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Chicago Business Brings the Cycling Ethic to Clients and Community

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Ready to Roll: Cyclists gather for a recent ride sponsored by Chicago's Big Shoulders Realty. (Credit: Lee Diamond)

When Chicago realtors Carrie Weston and Lee Diamond launched their real estate business back in 2006, they wanted to offer their clients a break from the status quo. "We had our own unique ideas about how we wanted to do business," said Diamond. "Organic, small, embrace-the-indieness sorts of ideas."

With the opening of [Big Shoulders Realty](#), they did, indeed, "embrace the indieness," offering services quite unlike other realty companies, beginning with their unique database that helps clients define their preferred architectural style, then locate real estate that matches that aesthetic. "We're the only agency where you can search for properties by style," said Diamond. And Big Shoulders is probably the only real estate agency, in Chicago or elsewhere, that's equipped with a fleet of bikes designated for clients who want ease of mobility when looking at properties.



Each bike in the Big Shoulders' fleet is named after a Chicago historical figure. This Halloween-orange bike was named for 19th-century philanthropist Bertha Palmer.

(Credit: Lee Diamond)

"I built an army of bikes called the Big Shoulder Recyclery," said Diamond, who sourced the eclectic melange of steel-frame bikes from flea markets, stripping them down and rebuilding them to make them safe and rideable. "They're all free for all people to ride." Currently, about 30 per cent of Big Shoulders' clients make use of the 12 recycled, revamped bikes, which are all named for historical characters who called Chicago home - from Studs Terkel to Bertha Palmer.

Diamond, who plans to make another dozen

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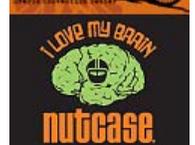
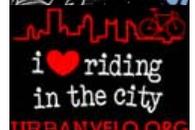
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It was a good day.



Brompton Bicycle



bikes available to clients soon, also makes his herd available to steedless pedalers on the community rides he and his colleagues organize each month. The neighborhood spins, which have steadily grown in popularity through DIY and word-of-mouth advertising, often attract upwards of 150 people per ride. Past rides have already scoured the streets of Lincoln Square, Hyde Park and Avondale; [the next ride](#), slated for October 31, will focus on the architecturally diverse West Town district, and participants are encouraged to ride in costume.

Each cycling event attracts a "decidedly mixed" crowd, of men, women and children who appreciate the freedom of two wheels coupled with a well-informed, guided-tour experience. Diamond's thorough preparation for his custom-designed tours often begins with library research on local architecture and history, equipping himself with the information he will need in order to offer his fellow ramblers an interesting and memorable experience. "The history of Chicago is a diverse and crazy one," said Diamond. "I'd like to be able to raise people's appreciation for our architectural history."

In addition to architectural highlights, the upcoming West Town tour will focus on community gardens and murals, and will conclude on Paseo Bariqua, where a neighborhood organized Halloween event complete with a parade and community trick-or-treating. Because supporting the local cycling community is at the core of Big Shoulders' business ethic, they'll be partnering with [West Town Bikes](#), a cycling advocacy group dedicated to encouraging youth riding, and West Town bike shop [Ciclo Urbano](#). For Lee Diamond, making a difference is more than just a personal passion, its an integral component of his work ethic. "We're strong cycling advocates out to change ideas about how you can do business."

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