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Jody Record

UNH Media Relations

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Building Materials From UNH's DeMeritt Hall Demolition Recycled

Contact: [Jody Record](#)
603-862-1462
UNH Media Relations

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DURHAM, N.H. - Behind the bricks and mortar of what was, and soon will be again, the physics department at the University of New Hampshire, there's a whole lot of green.

And it's not just because DeMeritt Hall, currently under construction, replaces an inefficient facility with outdated laboratories, or that the building's exterior has been redesigned to maximize benefits of natural daylight and cutting edge insulation details, or that florescent lighting is being used throughout, which will use one-fifth the amount of electricity as incandescent lighting.

It's also how the original building's materials were disposed of when it was demolished.

There was a time when the used bricks and boards would have wound up in landfills. But recycling was a component of the bid criteria and design process requested by UNH.

So far, more than 98 percent of the rubble has been recycled. That amounts to 2,325 tons. About 1,470 of those-or 62 percent--were bricks and concrete. Mixed materials accounted for 16 percent of the reused waste while 7 percent was wood and 6 percent was metal.

"It took a lot of work and a lot of cooperation with the construction company (Harvey Construction Corp.) to find a subcontractor (Institution Recycling Network) who would handle that amount of material," says David Clark of Campus Planning. 'Facilities worked on the concept for a couple of years. As a rule, there is a cost attached to recycling and many budgets don't accommodate too many extras even though it is socially responsible. But the university was concerned about responsible waste handling.'

Most of the masonry from the old DeMeritt Hall, built in 1914 four months after its namesake Albert DeMeritt died from a gunshot wound while hunting woodchucks, will be used as road fill. Some of the wood was in good enough condition to sell. And much of the flooring will be re-milled and go back into the 52,000-square-foot building as new floors.

"It's amazing how much of the building was able to avoid a landfill," Clark says.

The construction industry has been monitoring itself for the last several years, making the reuse of demolition debris more practical. There is also an increased awareness regarding new construction materials; at this point, 95 percent, or almost 10 tons, of those being used in DeMeritt's rebuild-leftover drywall pieces, for example-are being recycled.

Ecological benefits don't stop there. The design of the new building incorporates numerous energy efficient features. For example, while all of the occupied rooms will be air conditioned during the summer, research spaces, the library, and some teaching spaces will have air conditioning available only when needed throughout the year. Carbon dioxide sensors will reduce ventilation according to the number of people in a room. Switches will turn off

ventilation in a room if its windows are open. And water will be conserved with waterless urinals and sensor-controlled sinks.

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