

# DRAFT

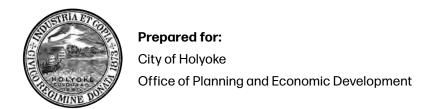
## Holyoke

**Comprehensive Plan Update** 

## DRAFT GOALS & STRATEGIES

**April 2025** 





Prepared by:



cambridge econometrics































Holyoke Comprehensive Plan Update 2025



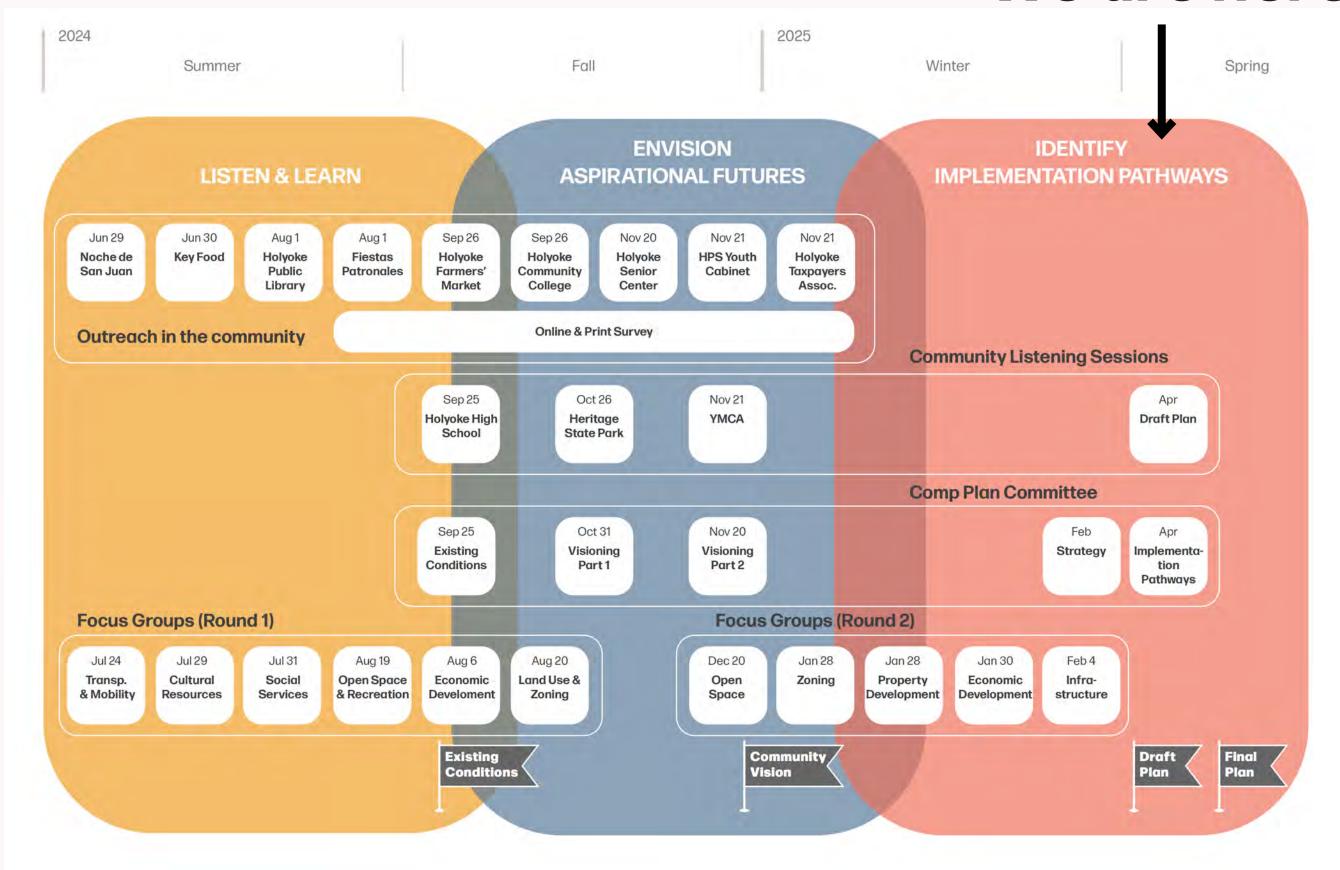




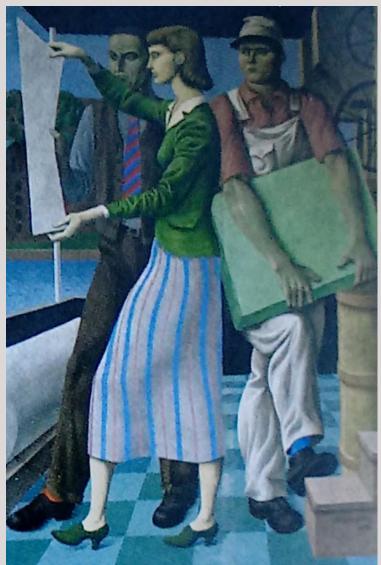


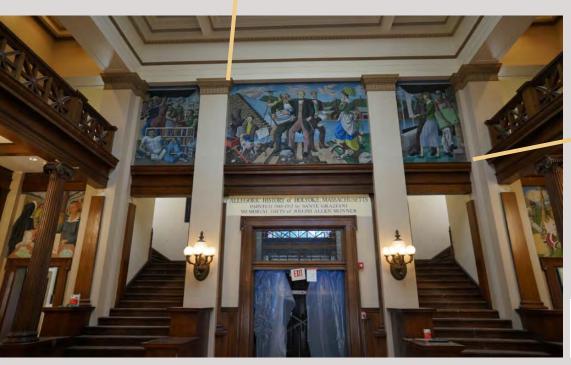


## We are here!



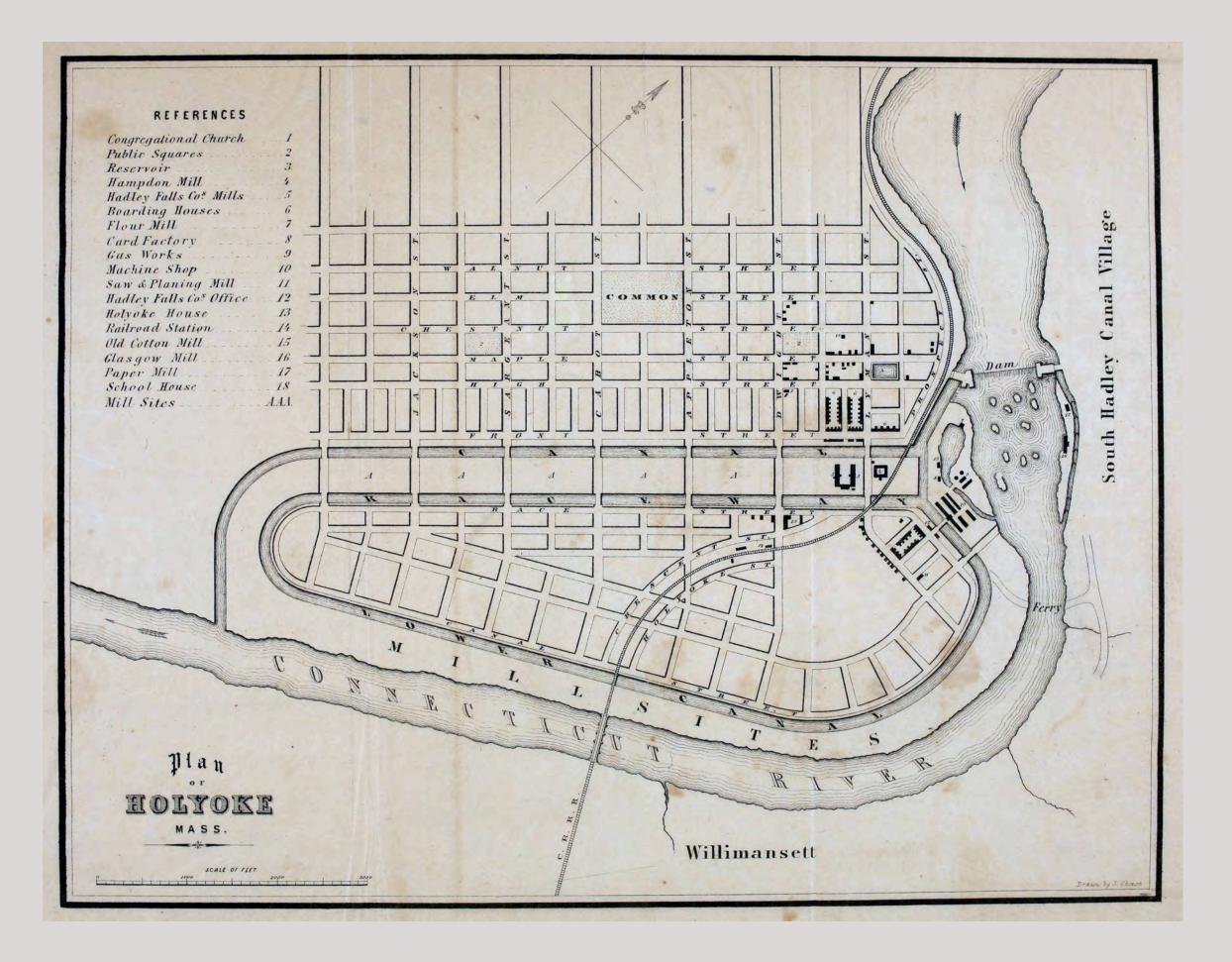






# Holyoke's first (unofficial) comprehensive plan

**Sante Graziani Mural** Holyoke Public Library, 1954 Anderson & Chase Plan for Holyoke, 1853

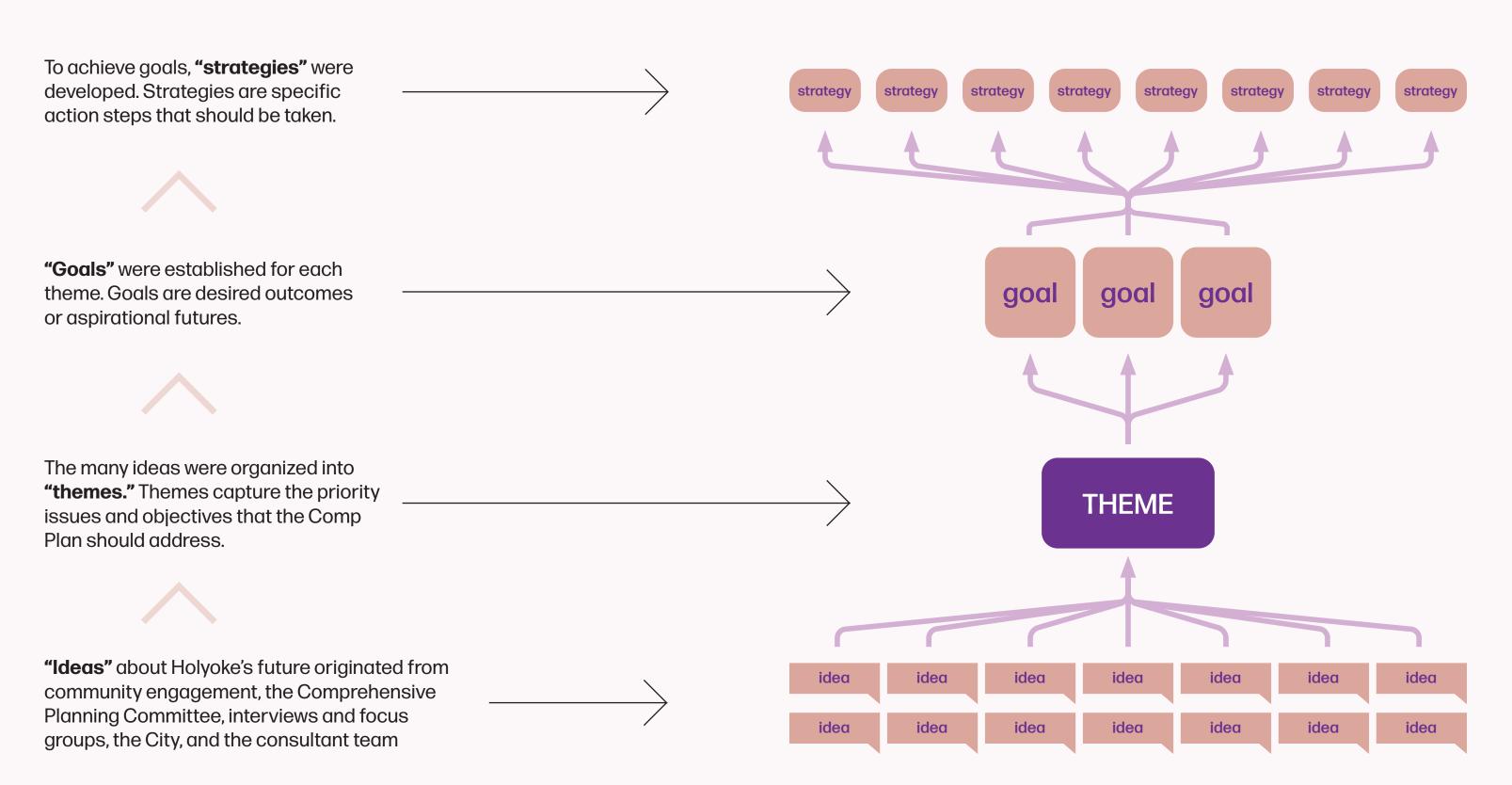


### **Vision Statement:**

Holyoke is growing toward a clean and green future, leveraging its renewable energy and environmental beauty to offer economic opportunity, access to education, healthy, safe and joyful quality of life, and housing for all. Holyoke is assured of its future—vibrant, inclusive, and modern.



## **Planning Framework**



Holyoke Comprehensive Plan Update 2025

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## **Planning Framework**









Theme 1:

Holyoke is...

Ready for Business!

Theme 2:

Holyoke is...

Safe and Compassionate!

Theme 3:

Holyoke is...

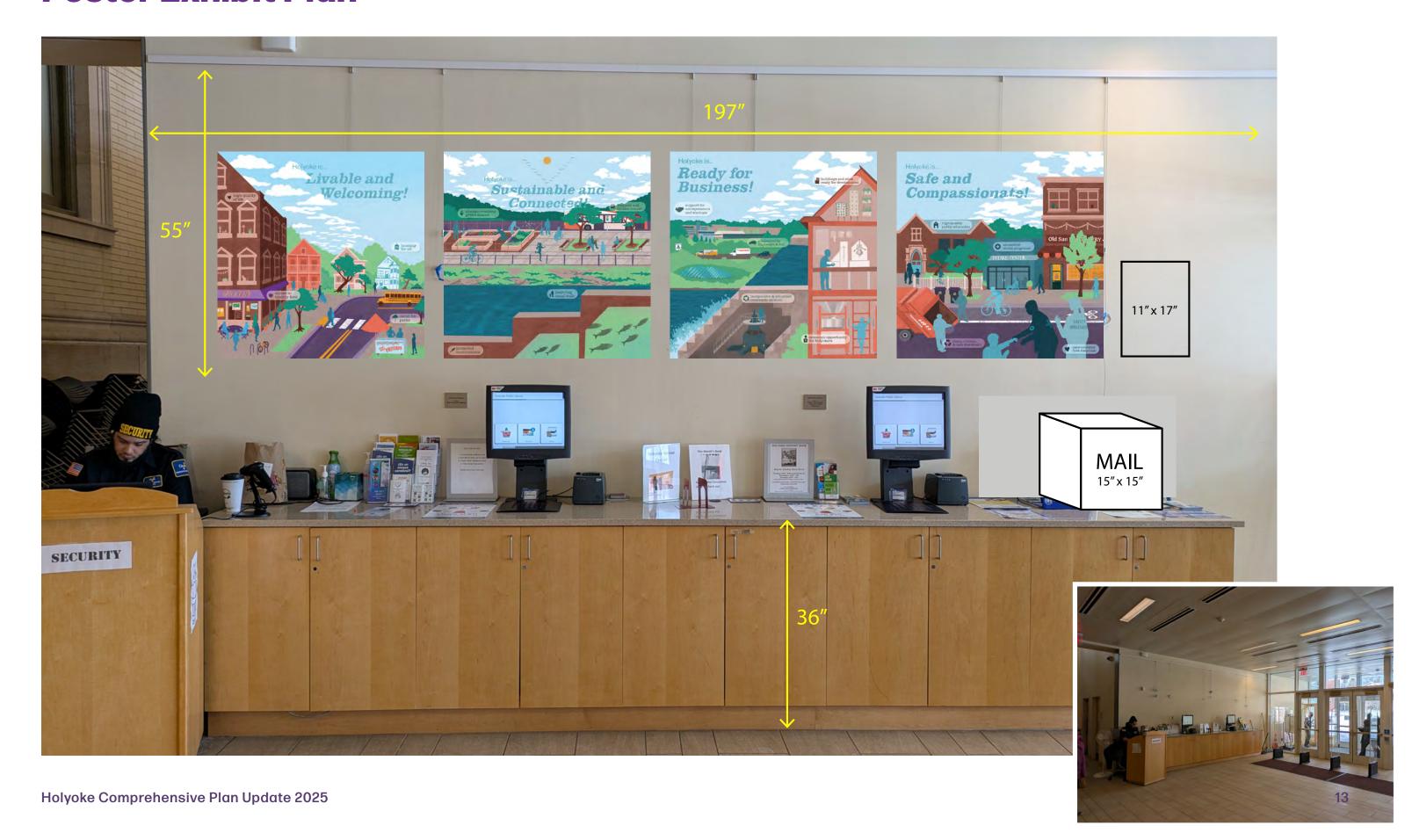
Livable and Welcoming!

Theme 4:

Holyoke is...

Sustainable and Connected!

## **Poster Exhibit Plan**



## **Agenda**

## Grab a plate, settle in

- 1. Presentation: Holyoke is Ready for Business

  Discussion
- 2. Presentation: Holyoke is Livable and Welcoming Discussion
- 3. Presentation: Holyoke is Sustainable and Connected Discussion
- 4. Presentation: Holyoke is Safe and Compassionate Discussion
- 5. Closing / Next Steps

Holyoke is...

Ready for Business.



### **Call to Action**

In the past decade, **there have been substantive economic development strategies, initiatives, and investments** to leverage and promote Holyoke's unique assets.

At the same time, **major challenges persist in the city, including poverty,** public safety, vacant/deteriorated buildings, and uncoordinated city processes.

And yet, Holyoke has the assets and potential for revival and growth.

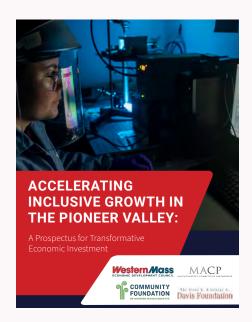
But Holyoke will not realize its potential until it is ready to make a serious commitment to economic development, provide a friendly environment to businesses and developers across all city departments, and ensure a safe and clean city for its residents, workers, visitors and businesses.





## An ecosystem of economic development initiatives that fosters the cleantech industry

- Conduct a marketing campaign that highlights Holyoke's economic development successes and locational advantages
- Create a **start-up incubator space**
- Establish annual events for the cleantech and innovation industries
- Develop a food product, storage, distribution facility, a logical downstream complement to the Western Mass Food Processing Center in Greenfield
- Partner with economic development leaders to pursue clean tech and climate tech opportunities, leveraging the successes and assets of Holyoke



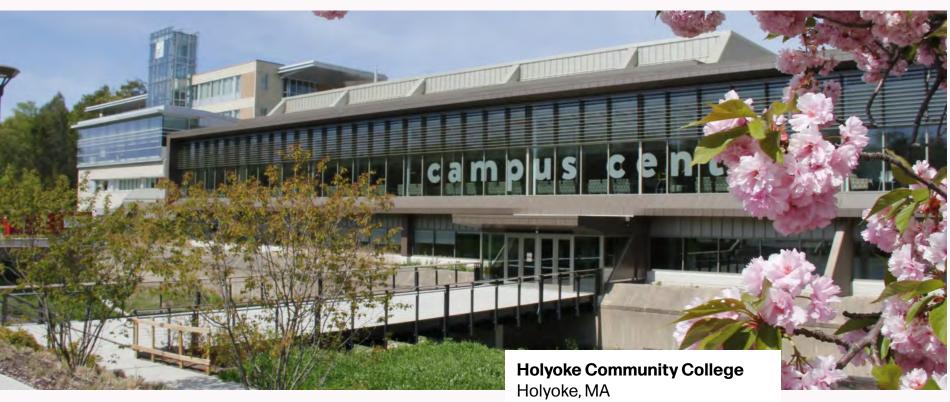




## STRATEGIES

## Workforce development for all Holyokers

- Strengthen the **pipeline into the local workforce** between students and local employers through partnerships with:
  - Holyoke Community College
  - Springfield Technical Community College
  - Holyoke Public Schools
- Partner with MassHire Holyoke Career Center to promote education and training opportunities that provide tangible career pathways for Holyokers of all ages and abilities





## World-class ecosystem for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and start-ups

- Create a one-stop-shop for businesses, developers, and entrepreneurs for permits and starting a business
- Ensure Holyoke can provide a portfolio of lower-cost, market ready spaces for start-ups
- Build strong partnerships with regional groups such as Western Mass EDC and E for All
- Encourage a pop-up food truck court downtown
- Form the High Street Business Improvement District (BID)



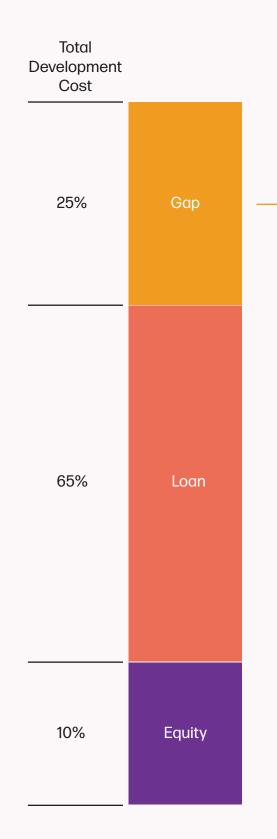


## Strong governance of economic development policy and initiatives

- Seek creative approaches to expand economic development staff capacity
- Partner with and support employers and developers that demonstrate a track record of positive investment in Holyoke
- Ensure alignment across city departments on key economic development policies and practices
- Fill project funding gaps through the continued provision of local funding, financing, and tax exemption tools
- Simplify permitting processes to increase as-of-right permitting and reduce special permit hearings

Two critical tax incentives helped seal the deal: \$1.05 million in tax credits through the state's Economic **Development Incentive** Program and local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) valued at \$351,000 to offset property taxes.





#### **Local Development Incentives**

**Abandoned Building Tax Deduction** 

Center City Housing Incentive Program (CCHIP)

Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ)

Industrial Development Loan Program

**HG&E** Economic Development Discount

**HG&E Commercial Energy Conservation Program** 

HG&E Carbon-Free Electric Pilot Program

Massachusetts Vacant Storefronts Program (MVSP)

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE)

Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF)

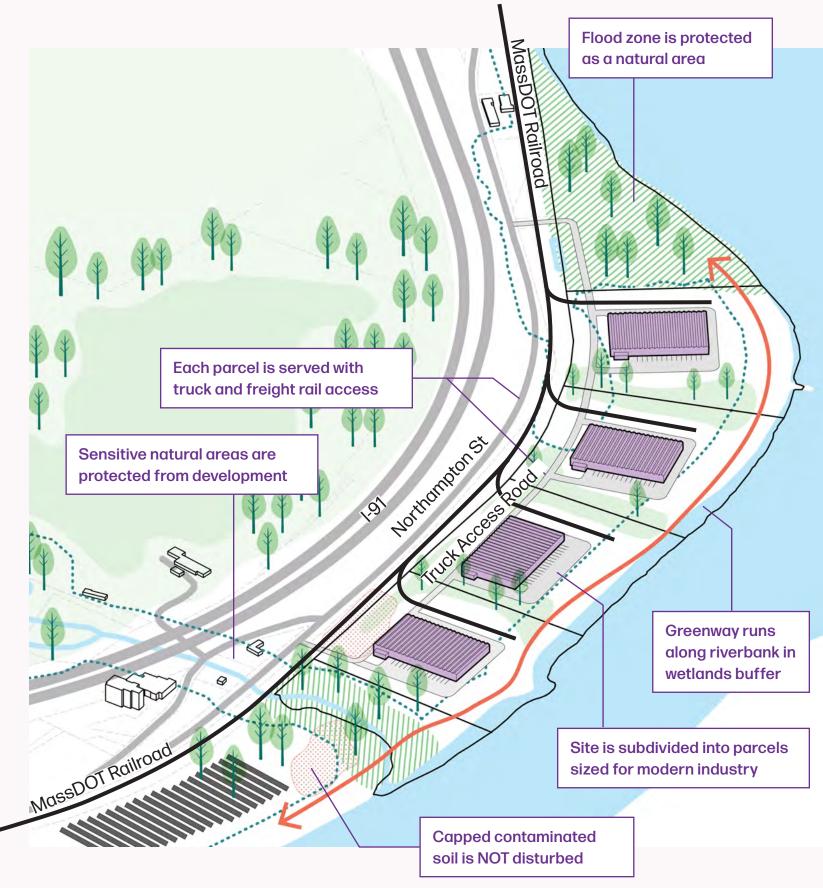
Local development incentives help fill funding gaps so the cost to redevelop a property can be met.

## GOAL

## Buildings and sites are market-ready for redevelopment

- Develop a master plan for redevelopment at the former Mt. Tom
   Generation to support clean tech business growth opportunities
- Identify vacant storefronts downtown and seek funding to activate spaces
- Obtain cost estimates and seek funding for pre-construction work required to redevelop underutilized sites
- Partner with Holyoke Redevelopment Authority to advance development of key properties
- Assess the future uses and evolution of the Holyoke Mall area and K-Mart plaza





STRATEGIES

## Holyoke is... **Ready for Business!**

## **Streamlined business zoning encourages** desirable development patterns

- Consolidate commercial zoning into fewer, clearer zones
- Develop **more as-of-right** and reduce the volume of special permits

#### **Neighborhood Business**

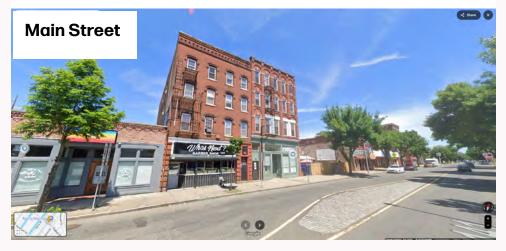
- Intent: pedestrian-oriented "main street" commercial in residential areas
- Facade transparency, entrances onto sidewalks
- Based on: BL, BG, NSOD, and RO

#### **Downtown Business**

- Intent: transit-oriented regional job center, culture and entertainment uses
- Facade transparency, entrances onto sidewalks
- Based on: BC

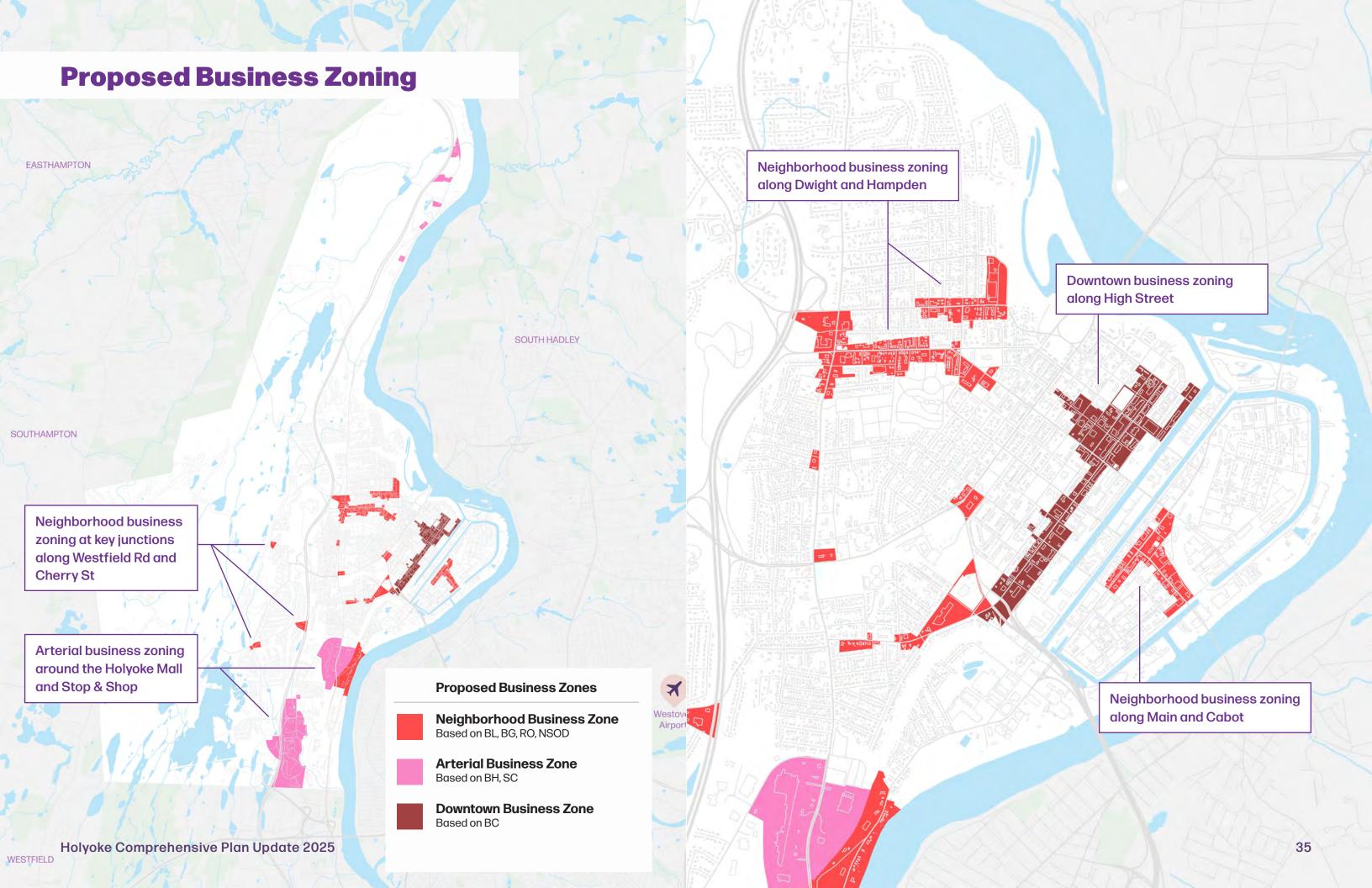
#### **Arterial Business**

- Intent: car-oriented commercial along arterial streets, and shopping malls and shopping plazas
- Based on: BH and SC





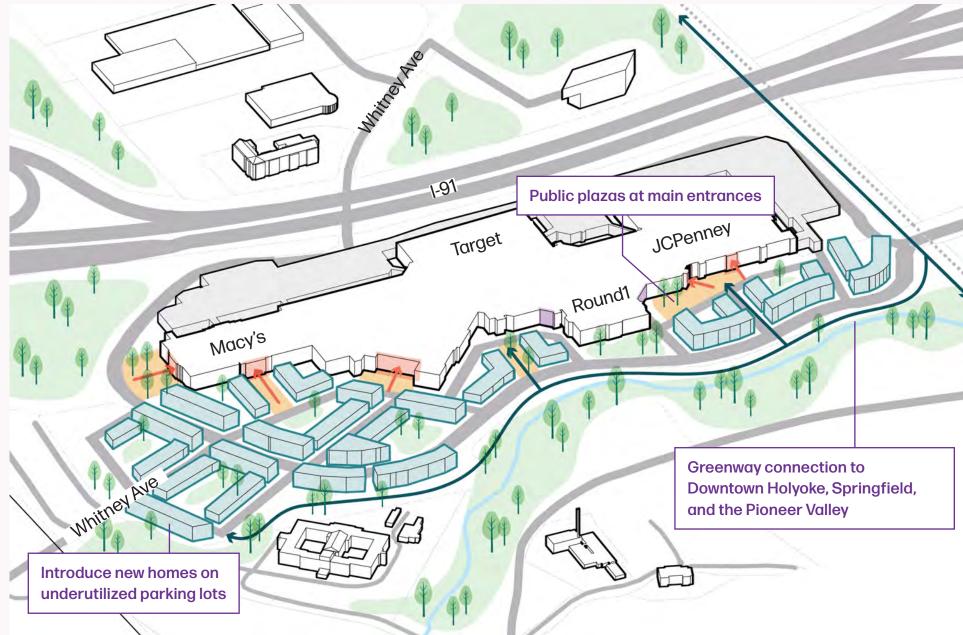


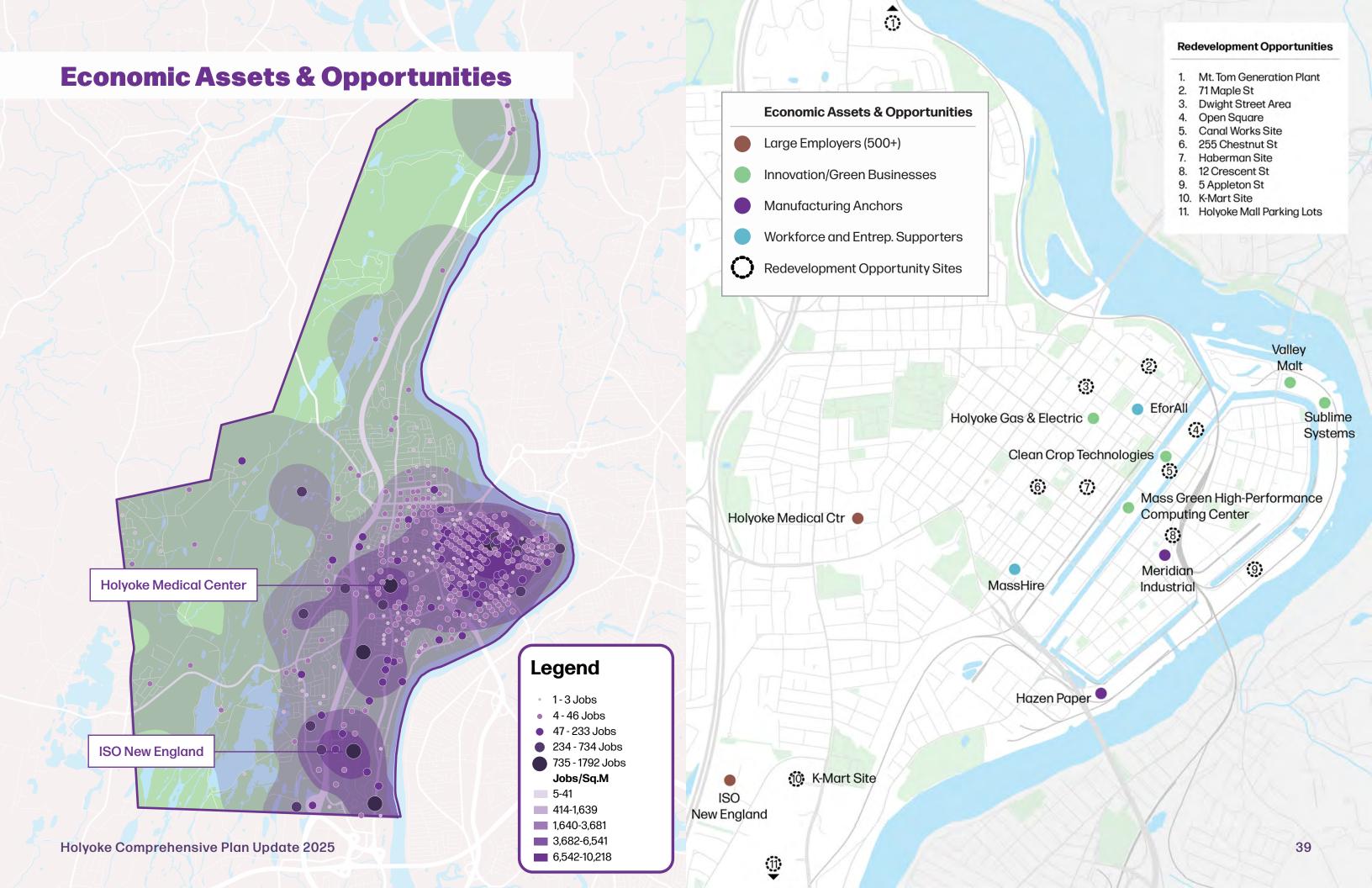


## A mall for modern times

- Partner with the Holyoke Mall to plan for re-investment as a mixed-use district
- Introduce **housing** on underutilized parking lots
- Introduce public spaces and a network of greenways







## Summary

## Ready for Business!

- An ecosystem of economic development initiatives that fosters the Cleanteach industry
  - Workforce development for all Holyokers
  - World-class ecosystem for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and start-ups
  - Strong governance of economic development policy and initiatives
  - Buildings and sites are market-ready for redevelopment
  - Streamlined business zoning encourages desirable development patterns



Holyoke is...

Livable a
Welcomi

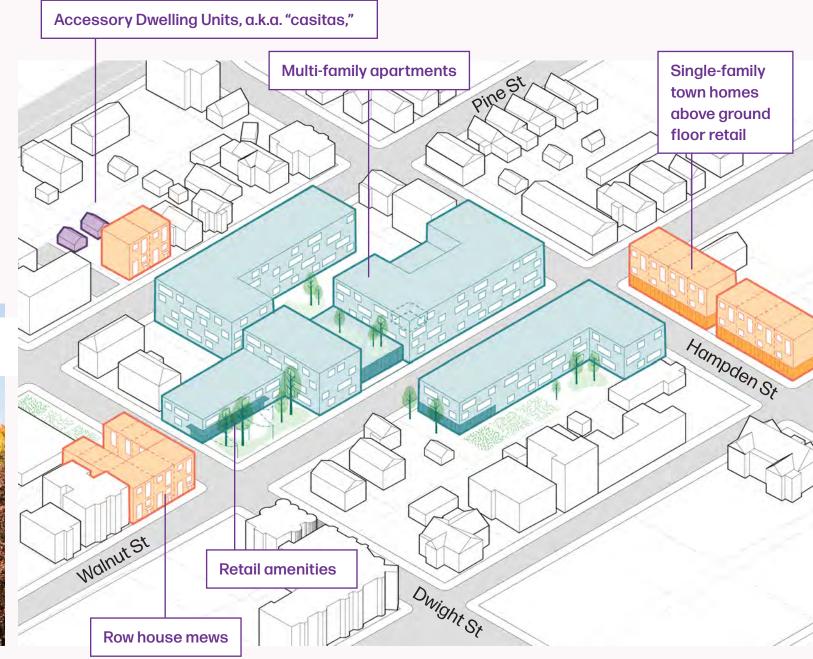


## Downtown is a sought-after place to live

- Rezone some areas to **Downtown Residential** (DR) to make it easier to build housing downtown
- Build family-sized units to increase residential density and provide more **diverse housing options** to Holyokers
- Relocate industrial uses out of downtown

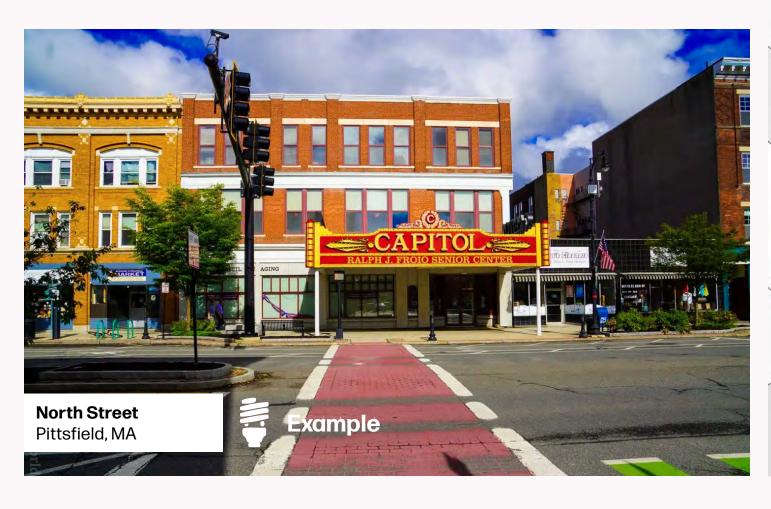


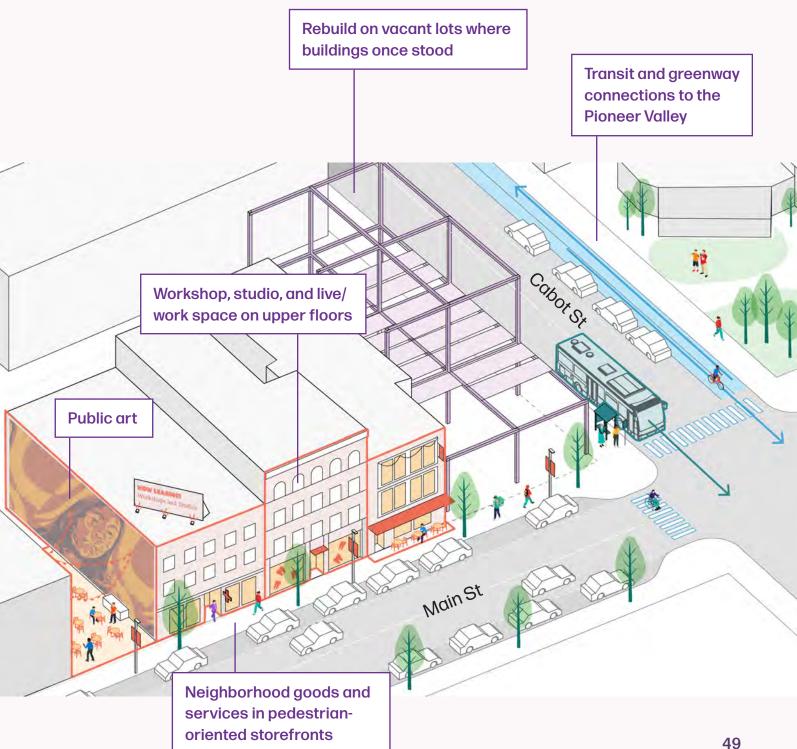




## Main Street is restored as a walkable neighborhood center

- Rezone Main Street from Business Highway to Neighborhood Commercial Zone
- Introduce live/work, workshop, and studio spaces alongside commercial and retail uses
- Improve the pedestrian realm through a regional trail and a canal walk

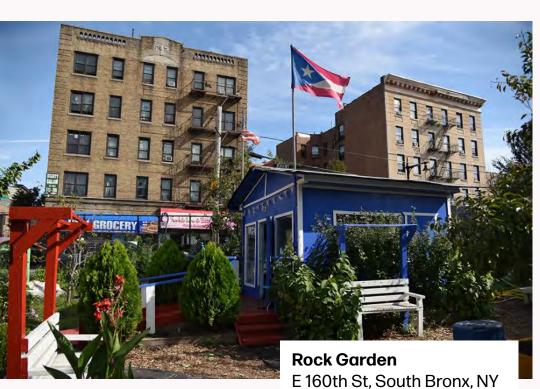




## Holyoke is... *Livable and Welcoming!*

## | Inspiration taken from the casitas tradition

- Elevate the Puerto Rican tradition of "casitas" as a building typology and cultural asset through education and built demonstrations
- Explore opportunities to use casitas for recreational and social purposes by activating underused/underdeveloped parcels
- Create tangible pathways to build casitas throughout Holyoke and partner with CBOs to respond to housing, urban agriculture, economic development, and other local needs in culturally appropriate ways







## Holyoke is... Livable and Welcoming!

STRATEGIES <

## Design standards for casitas (a.k.a. **Accessory Dwelling Units)**

- Develop a pre-approved ADU design catalogue
- Proactively update Zoning Ordinance to comply with Massachusetts Affordable Communities Act
- Establish a **financial assistance program** to support homeowners in constructing casitas (ex.: ADU Financial Assistance Program, Boston, MA)



opposite page:

**By-Right Casitas Catalogue** Tuscon, AZ



#### Casita Sama

- studioSAMA
- Stefan Mostert & Annheliza Jordaan
- Studio / 1 BA 400 SF
- 1BD/1BA543SF 2BD/1BA662SF

Casita Sama's design utilizes an innovative low-cost modular construction system which is ADA-compliant and fully adaptable, accommodating a phased construction process. A Studio (400 sf) can be developed into a 1-Bedroom (543 sf) and then a 2-Bedroom (662 sf) ADU, with no structural modifications by means of strategic placement of openings.



**Design Details** 







**Detached Sonoran ADU** 

- Silva & Havens
- Logan Havens
- Studio / 1B 459 SF
- 1BD/1BA 646 SF

Detached Sonoran ADU is a contemporary representation of historic Tucson architecture. It uses similar methods andphilosophies of our oldest structures but is based on current materials and processes. It is heavily insulated, all-electric, accessible, uncomplicated, and designed to last generations.



**Design Details** 

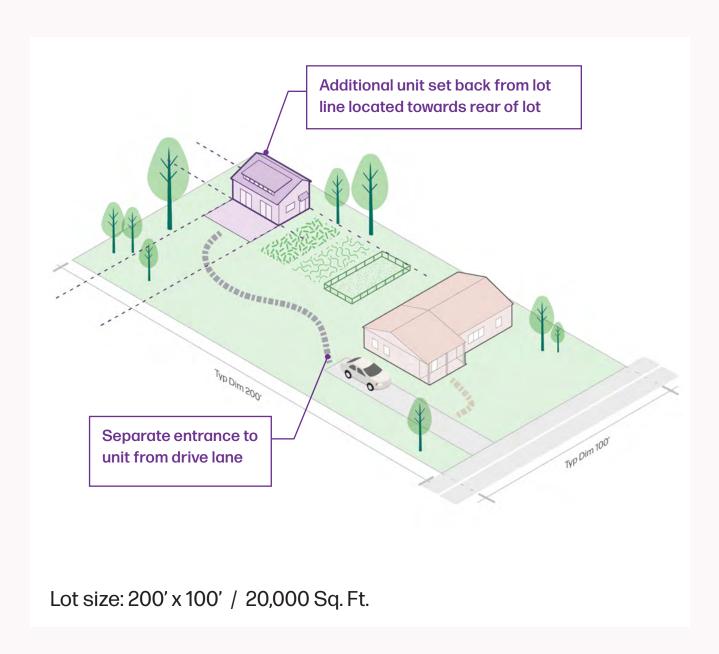




## EGIES

### **Casitas for exurban areas**

 Amend Zoning Ordinance to permit "exurban casitas" in agricultural and single-family residence zones (RA)



### Casitas for suburban areas

 Amend Zoning Ordinance to permit "suburban casitas" in singlefamily residence zones (R-1, R-1A)



## Holyoke is... Livable and Welcoming!

## GOAL

## **Casitas for the Highlands**

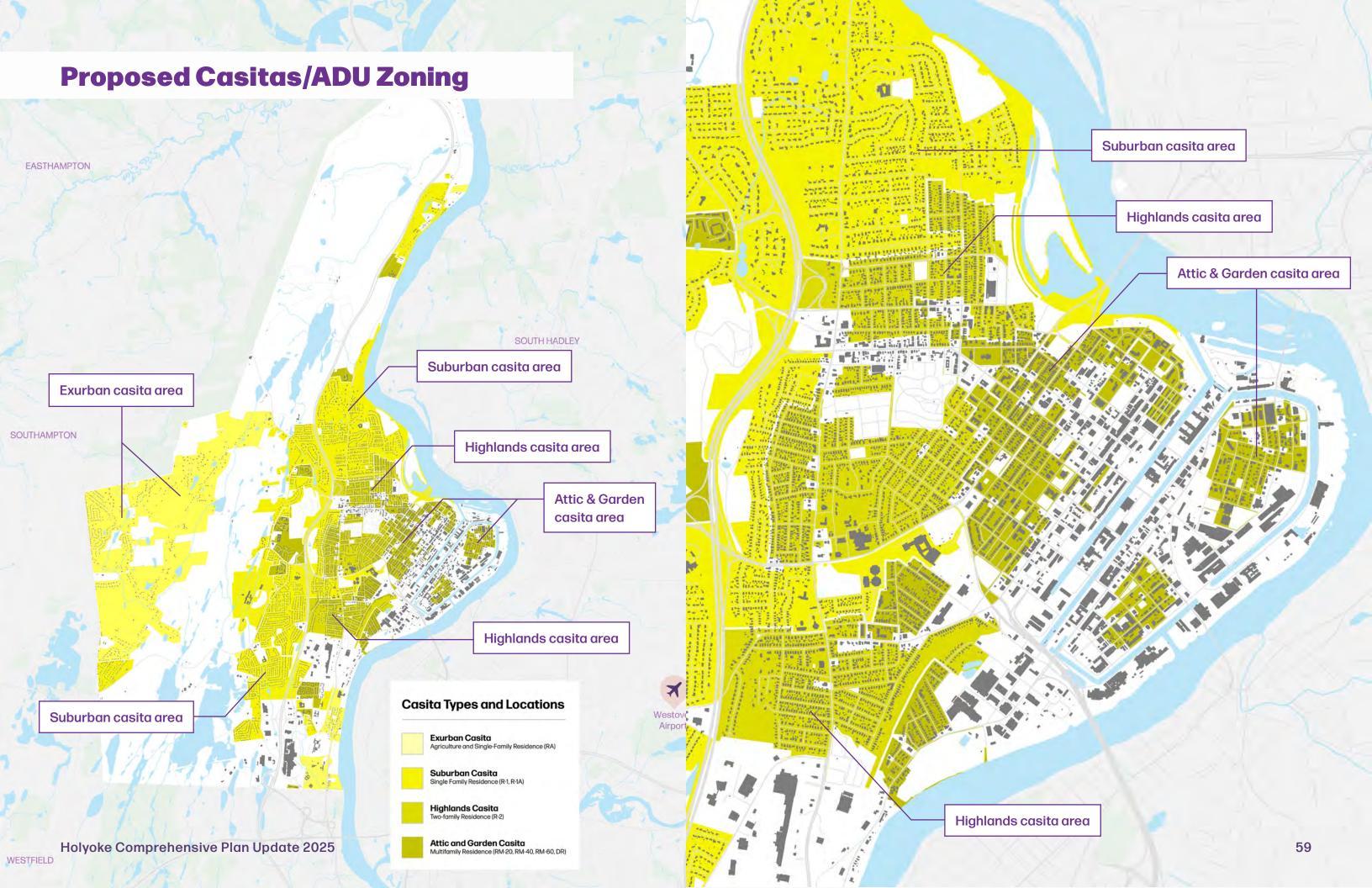
 Amend Zoning Ordinance to permit "highlands casitas" in two-family residence zones (R-2)



### Casitas as attic or garden units

 Amend Zoning Ordinance to allow "attic and garden ADUs" by special permit in multi-family residence zones (RM-20, RM-40, RM-60, DR)



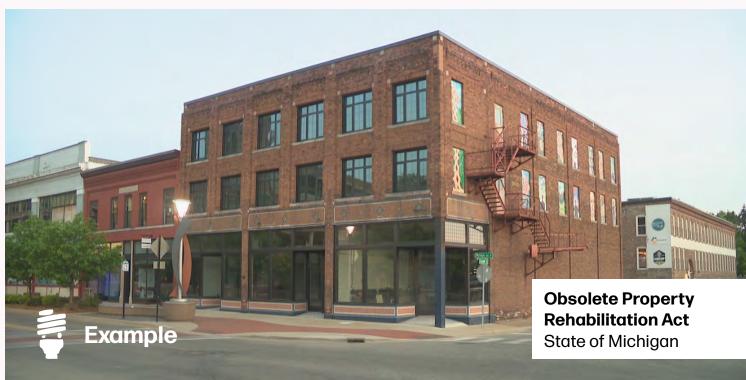


## Holyoke is... Livable and Welcoming!

## Preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic and obsolete buildings

- Coordinate with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)'s work to improve historic preservation standards and design review processes.
- Endow a **revolving fund** that provides financial support (grants or loans) for the preservation of historic structures
- Establish a local tax stabilization program that defers the collection of property taxes on obsolete buildings that undergo redevelopment ---a compliment to the state Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP)
- Partner with a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to establish and manage a homeowner financial support program for repairs/maintenance, ADU construction, and energy transitioning





# Holyoke is... Livable and Welcoming!

# Affordable and healthy food in schools and neighborhoods

- Launch a Healthy Bodega Initiative to increase the availability and accessibility of healthy foods and produce, particularly in historically disinvested neighborhood
- Renegotiate contract with Holyoke Public Schools cafeteria to partner with a healthy foods provider

## Stewardship of parks and open spaces

- Coordinate Holyoke's Comprehensive Plan and its Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Improve physical access to parks and open spaces.
- Ensure a safe and accessible experience at parks through continued maintenance.
- Distribute maintenance funding and efforts equitably.
- Increase public knowledge of outdoor programing
- Improve communication between City entities that work with parks matters.
- Connect Holyoke to its waterways, such as with a canal- or river-front park or walkway.



# Summary

# Livable and Welcoming!

- Downtown is a sought-after place to live
- Main Street is restored as a walkable neighborhood center
- Design standards for casitas (a.k.a. Accessory Dwelling Units)
- Preservation, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse of historic and obsolete buildings
- Affordable and healthy food in schools and neighborhoods
- Stewardship of parks and open spaces





Holyoke is...

# Sustainable and Connected



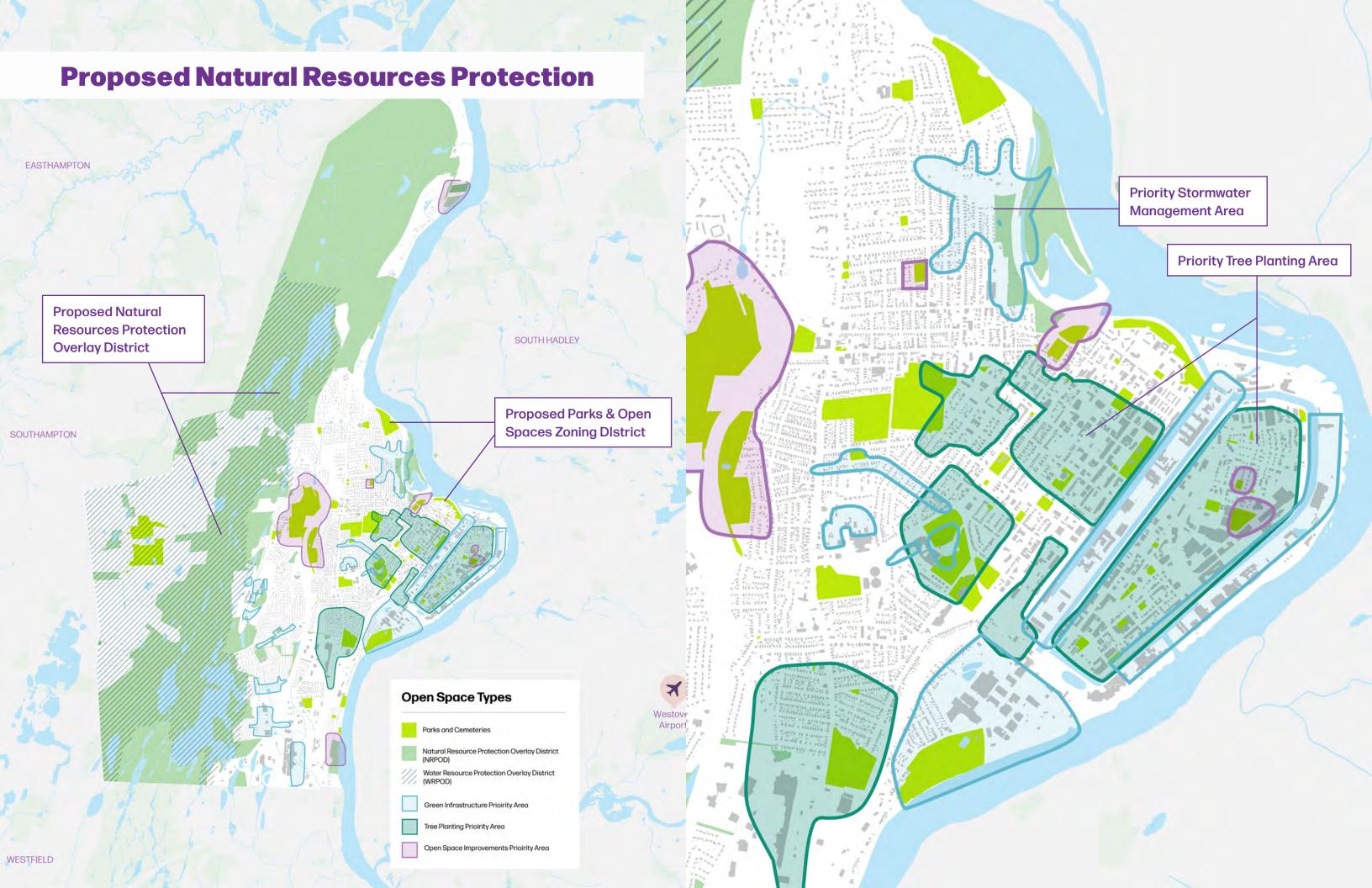
### Abundant green spaces that reduce climate hazards

- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include a Natural Resource **Protection Overlay District (NRPOD)**
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to include a Parks & Open Space zone
- Install green stormwater infrastructure in publicly-owned properties, streets, and parks. Prioritize areas that experience nuisance flooding.
- Reduce the effects of extreme heat by expanding **tree canopy** in tandem with green infrastructure projects.

# **Separated sewer and stormwater systems**

- Coordinate with the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the Integrated Management Plan (IMP)
- Continue **separating sewer infrastructure** from stormwater drainage infrastructure
- Eliminate all Combined Sewer Outflows (CSOs)





#### Frequent, reliable, and dignified transit service

- Improve bus frequency to a bus every 15 minutes during peak hour on major routes
- Extend service hours into the evening to serve shift workers, especially on routes that serve the Holyoke Mall
- Improve travel times by creating bus lanes and/or reconfiguring bus stops along key travel corridors in conjunction with complete streets projects
- Improve bus stop design to improve comfort and accessibility



#### Merrimack Valley Transit (MEVA)

A cousin to PVTA, MEVA has made improvements to its bus stop quality, service frequency and reliability, and branding and wayfinding.

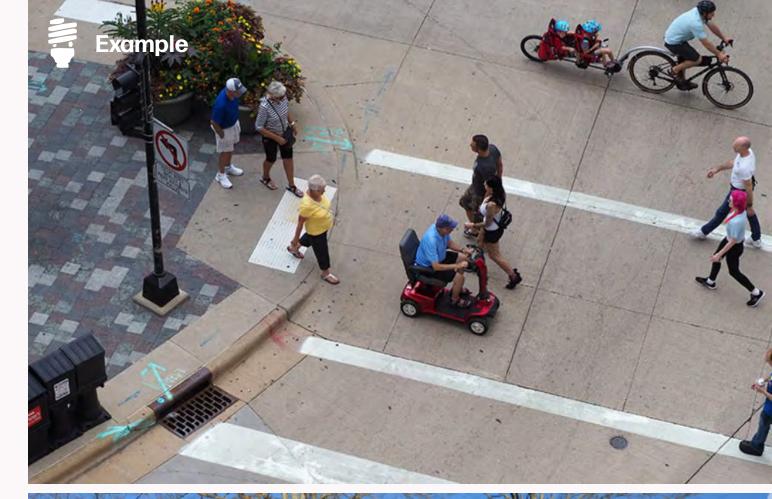






# Safer and people-oriented streets

- Implement low cost and quick build pilot projects based on 2016 Bike/ Ped Plan.
- Identify and close gaps in active transportation networks.
- Implement recommendations from Holyoke Parking Audit to improve downtown streetscapes.
- Coordinate complete street upgrades with upcoming infrastructure work in right of way
- Introduce snow removal policy for shared use paths
- Apply universal design standards in all streetscape, greenway, and parks upgrades





# A world-class canal walk and greenway network

- Build out the MassDOT **Priority Trails Network** Vision
- Connect Holyoke to the Connecticut River Walkway & Bikeway via "marsupial bridges" underneath I-391 and the Mass Pike



**Lowell Canal Walk** Lowell, MA





**Holton Viaduct Marsupial Bridge** Milwaukee, WI

# GOAL

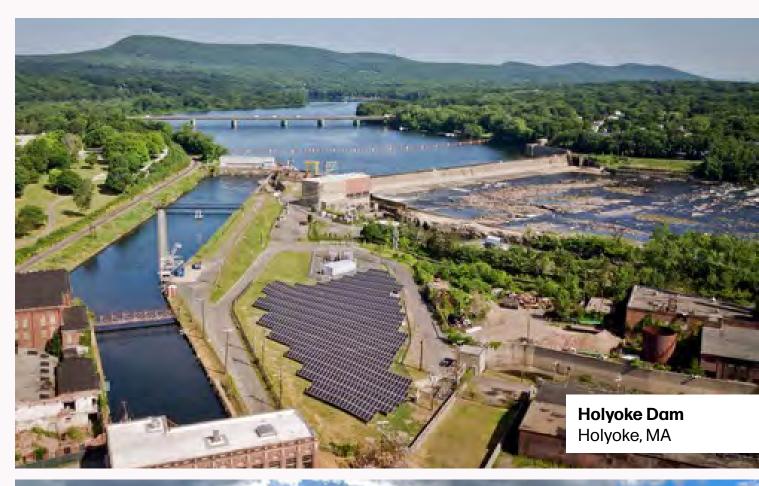
# Powered by renewable, inexpensive, abundant, and locally-controlled utilities

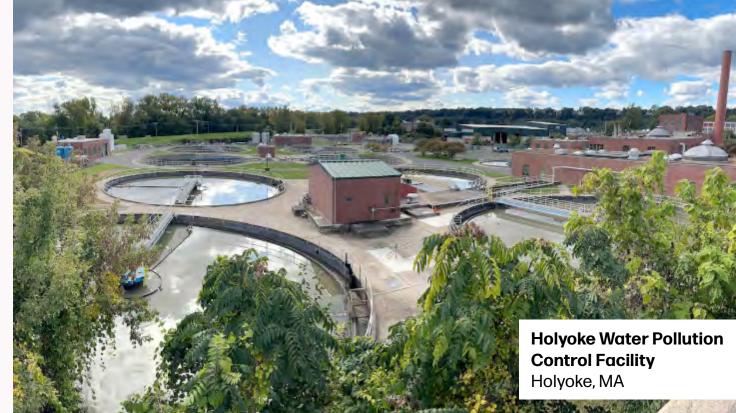
- Improve external marketing and storytelling materials related to Holyoke's existing utility capacity for large businesses.
- Incorporate resilience into future stormwater infrastructure planning and updates operations and maintenance guidelines as needed to support resilience.
- Expand fiber optic network to residential neighborhoods.
- Prioritize state of good repair in all utility systems.

# Revenue generated from clean water



- Capitalize on excess waste water treatment capacity and charge adjacent municipalities to process their waste water
- Produce renewable power at the Holyoke Water Pollution Control Facility





#### **Connected to markets with Class 1 freight** railroads

 Deploy Industrial Rail Access Program (IRAP) grant to extend Water Street spur and **repair rail bridge** between Sergeant St and Hamilton St

- Deploy Consolidated Rail Infrastructure ans Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant to improve speeds and increase weight capacity
- Target propane terminals, retailers, and manufacturers in marketing efforts to win more rail customers
- Feature freight rail access in business recruitment materials, emphasizing it as a feature that makes Holyoke a green place to do business.



James Hardie Building Products Inc., together with local elected officials, today celebrated the ribbon cutting and grand opening of the James Hardie Westfield manufacturing plant.





**James Hardie Building Products** In 2024, this lumber manufacturer opened a new plant served by the Pioneer Valley Railroad in neighboring Westfield, MA



# Summary

#### Sustainable and Connected!

- Abundant green spaces that reduce climate hazards
  - Separated sewer and stormwater systems
  - Frequent, reliable, and dignified transit service
  - Safer and people-oriented streets
  - A world-class canal walk and greenway network
  - Powered by renewable, inexpensive, abundant, renewable, and locally-controlled utilities
  - Revenue generated from clean water
  - Connected to markets with Class 1 freight railroads



Holyoke is...

Safe and Compass



# High quality, sought-after public education

- Partner with local, higher-ed institution(s) to enhance K-12 education in Holyoke Public Schools
- Implement professional development systems focused on structure literacy to increase K-12 reading and math outcomes
- Partner with Institute for Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE) to train current/incoming K-12 teachers and to provide supervisory feedback and accountability
- Enhance culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP) to ensure classroom instruction continues to provide access to and authentic engagement opportunities for all students

# **Context-Specific First Response**

- Institute alternative, community-based first responder services for non-violent incidents
- Partner with social workers and specialists to co-respond to critical mental health episodes



# West Philadelphia Transformation

Once beleaguered, this neighborhood was turned around through investments in public schools, safety, homes, and shops.



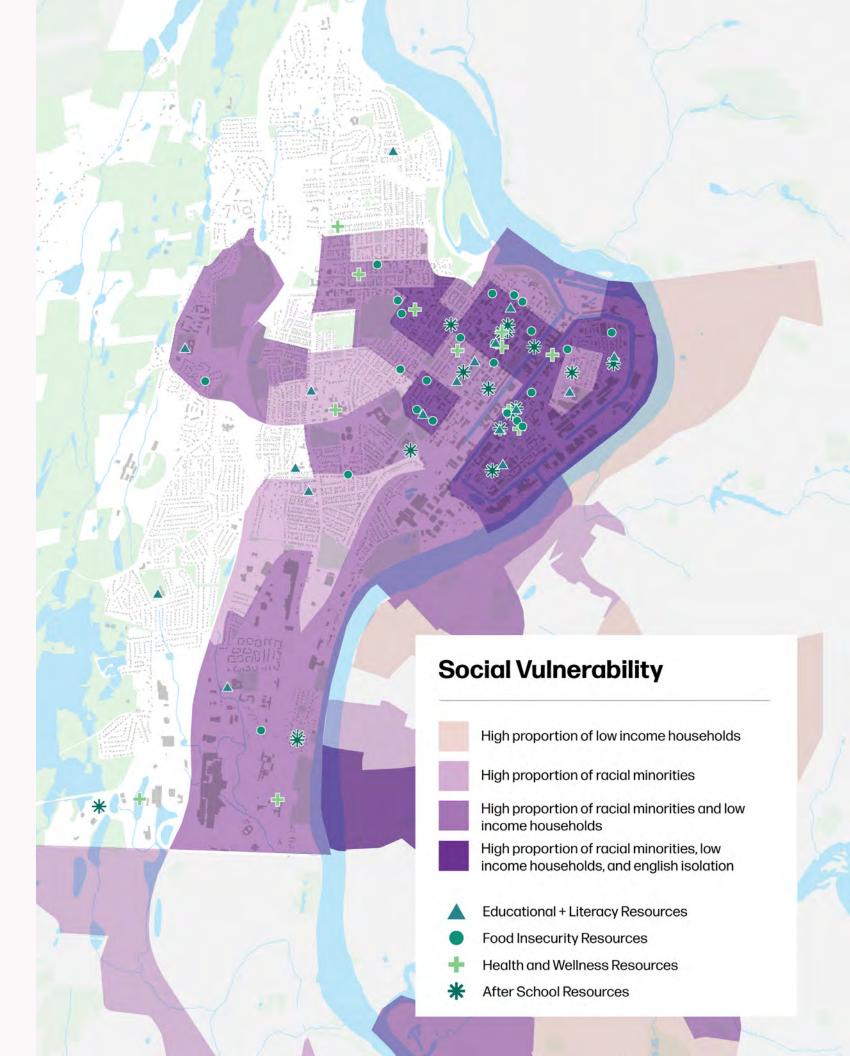
STRATEGIES

- Redouble program intake partnerships with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Invest in and intentionally meet community members in spaces and places where they feel safe and comfortable

#### A clean, safe, and vibrant downtown

- Complete the formation of a High Street Business Improvement District (BID) to enhance the stewardship of this commercial corridor
- Quickly-resolve citizen complaints about **nuisances and blight**





# **Summary**

# Safe and Compassionate!

- High quality, sought-after public education
  - Context-Specific First Response
  - Easy access to social programs
  - A clean, safe, and vibrant downtown





# We are here!

