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## Reuse movement takes hold in the East Bay

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Two separate changes in the world today have given rise to the success of the reuse movement in the East Bay — the failing economy and the need to "go green." These two elements combined have made Oakland's East Bay Habitat for Humanity's ReStore a retail success.

ReStore, which had its grand opening in 2003, is an outlet store that offers discount building materials that have been donated. At ReStore, shoppers can find doors, windows, plumbing and lighting fixtures and flooring as well as rare, vintage items. Some donated materials are used to build Habitat for Humanity homes for low-income families and the rest is sold to the public at 50 percent to 75 percent off the retail price. ReStore's profits go toward building homes for Habitat for Humanity.

With today's slow economy, shoppers are more enthusiastic than ever to hunt for bargains, says Linda Schmoldt, the material procurement coordinator for Habitat for Humanity East Bay.

For Oakland resident Liz Tellefsen, ReStore's offerings exceeded her expectations. After purchasing an old Victorian house that needed repairs, Tellefsen found that Home Depot prices were too steep.

Once she discovered the bargains at ReStore, "it became a place that I would go to three times a week," Tellefsen said. "Half the time, stuff that I find there is brand new." Tellefsen said she is glad she is

finding bargains while reducing her carbon footprint.

Schmoldt credits part of the store's success to the Piedmont community. ReStore receives donations, including appliances, from Piedmonters on a regular basis.

"We've been getting a lot of support and interest from the Piedmont area," including the Piedmont Pines Neighborhood Association and local real estate agents, Schmoldt said. "We really love to have the neighborhood's involvement."

Businesses outside the East Bay are also chipping in. Schmoldt reported that a lighting company in San Carlos recently donated \$100,000 worth of brand new residential lighting.

Such donations are often a result of the need to keep a fresh inventory or liquidations. Schmoldt said ReStore receives donations by the "truckload."

"It's pretty amazing what people throw away," he said.

But items sold at ReStore aren't necessarily throwaways, Schmoldt said.

"Ninety-five percent of what we get is flawless," he said.

The other 5 percent might be items that have sustained minimal damage.

Every year, donations and sales at the ReStore have continually increased. The green movement has given way to ReStore's record-breaking donations and sales.

"We're blessed beyond belief," Schmoldt said.

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Schmoldt reported that ReStore has diverted more than 1,000 tons of construction materials from landfills.

**East Bay Habitat for Humanity's ReStore is at 9235 San Leandro St., Oakland. For more information, call 510-777-1447 or visit [www.habitateb.org](http://www.habitateb.org) and click on "ReStore."**

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