



Fall 2023

Carpenter Neil Israel saves money for his clients with Reuse Center materials

➤ If you hear humming and drumming in BBR’s Reuse Center, carpenter Neil Israel may be perusing the nearby shelves.

Neil has been shopping at the Reuse Center for twelve years after learning about the organization from a friend. “I shop here a lot,” Neil says. He has become well known among the staff for his habit of singing while he browses through the day’s selection of items.

Neil finds materials to use for client projects as well as for his own home. “You find very unusual things here sometimes,” he says. “Things you don’t see every day.”

On this particular day, he’s looking for doors, but also finds some floor tile, a pedestal sink, and a couple of hand tools. Neil enjoys the treasure-hunt quality of shopping here: “Sometimes I just pass by and I stumble upon things. I find things here that you don’t normally see elsewhere.”

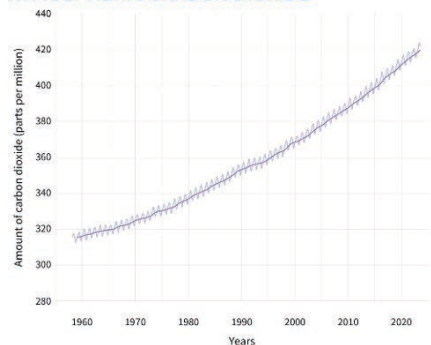
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Neil Israel finds many items at the Reuse Center that he can use for clients and for his own home.

Embodied carbon > What is it, and why does it matter?

ATMOSPHERIC CARBON DIOXIDE



Carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere has been rising since 1960. Building materials account for more than 11% of global CO₂ emissions.

Source: NOAA

Across the globe, the realities of climate change are sobering. Deadly fires in Maui and Canada, devastating floods in Libya, and increased hurricane activity in recent years are all directly attributable to the warming of our planet.

During the past century, increased consumption of fossil fuels and associated emissions have resulted in a dramatic rise in the level of atmospheric carbon dioxide.

As the negative impacts of increased CO₂ in the atmosphere have become well understood, individuals and companies are seeking ways to curb their emissions. Per-capita CO₂ emissions in the United States are among the highest of any country—more than 15 metric tons per person each year. These emissions include fossil fuels burned to power and heat homes and buildings, and to supply food,

transportation, and everything else that supports our existence. Fifteen metric tons of CO₂ can be hard to comprehend, but it is roughly the equivalent carbon emissions from burning 1,500 gallons of gasoline, or filling the tank of the typical sedan 100 times.

Our built environment accounts for nearly 40% of global CO₂ emissions. This includes construction and operation of buildings, bridges, homes, and all other built infrastructure. Building materials alone account for more than 11% of total CO₂ emissions. Expanding the reuse of

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Featured products

Storm windows

A high-quality storm window increases energy efficiency and reduces noise infiltration. The Co-op at BBR offers storm windows from Coastal Industries and Mon-Ray. We can install them for you, too. Contact us to speak with one of our window and door specialists. *Member price starting at about \$475 for white and bronze*



Member prices are listed and are subject to change without notice.

Pipe insulation

Insulating heating pipes is a DIY-friendly project that will pay for itself in energy savings during the first heating season. If you have a hot water or steam heating system, you know that a tremendous amount of heat can be lost in your basement as the heat makes its way up to your living space. Insulating your pipes keeps heat in until the steam or hot water makes it to your radiators. Insulation is 1" thick and comes in three-foot lengths in a variety of diameters. Stop by and we'll teach you how to measure your pipes. *Member price starting at \$5.25 for a three-foot segment*



Thermally modified parting bead

The Co-op at BBR is now offering parting bead made of thermally modified poplar for historic window restoration. The wood has been exposed to high heat to remove any sugars, which makes it highly resistant to decay and pests. It has similar performance to Spanish cedar with less of an environmental impact. The color resembles walnut. *Member price: \$7.00 for a seven-foot length*

Carpenter Neil Israel *continued from page 1*

As a carpenter, Neil is proud of his work. "I try to do the best work I can. I shop here a lot and find things that are very affordable. It helps keep the price down."

It's all too easy to underestimate the cost of a home improvement project. "You think it's going to cost this much, and by the time you finish, it takes you way over budget," he says. "This is the kind of place that helps keep the budget down."

Furthermore, donating materials to the Reuse Center at BBR benefits the environment. "You're keeping them out of the dumpster." From insulation to appliances to windows and doors, materials from the Reuse Center make it possible to keep the environment and your home in good repair—for a song.



BBR and MAHA collaborate on home improvement workshop



Boston Building Resources and the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance STASH program co-sponsored a workshop on September 23 to teach new homeowners how to prioritize their home improvement projects. The hybrid workshop was attended by more than 40 people both online and in person.

◀ *Neil Israel shopping at the Reuse Center for affordable building materials for his clients*

Embodied carbon

continued from page 1

building materials can have a significant, positive impact on our environment.

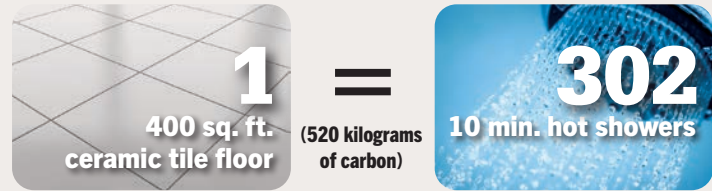
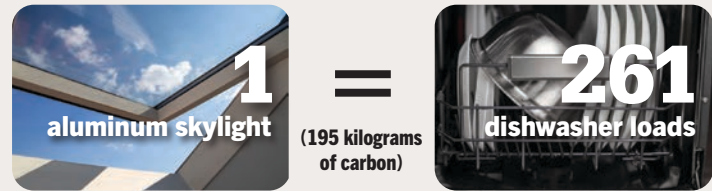
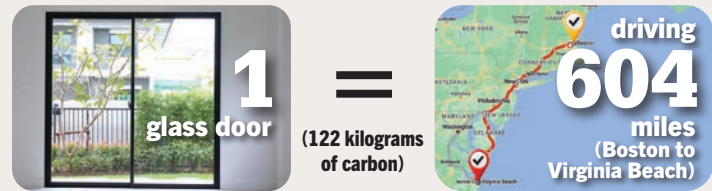
You may have heard of the term embodied carbon, which refers to the total amount of CO₂ generated from the manufacture, transportation, installation, maintenance, and disposal of an item. Embodied carbon can be calculated for any building material; understanding this metric can help guide our choices.

Wood, for example, contains about 50% carbon by dry weight. As long as the wood remains in the building, the carbon remains sequestered and not released into the atmosphere. If that wood is reused at the end of the building's lifecycle, the environment benefits. If that wood is landfilled, the carbon will be released into the atmosphere as the wood decomposes, contributing to a warming climate.

In choices big and small, considering embodied carbon can help make a strong case for reuse. Ten linear feet of kitchen cabinetry and manufactured countertop contains approximately five metric tons of embodied carbon, or nearly one-third of a person's carbon footprint for an entire year! The reuse of a typical vinyl window saves CO₂ emissions equivalent

One Choice, Big Impact

Your choice of building material is a one-time decision that can have an environmental impact far greater than the everyday actions you may think about when trying to reduce your carbon footprint. See how the embodied carbon in common building materials stacks up against carbon emissions from common everyday activities.



When you buy used materials, you zero out the carbon emissions that would be needed to manufacture a new item. Shop at the BBR Reuse Center and keep carbon emissions low!

to driving 200 miles, and the reuse of ten square feet of ceramic tile saves emissions equivalent to driving 25 miles.

Because building materials have an outsized impact on carbon emissions, even

a few of our choices can significantly enlarge or shrink our personal footprint. Extending the life of useful building materials is one way to help keep the climate sustainable for the next generation. ◀



Ladies and gentlemen, start your composters!

Compost is the secret ingredient for beautiful gardens, and autumn leaves are an essential ingredient for home composting. As the leaves begin to fall, set up a backyard composter to collect dry leaves ("browns") and vegetable peelings ("greens"). Give it a stir from time to time, and, by spring, you'll have some free, homegrown compost for your garden and yard.

Earth Machine compost bins are \$25 for Boston residents thanks to a city subsidy (\$84 for others). Pick yours up from the Co-op at BBR.



Elijah Miller: A solid financial foundation leads to innovation and progress

Boston Building Resources members who attended the 2023 annual meeting, held May 9 at the Boston Nature Center in Mattapan, heard from Elijah Miller, the director of policy in the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion. He commended BBR members for being part of a cooperative and promoting a more just society. In a complex world, problems have complex origins, so a shift in thinking may be needed to find the solutions that will make progress possible.

Illustrating his perspective with a "bad analogy," Elijah posed the challenge of trying to go from Boston to Providence in one hour. "What is my problem? I can say my problem is speed, and if I run there fast enough I can do it," he said. "I'll just train and become the next Usain Bolt." But, eventually, "I'll realize that's an impossible task," and could simply give up. "The system I'm working with is not going to allow me to live the life that I want to live." Giving up, however, discounts the



Elijah Miller spoke to BBR members at the May 9 annual meeting.

possibility of solutions such as cars or high-speed rail.

"We all have a bias for what we deep down think is the problem and the needed solutions," Elijah continued. "The underlying

debate is how we get to the next world that we know we need to see."

The pressures of daily life often prevent people from focusing on how to make the larger world a better place. "A lot of people, especially young people, say the system is rigged, it'll never work," he said. "You need to take care of your child the next day; you have to take care of a parent or grandparent." The American Revolution, like many events precipitating great societal change, were led by the middle class—people with enough resources to think beyond daily survival.

"You discussed sustainability in your building structure, because you want to live your values," Elijah continued. "You're living new values that are not just about squeezing out every dime of profit, but you're creating value." When BBR members improve their homes, "you're ultimately giving them the wealth, or the opportunity to innovate the way we live our lives."

When people have a solid financial foundation, they feel secure enough to take risks and try new ideas that can bring prosperity for everyone, Elijah said. Financial stability gives people "room to imagine innovations, for people to build new institutions, new ways of expression, new ways of solving problems, new ways to allow people to pursue happiness." ◀

BBR totes, shirts, and mugs



Right on time for holiday gift giving, Boston Building Resources has a few options for the BBR member in your life. Canvas tote bags, coffee mugs, and platinum logo T-shirts are available from our swag store, operated by Worx Printing, a worker cooperative. You can also purchase one of our custom tie-dye tees. Stop in or visit our website by scanning the QR code.



Common types of wood and their properties



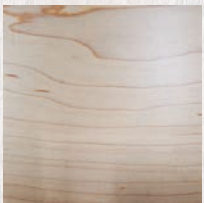
Oak >> Oak is a strong, hard, heavy, and dense wood with close grains. There are more than 500 species of oak with wood colors varying in tone from light to olive to reddish brown. Oak is prized for its resistance to decay, insects, and fungus types. It is commonly used for flooring and stair parts and is native to North America.



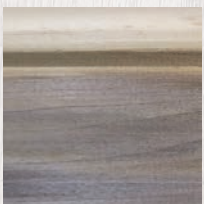
Mahogany >> Known for its durability and beauty, mahogany ranges in color from a uniform reddish-brown to a deep red-brown, turning red/purple with age. It is a medium hardwood species with a smooth and even texture and diverse types of grains: straight, interlocked, or wavy. Mahogany is naturally resistant to rot, decay, and insects due to natural oils that repel water. It is native to Central and South America. Common uses include furniture and millwork.



Cherry >> Popular among carpenters for its workability and strength, cherry is known for its rich color, which deepens over time from light pinkish brown to deeper reddish brown. It has a smooth texture with natural gum pockets and brown flecks. Cherry is native to the Northern Hemisphere and is often used for cabinetry.



Maple >> Maple is a strong wood with generally straight grains. It tends to have a fine, even texture. Color can be nearly white to off-white cream. Maple is versatile and affordable, and is often used for cabinetry, flooring, and trim. There are approximately 132 species of maple; the tree is native to Northeastern America.



Poplar >> This soft, low-density hardwood ranges in color from very light to olive green. It has straight grains and is native to the Northern Hemisphere. Poplar is susceptible to dents and scratches. It is often used for interior trim.



What's bokashi composting?

Bokashi composting is a fundamentally different process than traditional backyard composting. While traditional composting happens by decomposition, bokashi uses fermentation.

A traditional compost pile must be stirred from time to time to create air pockets for the organisms that break down the organic material. Bokashi composting happens in an anaerobic environment, and breaks down the material much faster. It takes about two weeks to fill a bokashi bucket, and another two weeks to ferment.

With bokashi composting, you can put meat, bones, dairy, and cooked items into the mix. Sprinkle the organic material with bokashi bran—about one tablespoon per inch of waste. Once the bin is full, set it in a warm place. Empty the bokashi tea every couple of days and use it to feed your plants.

After two weeks, you should smell a pickle-like odor, the food waste will be softer, and you may see white mold. These are indicators of successful fermentation. Bury the fermented food waste directly in your garden, compost pile, planters, or soil factory. In two more weeks, the pre-compost will be incorporated into the soil web to the benefit of all plants and soil in the surrounding area.

Healthy soil is full of life, including macrobes (worms, bugs) and microbes (bacteria, yeasts, and fungi). Healthy soil begins with microbes. Soil biologists have determined that plant roots are actually a two-way system. Plants send almost 40% of their energy down into their roots, where it is released in the root zone in the form of sugary carbohydrates intended to attract microbes. Microbes, by digesting the minerals and nutrients from the soil around the roots, feed the plants. Bokashi compost encourages microbial growth and strengthens the soil web.

Ready to give bokashi a try? A single-bin starter kit—including one bokashi bucket, one bag of bokashi bran, a guide booklet, and a cup to collect bokashi tea—is available for a member price of \$75 from the Co-op at BBR. Additional 2.2-pound bags of bran are \$14.45 each; one bag lasts three to four months.



The Tool Box

On September 26, BBR hosted The Tool Box, the second in our quarterly series of gatherings for women and gender-diverse folks who work in the building trades. More than 20 people came together at the Reuse Center to make new connections and build their networks. The conversation focused on ways to promote self-care.

The date for the next Tool Box event is Tuesday, January 30. Mark your calendars!



Dorchester kitchen lets the wood grain shine



A co-op member who is an architect worked closely with kitchen designer Linda Lesyna on this gorgeous remodel featuring Imperia cabinetry. The doors have a rift-cut white oak veneer with a straight grain that, on a slab door, emphasizes clean, vertical lines. Contour drawer pulls on the drawers below the cooktop mean no hardware needed. Black accents include painted doors above the cooktop and glass doors with a black metal frame. Scan the QR code to see more photos on our Houzz profile.



Co-op kitchens

Photos by Nicholas Doyle

A gift that lasts

If you love the work we're doing at BBR and want your support for our mission to benefit the next generation, consider making a gift to the Reuse Center as part of your estate plan. You can make the Reuse Center a beneficiary in your will, or of your retirement plan or life insurance policy, by using the following language:

"I give the sum of \$___ [or ___ percent of the remainder of my estate] to the Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund, a tax-exempt charitable trust, tax ID 04-2749815, with offices at 100 Terrace Street, Boston, Massachusetts, 02120, for the exclusive use of Boston Building Resources - Reuse Center."

This greenhouse is really green!



BBR customer John Burns built this greenhouse using 23 windows of various shapes and sizes, along with one 15-lite door, from the Reuse Center. He added a couple of other windows to complete the job. Outstanding!

Thanks to recent foundation supporters!

Cabot Family Charitable Trust
Cambridge Savings Charitable Foundation
Dedham Savings Community Foundation
Lawrence Model Lodging Houses Trust
Liberty Mutual Foundation
Needham Bank
P&G Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation

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, 2022

(with comparative totals for 2021)

Assets	2022	2021
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$125,900	\$431,951
Cash and cash equivalents, restricted	141,100	5,028
Accounts receivable, other	2,955	2,801
Accounts receivable, ERC	51,387	47,675
Unconditional promises to give, net	54,574	25,375
Investments	2,000	2,000
Inventory	126,580	161,510
Cash and cash equivalents, board-designated	316,085	—
Prepaid expenses	7,554	6,370
Total current assets	<u>828,135</u>	<u>682,710</u>
Net property and equipment	1,981,031	2,061,009
Total assets	<u>\$2,809,166</u>	<u>\$2,743,719</u>
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current liabilities		
Current portion of long-term debt	\$30,413	\$28,126
Accounts payable	18,755	18,267
Accrued expenses	46,624	46,734
Customer deposits	2,559	—
Total current liabilities	<u>98,351</u>	<u>93,127</u>
Long-term debt, net of current portion	84,978	227,292
Total liabilities	<u>183,329</u>	<u>320,419</u>
Net assets		
Without donor restrictions		
Undesignated	2,168,652	2,418,272
Board-designated	316,085	—
With donor restrictions	141,100	5,028
Total net assets	<u>2,625,837</u>	<u>2,423,300</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$2,809,166</u>	<u>\$2,743,719</u>

Statement of Activity

For the year ended December 31, 2022

(with comparative totals for 2021)

Operating support and revenues	2022	2021
Sales	602,360	531,022
Less cost of goods sold	(564,024)	(489,283)
Net sales	38,336	41,739
Educational workshops	10,604	—
Memberships	11,970	6,855
Total operating revenues	60,910	48,594
In-kind donations of inventory	520,926	562,433
In-kind donations of services and rent	43,450	47,645
In-kind donations of securities	—	514,861
Grants and contributions	458,686	146,286
Other income	8,680	5,257
Investment income, net	7,995	29,616
Total operating support	<u>1,039,737</u>	<u>1,306,098</u>
Total operating revenues and support	<u>1,100,647</u>	<u>1,354,692</u>
Operating Expenses		
Program services	715,605	695,515
Management and general	163,133	102,268
Fundraising	29,372	30,436
Total operating expenses	<u>908,110</u>	<u>828,219</u>
Change in net assets from operations	192,537	526,473
Non-Operating Support		
Capital contributions and grants	10,000	212,745
Forgiveness of debt	—	85,426
Total non-operating support	10,000	298,171
Total changes in net assets	202,537	824,644
Net assets, beginning of year, as originally stated	2,423,300	1,550,981
Prior period adjustment	—	47,675
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$2,625,837</u>	<u>\$2,423,300</u>



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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.

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www.bostonbuildingresources.com

Making Boston more cooperative



As a consumer cooperative, Boston Building Resources is part of a network of cooperatively owned and operated businesses and housing communities. Seven principles set co-ops apart from other organizations:

- 1. Voluntary:** Cooperatives consist of voluntary members and are open to any people who are willing to accept its terms, without discrimination.
- 2. Democratic:** Members control the cooperative, making business choices and forming policies.
- 3. Economic:** Members benefit economically in proportion to the business they conduct with the co-op, and capital is democratically controlled.
- 4. Autonomy:** Cooperatives function on their own, controlled by their own members, not by external forces.
- 5. Education:** Members of cooperatives are trained to be able to effectively work with and understand the cooperative.
- 6. Cooperation:** Cooperatives support and do business with other co-ops as much as possible.
- 7. Community:** Cooperatives work to benefit the larger community as well as their members' needs.

As a member of the Co-op at BBR, you are the focus of the business. There is no pressure from shareholders to generate dividends, so a co-op can directly address their customers' needs without feeling the pressure of other priorities.