

'Green' Demolition Is Latest Trend in Environmentalism

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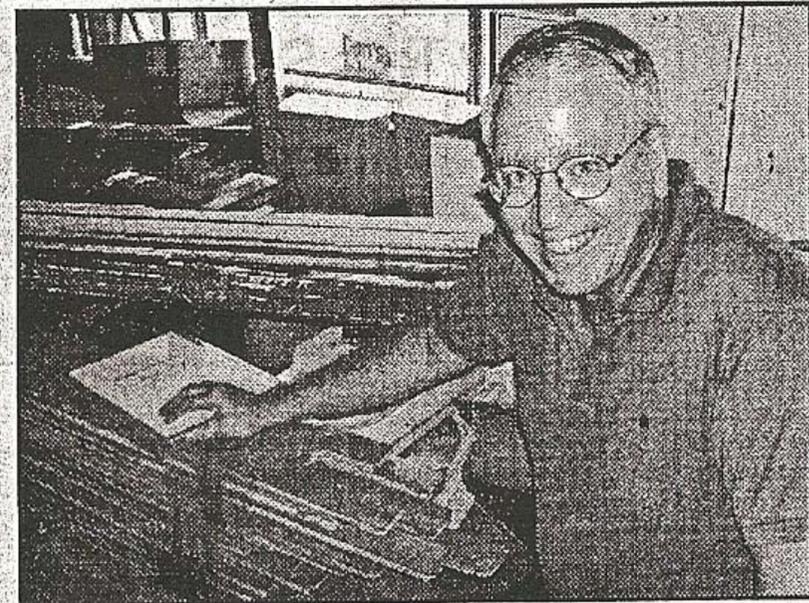
While Arlington builders have made strides toward crafting more environmentally sound, or "green" buildings, very little progress has been made in finding ways to tear down old buildings in a way that doesn't simply scrap all the materials.

Until now.

Deconstruction Services, a two-month-old company whose mission is to demolish buildings in a "green" or sustainable manner, tore down its first Arlington residence last Friday. A home that Deconstruction Services tears down may become the foundation for several homes, as all usable pieces of the house are donated to Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that builds homes for low-income residents.

"It's a shame to see all these materials wasted, and thrown into a landfill," said Deconstruction Services president Paul Hughes. "Think of all the energy that went into shaping aluminum ducts, or cutting wood beams - you're saving a lot of that energy."

The pioneers for the deconstruction programs are Matt and



Paul Hughes is president of Deconstruction Services, which donates material from homes it demolishes to Habitat for Humanity.

PHOTO BY RYAN SELF

Martha Braunstein, a young couple who have joined the trend of buying older, rambler-style homes in North Arlington, tearing them down, and building a much more grand home.

"Arlington has a lot of these smaller ramblers - it's efficient to buy the property, knock them down and build up again," Matt Braunstein said. "We want to raise our two kids here, and send them to school here."

Reusing the materials from a home instead of just razing it and tossing everything into a landfill has more benefits than just a feeling of environmental sensitivity

and helping the less fortunate. Deconstructing the home in this fashion means a tax deduction of up to 50 percent of the retail costs of the parts they use, and County Board member Paul Ferguson said that the county plans to offer further incentives to developers and homeowners who follow the policy.

"People will get tax credit for it, and for developers this is definitely something the board would view as a positive," Ferguson said. "This fits our green home policy, and I hope it will become standard practice."

"We hope it's the future of Arlington," agreed Joan Kelsch, an environmental planner with the county. "This is the 'full circle' approach."

Deconstructing does come with a few drawbacks. While it might take three days to demolish a home, it takes a little over a week to save the materials.

"I was concerned about how it would impact my building sched-

ule, but I just applied for demolition permits, so the timing should work out," Matt Braunstein said. To minimize the extra time needed, Deconstruction Services

demolishes almost the entire home, saving only the foundation, roof and load-bearing walls until the demolition permits come through.