



handsOn

A newsletter of the
Boston Building Materials Co-op and
the Building Materials Resource Center

Fall 2007

Resource Center Expands with New Addition



The new addition on the right, with its closed overhead door, blends in seamlessly with the existing warehouse building.

The Building Materials Resource Center's warehouse addition opened this summer, adding 2,000 square feet of space for a separate materials receiving area and additional retail display space for donated materials. The warehouse construction was the major component of the BMRC's Expansion Project, which also included technology improvements and the construction of new administrative office space above the existing sales office.

The new space has allowed BMRC to make significant changes in the way donated materials are received and displayed. Donated items can now be unloaded "behind the scenes," where they are evaluated, tested and cleaned if necessary, and priced before being presented to customers.

Materials will soon have price tags with unique inventory numbers and scannable bar codes to automate the sales process. This sets the stage for making BMRC's inventory

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Cabinetry to Keep Your Kitchen Green

The Boston Building Materials Co-op is pleased to introduce a new line of "green" cabinets called Breathe Easy. The Co-op is the first retailer in Boston to carry these high-quality cabinets, made with virtually no polluting volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

While the term "green products" has been widely used, specifics about what makes something green are less well understood. With cabinetry,

there are four main aspects:

- Wood that is sustainably harvested as certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Plywood (used for the box construction and shelving) made without added formaldehyde
- Finish with virtually no VOCs
- Local manufacturing to minimize emissions generated from transportation

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Co-op kitchen designer Kim Eifrid (he's the Atlanta voice you may hear on the phone) shows some of the features of Breathe Easy cabinets to board member Dan Nakamoto.

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SELECT PRODUCTS AVAILABLE AT THE CO-OP

Why wait—insulate!

Energy prices are high and going higher. One way to save is with cellulose insulation, which can be blown into walls and attic floors to effectively wrap your house in a “blanket” that keeps the heat in—and keeps your energy costs down. Cellulose is made from recycled paper processed with a fire retardant. Each 25-pound bag insulates about 25 square feet of wall area (R value of 13) and 28 square feet of attic floor (R-30).

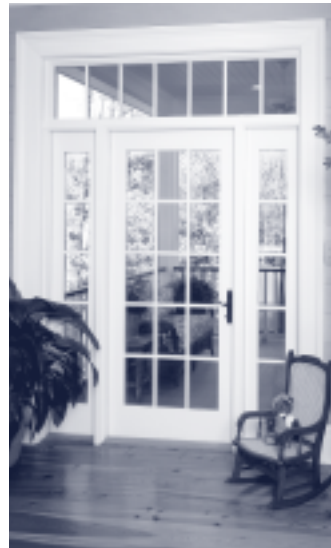
Save even more by renting the Co-op’s insulation blower and doing the work yourself. *(\$12.25 per bag; \$40 per day blower rental)*

Pipe insulation

Why use energy to heat your basement when everyone is upstairs? Insulating your home’s steam pipes or hot air ducts will not only save energy, but also reduce the banging experienced by many people when their steam heating systems start up. Insulation is easy for homeowners to install themselves, and BBMC custom-orders it to match the size of your pipes. *(Various prices)*

Windsor windows and doors

The Co-op now carries Windsor replacement and new construction windows and patio doors. Windsor products are made from wood and clad with aluminum on the exterior. Co-op members interested in sliding patio doors or French doors will find some high quality choices from Windsor. Eight exterior color options are available. *(Various prices)*



Do away with door drafts

The Co-op’s own door kits are an easy, inexpensive solution to one of the most common heat loss areas—a drafty door. Cut the strips to the correct length and attach them to the door jamb with a few nails. Don’t forget interior doors to the basement and attic. Add a door sweep at the bottom for a tighter seal. *(\$11.75 for door kits; \$5.80-\$8.10 for sweeps)*

Cushion bronze weather stripping

Nothing works quite as well and as long as cushion bronze weather stripping to keep drafts from slipping through the edges of double-hung windows. The Co-op is one of the few places you can buy this hard-to-find product. *(\$7.50 for 7 feet)*

Prices include the member discount and are subject to change without notice.

Dull tool? Don’t throw it away—sharpen it!

Instead of throwing away dull yard tools, shop tools, and scissors, you can bring them in to the Co-op for sharpening. By not throwing the tools out, you’ll be saving the money and energy that it would take to manufacture and transport a replacement. Staff member Patti Hudson recently had several pairs of tin snips and some good-quality, but dull, scissors honed. “It was awesome to finally bring some of my tools in to get sharpened,” she said. “My tools came back almost better than brand new. They did the best job. Took them apart, cleaned them, and sharpened them.” Here’s one more way to cut back on the amount of material we throw away.

Look for Us on Angie’s List

If you are a Co-op member who subscribes to Angie’s List, we hope you’ll consider writing a review about your experience. Recommending the Co-op to others will help

the business thrive for the benefit of our more than 1,000 member-owners! BBMC now has reviews under the Interior Design and Decorating

category (for kitchen design) and the Windows category, but you can also write a review in the categories of Doors, Insulation, and Screen Repair.



We Like Bikes

Reduce your carbon emissions by riding your bike to the Co-op or BMRC! A bicycle parking rack is now available.

THIRD ANNUAL

energy savings

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, January 12

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

**Curtis Hall • 20 South Street
Jamaica Plain**

Meet weatherization experts who can answer your questions about conservation, learn simple ways to cut fuel costs by minimizing heat loss in your home, and talk to representatives of other organizations that can help you cut fuel and water costs and make related home improvements. Call 617-442-2262 or visit www.bbmc.com for more information.

Save the Date!

Oh No! It's Snowing, and I'm Out of Ice Melt!

Don't get caught by surprise if winter weather arrives early this season. The Boston Building Materials Co-op can make sure you're prepared for that first snowstorm by delivering a supply of our earth-friendly ice melt to your door on Saturday, December 1, for orders placed by November 29.

The Co-op's own ice melt—a blend of urea and sand—keeps walkways clear while keeping your plants and pets happy. It provides traction to prevent slipping and sliding, and, unlike rock salt, won't harm the nearby flora and fauna—that is, your plantings and pets' paws. (A fertilizer component, urea is actually beneficial to vegetation.) Many Co-op members make their way to Terrace Street when it looks

like snow just to stock up on this winter must-have.

New this year, as a pilot program, Co-op members who live in a limited geographic area can choose to have their season's supply of ice melt delivered to their doorsteps. Deliveries will be made on Saturday, December 1, to Mission Hill, Jamaica Plain, and lower Roxbury only (Zip codes 02119, 02120, and 02130). **Members must order and prepay before the Co-op's 4:30 p.m. closing on Thursday, November 29.** Each bag of ice melt is \$8.25 for a 25-pound bag (member price), plus a delivery charge of 50¢ per bag or a maximum of \$2.00 per delivery.

For more information or to place your order, call the Co-op at 617-442-2262.



Newspaper Ads Help Customers Find Us

If you've seen the headline "Found It at the Resource Center" on a page of your local weekly newspaper, you already know about BMRC's first-ever newspaper advertising campaign, which launched in September. Four ads feature different items—a sink, chandelier, cabinet, and tile—in a campaign that correlates with the word-of-mouth nature in which



most customers find their way to the BMRC.

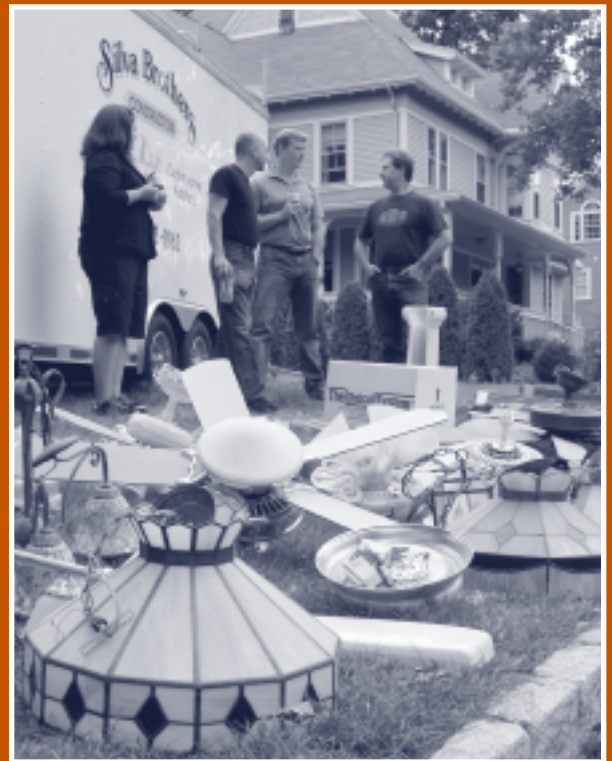
While a continuing outreach program on MBTA trains urges potential donors to contribute materials with the slogan "Don't Throw It Away—Donate," the newspaper campaign focuses on a different audience—potential buyers of materials.

"We wanted to invoke the feeling of a treasure hunt with this campaign because there are so many great, random things that can be found at the Center," said Tim Carlson, a partner with advertising firm Oxygen LLC. "Showing the high-quality materials that can be had for such low prices gives us the 'wow factor' that will capture people's attention."

Ads ran in English and Spanish in the *Banner*, *Bulletin*, *Dorchester Reporter*, *Jamaica Plain Gazette*, *Mattapan Reporter*, *Mission Hill Gazette*, *El Mundo*, and *La Semana*. Funding for this ad campaign was provided by the Great Bay Foundation, located in Portland, Maine. One of the first Massachusetts nonprofit organizations to receive funding from Great Bay, the BMRC received monies last year to fund the market research study that became the strategic foundation for the campaign.

Ads will run again beginning in February and continue through mid-May.

Resource Center News



This Old House Donates to BMRC

This Old House

PBS's *This Old House* program donated lights, plumbing fixtures, flooring, and other reusable materials to the Building Materials Resource Center from its Newton project in August. Producer Deborah Hood, director David Vos, and host Kevin O'Connor reviewed the collection of items with BMRC's Matthew St. Onge before the taping. Look for the BMRC truck and crew in an episode of *This Old House* in late 2007!

Out of the Showroom and Into the Kitchen

After Metropolitan Cabinet & Countertops updated their showrooms this spring, several floor displays of kitchen cabinetry needed new homes, and the Building Materials Resource Center was more than happy to help.

Based in Norwood, Metropolitan also has showrooms in Natick and Watertown, which are updated on an ongoing basis to show new products and designs. In May 2007, company president Stuart Elfland made a call to BMRC's donations staff, and fourteen top-quality kitchen cabinet sets made their way from his showrooms to the BMRC warehouse, where they were quickly sold to members.

"I really like knowing that we are helping people," said Stuart, who started the company with his father 24 years



BMRC donor Stuart Elfland of Metropolitan Cabinets appreciates knowing that the cabinets he donated are helping someone else.

ago. He noted that many aspects of kitchen renovation have changed since then as the kitchen has become more of a place to congregate instead of just a place to prepare meals. "Back then, the plumber might be the one to pick out a sink and faucet," Stuart noted. "Now, there are many more choices, and peo-

ple have their own opinions about what they want."

And with many choices of what to do with their showroom displays, we are grateful that Metropolitan made the choice to donate them to BMRC!

Earth Share of New England

If your employer offers workplace charitable giving through Earth Share, please consider designating the Building Materials Resource Center as your charity of choice. You can do so by using BMRC's five-digit number: 16888. Many thanks!



Earth Share
OF NEW ENGLAND

Don't Get Left in the Cold

Here are some resources if you are having trouble paying your energy bill this winter:

- **Action for Boston Community Development**, fuel assistance: 617-357-6012, ext. 6640
- **Citizens Energy Oil Heat Program**, fuel assistance (November 1 through February 28): 1-877-JOE-4-OIL (1-877-563-4645)
- **Roxbury Multi-Service Center**, emergency fuel assistance for Boston residents: 617-427-4470, ext. 410
- **Mass. Energy**, an oil buying network that can save 10 to 30 cents per gallon: 1-800-287-3950 or www.massenergy.com
- **NStar**, discounted rate application: 1-800-592-2000, ask the voice prompt for "customer service," or fill out an online application at www.nstar.com
- **United Way**, referral to fuel assistance programs: 1-800-231-4377

Warehouse Addition *continued from page 1*

accessible via the Internet in the future. Further technology improvements to make this possible are now in the development stage.

Having a separate receiving area relieves crowding in the front part of the BMRC's warehouse and makes it possible to have more effective displays of materials for sale.

Construction of the warehouse addition was delayed for more than two years due to zoning, permitting, and other regulatory issues. After these challenges were successfully addressed, a building permit was issued in March 2007, and construction began immediately. In the meantime, construction was completed

on new office space above the existing sales office, allowing donations manager Dave Adams to move into the warehouse and bringing the donations department staff together under one roof.

Dave evaluates materials offered as donations, making sure they match the needs of BMRC customers. He also



Left to right, donations manager Dave Adams and staff members John Robles and Mark Kelly prepare to unload materials into the new receiving area.

schedules material pick-ups in the BMRC truck, operated by staff members Mark Kelly and John Robles.

The technology component of the Expansion Project was largely completed in 2006. The new system allows a potential donor of materials to fill out an offer form on BMRC's Web site, www.bostonbmrc.org. Contact information is then transferred directly to BMRC's database, eliminating the need for repetitive data entry and giving all staff access to the same information.

Ten foundation supporters contributed a total of \$191,000 to make the Expansion Project possible. Thank you, one and all!

Thanks go out to the organizations that provided funding for the BMRC Expansion Project:

- Agnes M. Lindsay Trust
- Anonymous Foundation
- Bank of New York Mellon
- Cabot Family Charitable Trust
- Clipper Ship Foundation
- Fidelity Management Trust Company
- Jane's Trust
- The Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust
- Mabel Louise Riley Foundation
- John H. and H. Naomi Tomfohrde Foundation

New Resource for Homeowners Facing Foreclosure

New help for Massachusetts homeowners facing foreclosure was announced by state officials in July. Homeowners can access foreclosure prevention counseling and fixed-interest rate refinancing loans by calling 1-888-995-HOPE (4673).

The program is geared toward homeowners with modest incomes who were put into loans that were unaffordable and unsustainable, and where abusive practices may have been used by the lender. Household incomes may not exceed 135 percent of the area median in the Boston area and 125 percent of the area median income for the rest of the state.

Callers will be connected with foreclosure prevention counselors from NeighborWorks, a national nonprofit. After providing initial

information, they will be directed to one of a dozen or so Massachusetts nonprofits for more in-depth counseling. If the borrower is qualified, he or she may be able to obtain up to a 40-year, fixed-interest-rate loan for up to 105 percent of the value of the home, as determined by an appraisal.

Borrowers can be behind on their mortgage payments by up to 60 days and still be eligible, as long as the delinquency was caused by their interest rate resetting to a higher level and not by the homeowner's actions, such as assuming more debt. The program is open to owners of condominiums, single-family homes, and two-, three-, or four-family homes. Many other programs are being developed as this crisis deepens, and other options may become available in the near future.

“Whenever we bring up green options for cabinets, customers take an interest,” said Kim Eifrid, one of the Co-op’s kitchen specialists. “There are different shades of green, and it’s nice that all of them are available from Breathe Easy.” Members can opt for FSC-certified hardwoods, the plywood is a formaldehyde-free product with a finish cured by ultra-violet light, the protective finish is water-based (though not all stains are available as water-based), and the cabinets are made in eastern New York.

When members began to inquire about green cabinetry, retail manager Linda Lesyna started looking for a supplier that could provide cabinets that not only had all the green aspects, but were also made with high quality that the Co-op could stand behind.

“Breathe Easy cabinets are made with no shortcuts,” said Paul Kiefer, Co-op shop manager who joined the staff this spring after 20 years as a contractor and woodworker, and who has a strong interest in green building products. “Thicker plywood is used everywhere. It’s a premium cabinet.” Full-extension soft-close drawers are standard, and eleven door styles are



Paul Kiefer, Co-op shop manager, has a strong interest in green building products. He staffed BBMC’s table this summer at Brookline Climate Action Day.

available to choose from in bamboo, cherry, maple, and oak.

Another green option is Young Furniture of New Hampshire, longtime Co-op supplier of unfinished cabinets of eastern white pine and poplar, which received FSC certification for its poplar earlier this year. The company’s standard construction for drawer bottoms and back panels is plywood, but there is also an option for cabinets made of 100% solid lumber where half-inch solid stock is substituted for plywood. All the wood used is grown in the Northeast and without pesticides, and Young uses low-VOC glues, according to Paul Oppold, the company’s director of marketing. These qualities make Young a LEED-qualifying cabinet line.

For finishing the cabinets yourself, low-VOC finishes are available from most major paint and stain manufacturers.

Breathe Easy is comparable in price to other brands of semi-custom frameless cabinets, and Young Furniture is a good option for those with tighter budgets and the ability to finish

the cabinets themselves. Both companies will make custom size cabinets for very reasonable upcharges.

Other cabinet lines carried by the Co-op have green aspects as well. Apple Valley, Candlelight, and Imperia are all located in the Northeast. Imperia’s plywood option is formaldehyde-free, and Candlelight will either give each customer a tree to plant in his or her own yard or plant two trees on their behalf in a national forest.

Ultimately, customers will need to decide how to weigh the various shades of green with their needs, tastes, budgets, and environmental commitments as more companies respond to the demand for environmentally friendly products.

Nexus Green Building Center

An overview of green building is available at Nexus,



the Green Roundtable’s sustainable design center at 38 Chauncy Street, which opened to the public earlier this year. The center includes a showroom for green products, technologies, and services; green product samples; and a library that includes books, periodicals, technical manuals, and reference materials related to sustainable design and construction. For details, visit www.nexusboston.com.



handsOn

HandsOn is the semiannual newsletter of the Boston Building Materials Co-op and the Building Materials Resource Center.

Deb Beatty Mel, *HandsOn* Editor

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Discount Zipcar Memberships
www.zipcar.com/bbmc-bmrc



The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a member-controlled, not-for-profit building materials retailer and technical assistance provider. Founded in 1978, we specialize in cabinets, counters, windows, doors, and weatherization materials. We offer a range of affordable homeowner support services, including in-home consults, educational workshops, a tradesperson referral file, a lending library, and a Saturday morning window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op.

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The Building Materials Resource Center is a project of the Boston Building Materials Co-op Charitable and Educational Fund, a 501(c)(3) charity. Founded in 1993, the BMRC is a building materials reuse center that accepts donations of new and used building materials and distributes them to homeowners, nonprofits, and small businesses. Anyone may shop at the BMRC, with substantial discounts offered to income-qualified customers and nonprofits.

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