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April 9, 2025

Testimony of Representative Sam Zager presenting
**LD 798, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue
to Fund Mass Timber Manufacturing**

Before the Joint Standing Committee Committee on Appropriations and Financial Affairs

Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine and other distinguished members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, thank you for today's hearing. I'm Sam Zager, representing House District 116, which is part of Portland and I am pleased to be here to present this bipartisan measure, **LD 798, An Act to Authorize a General Fund Bond Issue to Fund Mass Timber Manufacturing**.

What is mass timber? ^{1,2,3}



Arctic Studies Center
while under construction,
Bowdoin College



100 Rock Row, Westbrook [architectural rendering]
(WGME interviewed UMaine's Prof. Shaler about it.⁴)

¹https://www.archdaily.com/996319/the-meteoritic-rise-of-cross-laminated-timber-construction-50-projects-that-use-engineered-wood-architecture?ad_campaign=normal-tag

²<https://www.archdaily.com/906495/the-tallest-timber-tower-in-australia-opens-in-brisbane>

³<https://www.fs.usda.gov/inside-fs/delivering-mission/apply/worlds-tallest-timber-building-opens>

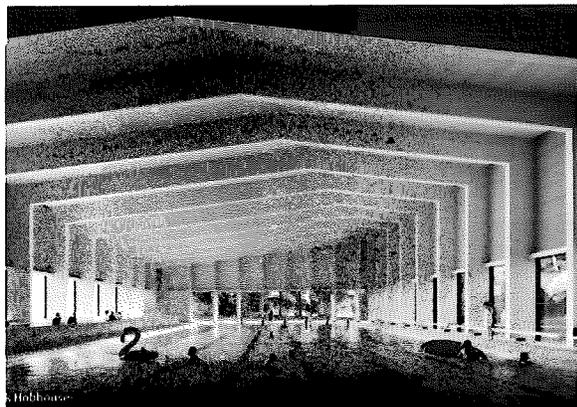
⁴<https://umaine.edu/news/blog/2021/09/09/wgme-speaks-with-shaler-about-building-with-cross-laminated-timber/>



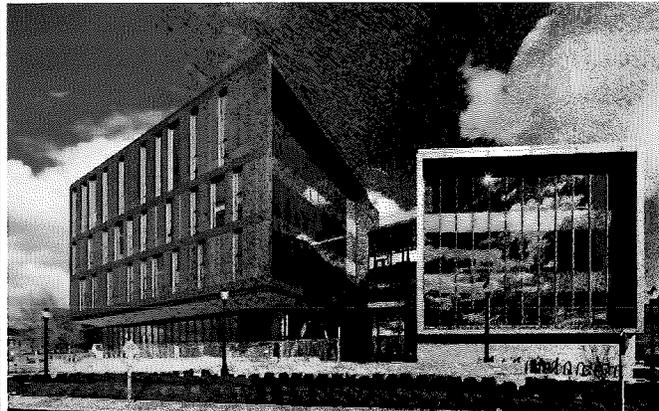
The world's tallest CLT building, 25-story Ascent MKE Building, Milwaukee, WI



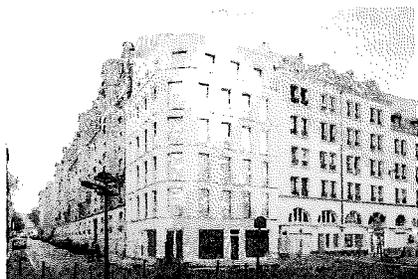
Brisbane, Australia



Freeman's Swimming Pool, Surrey, UK
mass timber withstands high-moisture environments.



UMass Amherst School of Design



Residential units, Paris, France



Cultural Center, Skelleftea, Sweden

District 116: Portland (part)



Student Center, University of Southern Maine, Portland

Again, what is mass timber?

- A wood composite building material. It is kiln-dried lumber usually oriented at right angles to one another and attached to form structural panels.
- Huge economic development opportunity for Maine. We have vast spruce and fir timber stock, loggers, truckers, core mill infrastructure and a transportation network. But we lack mass manufacturing capacity here in Maine.
- Environmentally friendly, because the conventional alternative, steel and concrete construction, has a huge carbon footprint. There is a vast market for lower carbon footprint buildings, which Maine can supply.
- Fire-safe⁵ and structurally sound. The largest mass timber building completed in 2022 in Milwaukee is 25 stories.
- Beautiful and very rapidly gaining favor for commercial, public and residential buildings.

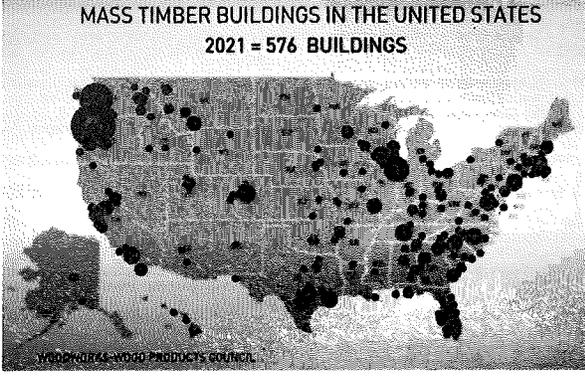
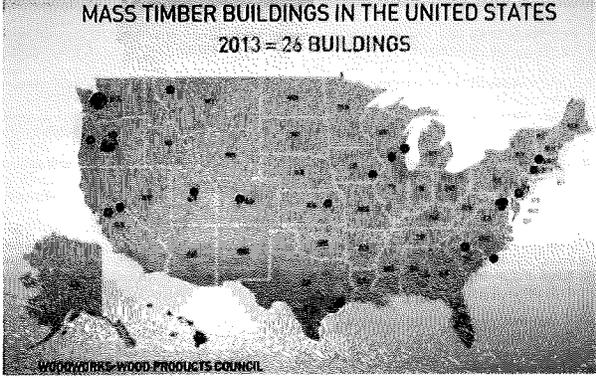
“...These benefits stem from mass timber's potential to grow wood's role in the construction industry and, in turn, potentially drive increased demand for timber.” Per the U.S. Congressional Research Service (Oct. 2023).⁶

The use of mass timber is quickly growing. It has grown exponentially in the past decade or so, as the maps and graphs from DECD indicate below.⁷

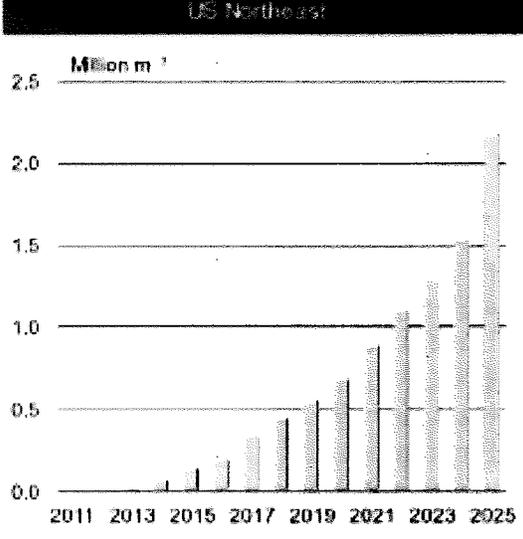
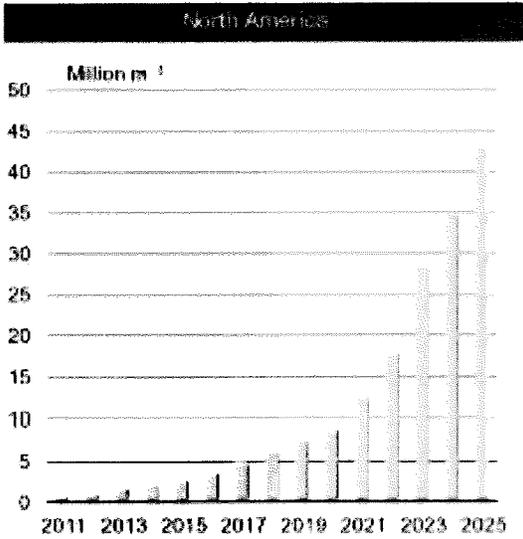
⁵ <https://www.naturallywood.com/products/cross-laminated-timber/>. During a fire-resistance test of a 5-ply mass timber panel wall, the panel was subjected to temperatures exceeding 980 degrees celsius. Structural capacity persisted for over three hours, exceeding building code requirements.

⁶ <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47752>

⁷ <https://www.maine.gov/decd/sites/maine.gov.decd/files/inline-files/Market%20Profile%20-%20-%20Cross%20Laminated%20Timber.pdf>

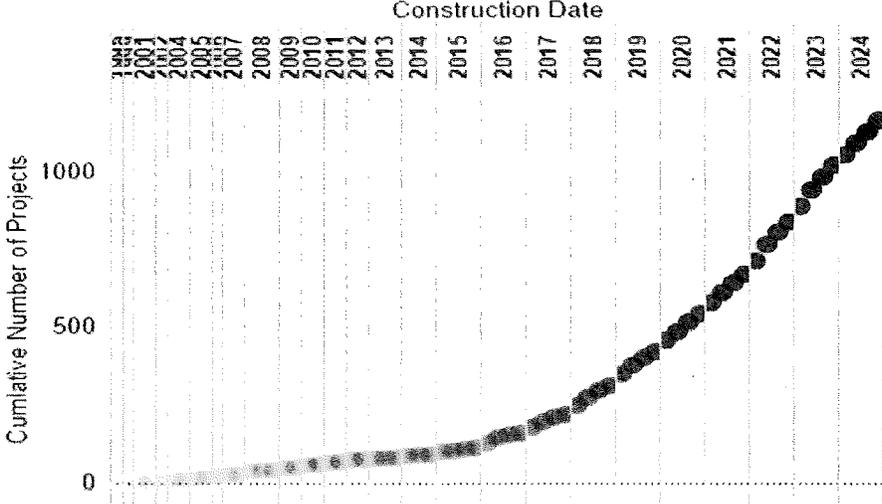


Predicted North America and Northeast CLT Demand



Source: Poyry, 2017 via MMTCC

Mass Timber Projects Constructed in the US as of December 2024⁸



⁸ <https://www.woodworks.org/resources/mapping-mass-timber/>

Window of opportunity lasting 2-3 years. Seeing this growing mass timber market, other states very much would like to gain prominence as manufacturers. Maine's DECD has been working hard to engage and attract the handful of potential manufacturers for several years. Unfortunately, the appropriations for the Dirigo Business Incentive Program has not yielded a mass timber manufacturer here.

But Maine still has an opportunity to be at the forefront, because things have not fully taken off. There still is no mass timber manufacturer in either New England or the Mid-Atlantic region. Before long, though, plants will get established and the market precedence will be decided.

LD 798 is a vehicle to break the logjam. It implements key recommendations from the UMaine study pursuant to LD 881 (131st), which explored the barriers to establishing mass timber in the state.^{9 10 11 12} It would ask voters for permission to augment the Dirigo program by \$50 million, one time, for the purpose of doing an incredible thing for Maine's economy and for the environment, with mass timber. The 132nd Legislature has a great opportunity.

Thank you for your attention. I'd be pleased to discuss further with any of you, today or beyond.

⁹ UMaine has been a leader, not only in developing, refining, and championing the technology, but also as a convener of various interests around mass timber. In 2017, UMaine established the Maine Mass Timber Commercialization Center (MMTCC), which was funded by a 3-year grant from the US Economic Development Agency.

¹⁰ https://composites.umaine.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/600/2021/08/UMaineCompositesCenter_MassTimber-092917.pdf

¹¹ <https://composites.umaine.edu/woodcomposites/mmtcc/>

¹² The mass timber chicken-and-egg dilemma is that no manufacturer of mass timber is willing to set up a facility in Maine until there's more demand, but that quantity of demand doesn't exist while projects in the Northeast would have to pay to transport mass timber from the Midwest, the South, or Europe. Ironically, Maine's few mass timber projects presently tend to obtain it from Europe. In 2018 a North Carolina-based company expressed interest in being the first mass timber manufacturer in Maine, which would have breathed life back into the Great Northern Mill in Millinocket. Unfortunately, it pulled out less than a year after announcing its plans. <https://www.mainebiz.biz/article/redevelopment-of-millinocket-mill-has-setback-as-anchor-tenant-pulls-out>. The incentives have not been sufficient in subsequent years either.