EAST CHICAGO life

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR EAST CHICAGO NEWS AND EVENTS

CELEBRATING 125 YEARS >>> 1893 – 2018











"We are a strong city with an even stronger resolve to provide for our future"

We began this year – our 125th – the way we began our first: a city in the midst of rapid transformation.

In this issue of East Chicago Life, we are sharing our goals – our vision for an even more vibrant city.

The changes you see – from the restoration of Block Stadium, two new recreation centers and continuous miles of new roads – are the result of our dedicated team of professionals who meet every challenge.



QUALITY OF LIFE

Four fire engines, 50 police cars and 10 public works trucks are keeping our city safe and clean. A changeover to Superior Ambulance has increased advanced life support services by 50 percent.

BEAUTIFICATION

An army of dedicated workers are keeping our streets clean. More than 800 trees will be planted this year. Our first off-road bike path is in the works; a second is planned alongside Roxana Marsh.

Our lakefront has been reclaimed for public use and enjoyment with new investment at Jeorse Park.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

A $14 million multiyear project will make Indianapolis Boulevard more functional and attractive. Another $13 million has been earmarked to improve intersections along Columbus Drive and reconstruct Guthrie Street, improvements that will pave the way for a $38 million, 208-unit senior living complex.

Happy Birthday East Chicago!

ANTHONY COPELAND
Mayor City of East Chicago

NEW COMMUNITY CENTERS GEARING UP FOR SUMMER GRAND OPENINGS

Construction crews are putting the finishing touches on a brand new Heritage Hall, which is planned for a grand reopening in May.

The heavily utilized community center – at 4506 Tod Avenue – was razed last year to make way for a new building with a larger footprint and expanded recreational offerings.

The other new facility — the former Pennsylvania Center at Broadway and Guthrie — will open this summer with a new name and enhanced amenities.

"We created a redevelopment plan based on an assessment of need," City Engineer William Allen said. "It would have cost more to bring Heritage Hall and Pennsylvania Center up to our standards than it would cost to rebuild them." •

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Our community centers provide free recreational activities, educational programs and sporting events from 2:30 to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday during the spring.

INFO: This free drop-in program is offered for children 5-18. Registration forms are available at your local community center or at the park office.



The greenhouse's lush foliage and beautiful sculptures (left) offer a glimpse of beauty on display for the city's annual flower show. The aquaponic gardens (top right) provide a bounty of greens, herbs and other seasonal produce. Greenhouse Supervisor Hilda Aleman (above) packages free greens for the city's residents. [Steve Segura photos]

AQUAPONIC GARDENS PRODUCING BOUNTY OF FREE, HEALTHY PRODUCE FOR RESIDENTS

Pastor Marty Henderson is a big fan of the aquaponic gardens at Washington Park – taking part in the weekly harvest of what the urban farm has to offer.

"This is the best-tasting produce I have ever eaten," said Henderson, who tends to a parish garden in Gary. "I eat mostly salads now, thanks to the garden, which has helped me shed 62 pounds."

Parks and Recreation Director Mayra Acosta said it is a treat to see Mayor Copeland's vision come to life.

The city has invested $500,000 to restore the 85-year-old greenhouses and launch a program of sustainable produce based on a model developed by Ball State University.

Greenhouse Supervisor Hilda Aleman said the garden provides 40-50 pounds of produce a week.

"Through the city's investment and our hard work, we are providing fresh produce for our residents all year round," Aleman said." •

FREE PRODUCE

East Chicago's aquaponic gardens provide 40-50 pounds of produce a week. Residents can pick up free greens and other seasonal items after 10 a.m. on Thursdays.

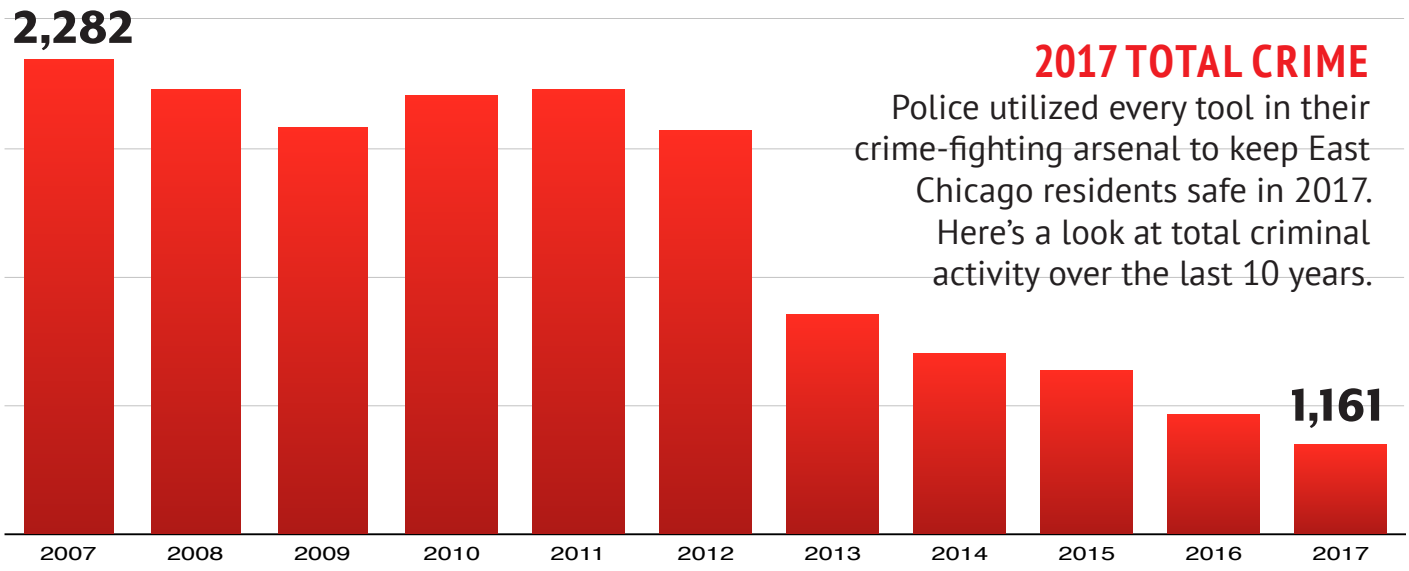
SENIOR FLOWER SHOW

Senior citizens can check out the spectacular blooms from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 9 at our annual flower show. Registration is required. The greenhouse will be open to the public May 10-11 for viewing.

GREENHOUSE CUISINE

Join us the first and third Wednesday of the month as Chef Rich Rodriguez teaches how to cook healthy meals using aquaponic produce and herbs. Classes are $15 per session or $55 for four classes. Registration is required.

INFO: For reservations or more information on these and other events, please call (219) 391-8474.



2017 TOTAL CRIME

Police utilized every tool in their crime-fighting arsenal to keep East Chicago residents safe in 2017. Here's a look at total criminal activity over the last 10 years.

EC CRIME CONTINUES TO DROP

East Chicago Police Chief Frank Smith credits the downward trend in crime to great police work by his officers and the watchfulness of residents.

"We believe in community policing.' Smith said. "Our wins in this fight against crime are thanks to our dedicated officers as well as our residents, who know to call us whenever something doesn't look right."

A pair of ongoing initiatives: "Night Out Against Crime" and Citizen's Police Academy – an educational series where residents learn about policing from officers– have engaged residents in meaningful ways.

"Our community has stepped up and we are grateful," Smith said.

"Having them partner with us has made it so we can be more proactive. The great news is: our crime rates have gone down six years in a row. Last year, crime was reduced by 6 percent. Thank you to everyone who is working to help make East Chicago the safest city in the region." •



CITIZEN'S POLICE ACADEMY

From prevention to intervention, East Chicago Citizen's Police Academy gives residents a taste of law enforcement.

When Pastors Edward and Myrtle Townsend were accepted in 2016, the husband-and-wife duo never imagined it would be a life-changer. "The Citizen's Police Academy taught us what to look for in our neighborhood that might mean something is amiss," Edward said.

For Myrtle, it was an opportunity to bond with like-minded neighbors. "We had only been living in the city five years when we took the class. We loved it so much, we've become ambassadors who assist in every class."

INFO: For more information or to apply, call (219) 391-8318.

SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING. Call the our anonymous tip hotline at (219) 391-8500.

EAST CHICAGO'S FIELD OF DREAMS

In a few short weeks, Block Stadium will be primed and ready to field offers from baseball's up-and-coming dream teams.

Since construction began on the home of the East Chicago Central Cardinals in 2017, the vintage field has been transformed into a world-class venue.

Public Works Director Keith Selvie, along with Planning and Economic Development Director Marino Solorio, developed a vision to maximize the field's historic past while tapping into 21st Century trappings like Wi-Fi and fiber optics.

Selvie said what began as a modest project to refurbish the field built in 1942 within eyeshot of St. Catherine Hospital, morphed into a multi-phase construction.

"Already the field has been completely redone – from sod and irrigation to a new warning track, scoreboard and roof," he said. "Phase II will include new locker rooms, additional space for concessions and dedicated VIP seating."

Solorio said the city is ready to begin marketing to league entrepreneurs who see the value in bringing America's pastimes back to its beginnings.

"None of this could have happened without Mayor Copeland," Solorio said. " He wants families to enjoy an afternoon at the ballfield right here in East Chicago." •

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK…

The multi-million-dollar investment includes new bullpens, field drainage, lockers, shower rooms, evergreen backdrop, accessible seating, dugouts, bench seating, press box, back-stop, new scoreboard, pay box, concessions, grandstand roof, fencing, sloped picnic areas and party decks at both wings.

DID YOU KNOW?

Block Stadium is home to the following teams:

- East Chicago Central's Cardinals
- Calumet College of St. Joseph's Crimson Wave
- Post 369 American Legion's summer league



EAST CHICAGO WINS FIBER OPTIC RACE

After years of phased construction, the City of East Chicago has fulfilled the vision of Mayor Anthony Copeland to invest in improved technology and communications, while enhancing opportunities for economic development throughout the city.

The investment has resulted in East Chicago becoming the first municipality in Northwest Indiana to complete construction of a high-speed, fiber-optic network.

Underneath your feet is 17 miles of fiber optic cables — including a 13-mile loop constructed along major business routes.

Information Technology Director Kevin Klocek said the network has accelerated the speed of communication while reducing costs in many of the city's telecommunications operations.

"We are excited about this project," he said. "This investment has dramatically increased the speed at which we communicate.



WHERE ARE THE HOT SPOTS?

Looking for a place to use your computer, cell phone or tablet? East Chicago's new fiber-optic network features Wi-Fi hotspots throughout the city including Main Street Plaza and Jeorse Park Beach as well as the city's main business districts and parks.

"At the same time, we have been able to significantly reduce the costs of computer and telephone connections."

The city entered into an agreement with NITCO to assist in managing the network that is being made available to the public, while extending services — such as internet and phone — to businesses throughout the city's fiber loop.

Next, all city telephones will be moved onto the network.

Fiber optic lines are strands of optically pure glass – about the diameter of a human hair – that carry digital information through underground cables.

In addition to telephone and computer lines, the city's 700 security cameras are now tethered to the fiber optic loop, boosting savings.

Free Wi-Fi is accessible in all city parks and in other locations.

"NITCO is committed to building additional infrastructure as needed," Klocek said. "Plans are in the works to see where the network can be expanded into our business districts and neighborhoods to meet future demand."

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN IMPROVEMENTS ...

EAST CHICAGO MARINA

Projects at the marina that are nearing completion include:

- State-of-the-art piers featuring cable television and Wi-Fi
- New social spaces for boaters in front of each pier
- Harbor walk with benches, additional seating and a one-of-kind umbrella sculpture that beautifies the landscape

Other proposed projects on this year's list include:

- Painting and refacing all marina buildings
- Installing murals on some of the exterior walls
- Reopening the Marina Bar and Grill with nightly entertainment
- Offering water activities and rentals such as paddle boats, Jet Skis, snorkeling, scuba diving and much, much more.

LAKEFRONT PROJECTS

Work continues on the lakefront, including:

- Installation of the new Beach Ball sculpture
- Construction of a permanent stage on the beach
- Restoration of the dune by planting pines, shrubs and herbaceous plugs as well as replacing sand and moving earth.

STARS SUMMER CAMP

It's time to register your child for this year's Stars Summer Camp.

WHEN: 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. **May 1**

WHERE: East Chicago Park Department,
1615 East 142nd Street

INFO: (219) 391-8474

MAY MOVIE NIGHT

Grab a lawn chair and head to park to watch Disney's "Coco" on the big screen.

WHEN: 6 p.m. (dusk) **May 24**

WHERE: Tod Park, 140th and Indianapolis Boulevard

BLESSING OF THE WATER

Join Mayor Copeland and the City of East Chicago for this annual Memorial Day ceremony.

WHEN: 10 a.m.-1 p.m. **May 28**

WHERE: East Chicago Marina, 3301 Aldis Avenue

TEEN BEACH BASH

Grab a blanket or a lawn chair and head to the beach for a evening of sand volleyball and teen fellowship.

WHEN: 5-9 p.m. **June 8**

WHERE: Jeorse Park Beach, 3301 Aldis Avenue

INFO: (219) 391-8482

JUNE MOVIE NIGHT

Grab a lawn chair and head to park to watch "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle"on the big screen.

WHEN: 7 p.m. (dusk) **June 21**

WHERE: Washington Park, 1615 East 142nd Street

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