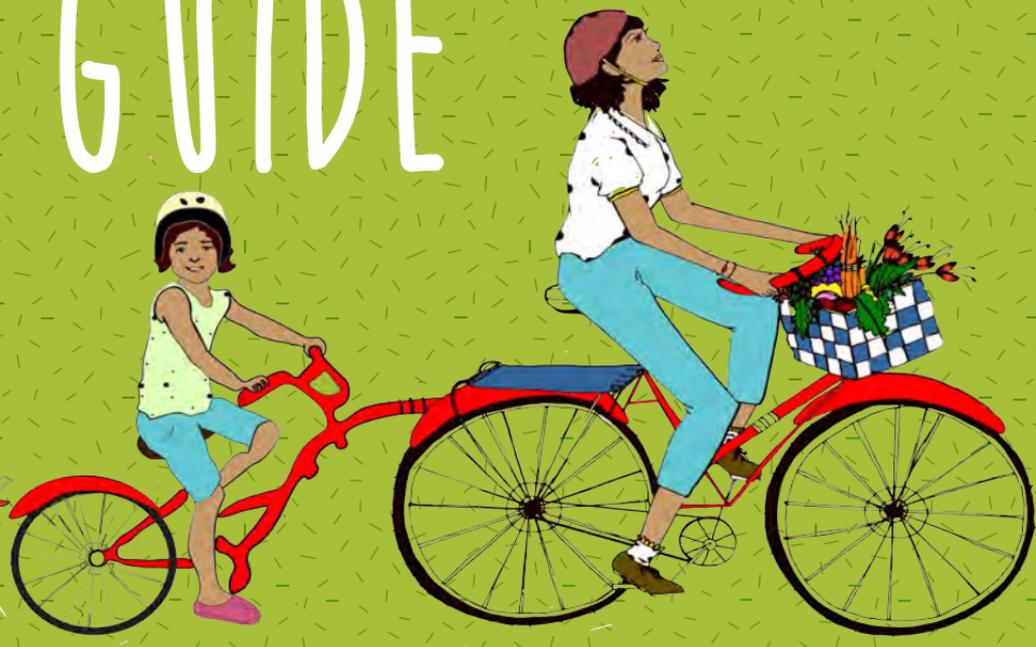


# CHARLOTTE FAMILY BIKING GUIDE



*A How-To Manual For All Stages Of Family Biking*

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# SPECIAL THANKS TO THE CHARLOTTE FAMILY BIKING GUIDE CONTRIBUTORS!

We thank the Oregon Metro for generously donating their Family Biking Guide template to Charlotte for our use!

Sustain Charlotte and the City of Charlotte Bicycle Advisory Committee have worked to customize a guide to fit the needs of our city.

## A NOTE ABOUT SUSTAIN CHARLOTTE

Sustain Charlotte is a nonprofit organization helping to advance a region-wide sustainability movement by serving as a catalyst for change.

Our mission is to inspire choices that lead to healthy, equitable and vibrant communities across the Charlotte metro region for generations to come.



## A NOTE ABOUT THE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BAC)

The BAC is an advisory body to City Council. The committee reviews bicycle plans and makes recommendations on implementing the policies and policy strategies.

The BAC also recommends appropriate action to the City Council and County Commission on bicycle transportation issues.

# *WELCOME TO THE CHARLOTTE FAMILY BIKING GUIDE!*

*Biking as a family allows you to spend quality time together, stay fit and experience the Queen City by bike.*

*Depending on your comfort level, you don't need to wait until your kids are old enough to ride on their own to enjoy the benefits of biking together.*

*Whether in a pull-along trailer, seated on the back of a long-tail bike, or riding solo, you and your child can experience the freedom and convenience of getting to your next destination -- or simply exploring -- on bike!*

# BIKING WHILE PREGNANT

Biking during pregnancy can be a great way to help curb nausea, improve energy levels, and maintain an active lifestyle. Of course, every pregnancy and every woman is different.

Here are a few things to keep in mind if you're considering biking during your pregnancy:

## Check With Your Doctor

Make sure biking during pregnancy is a healthy choice for you, and that your doctor is on the same page.

## Consider Your Route

Does your commute generally stay on lower-traffic streets or have bike lanes? Re-routing your ride to streets with fewer cars and busy intersections could reduce ride stress.

## Consider Your Comfort

It might be time to invest in an upright bike or make adjustments to your current ride to increase your comfort and riding confidence as your body changes.

## Listen Up

You know your body best, so be sure to listen to it. Today might be a better day to take public transit or carpool.

**Charlotte Pro Tip**  
"Just be mindful -- your center of gravity shifts with your changing body!"



# BIKING WITH BABIES

## Neck Strength

Until your baby is able to hold her head up on her own, she shouldn't be carried in an upright bike seat. Adequate neck strength usually won't occur until 9 months or later.

## Cargo Box Bikes and Trailers

Cargo box bikes and trailers have the option of strapping an infant-sized car seat into their frame to help support your baby's neck and head. Continue to the next page for cargo box bike and trailer examples.



## 1-3 years

Once your baby can sit up without falling, hold her head up on her own, and fit into a helmet, she is most likely ready to ride in a front- or rear-mounted bike seat, cargo box bike or trailer.

### Set-up Options

#### Front-Mounted Seats

Typically have lower weight limits so these work best as an option up to age three. Allows you to see what your baby is up to while riding. Can attach to your bike stem or frame.



#### Rear-Mounted Seats

Typically have higher weight limits so you can use them longer than a front-mounted version. Conversations with your child are still possible, but you lose the ability to see what your child is up to while you ride.

*Attaching a rear rack on your bike is necessary before attaching a rear-mounted seat.*



#### Cargo Box Bikes

After your baby can sit well (usually after 12 months) she may be ready to ride in a seated position in the box of a cargo bike. Cargo box bikes have lots of extra room for your family gear and also offer rain/element covers and other accessories.



#### Trailers

Trailers are easily attached to your bike and don't demand much change to your current set-up. It is not as easy to chat with your child while riding, but they will have good protection from the elements and can nap easily. There's also lots of room for extra cargo.



## Un/loading Your Bike

Never leave your bike unattended with your child in a bike seat!

A double-sided kickstand can assist in stabilizing during loading and unloading, but always keep a hand on the bike during the process.

## Head Support

Bike rides tend to lull children to sleep. Make sure her head and neck have enough support when she nods off.

## Accessories

Various brands offer accessories for seats like rain/element covers, handlebars, head rests, adjustable foot rests and more.

## Test Your Set-Up

Be sure to try out whatever option you choose without your child to make sure you feel comfortable with the added weight and can ensure everything is properly attached. Test rides provide a chance to check your knee clearance with front-mounted seats and to practice mounting and dismounting.

## What To Expect From Your Child

Depending on your baby's temperament, she may take some time getting used to biking. It also may be a struggle to get your child to wear a helmet, but she will likely forget it's on once the bike is moving. Eventually, a helmet will be accepted as a required riding tool and your child will be reminding you to put yours on.



*Children nearing two years old and older are usually ready to try their hand at riding a bike. See "Your Child's First Wheels" in the next "Biking With Toddlers" section.*

# BIKING WITH TODDLERS

## 3-5 years

If you're using a front-mounted seat, it will probably be time to move to a rear-mounted seat, assuming your child is near the weight limit. Rear-mounted seats, trailers, and cargo box bikes are still good travel options with toddlers, but as they move past age three there are additional set-ups to consider.

### Toddler set-up options

In order to advance to any of the following toddler options, your child will need to stay awake for the whole ride and sit safely on a bike without restraints. Keep your first rides shorter so everyone can get used to the new set-up.

#### Tag-Alongs or Trailercycles

Tow your child on a one-wheeled bike that attaches to the seat post of your bike; it gives your child the option of pedaling or just coasting along for the ride.



#### Bike Tow Bar/Follow-Me Tandem

Tow your child and her full, two-wheeled bicycle behind yours, then unhook and let your child ride by herself when she's confident to ride on her own.



#### Longtail Bikes

Rear-mounted seats, back rests, and handlebars can all be attached on this bike's back extension for multiple child and cargo carrying options.



#### Tandems

There are multiple styles of family tandems available, with possibilities of children pedaling in front or back, and in upright or reclined seating positions.



## Riding with Two or More Children

Here's where you can get creative. Combinations of many products already mentioned should do the trick.



### Charlotte Pro Tip

"It's tough for the outdoors to compete in the age of Minecraft, iPad, XBOX, and the like," says Jon Harding, a routine bike commuter, bike-packer, and general man-about-town on two wheels. "Getting started can be a little intimidating, especially if your kids outnumber you."

Don't be discouraged! Jon says getting the kids and family out there on the bike can be easy with a little planning ahead.

## Your Child's First Wheels

Toddlers around two years and older are often ready to be introduced to a balance bike or trike on their own. Starting your child on a balance bike or trike will build confidence before she starts pedaling on two wheels independently, with or without training wheels, around age three.

### Balance Bikes

Small bikes without pedals or training wheels meant to teach the fundamentals of balancing and steering a bike. Sitting upright with feet flat on the ground helps your child feel more comfortable and steady as she begins learning to balance.



*Making your own Balance Bike: Lower the seat and remove the pedals of another small youth bike and you've created your own balance bike (a local bike shop can assist with those adjustments if you don't have the tools).*



### Training Wheels

Training wheels help a bicycle stay upright while your child learns to pedal and begin maintaining balance. Gradually raise the training wheels as your child becomes more proficient at riding then remove them once she's gotten the hang of it.

### Riding Practice

Try out new riding skills in car-free places like parks or school playgrounds. Practice safety skills early by staying to the right and teaching awareness of other path users.

# BIKING WITH TODDLERS

## Charlotte Resources

We have great resources right here in Charlotte that will help you start bicycling with your child. Whether you need help teaching your child how to ride or if they are ready for the next steps, these organizations have you covered!

### Learn to Ride

Learn to Ride is a not-for-profit, 100% volunteer series of events to grow Charlotte's cycling community one new cyclist at a time. Kids of all ages and grown-ups, too, can learn to ride a bike using the tried-and-true "balance bike" method. Keep an eye out for these amazing events!

[learntorideclt.com](http://learntorideclt.com)



### Charlotte Bike Camp

Geared for young riders (recommended for ages 5 to teenagers) who are eager to gain independence, learn new skills and build confidence on their bikes while exploring our amazing city! Riders will learn the essentials of safe riding, bicycle maintenance, and route planning and will be able to practice riding techniques in a safe, supportive environment.

[cltbikecamp.org](http://cltbikecamp.org)



# BIKING TO SCHOOL

Making the shift from casual riding to commuting can seem really big and mysterious, but is fairly straightforward once you've tried it a few times and created your own routine. Biking to school is an excellent way to get to school and work quickly while spending quality time with your children.

## Find A Route

Choosing good routes for your bike trips can make your rides safer, more pleasant, and more kid-friendly. The route you normally drive usually isn't the best route by bike. Find trip planning assistance here:

- Many elementary schools offer school-specific walking and biking maps showing routes and crossings with one mile of participating school. Ask your local school if they participate in Safe Routes to School or have a bike train program.
- **The Charlotte Cycling Guide** covers Mecklenburg County bicycle routes and rates them based on comfort level.  
[charlottenc.gov/Transportation/Programs/Pages/Bicycle.aspx](http://charlottenc.gov/Transportation/Programs/Pages/Bicycle.aspx)
- Charlotte's greenway, parks and rail trail systems are great for commuting away from traffic. Explore them all at  
[mecknc.gov/ParkandRec/Greenways/Pages/default.aspx](http://mecknc.gov/ParkandRec/Greenways/Pages/default.aspx)

## Neighborhood Greenways & Low-traffic Streets

A number of quiet local streets have route signs and markings to help bicyclists find their way and are ideal for families biking for transportation. Areas without designated greenways still have options for traveling on low-traffic streets that get you where you need to go, without exposing yourself and children to streets with heavy traffic or fast-moving vehicles. Many connect directly with neighborhood schools and parks.

# Kids On Your Bike

## Commuting To Daycare And Early Elementary

When commuting with kids on your bike, there are a few things to think about to make your trip a little easier:



### Plan Ahead

Dropping your child off and continuing on to work usually includes figuring where to leave her helmet, how to haul your gear, and more. Planning ahead and surveying the drop-off scene at school can be helpful. Turning this plan into a regular routine can also make mornings less stressful.

### Be Prepared

(psst...bring snacks!) Similar to traveling with your child by any other mode, be prepared for whatever the weather might bring when considering apparel and accessories. Having snacks on hand when you show up after daycare or school can make the ride home more enjoyable.

### Teach Street Safety Skills

Riding together is a great time to talk about what stop signs, road markings, or other traffic controls mean when on a bike. This will make your job easier later on when teaching your child to walk or bike independently.

### Charlotte Pro Tip

Do you want to step up your own bicycling game? There are a bunch of adult cycling classes for you to brush up on your skills! Check out Cycling Savvy at [register.cyclingsavvy.org/groups/north-carolina](https://register.cyclingsavvy.org/groups/north-carolina)

# Kids Riding Independently

## Elementary School And Beyond

The graduation from simply being able to ride with ease (braking, turning, navigating hills) being confident with street rules takes a lot of practice and diligence. When practicing on quiet streets or sidewalks, walk or ride alongside your child and talk about street rules with an emphasis on safety.

## Five Important Skills To Make Sure Everyone Is Confident

- 1 *Using street and traffic safety, especially around crossings and driveways; this includes watching for cars, understanding right of way, and more*
- 2 *Riding predictably in a straight line*
- 3 *Looking back without swerving*
- 4 *Stopping and speed control*
- 5 *Riding on uneven and varied surfaces, especially gravel*

## Practice Makes Perfect

Before you begin the weekday school run, practice your route on a weekend morning when traffic is usually lighter. This can help gauge your travel time and also how well your child is prepared for riding in the streets.

## Start Small

Neither you nor your child may be ready to jump full on into daily bike commuting. Start by riding once a week or on late-start days until you are both ready for more.

## Safe Routes To School

Safe Routes to School offers encouragement programs and bike safety education to help support walking and rolling to school.

Schools in the Charlotte area are beginning to offer some of the following events or programs to help you and your student get excited about biking! If you would like to organize these activities at your child's school, **let Sustain Charlotte connect you with community leaders** to learn how to start a program.

### Bike Trains

Groups of students riding to school with one or more parent chaperons. Designated routes allow students to join in anywhere along the way. More than one = fun!

### International Walk + Bike To School Day

Join students and families across the globe every October to celebrate getting to school in an active, healthy way!

### Walk + Bike Challenge Month

Charlotte students can challenge other classes, schools, or their faculty to see who can walk or roll to school more often in May.



### Charlotte Pro Tip

Park Road Montessori has a fantastic bike train to school called Bicycle Friday, where dedicated teachers, parents and volunteers lead children to school! Want to see this happen at your child's school? Check out their website for details and to meet the wonderful staff in charge!  
[parkroadmontessori.com/get-moving-with-bike-to-school-fridays/](http://parkroadmontessori.com/get-moving-with-bike-to-school-fridays/)

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR YEARLY BIKE EVENTS!

## Charlotte Resources

In addition to great parks and greenways, Charlotte also has a ton of cool activities focused on kids and biking!

### Sustain Charlotte's Biketoberfest presented by the Charlotte Knights

Every October, Sustain Charlotte hosts a family-friendly fundraiser that shows people how easy it is to get around Charlotte without driving! This event features routes only on low-stress and protected bike facilities with shorter options for young families. [biketoberfestclt.org](http://biketoberfestclt.org)



*Former Mayor  
Jennifer  
Roberts with  
participants,  
2016!*

### Open Streets 704

Open Streets events temporarily close streets to automobile traffic so that people may use them for walking, bicycling, dancing, playing and meeting their neighbors. This happens bi-annually, usually in late spring and mid-fall, and moves to different neighborhoods in Charlotte with each event! [openstreets704.com](http://openstreets704.com)

### BIKE! Charlotte Week

BIKE !Charlotte is 17 days of bicycle-related events and promotions in the spring used to encourage families, friends and colleagues to break out the bike and integrate it into their daily routine. Keep your eyes peeled for numerous events geared for kids! [bikecharlotte.org](http://bikecharlotte.org)

# WHERE CAN YOU TAKE YOUR INDEPENDENT KIDS TO RIDE

## Charlotte Resources

Mecklenberg County has a developing network of greenways, rail trails, and urban parks where you can bicycle with your child away from traffic. Listed are a few of our favorite places to pedal around with the kiddos.

### Freedom Park

Connected to Little Sugar Creek Greenway, Freedom Park offers 98 acres of lakes, baseball fields, playgrounds, gardens, and multi-use paths perfect for kids exploring their new bike skills.

### Little Sugar Creek Greenway

Frequently used by bicyclists and pedestrians to cross Charlotte from East to West, Little Sugar Creek Greenway offers miles of trails from North Tryon Street to Cordelia Park just north of Uptown.

### Irwin and Stewart Creek Greenway

West Charlotte is connected by the Irwin and Stewart Greenway section. It is perfect for young families testing their skills.



### The Bicycle Playground at Arbor Glen Recreation Center

The Arbor Glen Recreation Center has a bicycle playground! Teach your child about traffic basics without having to be in actual traffic.

Find parks and greenways close to your home at [mecknc.gov/ParkandRec](http://mecknc.gov/ParkandRec)

# Sidewalk and Rail Trail Riding

Riding on the sidewalk and along the Charlotte rail trail can be a great place for younger children to learn bike skills, and can often seem safer than riding in the street. However, driveways and intersection crossings can be dangerous if you don't treat them with close attention!

Here are a few things you can teach your child to improve their safety on the sidewalk and the rail trail.

---

## Go SLOW

A slower pace is a safer pace.

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## Check Every Intersection & Driveway

When you are riding on the sidewalk, always check for drivers speeding through intersections and cars backing out of driveways.

---

## Cross the Street at Crosswalks

Just like a pedestrian, cross where cars will most expect to see someone. You may use a crosswalk to cross on your bike, but remain aware of turning vehicles. Be courteous when passing and yield to pedestrians – it's their terrain too!

## Unsafe Behavior While Riding on Sidewalks and Intersections

- **Darting into traffic**
- **Riding at higher speeds than an ordinary walk**
- **Failing to audibly warn a pedestrian when passing them**
- **Not yielding to pedestrians**
- **Endangering any person or property with careless riding behavior**

## The Law

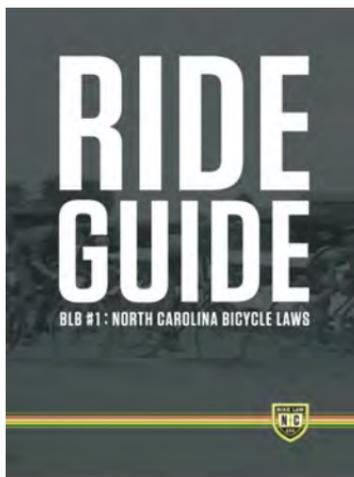
In Charlotte, riding a bicycle on the sidewalk is legal except for streets within the Congested Business District, which is primarily within the Center City area.

### Charlotte Pro Tip

Have a question about state and local laws around biking?

We have a resource for you!

Check out the *Ride Guide* published by NC Bike Law for all that you need to know as you hit the road on two wheels!



# HELMETS

## Laws & Proper Fit

Any youth in North Carolina under the age of 16 is required to wear a helmet when riding a bike.

### Helmets Only Work If Worn Correctly

Avoid these common mistakes when fitting your child's helmet:



**Tilted** Your child's helmet should be level on her head, about a two finger width above her eyebrows.



**Loose Straps** Straps should be snug against your child's chin, with just enough space available for one or two fingers to fit.



*Adjust the buckles on the side straps so they form a "v" around the ears.*

Does your child's helmet move when she shakes her head? If so, try one or more of the following.

**Readjust** the chin and side straps.

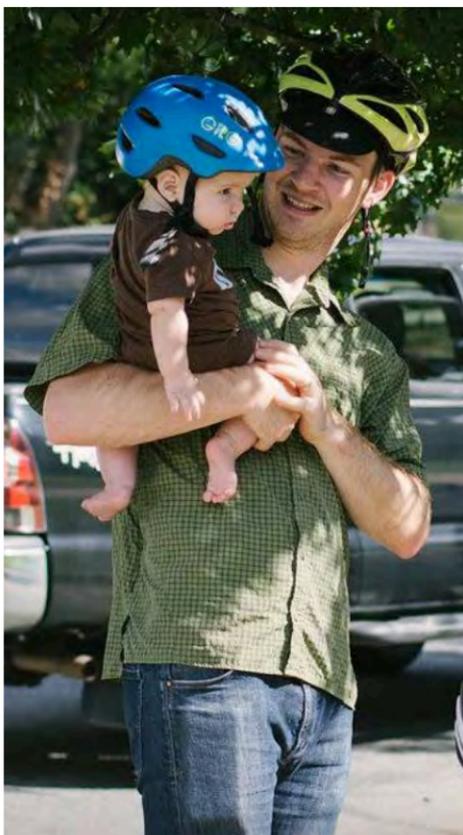
**Tighten** with an internal adjuster sometimes found at the back of the helmet.

**Attach** the foam pads that generally come with a new helmet to make the fit more snug.

**A helmet lasts only one crash!**

**Replace** a helmet if it is over five years old or has any visible damage. Cracks in the styrofoam or missing bits of styrofoam are signs the helmet should be replaced.

**A house rule** requiring helmets worn when riding on any personal wheels can set expectations early on. Adults can set a good example by always wearing a helmet when biking.



Charlotte dads making sure their kids are safe on their bikes!



# RESOURCES

## North Carolina Safe Routes To School

Partnerships with local governments, schools, neighborhoods, community organizations and agencies advocating for and implementing programs that make walking and biking around neighborhoods and schools fun, easy, safe and healthy for all students and families.

[ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetieducation/safeRoutesToSchools/](http://ncdot.gov/bikeped/safetieducation/safeRoutesToSchools/)

## Low-Cost Carrying Options

Purchasing used bike seats and trailers on Craigslist can help cut costs. Be sure to check quality and condition closely before purchasing..

[charlotte.craigslist.org](http://charlotte.craigslist.org)

## Trips for Kids Earn-A-Bike and Helmet

Through their Earn-A-Bike (EAB) Program, Trips for Kids teach boys and girls bike safety, maintenance and repair. When kids successfully complete the program — which is at no cost to them — they earn a bike with front and rear safety lights, a helmet and a sturdy lock. [tripsforkidscharlotte.org/earn-a-bike](http://tripsforkidscharlotte.org/earn-a-bike)



# FAMILY BIKING DIRECTORY

## Charlotte Resources

Charlotte has a lot of great resources for families! Here's the contact information for all the great organizations mentioned throughout this guide.

### Sustain Charlotte

Stay up to date by signing up for our weekly newsletter via our website or following us on social media.

[sustaincharlotte.org](http://sustaincharlotte.org)

### Bicycle Friday

Bicycle Friday is a small group of people committed to making cycling safe and fun for children and to creating a safe space for children to gain confidence and skills on bicycles.

[parkroadmontessori.com/get-moving-with-bike-to-school-fridays](http://parkroadmontessori.com/get-moving-with-bike-to-school-fridays)

### BikeCampCLT

Geared for young riders (ages 5 and above) who are eager to gain independence, learn new skills and build confidence on their bikes while exploring our amazing city! Check the website for camp details!

[cltbikecamp.org](http://cltbikecamp.org)

### TripsforKids

Trips for Kids Charlotte provides transformative cycling experiences for under-served youth. They strive to prepare children for success by teaching respect, honesty, teamwork, overcoming challenges, healthy and safe lifestyles and service.

[tripsforkidscharlotte.org](http://tripsforkidscharlotte.org)

### Learn to Ride

Kids of all ages and adults can Learn to Ride a bike using the tried-and-true "balance bike" method. Take a look at their website to see when the next event will happen!

[learntorideclt.com](http://learntorideclt.com)

### Charlotte Youth Cycling League

CYCL is a non-profit mountain bike race series for kids. They race to build good life skills, good bike skills, and create an awesome generation of mountain bikers.

[charlotteyouthcycling.org](http://charlotteyouthcycling.org)

### Bikin' Dads Adventures

Bikin' Dads Adventures provides a core group of volunteers who expressed the same passion towards empowering today's youth through the various positive effects of having that father figure in their lives throughout our activities.

[bikindads.com](http://bikindads.com)

# Bike Shop Directory

There are number of great bike shops in the Charlotte Metro that can help you out with advice and simple repairs. Take advantage of their expertise and stop into a local shop today!

## Charlotte Re-Cyclery

Visit the Charlotte Re-Cyclery to buy a new-to-you bicycle that's been restored by trained mechanics, and all proceeds support Trips for Kids Charlotte. These fully refurbished bikes cost a fraction of what they would be new.

(704) 910-3970 | 132 N. Caldwell St

## BikeSource\*

At BikeSource, they have one goal... to help you experience the ride of your life. That's for all types of cyclists. Beginners. Experts. Kids. Women. Triathletes.

(704) 525-8410 | 4301 A Park Rd

## Queen City Bicycles\*

Serving Charlotte area cyclists since 1999 and formerly was SouthPark Cycles on South Blvd. They have a full range of bicycles for the family and the enthusiasts, will service any bicycle and offer numerous road and mountain bikes for rent. (704) 522-7006 | 128 E Park Ave, Ste A

## Charlotte Cycles\*

Charlotte Cycles is the largest electric bike dealer in the Southeast and specializes in offering electric bikes from trusted brands like Giant, Pedego, and Felt.

(704) 333-4358 | 337 Baldwin Ave

## Performance Bicycle Shop\*

The local Charlotte, NC Performance Bike store for a wide selection of bikes, helmets, clothing, nutrition and more. Check out the free in-store clinics and full service bike repair shop.

(704) 837-0578 | 4436 South Blvd

## The Bike Gallery

Serving Charlotte's cyclist community since 1974, offering a bike for every member of the family with a full line of bike accessories. Professional and friendly staff can fully equip any rider at any level.

(704) 332-2165 | 2500 Park Rd

## Bicycle Sport

Charlotte's friendly neighborhood shop for any bike: road, cyclocross, mountain, kids, commuter, and fitness/hybrid. Incredible customer service for over 25 years.

(704) 35-0323 | 2916 Selwyn Ave Ste AA

## Trek Bicycle Store of North Charlotte

Their mission: Develop a relationship... Create an experience... Build a community.

(704) 598-0057 | 10129 Perimeter Pkwy

### Bike Line of Charlotte

Serving Mecklenburg County and surrounding areas since 1998. They sell Giant, Liv, and Momentum bicycles. We have a full service repair center with capability of working on any bicycle.

(704) 549-8804 | 8528 University City Blvd, Ste M

### Ultimate Bicycle

Your friendly neighborhood bike shop.

(704) 841-1044 | 9129 Monroe Rd #115

### The Spoke Easy

Bringing the joy back into cycling, one custom bicycle at a time. Offering full service repairs, customized bicycles, collaborative builds, art and apparel, and Park Tool School location.

(980) 224-7681 | 1523 Elizabeth Ave, Ste 120

### Uptown Cycles

A concept cycling shop that focuses on bicycle sales, parts and accessories, service, coaching, and CompuTrainer classes.

(704) 333-4358 | 1432 W Morehead St

### Trek Bicycle Store of South Charlotte

Their mission: Develop a relationship... Create an experience... Build a community.

(704) 619-5802 | 12194 Johnston Rd #110

## Mobile Bicycle Repair Services

### The Bike Van

The Bike Van is a mobile bike shop that performs tune-ups and adjustments whenever and wherever you need them.

(704) 765-0275

### The Bike Medics Mobile Bike Shop\*

The Bike Medics team is proud to bring you and your family top quality service directly to your front door.

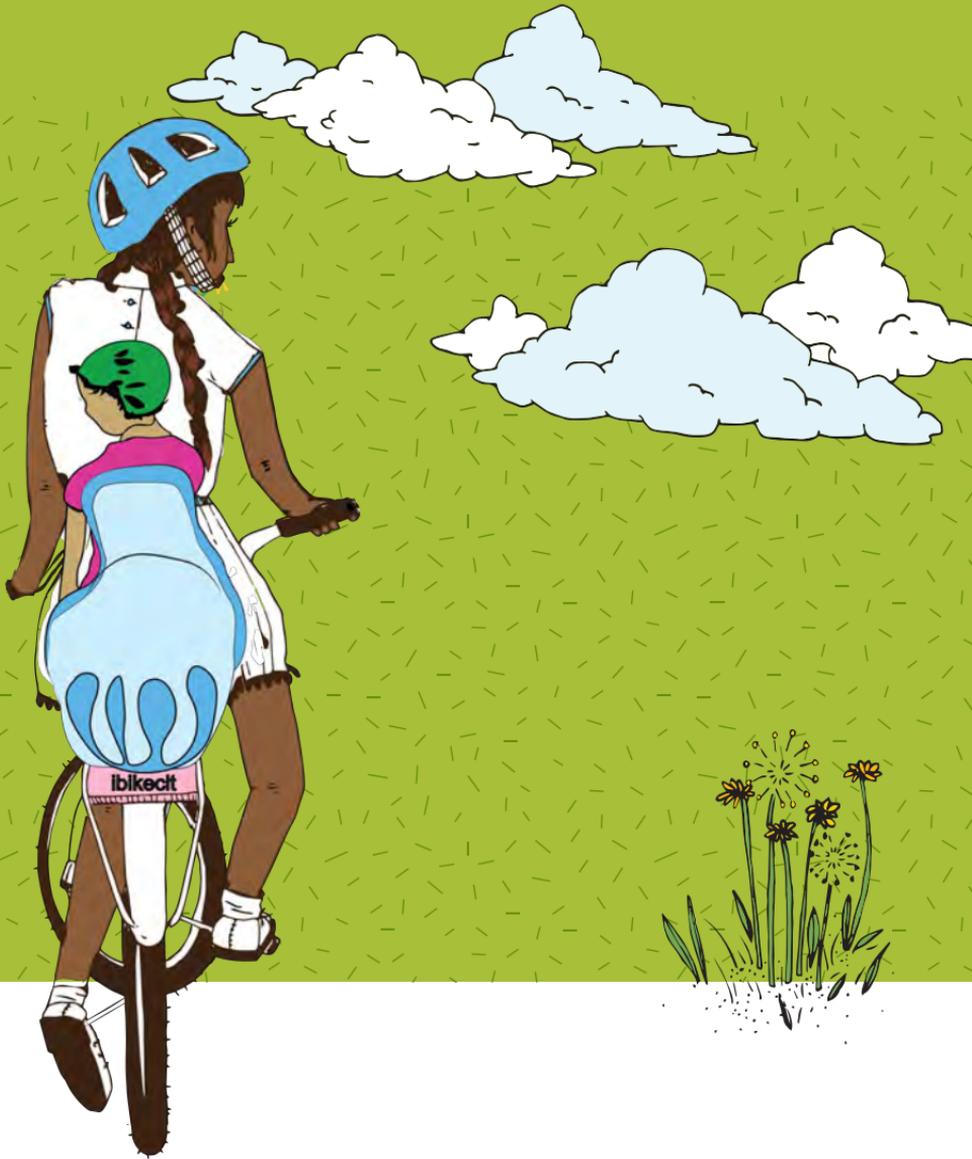
(704) 774-8312

### Charlotte Pro Tip

\*These bike shops are part of the Sustain Charlotte Bike Shop Partner Program and offer Sustain Charlotte Members a 10% discount! Become a member today!

[sustaincharlotte.org/membership](https://sustaincharlotte.org/membership)

# SUSTAIN CHARLOTTE



Many thanks to the Oregon Metro and the City of Charlotte  
Bicycle Advisory Committee for content and inspiration in  
creating this guide!

Photo credits:

Learn to Ride CLT/ Open Streets 704 / Sustain Charlotte / Paul Benton/  
BikePortland; Cycle Tow / Tail-Gator and Strider bikes