

The New 5- and 6-Storey Wood Mid-Rise Building Opportunity

A NEW CONSTRUCTION OPTION

A proposal to modernize the Model National Building Code of Canada (NBCC) in 2015 to increase the height limit for wood construction is actively being considered. Recommendations to move from the currently allowable four storeys – up to five and six storeys – is the product of a rigorous, broad-based engineering and scientific review by expert committees of the Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes. These independent committees are made up of professionals from industry, the regulatory community and general interest groups, such as the fire services.

Adding Choice to the Mix

The new wood five- and six-storey mid-rise construction option provides builders with “code compliant” alternatives that fully meet the safety, health, and accessibility as well as fire and structural protection objectives of the NBCC.

Whether built with light wood framing materials or new engineered wood products, the added height and area of these buildings creates new opportunities for architects and developers to deliver projects that best fit their overall vision and design.

Wood Construction is Fast, Efficient and Often Costs Less

This new wood mid-rise construction option also allows for increased structural material competition in the marketplace, often resulting in lower overall material costs. Speed of construction is also often improved, since wood-based building can take place virtually year-round across the country. In addition to this, developers can take advantage of a large pool of tradespeople who are highly skilled, and well-versed in working with wood products.

When combined with the fact that wood can be locally sourced and is usually less expensive than alternatives, builders have reported cost reductions of up to 15%. Passed on to home buyers or renters, these savings can result in more affordable condos or rental units.

Unlocking Urban Potential

Land along urban corridors is generally underutilized and represents a significant opportunity for re-development. The new construction option can unlock that urban potential by allowing five- and six-storey mid-rise buildings on corridors in communities where, because of construction costs, they were not previously feasible.

Wood mid-rise construction on underutilized main streets means developers can encourage future residential growth in areas which are generally well-served by a variety of transit routes, and make even better use of existing infrastructure.

In addition to these benefits, mid-rise developments can help meet demand for diversity in housing by offering a variety of configurations and unit sizes. These are among the many reasons urban planners have been advocates of the idea of mid-rise residential and mixed-use buildings on urban corridors. They are seen as a fundamental component of creating denser, yet more livable, Canadian cities.

The Canadian Wood Council (CWC) is the national association representing manufacturers of Canadian wood products used in construction. CWC is a strong advocate for the use of Life Cycle Assessment and communication about environmental attributes through the use of Environmental Product Declarations. Visit us at www.cwc.ca.

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