

# Giving a House a Second Chance – it's all in the Details

by Barbara Guarnieri

When most of us begin to renovate, or perhaps totally rebuild an existing home, we probably give little thought to the resultant rubble that goes to our landfills. According to the FEMA "Debris Estimating Field Guide," a typical 2,000 sq. ft. wood frame home produces 10,000 cubic feet of landfill debris. If salvaged, that same home yields 6,000 feet of reusable wood board or the equivalent of 36 mature trees. In addition, many of a home's interior details like fireplaces or window frames and hard goods such as stoves, bathtubs, etc., can also be saved from landfills through salvage repurposing. All told, the EPA reports that almost 40% of landfill space is occupied by building and construction debris. This is why on Dumpster Day RRLRAIA includes several building materials recycling and reuse services along with the waste containers. One local salvage and reuse company is called Second Chance, a name that signifies its dual purpose.

Second Chance not only accepts donated home goods for repurposing, it is also known for its building deconstruction projects. It identifies and salvages architecturally significant forms and valuable building materials, skillfully salvaging anything from the most well-preserved or historically important building elements to entire homes. The work can be tedious and the hourly rates can add up compared to the alternative: a day's worth of bulldozing. But the latter leads to a costly lifetime in the dump. So, for the homeowner, deconstruction offers major environmental brownie points and can also offer tax relief as Second Chance is a registered §501(c)(3) nonprofit business. Furthermore, the local community benefits from Second Chance's thriving salvaged goods retail sales business. Many of the historic or vintage treasures are put up for sale providing a truly amazing shopping experience for the general public. I highly recommend a trip through Second Chance's Ridgely Street warehouse! (For a virtual visit, go to [www.secondchanceinc.org/store-tour/](http://www.secondchanceinc.org/store-tour/).)

The primary purpose of Second Chance is neither historic preservation nor 'antique' sales. Second Chance began over a decade ago as a training and employment program for workers in Baltimore facing severe challenges that made it difficult for them to find employment (lack of education, prison records, homelessness, etc.). The organization teaches a combination of life skills and specialized 'deconstruction' building skills. Today it trains and hires workers in deconstruction, salvage, warehousing, retail operations, transportation and customer service. Second Chance has proven its value to many regional businesses and now works closely with a broad group of architects, developers, builders and homeowners to assess the salvage potential of buildings slated for demolition.

The founders appreciated from the start that the salvage and reuse of materials also has 'green' benefits: diverting tons of material from the waste stream, decreasing consumption of natural resources, lowering energy use and decreasing waste in the landfills. While those are important goals, Second Chance is most interested in salvaging lives by giving people work skills needed to sustain a living wage and pursue a career path. The organization is supported by income from direct sales and salvage contracts, commercial and non-profit partnerships, government grants and individual donations. It views its business goals as threefold: being socially

responsible, environmentally sound and financially viable. Senator Ben Cardin recently cited Second Chance as one of the nation's exemplary models of workforce development.