EAST CHICAGO life

YOUR LOCAL SOURCE FOR EAST CHICAGO NEWS AND EVENTS

2024 STATE OF THE CITY

NEW ROADS, HOUSING, INFRASTRUCTURE HAVE US PRIMED FOR FUTURE GROWTH



We marked 2023 with projects that significantly – and positively – impact each one of us. As your mayor, one of my jobs is to keep track of where we are while adding to the list of what we need to do next. Innovation at every level was the hallmark of 2023.

We made streets safer. Electric vehicles in public works are reducing our carbon footprint and making the air cleaner. Underneath our roads are utility upgrades that keep the transmission lines impervious to ground-water infiltration as we commit to improvements for stormwater management.

Behind every innovation are workers – from those who lead departments to our bus drivers, police who patrol our streets and those who beautify our parks – who collectively say, "We can do more and better for the residents we serve." You are the reason we are here. Your best interests are why we make the choices we do.

The long-awaited Indianapolis Boulevard project checked all the boxes. As a primary thoroughfare, it served the needs of a vast majority of residents who use it every day. Upgrades added much-needed safety. City tax dollars were saved to meet the local match. We were successful in targeting state and federal dollars to equal our investment.

We are thrilled to hear from you – whether that is a pat-on-the-back for something we did well or suggestions on what you need us to do better.

Thank you, East Chicago!

ANTHONY COPELAND
Mayor City of East Chicago

ABOUT THE SERIES

This is the first of two newsletters featuring the State of the City.

ISSUE #1

A special report on all the exciting projects East Chicago accomplished in 2023 and the new developments in your neighborhood.

ISSUE #2

Coming next: A special report on what East Chicago is working on in 2024.

[PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT]

Completion of the South Shore double-tracking project opened growth opportunities in 2023 for cities along the way, none more so than East Chicago. The growth of clean industry, new housing and opportunities for business start-ups have primed the city for expansion.

- **Transit Development:** As one of seven designated Transit Development Districts between Illinois and Michigan, East Chicago stands to gain through accelerated development and public infrastructure investment surrounding the South Shore station.
- **Prairie Crossing:** Excitement is growing around Prairie Crossing, the city's newest housing development since 2010. Located south of Columbus Drive near the eastern border, Prairie Crossing offers residents proximity to parks, Block Stadium, healthcare and Lake Michigan beaches.
- **Marquette Greenway:** East Chicago's Marquette Greenway Trail has been designated, making it the first pedestrian/bike trail in the city. Part of a federal/local project that stretches from Chicago to the Indiana-Michigan border, the Marquette Greenway makes the southern shore of Lake Michigan accessible to residents without using cars.









[BUILDING DEPARTMENT]

The Building Department split its time in 2023 – razing blighted structures to make way for the new while overseeing a spate of construction. Healthlinc Pharmacy, Wendy's and a federally funded senior-housing complex are just a sampling.

- **Demolition:** The Building Department coordinated the demolition of 21 buildings using $311,764 in Unsafe Building Funds. Officials are anticipating demolition of another 24 structures this year. The newly vacant properties are ready for housing or commercial purposes. In some cases, adjacent properties are combined to create economic development opportunities.
- **Marktown:** Redevelopment is breathing new life into historic Marktown with a facade program that maintains the classic architecture of the century-old workers' housing while adding features today's families are seeking. The first upgrade – on a duplex owned by the city – has caught the attention of its neighbors.
- **Levin Building:** Once a furniture store that carried all that was new in sofas, tables and lighting, the Levin Building is being reimagined as a banquet facility with housing units that maintain the unique character of the original structure filling in the spacious upstairs.

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[ROADS PROJECTS]

Years of planning ushered in the largest single-year infrastructure construction season in 2023. Projects were designed to enhance safety and create efficiencies both above – and below – ground. New pavement, lighting, sidewalks, ADA-compliant corner ramps and beautification were all part of the package.

- **Magoun Avenue:** At $6.5 million, Magoun Avenue from 147th to 151st has been rebuilt with a design that harkens back to the city's early days while embracing 21st Century advancements, to better serve the west side of the city.
- **Indianapolis Boulevard:** It was a combination of federal state and local funds that built 2.7 miles of Indianapolis Boulevard at a cost of $21 million. The multi-year project to rebuild the major artery – from 152nd to Columbus Drive – is on target for completion in 2025.
- **Dickey Road:** Improvements to 1.3 miles of Dickey Road include a more durable base to stand up to the constant flow of heavy rigs, roundabouts to speed up traffic and lights to improve safety particularly for those who live in Marktown. The cost: $4 million.









[TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT]

Transportation Director Francisco Rosado began 2023 and will end 2024 with a pair of initiatives – to rebuild ridership and expand the roster of dedicated transit drivers both hard-hit during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Community Outreach:** The city is working on an outreach program to target potential drivers as well as an awareness campaign on the advantages of hopping on city transit to get around town.
- **Equipment:** The city has purchased a 35-foot bus to replace the oldest one in the fleet, which was put into service in 2010. The city wants to remind the community that transit service is available by appointment for ADA clients.

[INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY]

- Creating a tracking system for the Public Works Snow Removal Fleet that displays real-time status to the public is all part of a day's work for Information Technology. IT is working citywide to further automate processes that make city government more efficient and easier for residents to access.

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[EAST CHICAGO POLICE DEPARTMENT]

Between 2012 and 2023, East Chicago police have logged major crime reductions. Last year: Overall crime dropped by 3.18 percent and year-over-year homicides were reduced by 50 percent. Thanks to staff and crime-fighting strategies, four of the five homicide cases were solved, well above the national rate for murders.

- **Staffing:** East Chicago hired a dozen new officers and doubled the staff of working K-9s in 2023. The department implemented a paid intern program for college students focusing on criminal justice to work part-time in the city jail.
- **Technology:** A new teach wonder, Resource Router deploys officers to high-crime areas, utilizing resources more efficiently. Put in use in 2023, the department has already noticed a drop in calls and crimes.
- **Partnerships:** By joining the Lake County Prosecutors Homicide Task Force, East Chicago has new access to area law enforcement – like Indiana State Police Detectives – that assist with local homicides. East Chicago officers are now part of the Northwest Regional SWAT Team, receiving valuable training they bring back to the department.



[EAST CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT]

The addition of new firefighters provided opportunities for safety outreach throughout the community in 2023. From touring and reviewing response plans at St. Catherine Hospital and BP to Tradebe and Kemira, firefighters were able to better plan for emergency situations at local industry.

- **Staffing:** Congratulations are in order; to the nine probationary firefighters who graduated and received their line assignments and the 12 seasoned firefighters promoted to higher ranks.
- **Technology:** The department went digital with software enhancing fire inspections, added tactical rubber boots for fire personnel as well as mobile data terminals and Opticom systems on emergency apparatus and vehicles.
- **Partnerships:** With the assistance of partners, such as NIPSCO and the Red Cross, firefighters distributed smoke – and carbon monoxide – detectors and provided East Chicago residents with education about fire safety. As part of its community outreach programs, firefighters visited elementary schools as well as Central High School and had a great response at the 2023 Open House.

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[EAST CHICAGO WATER DEPARTMENT]

Upgrades to the water delivery system were accompanied by rate increases in 2023. It marked the first time since 2017 the city sought an increase for residential, commercial and industrial customers from the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

- **Water Rates:** The IURC approved a three-year plan to increase water rates through 2025. Rates were raised by 41.79 percent in 2023 and will increase by 28.6 percent this year and 10.9 percent in 2025. Included in the increase are additional customer costs for fire protection services for hydrants and sprinklers.
- **Distribution System:** As part of road construction, the water distribution system was expanded and modernized. Some of those projects included: Chicago Avenue to Exchange; Magoun and Homerlee from 151st to Chicago; and, Indianapolis from McShane to Chicago.
- **Clean Water:** The Water Department also moved forward with repairs and maintenance guaranteeing that water arriving in homes, businesses and industry via the intake crib off the Lake Michigan shore before being treated at the city's purification plant is reliable and safe.









[STORMWATER DEPARTMENT]

Julia Carrillo joined East Chicago as the city's stormwater inspector and hit the ground running. With a degree in environmental engineering, Carrillo is in charge of a city mandate to comply with the EPA's burgeoning efforts to reduce pollution that enters the system through stormwater.

- **Training:** Employees were trained on Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination, Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping as a first salvo toward compliance with new federal rules.
- **Social Media:** Social media is engaged as a new tool to communicate with residents about stormwater issues and programs to reduce stormwater pollution, which occurs when untreated runoff picks up lawn fertilizers and weed killers that cause environmental hazards.

[PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT]

The East Chicago Public Works team focused on working with city residents and business owners on a citywide effort to Keep East Chicago Clean. A little trash here, a pile of rubble there all adds up to a city that isn't as clean as it could – or should – be. Robinson is asking residents to keep their alleys and yards free of debris.

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ANNUAL BEACH CLEANUP

Mayor Anthony Copeland and the folks at the East Chicago Marina invite residents to our annual beach clean up event. Bring your friends and family to show some love to our beach by keeping it clean.

When: 10 a.m.-noon **May 21**

Where: Jeorse Park Beach, 3444 Aldis Street

JUNE MOVIE NIGHT

Grab a lawn chair and head to the park to watch "Trolls Band Together" on the big screen.

When: 6 p.m. **June 6**

Where: Tod Park, 533 West 140th Street

RHYTHM & SOUL FEST

Mayor Anthony Copeland kicks off our summer events with the Rhythm & Soul Fest "A Juneteenth Celebration," featuring The Dazz Band. Bring a lawn chair and enjoy live entertainment, food, fun and crafts. Free admission and parking near Block Stadium.

When: 3-9 p.m. **June 15**

Where: Washington Park, 1615. 142nd St.

CALLING ALL VENDORS!

The City of East Chicago is looking for vendors and food trucks for upcoming events including Movie Nights in the Park, Rhythm & Soul Fest, Salsa in the Park, Fusic Fest, Kielbasa Fest, Monarch Festival and so much more.

Info: For questions, more information or to register, please visit eastchicago.com or call (219) 391-8482.

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MAYOR ANTHONY COPELAND AND EAST CHICAGO ANIMAL CONTROL PRESENT A DRIVE-THRU ...

PET CLINIC

Must be an East Chicago resident!



11AM – 1PM SUNDAY, MAY 19

Block Stadium Parking Lot
1601 East 144th Street

FREE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

- Canine Distemper | Parvo Vaccine
- Kitty FVRCP Distemper
- Rabies Vaccine
- Microchipping

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