



Swinerton hosts Timber Talks event panel

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Manhattan, NY Swinerton, a general contracting and construction management leader, hosted the insightful NYC Timber Talks event in February at Haworth New York Showroom. The event featured a panel of experts in the construction industry with a focus on mass timber.

Featured speakers, including Andrew Pearl (Swinerton), Charles Besjak (SOM), Eli Gottlieb (Thornton Tomasetti), Gizem Karagoz (New York City Economic Development Corporation), Taylor Landry (Woodworks), and Tanya Luthi (Timberlab), brought their expertise to the forefront, dispelling myths and inaccuracies surrounding mass timber. They delved into the current and past mass timber applications, shedding light on its safe and innovative usage and exploring the vast opportunities for future developments in this sustainable construction material.

“At Swinerton, we recognize the critical importance of uniting stakeholders across the construction industry to collectively address and overcome the challenges we face, including headwinds and misinformation about sustainable materials like mass timber,” said Pearl, vice president and division

manager of Swinerton's New York location. "The NYC Timber Talks event underscored our commitment to fostering collaboration and transparency, ensuring that together, we can advance construction practices that are not only environmentally responsible but also align with the highest safety standards. By working hand in hand, we're setting the stage for a future where sustainable construction materials like mass timber are understood, valued, and utilized to their full potential."

The panel highlighted the transformative power of mass timber in the construction industry, emphasizing its role in significantly reducing carbon emissions by up to 40% compared to traditional steel structures. This innovation aligns perfectly with New York City's ambitious emission reduction targets and the directives of Local Law 97, marking a shift towards more sustainable building practices. Furthermore, mass timber introduces an unprecedented level of transparency in timber sourcing. Thanks to advanced tracking systems, every piece of timber can be traced back to its source, providing deep insights into sustainable timber production and fostering responsible growth in the sector. This dual benefit of environmental impact reduction and supply chain transparency positions mass timber as a critical component in the future of eco-conscious construction.

Luthi, director of engineering at Timberlab, highlighted how the rigorous fire testing done on mass timber at Timberlab will revolutionize the fire code across all buildings. She stated, "We're testing multiple methods of fire resistance, seeing how techniques like the char method can interact with non-combustible finishes to extend burn times by 50%. We're making mass timber just as safe if not safer than the fire code currently permits."

"Mass timber has just as much a place in city development as steel, as seen with the success of Boston's Mass Timber Accelerator program. The Ascent project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a 25-story mass timber hybrid residential high-rise, demonstrates mass timber's potential for building tall," Gottlieb, managing principal at Thornton Tomasetti, said. "Mass timber's potential in cities is not limited to tall buildings, as the majority of New York City's buildings are only six stories."

NYC Timber Talks made it clear that mass timber is here and it is here to stay.

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