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Wooden Buildings Are Making A Comeback

One of the most recognized inventions of the 13th century forever changed construction processes and building opportunities. The introduction of steel brought with it a new form of mastering architectural structures that had not yet been achieved in the same way with marble and wood. Now, as climate change weighs heavily on our minds and cities are looking to continue to build innovative structures, steel is being set aside and wood is being welcomed back into the fold.

WHY WOOD, NOW?

Wood has been a common building material for years and was one of the earliest materials to be used. As buildings grew in size and scale, however, wood became primarily a finishing product and concrete and steel were relied upon for increased structure and stability. Necessity is the mother of invention, and what is needed on an international scale is a greater focus on climate change and reducing carbon footprints. With a problem comes a solution and the solution that has proven to be a viable one moving forward is cross-laminated timber.

Cross-laminated timber, or CLT, is comprised of wooden building materials combined with an adhesive. Not only is it stronger than traditional lumber, but it is durable, more environmentally friendly than alternative building materials, and is fire resistant. In addition, CLT absorbs carbon for the lifespan of the building itself. Utilizing CLT and reducing cement and steel production also helps to reduce overall emissions, allowing this alternative to be a wise investment for not only future developments but for our planet as well.

CANADIAN PRESENCE

Architects and development companies across Europe have been experimenting with large-scale wooden buildings composed of CLT, and have witnessed success in reintroducing wood as a staple building material. Canada is now adopting this trend both on the west coast and in Toronto.

British Columbia is home to the Brock Commons Tallwood House, which was considered as the tallest mass timber structure in the world when it opened in 2017. Since then, a taller mass timber project was completed in Norway, but that isn't stopping Canadians architects and development companies from being among the first to make their mark.

The University of Toronto will soon be home to a mass timber building of their own, affectionately named the Academic Wood Tower. At 14 storeys and 80 metres in height, it will be the largest mass timber development in North America. Unlike other projects that utilize a minimal amount of steel for framing purposes, the Academic Wood Tower will feature a wood frame and will incorporate concrete where needed to accommodate its scale.

With provinces revising their building codes, and CLT growing in popularity, mass timber developments will begin to contribute to skylines across the country. How do you see this building trend progressing? We are keeping a close eye on it, as this wave of innovation takes hold.

ABOUT PLATFORM

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