

Mass Timber for Affordable Housing, Healthy Forests and a Cleaner Environment

Jeff Spiritos, *Manager, Spiritos Properties*

ABSTRACT

Affordable housing studies (JCHS Harvard, McKinsey) have stated and quantified the need for millions of housing units for low income (including very and extremely low income) people. Providing housing for this population is urgent, evidenced by the huge number of people and families devoting 30 and even 50% of their incomes to rent and by the growing population of people experiencing homelessness, exacerbated by the tremendous gap between the wealthy and regular Americans. At the same time, our climate continues to worsen, emitting far too much CO₂, generating far too much waste, speeding toward a potentially disastrous temperature rise. Moreover, our forests are so vulnerable, with unmanageable fires annually in California, eastern Australia and elsewhere, caused in many cases by the sicknesses of overgrowth and the reality of insufficient management. Moving to a nation-wide program of building government funded (LIHTC, etc.) multifamily housing with mass timber would play a major role in addressing all these concerns and more. Mass timber building structures are vital for reversing climate change, sucking the carbon from the air in volume, as the wood from trees keeps the sequestered carbon inside the wood. Utilizing sustainably harvested wood would mitigate the forest fire calamity, providing for economic growth in rural forested areas along the way. And, as importantly, people of all economic classes would get to live in healthy homes, where the wood is exposed, bringing its asthma reducing, calming, humidity managing, warm and more durable environment to all. We will present 340+ Dixwell, a 69 unit LIHTC mass timber, passive house affordable housing project in New Haven Ct, currently under construction.

BIOGRAPHY

Jeff Spiritos is the principal of Spiritos Properties, LLC, a commercial and residential developer that builds mass timber projects in New York and the Northeast. Spiritos worked for 25 years with Hines before starting his firm in 2004 and for the past seven years has turned to build only with mass timber structural systems. Current projects include Acme Timber Lofts, an 18-unit rental apartment vertical extension project and 340+ Dixwell, a 69-unit affordable housing project, both underway in construction in New Haven, Ct and 79 King Street, a 70-unit 55+ rental apartment project in Northampton, Mass, currently in design. Both the New Haven projects were fortunate to have been selected for US Forest Service Wood Innovation Grants.