

# Promoting Deconstruction in Your Community

Prioritizing reuse and recycling of building materials presents communities with opportunities to reduce waste, support the local economy, spur job creation, and enhance resiliency.

Municipalities can take a leading role in promoting this activity to lay the groundwork for realizing these benefits in their communities.

## DEFINITIONS

**Deconstruction** is an alternative to demolition to achieve resource conservation by maximizing material recovered for reuse, recycling what is not reusable, and minimizing the amount of material going to landfills or incineration. Policies and incentive programs are two ways municipalities can promote deconstruction.

**Policies** are enforceable mechanisms that require deconstruction and include executive orders and ordinances. For example, an ordinance could require that new municipal construction projects use reclaimed materials.

**Incentive programs** are mechanisms that encourage deconstruction but ultimately require stakeholders to opt-in to participate, like a pilot program or partnering with an organization that offers free technical assistance. One example of such an incentive could include waiving permit fees for projects that employ deconstruction.

The Center for EcoTechnology (CET) can provide direct technical assistance in select states to help businesses and institutions identify reuse and recycling outlets for building materials, furniture, equipment, and more. To learn more, contact us at **413-586-7350** or [cet@cetonline.org](mailto:cet@cetonline.org).

## DECONSTRUCTION PATHWAYS

The table below presents the different pathways, or scales, deconstruction projects can take on.

		SCALE: MIN → IMPACT → MAX				
Deconstruction Pathways	TYPE	Pre-Demo Clean Out	Soft-Stripping	Partial Deconstruction	Full Deconstruction	Adaptive Reuse
	DEFINITION	Removing items like furniture that can be donated before the project begins	High value and easy to remove materials like appliances, lighting, cabinetry, and architectural items	Additional material including doors, trim, flooring, and windows	Salvaging all materials with value and outlets such as structural lumber and steel	Maintaining a building structure while renovating its interior for different purpose

## DID YOU KNOW?

Deconstruction activities such as cleanouts, soft strips, and others can happen now – they don't need policy behind them. Contractors are already engaging in deconstruction!

### EXAMPLES OF ORDINANCES, INITIATIVES, & INCENTIVE PROGRAMS FOR YOUR MUNICIPALITY

The table below presents examples of ordinances, initiatives, and incentive programs from across the country that promote deconstruction.

Parameter	Type	Applies to Commercial Buildings	Applies to Residential Buildings	Building Size	Building Age/Project Cost	Requires Building Materials Reclamation & C&D Recycling
<a href="#">Austin, TX</a>	C&D Recycling Ordinance	Yes	Yes	Building permits greater than 5k square feet	N/A	The project must recycle or reuse at least 50% of construction debris from C&D projects
<a href="#">Baltimore, MD</a>	Deconstruction Initiative	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
<a href="#">Boston, MA</a>	Deconstruction Initiative	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	The city is offering technical assistance to projects interested in exploring deconstruction opportunities
<a href="#">City of Boulder, CO</a>	Ordinance	Yes	Yes	Level 4 Alterations for commercial and residential buildings (see ordinance link for more info)	N/A	Divert 75% of the materials generated from deconstruction projects, by weight, from the landfill
<a href="#">Contra Costa County, CA</a>	Ordinance	Yes	Yes	Projects that increase the building area by $\geq$ 5k square feet or alterations that impact $\leq$ 5k square feet	N/A	At least 65% by weight of job site debris must be recycled, reused, or otherwise diverted from landfill disposal
<a href="#">Cook County, IL</a>	Ordinance	Yes	Yes	All buildings with load-bearing walls	N/A	The project must recycle or divert at least 70% of the material (by weight) and reuse whenever possible
<a href="#">Lake Oswego, OR</a>	Ordinance	No	Yes	Tax incentive for residential deconstruction projects that impact 50% of the structure	Deconstruction required for residential dwellings built in 1940 or earlier	Yes, for dwellings built before 1940
<a href="#">Milwaukee, WI</a>	Ordinance	No	Yes	N/A	Covers historic structures, structures in historic districts, and buildings built before 1929	Ordinance requires 85% diversion rate
<a href="#">Pittsburgh, PA</a>	Executive Order	City owned, condemned buildings	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Parameter	Type	Applies to Commercial Buildings	Applies to Residential Buildings	Building Size	Building Age/Project Cost	Requires Building Materials Reclamation & C&D Recycling
<a href="#">Portland, OR</a>	Ordinance (requiring full deconstruction)	N/A	Single family homes and duplexes	N/A	Built before 1940	N/A
<a href="#">San Antonio, TX</a>	Ordinance	N/A	All small-scale residential structures	N/A	Built on or before December 31, 1920 or built on or before December 31, 1945 and located within a historic district	Requires projects to be fully deconstructed
<a href="#">San Jose, CA</a>	Ordinance	Yes	Yes	All demolition projects and alteration projects of \$5,000 or more	N/A	At least 50% diversion is required for demolition and renovations, and 75% required for new projects
<a href="#">Seattle, WA</a>	Incentive Pilot	No	Yes	N/A	Additional criteria may apply	Incentive provides \$4,000 per permitted deconstruction project for residential buildings, see criteria

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. [A Local Government Policy Guide to Alternatives to Demolition through Deconstruction and Building Material Reuse](#): This guide is a fantastic resource for municipalities looking into creating ordinances that promote deconstruction. The guide was created by CROWD, which is a collaborative network of planners, architects, preservationists, policymakers, salvage and reuse professionals, real estate specialists, academics, and students from around New York State.
2. [Funding Opportunities for Deconstruction](#): This webpage, maintained by Build Reuse, leads to federal and regional funding opportunities that can support deconstruction and building materials reuse projects.
3. [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Considerations](#): Pages 5 and 6 of this guidance document created by the Center for EcoTechnology list opportunities to integrate and advance a municipality's DEI efforts when promoting deconstruction.

This document was developed and edited by the [Center for EcoTechnology](#) (CET). CET is a nonprofit that helps people and businesses save energy and reduce waste.

For assistance with building materials reuse and recycling, contact CET at **413-586-7350** or [cet@cetonline.org](mailto:cet@cetonline.org).



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