

## Get Ready for Dumpster Day!

By Brigid Avery, ECA Board Member

The ECA is gearing up for Dumpster Day, that glorious Saturday morning when we can offload the junk that's been weighing us down for the past year. Maybe you have a broken table occupying your deck, a casualty of falling roof ice. Or maybe you have a closet you have been meaning to clean out but, well, life. Now is your chance to get rid of the clutter and do some Spring cleaning.

I recently spoke with Kristina Hankamp, neighbor and Professional Organizer of Actualize Organizing ([actualizeorganizing.com](http://actualizeorganizing.com)). I asked her for some tips for tackling the junk.

Kristina suggests addressing just one area of one room, rather than focusing on the entire space. Set a timer, even just an hour to start. Gather bins or boxes and label them for "Donate," "Sell" (but only if you are really committed to a yard sale or posting online) "Recycle," "Relocate," and "Dumpster." She suggests taking questionable items and asking two questions: 1) Do I love this thing (not to be confused with, do I love the person who gave it to me)? 2) Do I use it right now (avoiding the mistake of hanging on to items we "might" use or fit into someday)?

Not all items can or should be given away or sold. Upholstered, broken furniture, stuffed animals, and broken plastic that does not have a recycling logo are good candidates for Dumpster Day, Kristina says. However some items may still have a second life; cleaned, yet stained clothes can be recycled into rags or stuffing for furniture.

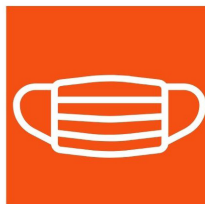
Kristina urges us to remember that organization is not a personality trait, but rather a behavior that can be changed. Using a professional organizer can be extremely helpful in speeding up the decluttering and organizing process. A friend or relative may even act as a coach and accountability partner to help set up sustainable systems that ensure your cupboards actually stay that way.

Throughout the year you can get tags for bulk items from the City which are now available online. SafeChem handles hazardous waste ([reimaginetrash.org](http://reimaginetrash.org)), and recycling drop-off is at 977 Wealthy St. SW, however it is currently closed until fall 2021 for construction.

The ECA Dumpster Day will be held on May 22 from 8am - 12pm, *or until dumpsters are full*, at the Ethel Parking Lot (Wealthy and Ethel) for all Eastown residents. Proof of residence, masks, and social distancing are required. The event is "drive-up and drop off" and contact-free so plan ahead to haul your materials. No yard waste or hazardous materials will be accepted. Major appliances must be prepared for disposal (freon free). A \$5 donation is suggested. ♦



- GET RID OF YOUR JUNK FOR FREE!
- MUST SHOW PROOF OF EASTOWN RESIDENCY
- MASKS REQUIRED
- \$5 SUGGESTED DONATION



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The Eastown Community Association board of directors meets on the second Monday of every month at 6 p.m. via Zoom. Eastown residents and business owners are encouraged to attend. For more information visit our website at eastown.org

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**FROM THE DIRECTOR**  
**Spring Has Arrived!**

By Emma Heemskerck, ECA Executive Director

We, like so many of you, are really enjoying this warmer weather and the renewed hope of Spring. We are also excited for some of the recent small gatherings we have been able to partake in and things that are in store for the summer.

ECA Board members and volunteers were able to get together outdoors as part of the City-wide *Its My Park Day* clean-up event that the ECA hosted on April 17 at Wilcox Park. It was a great way to see each other safely and had a great turnout with beautiful weather. Many thanks to all of the wonderful volunteers who helped to keep the park clean for all to enjoy. There are also exciting improvements underway at Sigsbee Park (see pg. 9).

We are also excited to see the creative ways you are all getting out and about. Many of you have been taking advantage of the continued scooter pilot to enjoy the warmer weather. Be sure to check out tips to stay safe on page 5. Others have been becoming avid birders during the pandemic (pg. 8), or helping to get the ECA garden prepared for the season while celebrating Earth Day (pg.13).

We can't wait to see all of you and are currently keeping an eye on public health and adapting our events accordingly. Stay tuned to our website at eastown.org and Facebook page (@eastowngr) for the latest information.

In the meantime, we look forward to seeing you all at our **Dumpster Day, a free refuse disposal event that is open to all Eastown residents on May 22 in the Ethel Lot (Wealthy/Ethel) from 8am-12pm, or until dumpsters are full** (see cover). This free refuse event is contact-free and 'drive-up and drop off' so plan ahead to haul your materials into the provided bins. No yard waste or hazardous materials will be accepted and major appliances should be prepared for disposal (freon free). A \$5 donation is suggested. If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact the ECA at info@eastown.org or 451-3025.

Lastly, if you are a Host Neighbor or are interested in learning more about ECA's Host Neighbor Program be sure to check out our new Host Neighbor Corner on page 11 with information about how you can help out on your block. As always, if you are interested in getting involved on one of ECA's committees (Events, Bricks & Mortar, Community Engagement, Garden) email us at info@eastown.org! ♦

**EASTOWN ACCESS**

As the newsletter of the Eastown Community Association, the *Access* is published six times a year.

**Contributors**

Brigid Avery, Kristin Bennett, Lee Hardy, Emma Heemskerck, John Helmholdt, Noah Joseph, Peter Lewandoski, Staci Rickman, Amanda Sterling, Amy Wolterstorff

*The views and opinions expressed in Access are not necessarily those of the ECA Board.*

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# EBA NOTES

## Easttown Business Association Updates

By Dana Kroll, Uptown Grand Rapids, Inc.

This is the season for Uptown beautification initiatives, and we have quite a few that have gotten underway over the past few weeks/months. Here's a recap of some of those already shared in recent communications, as well as some additional things to be proud of together:

Uptown is now fully engaged with our Ambassador Program, a program offering ongoing maintenance of all public spaces within the district, including emptying trash receptacles and keeping them in good repair, rubbish removal along curbsides, graffiti removal, and more. The program is a partnership between Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. and their Block By Block Program, and it has been funded through our very own Business Improvement District (BID).

Additionally, we recently engaged with the landscape company Simply Gardens for the spring cleaning, planting, and mulching of our public garden/greenspace areas. This project was spearheaded through Uptown's Design Committee and again funded through our BID.

Finally, our most current beautification enterprise, also implemented by our Design Committee, has been to begin the addition of what will ultimately be fifty new street trees, planted throughout our four business districts, which of course includes Easttown. We are so excited to add to our tree canopy. As the trees mature, they'll contribute towards creating a lovely established presence, as well as provide cool spaces and shade, of course. The project was contracted with Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, and has been funded through our CIA (Corridor Improvement Authority). ♦



**Check out who's new in Easttown!**

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Xtreme Cryo & Wellness  
Tamales Mary • Basalt Tex-Mex  
Commune • Cubi Market  
Strike Back Fight Club  
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Psyche Glass Shop



### USEFUL NUMBERS

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>Emergency:</b>                      | 911      |
| Grand Rapids Customer Service          | 311      |
| <b>Police: Non-emergency</b>           | 456-3400 |
| <b>Silent Observer (Anonymous):</b>    | 774-2345 |
| <b>Community Police Officers:</b>      |          |
| Captain John Bylsma                    | 456-4485 |
| <b>Calvin College Dean of Students</b> |          |
| John Witte                             | 526-6548 |
| <b>Aquinas College, Engagement</b>     |          |
| Katharina Hausler-Gross                | 632-2112 |
| <b>City of GR, Code Compliance</b>     |          |
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# IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## Dog Tips

Information from Kent County Animal Shelter

Spring is in full swing and that means everyone is out and about with their furry friends soaking in the warmer weather. Whether you're out walking with your pooch or just outside your house, don't forget these tips to help keep Eastown clean, safe and welcoming for all!

### 6FT LEASH

Kent County Animal Control requires all dogs to be on a six foot leash and can capture any loose or off-leash dogs while not on the owner's property including in neighboring walkways, yards, and driveways. They also may issue citations, legal penalties, and/or fees.

### CURB YOUR DOG

Be courteous and pick up after your pooch in your yard, on walks, and in parks! Kent County Animal Control requires proper disposal of all fecal matter in public. It also helps to keep our environment clean and reduces disease and contamination of waterways.

### DOG PARKS

Check out a local dog park for letting your fur baby off the leash! Hillcrest and Covell parks are both great examples of city-owned dog parks where your pal can run off-leash and socialize with other dogs.

### MORE INFO

For more information visit <https://www.accesskent.com/Health/AnimalControl/> and select Kent County Animal Control Regulations for a list of current requirements for animal behavior, the keeping of animals, and licensing. Kent County Animal Control can be reached at (616) 632-7300. They also have a bunch of adorable pets available for adoption that are viewable online! ♦



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# GETTING AROUND

## Shared Mobility Pilot Continues Through 2021

By Kristin Bennett, City of Grand Rapids

The City's Shared Micromobility Pilot kicked off in September 2020 and will continue through the end of 2021.

Shared micromobility services like e-scooters and electric-assist bicycles are solo, low-cost, on-demand transportation options. They connect with The Rapid and DASH, parking lots and garages, business districts, neighborhoods and other important places in Grand Rapids.

### *What Kind of Vehicles are Available?*

The City's pilot program works with two companies – Spin (shared e-scooters available since Fall 2020), and Lime (shared e-scooters and electric assist bicycles available later this spring).

### *Key Rules and Safety Tips*

- You must be 18 years or older to use these services
- Only one person per scooter or bicycle – no doubling up!
- Ride in the street (not the sidewalk) with the flow of traffic
- Always yield to pedestrians
- You are required to park in the Designated Parking Zones to avoid further charges – never block a sidewalk, crossing ramp or bus stop
- Wear a helmet – if you do not have one, both Lime and Spin offer options to get one

### *How Much Does It Cost and How Can I Pay?*

Currently, it costs \$1 to unlock a vehicle plus 15 cents per minute of riding time. People meeting certain income requirements can receive a 50%



Scooters Photo by Lee Hardy

discount. To sign up for discounted rates, contact Lime and Spin and provide proof of income or enrollment in a local, state or federal assistance program like HUD Housing Choice Section 8 vouchers, Medicaid, SNAP EBT, TANF and WIC. Both companies also help people without credit/debit cards to get reloadable cards to pay for their rides.

### *Where Can I Find, Ride and Park Them?*

You can find shared e-scooters and electric-assist bicycles at Designated Parking Zones and ride them within the

12-square mile pilot service area. This pilot service area includes downtown, many local business districts including Eastown, and almost 75% of the City's Neighborhoods of Focus in west, southwest and southeast Grand Rapids.

City staff installed over 175 Designated Parking Zones throughout the pilot service area where you can pick up and drop off e-scooters and electric-assist bicycles.

Use the Lime and Spin mobile apps to find Designated Parking Zones near you and your destination. Then look for painted white boxes with pavement decals and signs (being installed now) – the Designated Parking Zones are often found near street intersections. You can find these zones near bus stops, parking lots and garages, and other locations throughout downtown and neighborhoods like Eastown.

City staff will be adding more Designated Parking Zones this spring and summer to help maintain sidewalk access, reduce clutter and improve convenience. Map updates will be made in the Lime and Spin mobile apps and on the pilot program web site.

### *Take the Pilot Survey!*

You can find out more information about the Shared Micromobility Pilot and also take a survey at [www.grandrapidsmi.gov/sharedmobility](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov/sharedmobility) or by calling 311.

The survey is available in English and Spanish. We welcome feedback from people who have used and also not used these shared micromobility services. Input will be used to evaluate this pilot program and make recommendations to City leaders on next steps. ♦

# URBAN PERCH

## Safer Streets for All

Information from AARP Livable Communities

Between 2010 and 2019, drivers in the United States struck and killed 53,435 pedestrians — more than 14 people per day on average.

The reasons for the high rates, which have increased every year over the past decade, are many, ranging from public policy and traffic engineering decisions, to the elevated heights of trucks and some passenger vehicles, to the way the nation's roadways are designed and constructed. "Our approach to building and operating streets and roads is directly contributing to these deaths," note the authors of *Dangerous By Design 2021*, a report by Smart Growth America and its National Complete Streets Coalition initiative. "We continue to design streets that are dangerous for all people."

The following illustrations are featured in the report to show the differences in a street that prioritizes the desire to keep vehicles moving — fast — compared to one that's safer for all users.

Designing roads for high speeds dramatically increases the likelihood that a pedestrian struck by a vehicle will be killed. For instance, at 40 miles per hour, 85 percent of crashes involving a person who is walking are fatal. The numbers on the first illustration correspond to the information below:

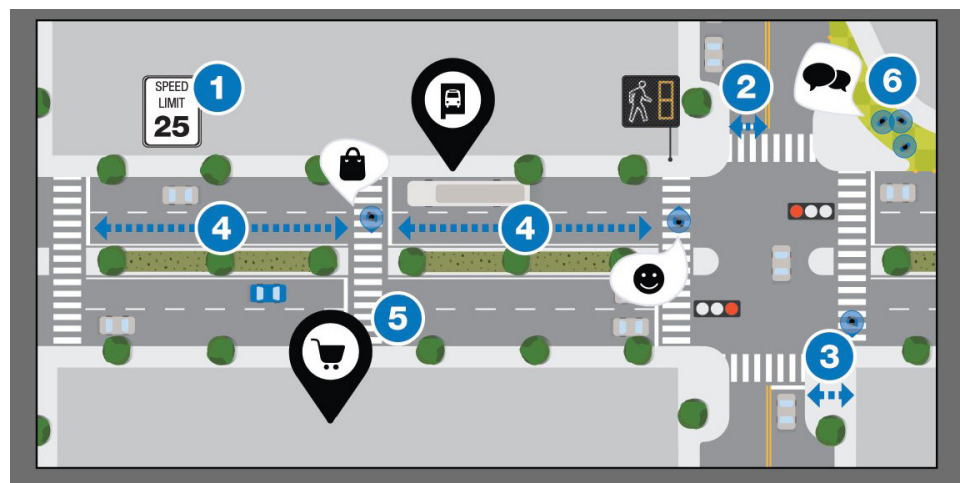
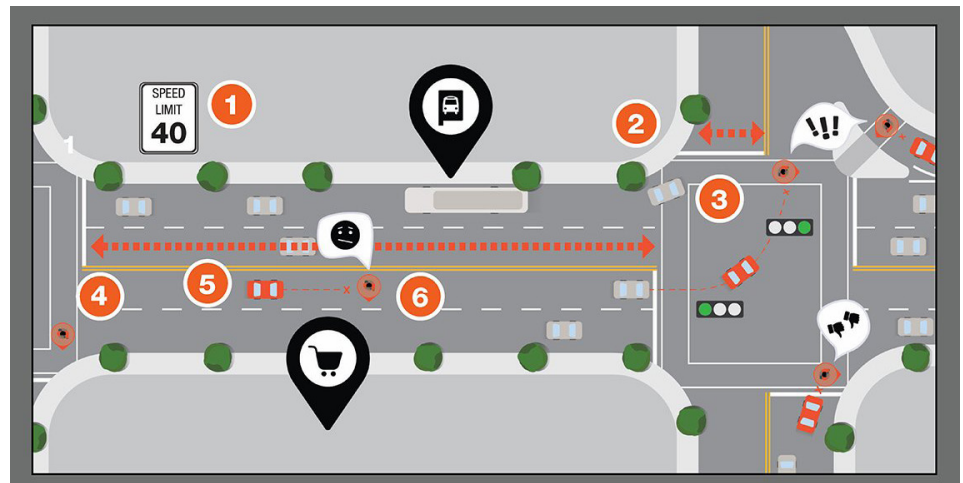
1. Speed is the number one factor in pedestrian fatalities.
2. Streets with wide lanes encourage faster driving, regardless of the posted speed limit.
3. "Slip" lanes were designed to keep vehicles from needing to slow down when making right-hand turns.
4. Streets with wide corners create long crossing distances for pedestrians.
5. Long distances between

- intersections encourage faster driving speeds.
6. Streets without properly placed crosswalks leave pedestrians with the choice of either crossing unsafely or walking far out of their way to cross, especially when destinations are located directly opposite one another.

A roadway that's designed for all users is often referred to as a "Complete Street." The numbers on the second illustration correspond to the information below:

1. While it's important to lower speed limits, safe design provides drivers with added visual cues to slow down.
2. Narrow travel lanes naturally slow traffic.

3. Highly visible, signalized crosswalks make drivers more aware of pedestrians, and extended curbs shorten the distance required to cross the street.
4. Decreasing the distance between intersections helps to reduce speeds.
5. Adding signalized crosswalks in the middle of long blocks slows traffic and provides connections where people need or want to cross.
6. Eliminating right turn "slip" lanes in favor of right-angle corners produces slower, safer turns and shorter crossing distances for pedestrians.



Illustrations courtesy Smart Growth America 2021 *Dangerous by Design* Report



# Celebrating Juneteenth

By Staci Rickman, ECA Board Member

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day and Jubilee Day, is the oldest national celebration honoring the freedom of the last remaining slaves in the U.S., and the decades of Black resistance and excellence before and since that critical moment in American history.

Many of us are taught that slavery ended on January 1, 1863, when President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation; however, slaves were not actually freed until more than two years later.

On June 19, 1865, about 1800 federal troops took over the state of Texas to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the more than 250,000 people who were still enslaved. Even then, some slave owners refused to release their slaves until after the harvest was completed.

On December 6, 1865, the 13th amendment abolished slavery in the United States, declaring in part, "Neither slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday, and other states, including Michigan, have followed. In 2020, the City Commission of Grand Rapids voted to make Juneteenth an annual, city-sponsored event

which is typically celebrated on June 19th of each year.

What are ways to honor Juneteenth?

**JOIN:** At the time of publication, no Juneteenth events have been posted yet for the city of Grand Rapids. As we get closer to June 19th, we encourage you to actively seek out and share both virtual and in-person events that people can join to honor and celebrate Juneteenth. The ECA will share events on our website as they are shared to social media.

If you identify as white, check to ensure that the event you are interested in attending is open to white allies, and please respect the spaces which are specifically and solely created for Black and/or BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community members.

**AMPLIFY:** Share a Juneteenth Call to Action with your friends & networks and lift up and follow the lead of Movement for Black Lives and local Black leaders in our community.

**EDUCATE:** Use this time to read anti-racism resources on why it is important to invest in Black communities.

**REFLECT AND ACT:** Reflect on tangible actions that you can take to engage in the anti-racism work happening in our community. Invite others to join you in learning about Juneteenth and celebrating Black lives. ♦

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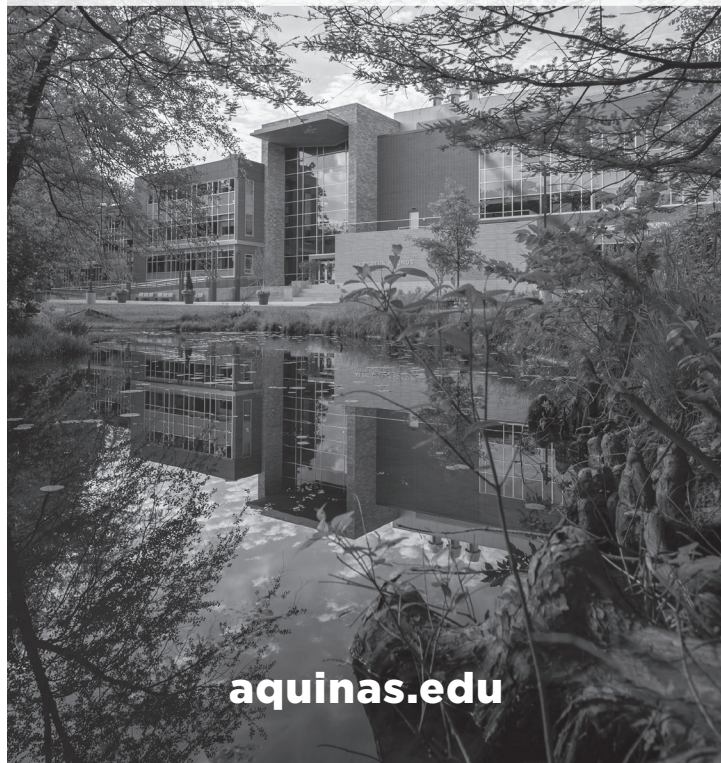


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# NATURE

## Birding In and Around Eastown

By Peter Lewandoski, Access Contributor

Like me, I am sure you have been enjoying the warmer weather and all it brings: relaxing on the front porch, colorful flowers popping up in gardens, chatting with neighbors on the sidewalk, and the occasional rumble of a thunderstorm. Spring is definitely in the air. But that is not all that's in the air. There are also birds, and late spring is the perfect time to go birding!

Birding is a great family-friendly activity. It is also a good way to connect with the beauty and diversity of the natural world. And you don't even have to go very far, as there's a wide variety of birds right here in Eastown!

There are the common ones you'd expect, such as American Robin and House Sparrow, but there are also House Finches, Red Bellied

Woodpeckers and Black Capped Chickadees. Occasionally you may see a Cooper's Hawk, Rose Breasted Grosbeak, or even a Nashville Warbler!

However, if you are able to go to a location outside of Eastown that provides better bird habitat, you are likely to see a lot more species of birds. A few good spots nearby include the boardwalk at Huff Park, the trails near and around Reed's Lake, and the walk along Plaster Creek at Ken-O-Sha Park.

Whether you are looking out your window at a feeder or going on a long walk at a nearby hiking trail, the birding process is the same. Here's some tips for beginners and little ones:

First, as best you can make a mental note of what you see and hear. Things to look for include the bird's coloring,

shape and size, habits, location, and sounds.

Next, to help you make sense of what you see and hear you need to get your hands on a bird identification guide.

There are many good choices of books available at the library. Another handy option is to download the Merlin app to your phone. It was created by Cornell University and is both free and easy to use.


By going through this simple process you may not identify every bird you see at first, but it will get easier and easier with time and practice.

Eventually, you may surprise yourself by identifying Baltimore Orioles, Indigo Buntings and Red-Eyed Vireos, all of which are seen fairly regularly at the spots mentioned above.

*Continued on Page 11*

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# PARKS

## Sigsbee Park Improvements Underway

By John Helmholdt, Grand Rapids Public Schools

Wondering about all the equipment and construction at Sigsbee Park?

It all started back in 2017 when Carter's Kids, Lake Michigan Credit Union, and the Grand Rapids Public Schools Foundation (formerly GR Student Advancement Foundation) approached Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) about a playground project.

GRPS and the City Parks and Recreation Department worked together and selected Sigsbee Park for the project (which is actually a GRPS-owned property that is part of a historic joint use agreement with the City of Grand Rapids on parkland and greenspace).

Then, in 2019, GRPS and the City Parks and Recreation Department engaged with many of you and the Eastown Community Association to secure feedback from neighbors on park improvements.

Thanks to more than \$120,000 in donations from the lead donor Lake Michigan Credit Union, Eastown neighbors and businesses, GRPS Foundation, and a Michigan Economic Development Corporation matching grant, phase one of the Sigsbee Park improvements were completed just before the pandemic hit.

Fast forward to today and work is once again underway with the next round of improvements to Sigsbee Park. This phase of the project is a collaboration between Grand Rapids Public Schools and the City Parks & Recreation Department.

Nearly \$100,000 in funding for the new "nature play" features is provided by a grant from The Wege Foundation and the 2013 Grand Rapids Parks Millage (THANK YOU GR voters and taxpayers!).

In addition to the nature play structure being constructed in "the

bowling" area, the project includes the reinstallation of the Florence Higley Memorial, which commemorates a beloved local civil rights activist and community organizer. Also included are installation of custom benches donated by local furniture maker Dan Chase and ReDwell, new landscape beds with trees, and a bikeable landscape. Construction is expected to be complete by early summer 2021.

Potential future improvements may include a lower-bowl hardscape renovation with amphitheater construction, a pavilion with picnic tables, new full-sized basketball court and surrounding hardscape improvements, additional tree plantings, entry signage, and re-painting concrete embankments.

If you have any questions or want more information, please feel free to contact the GRPS Communications Department at 616-819-2149 or email [communications@grps.org](mailto:communications@grps.org). ♦



Photos courtesy Grand Rapids Public Schools

# MICHIGAN

## Cutting Edge New Clean Slate Law

By Noah Joseph, ECA Board Member

The state of Michigan has enacted a set of new Clean Slate laws that will greatly expand the opportunities for people to have their criminal records expunged. So what is expungement and why does it matter?

### Expungement Basics

Expungement is the act of sealing a criminal record from public view. Once a person's record is expunged, landlords and employers will no longer be able to find the expunged conviction. This allows people who are seeking jobs and housing to truthfully state on applications that no conviction ever occurred.

In the past, expungement has been limited only to people who had one or two minor convictions. Yet a criminal record can have a significant impact on people's lives, leading to difficulty in finding a job or even a place to live.

### New Clean Slate Law

In the fall of 2020, the Michigan legislature passed a group of bills enacting the most expansive expungement laws in the nation.

The number of crimes and the types of crimes that will soon qualify for expungement has been greatly expanded. This includes a Clean Slate program, meaning there will be automatic expungement for many people. While Michigan's law is the most expansive, it was not the first.

In 2014, the Center for American Progress and Community Legal Services of Philadelphia looked into the impact of a minor criminal record on job prospects and poverty. As you might guess from the title, "One Strike and You're Out," the impacts of a criminal record are important and long-lasting.

The solution that came out of this research was the idea to create a mechanism for automatically wiping convictions off people's record, an idea termed Clean Slate. In the past, a person always had to apply and go to court to get a conviction expunged,

which created additional barriers. Pennsylvania was the first state to enact Clean Slate in 2018.

Automatic expungement means that if a person is convicted of a qualifying crime, serves the time required, completes any conditions of probation or parole, and then waits the specified waiting period without committing any additional offenses, that conviction will come off their record through an automatic process. This component of the law is critical as there has been data showing that less than 10% of those people who qualify for expungement obtain one. There will be no application or petition required, no hearing, and no judge to review the case. This part of the law is set to take effect in 2022, as the state needs time to create the mechanisms that are required to seal records automatically.

### Bipartisan Support

Criminal Justice Reform is an issue that has gained broad bipartisan support recently and expungement is an example of that. One reason for bipartisan support is the data, which shows that if someone with a single conviction does not commit an additional crime for a certain amount of time, they are actually less likely to commit another crime than the average person.

A study done by professors from the University of Michigan Law School and the University of Chicago which was published in the *Harvard Law Review* found that "Michigan data also showed that crime rates for those receiving expungement were vanishingly low—indeed, lower than average crime rates for the state's adult population as a whole." (Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study, by J.J. Prescott and Sonja B. Starr, *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 133, No. 8, pp. 2460-555 (June 2020).

Expungements have always required a waiting period and that will continue under the new laws. The

more serious the crime, the longer the waiting period, although the most serious crimes will not qualify for expungement at all.

### The Changes

The new laws make too many changes to list them all here and more changes might still come, but here are some of the most important changes:

- One of the bills created a true Clean Slate program, which will bring automatic expungement although this will not go into effect until December of 2022.
- Most crimes that qualify for expungement will qualify for the Clean Slate program, but there will still be convictions that can only be expunged by application and hearing.
- Eligibility will expand to three felonies and an unlimited number of misdemeanors, with conditions on the types of offenses that qualify. Some of the convictions that will not qualify for expungement are for charges with a maximum sentence of life in prison, human trafficking, crimes involving child pornography or abuse, and felony domestic violence (when there was a previous misdemeanor charge).
- The bills that expand the types of convictions that qualify for expungement just went into effect this April. That means that people with convictions can either wait a couple of years for the automatic expungement to go into effect or apply now, so long as they meet the waiting period.
- The waiting periods for qualifying will vary depending on the conviction, three years for most misdemeanors, five years for serious misdemeanors or one felony, or seven years for multiple felonies.

*Continued on Page 11*



## **Clean Slate Law, cont.**

- Many low-level marijuana charges can be expunged with a simplified process that would generally not require a hearing, unless the prosecutor objects to the petition for expungement.
- Most traffic offenses will be eligible for expungement, although currently convictions for driving while intoxicated, offenses causing injury or death, and Commercial Driver License violations would not qualify.

If you think you might qualify for expungement under the new law, talk to an attorney to get more information.

The new laws are more complicated than in the past and it's impossible to list all factors here. You can also lose your chance for expungement under the current law if your petition is not done correctly, as you cannot re-apply for three years.

There might also be more changes coming, as the legislature is working on a bill to add a first time driving while intoxicated offense. A similar bill was passed in the fall along with the other laws described, but Governor Whitmer did not sign that bill, so it is not currently included.

While expungement seals a person's record from public view, law enforcement, courts and certain state agencies are still able to access the convictions. This can impact any future charges without causing impacts on job and housing prospects. Expungement does not impact any restitution, fines, or costs that have been ordered. It also does not limit the ability of the victim of any crime to sue for civil damages. Finally, once a record is expunged, divulging or publishing information on that conviction, unless authorized by law, is a misdemeanor.

### **Conclusion**

Clean Slate was created to reduce barriers for people to access employment and housing and the data shows that it works. The same study from Prescott and Starr found empirical data from Michigan that an expungement was followed by a

23% jump in wages within a year. The rise was driven mostly by people who are unemployed or marginally employed and then found steady work. According to Safe and Just Michigan, "Tens of thousands of Michiganders would automatically receive expungements if Clean Slate legislation is passed. That means tens of thousands more people can find meaningful work, provide for their families, find a home and build a future in their community. And that's something positive for everyone."

### **Resources**

If you cannot afford an attorney, you can contact Legal Aid of Western Michigan for assistance (<https://lawestmi.org/>).

For additional information on the new Clean Slate laws, visit Safe & Just Michigan (<https://www.safeandjustmi.org/>).

One Strike and You're Out article (<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/poverty/reports/2014/12/02/102308/one-strike-and-youre-out/>)

Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study ([https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3353620](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3353620))



## **Birding, cont.**

One last thing to note is that though you can bird without any equipment, it is extremely helpful to have a pair of binoculars. Perhaps your family already has a pair around the house, or maybe you can start by borrowing a set from a friend. If not, there are some fairly decent inexpensive options out there, and a typical size for birding is 8x42.

So while you're enjoying the warmer weather, try something new and go out birding!



## **HOST NEIGHBOR CORNER**

The ECA is funded in part by Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) for public safety, community leadership, and civic engagement. As part of this work, one of our long-standing programs is the Host Neighbor Program.

While it has changed over the years and experienced different levels of involvement, the Host Neighbor Program is an informal network of neighbors who help to foster engagement, communication, and leadership on their block.

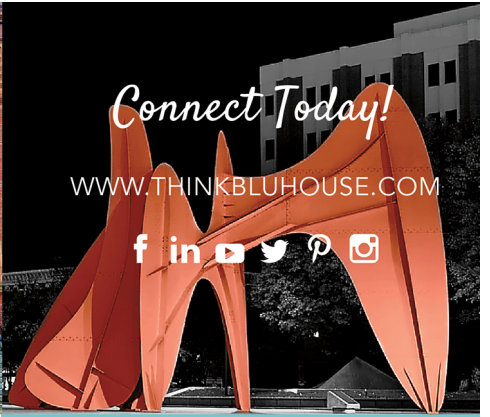
They do this by helping the ECA to disseminate information (i.e. flying on their block), keeping a "phone tree" of their block, and serving as a point of contact for their block to communicate issues between the ECA and residents.

As new residents move in, a Host Neighbor may serve to welcome new neighbors to the area by sharing potential resources and the phone numbers of their neighbors. They may also check on elderly residents or other residents in need, such as for medication or grocery needs during Covid.

The Host Neighbor Program seeks to empower residents to help themselves, each other, and the community - while "meeting people where they are at" so to speak. Therefore, it is truly up to the Host Neighbor how much time they would like to contribute.

Host Neighbors often become involved in ECA committees and events or just remain a point of contact for planning block parties on their block. While Eastown has many long-time residents and Host Neighbors, residents often change contact information or move.

The ECA relies on information shared with us to update our Host Neighbor list. If you are not sure if you are a Host Neighbor, would like to become one, would like to update your information, or receive an info packet, please contact us at [info@eastown.org](mailto:info@eastown.org) today! ♦



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# COMMUNITY NOTES

## Earth Day at ECA!

By Amanda Sterling, ECA Volunteer

The ECA garden committee kicked off the 2021 season on Earth Day and made great progress prepping the garden beds for planting season. The group is encouraging community members to join the committee which meets the first and third Thursday of the month at 6pm in the garden behind the ECA headquarters at 415 Ethel SE. After such a difficult year, many of us are looking forward to reconnecting with neighbors and other members of the community and working in the garden is such a rewarding way to do this. Kids and all skill levels are welcome. If you'd like to get involved, shoot an email to [info@eastown.org](mailto:info@eastown.org). We'd love to play in the dirt with y'all!



Board Member and Garden Committee Co-Chair Mike Bopp in the ECA garden  
*Photo by Amanda Sterling*

## Coldbrook Creek

By Peter Lewandoski, Access Contributor

The city of East Grand Rapids is currently considering whether to allow the development of a boat rental and refueling marina, along with the operation of a 60-foot tour boat, on Reeds Lake. For more information, visit the EGR planning commission's agenda page at [www.eastgr.org](http://www.eastgr.org). There are pros and cons to this proposal, of course, but one idea this issue brings to mind is how areas within a watershed are connected. We all live in a watershed, and many readers of the Access live in the Coldbrook Creek watershed, of which Reeds Lake is a part. It is important to note that what happens in one part of a watershed can affect areas further away in the watershed. Remember: the water connects us. Coldbrook Creek originates in the wetlands around Reeds Lake in East Grand Rapids and from there flows into the Grand River in downtown GR. The mission of the Coldbrook Creek Community is to promote education, protect the environment, and provide enjoyment of this watershed.

*To become involved or for more information please visit [www.lgrow.org/coldbrook-creek](http://www.lgrow.org/coldbrook-creek), or search for us on Facebook.*

## Cubicles on Wealthy

By Lee Hardy, Access Contributor

You may have been wondering what the cubicles are doing at the corner of Wealthy and Fuller. The short answer: they are Cubi Market, a kind of one-stop shopping for local produce and products. Shopping at the Cubi Market is as simple as going to the Cubi website ([cubi.com](http://cubi.com)) and putting in your order. The selection ranges from fresh produce to baked goods to items from locally owned stores. Once you put in your order, local entrepreneurs go to work, and the products are gathered and placed in the Cubi locker at the place, date, and time you pick (with a two-day lead time). An email link is sent to you to access your order.



Cubi Market at Wealthy and Fuller *Photo by Lee Hardy*

Vendors for Cubi Market include Field and Fire Bakery, Good Life Naturals, Visser Farms, Schuil Coffee Company, Malamiah Juice Bar, Maggie Ann Soap Company, Square Roots, MOOville Creamery, and more.

The Cubi station on Wealthy is available for pickup between 11 am and 11 pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays. Parking is available on site. Video surveillance is provided for safety. The lockers are temperature controlled, so your produce remains fresh.

## Covid-19 Vaccine Info

All Michigan residents age 16 and up are now eligible for the vaccine. Vaccine supplies are increasing, and appointments are easier than ever to schedule. Some locations even allow walk-ins. Register and find answers to frequently asked questions at <https://vaccinatewestmi.com> or by calling 888-535-6136. ♦





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## DOG TIPS

Help keep your neighborhood  
clean, safe, and welcoming for all!

### Keep your dog leashed

#### 6FT LEASH

Kent County Animal Control can capture any dogs running loose or off-leash while not on the owner's property and may issue citations, penalties, and fees.

#### CURB YOUR DOG

### Clean up after your pooch

Pick up after your pooch in your yard, on walks, and in parks! Kent County Animal Control requires proper disposal of all fecal matter in public.

#### DOG PARKS

### Check out a local dog park

Hillcrest and Covell are both great examples of city-owned dog parks where your pal can run off-leash and socialize with other dogs. More info can be found at: <https://www.grandrapidsmi.gov>

#### MORE INFO

### Kent County Animal Control

For more information visit:  
<https://www.accesskent.com/Health/AnimalControl/>  
or contact: Kent County Animal Control at (616) 632-7300.

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## CLEAN & GREEN

If you're not recycling your paper, glass and cans, start now by calling the city for a free recycling bin: 456-3232

If you have electronic components you need to get rid of, you can take them to:

### Kent County Recycling Center

977 Wealthy SW/Grand Rapids  
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.  
(Currently closed for construction until fall 2021. See [reimaginetrash.org](http://reimaginetrash.org) for alternatives)

### CompRenew

629 Ionia SW/Grand Rapids  
Monday-Friday 10:00 a.m.- 6 p.m.

### Valley City Electronic Recycling

2929 32nd St SE  
Grand Rapids MI 49512  
616-421-3386

Have an item to recycle but not sure where to take it? Visit [www.recyclekent.org/](http://www.recyclekent.org/) for locations to accept most household items.

Used auto oil can be taken to the Auto Zone, on Fuller just south of Leonard, for free recycling.

If you wish to reduce the amount of junk mail you receive, try: [www.41pounds.org](http://www.41pounds.org) or [www.dmachoice.org](http://www.dmachoice.org)

## WEBSITES/EMAILS

### The City of Grand Rapids:

[www.grandrapidsmi.gov](http://www.grandrapidsmi.gov)

### Mayor of Grand Rapids

Rosalynn Bliss: [mayor@grcity.us](mailto:mayor@grcity.us)

### Second Ward Commissioners

#### (North of Wealthy):

Milinda Ysasi: [mysasi@grcity.us](mailto:mysasi@grcity.us)  
Joseph D. Jones: [jdjones@grcity.us](mailto:jdjones@grcity.us)

### Third Ward Commissioners

#### (South of Wealthy):

Senita Lenear: [slenear@grcity.us](mailto:slenear@grcity.us)  
Nathaniel Moody: [nmoody@grcity.us](mailto:nmoody@grcity.us)

### The Rapid Bus System:

[www.ridetherapid.org](http://www.ridetherapid.org)

### Kent County:

[www.accesskent.com](http://www.accesskent.com)

### State of Michigan:

[www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov)

### Get the Lead Out!

[www.healthyhomescoalition.org](http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org)



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