

Waste diversion helps projects meet sustainability goals.

Construction generates a lot of waste materials. Whether new building construction or tenant improvement materials are often discarded to accommodate new tastes, manage tight construction schedules, and diversion programs. Green building programs like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design pay more attention on waste minimization at the construction site, and many builders go the extra mile and are formally evaluated. Understanding waste composition and diversion opportunities can help projects meet their goals.

Waste Stream Characterization



According to a 2004 waste characterization study conducted by the California Council on Building Industry Resources, construction and demolition (C&D) waste accounted for approximately 30.2 percent of the waste stream. A second CIWMB study, conducted in 2005, found that 30.2 percent of the waste stream was higher. A total of 622 loads of C&D waste across four metropolitan areas were analyzed. Demolition materials comprised the largest single portion of the waste stream. Finding ways to divert some of this demolition material can help lessen the burden on the waste stream.

Managing Construction Waste

It's become commonplace for reputable builders to develop waste minimization plans for each job. Pursuing LEED certification or not, minimizing waste is a responsible building practice," said Josh E. DPR Construction in San Francisco. "We see it the same as safety practices or good estimating, an

Recycling and diverting C&D waste helps keep usable materials from going to a landfill but can also be costly. On a construction job in San Francisco, the 45,000-square-foot tenant improvement project required two dumpsters to handle demolition waste. Fortunately, 20 of those dumpsters contained source-separated materials and more that were targeted for recycling.



In addition to simply recycling the C&D waste, most metropolitan areas have programs that encourage recycling rather than recycling. Some companies focus on electrical and mechanical materials. It's important to have one of these companies visit the site early to identify and coordinate workflow, builders often choose to use their own

Salvaging building materials can help project teams gain LEED points through waste minimization. By recycling and/or salvaging at least 50 percent of non-hazardous waste, teams can gain one point in Material and Resources Credit 2.1. An additional point can be earned by salvaging 10 percent of the waste by weight or volume, but must be consistent throughout.

On that downtown San Francisco project, DPR Construction's goal was a staggering 95 percent recycling rate.

Harvey Rifkin

Harvey Rifkin is president of Industrial Asset Recyclers, a green building services company helping stream every month. More details can be found at www.industrialecyclers.com.

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