2025-2026

Annual Report

Binners' Project

Letter from the Director

I can't believe it has already been a year since I last sat down to write this letter to you all.

If I'm being honest, it was a good year, but also a hard one. Binners' Project, like so many charities and non-profits, has faced increasing challenges in securing funding for our work, but we have continued to persevere in supporting the binners that we work with every day. We also saw a number of losses over the year, including the passing of "Binner #1", Michael Leland, who passed away March 10th, 2026. Alongside those challenges, I remain so grateful for the opportunity to work alongside an incredibly committed team that shows up for the community.

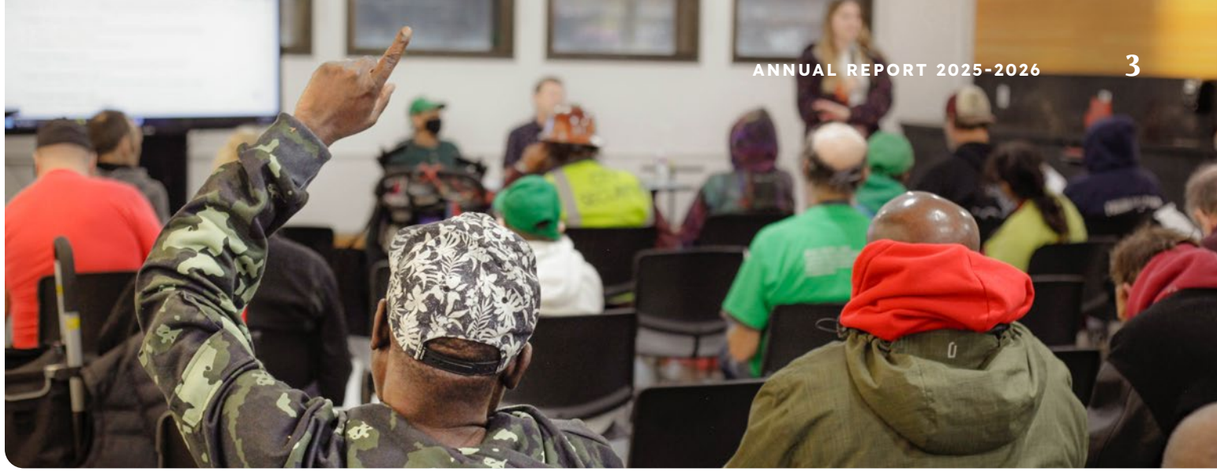
Looking at some of the highlights of the year, I have to start with our second Alley Oop Street Party, which brought 125 guests together for a joyful night to celebrate binners and raise $10,861 for the Project. We also, once again, smashed our record at Coffee Cup Revolution, where we collected 213,841 cups in a little over 3 hours! The Social Enterprise program continues to provide year-round income opportunities for members and we saw growth in our event contracts over the last year. We are incredibly grateful to our long-standing sorting sites and event partners for continuing to do this work alongside us. These ever-important and long-term relationships form the foundation of the program's ongoing stability and growth.

Alongside this year's Coffee Cup Revolution, we were excited to host an exchange with our friends at the North America Waste Pickers Alliance (NAWPA), which brought together binners from New York, Montreal, Portland and Victoria to participate in wide-ranging discussions around policy advocacy and community engagement. We've also made great strides with the Universal Cart Initiative and finished the year by securing the funding to launch the first phase of the cart program! Stay tuned for more details on that launch later this year.

I'm so happy to share that this year we provided 13,862 hours of income opportunities with a total of $344,005 directly going into the pockets of binners. I hope you'll read through the report to see more about all of this work, and thanks as always for your support.

Sincerely,

Sean Miles
Director, Binners' Project



About Binners' Project

Our work takes place on the shared, unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səlilw̓ətaʔɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

Binners' Project is a group of waste-pickers aided by support staff dedicated to improving their economic opportunities, and reducing the stigma they face as informal recyclable collectors. We do this through our many programs that work to increase binners' access to bottles and cans, provide reliable income opportunities through waste sorting, and fostering relationships with binners and the wider community.

Our work is guided by a triple bottom line: waste diversion, social inclusion, and community economic development.

The cornerstone of our programs is the weekly Binners' Meetings, where binners receive community and Project updates, as well as their shifts for the week. These meetings also serve as a vital connection opportunity for members to engage with each other and help build community.

OUR WORK IS GUIDED BY A TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE:

Waste Diversion

Social Inclusion

Community Economic Development

Community Engagement and Advocacy

212
ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES OVER THE PAST YEAR

Our community and policy engagement programs are rooted in the belief that those most impacted by systemic barriers must be meaningfully supported to speak, lead, and shape the solutions that affect their own lives.

These engagements not only create income opportunities but also challenge harmful stereotypes, deepen public understanding, and position binners as environmental stewards, educators, and leaders.

WORKSHOPS, TOURS, AND PRESENTATIONS

This year, six binners participated in a panel discussion at DTES Heart of the City Festival, engaging community members in conversations about the realities of informal waste recovery in Vancouver. Binners also participated in an engaging workshop facilitated by Women Transforming Cities to help build the confidence and skills of underrepresented voices to engage in local government in the lead-up to the 2026 election and beyond, reflecting on the question, "What do you need in the city to thrive?"

Another memorable highlight was Casey leading an educational session with students from York House School. Students were given a firsthand look at the realities and environmental contributions of binning through a visit to CRAB Park, where they learned how binners divert recyclable materials from landfills every day. Reflecting on the experience, one student shared: "Binners are doing way more for our world than we think."

While these educational opportunities help shift how others see binning, just as important is how we continue to show up for binners in their day-to-day lives. Our monthly wellbeing calls provide a low-barrier way to stay connected with binners outside of program activities, offering monthly check-ins on health, safety, and overall wellbeing while creating space to share updates, access support, and strengthen relationships.

Over the past year, binners participated in 212 engagement opportunities, bringing their lived experience and expertise into a wide range of rooms, spaces, and conversations.

CITY CONSULTATIONS

Highlights from this year include wrapping up three years of binner-led engagement on the Metro Vancouver Solid Waste Updated Management Plan, where 320 binners were consulted in the process! Since 2023, binners have been on the ground, facilitating surveys at local bottle depots and at our own Coffee Cup Revolution, to gauge feedback from waste experts (binners) on how a new solid waste management plan should operate, what needs to be improved, and what to prioritize. We also had the pleasure of offering space for more in-depth conversation, in addition to the surveys, through 9 consultations with binners.

NORTH AMERICAN WASTE PICKER ALLIANCE EXCHANGE

Building on this momentum, the exchange with the North America Waste Pickers Alliance (NAWPA) created an important space for cross-city learning and solidarity between waste pickers and binners from Sure We Can (New York City), Coop Les Valoristes (Montreal), Ground Score Association (Portland), and Diverters (Victoria). The gathering focused on shared experiences of informal waste recovery, policy barriers, and emerging advocacy strategies across different jurisdictions.

NAWPA North America Waste Pickers Alliance

LES VALORISTES COOPÉRATIVE DE SOLIDARITÉ

SURE WE CAN WHERE EVERYONE COUNTS

GROUND SCORE ASSOCIATION

The Diverters

Coffee Cup Revolution

This year marked the 12th Annual Coffee Cup Revolution, the founding and flagship event of Binners' Project.

213,841
CUPS COLLECTED

At this one-day pop-up depot, binners receive a 10-cent refund per used coffee cup, highlighting their critical role in reducing waste and advocating for a refundable cup deposit system to divert millions of disposable cups from B.C. landfills each week.

Binners turned out in force and set a new record, collecting an incredible 213,841 cups!

The event also serves as a key space for community dialogue on waste management and the role of binners within the system. A major highlight this year was welcoming fellow waste picker organizations from the North American Waste Picker Alliance (NAWPA), who joined the community engagement table to share insights and experiences on how waste pickers are shaping the future of waste diversion across borders. As Ryan from Sure We Can in New York City shared, **"The work we do is participatory practice. It allows us to practice care, with materials and with people."**

Approximately 40+ community members and city councillors attended to hear directly from these organizations and to recognize the essential role that binners and waste pickers play in supporting and strengthening our waste management systems.

As we look ahead, Coffee Cup Revolution will continue to evolve in 2027 by exploring new ways to come together around waste diversion.

13
BINNERS LED PEER OUTREACH BEFORE THE EVENT, EARNING A TOTAL OF $585

$21,384.10
EARNED BY BINNERS FROM REFUNDS

39
BINNERS LED OPERATIONS ACROSS TWO DEPOTS

Ken Lyotier Fund

CleanStart

RECYCLING ALTERNATIVE

GASTOWN

COMMUNITY IMPACT REAL ESTATE

HASTINGS CROSSING Business Improvement Association

metrovancouver

CITY OF VANCOUVER

CENTRAL CITY FOUNDATION

onni group

Made in print

Stantec

VCC

Universal Cart Initiative

The Universal Cart Initiative is a bold and innovative program designed to provide binners with legal, accessible, and purpose-built carts to support their work.

Modeled after a bike-sharing system, the carts are stationed on city streets and accessed by binners as needed. Registration is designed to be low-barrier, allowing participants to access carts through custom voice-recognition technology. The program continues to be freely accessible and open to the community, with a mandatory orientation to ensure participants are equipped to safely operate the system.

As of this year, we are pleased to share that funding has been secured to support a pilot launch of the Universal Cart Initiative, thanks to the support of Ken Lyotier Fund, Bosa Foundation, Central City Foundation, Vancity Community Foundation, and Richmond Sunrise Rotary!

Building on groundwork developed since 2016, we are now focused on finalizing implementation planning and confirming a concrete pilot launch date within the current year.

Ken Lyotier Fund

CENTRAL CITY FOUNDATION

CITY OF VANCOUVER

robert bosa foundation

Rotary Richmond Sunset

Vancity Community Foundation

Alley Oop Street Party

On June 14, 2025, the vibrant laneway of Alley Oop came alive.

The Alley Oop Street Party brought colour, music, and energy to downtown Vancouver's iconic Pink Alley, celebrating community while shining a spotlight on the essential work of binners across the city. More than just a fundraiser, it's a friend-raiser where friends of Binners' Project – and friends of friends – joined us in supporting binners, or learning about their work for the first time.

What was especially exciting were the binners' stories shared in the alley, offering people a chance to hear directly from binners themselves, whose expertise is at the heart of Vancouver's recycling system.

Alley Oop will return to the alley in summer 2027 for another unforgettable celebration.

OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

DOWN TOWN VAN

COMMUNITY IMPACT REAL ESTATE

DESTINATION VANCOUVER

AMEGroup

onni group

PARTNER

RECYCLING ALTERNATIVE

GAME SPONSOR

Happy Cities

DRINK SPONSORS

The MAGNET

BRASSNECK

$10,861

RAISED TO SUPPORT BINNER-LED PROGRAMMING

Over 125

ATTENDEES FROM ACROSS THE CITY

20

BINNER ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

4

WASTE-SORTING STATIONS PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY AND EDUCATION

2

LOCAL ARTISTS

Social Enterprise Programs

721
PAID EVENT SHIFTS

BACK-OF-HOUSE WASTE SORTING

Our Back-of-House Waste Sorting program continued to provide meaningful and consistent economic opportunities for binners while supporting organizations across the city in improving their waste diversion practices.

As an additional service offering, we provide data collection services that allow us to generate reports for clients that help them better understand the makeup of their waste, including contamination rates, trends, and volume diverted from the landfill. At just one site, we diverted approximately 80% of waste, sorting **a combined 80,083kg of waste** in one year!

We continued to support a waste management company, Waste Control Services, in conducting a number of their client waste audits. This involved meticulous sorting and weighing of waste to help clients see the composition of waste in their waste streams.

WASTE EDUCATION AT EVENTS

Event season remained one of the most visible and dynamic components of the Social Enterprise Program. In 2025, **95 binners participated in event-based waste diversion work across 113 event days, generating 2,897 hours of paid income opportunities through 721 shifts.**

From neighbourhood festivals and cultural celebrations to large-scale and multi-day events, binners played a vital role in helping event organizers meet their sustainability goals. Working at zero waste stations and throughout event spaces, binners supported attendees with proper waste sorting, reduced contamination, and helped divert recyclable and compostable materials from landfill. Just as importantly, the program created opportunities for meaningful public engagement, where binners shared their expertise and environmental knowledge directly with thousands of event attendees.

"We've worked with the Binners' Project team at Khatsahlano Street Party, Pleasant Day Festival, and Flats Fest. Their crew is consistently positive and reliable, taking personal responsibility for maintaining the cleanliness of our event sites while managing waste sorting and recycling. Their support has been key to making our festivals greener and more responsible."

MRG, 2025

The 2025 event season included a wide range of partnerships, including long-standing collaborations with the PNE Fair, Khatsahlano Music Festival, Powell Street Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, TaiwanFest, and Car Free Day festivals. The PNE alone generated **916 hours of economic opportunities across 223 shifts**, making it the largest event partnership of the year.

The diversity of the event calendar also helped sustain engagement throughout the year, with opportunities spanning from spring through December. In addition to festivals and public events, binners also supported community meals and outreach events with Union Gospel Mission, waste audits, repair hubs, and neighbourhood activations.

With support from community funders and partners, the program continued to expand its reach and visibility in 2025. New and returning event partnerships strengthened the role of binners as environmental stewards and demonstrated the value of lived expertise in advancing zero waste initiatives across the city.

2,897
HOURS OF PAID EVENT WORK

OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERS IN 2025-2026 WERE:

powell street festival society パウエル祭協会
SFU
CONCORD PACIFIC DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL 龍舟節
HASTINGS CROSSING BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
LOWTIDE
FAIR IN THE SQUARE
WEST 4TH KHATSAHLANO STREET PARTY
Providence Health Care How you want to be treated.
ARITZIA
BC HOUSING
THE AMSTERDAM CAFE
Waste Control Services Inc.
PNE
TAIWANfest VANCOUVER 溫哥華台灣文化節
UNION GOSPEL MISSION
PlayLand At the PNE Vancouver
atira PROPERTY MANAGEMENT
MRG
THE BLOOM GROUP
A BETTER LIFE FOUNDATION
M12 MAIN
FEST
HUDSON PACIFIC PROPERTIES
LA BOUSSOLE
DOWNTOWN VAN
CAR FREE DAYS OF SUMMER
TF EVENT COMPANY INC.

Measures of Success

Snapshot of the impact of our social enterprise programs in 2025-2026:

$286,042
WENT DIRECTLY INTO THE POCKETS OF BINNERS

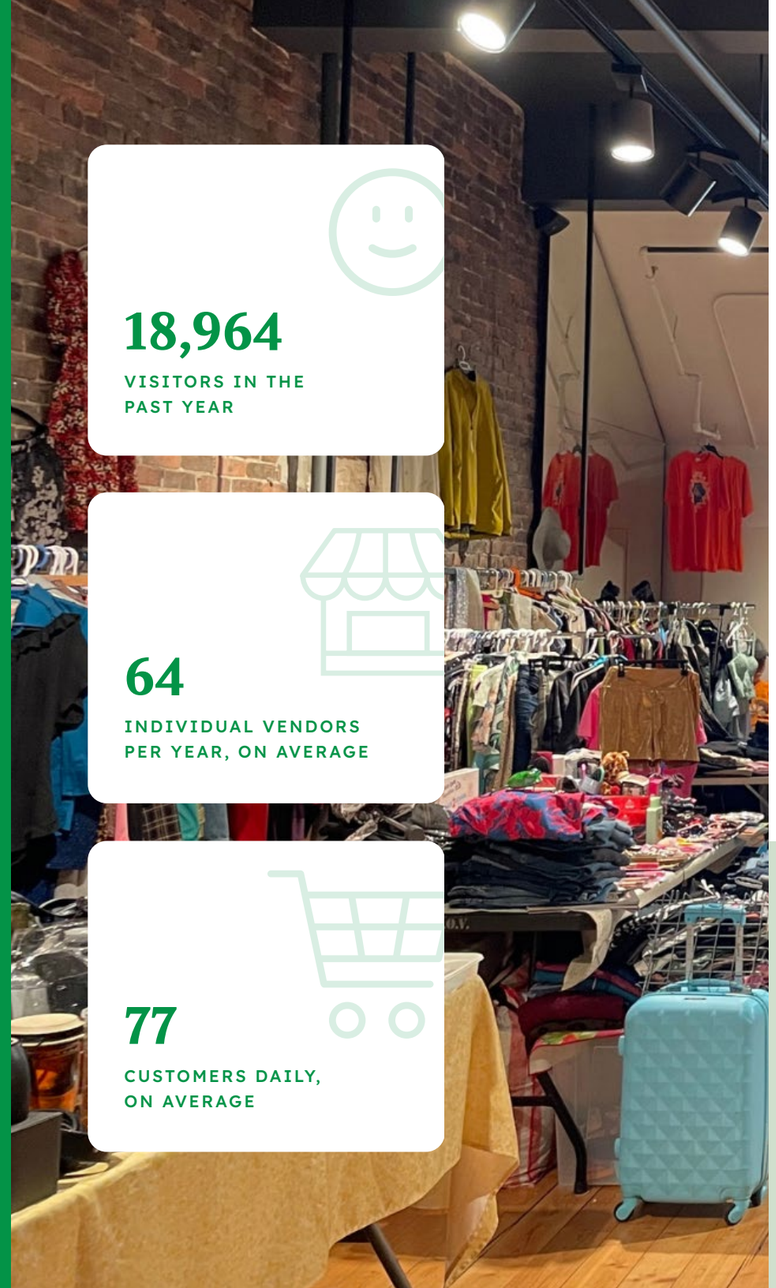
85
SHIFTS, RESULTING IN 244 HOURS OF INCOME OPPORTUNITIES EACH WEEK, ON AVERAGE

113
EVENT DAYS, RESULTING IN 2,897 HOURS OF PAID INCOME OPPORTUNITIES FOR BINNERS AT EVENTS

12,688
HOURS OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITIES

"It feels empowering to be recognized as an expert in something that most people overlook or throw away."

MAY LI



18,964
VISITORS IN THE PAST YEAR

64
INDIVIDUAL VENDORS PER YEAR, ON AVERAGE

77
CUSTOMERS DAILY, ON AVERAGE

DTES Community Corner

Binners' Project continued its work as operator of the DTES Community Corner Market, providing safe, low-barrier vending and income-generation opportunities for residents of the Downtown Eastside.

Now located at 52 E Cordova Street, the market continued to grow over the past year, supporting an average of 15-20 vendors each day and welcoming approximately 77 customers daily.

"The Community Corner has become more than a market, it is an essential gathering place where neighbours support each other and build resilience together."

ASH HICKEY,
MARKET MANAGER

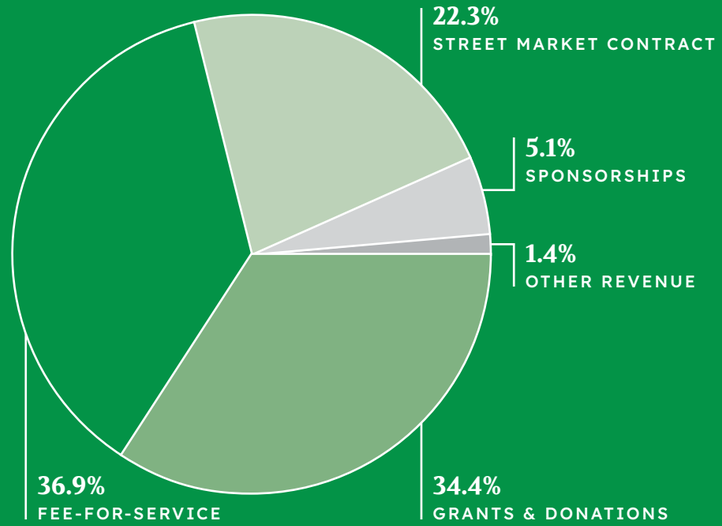
$42,830
RAISED IN JUST 30 MINUTES

Annual Fundraiser

It was another successful year for our fundraiser in November!

That night, we brought together 79 guests to hear directly from binners about their work and celebrate our achievements over the year. A special thank you goes to Brassneck Brewery for providing a beer donation and Showstream for helping create a seamless event experience. We're also happy to report that we surpassed our $40K goal and managed to raise $42,830 in just 30 minutes! Thanks to the amazing staff, volunteers, funders and donors who helped us get to this incredible result.

Binners' Project Financial Overview

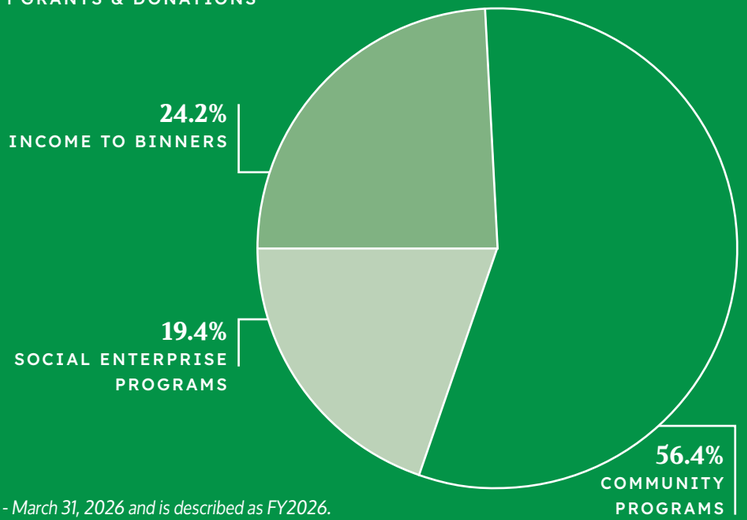


FY2026 Binners' Project Revenue Breakdown

Grants & Donations	$448,798
Fee-for-Service	$481,056
Street Market Contract	$290,309
Sponsorships	$66,550
Other Revenue	$17,833
TOTAL REVENUE	**$1,304,546**

Income to Binners Analysis

Income to Binners	$344,005.37
Community Programs	$801,513.60
Social Enterprise Programs	$276,587.66



The fiscal year being reported on was from April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026 and is described as FY2026.

Our Impact: A Snapshot

156
BINNERS ENGAGED IN OUR PROGRAMS

$344,005
WENT DIRECTLY TO BINNERS ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS

13,862
HOURS WORKED BY BINNERS ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS

Tribute to Michael Leland

Our dear friend and colleague, Michael Leland, passed away on Tuesday, March 10th, 2026, at the age of 67.

Michael was the first binner to join the Project back in 2015 and was affectionately known as 'binner number 1.' Michael was an invaluable member of our team and community, quickly becoming one of the first binner-staff where he held his long-standing position as chair of our weekly Binners' Meetings. He was a leader, a storyteller, and above all – a fighter.

Many of you will recognize him as our 'poster boy': always willing to take a photo, appear on video, speak at city council, or be ready in his binner-greens for a last-minute media appearance.

In his early life, Michael was a commercial fisherman until health issues prevented him from keeping his job. He later became homeless, living in the lane behind the Keg on Thurlow Street. As Michael would often tell the story: after roughly six months in that spot, he saw a man putting about 18 dozen beer cans into the lane's blue bin. He asked if he could take them, to which the man replied, "help yourself!" Michael earned about $20 that day, and in his words, 'I haven't looked back since.'

Michael's health problems continued over the past couple of years, forcing him to slow down. Eventually, he had to leave his work at the Yacht Club, and limit his role at Binners' Project to co-chairing the Binners' Meeting, working small events, and of course fulfilling his 'poster boy' duties.

As the first of our community to have the bravery and courage to believe in this work and in our ability to succeed, Michael will always remain the foundation for what Binners' Project has become today: resilience personified in the commitment to keep showing back up, no matter what.

Rest well, dear friend.

Photography: Lani Brunn

Our work takes place on the shared, unceded lands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səlilw̓ətaɁɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

MakeWay Charitable Society, our Shared Platform

Binners' Project joined the shared platform in 2015, which provides operational supports, governance, and charitable expertise for changemakers. The shared platform enables more time and money to go towards achieving greater impact. MakeWay is a national charity that builds partnerships and solutions to help nature and communities thrive together.

BINNERS' PROJECT

A project of MakeWay

Don't wait until our next report for an update!

Join us on social media or our low-traffic email list to keep up with our activities year-round:

- Binners' Project
- @Binners_Project
- @binners_project
- Binners' Project

Scan the QR code to sign up for our newsletter!

or visit binnersproject.org/signup