The Elkhart Environmental Center (EEC) is committed to providing opportunities for citizens to create a healthier and more resilient local environment. The ElkhartWood program, a partnership between the Forestry Division and the EEC, is dedicated to full-circle urban forestry. It creates access to high-quality logs from city trees for sawyers, woodworkers, and others in the local wood products industry to utilize for value-added processing, keeping the product local and its unique history intact. Sale of these logs supports community tree plantings. Therefore, when city trees do have to come down, the program enables them to be put to their highest and best use and in doing so invests back into the tree canopy of the city.

The ElkhartWood program also supports workshops and educational opportunities related to urban forestry and wood products.

**How it all began**
The program began with a meeting back in October of 2012 that brought together sawyers, woodworkers, and others in the local wood products industry along with the City Forester and the EEC. The City of Elkhart, like so many communities around the country, was in the middle of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation. EAB is an invasive beetle whose larvae consume the living tissue between the bark and the heartwood of ash trees, cutting off the flow of water and nutrients; girdling the tree.

EAB does not hurt the heartwood of the tree so it can still be used, but with a large number of the city’s ash trees expected to come down over the next few years something needed to be done so it would not go to waste. This was the challenge placed before the group that met in 2012. Together they helped develop the parameters for an urban wood utilization program that would give back to the community by planting new trees.

**ElkhartWood Products Network**
The ElkhartWood Products Network is comprised of local woodworkers, sawyers, and others involved in the wood products and tree care industries. These individuals have given their time and talent to the development of the ElkhartWood urban wood utilization program. They provide insight and feedback for developing and improving the program as well as purchase logs that come from city trees. If you would like to get involved in
Program Information
The goal of the ElkhartWood program is to think about the city forest as more than just the trees that are currently growing along streets and in parks, but to think creatively about how we as citizens can contribute to our urban canopy and how we can make the best use of city trees after they come down. The ElkhartWood program connects people to the urban canopy of our city by finding the value of community-grown trees and putting it towards planting the next generation of tree canopy in the city. ElkhartWood is full-circle urban forestry, finding value and increasing capacity for trees that are here, trees that are gone and the trees that are yet to grow.

What makes it full-circle?
When trees come down in the city or are removed for safety reasons, they aren’t going to waste. If they are of good quality they are going to sawyers, woodworkers, artists, and others who then take these logs and turn them into furniture, building materials, art, and more. Certainly not all trees are suitable for milling, most are only suitable for firewood or wood chips. However, the trees that are suitable for milling become symbols of the stories and places of Elkhart. The logs are also a resource that can become a value-added product, locally milled, crafted, and sold in our community. Wood products from city streets and parks? That’s about as locally grown as you can get!

the network, please contact Jamison Czarnecki at (574) 293-5070 or send an email to jamison.czarnecki@coei.org.