

**New York State  
Environmental Investment Program  
Technical Assistance Project Summary  
Syracuse Habitat for Humanity, Inc.**

**Project Background**

Since its incorporation in 1984, Syracuse Habitat for Humanity (SHFH) has helped construct or renovate 50 affordable homes in Onondaga County, targeting the "Near West Side," one of the poorest sections of Syracuse. Two years prior to this project, SHFH began accepting donations of reusable building materials from local C&D contractors, builders, and retailers, and storing them in a donated warehouse. Volunteers held periodic tag sales to raise funds for SHFH's operations.

As there were no other places to donate building materials locally, SHFH received far more calls to take them than it could accommodate. In addition, the donated warehouse was not heated, properly secured, or centrally located. After two years operating this way, SHFH management decided to convert the program to a full-fledged "ReStore." Habitat for Humanity affiliates across the country have been realizing great success via operation of ReStore facilities because they can sell the donated building materials at reduced rates and earn enough revenue to cover costs and generate an income stream for the organization. In March, 2004, SHFH Syracuse purchased a 15,000 sq-ft, centrally-located, heated warehouse with loading docks, overhead doors and office space. EIP assistance was sought to enable a transition from periodic tag sales to a fully operational ReStore with a paid manager.

**Project Description**

SHFH drew on the experiences of other Habitat ReStores operating in the US. The store was initially open with limited hours. By the close of the project, however, it was open Thursdays and Saturdays, 10 am until 4 pm, and Fridays, noon until 8 pm. With ESU support, Syracuse SHFH hired a part-time store

manager to oversee its volunteer work force. SHFH had already acquired a small truck to pick-up donations when necessary.

**Project Results**

Start-up of the ReStore was slower than anticipated, but in the final months of the 18-month project, following a number of mid-course corrections, revenues began to climb. By December, 2005, SHFH had hired a store manager with significant experience in retail, who helped improve its efficiency and operations. By that time, the ReStore had lined up a group of volunteers who were working regular hours. ReStore management also began focusing on acquiring and selling building materials, rather than furniture and other goods, for which there were several other outlets in the Syracuse area. It took time for knowledge of the ReStore to spread throughout the region, but as increasing numbers of donors and shoppers began utilizing the store, sales took off. In one weekend following a feature in a local newspaper, SHFH's ReStore sales reached \$4,000.

The ReStore fell short of achieving its project goals, diverting only 92 of the 320 tons of building materials targeted, saving local businesses only \$4,000 of the \$16,000 targeted, and earning only \$80,000 of \$136,000 targeted. However, at the close of the project, the ReStore was clearly growing out of its infancy. The quality and quantity of merchandise continues to improve.

SHFH also trained a team to deconstruct houses. The group had deconstructed three houses and salvaged building materials for sale at the ReStore. The ReStore website, which contains information about what can be donated, store hours, location, and how to volunteer is at <http://www.syracuserestore.org>

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<b>Contractor:</b>	Syracuse Habitat for Humanity, Inc	<b>EIP Investment:</b>	\$35,000
<b>County:</b>	Onondaga	<b>Contractor Match:</b>	\$40,965
<b>ESD Region:</b>	Central New York	<b>Total:</b>	\$75,965
<b>ESD Contact:</b>	518/292-5340	<b>Completion Date:</b>	February, 2006