

Promotion of Wood Products

CASE STUDY

In September 2015, USDA, in partnership with the Softwood Lumber Board and the Binational Softwood Lumber Council, announced the winners of the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition. The two winning development teams were granted a combined \$3 million in funding to support the development of tall wood demonstration projects in New York and Portland, Oregon.

“The U.S. wood products industry is vitally important as it employs more than 547,000 people in manufacturing and forestry, with another 2.4 million jobs supported by U.S. private-forest owners,” said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. “By embracing the benefits of wood as a sustainable building material, these demonstration projects have the ability to help change the face of our communities, mitigate climate change, and support jobs in rural America.”

Next-generation lumber and mass timber products are flexible, strong, and fire resistant, and can be used as a safe and sustainable alternative to concrete, masonry, and steel. Using wood helps to reduce GHG emissions by storing carbon and simultaneously offsetting emissions from conventional building materials. Wood can also help struggling rural forest communities. During the Recession, the drop in new construction and decline in home remodeling had a deep impact on wood manufacturing. However, if next-generation wood products can penetrate just 5- to 15-percent of the non-residential North American market, it would mean roughly 0.8 to 2.4 billion board feet of lumber consumed annually. To put that in real-world context, roughly 35 jobs are created for each million board feet of wood processed.

The two winning proposals showcase the safe application, practicality, and sustainability of a minimum 80-foot structure that uses mass timber, composite wood technologies, and innovative building techniques. More information on the Competition can be found at: <http://www.tallwoodbuildingcompetition.org/>.



West coast winner of the U.S. Tall Wood Building Prize Competition: A 12-story building with retail, offices, and workforce housing. Photo courtesy of Lever Architecture.