

Woodworking Network

Massive factory planned for CLT lumber components in Washington State

By Bill Esler September 26, 2017 | 9:00 am EDT



Katerra's existing plant in Phoenix totals 220,000 square feet.

SPOKANE VALLEY, Calif. – Katerra, a high-tech construction firm, will open a new factory in Spokane Valley, Washington, where it will produce mass timber products including cross-laminated timber (CLT) and Glulam. The materials will be used in its modular building manufacturing process.

Katerra has been laying the groundwork for the Washington State venture, in June acquiring Nystrom Olson, a Spokane boutique architectural studio specializing in socially and environmentally sustainable modernist architecture.

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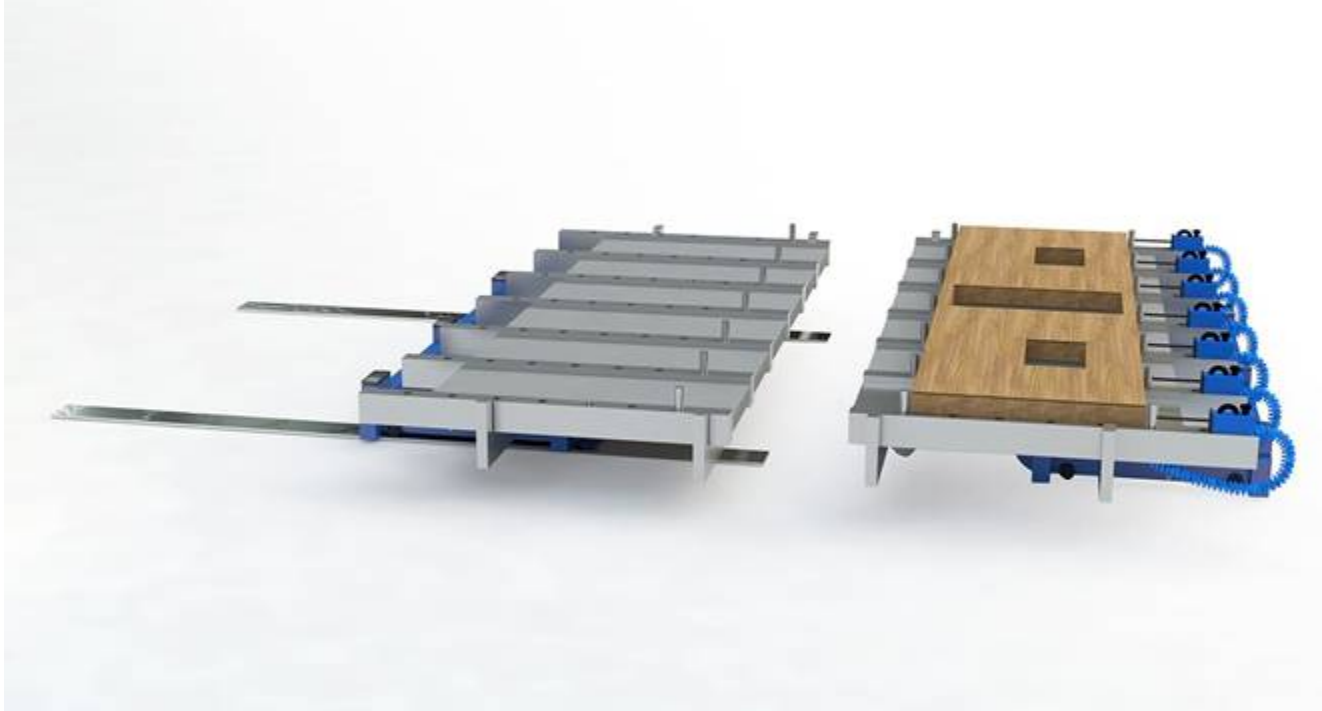
Katerra's Phoenix operation.

Katerra is already applying its high-tech construction techniques to manufacture building sections in an existing Phoenix factory, in processes similar to auto plant plants. The Phoenix plant uses CR Onsrud and Laguna machinery, and fabricates rooms and building sections, including cabinetry, plumbing and wiring.

The advanced manufacturing lines can produce a 24-unit garden style walk-up every two weeks (600 apartments per year); cabinets and countertops for 15,000 apartments per year (41 apartments per day); and 12,000 door assemblies per year (33 apartments per day).

With 220,000 square feet of manufacturing and office space, the Phoenix also contains the Katerra Design Showroom. Katerra's approach echoes the pioneering work done on the [VirginiaTech FutureHaus Project](#), which was presented - along with mass wood construction technology - at the [Woodworking Network Leadership Forum in July in Las Vegas](#). It also bears some resemblance to [Factory OS](#), which built modular residential units for Google employees.

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Soukup Wing Table for gluing wall sections

Katerra received a \$130 million infusion of capital in April 2017, and merged two weeks later with United Renovations, a multi-family building renovation firm.

Katerra says its new 250,000 square foot mass timber manufacturing facility will help scale up U.S. production of CLT so that the material can be more broadly adopted across the construction industry. Katerra says its manufacturing presence in the region will provide hundreds of jobs and stimulate additional jobs through the larger supply chain and associated industries, including design, engineering, and construction.

Cross-laminated timber, or CLT, is a key ingredient in the so-called timber towers - multi-story high rises built of wood, some reaching 18 stories or higher. Katerra says CLT is valued due to its low carbon footprint and strength. By manufacturing its own CLT, Katerra says it is embracing this natural resource, and helping the U.S. construction industry realize the promise of an advancement that is already widely used in Europe.

Through this investment in the Spokane area, Katerra is helping to make economic and community progress that is truly sustainable. This type of sustainable ecosystem is a model the company is planning to replicate in partnerships that will help boost other local economies through growth of this new market sector within North America.

“CLT... is a material that creates beautiful spaces, is designed for manufacturing, and is sustainable all at the same time,” said Michael Marks, chairman and co-founder of Katerra. “This material represents a great opportunity to create new value within the construction industry and will be central to many of the projects we’ll be designing and building. We feel very comfortable and excited, particularly with the knowledgeable team we have, to make the jump into manufacturing mass timber. We are ready to help bring mass timber to the mainstream of U.S. construction.”



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Katerra's April acquisition of Nystrom Olson followed the two firms' joint projects and establishes an official Spokane office presence, as Katerra's architecture projects continue to scale up throughout the Pacific Northwest the firm says. The Katerra Spokane architecture office houses 12 employees, with plans to expand further in the months and years ahead. Ongoing Katerra partnerships in the Spokane area include McKinstry, Community Cancer Fund, and more.

Through its end-to-end construction services model, Katerra will supply much of the CLT to projects where it will also serve as architect and contractor. One of Katerra's first local Spokane-area CLT projects will be the construction of the new Hospitality Center in association with the Community Cancer Fund, Ronald McDonald House and Kootenai Health (Walden House). The facility will house both Ronald McDonald House families while their children are hospitalized in a home-away-from-home environment, as well as provide lodging for the Walden House adult outpatients and their families while receiving treatment at the Kootenai Health facility. The Hospitality Center project is projected to be completed by 2019.

Additional facts and figures about Katerra's CLT factory include:

- The facility will occupy 29 acres of a prime 52-acre site in Spokane Valley, with easy access to rail lines and interstate highways
 - More than 150 construction-specific jobs will be created to build the CLT factory
 - Construction of the factory will break ground later this fall, with production slated to begin by Q1 of 2018
- <http://katerra.com/en/what-we-do/products/mass-timber-products.html>

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