

By Chris Cullander, Berkeley FireSafe Council, 2026

Non-combustible fencing options -

Hardiboard is a name used for fiber cement siding manufactured by James Hardie Building Products. Looks like wood, could be used for fencing - Kazoo Sherman likes it, but I would check with the BFD. Trex Fencing is sometimes promoted, but it seems flame retardant, not non-combustible. Lumber yards are unlikely to carry either product.

True non-combustible fencing materials would include steel, aluminum, concrete, stone, and masonry. Purchased new, they are all expensive, but as you implied, salvage could be one way to go. Urban Ore is now kind of pricey, and is recovering from an extended strike, so stock of some stuff is low. Last time I was there, they had fencing & gate material all over the yard, in some cases stacked with screen doors, trellises and the like, and the workers didn't seem to know where the various stashes were.

That said, here are some local sources for salvage other than Urban Ore:

RE:Source – a directory for salvage materials in East Bay – see <https://resource.stopwaste.org/>
The Oakland store includes fencing.

Example - Direct link for Construction & Demolition Debris:

https://resource.stopwaste.org/search?item=13180&distance%5Bpostal_code%5D=94704&distance%5Bsearch_distance%5D=5000&distance%5Bsearch_units%5D=mile

Check out other categories such as Ferrous Scrap Metal/Steel, Rock/Gravel – Clean, Scrap Metal, etc.

Also see Habitat for Humanity ReStore East Bay <https://restore.habitatcsv.org/>

Salvage fences:

Once when I was in Belgium, I saw a lot of chain-link fences that had strips of plastic or metal woven through them to make lace-like patterns or Mondrian-style blocks of color. In one case, the maker used recycled Venetian blind strips.

DIY Chain Link Fence Decorations

<https://www.pacificfence.com/shop/chain-link-fence/slats/arrowlock-privacy-slats/>

What To Do With A Chain Link Fence

<http://www.astoriedstyle.com/what-to-do-with-a-chain-link-fence/>

20 Ways to Repurpose Bicycles into Fences

<https://www.pacificfence.com/blog/fun-stuff/20-ways-repurpose-bicycles-fences/>

There are also fences made using

Box springs,

<https://permies.com/t/32693/Free-fence-wire-concrete-reinforcement>

metal electrical conduit (could notch them to make panpipes & drive your neighbors crazy when the wind blows),

<https://makerpipe.com/blogs/diy-modular-pipe/the-ultimate-conduit-gardening-guide>

recycled non-ferrous metal,

<https://finecraftguild.com/diy-fence/>

and glass bottles,

<https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo/glass-bottle-fence.html?sortBy=relevant>

as well as gates made of old pots and pans, metal tools, etc.

<https://mx.pinterest.com/jodilynturner/fence-and-gate-ideas/>

There are also fences made from tin cans, car parts, and stuff like store mannequins, but these somehow didn't seem useful.

At one point I worked in a print shop, and shingled a plywood dome with used aluminum offset printing plates – see <https://www.offsetprinting.info/2020/07/what-are-offset-printing-plates.html> - which were usually sold to a scrap metal dealer. If one didn't want to see the text & images, then just use the blank plates. Might be useful for an outbuilding.

Finally, there's a lot of building going on now in Oakland, and it may be possible to search the City's permit database for projects involving demolition. The point of doing so is that the workers or the foreman are often willing to let you have something that they would have to pay to have hauled away or tossed into a dumpster. Sometimes they'll let you have it free, other times they'll want \$20 or so.