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EXCLUSIVE REPORTS

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Stapleton recycler takes on California project

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An Arvada recycling company that just wrapped up demolition of the runways at Stapleton -- preparing 6.5 million tons of concrete for a second life -- is taking its expertise to Orange County, Calif.

There, it will dismantle and recycle more than 3 million tons of concrete at a closed military air base.

[Recycled Materials Co. Inc.](#) (RMCI) completed demolition of Stapleton's runways at the end of July, a project that began in 1999. The material is stored on-site in what the company calls an "urban quarry." The recycled concrete has been used at the massive redevelopment and at other projects, and all of it should be in new uses by 2009.

The 4,700-acre former airport in northeast Denver is being redeveloped over 20 years and eventually will include 12,000 homes and apartments, retailers, restaurants, office space and an extensive park system.

RMCI is 30 years old. While it wasn't paid for the demolition per se, it keeps and sells the recycled materials to make a profit, including selling it back to Forest City Stapleton, the project's master developer.

The recycled hardscapes have been used extensively at Stapleton as stabilization for roads, base for new concrete and a foundation rock called Staple Stone, among other uses. The city buys recycled material for other locations, and private clients seeking recycled concrete for their projects buy it as well, said Rick Givan, president of RMCI.

The agreement helps Forest City because there are no transportation costs, meaning the materials cost the same or less than new, quarried rock, Givan said.

It's also better for the environment.

"We call it 'sustainability through reuse,'" he said. "It didn't have to be quarried, transported or mined, and it didn't get thrown in a landfill."

Its runway demolition work helped RMCI make the short list for the redevelopment of the El Toro Marine Air Base in Irvine, Calif. But it was the company's varied recycling experience that helped it edge out other contenders to win the contract, said Glen Worthington, manager of planning and environmental services for the Great Park Corp., a nonprofit created by the city of Irvine to manage the redevelopment.

"There were other folks we talked to who could demolish and remove in a very efficient manner, but their forté was doing the demolition and crushing the rock," Worthington said. "RMC really brought an insight into re-using the materials."

The 4,700-acre base is being turned into a 1,000-acre municipal park and housing. Lennar Corp. is master developer for the residential redevelopment. RMCI plans to demolish and recycle at the base for at least eight

years.

Worthington said he expects all of El Toro's 3.5 million tons to be re-used in many ways at the project, including for decorative drainage areas and as crushed, colored rock for park trails.

The agreement is similar to that at Stapleton, meaning RMCI will demolish the concrete for "free" and then sell the recycled materials back to the developer. This not only saves on transportation costs, but helps maintain quality of life in the neighborhood because trucks aren't hauling rock in or out of the project.

Demolition is to start by year-end.

RMCI offers other recycling services, including for highway projects. There, it can use machinery to break up the road in place and then put the crushed material back down as one layer of the new road.

According to Givan, the company did this work on the T-REX project and many others in the western United States.

RMCI also has four commercial drop-off sites in the metro area where construction companies and others can pay a fee and dispose of their concrete and asphalt waste. RMCI cleans up and recycles this material, and sells it back to the market.

The concrete re-use at Stapleton -- a large and visible project -- has helped the building community accept and appreciate recycled concrete as a viable option, Givan said. And that's helped the 100-person company grow and expand into new markets, such as California.

"For us, California is an extremely vigorous recycling market," Givan said. "They understand and like what we do. They have recyclers there, but we represent a little more state-of-the-art experience ... It's an excellent market for what we do, and I think we'll end up with a strong California operation."

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