



# Deconstruction Works: A Study of Programs in Action

## Case Study #3: Youth Training Program

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### What is Deconstruction?

Deconstruction is the process of carefully dismantling a building in order to salvage components for reuse and recycling. This labor intensive, low-tech, and environmentally sound process has emerged as an alternative to traditional demolition methods. Demolition places high priority on removing structures as quickly and cheaply as possible, and in the process, minimizes employment and maximizes waste.

Deconstruction has many benefits, including: maximizing the recovery of materials, conserving finite old growth forest resources, and providing many employment and job training opportunities. By coupling deconstruction activities with traditional demolition methods, communities can create local economic activities around remanufacturing or reprocessing salvaged materials while diverting demolition debris bound for landfills and preserving resources through reuse.

## Youth Employment Partnership Deconstruction Program

### Project Goals

The Youth Employment Partnership, Inc. (YEP) operates many employment and development programs for low-income in-school and out-of-school youth. One of these is the Deconstruction Program which trains high-risk youth, ages 18 to 29, in the construction trades by dismantling buildings at the Harbor Transportation Center, located at the Port of Oakland. The program targets high school drop-outs, single mothers, and welfare recipients. It provides participants with 32 weeks of paid training which includes hands-on deconstruction and construction skills (including lead abatement), leadership development activities, academic instruction based on individual needs, and an opportunity to earn a general equivalency degree.

YEP's Deconstruction Program participants develop discipline, teamwork, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills in a non-threatening environment. Mistakes made deconstructing buildings are less costly than those made in construction, manufacturing, or other less forgiving occupations. The YEP Deconstruction Program offers an informal environment in which to improve skills and build confidence, preparing the participants for work in the private sector. It is an innovative and extremely appropriate training activity for those with significant barriers to employment. Beyond practical job skills, participants also learn the value of recycling and reusing materials.

Much of the lumber that was salvaged through the Deconstruction Program was painted with lead based paint. Since this posed a safety risk to trainees and because certification in lead abatement is useful for anyone entering the construction field, the \$10,000 Materials for the Future Foundation (MFF)/US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Deconstruction Grant were used to train approximately 40 young adults in lead abatement. These participants are now California State certified in lead abatement.

The YEP Deconstruction Project also received funding from the following sources: Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board, \$130,000; the Oakland Private Industry Council, \$120,000; and Citibank, \$10,000.

Most importantly, over 95% of the waste from deconstructed buildings has been diverted from landfills. Additionally, YEP has helped the field



