



# handsOn

Fall 2010

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

## Safety Center Takes Shape in Dorchester, Thanks to BMRC Materials

In Dorchester's Codman Square, a group of volunteer firefighters has achieved a remarkable feat of poetic justice: transforming a building that once served as a haven for illicit activities into a safety training center—stretching their modest budget with materials from the Building Materials Resource Center.



*Firefighters Jonathan Jackson, Karen Miller, and Octavius Salih Rowe visit the "smoke house," where kids learn to crawl under the smoke to safety. The door is a Resource Center find.*

The Boston Society of Vulcans (named for the Roman god of fire) is an association of Black and Latino firefighters that promotes safety skills and helps Boston residents pursue careers in public safety. When they learned about "Streetwise" training centers operating in England, they were determined to bring the program to Boston, said Karen Miller, Boston Vulcans executive director. "We take everything that you do outside in the street and bring it in here, so you can teach," said Karen.

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## New City Program Helps Residents Save Energy and Money

Colder weather is coming, and there's no time like the present to make home improvements to save energy and money. If you live in Boston, you may be eligible for a new program to provide city residents with free energy efficiency improvements, such as insulation upgrades and air sealing, to help conserve energy, save money, and lower utility bills.

The Renew Boston Residential Program, launched in August, offers no-cost weatherization services to Boston residents earning 60 to 120 percent of area median income (e.g., a family of four can have annual income of up to \$118,274) and living in buildings with four or fewer units.

Renew Boston is a public/private partnership that coordinates city government with energy efficiency experts,



**Save Energy, Save Money**  
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

energy service providers, and others to save energy and money for Boston residents and to create jobs. The program is funded with \$1.8 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and through existing programs administered by NSTAR and National Grid. It will result in more than \$11.9 million in energy efficiency work and is expected to save \$3.4 million yearly in energy costs and to create 58 local jobs.

We encourage everyone to take advantage of this limited-time opportunity to improve the energy efficiency of your home. To enroll, call 617-635-SAVE or visit [RenewBoston.org](http://RenewBoston.org).

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## SELECT PRODUCTS AVAILABLE AT THE CO-OP

### **Tru-Channel storm windows**

A study in Vermont has shown that restoring and weather-stripping your house's original double-hung windows and installing a high-quality storm can be just as energy-efficient as replacements, saving you money and preserving the architectural integrity of your home. At the Co-op, homeowners can purchase Harvey Tru-Channel storms, one of the highest quality storm windows available: triple-track, built for the long haul. One of our staff members has had her Tru-Channels for 20 years and reports that they still work perfectly! Available in white, bronze, almond, or black. (Call for pricing.)

### **Programmable thermostat**

Save money by having the heat automatically turned down while you're away during the day and asleep at night. Our programmable thermostat can be set for four time periods per day (wake, leave, return, and sleep) with different settings for weekdays and weekends. Large LCD display makes it easy to read and reprogram. (\$45.15)



### **Heating pipe insulation**

Do you have a warm basement in the winter? That's a sign that some of the heat you're paying for is getting lost in the basement instead of making it upstairs to where you live. Fiberglass pipe insulation will keep the heat in your pipes until it gets up to the radiators in your living space. Insulation comes in three-foot lengths and qualifies for the energy-efficiency tax credit if installed before December 31, 2010. Installation is easily done by the handy homeowner. We'll show you how to measure and install. For hot water and steam heating systems. Prices vary depending on pipe size, but 1"-thick insulation for a 1" pipe is \$1.50 per linear foot, and for a 2" pipe is \$1.90 per linear foot.

### **Door weather-stripping kit and sweep**

Door drafts can not only make you uncomfortable, but also increase your heating bill needlessly. The Co-op's door kits are made with Q-Lon (a strip of urethane foam clad with UV-resistant polyethylene) and a wood carrier that can be painted to match your woodwork. The kits are assembled by Triangle Packaging, a group that provides competitive employment to adults with disabilities. Cut the strips to size and install them on the top and side jambs with a few nails. Use them on all doors that lead from a heated space to an unheated one, such as a basement or attic. (\$15.00 for three-piece kit) Complete the seal with a door sweep (starting at \$4.99) for the bottom of the door and keep drafts outside, where they belong.

### **Bronze window weather stripping**

Window restoration contractors seek us out for hard-to-find bronze weather stripping, which will keep windows weathertight for many years. Cushion bronze (V shape, 1-1/8" wide) comes in 7' lengths (\$10.62). We now have this material in copper-

colored bronze to coordinate with copper-dipped sash chain: 7' lengths in widths of 1" (\$6.45) and 1/2" (\$6.60).

Spring bronze (1" wide) comes in rolls of 100' (\$106.21). Other widths are also available for spring bronze; visit [bbmc.com](http://bbmc.com) for details.

### **Professional grade air-sealing foam**

Pur Fill 1G foam seals gaps where cold air gets in. When applied, this moisture-cured polyurethane foam expands in place and bonds to the surrounding materials to stop the passage of air—not to mention dust, pests, and odors. The foam cures in one hour and uses no CFC propellants. One 750-ml. canister (32 oz., member price \$16.96) will produce 2,820 cubic inches of cured foam, or 1,200 linear feet of 1/2" bead. It is tack-free in ten minutes and trimmable in thirty minutes. Apply using the Pur Shooter gun (\$38.21) and adjust the bead to the size you need. Foam qualifies for the energy efficiency tax credit if installed before December 31, 2010.

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

## Coming Soon: A New Name—But the Same Heart

The Boston Building Materials Co-op and the Building Materials Resource Center will soon have a new, combined name: **Boston Building Resources.**

Having one name, a single phone number (617-442-2262), and unified Web site (bostonbuildingresources.com) will make it easier for the public to remember and connect with us. The materials and services offered will remain the same, focused around a shared mission of being a place for homeowners and renovators to make a positive impact on their communities and the environment as they care for and improve their homes.

The change to a single name was made for two reasons. First, the public has often blurred the distinction between the two organizations, one of which is a consumer co-op and the other a charitable nonprofit. The two current names are very similar, the organizations have the same address, and their work often overlaps. As a result, inquiries meant for one organization often come to the other. Secondly, customers and donors often did not realize the full scope of the products and services offered by the two companies. Having one

name and one “front door,” to use a building-materials metaphor, will make it easier for the public to find the products, services, and information they need. (The underlying legal structures remain the same, and the nonprofit organization will be known as the Reuse Center at Boston Building Resources.)

Both organizations have seen a history of growth. The Boston Building Materials Co-op, founded in 1978, began as a source of materials and knowledge around energy efficiency, specifically, blown-in cellulose insulation and high-quality storm windows. The Boston Building Materials Co-op

Charitable & Educational Fund was established in the early 1980s to support projects such as insulating the homes of lower-income residents. The Co-op moved to its current Terrace Street location in 1990 and greatly expanded its kitchen cabinetry sales and design service. Sales grew from \$581,000 in 1998 to a high of \$1.8 million in 2008.

In 1993, the Building Materials Resource Center was launched as a project of the Charitable and Educational Fund. Housed at first in unheated

trailers, the BMRC building was constructed in 1997. Sales of donated materials, from a handful in the early years, grew steadily: In 2009, nearly 1,500 people made purchases, and materials valued at approximately \$1.6 million were donated.

As both organizations grew, areas of overlap developed: Both organizations began to advertise, and several staff

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### Membership Benefits

**Boston Building Resources will have one membership with two levels: Standard and Plus. Standard membership gives discounts on new materials and other benefits at the Co-op. Plus membership includes discounts at the Reuse Center and is reserved for those who are income-qualified, and for nonprofit organizations. All memberships will now renew on the anniversary of the joining date. As before, the public is welcome to purchase new or used materials or take workshops without becoming members, but at a higher pricing level.**

	Standard members	Plus members (income qualified)
Member discount on materials from the co-op	✓	✓
Pricing on materials at the Reuse Center	Public price	Discount
Access to tradesperson referral file	✓	✓
Tool rental	✓	✓
Four hours of kitchen design time	✓	✓
Fee for workshops	\$35–\$45	\$25–\$35
Annual membership fee	\$25	\$10

## Local Youth Sharpen Job Skills at the Resource Center

Over the past year, the Building Materials Resource Center has enjoyed a partnership with Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). Through ABCD's Career Exploration Program, five young people have been placed in a series of paid internships at the Resource Center, where they have learned about construction materials and retail sales while helping the Resource Center carry out its daily work.

The interns worked ten hours per week, paid by ABCD and supervised by both Resource Center staff and an ABCD case manager. They have helped create attractive displays for materials, unload the truck, prepare newly donated materials for sale, and assist customers. Along the way, they have learned the basics of being good employees, such as punctuality and communication skills.

"I have been very impressed by the level of mentorship that the Building Materials Resource Center has been able to offer to our students," said ABCD's Carl Lowenberg. "The staff members treat them like adults and push them to be professional in

# Resource Center News

their interactions. You have very high expectations of these student workers, and the students have been able to meet them." At the same time, Carl said, the students have learned hands-on skills that will be useful in future jobs.



*From left to right, Eric Irizarry, Akeem Hodge, and Indian Avant all served as interns at the Resource Center through ABCD. Akeem and Indian now work at the Resource Center as regular employees.*

ABCD's Career Exploration Program provides job placement and case management services. Serving as a model for youth employment and the transition from school to career, the program offers older and out-of-school youths an opportunity to gain basic skills and explore career options within a particular field. Youth visit worksites, meet professionals in the trades, and participate in internships.



## Entrance Ramp Under Construction

The BMRC will soon be more accessible. A new entry is under construction, which includes a wheelchair ramp and new stairs. The inside of the warehouse has also undergone significant reorganization lately. Come by and see the changes in person!

## New EPA Regulations Reignite Concerns About Lead Paint

New Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations took effect in April aimed at reducing the risk of lead poisoning during renovation. The new rules have forced contractors to rethink the way they work in older homes and buildings.

The rules, which went into effect April 22, apply to all contractors, including carpenters, plumbers, electricians, painters, and window replacement contractors. They apply to buildings built before lead paint was banned in 1978—all residences as well as non-residential buildings frequented by young children.

Contractors must receive EPA- and Massachusetts-approved training on how to work in older buildings using practices that minimize the possibility of disturbing lead paint and generating lead dust. These include:

- Containing dust and debris to the work area, usually with plastic sheeting
- Minimizing dust
- Thoroughly cleaning up after work is completed

The contractor training consists of an eight-hour course, which is being offered by the Home Builders Association of Massachusetts ([www.hbama.com](http://www.hbama.com)) and other organizations. Contractors also must distribute the EPA booklet *Renovate*

*Right* to the building's owner before work begins. Lead paint dust harms children's brain development, causing cognitive and behavioral problems.

As with any rule, there are a few exceptions. The regulations do not apply if the property has already been delead, or if the repair disturbs only a small area: as of press time, less than six square feet of painted surfaces per room indoors or less than

twenty square feet of painted surface outdoors. (All window replacement work must be done following the regulations, however, and contractors should check online for the most current information.) Homeowners renovating their own properties are not required to follow the work practices, but following them can add a measure of protection against lead dust, which is harmful to adults as well as children.

We will continue to keep our members informed as the regulations continue to evolve over time. In the meantime, if you are planning renovations in a home built before 1978, we encourage homeowners and contractors to discuss what protective measures must be taken when the work is performed. For the most current regulations, consult your local building inspector or visit [epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm](http://epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm).

### BMRC DONOR PROFILE

#### Contractors Keep Donated Materials Flowing



*Chris DeBord*

Diverting reusable materials from the waste stream is a key part of the mission of the Building Materials Resource Center—and the people who often take the first step to make this happen are the contractors who suggest to their clients that reusable materials be removed carefully and donated rather than junked.

One regular donor to the Resource Center is Chris DeBord, a South End contractor and resident who does most of his work in that neighborhood. He learned about the Resource Center when working for another contractor, and now finds his clients universally receptive to the idea of donating reusable materials. "I don't like to throw things away," he said. "The saying goes, 'Reduce, reuse, and recycle,' but there's also 'Rethink.'"


Chris makes sure items are removed carefully, avoiding scratches and dings and removing nails: "Sometimes my demo guy will ask me, 'Is this a surgery today?'" He takes out the old materials with the thought in mind that they are being preserved for someone else's use.

We are grateful to Chris and the many other contractors who let their clients know about the Resource Center. When they start the donation process, they help clients, subcontractors, and peers to "rethink" the practice of just throwing it away.

## Support the Building Materials Resource Center

Your financial support makes it possible for us to help people improve their homes while keeping reusable materials out of landfills. Please consider making a gift to the Resource Center this season. In addition to simply sending a check to the BMRC, here are a couple of options:

### Earth Share of New England

Member of  If your employer offers workplace charitable giving through Earth Share, consider designating BMRC as your charity of choice. You can do so by using BMRC's five-digit number: 48135.

### Gift registry

Through [www.justgive.org](http://www.justgive.org), you can set up a gift registry for your wedding, birthday, or other occasion. Let your friends know that they can support the organizations you care about in lieu of giving gifts. To get started, visit [www.justgive.org](http://www.justgive.org).

## Safety Center Takes Shape in Dorchester

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While the Vulcans' "Streetwise" center is a work in progress, it already has a mock restaurant, several houses, a park, a kitchen, and other structures. Plans for the future include installing rubberized flooring to mimic a road surface, building a mini bank (where the fundamentals of saving and credit will be taught), installing a traffic island with a realistic signal, and adding a bathroom so that larger groups can be accommodated. Ultimately, they would like to be able to bring in groups of 50 to 100 people



*Karen Miller in the Streetwise kitchen, where kids learn to extinguish a pan fire by covering it with a lid. The kitchen cabinet set came from the Resource Center.*



*This group of kids can practice crossing the street safely in the Vulcans' Streetwise center.*

from schools and camps. Trainings currently held at the center include safely crossing the street, stranger danger, bicycle safety, correct installation of car seats, escaping from a smoke-filled room, and safety when using a stove. "We are filling programming gaps that other community centers don't cover," Karen said. And the trainings are not just for kids, she stresses. Adults who attend first aid and CPR classes have the opportunity to practice their newly learned skills in a realistic setting—for example, helping a victim of choking at one of the restaurant tables. The centers in England serve 30,000 to 40,000 people per year, said Vulcans volunteer Jonathan Jackson.

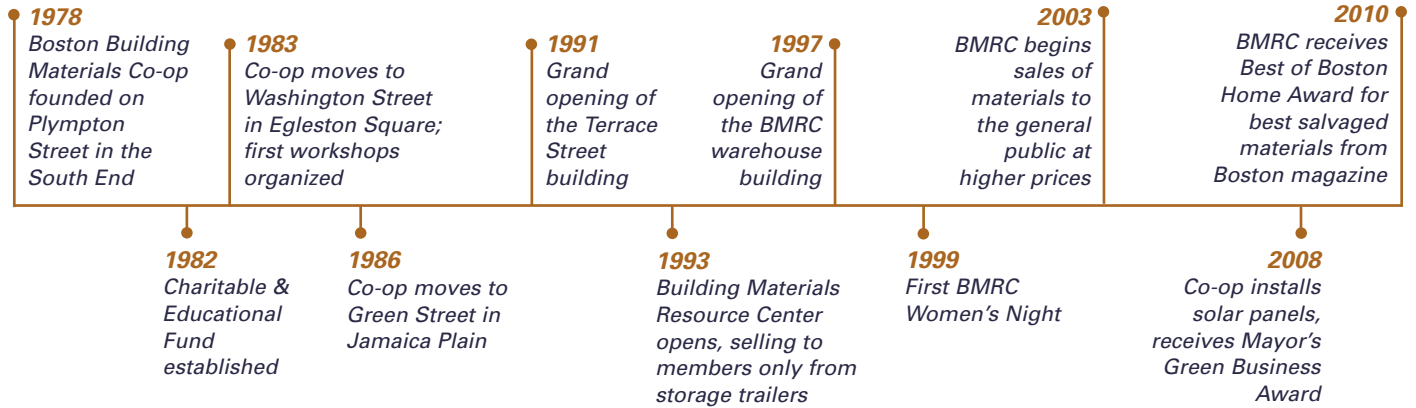
Resource Center materials have been used extensively: doors, windows, plywood, pavers, and 2x4s for the inside structures as well as the fiber-cement siding on the building's exterior. The

kitchen has been outfitted with an oak cabinet set from the Resource Center. The labor to build it all has come from volunteer firefighters and from Boston Youth Fund summer crews of teens.

Originally used for car sales and repairs, the 100-year-old building near the Codman Square branch library reached a nadir when it was closed due to hazardous waste and abandoned. When the Vulcans acquired it, it was "full of junk," said Jonathan.

But after some time and a great deal of effort, the community can now be proud of what's going on inside. As Karen says, "This is a place where we can teach any and every safety, emergency, and disaster preparedness skill in a safe, indoor environment."

## Timeline of the Co-op/BMRC (soon to be known as Boston Building Resources)



### A New Name *continued from page 3*

members held responsibilities with both companies. With some consulting help from Harvard Business School's Community Action Partners (see sidebar below), directors, trustees, and staff members agreed that the best way to avoid confusion was to use one umbrella name for both organizations.



Although the name and logo are new, the heart of the organization is the same as ever. Homeowners will find the materials they need at affordable prices, as well as the knowledge of how to use them, with a focus on environmental stewardship and advice you can trust. Watch our Web site and email updates for ongoing news about the transition to the new name.

### A Little Help from our Friends

Before reaching the decision to rebrand, we received some help from Community Action Partners (CAP), a volunteer organization of Harvard Business School alumni. Over a nine-month period starting in the fall of 2008, CAP volunteers interviewed members, donors, vendors, and others and discussed strategies to address the problem of

confusion between the two organizations. In addition, CAP members recruited branding consultant Michele Levy, who came up with the name Boston Building Resources.

As we continue to build upon their valuable work, Boston Building Resources tips its "cap" to this hardworking and insightful group of volunteers.

### Stock Up on Ice Melt

*Delivery available in Roxbury and JP; order by Dec. 9*

Now that fall is here in earnest, the snow can't be far behind. Get ready for the winter season by stocking up on the Co-op's environmentally friendly ice melt. Made from urea and sand, our ice melt will not irritate pets' paws or harm nearby plants. (In fact, urea is a fertilizer component and is beneficial to vegetation.)

Current members in Roxbury and Jamaica Plain can have the season's supply delivered to their homes on Saturday, December 11. **Orders must be placed and paid for by December 9.** There is a four-bag minimum for delivery and a delivery charge of \$1.00 per bag. Member price per 25-pound bag is \$11.95; delivered, it is \$12.95 per bag. New this year, you can also purchase 50 pounds of ice melt in a reusable, covered bucket for the member price of \$29.65, plus a delivery charge of \$1 per bucket (minimum order of two buckets). Of course, you can also stop by and pick up a supply at 100 Terrace Street, Roxbury Crossing.

*Don't let the opportunity slip by!* For more information, or to place your order, call the Co-op at 617-442-2262.



# handsOn

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

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Building Materials Resource Center**

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**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 window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op.

**Contact the BBMC at**

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120-3418  
**phone** 617.442.2262 • **fax** 617.427.2491  
**email** info@bbmc.com • **web** www.bbmc.com

**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.

**Contact the BMRC at**

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