Material reuse: What is it?
It involves removing usable materials — everything from office furniture, lighting and flooring to countertops, equipment and artwork — from spaces undergoing renovation and reusing them in projects that incorporate reclaimed materials.

How are reclaimed materials used in projects?
For Burns & McDonnell, a close-to-home example is its new 310,000-square-foot building recently completed on its Kansas City world headquarters campus. Constructed on the site of a former synagogue, the office building repurposed marble panels, which once lined the synagogue’s walls, as countertops in executive conference rooms.

“Reclaimed materials tell a story,” says Clint Blew, associate architect at Burns & McDonnell. “In our disposable society, I think everyone appreciates it when we can capture a piece of another project’s history by respectfully using its materials to tell our own story.”

What’s driving the surge in interest?
“It’s a cost-efficient way to do the right thing,” says Brian Alferman, a project manager at Burns & McDonnell. Old building materials make up nearly 40 percent of all landfill waste, he says. Diverting these materials from landfills not only reduces waste — and landfill fees — but also helps owners meet their sustainability goals. Additionally, it helps the recipients outfit their facilities at a fraction of the cost they might otherwise pay.

What held companies back before?
“No one wants to throw perfectly good things away,” Alferman explains. “But their project teams have so many other things to worry about. Even if they are interested in reuse, they don’t know where they would go with these materials, so it hasn’t been a high priority.”
What role does a material reuse specialist play?
Material reuse specialists see things differently than a project team’s other members. “We look at a project through a different lens,” Alferman says. “We see value in things that no one else is even looking at. Often we’ll find a diamond in the rough. And we know how to put the wheels in motion to find it a new home without adversely affecting the schedule.”

How does adding material reuse to a project affect the design and construction schedule?
The impact is minimal. “We don’t need much lead time,” Alferman says. “Even with as little as two or three weeks’ notice before demolition begins, we can usually get our job done without impacting the other work being performed.”

Are the salvaged materials resold?
Resale takes longer, and the value is usually limited. That’s why reclaimed materials are almost always donated. But Alferman notes that there is still an economic upside.

“You save money on disposal costs,” he says. “If the item is donated to a charitable organization, you might be eligible for a tax deduction as well. Our goal is to make material reuse a cost-neutral solution, with the cost to administer the program offset by the savings associated with avoiding a landfill fee.”

**HOW MATERIAL REUSE WORKS**

**STEP 1**
**MATERIAL ASSESSMENT**
We visit a renovation site to identify and document potential reusable materials.

**STEP 2**
**OUTLET IDENTIFICATION**
By tapping into our national network of secondary market outlets, we find a new home for the materials.

**STEP 3**
**REMOVAL COORDINATION**
Working with the design and construction teams, we facilitate the process of deconstructing, removing reusable materials and distributing to outlets.

**STEP 4**
**RESULT DOCUMENTATION**
After validating material quantities and weight, we prepare a reuse summary for the owner, including applicable tax deduction and LEED documentation.

**Take a Seat: Theater Chain Puts Reuse Into Action**

When the leaders at AMC Theatres launched a nationwide renovation of its multiplexes in 2015, they were focused on one thing: how quickly they could finish the work and start filling the theater with luxurious new leather recliners. The fate of the tens of thousands of perfectly good theater seats they were replacing was the last thing on their minds. That is, until AMC was introduced to a way that saved them from a landfill.

Read the full story at burnsmcd.com/SecondChance