

**Narrative Information Sheet for Community-wide Assessment Grant**

R05-26-A-022

<b>1. Application Identification:</b>	City of East Chicago, Indiana
<b>2. Website URL</b>	<a href="https://www.eastchicago.com/">https://www.eastchicago.com/</a>
<b>3. Funding Request:</b>	a. <b>Assessment Grant:</b> Community Wide b. <b>Federal Funds Requested:</b> \$500,000
<b>4. Location:</b>	The City of East Chicago, 4525 Indianapolis Blvd, East Chicago, IN 46312
<b>5. Target Area and Priority Site Information:</b>	<b>Target Area:</b> Half-mile buffer around the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal (IHSC), as well as connected waterways including the Lake George Canal and the Grand Calumet River.
	<b>Census Tracts (CT) Numbers within Target Area:</b> Census Tract 307; Census Tract 306; Census Tract 304; Census Tract 303
	<b>Priority Site Names &amp; Addresses:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. PS1: Old Roxana Park, 5415 Walsh Avenue, Tax PIN: 45-03-32-302-001.000-024)</li> <li>2. PS2: Roxana Marsh Vacant Parcel, 5300 Indianapolis Blvd, Tax PIN: 45-03-32-330-001.000-024</li> <li>3. PS3: East Chicago Sanitary District, 5201 Indianapolis Blvd, Tax PIN: 45-03-32-401-001.000-024</li> <li>4. PS4: Former Municipal Landfill, 24 Carroll St, Tax PIN: 45-03-32-427-001.000-024</li> <li>5. PS5: Dupont Property, 5000 BL Parrish Ave, Tax PIN: 45-03-34-300-001.000-024</li> <li>6. PS6: Public Works Facility, 5400 Cline Ave, Tax PIN: 45-04-34-400-001.000-024</li> </ol>
<b>6. Contacts</b>	<b>Project Director</b>
<b>Name</b>	Marino Solorio, Director Planning & Economic Development, City of East Chicago
<b>Mailing Address</b>	4525 Indianapolis Boulevard, East Chicago, IN
<b>Phone Number</b>	219-391-8205
<b>Email Address</b>	<a href="mailto:msolorio@eastchicago.com">msolorio@eastchicago.com</a>
<b>7. Population</b>	26,158 (ACS 2023 5-year)

**8. Other Factors Checklist:**

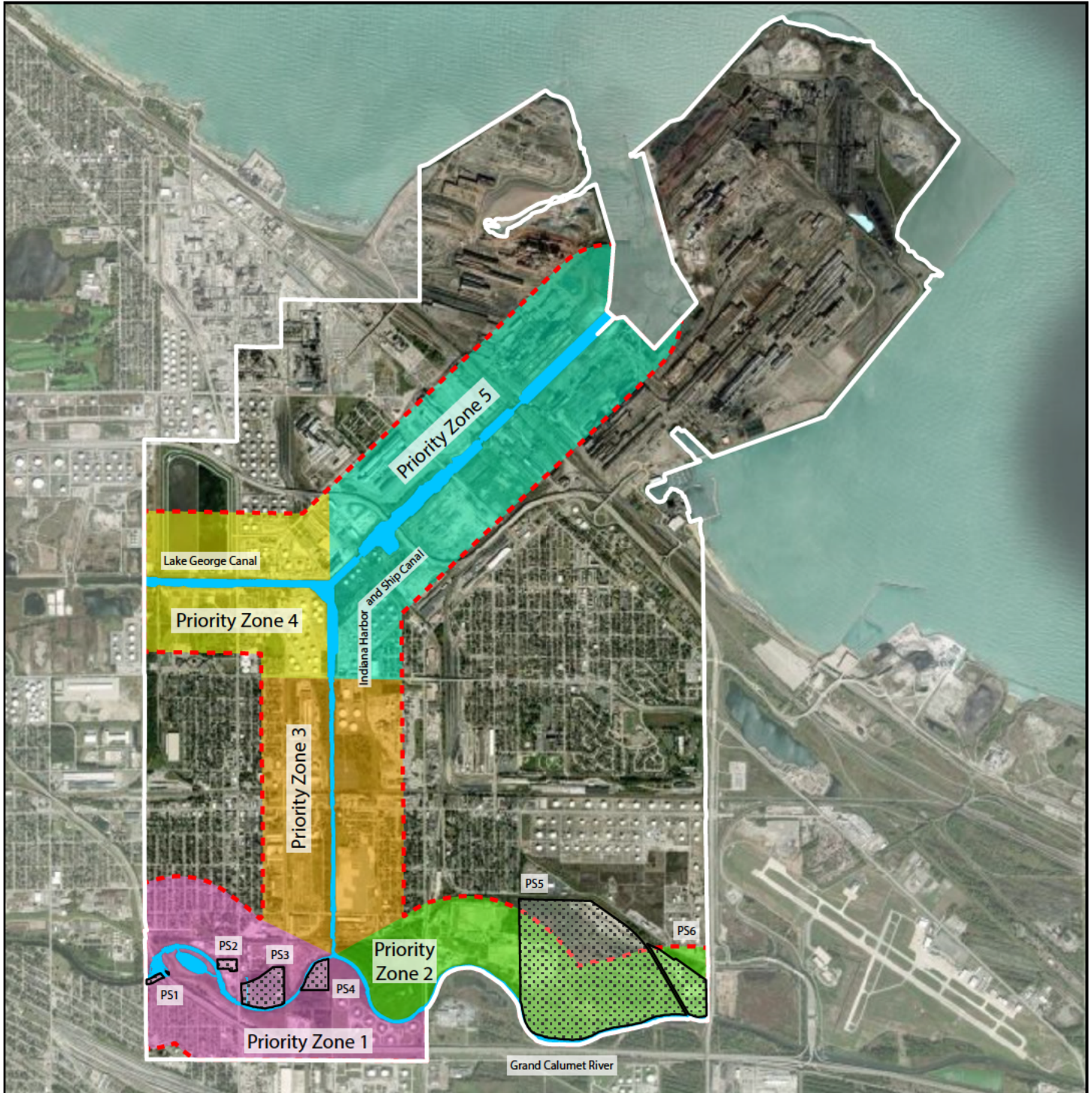
Other Factors	Page #
Community with population 15,000 less	NA
The applicant is, or will assist, a federally recognized Indian tribe or United States territory.	NA
The priority site(s) is impacted by mine-scarred land.	NA
The priority site(s) is adjacent to a body of water (i.e., the border of the priority site(s) is contiguous or partially contiguous to the body of water or would be contiguous or partially contiguous with a body of water but for a street, road, or other public thoroughfare separating them).	Yes – see narrative 1.1 (Page 1)
The priority site(s) is in a federally designated flood plain.	DFIRM ID: 18089C
The reuse of the priority site(s) will facilitate renewable energy from wind, solar, or geothermal energy.	NA
The reuse of the priority site(s) will incorporate energy efficiency measures.	NA
The proposed project will improve local climate adaptation/mitigation capacity and resilience to protect residents and community investments.	Yes – see narrative 1.2.e (Page 3)
At least 30% of the overall project budget will be spent on eligible reuse/area- wide planning activities, as described in Section I.B., for priority site(s) within the target area(s).	Yes – see narrative 1.2.d (Page 3)
The target area(s) is located within a community in which a coal-fired power plant has recently closed (2014 or later) or is closing.	NA









**9. Letter from the State or Tribal Environmental Authority:** A letter of acknowledgement dated 1/28/2026 from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) for the City’s FY2026 EPA Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant application is attached.

**10. Releasing Copies of Application:** The application does not contain confidential, privileged.

**11. Page Numbering:** This application contains a two-page Narrative Information Sheet on page 1-2, a ten-page Narrative on pages 3-12, and separately attached the following: Target Area and Priority Area Map, Threshold Criteria Responses, and IDEM letter of acknowledgement.

# East Chicago Waterway Management District (ECWMD) Community-Wide Assessment Grant Study Area



- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  Priority Sites |  Priority Zone 1 |
|  Waterways      |  Priority Zone 2 |
|  Target Area    |  Priority Zone 3 |
|  |  Priority Zone 4 |
|  |  Priority Zone 5 |



0 1.5 3 Miles



## 1. PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION and PLANS FOR REVITALIZATION

### **1.1 Target Area and Brownfields 1.1.a. Overview of Brownfield Challenges and Description of Target Area(s):**

The City of East Chicago (population 26,158<sup>1</sup>) emerged in the late 19th century through major investments in steel production, rail infrastructure, and heavy industry, shaping its identity as the “Twin Cities.” Although this industrial base supported planned residential communities such as Marktown, decades of nationwide manufacturing decline led to disinvestment, abandoned industrial properties, and neighborhoods physically divided by rail corridors and the industrial waterways of the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal (IHSC), Lake George Canal (LGC), and Grand Calumet River (GCR). Industrial decline, combined with barriers created by waterways and large industrial sites, has driven neighborhood isolation, environmental degradation, and persistent disinvestment. The IHSC and its connected waterways are among the nation’s most severely contaminated river systems, as recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), highlighting both the environmental challenges and the urgency of reinvestment. Surrounding communities—predominantly lower-income and minority residents—continue to experience disproportionate impacts from legacy pollution and limited economic opportunity, reinforcing the need for inclusive planning, healthier environmental conditions, and risk reduction to reconnect neighborhoods and support future redevelopment. The Target Area (TA) spans a half-mile buffer around the IHSC and connected waterways, overlapping with the jurisdiction of the East Chicago Waterway Management District (ECWMD), the City’s primary partner for this grant. These industrial waterways and freight corridors include a spectrum of conditions, from abandoned industrial sites and known brownfields to active manufacturing, logistics, and waste-management facilities. They also lie within 44 FEMA-designated High-Risk Flood Zones (Lake County, IN DFIRM ID 18089C). Within the TA, four census tracts across five Priority Zones (PZ) have been identified as key redevelopment opportunities to advance a shared community and regional vision: transforming legacy industrial sites into a connected recreational hub that links neighborhoods, expands waterfront access, and buffers residents from ongoing industrial activity. Through this Community-Wide Assessment Grant, the City seeks to conduct targeted environmental assessments, support community-driven planning, and advance remediation and repositioning of long-dormant waterfront industrial sites to unlock redevelopment potential. Over time, these efforts will help create new jobs, expand recreational opportunities, and improve quality of life. The canal system and adjacent waterfront—shaped by East Chicago’s historic role as an industrial and transportation hub—represent a critical opportunity to address legacy contamination, improve compatibility with nearby neighborhoods, leverage community investments, and create safe natural spaces and waterfront access for all residents and visitors. **1.1.b. Description of the Priority Brownfield Site(s):** The five PZ within the TA represent the most impactful opportunities for brownfield assessment and redevelopment along the waterfront industrial corridor. These areas contain underutilized and partially vacant industrial parcels adjacent to predominantly lower-income and minority neighborhoods<sup>2,3</sup>, where legacy contamination has restricted safe access and limited reinvestment activity. The ongoing Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) sediment remediation project that includes dredging, capping and sediment management within the Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) further underscore both the severity of environmental degradation, and the need for coordinated remediation<sup>4</sup>. As these waterway clean-up efforts progress, they are directly enhancing redevelopment readiness by improving environmental conditions along canal edges and former industrial shorelines. While steelmaking, petroleum refining, and port activities remain active, today the waterfront largely consists of vacant, underused, or outdated industrial land. This vacancy pattern, particularly concentrated within the half-mile TA, reinforces the opportunity for thoughtful and catalytic redevelopment. Citywide, only about 3% of buildings are

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<sup>1</sup> [United States Census Bureau](#)

<sup>2</sup> [United States Census Bureau](#)

<sup>3</sup> [East Chicago Census Reporter](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Great Lake Areas of Concern](#)



considered underutilized, yet nearly 21% of the TA's office space is currently vacant, and 2.9% of the City's 3.2% vacant industrial properties fall within this same area.<sup>5</sup> These contrasts reinforce the extent to which the industrial waterway corridor is uniquely positioned for transformation. Recent regional economic trends reinforce the TA's potential. The regional economic center of gravity shifted southwest by a quarter mile between 2010 and 2023, signaling that industries in the southwest of the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) are contributing significantly to the region's economic growth.<sup>6</sup> The elevated 7.4% multi-family vacancy rate and disproportionate concentration of empty real estate further demonstrate that market pressures, combined with changing industrial patterns, have left the corridor primed for reinvestment—especially as environmental remediation continues to unlock previously constrained parcels. The Lake George Canal corridor exemplifies the transition of industrial properties to other uses. Decades of petroleum, steel, and utility impacts created contamination and long-term disuse, making the area a priority for targeted assessment. As remediation progresses, vacant parcels are gaining redevelopment potential, with restored waterways supporting new recreational, residential, and economic uses. Together, the PZs form the core of a strategy to remove cleanup barriers, improve neighborhood compatibility, and advance equitable revitalization along the IHSC system. Existing vacancy—once a challenge—now provides flexibility for coordinated land-use planning tied to waterway restoration. Clean-up along the GCR and LGC is creating near-term redevelopment opportunities in PZs 1–3. PZs 4 and 5, while more complex due to active industry and the need for private-sector coordination, will ultimately expand shoreline and Lake Michigan access. The following sections describe each PZ and its Priority Sites, summarizing current planning efforts and how conditions, vacancy patterns, and ongoing investments shape both challenges and opportunities. Priority Sites align with adopted plans and initiatives, including the Roxana Marsh Initiative, TOD Plan, and Ball State studies.

**PZ1, Southwest Gateway/Utility and Industrial Legacy Zone:** Assessment of vacant and utility adjacent- parcels in PZ1 can transition legacy industrial land toward new economic uses while creating gateways to restored sections of the GCR. Planned trail connections and access nodes in PZ1 strengthen recreational links to the City's southern edge. Four PSs within PZ2 are targeted for assessment due to current remediation along the GCR positioning them for near-term redevelopment. These Priority Sites include the following: *PS1: Old Roxana Park (5415 Walsh Ave)* This former city-owned park, now vacant and underutilized, was selected due to its open condition and adjacency to the waterway. If remediated, it could become an accessible rest point or docking location for kayakers, enhancing active-recreation access along the corridor. *PS2: Roxana Marsh Vacant Parcel (5300 Indianapolis Blvd)* A city-owned site and currently used in a limited capacity. With remediation, it could support new commercial uses while incorporating a waterfront buffer that improves environmental quality and public access. *PS3: East Chicago Sanitary District (5201 Indianapolis Blvd)* This city-owned property contains unique warm-water habitat, including rare freshwater sponges and high fish spawning activity, making its current ecological value a key selection factor. Remediation would support habitat preservation and low-impact recreation, strengthening the corridor's ecological assets. *PS4: Former Municipal Landfill (24 Carroll Street)* A large, vacant city-owned industrial site at the confluence of the canal and river, this parcel was selected as a top catalytic opportunity due to its size, visibility, and strategic location. Once remediated, it could support major commercial and recreational redevelopment, connect directly to the Marquette Trail, and enhance wildlife habitat, including frequent bald eagle activity.

**PZ2, Southeast/Grand Calumet River Corridor:** Remediation along this river segment supports habitat restoration and opens the door to new riverfront trails, including links to the Marquette Greenway. Cleanup positions industrial parcels for redevelopment and improves east–west neighborhood access. Two Priority Sites within PZ2 are targeted for assessment due to current remediation activities along the GCR and adjacent transit-oriented planning efforts,

<sup>5</sup> CoStar

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau – Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics WAC (Workplace Area Characteristics)



positioning them for near-term redevelopment and recreational activities such as kayak launches and rentals and improved community connectivity via bike infrastructure improvement and train access. These Priority Sites include the following: ***PS5: DuPont Property (5000 BL Parrish Ave)*** This 100-acre dune-and-swale natural habitat area, one of the last remaining in the City, was selected for its exceptional ecological significance and ongoing stewardship by The Nature Conservancy. With remediation and access improvements, it could offer hiking trails, guided tours, kayak stopovers, and limited industrial development on its northern edge to support local jobs. ***PS6: Public Works Facility (5400 Cline Ave)*** A city-owned former incinerator property with extensive vacant acreage, it was selected due to its open condition and proximity to natural viewsheds. If remediated, it could provide nature-based amenities such as birdwatching areas, scenic overlooks, and improved connectivity to future trail networks. **PZ 3, Central City Spine & Grand Calumet River Edge:** Cleanup along this north-south corridor strengthens the opportunity for connections between neighborhoods and the GCR. Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) South Shore Commuter Railroad Double Track access improvements and related Transit Development District (TDD) planning, and new active transportation routes, collectively prepare underutilized central parcels for mixed-use or recreational redevelopment. **PZ4, West Central Residential–Industrial Interface:** At the City’s most compressed residential-industrial edge, targeted assessments support priorities outlined in the City’s Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Annual Action Plan, which focuses on building affordable housing, reducing blight, and investing in park improvements while reducing exposure risks. Mobility upgrades and short trail connectors can improve crossings over rail corridors and repurpose underused parcels for community and recreational activities, and access to the lake front. **PZ5, North Harbor / IHSC Corridor:** This canal-front industrial zone is being reshaped through IHSC dredging and the North Harbor Redevelopment Initiative (NHRI). Cleanup here enables new waterfront access, trail connections, and green buffers, supporting mixed-use or light-industrial redevelopment that reconnects neighborhoods to the shoreline.

**1.1.c. Identifying Additional Sites:** The City will expand its brownfield inventory through records review, field reconnaissance, and analysis of parcels flagged for tax delinquency, vacancy, or environmental concerns. Ongoing community engagement will help identify additional sites, which will be screened using EPA-aligned criteria including contamination potential, redevelopment readiness, and community benefit. This iterative and equitable process ensures priority properties are identified systematically, with owner coordination secured as needed for access and eligibility.

**1.2. Revitalization of the Target Area**

**1.2.d. Reuse Strategy and Alignment with Revitalization Plans:** The reuse strategy transforms the City’s legacy industrial waterfront into a continuous recreational and ecological corridor, integrating past, ongoing, and future initiatives into a cohesive system rather than isolated site efforts. Centered on community priorities that place natural resources “front and center,” the strategy advances nature-based revitalization through connected habitat areas, parks, multi-use trails, and small-craft access points that link neighborhoods, schools, and jobs to restored waterways. Grant-funded assessments will identify and prioritize brownfield sites, define cleanup pathways, and develop reuse scenarios that support economic resilience and respond to community and environmental needs. This strategy aligns with the City’s adopted land use, mobility, and redevelopment plans, which call for reactivating canal- and river-adjacent industrial properties for mixed-use, advanced manufacturing, green infrastructure, and expanded waterfront recreation. Major federal investments, including more than \$200 million in the EPA’s GLLA GCR AOC sediment cleanup project and ongoing United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) dredging of the Indiana Harbor Canal, are improving environmental conditions and creating a foundation for safe, developable land. Complementary local initiatives, such as the City’s Annual Action Plan investments in housing rehabilitation, blight removal, parks, and neighborhood improvements, plus multimodal projects including the Greenways + Blueways network, the Marquette Greenway, the NHRI, and South Shore Double Track improvements, reinforce connectivity and readiness for redevelopment. Collectively, these efforts strengthen the City’s ability to convert brownfields into accessible, resilient, and economically productive waterfront destinations.

**1.2.e. Outcomes and Benefits of Reuse Strategy:** Cleaning up and redeveloping the IHSC, LGC, and GCR



corridor will convert long-polluted, under-used industrial land into safe, accessible community assets that improve quality of life and support diverse job growth. Targeted assessments will prioritize sites based on proximity to waterways, redevelopment readiness, and community benefit, advancing contaminated properties toward productive reuse with remediation strategies tailored to future uses. **Environmental benefits** include reduced exposure to PCBs, PAHs, petroleum hydrocarbons, and heavy metals through soil, groundwater, and sediment cleanup, building on successful habitat restoration at Roxana Marsh to strengthen biodiversity, water quality, and flood resilience. Green infrastructures such as wetlands, bioswales, and stormwater corridors—will reduce runoff and buffer neighborhoods facing high environmental burdens. **Social and community benefits** stem from unlocking underused land for reinvestment, improving safety, expanding parks and cultural spaces, and creating a connected recreational network with new overlooks, launch points, trails, and programming that links neighborhoods to waterways. **Economic benefits** include job creation, new commercial activity, enhanced property values, and shoreline improvements—such as boardwalks and pocket parks—that support long-term neighborhood and fiscal resilience.<sup>7</sup> **1.3 Strategy for Leveraging Resources 1.3.f. Resources Needed for Site Reuse:** The City can leverage a strong mix of federal, state, and local tools to advance cleanup and redevelopment along the industrial corridor. Major federal programs have invested approximately \$336 million in sediment remediation and waterway improvements along the GCR, supported by ongoing dredging and CDF operations, significantly enhancing environmental conditions and navigability. State support through the Indiana Brownfields Program provides assessment assistance, RLF financing, and 128(a) resources that help prepare sites for reuse. Locally, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and HOME funds strengthen housing, infrastructure, and community development efforts, while four Opportunity Zones create tax-advantaged pathways for private reinvestment. Together, these resources allow the City to amplify EPA assessment funding and accelerate infrastructure, housing, and economic revitalization along its waterways, supported by TIF, RDA-driven TOD investments, and TDD financing that strengthen corridor-wide redevelopment. **1.3.g. Use of Existing Infrastructure:** East Chicago can leverage its existing roads, utilities, transit corridors, and underutilized building stock to support revitalization along the IHSC, LGC, and GCR, reducing the need for new infrastructure and building on longstanding public investments. Redevelopment opportunities concentrate around strong economic anchors such as Railroad and Kennedy Avenue and are reinforced by the City’s sizable inventory of more than 900 publicly owned parcels. Ongoing initiatives—including NHRI, South Shore Line transit-oriented planning, and citywide public space and safety improvements and housing initiatives—further strengthen these efforts, while EPA and USACE remediation of the canal system is improving environmental conditions through sediment cleanup, shoreline stabilization, and habitat restoration. Collectively, these coordinated investments position the City for resilient, connected, and economically productive redevelopment aligned with long-term community goals. **2. COMMUNITY NEED AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2.1 Community Need 2.1.a. The Community’s Need for Funding:** East Chicago’s limited financial capacity to conduct environmental assessments or reuse planning for the contaminated sites within the TA, as the City’s small and predominantly lower-income population limits its ability to draw on local revenue or flexible funding sources. Although 40% of East Chicago’s residents live within federally designated OZs<sup>8</sup>, these zones do not provide the upfront environmental due diligence needed to unlock redevelopment on heavily contaminated sites. At the same time, the City’s limited CDBG allocation must be directed toward urgent community priorities such as housing rehabilitation, infrastructure repairs, and public services, leaving no capacity to fund environmental assessments or brownfield planning activities. **2.1.b. (1) Health or Welfare of Sensitive Populations:** East Chicago qualifies as a Low-Income and Disadvantaged Community (LIDAC) under the federal Climate and Economic Justice Tool and ranks above

<sup>7</sup> [EPA Accomplishments](#)

<sup>8</sup> [List of East Chicago, Indiana Opportunity Zones OZ Funds](#)



the 90th percentile for legacy pollution, reflecting the dense concentration of hazardous waste sites, regulated industrial facilities, and contaminated waterways within the GCR and IHSC AOC. Much of the city was built on filled wetlands composed of steel slag, coal ash, and other industrial byproducts, creating widespread potential for soil and groundwater contamination as well as geotechnical challenges that complicate redevelopment. Smaller legacy commercial sites, including former gas stations, dry cleaners, underground storage tanks, and older housing with lead-based paint, remain embedded within residential neighborhoods and commercial corridors. These conditions intersect with high poverty rates, aging infrastructure, and heightened exposure to air pollution, flooding, and climate-related stressors.<sup>9</sup> Sensitive populations, including children, older adults, individuals with chronic illness, and housing-insecure households, experience disproportionate exposure risks and reduced adaptive capacity, underscoring the need for targeted environmental assessment, cleanup, and resilience planning to reduce cumulative burdens in the City’s most affected neighborhoods. **2.1.c. Greater Than Normal Incidence of Disease and Adverse Health Conditions:** The community faces significant health disparities, including an infant mortality rate 20% higher than the national average, driven largely by perinatal risks and preterm birth. Persistent inequities tied to race and income further affect maternal and infant outcomes, with 2021–2023 preterm birth rates highest among Black infants (14.6%), compared with Hispanic (10.5%), White (10.4%), American Indian/Alaska Native (10.3%), and Asian/Pacific Islander infants (9.9%), alongside corresponding statewide birth distributions.<sup>10</sup> Residents in Census Tracts 301–310 also experience disproportionately high chronic disease burdens—ranking above the 85th percentile nationally for asthma, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Table 1)—compounded by high poverty, limited healthcare access, and potential exposure to contaminants from nearby brownfield sites.

**Table 1: National Percentile Rank Chronic Disease (%)**

Health Variables	City of East Chicago	Target Area
Asthma	84	86
Diabetes	96	97
High Blood Pressure	89	89

**Table 2: National Percentile Rank Exposure to Risk (%)**

Health Variables	City of East Chicago	Target Area
Lead Paint in Housing	94	96
PM2.5 Concentration	81	82
NO <sub>2</sub> Concentration	91	91
Black Carbon	73	73
Toxic Air Pollutants - Thyroid	86	86
Toxic Air Pollutants – Neurological	95	95
Toxic Air Pollutants – Immunological	81	81
Toxic Air Pollutants - Kidney	97	96

Residents in East Chicago bear a disproportionate burden of environmental and health challenges. As detailed in **Table 2**, the City ranks in the 90th to 100th percentile nationally for environmental justice variables, including exposure and risk to community health, average level of Nitrous Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentration and lead contamination.<sup>11</sup> These factors contribute to poor health outcomes and limit economic opportunities for residents. Remediating brownfield sites and enhancing community resources will be vital to creating a healthier environment for vulnerable populations, who face heightened risks for adverse health outcomes. By reducing environmental health hazards through the remediation efforts supported by this grant, the City can alleviate the significant health burdens residents currently experience and lay the groundwork for safer, more resilient neighborhoods. **2.1.d Economically Impoverished/Disproportionately Impacted Populations:** Compared to the national, annual per capita income (PCI) of \$45,256, and the Chicago region’s PCI of \$49,948, the PCI for East Chicago is substantially lower, at \$23,164. The TA’s population is largely Hispanic (56%) and Black (36%), with roughly

<sup>9</sup> [Environmental Impact Assessment Review](#)

<sup>10</sup> [March of Dimes Indiana Prematurity Profile](#)

<sup>11</sup> [The U.S. Climate Vulnerability Index](#)



26% of the population below the poverty line. The City faces significant challenges that necessitate public support for redevelopment. Notably, approximately 27% of residents live below the poverty line and the median household income of \$41,071 is well below the national median of \$78,538. The local real estate market remains weak, with limited private investment due to affordability concerns and lack of substantial inventory. The median value of

owner-occupied housing is also below the national value. **Table 3** provides the population dynamics of the TA, compared to those of the U.S. and Indiana.<sup>12</sup>

This grant will assess local economic challenges and guide redevelopment that attracts investment, creates jobs, and

**Table 3: Socioeconomic Vulnerability Variables**

Geography	U.S.	Chicago MSA	City of East Chicago	Target Area
<i>Per Capita Income (\$)</i>	\$45,256	\$49,948	\$23,164	\$23,009
<i>Median Value of Owner-Occupied Housing</i>	\$303,400	\$301,900	\$92,400	\$93,248
<i>% Below Poverty Level</i>	12.4%	11.1%	27.0%	26.9%
<i>People of Color</i>	37%	44%	84%	78.7%
<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	5.2%	6.1%	7.9%	6.8%
<i>Less than High School Ed</i>	11%	10%	26%	27%
<i>Age &gt;60 years %</i>	23%	22%	20%	19%

strengthens long-term economic resilience. Market and reuse analyses will identify viable redevelopment options aligned with community needs and position underutilized sites for productive reuse. By expanding economic opportunity and drawing new public and private investment, the project supports a sustainable cycle of job growth, poverty reduction, and neighborhood revitalization that enhances overall economic stability. **2.2 Community**

**Engagement 2.2.e & 2.2.f Project Involvement/Roles:** The City’s Brownfield stakeholder group will make up the initial Steering Committee and will consist of the following public and non-profit partners who have been identified because they have alignment with goals, opportunities for additional funding and technical support:

Name	POC	Specific Involvement / Assistance Provided
East Chicago Waterway Management District (ECWMD)	Fernando M. Treviño [REDACTED]	Serves as a key stakeholder and Steering Committee member, providing leadership within the Target Area, which overlaps the ECWMD’s jurisdiction.
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)	Kathy Luther, 219.254.2513 <a href="mailto:kluther@nirpc.org">kluther@nirpc.org</a>	Serve on Steering Committee to offers regional planning expertise, resource sharing, and alignment with regional sustainability goals across all Priority Zones and manages funding for Marquette Greenway projects.
Regional Development Authority (RDA)	Sherri Ziller, 219.644.3500 <a href="mailto:Sziller@rda.in.gov">Sziller@rda.in.gov</a>	Serve on Steering Committee to advise on alignment of project activities with regional investment priorities and funding opportunities and governs TOD/TDD initiatives while linking them to recreational corridor development.
Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)*	Jacob Roos, 317.234.4386 <a href="mailto:Jroos@dnr.in.gov">Jroos@dnr.in.gov</a>	Provides regulatory, conservation, and habitat guidance as the state environmental agency and contributes land-ownership authority within Priority Zone 1.
Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM)	Jim Morris, 317.234.0235 <a href="mailto:JMorris@ifa.in.gov">JMorris@ifa.in.gov</a>	Oversees environmental compliance and remediation standards, offering funding opportunities and required permissions for recreational activities.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census



Northwest Indiana Paddling Association	Daniel Plath, 219.879.3084 dplath@nwipa.org	Serve on Steering Committee to advise on waterway access, recreation, and stewardship as a Steering Committee member, providing organized guidance on paddling opportunities and best practices across Priority Zones 1–3.
The Nature Conservancy	Susan Mihalo, 312.5802100 smihalo@tnc.org	Serve on Steering Committee to supply ecological and restoration expertise and serves as designated manager of the 100-acre easement while advising nature-based solutions. Serves as a Steering Committee Member.

In addition to the initial Steering Committee, the City identified the following list of collaborators who will be engaged throughout the project: Care Committee, Coastal Advisory Board, Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, East Chicago Sanitary District, Marquette Green way Team, Dunes Learning Center, East Chicago Calumet Coalition, Save the Dunes, South Shore Convention & Visitor Authority, South Shore Train Station, Urban Enterprise, Community Groups (Knights of Columbus, Cuyahoga Paddlers Club, Greenways Foundation of Indiana), Adjacent Land Owners (Buckeye, NIPSCO, Gateway Property), and other Local, State/National entities (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Indiana Toll Road, U.S. EPA and other City departments). **2.2.g. Incorporating Community Input:** The City of East Chicago will use a transparent, multilayered engagement process to keep residents, property owners, stakeholders, and partners informed and involved throughout the grant. Updates will be shared through quarterly briefings, public meetings, and the City’s existing communication channels, including its website, social media, email notices, and printed materials distributed at community hubs. Virtual tools—such as online town halls and recorded presentations—will ensure both in-person and remote participation. To support inclusive engagement, the City will offer translation services, plain-language materials, sign-language interpretation, closed captioning, accessible formats, and physically accessible meeting locations. Daytime sessions, mailed notices, small-group meetings, and partnerships with senior centers and neighborhood organizations will help reach residents with limited ability to attend traditional meetings. The City will actively gather and incorporate community and property-owner input through outreach meetings, comment forms, surveys, and dedicated contact points. All feedback will be documented, summarized, and shared back with the community—using a clear “You Said, We Did” format—to show how community priorities are shaping the long-range vision for the industrial waterfront corridor.

**3. TASK DESCRIPTIONS, COST ESTIMATES, and MEASURING PROGRESS 3.1 Description of Tasks/Activities and Outputs 3.1.a/b/c/d. Project Implementation, Anticipated Schedule, Task/Activity Leads, and Outputs:**

<b>Task 1 – Community &amp; Stakeholder Engagement</b>
<b>Project Implementation:</b> <b>1.1 Community Engagement Plan:</b> Develop a culturally responsive outreach & education strategy; Identify community and vulnerable population priorities, language needs, and engagement barriers. <b>1.2 Public Outreach:</b> Conduct public engagement including six in-person sessions (two with broader educational focus and three visioning workshops associated with reuse planning) and ongoing digital outreach through virtual communication/website. <b>1.3 Stakeholder Engagement:</b> Develop a steering committee with engaged stakeholders and hold quarterly meetings as well as focus meetings related to priority sites (assume four). Develop and distribute materials/tools for stakeholders to bring to meetings of partners (Table in 2.2).
<b>Schedule:</b> Steering Committee selection by end of Q1 and convene beginning in Q2; Complete Community Outreach Plan in Q2 and begin creating outreach materials; Community meetings held beginning in Q3 through and extending throughout the 4-year performance period with visioning in Q4.
<b>Task Lead:</b> City of East Chicago will lead this task (in-kind) with consultant support to create outreach materials.
<b>Outputs:</b> Community Engagement Plan; Meeting materials, summaries, and attendance records; Community informed reuse preferences



<p><b>Task 2 – Brownfield Inventory, Assessments, and Planning</b></p> <p><u>Project Implementation:</u> <b>2.1 Brownfield Inventory &amp; Site Prioritization:</b> Compile GIS-based and tabulated inventory of candidate sites using: Basic data (ownership, current status, site type), historic land use data, regulatory databases, community and stakeholder input; Social Vulnerability Screen and floodplain data. Develop site selection criteria emphasizing waterway proximity; community need, reuse potential, ownership and redevelopment readiness. Collect preliminary eligibility information to support EPA eligibility determinations. <b>2.2 Market Study:</b> Complete a Market and Feasibility Study by analyzing industrial, logistics, renewable energy, green infrastructure, or mixed-use opportunities; Consider flood resilience and climate adaptation strategies; <b>2.3 Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA):</b> Conduct ten Phase I ESAs in accordance with ASTM E152721 and All Appropriate Inquiries (AAI) rule and include vapor encroachment screening where applicable (assuming four). <b>2.4 Phase II ESA:</b> Conduct four Phase II ESAs to sample soil, groundwater, sediment, and/or surface water sampling. Each Phase II ESA will include a Sampling and Analysis Plans (SAPs) and Health &amp; Safety Plans (HASPs); Develop a generic Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and two site-specific QAPPs. <b>2.5 Site Reuse Assessments</b> at four priority sites to identify potential assets and barriers (site document review, site walk, market conditions, focus engagement/interviews part of Task 1, and asset/infrastructure evaluation)</p> <p><u>Schedule:</u> Site selection screening criteria and brownfield inventory will be conducted from Q1-Q3 and will incorporate steering committee and community input. Market Study will be conducted in Q2. Initial site selection and commencement of Phase I ESAs will be in Q4. Phase II ESA and Site Reuse Assessment will happen in parallel after Q4. Brownfield inventory additions will continue throughout the grant period.</p> <p><u>Task Lead:</u> Technical aspects will be conducted by the selected contractor/ Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) with input and from the City (in-kind)</p> <p><u>Outputs:</u> Brownfield inventory and prioritization matrix; Ten Phase I ESA reports; Market Study; Four Phase II ESA reports with analytical results; and Site-specific Reuse Assessments (four sites).</p>
<p><b>Task 3 – Priority Site Remedial &amp; Reuse Planning</b></p> <p><u>Project Implementation:</u> <b>3.1 ABCA/Costing</b> Prepare Analysis of Brownfield Cleanup Alternatives (ABCA) for two priority sites, incorporating applicable Indiana and federal regulatory standards and using planning level cost estimates to support EPA Cleanup/RLF applications. <b>3.2 Site Reuse Vision:</b> Prepare site reuse visions for two priority sites with concepts consistent with remediation requirements and integrating community input, infrastructure, access, and zoning considerations. <b>3.3 Resource Roadmap:</b> Refine funding and implementation strategy, identify alignment of scope and goals with state and federal grant programs including EPA Cleanup, RLF, and infrastructure funding.</p> <p><u>Schedule:</u> ABCAs/Costing and Site Reuse Vision will be completed simultaneously, to allow for concurrent evaluation of cleanup costs and desired end uses, and will commence following Phase II assessments, around the end of Q4, and continue throughout the grant period. The Resource Roadmap will be developed after the initial ABCAs/Costing and Site Reuse Visions are complete, around the end of Q6 and will be updated throughout the grant period.</p> <p><u>Task Lead:</u> Technical aspects conducted by selected QEP with City input and oversight (in-kind)</p> <p><u>Outputs:</u> For two priority sites: ABCAs, planning level cleanup cost estimates, and site reuse visions, Resource Roadmap</p>
<p><b>Task 4 – Grant Management, Reporting and Training</b></p> <p><u>Project Implementation:</u> The City will procure a QEP to assist with grant management. The City will provide in-kind programmatic support for the 4-year grant term, overseeing grant implementation and administration to</p>



comply with the Cooperative Agreement Work Plan and EPA Brownfields Program rules and guidance. The travel budget allows for 1 City staff to attend 2 brownfield conferences.
<u>Schedule:</u> QEP/consultant selection completed in Q2. Ongoing reporting through the grant period, including ACRES reporting beginning Q1, quarterly reports beginning Q2, annual reports beginning Q5, and final/closeout - per federal fiscal calendar
<u>Task Lead:</u> City (in-kind) with consultant support
<u>Outputs:</u> Executed QEP/consultant contracts; 16 Quarterly Progress Reports; 4 annual Federal Financial Reports (FFRs) and M/WBE reports; ACRES Property Profiles and updates; final closeout report; conference attendance.

Budget Categories	Project Tasks (\$)				
	Task 1: Community & Stakeholder Engagement	Task 2: Brownfield Inventory, Assessments, & Planning	Task 3: Remedial & Reuse Planning	Task 4: Program Management & Reporting	Total
Contractual	\$79,180	\$323,000	\$61,760	\$32,800	\$496,740
Total Direct Costs	\$79,180	\$323,000	\$61,760	\$32,800	\$496,740
Indirect Costs	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$3,260	\$3,260
<b>Total Budget</b> (Total Direct Costs + Indirect Costs)	\$79,180	\$323,000	\$61,760	\$39,320	\$500,000

**3.1.e. Cost Estimates:** The below cost estimate presents anticipated costs for this grant, based on experience, local market conditions, and standard consultant hourly rates, and includes only Contractual direct costs and travel to the Brownfield Conferences (in-direct cost). No direct or in-direct administrative or overhead costs will be charged to this grant. The City will contribute all necessary Brownfield staff salary costs and associated indirect costs related to grant administration and programmatic oversight as in-kind resources. The City will spend 99% of the award budget on Contractual costs and over 45% of the award budget on Site-Specific Assessment and Cleanup Planning (portions of Task 2 and Task 3). **Task 1: Community & Stakeholder Engagement total budget of \$79,180** is associated with Contractual costs to develop the Community Engagement Plan (54 hours x \$150/hr), conduct public educational and visioning meetings (160 hours x \$150/hr), provide virtual public engagement/reporting (72 hours x \$130/hr), plan and conduct steering committee quarterly meetings (148 hours x \$150/hr) and focused stakeholder meetings on priority sites (48 hours x \$150/hr), and prepare stakeholder outreach materials (64 hours x \$130/hr). **Task 2: Brownfield Inventory, Assessments, and Planning of \$323,000** is associated with Contractual costs to develop a Brownfield Site Inventory including mapping (40 hours x \$150/hr), tabulation/screening (100 hours x \$130/hr) and evaluation (20 hours x \$150/hr); perform a Market Study (\$34,000); complete ten Phase I ESA (10 x \$3,900/each= \$39,000) with four including vapor encroachment screening (4 x \$900/each= \$3,600), complete four Phase II ESA with Site-Specific Sampling Analysis Plans and Health and Safety Plans (4 x \$40,000/each= \$160,000) and QAPPs including a generic QAPP and two Site-Specific QAPPs (\$8,400), and complete four Site Reuse Assessments (4 x \$14,000/each=\$56,000). **Task 3: Remedial & Reuse Planning total budget of \$61,760** is associated with Contractual costs for remedial and reuse planning at two sites including preparation of ABCAs (2 x \$14,000=\$28,000), cleanup costing (2 x \$2,880=\$5,760), Site Reuse Visions (2 x \$18,000=\$36,000) and preparation of a Resource Roadmap/Funding and Implementation Strategy (\$6,000). **Task 4: Program Management & Reporting total budget of \$36,060** is associated with Travel costs for 1 City of East Chicago staff to attend 2 conferences at \$3,260 (2



roundtrip flights at \$430/each, 6 nights hotel at \$300/night; 6 days of incidentals/per diem of \$100/day.) Contractual: \$32,800 for Programmatic Support from QEP (220 hours x \$125/hour) for ACRES reporting and property profiles; 16 Quarterly Progress Reports; 4 annual Federal Financial Reports (FFRs); 4 annual M/WBE reports; and programmatic support for 4-year grant term including final report and closeout documentation.

**3.1.f. Plan to Measure and Evaluate Environmental Progress and Results:** The City will track progress by regularly evaluating outputs against those stated in the Cooperative Agreement Work Plan. Outputs will be reported in quarterly and annual reports to USEPA, submitted through ACRES. Site eligibility determinations and property profiles will be entered and updated in ACRES to reflect grant activities. The City will track quantifiable grant results in ACRES including number of acres assessed, remediated, and redeveloped/preserved, number of jobs retained/created, and amount of additional funding leveraged. The City will hold quarterly meetings with the project Steering Committee to evaluate task schedules, progress, results, next steps, and determine corrective measures, as necessary. The City will meet regularly with the USEPA Project Manager to provide grant progress updates and seek input on any needed problems or changes. **4. PROGRAMMATIC CAPABILITY and PAST PERFORMANCE 4.1**

**Programmatic Capability 4.1.a. Organizational Capacity:** The City of East Chicago has the staffing, systems, and experience to manage all programmatic, administrative, and financial requirements of an EPA Community-Wide Assessment Grant. The City routinely administers federal housing, environmental, and infrastructure programs and maintains strong internal controls for procurement, financial management, and regulatory compliance. Because the Target Area overlaps with the ECWMD, the City will leverage ECWMD's technical expertise in environmental assessment and remediation coordination to support efficient project delivery. The City will provide overall program and fiscal oversight, while qualified consultants will conduct technical work and ensure compliance with EPA requirements, including ACRES and all required reporting. This combined team structure ensures timely implementation, accurate tracking, and full compliance with the cooperative agreement. **4.1.b/c. Organizational**

**Structure + Description of Key Staff:** The City of East Chicago's Planning Department will administer and monitor the grant. Led by the Director of Planning & Economic Development, Marino Solorio, the Department provides executive oversight, while the Planning Manager, Tracy Ailes, manages daily tasks including scopes of work, contractor procurement, and coordination with environmental consultants. Administrative staff will support documentation, logistics, and reporting. The Board of Public Works will oversee approvals and expenditures. Together, this team's experience in planning, compliance, and project management ensures the City can meet EPA's technical, administrative, and financial requirements and deliver all grant activities on schedule. **4.1.d. Acquiring Additional**

**Resources:** The City uses federally and state-compliant procurement procedures to competitively hire qualified consultants for technical, programmatic, and grant management support. Contractors will assist with assessment activities, scheduling, and reporting, all under City oversight with defined scopes and deliverables. The City retains full responsibility for decisions, compliance, and financial management. This procurement approach efficiently leverages specialized expertise while ensuring accountability and adherence to EPA requirements. **4.2 Past**

**Performance and Accomplishments 4.2.e (1) Currently Has or Previously Received an EPA Brownfields Grant:** The City, through its Brownfield Coalition partner NIRPC, received approximately \$150,000 in assessment funds for various brownfield sites. All assessed properties have since been developed or are currently in active negotiations for redevelopment. To date, this initial investment has leveraged roughly \$25 million in new commercial and residential development, with an additional \$2 million anticipated later this year for further development. The City was among the most successful communities within the coalition in fully utilizing not only our allocated portion of the grant but also remaining funds unused by other municipalities. Additionally, the City led the coalition in successfully moving assessed properties into redevelopment following completion of the environmental assessments.



**City of East Chicago  
Mayor Anthony Copeland**

**FY26 Brownfield Assessment Grant –  
Threshold Criteria**

## Threshold Criteria for Community-Wide Assessment Grants

### ***1.a. Applicant Eligibility***

The City of East Chicago is an eligible applicant as a general-purpose unit of local government and meets all requirements to apply for a Community-Wide Assessment Grant. The City is not a potentially responsible party for any proposed sites and has no disqualifying affiliations.

### **2. Community Involvement**

The City of East Chicago is committed to engaging the entire community, even though brownfield remediation and redevelopment opportunities are concentrated within the 0.5-mile ECWMD waterway buffer. The City maintains an active, multi-platform communication system to reach residents citywide, including regularly updated news postings, video announcements, and event information on its official website, along with widely promoted tools such as Nixle emergency and event text alerts and the ECWORKS 311 mobile app, which residents use to report issues and stay connected to City departments. These existing communication pathways will be used to provide timely updates on assessment activities, public meetings, and opportunities to participate in project decisions.

To ensure all residents and stakeholder can meaningfully contribute, the City will host public meetings in accessible locations throughout East Chicago and distribute bilingual (English/Spanish) materials through libraries, community centers, and neighborhood groups. The City already partners with regional and local organizations for public engagement, including the East Chicago Waterway Management District, which has an established history of community outreach through its Community Engagement Plans for the Grand Calumet River and Indiana Harbor Canal projects. The City will also collaborate with neighborhood associations, environmental groups, and civic institutions to help disseminate information, gather wide-ranging feedback, and ensure that community priorities shape site selection and reuse planning.

This comprehensive approach leverages the City's existing communication infrastructure and trusted local partnerships to guarantee that all East Chicago residents are informed, engaged, and represented. Through continuous updates, transparent sharing of assessment results, and multiple avenues for feedback, the City will ensure community perspectives citywide guide planning, implementation, and future redevelopment outcomes.

### **3. Expenditure of Existing Grant Funds**

I affirm that my organization does not have an open EPA Brownfields Assessment nor Multipurpose Grant.

### **4. Contractors and Named Subrecipients**

The City will procure a qualified consultant to administer and manage the grant upon award. All consultant selection and contracting activities will comply with the competitive procurement and oversight requirements outlined in Section 4.D.



# INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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Mike Braun  
Governor

Clint Woods  
Commissioner

January 28, 2026

Mr. Marino Solorio, Director of Parks and Recreation  
City of East Chicago  
4444 Railroad Avenue  
East Chicago, Indiana 46312

Re: IDEM Acknowledgement Letter  
U.S. E.P.A. Brownfields Grant Proposal  
Community Wide Assessment Grant  
City of East Chicago  
Lake County

Dear Mr. Solorio:

This letter is provided in support of the City of East Chicago (East Chicago or the City) proposal to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) for Brownfields Community Wide Assessment Grant funding. The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) acknowledges that East Chicago is requesting \$500,000 for hazardous substances and/or petroleum assessment.

IDEM understands that East Chicago has demonstrated its commitment to redeveloping brownfields by taking advantage of financial and technical assistance offered through the Indiana Brownfields Program (Program) and that East Chicago, based on the information it has provided with its request, believes it has the capability to perform the proposed grant-funded activities. The requested community wide assessment grant funding will help East Chicago with community outreach, evaluating and prioritizing site inventory, conducting Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments, and developing site specific cleanup and reuse plans.

East Chicago has identified the Target Area within the City which encompasses a concentration of legacy industrial properties abutting the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal (IHSC), as well as connected waterways including the Lake George Canal and the Grand Calumet River. Notably, the Indiana Harbor and Ship Canal and connected waterways are among the most severely contaminated river systems in the nation, underscoring both the environmental challenges and the significance of reinvestment along these corridors. This grant opportunity will help advance a shared community and regional vision to transform legacy industrial sites into a connected recreational hub which will knit neighborhoods together, create public access to the waterfront, and will buffer residents from ongoing industrial uses. These waterfront and canal-adjacent sites reflect East Chicago's historic role as a regional industrial and transportation hub and present a critical opportunity to assess,

Visit [on.IN.gov/survey](http://on.IN.gov/survey) or scan the QR code to provide feedback.

*We appreciate your input!*



address, and mitigate environmental contamination; improve compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods; and reposition underutilized land for reinvestment that benefits surrounding communities.

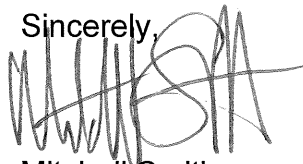
The Focus Areas are distributed along major industrial waterways and freight corridors and reflect varying stages of industrial activity. Today, these sites function as a fragmented corridor defined by incompatible land uses, physical barriers, and limited public access to waterways. The current conditions of each site present distinct environmental characteristics shaped by proximity to canals, rail infrastructure, and sensitive receptors such as residential neighborhoods and schools. This grant creates a critical opportunity to transform the corridor into a cohesive redevelopment framework that supports a complete neighborhood by strengthening internal connections, restoring access to the river, and linking the community to the broader regional network. Assessment across the sites will support informed planning decisions that balance industrial function, community health protection, and long-term redevelopment potential.

East Chicago has not yet selected specific sites to benefit from U.S. EPA brownfield grant funding. If East Chicago is awarded the requested grant funding, the Program will work with U.S. EPA and East Chicago to determine site eligibility once specific sites are identified.

IDEM has worked with East Chicago on several projects and recognizes that East Chicago is committed to working with the Program and/or the IDEM Voluntary Remediation Program for technical oversight of grant-funded site activities as applicable during the grant project period. The Program and IDEM are committed to continuing to support brownfield redevelopment within East Chicago by providing technical and other assistance through the Program.

IDEM considers East Chicago an excellent candidate to receive U.S. EPA assessment grant funding to continue its brownfields redevelopment efforts, which support Indiana's brownfields initiative. IDEM looks forward to continuing its partnership with East Chicago and its constituent communities. For further assistance, please contact John Morris of the Indiana Brownfields Program directly at (317) 234-0235 and at [jmorris@ifa.in.gov](mailto:jmorris@ifa.in.gov).

Sincerely,



Mitchell Smith  
Technical Staff Coordinator  
Indiana Brownfields Program

MS/JTM

cc: *(via electronic transmission)*

Kelsey Poole, AECOM  
John Morris, Indiana Brownfields Program