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Discovery Channel films farmstead deconstruction

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Beneath an azure blue sky, students from Polaris School for Expeditionary Learning on Tuesday dismantled a turn-of-the-century home while the Discovery Channel's cameras rolled.

Deconstruction of the old farmstead along North Overland Trail is part of a city project to turn 158 acres of newly acquired land into a natural area that will connect with Reservoir Ridge.

The deconstruction project, designed to recycle and reuse the wood and materials in the old two-story building, is being done by the National Center for Craftsmanship in partnership with the Center for Resource Conservation's resource program and the city of Fort Collins.

The entire process is being documented by the Discovery Channel's Planet Green "Renovation Nation," hosted by Steve Thomas. The show spans the country covering "green" building and eco-friendly projects.

Neil Kaufman, director of the NCC, said the Discovery Channel sent out a request for information on projects, such as the Overland Trail effort.

On Tuesday, wearing a yellow hard hat, beanie and headphones, Planet Green director Christo Garcia directed his crew into place and conducted an interview with John Stokes, director of the natural resources department with the city of Fort Collins.

"What we are doing here in Fort Collins is a reclamation project. This is old growth, original wood from the Old West," said Garcia, who noted Americans are not good at recycling. "You can't get wood this good nowadays."

Motioning toward the old wooden home built some time around the turn of the century, Garcia said the show will tell a great story about the history of American craftsmanship and how the old wood will be reused for a new home.

Stokes said the city acquired the property to add to its natural area, and the old buildings came with it. Not having any use for the structures, the city decided to remove them.

Rather than just demolish them and haul the material to a landfill, Stokes said the city wanted to reuse it.

"Anything that can be reused will be reused out of here or recycled," said Stokes, who is excited to see the city get some national attention for its efforts.

The property at 1425 N. Overland Trail will serve as a public access point with a parking lot and trails when the project is complete.

Spenser Villwock, deputy director of the Center For ReSource Conservation, watched as the students dismantled the wood, which his company will sell for 50 cents on the dollar.

While 30 percent of landfills are filled with waste from demolished homes, Villwock said 90 percent to 95 percent of the materials coming out of the Overland project will be reused in some manner.

"Whenever you get into a deconstruction job, you start peeling away this time machine," Villwock said.

On Tuesday afternoon, the film crew followed the wood to the ReSource Yard, 1501 N. College Ave., where Villwock helped unload it.

About 10 students from Polaris attacked the building, tearing the wood free and removing square nails from the lumber.

Student Samantha Bonner, 15, removed nails while trying to dodge the cameras, not wanting to be on TV.

Bonner, who is getting class credit for on-the-job learning, said she thought the project was a good way to help save the planet while reducing waste in already overcrowded landfills.