

# Uncovering the Underlying Truth About Wood: MYTHS VS. FACTS

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Over time, wood framing and building has unwillingly earned a reputation of being a threat to the environment, expensive, energy inefficient and difficult to maintain. On the contrary, speculations are often based on a lack of information. As the most common



way to build structures and houses in Hawaii, it's time to set the record straight and finally sort out the reality and benefits of choosing to build with wood.

Probably the most controversial myth regarding wood is its green building aspect. Due to sustainable forestry practices, a vast majority of the wood products used in the U.S., known as certified lumber, ensure enough supply to build 1.6 million homes each year. With more than 225 million acres in the U.S. and



Canada, certified lumber from sustainable forests is currently the most readily available building material of today. Furthermore, these working or sustainable forests can provide timber for future generations. Wood is a recyclable, renewable, biodegradable, abundant and sustainable building commodity. It is the ultimate green material for architects, designers and builders.

Another common misconception is that wood is more expensive to build with. In today's current market, the price of steel has risen steadily over the last five years because producers are not making enough to meet a global demand. There are also few indications that steel prices are going to drop dramatically any time soon. On the other hand, lumber is cheaper now than it has been for a long time. Wood maintains a competitive pricing advantage over other building materials, including steel, facing reducing supplies for increasing world demands.

Energy also brings up a cost issue when it comes to wood. An assumption is that wood-built structures require a lot of energy, therefore increasing costs. The truth is that wood frame construction actually possesses energy-saving qualities and can meet the most demanding energy codes at a lower cost. Wood is energy efficient because its versatility makes it easy to adjust the width of a wall to accommodate extra insulation where desired. It's 400 times less heat conductive than steel and 8.5 times less conductive than concrete. Additionally, new wood product innovations, such as structural insulated panels (SIPS) and radiant barrier panels, further improve energy efficiency and continue to make wood the premier choice for homebuilding.

There's also a theory that, over time, wood cannot be protected from termites or decay. Although there are certain types of wood that are more naturally able to resist decay, most wood needs treatment to maintain its high level of durability for many decades. Today's preservative treatments for wood protection safely minimize or even eliminate the threat from termites and other insects or decay. In Hawaii's environment, treated wood is essential to providing a strong and durable structure.

Another important myth is that it's more difficult to remodel with wood than with steel. To remodel steel, a homeowner would need such tools as a welder and a cutting torch to alter a structure. On the other hand, wood is an easy workable and do-it-yourself material. Wood comes in an array of colors and shades to suit various tastes and, unlike steel, can be refinished and designed to fit numerous looks. It can also be customized, shaped and cut by contractors to fit the needs of any individual.

Uncovering these truths dissipates a few misguided assumptions. Wood is an inexpensive, natural, environmentally friendly, energy efficient and simple to maintain building material. With all these benefits to building with wood it's hard to understand how so many misguided speculations came to be.