

Habitat for Humanity offers builders an easy way to give back

By Jon Bell

For the HBA

Habitat for Humanity has long been known for the homes it builds for people, but it also does something else with houses, too: Tears them down.

OK, not entirely, but through its ReStore's Building Material Recovery deconstruction services, the nonprofit's staff and volunteers strip cabinets, trim, lumber, fixtures, doors, windows and any other salvageable building materials from homes that are being torn down or from areas being remodeled. Habitat then sells the materials through the ReStore to help fund new homebuilding projects.

"We basically provide a strip-out and gleaning service," said Mark Haley, manager of the material recover program. "We don't do anything structural, but we go in and salvage cabinets, light fixtures, wood trim, siding — anything that we can sell in our stores."

The program, which is licensed, bonded and insured, has been around for about two years now, Haley said, and it's been popular with many builders and remodelers in the five counties served by Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East: Multnomah, Clackamas, Washington in Oregon and Skamania and Clark in Washington.

"It's been very successful," he said. "It really benefits the stories, but it's the relationships with all the contractors that really makes it work. We just couldn't do it without them."

The fee for the service is fairly nominal. Haley said it's usually \$50 for, say, a bathroom remodel, and a whole house tops out around \$300. So there's a big cost savings incentive for builders and remodelers to use the service, which also saves money by reducing hauling costs and labor costs. Contractors don't have to worry about devoting their own workers to the deconstruction, either. Additionally, anything that goes to the ReStore through the program is tax deductible, so builders can write off part of the deconstruction.



Elite loved the site's view and felt that the newer, 6,000 square foot home currently on the lot was a wealth of re-usable and recyclable material.

Haley also said that the program works on a short timeline, too, so builders can call and schedule a team quickly. The work gets done usually in a half-day or day, so it doesn't really add much to an overall project's schedule.

An added bonus is that builders who use the service are diverting materials from the landfill, which adds a splash of green to their work.

"I think customers like it because they know that the right thing is being done," Haley said. "It's not just people coming in on a smash and dash."

Elite Development Northwest enlisted the material recovery services for one of their recent projects, an entire house that's to be torn down in a seven-lot subdivision in Newberg. Elite will put the lots on the market in January. The house is big — 6,000 square feet — but doesn't fit what Elite has in mind for the development. It also has quite a bit of salvageable material in it.

"The home's new enough that there are definitely things that can be saved," said Natalie Long, who co-owns Elite

Development Northwest with Jamie Harris. "We didn't want to waste everything that's in there."

She said the ReStore crew would remove cabinets, light fixtures, windows, doors, fencing, appliances and lots of other materials. Once they're done, the home will be donated to the Newberg Fire Department for their "Burn to Learn" program. The program uses donated homes that are set to be torn down to train firefighters on proper techniques.

Harris said Elite would appreciate the cost savings the material recovery program will deliver, but she said there's more to it than that.

"It's a cost saver, but it's also just the right thing to do," she said. "It really is the right decision to make, and it's a great way to support Habitat. I think everyone should do it."

For more information about the ReStore's Building Material Recover program, visit <http://pdxrestore.org> or contact Haley at 503-535-9141 or mark@pdxrestore.org.