EAST CHICAGO life

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR EAST CHICAGO NEWS AND EVENTS

ANIMALS FIND GOOD HOMES

Animals surrendered to East Chicago Animal Control are getting a new lease on life, thanks to Leon Valdez, the manager of inspections and animal control.

When Valdez assumed managing Animal Control in June 2018, the East Chicago facility was at capacity.

"I reached out to no-kill animal shelters in the region. They took many of our animals, which have since found good homes," he said. "Humane Indiana also helped out by providing food, treats and bedding."

INFO: Call the city Animal Control at (219) 391-8467.

"I encourage you to invest in East Chicago – and our ongoing efforts to beautify the city"

Did you know visually appealing communities increase property values, attract businesses and improve the city's image?

Beauty is one of the three most influential factors in residents feeling a loyalty to their community. Research shows a community that takes pride in itself promotes good behavior among its residents.

It's what we do in this city: We look at parks and parkways and imagine how we might augment those spaces with new plantings or public art to make them even more attractive. We take stock of Jeorse Park to see how our new plants fared under this winter's brutal conditions and what we can do to make our amazing lakefront even more inviting.

It's an ongoing process, a series of steps that lead to huge results when it comes to making our city more beautiful. In just the last four years, we have invested $250 million in improvements. Some of that has been spent on thoughtful enhancements using public money. Private companies have also stepped forward to help. This year, we will be spending $40 million on infrastructure improvements and enhancements citywide.



As a city of neighbors, I invite you to invest in our city, too! Be a part of this ongoing effort to beautify East Chicago. Across the country, communities like ours are coming together to plant flowers and shrubs, paint planters and benches.

It's not only good aesthetically, it's a great way to be more neighborly.

There are a million ways to help. You can start by participating in our annual Spring Clean-up or even plant trees during our Arbor Day initiative in Marktown. I hope you'll join me.

ANTHONY COPELAND
Mayor City of East Chicago

SPRING CLEANUP

The robins have returned and snows have melted. Equally welcoming as a harbinger of spring: Public Works Director Keith Selvie is preparing for the city's annual Spring Cleanup — where extra crews are scheduled to pick up what winter left behind.

Residents are encouraged to take advantage of the increased collections.

Now in its third year, Selvie said, "Spring Cleanup is a chance for residents to remove any items they would like to discard with trash and yard waste. More importantly, it offers an opportunity to interact with the East Chicago Public Works Department and help make the City of East Chicago a more beautiful place to live."

DISTRICT CLEANUP SCHEDULE

The district spring cleanup will be held from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. as follows:

DISTRICT 4: April 1-5

DISTRICT 6: April 8-12

DISTRICT 2: April 15-19

DISTRICT 3: April 22-26

DISTRICT 5: April 29 - May 3

DISTRICT 1: May 6-10

- Place large items in the alley or curbside where alleys do not exist.
- Secure all items that may be blown away by the wind.
- Properly bag all yard-waste materials and place at the curb.

Please note: All abandoned vehicles, expired plates and parked vehicles where "No Parking" signs are placed will be towed at owner's expense.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please call East Chicago Public Works at (219) 391-8463 or (219) 391-8464.









East Chicago Fire Chief Anthony Serna (above) helps set up a Pack 'n Play for Diana Vega and her 10-month-old daughter as part of the citywide DOSE – Direct On Scene Education – program. East Chicago firefighters (upper right) have been trained to ask if a baby lives at a residence so they can provide a free Pack 'n Play as well as safe sleep education, such as the "Sleep Baby: Safe and Snug" book pictured here. INFO: For more information about the DOSE program, please call Fire Chief Anthony Serna at (219) 391-8472. [Steve Segura photos]

FIRST RESPONDERS HELPING SAVE BABIES' LIVES

Diana Vega was upset – at first – when she locked herself and her two young children out of their home on a cold day in March.

In retrospect, Vega believes it was absolutely the best thing that could have happened.

After firefighters helped the lifelong East Chicago resident get inside, they brought a Pack 'n Play to safeguard the 10-month-old from accidentally smothering while she is sleeping, installed smoke detectors Vega had already purchased and replaced an outdated carbon monoxide detector.

Fire Chief Anthony Serna considers everyday events like that the ultimate win in the fire department's quest to improve safety – particularly for East Chicago's youngest residents.

"Our newest initiative is providing safe sleep options and instruction for parents of infants under 12 months of age, who research shows are most vulnerable to accidental smothering either because they are placed in the wrong position while sleeping or don't have age appropriate cribs," he said.

"We are fully embracing the DOSE project – Direct On Scene Education – founded by Lt. Mike Sharp, St. John FD and former East Chicago medic. Everyone in the department has been trained to ask the right questions, provide a free Pack 'n Play crib for infants who need one and provide safe sleep education."

Serna said the fire department is uniquely positioned to implement the DOSE program citywide.

"Our firefighters are trained to ask families if a baby lives there," he said. "If they do, we talk to them about safe sleep. Our goal is to have zero accidental smothering incidents in the city this year." •



HOW A BABY SLEEP MATTERS ...

Babies should never sleep in bed with parents or siblings, in a car seat, on an air mattress, pillow or with covers.

For the first 12 months, babies should sleep on their backs in cribs or in a Pack 'n Play with climate-appropriate sleepers. If you fear your baby isn't warm enough, you can put a T-shirt and socks under their sleepers.

BEFORE



AFTER



FROM TATTERED TO TREMENDOUS! Juan and Idalia Olvera turned the former El Portrillo Restaurant into the talk of the town. The flower shop's new facade showcases Laly's creative genius in crafting floral creations and has given a healthy bump to the store's bottom line, which increased by 15 percent to 20 percent in each of the two years since the facade improvements were completed. Stay tuned: the Olveras are looking at making additional investments in the neighborhood. [Photos provided]

BUSINESSES CASH IN ON FACADE PROGRAM

Juan and Idalia Olvera discovered the East Chicago facade improvement program while they were still getting Laly's Florist established in the community.

That partnership – the city contributed 80 percent to the facelift while the Olveras chipped in 20 percent – boosted sales at just the right time, allowing the couple to invest in expanding the popular flower shop.

"When we started working with the city, we occupied half of a building and one soda pop-sized cooler to keep arrangements fresh," he said. "Today, we own the entire store front and have three large coolers along with a display cooler."

With the city willing to invest up to $25,000 in the project – including architectural renderings of what the finished storefront would look like – the Olveras had the facade rebuilt to Idalia's specifications. New doors, windows, awnings and lighting helped transform the building – and the business.

"We involved the city at every step in the process and followed the guidelines," he said. "The process is lengthy – but simple. The people in Economic Development became our best friends. They answered questions and welcomed us stopping by to discuss next steps. They offered advice but left decisions about our contractor and details to us."

Marino Solorio, director of Planning and Economic Development, points to the Laly's Florist with pride.

"Business startups, like Laly's Florist, are the kinds of businesses that built East Chicago more than a century ago," Solorio said. "The facade program is helping a new generation of entrepreneurs build their own businesses while helping rebuild East Chicago's retail hubs."



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

East Chicago's Facade Improvement Program is a partnership between the city and business owners. The program boosts the efforts of owners to improve the front of their buildings by contributing matching funds – either 50 percent or 80 percent – up to $25,000.

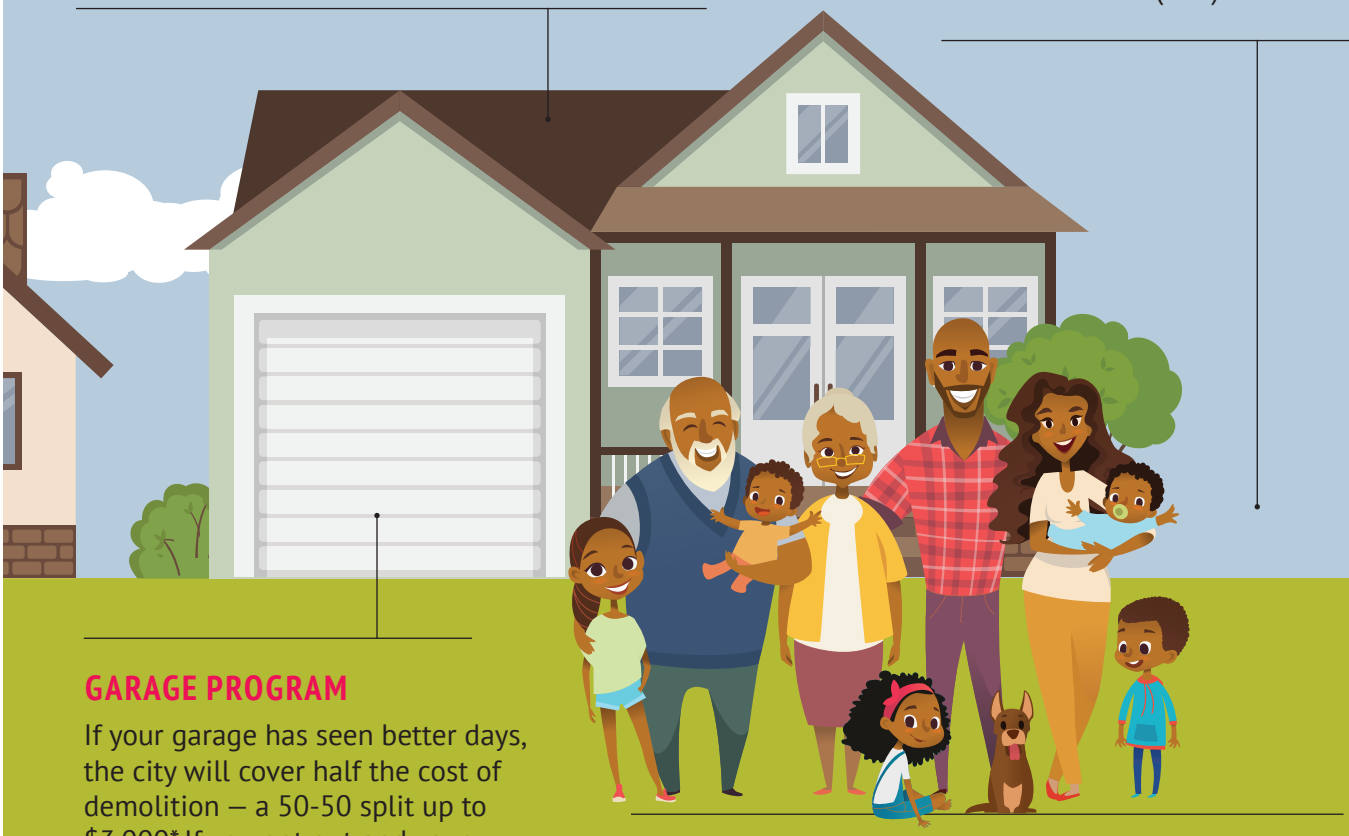
INFO: More information is available on the city's website at **eastchicago.com** or by calling Planning and Economic Development at (219) 391-8205.

ROOF PROGRAM

East Chicago Redevelopment is launching a program this spring to help single-family, owner-occupied homeowners pay for roof repairs. The city will provide a 50-50 split up to $5,000 to repair a homeowner's roof (no garages) that is in most need of related work. **INFO:** Call (219) 391-8513.

SIDE LOT PROGRAM

The Side Lot Initiative allows residents to acquire vacant single lots under 35 feet owned by Redevelopment. Applicants must live on and own a property adjacent to the vacant lot, be current on all property taxes and have no code violations. **INFO:** Call (219) 391-8205.



GARAGE PROGRAM

If your garage has seen better days, the city will cover half the cost of demolition — a 50-50 split up to $3,000*. If you opt out and your garage is determined to be a safety hazard, the city will hire out the work and put a lien on your property for the full cost. ***INFO:** Please contact the Building Department at (219) 391-8294 to see if you qualify.

DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The city is offering homebuyers $10,000 to help purchase an existing home and $25,000 for those looking to build. Only single-family homes are eligible for the program. **INFO:** Contact Redevelopment Director Frank Rivera at (219) 391-8513 to see if you qualify.

RENTAL REGISTRATION DEADLINE: East Chicago requires landlords to register every occupied rental property. The cost is $5 per unit through April 15 and $105 per unit after April 15. This annual registration is not optional. It's the law. You can register your properties at the Building Department, 4525 Indianapolis. Visit **eastchicago.com** for a complete list of essential documents.

EASTER EGG HUNT

Grab your basket and head to Washington Park for our annual Easter Egg Hunt. Children ages 3 to 12 are invited to hunt for eggs! The afternoon includes a raffle, games and so much more.

WHEN: Noon-3 p.m. **April 13**
WHERE: Washington Park
NOTE: If raining, we'll move to the Bessie Owens Center.
INFO: (219) 391-8474

ARBOR DAY - EARTH DAY

Please join Mayor Copeland in planting 50 native trees in celebration of Arbor Day. Register online at **MarktownArborDay.eventbrite.com**.

WHEN: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. **April 26**
WHERE: Marktown Park
INFO: (219) 391-8474

STARS SUMMER CAMP

It's time to register your child for this year's camp.

WHEN: 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. **May 1-31**

WHERE: Parks & Recreation

INFO: (219) 391-8474

ANNUAL FLOWER SHOW

Grab your Sunday hat and join us for a Victorian Tea Party. The afternoon includes a light brunch, raffles and games. Register at the Parks & Rec office.

WHEN: Noon-3 p.m. **May 8**

WHERE: EC Greenhouse

INFO: (219) 391-8474

MAY MOVIE NIGHT

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

WHEN: 7 p.m. (dusk) **May 23**

WHERE: Tod Park

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