

# GTA builders usher in the era of wood

Land development industry has been working to find innovative ways to design, build and market this new type of home.



One project expected to be constructed this summer is the Cabin by BILD member Curated Properties and architect RAW Design in Toronto's Queen West neighbourhood. The project features 25 two-storey units each with its own yard, private rooftop garden or terrace. (COURTESY OF CURATED PROPERTIES)

By **BRYAN TUCKEY** Special to the Star  
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A new type of building is coming to the GTA; the first six-storey wood residential projects are just months away from construction.

Midrise buildings, which are generally five to 11 storeys, are seen as an important built form for the future growth of the region and the homebuilding and land development industry wants to construct more of them. However, there are challenges and the ability to use wood helps to make them more achievable.

Wood is a sustainable resource. It's a lighter material to transfer and work with. It's faster to build with. And it's ideal for building on small sites, which all leads to making midrise buildings more financially feasible.

For years, BILD and a number of its partners advocated for legislative change to permit the construction of wood buildings up to six storeys. In January 2015, an [amendment to the Ontario Building Code](#) took effect allowing wood construction to this height. Prior to the code change, wood buildings could only be constructed up to four storeys.

Since then, the development industry has worked to find innovative ways to design, build and market this new type of home. Designers have taken a new integrative and collaborative approach to these buildings, especially since project plans and applications now require professional drawings by architects and engineers.

A few firms in the GTA have stepped up as innovators and leaders by staying on the cutting edge of new building techniques and technologies, learning from other professionals in places such as B.C. and European cities where building with wood is more common, and inviting experts to join their design teams. Together, these teams have come up with innovative techniques to increase fire protection, reduce noise transfer and more.

One of the first six-storey wood buildings expected to be constructed this summer is Heartwood the Beach. In Toronto's Beaches neighbourhood, it is a partnership of BILD members Fieldgate Urban and Hullmark Developments and is designed by Quadrangle Architects in collaboration with Moses Structural Engineers.

The building will have 37 suites, eight per floor and five unique penthouses and celebrates the use of wood from the outside in. One example is the use of the construction hoarding around the property as a marketing and educational tool explaining the benefits of wood construction.

The second project expected to be constructed this summer is the Cabin by BILD member Curated Properties and architect RAW Design in Toronto's Queen West neighbourhood. The project features 25 two-storey units each with its own yard, private rooftop garden or terrace.

Both projects exemplify the promises of midrise buildings, which include making use of existing infrastructure, benefitting the surrounding neighbourhood by revitalizing underutilized properties, and bringing a new housing type and businesses to the area.

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