



Mid-rise wood-frame buildings in Vancouver, B.C. are bringing quality, safe and new housing types to the city including condominiums and rental.

Changing the shape of our cities

Ontario approves six-storey wood-frame construction

Earlier this year the provincial government committed to permit six-storey wood-frame buildings in Ontario starting Jan. 1, 2015.

“This is great news for the industry and consumers. Introducing safe, quality mid-rise buildings into the Ontario market will bring additional choice in housing type for new-home purchasers,” said Bryan Tuckey, Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) president and CEO.

BILD welcomed the announcement after several years of advocacy — a coordinated effort by the Ontario Home Builders’ Association (OHBA), BILD and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) — encouraging the Ontario government to amend the Ontario Building Code (OBC) to allow for the construction of wood-frame buildings up to six storeys.

The amendment will assist cities and towns across the GTA to implement the intensification targets of the provincial growth plan as we continue to build quality, complete communities for the up to 100,000 people and 50,000 jobs that come to the GTA every year.

“Communities across Ontario, from London to Thunder Bay, will all benefit from the housing, rental and office opportunities that this building code decision provides,” added OHBA CEO Joe Vaccaro. “We look forward to seeing Ontario’s first six-storey wood projects.”

In May 2013, the strong planning and economic rationales for the change were outlined in the report, *Unlocking the Potential for Mid-Rise Buildings: Six Storey Wood Structures*, commissioned by BILD and authored by former City of Toronto chief planner Paul Bedford.

The report showed that potential development opportunities that are well-served by existing infrastructure and transit could be unlocked with the approval of six-storey mid-rise wood buildings, helping to meet the demand of the increasing population of the region, and offering a variety of sizes and design

features for people of all ages.

“Allowing six-storey wood structures in Ontario will generate new innovative design options from the building community, and we should recognize that this is an important and necessary amendment to support Ontario’s growing communities,” said RESCON president Richard Lyall.

Wood-frame mid-rise buildings can help open up new possibilities for approximately 160 km of urban corridors within the City of Toronto alone, according to Bedford’s report, creating several hundred thousand homes to accommodate our growing population.

“This Made-in-Ontario change to the building code will result in a new and innovative way of building homes.”

BRYAN TUCKEY,
president and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)

It is also beneficial to the forest industry, which will supply local and renewable resources to build these new homes — a great way to reduce our carbon footprint.

To commemorate the collaborative advocacy efforts, BILD, OHBA and RESCON were recognized with the Ontario Forest Sector Champion Award from the Ontario Forest Industries Association in February 2014. This was followed up with a Wood Champion Award from Ontario Wood WORKS! in November.

As the industry embraces this exciting initiative, it is important that everyone involved learns about what it takes to build six-storey wood structures. That means educating industry professionals about the technologies around this new building type while explaining its benefits to new homebuyers.

“It is imperative that GTA residents



The Rivers Edge — currently under construction in B.C.

understand the safety and quality aspect of wood buildings,” Tuckey said, adding that every building will meet the strict standards of the OBC and Fire Code. “Firefighter and occupant safety were key considerations in the drafting of this amendment.”

BILD, OHBA and RESCON recently took a group of members to Vancouver, British Columbia to tour various mid-rise wood-frame construction sites. The group visited completed condominium and rental sites, some under construction which provided different types of examples of housing options and affordability.

“With the OBC amendments, this tour was a great opportunity to see, examine and understand mid-rise wood-frame projects, as well as a good way to learn directly from architects and municipal staff who have dealt with implementing what will be a new and exciting way of building in Ontario’s municipalities,” said Paula Tenuta, BILD vice-president of policy and government relations. “Our members came back with a renewed excitement to build complete communities in a new way. Seeing these buildings first-hand was the best type of education.”

Tenuta also pointed out the importance of working with municipal partners to pre-designate and pre-zone sites for these buildings, as well as develop appropriate building code requirements. By aligning municipal zoning bylaws with growth-plan principles, the industry can bring six-storey wood buildings to transit corridors and urban centres in a quicker, more efficient and cost-effective manner.

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WORKING TOGETHER TOWARD A GREATER GTA

Building healthy, complete communities is a team effort. That’s why BILD works closely with our partners in government to establish fair and effective policies that affect the land development, home building and professional renovation industry in the GTA. We are always at the table on behalf of the industry and new home buyers. So why is advocating on your behalf so vital to us?



BECAUSE THE GTA IS OUR HOME TOO

