

12-Step Program to Recovery

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This document serves as an executive summary that explains the steps Pittsburgh Habitat needs to follow in order to educate more people about their existence and about the benefits of green homes without compromising their existing resources, money and manpower.

1-Restart the Adopt-a-House program. Only this time, solicit donors that are committed to green design such as Green Building Alliance Community Loan Bank, PNC and the Heinz Foundation. It would be a great opportunity for PHFH and a case study for affordable non-profit builders throughout the Northeast region. Sponsor a competition for the greenest renovation and limit the total cost of construction to \$125,000, which is only \$25,000 more than what PHFH spends on constructing a new home.

2-Restart the AmeriCorps program. AmeriCorps is a national service program that has job placement at many HFH affiliates in the United States. An AmeriCorps volunteer would act as a foreman to the construction manager on the job site. AmeriCorps volunteers are a great deal because they are able-bodied, reliable fulltime workers who only cost HFH \$4,000 a year to employ.

3-Track and record all the green strategies previously used by PHFH. Such documents would include sketches or photographs of past projects, a brief description of the house and any green strategies implemented. These would not only act as publicity brochures but would also be a venue to illustrate PHFH's commitment to building environmentally sensitive homes.

4-Move along the plans for Hanson to create a green housing plan book. This book was in the beginning stages last year. It will contain the plans, elevations and methods of construction for a home built in Pittsburgh in terms of contextual and climatic design.

5-Purchase abandoned housing stock in dense areas and renovate. The City of Pittsburgh sells abandoned homes for less than the market value. Using the current housing stock is a green practice in itself.

6-Stop using vinyl products for floors and siding. Wood and dyed concrete are both cost-effective alternatives for flooring. Fiber-cement board made by James Hardie is a cost-effective alternative for siding.

7-Start a "Green Team". This team would be a group of skilled or interested individuals whose responsibility would be to meet monthly to discuss and research green strategies that PHFH could implement. It would consist of the construction manager, two board members and two volunteers. This would eventually take the place of the current construction committee.

8-Rewrite the mission statement. Change it to something along the lines of “To design and build healthy, comfortable, efficient, durable and low-maintenance homes for low-income families”. This would marriage the concept of high quality and green design.

9-Make a green info kiosk at every work site. The kiosk could initially advertise that PHFH reduces waste on-site, recycles on-site and uses fiber cement board siding. More aspects will surely be added in the future. Again, the purpose is more to get into the habit of constructing these kiosks in order to draw attention to the mission of PHFH, which is to create healthier, longer lasting homes at a low cost.

10-Tour worksites monthly on Saturday mornings followed by an information session. This is an easy event to plan and a great way to get the staff all together to interact with the volunteers constructing on the site, to see the typical Pittsburgh house plan and to meet the current and future Habitat homeowners.

11-Secure funds to send the construction manager to Yestermorrow Design Build School for a two-week intensive hands-on workshop in sustainable design, building, woodworking and traditional crafts. This would be part of the construction manager ‘s job description.

12-Apply for the Aluminum Association’s 2005 Cans for Habitat Grant program. PHFH could win anywhere from \$5,000 to \$45,000 for improving the aluminum can recycling efforts in their community. More details can be found at www.cansforhabitat.org.

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These action items are presented in an order that will have the biggest impact on the organization and its mission. However, as long as they are all initiated within the next six months, they can be completed in any order. Since I am only a volunteer member of the construction committee, and not full-time staff member, it would be strategic for me to bring one of these action items to the table each month. I would bring them up in the following order: stop vinyl siding and flooring, make green kiosks on site, apply for the AmeriCorps program, restart the Adopt-A-House program, rewrite the mission statement, start a Green Team, apply for the 2005 Cans for Habitat Grant, organize monthly Saturday tours, track and record the green strategies previously used by PHFH, move along the plans for Hanson to create a green housing plan book, purchase and renovate abandoned housing stock in dense areas and secure funds to send the construction manager to Yestermorrow Design Build School.