



VIBRANT CITIES LAB



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URBAN WOOD REUSE



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# Elkhart, IN: Creating Value in the Wake of Emerald Ash Borer

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Photography

Knowing that the arrival of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) brings lot of tree removals and therefore generates a lot of wood waste, Elkhart established

## LOCATION

Elkhart, IN

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## POPULATION

51,421

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## CLIMATE

Elkhart, Indiana, gets 39 inches of rain per year. The US average is 39. Snowfall is 51 inches. The average US city gets 26 inches of snow per year. The number of days with any measurable precipitation is 81.

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## DEMOGRAPHICS

an urban wood use program that creates products and funds tree planting.

66.1% White, 15.4% African American, 0.6% Native American, 0.9% Asian, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 12.9% from other races, and 4.1% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 22.5% of the population

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**The urban wood use program was established in** 2015 through City code, § 98.10 URBAN WOOD UTILIZATION, EDUCATION AND TREE PLANTING PROGRAM – ELKHARTWOOD.

## CONVENING

At the onset of the ElkhartWood program, The Elkhart Environmental Center and the City's Forestry Division first went to the community to ask what kind of urban wood use program they might need and how it should operate. An expert from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources was brought in to participate in the meeting with stakeholders, help answer questions, and bring credibility to the nascent effort. Elkhart has a large Amish and Mennonite community with a lot of woodworkers who had interest and expertise in the newly available materials. These stakeholders were convened informally as the ElkhartWood Products Network.

## **STAKEHOLDER REQUESTS**

Stakeholders wanted certain things from the program. They wanted to know where the logs came from (what geographic location); they wanted to be able to buy logs singly or in loads; and they wanted to be able to pay for the logs and then pick them up a month or two later rather than have to take them at the time of

sale. They also wanted proceeds from sales to go to fund public tree planting operations.

## **THREE YEARS OF SUCCESS**

The program is in its third year. Information on logs is brought into the EEC and tracked on an Excel spreadsheet. Most buyers buy one to four logs at a time, but some buy in lots of 10-20. The majority of the trees that come in are ash, but other species come in as well. If City Forestry knows a member of the ElkhartWood Products Network is looking for a certain burl or character defect that may otherwise result in the log being chipped, they will bring it to the yard for that woodworker.

The program is focused on sustainability – meeting its goals without being needlessly complex. The private and public sector partners collaborate to exchange ideas and opportunities to engage and educate the public on urban wood use, markets, and products.

ElkhartWood is a great example of a community turning a challenge, the arrival of an invasive insect, into an opportunity.

## FUNDING

- The urban wood use program is established in City code, § 98.10 URBAN WOOD UTILIZATION, EDUCATION AND TREE PLANTING PROGRAM – ELKHARTWOOD.
- Revenue comes from the sale of logs administered by The Elkhart Environmental Center and the City's Forestry Division.
- They are overseen by The Board of Public Works whose responsibilities include oversight of all bidding, contracts, and

## IMPLEMENTATION

- [ElkhartWood](#) Urban Wood Utilization Program home page
- [Elkhart Ordinance 98.10](#) – Urban Wood Utilization, Education and Tree Planting Program – ElkhartWood

agreements, as well as the sale of surplus property.

- Proceeds from the sale of logs go into a special non-reverting fund (not to the General Fund) to support public land tree planting and the Elkhartwood program.

## **PARTNERS**

- Elkhart Environmental Center
- City Forestry Division
- Board of Public Works