

PORTLAND

THE ART OF UNBUILDING

Stewardship and self-reliance in the Pacific Northwest.



THE TREE THAT BUILT THE CITY

An Urban Forest

Portland, Oregon's architectural history began with the towering Douglas fir. In 2016, the city took a pioneering step, becoming the first in the nation to guide the careful deconstruction of historic homes built before 1940.

Structures as Resource Reserves

This approach looks beyond simple preservation. It recognizes that historic buildings are standing reserves of rare, tight-grained timber. By choosing to deconstruct, Portland honors the inherent value of these materials.



A COLLABORATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Dismantling with Care

Portland's success relies on a community-wide network. Instead of traditional demolition, skilled crews take structures apart piece by piece. This deliberate pace keeps thousands of tons of useful building material intact.

Supporting the Local Circle

Through partnerships with innovators and nonprofit salvage hubs, this dismantling feeds a creative micro-economy and supports local livelihoods while lightening the city's environmental footprint.



LOCKING IN CARBON

The Art of Upcycling

In the Pacific Northwest, salvaged lumber is treated as an opportunity for renewal. Dedicated artisans and community organizations, like the ReBuilding Center and Sankofa Lumber, transform weathered wood into furniture and new structural components.

A Climate Victory

The environmental benefit is simple: as long as this dense wood remains whole, the carbon captured by those original trees stays locked within the fiber for generations. Through dedicated craftsmanship, history remains an active part of a modern, green economy.





THE PORTLAND METHOD

A Blueprint for Growth

Portland offers a meaningful example of how a community can evolve without losing its past.

Framing the Future

Even as the landscape changes, yesterday's materials are systematically woven into new structures—reclaiming old joists and beams to frame new, energy-efficient homes.



THE POLICY OF PARTNERSHIP

The Collective Effort

Portland demonstrates how a community can inspire participation by treating homeowners and builders as partners in stewardship rather than obstacles to progress. By allowing salvaged materials to be donated to local hubs for a charitable tax deduction, the city turns a demolition liability into a community asset, supported entirely by a trusted network of certified deconstruction experts. When the true environmental costs of traditional demolition are accounted for, the alternative naturally becomes the competitive choice. Ultimately, Portland proves that when a city aligns its values with supportive pathways, resource recovery ceases to feel like a mandate and becomes an act of shared civic pride.