

# Recycling with Habitat for Humanity

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Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit organization that builds houses. In fact they are one of the largest home builders in North America if you put all their local branches together. Their houses are rather simple and ordinary, but what is not ordinary is the way the houses get built and who owns them. The objective is to provide decent home ownership to low income families. To have the right to buy one of these houses, the future owner has to be selected, then has to put in 500 hours of labour on building someone else's house(s). It doesn't matter if you are not skilled, there are so many different necessary tasks around a build that everyone can find useful things to do. When it comes time for your house to get built, you will find that most of the labour is volunteer, from other future homeowners, to volunteer professional plumbers, electricians, carpenters and so on. In addition 80% of the material has been donated by corporations that believe in the cause. Occasionally the municipality will donate the land. The actual cash out cost of the house is a fraction of it's real value. Then you get an interest free mortgage from Habitat from Humanity to make your monthly payments very low. Although there are provisions to prevent you from flipping the house and making a big profit off of everyone's labour, you are accumulating equity rather than paying rent. They like to call it "A hand up, not a hand out". Of course all of this requires a dedicated staff in a large city like Toronto that is building a good number of houses each year, a staff to organize the volunteers, to find the free materials and other fund raising. So in Toronto they have set up the Re-Store, the profits from which manage to cover the entire cost of the Toronto staff, leaving all other monies available to go into houses. The Re-Store is real simple. You need to remove something from your house for renovations, you call the Re-Store. They send out volunteers, mostly retired carpenters and handypeople, who carefully take out what you would have sent to the dump, at no cost to you. You can co-ordinate their de-construction with your own contractor so that you don't have to pay him to remove and dump the old cupboards, floorboards, plumbing etc. They then sell what they salvage from your house to others at their Re-Store, providing low cost materials and fixtures to people who need them with the profits covering the overhead of building new houses for low income citizens. Everyone wins. When they raise a house in just a few short weeks, they call it a "build". I have been and it is both work and fun. You might try it one day. It is good experience. Habitat for Humanity is building houses in 54 different cities in Canada this year, not to mention 79 countries world wide.

**Keywords:**

Contractors, Housing, Construction, House