



# THE URBAN WOOD TOOLKIT

## BULLETIN #5: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOOD INDUSTRY PARTNERS

### BUILDING WOOD INDUSTRY SUPPORT FOR URBAN WOOD

Many of the urban wood projects operating across the country rely on unique public-private partnerships in order to maximize utilization and be successful. A variety of partnership opportunities exist, and it is critical to always prioritize the unique needs and capacities of your community when exploring your options. This bulletin, the fifth in a series designed to provide tools for communities considering an urban wood use plan, identifies resources for finding potential partners and discusses examples of how to build relationships with members of the wood industry.

### GENERAL GUIDELINES TO BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOOD INDUSTRY PARTNERS

#### ***Step 1: Develop a comprehensive list of potential wood industry partners.***

- Consider a variety of possible partners across the full spectrum of the urban wood supply chain, including both members of the traditional forest products industry and organizations that operate only in the urban sector. Some options may include:
  - Tree service companies
  - Portable sawmills
  - Lumber companies
  - Log buyers
  - Loggers and timber companies
  - Mulch producers
  - Pallet producers
  - Woodworking organizations
  - Cogeneration plants or utility companies
- Use a variety of sources to identify potential partners in your service area. The following groups (or their local counterparts if you are outside of Michigan) may have good information or directories:
  - [Michigan Urban Wood Network](#)
  - [Firewood Scout](#)
  - [MDNR Forest Products Directory](#)
  - [Michigan Conservation Districts](#)
  - [Michigan State University Extension](#)
  - [Wood-Mizer Pro-Sawyer Network](#)
  - [Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association](#)
  - [Arboriculture Society of Michigan](#)
  - [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Recycled Materials Directory](#)
  - [Michigan Association of Timbermen](#)
  - [Sustainable Resources Institute](#)
  - [Michigan Forest Biomaterials Institute](#)
  - [Michigan Green Industry Association](#)

#### ***Step 2: Prior to initiating a conversation, know your own partnership objectives.***

- Why are you interested in finding partners? Are you looking to buy, sell, donate, or pay for services?
- What benefit will this partnership provide you? To your partners? To others?
- What specifics do you need to know about their services?
  - Do they provide the processing or other services you need?
  - Are they interested in single-log pickup or do they only want large quantities?
  - Who handles wood transportation? Will they bring their own equipment for loading?
  - What is their typical turnaround time?
  - Does availability vary by season?
  - Do they have limits on the species, size, quantities, and condition of wood they will accept?
  - Will they take all logs that you set aside? Will they take lower-value material?
  - Will your crews be expected to pre-screen or sort material in advance?
  - Can the processor train your staff to meet their log or other materials specifications?



- Do they have recommendations on sort yard practices?
- Is the potential partner conveniently located? Where will processing take place?
- What payment types will be considered?
- Will you be compensated, or can you trade goods for services?
- Will you be charged by the hour, by volume, or for additional fees?

### ***Step 3: Select the best medium for effective communication.***

- How will the conversation be best delivered: face-to-face, email, phone call, public meeting, etc.?
  - Not all potential partners will use or prioritize the same medium of communication.
  - Allow ample time for response, as many of these industry partners are working in the field and may not be able to check communication outlets frequently.
- Be sure to discuss the best methods for long-term communication if a partnership develops:
  - How would they like to be contacted when wood is available?
  - Do they want photos of available material before making a trip to your facility?
  - How far in advance would they like to be contacted for any new supply?

### ***Step 4: Build trust and gather important information.***

- Keep a positive tone and be prepared for questions, pushback, and hesitation.
- Ask the important questions, listen, and take notes on the information that is provided to you.
- Make sure to keep the conversation on track and be respectful of everyone's time. Many of these industry partners will be busy and only have a brief amount of time allotted.

### ***Step 5: Have realistic expectations and a realistic implementation timeline.***

- Like with any partnership endeavor, merging goals and objectives of all parties can be time-consuming. Be patient and flexible. Don't rush the process.
- Make sure expectations are clear and understood by all parties.
- Many mills already have an ample log supply and may only be interested in logs of a certain quality.
- Developing a partnership before removals occur is the best strategy. It is often difficult to find interest in wood that has already been stockpiled for a long time. It is even harder to find interest in wood from an urgent tree removal that must be dealt with immediately.

### ***Step 6: Establish a mutually beneficial partnership agreement.***

- Using the information you have collected, initiate a mutually beneficial agreement with clear terms.
- Start small and work towards a more comprehensive model. Incremental change may be the most feasible way for most communities to improve the sustainability of wood recovery options year-by-year. Any improvements in wood recovery, waste reduction, cost control, and partnership development is cause for celebration and is worthwhile.

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