Call it a simple case of international supply and demand.

Town and Country Cedar Homes, located in the Boyne Valley in Northern Michigan, manufactures Michigan white cedar homes. The wood is remarkably similar to Hinoki, a rare, prized natural resource in Japan. Hinoki is so valued that many Japanese homes contain a single piece of Hinoki carefully placed behind an honored elder’s chair in the dining room.

One year ago, the Japanese External Trade Organization, working to balance the trade situation and meet the demand for housing, recruited Town and Country Cedar Homes to build custom cedar structures in Japan.

Japan has 1.7 million housing starts each year, and the demand is attributed to the country’s deteriorating post-World War II buildings.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity for American building manufacturers. Japan is in dire need of good housing,” said Town and Country Cedar Homes President Stephen Biggs. He attributes the high demand to superior American building products.

“Japan is decades behind the United States in product technology,” Biggs said. “American building products are much more advanced. After the earthquake in Kobe, most of the buildings that stood were the imported housing structures.”

Town and Country has established a network of dealers and distributors in Japan, including a structured marketing, delivery and building program. The company constructs walls and other structural components in Michigan and ships them to Japan for assembly.

Town and Country will build 17 homes in Japan this year. In addition, the company has presented its building system to the planning committee of the 1996 Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Town and Country also recently began construction of a series of standardized dental clinics in Japan and Thailand.

The company harvests Northern White Cedar in Petoskey, and the wood is treated through an exclusive kiln drying system to prevent twisting, warping and shrinkage.

Town and Country created a patented Post and Sill Building System that is customized for each home. The building system is usually composed of hand-hewn or rough-sawn exterior white cedar, vertical load-bearing timber, an internal wiring chase and a rigid insulation core of Celotex Thermax® Sheathing or Celotex Tuff-R® “C” Commercial Insulating Sheathing. The R-value of Town and Country’s building system ranges from 14.4 to 28.8.

Thermax is a polyisocyanurate foam core board reinforced with a patented combination of glass...
The interior of a Town and Country cedar home made with Northern White Cedar. The wood is remarkably similar to Hinoki, a rare, prized natural resource in Japan.

fibers and special chemical additives for fire performance and improved dimensional stability. Tuff-R® “C” Commercial is made with a rigid polyisocyanurate closed-cell core interlaced with glass fiber strands for strength and stability.

“This massive solid wall system gives Town and Country homes an insulation value and structural stability that is unsurpassed in the industry,” Biggs said.

Both Thermax and Tuff-R are also used in Town and Country’s roof systems. In one application, two layers of 2-inch Thermax were cut 22 1/2 inches horizontally and cross-stripped.

About the Author
The Celotex Corporation, based in Tampa, Fla., is a national manufacturer of building and roofing products for residential and commercial use.