

# Recycling *for* Charities

*Protecting the earth while helping charities.*

**Recycling for Charities Web Talk Radio Show Transcript  
Peggy Brennan**

*Dwight Zahringer:* Thanks for tuning in to another edition of the *Recycling for Charities Podcast Radio Show*. Hi, I'm Dwight Zahringer, Chairman and Founder of recyclingforcharities.com. We're a 501C3 nonprofit organization that allows individuals, organizations and charities the opportunity to recycle their old cell phones, PDA's, mobile Palm Pilots, digital cameras, iPods and iPhones for a value that has been donated to themselves or the charity of their choice. Not only is recycling for charities acting as a medium to raise funds for charities, but our organization also helps individuals protect the environment as well. Helping to preserve the environment for generations of the future is an important responsibility for which everyone should be held accountable.

Unfortunately, until recently, legitimate wireless recycling efforts and programs were far and few in between. That's why I created recyclingforcharities.com. It allows every individual to go online, choose the charity of their choice, donate their item and make sure that charity receives funds while making sure their donated item is recycled properly to protect the earth. We're committed to recycling all of these products and we strive to recycle or refurbish as many of the units we receive. Each week on the *Recycling for Charities Podcast Radio Show* we'll be talking to different individuals who are leaders in keeping the earth green and friendly and helping charities along the way. We'd love to hear from you and hope you enjoy what you hear. Let's keep the earth green and friendly and make sure you recycle all your old wireless products at recyclingforcharities.com.

Hello and thank you for joining us for another edition of the *Recycling for Charities Podcast Radio Show* where going green is fun while it's helping charities. Hi, I'm Dwight Zahringer, Founder and Chairman of Recycling for Charities and we have Dario Chiarini, also our board member and Kelly Steed, who's one of our greenest of greenest employees helping to keep everybody happy, green and green. And today on our radio show, we have with us Peggy Brennan of The Green Garage right here in our hometown of Detroit Michigan. This is a very interesting idea that Peggy and her husband Tom are working to accomplish. Basically The Green Garage here in Detroit. As everyone has heard it has a little bit of press in the past year or so about Detroit and some of the things that have been happening here. They are renovating a Model T showroom.

It is undergoing a historic and green renovation and will become a green business incubator providing rental spaces to local businesses who want to have a green component to their business. It's a big deal nowadays. The Green Garage in Peggy and Tom's remind me first of three different things, a building, a business and a community. It's located down in midtown and it's again originated as a Model T showroom back in 1920. Peggy, thank you for joining us today.

*Peggy Brennan:* You're welcome.

*Dwight Zahringer:* I appreciate you taking the time out and explaining to us a little bit more about what's happening with The Green Garage. It's undergoing historic and green renovation. Briefly explain to our listeners what The Green Garage is and what the final goal is you and your husband have in mind.

*Peggy Brennan:* Well as you said earlier, The Green Garage is basically three different things. It's a building in midtown that used to be a Model T showroom. It was built in 1920. We bought it at the very end of 2007 and right now it's undergoing a green and historic renovation. It's going to become a green business incubator and finally the last component of it is that it is a community of people.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Okay. When you say a community of people, define that a little bit further.

*Peggy Brennan:* Well I think one of our goals is not just to remodel a building, but to really develop a community of people that are centered around common work together. And so we've started the very beginning of the project with discussions with people and we're continuing at this point to do everything as a community based approach so that not just one person's making the decision, but a group is deciding things together.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Nice.

*Dario Terrini:* Peggy, how are ya, this is Dario.

*Peggy Brennan:* Hi.

*Dario Terrini:* As Dwight mentioned in the intro there's been a lot of both positive and negative press about Detroit. A couple major publications have planted people here and *Time Magazine* amongst them. You're obviously a believer that Detroit as a city and the

region can turn around by making considerable investment. So what does this mean for the city to kind of reinvent ourselves and push forward?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well I really don't know what it means for the city. I think looking at a very broad perspective; I think that's a very difficult thing to say. We're actually, in our project, very narrowly focused, trying to do one thing and to do it well, which is basically to learn how to basically renovate this building, get it to be a net zero energy building and then rent business space to people. I think if we do that well, it would be a great thing for the city of Detroit but it's very difficult for me to project out as to what the overall benefit would be.

*Dario Terrini:* Well I guess part of that is then you feel confident that there are going to be other progressive businesses that would want to take up that space. I guess that is where I was trying to go with that, that you know there is a movement to be more progressive and move forward instead of sort of stuck in the past.

*Dwight Zahringer:* You know Dario, you bring up a really good point because I think what he's also getting at Peggy too, is for our listeners that are not in the southeastern Michigan, Detroit region, we have had quite a decline of business in general, the economy as a whole. It has definitely taken its toll here in Detroit and the surrounding suburbs, including Michigan. We have one of the highest foreclosure rates in the country and Detroit's really had a very tough time coming back through the downfall of the automotive industry of late and even before then as well. So I guess one of the things we are trying to point out Peggy is that it takes a lot for a business to choose Detroit because there are a lot of barriers that go up. I could imagine trying to make this building as environmentally friendly, environmentally friendly and green as possible has got to just add on to the challenges amongst the layers and layers of bureaucracy that you have to go through.

The other part too is owning a business and operating something under such a pretense is gotta also be tough to attract businesses to be involved in something like that. Innately they have really got to believe in it because trying to drive people down to Detroit, because there's not much down there, there's not a lot of business and commerce that's happening, also could be restrictive for generating business.

*Peggy Brennan:* I think that that's true. I do think that people are attracted to projects that work and this is something, this is why we have such a very strong focus on getting something done and doing it well. So far we haven't had any issues with finding volunteers or with the City of Detroit in any way.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That's great.

*Peggy Brennan:* I think it's been a very positive experience overall.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That's great. In our research we noticed that you were hoping to make this a zero energy building. Tell us a little bit more exactly what that means.

*Peggy Brennan:* Well what that means, net zero energy means that the building will produce as much energy as it's going to consume. So in order to do this we had a group of about a dozen individuals, volunteers basically from all walks of life who, including designers, architects and engineers who met basically for nine months once a week on the design. Very early on they determined that the key to the net zero energy was tied to passive design which has to do with a super insulated and tight building envelope, the roof, the walls and the windows. So we formulated a design, modeling it using energy modeling software and we found that we were able to reduce the heating and cooling demands by 90%.

So basically we're gonna be heating this building as if it were a 1,000 square foot building instead of an 11,000 square feet. Now when we open we won't have achieved the exact net zero energy but we will be about 95% there. So we've created a platform to work with and we're gonna tackle the remaining 5% as the building opens.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That's great. You and your husband, how long have you guys been concerned really with the idea of conservation and being sustainable, living a sustainable life and integrating those terms into how you live?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well if I can take you back to 2001 –

*Dwight Zahringer:* Go ahead.

*Peggy Brennan:* My husband retired at that time and he became involved in the green movement by serving on the board of the River Raisin and Institute in Monroe which helps develop and sponsor green

projects. So we came to the conclusion at that time that he'd like to work in the area of environmental sustainability, so he and I developed a group called Great Lakes Green Initiative. And this group has had conversations weekly since 2005 that center around how to change our lives and become, live a more environmentally sustainable manner. When we initially designed this group we had in mind some sort of demonstration center that would help promote our learning.

For a while we were looking for property in Ann Arbor to build the center because we thought locating close to a university was gonna be key to our work cause we wanted to draw from that university population. But many people talked to us as we described the project and recommended that we locate it in Detroit. It made sense to us so we located a realtor and we decided on the midtown area and this was the first property we saw.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow. I guess you know what are the attractions as we're definitely highlighting once again and that has been highlighted in other forms of press you received. Is it being an old, run-down Model T showroom? How did that come into play? Was that part of the decision process and how is that being part of the tagline to the entire project?

*Peggy Brennan:* Right, right, I would say for us it has a lot of historical significance. It's got a lot of meaning. I think it's very symbolic for us of Detroit. I do know that the building was built during a boom time in 1920 and the front windows were bricked in 1967, which was the year of the riot.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow.

*Peggy Brennan:* And for us, it's going to be very significant when in a couple of weeks we're going to unbrick those windows.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah.

*Peggy Brennan:* That for us symbolically symbolizes for us the hopefully the turnaround that this city is going to experience.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow, that's great. Have you found any cool and interesting artifacts inside of the building?

*Peggy Brennan:* We have, yeah. We have found an old radiator cover that is an Ames built radiator cover and Ames was in there I think about

1928, something like that. We have found some other historical I would say old documents. Inside the walls we found all kinds of papers. Apparently they used these as insulation so we've got receipts and copies of notes written by people that go all the way to the 1920's.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow. So Peggy is there any information you can give us and our listeners more about what really happened with Jimmy Hoffa?

*Peggy Brennan:* Yeah. I can tell you right now, we haven't found him yet.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Okay, okay. Well when you break up that foundation, keep us posted on that.

*Peggy Brennan:* Exactly, but I will say that we have a scary enough basement down there so we will be down there.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Really? Interesting, interesting. What other type of hurdles have you encountered when trying to start this green garage in regards with the city of Detroit, zoning, other trials and tribulations?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well, as far as the city of Detroit goes, I can tell you basically that with have had absolutely no hurdles at all. I mean this is a good news story. There's nothing that has been a problem. We turned our plans into the city, we developed, we spent about a year developing plans, turned our plans into the city, they were 25 pages long, they had detailed descriptions of systems that are not typical for buildings such as our geo-solar hybrid heating and cooling system and those plans passed within one and a half weeks.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow.

*Peggy Brennan:* We were very surprised by that I can assure you because we've done remodeling projects on other properties that we owned and they haven't even begun looking at the papers you know I would say at least three weeks, let alone give approval. So I really think I can give you an unqualified thumbs up on working with the city. I do know that you need to be prepared.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Sure.

*Peggy Brennan:* And I the ink that you need to have your work done and I think you have to have people in your group that you're working with who know the code in the city so that you're not having to

backtrack. We did all those things and we had no problems whatsoever. We found no bureaucracy whatsoever.

*Dario Terrini:* That's great. And Peggy, this is Dario again. What's your timeline in terms of when this is going to be up and running?

*Peggy Brennan:* Right. So we're gonna be done in April with the construction. We are gonna need till May to get all of the exterior work done, which is we're basically taking out all the cement around the building and we're going to be putting in native landscaping and things like that. So that requires a May timeframe. So we'll be open for business in May.

*Dario Terrini:* Oh, right around the corner.

*Peggy Brennan:* Yeah, I hope. It is going to be soon.

*Dwight Zahringer:* What kind of business are you looking to attract?

*Peggy Brennan:* Exactly, so what we're gonna be doing is we're doing a number of things in the building. First you need to know that The Green Garage is comprised of two conjoined buildings. One is the historic building and then in the 1960s they put an annex onto it. So in this historic building, we're planning on renting office space to people who wanna start green businesses and because we wanna use the space as efficiently as possible, and save our clients money, we're going to rent them something as small as just a desk or something as large as an entire set of offices, whatever they'd like. And we would be providing green office environment and help with business plans and help with contacting funding sources, etc.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow, that's wonderful.

*Peggy Brennan:* Oh it's gonna be great. Yeah and you know by the way, my husband has a background as a management consultant. He was a partner with Accenture so he's used to being, you know running large projects and things like that.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow, excellent.

*Peggy Brennan:* And then in addition we've got a, we've got some consultation space to work with people who might drop by and want help greening up their own lives. So we're developing a library, we're developing a design center so there will be places where if you wanna walk in off the street and say I need some help with



something, we're hoping that that's part of what we're doing. And then in the annex building, we're gonna be setting up workshop space for people who want to rent space to develop a product. What we're thinking right now is that we're probably going to be renting on a monthly basis with hopes that our tenants would develop strong independent enough businesses within a year or so and then take those out into the city.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow, that's great. You really have this thought through. It is definitely not the bar napkin type of a plan here.

*Peggy Brennan:* Oh no, no, we definitely wanted to get the thinking done before the construction started.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Well as you're aware, with Recycling for Charities, we've been around the block and we've been around for about six years now and our main focus is helping to keep the earth green and keep everybody environmentally conscious of what they are doing with old wireless recycling products such as cell phones, PDA's, pages, before, now iPods and digital cameras. In fact Kodak just partnered with us and as far as Walmart with recycling all of their digital cameras for them. This is something that we like and that we; you know being close to us and being local in the Detroit area, something that we can definitely cling to. I think it is something we are going to have to talk more in the future when you are getting closer to the launch that we can definitely make you as a collection point for people that want to partake in something like this as well. What about as far as getting involved with the renovation? If any of our listeners want to do anything like that or help you out, how can they go about doing that?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well I would say the best way to do it is to contact us at our Gmail address which is [greengaragedetroit@gmail.com](mailto:greengaragedetroit@gmail.com).

*Dwight Zahringer:* Okay.

*Peggy Brennan:* Or if you want to you can just find us on FaceBook. We've got our own FaceBook account under Green Garage Detroit.

*Dwight Zahringer:* That's wonderful. For those listening in the Detroit area that are local here, give us a few of the landmarks that are around The Green Garage so we can be aware of it as we're driving around aimlessly through Detroit looking for something attractive and

beautiful to look at. It'll probably stand out like a sore thumb or the opposite of the good finger on the bad hand.

*Dario Terrini:* Green thumb.

*Dwight Zahringer:* The green thumb, it is going to stand out like a green thumb but what are some other significant landmarks?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well basically we're on Second Avenue right around Canfield in the **Wayne State** area and I would say the biggest landmark probably close to us is the Traffic Jam Restaurant.

*Dario Terrini:* Oh.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Excellent, excellent. Peggy, I wanna thank you very much for taking the time out of your busy schedule renovating under your tight deadline to speak with us and tell us a little bit more about what you're doing. Before we leave off, is there anything else you wanna leave our listeners to or plug your site and then some of the other initiatives you have going on?

*Peggy Brennan:* Well the only other thing I wanted to mention is the Green Alley Project that we're doing. We've got an alley that's next door to us and we have got a project going where we're going to be taking all of cement out of there and we're going to be putting in a brick walkway bordered with permeable pavers on either side and on either side of that is going to be native gardens. So it's gonna be a lovely area and part of the greenway movement that's happening in the city of Detroit right now.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Wow that's wonderful. And that's something that's going to be starting in the spring?

*Peggy Brennan:* That's going to be starting this coming spring, yes.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Oh wonderful, wonderful. Will you be looking for volunteers and help on that as well?

*Peggy Brennan:* Oh we will be.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Okay perfect. Well for all that want to get involved, I do recommend that you go out and take a look at [greengaragedetroit.com](http://greengaragedetroit.com) or go ahead and email [greengarage@gmail.com](mailto:greengarage@gmail.com). It's got a lot of information, historical

information and it looks like you are documenting the entire building process as it's taking place as well.

*Peggy Brennan:* We are, yes.

*Dwight Zahringer:* Yeah, it's a wonderful thing. Peggy, thank you very much. We wish you the best and please let us know however we can help you out or spread the word and get you some exposure.

*Peggy Brennan:* Well thank you very much.

*Dwight Zahringer:* I want to thank you for tuning into another edition of the *Recycling for Charities Podcast Radio Show*. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions and always looking for more content to put here on the natural podcast itself and on our web site. Feel free to go on over there. You can sign up to become a charity or participate in organizations or make a donation yourself as a regular consumer. They are tax deductible since we are a 501C3 nonprofit organization, [www.recyclingforcharities.com](http://www.recyclingforcharities.com). Thank you for listening. Be green and love life.

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