

Salvaged Materials

Salvaged materials instill a sense of depth, character, and uniqueness to a project and can bring many environmental and economic benefits. The San Francisco Bay Area has an abundance of businesses that collect, sort, and, in some cases, refurbish a great variety of salvaged building materials and products, and they are an important component of regional waste diversion efforts.

Using salvaged materials in a project can be somewhat of an art form, and it can require a very thoughtful approach to design and construction. Since finding a salvaged piece that precisely matches a specification is unlikely, it often makes sense to acquire the salvaged portions before completing design work so that they can be well integrated into the final project. Inventory at salvage venues is constantly changing, so architects and contractors who make extensive use of salvaged materials periodically visit them, sometimes acquiring and stockpiling items that they would like to use in current and future projects.

Here are some of the materials and products one might typically find at such locations:



Construction Materials

- Brick & Pavers
- Beams & Timbers (must be regraded if used for structural applications)
- Framing Lumber (for partition walls and other non-structural applications)
- Siding
- Roofing Tiles & Slates

Interior Finish Materials

- Ceramic Tile / Marble
- Hardwood Flooring
- Fireplace Mantels
- Molding & Trim
- Wainscot
- Countertops

Other

- Sinks
- Bathtubs
- Doors & Windows
- Door & Window Hardware
- Lighting Fixtures
- Cabinetry
- Furniture
- Ironwork

However, there are some salvaged materials and products that Build It Green does not recommend using. Read below for details.

PRODUCT COMPARISONS

Salvaged Materials

Endowed with character
Conserve energy and resources
Divert waste from landfills

Virgin Materials

Can lack character
Consume energy and resources to produce
Do not divert waste from landfills



LEED CREDITS

Using this material potentially contributes to obtaining these credits in the US Green Building Council's LEED certification program:

Materials & Resources

MR Credit 3 Resource Reuse

LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. To find out more about it, visit www.leadbuilding.org

ENVIRONMENTAL ATTRIBUTES

Energy Performance

While there is typically an abundance of single-pane windows at salvage businesses, the GRC does not recommend using them, as their poor insulating value far outweigh any benefits of reusing them. Single-pane windows have less than half the efficiency of new double-paned windows, so buildings that use them will typically require considerably more fossil fuels to maintain a comfortable interior. However, single-paned French doors can be useful between rooms, and some creative people find a variety of interior applications for single-pane windows.

Resource Impacts

Many high-quality building materials are disposed of long before the end of their useful life, because buildings are often demolished or renovated for real estate or aesthetic reasons. By using salvaged materials, a market is created for these materials, and a variety of environmental impacts related to the extraction, processing, and transportation of virgin materials are avoided. These impacts include waterway sedimentation and pollution from mine tailings and clearcut forests, air pollution and energy consumption associated with manufacturing processes, loss of quality habitat due to forest clearance and strip mining, among many others. Additionally, the energy required to transport materials to landfills is avoided, and the landfills last longer.

Most salvage businesses have a lot of old toilets in stock, but the GRC does not recommend using them due to their inefficient consumption of water. New toilets that get very high marks for performance use 1.0-1.6 gallons per flush, whereas most of the salvaged toilets use 3.5-5.5 gallons per flush. While old toilets can be retrofitted with new flush mechanisms, these devices will only reduce use by 0.5-1.0 gallon per flush. Most city building codes also do not allow the installation of old toilets that exceed the 1.6 gallon per flush limit.

Health Considerations

When buying salvaged materials, pay attention to the possibility of encountering lead paint. About two-thirds of the homes built before 1940, one-half of the homes built from 1940 to 1960, and even some homes built until 1975 contain lead-based paint. Health hazards associated with lead-based paint result primarily from careless paint stripping practices such as inhaling dust from sanding or fumes from heat-stripping. Use common sense and wear masks with high quality filters. Consider using gel-based strippers, which tend to do a better and safer job than sanding or heat-stripping. Even better, reduce the amount of stripping required by encapsulating the lead-based paint with additional high quality paints or sealers. (See the Greener Paints materials sheet for more information about lead paint.)



Pressure-treated salvaged wood should also be avoided, as it would most likely contain chromium and arsenic. This type of lumber has also been banned from manufacture for the residential market as of January 1, 2004. (See the Alternatives to CCA-Treated Wood materials sheet for more information.)

FUNCTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cost

Generally, the cost of salvaged building materials is a fraction of that of the cost of new materials. Ideally, as in the case of doors, sinks, and bathtubs, there is little practical difference between the salvaged and new part except for some signs of previous use. Also, fully investigate the material for defects, wear, and missing parts before you buy it, considering how much additional money you may need to invest to get the product to the look and performance level that you desire.

Installation

No different than new materials, except for possibly dealing with missing installation clips, screws, brackets, etc.

Maintenance

Usually no different than new materials. Some older materials may require more maintenance in painting or polishing.

Other Data / Comments

Reclaimed wood comes from a variety of sources, including whole logs from river and lake bottoms, posts and beams of old barns and industrial buildings, and siding and flooring from a variety of buildings. Some businesses are now making use of urban trees that are felled due to disease or interference with utility lines and buildings. The businesses listed below sell reclaimed wood as is, mill it into lumber, or use it to make a variety of products.

RESOURCES

Suppliers

The following is a list of businesses that specialize in selling architectural salvage materials, including reclaimed wood. Keep checking locations for your desired materials as their stock changes frequently. For up-to-date retailer information, search the Green Materials Database, www.builditgreen.org/guide.

Berkeley Architectural Salvage
1167 65th Street
Oakland, CA
(510) 655-2270

Black's Farmwood
San Rafael, CA
(877) 321-WOOD

**P.A.L. Foundation &
East Bay Conservation Corps**
1021 Third Street
Oakland, CA
(510) 992-7800
www.recycletrees.org

The Reuse People



www.blacksfarmwood.com

Building Resources

701 Amador Street
San Francisco, CA
(415) 285-7814

www.buildingresources.org

Caldwell Building

195 Bayshore Blvd.
San Francisco, CA
(415) 550-6777

www.caldwell-bldg-salvage.com

C & K Salvage

718 Douglas Avenue
Oakland, CA
(510) 569-2070

Gilman Street Salvage

808 Gilman Street
Berkeley, CA
(510) 524-5500

www.gilmantrading.com

Ohmega Salvage

2407 San Pablo Avenue
Berkeley, CA
(510) 843-7368

www.ohmegasalvage.com

Omega Too

2204 San Pablo Avenue
Berkeley, CA
(510) 843-3636

www.omegato.com

2100 Ferry Point, #150
Alameda, CA
(510) 522-2722

www.thereusepeople.org

This & That Used Building Materials

1701 Rumrill Blvd.
San Pablo, CA
(510) 232-1273

Toolbox Consignment

3430 Clayton Road
Concord, CA
(925) 671-9861

Urban Ore

900 Murray Street
Berkeley, CA
(510) 841-7283

www.urbanore.citysearch.com

Whole House Building Supply & Salvage

1955 Pulgas Avenue
East Palo Alto, CA
(650) 328-8731

www.driftwoodsalsvage.com

The Wooden Duck

2919 Seventh St
Berkeley, CA
(510) 848-3575

www.thewoodenduck.com

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