

# THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF WHITE OAK IN NORTH AMERICA: OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW AND STABILIZE THE HARDWOOD MARKET

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## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

No matter what you believe about the past, wood was the most important natural resource in early human economies. This presentation will go over the history of hardwoods in North America from Native Americans leading up to the Industrial Revolution. I will then discuss hardwoods and white oak today for industrial, consumer, and other uses.

## METHODS AND APPROACH

To help the hardwood industry grow and stabilize, we need to research appearance applications for rustic grades, urban wood, thermal modification, and biophilic design. Designers and architects need to be better informed on these applications to improve wood utilization and the public's connectivity to nature. We need to research process improvements for hardwood log grades, quality control, yield recovery, wood utilization, drying, sap stains, automation, and pressure treating to name a few. We also need to examine and research the environmental tools and regulations in more depth. Product category rules, environmental product declarations, life cycle assessments, certifications, tracking, DNA identification, and European Union's regulation on deforestation-free products geolocation can all be used to showcase wood's unique capabilities as a renewable resource. The National Hardwood Lumber Association conducted a focus group with architects and designers to discuss wood, sustainability, and carbon sequestration.

## FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The focus group discussions indicated that there were many misconceptions and lack of knowledge around preserved (treated) wood. As we look to the future, we need to help people recognize the importance of forest change, help them understand the need for super-sustainable wood. We also have a need to attract top talent. We need to demonstrate to the public and those professionals in building and design that the hardwood industry can be forever innovative and provide an endless future of wood use.

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