

**ARCHITECTURAL FIRM BANKS ON CEILING RECYCLING TO KEEP OFFICE RENOVATION PROJECT "OUT OF THE DUMPS"**

*Reclamation of Nearly 25 Tons of Old Acoustical Ceiling Panels  
Highlights Remodeling of Facility for Florida Financial Institution*

In most office renovation projects, the old suspended ceiling panels are removed, thrown into a dumpster, and taken to a landfill for disposal.

The recent renovation of an office facility in Winter Park, Florida, however, was different, thanks to the recommendation of the project's architectural firm. Instead of dumping nearly 25 tons of old acoustical ceiling panels into a landfill, the panels were recycled and eventually turned into new ceiling panels.

The recommendation to recycle rather than to dump was made by Robert Reid Wedding Architects. Based in Tampa, the firm does a great deal of design work for SouthTrust Corporation, a Birmingham, Alabama-based holding company that operates more than 600 banking offices in eight Southern states.

As part of a recent project for the bank, the firm was asked to convert a vacant, 50,000-square-foot office building into a new SouthTrust operations center.

According to Naula Haskins, Director of Interior Design for Robert Reid Wedding, the existing ceiling, which consisted of 2'x 4' lay-in acoustical panels, needed to be replaced for two reasons. "First, it was the original ceiling, meaning it was at least twenty years old. And second, we were going from a combination open and closed plan office space to a completely open plan."

In a renovation project of this type, contractors would normally send the old ceiling panels to a landfill after removing them. In this case, however, Haskins recommended recycling the panels as part of a ceiling recycling program recently introduced by Armstrong World Industries, the country's largest manufacturer of acoustical ceilings.

The program, which is the first of its kind, enables commercial building owners to ship old ceilings from renovation projects to an Armstrong ceiling plant as an alternative to landfill disposal. As part of the program, Armstrong even pays freight costs for shipping the old ceilings, which it uses as raw materials in the manufacture of new, high-performance acoustical ceilings.

**Participation in Program Is Hassle-Free**

When the project's general contractor, Kelsey Construction, Inc., of Orlando, learned of the program, it signed on immediately. Michelle Forte, the Kelsey project manager that oversaw the SouthTrust job, says the program not only appealed to her company's sensitivity to environmental issues, but to participate in it was hassle-free.

Only three steps were involved. First, Forte needed to verify with Armstrong that the building's old ceiling panels could be recycled. Neither the old nor the new replacement ceilings had to be Armstrong products to qualify for the program.

Next, after removing the old ceiling tiles, the demolition contractor had to stack the tiles on pallets and wrap them for pick-up. And finally, once there was a full trailer load of old ceilings, Forte simply had to notify Armstrong to arrange for a truck to pick up the material and transfer it to the nearest Armstrong manufacturing facility. The ceiling tiles from the SouthTrust project were shipped to the Armstrong plant in Pensacola, Florida.

The process for recycling old ceilings proved to be nearly as fast as dumping them, so the program had little adverse impact on demolition schedules. It was also less expensive than the cost of local handling, transport, dumpster and landfill fees.



# case study

## **New Ceiling Has High Recycled Content**

When it came to replacing the old ceiling, Haskins notes that she recommended a combination of Armstrong's Optima and Ultima panels, both of which are designed for open plan offices. In addition, the Ultima panels reinforce the client's environmental sensitivity since they contain 79% recycled content, mainly in the form of old ceiling tiles, old newsprint, and a by-product of steel production called "mineral wool."

Both Optima and Ultima ceiling panels are also high light reflectance ceilings, meaning they reflect 89% percent of the light that strikes them, significantly reducing the amount of energy required to light a space. Most acoustical ceilings only reflect about 75% of the light that strikes them.

Looking back at the project, Haskins is quite pleased. "This was the first time we took advantage of the ceiling recycling program," she says. "We think it's great to recycle products instead of sending them to a landfill. And in this case, it was especially so because we're getting another use out of the old ceilings. We'll definitely recommend this program again to our clients. In fact, we hope we have more projects like this one."

Another person pleased with the ceiling recycling program is Suzanne Boroff, utilities services specialist with the Orange County Recycling Task Force. Upon learning of the SouthTrust renovation project, which is located in Orange County, she noted that, "This type of recycling is a good idea, especially since Armstrong is taking the old tiles and turning them into new ones. Anything we can do to save landfill space is always a plus."

To obtain additional information on the Armstrong Ceiling Recycling Program, call 1-877-ARMSTRONG (1-877-276-7876) or visit [armstrong.com/recycling](http://armstrong.com/recycling) on the Internet for complete product information.