

SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD *IN*



Design/Build Giant Acquires Michael Green Architecture, Plans to Open CLT Factory



The 150,000-square-foot Catalyst Building in Spokane, Washington, will be the state's first office building constructed of cross-laminated timber. It will also be connected to an energy resource sharing "eco-district" planned for the development.

Rendering courtesy Katterra

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Randy Gragg

In three short years, the design/build firm Katterra has grown from a Silicon Valley entrepreneur's bright idea into what soon could be one of the largest commercial residential construction firms in the country. The



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strategy: vertically integrate every layer of construction, from design to the fixtures and subcontracting in order to lower costs, build faster, and raise quality. The means: venture capital (over \$1 billion so far) plus acquisitions of existing companies in the building and products industry. Now Kattera is moving to buy architecture firms, and today is announcing the acquisition of the mass timber innovator Michael Green Architecture of Vancouver, with a staff of 25. Other purchases are on the way.

“It was love at first sight,” said Michael Marks, chairman and co-founder of Kattera, by phone. “Michael Green and his team have built a reputation for engaging design and leadership in the use of mass timber. This goes a long way to support our mission to utilize cutting-edge technology and systems to revolutionize the construction industry.”

To date, Kattera has focused on market-rate multi-family housing, student and senior living, and master-planned developments for the apartment giant Wolff Company, supplying everything from integrated wall systems to cabinetry and fixtures. But the company is plotting a major mass timber push with a state-of-the-art 250,000-square-foot CLT factory in Spokane, Washington, opening in early 2019.

One of the earliest and most forceful North American proponents of mass timber, Green is best known for two of the continent’s largest CLT structures: the [Wood Innovation and Design Centre](#) in Prince George, British Columbia, and T3, a 220,000-square-foot seven-story office building in Minneapolis.

“It’s an unusual deal: they effectively bought our brand,” Green said of the merger. “It couldn’t be a better scenario: we get all of Kattera’s cool innovation capacity and R&D. We’ve been developing product concepts for mass timber and now we’ll be able to get into the shop and create some major leaps forward.”

Marks, the former head of Flex and interim CEO of Tesla, started Kattera in 2015 with Fritz Wolff, chairman of Wolff Company, and Jim Davidson, one of the founders of the venture firm Silver Lake. The company has grown at an awe-inspiring pace courtesy of injections of capital, most notably \$865 million in January from Japanese venture giant SoftBank. In the last year, it bought two regional multi-family giants; Dallas-based residential remodeler United Renovations and northeast builder Fields Construction. Nineteen projects are under construction, and dozens more in design, with reported billings of \$1.3 billion, and over 1,500 employees.

Headquartered in Menlo Park, California, Kattera maintains a 100-employee design group in Seattle, overseen by Craig Curtis, FAIA, formerly design partner at Miller Hull. The company supplies wall systems, trusses, cabinetry, and fixtures from a 200,000-square-foot Phoenix factory. It also operates a lighting factory in Shenzhen, China, and design and software development offices in Pune and Bangor, India. Kattera is establishing a partnership in Graz, Austria, with mass timber guru Gerhard Schickhofer, head of the Institute of Timber Engineering and Wood Technology, to feed the North American shortage of CLT-savvy architects, engineers, and fabricators.

Those tools and Kattera’s disruptive idealism drew Green into the partnership. He became the first member of a “design consortium,” a resource/crit group that Curtis created to, as he put it, “keep us honest.” (Ted Flato of Lake|Flato, Joe Greco of Lord Aeck Sargent, and Andrea Leers of Leers Weinzapfel Associates have since joined as advisors.) The relationship evolved into the design and future construction of “Catalyst,” a net-zero



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SENT TO LSU AGCENTER/LOUISIANA FOREST PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT CENTER - FOREST SECTOR / FORESTY PRODUCTS INTEREST GROUP office/lab building in Spokane. Slated to open in 2020, it will be the first to use CLT from Katerra’s new factory. “Michael has a systems approach that is the perfect fit for what we’re doing,” says Curtis.

Green said his firm is awash in new work since T3. The alliance with Katerra will give the office needed capacity without loosening his fingers from design. He will continue with non-Katerra “one-offs,” like two new mixed-use towers in Paris and a 200,000-square-foot culture/sports complex above the Arctic Circle in Gallivare, Sweden. He will also continue to operate his own non-profit design/build school.

“Architects have done a great disservice to the world by concentrating on those who can afford architecture rather than on making architecture affordable to more people,” Green said. “That fundamental belief is driving us toward the Katerra model. I want to be on the inside track.

Michael Green Architecture will retain its name and location, but now as a subsidiary of Katerra with Green as CEO. Neither party disclosed the acquisition’s terms.

https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/13471-design-build-giant-katerra-acquires-michael-green-architecture-plans-to-open-clt-factory?utm_source=Forest+Business+Network+email+newsletter&utm_campaign=4fb48a7ee5-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2018_06_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3a629cb392-4fb48a7ee5-111955785

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