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Michigan Technological University

Michigan Tech on cutting edge of cross laminated timber technology

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Michigan Tech professor Mark Rudnicki wants to put Michigan **hardwoods** to use in a new and exciting way. Cross laminated timber technology is already a part of skyscrapers in Europe and America’s west coast. By pressing cross sections of wood together it is possible to create structural components as sturdy as the steel girders that make up landmarks like the Empire State Building or Detroit’s Renaissance Center.

Working with the MTEC Smart Zone, Rudnicki leveraged academic grants and corporate support to obtain a press that will assemble CLT right here in the Keweenaw. It’s for research purposes only, but the findings could help make the case for future commercial production. Rudnicki says new markets vital for an industry where traditional pulp isn’t in demand the way it once was.

United States Senator Debbie Stabenow visited Tech’s campus last year in support of the program and it has caught the eye of politicians in Lansing as well. Rudnicki says using wood in construction of megastructures helps to give the buildings character, a certain aesthetic that you don’t find currently. It’s also more environmentally friendly.

Currently, commercial CLT products for tall timber buildings are made from only softwood species, despite hardwood’s many desirable properties such as increased strength, higher fire resistance, better resistance to vibration, better sound insulation, and aesthetic appeal. “Recent research at Michigan Tech has demonstrated that several hardwood species from the Great Lakes region, including our most common, sugar maple, can work well as a CLT product,” says Mark.

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