



# UNBURIED TREASURE

Green Luxury—the highly satisfying outcome of a salvage operation that rescues fine materials from the house-wrecker's ball

**Above:** A recycled kitchen by Form, Ltd., in its new home in Cos Cob, Connecticut. Looks like new, doesn't it?



Have you ever wondered, when you see a fine old house being torn down, what will happen to its contents—the still-useful (and often valuable) appliances and building materials destined to be hauled away in the wrecker's Dumpster?

I asked myself that question five years ago as I witnessed the demolition of the 10,000-square-foot Greenwich mansion (once a Rockefeller estate) that had belonged to Farah Pahlavi, the last empress of Iran.

Unfortunately, in the past, beautiful, high-end products—from kitchen appliances to architectural elements—were simply tossed onto the scrap pile. But no longer! These days, homeowners can save them from smash-up, see them hauled away (at no charge), and, after they've been refurbished and resold, get IRS-satisfying paperwork that will allow the resold item to be listed as a charitable tax deduction. I call this recycling process "Green Luxury."

In response to watching the regrettable smashing of the former empress's home, I founded Green Demolitions, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to save worthwhile artifacts from the wrecker's ball. So, if you're in Fairfield County, Connecticut, or Westchester County, New



**Above:** High-quality Rutt kitchen cabinets being reclaimed—at Kitchen Design Studios in New Canaan, Connecticut—by Green Demolitions.



York, and you believe that your slated-for-destruction house contains items worth preserving, call us. We'll send out a qualified inspector to do an evaluation. (He/she frequently finds more items worth salvaging than their owners thought they had.)

If you've got the right stuff, we'll do a restoration removal (carefully prizing out embedded items) and haul away the material, at no charge to you. Then we'll refurbish them and put them up for sale at a Green Demolitions store (they're located in Bethel, New York, and Honesdale, Pennsylvania; a new store is scheduled to open in the spring of this year in Black Rock, Connecticut). The proceeds benefit a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that supports the All Addicts Anonymous outreach program for the prevention of, and successful recovery from, addiction. Therefore, when your

item is sold we can send you paperwork that will support your deducting the sale price as a charitable contribution on your tax return.

What sorts of items are we looking for? Solid-wood counters with granite tops; luxury appliances (like recent appliances by Sub-Zero, Wolf, and Viking); high-quality bathroom fixtures; marble or granite vanities and whirlpool baths; architectural elements; rugs; antiques; lighting; quality wood flooring (like chestnut and heart pine); fireplaces; front and interior doors; and recent, high-end heating or air conditioning systems.

Many well-respected, high-end building professionals (including Hobbs, Incorporated; The Kaali-Nagy Group; R. S. Granoff Architects; Kitchens by Deane; and Taconic Builders) now urge their clients to recycle their luxury materials. Partnering with Green

Demolitions, Reclamation Lumber in New Haven had a field day with the restoration removal of the contents of a 1915 Tudor mansion in Greenwich. Owner Rob Fecke assembled a team of architects who purchased complete door sets, heart pine and quarter-sawn oak flooring, lighting fixtures, and windows. "The uniqueness of the old-growth lumber increased its resale value," he told me. "Chestnut, heart pine, and old-growth cypress are only available through reclamation."

The customer who gives an item salvaged by Green Demolitions a second home is nicely rewarded: These previously owned (but restored) items sell at our stores for 50 percent to 75 percent less than they'd fetch if they were bought new. Some items are sold even before they go to the stores—customers can preview them on the reclamation site. For instance, Gretchen and Marty Lupinacci, of Cos Cob, were looking for the perfect kitchen—exquisite cabinets, natural-tone granite, and stainless appliances. They found a gorgeous, two-year-old recycled custom kitchen originally designed by Form, Ltd., at a reclamation site in Rye. Adding their choice of granite, a Sub-Zero, and a few design flourishes completed the project. "We got a \$100,000 kitchen for \$50,000," Marty told me. Gretchen added, "Who would ever know it was recycled?"

And so the preservation circle continues. The original homeowner gets his unwanted stuff hauled away free, and gets a tax credit when it's resold. The consumer buys the saved materials at a big discount. And the environment is protected, since recycling not only reduces landfill and energy costs but, in some cases, spares the cutting-down of trees. In the Green Luxury game, everyone's a winner. **TME**

Steve Feldman is president of Green Demolitions, the donation program for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Green Demolitions recycles and resells items from houses about to be demolished, renovated, or remodeled.  
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