

# THE RESTORE HOME IMPROVEMENT CENTER

The ReStore is a non-profit retail store selling used and surplus building materials. The ReStore's mission is:

- Reuse valuable building materials
- Make home improvement affordable for more people
- Create local jobs and provide training

The ReStore manages to meet environmental and social goals while maintaining its economic viability in the marketplace. Sales at the ReStore have grown from approximately \$75,000 annually in 2002 to approximately \$400,000 annually in 2006.<sup>1</sup>



The Restore has recorded almost 10,000 customers and they receive donations of materials from more than 1,000 different donors. This broad-based community support of the store can also be measured financially – the ReStore estimates that its customers saved approximately \$600,000 when comparing sales revenues to the retail cost of new materials.

Lessons Learned:

- Non-profit businesses can support themselves through revenues instead of grants.
- Environmental organizations can look towards sustainability projects that address social and economic concerns.
- Some businesses that would not be sustainable as for-profit ventures can be highly functional as non-profits.



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## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The ReStore is an enterprise of the non-profit environmental organization the Center for Ecological Technology (CET). The ReStore with CET's help is able to focus on both practical environmental solutions and issues of job training and local economic development. By assisting homeowners with renovations they are aiding in the revitalization of the city. This is important within the context of a city with a large population of renters and individuals living in poverty. Nearly 25% of families in Springfield, MA have income below the federal poverty level and only 51.6% of housing is owner occupied.<sup>2</sup>

The ReStore's success of reaching environmental and social goals within a business model that is self-sustaining may not be possible in all sectors, but represents what can be a key goal. The ReStore's success at providing local jobs is meaningful in an area with a low median income and high poverty levels. The context in which a project takes place can have a significant impact on what type of sustainability project will be most meaningful to the local population.

Beyond their retail store the ReStore has entered the business of "deconstruction". They carefully take apart buildings so that valuable building components can be re-used before demolition. This time-intensive process has allowed the ReStore to hire more staff and reclaim more materials.



The ReStore is hoping to expand its impact and presence in the community by buying a new facility more centrally located in Springfield. This will allow it to reach a wider audience and carry more stock – keeping more materials out of the waste stream and employing more people.

<sup>1</sup> 2007 ReStore Progress Report

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey



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