



Demolition Or Deconstruction...Now There's A Choice



Re-use Hawaii co-directors Quinn Vittum and Selina Tarantino

Third in a series on the "Greening" of Hawaii's housing industry.

Re-use Hawaii is a unique new resource with the potential to take the "greening" of Hawaii's housing industry up a notch. Founded last October by Quinn Vittum and Selina Tarantino, the company is currently offering consulting and estimating services and plans to begin deconstruction work in July.

When a structure is deconstructed, rather than razed with the use of heavy machinery, substantial amounts of material can often be salvaged and reused. Deconstruction specialists, trained to differentiate between reusable materials and those that will either be recycled or sent to the landfill, literally disassemble the building by hand. Wood that is free of termites and rot and retains structural integrity is collected, sorted, and then stored by Re-use Hawaii. Windows, doors, trim, mouldings, and metal fixtures such as door handles, locks, faucets, and cabinet hardware can often be saved...in some cases for reuse by the owner in a new or remodeled home.

The benefits are obvious. Reusing wood means that fewer trees will be cut for lumber and less construction waste will go into Oahu's already overburdened landfills. And, hopefully, this additional alternative for disposal will result in fewer instances of illegal dumping on vacant land in rural areas.

According to the State of Hawaii C & D (construction and demolition) Waste Management Guide, 600,000 tons of building materials are currently disposed of in Hawaii's landfills. Vittum calculates that approximately half of it is reusable.

Vittum and Tarantino developed the concept for Re-use Hawaii after meeting at an Environmental Protection Agency deconstruction conference in Atlanta, Georgia at which Vittum was a presenter, having served as a director of non profit organizations active in building material deconstruction, salvage, and reuse in the Pacific Northwest. Tarantino, formerly a designer with



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Ferraro Choi and Associates, a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified architectural design firm, attended the conference with the objective of linking up with organizations active in the field and educating herself on construction reuse business models.

"I was surprised to find out that there were no companies in Hawaii attempting to recover reusable and recyclable building materials on a large scale," Vittum said. "We recognized both the opportunity and the problem with Oahu's finite amount of land and high cost of construction materials. After spending a few months on our feasibility studies, I wound up my roles in Washington and moved to Honolulu. We've both been encouraged by the enthusiastic reception we've received from building industry professionals who want to shift out of being part of the problem and become part of the solution."

Typically, when a builder, designer, or home owner contacts Re-use Hawaii about a deconstruction job, they review the project to ensure that deconstruction works with the established building or remodeling schedule. Deconstructing an entire home, for example, a wood frame 1,500 square foot structure, would normally take eight to ten working days, whereas demolition of a similar structure could be completed in two to three days. If the time line is satisfactory, the next step is to survey the building, includ-

ing the framing, roofing, flooring, cabinets, doors, windows, plumbing, and electrical fixtures. A proposal is then presented to the builder and/or home owner indicating the materials and items that can be reused and what will be recycled. An estimated cost is also assessed.

"The upfront cost of deconstruction is generally higher than demolition. However, keep in mind that the tax benefit of going the



deconstruction route can offset the additional cost. As a non profit organization, we are able to provide the customer with a statement that a specific amount of reusable material has been donated. For remodeling projects, our price can be competitive. Deconstruction can also be cost effective on steep, hillside lots that are not accessible to heavy equipment," Vittum said.

Currently, Re-Use Hawaii

is focusing on presentations to architects and builders and consulting with other companies interested in incorporating deconstruction and recycling into their services. "If deconstruction and recycling of construction materials continues to generate the kind of interest we've seen so far, Hawaii will need additional resources," Vittum said. "Privatization and the immense scope of the work in progress at our military bases will require new progressive recycling solutions to avoid a solid waste crisis. We hope to develop pilot projects with the companies that have been contracted by the military. We also plan to work more closely with the architects and designers engaged in the LEED program and with those working to gain points toward project certification...which can be achieved by using recycled materials. Because recycled lumber and other used building materials are far less expensive than new, we expect to be working with a number of organizations involved in developing and providing affordable housing.

Vittum and Tarantino will be members of an expert panel on reuse and recycling on Wednesday, May 9, at the annual Build and Buy Green Conference. The 2007 conference will be held at the Hawaii Convention Center on Tuesday, May 8, and Wednesday, May 9, from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Re-use Hawaii provides free on-site deconstruction estimates.

Anyone interested in obtaining recycled material should access the company's website and visit the building materials page.

