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DECONSTRUCTION TAKES HOLD OF LOCAL BUILDERS

MAMMOTH LAKES, CA – The tearing and cracking seared through our bones as the huge jaws tore into the side of the small cabin. The little structure didn't stand a chance. It shuddered, rose off its foundation, then crashed back down as the steel monster loosened its grip. Some of us had to turn away. It was too painful to witness such a crushing end to a building that had served the town so well over so many years. Then, just as it couldn't get any more torturous, the huge mouth suddenly stopped attacking the cabin and delicately picked up a long metal pipe, swung around on its axis, then dropped it into a jumble of metal pieces destined for recycling. Somehow, this was consoling. Many of the cabin's pieces were going to live another useful life. We could even call it a "donor cabin."

Most everyone in town is very familiar with how new buildings go up, but not many people think about how old ones come down or what happens to all the materials they're made from once they're torn apart. Such considerations are becoming increasingly valid, however, as landfills pile up and tipping fees skyrocket, all the while resources continue to dwindle.

Over the years, the Town of Mammoth Lakes has certainly seen its share of new-building construction. Driven by the large number of local residents connected to the construction trade or real estate market, and the many people who would like to live here, local build-out has even been compared to mushrooms sprouting after a good soak. However, most private land has now been developed, leading to the second wave of the local construction industry: Old buildings and parts of old buildings are coming down to make way for new or remodeled ones. And with no end in sight to this current trend, an opportunity has presented itself within the construction industry – *deconstruction*.

Following the age-old adage "find a niche and fill it," one forward-thinking local, Kurt Stolzenburg, recently founded a new business named Eastside Renewal for the purpose of deconstructing – or taking apart – old buildings and salvaging used materials. "I've been collecting and reusing building materials for many years and have always had a hard time accepting the rampant waste within the construction industry. As a carpenter, I can't help but feel partially responsible. This is my way of giving back," he explained.

Driven by an opportunity to deconstruct the Pondersosa and the Engelhof, two Intrawest-owned building complexes formerly used as employee housing for Mammoth Mountain Ski Area, Stolzenburg joined forces with The Reuse People, a statewide non-profit in the business of deconstruction, demolition and

resale of used materials. This partnership enabled him to draw upon TRP's experience and resources, crucial to the success of such a large-scale project never before attempted locally. He also connected with the Inyo Mono Advocates for Community Action (IMACA), a local non-profit organization, to provide them with a sustainable source of building materials for weatherproofing low-income housing.

Stolzenburg initially began the job last fall by stripping many reusable items from the buildings, including old multi-paned windows, doors, kitchen fixtures, bath fittings and wooden paneling. Then, once asbestos removal was complete, he was able to get underway in earnest, announcing the project with a banner proclaiming "Deconstruction in Progress" prominently hung on the side of the Engelhof along Canyon Boulevard. The TEREX crane arrived and the stripping of large timbers began. Over 50 25-foot-long wooden beams came out of the Ponderosa alone, perfect for remilling and reuse.

While deconstructing a building is more expensive and takes more time than traditional demolition, the procedure results in many reusable construction materials at a fraction of their original cost. Tax incentives are also available to building owners who donate deconstructed and salvaged supplies to non-profit reuse organizations, such as TRP or IMACA. Additional savings are also realized by the decrease in landfill costs. Stolzenburg stressed this initial deconstruction project would never have been possible without the committed support of Intrawest, who agreed to provide the test case despite the higher costs and longer timeline. "They did it because they wanted to support and participate in a new process and make available as many materials as possible for salvage and reuse," he explained.

After salvaging all the materials that could be easily reused, TRP's contractors arrived to take down the remaining structures through traditional demolition processes, with one major exception: As the machines swung away and tore into the buildings, the huge prehistoric-like jaws carefully sifted through the rubble to remove recyclable materials. All metal pieces were separated out and all cement was broken up for crushing on-site as the base for the new construction.

Now that the deconstruction and demolition of the Ponderosa and the Engelhof is complete and both building complexes are gone, the test has been ruled a success and Intrawest has contracted Stolzenburg to take down the Stormriders building. Looking back on the project, John Sedgwick, Construction Director for Intrawest California Holdings, noted, "I think it all came out great. We were able to recycle a lot of the materials instead of putting them into landfill, which is better for everyone. I only wish Eastside Renewal existed when we tore down the buildings for the construction of the Village and Canyon Boulevard."

For more information, contact Eastside Renewal at (760) 920-0420.