

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

The logo is a white outline of a tool, resembling a wrench or a similar hand tool, with a perforated texture on its left side. Inside the tool shape, the words "CHICAGO TOOL LIBRARY" are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background of the entire image is a photograph of a well-stocked workshop or warehouse with metal shelving units filled with various power tools and equipment. The lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a cozy atmosphere.

CHICAGO TOOL LIBRARY

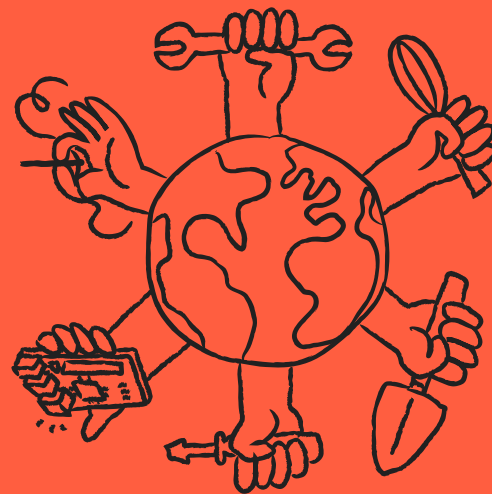
OUR MISSION

Have you ever wanted to build a raised garden bed, try out a 3D printer, or replace a light fixture but you didn't have the tools?

The Chicago Tool Library seeks to provide equitable access to tools, equipment, and information so all Chicagoans can learn, create, and repair. We believe that everyone can be an artist, builder, or repairer and that they deserve a chance to try. The ability to engage with the world around us and make it work for us shouldn't be limited to just a few.

At CTL everyone selects the cost of their own membership—no Chicagoan is turned away. And there are absolutely no other costs throughout the borrowing process; it starts affordable and stays that way.

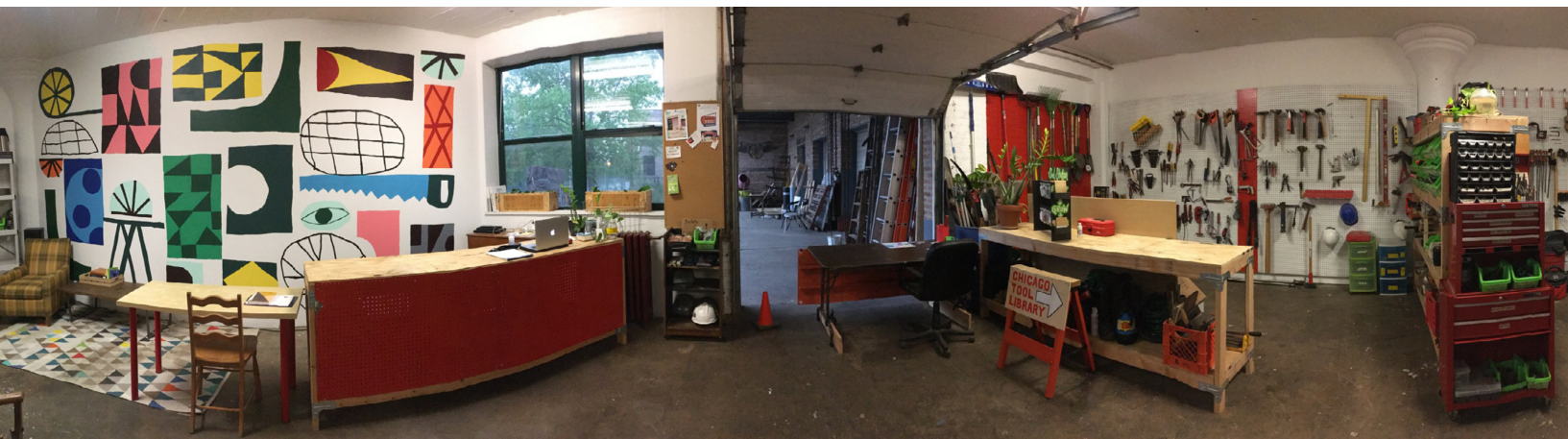
**BORROW,
DON'T BUY!**



BETTER FOR PEOPLE.

BETTER FOR THE COMMUNITY.

BETTER FOR THE PLANET.



"It felt so overwhelming to have to fix any small thing myself. It's empowering to know I can do that kind of stuff [with the help of the Chicago Tool Library]. It's not just for men. It's not just for strong people. It makes me feel bigger, stronger, more powerful." -Carina

ABOUT CTL

Located on the southwest side of Chicago, in the Bridgeport neighborhood, our non-profit lending library houses over 2,500 items that range from basic hand tools and table saws to ice cream makers and camping equipment.



HOW BORROWING WORKS

The process is very similar to any public library. After you sign up for a tool library card, just come by and check out what you want from our friendly volunteer librarians who can help you find the right tools for the job—learning is part of the process!



JOIN & RESERVE

Pay what you can to join and reserve your items online at chicagotoollibrary.org



BORROW & DIY

Visit the library to pick up your items, then use them to work on your project.



RETURN & REPEAT

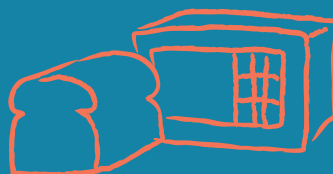
Return your items and start dreaming up what's next.

Our “tools” seek to fill a few different needs for our users. We have:



THE THING THAT'S TOO EXPENSIVE

THE THING YOU ONLY NEED ONCE



THE THING THAT'S TOO BIG TO STORE IN YOUR SPACE

THE THING THAT YOU'VE BEEN WANTING TO TRY OUT



Not to mention the other odds and ends that make all the difference when finishing a project.



SEEDS

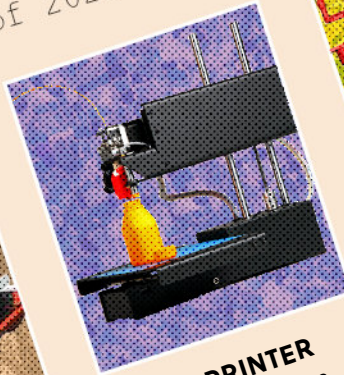
You may be asking yourself, "how do you return seeds?"

You dont! We don't want them back.



TILE SAW

We assume that very few Chicagoans need to have a tile saw handy 24/7. For those times when the urge to tile strikes, we are here!



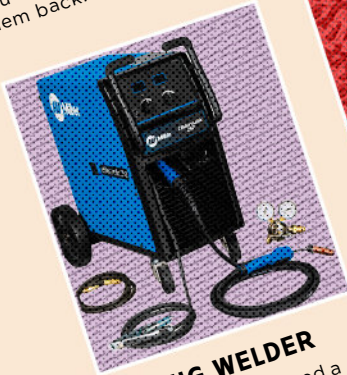
3D PRINTER

What year is it, 3008? Borrow our 3D printer and print your own record adapter, cast, coffee mug, or whatever you want! We don't ask.



CLAMPS

Ah, clamps. The tool you never think you need until you really need them. We have a bunch just waiting to hold your stuff together!



MIG WELDER

You've always wanted a MIG welder but you've never had a good place to keep it...until now! We will keep it warm for you.



TENT

Nature is calling. Camp like an REI co-op member without the cost and storage commitment!



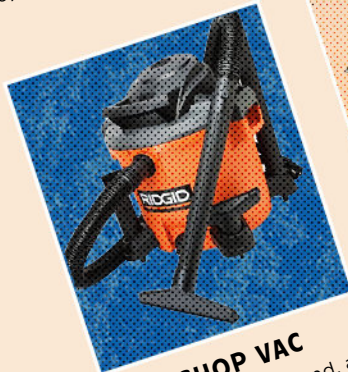
DOLLY

Hello Dolly! Dolly Parton! This is just like both of those things in that it will help you move heavy stuff around.



HAND TOOLS

It's not all about electricity and batteries, people! A lot can be done with brute strength and hand tools, and we have a lot of both!



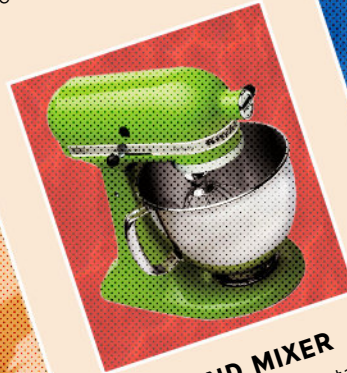
SHOP VAC

What's orange, rotund, and available to help clean up all wet or dry messes? Our shop vacs!



DRILL

Never break up over IKEA furniture assembly again! A fully charged drill makes light the work.



STAND MIXER

Foodies rejoice! Our stand mixer is standing by to help you make desserts and doughs.



JAW SAW

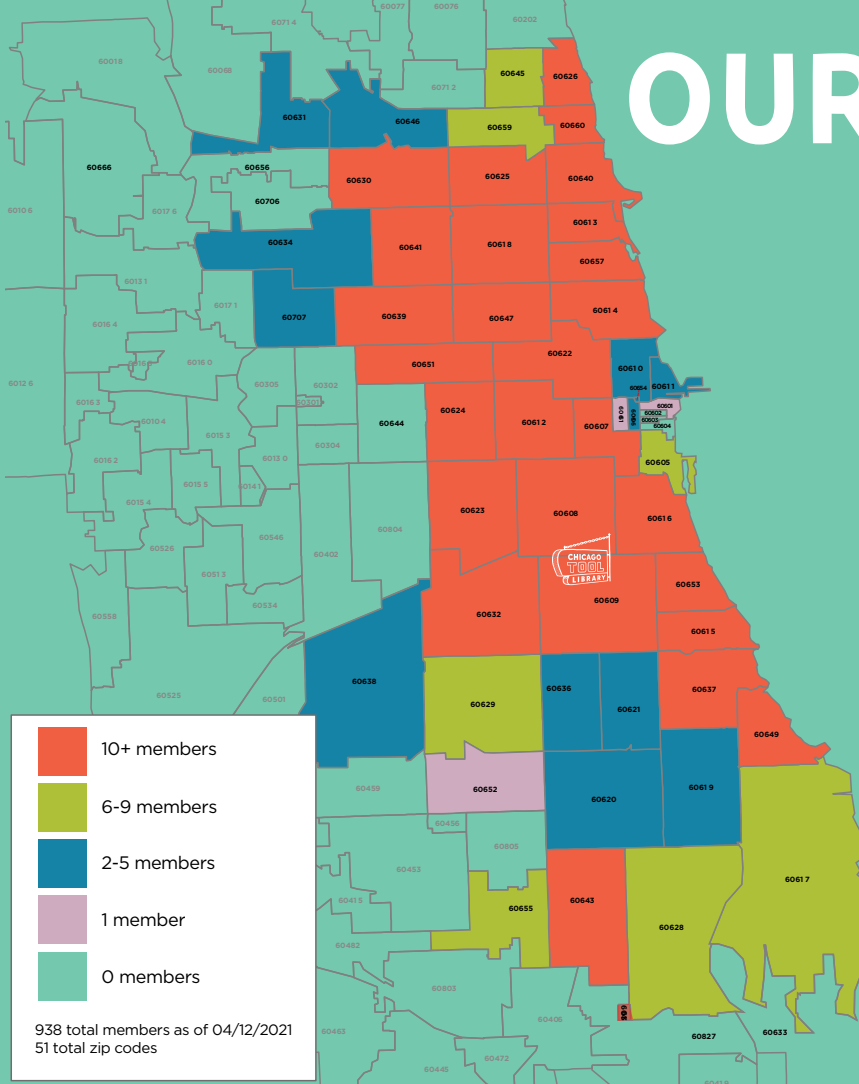
Chainsaws can be scary! The jaw saw is friendly and capable.

OUR MEMBERS

WHO USES THE TOOL LIBRARY?

Everyone! Our library users aren't just professional artists or contractors, they are often folks getting their hands on tools for the very first time. Over 900 people from 51 of Chicago's 59 zip codes have signed up to join the library.

THERE'S NO BETTER TIME TO SIGN UP THAN NOW!



MEET MIA & TIM!



In the summer of 2020, Mia & Tim had a golden opportunity to open a shop in Andersonville but with one catch: the location needed work, a lot of work. Having access to CTL allowed them to confidently jump at the opportunity knowing they could make it look great without having to buy all the tools necessary to make the renovations. Mia used to be nervous around power tools.

"I had zero experience with tools prior to the library. I looked at a lot of DIY blogs to figure out what tools I needed, but if I had no idea, I would ask the librarians directly and they would lead me to the right tools."

You can see their hard work and newfound skills on display for yourself at Ándale Market!

SPECIAL PROJECTS

In a year without in-person events like our Repair Fairs, we found new ways to connect people with resources for their homes and gardens and imagine new strategies for diverting waste.



BASIC TOOL BOXES WITH CCRX

We launched a new program to create starter tool boxes in partnership with Chicago Creative Reuse Exchange. These basic tool kits will be donated to Chicago Women in Trades' job training program participants.

FREE SWAP EVENT WITH PLANT CHICAGO

Chicagoans struggle to find ways to recycle usable nails, screws, hardware, and tools. In February of 2021, we piloted a swap event with Plant Chicago where community members could bring unneeded materials or pick them up for free.



SEED SHARE

Thanks to donations from several seed companies and local groups like the UIC Heritage Garden we are able to host a popular seed share program. Each growing season we distribute free packets of fruit, vegetable, herb, and flower seeds to hundreds of community members.

LAST YEAR

Our 2020-21 fiscal year began when Chicago's first COVID restrictions took effect. After closing for over 6 weeks, we developed new systems to safely serve our library visitors.



To make in-person services faster and safer, we focused our efforts on improving our online services.

- We built new features for our software to allow for scheduling appointments and reserving tools.
- We began a critical audit of our website and software to improve the accessibility of our digital platforms.
- We improved the data in our online inventory to make digitally searching for tools easier and more like the experience of being in the library.

Additionally, we built a service window (pictured above) to reduce contact between volunteers and visitors. But we made sure that the library was still a space to build community and connection even though we were distanced.

The tool library has never been busier, or more important, as people across our city sought out opportunities to repair, help others, and improve their surroundings. Our people-first policies have allowed many Chicagoans to stay active even as money was tight.

This was also a year that felt particularly important to find opportunities for internal growth and we closed the year by welcoming a new board of directors. They are eight wonderfully talented individuals with a wide range of skills and backgrounds. Most of all, they are thoughtful and committed to guiding the Chicago Tool Library to become its best. You can find more about our hopes for the future and our commitments on page 9.

2020 FISCAL YEAR STATS

1,648

Library Visitors

\$43

Average Annual
Payment

6,009

Total Loans

689

New Member
Sign-ups

434%

Growth in
Memberships

2,500+

Items in Inventory

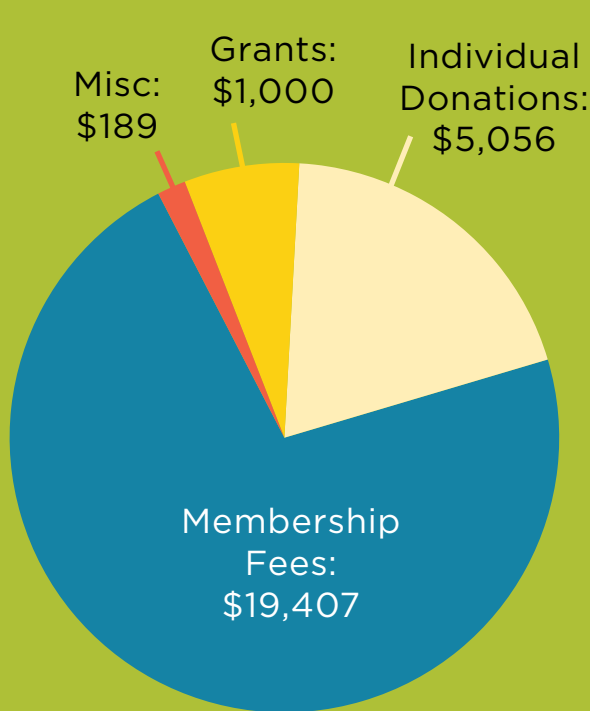
FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT



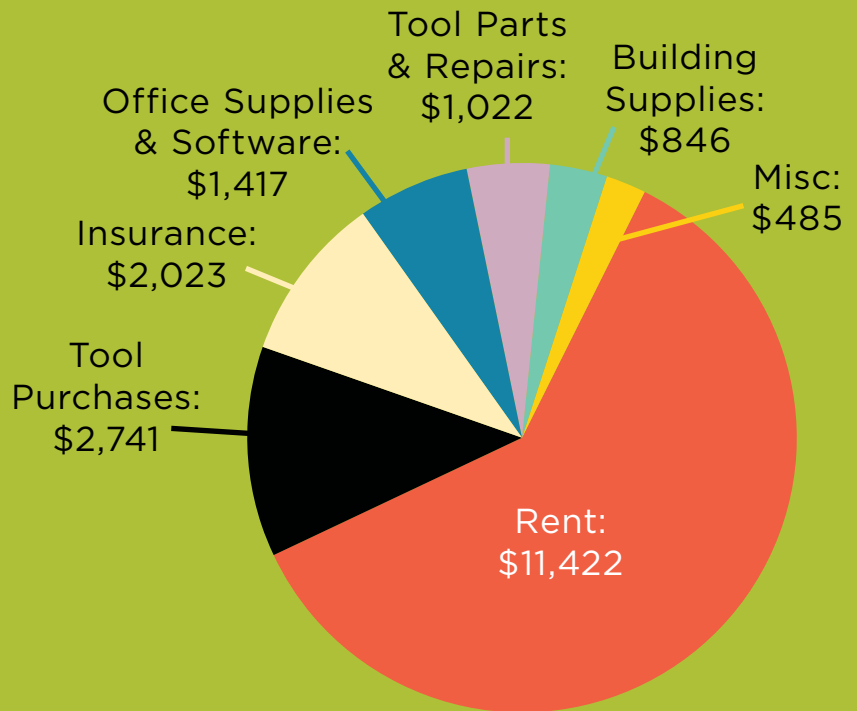
We expected our first fiscal year to be full of events, fundraisers, and grants. The pandemic had other ideas! While social distancing meant we couldn't gather, it also meant more people than ever were ready to sign up for tool library memberships to tackle neglected home projects or learn new skills.

Our main source of income last year was through membership sign-ups. Looking ahead, we are planning for grants and individual donations to become larger income streams. With increased revenue we hope to improve our services by hiring staff, purchasing high-demand tools, and expanding to offer pick-ups and deliveries.

FISCAL YEAR · APRIL 1, 2020 – MARCH 31, 2021



INCOME
\$25,652.21



EXPENSES
\$19,956.19

LOOKING AHEAD

THIS YEAR

- EXPAND OUTREACH
- INCREASE LIBRARY HOURS
- IMPROVE DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY
- INCREASE INCOME THROUGH GRANTS AND INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS

LONG-TERM

- HIRE STAFF!
- EXPAND REACH OF SERVICES
 - DELIVERY
 - NEW LOCATION
- DEVELOP PROGRAMMING
- FIND STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ADOPT OR ENHANCE CTL'S SERVICES

OUR COMMITMENTS

The Chicago Tool Library was built to change. We've set out to be adaptable and responsive to the needs of our community and let our services be guided by the voices of many as we grow. This flexibility is anchored by an unwavering set of core values that direct our work.

HUMANITY

WE WILL PLACE A PERSON'S HUMANITY AND DIGNITY BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

EQUITY

EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND DIVERSITY WILL NOT LIVE IN A COMMITTEE OR A STATEMENT. THEY WILL BE A PART OF EVERY INTERACTION, POLICY, AND STRATEGIC DECISION.

LEARNING

WE WILL WORK TO HAVE A CULTURE OF APPRECIATION AND LEARNING, WHERE PROCESS MATTERS. THAT MEANS SHARING CREDIT, BEING ACCOUNTABLE, TRYING NEW THINGS, ASKING FOR HELP, MAKING MISTAKES, AND DOING BETTER THE NEXT TIME.

PUBLIC SERVICE

WE WILL SERVE THE GREATER PUBLIC INTERESTS—NOT OUR OWN OR THE INTERESTS OF EXCLUSIVELY OUR MEMBERS. REALIGNING OUR SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC GOOD WILL BE A CONTINUAL PART OF OUR PROCESS.

Influenced by: [Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture](#) by T. Okun

"I'm generally a pretty anxious person and experiencing new things is usually a stressful experience for me. Having been able to cultivate my novel experiences because of the Chicago Tool Library has made me more brave in other aspects of my life." -Brooke



WHO WE ARE

The Chicago Tool Library is currently a volunteer-run organization. We are successful due to the generosity and care of our donors, volunteers, and library users.

What does it mean to be volunteer-run? It means that every email, tool loan, Instagram post, tool repair, software upgrade, and so much more is accomplished in somebody's free time. This work is done by many talented, dedicated people and we are so appreciative.

We couldn't begin to thank everyone who deserves it, but we'd like to extend a special thank-you to two volunteers who have given us a remarkable amount of their care, time, and expertise since day one. The Chicago Tool Library would not be as successful without the efforts of Mike Wilkin and Will Gosner. Thank you!

WE NEED YOU, TOO!
**INVEST IN OUR EFFORTS: MAKE A DONATION,
VOLUNTEER, OR SIGN UP FOR A LIBRARY CARD TODAY!**



Jim Benton
Vivek Doshi
Sony Rane



Board of Directors:

Damiane Nickles
Kate O'Mahony

Forrest Parks
Sasha Neri
Elvia Rodriguez-Ochoa

**VISIT
US!**

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WORDS FROM MEMBERS

*"I love the Chicago Tool Library. The [volunteers are] friendly, professional and took the time to explain and show me how to use the tools, plus given me different ideas for a lot of my projects. The terms for borrowing the tools are great and inexpensive. **The best thing is the money I've saved by doing the work myself.** Thanks Chicago Tool Library!" - Delores G.*

"Super friendly and helpful staff, a great inventory, and flexible return periods/policies. This library is a huge asset to the neighborhood and city. Get a membership!" - Joseph G.



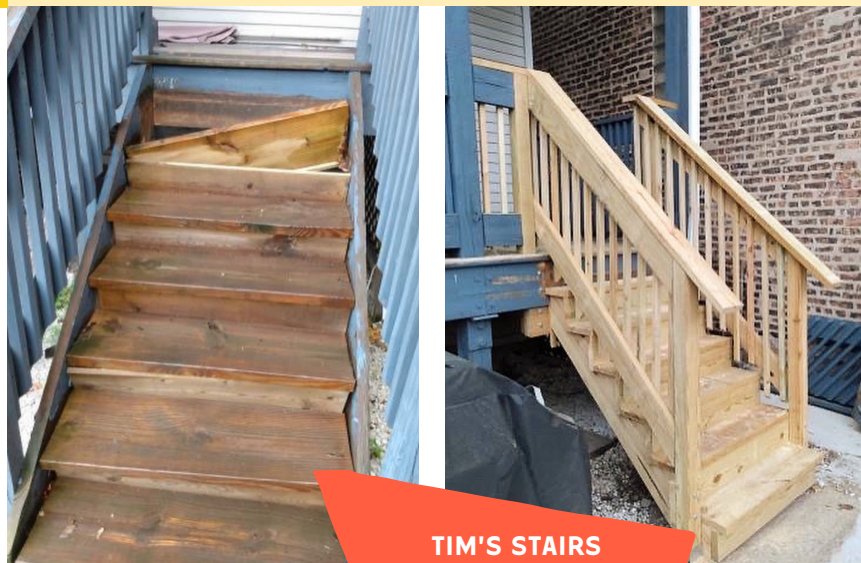
"I've had a lot of help from the librarians. Every time I go in is a chance to workshop my ideas to figure out how to accomplish something. I get feedback on how to do the things that I want to do." - Stephen S.

"I cannot say enough good things about CTL! I love its circular model and the sliding scale membership fee is awesome. Love how knowledgeable the volunteers are. Other cool things about CTL: a hotline for tool/project help, every essential tool you'd need plus non-tool items like camping gear and kitchen appliances, super responsive to emails and calls, fun social media to follow, accessible location and much more.

Since becoming a member I've used tools like a shovel, nail gun, couple of saws, ladder, paint supplies and more. I've made a raised garden bed, lifted carpet and installed laminate flooring, painted walls, and cut/installed wood shelves. And TRUST ME, I am a novice tool-user so all of this was out of my comfort zone but made SO easy by the Tool library."

- Carina T.

"Such an amazing place for all kinds of tools! Becoming a member at any level means supporting more equitable access to tools along with increased confidence and understanding of how to use them. It's great to borrow the tools you need from people invested in the process without the punitive rental penalties you get at the big hardware stores. I highly recommend becoming a member!" - Kevin W.



**TIM'S STAIRS
BEFORE & AFTER**