



Bringing a historic home back to its glory

➤ Most customers who visit the Reuse Center at Boston Building Resources come from nearby neighborhoods. Occasionally, though, our reach extends farther away.

Customer Justine completed a first-time homebuyer course and began looking for a home. Housing prices were so high in the city that she expanded her search, and ended up purchasing a foreclosed home in Plymouth County. Her new home is also a farm, with acres of land that she plans to cultivate, and a beloved historic house built in 1835 that had fallen into serious disrepair. Justine is doing a lot of the work herself and purchasing low-cost building materials from the Reuse Center at Boston Building Resources.

Shortly after the purchase, Justine got a quote from a contractor for a full restoration. “It was like \$150,000, \$200,000. That included the demo, the materials, the appliances, the cabinets, everything. I just fell over, you know. I was like, I can’t do that. I could have been really discouraged, because he was the expert.” Knowing about the Reuse Center “took a little bit of the edge off” of the initial sticker shock.

> *continued on page 2*



This historic home had fallen into major disrepair before Justine purchased it. One step at a time, she is restoring it to its former beauty.

Net zero carbon > Closer to possible than you might think



Air-source heat pumps provide home heating and cooling without combustion.

Homeowners committed to minimizing their climate impact may be familiar with the concept of *net zero energy* homes that produce as much energy as they consume over the course of a year from clean, renewable sources. Increasingly, these buildings are not using fossil fuel at all, becoming zero carbon emissions as well. Thanks to newer generations of cost-effective materials that save and generate energy, the ability to make one’s home net zero energy and free of carbon emissions is closer than ever before.

Zero emissions and zero energy are related, but different, concepts, said Rick Ames, Boston Building Resources board president and architect at Next Phase Studios. Net zero energy could include fossil fuel consumption on site, while zero emissions means no fossil fuels and no on-site combustion. “Net zero energy is aspirational, especially for someone with an older home,” Rick noted. “But you can electrify the building and get to zero emissions as well.”

The New Buildings Institute names five aspects of a zero-carbon building: energy efficiency, renewable energy, grid storage and integration, building electrification, and embodied carbon in the materials used for construction or renovation. Increasing energy efficiency involves insulation, air sealing, and efficient appliances and systems powered by electricity. With the electrical load established, a

> *continued on page 3*

Featured products

Countertops

To update your kitchen without replacing the cabinets, consider new countertops. The Co-op at Boston Building Resources offers a wide variety of materials, from quartz to natural stone to butcher block. Our designers will work with you to find the choice that meets your needs and budget. Contact us for a consultation by emailing kitchens@bostonbuildingresources.com.

Ice melt

Keep your walkways and steps free of ice without damaging metal railings or hurting your pets' paws. Co-op Ice Melt is a blend of granular urea and sand that speeds melting and provides traction. Be prepared for the inevitable. Stock up now! *Member price: \$16.25 for a 25-pound bag and \$28.00 for a 40-pound bucket*



Interior storm windows

Tyzall plastic interior storm windows offer an inexpensive way to stop window drafts. They seal in a similar way to a Ziploc bag, and each kit can be used year after year. The kit includes eight 26" long white plastic mounting strips and one sheet of 72" long by 54" wide 4-mil clear vinyl. *Member price: \$13.00*

Restoring a historic home

continued from page 1

"I didn't buy this house because I had no other choices," Justine says. "I bought it because I connected with this house. It deserves to be brought back." The initial months involved tearing out "layers of wallpaper, paint, paneling, carpet, and it all smelled really bad. It seemed like the previous owners' solution was to just keep covering stuff up."

During the demolition, she was careful to save the original doors, trim, fireplace mantel, and other woodwork. "I'm going to strip all this and put the original stuff back in, because that's really important to me. These are solid wood, they're beautiful doors, there's no reason to go buy new doors."

She also uncovered beautiful wide-plank wood floors under the layers of carpet: "Three inches of solid hardwood. You could not buy this again for any amount of money. It's one of the things I love the most about this house."

But plenty of new materials will also be needed. So far, Justine has purchased from BBR several windows, a kitchen cabinet set, oven, range hood, vanities, toilets, shower pan, chimney cap, tools, mirrors, and much more. During the pre-renovation "free day" at the Reuse Center, she scooped up some high-quality sinks. Almost nothing in her renovation is new, except for lumber.

"I'd rather save on materials and put the money I'm going to spend into repairing

the basics. The price tag of things just blows my mind." To date, she has had a new well dug and is getting ready to re-roof. Additional supports will be needed in the basement to shore up the center of the house structurally.

When possible, Justine is planning to do the work herself, especially labor-intensive tasks such as repointing brick. "I'm really excited to do it myself. I've watched a lot of videos on this. It involves gently chipping out the old stuff and filling in the new stuff. It's important to get the right kind of mortar for bricks as old as these."

For the kitchen, Justine had used an online layout tool and was planning to order from an inexpensive cabinetry line. "I thought that would be my cheapest, best bet. But it still would have been \$5,000," she remembers. "And then I saw exactly what I would have wanted for much, much less at the Reuse Center. I really love these so much." The custom wood cabinets have inset doors and drawers for a traditional



The cabinet set Justine found at the Reuse Center is awaiting installation. The set was just what she was looking for, at a fraction of the cheapest new cabinet set she could find.

A new co-op in town



The Dorchester Food Co-op is recruiting members for a new cooperative grocery store, to be located

in the Bowdoin-Geneva neighborhood on the first floor of a 41-unit housing development. Construction is expected to begin in 2021, but you can join today to demonstrate your support for a member-owned grocery store in the city. Visit DorchesterFoodCoop.com for more information.

feel that goes well with the historic home, and the set cost just \$1,200. "I don't know if I could have done it if I didn't find all these areas to save money."

Building her knowledge has also been a major endeavor—learning enough about each project to make decisions. "Reading these how-tos, like, how am I going to install this, or how am I going to do these cabinets, I'm so glad I don't believe every word of what I see and get intimidated," Justine says. In the end, Justine will have a familiarity with just about every square inch of her home, down to its bones. "That makes it more special. I feel like I'm creating this thing, and I will feel at the end that I'm connected to every piece. I've spent a lot of time with every piece of wood."

"It's going to be exactly what I want in the end." ◀

Net zero carbon

continued from page 1

renewable energy source (usually solar) can be designed to power it.

Renovations now in progress at the Reuse Center at Boston Building Resources will make the building net zero, thanks to heavily insulated walls and roof, an airlock for material pick-up, an all-electric heating and cooling system, and a rooftop solar array to power it all.

➤ Air sealing and insulation

Preventing energy loss with air sealing and insulation is the first place to start when reducing carbon. Architect Travis Anderson of PlaceTailor recommends focusing on “an airtight boundary, good windows, and a good jacket” of insulation.

Spray foam is very effective for air sealing. However, many spray foams use propellants that are highly volatile and harmful to the environment. Rick recommends asking your insulation contractor to use a spray foam that emits no VOCs and uses non-damaging propellants. Environmentally friendly insulation options include cellulose and mineral wool.

Newly constructed or tightly sealed buildings use air exchangers to ensure that carbon monoxide and other toxins do not build up inside. A high level of air sealing needs to be reached before an air exchanger is necessary.

➤ Efficient electrical appliances and heating systems

Many homeowners have already switched to LED lighting and smart thermostats. But what about home heating? Air-source heat pumps now provide a viable alternative to the fossil-fuel-powered boilers and furnaces heating most Boston-area homes. Heat pumps are highly efficient systems that move heat in or out of a building to provide heat in winter and cooling in summer using vapor compression, as a refrigerator does. Heat pump technology has been used for many years in Asia for home cooling, and has now advanced to the point where it works well in cold climates to generate heat. Heat pumps work effectively even when

Heat pumps harvest energy from phase change—that is, the energy taken in or released when a substance changes to or from solid, liquid, or vapor. For example, when water reaches its boiling point, a large input of energy is needed to push the water into its vapor form, steam. When the steam cools and returns to its liquid state, the phase-change energy is released. “By putting a refrigerant under pressure, the pump is able to get a phase change reaction that generates much more energy than what was needed to crank that pump up,” explained Rick.



temperatures dip below freezing, and they cool more efficiently than conventional air conditioning systems.

“BTU for BTU, electricity costs as much as 23% more as a fuel source,” said Rick. But the efficiency gained with a heat pump system can offset the higher fuel cost. “Heat pumps are much more

efficient than any boiler can be,” Rick explained. “If you layer on any solar at all, it becomes a no-brainer, because you’re providing your own fuel.” Heat pumps are also available to run a dryer, water heater, or refrigerator.

Converting an older home to heat pumps must happen in concert with air sealing, insulation, and door/window/envelope upgrades, as well as a solid effort at conservation. Even with a more efficient system, a drafty home will cost more to heat and cool.

➤ Solar power

With a well insulated and air-sealed home, entirely powered by electricity, a home’s energy needs can be met with a rooftop solar array. Money spent on a solar installation will be recouped in future energy savings. On a nationwide average, the payback period for solar is about eight years, but it can be much less depending on the situation. Mass Save and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center have more information about rebates and financing options.

With air sealing, insulation, efficient equipment, and a clean, renewable energy source, homeowners can reduce their energy bills and increase comfort while minimizing their impact on the planet as never before. ◀

Insulated panels increase energy efficiency

One of the more visible aspects of the renovation of the Reuse Center at BBR is the installation of new exterior wall and roof panels, a key component of the building envelope that will vastly increase the energy efficiency of the structure. These panels can be thought of as a “foam sandwich”—two pre-finished steel facings enclose a layer of polyurethane foam that is four inches thick in the wall panels and five inches thick on the roof. A grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection covered a



major portion of the cost of purchasing and installing the insulated panels. For more information, visit BBR’s Advice blog: BostonBuildingResources.com/advice.

2019 Facts & Figures

- We served **1,895 income-qualified homeowners and nonprofit customers.**
- **Sales of materials totaled \$519,608.**
- We **diverted materials valued at more than \$2 million** from disposal in landfills by accepting donations from 1,523 donors.
- We conducted **34 home improvement workshops** teaching skills that allow homeowners to make repairs themselves, understand how their home's systems function and work with contractors more knowledgeably. These workshops reached 278 attendees.
- **At six Zero Waste Days in four Massachusetts communities,** we collected reusable materials from local residents.

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annual report 2019 *continued*

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Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund, dba Boston Building Resources – Reuse Center

Statement of Financial Position For the year ended December 31, 2019 (with comparative totals for 2018)

Assets		
	2019	2018
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$823,725	\$773,916
Accounts receivable, net of \$0 allowance	3,326	3,456
Contributions receivable, net of \$0 allowance	95,790	124,523
Inventory	88,881	89,510
Prepaid expenses	11,217	14,807
Investments	2,000	5,810
Total current assets	<u>1,024,939</u>	<u>1,012,022</u>
Property plant and equipment		
Land	2,000	2,000
Building	488,400	398,138
Vehicle	85,426	85,426
Furniture and equipment	29,001	29,939
Less accumulated depreciation	(223,283)	(197,221)
Net property, plant, and equipment	381,544	318,282
Total assets	<u>\$1,406,483</u>	<u>\$1,330,304</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current liabilities		
Accounts payable	18,224	34,884
Accrued expenses	30,120	27,458
Customer deposits	176	—
Total current liabilities	<u>48,520</u>	<u>62,342</u>
Net assets		
Unrestricted	696,278	634,036
Temporarily restricted	661,685	633,926
Total net assets	<u>1,357,963</u>	<u>1,267,962</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$1,406,483</u>	<u>\$1,330,304</u>

Statement of Activity

For the year ended December 31, 2019
(with comparative totals for 2018)

	2019	2018
Revenue and support		
Donated materials for resale	506,664	490,043
Sales, pick-up fees, miscellaneous	538,866	520,204
Grants, contributions, membership dues	244,891	601,783
Donated goods and services	92,424	130,129
Educational workshops	16,575	9,800
Interest and dividends	4,234	2,252
Other income	7,255	771
Total revenue and support	<u>1,410,909</u>	<u>1,754,982</u>
Expenses		
Program services	1,177,870	1,166,998
Management and general	125,644	123,414
Fundraising	17,394	16,417
Total expenses	<u>1,320,908</u>	<u>1,306,829</u>
Change in net assets	90,001	448,153
Net assets, beginning of year	1,267,962	819,809
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$1,357,963</u>	<u>\$1,267,962</u>

Hands On is published by **Boston Building Resources:** *We inspire, educate, and empower homeowners to increase the efficiency and value of their homes. As a local social enterprise, we focus on affordable solutions that help all of our neighbors create stronger communities while benefiting the environment.*

This newsletter is a project of the Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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We need your help to fully fund Reuse Center renovations

Renovation of the Reuse Center is well underway—but we still need your help to raise the remainder of the funds needed. Please contribute today so our customers can experience these benefits and more:

- **More materials.** With a larger, more efficient receiving area, we will be able to move more donated materials onto the sales floor more quickly.
- **New retail space** at the front of the store to give kitchen cabinet sets and other materials a chance to shine.
- **An energy-efficient building envelope.** A well-insulated roof and walls will save energy and make for a more comfortable space.
- **An all-electric HVAC system** with more even heat distribution and—air conditioning!
- **A centrally located checkout** and airlock merchandise pick-up door will make it much easier to handle large items.
- **Improved traffic flow** by moving incoming donations to the rear of the building.
- **Better displays and more lighting** will help you find what you need.
- **A rooftop solar array** to generate our own solar electricity.



To make a contribution to the Campaign for the Next Generation Reuse Center, visit: www.BostonBuildingResources.com/nextgen

