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Summary Report: Michigan Mass Timber Summit (2020)

Dates: September 22, September 29, and October 6, 2020

Session Recordings: Available online

Co-Hosts: Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute

Sponsors
Granger Construction Inc.
Mass Timber @ MSU
The Nature Conservancy
JM Longyear
The Sansin Corporation
SDI Structures
Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development

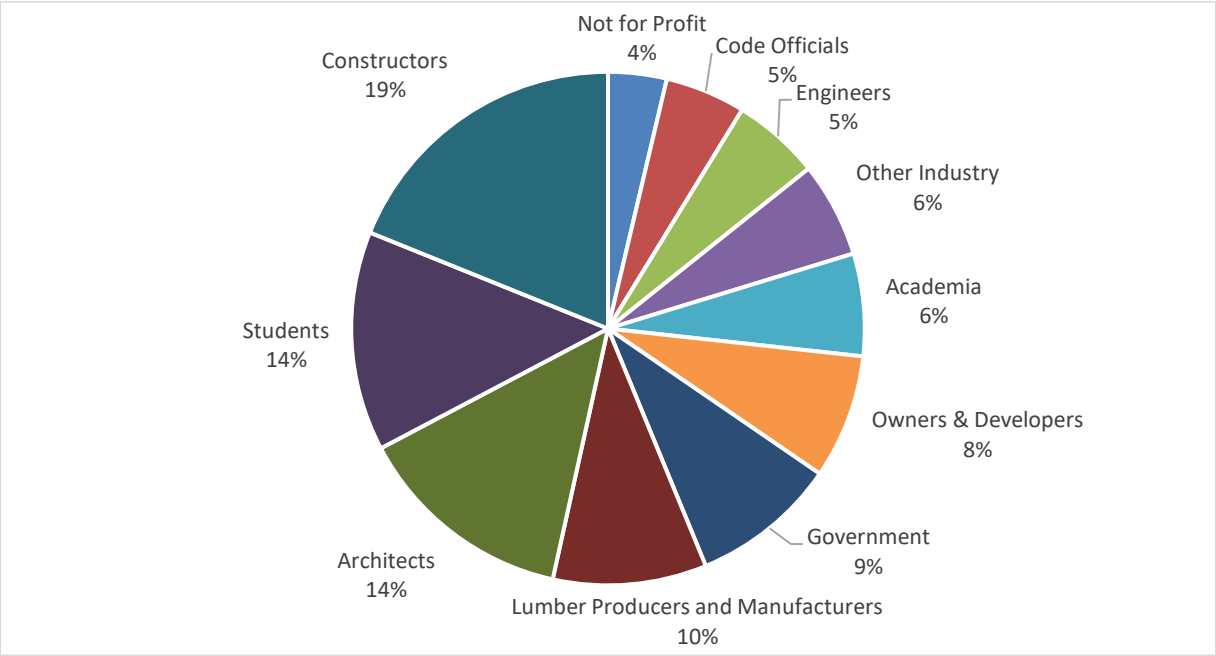
Exhibitors
Christman Constructors, Inc.
Element 5
Integrated Design Solutions (IDS)
Mass Timber Institute
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
WTA Architects

Background: Mass timber construction -- a system where the load-bearing structure of buildings is constructed from engineered wood – is quickly spreading throughout the United States. Michigan's first mass timber building (a $100 million, 120,000 ft2 project) is under construction on the campus of Michigan State University in East Lansing, with a Fall 2020 anticipated completion. While mass timber presents opportunities for aesthetics, cost savings, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions and storage, the adoption of a new building method also presents challenges.
Purpose: The Summit's goal is to accelerate the adoption of mass timber in Michigan by using an on the ground approach and first-hand look at a mass timber building under construction.

- Increase the number of mass timber buildings in Michigan.
- Reduce the carbon footprint of Michigan's built environment.
- Identify resources to accelerate mass timber in Michigan.

Audience Demographics: With 207 registrants participating in the virtual Summit, the Michigan Mass Timber Summit doubled its reach from the originally scheduled in-person event. Registration for the in-person event originally scheduled for April 2020 was capped at 100 people to comply with COVID-19 protocols at the time. The in-person event was subsequently postponed and reformatted to a virtual event due to COVID-19 restrictions. The overwhelming majority of attendees represented Michigan; however, the virtual event also permitted participation from 12 states including the District of Columbia, and several countries. Figure 1 below illustrates the broad reach of the event to a diverse audience in the mass timber value chain. Furthermore, a survey following the event invited attendees to select the reason they chose to attend the Summit: 60% indicated to learn more about mass timber in general; 28% selected to learn more about mass timber in Michigan; and 9% selected business development.

Figure 1. Audience Demographics



Agenda: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the event was transitioned from an in-person event including a walkthrough of the Michigan State University STEM Training Building under construction in April 2020 to a virtual event including a video tour of the building on September 22, September 29, and October 6, 2020 from 8:30 AM – 12:00 PM EST. Sessions included the video tour, design opportunities, cost benefit analysis, building codes, design, construction, and logistics, and a discussion session to identify opportunities and barriers for mass timber in Michigan. The agenda also included two sponsored lunch-and-learn sessions addressing climate benefits and finishes for mass timber. A detailed agenda and presentations from the sessions can be found at http://mifbi.org/2020-michigan-mass-timber-summit/. Session recordings are available online.

Opportunities and Barriers: The desired outcome of the Summit was to identify opportunities and barriers for mass timber construction in Michigan. According to session discussions, the following were identified (in no particular order):

Opportunities

- Large regional wood supply
- Growing desire for green building systems
- Movement to integrated design processes
- Expanded opportunity in Higher education
- Project clusters leverage local experience to influence owners
- Use of salvaged lumber
- University research and outreach
- Engagement with the Forest Products industry

Barriers

- Slow adoption of new building and fire codes
- Lack of regional material supply and manufacturing capabilities
- Reluctance on the part of code officials to use alternative means processes
- Lack of experience with mass timber systems
- Identifying and educating owners

Summit Outcomes: Results from the survey of attendees indicate the Michigan Mass Timber Summit achieved its goals and attendees were overwhelmingly satisfied (94% satisfied/very satisfied) with the event.

- The virtual format enabled the opportunity to record presentations and make them available for continued learning. The organizers greatly appreciate all presenters for sharing slide decks and

permitting the recordings which are now available at http://mifbi.org/2020-michigan-mass-timber-summit/. More than 80% of survey respondents indicated they are likely to share the presentations/recordings with others, demonstrating the Summit will have continued reach.

- The objective of the Summit was to accelerate the adoption of mass timber in Michigan. According to the post-event survey, 71% of survey respondents are likely to consider building with mass timber.
- The Summit was designed to educate and inform, and also to identify opportunities and barriers to advance mass timber in Michigan. According to survey respondents, barriers to mass timber in Michigan were classified as:
    - Lack of experience with mass timber products (20%)
    - Lack of regional suppliers (18%)
    - Cost (16.7%)
    - Building codes (15%)

Next Steps: The Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute will continue to work in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other key stakeholders to prioritize and advance measures to accelerate the adoption of mass timber construction in Michigan.

Acknowledgments: The Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute appreciates the collaboration and support from so many individuals and organizations that contributed to the success of the Summit.

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