

GREEN BUILDINGS

By Christian Hudson, Hudson Management “Why we went with wood”: a five-story hotel made of wood

We knew it would generate a lot of buzz when we decided in the middle of the Great Recession to build a new five story hotel in Rehoboth Beach on Coastal Highway. But we never anticipated how much of that buzz would be about our construction methods.

Our construction methods have been the subject of more than one local talk radio show, and there have been multiple queries to various state and county approval agencies. In general, people are demanding to know if it is even legal to build a multi-story hotel out of wood! As a result, we want to take the opportunity to explain...

First we want to clear the air about concerns and confusion over the legality of using wood. Yes – it is legal to use wood to build a multi-story commercial building. From large apartment buildings and condo complexes to single family homes, many large construction projects on Delmarva choose to go with wood as well. In Australia for instance, they are building seven story structures out of wooden wall panels. Builders are still required to follow all of the building codes, ordinances, and regulations - but it is legal to do.

When properly designed, the structure is also just as



strong and durable as other construction methods. For our hotel we hired a team including an architect, structural engineer, civil engineer, and a mechanical engineer to do the initial design work.

We then submitted our drawings for review by the various state and county review/approval agencies. All commercial jobs, especially hotels, receive extensive scrutiny for fire and life safety related issues. We received our approvals, including those from the State Fire Marshall and Sussex County Building Code Departments.

Sam Yoder & Sons, LLC out of Greenwood, Delaware provided wooden wall panels for the project. They design

and build the panels in their factory, and ship them to the construction job site as they are needed. This allows whole sections of walls, both interior and exterior, to be raised all at once. This saves considerable time as opposed to having individual carpenters installing those same walls one 2x6 at a time.

Additionally, the plans are more accurate, as the technology almost completely eliminates “field changes.” This makes for not only more consistency with regard to structural integrity, but also for budgeting purposes.

The panels are built under roof in a local factory, which is great for the local economy. This also means



they are not exposed to the weather so the wood doesn't warp when it gets wet, or allow mold spores to grow which can happen when using conventional wood framing. There's also less job site theft, as it's pretty tough to have a whole section of wall “walk” from a job site.

We also estimated that we saved approximately 15% in costs when compared to conventional “one stick at a time” wood construction, and far more versus concrete or steel construction. If we can build something just as safe and strong, but more cost effective, much quicker, and it puts people in our community to work; why wouldn't we go with wooden wall panels?

Still have questions? Let me know at info@hudmgt.com ■