



Reuse & Renovation Case Study

Home City Development, Inc.

Home City Development, Inc. (HCDI) is a non-profit real estate developer based in Springfield. In June 2018 the firm purchased the Elias Brookings School with a plan to renovate the historic building to create 42 affordable housing units. Constructed in 1925, the 50,000 square foot building had been vacant since it sustained tornado damage in 2011. Although HCDI has extensive experience renovating buildings into apartments, the firm had less experience with salvaging materials from projects for reuse. After recognizing the volume of material remaining in the closed school, developer Peter Serafino contacted RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts (RecyclingWorks) for support in the process of finding outlets for materials left in the building.



At A Glance

- Non-profit real estate developer, **HCDI**, in Springfield, found success reusing and recycling materials during a renovation project that transformed an abandoned school into an affordable housing complex.
- HCDI identified and adopted a new approach that incorporates considerations for recovering as much material as possible.
- The Elias Brookings School renovation project resulted in 33 tons of material diverted for reuse and recycling.
- As a result of this approach, HCDI saved money, reduced its environmental impact, and built goodwill in the communities where it operates.

Joni Lohr Photography

info@recyclingworksma.com | recyclingworksma.com | (888) 254-5525

RecyclingWorks in Massachusetts is a recycling assistance program funded by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and delivered under contract by the Center for EcoTechnology that helps businesses and institutions reduce waste and maximize recycling, reuse, and food recovery opportunities.

Diversion Programs

After the tornado in 2011, the school was closed abruptly and a temporary roof was placed over the structure to prevent moisture and other damage to items within. School supplies, furniture, books, lockers, and general items previously needed for school operations were left behind and preserved within the structure. HCDI contacted RecyclingWorks to conduct a site-visit of the building to evaluate opportunities for reuse and recycling. A strategy was developed that would prioritize redistributing materials locally for reuse, and recycling items that could not be reused.

Program Logistics

The Elias Brookings School has been proposed for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places, and as a Springfield one-building historic district. As a component of the project, HCDI sought to preserve as much of the original building and its architectural elements as possible, including terrazzo floors, brick wainscoting,

and grotesques. At the outset of the project, the team created a [Waste Management Plan](#) to outline the types and quantities of materials to reuse or recycle, the process for recovering and handling each material, and employee training considerations.

To facilitate the clean-out process, HCDI recruited support from [ROCA Inc.](#), a Massachusetts-based organization that offers workforce development programs for high-risk young men and women. The team from ROCA helped uninstall items such as white boards and accordion doors, and prepared materials in the building for donation. Many reuse organizations require items to be staged outside for pick-up, and the team from ROCA also assisted with this process.





HCDI recovered dry erase boards, cabinets, solid wood interior doors, and metal chairs for donation.

A phased approach was taken to facilitate as much reuse as possible. Several open houses were scheduled for teachers, nonprofits, and other community members to visit and collect materials that might be useful for their programs. RecyclingWorks also connected HCDI with reuse organizations.

[Habitat for Humanity](#) accepted dry erase boards, cabinets, and other building materials. [EcoBuilding Bargains](#) also accepted some items for reuse, including solid wood interior doors and metal chairs. An architectural salvage contractor was engaged to recover and sell several pieces from the former school, including custom built cabinets. [The Old Stone Mill Center](#) [Zero Waste Maker Space](#) was also involved in the project and offered many opportunities to creatively reuse and redirect materials from the waste stream.

RecyclingWorks Resources

Learn more about reuse and recycling with building projects:

[Construction Materials](#)

[Construction & Demolition Materials Guidance](#)

[Building Materials Reuse](#)

[Furniture and Office Equipment Reuse Guidance](#)

Lessons Learned

Projects such as the Elias Brookings School renovation reinforce the concept that each initiative is different, and that a waste management plan should be developed and tailored to address unique opportunities or obstacles. With this project, HCDI had the benefit of lead time, which enabled the developer to facilitate reuse and recycling opportunities for the large quantity of materials that remained in the building. Although HCDI initially expected the reuse outlets would uninstall fixtures, the developer learned that as the building owner, they were responsible to removing and stage fixtures for pick-up. This is a valuable lesson learned for projects involving reuse, as there needs to be advanced planning to incorporate labor costs for materials removal in the project budget. Planning ahead for waste management is an important component of the process to maximize recycling opportunities and avoid disposal costs.

Program Evaluation

This project netted multiple benefits for HCDI, including materials diversion, cost savings, positive press, and a streamlined approach for future projects. HCDI estimates that these efforts resulted in a net savings of \$60,000 over the course of the project, reaping savings in disposal costs despite the additional labor needs. A total of 33 tons of materials were diverted through the project, including cardboard and paper, scrap metal, books, electronics, furniture and more. Of this total, 10 tons of furniture, fixtures, and school supplies were reused, and 23 tons were recycled.

Based on this success, the non-profit intends to incorporate this approach into future projects, planning for reuse early in the renovation process to take advantage of built in down-time. For example, during an upcoming barn and farmhouse rehabilitation project in Pelham, the developer will collaborate with its general contractor to set and achieve reuse and recycling goals. Engaging the general contractor as a participant in strategy development will further support these efforts to maximize diversion.



Connect With RecyclingWorks:

If you have an upcoming renovation or construction project, contact RecyclingWorks to learn more about **free technical assistance** opportunities.

info@recyclingworksma.com | recyclingworksma.com | (888) 254-5525

