

Bigelow Cooperative Daycare Center

Bigelow Cooperative Daycare Center had been running out of the basement of a church in Harvard Square for over 20 years. With less than a year's notice the center had find a new facility and move out. Bigelow wished to stay close to Harvard Square but found that to be difficult. After expanding its search, Bigelow decided to lease and renovate warehouse space on the Cambridge-Somerville line. The building owner upgraded the utilities and exterior of the building and with a loan from the Fund, the new space was created. Completed, the space includes a central active play space, five classrooms, space for infant care, a commercial kitchen, and administrative and teacher work space. Bigelow also developed a 3,500 sq. ft. outdoor play area.



# Children Served	49 at any give time, 60 in total
# Slots Improved	49
# Slots Added	15
# Employees	17
Total Project Cost	\$1,000,000
Size of Program Space	5,500 square ft.
Time to Complete	8 months
Sources of Funds	Children's Investment Fund loan Private Donations

Challenges

- Finding a space
- Finding financing
- Negotiating the lease
- Obtaining special permit
- Estimating the size of our new school based on projected enrollment
- The landlords had a lien on the property and were stalling the lease negotiation process to the point where we were afraid we would lose our window of opportunity to renovate in time for our promised September 1st opening
- Contractor work was held up waiting for landlord's subcontractors
- Coordinating with NSTAR for permanent power in order to get all systems tested in time for inspections and certificate of occupancy, and NSTAR strike
- Had to redo our kitchen – did not check with Inspectional Services before building kitchen.
- Changed exterior design without checking with Somerville Zoning Board, which was a serious offense.
- Did not schedule alarm system inspection in time

Advice

- Be an active, involved part of the team
- Expect delays and cost overruns
- Have a plan that includes contingencies
- Prepare your staff for the changes in the environment. Include and engage them in the process
- Hire an early childhood space consultant if your architect has not designed early childhood space before
- Be sure that you have a person on your team who is coordinating the entire effort from start to finish
- Be sure that you have administrative staff that can take on additional responsibilities of running the business while the director is engaged in the development process
- Keep your stakeholders in the loop
- Be sure that you have an educator on the classroom design team

For more information about Bigelow, visit their website at www.bigelowcoop.org