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Notes from editor (not for publication):

Some tweaks — minor, I hope and intend. Some of their language seemed a little too promotional and repetitious, so I intended to trim it back just a bit without losing any of the underlying points. If you think I went nuts, let's talk.

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

A building materials store reclaims its vision

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####BEGIN SUBHED####

With the return of ReNew Salvage, a nonprofit and a for-profit newly join forces in a Brattleboro storefront

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TEXT BODY:

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ReNew Salvage is back.

A new incarnation of the used and surplus building material resource will host a grand opening on Saturday, July 11, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at its new storefront at 234 Elliot St. The official ribbon cutting is at 10 a.m., followed by brief remarks.

10 In this endeavor, two entities — Deconstruction Works
11 (DW) and Reclaimed Materials Resource Management (RMRM)
12 — are jointly operating ReNew Building Materials & Salvage, a
13 business that was launched in 2004, rocketed to a major
14 expansion in 2009, but was defunct by 2013.

15 DW's Erich Kruger and Marcus Jones of RMRM have
16 come together to bring new life not only to quality old materials,
17 but also to the site.

18 The storefront had been vacant for several years since
19 Falvey Pool closed the retail space and moved to Vernon.

20 Jones bought the building in January, renovated it
21 throughout the winter, and opened to the public on May 16.

22 “We’re kind of breaking commercial life into that
23 neighborhood,” Kruger says of the microbusiness district that’s
24 also home to Millie’s Antiques, The Root Social Justice Center,
25 and Whetstone Studio for the Arts. “So it’s kind of a two-for-one.”

26 Working across Vermont, New Hampshire, and western
27 Massachusetts, DW carefully recovers doors, windows, lumber,
28 fixtures, and hardware that a wrecking crew would otherwise
29 send straight to the dumpster.

30 Many projects reach a 75% reuse-and-recycle rate, with
31 materials coming back as what they were originally built to be, as
32 promotional material for the company puts it: “A door stays a
33 door. A beam stays a beam. DW has proven that deconstruction
34 is not just possible — it works.”

35 Reclaimed Materials Resource Management supports
36 deconstructing buildings rather than demolishing them, so that
37 valuable building materials can be given a second life instead of
38 filling landfills.

39 Kruger and Jones say they “think in generations.”

40 “We believe everyone should have access to habitable
41 shelter, and that starts with access to quality, affordable building
42 materials,” they say.

Kruger and Jones extend the mission into the larger context of contributing to a world with clean air, clean water, nutritious food, habitable shelter, and plentiful energy. “It sounds too big to be feasible; however, if we start now, the groundwork will be laid for future generations to grow,” they add.

A history of renewal

Since its inception in 2005, ReNew was a story of resilience amid recession, as the nonprofit that deconstructed buildings and resold salvaged material thrived even as major corporations struggled.

Founded by Kruger, the organization salvaged items like doors, sinks, and lumber, keeping hundreds of tons of material out of landfills annually. It employed a mix of workers, including formerly homeless individuals, and had grown enough to need a larger warehouse.

With a \$1 million USDA grant already in hand, it was raising additional funds for a 10,000-square-foot expansion. However, just a year later, Kruger’s position as executive director was eliminated by the ReNew board of directors, reportedly due to financial pressures.

The board cited an operating deficit from 2008 IRS filings and described a “financial crisis” driven by higher costs and falling revenue. The decision drew strong pushback from supporters, with the board acknowledging Kruger’s contributions while defending the need to streamline operations.

In 2012, ReNew launched an emergency fundraising campaign, needing at least \$40,000 quickly to stay open, but by 2013 the company had closed its doors. The recession had reduced both contractor donations and homeowner remodeling, shrinking ReNew’s supply and sales. Rising overhead costs compounded the problem.

The aftermath of the Brooks House fire and Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 had also delayed fundraising efforts.

77 The story traces a mission-driven nonprofit moving from
78 rapid expansion to leadership turnover to a fight for survival,
79 shaped largely by the broader recession's impact on construction
80 and donations.

81 "ReNew let me go in 2010, and then it stumbled along
82 for a couple more years before becoming insolvent and closing,"
83 says Kruger, who went on to work with FingerLakes ReUse in
84 Ithaca, New York, for a couple of years.

85 He returned to Brattleboro around the time his second
86 child was born and started Deconstruction Works as a member-
87 owned worker cooperative.

88 Of the four founding members, he and Tom Shea remain.
89 Shea runs a crew in the northern part of the state, while Kruger
90 runs one based in Brattleboro.

91 "Because this business is for-profit, we've partnered with
92 Marcus Jones and RMRM to facilitate charitable donations for
93 customers who can take advantage of that," says Kruger.

94 Since around 2014, Deconstruction Works has been
95 selling materials online, with transactions completed from the
96 back of Kruger's truck, via seasonal tag sales, and directly from
97 jobsites.

98 When the lease on his storage area, formerly part of the
99 Stop & Go complex on Putney Road, came into question, Kruger
100 decided it was time to open a bricks-and-mortar retail space.

101 "This allows more folks access to view and shop the
102 deconstructed building materials, tools, and so much more, and
103 also makes it easier for people to make donations," he says.

104 Current shop hours are Monday through Thursday, 4:30
105 to 6 p.m.; Friday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; and by appointment.

106 Kruger is in the field doing construction Monday through
107 Thursday, so he and Jones split the store hours on Fridays. As
108 Kruger puts it, "weekends are for family."

109 Jones, Kruger says, played a big part in the renovation
110 and efficiency project of revamping the storefront, although he is
111 busy with other work as well.

112 “Marcus and RMRM are still doing great things in the
113 southwestern corner of the state, keeping building materials out
114 of the landfill and advocating for greener building methods, as
115 well as providing logistical support to our deconstruction
116 projects,” Kruger says.

117 He describes the storefront, inventory, and website as
118 “works in progress.”

119 “As you can imagine, many of the fixtures in the new
120 store are repurposed, as well as all the inventory,” he says. “We
121 are excited to be part of our downtown neighborhood, bringing
122 together community, affordability, and environmental action.”

123 **Separate parts of a whole**

124 Jones co-founded Reclaimed Materials Resource
125 Management in 2022, he says, “after meeting Kruger and
126 learning about the world of reclaimed material.”

127 Recognized by the IRS as a tax-deductible, tax-exempt
128 nonprofit, the organization is “focused on keeping usable
129 building materials out of the landfill and getting them back into
130 the community at a fraction of retail.”

131 “Erich and I are not the same operation,” Jones explains.
132 “Deconstruction Works takes buildings apart. RMRM helps run
133 the store and is the charitable organization receiving donations.
134 We are two separate organizations focused on a shared goal. I
135 think of it like a rising tide lifts all boats — without the effort of
136 both organizations, ReNew wouldn’t exist today.”

137 Jones says the trust earned by the original ReNew in the
138 community is why the two decided to revive the name.

139 “We’d rather honor that history than start over under a
140 new banner,” he says.

141 “The community lost its salvage storefront and never got
142 it back,” Jones continues. “Materials that Deconstruction Works
143 recovered from job sites had nowhere to land, so they’d sell off
144 the back of a truck at a fraction of their worth just to move them.”

145 He says that the storefront “fixes that.”

146 "Materials come back to ReNew, get stored and
147 displayed properly, and sell at 50 to 70% below retail while still
148 funding the work," Jones says.

149 Jones says the pair decided to try this again "because the
150 need never went away."

151 "Vermont sends an enormous amount of construction
152 and demolition material to the landfill every year, most of it
153 perfectly reusable," he says. "At the same time, plenty of people
154 in this community can't afford new materials to update their
155 homes."

156 A salvage store solves both problems at once, Jones says:
157 "It keeps good material in use, and it makes shelter more
158 affordable."

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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159 For more information, visit renewalsalvage.net or call 802-
160 246-2400.

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

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