

What is The Loading Dock? Opened in October 1984, The Loading Dock, Inc., (TLD) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to improve living conditions for families, neighborhoods, and communities, while positively impacting the environment, through redistributing surplus building materials. TLD operates out of a 42,000 sq. ft. warehouse in southeast Baltimore and serves as the state's central clearinghouse for salvaged surplus building materials that are otherwise headed for landfills and redistributes them.

Since 1984, TLD has saved low-income housing and community projects over \$16.5 million and has rescued over 33,000 tons of building materials from landfills.

TLD accepts all kinds of materials, including paint, lumber, plumbing fixtures, doors, cabinets, windows, caulk, moldings and just about anything reusable from the home building industry. TLD has rescued thousands of tons of building materials from landfills, assisted more than 8,500 individuals and groups and partnered with more than 400 manufacturers, distributors and contractors in the Mid-Atlantic region.

The first non-profit program of its kind in the nation, TLD represents a successful marriage between nonprofit organizations and businesses that offers a creative way to tackle housing and environmental issues. It has inspired similar programs in other cities nationwide and has fielded requests for information from, and lent technical assistance to, more than 300 cities, some as far away as Tijuana, Mexico, St. Johns and St. Croix in the Caribbean, five countries on the west coast of Africa, Hungary and Germany. TLD serves as a national model for communities interested in starting a reuse facility and is the recipient of two prestigious national awards: the Presidential Award for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Habitat II "Building Communities of Opportunity" National Excellence Award.

Why Establish a Reuse Program? When it first opened its doors, TLD answered the great and pressing need to upgrade substandard housing in Maryland. The combined resources of public, private and charitable sectors proved to be insufficient to meet the need for affordable housing at a time when, according to the Governor's Housing Initiatives of 1986, approximately one out of every six housing units in the state was substandard, and a majority of these substandard homes were occupied by poverty level households with annual incomes under \$10,000. The initiative also indicated that 33,000 of the state's year-round housing units lacked completed indoor plumbing while 22 percent of the substandard rental units were inhabited by the elderly, who have experienced increasing difficulty in meeting the rising costs of rent, utility bills and home maintenance.

The need for more affordable housing in Maryland remains a pressing issue. The donation of surplus materials provides companies and individuals with a no-cost method to support nonprofit agencies and their communities. Moreover, by donating surplus materials to be redistributed, companies can break the trash cycle that consumes rather than conserves vital resources. In short, establishing TLD's reuse program was a win-win-win situation for donors, clients and the environment.

Goals & Growth When the founding board developed the idea of TLD, the plan was to serve a handful of nonprofit organizations. After a series of meetings, however, it was apparent that TLD could grow larger. TLD's first home was a rented 7,000 sq. ft. warehouse space for \$200/month. The warehouse had electricity only in some rooms, no heat, and due to the rotted floors in some areas, shipments of surplus materials had to be loaded manually.

Based on the growing success of TLD, even in its less-than-glamorous home, the board concentrated on two goals: To become self-sufficient and to find another space that would allow TLD to operate on a more efficient basis in a less daunting environment. TLD ran a capital campaign and raised more than \$800,000. TLD was able to move into a new location, with 21,000 sq. ft. of space, on Gwynns Falls Parkway. TLD became self-sufficient in 1990. In 2005 TLD once again outgrew its space and relocated into a 42,000 sf facility in SE Baltimore. TLD is able to remain self-sufficient through handling and membership fees. Handling fees are typically 25-30% of retail, and reflect the labor costs of transporting and storing materials.

Milestones Like any other organization, in operation since 1984, TLD can point to milestones that hallmark its growth. Acquiring its own building is the single physical thing that has made TLD cost-effective. Aside from reaching

self-sufficiency status in May 1990, other notable milestones include the acquisition of a truck, and the implementation of new services for both clients and donors, including the Do It Yourself Workshops, the Landfill Collection Program, and Community Days.

What are the Benefits of The Loading Dock? Housing stock, job pools, the market and the environment are effected by TLD. Because TLD solicits usable building materials from contractors, retailers, manufacturers, distributors and individuals, as well as rescues materials directly from landfills and redistributes them, it has aided in the effort to increase the housing stock in the state of Maryland, but particularly in Baltimore City.

Low to moderate income housing and substandard housing are brought up to par. Neighborhoods are rejuvenated, which in turn prompts a healthier tax base in the city. For example, the Light Street Presbyterian Church founded a program called Light Street Housing Corporation that purchased abandoned houses in the neighborhood and rehabilitated them into group homes for displaced neighborhood people during the re-gentrification of the Federal Hill/Light Street area.

By obtaining building materials from TLD, the church corporation rehabilitated seven houses at a considerably lower cost - at least 70 percent savings from retail - enabling it to maintain original or local residents in the neighborhood, which was quickly shifting from a blue-collar to white-collar area.

With help from TLD in the form of floor coverings, paint, tile, kitchen cabinets and lumber, Jubilee Housing, an organization that renovates and manages housing stock for low to moderate income families in Baltimore City, rehabilitated and continues to maintain approximately 75 homes in the southeast area of the city.

Additionally, more than 4,000 low to moderate income families get home building supplies directly from TLD. Motivated people who want to change their environment but lack the money to obtain materials at market costs come to TLD. Sweat equity and TLD materials enable them to realize their repair goals and increase the worth of their properties, while raising the standards of the neighborhood; others follow suit, and before long, an entire block has experienced a renovation, prompting residents in adjoining blocks to spruce up their surroundings. Also, over 2,000 landlords, contractors and architects specializing in low-income housing have TLD memberships.

Because TLD is dependent on donations for materials, members may not always find everything they need here each time they come in. Business at local building supply houses is subsequently stimulated as they take up the slack.

Each year, TLD prevents approximately 24,000 gallons of paint and other toxic elements such as caulk, adhesives, stains and sealers from reaching landfills. Often, these items are new. For example, a manufacturing company that has discontinued a certain color of caulk, paint or stain removes it from its warehouse and retail shelves and sets its dumping arm in motion. By soliciting these items for use by TLD clients, these materials never reach the landfills. TLD ensures donor companies that the materials will not reenter the marketplace.

The National Network: What is it and How Can it Help You?

To accommodate the growing number of requests TLD was getting from around the country for information on starting a reuse facility, we spurred the creation of a national reuse information network which eventually developed into the Reuse Development Organization (ReDO). Other reuse partners involved in the genesis of ReDO included Urban Ore of Berkeley, California, Materials for the Arts of New York City and Barnraisers of Albany, New York.

ReDO is a national and international tax exempt, 501(c) (3) non-profit organization promoting reuse on every level. ReDO was created to fill an informational void identified at a February 1995 conference on reuse, where participants voiced a desire to avoid "reinventing the wheel" and share what they had learned. In 1996 ReDO became a 501©3 organization. ReDO's mission: to advocate, educate and organize new and established reuse centers across the United States and Canada. In 2003, ReDO moved in with TLD as it scaled back operating expenses.

To deal with information requests, TLD also created a how-to manual detailing TLD's history and operations and offers consulting services and additional printed resources such as sample budgets and by laws.

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"You could build a house with what people throw away."