

## Heartwood House's new home

# RND Construction, with design and engineering support, solves complex, budget-constrained project challenges

### STAFF WRITER

— The Ottawa Construction News Special Feature

RND Construction once again has proven its expertise in solving complex, budget-constrained projects through the development of the new Heartwood House in Ottawa's east end.

RND, design experts 4te Inc. and McKee Engineering converted a former Giant Tiger store and warehouse into purpose-built space for the 18 non-profit organizations working through Heartwood House.

Heartwood's director Moe Moloughney explains the complexity. "Our previous location had been sold and we had a small window to find a new location, get renovations done and get everyone moved in."

She calls RND president Roy Nandram the 'right fit for a small charity' because the building had to be converted in a cost-effective way. "Roy was sensitive to our lack of experience and was able to walk us through the process, the codes and conditions we needed to know. Our first challenge was finding a contractor and Roy seems to thrive on challenges like this, on finding creative ways to make things work."

In the project's first phase, which began in 2013, the team gutted the 9,000 sq. ft. main store. In phase two work continued in the 7,000 sq. ft. warehouse and second floor apartment. "We used spray foam insulation around the perimeter to make the building more efficient and then installed new electrical and mechanical systems including two high-efficient HVAC systems."

RND focuses on sustainable projects so wire and metal were recycled, concrete blocks were re-used and what wasn't has been donated. Gas piping has been upgraded and a new, large hot water tank installed to support the laundry. Demountable, mobile walls were installed to create individual spaces for the tenants and provide future flexibility. The building



has also been adapted to meet current accessibility requirements and new openings were created for doors and windows.

4te Inc. proved the answer to the next challenge - finding a designer able to create a space which would accommodate everything from a child care centre to a commercial laundry and a place of worship. Moloughney says fitting everyone in and giving them the space they needed required a complex simplicity.

This proved one of the greatest design challenges. "We spent time with each of the user groups hearing what they wanted and needed as part of the programming phase," says 4te interior designer Michelle Goodison. "Everyone wanted access to natural light. Fitting everyone in, using a combination of the existing windows and deciding where we could add new has been a challenge but one we succeeded at."

Goodison says the design had to maintain a co-ordinated palette so a selection of finishes that users could choose from and that blended together were selected. Materials were all low VOC and carpet remnants and carpet tile removed from another of 4te's projects provided a sustainable and cost effective flooring option.

Capital Starwall, a supplier of moveable walls, had been invited to review and recommend ways of making sure Heartwood received the products they needed at an affordable price. President Barry Burbidge said, "4te recommended a Demountable

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RND's Roy Nandram

partition system as the likelihood of change in the physical appearance for Heartwood was high and asked us to get involved in the project.”

He said the flexibility of the Starwall system lent itself to changes required during the construction phase. “Under normal circumstances, Starwall is the last to be installed once all other contractors have completed their work but in this case, we

worked side by side with the other trades to ensure the tight deadlines stipulated by the circumstances,” Burbidge said.

Starwall’s installation manager, Marc Allerie, is proud of the project’s success. “We all pitched in to help get this project done in as little time as possible.”

He said RND’s site supervisor, Rob Machado, coordinated tasks to keep the project moving and that it was a great ex-

perience working with Heartwood’s Moe Moloughney.

“There is an untold story behind small charities and their lack of ongoing funding,” says Moloughney. “Groups like these are used to being housed anywhere. To have a purpose-built functional space with access to natural light and proper ventilation is wonderful.”

Moloughney says when Heartwood bought the property the non-profit organization didn’t understand the project’s scope. “Meeting Roy and Michelle is a case of meeting the right people at the right time to make something happen.”

Heartwood had to move into the new home in January while work was going on, creating logistical challenges as groups were set up in temporary spaces while their permanent locations were finished. The final stage, installation of a new elevator, has been completed.

Heartwood House is a non-profit organization providing a creative, cost-effective and co-operative environment for its mem-

ber organizations since 2001. In 2010 the collective group of more than 1,500 volunteers supported almost 1,100 new immigrants and almost 40,000 people overall through its services.

Heartwood House is still accepting donations to help cover the rehousing project costs. For more information, visit heartwoodhouse.ca.



**Proud to be associated with the Heartwood House Project!**



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