

**New York State
Environmental Investment Program
Research Project Summary
Buffalo Reuse, Inc.**

Project Background

Buffalo ReUse, Inc. (BRI), a not-for-profit, incorporated in 2007, uses building deconstruction as an alternative to the demolition of vacant and abandoned homes in Buffalo. It is estimated that there are up to 23,000 such structures in and around the city. BRI planned to establish a reuse center in which to sell the materials reclaimed from the deconstruction projects to the local community. They also planned to develop a construction trades job training program associated with the deconstruction work. BRI was also preparing to respond to a City RFP for the deconstruction of at least ten city-owned homes and planned to deconstruct another ten privately owned homes. The intent was to introduce the concept of deconstruction in the city with the long-term goal of expanding it to become the standard practice for managing vacant structures. BRI needed to prove that deconstruction could become a competitive long-term alternative to demolition and this project would help determine best practices for accomplishing that.

Project Description

BRI successfully deconstructed 21 homes during the course of the project. In the process they refined strategies and techniques for surveying and assessing buildings as candidates for deconstruction; handling, storing and transporting materials; using labor efficiently and maximizing materials salvage. In May, 2008, BRI successfully opened the Resource, a building materials reuse center with 22,000 sq ft of selling and warehouse space. They identified the primary market groups for their salvaged materials and negotiated an agreement with a local sawmill to manufacture flooring from reclaimed lumber. Since flooring has a higher

sales value than lumber, this relationship has the potential to provide a consistent and reliable source of revenue to BRI. BRI was the successful bidder on the City of Buffalo's RFP to deconstruct ten homes. Due to prevailing wage law, however, BRI was unable to deconstruct any city-owned properties during the course of the project, however the company and the city continue to work to rectify the situation. Rather than "traditional" hand deconstruction which can take up to two weeks, BRI employs a method of deconstruction called hybrid or panelized deconstruction, which uses a combination of labor and heavy machinery to dismantle buildings as quickly as possible. This proved essential to BRI's work in the city.

Project Results

The project laid the groundwork for BRI to be successful in the long-term. The organization continues to expand its deconstruction work (from private building owners), employing strategies honed and refined during this project. In addition, BRI has established itself as an essential community revitalization organization and continues to expand its reach beyond deconstruction and building materials reuse. To date, BRI has created four community gardens, planted over 500 trees and is pursuing a goal to transform at least 20 blighted lots into productive green space. In November, 2008, BRI organized first Great Lakes Building Materials Reuse Conference to explore deconstruction and other creative solutions to the issues surrounding vacant and abandoned properties.

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| Contractor: | Buffalo Reuse, Inc. | NYS EIP Investment: | \$187,450 |
| County: | Erie | Contractor Match: | \$90,0378 |
| ESD Region: | Western New York | Total: | \$277,487 |
| ESD Contact: | 518/292-5340 | Completion Date: | September, 2008 |