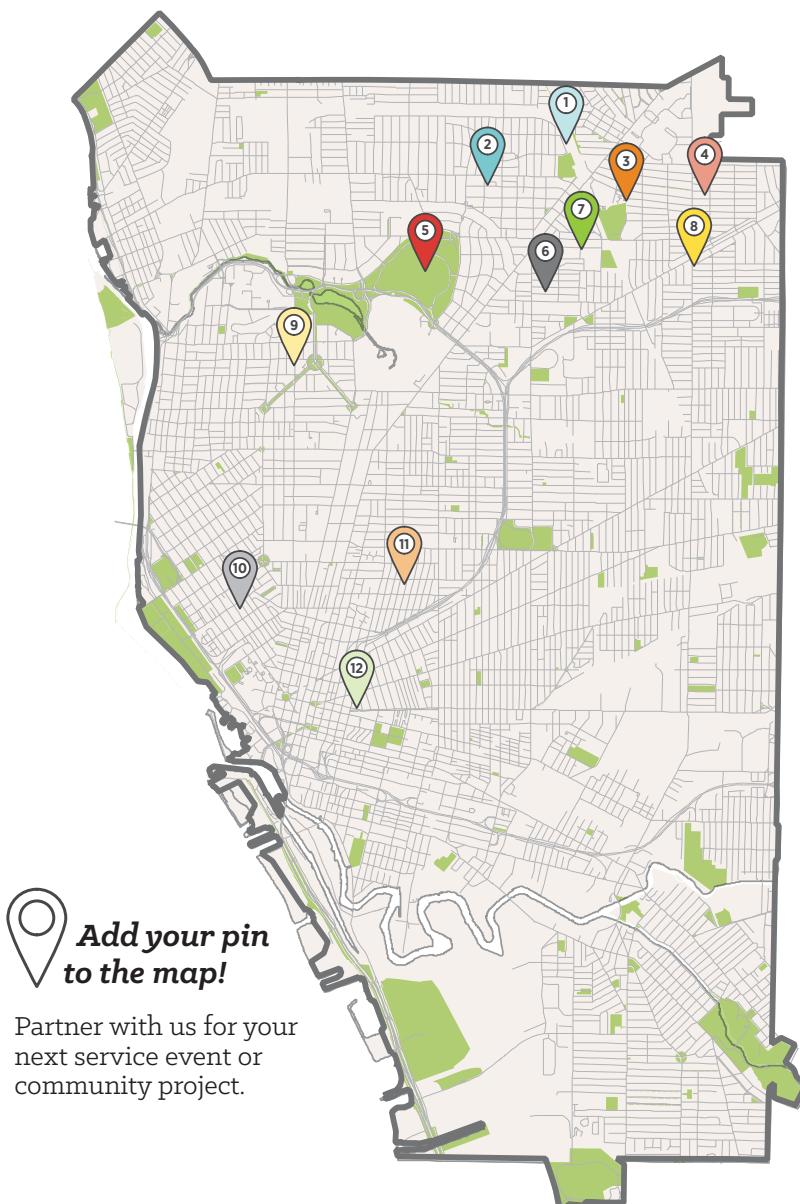
Over 900 tools
were borrowed
by organizations
across the city for
community projects
and service events

Location	Organization	Event
(1)	UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS COLLABORATIVE	Linear Park/Rail Trail Cleanup
(2)	NORTH BUFFALO ORGANIZATION	Hertel Avenue Cleanup
(3)	MINNESOTA AVENUE BLOCK CLUB	Gardens on Minnesota
(4)	UNIVERSITY DISTRICT BLOCK CLUB COALITION	Bailey-Dartmouth Community Garden Work Day
(5)	BUFFALO OLMFSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY	Tree Stewardship Work Day
(6)	JOURNEY'S END REFUGEE SERVICES	Urban Farm Work Days
(7)	UB ENGINEERS FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD	Hill Street Park Cleanup
(8)	UB MEDICAL SCHOOL	UB Med Day of Service
(9)	ELMWOOD VILLAGE ASSOCIATION	Elmwood Avenue Cleanup
(10)	HEART OF THE CITY NEIGHBORHOODS	West Side Cleanup
(11)	UB CENTER FOR URBAN STUDIES	Fruit Belt Clean-a-thon
(12)	AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR	Jesse Clipper Memorial Garden Work Day

Thanks to the Tool Library's growing number of partnerships with block clubs, neighborhood associations, nonprofit organizations, and education institutions, many of these groups now look to the Tool Library as a resource center for their large scale service events and community projects. Instead of spending money buying tools and supplies for one-time events and projects, groups can sign up for a Tool Library membership to access the tools they need when they need them, saving time, money, and space.

Events range from small block club cleanups and community garden work days, to annual events like the Fruit Belt Clean-A-Thon that engages hundreds of students from Future Academy to become active participants in quality of life issues in their neighborhood. Through a partnership with Keep Western New York Beautiful and their national affiliate, Keep America Beautiful, the Tool Library has also been able to provide hundreds of tools for the annual Great American Cleanup initiative, which encourages volunteers to improve, invest, and restore their neighborhoods through hands-on community improvement projects.

By providing access to tools and technical assistance geared towards service events, the Tool Library can continue to encourage civic engagement and volunteerism across the city.



LENDING A HAND

As an all-volunteer organization, there are many ways to support the Tool Library with your time, talents, and resources. Learn how you can lend us a helping hand:



Join

Become a member of the Tool Library and help support our mission! Not only do you get access to thousands of tools, you also become part of a community dedicated to improving the world through shared knowledge and resources.



Donate

Cleaning out your garage or basement and have a few extra tools laying around? Donate them to the Tool Library and we'll put them to work in the community! You can also make a tax deductible donation to support our work.



Volunteer

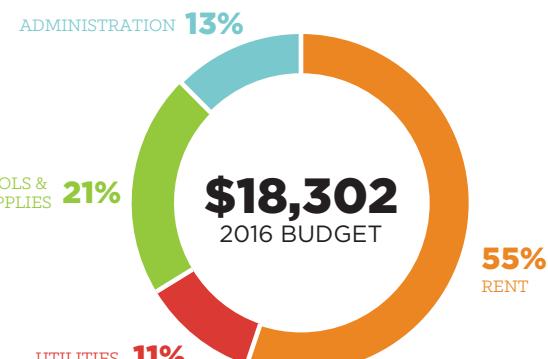
Looking to get more involved or make a difference in your community? Become a volunteer at the Tool Library and help keep our shop doors open! You can also get involved with one of our many community projects.

Become a member, sign up to volunteer, or donate to the Tool Library by visiting us online at: www.thetoollibrary.org

KEEPING US GOING

The Tool Library's operating costs in 2016 were slightly over \$18,000, marking just a 4% increase over 2015. A majority of these costs are related to the Tool Library's brick and mortar location at 5 W. Northrup Place, with well over two thirds of the Tool Library's budget going to rent and utilities. An increase in administrative costs during 2016 was due to the Tool Library rolling out a brand new website, which is more user friendly and content rich. Goals for 2017 include incorporating as a non-profit, increasing fundraising activities, and bringing paid staff on board.

The Tool Library received a majority of its funding through the City of Buffalo's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, as dispersed by the University District Councilmember's Office. Additional funding is provided by the University at Buffalo and St. Joseph Neighborhood Housing Initiative, while revenue continues to be generated through membership dues, late fees, and the purchase of tools, hardware, and merchandise.



SUSTAINING SPONSORS

Thanks to our sustaining sponsors, the Tool Library is able to keep its doors open and provide hundreds of Erie County residents with low cost access to thousands of tools to improve their homes, gardens, and communities.



PROJECT SPONSORS

Thanks to our project sponsors, the Tool Library has been able to accomplish incredible things out in the community, from tree planting to blight fighting and everything in between.





BY THE NUMBERS

10 Events

415 Trees

705 Tools

765 Volunteers

2,775 Service Hours

\$108,500 Invested

PARTNERS

Bailey Avenue Business Association
Buffalo Green Fund
Buffalo Promise Neighborhood
City of Buffalo Division of Parks and Recreation
Dash's Market
Home Depot
ReTree WNY
University at Buffalo
University District Community Development Association
University Heights Collaborative

HIGHLIGHTS

The Tool Library partnered with the UB-student-led Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE) to measure and improve the operational efficiency of ReTree the District. From a new registration layout to standardized planting process, the partnership with IIE has drastically improved planting times and the volunteer experience.

RETREE THE DISTRICT

www.thetoollibrary.org/retree

ReTree the District is a community development initiative in Buffalo's University District that has planted over 1,000 trees across the community. The project is reinvesting in our urban tree canopy, strengthening ties among neighbors, restoring our parks and green spaces, teaching the importance of urban ecology and encouraging hands-on volunteerism.

Working with the City of Buffalo Division of Parks and Recreation, ReTree WNY, and the Buffalo Green Fund, the Tool Library held two large scale plantings during the fall and spring of 2016. These events **attracted over 500 volunteers** from area block clubs, businesses, schools, and universities and resulted in an additional **415 trees** planted across University District. This helped the Tool Library hit ReTree the District's goal of planting 1,000 trees in two years.

While the Tool Library will continue to plant trees beyond the initial 1,000 tree goal, additional efforts will also focus on tree stewardship and maintenance of the newly planted trees. To increase survivorship rates and increase community knowledge, the Tool Library hosted several hands-on tree stewardship workshops throughout the neighborhood. The Tool Library is also an active partner of the CommuniTree Steward Program. CommuniTree is a city-wide initiative sponsored by the Buffalo Green Fund that brings together partners like the City of Buffalo Department of Parks & Recreation, the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Re-Tree WNY, Olmsted Conservancy, and Wendel Companies to train and empower residents to properly care for and maintain trees in parks, public spaces, and along streets.

One of the lasting legacies of ReTree the District (beyond the trees, of course!) has been the experimental use of mobile technology throughout the implementation of the project. A team of volunteers mapped over 2,500 tree locations in University District to assist in project planning using nothing more than their mobile phones. Text messaging also helped the ReTree team speed through a previously arduous registration process by capturing contact information and allowing the electronic signing of volunteer waivers. ReTree also used text messaging to shorten response times to field-based issues (e.g. broken tools, tree locations, resident complaints). These tools have since been adopted by the Tool Library across multiple community projects to increase efficiency and effectiveness - working smarter, not harder!

GET INVOLVED



Donate

Did you know that each tree we plant costs about \$100? That means we've planted \$100,000 worth of trees! Your donation not only helps us plant more trees, it provides us with the tools we need to ensure a healthy and happy tree canopy.



Volunteer

Each year, ReTree the District sponsors large scale plantings in the late fall and early spring. Join us for a planting or one of many tree stewardship and maintenance workshops held throughout the year.



“

This project is about more than just planting trees. It's about building community by working shoulder to shoulder to create tangible change with someone who might live down the block or across the neighborhood.”



Bailey Fights Blight

BY THE NUMBERS

11 Events

15 Buildings

40% Decrease in
Blight

175 Volunteers

636 Service Hours

\$19,850 Invested

PARTNERS

Arts Services Initiative of WNY
Bailey Avenue Business Association
Buffalo Promise Neighborhood
Junior League of Buffalo
People Inc.
M&T Bank
Stockbridge Avenue Block Club
Team Razor Wire
University at Buffalo
University District Community
Development Association
University Heights Collaborative
Villa Maria College

HIGHLIGHTS

The Varsity Theatre, an early target for Bailey Fights Blight service days, officially opened its doors as a one-of-a-kind entertainment venue on Buffalo's East Side in February 2016 after being shuttered for nearly a decade. Additionally, a \$300,000 Buffalo Main Streets Initiative grant was secured by the UDCDA to assist Bailey Avenue property owners with building renovations.

BAILEY FIGHTS BLIGHT

www.thetoollibrary.org/bfb

Bailey Fights Blight is a community-based project working to improve public spaces and re-imagine vacant or underutilized properties on Bailey Avenue. Through neighborhood cleanups, community gardening, and public art, Bailey Fights Blight is helping to redevelop one of Buffalo's major East Side commercial corridors.

Since 2014, the University Heights Tool Library has worked closely with the Bailey Avenue Business Association and other partners to organize cleanups on Bailey Avenue, remove graffiti, weed and mulch tree pits, and securely board and paint the facades of over 15 buildings along Bailey Avenue. These basic community improvement projects have correlated with significant uptick in economic activity on Bailey Avenue. From 2011-2014, the corridor had an average of 13 new business licenses issued each year. In 2015, the number of new business licenses grew by over 600% to 79 licenses. Building permits have also increased, from an average of 61 permits (2011-2014) to 65 permits in 2015.

As Bailey Fights Blight shifts its focus from boarding and securing vacant buildings to incorporating public art and other streetscape improvements, the Tool Library is working to actively engage members of the community in creating an environment that reflects their vision and hope for the future of their neighborhood.

The first such example is a bold, geometric mural recently completed at the corner of Bailey Avenue and Stockbridge Avenue thanks to a \$2,000 Arts Service Initiative of WNY grant. The design for the mural developed out of a number of community brainstorming sessions led by artists Nick Miller and Chris Kameck of Team Razor Wire. Members of the Stockbridge Avenue Block Club attended one of the meetings and shared the phrase "stocks are rising" as a motto for their street. This would ultimately become the inspiration behind, and title of, the mural.

Community painting days were held throughout July and August where community members worked alongside Nick, Chris, and Tool Library volunteers to complete the mural. By keeping the design bold yet simple, Nick has made it easier for the mural to be maintained by the community for many years to come.

GET INVOLVED



Donate

Whether it's plywood, mulch, or paint, your donation will go directly towards fighting blight on Bailey Avenue by ensuring our volunteers have the right tools and materials for the job!



Volunteer

Bailey Fights Blight holds painting and cleanup events throughout the spring, summer and fall. There's something for everyone and, as the saying goes, many hands make light work!



“

All too often the focus is on big ticket development projects across the city, yet it is these small, incremental improvements made over the course of years that can lead to significant improvements in quality of life for existing residents and businesses.”





BY THE NUMBERS

3 Events

3 Gardens

1,500 Bulbs

48 Volunteers

124 Service Hours

\$3,490 Invested

PARTNERS

Buffalo in Bloom

Main Street Garden Group

University at Buffalo

University Heights Collaborative

HIGHLIGHTS

Volunteers from Buffalo in Bloom and the Tool Library planted over 100 tulip bulbs in front of a mural on Bailey Avenue recently completed as part of Bailey Fights Blight. The yellow and red tulips were chosen to reflect the gold and copper found in the mural. Volunteers also planted hundreds of daffodil bulbs around block club signs and neighborhood pocket parks.

UNIVERSITY BLOOMS

www.thetoollibrary.org/bloom

University Blooms is a volunteer-driven initiative that is working to improve public green spaces, pocket parks, and vacant lots in University District through community gardening and landscape design.

University Blooms is the outgrowth of an extremely generous and touching donation of one thousand daffodil bulbs by University at Buffalo Professor and Director of the UB Civic Engagement Academy, Barbara Bono, to the Tool Library in memory of a friend's son. The daffodils were planted in several pocket parks like the Winspear-Tyler Triangle and Tyler Triangle, as well as lining a recently renovated Linear Park. Seeing the positive impact of this initial planting had, volunteers at the Tool Library and Buffalo in Bloom decided to collaborate and continue the planting tradition each year.

In 2016, the bulb planting expanded to three locations, including the North Buffalo Rail Trail (in front of a former railroad abutment), Westminster Triangle Park (located at Westminster and Stockbridge Avenues), and in front of the "Stocks are Rising" mural at Bailey and Stockbridge Avenues. These locations were chosen by volunteers to both highlight new investment in the neighborhood, such as the Rail Trail and mural, and also call attention to underutilized and underinvested green spaces, such as numerous triangle pocket parks located along Westminster Avenue off of Bailey Avenue.

University Blooms has also come to encompass other gardening initiatives supported under a partnership between the Tool Library and Buffalo in Bloom. This includes maintenance and improvement of the extensive public gardens found at the Winspear-Tyler Triangle as well as the Tyler Triangle Park. These public flower beds have been rehabilitated, maintained, and nurtured by area residents and Tool Library volunteers under the guidance of a master gardener. With primarily perennial flowers blooming from spring to fall and several edible berry bushes, these green space provide a peaceful place to enjoy the neighborhood. The gardens have been featured on the Capen Garden Walk, been "bloomed" by Buffalo in Bloom, and have also played host to an increasing number of community events and outdoor festivities.

GET INVOLVED



Donate

Help us continue to fill public spaces and parks with landscapes of color each spring! Donate bulbs or bucks to cover the thousands of perennial bulbs our volunteers plant each fall.



Volunteer

Join us each year in the fall to help plant thousands of bulbs! Know a space in your neighborhood that could use some landscape love? Organize a planting, and we'll provide the bulbs and tools!



“

As city dwellers, we tend to focus on buildings. But it's the space between those structures that matter most. Every park, every garden, and every vacant lot is an opportunity to make the city a little more beautiful.”





BY THE NUMBERS

7 Raised Beds

10 Work Days

15 Gardeners

55 Volunteers

165 Service Hours

\$4,283 Invested

PARTNERS

Gloria J. Parks Community Center

Grassroots Gardens WNY

University at Buffalo

University Heights Collaborative

University Presbyterian Church

HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to a partnership with UB's Engineering Intramurals, gardeners with the Tyler Street Community Garden were able to work with UB students to develop an automated watering system that collects rainwater and, using a gravity-fed system, delivers the water to one of the garden's raised beds through a series of PVC pipes. The ultimate goal is to develop a system that would automate the watering of all the beds.

TYLER ST COMMUNITY GARDEN

www.thetoollibrary.org/tylerstreet

The Tyler Street Community Garden is a once vacant lot that has been transformed into a place to grow food locally, hold events, host gardening workshops, and build community. It currently features seven raised beds, several perennial flower gardens, a handful of fruit trees, a community tool chest, and picnic area. The beds are adopted and maintained by local residents and organizations in the community.

The Tyler Street Community Garden was created in 2012 when the University Heights Collaborative partnered with Grassroots Gardens of Buffalo (now Grassroots Gardens WNY) to transform a vacant lot donated by a local landlord into a community garden. The garden, located at 73 Tyler Street, is the University Heights' only produce-bearing community garden and is also a registered monarch way station.

The garden has grown a considerable amount since its birth and there are plans to expand it even further. The UHC and UHTL board and staff members have been working with UB engineering students to develop an automated community garden watering system which would water raised beds on small or large scale in a timely and effective manner. The goal is to save volunteers time and allow them to focus on other tasks in the garden such as tending to perennial flower beds and hosting gardening workshops.

In 2016 Grassroots Gardens also announced their intentions to move forward with the purchase of several community gardens across the city to protect them in perpetuity. The Tyler Street Community Garden was one of three initial gardens to be purchased. Moving from land that is leased to land that is owned will allow the Tyler Street Community Garden to make more significant investments in the space, including signage, furniture, pathways, an expanded tool shed and more.

GET INVOLVED



Donate

The Community Garden is much more than a place to grow food. It's a venue to host events, teach workshops, and more! Help us continue to improve and invest in this space for years to come.



Volunteer

Join us each month for a community garden work day and get your hands dirty! Help us weed, mulch, and water and keep the garden looking good. The on-site tool chest will make sure you've got the right tools for the job!



“

Community gardens provide a space where neighbors who were once strangers can grow to become friends. They are a space where change comes from within rather than above, and a vacant lot can be transformed into an urban oasis by sowing tomorrow's seeds today.”





BY THE NUMBERS

20 Workshops

95 Events

172 Hours in Use

613 Attendees

\$7,580 Invested

PARTNERS

Bufvelo
CoolControl Program
D.O.P.E Art Collective WNY
The Foundry
Gloria J. Parks Community Center
GOBike Buffalo
Grassroots Gardens WNY
#HappyPeriod
Housing Opportunities Made Equal
People Inc.
PUSH Green
VOICE Buffalo
St. Joseph Neighborhood Housing
Initiative
University at Buffalo
University Heights Collaborative
University Heights Business Association
University Park Block Club
Valu Home Centers
Winspear-Northrup Block Club

HIGHLIGHTS

The CoLab and Tool Library, in partnership with The Foundry, ran several DIY workshops teaching people how to build their very own little library. Volunteers then handcrafted thirteen little libraries (including two with green roofs!) that were auctioned off in a joint fundriaser for both organizations.

UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS COLAB

www.letscolab.org

The University Heights Community Laboratory, or CoLab, was formally introduced in March 2015 as a multipurpose space open to the community to rent for no- to low-cost. The space hosts art shows, holds events and meetings, and provides workshops focused on community development, self improvement, and affordable and accessible education.

Recognizing a need for educational resources focused on proper tool use and DIY projects for both Tool Library members and residents, the CoLab developed as a venue for learn-by-doing workshops. Vacant and abandoned for many years, the space was slowly transformed over the course of several years and many long hours put in by volunteers into a place that 'colaborators' to make their own.. Where once chain link fence covered the windows, art now adorns the walls, meetings take place from morning to night, and the CoLab hums with the activity of a community and city willing to share their talents and teach those willing to learn. As a former dance studio, recording center, and neighborhood co-operative, the CoLab continues to promote individuality and sees no idea as too big or too small to test in the space.

2016 reflected an incredible period of growth for the CoLab, as the space tripled the number of events and workshops it hosted from 31 total events in 2015 to 95.. The event participants nearly doubled to 603 while those same participants helped contribute to over 170 hours of operational time throughout the year compared to 70 hours in 2015. The CoLab continues to stress the importance of local partners, or "colaborators", to provide new workshops and broaden network capabilities. The introduction of three new block clubs, a business association, and two homeschool classes who now regularly use the space has directly provided the CoLab with instructors and artists who now regularly use the space as well. The CoLab continues to be a place for artists to express themselves, entrepreneurs to test their business, and communities to come together for a great cause. Events throughout the years have ranged from art galleries to gardening workshops to dance performances to cooking classes to DIY workshops and many more!

The CoLab isn't just an event space, but also a supportive environment to create sustainable collaborative projects for the benefit of our communities. One such project is the Automated Watering Gardening System which connects University at Buffalo Engineering students with volunteers from the Tyler Street Community Garden to design and build an affordable watering system to reduce the watering time for volunteers and provide a model for community gardens across the city. Another ongoing program is the Tree Stewardship Program which teaches individuals the importance of maintaining their neighborhood's tree canopy through hands-on learning and demonstrations.



“

The CoLab is a space where community can come together to create, build, and grow. Where no idea is too big or too small to test!”

To continue to reflect the voice of the community, the CoLab is looking to introduce a pilot Repair Cafe program with the Tool Library to offer people a chance to fix their positions with the guide of an experienced instructor. Repair Cafes reduce the materials in the waste pipeline and actually teach people how to fix items which creates a continuum of shared knowledge ensuring the program's success for years to come. As the Tool Library works to incorporate as its own non-profit, the space hopes to be open regularly as a co-op working space for students, Buffalonians, and neighborhood residents.

GET INVOLVED



Donate

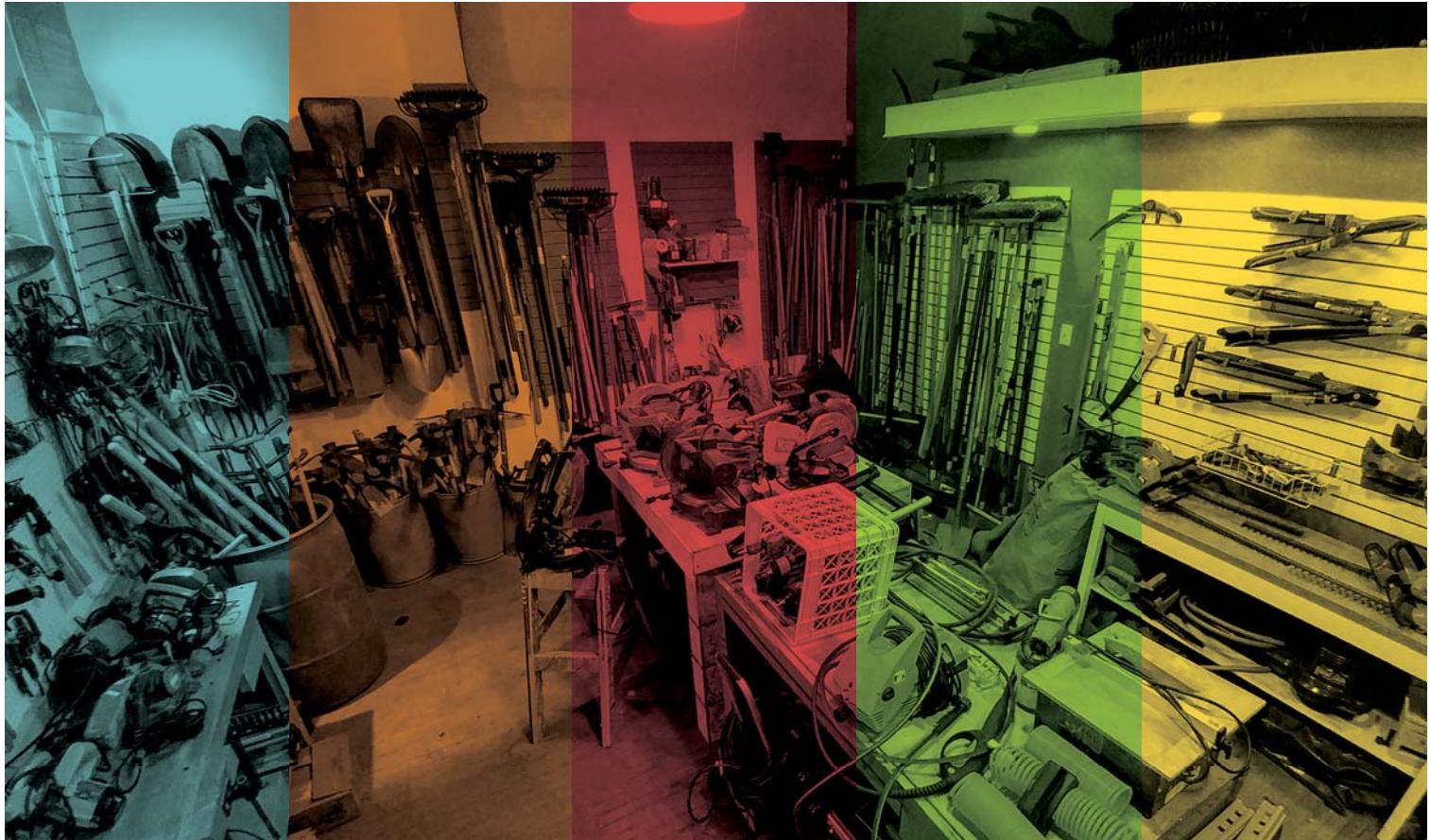
From vacant to vibrant, we've been able to transform the CoLab into a space where community can come together. Your support will help us continue to build out the space!



Volunteer

Have a skill you'd like to share? A favorite recipe you'd like to pass down? Teach a workshop at the CoLab and share your knowledge, skills, and talents with your fellow community members!





UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS TOOL LIBRARY



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