

Home remodeling



Home remodeling can be a big source of waste. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it accounts for 22 percent of all the construction and demolition waste generated nationally. However, with a plan and a little extra time, much of that waste can be avoided or diverted for reuse or recycling.

Reduce

Less is more. Smaller homes generate less waste over a lifetime of use and maintenance. Spend more per square foot on higher-quality materials and finishes instead of maximizing the total square footage of your project. The website notsobighouse.com is a great resource for designing spaces that are not as big as you thought you needed to perfectly suit the way you live. Skip the latest must-haves and stick to simple, classic designs and finishes that endure over time.

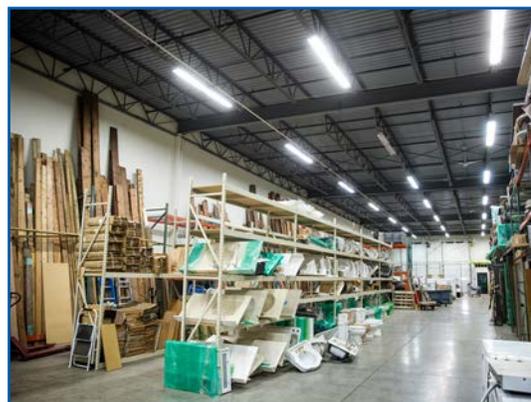
If you aren't able to reuse what you already have, you can still incorporate reuse into your project by buying used. Cabinets, flooring, sinks, light fixtures and much more can be found at used building material stores across the metro. Architectural Antiques, Bauer Brothers Salvage, Better Futures Minnesota, City Salvage, Guided Salvage, Habitat for Humanity ReStore and Professional Rebuilding Outlet are all good options for used and period-specific building materials. Craigslist, eBay and online garage sale groups are also good options for finding used or surplus building materials. Search the Choose to Reuse website at hennepin.us/choosetoreuse for home improvement and repair organizations close to you, or check the event listing for upcoming sales.



Reuse

Many furnishings and finishes can be reused rather than trashed. For example, cabinets and vanities can take on a new life with a fresh coat of paint or stain and new hardware. Sinks and tubs can be refreshed by replacing the faucet rather than the entire sink. Not only will you reduce waste by reusing, you'll also save money.

Donation and deconstruction



In addition to selling used building materials, many of the home improvement retailers also accept donations, and some offer pick-up service. Make sure you share your reuse plans with your contractor so items aren't destroyed during removal.

Better Futures Minnesota also offers deconstruction services, which is a process that carefully takes a building apart to preserve the materials for reuse. This method can be used rather than demolition for both partial and full building removal. Deconstruction takes longer and costs more, but tax credits for donating the building materials help reduce the cost, and this method can divert as much as 85 to 90 percent of the building material.

Recycling

After you've exhausted your reduction and reuse options, there are recycling opportunities for many materials. The gold standard for recycling construction and demolition debris is to sort the materials onsite and then have them sent to the various processors of those materials. If your site only has room for a mixed-waste dumpster, make sure the dumpster is going to one of three processors in the Twin Cities that divert materials for recycling: Broadway Resource Recovery (Atomic), DemCon or Veit. These recycling processors take mixed construction and demolition waste, sort it, and divert 60 to 70 percent of the material from landfills. Let your contractor know before work starts that you want the material recycled at one of these three places, and ask for the receipts to ensure it went where you specified.

Learn more

For additional resources on low-waste and green remodeling, visit pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/residential-building.

