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CHRISTINA HADDAD is the Regional VP, Ontario at CMHC. For inquiries call 416-218-3362 or e-mail obc_communications_and_marketing@cmhc.ca.



Software to build six-storey wood

The Province of Ontario now permits wood-framed buildings up to six storeys. However, in conducting a detailed review, the structural engineers of London-area's Strik Baldinelli Moniz found that very little research had been focused on the three-dimensional behaviour of these structures under lateral loads. In addition, the current structural analysis and design of these lightweight wood-framed construction buildings is performed on an element-by-element basis, neglecting the overall behaviour of the building's structural system.

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"Our firm has completed approximately 25 commercial wood buildings varying from one to four storeys. We knew our existing clients would want to take advantage of the code changes," explains Michael Baldinelli, MESC, P.Eng, and principal, Large Buildings, at Strik Baldinelli Moniz structural engineers in Arva, Ontario. "In early 2014, I went to B.C. and toured four six-storey wood buildings under construction. Our firm formed a Wood Building R&D group and spent 14 months (on and off) researching the structural design implications, fire issues during construction, implications of wood shrinkage and cost implications for five- to six-storey wood buildings."

In late 2014, the firm put together a full-day seminar for 85 select clients and city officials to help educate them on the 'dos and don'ts.' From that, they developed a proprietary wood design software called SX-N-WD.

THE PROGRAM:

1. Calculates all wind and seismic loading on the building
2. Takes into account both rigid and flexible floor diaphragms
3. Calculates the overall building deflection and inter-storey drift at any point in the building
4. Accounts for the stiffness of other building materials (concrete masonry units, cast-in-place concrete, steel-cross-braced frame, etc.)
5. Calculates building natural frequency, overcapacity ratio and torsional sensitivity
6. Takes into account the cumulative effect of hold-down anchor slippage and nail slippage in deflection calculations
7. Meets CSA O86-14, Canadian Wood Design Manual and Ontario Building Code 2012 requirements.
8. Optimizes the shear wall selection based on material costs (i.e. labour and material)

The software analyzes wood buildings under earthquake and wind loading and at the same time takes into account material costs—the first of its kind in the industry, says Baldinelli. During the design, the program selects from a database of walls, floors and tie-downs based upon the least expensive option. If the option selected "fails," then "next wall," "floor" or "hold down" is selected. The program typically goes through 300-400 iterations to ensure all Code requirements pass. Once completed, the most cost-efficient, code-compliant

design is produced.

"We've implemented the software on five wood buildings and found savings of 10%-15% versus traditional design methods," Baldinelli notes. "As far as advantages are concerned, we are finding that in most cases a building that was originally designed or planned as a four-storey structure is easily being transitioned into a 5- to 6-storey wood building (pending zoning requirements). Occupant uses vary from affordable housing projects, post-secondary student residences and residential apartments or condominiums. In some instances, the municipalities are requiring a commercial component on the main floor to encourage mixed-use

"We've (used) the software on five wood buildings and found savings of 10%-15% versus traditional design methods."

buildings where people can work and live."

In other instances, where zoning is restricted to a mid-rise type building, wood becomes a great option, Baldinelli says. "It's affordable; it provides quick installation, thereby reducing the construction timelines and carrying costs; and it reduces structural demand on the foundations. We've conducted a large amount of research on the topic and have completed a few case studies comparing different building materials and their effect on the foundation design. When using wood, we found a 10%-12% overall savings on the building construction cost versus traditional materials. At first glance the savings appear modest, but on a 90,000 sq. ft. building, the potential savings are in the millions."

Strik Baldinelli Moniz is currently in the process of designing three six-storey wood buildings and is expecting a permit on the second six-storey wood building in Ontario.

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