



# **Historic Preservation and the Deconstruction Movement: Looking to the Past for a More Sustainable Future**

Solid Waste Administrators Association Winter Training  
March 6, 2024



Rethos is a 40-year-old historic preservation non-profit. We work with people in Minnesota and beyond to reuse and celebrate their communities' most-loved places. We make buildings better.

**This is the New Preservation.**



# About Rethos

- **Community Programs:**

- Education
- Minnesota Main Streets
- Heritage Tourism

- **Real Estate:**

- Historic Rehab Loans
- Preservation Easements

- **Rethos Policy Institute:**

- Advocacy at the State Capitol
- Sustainability Collaborations





# Save



# the Shave



Winter 2012

## Preservation & Loss

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**Protect  
Buildings**

**What is Historic Preservation  
trying to Accomplish?**

**Tell  
Histories**

**Protect  
Enviro**





**Protect Buildings**

**What is Historic Preservation trying to Accomplish?**

**Tell Histories**

**Protect Enviro**



# Building A Voice for Preservation as Reuse in Minnesota

## Early Work and Outreach:

- *Places Reimagined* magazine
  - April 2008 issue: Sustainability Themed
  - April 2009 issue: Salvage Themed
- AIA-MN Convention, 2009
  - Sponsored *Old is the New Green* symposium



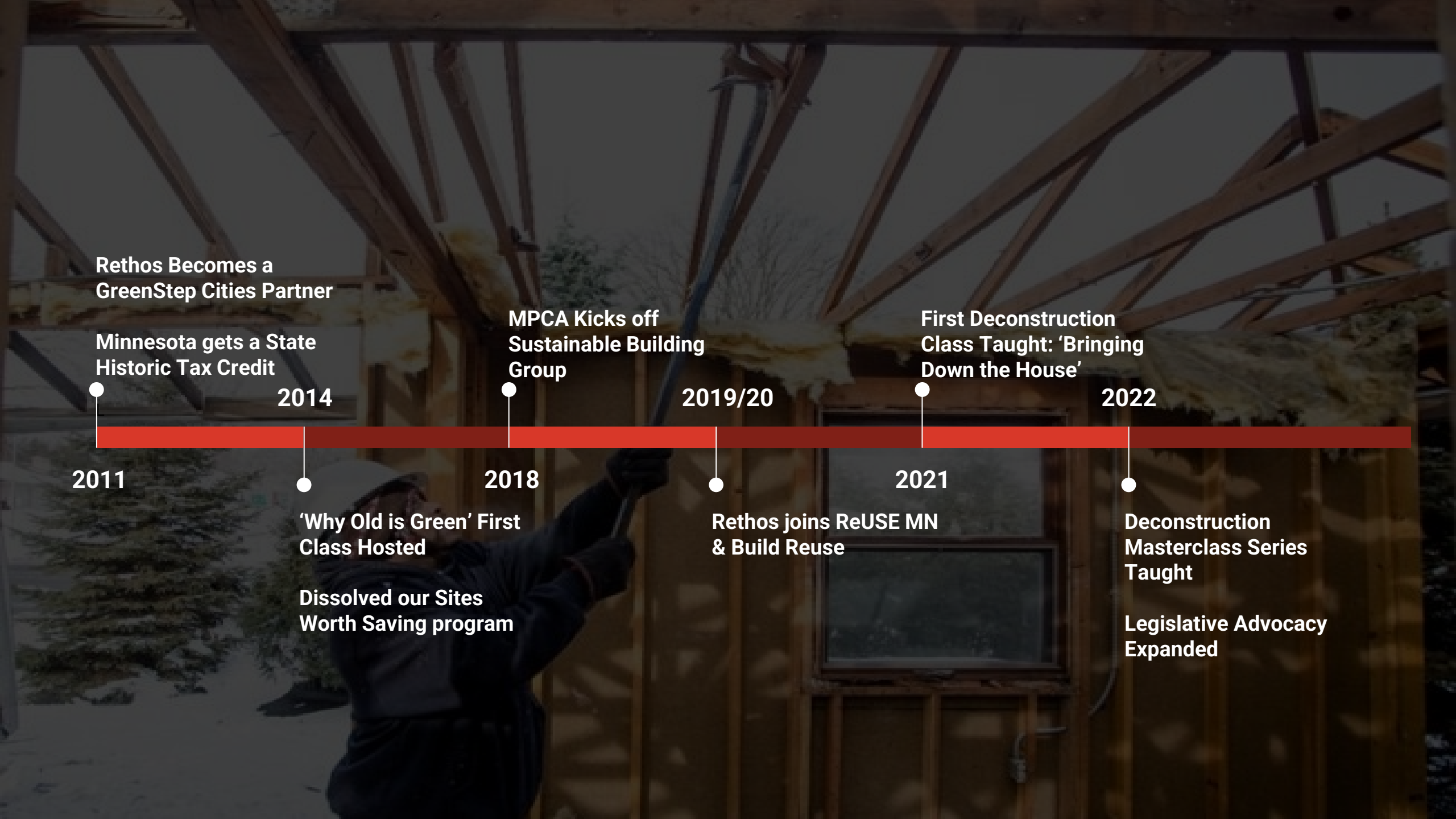
## Major Turning Point:

- Annual Most Endangered List & Sites Worth Saving
  - 2014: Dissolved due to loss of buildings

## Increased Work in Sustainability & Reuse:

- 2015: Facilitated the move of a small house for rehabilitation
- 2021: Bringing Down the House class focused on deconstruction. CE credit for realtors
- 2022:
  - 3-Course Deconstruction Masterclass
    - Funded in part by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- 2023
  - Deconstruction professional joins Board of Directors
  - Hire Coordinator with experience in deconstruction







# Rethos Education Program

- Established in 2013
- Originally Twin Cities-based, now supports Greater Minnesota, including St. Cloud and Winona
- 800+ students annually
- DIY "Rehab Labs" promote adaptive reuse and building preservation
  - Realtor Continuing Education
    - Old Home Certified
- GreenCorps Deconstruction Term

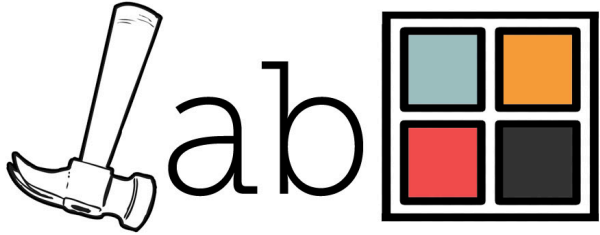




# Programming Growth and Sustainability

- Operational Review
- Financial Viability
- Strategic Planning
- Equity and Impact

# Rehab



# A Future of Deconstruction

## Saving the Greenest Building:

- Reaching Rural Audiences
  - GreenStep Cities Grant
- Promoting Adaptive Reuse
  - Eco Experience, Reuse MN
- Telling Building and Material Stories
  - Re:Purpose Savannah

## Contractor/Building Official Education:

- Continuing Education Classes
- Tax Credit/ Local Ordinance Education

## Deconstruction Certification:

- Statewide Contractor Education
  - MPCA Funding and Partnership
  - Build Reuse National Non-profit



# Deconstruct the Norm

# Equity Through Preservation Education

- Thoughtful preservation supports **community resiliency**
- Preservation policy and programming has **positive economic impact** on rural places, career seekers, and generational wealth development
- Intentional review of the difference between “good” places and “important” places can **center the stories of marginalized people**
- The reduction of demolition and new construction keeps neighborhoods **safe to inhabit**





All places have something to offer to the world.

All communities deserve to have their story respected.

All people deserve to impact the story of their home.

# Redefining the Preservation Narrative

## Preservation Policy Changes that Can Reduce Demolition

- **Local Historic Districts** as safe zones for smaller, older, more affordable homes
  - Policy Challenge: Top Down or Grassroots designation process
- **State Historic Tax Credit** legislation for Commercial and Residential
  - Reduce the basis to enable more projects
- Incentivize the redirection of development to vacant parcels
  - **Vacancy Tax** on parcels that are left empty for more than specified period
  - **Tax breaks** for developers who build on existing vacant parcels
- **Thoughtful rent stabilization** that does not incentivize demolition
- **Demolition Review** to help stem demolition



# Rethos is not Alone

A large number of historic preservation organizations are working to avoid demolition, including the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Preservation Partners Network.

Rethos is part of a growing field of preservation organizations across the country who see historic preservation as an important piece of the demolition problem.

Until the historic preservation field can expand public understanding of our field, we will continue to be thought of as an obstacle to reuse, deconstruction, and fighting climate change.





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To learn more about our programs, please visit [www.rethos.org](http://www.rethos.org)

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