The Future of Tall: Stakeholder Meeting on Research and Outreach Direction of Cross Laminated Timber

On September 24, 2019, stakeholders from academia, private sector, and the government organizations met to discuss the future direction of cross laminated timber (CLT) research and outreach. Representation at the meeting included:

- SmartLam North America
- WoodWorks
- School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Auburn University
- School of Architecture, Planning, & Landscape Architecture, Auburn University
- Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, Auburn University
- Facilities Management, Auburn University
- Office of Sustainability, Auburn University
- Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, College of Agriculture, Auburn University
- Wood Utilization & Design Institute, College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Life Sciences, Clemson University
- Alabama Cooperative Extension System
- U.S. Forest Service, Southern Research Station
- Alabama Forestry Commission
- Alabama Forestry Association
- Alabama Farmers Federation
- Forest Products Society

Summary and purpose – In June of this year, the Alabama State Legislature approved a funding allocation of $890,125 to advance cross-laminated timber (CLT) research and outreach. Through these initiatives, this support will provide additional opportunities for this emerging high rise building industry. Additionally, there may be opportunities to gain traction for CLT use in the residential sector. The purpose of this meeting was to partner with collaborators and stakeholders to identify what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, develop timelines for initial steps and progress, and identify gaps, challenges, needs, and educational opportunities.

Specifically, the meeting was kicked off by two presentations. Simon Siegert, of SmartLam North America, in Dothan, Alabama, presented on the progress of CLT and future directions for tall building. Next, Jeff Peters from WoodWorks presented on growing the wood market for CLT. Both presentations provided current updates and outlooks of CLT use in North America. School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences faculty members Drs. Brian Via, Soledad Peresin, and Adam Maggard set the background and stage for roundtable discussions amongst the stakeholders in attendance by presenting on structures, materials, and adhesives research and capacity, the Sustainable Biomaterials and Packaging degree, and Extensions role in CLT education and awareness. Thereafter, participants engaged in several hours of roundtable discussions focused on research and outreach needs, how to integrate education into research and outreach, and developed action items for moving forward.

Next steps and key takeaways – The next steps are to determine where the strengths and abilities of Auburn University overlap with stakeholder interests’ in-order to best strengthen the approach moving forward. Key takeaways from the meeting included guided direction on research needs for CLT, education and awareness needs to be provided through outreach and Extension efforts, and the need
and benefits of hosting a CLT conference in Alabama in the near future. Key support from the WoodWorks Products Council and the SmartLam CLT plant in Dothan, Alabama were gained for this effort moving forward.