

{ green home remodel }
healthy homes for a healthy environment



salvage & reuse





green

What is a Green Remodel?

It's an approach to home improvement with the goals of making your home look and work better for both you and the environment.

Want a healthier home? Lower utility bills? Reduced maintenance? A cleaner planet? A green remodel helps you realize a range of far-reaching benefits from a single smart design. With careful planning, you can create a home that combines beauty, efficiency, comfort and convenience with health and conservation.

why

Why Consider a Green Remodel?

SAVE MONEY

When you incorporate salvaged materials into your project, they often cost less than new products, and last longer, too. This is especially the case when you are trying to match or create a style reminiscent of the period or quality of older homes. Another plus? When you choose salvaged materials over new, you reduce disposal costs and help our local economy by creating jobs for retailers specializing in these environmentally friendly services.

MAKE A HEALTHIER HOME

By minimizing your remodel's scope and reusing materials in place, you'll reduce the likelihood of your remodel releasing hazards into the home, such as lead paint dust or asbestos. When reusing materials, careful selection can avoid introducing additional hazards such as materials finished with lead-based paint.

REDUCE ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

In addition to lessening the burden on our landfills, reusing salvaged materials minimizes the demand for mining, tree harvesting, water, energy, and other natural resources. It also eliminates toxic materials used to process, manufacture, and transport new materials.

salvage & reuse

In 2005, Seattle and King County combined sent over 560,000 tons of construction-related waste to the landfill. Although residential projects represent only a portion of the construction waste total, a remodel invariably results in a variety of items being discarded.

Fortunately, more options exist for reusing and recycling used building materials today. A number of retail locations and online resources now accept and offer salvaged building materials. This makes it possible to minimize your remodeling waste, and incorporate "new" recycled items into your project. You can find salvaged supplies for virtually every building material category, from flooring to fixtures.

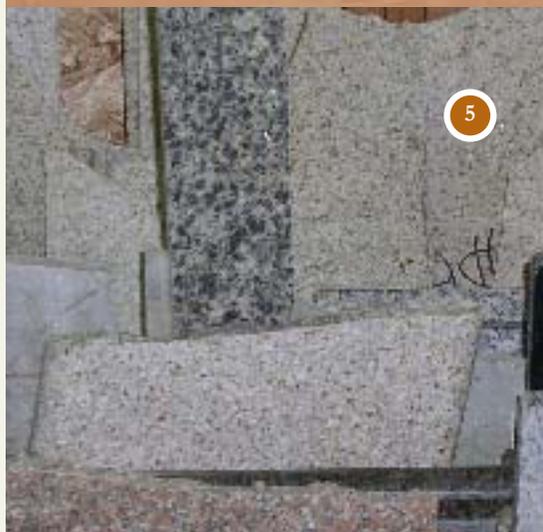
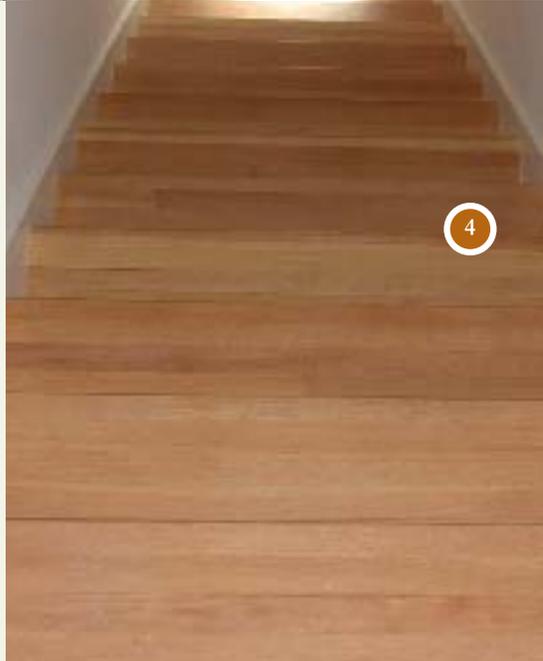
Used building materials can temper the newness of a remodel while tying fresh elements to the existing home. When you walk through the aisles of a used-building-materials retailer, you take a tour of the region's architectural history. Discover fixtures of a quality unobtainable today, often at a fraction of the cost of new, all while benefiting our environment.

*Cover photo and above: JAS Design Build
(photo © John Granen).*



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rethink remodeling

Create your own green remodel with

Ecology's Green Home Remodel

series. Find them at www.ecy.wa.gov.

www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/greenbuilding

or call (360) 407-6693



Like the rest of the green design process, reusing salvage materials necessitates more creativity than conventional garbage-generating remodeling. When integrating used materials into your project, products and plans often continue to influence each other as the remodel progresses. Be prepared to modify your schedule if need be, and create flexible designs that leave room to utilize used materials or a newly found item.

Up-front planning minimizes remodeling waste. A space-efficient design can reduce or eliminate the need to add square footage or remove walls. A flexible floor plan allows your home to adapt to changing uses and needs, without costly modifications. When you choose quality products and enduring design, your project will be one you and your family can enjoy for years to come.

Decide What You Want

The most effective home remodeling projects begin when you thoroughly assess your wants and needs. By prioritizing goals, you can avoid confusing the ends with the means. For example, if your goal is to just add more square footage, you may end up with a bigger home and a costlier remodel that still fails to address your space needs. However, if your goal is to create an efficient and effective use of space, you'll have the opportunity to do more with the square footage you already have.

Of course, careful planning is important for any remodel. Ecology offers a range of Green Home Remodel guides, like this one, to provide helpful information about materials and design considerations so you get the most out of your green remodel. Chances are, there's one to assist with your particular project. The following guides are available at no cost to Washington residents:

- Kitchen
- Bath & Laundry
- Roofing
- Painting
- Landscape Materials
- Hiring a Pro

To read or download, go to www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/greenbuilding and click on *Green Home Remodel*.

Expand Your Definition of Cost

Initial price gives only a peephole view of the true cost of a product or design. A higher purchase price can mean a better deal in the long run. You can actually reduce the cost of living in your home by choosing resource-efficient materials and designs that lower monthly bills and require less frequent replacement. Focus on long-term savings, ease of maintenance and conservation, not just initial price. A low purchase price may simply mean a good deal, a lack of quality or durability, or that some environmental, health, or social costs are not included in the price tag.

When you choose professional-quality materials, finishes and hardware, you minimize waste down the road by delaying replacement. Warranty length is often a good indicator of quality. By reusing building materials, you also reduce environmental costs caused by new product manufacturing.

Remodel Safely

First, identify health objectives for your new design. Next, determine what hazards may already exist in your home and those that could be created by the remodeling process. For tips on staying safe as you remove materials from your home, see *Salvage & Recycling* on page 4.

When reusing materials, care must be taken to avoid introducing new hazards into your home. Pay particular attention to lead-based paint, lead fittings and solder on plumbing products, as well as asbestos in shingles, flooring, ductwork and some appliances. For details, see *When Not to Reuse* on page 9.

Remodeling to Sell?

Many people remodel prior to selling a home, thinking they'll make money. Ironically, most homeowners would be better off keeping their cash in the bank. According to *Remodeling Magazine*, the average remodeling project—even a kitchen or bath—typically returns 90% or less on the original investment. Your house may garner a higher price, but not enough to offset the project costs. In other words, you may take on the work and expense of a remodel, only to lose money in the process.

Generally, you'll realize a better return on smaller, lower-cost projects. Do-it-yourself improvements can also increase your return on investment, but require time and skill to avoid "remuddling" your property. A speculative remodeling project may not match the new owner's tastes. This could result in further remodeling, wasting both money and resources. If you're intent on sprucing up your home before you sell, a new coat of paint may do the trick. The Green Home Remodel *Painting* guide offers tips on creating a healthy, environmentally friendly paint job.



beyond waste

This guide focuses on salvaging materials from projects, and incorporating used materials into remodeling. There are, however, many ways to design waste out of a project. The following table lists strategies for reducing remodeling waste. Keep in mind that there is often no single “right” decision to minimize your project’s environmental impact. With research, planning and creativity, you can take advantage of waste prevention opportunities that might be missed in a conventional remodel.

manage project scope

- Focus on meeting the largest number of your goals with the fewest modifications to your current space. This will cost less, reduce disruption, and use fewer resources.
- Consider a not-so-big approach to home improvement. An increasingly common goal with green remodeling is to stay within a house’s original footprint to save money and outdoor space.
- Use materials efficiently (such as placing wall studs at 24-inch intervals rather than every 16 inches, utilizing thinner plywood/wallboard or narrower molding, etc.), while ensuring quality construction, safety, and durability.

maximize flexibility and space efficiency

- Design spaces that can adapt with minimal modification as users’ needs and abilities change, including integrating Universal Design. For more information, see Kitchen or Bath & Laundry Green Home Remodel guides.
- Create multi-purpose spaces, such as a room that can be used for entertainment, a home office, and library rather than three rooms devoted solely to each purpose.
- Analyze how and with what frequency you use your current space. Consider whether seldom-used spaces can be reassigned to accommodate more frequent activities, or combined with more popular spaces.

create enduring design

- Research designs appropriate for your home’s vintage, and preserve still-functioning elements that match the period—such as a pedestal sink in a Craftsman home.
- Unfortunately, dated designs are often torn out well before they’re worn out. Focus on designs that maintain and enhance your home’s style. Often, older magazines and design books highlight colors and finishes that can withstand the test of time.
- If design schemes from 10-20 years ago still look fresh today, capitalize on their timeliness quality in your project.

design for deconstruction

- Opt for simple designs with fewer elements; these are easier to take apart and reuse.
- When possible, use nails and screws rather than adhesives.
- Use a limited palette of materials to make future salvage more worthwhile. Larger quantities of a single material are more marketable than small amounts.

design for waste prevention

- Try and design your project using standard lengths of wood to prevent excess waste and extra work!

Universal Design creates flexible, easy-to-use spaces for people of all abilities, reducing the need for costly future modifications to the home as users’ abilities change. Look to the American Association of Retired Persons’ site at www.aarp.org/families/home_design/ for more about Universal Design.





salvage & recycling

Yes, hauling your remodeling waste to the recycling and disposal station can seem like the easiest option. But many items may be useful to someone else, or even reused on your own project. By planning your activities and carefully removing materials to retain their value (deconstructing rather than demolishing), you can increase the likelihood of a future life for these materials, beyond the landfill. Thurston and King counties, at least, have a "remodeling and reuse" station at the "recycling and disposal" station.

A little sweat equity can go a long ways toward reducing your disposal expenses. If you can reuse materials on your own project, you will save money by not having to buy new. In some cases, you can also make money by selling your unwanted building materials, such as old hardware or a pedestal sink.

For optimum results, take the following steps to manage remodeling project materials:

1. reuse in place (leaving material as-is, repairing, refinishing, or re-facing, etc.)
2. salvage and reuse (on the project, in the home, sell, donate, or trade),
3. recycling, and
4. proper disposal of what's left.

Nearly all projects involve a bit of each. The green goal is to get as much of your materials into the top categories, while minimizing the amount that ends up at the landfill.

For tips on hiring a contractor for your green remodel, request a copy of the Hiring a Pro guide by visiting www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/snfa/greenbuilding and clicking on Green Home Remodel.



*Organizing a large remodel?
Consider deconstruction services.
This process carefully dismantles
materials for reuse and recycling,
keeping as much as 90% of
materials out of the landfill.*



getting organized

Organization is the key to successful salvage, so formulating a plan makes sense. This plan will make salvage easier, help reduce the health effects on your family, and minimize environmental impact.

1. **Compile a materials list.**

Walk through your project, and create a list of all the materials that have reuse and recycling potential. Refer to the *Used Materials Index* on page 11 for help determining whether items you are removing are recyclable or desirable for reuse. While making your list, consider repairing or reusing some materials in place, such as gypsum wallboard.

2. **Find salvage and recycling options.**

There are numerous outlets for reusable and recyclable materials: used building materials retailers, online exchanges, classified ads, and recycling companies. Fortunately, there are services that help you find the ones you need.

Remember to call companies before arriving with a load. Many reuse businesses have limited space and changing lists of materials they accept. Depending on the material, you may receive a small amount of cash, in-store credit, or the material may be considered a “donation,” meaning you can get rid of it for free. Some stores can offer a tax credit for materials. If they won’t take a material, you can still post it on online exchanges or classified ads. Recycling operations are usually more flexible, but may charge a fee, which should always be less than the per-ton fee at the Recycling and Disposal stations. If not, call another recycling service

Some statewide resources include:

www.2good2toss.com, www.craigslist.com, or www.freecycle.com

Habitat for Humanity Building Surplus Stores across the state (Spokane, Yakima)

Northwest Building Salvage network at www.nwubm.net/links.htm

“What do I do with...?” at www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/wdidw/

Online Materials Exchange at www.metrokc.gov/exchange/

Photo: The ReStore.

3. Develop a health and safety plan.

Make your objectives for dust and fume containment, as well as cleanup procedures, clear with contractors, friends, and family before work begins. One often-overlooked hazard involves lead dust, a serious indoor health risk, especially in households with children or expectant mothers. Homes built before 1960 contain paints with the highest concentration of lead. All homes built before 1978 almost certainly contain some amount of lead paint. Create a strategy to protect the rest of the home from dust and debris hazards. If necessary, use tape and plastic to seal heating vents in and near work areas. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offers excellent guidelines for addressing lead hazards during remodeling. Visit www.epa.gov/lead or call the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD for help creating a plan to deal with lead hazards during remodeling.

Asbestos also poses a remodeling hazard. For a list of common asbestos-containing home materials and tips on safely dealing with them during remodeling, go to www.epa.gov/asbestos and click on *Asbestos in Your Home*.

If removing walls or wallboard, always shut off the electricity to that portion of the house. Also consider the safety of the tools you use, and how you will remove materials. You may need an extra set of hands for bulky or awkward items. Nails, glass, and sharp metal pose common hazards on a construction site. Reduce the risk of a painful puncture or snag by removing nails from lumber, molding, and cabinetry as you go.

4. Remove materials.

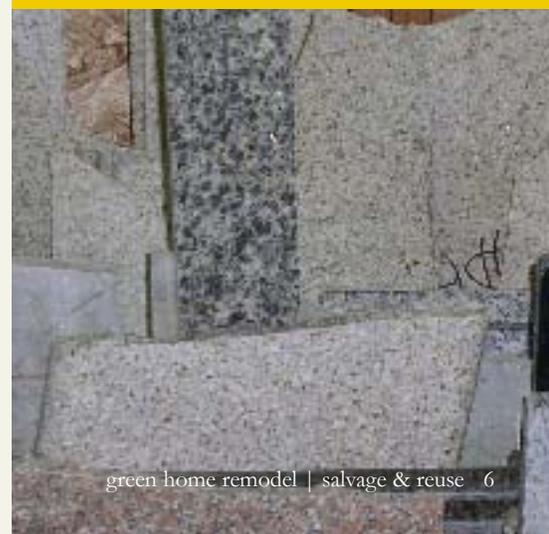
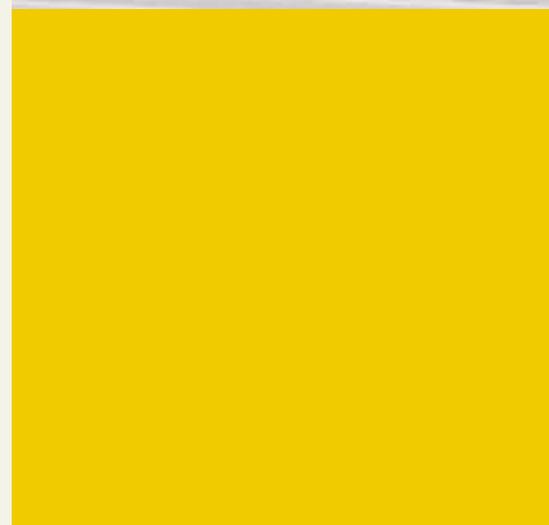
The key to successful salvage is careful removal. Keeping materials intact and unbroken maximizes the likelihood of reuse, and retains their value. Bundle multiples of a particular material. Make a call to a used building materials store before you start, and tell them what you're trying to remove. They can often recommend the best tools for the job. The right tools help immeasurably. Save money by renting or borrowing tools you're unlikely to use frequently. A utility knife usually works well for freeing materials that have been painted together, such as cabinetry and drywall, moldings and baseboards, light fixtures and ceiling. Small and large pry bars are proven essentials for removing molding, cabinetry, and anything that's been nailed down.

5. Define a storage area.

Keep materials tidy and safe in a protected storage area. Ideally, you want to set aside space for organizing your materials by type and destination: salvage, recycling, and disposal. Keep items slated for salvage and recycling protected and dry. Our rainy Northwest climate can quickly turn reusable materials into garbage. Store materials destined for recycling in piles according to how the recycling service accepts them. Recyclable materials that are contaminated with materials other than the recyclable material may be rejected and end up as garbage.

6. Arrange for hauling.

Many opt to self-haul. You can borrow a truck, or rent one on an hourly basis from hardware stores, rental agencies, or member-based programs like Flexcar. Use extra caution if you hire a private company to haul materials. Some part-time operations are unfamiliar with recycling and reuse options, or worse, illegally dump materials you believe are being properly transported. To avoid this, work only with permitted and licensed hauling companies. They should agree to take no more than half of their fee up front, with the remainder paid after you receive official receipts from the destinations you specified. Beware the "great deal" that sounds too good to be true. It could be a sign that the hauling service is improperly disposing of materials.





*Reusing building materials
benefits the environment and your
pocketbook. It also supports local
businesses and helps create jobs
throughout the state.*

reuse

Reuse puts all those building materials saved from the landfill into new projects. Often, used items serve the same purpose as before. See the reused flooring in the photo above. With little or no reprocessing, you can make them environmentally superior to recycled. Used items are usually used locally, so little energy is expended, and little pollution is created in transportation. Incorporating used materials into your project takes more time and creativity than buying new, off-the-shelf items. But it pays dividends aesthetically, economically, and ecologically.

Used building materials are available from many sources, including building salvage stores, online exchanges, classified ads, and demolition sales. A list of local sources of used materials is maintained on this guide's companion site at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/greenbuilding. Click on Green Home Remodel in the Salvage & Reuse section.

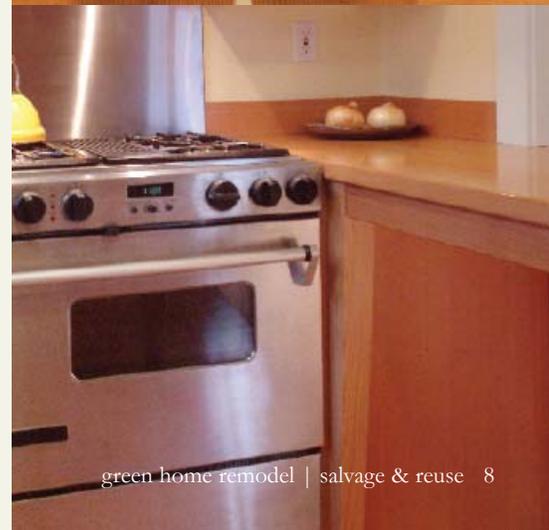


Tips For Incorporating Used Materials Into Your Project:

- Plan ahead. Give yourself time to find used products that meet your needs. Start looking early, and carry a list of the design elements you'd like to come from salvaged materials. Also keep specific measurements of cabinetry, countertops, ceiling heights, wall and floor lengths handy so you can determine whether salvaged elements will fit in your space. Shopping for used building materials is a form of treasure hunting. It's the "early and often" salvage-seeker who finds the best stuff. Make sure you have sufficient and proper storage for your found materials. Moisture and cold, over time, can destroy your new treasure before you get the chance to use it, or they necessitate costly refinishing or repair.
- Be creative. Think outside the box when it comes to using salvaged materials, because someone else's trash could become your treasure. Could those old wooden bleacher seats become bookshelves or stair treads? Could that slate chalkboard be reborn as a kitchen counter or shower walls? Adventurous materials decisions can add character and a sense of history to your new space.
- Show flexibility. Searching for a single, specific item may take a lot of time and be frustrating. You should love what you select, but keep your options open. Be willing to let go of one idea if another opportunity arises. Instead of creating a design and then hunting for the materials to make it work, why not let your discovery be your starting point? If you come across a beautiful salvaged piece such as vintage laboratory cabinets, a Craftsman-style fireplace mantle, or a pre-cut marble countertop, consider building part or all of your design around this unexpected treasure.
- Prioritize health, safety, and efficiency. It's not always good to reuse. Avoid materials that may introduce hazards into your home such as lead, asbestos, or unsafe electrical products. Consider too, whether a product you select will negatively affect your home's efficiency (such as single-pane windows). For more, see *When Not to Reuse* on page 9.

Working With Design Professionals

Incorporating used materials into a project is a specific skill, new to many design professionals. If you're using an architect or interior designer on your project and wish to incorporate used building materials, look to the *Hiring a Pro* guide in the Green Home Remodel series. Beyond pointers specific to materials reuse, this guide will help you find a green design or building professional for your job, covering issues of health and efficiency as well. Find the guide online at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/greenbuilding and click on *Green Home Remodel*.



when not to reuse

Some building materials should not be reused because they either pose safety risks or waste energy or water. So, it's best to be prudent and on the lookout for potential problems.

Health Hazards

- Lead. Widely used until 1978, lead paint is primarily a concern when it flakes or forms dust (such as that caused by scraping or dry sanding). Old plumbing fixtures (faucets) often contain lead solder and leaded brass, as well, which can leach into drinking water. Lead solder was frequently used to join copper pipes until it was banned in 1980. If you have concerns or questions about lead, visit the U.S. EPA's lead information page at www.epa.gov/lead or call the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD.
- Asbestos. This known carcinogen was used in many building products, particularly from the 1940s until the 1970s. Older materials that may contain asbestos include 9-inch square flooring tiles and older sheet vinyl flooring, "popcorn" textured ceilings, roofing and siding, ductwork insulation, window glazing compound, and vermiculite insulation. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/asbestos and click on *Asbestos in Your Home*.
- Mercury, PCBs, and arsenic. Old thermostats, "silent" light switches as well as those with internal lights, and all fluorescent tubes and bulbs contain varying amounts of mercury. Pre-1978 fluorescent light fixture ballasts may have carcinogenic PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls). Pressure-treated woods often contain a variety of toxic substances such as arsenic.

For further help with potential hazards in used home building materials, see *Resources* on page 12.

Fire Safety and Structural Risks

- Used lumber intended for structural applications must be professionally re-graded to meet local building codes. When in doubt, choose salvaged lumber for non-structural applications such as interior non-bearing walls, flooring, cabinets, or trim. Timbers of sufficient size may not need re-grading.
- Doors in some applications require a fire rating. Used doors must be inspected on a case-by-case basis if they are being specified for an application where the code requires a fire rating.

Always weigh the environmental benefits of reuse against other goals, especially health and safety. On this page you will find some instances where it's best not to reuse.



Energy and Water Inefficiency

- Toilets and Fixtures. All toilets manufactured before 1994 waste huge amounts of water and should not be reused. Compared to a new 1.6 gallon-per-flush (GPF) toilet, a typical 5 GPF toilet—commonly manufactured before 1980—will waste over 12,400 gallons and \$141 in water and sewer costs per year. There are many styles of new 1.6 GPF toilets to match the period of your home. New double flush toilets are now available to reduce water waste even further. With double flush toilets you select either a high or low volume flushing, depending on your needs.

Another source of water waste? Old showerheads. Reuse a showerhead only if it's rated for 2.5 gallons per minute (GPM)—2.0 GPM is preferable. The GPM should be listed on the showerhead. If not, assume it's inefficient. Visit www.savingwater.org for information on buying efficient, high-quality toilets and other water-saving tips.

- Windows. Old single-paned windows and most aluminum-framed double-paned windows are energy-inefficient. To meet building codes, they can only be reused if building energy use calculations are modified and energy improvements made in other parts of your home to compensate. Thinking of replacing your old windows? Go to www.efficientwindows.org to learn about energy-efficient options. If your single-paned windows are in good condition and you plan to maintain them, storm windows can reduce their heat loss by 25%-50%, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. Inefficient windows can be reused in unheated buildings, such as sheds, greenhouses, and outbuildings.
- Appliances. Old appliances, water heaters, furnaces, and boilers should only be reused if they meet current energy conservation and safety standards. In general, new Energy Star® refrigerators, clothes washers, and dishwashers offer significantly greater efficiency than older models; visit www.energystar.gov for more information. Also note that old refrigerators and air conditioners likely contain ozone-depleting CFCs and old appliances may contain asbestos and other hazardous materials. Recycle your old appliances at your local recycling and disposal station.

If it's time to recycle your old refrigerator, select a service that removes the refrigerant before recycling. Not doing so releases ozone-depleting CFCs into the atmosphere. It's estimated 4 million pounds of CFCs are released this way each year.



used material index

The following items are examples of materials that are often desired by others and generally available for reuse. Disposal options, health concerns, and considerations for buying new are also indicated.

ITEM	WHAT TO REUSE	WHAT TO RECYCLE	WHAT TO DISPOSE	ENVIRONMENTAL & HEALTH CONCERNS
wood (lumber, flooring, etc.)	timbers, large dimension lumber, plywood, flooring, molding, lumber longer than 6 feet	unpainted and untreated wood unfit for reuse	painted, pressure-treated and rotting wood	lead paint, structural integrity
windows	windows in good condition (for single panes, consider adding storm windows)	metal frames and screens, unpainted and untreated wood	glass, unusable painted items and wood in disrepair	lead paint, asbestos in older window glazing compound, energy inefficiency
cabinets	consider re-facing, or reusing in your home/shop/garage	remove and recycle hardware, unpainted and unfinished wood	painted or finished wood	lead paint, formaldehyde in particleboard or interior-grade plywood
plumbing products	sinks, tubs, faucets	metal pipe, toilets and inefficient plumbing fixtures (porcelain or metal), faucets with lead-content	toilet seats, PVC and other plastic pipe are not accepted at recycling stations	drinking water: lead content in faucets, solder, and old galvanized pipe
plaster and gypsum wallboard	repair cracks, or cover with textured paint, install new wallboard over old, or "skim coat"	wood lath—if clean—can be reused/recycled, unpainted wallboard	painted plaster or wallboard	nuisance dust, lead paint on walls, possible asbestos in older wallboard
electrical products	only if in good working order, or re-wired	metals (fixtures, conduit)	ceramic and plastic parts	frayed wires, possible asbestos insulation; PCBs in lighting ballasts; mercury in light switches and thermostats
landscape materials	timbers, stone, concrete	untreated, unpainted wood	rotting, treated, and painted wood	treated wood may contain arsenic, etc., wear a respirator and gloves when cutting; do not burn treated wood
non-wood flooring (tile, carpet, etc.)	difficult, unless removed intact, clean carpet in good condition	large quantities of ceramic tile, carpet pad and carpet tack strips	vinyl, stained carpet, broken tile	asbestos content in 9-inch tiles or sheet vinyl flooring, dust containing lead and pesticides in old carpet
roofing materials (see Roofing guide for more details)	retain sheathing, if in good condition, terra cotta or slate tiles	metal materials, contractors generally have outlets for recycling asphalt roofing materials, untreated cedar shingles	treated cedar shingles, torch-down roofing	possible asbestos content

resources

Books

- *Building with Vision: Optimizing and Finding Alternatives to Wood* by Dan Imhoff, et al. (Watershed Media, 2001). This book gives a good overview of the environmental and health impacts of building materials, and lists environmentally friendly alternatives.
- *Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time* by David R. Johnston, Kim Master (New Society Publishers, 2004) paperback.
- *Healthy House Building for the New Millenium* by John Bower (Health House Institute, 1999). Covers all aspects of building a healthy house, with a small section on salvaged materials.
- *Natural Remodeling for the Not So Green House: Bringing Your Home into Harmony with Nature* by Carol Venolia and Kelly Lerner (Lark Books, 2005).
- *No-Regrets Remodeling* by Alex Wilson et al. (Home Energy Magazine, 1997). Excellent overview of green remodeling, with emphasis on energy, efficiency, and health.
- *The New Natural House Book* by David Pearson (Fireside Publishers, 1998)

Websites

- Find other remodel guides in the Green Home Remodel series (including Kitchen, Bath and Laundry, Landscaping Materials, Roofing, Hiring a Pro, and Painting), at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/greenbuilding and click on *Green Home Remodel*.
- For more information on wanted materials or to list your own see www.2good2toss.com or www.craigslist.com.



The Washington State Department of Ecology wishes to thank the Seattle Department of Planning and Development City Green Building Program for allowing us to adapt the original brochure to suit our needs.





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If you need this information in an alternate format, please call the Solid Waste and Financial Assistance Program at 360-407-6900. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.



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