

= McDonald 's Cycle Center =

McDonald 's Cycle Center ( formerly Millennium Park Bike Station ) is an indoor bike station in the northeast corner of Millennium Park in the Loop community area of Chicago , in the U.S. state of Illinois . The city of Chicago built the center at the intersection of East Randolph Street and Columbus Drive , and opened it July 2004 . Since June 2006 , it has been sponsored by McDonald 's and several other partners , including city departments and bicycle advocacy organizations . The bike station , which serves bicycle commuters and utility cyclists , provides lockers , showers , a snack bar with outdoor summer seating , bike repair , bike rental and 300 bicycle parking spaces . The Cycle Center is accessible by membership and day pass . It also accommodates runners and inline skaters , and provides space for a Chicago Police Department Bike Patrol Group .

Planning for the Cycle Center was part of the larger " Bike 2010 Plan " , in which the city aimed to make itself more accommodating to bicycle commuters . This plan ( now replaced by the " Bike 2015 Plan " ) included provisions for front @-@ mounted two @-@ bike carriers on Chicago Transit Authority ( CTA ) buses , permitting bikes to be carried on Chicago ' L ' trains , installing numerous bike racks and creating bicycle lanes in streets throughout the city . Additionally , the Chicago metropolitan area 's other mass transit providers , Metra and Pace , have developed increased bike accessibility . Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley was an advocate of the plan , noting it is also an environmentally friendly effort to cut down on traffic . McDonald 's controversially claimed that , since it is providing a healthier menu and fostering grade school physical education in an effort to help its customers improve their health , sponsoring bicycle and exercise activity in the park augments the company 's other initiatives .

Environmentalists , urban planners and cycling enthusiasts around the world have expressed interest in the Cycle Center , and want to emulate what they see as a success story in urban planning and transit @-@ oriented development . Pro @-@ cycling and environmentalist journalists in publications well beyond the Chicago metropolitan area have described the Cycle Center as exemplary , impressive , unique and ground @-@ breaking .

= = History and background = =

Lying between Lake Michigan to the east and the Loop to the west , Grant Park has been Chicago 's " front yard " since the mid @-@ 19th century . Its northwest corner , north of Monroe Street and the Art Institute , east of Michigan Avenue , south of Randolph Street , and west of Columbus Drive , had been Illinois Central rail yards and parking lots until 1997 , when it was made available for development by the city as Millennium Park . According to 2007 data released in 2008 , Millennium Park trailed only Navy Pier as a Chicago tourist attraction .

The Millennium Park bicycle center was designed by David Steele of the architectural firm Muller & Muller , which won a \$ 120 @,@ 000 contract to design the station by Memorial Day 2004 , and commenced the design in August 2003 . This was at a time when bike stations were in place or being planned in several U.S. cities , such as Denver , and , in California , Los Angeles , Berkeley , Long Beach and Palo Alto . Developed at the time of " Bike 2010 Plan " discussions , the station was part of Mayor Daley 's vision of Chicago as the most bicycle @-@ friendly city in the United States . From the outset the plan was to have separate operators for the Cycle Center 's rental and repair services , as well as its coffee and juice bar .

The bike station had originally been planned to occupy 10 @,@ 000 square feet ( 929 m2 ) and cost \$ 2 million , but when completed , the Cycle Center was 16 @,@ 448 square feet ( 1 @,@ 528 m2 ) and located on a larger exterior plaza . The final two @-@ floor design cost \$ 3 @.@ 2 million , and a federal grant from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for projects that lessen traffic congestion and improve air quality funded its construction .

The Cycle Center was completed in June 2004 and the official opening occurred on July 19 , 2004 , the Monday following the Millennium Park 's grand opening gala . Attendees for the ribbon cutting included Mayor Daley , CDOT Commissioner Miguel d 'Escoto , Chicago Park District General Superintendent Timothy Mitchell , and representatives from the Chicago Bike Federation , Public

Building Commission , Chicago Police Department , and Chicago City Council . Managed by the Chicago Department of Transportation ( CDOT ) , the Cycle Center is on the fifth and sixth floors of the Millennium Park parking garage .

Although bicycle centers were already common throughout Europe , Long Beach , California is credited with pioneering commuter @-@ biking hubs offering valet parking , showers and repair services in the United States . As the concept grew , public agencies and private groups in other cities followed suit . The development of the Millennium Park Cycle Center was part of a reversal of bike disincentives stemming from *Bouff v. Township of Wayne* ? a 1998 Illinois Supreme Court ruling that bikes are " permitted " but not " intended " users of the roads , meaning that local governments have a limited responsibility to keep cyclists safe and that municipalities are immune from bicycle @-@ injury lawsuits unless the street has been clearly marked as a bike route . The city has been actively accommodating cyclists since 1999 through the CDOT Bike Lane Project . At the time of the July 2004 Cycle Center opening , Illinois Senate Bill 275 , which would have removed the liability disincentive to add bike lanes , mark bike routes and give cyclists reasonable protection , was at issue . At the time , the city of Chicago had 90 miles ( 140 km ) of bike lanes ( with an additional 110 miles ( 180 km ) forthcoming ) , in excess of 9 @, @ 000 bike racks , and it had implemented a policy allowing bicycles on CTA trains ( at all times excluding weekday morning and afternoon rush hours ) , CTA buses and Pace buses . In June 2005 , Metra allowed a limited number of bicycles on trains during off @-@ peak and weekend hours for the first time on a trial basis . By 2006 , the city had 315 miles ( 507 km ) of bike lanes . The planning emphasis in Chicago uses what is known as transit @-@ oriented development , which encourages developers to include bicycle parking .

The structure was originally named the Millennium Park Bike Station , but in June 2006 McDonald 's announced a \$ 5 million grant to underwrite the operations of the Cycle Center for 50 years . The bike facility had been the last unsponsored component of Millennium Park . As part of the endowment , McDonald 's agreed to be the sponsor of free summer physical fitness programs such as yoga , pilates , and a variety of dance class sessions in Millennium Park for 10 years . McDonald 's agreed not to use any of its traditional commercial signage such as the Golden Arches . The McDonald 's sponsorship of the Cycle Center and park fitness activity came just a few months after Chicago was named the fattest city in America by Men 's Fitness .

The Cycle Center is designed to encourage bicycle commuting to Millennium and Grant Parks as well as to work and other nearby downtown locations , such as the Art Institute of Chicago . It represents two major initiatives by the mayor : to promote cycling and to make the city greener . By supporting cycling as an alternate form of transportation , it will help reduce traffic congestion , improve air quality and promote the health benefits of cycling .

= = Design = =

The physical focal point of the Cycle Center is an atrium that introduces the two lower levels of facilities and provides an aesthetic above @-@ ground presence . The atrium , which has been praised by Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning architecture critic Blair Kamin more than once , has a sloping solar paneled roof . The 120 solar panels produce 6 @. @ 5 percent of the electricity supply required for the climate @-@ controlled building . The Cycle Center has an opaque design , with thin steel frames for its main windows . The interior design uses stainless steel and blond wood , and shade is produced by awnings .

The Cycle Center includes parking for up to 300 bikes , lockers , an Internet station , a cafe , bike rentals , bike repair and private stall showers . During business hours , the facility has 100 spaces set aside for first @-@ come , first @-@ served usage , but after hours the facility is limited to dues @-@ paying members . In addition to the riders , the Chicago Police Lakefront Bicycle Patrol Unit is stationed at the Cycle Center . As the city 's high @-@ profile bicycle parking facility , it has served as a demonstration location for efforts to lobby for further bicycle accommodations for the Active Transportation Alliance , League of Illinois Bicyclists , and Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn .

## == Facilities ==

When the heated and air conditioned McDonald 's Cycle Center opened , bicycle parking facilities with amenities , which had first appeared in the U.S. on the West Coast , did not exist in the Midwest . When it opened in 2006 the bike station was one of the country 's largest and most modern . The Cycle Center 's bicycle parking facilities use high @-@ capacity , two @-@ tiered DoubleParker racks that accommodate more than twice as many bicycles per square foot as traditional bike racks . These racks were manufactured by Josta , a German manufacturer of bicycle parking systems and stands . The interior design was a joint collaboration between the city of Chicago , Josta , and Cycle @-@ Safe , Inc. of Grand Rapids , Michigan , which also produces lockers and racks for bicycles . The Chicago Park District runs the station , which has a full @-@ time staff .

The Cycle Center is at 239 East Randolph Street ( at Columbus Drive ) , and offers convenient connections to mass transit at the nearby Chicago Transit Authority hub , the McCormick Place Busway and Metra trains at Millennium Station . For the annual series of festivals held in Grant Park , such as Lollapalooza and Taste of Chicago , the McDonald 's Cycle Center is complemented by the Chase Bike Valet at the corner of Lake Shore Drive and Monroe Street , which is one block east of Millennium Park . Chase Bank and organizations such as the Active Transportation Alliance sponsor the Chase Bike Valet . The city and its Cycle Center are considered exemplary by other cities in pursuit of covered , secure bicycle parking near public transportation .

## == Membership ==

The Cycle Center offers a wide variety of services to its members , and is busiest on Monday and Tuesday mornings . Illinois residents are eligible for Cycle Center monthly or annual memberships , which provide access to the showers and lockers ; allow participation in the shared bicycle program ; and include discounts on bicycle services , accessories , I @-@ GO car sharing membership , and City bike events . The Cycle Center is affiliated with , and provides free special @-@ event valet bicycle service for events such as Bike The Drive , L.A.T.E. Ride , and Chicago Marathon . As part of their membership agreement , members cannot store perishables and illegal substances in the lockers .

In April 2005 , the Cycle Center approached its 500 @-@ member capacity , and began a waiting list . Monthly membership was \$ 15 and yearly membership was \$ 90 . When the Cycle Center was renamed in 2006 , it had an approximate membership of 500 cyclists , who each paid dues of either \$ 15 monthly or \$ 99 annually . About 50 @, @ 000 riders used the Cycle Center in its first two years . By 2007 , the annual membership cost for those selected from the wait list was \$ 20 per month or \$ 149 per year . There are 240 lockers available to members . The Cycle Center has eight private stall showers , four each for men and women , that are equipped with an attached personal dressing area . The station has offered a nutritional continental breakfast including cereal , coffee , fruit , juice and yogurt .

## == Rentals ==

The Cycle Center offers a wide variety of bicycle styles , models and accessories for hourly , daily , weekly or monthly rental . Helmets , locks , and trail maps are included with each rental . Deposits can be secured with a valid credit card or driver 's license . Children under 18 years old must have a parent or guardian for rentals . Among the types of rentals available are tagalongs , wagons , tandem bicycles and inline skates , and discounts are available with online rentals . Bike Chicago manages the rentals at the Cycle Center , as well as at Navy Pier , North Avenue Beach and Foster Avenue Beach . The citywide rental network emulates those in cities such as Paris , where they have long been common . Showers and lockers were initially available to non @-@ members for a \$ 1 fee , but by 2009 , the fee had been raised to \$ 3 . One hundred lockers are available to day users .

### === Repair ===

The Cycle Center 's repair center offers full @-@ time professional bicycle mechanics from 10 am to 6 pm during the summer , between Memorial Day weekend and Labor Day weekend inclusive , and part @-@ time during the rest of the year . The repair center has tools available for those who want to fix their bicycle themselves . Repair services are deeply discounted .

### === Tours ===

The Cycle Center conducts two- to three @-@ hour tours , with reservations dependent on the seasons . Tours include the Lake Michigan lakefront , the North Side , the South Side and night @-@ time sightseeing . Self @-@ guided tours are also available . Reservations are recommended from April to August and are required during the rest of the year . In May 2006 , regular tours were offered . The biking event Le Tour de Shore was held over 2 days in 2008 . Starting at the Cycle Center , the event took riders 90 miles ( 140 km ) near Lake Michigan , through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore , and along the backroads of both Indiana and Michigan . The Chicago Trolley Company takes bicyclists from the Cycle Center to the DuSable Museum of African American History twice daily for the Presidential Bike tour , which starts on the South Side of Chicago . The bike tour travels to Barack Obama 's home in the Kenwood community area , the place of his and Michelle Obama 's marriage and other culturally related destinations .

### == Critical review ==

The Chicago Tribune 's architecture critic , Blair Kamin , gave the Cycle Center three stars ( out of a possible four ) , described as a " gem " for the city and praised several elements of its detail . It has received accolades from numerous architecture and bicycling enthusiasts . Other Tribune writers have described the station as an " oasis for the urban cyclist " and reminiscent of " a hip health club " . The Toronto Star described it similarly , saying that it is a " jewel @-@ like glass building " with " amenities of an upscale health club " ; it quoted a cycling advocate who said " It 's not heaven , but it 's close " . According to The Plain Dealer , the Cycle Center is the United States ' " best @-@ known [ bike ] station " , while The Oregonian describes it as " the ultimate in bicycle stations " . The Boston Globe felt that the Cycle Center put Chicago over the top as the nation 's most cycling @-@ friendly city .

The Cycle Center avoided much of the controversy that beset most of Millennium Park by remaining open during the paid rental of a large portion of the park by Toyota on September 8 , 2005 . What proved more controversial were McDonald 's claims that , since it is providing a healthier menu and fostering grade school physical education in an effort to help its customers improve their health , sponsoring bicycle and exercise activity in the park augments the company 's other initiatives . Longtime writer for the Chicago Tribune and current Tribune health and fitness reporter , Julie Deardorff , described the move as a continuation of the " McDonaldization " of America ' and as somewhat " insidious " because the company is making itself more prominent as the social sentiment is to move away from fast food .

The Cycle Center has helped Chicago to become known as a cycling @-@ friendly city . According to an article in The Washington Post based on selections by the Adventure Cycling Association and Bicycling magazine , Chicago is one of the ten most cycling @-@ friendly cities in the U.S. because of the Cycle Center and the Chicago Department of Transportation 's Bicycle Program . The Cycle Center was featured in the Federal Transit Administration 's April 2009 report to the United States Congress on a new generation of innovative transit systems entitled Reinventing Transit : American communities finding smarter , cleaner , faster transportation solutions . Cities as far away as Melbourne , Australia , point to Chicago as an example of a city with cycling @-@ friendly features because of the Cycle Center ( they also used European cities such as Amsterdam and Lyon , France , as well as U.S. cities such as Davis , California and Portland , Oregon as examples ) . The Chicago Architecture Foundation awarded its 2004 Stein Ray & Harris Patron of the Year award in

the governmental category to Millennium Park , specifically mentioning the bike station , Commissioner d 'Escoto and the City of Chicago Department of Transportation , along with several other leaders responsible for the development of other park features .