

Future Timber City Steering Committee Chair: Jeff Spiritos



Jeff Spiritos,
Spiritos Properties

Jeff Spiritos, Steering Committee Chair of the CTBUH research project "Future Timber City," funded by the USDA Forest Service and Binational Softwood Lumber Council, is the principal of Spiritos Properties, LLC, a commercial and residential developer that develops projects in New York and the Northeast. Spiritos worked for 25 years with Hines before starting his firm in 2004. Since 2016, he has built only with mass timber structural systems.

What inspired you to join as the Steering Committee Chair of the Future Timber City research project?

I strongly believe that the world must change from building with steel and concrete to the greatest extent, and that mass timber can go most anywhere that steel and concrete can. I think many people around the globe now know about the carbon issues created by buildings and that steel and concrete structural systems are terribly damaging to our climate. I have been so fortunate to get to know CTBUH CEO Antony Wood over the past few years and was aware of the new committee structure that CTBUH had set up. I want to do everything I can to help make mass timber buildings understood, adopted, and the best way to build, and I thought that I could do that well as Chair.

What do you want to see this project accomplish?

There is no other organization that has the purview and influence that CTBUH has to influence the quality and character of tall buildings and the future of the built environment. So, in these rather early days of the mass timber structural building system, it's important to work together with industry practitioners from all over the world to engage and exchange on philosophies, techniques, solutions, and challenges about how to maximize the

quantity and type of mass timber buildings built throughout the world. This obviously includes knowing what the industry has built and is building, in great detail, while building and enhancing relationships with industry leaders. This project is so unique and will provide very important information about the best practices for making buildings better, forests healthier, and the air cleaner, through mass timber building.

What are some aspects on which you think the tall timber industry has made good progress recently?

Mass timber is a relatively new building system, but keeps building taller each year. We now have buildings over 20 stories in Europe and America, and planning for 30- and 40-story buildings in many countries. France has shown great leadership in its support of taller timber buildings, and the United States has passed the 2021 IBC tall wood building code, which allows timber buildings up to 18 stories and 270 feet (82 meters) tall. This progress comes through system and product research, sound engineering, and more authorities recognizing the benefits of tall mass timber buildings.

What are some critical areas that you would like to see change or improve?

I think information dissemination and commitment are very important to the growth of the industry. We need to continue to find ways to communicate to builders, developers, capital sources, and policymakers that it is safe, cost-effective, healthy, and environmentally imperative to support, incentivize, and adopt this building system. Also, lots of practitioners work locally instead of globally, and there is so much benefit to be gained from sharing solutions and understanding challenges, practices, and policy around the world. That's why CTBUH's Future Timber City project is so relevant and important. It will speed the communication and collaboration fundamental to the worldwide growth of tall timber buildings! ■

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