

Deconstruction puts new twist on removing old buildings

by DECAM

Soda cans, paper, plastic and cardboard are a few products that come to mind when thinking about recycling. The market is expanding, however, and it turns out that even old buildings can find new life through recycling. Deconstruction, or the disassembly of a building, recovers parts from old buildings. The recovered materials are reused, salvaged and recycled rather than dumped in the local landfill, which happens if the building is demolished instead of deconstructed.

The process of deconstruction was first piloted here by the Directorate of Public Works and the Directorate of Environmental Compliance and Management during the summer of 2004. Three WWII-era buildings were deconstructed to see if the process was cost-effective compared to demolition only.

Enough data was gained from the pilot buildings that deconstruction is now being used on other suitable buildings slated for removal. The most recent facility under deconstruction is the Directorate of Morale, Welfare and Recreation-operated Golf Course Clubhouse, Bldg. 7800, which is currently being taken down and scheduled for completion in early April.

During deconstruction, as much material as possible is recovered for recycling or reuse. The goal for the Golf Course Clubhouse facility is for at least 75 percent of the concrete removed to be diverted from landfill disposal and at least 50 percent of the useable wood and other non-concrete materials saved from the building. Other materials being recycled include metal, windows, wiring, lighting, ceiling tiles and mechanical equipment.

Fort Carson began using the process of deconstruction in an effort to promote reuse/recycling practices and support Fort Carson sustainability goals as well as Army-wide efforts to reduce solid waste disposal. Deconstruction is one of several ongoing sustainability projects on the installation, which include constructing environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient “green” buildings, reducing energy use, conserving water, increasing the purchase of recycled-content products and increasing cooperation on these and other sustainability projects with regional partners.

For more information about sustainability, call the sustainability planner at 526-9777.