

Last Spring, Vallejo's Recycling Coordinator Derek Crutchfield gave me a challenge. Would it be possible to salvage, recycle or sell the fixtures in the closed My Café in downtown Vallejo?

This café was built in 1969 and operated many years as a Denny's Restaurant. It was now scheduled for demolition as part of the downtown master plan.

All the utilities were disconnected and the windows boarded over, so my first walk through was mysterious to say the least.

The last owner had removed almost all of the portable items: dishes, pots, pans, etc. What was left was the built-in counters and stools, booths, stainless steel prep areas, stoves and refrigerators. So, now what? I took a series of digital pictures and headed to the internet. With the current economy many newer restaurants are struggling or going out of business. I held my breath for the possibility of finding a home for used restaurant equipment.

What I found were several Bay Area salvage restaurant equipment companies who would only be interested in the scrap value and would charge to remove it.

ALCO Metal on Mare Island was ready to help out by delivering a dumpster for all the metal wastes and purchase or recycle the material at the going rate.

My next step was placing an ad on www.calmax.org and NapaMAX. Unfortunately, the local NapaMAX site is no longer in operation; CalMAX, however, came through. This free site helps businesses and individuals list odd items for reuse. I received a half a dozen hits from northern California and a couple from southern California.

Out the door went hanging lamps and light fixtures to be installed in the Gnostic Center in Berkeley. Two guys from a cooperative house in Oakland dismantled one of the round booths to install in their house.

Emails flew out to my "friend-cycle" network, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Vallejo-Benicia freecycle group. I spent several Saturdays helping people remove usable fixtures.

Stainless steel shelves went to a church in Vacaville.

Three huge booths, a wait station, and 20 counter stools will be reused in a brew pub café that is opening in downtown Vallejo. They were able to work with their architect to reconfigure their blueprints to accommodate these salvaged items.

A dozen etched glass panels found homes as shelves, garden accents and room dividers.

A local contractor removed sixteen huge windows that are destined for reuse as a greenhouse.

Touro University received a large ATM sign for Lander Hall. You can see it the next time you are on campus.

The total diversion for the two and a half month project was more than 15,000 pounds.

One thing I learned is that there are companies who will deconstruct buildings for reuse and recycling. This would be my first call in the future. Local companies include Urban Ore (www.urbanore.ypguides.net, Berkeley), and The Reuse People (www.thereusepeople.org, Oakland). These companies have warehouses that sell doors, window, lumber and more to the public.

Toni Renee Vierra (www.eco-Organize.com 707 258-8338) sums up her company's mission that guided me through my part of this project.

"When you deconstruct instead of demolish, you preserve valuable resources and might even be able to get a tax break for your efforts. Napa's eco-Organize provides D4 services to help you with eco-friendly site clearing and preparation projects.

"DECONSTRUCTION - We come to your site to assess best practices for environmentally-friendly demolition and debris disposal.

"DEMOLITION - We work directly with general contractors and demolition contractors to properly site-sort materials to ensure the highest level of landfill diversion possible.

"DIVERSION - We coordinate the removal and relocation of site debris with an emphasis on reusing, repurposing, and recycling.

"DOCUMENTATION - We prepare all required LEED and Build It Green documentation, including your Construction Waste Management Plan, and third party verification for building permitting purposes."

Don't forget we have a growing reuse and recycling yard at Devlin Road Transfer Station. Check it out the next time you go to Napa.

Over the past three years, I have helped the Chamber divert 3,400 pounds when they moved to their new office; 4,900 pounds from the old Muggs Cafe in the Ferry building, and 2,700 pounds from an attic at Mustico Realty. That is a total of thirteen tons and counting.

America Recycles Day

America Recycles Day will be celebrated at VALCORE Recycling from 10:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, November 14. Come by to learning about recycling and waste reduction. Highlights will include a garage sale and recycled crafts activities.

VALCORE Recycling Board Secretary Jane Bogner's "A Sorted Affair" is published every other week in the Times-Herald. For recycling information call VALCORE Recycling at 645-8258 or visit www.VALCORErecycling.org.

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