

Case Study in Reuse

Top 15 U.S. Bank, North Carolina



Situation: Renovation of approximately 20,000 square feet of upper-floor office space, Charlotte, NC.

Quantity and Composition: 934 freestanding pieces including professional desks, seating, and conference rooms, plus partition systems for 92 workstations.

Setting: Downtown urban streets.

Overview

A top-15 U.S. bank and longtime Steelcase client is undertaking renovations at its offices in Charlotte, NC. This phase of work encompassed the replacement of private office furnishings, workstations, and conference rooms, for a total of about 20,000 square feet on the third floor of a downtown office tower.

Like many Steelcase clients, this firm has made a corporate-wide commitment to sustainability, including a 65% reduction in waste disposal. The client asked Steelcase to provide a better option than throwing away the furnishings removed from their Charlotte offices. Steelcase’s John Hughes (Field Operations Manager, Steelcase Performance Management) first contacted a reseller to determine if the furnishings had secondary market value. When the reseller declined, John Hughes reached out to IRN. A Steelcase partner since 2008, IRN’s mission is to match usable surplus furnishings with U.S. and worldwide charities for disaster relief and economic development.

Composition

Item	Count	Item	Count
Work Table	244	Chair	80
Conference or Other Table	109	Desk	9
Storage Cabinet	102	Bookcase	52
File Cabinet	191	Pedestal File	116
Whiteboard	31	Total	934

In addition, approximately 600 panels of Steelcase Pathway/Answer, unsuitable for reuse, were recycled for their steel content. Not one item was landfilled.

Implementation

Charlotte Steelcase dealer [Office Environments](#) was overall project manager. At the client’s request, and to avoid conflict with other use of the building’s loading dock, knockdown was allowed during regular business hours, but all loadouts were made after hours.

The project was carried out over five days. Carey Moving & Storage provided labor. All items slated for reuse were removed from the premises first, and taken in trailers to Carey’s warehouse in Rocky Hill, SC. When all the furnishings reached the warehouse, IRN brought in 40-foot shipping containers that carried the furnishings to their ultimate destination in Jamaica.

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As furnishings were removed and floor space opened up, Carey’s crew started to dismantle the partition systems. Panels were staged on wheeled carts, then taken to the basement loading dock and packed into open trailers to be recycled.

The project was touched by several factors common to urban work. Although the loading dock was large enough to accommodate 53-foot trailers, reaching the dock involved backing down a narrow street, and a tight turn into the dock area. As noted above, dock access was limited to evening hours. Unexpected complication came in the form of a college basketball tournament and Billy Graham’s funeral, which between them brought tens of thousands of visitors and their vehicles to Charlotte, disrupting all traffic movement.

Destination

The reusable items were accepted by IRN’s longtime partner Food for the Poor and shipped to FFP’s central Caribbean warehouse in Jamaica. From there they are being distributed to relief and development projects in Haiti, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, and other islands hard hit during the 2017 hurricane season.

The 33.54 tons of Answer panels were recycled through a local scrap yard.

Environmental Metrics

An important element in completing the project was the [Steelcase Phase 2 Sustainability Metrics Report](#), which documents the waste diversion impacts associated with reuse and recycling. The Metrics Report is used by many Steelcase clients to document their progress toward waste diversion goals, and to support LEED and other environmental building certifications.

Freestanding furnishings were staged in Carey Moving’s warehouse (L) and loaded into five overseas containers (R) to be shipped to Food for the Poor’s central Caribbean warehouse in Jamaica



“The project went smoothly from start to finish. The client was very happy with the outcome, not just that their furniture was reused, but that they spent no more than if they’d thrown it all away.”

John Hughes, Field Operations Manager, Steelcase Performance Management