

# 2025

Day 1

12:15 PM

Oct 22

KEYNOTE 2

## Full Circular: From Blue Collar to Green

**Moderator:** MaryEllen Etienne



NATIONAL  
**ZERO**  
WASTE  
CONFERENCE

**Speaker:** Deconstruction Dave Bennink





# Reuse Innovation Center

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**NYC Circular Construction Network**  
National Zero Waste Conference  
October 22, 2025

*'Full Circular – From Blue Collar to Green'*  
*Dave Bennink*

# Keynote

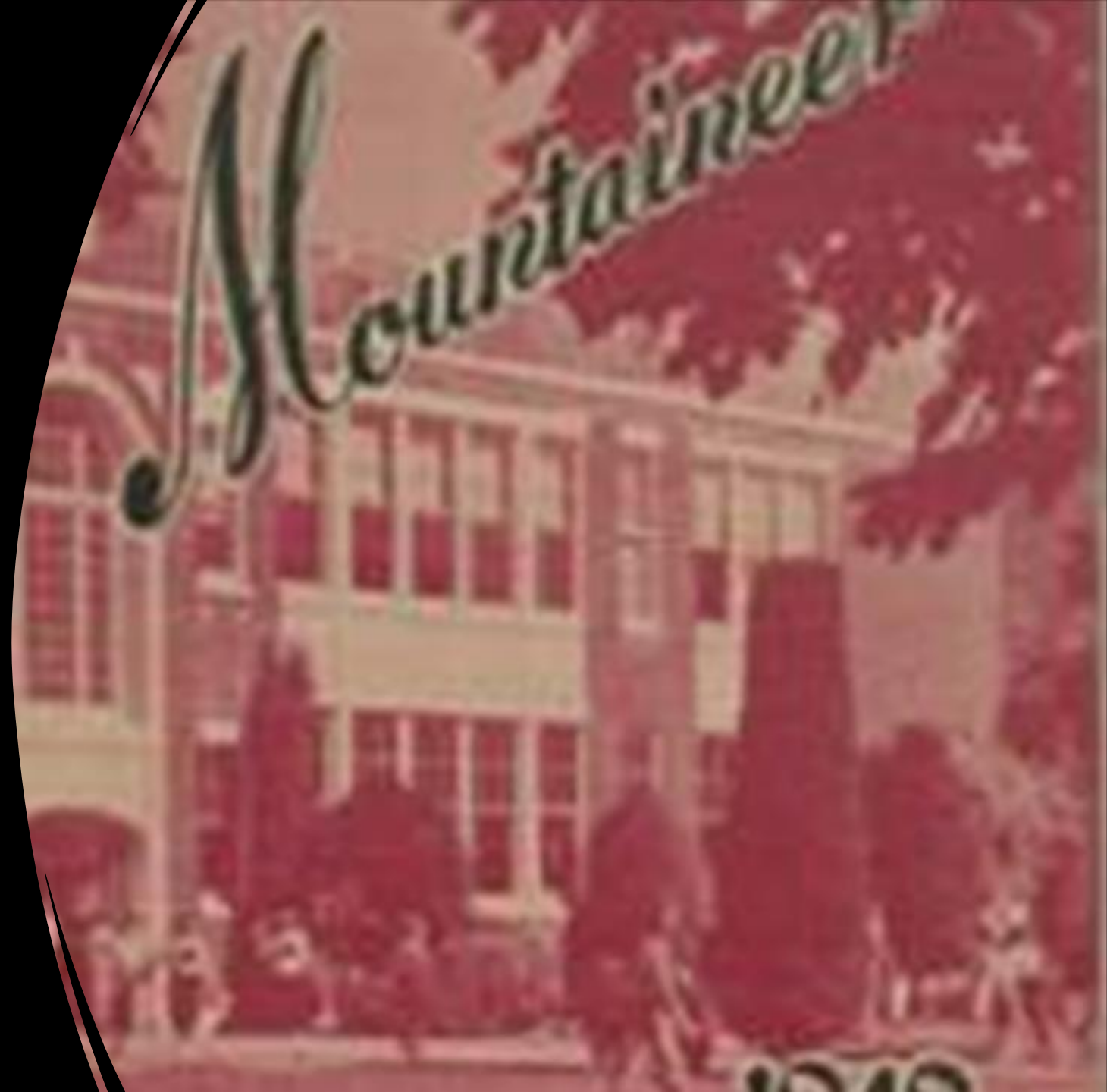
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# The Path to this Moment

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- Grew up in rural America with hard working farmers and loggers
- Represent all of us, all at once...
- Here to spread – hope that people from different backgrounds and parts of the Country can understand what is happening and work together to be the solution



# Moving Forward

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- 1 foot in a blue-collar past
- 1 foot in the fight for climate action & 1 in historic preservation
- 1 hand in the past, saving what I can
- 1 hand reaching to the future with solutions that should be mainstream by now



# A LIFETIME'S WORTH OF WASTE

BUILDING DECONSTRUCTION INSTITUTE  
[www.reuseconsulting.com](http://www.reuseconsulting.com)



The EPA states that Americans produce an average of 4.90 pounds of waste a day

This adds up to about

**136,000** pounds of waste in 76 years, or one average lifetime



The average American home is 2,400 square feet and weighs about 56 pounds per square foot

This adds up to about **135,000** pounds per home



**DEMOLITION OF ONE AMERICAN HOME IS EQUIVALENT TO A LIFETIME'S WORTH OF WASTE**

Consider Building Deconstruction and ReUse to support an impactful circular and sustainable system



A large, light-colored wooden beam is being hoisted by a crane. The beam is suspended by a metal hook and cables. In the background, a modern multi-story building with large windows and balconies is visible, along with several tall evergreen trees under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The scene is set outdoors during the day.

***We take  
buildings apart,  
and then we sell  
the parts***

Environmental benefits

- reduced carbon footprint
- 11 to 20 times less energy required
- demand before supply
- architect wish-lists of salvaged materials to specify



## ***We build buildings and other products***

We are going 'Beyond Reuse' Rebuilding, Designing for Disassembly, Reassembly, Reinstallation, Industrial Symbiosis, more..

Economic benefits

- workforce development
- business incubator
- up to 20x more green-collar jobs required
- affordable options

***We're creating a  
reuse***

***network for NYC***

- Circular directory via strategic partnership with iWasteNot
- Wish-list for our partners
- Materials exchange
- Implementation audits

A photograph of the New York City skyline, including the Freedom Tower, viewed from a waterfront perspective. The sky is clear blue, and the water is dark blue. A black metal railing is visible in the foreground.

## NYC CIRCULAR CONSTRUCTION NETWORK

**Current status:**

**16 structures - Total combined budget of \$3 billion  
Total at risk of disposal: 100 million pounds**

***On a planet covered  
in water ...***

- We invented particle board
- We build homes where the fire department can't use water to put out a fire without totaling the whole home...(90 second fire)
- Today's buildings are designed in such a way that they are destined to be demolished. 'Designed for Demolition'



# *Why can't we seem to achieve zero?*

- Today problems are traffic, grocery prices, a Facebook post
- Tomorrow problems are climate change, racism, deforestation..
- When we fill our lives with today problems, there is nothing left to focus on tomorrow





# NY Climate Exchange – SOM Architects

*There is nothing  
circular about a  
semi-circle*

- Supply
- Demand
- Balance
- Circular construction

# The Reuse Innovation Center - NYC

“We are not here to **ADD** to the circular economy, we are here to **MULTIPLY** it!”

- 15+ circular businesses
- Compete vs. Complete

# NYC Reuse Innovation Center



# Reuse Innovation Center - NYC

## Process:

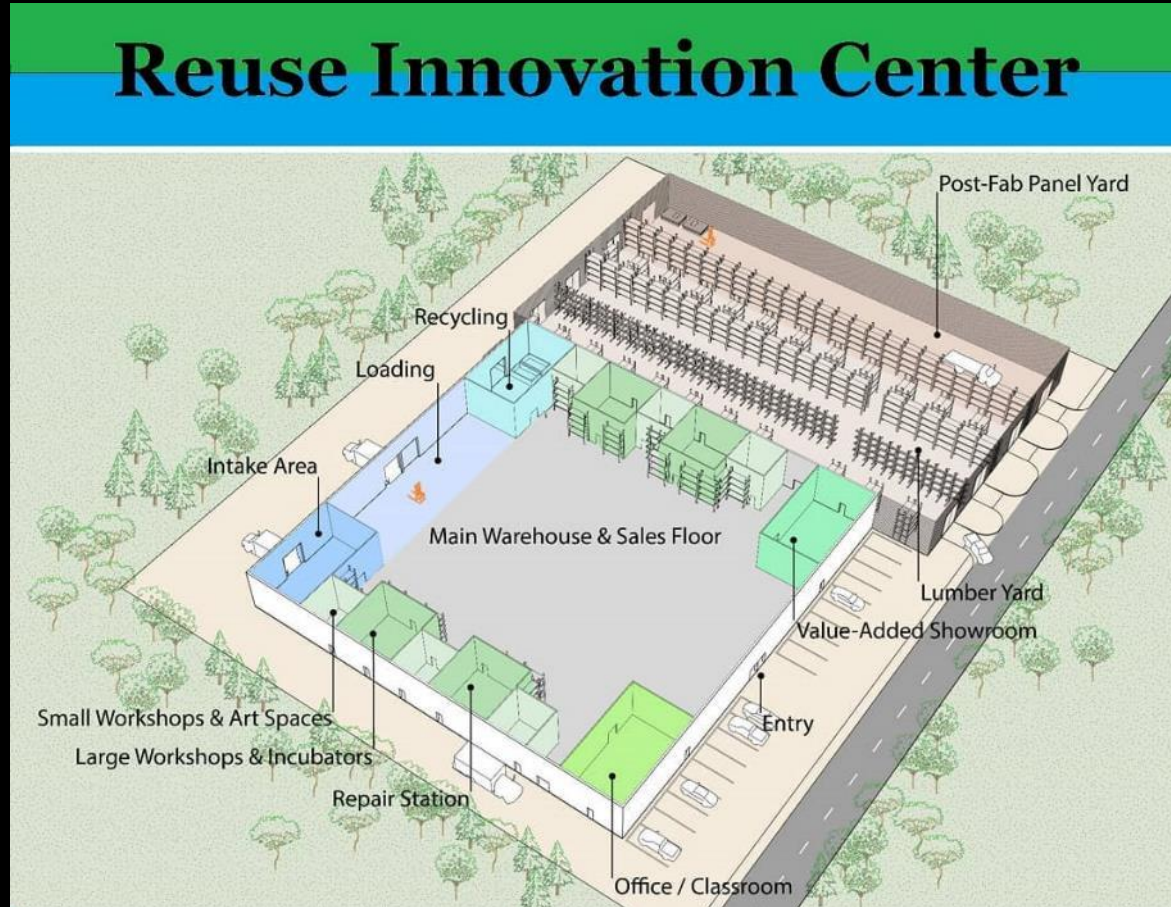
Collect Materials

Transport to RIC

Remanufactured

Placed in  
Showroom

Trainees involved  
in every step



Business incubator

Job training – 8  
jobs  
in 1

90% landfill  
diversion

Diversity achieved

Affordable  
materials

# *Affordability is the gateway to sustainability*

...

## **Triple bottom line benefits**

- Inclusive – we involve EVERYONE
- Affordable – provide access to low-cost and environmentally friendly materials
- Resilient – we're reclaiming materials and preserving our history
- Job creator – provides jobs & training
- *All those benefits, all at once!*



# ***Finding Purpose in Tragedy***



- Americans don't like tragedy. Our movies must have a happy ending ...
- However, there's purpose in tragedy, pain and sacrifice
- It takes something tragic or a terrible time or situation to move us to change
- Mt Baker High School example
- Is this a terrible time for you? What will you do with it?
- Without purpose, a tragedy is just a tragedy ...



*Thank You*

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Questions?



# Reuse Innovation Center

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**NYC Circular Construction Network**

'Decon Dave' Bennink

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