

Northern Colorado BUSINESS REPORT

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Hybrid teardown shows retail demolition can be green

By Allen Ginsborg

Redevelopments and rehabilitations often require partial or complete demolition of functionally obsolete buildings to make way for new tenants. NewMark Merrill's Mountain States division faced an opportunity to apply one of its core principles of doing well by doing right when it needed to demolish 25-year-old Nate's restaurant building at its Fort Collins Marketplace center at College Avenue and Horsetooth Road to make way for a new Chick-fil-A restaurant.

Fort Collins is a leader in green construction initiatives. NewMark Merrill's willingness to be the city's first commercial deconstruction project was enthusiastically embraced by the community. Deconstruction is an evolving technique that reclaims building components to be reused or recycled during demolition. Deconstruction reduces carbon emissions, recycles the majority of a building's components and materials and reduces the amount of material sent to landfills.

For all its virtues, deconstruction is not a well-established method for commercial structures. So, NewMark Merrill approached the project with trepidation. Would it be cost effective? Would it delay the commencement of rent when compared to a traditional demo? Would the extra effort really make a difference to the community and environment?

In researching green alternatives, NewMark explored everything from a full deconstruction to a traditional demolition. Initial bids from a local and relatively unproven deconstruction specialist came in at \$7.88 per square foot compared to standard demolition at \$3.44 per square foot.

Deconstruction seemed economically infeasible until NewMark Merrill's local Property Manager Luke McFetridge found Brinkman Partners, who wanted to try a deconstruction project. McFetridge also discovered that ReSource, a local nonprofit recycler, wanted the reusable materials such as stainless steel fixtures, vent hoods, windows, lighting and much more. By making the donation to ReSource, NewMark Merrill obtained a significant tax credit, which brought the final deconstruction cost down to \$3.92 per square foot.

Holding a tight schedule was equally as important as the price, because delays would cost significant rental income. McFetridge was able to take advantage of the few days leading up to the building demolition to have the building stripped of its reusable materials for ReSource. As a result, NewMark's hybrid deconstruction process was completed in just nine days.

Other advantages

What about helping the environment? Through reuse and recycling, NewMark Merrill and Brinkman were able to divert 54 percent of the building materials from the landfill. It would have been 78 percent, but Brinkman discovered a vapor barrier beneath the concrete slab, which prevented processing of the concrete into new road base material.

NewMark Merrill also discovered an additional way to help the community. The Fort Collins Fire Authority asked to use the building for a training exercise. Thankfully, they didn't want to set it on fire, but to train firefighters on the correct techniques for extinguishing a restaurant blaze, which required punching holes in the roof and walls.

"Cutting ventilation openings into roofs without active fire is a dangerous technique used to help

draw high heat and fire gases away from occupants inside the building," explained Fort Collins Battalion Chief Jim Pietrangelo. "When crews operate under real conditions, there is little time to perform this risky tactic. Our firefighters have to be on top of their game to complete this objective before the roof collapses from fire. This training will help us perform better during the real thing."

Deconstruction is a responsible, cost-effective technique that shopping center redevelopers can embrace to help the environment and local community while improving their shopping center. The Nate's deconstruction cost a bit more and took four days longer than a traditional demolition. However, the additional cost and time were more than worth it to recycle more than half of the former restaurant and provide a valuable training exercise for local firefighters.

We learned a lot and really made a difference to the community and for the environment. We'll deconstruct again in a heartbeat and be even better at it next time around.

Allen Ginsborg is Mountain States Principal for NewMark Merrill, based in Fort Collins.