

The Holyoke Master Plan

**final draft
3/10/99**

Acknowledgments

This plan was produced by:

Over 700 Holyokers,

who shaped this agenda for our city's future by participating in public forums, interviews, focus groups and other activities.

Participants came from all of the city's neighborhoods, and represented the wide range of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds to be found here.

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Stop & Shop, Taylor Rental, Waldbaum's Foodmart, The Yankee Pedlar

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Introduction

In 1847 a group of wealthy businessmen met in Boston and forged a plan to create the new city of Holyoke, Massachusetts. They imagined an ambitious and costly dam across the Connecticut River, to capture the tremendous power available from the water's drop of nearly 60 feet. They imagined an extensive series of canals and raceways to bring that power to machine shops, mills and factories. They imagined tenement housing for factory workers and building lots for grander homes, all within a system of gridded streets. They imagined all this at a time when there was only farmland where Holyoke is now. Today we live with the results of their farsighted efforts.

A hundred and fifty years after the Boston-based businessmen planned their vision for Holyoke, a new vision for the city is underway. This time, its creators are not out-of-town investors seeking to turn a profit, but Holyokers themselves, seeking to make a better community for all who live here.

In 1997 and 1998, the city conducted an extensive planning process involving hundreds of Holyokers from all parts of the community and all walks of life.

- Six public forums were held in different neighborhoods throughout the city where people came together to express their vision for the future of Holyoke.
- Eight more forums were held to collect ideas for achieving that vision — each concentrating on a specific topic such as economic development, education, or downtown revitalization.
- A special forum was held for Holyoke's young people.
- In-depth interviews were conducted with dozens of community leaders.
- Holyokers with specific areas of experience and expertise were brought together in “focus groups” to discuss and develop the strategies you see here.
- A 19-member master plan committee, appointed by the mayor, met monthly to oversee the process.

It's been a grand public conversation, and we are pleased, proud and excited to present its result: *The Holyoke Master Plan*. The plan consists of two documents, a summary booklet showcasing the city's priority projects and activities, and a looseleaf binder presenting the complete output of recommendations developed by the master plan committee and focus groups, along with background information and details on implementation.

Perhaps the most impressive outcome of the master plan process is the unity Holyoke has shown. Over and over again we heard the same proposals being made, proposals for the beautification of major streets and “gateway” areas leading into the city, for programs to foster citywide cultural awareness and sensitivity, for the development of a recreational walkway around the first and second level canals, and for matching Holyoke's disadvantaged with the substantial training and job opportunities that exist here. While

not everyone will buy into every item in the plan, Holyoke's top priorities are very clear. The extent and cohesiveness of public input gives them the strength of a mandate.

We pledge our commitment to pursuing the master plan's recommendations. We call on all of Holyoke's civic and political leadership to do the same. Strong leadership is a must. But just as the plan was shaped by a broad and diverse base of Holyokers, we need widespread support and involvement to carry it through. Once upon a time Holyoke's destiny could be controlled by a wealthy few. Now we all have a role and a responsibility for the future of our city. Read on. Join us. Participate.

Daniel J Szostkiewicz
Mayor

Joseph McGiverin
City Council President

Karen Keirstead, Co-Chair
Holyoke Master Plan Committee

Melvin Sanchez, Co-Chair
Holyoke Master Plan Committee

What is the Holyoke Master Plan?

The Holyoke Master Plan is a document that is intended to guide the city's actions over the next several decades. It is, in effect, our collective agenda, a "To Do" list for the next generation. It provides recommendations for all branches of municipal government as well as for private agencies, the business community, and individuals.

Recommendations address 10 key goal areas that were identified by Holyokers through public forums and meetings. These are:

Image & People	Crime & Safety
Economic Development	Education
Homes & Neighborhoods	Historic Preservation
Downtown Revitalization	Open Space & Recreation
Location & Infrastructure	Land Use

The master plan presents information and recommendations on eight of the ten goal areas. Two areas — Historic Preservation and Open Space & Recreation — have been the object of independent planning efforts, conducted recently or concurrently with the master plan. Their products, The Holyoke Preservation Plan and the Historic Inventory, and the Holyoke Open Space and Recreation Plan, are being considered as accessory documents to the master plan.

For each of the goals covered in this document, you'll find:

Goals and Objectives

Master plan goals and objectives were developed through a citywide visioning process conducted in 1997 involving over 500 participants. First published in the booklet *Voices of Holyoke, A Vision for Our Future*, they served as a framework for the developing the recommended strategies and actions that are the centerpiece of this plan, and are reprinted here.

Information & Assessment

Background information is given under this heading on how master plan goals and objectives are currently being met in the city. The material is edited from papers that were provided to focus groups who met to discuss the master plan goals and objectives, and to develop strategies for addressing them. Included are statistics, narrative descriptions, and anecdotal information from interviews conducted with relevant public and private sector representatives. The information is not meant to be an exhaustive account and evaluation of all that is going on in Holyoke; its purpose was to help identify areas of opportunity for program enhancement and new initiatives.

Recommendations

As noted, recommendations are the centerpiece of this master plan. The Recommendations section includes proposals for specific projects and also identifies issues needing further study. The intent is to be both visionary and practical, featuring large-scale, long-term projects that will have substantial impacts along with smaller tasks that are readily achievable and are therefore important for sustaining a sense of accomplishment and momentum.

Because the master plan is meant to be responsive to the needs and desires of the people of Holyoke, an extensive public process was used to assess public opinion and generate recommendations. Participants in that process should be able to see their thoughts reflected in these pages. The wealth of recommendations included in the plan is owing to their creativity and exuberance.

The final set of recommendations for each goal area was developed in large part by a focus group of civic leaders and stakeholders concerned with the issues covered by that goal.

Implementation

Implementation tables at the end of each section provide a succinct numbered list of recommendations along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will add to and update them, also providing information on project schedules and progress.

It is important to note that each section on a goal area is designed to be read and considered on its own, with or without the other sections. Because of this the plan has some "built in redundancy" to it — that is, certain recommendations appear in more than one section. Repeated recommendations are those that are relevant to more than one goal area. For example, recommendations for the city to strongly support and pursue creation of a Canalwalk pertain to both the goal areas of Downtown Revitalization and Location and Infrastructure, and therefore appear in each. Similarly, although the goal of Public Safety has its own section in the plan, recommendations concerning public safety also appear under the sections on Homes and Neighborhoods, Downtown Revitalization, and Education. There are many such instances in the plan where issues and recommendations from one goal to another overlap.

Now that Holyoke has a master plan that embodies the vision, spirit and ideas of its citizens, what do we do with it?

- **Celebrate and Recognize**

This master plan is built on a strong base of existing programs and activities whose contributions must be recognized and celebrated. We make no apologies that many of the plan's recommendations are to continue, support, or expand the good work of agencies such as the city's Office of Economic and Industrial Development, Greater Holyoke, Inc., Holyoke Public Schools, Enlace de Familias, the city's religious community, and others much too numerous to name.

- **Embrace**

The Holyoke Master Plan should be embraced as the city's yardstick against which to measure everything from political candidates to spending measures to development proposals.

- **Promote**

For the Holyoke Master Plan to be used and effective, people need to know about the plan and what it contains. Talk about the plan with your colleagues and business associates, your friends and neighbors. Display it in the offices of your business or organization. Arrange for a presentation on the master plan to groups that you are affiliated with in Holyoke, such as a neighborhood association, religious institution, or business club.

- **Participate**

By design, the Holyoke Master Plan is too broad for the city to carry out alone.

Participation is needed from private civic organizations, community groups, housing developers, education and social service providers, religious institutions and others. As noted above, a Master Plan Implementation Committee convened by Holyoke's Planning Department is working to identify and contact the groups most appropriate for carrying out the plan's recommendations, with the goal of ensuring that responsibility is assigned for each one. But don't wait to be contacted by the Implementation Committee. Call, write or e-mail the Holyoke Planning Department to discuss ways in which you or your organization can be involved.

- **Continue**

This is not a plan for the drawer or the shelf. The Holyoke Master Plan Implementation Committee is furthering the plan through such activities as plan promotion, developing a timetable for implementation, exploring issues of budgeting and funding, and keeping track of plan progress. The Holyoke Planning Board and Planning Department are pursuing the recommendations concerning land use with a comprehensive review of the city's zoning regulations. And the grand public conversation that was initiated with the plan's creation and that was greatly valued by Holyoke's citizens will be continued by the city. The Holyoke Planning Department will conduct periodic events and forums to report on progress, solicit new input and sustain momentum.

*For more information on the master plan,
to provide comments,
to obtain accessory documents,
or to connect with people working to implement plan recommendations,
contact:*

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Holyoke's Priorities

The Holyoke Master Plan contains literally hundreds of recommendations and proposals for action. Those participating in the plan's development believe the city should not rely on a few big ideas to achieve its vision. Instead it must spread the net wide, covering the multiplicity of Holyoke's needs and interests, setting the stage for continued participation from people in all corners of the city, increasing the chances for sparks to fly and magic to happen. Additionally, lessons from small cities with successful plans suggest that momentum and long term sustainability comes from having projects with a broad range of sizes and significance, mingling those that can be achieved in a day with those that will take decades. Accomplishing and celebrating the small steps along the way will keep the plan alive.

Yet throughout the master plan process, in the many public forums and the many meetings of focus groups and committees, a handful of ideas surfaced again and again. These are Holyoke's priorities, presented below as the city's "Top Twenty" list. To the right of each item is the section where more details on that particular issue can be found. Relevant recommendations are highlighted in the text by shading.

- 1. Celebrate our city** (*Image & People*)
- 2. Beautify Holyoke's gateways** (*Image & People*)
- 3. Increase sites for business growth** (*Economic Development*)
- 4. Develop a top notch workforce** (*Economic Development*)
- 5. Capitalize on Ingleside growth** (*Economic Development*)
- 6. Promote grass-roots neighborhood action** (*Homes & Neighborhoods*)
- 7. Clean up and landscape our neighborhoods** (*Homes & Neighborhoods*)
- 8. Strictly enforce building codes** (*Homes & Neighborhoods*)
- 9. Reconnect Holyoke with its waterfront** (*Downtown Revitalization*)
- 10. Harness municipal powers to redevelop the downtown** (*Downtown Revitalization*)
- 11. Develop a comprehensive capital improvements plan** (*Location & Infrastructure*)
- 12. Aggressively market the city's fiber optic capabilities** (*Location & Infrastructure*)
- 13. Increase community involvement in crime prevention** (*Crime & Safety*)
- 14. Promote a community sense of safety** (*Crime & Safety*)
- 15. Set benchmarks for educational performance** (*Education*)
- 16. Turn our public schools into all-day activity centers for learning** (*Education*)
- 17. Preserve and restore Holyoke's historic resources** (*Historic Preservation*)
- 18. Promote appreciation of Holyoke history** (*Historic Preservation*)
- 19. Improve and expand the city's park system** (*Open Space & Recreation*)
- 20. Plan for balanced land preservation and appropriate development on Mt. Tom** (*Land Use*)

The Goal Areas

- 1. Image & People**
- 2. Economic Development**
- 3. Homes & Neighborhoods**
- 4. Downtown Revitalization**
- 5. Location & Infrastructure**
- 6. Crime & Safety**
- 7. Education**
- 8. Historic Preservation**
- 9. Open Space & Recreation**
- 10. Land Use**

Please note that the goal areas of Historic Preservation and Open Space & Natural Resources are covered in separate, accessory documents that are available through the Holyoke Planning Department.

1. Image & People

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

“My perception of Holyoke is that it is a viable industrial city with a strong tax base, with a core of middle age/older people who, as community volunteers, ‘make things happen’... It appears, however, the perception of many people who reside in and outside of Holyoke is different. Too many people perceive Holyoke as an area of high crime, with an inordinate portion of the population on public assistance and, at best, a mediocre school system.”

interview subject

The Holyoke Master Plan, Phase I, 1997

“...people’s perceptions of Holyoke’s problems [are] the most important roadblocks to Holyoke’s progress-- and many of these perceptions are remediable.”

A Marketing Research Study
of the Quality of Life in Holyoke
DORR Research Corporation, 1987

Image & People

Goals & Objectives

Image & People is comprised of three related goals.

Perception of Holyoke

Goal: Establish a positive image of Holyoke as lively, attractive, safe, accessible and walkable.

Objectives:

1. Insist that this shared vision of Holyoke must stay on course.
2. Provide adequate resources and a plan to market and publicize Holyoke's assets, successes and plans for the future.
3. Create a process by which all public employees work together towards creating a more user-friendly Holyoke.

Multi-Cultural Diversity

Goal: Embrace cross-culturalism under the common umbrella of pride in Holyoke.

Objectives:

1. Consider cultural diversity in implementing all of the Goals and Objectives of *The Holyoke Master Plan* and in all other public policy decisions.
2. Sponsor programs and events to eliminate racism.
3. Focus all multi-cultural events in downtown Holyoke.
4. Gather residents and visitors from all ethnic groups at celebrations and events.
5. Create more public spaces downtown for those who live and work in Holyoke.

Citizen Participation

Goal: Aggressively seek the participation of the people of Holyoke in matters that affect their lives here in the city.

Objectives:

1. Create a citizen participation task force to encourage and reward participants in all aspects of the city and its neighborhoods.
2. Develop programs for citizen participation in the schools.
3. Involve residents in continued efforts to clean up their neighborhoods in cooperation with city departments.
4. Encourage the business community to work with residents in the common goal of improving Holyoke.
5. Establish a continuing support system for citizen volunteer efforts.

Image & People

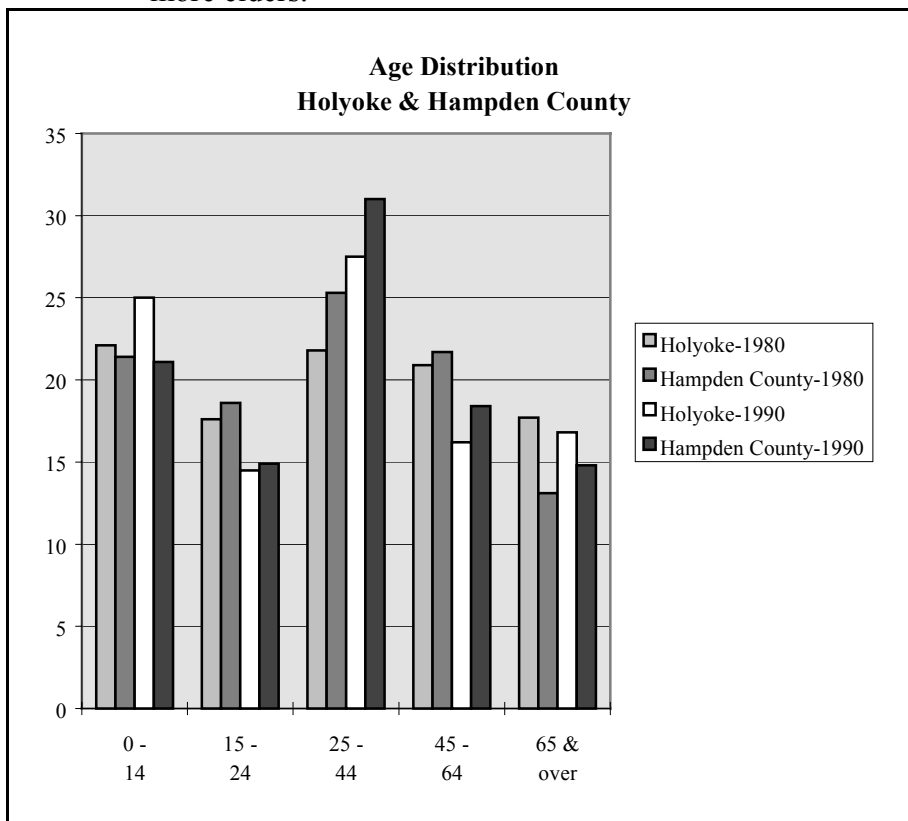
Information & Assessment

A Statistical Snapshot of Holyoke

The following statistics are not intended to present a comprehensive portrait of city demographics and trends, but are meant to highlight issues and opportunities.

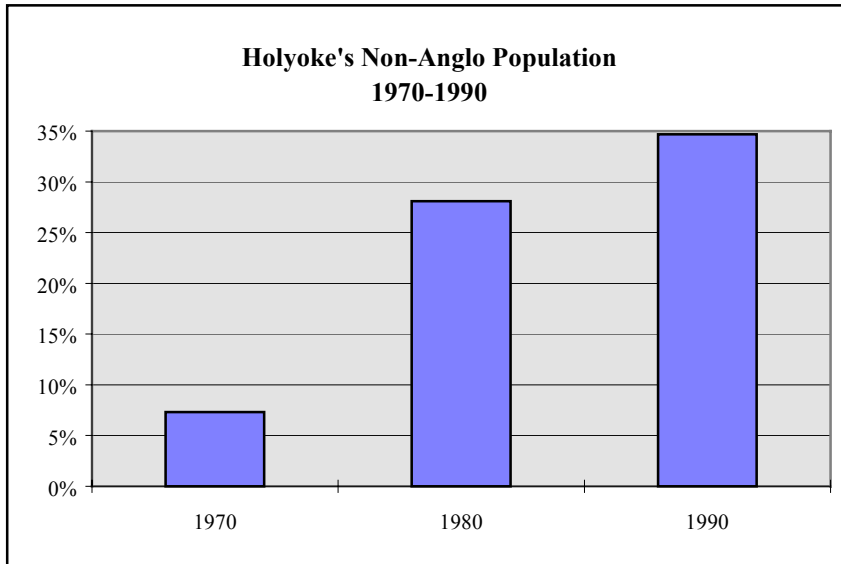
Population

- The distribution of age groups in Holyoke is roughly in line with distributions in the county.
- However, Holyoke does have proportionately:
 - fewer boomers;
 - fewer people in mid-life;
 - more school-age children;
 - more elders.



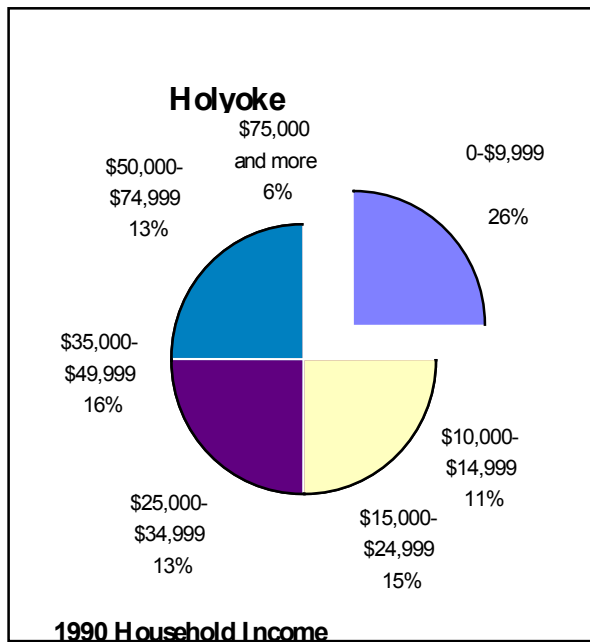
Cultural Composition

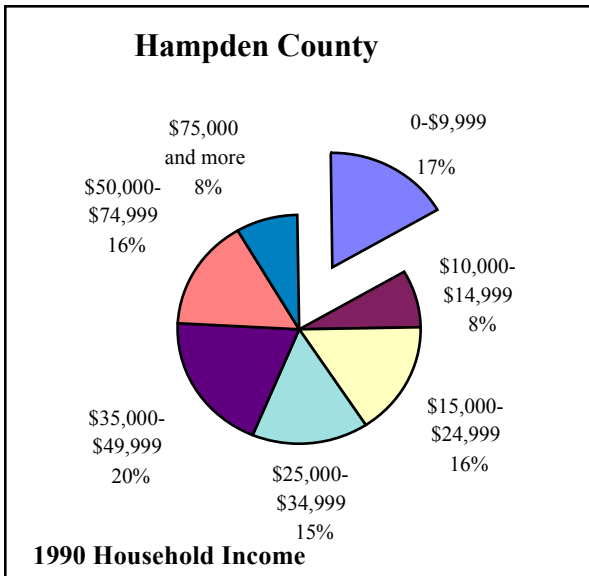
- Holyoke's cultural composition changed rapidly in a generation: 7.3% of the population in 1960 was non-anglo; by 1990, this was up to 34.7%.



Income

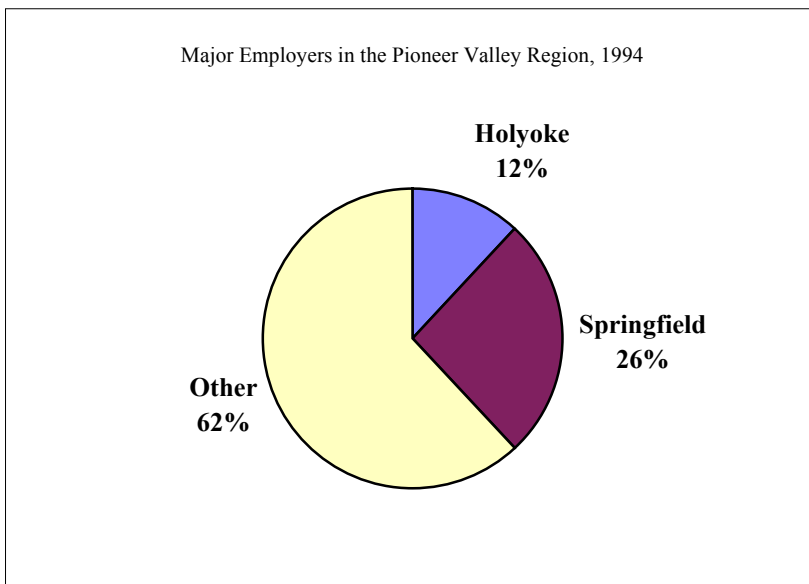
- Over 1 in 4 Holyoke households has an annual income under \$10,000 -- 9 percent higher than the county average; 19 percent higher than the state.
- Nearly 1 in 5 households has an annual income of \$50,000 or more — 5 percent lower than the county average





Jobs & Industry

- In 1994 Holyoke had 50 of the Pioneer Valley Region’s major employers, second only to Springfield, and 12 percent of the total.
- These major employers provide close to 10,000 jobs.
- Holyoke is a net exporter of jobs to the region.
- Historically known as “The Paper City,” Holyoke remains home to such paper companies as Ampad Corporation., Hazen Paper, United Paper Box Co., and Parsons Paper.



Crime

- Holyoke's police department did not begin to compile a comprehensive computer database of crime statistics until 1995.
- In 1996 5,793 crimes were recorded in Holyoke -- one for every 7.5. residents. This is the highest per capita crime rate in the state.

Lifestyle

The figures below are taken from a national zip code analysis of consumer behavior.

- Holyokers are much more likely than the national average to
 - buy high fashion clothing;
 - do crossword puzzles;
 - play home video games;
 - watch cable television;
 - collect veterans' benefits.
- They are somewhat more likely to:
 - attend cultural events;
 - listen to music;
 - watch cable television;
 - collect stamps;
 - bowl, ski, golf, and walk for health;
 - spend time with grandchildren.

<u>High Tech</u>					
<u>Area</u>	<u>ELE</u>	<u>HVG</u>	<u>PHC</u>	<u>SRT</u>	<u>CAB</u>
	electronics	home video games	personal home computers	stereo records tapes	cable
% HH's	6.4	12.9	14.4	46.8	52.5
% U.S.	72	115	71	109	128

<u>Sports and Leisure</u>				
<u>Area</u>	<u>SKI</u>	<u>WAL</u>	<u>GOL</u>	<u>BOW</u>
	skiing	walk for health	golf	bowling
% HH's	9.1	40	19.3	15.1
% U.S.	113	108	105	102

Domestic Activities				
<u>Area</u>	<u>GRC</u>	<u>VET</u>	<u>PUZ</u>	<u>CSC</u>
	grand children	veterans benefits	crosswrd puzzles	stamp collecting
% HH's	19.9	5.8	23.4	8.1
% U.S.	107	123	124	106

Good Life		
<u>Area</u>	<u>CUL</u>	<u>FAS</u>
	attend cultural events	fashion clothing
% HH's	16	15.4
% U.S.	106	122

Source: Lifestyle Zip Code Analyst 1992

Volunteerism & Social Service

- Holyoke hosts over 100 social service, community and religious organizations, providing a sizable framework for community volunteerism.



Public Relations

A Recent History of Holyoke Public Relations Efforts

Improving Holyoke’s image is a task many have taken on in years past -- and continue to address today.

- 1985: *Holyoke on Parade, A Program for Downtown Revitalization*, opened its plans with a section on “A New Image,” aimed at attracting people back to the downtown. One component was a Clean City Campaign , launched in July of that year. It featured “Trashbusters” dressed in yellow t-shirts and armed with brooms, and monthly awards given to property owners for maintenance.
- 1987: *A Marketing Research Study of the Quality of Life in Holyoke, Massachusetts*. The DORR Research Group conducted an opinion research study on behalf of the city, the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, and Greater Holyoke, Inc.. Its goal was to explore positioning alternatives for image campaigns. DORR’s major conclusion was that “Holyoke’s vitality is being re-energized.” This is a position echoed again and again in statements made during the master plan visioning process, such as “Holyoke is at a crossroads...” and “Holyoke is changing...”

- 1988: Agnew, Carter, McCarthy Inc.. prepared a Public Relations Plan based on the DORR interviews with residents of the city and surrounding areas, investors, political leaders (statewide), media, and tour operators. The theme was: Holyoke is the City of Opportunity.
- 1989: Darby O'Brien prepared a Communications Plan for the city which, like the Agnew, Carter, McCarthy plan, also built on the DORR research. It proposed the slogan, "Holyoke. Wanna make something of it?," and had a price tag of roughly \$200,000 a year for the first two years, dropping to \$130,000 in the third.

While neither the Agnew McCarthy nor Darby O'Brien plans were fully implemented, Greater Holyoke Inc. has followed some of their recommendations in its own work. Cost is a factor cited for the plans not moving forward; difficulties with securing consensus around themes and slogans was another. It should be noted that major costs in the Darby O'Brien communications plan went for a few large ticket items such as national advertising, a video and special event. Public relations planning was itemized at just \$10,000 per year.

- Late 1980's: the Greater Holyoke Partnership was created by a group of area business leaders interested in studying the challenges and potential solutions related to economic development, education, and housing in Holyoke. Casey Associates, Inc. created a marketing plan for the Partnership, but it was not fully implemented.
- 1997: Casey Associates' efforts were revived on two fronts. The group prepared a new low cost approach to *Structuring an Overall Marketing Apparatus to Promote the Benefits of the City of Holyoke*. Subtitled "an initial guideline plan," its proposals revolve around city self-promotion with much of the work to be undertaken by municipal staff. Training and organization is needed. The Holyoke Partnership has been actively involved in trying to make this happen. The program builds on Mayor Szostkiewicz' Pride and Progress theme. Casey Associates is also involved in an effort by The Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce to establish a Holyoke Marketing Committee. The Committee was established in the fall of 1997 with broad-based participation from the city's downtown leadership. David Casey and Terry O'Connor of Casey Associates identified gateway improvements as an important image strategy for the Committee to pursue. Their recommendations include:
 1. Entry points signage program
 2. Zoning review
 3. Mural program
 4. Coordinated painting program
 5. Coordinated signage program
 6. Directional signage review
 7. Interstate 91 signage
- Another image improvement idea revived in 1997 is the award program for well-maintained properties. The "Taking Pride in Holyoke Award" is to be given by the Mayor's office twice a year, in Spring and Fall.

- Holyoke’s Office of Economic and Industrial Development has been researching communities with municipal communications officers.
- A special opportunity for public relations will materialize with the upcoming restructuring of the Coolidge Bridge between Amherst and Northampton, many commuters will be introduced to Holyoke as they avoid traffic congestion by taking a detour on Routes 202 and 116.



Cultural Diversity

Racial tension has been cited as a negative aspect of Holyoke in both the past marketing studies mentioned above as well as the Phase I master plan community visioning. As one participant put it, “...members of the Latino population in Holyoke do not feel connected to the city; they do not feel welcomed.”

Bringing Awareness Through Festivals

The master plan objectives cited above call for the use of celebrations and events, particularly in Holyoke’s downtown, to knit the city together. The city already has a number of large and successful annual celebrations, drawing people from both Holyoke and throughout the region. These are:

- *Celebrate Holyoke.* A four day festival of music, food, and fun, held annually the last weekend in August, Celebrate Holyoke attracted over 75,000 people from all backgrounds to the downtown in 1997. In addition to big name popular music, local bands played music from salsa to polkas. It provides a singular opportunity for the entire community to mix together. Members of the Image and people focus group noted that Celebrate Holyoke, while representing the city’s Latino population with the best local bands available, has not used nationally known Puerto Rican musicians as evening headliners.
- *St. Patrick’s Day Parade.* For forty-five years the St. Patrick’s Day Parade has been the city’s major event. In 1997, it drew over 300,000 spectators and 15,000 participants, making it the second largest St. Patrick’s Day Parade in the country - - and increasing Holyoke’s population for the day by a factor of seven. The parade’s course has changed over the years, but it traditionally ends in downtown on High Street. Jack O’Neill of the Parade Committee notes the event enjoys participation from the Hispanic community, and that it is an excellent time for Irish and Hispanics to highlight shared cultural experiences
- *The Hispanic Family Festival.* Held every fourth of July for the past 11 years, this indoor event is smaller and less well known than the city’s other celebrations. Publicity has been cited as an issue — the event is not listed on the city’s web page or in other promotional material on Holyoke events and attractions.

A New Locus of Ethnic Activity

The neighborhood of South Holyoke is emerging as a center of Latino activity in the city, particularly along the Main Street commercial corridor. The community development organization Nueva Esperanza is pursuing a number of ethnically-oriented development projects there, including a Puerto Rican-style open air market selling Latino foods and other items. The area is adjacent to Holyoke's downtown, and to the planned Canal Walk. Observers say it has the potential to become a "Little Puerto Rico," attracting visitors from other parts of the city and the region.



Public Participation

Current Programs

As noted earlier in this paper, Holyoke's many social service organizations provide many opportunities for public service. While it is beyond the scope of this plan to conduct a complete inventory, examples include:

- *Caribbean Colors.* Main Street in South Holyoke received a facelift during the summer of 1997 as a group of youths, sponsored by Nueva Esperanza, painted selected storefronts in a rich array of blues, yellows, pinks, orange and red. These "Caribbean Colors" both enlivened the area and provided jobs for local youths. Funding was provided by Bank Boston and local businesses, including those benefiting from the program.
- *Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps.* This is a full-time community service and leadership program, funded in part by the Corporation for National Service. Young people between the ages of 17 and 25 are paid to work on such community service projects as staffing community policing sub-stations, construction for the Holyoke Community Land Trust, and conducting after school programs.
- *Holyoke City Serve.* A an organized day of community service sponsored by the Greater Holyoke Youth Service Corps. This program brings together over 400 volunteers from Holyoke, the surrounding communities, and all across the Commonwealth. Community service projects undertaken by the Corps range from park clean-ups to graffiti removal, painting traffic lights, renovating playgrounds, and building a TV studio at the Children's Museum for children's programs.

Note: Holyoke has no central clearinghouse for matching volunteers with opportunities.

Image & People

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPLEMENTING HOLYOKE'S MASTER PLAN

The first objective listed in *Voices of Holyoke, A Vision for Our Future* states “Insist that this shared vision of Holyoke, as embodied in the master plan, must stay on course.” The prominence of this statement reflects a city poised and anxious to make things happen, along with some concerns over the master plan’s eventual fate. Here are recommended strategies for overcoming these concerns and promoting success of the master plan.

1. Demonstrate leadership and support by the city for the master plan.

Because plan implementation depends on the participation of a broad array of individuals and groups, both in and out of city government, efforts are needed to quickly create confidence in the plan. The city should lead the way by demonstrating its own strong commitment to it.

Actions

- Both the Mayor and the City Council should formally and visibly endorse the plan.
 - *The City Council should pass a resolution declaring its support for the master plan and the projects listed in it, and committing to using the plan as a guidance document in its deliberations.*
 - *The master plan should be used by the Mayor and the Council as a benchmark for measuring progress in the city. The plan should be referenced in political speeches, city news releases and the like, serving as a context for municipal action. Citing the plan in this way will help keep attention focused on it.*
- The city should provide annual funding for master plan implementation through the budget for the mayor’s office.

This item is as important for its significance as it is for its monetary value. It would be a tangible indication of municipal commitment to the plan. It would make the plan accountable to the city’s budgeting process and provide for annual municipal review of plan progress. Changes in funding levels could function as a barometer of administration support. Minimum funding should be sufficient to ensure the availability of staff time to oversee plan implementation and pursue projects. Optimally, larger appropriations can made to fund recommended projects, or to provide match money for projects with private sector partners.

2. Establish a master plan implementation system.

The master plan will consist of numerous strategies and action items, ranging from the simple and mundane to the complex and visionary. Small, inexpensive tasks will help establish early successes, giving the plan needed momentum. Middle and long range items will guide the city for the next two decades. Responsibility for implementing such a wide reaching plan must be shared throughout all municipal departments — and beyond into the numerous private groups, organizations and corporations, both for and not for profit, operating in the city. The magnitude of the job requires it. The following actions are recommended in order to: clarify responsibilities; establish commitments for action; refine tasks and identify funding and other needs; keep track of plan progress; provide a

detailed record of master plan activities to help the plan “stay on course” through changes in administration and agency personnel.

Actions

- Establish entities responsible for master plan implementation and oversight.
Short Term - Currently, plan development is the province of the city’s planning department, with oversight performed by a mayoral-appointed master plan committee. This arrangement could be continued into the plan’s implementation phase. Building on the current model, the eight master plan focus groups involved in developing plan strategies could evolve into implementation task forces.
Long Term - Holyoke’s planning department should assess its capacity to manage implementation activities. Several communities noted for successful master plans attribute their achievements to a public-private partnership formed for the express purpose of overseeing the plan, and Holyoke should not overlook this model. Regardless of who eventually manages the plan:
 - progress should be reviewed regularly in order to identify next steps and keep the plan moving. A bi-monthly basis should be sufficient to monitor progress while allowing time for projects to develop and meetings to be fruitful;
 - the composition of oversight committees should be reviewed and updated every six months to ensure they are staffed with active and interested members.
- Develop Master Plan Partnership Agreements with each municipal department and other plan implementers.
Each potential implementing agency should be asked to draft a document specifying which master plan strategies it will commit to further, and detailing the tasks it will undertake. The documents should include:
 - a brief description of each implementation task;
 - primary contacts;
 - milestone deadlines and budgets;
 - needs for assistance and potential obstacles.*These “master plan partnership agreements” should be endorsed by each organization’s leadership and updated on a regular basis. The updates will function as progress reports, and their frequency should be specified in the partnership document.*
- Develop a record keeping system for keeping track of master plan progress.
 - “Staying on course” will be facilitated through regular monitoring and evaluation of plan progress, both of which are in turn facilitated by detailed record keeping. Hillsboro County, Florida has developed an award-winning computer program to track master plan progress. Reports can be generated based on such criteria as implementing agencies, due dates, staff assignments, contact persons, implementation status, etc. Holyoke should obtain this free program and use it directly, or as a model for a program specifically tailored to the city’s needs and computer capabilities. Sample data sheets are in the appendix.
 - The partnership agreements discussed above should be tightly coordinated with a master plan record keeping system. This can be done by creating a template for the partnership agreements that covers all the fields to be included in the plan’s data base. Fields should include project number, contact, description, tasks, products, budget (if applicable), and delivery dates.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CITY MARKETING & PROMOTION

3. Establish a Municipal Office of Community Relations to conduct public relations activities and promote cultural understanding.

Holyoke's combination of promotional and communications needs gave rise to the recommendation of establishing an in-house office of community relations.

Responsibilities might include the following actions.

Actions

- Coordinate an ongoing public relations and marketing campaign covering the range of city-wide accomplishments including those in education, economic development, infrastructure, public safety, and more.
- Organize special events and programs to promote Holyoke pride and spirit;
- Incorporate multi-cultural considerations into city activities, arranging for city-wide diversity awareness training, organizing dialogue groups on race relations, etc.

4. Fast track Improvements to the city's gateways.

Gateway improvements — fixing up the appearance of those roads and streets that lead into the city center from neighboring communities and major highways such as I-91 and 391, was the first recommendation to emerge from the Holyoke Marketing Committee. It also was a prominent recommendation by participants in the Image and People focus group, and the public forum. A separate group has formed with members of both the Holyoke Marketing and Master Plan Committees to identify and implement needed improvements.

Actions

- Create a gateway management plan and a task force to oversee its implementation.
- The city's gateways should be identified, mapped and evaluated. A complete list of gateway projects should be developed, including such as activities as building redevelopment or demolition, vacant lot improvements, signage, tree and landscape plantings, street furniture, lighting, etc.
- The gateway plan should identify responsible implementation parties. A Gateway Task Force should be created to facilitate and monitor progress.
- Direct municipal funds and staff (e.g. DPW, Parks) to gateway projects.
- Identify owners of key gateway properties and encourage them to make use of the city's facade improvement program and other resources.
- Increase the attractiveness of the facade improvement program to gateway property owners by increasing the match provided for gateway sites.
- Make Route 202 a high priority gateway area.

*With the restructuring of the Coolidge Bridge linking Amherst and Northampton, commuters between the Amherst and Springfield areas will detour through Holyoke along this route.**

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

5. Implement, support and expand on the 1997 Holyoke Partnership public relations program.

This plan, Structuring an Overall Marketing Apparatus to Promote the Benefits of the City of Holyoke, written by Casey Associates, sets forth a system for training municipal staff to collect and disseminate positive news about Holyoke to the news media.

Because the plan relies on expanding the duties of existing city personnel, it requires minimal funding. Success of the Holyoke Partnership's plan can be facilitated by the following actions.

Actions

- Evaluate the Holyoke Partnership Plan on a quarterly basis.
The Holyoke Partnership plan is a good and much-welcomed idea, especially for its resourceful, low-cost nature. But it is an untried idea and depends for its success on the participation of a number individuals for whom public relations responsibilities will be new and unfamiliar. The plan should be evaluated periodically, especially in its early stages, to determine whether and where it is working and how it might be strengthened. In addition to measuring press results, evaluation should look at whether municipal staff have found the system easy to use, and examine the frequency and quality of news releases produced under the program.
- Expand the Holyoke Partnership's Plan/Establish a Holyoke Communications Office.
Holyoke's negative image is as much the result of the factual reporting of negative events as it is the lack of reporting good news. The Casey plan should be expanded to address the issue of damage control through:
 - *prompt municipal action responding to a negative event, and reporting that action to the press;*
 - *attempts at controlling the story by providing appropriate "spin."**Another means of expanding the Casey Plan would be for the city to coordinate the plan's efforts by hiring a municipal communications officer. Holyoke's Office of Economic and Industrial Development has been researching this issue, collecting job descriptions from other municipalities. These have been forwarded to the Mayor's office. Were the city to move forward, a city communications office should be established, enabling the new communications professional to serve all of city government. The office should be given responsibility for implementing and managing master plan strategies having to do with the city's image, particularly those listed here under the objective of marketing and publicizing Holyoke's assets.*
- Prepare a Holyoke Press Kit and designate spokespeople for the city.
Use of a decentralized public relations system, as the Casey Plan is, can be facilitated by providing the media with a comprehensive list of contact names and numbers for different topic areas. These spokespeople need not be municipal employees — they simply need to be people who can be relied upon to make accurate comments with a positive spin. Their effectiveness can be increased with media training, showing them how to deliver messages in brief, quotable sentences and how to position stories to the city's advantage. In addition to this list of contacts, reporters should be provided with basic background information on the city, selected to combat negative images of the city.
- Arrange for a municipal delegation to meet with media outlets.
This idea, put forth at the public forum on Holyoke's Image and People, calls for the mayor, city councilors and other municipal officials to meet with the news media to personally deliver positive messages about the city and discuss reasons for persistent

negative reporting. Meeting with newspaper editorial boards and reporters is, in fact, a standard public relations technique. Such a meeting with both Holyoke's mayor and city councilors present would offer an image of a unified city government, able to move forward and get things done.

- *Arrangements should be made for the group to meet with the Union News, and Holyoke's own weekly The Sun.*
- *The visits should be made on a yearly or twice basis, and closely coordinated with other public relations activities.*
- *The mayor's office should monitor follow-up activities.*

6. Place a special emphasis on generating good news about Holyoke's school system.

The poor reputation of Holyoke's schools surfaced repeatedly at master plan public forums. Yet at the same time, many expressed pride in the city's school system. One explanation for this is that Holyoke's schools do a lot with the challenges of a student body that includes a high proportion of non-native English speakers and children living in poverty. Holyoke's new public relations efforts — be they the Holyoke Partnership plan or something more centralized, such as a municipal communications officer — should give special attention to promoting good news about Holyoke's schools. Some preliminary action items are given below. More recommendations on promoting Holyoke's schools will be developed by the focus group on education.

Actions

- Include Holyoke's schools superintendent and public relations officer in the mayor's media delegation, described above.
- Improve the picture of Holyoke's school system in the city's web page.
The school test scores listed in the city's web page are alarming and misleading, and should be deleted or placed in context. New web pages and links to showcase Holyoke's schools should be developed.
- Showcase the achievements of Holyoke students through forums for student writing.
The Union-News has a weekly section for teens, written by teens. Holyoke teachers should help and encourage students to contribute to his forum.

7. Support the Chamber of Commerce-sponsored Holyoke Marketing Committee.

This group was convened in the Fall of 1997 and brings together some 25 leaders from Holyoke's business community, municipal government and not for profit groups. Holyoke's planning department is represented, and there is some overlap between the Marketing Committee and the city's Master Plan Committee.

Actions

- Coordinate the Holyoke Marketing Committee's work with *The Holyoke Master Plan*.
The Marketing Committee should be viewed as a potential implementation arm of the master plan.
- Fund marketing efforts.
Several marketing plans produced for the city in the 1980's languished for lack of funding. It is important that the city overcome these past experiences and demonstrate a commitment to self-promotion. As with the full master plan, the city

should make a visible, demonstration of support for increased marketing and promotional efforts.

- *The city should consider establishing an annual marketing budget, with direction on how it should be spent to come from both the Holyoke Marketing Committee and municipal departments.*
- *The city should provide staff support for implementing recommendations of the Holyoke Marketing Committee.*

8. Improve Holyoke's Web Site.

Holyoke has shown itself to be a forward thinking city by using Internet technology to promote itself. However, the current web site does the city some disservice by providing data that can be misinterpreted in a negative light and by not taking advantage of the medium as a promotional vehicle for the city.

Actions

- Assign responsibilities and assemble resources for website improvements.
Holyoke Community College or Dean Technical School should be contacted to explore the potential of using both students and teachers to work on the city's website, perhaps as an internship or class project. A city contact should be designated to organize and supervise the student work.
- Edit current information to ensure that all facts are presented in the most positive way possible.
Data that paints a negative picture of Holyoke should be addressed with explanations and information on what the city is doing to counter the problem.
- Increase the graphic content of the site, possibly creating a virtual tour of the city.
- Links to e-mail should be established, to allow users to send direct inquiries to municipal departments and city organizations.
Additional suggestions for web site improvements will be made elsewhere in the master plan as focus groups discussing other issues recommend how the site can be used to further their objectives.

9. Use Holyokers to promote Holyoke.

There are two audiences for a Holyoke image campaign: one is the world outside Holyoke, which, fueled by reports of what "makes news," sees the city as a nest of crime, drugs, fires and poverty; the other is Holyokers themselves, some of whom are proud of their city, some of whom are not. It is recommended that image and marketing efforts target city residents first, in order to develop a spirit of optimism and confidence. Proud citizens are a municipality's strongest marketing tool, and are an important source of investment.

Actions

- Create and use a slogan to rally around.
The issue of slogans has surfaced repeatedly in Holyoke's efforts to improve its image. The 1989 Darby O'Brien marketing plan proposed the challenge "Holyoke: Wanna make Something of It?," which was embraced by some and perceived as too brash by others. Several slogans were volunteered at the master plan public forum on the city's image. These included: "Holyoke Has.....;" "Holyoke's Got It.," and "A Classic City on the Canal." Currently, the Holyoke Partnership public relations plan for the city, noted above, calls for a slogan. As of this writing, nothing has been chosen. The city is still searching for a good one.
- Study the potential use of billboards as communications vehicles.
Further consideration should be given to the use of billboards to promote progress being made in the city — for example, the impressive amount of vacant industrial space rented, "showcase" projects such as Hope VI or the Holyoke Canalwalk, etc. A Springfield billboard developer has mentioned to David Casey a program whereby one side of two-sided billboards are made available to municipalities for public purposes. While the city would get free advertising space, it would at the same time impose commercial structures on the landscape, and possibly pave the way for billboards of a totally commercial nature.
 - *The city should study the potential benefits and impacts of such an arrangement, comparing them to such alternatives as municipal purchase and control of a single billboard site or a sign program that displays information on a smaller scale.*
- Create vehicles for direct communications between the city and its residents.
One way for the city to ensure good news about Holyoke is regularly communicated to city residents is to take control of the message through direct written communications, such as brochures, mailers or newsletters. A city newsletter was mentioned by several participants at the Image and People public forum. Regardless of format, direct communications should be used to inform Holyoke citizens of progress being made around the city in key areas such as physical improvements, economic development, crime and safety, and education. Information could be couched in the context of the master plan, or simply put forward as "good things happening in Holyoke." It should be presented bilingually, and issued every two or three months. Options for distribution include brochures placed in city hall, public agencies and cooperating retail outlets, and utility bill insert mailings.
- Use the mall to promote Holyoke.
The Holyoke Mall can function as a public relations vehicle for Holyoke, providing exhibit space and a distribution outlet for brochures and such promotional items as Holyoke T-shirts and bumper stickers. The city's marketing slogan may even be worked into mall brochures, promotions and advertising.
 - *The city should pursue an agreement with the mall for cooperative marketing and promotional activities.*

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES TO CREATE A MORE USER-FRIENDLY HOLYOKE

10. Disseminate information about Holyoke's government and how it works

The “user-friendliness” of city government can be increased by informing citizens about how it is structured, key municipal laws and requirements, and what citizens can and cannot expect from it.

Actions

- Create a guide to City Hall.
The city should hire marketing and communications professionals to prepare the guide, since “user-friendliness” depends in part on the guide’s tone and appearance — it should not look like it comes from a bureaucracy. Research should be conducted to determine the mix of information most useful to city residents. Reaching the broad spectrum of Holyoke’s residents requires using an equally broad spectrum of media and distribution methods. The guide should be published bilingually and made available through city departments, realtors, the Chamber of Commerce, houses of worship, community centers, service organizations, and the city’s web site.
- Stage a Holyoke Open House.
Stage an annual event where the city throws open its doors to its citizens, providing tours of municipal buildings and facilities, informal talks by municipal officials, and workshops on how to get things done in the city — for example, getting a building permit, getting your child the best education, staging a neighborhood clean up. Make the event festive with refreshments, decorations and entertainment or, alternatively, stage it during an existing city festival such as Celebrate Holyoke! or a Lark in the Park event. Use the open house as a promotional vehicle in addition to an educational one.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE MULTI-CULTURAL DIVERSITY

11. Continue and expand diversity training efforts in the city.

Diversity training is a process for increasing people’s awareness of and sensitivity to issues of race and ethnicity. In recent years, professionals have emerged who develop and conduct such training for corporations, non-profits and governments. Holyoke has held some training for municipal employees, but continuation and expansion is needed to allowing staff to refresh, update and deepen their skills. The program should also be made available to the police department and emergency response personnel, and people outside city government who serve Holyoke carrying out municipal projects and policies — for example, members of boards and commissions.

12. Make it a public policy to consider multi-culturalism in public policy decisions.

Actions

- Issue a Mayoral proclamation.
Holyoke’s mayor should formally embrace the city’s multi-culturalism in an official statement. The statement should be as detailed as possible, dictating and providing examples of how race and ethnicity should be taken into consideration by city agencies. It should be celebrated publicly, and include announcements of specific Actions and projects to be undertaken by the city.
- Have the City Council pass a resolution.
Holyoke’s City Council should pass a resolution similar to that described for the mayor, above.

- Establish a multi-cultural Advisory Board
The city should convene an advisory board with representation from each of its different cultures for the purpose of reviewing and commenting on the potential impact of municipal Actions on the city's racial and ethnic groups. The group could be meet as needed upon request by the mayor, or on a regular schedule.
 - *Holyoke's Council on Human Understanding should be represented on the board.*

13. Highlight Holyoke's multi-culturalism in city communications, promotional materials and at city events.

Actions

- Revise Holyoke's Website to reflect its multi-cultural character.
Add information on Holyoke's multi-cultural assets to its website. Post information on the city's cultural and ethnic festivals, particularly its Hispanic Family Festival.
- Incorporate multi-cultural information into Chamber of Commerce materials.
The Chamber of Commerce should incorporate information on Holyoke's multi-cultural assets into reprints of its promotional booklets and brochures.
- Enhance the multi-cultural character of Celebrate Holyoke.
The need for more multi-culturalism at this showcase Holyoke event was brought up in both the focus group and public forum on this topic. Suggestions included:
 - *Increase both the quantity and visibility of ethnic music, especially in the evening when the festival draws its largest crowds.*
 - *Incorporate a booth or exhibit on Holyoke's cultural diversity.*

14. Develop city-wide programs and events around National Race Relations Week.

The week prior to Martin Luther King Day is National Race Relations Week, and provides a hook on which to hang events and programs concerned with this issue. The national activities provide a context for local ones, focusing media attention on race issues and lending a sense of timeliness and import to the topic.

Actions

- Create a Race Relations Week Task Force.
The city should convene a task force to plan, coordinate and promote events during this week — for example, diversity training workshops, dialogue group formation, exhibits, oral history presentations, plays, films, etc. Representatives should come from city government, neighborhood groups, the religious community and the business community. City staff and resources should be made available to support the work of the group, which could tie in with the national dialogue on race relations launched by President Clinton.

15. Foster the development and proliferation of dialogue groups on race and ethnic relations.

The Holyoke-based Council on Human Understanding and the Springfield-based Institutes for the Healing of Racism are local organizations with programs that bring people together from different racial and ethnic background to confront and resolve their prejudices.

Actions

- Conduct exploratory meetings.

The city should meet with representatives of both the Council on Human Understanding and the Institutes for the Healing of Racism to discuss how they might expand or establish activities in Holyoke, and what the city can do to help them.

Possibilities include:

- *providing meeting space;*
- *providing organizational contacts and introductions;*
- *facilitating recruitment to municipal employees.*

16. Use Holyoke's immigrant history to promote understanding of group differences.

At the master plan public forum on Image and People, a Hispanic woman had a moment of revelation and insight when she learned about the difficulties faced by Irish in Holyoke earlier in this century. "I thought it was just us!," she exclaimed.

Actions

- Create an Oral History Program

Holyoke should invite its elders to participate in activities to promote multi-cultural understanding. One of the city's great assets, noted repeated at public meetings, is its people — particularly the fact that many city residents have lived here their whole lives. A program should be created to:

- *identify and recruit people who have experienced several decades of change in Holyoke, and who can and are willing to speak about what they've seen;*
- *train speakers to tell personal stories that illuminate race relations;*
- *create forums for the speakers to bring their experiences to new generations of Holyokers — e.g. schools, libraries, community centers, etc.*

- Create a traveling multi-cultural history exhibit.

Holyoke's multi-cultural history should be presented in a display that can travel to schools and festivals such as Celebrate Holyoke.

- Create a program on Holyoke's multi-cultural history for cable access television.

17. Focus attention on schoolchildren.

Children are a critically important audience for race relations efforts, and warrant special attention.

Actions

- Create a Holyoke History curriculum.

Holyoke should develop a social studies curriculum based on local history and designed to promote multi-cultural values. The advice of educational consultants should be sought as to what grade level would be most receptive to this information and message.

- Organize a Multi-cultural mural project.

Holyoke should create a project involving teen artists in the research, creation and execution of a mural, or series of murals, showcasing the city's multi-cultural history.

- Establish student dialogue groups.

Holyoke's high schools should offer students the opportunity to participate in diversity training or dialogue groups.

- Use Field Trips to promote racial and ethnic sensitivity.

18. Increase the number and frequency of festivals downtown

The master plan objective to “Focus all multi-cultural events in downtown Holyoke” proposes to utilize Holyoke’s downtown as a neutral meeting ground for Holyoke’s diverse groups. Currently, the city’s major events — the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade and Celebrate Holyoke — do take place here. More festivals downtown would provide opportunities to celebrate Holyoke’s diversity, and would also further the objectives of downtown revitalization by providing activities to bring people into the area.

Actions

- Support new festival development.

Holyoke should identify ways to support the creation of new festivals.

- *Existing and potential festival organizers should be brought together to discuss their needs, plans, experiences, etc.*
- *Funding sources for festivals should be developed.*
- *The participation of Holyoke’s business community and downtown merchants should be sought.*

Potential new events include:

- *Holyoke Multi-Culti Fest: The city should create a special, annual forum for celebrating its diversity, featuring ethnic music, food, dance, costumes, art, literature, etc.*
- *Holyoke’s 125th Founder’s Day Celebration: The city should focus events related to this city milestone in the downtown. Celebration planners should be directed by the city to highlight multi-culturalism in the event programming.*
- *An expanded 4th of July: Festivities could be made weekend-long, when the calendar permits. Coordination will need to consider the Hispanic Family Festival, which takes place around this time.*
- *Heritage Tie-Ins: Identify and develop opportunities for multi-cultural celebrations and commemorations, such as Puerto Rican Heritage Month, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Week, etc.*

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

19. Create a clearinghouse for volunteer activities.

Actions

- Form a volunteer task force.
The task force should be responsible for planning how volunteer opportunities will be consolidated and publicized both inside and outside the city. It should, in partnership with the city, create an award program to acknowledge outstanding volunteers.
- Advertise volunteer opportunities.
Place volunteer opportunities on the city's web page and in the local newspapers, cable access and college newspapers.
- Develop a program with the five colleges, HCC, and Westfield State that offers students class credit for volunteer experience.
One opportunity could be the management of the volunteer clearinghouse and the management of the Clearinghouse's web page.
- Organize volunteer workdays in the city.
Partners such as Habitat for Humanity, Americorps, and the Holyoke Land Trust could help develop projects.

20. Establish a community leadership class in the highschools.

Actions

- Evaluate volunteer opportunities from the Clearinghouse that could be filled by highschool students.
- Ask the local businesses and public offices to submit proposals for internship opportunities.
- Work with the schools to develop this class as a part of the required curriculum. The curriculum could include:
 - *Civics*
 - *History of Holyoke*
 - *Public Speaking*
 - *Dialogue on current events and social issues that pertain to the volunteer work being completed by the students.*

21. Strengthen existing programs in Holyoke that are designed to improve the physical appearance of the city.

Actions

- Update the facade improvement program to allow improvements such as Caribbean Colors.
- Increase publicity for Graffiti Away.
Increase involvement by sending out targeted mailings to those property owners who need the service. Ask Americorps or the Honor Court to identify such properties. Publicize those projects that have been successful through this program.
- Expand the Take Pride Program.

Solicit a widespread participation throughout the city. The nomination process needs to be expanded and simplified.

- Encourage a greater level of community participation from the community in Americorps' City Serve.
- Organize a city employee clean up day that allows city employees to leave their desks and join in a concerted effort to physically improve Holyoke.

22. Create programs that strengthen the connection between the residents and the physical appearance of the city.

Actions

- Enroll Holyoke in the Keep America Beautiful Program.

The city will have access to the program's educational materials which can be used in schools and businesses throughout the city.

- Formalize and market a centralized storage area for clean up equipment that can be used by community groups.

The equipment could be donated by area businesses and would add efficiency to the organization of community clean up efforts. An informal storage area already exists at the DPW. The materials stored there should be inventoried and updated.

Image & People

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

2. Economic Development

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Economic Development

Goals & Objectives

Goal: Promote and maintain the economic health of commercial and industrial entities that contribute to the entire community's quality of life and that fit within Holyoke's social and physical environment

Objectives:

1. Identify appropriate areas for new development and redevelopment.
2. Analyze unused and under-used commercial and industrial properties to determine how they can be upgraded or converted to a more productive use.
3. Encourage rehabilitation and improvement of existing facilities.
4. Develop a plan illustrating how cultural centers, public projects and public facilities enhance and stimulate economic activity.
5. Take advantage of Holyoke's telecommunications location which offers new and diverse opportunities.
6. Develop coordinated programs to train residents in the skills needed for existing and future jobs in the city.
7. Develop and maintain employment opportunities within the city which offer good wages and a promising future for all of Holyoke's residents.
8. Develop a strategy to streamline a development process in regards to permitting and licensing, as well as making support services more accessible and user friendly.
9. Concentrate the city's efforts on development and retention of small business.
10. Continue and increase the city's current commercial and industrial development efforts, including the Holyoke Crossroads Development Park, the Economic Development Incentive Program, the Small Business Information Center, etc.
11. Create a comprehensive, coordinated economic development plan for Holyoke's central business district, which will maximize the benefits of public spending in the district.

Economic Development Information & Assessment

The meaning of Economic Development for Holyoke

Economic development is the process of building a community's capacity for shared and sustainable improvement in its economic well being — well being defined by qualities such as good jobs, a decent quality of life, long term stability, equity in sharing the fruits of the economy, a workforce that is capable of responding to the labor needs of local business and industry, and vitality in the business sector. Holyoke has some of these qualities, but not all. It offers good jobs. Indeed, the city is the second largest job provider in western Massachusetts, and showed a 5% increase in job growth for the 18 month period between April 1996 and November 1997. But the fact that Holyoke has 1.6 jobs for every member of its workforce doesn't translate into full employment. Through the first half of the 1990's, Holyoke's unemployment rate followed a parallel track with other communities in the region, but averaged 1.5 to 2.0 percentage points higher. This gap implies that Holyokers are not all sharing in the fruits of its economy, and that the local work force does not meet the needs of local labor.

Because of the mismatch between local unemployment and Holyoke's position as a job exporter, economic development in the city cannot be considered simply in terms of new business growth. It must be looked at in terms of how well the city can prepare and provide jobs for its population in need. And a significant portion of the city's population is in need. By virtually every socioeconomic measure, Holyoke ranks near the bottom of other communities in Hampden County in terms of economic well-being. It has the lowest median household income, \$22,858 in contrast with a county-wide average of \$37,900. While Holyoke's population continues to shrink, its most burdensome segments swell and the productive segments decline via natural forces or out-migration.

A focus on providing jobs for Holyoke's have-nots will have broad rippling effects, increasing the spending power of city residents, strengthening the customer base of local small businesses and, eventually, more evenly distributing Holyoke's residential tax base which is currently concentrated in a relatively small proportion of its citizens.



Strategic Areas

In April 1994, Holyoke's Office of Economic and Industrial Affairs prepared an *Economic Development Strategy* for the city. The master plan chapter on economic development does not intend to supersede it, but uses it as a springboard. The following sections in this assessment are based on strategies identified in the 1994 strategic plan.

Holyoke Business Growth Prospects, 1997

A. Economic Development Incentive Program State Investment Tax Credit and Municipal Tax Incentive		
B. Holyoke Crossroads Development Park	Acres	Status
Ownership:		
• O’Connell Engineering and Financial, Inc.	116+	Proposed 6 site light industrial park; Planning and Permitting Stage
• Marox Company	9.8	Sale Pending - 40,000 - 50,000 SF Manufacturing Facility/40,000 - 75,000 SF Office Building
• Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation	16+	Available for Sale 1 Office Site 1 Manufacturing Site
C. Land Reclamation/Recycle Projects in Industrial Core		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Electric Cable Company - 20,000 SF Expansion • Central Mass Machine, Inc. - 15,000 SF Expansion • New England Etching Company - 8,500 SF Expansion • Pratt and Austin Co., Inc. - to be determined • Reliance Electric Company - to be determined 		

Source: Holyoke Office of Economic and Industrial Development



Holyoke’s Industrial Base

Industry is in Holyoke’s bones. The city was founded as an industrial community, and the large brick mill complexes downtown continue to define its identity — both visually and culturally. It is a credit to Holyoke that 90% of its historic mills remain occupied while in many other New England mill cities such buildings are abandoned and a burden. Moreover, while projections made by Regional Economic Models, Inc. (REMI) in 1996 predicted a 1.7% decline in Holyoke manufacturing employment by 1998, manufacturing jobs in the city actually rose by 8% for the 18 month period between April 1996 and November 1997.

Industrial growth is vital to Holyoke, as the city relies more heavily on the manufacturing sector for jobs and taxes than the rest of the region. For example, in FY1996 Holyoke’s industrial property constituted 12% of its total property tax assessment and 16% of tax payments. In contrast, manufacturing contributed just 5% to region’s tax base.

The primary challenge to Holyoke’s industrial base is: Where can it go to expand? Finding locations for business growth anywhere in this largely built out city is of primary concern. Demand is here. Bucking national trends, western Massachusetts continues to have its greatest concentration of employment in the cities, and the concept of the suburban industrial or office park is virtually unknown here. Of the region’s ten newest

industrial parks of 30 or more acres, seven are located in the cities, including the new Holyoke Crossroads Industrial and Office Park.

More specifically, in a 1996 business survey conducted by the city in conjunction with Lake Hitchcock Development Corporation, and which focused heavily on manufacturers, 14 of the 20 respondents said they would expand operations within the next three years, 10 of them in Holyoke.

While there is both need and demand, there are also constraining factors and concerns on the part of existing businesses considering expansion. When asked what services would enable their business to grow, respondents to the survey cited above called for controls on vandalism, increased police protection, security for on-street parking, and streetscape improvements addressing both cleanliness and the redevelopment of abandoned or burned out buildings. Participants in the *The Holyoke Master Plan's* Economic development focus group noted additional restraining forces for stabilizing and expanding the city's industrial base, including:

- poor land availability;
- antiquated buildings in the urban core, with comparatively high costs for adapting to current business needs;
- lack of qualified/skilled workers;
- lack of public transportation to serve workers on 2nd and 3rd shifts;
- lack of access to affordable capital;
- Holyoke image issues;
- potential conflicts between commercial, industrial and residential uses, particularly in the urban core.

A Comparison of Vacancy Rates in Holyoke, 1993, 1995 and 1996

	1993	1995	1996
Industrial Building Space:	16.51%	11.21%	10.10%
Ingleside Class A Office Space:	22.50%	4.20%	2.80%
Downtown Class B Office Space:	17.70%	5.20%	13.20%

Sources: Industrial Building Space Vacancy Rate compiled by the Office of Economic and Industrial Development from its "Available Industrial Building Space Inventory", November 1997; Office Vacancy Rates are from "Real Estate Analysis - Office Space Survey of Gtr. Spfld." compiled by the Colebrook Group, 1993, 1995, and 1996



Development at Interstate Exits

Modern retailing is built on the premise of convenient access to the economic region, with the most desirable growth areas being the nodes of land around highway exit ramps — easy on, easy off attracting both customers and quality employees. Holyoke is favored with three interchanges on Interstate 91, the region's major north-south corridor.

These locations give the city a competitive advantage in attracting business development, particularly at the southernmost interchange at the Ingleside area. Holyoke's extensive transportation infrastructure also provides other highway areas to be considered for their development potential, including I-391, and Routes 5, 116, 141 and 202.

Continued expansion of the Holyoke Mall at Ingleside promises to make it the largest mall in New England. Other major retail has followed the mall, including Holyoke Crossing, which features "big box" chains such as Barnes & Noble and Bed, Bath & Beyond, and restaurant chains such as Friendly's and Cracker Barrel. Holyoke has an informal land use policy calling for commercial development on the east side of I-91, and light industrial and office uses on the west side of the highway. The location of the new Holyoke Crossroads Industrial and Office Park follows this policy. However, the city's Planning Department reports commercial pressures on the area that may put the Ingleside policy to the test.

Much of the land in the vicinity of Holyoke's other two I-91 interchanges is largely developed. For example, in the I-91/202 area there are just two vacant parcels, one with two acres, the other having about 15 acres of developable land, but with wetlands presenting a challenge to site access. The area around Dwight Street offers the potential for conversions of residential to business uses and for upgrading existing commercial uses.

The largest area of undeveloped land off I-91 in Holyoke is found west of the highway along Route 141. Zoned for residential and commercial uses, the Williams and Edmund's estates lands are attractive to both those interested in seeing new development in the city and those wanting land at the base of Mount Tom to be preserved, augmenting the city's stock of open space and recreation land. The possible existence of rare plant and wildlife in the area raises the need to exercise caution in regard to future development.



Labor Force

The Plan for Progress, the Pioneer Valley region's economic development plan, has identified labor force issues as a key indicator of its growth potential. There are two aspects to the labor force — quantity and quality.

Holyoke is relatively well positioned regarding workforce availability, despite statistics that show steady declines in the city's workforce from the early eighties to the mid nineties. This is due to a high percentage of young people approaching working age. In 1990, persons 15 and under made up about 28% of Holyoke's total population, while the regional average for this age cohort was 20%. By now a portion of this population group has moved into the next age cohort (15-24) and the balance will continue to increase it

over the next decade, giving the city a proportionately greater supply of entry level workers than the balance of the region.

Current and Intermediate Term Holyoke Development Projects

Current Projects — within two years

1. Marox Development Project (Holyoke Crossroads Development Park)

- 40,000 to 50,000 SF Manufacturing Facility
- 40,000 to 75,000 SF Office Building

2. Major Infrastructure Initiatives (complete)

- Holyoke Gas and Electric's Metropolitan Area Network (Fiber Optic Network Connectivity and Internet Access available to all Municipal and Public School Buildings as well as the 1,100+ business operators in Holyoke)
- Holyoke Water Works Water Pipeline (Improved Water Quality and Increased Capacity)

3. Ingleside Growth

Office Developments

- Kaiser Permanente (19,000+ SF, 65 employees)
- Holyoke Pediatrics (11,000, 45 employees)
- Hampshire Broadcasting (WRNX - 100.9 FM Radio, 25 employees)
- Valley Chiropractic (25 employees)
- Ingleside Professional Office Center (21,000 SF expansion)

Retail Market Developments

- Cracker Barrel Country Store Restaurant
- Friendly's Family Restaurant

4. Regional Economic Target Area (Holyoke, Chicopee, Easthampton and Westfield)

- Regional Intermunicipal Agreement for Marketing, Tax Incentives, Regional Cooperation, and promotion of the Holyoke Foreign Trade Zone
- Designed to stimulate regional investment and job creation

Current and Intermediate Term Holyoke Development Projects

Intermediate Term Projects — within 5 years

1. Volley Ball of Fame

- Tourism Development with linkage to the Basketball Hall of Fame (Springfield)

2. Holyoke Dam/Hydro Project

- Creation of Development Bank (funding for Redevelopment of Industrial Core)
- Rate Relief for all customers, including businesses

3. Churchill Neighborhood Reconstruction (Part of Econ. Opp. Area -1)

- Hope VI Federal Grant (\$15 million)
- Prospective Private Funding (Leverage \$42 million)
- Neighborhood Economic Development - \$1 million Investment Set- aside

4. Downtown Holyoke

- Holyoke Center Office Park (Office Building Reinvestment/Re-tenanting Program)
- Hispanic Business Development (Entrepreneurs and Investors)

source: Holyoke Office of Economic and Industrial Development

In the survey of manufacturers cited above, the availability of workers was ranked as a positive attribute of the city's business climate. Quality is another issue entirely. The manufacturers ranked labor force skills very negatively, and Holyoke's consistently higher unemployment testifies to a population unable to meet the needs of existing employers. Several factors contribute to this situation. Language barriers exist for many Puerto Rican migrants, transportation is a limiting factor for workers in the 10% of Holyoke households that do not own a personal car, and lack of child-care options prevents many mothers from participating in the workforce. The most significant factor however, particularly from the employer's perspective, is education. Educational attainment levels in Holyoke are the lowest of any city or town in the region, owing in large part to Holyoke demographics. Hispanic levels of educational attainment and job skills lag the general population in most areas of the country and Holyoke's population is one-third Hispanic.

Medical services and miscellaneous business services are the region's major growth segments, both requiring educated employees. Even in the industrial sector, technical skills are increasingly in demand. There is a clear and compelling need for Holyoke to increase the basic skill competency of its workforce, and to foster the potential and willingness to continue to learn.



Small Business

Support for retaining and growing new small businesses is an explicit objective of the master plan, in part because it reflects community values and the entrepreneurial spirit of New England and in part because it makes good economic sense. Observers of the regional economy see the greatest promise for growth being driven by the proliferation of small firms.

Holyoke business leaders participating in a focus group on the city's economy identified a number of driving forces to justify an emphasis on small business retention in Holyoke. Small businesses:

- tend to make good employers;
- often have owners and operators that are closely tied to the community;
- may have the need to use the low cost labor available in Holyoke;
- may be able to take advantage of the upper stories in Holyoke's older industrial buildings;
- may be able to take advantage of the market created by Holyoke's growing Latino middle class;
- may be able to take advantage of existing funding opportunities for small businesses.

At the same time, the group identified factors restraining small business growth. These include:

- Holyoke's relatively high commercial tax rate;
- a lack of civic leadership;
- lack of purchasing power of households in Holyoke/ small market demand;
- negative perception of the city, particularly with respect to public safety.



Canal District

In *Rebuilding the Canal District - An Economic Development Analysis & Plan*, a study produced for Holyoke Gas and Electric in 1997, the consulting firm Lake Hitchcock Development Corp. wrote that "All of that which is positive about Holyoke is countervailed by [its] 19th century remnants. Unless a plan is put in place which addresses the financial and managerial resources required to deal with the Canal District, the revitalization segment of the economic cycle will remain stalled."

Lake Hitchcock's strong statement refers to the concentration of poverty and unemployment found in Holyoke's lower wards. While the area is the core of Holyoke's historic industrial base, it is also where most of the city's low cost rental housing is located. This housing has continued to attract new migrant families to the area, although the jobs for unskilled labor that led to their development are no longer available and the housing stock itself suffers from obsolescence and physical deterioration. Obsolescence

has also been the fate of many of Holyoke's mills, as industry migrated to modern facilities near interstate highways, transportation superseding proximity to power as a key locational criteria. But as noted earlier, Holyoke has had remarkable success in keeping much of its mill buildings occupied. Vacancies are most likely to be seen in the upper stories.

Holyoke's canal district was mentioned repeatedly in master plan public forums and meetings — not as the “intolerable economic burden” portrayed by Lake Hitchcock, but as a “diamond in the rough.” The city's historic canal structure lined by picturesque 19th brick mills is viewed by many as an attractive municipal treasure with the potential to revitalize the downtown and make Holyoke a destination city. Deteriorated infrastructure and a lack of consumer amenities prevent the area from fulfilling this potential.

The Canal District Economic Development Plan noted that “a number of fundamental elements are in place which provide promise that Holyoke can overcome the legacy of rapid industrial growth.” The master plan is mentioned as the foremost of these elements, as “a city which has no plan has no future.” Other signs of promise include the many ideas that have come forward for the canal district ranging from the casino, to a new \$20 million Volleyball Hall of Fame to the Canalwalk interpretive walkway project now being designed under a federal grant. For more on plans and proposals to revitalize the area, see the master plan section on Downtown Revitalization.

Lake Hitchcock also commented that “Canal District revitalization is of manageable scale. There is precedent for this effort in other urban centers in Massachusetts and Holyoke has infrastructure, physical and managerial, in place to make it work. The missing component is capital.” To address this missing component, they have proposed creation of a redevelopment bank to be funded by municipal profits from operation of the Holyoke Dam. However, the Dam license has not yet been granted to the city and the date of the FERC (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) decision on whether it will go to Holyoke or Western Mass. Electric is uncertain.



Permitting and Licensing

Businesses seek simple, streamlined procedures for permitting and licensing. Beyond the practical advantages of ease and speed, they are important because of the message they send that local government is business-friendly. Holyoke's approval process has been frequently cited by business as a deterrent to business investment, leading to an in-house review being conducted concurrently with the master plan.

On the positive side, Holyoke's permitting and licensing procedures received some kudos by regional economic leaders interviewed for a 1998 economic development study of the neighboring communities of Northampton and Easthampton by the Pioneer Valley

Planning Commission. The city was commended for the comprehensive information on permits and licenses, and the ease of access to it, available through Holyoke's web pages.



Tourism Development

Both Holyoke and regional civic leaders have recognized the potential for the development of heritage-based tourism in Holyoke. The prospect has gained increased attention by circumstances outside the city including the recent designation of the Connecticut River by President Clinton as a National Heritage River, investigations by the National Park Service into establishing a National Heritage Corridor along the river, and plans in nearby Springfield to develop tourist destinations along its riverfront.

Existing Holyoke assets for heritage-based tourism include the Heritage State Park, the dam and canals (and the planned Canalwalk), the mill buildings, and the wealth of historically significant architecture in the downtown and elsewhere. Additionally, Holyoke has much to offer family and recreational tourists, including the Children's Museum, Merry-Go-Round, Volleyball Hall of Fame, the Mount Tom Reservation and the Holyoke Mall. The Volleyball Hall of Fame is planning a considerable expansion, although at this time a site has not been selected and it is uncertain whether it will maintain a downtown, or even Holyoke, location. Additionally, proposals for a Connecticut River Heritage Museum, possibly with freshwater aquarium, have been put forward, spearheaded by Congressman John Olver.



Economic Leadership and Regional Collaboration

The lead agency for coordinating economic development activity in the city is Holyoke's Office of Economic and Industrial Development (OEID). It works with a variety of both public and private entities including Holyoke's Planning Department and Office of Community Development, Greater Holyoke, Inc., Riverside Development Corporation, Nueva Esperanza, the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, Greater Holyoke Partnership and private industry. As noted at the outset of this section, OEID produced an economic development strategy document in April 1994.

On a regional level, Holyoke administers a state Economic Target Area that also includes Chicopee, Westfield and Easthampton.

Economic Development

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STABILIZING AND EXPANDING HOLYOKE'S INDUSTRIAL BASE

The condition of the industrial base is a critical factor in the city's economic health and residents' well being. The industrial base provides employment and investment opportunities and is one of the major sources of revenue to support municipal operations.

1. The city should explore new areas of Holyoke which may be appropriate for industrial development.

Holyoke currently has a limited supply of new industrial land in the future, as the redevelopment of the industrial core may well take many years given the need to consolidate several parcels into a new developable site and the reality that the industrial land in the Ingleside area is approaching full buildout.

2. The city should consolidate vacant, abandoned, and underutilized sites (industrial, commercial and residential) to develop new sites suitable for industrial development.

In the industrial core, the city should take the lead in identifying and consolidating land suitable for industrial development. The large scale abandonment and/or tax title status of a number of parcels offers the city an unprecedented opportunity to demolish obsolete structures and to make the parcel available for a new use. These newly available parcels may first be offered to adjacent property owners to expand industrial or commercial operations or several adjacent parcels may be consolidated and offered out for industrial or commercial development.*

3. The city should seize new opportunities to address environmental concerns that discourage redevelopment of industrial and commercial properties.

Sites with any previous history of intense use may face the stigma of the unknown – previous environmental contamination that may preclude securing financing or may limit the use of the site. The city recently submitted a grant request for funding to inventory and assess environmental contamination on underutilized or abandoned or tax title properties. The city should develop a process so that those sites with the most potential for economic development receive high priority in assessment activity.

4. The city should hire a consultant to undertake an independent review of Holyoke tax policy.

The purpose of the review would be to address the question of how the tax structure in Holyoke impacts economic development and investment and how Holyoke compares with similar communities.

5. The city should continue efforts to make Holyoke more “user-friendly” to the business community.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

The city has already established a strong partnership with the industrial sector through the Industrial Development Services provided through the city's Office of Economic and Industrial Development (OEID), which conducts economic and business research, publicizes economic development programs and incentives, conducts industrial promotion and marketing, serves as the business liaison, and staffs the Mayor's Industrial Development Advisory Committee, Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Development Corporation and the Holyoke Industrial Financing Authority. OEID works closely with the local community development corporations (Greater Holyoke Inc., Riverside Development Corporation and Nueva Esperanza) on business development.

6. The city should explore how to maintain a variety of space at a variety of prices that foster new business start up activity.

Underutilized industrial space in Holyoke offers many opportunities for low cost start up. As market pressure increase on these spaces, they may become unavailable to serve this low cost start up space, which is a critical element in new business development

7. The city should expand the tax squad effort.

This initiative was implemented to move properties off the non-performing tax role.

8. The city should advocate with the state legislature for changes in the tax title tax forgiveness regulations.

Current state regulations require the city to deduct tax forgiveness for tax title properties out of their municipal overlay account, which has the impact of reducing the city's revenue available to pay for services. This regulation serves as a strong deterrent to municipal tax forgiveness which is a barrier to moving the property to new ownership.

9. Undertake a comprehensive rezoning of Holyoke's industrial core.

The core is the area bordered by the Connecticut River, Route 391, Front Street to the Holyoke Dam, minus the Superblock proposed as an Arts and Industry district. Rezoning should promote the conversion of obsolete buildings and vacant land to uses that support and complement industrial uses, while respecting existing active and viable commercial and residential areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXPAND AND SUPPORT ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT AT INTERSTATE EXITS

10. The city should review its policies and practices concerning Ingleside growth to ensure consistency with municipal interests.

Two issues are prominent. One concerns the potential for commercial development pressures on existing industrial uses. If warranted, the city should institutionalize its current policy of encouraging industrial and office uses to the west of Interstate 91 and retail uses to the east of Interstate 91 at the Ingleside exit through zoning revisions. The second issue has to do with encouraging growing businesses to participate in city economic development efforts such as tourism and small business growth.

Holyoke should aggressively seek assistance from growing Ingleside businesses for economic development projects in the city, particularly projects where there is mutual benefit.*

- 11. The city should assess the development potential in the Mountain Park/Smith Ferry area of Holyoke.**
This area could be served by access at the Route 5/I- 91 interchange in Northampton or by an already approved new I-91 interchange at Mountain Park/Mount Tom.
- 12. The city should examine the potential for conversions and upgrading of commercial uses at the Dwight Street/Route 91 interchange area.**
- 13. The city should assess the development potential for the Williams and Edmunds estate sites on Route 141 in conjunction with existing business uses.**
- 14. The city should explore the conversion of existing municipal uses to The Holyoke Master Plan and commercial areas in commercial and industrial zones.**
- 15. The city should explore the development potential of the Route 91/Route 202 interchange.**
- 16. The city should review and update the Route 5 Corridor Study and revisit recommendations that have not yet been implemented.**
- 17. The city should conduct a corridor study of Route 5 north of Dwight Street, in particular if the expansion of industrial or commercial activity is recommended for the Mountain Park/Smith Ferry area.**
- 18. The city should review the Office District uses between Yankee Pedlar (Route 202) and Dwight Street (Route 141).**
- 19. The city should undertake gateway planning at the Interstate exits to reinforce efforts to improve the image and reputation of the City of Holyoke.**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SKILLED LABOR FORCE

The development of a skilled laborforce is critical to the long term economic health of the city. A recent survey of major employers in the region found that the most important location selection criteria was the skill of the workforce. If the city is to retain and grow existing industry and attract new industry, it must keep its eye on the quality of labor.

- 20. The city should continue to improve the public education system in Holyoke.**
The K-12 education system in Holyoke lays the educational groundwork for future participation in the workforce. Children must emerge from the school system with basic core competencies in thinking and problem solving, communication (written and verbal),

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

and social skills. Some students will enter the workforce and some will go on to more education and training. Holyoke schools must collaborate with parents and with the wider community in the preparation of students to become productive and responsible citizens. The city must provide the school system with the resources (financial and human) to meet their obligation.

21. The city should encourage support organizations to create innovative solutions to reducing the barriers to entering and staying in the workforce.

Dependable transportation arrangements to worksite and affordable child care are two issues cited by agencies who assist transitioning adults into the workforce. Many of the new employment opportunities are at locations not well served by public transit or if served, the route may not run late enough to cover the shift changeover. Also concern for personal safety may deter use of public transportation. The cost of owning and maintaining a car may be cost prohibitive for some households needing employment and their inability to afford a car may severely limit their employment options. The availability of affordable and accessible childcare may also be a barrier.*

22. The city must continue and expand collaborations between schools and the business sector.

The Holyoke Education Partnership, the School to Work partnership and the Holyoke "Employer Involvement in Workforce Development Initiative" are all efforts that recognize the need to increase connections between education and work. Schools must assist students to acquire the skills and attitudes necessary to be successful in the world of work. Business must support the schools by supporting the call for adequate school funding and by participating in the development of curriculum that will produce not only good workers but also responsible and productive adults.

23. The city should encourage business to explore innovative ways to assist their workers balance family and work responsibilities.

Some companies provide on-site childcare facilities (like Commerce Insurance in Webster Massachusetts) for employees, others offer partial child care reimbursement as an employee benefit. Flexible work schedules may allow a worker to better balance family and work demands.

24. The city should support the use of the MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System) results as a baseline to guide future improvement in the Holyoke Public School System.

25. The city should advocate for increased resources for GED and Adult Basic Education Programs.

Currently, many of those who need these programs are unable to enroll and the waiting lists for entry are long.

26. The city should actively participate in the development of the Implementation Grant for Ford Foundation Employer Involvement in Workforce Development Initiative and provide the required matching funds.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

The city, in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, is among the finalists for this program which may bring a two year program grant to assist Holyoke continue and expand its efforts to prepare hard to employ and youth at risk for work.

27. The city should expand alternative educational programs for School-Age Children with behavior problems.

School-aged children with behavior problems disrupt classrooms and make teaching other children more difficult for teachers. It is imperative that Holyoke impact children during their formative years so that they are diverted from a life of anti-social and criminal behavior.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF SMALL BUSINESS

28. Continue and expand the Small Business Information Center.

The Small Business Information Center offers information on resources for small business in both English and Spanish. This information is available through the internet or through touch-screen kiosks in City Hall. Explore establishing a kiosk at the Holyoke Ingleside Mall. The SBIC must be maintained with new and updated information.

29. Expand and improve computer-based linkages for small business with the state procurement COM-PASS page.

30. Continue to work closely with local community based organizations (CDCs, Chambers) to identify the needs of small business owners and to develop new programs responsive to their needs.

31. Explore the development of a small/disadvantaged business set-aside program for City of Holyoke procurements.

32. Expand the specialized Hispanic retail and commercial markets in Holyoke. Holyoke has a large Hispanic population.

This provides the retail and commercial outlets a specialized niche market, that once developed, may attract customers from outside the city.

33. Holyoke should develop a long term initiative to increase the income of lower income households in the urban center of the city.

Many small business depend on a market in close proximity to their location, whose purchasing power translates into a stronger market for small local businesses. In order for small local businesses to be profitable, their customers must have incomes to purchase the goods and services they need to support their households. Many of the customers of small business are low income households living on very limited incomes. Increasing the income base of neighborhoods by increasing employment opportunities for neighborhood residents will support small business activity.

34. Develop a “buy local” campaign.

It is estimated that 60% of the profit of small locally owned businesses are recirculated into the local economy, while only 20% of the profit of chain stores and only 8% of the

profit of discount stores is recirculated locally. Increasing the local recirculation of money will increase retention of the wealth created locally.

35. Create a youth business development initiative.

Holyoke has a very significant youth population which will be the next generation of small business proprietors. Creating opportunities for youth business will have a variety of benefits – including greater understanding of the world of business, opportunities to contribute positively to the community by offering needed goods and services, and the opportunity for youth to earn income while learning life skills.

36. Promote Holyoke as a low cost, easy start up location for small business.

37. Explore the needs of home-based businesses to discover what would help them grow.

38. Explore working with the Holyoke Ingleside Mall to develop a small business retail sales start-up opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO REDEVELOP THE CANAL DISTRICT

During the course of this effort, it has become clear that the boundaries of the Canal District are subject to a broad range of interpretation. The future development of the section of Holyoke that is bordered by the Connecticut River, Route 391, Front Street to the Dam is a topic of great interest to the participants of the master planning process. This area is Holyoke's past, its future, its hope, its controversy, and its challenge. The passion surrounding these discussions are reflective of this area's importance in defining Holyoke's future – it is Holyoke's diamond in the rough, extraordinarily valuable if we get the cut right; just another regular rock if we slip up.

39. Define the Canal Arts and Industry District as the Superblock from High Street down to the Second level canal between Dwight and Appleton.

40. Undertake a detailed study of the Canal Arts and Industry District .

The study should identify existing land use conflicts and evaluate the suitability of structures for supporting the contemporary use for which the structure is zoned. The study should also examine potential land use that will be respectful and complementary to existing business and industry.

Actions

- Conduct a feasibility study of the potential uses of upper level industrial space for non-industrial uses (office space or artisan studio space).
- Undertake a community visioning for the Canal Arts and Industry District- invite all Canal District stakeholders (manufacturers, property owners, property tenants – industrial, commercial and residential, and local officials) to participate in a process to set out the future use or uses of the Canal District or subsections of the Canal District (boundaries of which are not yet defined).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STREAMLINE THE PERMITTING AND LICENSING PROCESS

The local approval process is frequently cited by business as a deterrent to business investment.

41. The city should respond quickly to act on the recommendations that are made in the current study on streamlining permitting and licensing approvals.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the city has already engaged a consultant to study the current local permitting process and to make recommendations to improve the turnaround time of decisions.

42. The city should conduct an all boards hearing on major development proposals.

This process is operational in other communities and allows the developer to present the proposal once in its entirety so that all decision making boards understand the project. This would allow for issues to be identified and resolved comprehensively rather than in the fragmented manner that multiple approvals might create.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

43. Capitalize on Holyoke's unique industrial history.

Holyoke's rich history as one of the first planned industrial cities in the nation provides many opportunities to attract specialized historical tourism activity. The city is already home to the Holyoke Heritage State Park. Many of the features of the old industrial city remain intact and the city has a unique opportunity to preserve these features and enhance the city's attraction as a tourist site.

44. Work to keep the Volleyball Hall of Fame in Holyoke.

45. Capitalize on Holyoke's ethnic heritages.

The Irish, the French Canadians, the Hispanic population all contribute to the rich and diverse ethnic landscape of the city. The city has the opportunity to capitalize on the cultures and traditions each ethnic group has brought to the city.

46. Capitalize on Holyoke's natural resources and beauty.

The Connecticut River and the Mount Tom Range offers a diversity of recreational opportunities to the emerging eco-tourism market.

47. The city should take a larger role in tourism promotion.

Actions

- The city should continue to participate in regional tourism and travel promotion efforts.
- Visitor information on the Holyoke Home Page should be expanded. For the page to be effective it is critical that the information is maintained and updated on a regular basis.

48. Seek new ways to promote the "Lark in the Park" Programs.

- 49. Promote child and family-focused activities in Holyoke.**
- 50. Link the tourist attraction of Holyoke Mall to other Holyoke tourist attractions.**
- 51. Promote day trips to Holyoke.**
- 52. Work with the television media to improve the image of Holyoke.**

INCREASE COLLABORATION AMONG THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAYERS IN HOLYOKE AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

- 53. Revise and update the Economic Development Strategy Document.**
This document was created in 1994 by Holyoke's OEID and needs to be updated with new task identification and new assignment of responsibilities.
- 54. Explore a city ordinance for the creation of a Development Coordinator for the City of Holyoke.**
The creation of this position for the city would institutionalize the chain of command for economic development established by the Mayor and provide for long term stability of this leadership position.
- 55. Continue the leadership role Holyoke has assumed in establishing and expanding the Holyoke-Chicopee-Westfield and Easthampton Economic Target Area.**
Holyoke initiated the establishment of the Economic Target Area in 1994 and has continued to provide leadership in the evolution of this regional economic initiative. The community partnerships that have been established by this effort should serve as a model of regional economic cooperation.
Action
 - Explore the inclusion of South Hadley in the Economic Target Area.
- 56. Participate and support the inclusion of Holyoke in the regional Enterprise Community/ Empowerment Zone initiative.**

Economic Development

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

3. Homes & Neighborhoods

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Homes & Neighborhoods

Goals and Objectives

- Goal:**
- Achieve a balance of single family homes, 2-4 family homes and multi family apartments within the city for all groups and income levels.**
 - Encourage home ownership whenever possible.**
 - Create a sense of community in all neighborhoods.**
 - Provide clean, safe, attractive homes and neighborhoods.**

Objectives:

1. Encourage people to become homeowners through first time buyers assistance programs and other types of help.
2. Develop housing for our young middle income families in order to keep them from leaving the city looking for suitable housing.
3. Encourage the City of Holyoke to facilitate and participate in neighborhood forums and meetings.
4. Review and recommend changes in the existing zoning regulations, spot zoning and other city ordinances so as to maintain the integrity of our neighborhoods and prevent intrusive uses.
5. Enforce existing building codes and ordinances in order to maintain the quality and integrity of the existing housing stock.
6. Provide social settings and facilities in each neighborhood of the city.
7. Preserve existing neighborhoods through the rehabilitation or demolition of existing housing stock while providing the opportunity for new construction that is compatible with the area.
8. Encourage the use of innovative residential development in certain areas so as to minimize the impact on the land, to create neighborhoods, and to keep development costs reasonable.
9. Provide required public improvements in all neighborhoods as a means of enhancing and preserving residential characteristics.
10. Direct residents to technical assistance and financial aid programs which provide for home improvements and energy conservation.
11. Foster positive interaction between community police and neighborhoods.
12. Foster communication and cooperation among landlords, renters, and the city.
13. Ensure the development of quality rental stock that maintains the integrity of existing neighborhoods.

Homes & Neighborhoods

Information & Assessment

Holyoke's Neighborhoods

"a great city is merely a confederation of great neighborhoods"

Andre Duany & Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk,
urban designers and founders of the New Urbanist movement

If Duany and Plater-Zyberk are correct in asserting that a great city is merely a confederation of great neighborhoods, then Holyoke has the ingredients for greatness — 14 distinct neighborhoods, with boundaries defined by the city. Throughout the public process surrounding the master plan, there has been a general acknowledgment that these neighborhoods are key city strengths. Again and again, participants praised Holyoke's:

- community feeling, small town feel, and sense of close knit community;
- affordable housing, where more home can be had for the money;
- architecture, historic buildings and churches;
- new residents, and the fact that *"people who move away, come back!"*

Despite these upbeat sentiments, it is clear to the most casual observer that all Holyoke's neighborhoods are not faring equally well. There is, in fact, a great spectrum in both the quality of housing stock and the quality of life in Holyoke's neighborhoods, ranging from areas with large and well-maintained historic homes to blighted areas riddled with vacant lots. A table presenting Holyoke's 14 neighborhoods appears on the following pages.

Neighborhoods, Census Tracts & Wards: 3 Ways of Looking at Holyoke

Community residents and visitors typically relate to their surroundings in terms of neighborhoods. Citizens and local activists, concerned with political representation, may relate to where they live in terms of wards. Statisticians look at yet another geographic unit -- the U.S. Census tract. Much of the data available on housing in Holyoke, and presented here, is by census tract.

There are significantly more neighborhoods in Holyoke than are wards or tracts. Yet, when some areas are combined there is a rough correlation. The table below shows which neighborhoods fall into which tracts.

US Census Tracts & the Holyoke Neighborhoods They Include

Census Tracts	Neighborhoods Included
8114	The Flats
8115	South Holyoke, small parts of the Flats and Springdale
8116	Churchill and small part of Downtown
8117	Most of Downtown
8118	Part of Highlands and part of Downtown
8119	Smith's Ferry, Highland Park, parts of Highlands and a small part of Jarvis Avenue
8120	Parts of Rock Valley, parts of Jarvis Avenue and Oakdale. A small part of downtown.
8121.01	Homestead Avenue, most of Rock Valley
8121.02	Whiting Farm, Elmwood, Springdale and Ingleside



Holyoke's Housing Stock

Affordability & Value

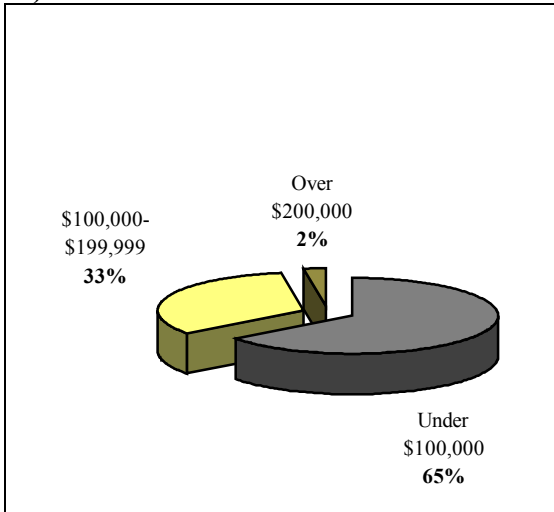
- Two thirds of Holyoke's residential sales during the 1990's were under \$100,000; conversely, only two percent of homes sold for \$200,000 or more.
- Holyoke's modest valuations result in a relatively modest average property tax bill - \$1,645 for Holyoke compared to a regional average of \$1,807 (FY1996)¹. Note that Holyoke's average bill is lower than the region's despite having a relatively high tax *rate* - \$17.55 v. \$15.12 (FY1996).
- Median home sales have averaged in the low \$80,000's for much of this decade.
- While residential sale prices in Holyoke declined 16.5% between 1996 and 1987, the drop reflects regional and national trends. Note that much of the drop occurred between 1990 and 1992. Prices have been fairly flat since then.

Diverse Offerings

- While primarily single family, Holyoke offers a wide range of housing options, including attached 2-family homes and multi-family apartment buildings with over 50 units.
- Among multi-family properties, those with 5 to 9 units are most common.
- Holyoke's residential architecture reflects the city's building history:
 - nearly half the city's residences are pre-war;
 - just under 10 percent have been built in the past two decades.

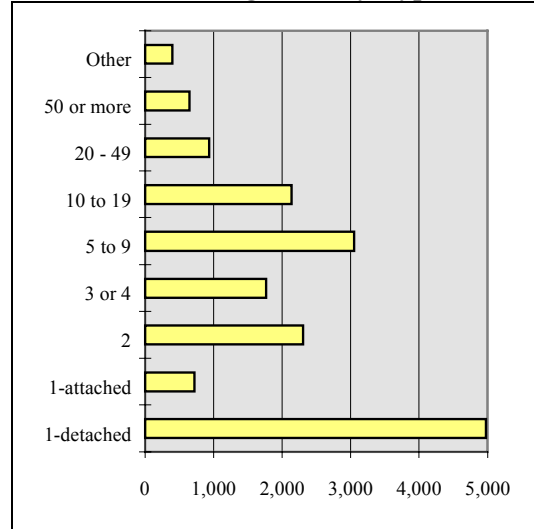
¹ Source: Mass. Department of Revenue

Residential Sales including Condos (1991-96)



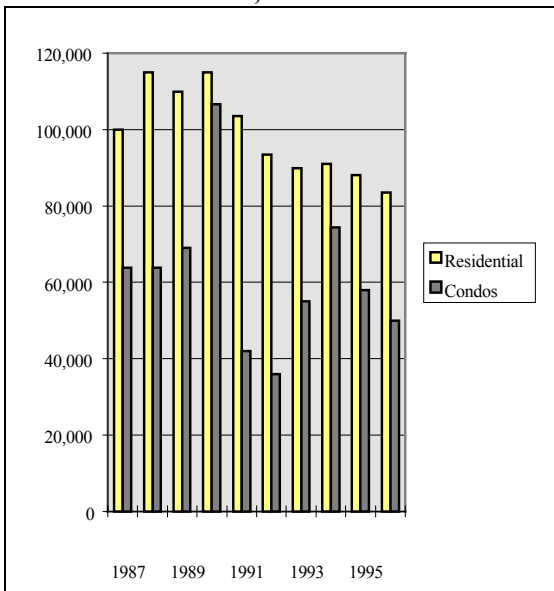
Source: County Data Corporation

Number of Housing Units by Type, 1990



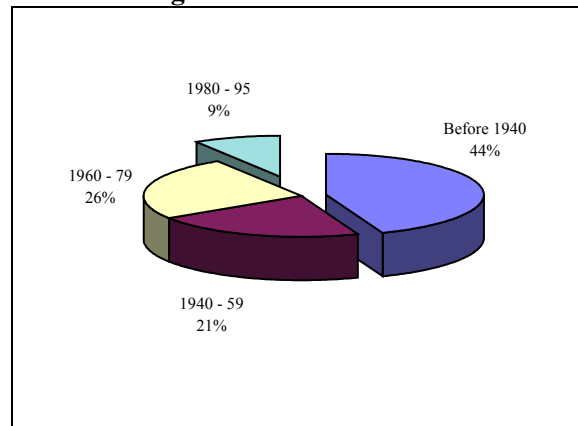
Source: 1990 US Census

Median Home Sales, 1987 - 1996



Source: County Data Corporation

Year Housing Units Built



Source: 1990 US Census

Housing Issues

Fragmentation, not Confederation

A great city is merely a confederation of great neighborhoods. A key word in this quote given is confederation — meaning alliance, coalition, union. But, returning again to the voices of Holyoke citizens as expressed during the city's visioning process, Holyoke's neighborhoods are not confederated but are sometimes characterized by:

- fragmentation, a division between the Flats and the Highlands, isolated neighborhoods;
- absentee landlords, boarded up buildings;
- street dirtiness, garbage and filth, littered and abandoned empty lots;
- run down properties, derelict housing, poor conditions and old, unoccupied buildings, deteriorated housing;
- lack of decent housing, poor living conditions;
- lack of home ownership;
- too much public housing, too much low income housing.

Negative comments (expressions of weakness) relating to Holyoke's homes and neighborhoods made during the visioning sessions significantly outnumber positives (expressions of strength) in both frequency and variation of terms used.

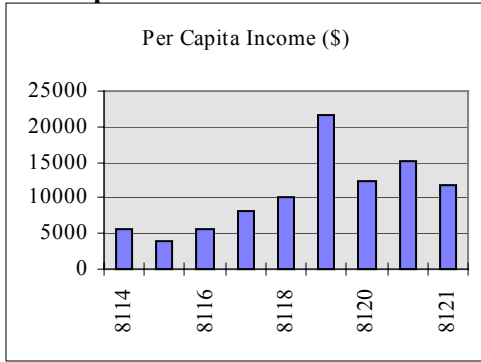
Neighborhood Differences

Sharp divisions between Holyoke's neighborhoods can be seen in:

- *Income.* Reported household income in Holyoke neighborhoods ranges from less than \$5,000 per capita in census tract 8115 to more than \$20,000 in tract 8119.
- *Ethnicity.* Holyoke is spatially divided along ethnic boundaries. The lower part of the city is predominantly Hispanic. The upper part is overwhelmingly Anglo.
- *Home Ownership.* Some Holyoke neighborhoods have owner occupancy rates of over 90 percent, while others fall under 5 percent. The city's extremely low rate of home ownership in its poorer neighborhoods brings its citywide average down among the lowest in the region. Some 40 percent of Holyoke's residential units were owner occupied in 1990. Springfield's rate was 56.5 percent. The regional average (Hampshire and Hampden Counties) was 55.5 percent.
- *Occupancy.* In November, 1996, 889 residential units in 112 buildings were vacant and abandoned. Most of these are located in the Churchill neighborhood.²

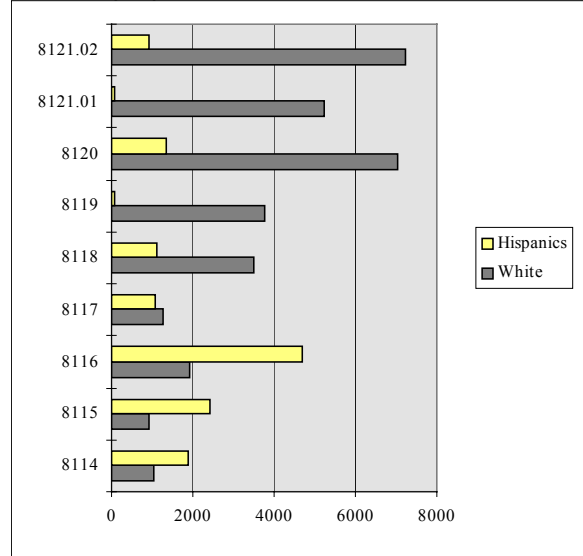
² Source: Office of Community Development

Per Capita Income



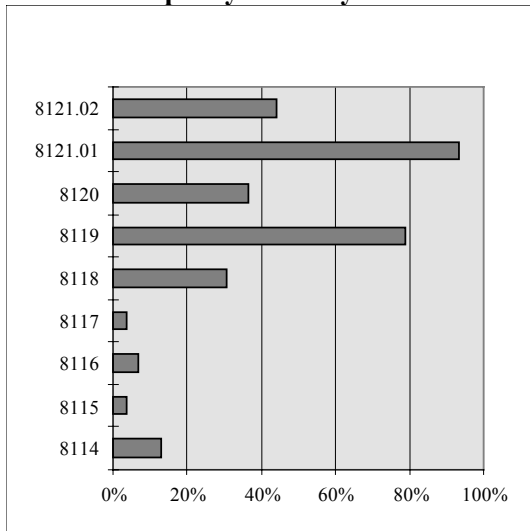
Source: 1990 US Census

Ethnicity by Census Tract



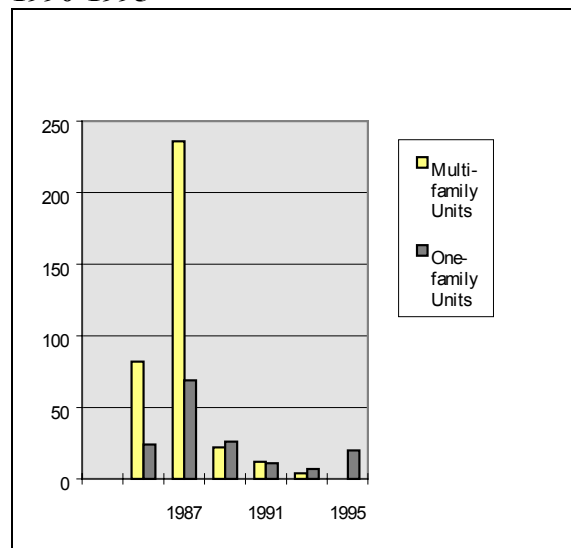
Source: 1990 US Census

Owner Occupancy Rates by Census Tract



Source: 1990 US Census

New Housing Units Built in Holyoke, 1990-1995



Source: City of Holyoke

Shift to Development for Home Owners

Over the last decade, the development of new residential units in Holyoke has shifted markedly away from multi-family rental housing to single-family homes for owner occupancy.



Housing Development in Holyoke

Organizations

Holyoke has a number of non-profit housing development agencies operating in the city. These include:

- *The Holyoke Housing Authority* owns and manages both state and federally funded properties, housing the elderly and low income families relying on Section 8 assistance. In total, the Authority is responsible for 2,164 units.
- *Olde Holyoke, Inc.* is a community development corporation which runs the city's Neighborhood Improvement Program, administering funds for the repair of 1 to 4 units, owner-occupied, homes. Grants provide up to \$8,000 per property and require a 40% match from recipients. Owners of buildings with 5 or more units are eligible for city-sponsored loans to bring buildings up to HUD minimum standards.
 - Over the past two decades, the Neighborhood Improvement Program has helped repair over 2,000 homes, using over 1.5 million in CDBG funds. It's become a national model.
 - Olde Holyoke also conducts a New Construction Program, building 2 family homes for owner-occupancy.
 - Olde Holyoke operates largely in the city's lower 4 census tracts: 8114, 8115, 8116 and 8117, covering the Flats, South Holyoke, Churchill and the Downtown.
- *Nueva Esperanza Inc.* is a community development corporation focusing on Holyoke's Latino neighborhoods. Since 1982, it's rehabilitated nearly 370 permanently affordable rental units in some 40 buildings in South Holyoke.
 - In addition to developing affordable housing, Nueva is involved with such community building activities as promoting education and human services programs, economic development, and leadership creation.
 - The CDC also focuses on streetscapes, providing its developments with amenities including street trees, historically appropriate detailing, awnings, backyards, etc.

- *The Holyoke Community Land Trust* was founded by Nueva Esperanza in 1989. It develops properties for first time home buyers and provides them with a 99 year ground lease, under which the homes can only be sold to families earning 50% to 80 % of the city median. The income restrictions limit profits and keep the homes affordable. However, no one has yet moved from a Land Trust property.
 - The Trust has developed 16 homes in the Churchill, Prospect Heights, Elmwood, and Highlands neighborhoods.
 - Funding is provided by People’s Bank and federal fund HOME and CDGB monies channeled through the city.
 - The Land Trust has utilized volunteer labor from both Americorps and Habitat for Humanity. Habitat volunteers were from the 5-college area; there is no Habitat Chapter in Holyoke.

City Activities

In the past ten years, Holyoke spent over \$10.5 million of CDBG and HOME money through the Office of Community Development on housing related expenses.

- \$6.5 million went toward rental rehabilitation;
- \$3.5 million went to programs assisting first-time home-owners;
- \$600,000 went to home-owners to help pay for repairs.
- Recently, the city’s focus shifted from an emphasis on rental housing rehabilitation toward providing first-time home-buying opportunity

The city’s housing priorities for 1998 - directing how funding will be distributed - include:

- Increase availability of housing stock for purchase by low and moderate income persons.
- Increase the opportunity for home-ownership for low and moderate income persons by providing assistance with downpayment and closing costs.
- Preserve and improve the existing rental housing stock by moderate or substantial rehabilitation of substandard properties in Chicopee. (Federal funding is shared with the community.)
- Move forward with the rehab and/or construction of rental units as currently committed under HOME and HOPE VI in Holyoke.

As of August 1997, Holyoke has identified 54 residential properties as candidates for demolition. These are mostly located in the Flats, South Holyoke, Churchill and Downtown neighborhoods.

- Eight of these properties (186 units) are slated for demolition under the HOPE VI grant project (see below).
- Funding is needed for demolition of the remaining 46 buildings.

The Holyoke Housing Authority was recently awarded \$15 million in HUD funding under the highly competitive federal HOPE VI program for the revitalization of the Jackson Parkway/Churchill Neighborhood.

- The project application was a joint effort between the Churchill Neighborhood Association, the Jackson Parkway Tenants Association and the Bethlehem Baptist Church, all of whom have a stake in the revitalization of the neighborhood.
- The plan aims to create a diverse community by offering a mix of housing units - e.g. half to public housing eligible residents, one-third to be rented at market rate.



Neighborhood Services

Programs, Facilities and Services

- *Park and Recreation Facilities.* There are 24 baseball diamonds, 14 tennis courts, 11 soccer fields, and 1 stadium. In 1979, there were 115 people on staff to maintain these facilities. During the eighties, this number was cut to 45. Currently, there are 10 employees who maintain 88 million square feet of park land and recreational facilities. Holyoke's budget for Parks and Recreation was the same in 1997 as in 1982.
- *The Department of Public Works' MadVac cleaning program* operates daily along Main, High, Maple, and Sargent Streets. According to DPW director Bill Fuqua, when service is missed, the garbage pileup on the streets is considerable. This is partly attributable to inadequate residential trash pick-up for downtown apartment buildings - residents overburden trash cans not intended for residential use.
- *Clean City Program.* This program promoting responsible civic behavior operated in Holyoke ten years ago, was eliminated through budget cuts, and is back on the DPW agenda. The DPW has added a full time recycling/solid waste coordinator to its staff who will coordinate Clean City with its national model, The Keep American Beautiful Program.
- *Workers from Holyoke's Honor Court* participate in clean up of the downtown neighborhood, and assist the city's Parks and Recreation Department in park maintenance.
- *Neighborhood Associations* operate in five of Holyoke's 14 neighborhoods: Smith's Ferry, Churchill, Elmwood, Whiting Farms and Rock Valley/West Holyoke. Residents from this last named area are organizing around the issue of alleged tax inequities - feelings that high property taxes on suburban and rural housing along the city's edges being used primarily on services to Holyoke's inner city.

Housing Regulation Enforcement

The city has 11 full-time employees and 2 part-time who conduct all Building Code inspections and Housing Code Inspections. According to the city's building Commissioner, Holyoke periodically inspects multi-family housing, as required by state law. There are, however, no provision for regular inspections of single family homes. Also according to the building commissioner:

- owner-occupied units are generally in better conditions than the renter-occupied units — due in part to lack of maintenance by some rental landlords.
- the city does not have incentive programs that encourage maintenance by property owners; the city relies on the threat of penalties;
- the general public is not aware of the city's building codes — this lack of awareness results in limited citizen reporting of violations.

Holyoke's Neighborhoods

Name	Area/ Boundaries	Character/ Description	Zoning
Smith's Ferry	Northernmost neighborhood in city. Bounded by Easthampton border on north, Connecticut river on the east, Mt. Tom on the west and Mtn. Park Access Road on South.	Single family homes, with some 2 family or singles w/accessory apartments. Population characterized by families who have lived there many years. Has active neighborhood group — the Smith's Ferry Conservation Assn.	RA, R1A, RM-20, with “spots” of BG and BH and which cover existing or grandfathered businesses (Mt. Tom Reservation, two motels, Jericho House, Canoe Club, Competitive Edge) and IG/IP near Mt. Tom Power Plant.
The Highlands (includes Highland Park & Bemis Heights)	Directly southeast of Mt. Tom along the river, and bounded on the south by Dwight Street.	Traditionally considered one of the most desirable neighborhoods of the city. Large, stately homes in a variety of styles, with some converted to multi-family apartments.	Predominantly R-1, with more dense R-1A, R-2, RM-20, RM-40 and business BL, BH and BG in areas southeast of Fairfield Avenue over to Oakdale neighborhood.
Jarvis Avenue	South and west of Mountain Park/Wyckoff Country Club and (topographically) “above” the Highlands/Bemis Heights neighborhood. Runs along both sides of Jarvis Avenue, extending west toward Rock Valley. Bounded on the south by Cherry Street extension.		R-1 and R-1A predominately, with RM-20 zones near southern boundary (Beaudoin Village Apartments) and near University Park Apartments. One “spot” zoned BL.
Oakdale	South and east of neighborhoods mentioned above. Bounded by Dwight Street on north, I-91 on west, and (roughly) the junction of Beech and Appleton Streets on the southeast.		Predominantly multi-family housing, zoned R-2. There are many spots of RO, BL, BG and BH along the main perimeter roads.
Downtown	Approximately bounded by the river on the north, the second level canal on the east, Cabot Street on the south over to Beech Street on the west.	Central business district and civic core of the city.	Zoned downtown business surrounded by all other business zones in spots and higher density RM-20, RM-40 and RM-60 residential zones.

Name	Area/ Boundaries	Character/ Description	Zoning
The Flats	Bounded by the Connecticut River, the second level canal on the west and Cabot Street on the south.	Oldest settled part of Holyoke. Mixture of residential and industrial uses. Undergoing gradual redevelopment, with two family homes replacing “triple decker” tenements.	IG zones along the canal and river. Housing is high density, zoned RM-60 with scattered BH, BL zones throughout.
South Holyoke	Borders the Flats and Downtown. Bounded by the 2nd level canal and I-391.	Mixture of residential and industrial uses, with a commercial corridor along Main Street. Area redevelopment efforts are focused on multi-family rental units. Contains two strong neighborhood groups: Nueva Esperanza and the South Holyoke Improvement Association.	Zoned for Highway business BH, predominantly with RM-60 residential. Spots of BG and IG.
Churchill	Abuts the Downtown to the northwest. Runs along the 2nd level canal to the I-391 terminus and cuts diagonally northwest toward Jackson Parkway/Resnic Blvd.	Dense and deteriorated section of the city undergoing a large-scale redevelopment effort with federal HUD funding to reduce density and increase home ownership. The Churchill Partnership is the area’s neighborhood association.	RM-20,40 and 60 zoning with scattered spots of BL, Limited Business. Highway (BH) and Downtown (BC) business zones at the perimeter access roads.
Elmwood	Abuts Churchill and Oakdale to the North and North east and I -91 to the west, running south to Whiting Farms Road/Calvary Cemetery.	Mix of well-maintained single and multi-family homes. Elmwood Traffic Commission and CARE (Concerned Area Residents of Elmwood) are two active citizens groups concerned about increased traffic and other neighborhood changes due to increased development in adjacent Ingleside/Homestead areas.	R1A, and R-2 with a small RM-60 zone adjacent to the BG district containing neighborhood shopping along perimeter access roads.
Springdale	Roughly begins at terminus of I-391 and South Street, running southward along river to Day Street more or less, bounded on the west by former NY, NH & Hartford railroad tracks (now PVRR).	Springdale is site of many active industrial buildings, including the Springdale Industrial Park also site of waste water treatment facility for city.	Zoning is largely General Industry, with RM-60 residential. Small spots allow multi-family/professional office mix (RO) and (BL) limited business.

Name	Area/ Boundaries	Character/ Description	Zoning
Ingleside/ Brightside	Directly south of Springdale, bounded on the east by the Connecticut River, railroad tracks on the west the West Springfield border on the south.	Contains part of the Holyoke Mall, Dean Technical H.S. and Providence Hospital, along with other significant commercial and industrial uses. Housing is a mix of older single family and two family homes, with newer apartment buildings. Some conflicts between residential and commercial/industrial uses are being felt.	
Whiting Farms	Directly south of Elmwood. Bounded by I-91 to west and the Holyoke Mall to the south.	Mix of single family homes, garden style and high rise apartments and general businesses along Whiting Farms Road. Also includes public and subsidized housing, and the Holyoke Geriatric Authority.	R-1A, RO, RM-20, RM-40, BG, BH, BL and IP zones present.
Homestead Avenue	Roughly bounded by the Cherry Hill Extension on the north, I-91 on the east, the West Springfield border to south.	Mostly single family homes with some business uses. Contains Holyoke Community College. South Homestead Ave. residents concerned about traffic issues.	R-1, R1A, BL. Industrial Park zoning adjacent to I-91 interchange number 15.
Rock Valley/West Holyoke	Westernmost area of the city. Adjacent to Holyoke's borders with Westfield and Southampton.	Area includes the McLean reservoir, and the Barnes Aquifer Recharge and Water Protection Area overlay zones.	RA for rural agriculture and single family homes generally, with R1A along Westfield Road. Small General Business and Limited Business zones.

Homes & Neighborhoods

Recommendations

1. Prepare a bottom-up neighborhood plan for each neighborhood.

Holyoke is a city of diverse neighborhoods. While the master plan will set city-wide policy recommendations, neighborhood plans will allow a more focused study of each neighborhood. Neighborhood residents will be expected to work with city officials to identify the immediate needs and concerns and to determine priorities for city services.

Actions:

- Prepare a neighborhood plan workbook that explains how neighborhood plans are to be prepared—survey methods, data collection, and other subjects.
- Encourage the mayor, city councilors, planning board, and other city agencies to endorse prepared neighborhood plans.
- Use the workbook to define the expected level of citizen participation in neighborhood plans, thereby establishing bottom-up benchmarks.
- Ensure that city departments and quasi-public entities help prepare the neighborhood plans.

2 Facilitate the development of neighborhood associations.

Holyoke has seen several neighborhood groups spring up around common issues. Some of these groups have evolved beyond the initial issues, becoming webs that connect residents as a community. Others have disbanded after the issues were resolved. Whatever the outcome, one point has repeatedly been made: neighborhood groups have increased loyalty to neighborhoods and community by giving residents a way to communicate with each other. Neighborhood associations recognized by the city will give residents more solid platforms for discussing issues that affect their communities

Actions:

- Prepare a manual, *How to Set-up a Neighborhood Organization*, that tells how to set up a neighborhood organization's funding, function, legitimacy, citizen participation, and outreach.
- Establish a mechanism at City Hall, CDCs, churches, and other social organizations that provides low cost in-kind assistance to these groups -- a mailing list of neighborhood residents, photocopy services (including paper), assistance in writing press releases and grants, assistance in preparing flyers, and other helps.
- Allocate funds in the city budget for neighborhood organizations, adhering to criteria such as the degree of resident participation and support for the neighborhood organization.
- Seek assistance from existing neighborhood associations to set up a mentoring program to help new organizations get started.
- Include neighborhood association newsletters with gas and electric bills.
- Establish diversity training for neighborhood associations. *

3. Develop neighborhood-level landscape plans.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

Actions:

- Seek low or no-cost assistance from the University of Massachusetts and other design groups to prepare neighborhood-level landscape plans that are tied to neighborhood-enhancing social areas, plant materials, sidewalks, lighting, pedestrian safety, traffic calming, tree belts, parks and open space sought in the neighborhood plans. Holyoke has many small neighborhood parks which should provide a foundation for these efforts.
- Seek corporate sponsorship to implement the landscape plan.
- Ask University of Massachusetts, Dean Technical High School, and other colleges for landscaping services such as plant materials and plant maintenance expertise.
- Establish a city nursery that provides planting materials to all neighborhoods.
- Encourage youth to help maintain and build parks, paint murals, plant trees, assist in anti-litter programs, and participate in other neighborhood-enhancing activities.

4. Create strong ties between city officials and neighborhoods and promote a more approachable City Hall.

Actions:

- Adopt a statute that requires a routine evaluation of department heads.
- Encourage the mayor and department heads to attend neighborhood meetings to which they are invited, whenever possible.
- Organize sporting events, barbecues, picnics, and other social events for city government officials and neighborhood residents. Seek corporate or other sponsorship for such events.
- Encourage the mayor and city councilors to host town meetings in different neighborhoods and schools on a routine and rotating basis.
- Prepare a booklet that suggests who to contact about housing issues such as building code information, housing rehab permits, available grant money or other housing-related funds. Provide these booklets free of charge through architects, real estate agents, general contractors, housing fairs, and bankers.
- Designate a neighborhood point person or source who will respond to, and forward to the appropriate party, any questions about City Hall functions.
- Set up a one-stop-shopping system for city permits.
- Create a system where the Planning Board and other city departments rotate their meeting spaces, moving out of City Hall and the City Hall annex into neighborhood-based facilities.

This concept is most appropriate for meetings where projects with neighborhood impacts are reviewed.

5. Establish good relationships between media and neighborhood groups.

The local media play an important part in creating a neighborhood's image. Newspapers, television, and radio are significant resources that should be cultivated carefully and appropriately to promote links between different neighborhoods and to show those outside the city that Holyoke's neighborhoods are thriving.

Actions:

- Appoint a media liaison for each neighborhood. This person, or committee, would be a clearinghouse for information ensuring quality control of material and a common voice for all media contact.
- Write a brief information sheet for each neighborhood. Each neighborhood liaison should provide this information sheet to appropriate media persons.
- Suggest a periodic feature about Holyoke's neighborhoods to the local media. This feature might highlight a different neighborhood each time it runs. Offer to provide media with information on unique or important events or issues that would create good news stories.

6. Publicize home buying opportunities in Holyoke.

Attract buyers to the city by publicizing Holyoke's assets -- its variety of residential options, its excellent location with close proximity near higher education centers, jobs, and recreational opportunities.

Actions:

- Create promotional materials that present Holyoke as an attractive place for middle-income families to live. These materials might include brochures with testimonials by satisfied Holyoke residents, fact sheets with population and homeownership statistics, copies of newspaper articles that highlight neighborhoods, and contact information for city services.
- Ask real estate agents and employers to give these promotional materials to people considering a move to the area.

7. Expand publicity of home buying assistance available in Holyoke.

Actions:

- Hold more frequent workshops aimed at first-time home buyers.
- Expand promotional materials for first-time homebuyer programs and workshops. Orient materials to people who are wondering if they can afford their own home, how to qualify for credit, what a mortgage means, and how to negotiate low down payments.
- Ask speakers from Holyoke neighborhoods to participate in workshops, promoting housing opportunities in the city.
- Organize workshops to inform real estate agents about first-time homebuyer assistance programs in the city. Provide them with promotional material to publicize programs.

8. Seek assistance from employers to reach potential homeowners.

Help large and small employers develop a program that encourages their employees to purchase homes in Holyoke.

Actions:

- Distribute materials promoting home ownership assistance programs through the city's major employers.
- Arrange for large employers to host workshops for first-time buyers.
- Develop a program for employers to provide financial assistance to employees wishing to purchase a home in Holyoke, and provide incentives for employers to

adopt it. At Chamber of Commerce Meetings, recognize employers who provide such assistance.

A program conducted by Yale University in New Haven offered \$2,000 to employees who purchased homes within designated areas of the city.

9. Plan for new housing development, encouraging developers to thoughtfully consider the Holyoke market.

Holyoke's land stock for new housing development is severely limited. New housing growth should be carefully developed and strategically placed to correspond to the city's needs.

Actions:

- Assemble a market need assessment report and provide it to area developers.
- Identify areas of the city suitable for new middle-income housing development.
- Craft zoning to promote traditional neighborhood development and cluster forms of developments in these areas.
- Create a streamlined permitting process for residential development.
- Identify potential municipal services and infrastructure that could be provided as incentives for residential development.
- Organize regular meetings between developers, real estate agents and city officials.

10. Support the improvement of Holyoke's aging housing stock.

Actions:

- Set up a loan program to provide funds for rehabilitating housing stock. The loan will act as a soft second mortgage giving buyers limited additional money, at low interest, for rehabilitation.
- Prepare a booklet of guidelines about rehabilitating Holyoke's older houses, covering time investment, funding opportunities, and cost estimates.
- Organize special events such as workshops for property owners and tours of model rehabilitation projects to promote housing rehabilitation. These workshops can be held in conjunction with current neighborhood tours.
- Seek state legislation that addresses liability issues concerning environmental contamination in older houses.
- Provide city-level tax credits for housing rehabilitation. These credits would be assigned on a point system that is geography-specific and accounts for architectural value.

11. Set up a carrot-and-stick approach to ensure code adherence by homeowners.

Actions:

- Establish a system of incentives that promote code adherence. These incentives could be, for example, financial help for property maintenance.
- Continue award programs for businesses and residences such as the "Take Pride in Holyoke" award.
- Continue Holyoke's zero-tolerance enforcement program that targets the city's known delinquent landlords.

- Discourage known problem landowners from investing in more properties.

12. Set up a vacant lot program.

Vacant lots, if not maintained, will likely become eye sores that negatively affect neighborhood character. A program that plans for creatively reusing vacant lots should be coordinated with the city's active demolition policy.

Actions:

- Establish post-demolition guidelines for maintaining vacant lots.
- Allow temporary or permanent conversions of lots to community gardens or pocket parks, if feasible.
- Allow abutters to purchase vacant lots at low prices.
- Ensure that reuse of vacant lots is consistent with neighborhood plans.

13. Promote a "Keep the neighborhoods clean" initiative.

Holyoke had at one time been a "Clean & Green" initiative, affiliated with the national "Keep America Beautiful" program. It was disbanded due to a lack of funding and manpower needed to comply with the national program's requirements. Reaffiliation, however, is being planned by the city's DPW as of this writing (1/98).

Actions:

- Re-register with the "Keep America Beautiful" program.
- Educate residents about clean neighborhoods by speaking in schools and distributing handouts in neighborhoods.
- Coordinate clean-up efforts by the city, Honor Corps, and other agencies.
- Help persons coming off welfare complete their community service requirements through participating in neighborhood clean-up programs.
- Arrange for neighborhood clean-up programs to qualify as court ordered community service.
- Establish an award that recognizes trash pick-up personnel for good work.
- Create a "tools-library" that loans tools for clean-up efforts. The Clean & Green program had begun amassing such a library. The materials are currently stored with Holyoke's DPW
- Seek neighborhood clean-up sponsors to donate trash bags, paint cans, and other needed items.
- Continue programs such as the "Take Pride in Holyoke" award for businesses and residences.
- Make the clean-up of streets and storm drains an important city priority.
- Fix up uninviting alleys.

14. Facilitate trust between police officers and neighborhood residents.

Actions:

- Give police officers incentives to live in Holyoke and be involved in their neighborhood activities.
- Encourage neighborhood representation and involvement in community policing activities and in enforcing the Community Policing Grant. Also, ensure that

community police officers work with neighborhoods for a long duration, , allowing them adequate time to establish strong ties with residents.

- Sponsor interactive events between police officers and neighborhood residents.
- Prepare, with the input of police officers, a periodic neighborhood watch newsletter that provides safety tips for residents.

15. Adopt non-police measures to address crime.

Actions:

- Provide adequate lighting in public spaces to illuminate potential crime spots.
- Open schools in the evenings for youth and other group activities.
- In the neighborhood plans, provide for designing safe spaces. (The master plan focus group on crime will cover this issue in more depth.)
- Revise zoning to allow multiple time activities.

16. Promote responsible landlord-tenant relationships.

Actions:

- Educate landlords and tenants about their rights and responsibilities through workshops, printed materials, etc.
- Provide technical assistance to landlords managing small rental properties, such as printed materials, person-to-person advice via city agencies, etc.

17. Initiate a procedure to review the code enforcement and building permitting procedures, with recommended changes to be issued within two years from the publication of the master plan.

Holyoke's current code enforcement and permitting procedures appear burdened by a number of issues, including shortage of enforcement staff, and confusion outside city hall about responsibility of various departments. Potential solutions discussed by the master plan focus group included hiring additional building inspection staff, training staff in customer relations and communications, and merging departments. Such suggestions, involving municipal expense and/or a restructuring of city government, warrant more consideration and public process than could be given during the development of the master plan.

Actions:

- Appoint a task force to review both the city's code enforcement process and the building permitting procedures.

As part of the task force process, conduct public hearings/meetings to collect extensive first hand information on how the process has impacted developers, property owners and residents.

- Make the task force process highly visible, to promote attention and responsiveness to its findings.
- Support the task force with municipal staff to transform its recommendations into draft regulations.*

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority.

18. Use public money to leverage private money towards housing development.

The city provides funds to a number of for-profit and non-profit development agencies for housing development and redevelopment. These funds are limited and may have a larger impact when distributed with requirements for recipients to provide matching resources.

Action

- The city should continue to require a portion of funds needed for housing development (or redevelopment) to be met with sources other than the city.

Homes & Neighborhoods

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

implementation chart to come

4. Downtown Revitalization

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Downtown Revitalization

Goals & Objectives

Goal: To develop a balanced plan to make downtown Holyoke economically vibrant by capitalizing on the existing human and physical resources.

Objectives:

1. Emphasize and celebrate Holyoke's cultural diversity as an asset to the downtown economy.
2. Link the canals to the economic and cultural growth of the downtown.
3. Maintain and enhance the human scale of downtown streets and historic architecture.
4. Establish telecommunications links within the downtown, and between the downtown and other areas in the region, so as to be an incentive for continued investment downtown.
5. Establish mechanisms to market, maintain and provide a sense of safety in the downtown.
6. Enhance the economic viability and public interest in the downtown's historic structures.
7. Link Holyoke's high-investment areas to economic development of the downtown.
8. Coordinate city programs and projects and use the powers of city agencies creatively to encourage necessary development downtown.
9. Strengthen downtown's existing arts and entertainment organizations; attract new artists and arts groups to live and work in downtown, especially in underutilized mill buildings; and encourage activities and programs that support arts and entertainment so as to create a lively downtown filled with diverse people, destinations and events.
10. Create a shared vision for downtown among all major stakeholders, including business owners, non-profits and the city.
11. Recognize the importance of the Volleyball Hall of Fame complex downtown.

Downtown Revitalization

Information & Assessment

Where Is Downtown?

Conceptions of downtown Holyoke differ, depending on who you ask and how long they've lived or worked in the city. Its apparent boundaries have changed with the times, often related to the economic health of Holyoke and the size of its population. For purposes of discussion in this paper, downtown refers to the central business district bounded approximately by Elm Street on the north, the second level canal on the south, Lyman Street on the east and Cabot Street on the west. The actual boundaries of downtown become more important when decisions are to be made about where to focus time, energy and financial resources on revitalization efforts, and when regulatory proposals are to be made.



The Downtown Challenge

Participants in the Phase I visioning process for the master plan identified the following problems associated with the city's downtown:

- Limited entertainment attractions/destinations
- Weak retail sector
- Vacant storefronts and upper floors
- Deteriorating and rundown properties, poor upkeep of private and public buildings
- Loss of history and architecture, lack of care for historic buildings
- Neglected appearance
- Lack of available parking
- Lack of green space and gardens
- Empty streets, particularly after 5:00 PM
- Lack of pedestrian safety
- High taxes for businesses
- Poor media and public perception



Existing Resources in Holyoke's Downtown

Historic Properties

- On the National Register:
 - North High Street Historic District (includes both sides of High Street from Lyman to the middle of Essex Street with approximately 40 contributing properties)
 - The Canal System
 - The Caledonian
 - City Hall
 - U.S. Post Office (Main Branch)
 - Wistariahurst
- Approximately 110 buildings listed on the city's historic inventory, many of which may be eligible for the National Register

Vacant and Underutilized Buildings

Greater Holyoke Inc.'s Project SPACE lists 20 properties for sale and 17 properties for lease in Holyoke's downtown at the time of this writing (winter 1998):

- retail space available: approximately 60,000 square feet
- office space available: approximately 175,000 square feet
- space available for non-specified uses: 50,000 square feet

Entertainment Destinations

Existing sites include:

- Heritage State Park and Visitor's Center
- Children's Museum
- Merry-Go-Round
- Volleyball Hall of Fame
- Canal Gallery
- Wistariahurst Museum
- War Memorial and Auditorium

Other Destinations

- City Hall
- U.S. Post Office
- Public Library (including art gallery)

Parking

There are more than 1,430 parking spaces downtown:

- Two parking structures with space for 805 cars;
- Four parking lots with 137 spaces;
- 367 on-street metered parking spaces.
- In addition, there are two lots controlled by the War Memorial with 121 spaces.

Downtown Events

- Farmers Market
- Celebrate Holyoke
- First Night Holyoke, Jr.
- Lark In the Park
- St. Patrick's Day Parade

Downtown Populations

- Residents: 2,224
- Employees: approximately 2,000
- Residents living within a half-mile of downtown: approximately 14,533



Strategies for Downtown Revitalization

The objectives resulting from the Phase I visioning process suggest five areas for exploration:

1. New business development
2. Historic preservation
3. Arts and entertainment
4. Marketing downtown as an attractive, safe and exciting destination
5. Financial incentives/investment for downtown redevelopment

Within each area the following issues are examined:

- Current programs/projects operating in the downtown; whether they are effective, and, if not, how they might be strengthened
- Potential strategies for capitalizing on Holyoke's existing downtown resources and for creating new projects. These potential strategies were discussed by the master plan focus group on downtown revitalization as fuel for developing the recommendations that follow.

New Business Development

The strategies given here are designed to address needs to fill both vacant office and retail space, and to promote the development of businesses that will strengthen downtown's draw as a destination.

Current Programs/Projects

- *Small Businesses Assistance* : Greater Holyoke Community Development Corporation provides a small business training program, individualized technical assistance and a mentoring program in which new businesses are partnered with existing businesses for advice and guidance. Loan programs include the Working Capital Loan Fund for loans ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 and the Western Mass Enterprise Fund which provides loans up to \$20,000 for working capital, equipment and inventory.
- *Survey of Properties Available for Commercial Enterprise (Project SPACE)*: This publication provides a map indicating available commercial property for sale or lease in Holyoke's central business district along with specifics about each property and demographic information about the city. It is compiled each year by Greater Holyoke Inc.
- *Small Business Information Center (SBIC)*: A one-stop location in City Hall (Room 3) provides information, via computer, on municipal licenses and permits as well as referrals to local programs for small business development. The touch screen display program is presented in both English and Spanish. It has been in operation for seven months.
- *Fiber Optic Network*: According to Holyoke Gas and Electric, state of the art telecommunications infrastructure, competitive with that found in the largest cities in the United States, is now available downtown and throughout the city. It is wired to handle high speed data and internet connectivity with dedicated access, as well as voice communications for businesses. A city-wide network connects all City of Holyoke offices. In addition, internet services for business and residential customers are available, and there are plans for capacity improvements.

Potential Strategies for New Business Development

- *Marketing Telecommunications Infrastructure:* Holyoke's telecommunications infrastructure is an asset that should be aggressively promoted in real estate marketing materials, business recruitment brochures, websites and the like. Among the businesses that would find particular benefit from this type of infrastructure include those with offices in more than one location and those that require a secure path with dedicated telephone lines to customers and/or suppliers.
- *Create an Educational Focus:* Many revitalized downtowns owe their success in part to the presence of a student population spending money on food, clothing, entertainment, books, etc. The issue has been repeatedly raised in Holyoke in regard to Holyoke Community College and the potential for bringing all or part of it downtown. Suggestions have ranged from conducting satellite classrooms in a downtown location to establishing a branch of the college downtown to moving the entire college downtown, with an arrangement for the University of Massachusetts to utilize the existing campus.
- *Business Incubators:* In a retail incubator, entrepreneurs have an opportunity to sell products in a retail setting but at a much lower cost for space. They also provide an opportunity to gain business experience and try out a new business idea before making the substantial investment that a storefront can require. Incubators may provide guidance to new businesses in such areas as marketing, business procedures and financing.

In an office incubator, business start-ups benefit from shared reception and secretarial services, shared fax and copying machines as well as lower rents.

Considerations regarding incubators:

- With a downtown employee population of 2,000 people, not including the workers from the industrial sector located near downtown, Holyoke has a sizable weekday population of potential retail and restaurant customers, particularly during midday lunch hour and after 5:00 PM.
 - Businesses launched by entrepreneurs acting on their own have only a 20% chance of surviving five or more years, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. In contrast, enterprises launched through a period of nurturing in business incubators fare much better, with an 80% survival rate, according to the National Business Incubation Association.
 - Incubators often are set up with the assistance of state and local governments and participation from other businesses, industries and frequently colleges or universities that have a stake in stimulating local economies.
- *Public Markets:* Public markets and retail incubators are similar in that they incorporate many sellers under one roof, creating an event atmosphere. The success of public markets is evidenced by examples such as Pike's Place Market in Seattle, Faneuil Hall in Boston and farmers' markets everywhere, including Holyoke. There are currently plans for a Latino public market in South Holyoke, sponsored by Nuestras Raices and Nueva Esperanza.

- *Holyoke Woodworkers Gallery/Shop*: There are at least eight woodworking companies in Holyoke, making furniture and cabinets. Two have retail areas in their manufacturing spaces. A cooperatively run gallery in downtown Holyoke might interest some or all of these companies.
- *Factory Outlets*: Currently, there are eleven factory outlets in Holyoke. (A few years ago, thirteen outlets were marketed via a poster that the Economic Development Office put together.) In addition, there are perhaps as many as fifteen more Holyoke manufacturers whose products, ranging from dolls and puzzles to jeans and furniture, might be of interest to retail shoppers. Most are located near downtown, primarily in mill buildings close to the first and second level canals. If at least ten more manufacturers were willing to sell some of their products in a small area of their manufacturing space, the critical mass needed to draw shoppers might be created. Such a factory outlet district could be marketed as more genuine than most, because of the direct relationship of stores to factories. Promotional materials could also emphasize nearby eateries and other downtown attractions.
- *Paper City Brewery*: Could the Brewery be encouraged to open a brew pub in the downtown or even in its brewery?

Historic Preservation

Preservation of the city's architectural legacy and utilization of it for economic development are key issues raised by the public and recognized by consultants in Holyoke and elsewhere time and again. Most cities who have brought their downtowns back to life have done so using historic preservation as a key component driving that effort. They include Boston, Portland, Kingston and Saratoga Springs, New York, Savannah, Georgia and New York City, to name a few.

Current Programs/Projects

- *Facade Improvement Program (FIP)*: Property owners can apply for matching grants up to \$20,000 for restoration/renovation of facades with ground floor commercial uses. Successful applicants also are provided with 15 free hours of an architect's time. Currently, few are taking advantage of the program and those that use it primarily for signage rather than facade improvements. In addition, there are no specific guidelines for restoration. The FIP Committee basically looks for good design, but this is subjective, dependent upon the opinions of those who serve on the committee at a particular time.

Potential Strategies for Historic Preservation

- *Increased Participation in Facade Program*: Increased participation in the Facade Improvement Program needs to be strengthened in the downtown and along the gateways into the downtown. Some ideas for accomplishing this include: 1) more aggressive marketing, possibly through site visits from city personnel explaining the program and how it works; 2) decreasing the match

requirement for downtown and gateway properties; and 3) establishing a program for providing low cost labor through apprenticeship programs with the high school, technical school and other entities.

- *Zoning Ordinance Amendments:*
 - Site plan review requirements could be amended to include review by the Holyoke Historical Commission of new construction abutting or involving historic buildings. The Historical Commission is currently not invited to review and provide recommendations on new construction or renovation that abuts historic properties on the National Register or on the city's historic building inventory. An example of where this might have come into play is in the development of the McDonald's in downtown , which is adjacent to the War Memorial, a historic structure in which the city has invested millions of dollars.
 - Establish a local historic district or a zoning overlay district within the North High Street National Register Historic District to enable the city to enforce flexible design guidelines that would protect and enhance the historic character of the central business district. There are no design guidelines (other than general standards from the Secretary of the Interior when federal funding is involved) to ensure appropriate, quality renovation work consistent with a building's historic character and surroundings. If, for example, a building owner wished to reduce the size of the windows on a commercial storefront or even entirely brick them up, there are no regulations to stop this kind of action.

Arts and Entertainment

Increasing arts and entertainment in the downtown seems to draw unanimous agreement. It's ability to generate economic development, attract large numbers of people and, over time, change an area's image are all important considerations for Holyoke.

Current Programs/Projects

- Private Arts-Related Projects:
 - Canal Gallery and Artists' Studios: This industrial building along the second level canal has 22 artist's studios and an exhibit gallery. The studios are full and the building's owner has turned away other artists interested in studio space.
 - Sears Building (80 Race Street): Several artist's studios are housed in this building.
 - 101 Cabot Street: The building was renovated for use as residences with studios for artists but ultimately was marketed to anyone who wanted live/work space. A portion of the building remains vacant, and it is unclear whether there are any artists with space in the building today. Renovation was undertaken by a private for-profit developer. Cost may be a factor inhibiting full use of the space by artists.

- *Canal Walk*: Design and engineering funds (approximately \$250,000) for a Holyoke Canal Walk are in place from the federal ISTEA program. A proposed model for the project includes a 15 to 20 foot paved walkway lined with benches and trees along both sides of the first and second level canals, as well as pedestrian bridges. Fountains and water powered sculpture also has been suggested. At this time no money is in place for construction. However, guidelines have recently been issued for the next round of ISTEA funding.
- *Feasibility Study for Volleyball Hall of Fame*: A study is underway to examine the feasibility of the Volleyball Hall of Fame and the most effective location for it, whether that be the downtown or elsewhere in the city. A draft has been issued, but the final report is not yet complete. One anticipated recommendation is that the facility cannot stand alone and meet with success, but rather, would have to be partnered with other entertainment-type destinations.

Potential Strategies for Arts and Entertainment

- *The Canals*: An important part of Holyoke's heritage are its canals. The Canal Walk, if done well, will help to restore Holyoke's faith in itself, improve its image locally and throughout the region.

Considerations: Given the potential impact of this project, what resources could be amassed to make the Canal Walk a reality and a high quality redevelopment project? How could local resources be made available to leverage state and federal funding, all of which may, in turn, leverage private investment in cafes, restaurants, shops and art/crafts galleries adjacent to the Canal Walk?

- *Funding From Dam Licensee*: The Holyoke Dam application submitted by Holyoke Gas and Electric identifies the Canal District as a important focus for the city's downtown revitalization. If granted the license, the company claims that it will participate in the re-investment of downtown, specifically along the canals. Before granting the dam license to Holyoke Gas and Electric or any other company, if legally possible, a written contract should be drawn up between the City of Holyoke and the dam licensee specifying the minimum funding that the company will contribute to the Canal Walk and any other projects for the Canal area that ultimately are addressed in the master plan.
- *The Arts*: The arts can be a significant stimulus for economic development in Holyoke's downtown. In 1989, the economic impact of the arts in Massachusetts alone was over \$1 billion.
- *Municipality as Lender and Investor*: For years, Peekskill (pop. 20,000) has used portions of the \$500,000 it receives annually in community development block grants to make low-interest loans to downtown property owners willing to convert upper story space into artists lofts and studios.
- *Vacant Property in Holyoke for Artists' Live/Work Spaces*: Is there a vacant or underutilized industrial building that could be developed for use as artists' residences/studios? If such renovation were undertaken by the city or a not-for-

profit organization, rents could be more affordable to many artists. Since artists often qualify as low income, utilizing Community Development money for this type of project may be possible.

- *Non-Profit Art Space Consultant:* Artspace, a non-profit national organization in St. Paul, provides consulting assistance to cities wishing to renovate old buildings into attractive, low income artist live/work spaces. It advises municipalities and private investors on financing renovation work with the help of low income tax credits and historic district credits.
- *War Memorial:* The only currently available theater space in the downtown is the auditorium at the War Memorial. At the public forums citizens have requested increased use of that performance space.
- *Feasibility of a Theater Complex:* Creating a complex of theaters is a concept that has met with a greater success in downtowns working on revitalization than one theater on its own, according to downtown consultant Steve Cecil. A vacant or underutilized mill building with a large expanse of open area may be a possible candidate for this type of reuse. Its location near the Canal Gallery and Heritage State Park would help to build on the beginnings of an Arts District.
- *More Events/Festivals:* Holyoke's citizens have asked for more festivals and events downtown. Currently there are two or three large events. Manchester, New Hampshire, hired a part-time downtown events coordinator for \$15,000 who later became full-time. The frequent events were seen as key in bringing people and businesses back to downtown.

Considerations: Are there organizations in Holyoke that might be able to take on the challenge of coordinating new events? There are many possible annual events/festivals that could be created in Holyoke. Three suggestions follow:

- *A Holyoke Marathon:* This would be along the lines of the Boston Marathon or a bicycle race – The Tour de Holyoke. For either type of event, the streets along the route would be closed off for several hours. A possible route might be through the downtown, along the canals, the river, through the neighborhoods, across the bridge into South Hadley, etc., perhaps ending at Pulaski Park.
- *Fourth of July fireworks from the canals.*
- *Connecticut River Museum:* The idea of a Connecticut River Heritage Museum has been proposed as a means of developing a significant, anchor destination for the downtown. The concept dovetails with national and regional activities to develop heritage tourism in the river corridor, including: a National Park Service study evaluating the potential for designation of the area as a National heritage Corridor; efforts to obtain American Heritage River designation, and the Conte Wildlife Refuge.

Marketing Downtown As An Attractive, Safe and Exciting Destination

New businesses, historic preservation, arts and entertainment will all contribute to making Holyoke a more exciting place. Clean streets, an increased feeling of safety and getting the word out about all of these things will make downtown a sought after destination.

Current Marketing Programs/Projects

- *Taking Pride in Holyoke Award:* This award recognizes the three best maintained properties in Holyoke with criteria for selection based on landscaping, trash containerization and being free of litter, graffiti and snow (through shoveling) The mayor presents the award twice a year, in Spring and Fall.
- *Clean City Program:* Ten years ago, Holyoke had a Clean City Program, part of the national Keep America Beautiful Program which is an anti-litter education campaign that cities can implement in schools, businesses and neighborhood associations. The city's DPW director, Bill Fuqua, believes that the renewal of this education program would help to change people's behavior and, thereby, reduce the city's need to focus its DPW staff on trash removal every day. A recycling/solid waste coordinator has been added to the DPW staff. That person will be responsible for reviving the Clean City Program.
- *Heritage Park Railroad:* The railroad is expected to be up and running again in the spring, but only on weekends. It will leave from Heritage Park, making stops at the Holyoke Mall and the Ashley Reservoir.
- *Voluntary Downtown Business Program:* Approximately 35% to 40% of downtown property owners participate in an informal voluntary Business Improvement District (BID), conducted by Greater Holyoke, Inc. Annual fees go toward keeping the downtown area clean (particularly the alleys), holiday decorations, plantings and auxiliary police. Given that only a minority of downtown businesses contribute to the program and the city does not contribute for the properties it owns in the downtown, the limited budget cannot yield the dramatic impact that formal, well financed BIDs often have.
- *1997 Casey & Associates Marketing Program:* "Structuring an Overall Marketing Apparatus to Promote the Benefits of the City of Holyoke:" Its goal is to improve Holyoke's image without spending money Its proposals revolve around city self-promotion with much of the work undertaken by existing municipal staff. Good news items are developed and released via department head news conferences and forums, utility bill enclosures and bag stuffers primarily at retail outlets in the Holyoke Mall. Training and organization is needed, and the Holyoke Partnership is currently involved in trying to make this happen. The program will build on Mayor Szostkiewicz' Pride and Progress theme and will be implemented this Spring.
- *Greater Holyoke Partnership:* The organization was created by a group of area business leaders interested in studying the challenges and potential solutions related to economic development, education and housing in Holyoke. It is

assisting in the implementation of the 1997 Casey & Associates Marketing Program (described above).

- *Holyoke Marketing Committee:* Recently launched by the Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, the group has participation from the city's downtown leadership. To date, David Casey and Terry O'Connor of Casey & Associates have identified gateway improvements as an important image strategy for the Committee to pursue. Their recommendations include various signage projects to address Interstate 91, entry points, directionals and signage coordination as well as mural and other painting programs.
- *Past Plans:* Both of the following plans were never implemented, though Greater Holyoke, Inc. followed some of the recommendations in its own work. Cost and difficulty securing consensus around themes and slogans have been cited as reasons for the plans not moving forward.
 - 1989: Darby O'Brien prepared a communications plan for the city with the slogan "Holyoke. Wanna make something of it?", and had a price tag of \$200,000 a year for the first two years, dropping to \$130,000 in the third year.
 - 1988: Agnew, Carter, McCarthy, Inc. prepared a public relations plan with the theme "Holyoke is the City of Opportunity."
- *Holyoke on Parade, A Program for Downtown Revitalization:* This plan was developed by Greater Holyoke, Inc. in 1985. Many components of the plan were implemented, including the construction of a parking garage and Heritage State Park, redevelopment of the upper floors of the Transcript Building for market rate residential, and metering on-street parking.

Potential Strategies for Marketing Downtown

- *Increase Events Downtown:* An increase in successful arts and entertainment events (such as dance company performances, music concerts) and in the number and type of festivals held in downtown Holyoke will help to enhance the city's image.
- *Sign Design Guidelines:* There are no design guidelines for downtown commercial signage. Although each individual sign should reflect a store's unique character, consistent design quality of the signage throughout the central business district can help to create a unique identity for the district and substantially enhance its visual appeal.
- *Window Display Award:* An annual award for the best window display including an awards ceremony hosted by the Mayor, coverage in the newspaper and as much fanfare as possible could help to encourage more attractive and creative commercial window displays.
- *Visible Police Presence:* Whether a lack of safety downtown is real or perceived, seeing police officers walking and bicycling the streets of the downtown on a regular basis (AM and PM) would almost immediately make many employees and shoppers feel more at ease.

- *Establish Business Improvement District (BID):* The power of a BID is in its management downtown of the public environment, business attraction and retention, marketing and events, security and other central services comparable to those required in successful office parks and shopping centers. Their success is borne out by their popularity around the continent, where they can be found in more than a thousand North American cities. A strong BID in downtown Holyoke could begin to change perceptions of the downtown as the area takes on the appearance and activities of a place that is being cared for.
- *Railroad Marketing and Funding:* How could the Heritage Park Railroad be incorporated into a marketing plan to bring people into the downtown, whether it be to enjoy riding an historic railroad, as a fun way of getting to and from the mall or to enjoy a trip out to the reservoir?

Financial Investments/Incentives for Downtown Redevelopment

Without investment in the downtown, revitalization remains just a concept. The City of Holyoke must take the lead in encouraging investment by providing incentives as well as investing its own resources to leverage those of others.

Current Programs/Projects

- *Community Development Funds:* Most of the city's Community Development Funds are spent on housing which has been the policy for a number of years. While there is a Citizen's Advisory Committee to recommend how CD funds should be spent, how they are ultimately spent is up to the Mayor, (though his decision must be consistent with HUD's guidelines). The following table addresses the level of Community Development funding that was invested in downtown, including both physical and social service projects, over the last five years.

These numbers suggest that downtown revitalization has not been a high priority for the city. Funding for social services includes such things as staff at the Boys and Girls Club and program assistance at Heritage State Park.

Community Development Funds Invested in Downtown Holyoke: 1993 - 1997

Year	CD Investment Downtown	% of Total CD Allocation
1997	\$215,850	13%
1996	\$364,100	19%
1995	\$160,355	9%
1994	\$256,000	15%
1993	\$187,340	12%
Total	\$1,183,645	14%

Source: Holyoke Community Development Department

Strategies for Investments and Incentives for Downtown Redevelopment

- *Community Development Funding:* Investing a larger proportion of Holyoke's community development money in downtown would actively illustrate the city's commitment to downtown revitalization to its citizens, financial institutions and the development community.
- *Mortgage Pool:* Some years ago ten financial institutions in Holyoke had created a mortgage pool to provide access to substantial loans for purchasing real estate. Would local banking institutions join together today to create a new mortgage pool to provide financing for the purchase and renovation of downtown properties?
- *Tax Abatements:* Would the city be willing to encourage downtown redevelopment through a local tax abatement program?

Downtown Revitalization

Recommendations

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the objectives listed above, the master plan focus group on downtown revitalization was guided by a strong sense that success would be, in the words of noted planner Kevin Lynch, an “18-hour downtown” — one with vibrant activity throughout the day and evening. Therefore, many of the recommendations were formed with the intent of bringing people into the area from throughout the city and the region, making downtown a destination.

Holyoke is fortunate to have a strong base of organizations, attractions and events upon which it can build. Of special note is Greater Holyoke, Inc. (GHI), which has been working in the downtown for 15 years, effecting physical improvements, working with merchants, and staging *Celebrate Holyoke*, an important event bringing tens of thousands of visitors to the downtown each summer.

- 1. The city should convene a Holyoke Downtown Roundtable, chaired by the mayor and city council president, for coordinating the efforts of the many municipal departments, non-profit organizations and private concerns working in downtown and focusing in downtown issues and programs, including downtown property and business owners.**

The Roundtable would provide a forum to strengthen communication and foster partnerships between the public and private sectors operating in downtown Holyoke with the purpose of enhancing the downtown’s appeal to businesses, shoppers, tourists and residents. Leadership would meet on a regular basis, perhaps quarterly, to share information, air concerns and when appropriate pool resources for cooperative efforts.

Actions

- Establish clear responsibilities for Roundtable organization and staffing.
 - Establish a Roundtable agenda, to include:
 - *joint planning to help downtown entities capitalize on the traffic brought in by special events and major institutions — for example, developing ways for downtown merchants, restaurants, retailers, etc. to derive business from visitors to such attractions as the Children’s Museum, Lark in the Park, Celebrate Holyoke;*
 - *addressing recruitment of a college into the downtown;*
 - *realizing the benefits of the area’s fiber optic capabilities;*
 - *crime prevention and effective community policing;*
 - *development and coordination of marketing activities with a specific downtown focus.*
- 2. Use downtown events as a springboard to revitalization.**

Major downtown events have been successful in attracting large numbers of people into the city, and have the potential to change negative perceptions both locally and regionally. Along with public relations benefits, festivals such as “Celebrate Holyoke”

and “Lark in The Park” bring economic advantages and enjoyment. The downtown needs more frequent events and ways of ensuring that existing downtown businesses and institutions benefit from the visitation they bring.

Actions

- Establish responsibility for coordinating the marketing of existing downtown events and for developing new ones. This responsibility can be undertaken by the city or by a private organization. Coordination may be facilitated by a volunteer events council with membership from various presenting organizations (e.g. Greater Holyoke, Inc., Lark in the Park, the St. Patrick’s Day committee) and downtown businesses.
- Pursue the creation of a downtown events coordinator position, either within City Hall or at a private organization.
- Coordinate the hours of downtown restaurants, retailers and attractions with special events, and create promotional tie-ins.
- Facilitate the staging of new events with supportive city services including easy access to needed permits, police protection, and public works assistance. Designate a point person within City Hall to help events organizers with these needs — i.e. “one-stop shopping.”
- Increase the number of events venues available within the downtown.
 - *Designate responsibilities within City Hall for management and marketing of the War Memorial auditorium to substantially increase its utilization for concerts, dance and theater performances.*
 - *Pursue rehabilitation of the Victory Theater. (see Central Business District recommendations, below)*

3. Establish two districts within the downtown area which have distinct identities and which will complement each other.

Downtown experiences nationwide have shown that “chunking” downtown into reasonably sized focus areas have enhanced revitalization efforts. The smaller areas allow for more specific targeting of resources and programs, and for results to be more visible.

Actions

- Designate and pursue development of a Central Business District, to encompass the area immediately surrounding High Street.
- Designate and pursue development of a Canal Arts and Industry District, potentially encompassing the superblock bounded by High, Main, Appleton and Dwight Streets. More details on this are given further down.*

4. Protect, promote and capitalize on the appeal of the downtown’s historic architecture.

The downtown’s historic architecture, both its office and mill buildings, have been cited again and again as one of the area’s great strengths and attractions. Designated buildings are given preference when being considered as locations for state and federal offices.

Actions

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority.

- Consider the recommendations of Holyoke’s Historic Preservation Plan for expanding the boundaries of the National Register North High Street Historic District.
- Pursue nominations to the National Register of individual buildings cited in the preservation plan.
- Consider the establishment of a Canal Area National Register Historic District. Such designation would impose no constraints on property owners using private resources for renovations.

5. Create a system for tracking crime statistics and progress on crime and safety improvements within the downtown.

Downtown crime — its perception and reality — is considered a powerful barrier to increased use of the area. Yet statistics are unavailable to help determine whether it is increasing or decreasing, where it is most prevalent, what types of crime most occur in the downtown and at what times of day. Such information is needed in order to assess the effectiveness of crime reduction programs, and also to be able to dispel public fears by reporting on successes.

Actions

- Request that the police delineate a downtown area to include the central business and canal districts for tracking crime statistics. This delineation is needed to establish a crime statistic benchmarks for the area, facilitating assessment of programs to improve downtown safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

6. Create a downtown signage program.

Directory-style signage is recommended to help visitors to Holyoke’s downtown find their way around to the area’s various facilities and attractions — and also to promote fuller use of the area by promoting services and destinations. For example, signage could make visitors to the events and facilities in the State Heritage Park aware that there is a nearby art gallery, eateries on High Street, outlet stores, etc. Such a program is eligible for funding under the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority’s Public Works and Tourism grant program.

7. Support planned gateway improvements.

The derelict appearance of major roads leading into the downtown is a source of major concern, as it is widely perceived a deterrent to downtown visitation. An ad hoc committee has been meeting to develop proposals to improve these “gateway” areas. Such plans should be made a municipal priority.

8. Plant and maintain trees throughout downtown Holyoke.

Streets lined with trees help to bring a more intimate human scale to urban streets, creating a warmer and more comfortable sense of place for pedestrians. Trees also help to enclose and define streets that have parking lots and few buildings, again enhancing the experience of walking.

Actions

- Plant more trees along High Street.
- Plant trees along Dwight and Appleton Streets between High Street and the second level canal to emphasize and enhance the connection, particularly for pedestrians, between the Central Business District and the proposed Canal Arts and Industry District.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

9. Create a formal Business Improvement District (BID) in the downtown Central Business District.

The power of a BID is in its management downtown of the public environment, business attraction and retention, marketing, events, security, sanitation and other centralized services comparable to those undertaken in successful office parks and shopping malls. BIDs can be found in more than 1,000 North American cities. A well supported BID in downtown Holyoke would significantly contribute to changing perceptions as the area takes on the appearance and activities of a place is this being cared for.

A voluntary BID, administered by Greater Holyoke Inc., currently operates with approximately 35% of downtown property owners participating. Each participant pays an annual fee which covers the cost of keeping the area clean, providing holiday decorations, plantings and reserve police. However, participation is too low to make the BID as effective as it could be. Programs and services could be expanded with increased membership to include marketing, events creation, site improvements or other services deemed valuable by participating property owners.

Actions

- The city should support a downtown BID by contributing fees for the downtown properties that it owns and speaking publicly in its favor. Such financial and public support from the city could help to convince private property owners who are no yet members of the BID to join.
- Recruit additional downtown property owners to join the BID.
- Encourage large Holyoke institutions outside of the downtown to make voluntary 5-year commitments to contribute to the BID. As the downtown becomes a more attractive destination for the local as well as the regional population, all entities throughout the city will reap the benefits.

10. Capitalize on Holyoke's fiber optics capabilities in downtown.

Holyoke has a state of the art telecommunications infrastructure. This makes it competitive with some of the largest cities in the country as a location for businesses and organizations that have advanced telecommunications needs. The city's fiber optics infrastructure can be a primary attraction for enterprises, both public and private, to locate in the downtown

Actions

- Utilize downtown property owners, Realtors, etc. to promote the downtown's fiber optics capabilities to prospective tenants and investors. This can be facilitated by:
 - *periodic workshops for this audience, bringing them up to date on the city's telecommunications infrastructure and expansion plans;*

- *promotional materials geared toward companies needing fiber optics capabilities and which could be used in marketing downtown properties.*
- With area colleges, pursue the development of an Information Studies and Media Center in downtown Holyoke. Greater Holyoke, Inc. has taken steps in this direction.

11. Support mixed use redevelopment in the upper floors of downtown buildings.

The Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation and Greater Holyoke Inc. have begun working with owners of vacant buildings downtown to develop a “downtown office park,” to be marketed with a package of financial incentives including tax rebates and utility discounts.

Actions

- Continue this effort and support it through implementation of the proposed incentives.
- Create an incentives package for residential conversions of upper floor office space.

12. Actively pursue a college presence downtown.

The presence of a student population can provide a base for economic activity in the downtown, and is a key component of many revitalized downtown areas. Several possibilities have been put forth during the master plan process, including:

- Holyoke Community College. At the time these recommendations were being prepared, HCC was meeting with Greater Holyoke, Inc. on this topic;
- University of Massachusetts. A City Councilman has proposed that the University of Massachusetts might locate a new college at the present site of Holyoke Community College, leaving the latter free to move to a new campus in the city’s downtown.;
- Springfield Technical Community College;
- the Five Colleges consortium;
- the University of Puerto Rico.

13. Strengthen and increase participation in the Facade Improvement Program to make it work for downtown.

The Facade Improvement Program currently provides property owners and leaseholders with up to \$20,000 in matching grants for restoration/renovation of facades with ground floor commercial uses. The program also funds signage. There is limited participation in the Program. It has been primarily used for signs rather than building facades.

Actions

- Decrease the required 50% match for downtown properties.
- More aggressively market the program to downtown businesses through site visits from city personnel, advertising and public relations.
- Increase funding for the Facade Improvement Program.

14. Complete rehabilitation of the Victory Theater.

As noted above, reopening the Victory Theater would add a needed venue for events in the downtown. Substantial work has already been done to stabilize the structure and prevent further deterioration.

15. Consider formal adoption of the design standards in Holyoke’s *Downtown Design Guidebook*.

The *Guidebook* was prepared in 1988 and provides detailed design standards for the renovation and rehabilitation of Holyoke's downtown streetscape.

Actions

- Stage public meetings to bring the guidebook and its recommendations to the attention of downtown property owners, developers, council members, etc., with the intent of reviewing the document for formal incorporation into the municipal code.

16. Establish special sign regulations for the North High Street National Register Historic District.

The North High Street Historic District hosts the largest concentration and some of the finest examples of Holyoke's historic architecture. The commercial signage should be an element that is compatible and complementary to the buildings and the district, rather than a detraction.

Actions

- Designate the Historic District a sign overlay district.
- Create special regulations for the sign overlay district that control appropriately for such qualities as size, placement and material of signs. The regulations should not result in costly increases for signs that could pose a burden to downtown merchants.
- Communicate the new regulations to downtown business owners and establish enforcement mechanisms.

17. Recruit "destination-type" restaurant development in the downtown with a package of zoning, financial and other incentives.

Destination restaurants are those with a unique, historic or festive atmosphere, or which serve exceptional or unusual food. Drawing customers from long distances, they do not depend on the local market for success. The incentive package might include low-cost, fast-tracked liquor licenses, tax abatements and zoning bonuses.

18. Investigate the development of a retail festival food market/incubator in the vacant first floor space of an historic downtown building.

Such a market would provide a place for low-cost start-ups retailing specialty food products, such as those taking advantage of the city's various ethnic populations. It might also serve as a winter outlet for vendors from the farmers market.

CANAL DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations addresses both the master plan objectives to "Link the canals to the economic and cultural growth of the downtown." and to "encourage activities and programs that support arts and entertainment so as to create a lively downtown." They build upon items put forth in a 1994 Economic Development Strategy document prepared by the Holyoke's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, and on current activities by the city to develop a historic walkway along the first and second level canal system.

Waterways hold a strong attraction, even a fascination for people, and many have recognized the potential for Holyoke's canals, with their unique history and proximity to the Central Business District, to fuel downtown revitalization. The master plan focus

group on downtown spent a considerable amount of its time discussing the creation of a Canal Arts and Industry District and developing a vision for it. In fact, several members of the group are continuing work on the area, functioning as an ad hoc committee to implement the action items below.

The Canal Arts and Industry District is envisioned as developing into a vibrant mixed use area, where arts-related activities and attractions exist side by side with industrial enterprises. The intent is to retain and enhance the existing business base, while planning for the adaptive reuse of vacant and obsolete properties.

A landscape architect has been hired jointly by Greater Holyoke, Inc., O’Connell Engineering and downtown property owner Denis E. Walsh to prepare computer simulations of the focus group’s vision for the area. It is an exciting vision that includes the Canalwalk, fountains in the canals, outdoor cafes, a theater complex and/or Connecticut River Museum, factory outlets, public art, galleries, historic interpretation and more. Plans for the images include public display in a prominent area, such as the window of the Steigers’ building, along with use in media and marketing efforts.

19. Modify Holyoke’s zoning ordinance to allow for a greater mix of uses within the new district, including live-work spaces.

Currently, Greater Holyoke, Inc. receives regular inquiries from the public regarding the availability of live-work space for small businesses, including artists.

20. Make construction of the Canal Walk a municipal priority.

The Canalwalk will be the central feature of the Canal District and a powerful spark for other development efforts.

Actions

- The city should take advantage of all funding opportunities (e.g., federal Transportation Enhancement Program).
- The city should provide match moneys when needed, and direct municipal funds to the project in the event of a shortfall in State and Federal funding.*

21. Continue to expand as well as support and market the niche of children and family-oriented activities in the Heritage Park area.

The Children’s Museum, Carousel, Volleyball Hall of Fame, Heritage Park Railroad and Lark in the Park programs constitute a base of children and family-oriented attractions on which the city can build. The Children’s Museum alone attracts up to 75,000 people each year.

Actions

- Invest in strengthening in the existing children’s and family-oriented destinations in the area.
- Utilize the theme of children and family-oriented activities in materials publicizing and marketing the city and the downtown.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority.

- Investigate developing a temporary outdoor skating rink in Heritage State Park, for operation during the winter season. In addition to its appeal for children and families, the rink would provide an activity for teenagers, a need that surfaced repeatedly in master plan public forums. One company that manages such enterprises for municipalities around the country, based in Warwick, New York, reports that some have broken even in the first year of operation.
- Coordinate the children and families theme with marketing efforts for canal area factory outlets selling toys, dolls, puzzles and clothing (see below).
- Organize children's programming in available events venues in the downtown.

22. Keep the Volleyball Hall of Fame in Holyoke.

The Hall of Fame is a family entertainment destination, contributing toward this important downtown niche. The city should make retention of the Hall a municipal priority, following the example of Springfield in regard to the Basketball Hall of Fame. Together, prestige basketball and volleyball institutions could generate regional, sports-oriented tourism.

Actions

- Work with developers and planners of the Volleyball Hall of Fame on their expansion plans.
 - *Explore ways to make a downtown location attractive to the Hall.*
 - *Pursue state funding for the expansion project when appropriate.*
- Work cooperatively with the Hall of Fame in efforts to market the city and the downtown.
- Pursue the designation of Holyoke as the site of Olympic Volleyball trials. This idea was proposed at the master plan public forum on economic development and was greeted enthusiastically by participants.

23. Pursue the development of a Connecticut River Heritage Museum in a vacant downtown building or site.

Museum development activities should be tied in with efforts, being spearheaded out of Congressman John Olver's office, to create a National Heritage Corridor along the Connecticut River. Other relevant programs with potential to support museum development include the Conte National Wildlife Refuge and President Clinton's American Heritage River's Program.

24. Expand service of, and market, Holyoke's Heritage Railroad.

Holyoke's Heritage Railroad links the Heritage Park area and the city's downtown with its new major attraction, the Holyoke Mall. The connection provides opportunities for capturing a portion of the mall's visitation. In addition, riding on an historic Railroad is in itself an experience with significant appeal.

Actions

- The city should assist the Heritage Railroad in its efforts to resolve insurance and other financial issues, enabling it to have more frequent, regular, year round service.
- Develop special programs, fares, promotions etc. that market combined shopping-tourism excursions.

- Promote the railroad at the Holyoke Mall, through brochures, schedules, posters and perhaps larger-scale activities such as a pushcart or kiosk selling toys trains and memorabilia or a model train.
- Reestablish and expand special entertainment programs such as train mystery excursions.
- Pursue funding from grants, sponsorships and other sources for rehabilitation of the trains and the Ingleside station.

25. Pursue the development of a performing arts complex in a vacant mill building in the canal district.

Experience in other cities has shown that a complex of theater venues has a higher success rate than a single theater space on its own.

26. Capitalize on Holyoke’s numerous manufacturers producing consumer products.

These include dolls, puzzles, jeans, sports clothing, paper products, silk flowers and woodworking. There are currently eleven factory outlet stores in Holyoke, and the city’s Office of Economic Development had at one time marketed them jointly.

Actions

- Renew and expand efforts to identify, map and promote Holyoke’s factory outlets. Take advantage of the close connection between the factories and the retail stores — a connection that is rare in regard to most outlets.
- Work with relevant manufacturers in the canal area to open outlets or to participate in a “Made in Holyoke” cooperative outlet space. The area’s many woodworking operations present an especially strong opportunity for cooperative outlet marketing.
- Coordinate outlet store hours.
- Investigate the feasibility of developing factory tours as a further attraction to the area.
- Encourage the Paper City Brewery to open a brew pub in its manufacturing space or in a separate location in the Canal Arts and Industry District.

27. Plan and implement streetscape improvements to make the canal district safe and attractive.

The visioning process currently being undertaken will identify and illustrate some of the needed improvements.

Actions

- Install and upgrade sidewalks.
- Install sufficient lighting.
- Plant trees.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

28. The city should make it a staff priority to pursue funds for downtown revitalization.

State, federal and private funding is available for many of the proposals cited above.

Examples include:

- ISTEA transportation enhancements funding for the Canalwalk, Heritage Railroad and streetscape improvements;

- Massachusetts Turnpike Authority Public Works and Tourism Grants for gateways improvements, downtown signage and streetscape improvements;
- The Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund, which provides 50% of project costs up to \$250,000 for the restoration/rehabilitation of historic buildings in public and non-profit ownership. A proposed use of these funds is restoration of the stained glass windows in the City Hall auditorium.

29. Investigate designating the Central Business District and/or the future Canal Arts and Industry District an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA).

Benefits for businesses include 5% investment tax credits and special municipal tax assessments.

30. Work with local banks to reestablish a mortgage pool to provide low interest loans for real estate acquisition and rehabilitation in the Central Business District and the proposed Canal Arts and Industry District.

This strategy, once successfully used by Greater Holyoke, Inc., was disrupted by changes and mergers in the banking industry. It should be revisited.

31. The city should provide tax incentives for market rate residential conversions of vacant upper floor office space.

As noted above, residential conversions would provide for adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings while fostering an 18-hour neighborhood downtown.

Actions

- Provide a full exemption on real estate taxes on downtown market rate residential conversions for a designated period (e.g. eight years), then phased in taxes during the subsequent period (e.g. five years).
- Using tax exempt financing, work with landlords to establish a two-year lease to own program whereby apartments are rented with part of the rent payments set aside as down payments, should the lessee decide to purchase at the end of two years. This program gives the lessee a chance to discover the benefits of living downtown before having to make a large financial commitment.

32. Use Community Development funds to leverage private investment in downtown.

Over the most recent five-year period (1993-1997), Holyoke's downtown area has received just 14% of the city's Community Development funds, only a portion of which has been used for visible capital improvements. How the city spends its Community Development funds demonstrates to area financial institutions and the development community where its commitments lie. For example, Lowell, MA, which has been noted for the progress made in its downtowns devoted over 60% of its CD funds over a seven year period. Similarly large investments yielding nationally recognized downtown successes were made in Portland Maine and Burlington, VT. to downtown redevelopment. While there is considerable competition for CD funds from Holyoke's neighborhoods, community downtowns are "everybody's neighborhood" and, as noted above, the city's public face. It should be made a priority.

Actions

- Direct a significantly greater allocation of Holyoke's Community Development funds into the downtown. While the Community Development moneys are already

committed for the next few years, downtown should be the next major focus of those funds.

- Provide Community Development funds for low interest loans to property owners willing to convert upper floors into living/studio spaces for artists who qualify in the low/moderate income category.*

33. Seek support for Canal District projects from the Holyoke Dam licensee.

In its dam application, Holyoke Gas & Electric has committed to fund projects in the area of the Canal District should it receive the license to operate the dam. An economic development study of the canal area performed by Lake Hitchcock Associates in support of HG&E's application proposes the establishment of a redevelopment bank to select and fund projects. Such an arrangement should be pursued with the eventual dam licensee.

34. Explore reactivation of Holyoke's independent redevelopment authority.

Independent authorities can be effective mechanisms for executing redevelopment plans. Holyoke has a municipal redevelopment authority, with the power to acquire and redevelop properties on behalf of the city, but it has been dormant for several years. The city should take the necessary steps to reauthorize its operation, requiring that it function according to a development plan focusing on vacant or underused properties in the downtown.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

Downtown Revitalization

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

5. Location & Infrastructure

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Location & Infrastructure

Goals & Objectives

Goal: Promote and maintain healthy infrastructure and public utilities (including water, sewer, gas, electric, and telecommunications) that will sustain appropriate levels of future development.

Objectives:

1. Develop a comprehensive, coordinated infrastructure plan for Holyoke, including a utility inventory, a capacity analysis, and a repair and maintenance plan.
2. Develop and implement a method for collaboration and coordination between city departments concerning the city's infrastructure.
3. Establish a process for interaction between private infrastructure providers and the city.
4. Establish a program where all infrastructure priorities are presented to public officials.
5. Increase participation in the advanced fiber optic opportunities in the region by developing a plan for the entire city.
6. Support, encourage and update best management practices for stormwater management.
7. Pursue and take a proactive part in a partnership with the licensee of the Hadley Falls Dam.
8. Develop a comprehensive, intermodal transportation plan.
9. Create signage at all city gateways to direct people to cultural and recreational facilities.

Location & Infrastructure

Information & Assessment

Transportation Infrastructure

Roads & Highways

Holyoke is located centrally within the Pioneer Valley region and has excellent highway access. The north-south running Interstate 91 connects the city with the metropolitan areas along the Connecticut River corridor, bringing Holyoke within half an hour of Hartford and Bradley International Airport, and two and a half hours of the greater New York City area. Just south of Holyoke, the Massachusetts Turnpike provides connections east to Boston and west to the New York State border and beyond. I-391, along with Routes 5, 116, 141 & 202, facilitate transport to surrounding communities.

Issues with, and needed improvements to, Holyoke's network of roads and highways include:

- Interstate 391 currently ends in the City of Holyoke about a half mile south of the downtown area at High Street and Resnic Boulevard. This results in traffic congestion on many local streets as traffic attempts to find the shortest path from the end of I-391 to Route 5 and the Holyoke Mall. In order to alleviate traffic congestion in this area, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) has proposed a link between Interstate 391 and Lower Westfield Road near the Holyoke Mall. Commonly referred to as the Elmwood Bypass, the new road would help to alleviate congestion in the area and will be included in the in the Regional Transportation Plan's long range element. High anticipated costs for the proposed project make its implementation unlikely in the coming decade as state transportation funds for the region are expected to drop by more than half and competition for scarce resources will be intense.
- Congestion also exists on State Routes 141 and Route 202. Truck traffic bypassing sections of Route 202 has spilled onto residential streets. As a result, the city plans to implement evening truck exclusions on Homestead Ave., Hitchcock Rd., Laurel Rd., and Brown Ave.
- The city's street system is maintained with State Chapter 90 funds which are spent on road resurfacing and sidewalk reconstruction projects. These funds are allocated each year based on knowledge of the local road network and input from Ward Councilors and residents. Over the last few years, the percentage of Chapter 90 funds spent on sidewalks has increased due to the need to repair many sidewalks that had been not been maintained for many years.
- Federal-aid eligible highways (roads that are not classified as a rural minor collector or local roadway) in Holyoke were included in the Pioneer Valley Regional Pavement Management Report (PVPC, 9/97) evaluating pavement

conditions and maintenance requirements. Many streets in Holyoke were identified in this report as being in need of reconstruction or rehabilitation.

- The planned reconstruction of the Calvin Coolidge Bridge connecting Northampton and Hadley may increase traffic on Routes 5, 116, and 202 in Holyoke from commuters south of the city traveling to the Amherst area.
- The Route 116 Bridge between Holyoke and Chicopee is in need of repair and is currently programmed in the regional Transportation Improvement Plan..

Rail Freight Service

Holyoke is served by active rail lines, including the Boston & Maine Railroad (B&M) and Springfield Terminal Railway Company. Guilford Transportation Industries provides service to Springfield, Vermont, New York, and Pennsylvania and has an interchange with Conrail in Springfield.

The Pioneer Valley Railroad is a short-line railroad that runs from Westfield to Easthampton and lower Holyoke with connections to Springfield Terminal Railroad in Holyoke and Conrail in Westfield.

Public Transportation

Public bus transportation in Holyoke is provided by the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) Currently, eight bus routes serve Holyoke and provide connections to several neighboring communities, including: South Hadley, Granby, Northampton, Springfield, Westfield and Chicopee.

Many of these routes converge in Veteran's Park in downtown Holyoke, a corner of which serves as a "transfer station." A report was prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in 1995 recommending improvements to the Park which would facilitate use of the area as a public transportation hub. These ranged from hardscaping the area (much of the lawn in the vicinity of the transfer station has been trampled to dirt by bus users) to providing such amenities as an information kiosk and waiting pavilion.

The PVTA also connects with the Springfield Bus Terminal, providing access to the region's private bus carriers: Bonanza Bus Lines, Greyhound Lines, Peter Pan Bus Lines and Vermont Transit Lines. These companies provide service to points both in and outside the region, including nationwide connecting service.

Pedestrian Transportation

Holyoke's development as an urban area with dense settlement and a gridded street pattern makes it one of the Pioneer Valley's more pedestrian-friendly cities. This is an important feature for city residents, as nearly a third of Holyoke households do not have a family car and journey-to-work statistics show that 10 percent of all Holyokers walk to work.. As mentioned above, the condition of the city's sidewalks has declined over the

years, requiring an increasing share of Chapter 90 funds for rehabilitation. There is currently no system for evaluating and prioritizing sidewalk improvement projects.

Bicycle Network

While Holyoke’s hilly terrain can make bicycling difficult in many areas of the city, its central location in the Pioneer Valley and situation along the Connecticut River makes Holyoke a key component of a regional bicycle network. Several projects for Holyoke have been identified in the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission’s Draft Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects in Holyoke

Project Name	Description
Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway	Proposed under the Connecticut River 2020 Strategy in 1994, the project will provide a North/South connection between the region’s largest urban centers. Springfield and Agawam segments are slated for construction in 1999, the year Holyoke connections will receive preliminary design.
Holyoke Canal Walk	A pedestrian walkway along the historic industrial power canals. The facility provides access to Holyoke Heritage State Park, the central business district, Holyoke Children’s museum and the Holyoke Boys Club. Design will take place in 1999.
Regional Bikeway Network	Four Holyoke projects are proposed as part of the Regional Bikeway Network: Northampton/Holyoke (Rte. 5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holyoke/W. Springfield (Rte. 5) • Holyoke 202 Corridor • Holyoke-Chicopee 116/141

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Gas & Electric Utilities

Holyoke Gas & Electric

Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E) is a municipal not-for-profit utility company providing electricity, gas, steam, and telecommunications to the business and residents of Holyoke. HG & E is the primary supplier of electricity for residents and businesses in Holyoke. Less than 10% of the electricity used by HG&E customers is locally generated at hydroelectric facilities (at 5 sites along the canals) and the local power plant. The remainder is produced at major power plants throughout New England.

The system is upgraded and maintained on a ongoing basis. Although there are no expansions currently underway, HG&E will expand electric service as needed. For example, service will be expanded as needed to serve the planned “Crossroads” industrial park at Bobala Road.

HG&E’s electric rates are very competitive with other electricity suppliers. In a November 1997 rate survey compiled by the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), Holyoke was noted to offer the second lowest industrial

electric rate in the 500kw-200,000 kwh category of any of the electric suppliers in Massachusetts. HG&E also offers economic development discounts to new or expanding businesses.

Deregulation of the electric industry, due to take place in early 1998, is not expected to have an immediate impact on HG&E. Under deregulation legislation, municipal utilities are not obligated to allow competition. HG&E plans to allow competition but has not decided when to open the market. However, HG&E has been working with large commercial customers (150,000 KWH/year or more) over the last 12 months to sign partnership agreements, in anticipation of upcoming deregulation. HG&E is offering a sliding scale of discounts to commercial customers based on the length of contract with HG&E (up to a 10% discount for a 10 year contract).

HG&E also provides gas service to most of Holyoke and parts of Southampton. The Smith's Ferry area is not served, but there are no immediate plans to expand there. HG&E does plan to expand service in the Rock Valley Road area. Over the past several years, HG&E has also expanded service in Southampton, adding many new customers.

Currently, HG&E is the only gas supplier in Holyoke. While some of the larger businesses in Holyoke have the opportunity to purchase gas from another supplier (transported by HG&E) no businesses have taken advantage of this opportunity. Further deregulation will eventually allow residents and business to purchase from competitive gas suppliers. However, HG&E's gas rates are very competitive with other gas providers.

HG&E provides steam to about 40 customers in Holyoke. Many of these are municipal buildings that use steam for heating. Several manufacturers, however, use high-pressure steam as part of their production process. Since high-pressure steam is not readily available, Holyoke provides a locational advantage for a manufacturer that needs steam as part of their production process. Steam is primarily available in the downtown area due to the difficulty in transporting high-pressure steam over long distances. HG&E has the capacity to serve additional customers within their service area.

HG&E offers discounted utility rates to first-time homebuyers and businesses. For first-time homebuyers, HG&E offers a three-year discounts of 30% the first year, 20% the second year, and 10% the third. An additional discount of 10% prompt payment discount is also available. HG&E also offers significant discounts to new or expanding commercial and industrial customers.

HG&E's economic development discounts are advertised on Holyoke's web site, as well as advertisements in Business West, the Springfield Union-News, and through underwriting on National Public Radio. Bill inserts are used to market these discounts to existing customers that are eligible for discounts if they expand their business.

Holyoke Gas & Electric Department Economic Development Discounts

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Gas & Electric	30%	20%	10%
Industrial Contract - Gas & Electric	20%	15%	10%
Steam ¹	90%	90%	50%

¹ Steam discounts are applied to base rate and minimum charges only; not to fuel or gas surcharges

Source: <http://www.holyoke.org/gaselec.htm>

Holyoke Gas & Electric recently constructed a state-of-the-art fiber optic telecommunications infrastructure throughout the entire city. All municipal buildings have been connected, providing data communication links and direct internet access. HG&E provides high-speed data, internet and/or voice connections to businesses as well as dial-up internet services to residences and businesses.

Hadley Falls Hydroelectric Facility

This facility, also known as the Holyoke Dam, is currently owned by Northeast Utilities (operating under the name Holyoke Water Power) and is operated under a license with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Holyoke Water Power Company provides electricity to large industrial customers in Holyoke and maintains the city’s canal system.

Northeast Utilities’ license with FERC will expire in 1999, when a new license will be granted for fifty years. Representatives of the City of Holyoke have pursued the possibility of the city acquiring the dam. Under Holyoke’s control, the facility would provide a source of revenue and give the city control of the 4 ½ miles of canals in the city that are currently under the control of Northeast Utilities. On the city’s behalf, a license application to FERC was submitted jointly by the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) and the Town of Ashburnham in September, 1997. Northeast Utilities also submitted an application. Both applications are currently under review.



Water Supply

Holyoke Water Works manages the public water supply, which serves between 98% and 99% of Holyoke’s population. The City of Holyoke has four surface water sources: the Whiting Street, McLean, Ashley, and Tighe-Carmody (or Manhan) Reservoirs. As of December 1997, the Ashley and Whiting Street Reservoirs will no longer be used as primary sources.

- *The Tighe-Carmody Reservoir* was originally constructed in 1897 and enlarged in 1953. It is located in the Town of Southampton and is the primary source of water for the City of Holyoke. The reservoir has a surface area of 365 acres and a watershed drainage area of 14.5 square miles. A recently completed 42 inch

transmission main from the Tighe-Carmody reservoir to the city replaces two old 20 inch pipelines.

- *The McLean Reservoir* was constructed in 1904 and was built primarily to serve the higher elevations of the city. It has a surface area of 0.1 square miles and a watershed area of 0.47 square miles.
- *The Ashley Reservoir* has a water surface area of 0.45 square miles and a watershed area of 2.6 square miles. This reservoir now serves as a feeder reservoir to McLean Reservoir. Water from Ashley Reservoir is pumped up to McLean from which it can be drawn and treated at the new treatment facility.
- *The Whiting Street Reservoir* is located in the northwestern edge of Holyoke and was put into service in 1889. Since December 1997, it is no longer used as a primary supply for the city. Although this reservoir will remain on stand-by status, it is unlikely that it would be used because the water would require filtration. Also, the Ashley and McLean reservoirs provide primary back-up.

The storage capacity and estimated safe yield for each of these reservoirs is listed in the table below.

Storage Capacity and Estimated Safe Yield of Holyoke Reservoirs

Reservoir	Storage capacity (million gallons)	Estimated Safe Yield (million gallons per day)
Tighe-Carmody	4,825	13.0
McLean	365	0.5
Ashley	795	2.1
Whiting Street	479	1.6
TOTALS	6,464	17.2

Source: Holyoke Water Works, Sanitary Survey, 9/97

Water supply issues, needs and projects in Holyoke include:

- *Excess capacity:* The average daily demand in Holyoke is 8.8 million gallons per day (MGD) and the maximum day demand is 13.5 MGD (1996). Even with the Whiting Street and Ashley Reservoirs no longer being used as primary water supplies, Holyoke has excess water capacity. Due to this excess water capacity, the city has investigated the possibility of selling water to neighboring communities, particularly South Hadley and Easthampton. However, at this time, these plans have not moved forward due to the expense of adding transmission lines, competitive water rates, and different municipal policies regarding water fluoridation.
- *Rates:* The City of Holyoke recently constructed a \$21 million water treatment plant, located on the eastern shore of the McLean Reservoir. This facility is intended to provide adequate disinfection and corrosion control of the three active

reservoirs. The plant will normally be fed directly from the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir, the primary water supply. Water from McLean and a blend from McLean and Ashley Reservoirs can also be treated at the new plant as needed. The water treatment plant is designed to treat a maximum flow of 14.8 million gallons per day.

Due to the expense of the new water treatment plant, water rates in Holyoke went up from \$0.18/100 gallons to \$0.28/100 gallons in January, 1998. However, Holyoke's water rates remain competitive with water suppliers across the state.

- *Maintenance & Capital Needs:* The Holyoke Water Works Department has an ongoing maintenance program to replace pipes, hydrants and meters. In addition, Holyoke Water Works has identified two large capital improvement projects. The Manhan Gatehouse Improvement project (est. cost of \$200,000) would involve improvements to the gatehouse that connects the reservoir with the new 42" pipeline. Also, a new Ashley Transfer Station is proposed to replace the existing pump station (originally constructed as a temporary means of transferring water up to McLean). These projects were not funded when they were brought before the City Council in 1995. Holyoke Water Works plans to continue to seek funding for these projects, particularly the Manhan Gatehouse improvements.



Sewer Service

Sewer Service is provided for most of the urban part of Holyoke. Areas not serviced include West Holyoke and a small part of Smith's Ferry. An expanded sewer system and secondary plant has allowed for an increase in industrial development in the Ingleside area as well as additional residential development in the Whiting Farms area. Currently, there are no plans for expansion of sewer service in West Holyoke or Smith's Ferry. In the areas of the city most likely to see growth (particularly the Ingleside area), sewer capacity is adequate. Sewer is also adequate in the Flats and the Main Street area.

Over the last 7-8 years, the Department of Public Works has completed small local improvements each year with funds from the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Each year, the city spends between \$400,000-\$500,000 from sewer use charges on local system improvements. (For example, 23 projects were completed in the fall of 1997.). Typical projects include new manholes to improve access and new catch basins. This year, DPW is undertaking a \$100,000 line replacement along Main Street, from Spring St. to Appleton St., in response to a need to provide improved service for an expanding business. Holyoke is also seeking SRF funding for a new pumping station in the Springdale Area.

As with other utilities in Holyoke, sewer rates are competitive. Holyoke's sewer rates are well below the state average (MWRA Advisory Board Annual Water & Sewer Retail Rate Survey, 11/97). The City of Holyoke, with the engineering firm Tighe & Bond, has

undertaken a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Abatement Study in an effort to reduce pollutant loading to the Connecticut River. The CSO Abatement Study is being performed in accordance with an administrative order issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the city. The Study consists of several tasks, including characterization of the sewerage system (currently underway), sewerage system modeling and wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) optimization (recently completed). The final CSO Abatement Plan, to be completed by March, 2000, will be used to guide the selection of the most cost-effective CSO abatement alternatives. Currently, there are 21 CSOs in Holyoke. Capital costs to abate Holyoke's CSO have been estimated at \$61 million. Several CSO abatement projects that have been identified are shown in the table below:

Proposed Holyoke CSO Abatement Projects

Proposed Project	Description	Estimated Cost
Wastewater Treatment Facility Optimization	Upgrade of Wastewater Treatment Plant for 68 MGD peak flow sewer	\$2,704,000
Dwight St. to Lyman St. Between High St. & Maple St.	sewer	\$170,000
Suffolk St.	drain for gas & electric drainage	\$20,000
Essex St.	sewer/drain system	\$700,000
Dingle Rd.	drain	\$20,000
Alley between Main St. and Race St.	separate drain only	\$50,000
Heritage St.	sewer separation	\$70,000
Springdale Park	sewer separation	\$1,517,300
TOTAL		\$5,251,300

Source: Holyoke Engineering Dept. and Tighe & Bond

Location & Infrastructure

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING & COORDINATION

Bringing the city's various infrastructure projects, plans and expenditures together in a single Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a stated objective of the master plan. Initial discussions on how this should be accomplished have already begun. A CIP is a document that presents the priority list of capital improvements for a community over a specified period (typically 5 years), with the first year shown as the current year's capital budget.

There is considerable variability in how communities approach CIP development. The first few recommendations below broadly address initial steps to be taken by the city toward the establishment of a capital planning process, leaving the details to be determined by a capital improvements management team. Guidelines for conducting the CIP are given in an addendum to this document, along with sample materials from other capital plans.

1. Legally require the city to maintain a five-year capital improvement plan, to be updated annually.

The practical value of capital plans is tied to their long-term maintenance and implementation through successive political administrations. Because of this many communities with capital plans contain provisions in their municipal charters that mandate CIP upkeep. In light of considerations that a change to Holyoke's charter may prove cumbersome, the city should take other legal means to require the establishment and annual updating of a five-year capital improvements plan.

Action

- Draft and implement a municipal CIP ordinance.*

2. Designate responsibility for CIP development and maintenance.

Actions

- The mayor should appoint a Capital Improvement Management Team to guide the process, to be comprised of heads of municipal departments involved in capital projects, such as DPW, engineering, schools, and parks & recreation.
- The mayor should designate staff responsible for preparing, monitoring and updating the plan. Coordinating roles vary by community. For example, in Springfield, Framingham, and Worcester, the Planning Director, Chief Financial Officer and Budget Director, respectively, are responsible for development and management of the capital plan. In Holyoke, the City Auditor should be considered for this responsibility.
- The mayor should establish a timeline for completing the CIP process.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

3. Establish a framework for conducting and updating the CIP.

As noted above, guidelines and materials for conducting a CIP process are given in attachments. This framework should be created by the CIP management team.

Actions

- Identify the categories of infrastructure and capital expenditures to be included in the CIP.
- Identify a minimum budget threshold that projects must meet to be included in the CIP.
- Re-establish the procedure, initiated several years ago, for departments to inventory assets and projects.
- Develop a system for identifying and prioritizing new projects.
- Establish a process for presenting highly ranked projects — i.e. those for implementation — to public officials, community groups and private infrastructure providers for input.
- Assess the city's financial capacity and develop a CIP financing plan for formal adoption by the City Council.
- Establish a process for monitoring projects and updating the CIP annually.

4. Develop a process for prioritizing infrastructure projects not to be included within a CIP.

Routine maintenance and smaller capital projects (i.e. below CIP thresholds) are currently prioritized on an informal, discretionary basis.

Action

- Adapt both the CIP project identification and prioritization processes for use by relevant city departments concerning their ongoing operations and maintenance budgets. Coordinate with the CIP process to avoid duplication of effort.

5. Coordinate Holyoke capital planning efforts with the city's master plan.

Projects involving infrastructure and capital expenditures are referenced elsewhere in the master plan, in connection with physical improvements to the city's canal district, gateways and other areas. These should be incorporated into, and given priority in, the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

Actions

- Involve the city's planning department in capital plan development in order to ensure consistency of the CIP with the master plan.
- Use consistency with the master plan as one criteria for ranking capital projects.

6. Continue and improve procedures for coordination and interaction between infrastructure providers in the city — both public and private — when planning infrastructure projects.

The following actions are based on conversations with the city's infrastructure providers.

Actions

- Require that city utilities inform the DPW of repair work in a timely fashion (amount of lead time to be determined).

- Continue the process of notifying private utility providers of upcoming road construction projects. Improve the process by providing utilities with adequate advance notification of scheduled projects (e.g. 6 months), along with a list of projects that are anticipated or being planned for the following year. (The existence of a capital plan will help with this.) Conduct follow up telephone calls to providers to ensure notices have been received by appropriate personnel.
- Hold pre-construction briefings for infrastructure projects one month prior to implementation. Include both public and private infrastructure providers.
- Establish regular, ongoing communication with the Massachusetts Highway Department for projects under their jurisdiction.

7. Require stricter accountability for road patches created by utilities during repair work.

Substandard road patches made by utilities needing access to underground lines for repair are decreasing the life of the city’s pavement. The DPW is currently responding to this situation by developing stricter guidelines on utility patch replacement. Stronger measures are desired.

Actions

- Establish a system under which utilities are held accountable for the quality of their road patches. Require that patches be maintained by the utility creating them for a specific period of time (e.g. 10 years, or the estimated remaining life of the pavement).
- Provide utilities with the option of purchasing road patching services from the city.

8. Coordinate efforts of municipal departments with the city’s private rail carriers in order to capitalize on Holyoke’s locational value to businesses using rail freight services.

Upcoming changes in the rail industry — specifically the sale of Conrail to the Norfolk Southern and CSX railroads — will potentially place Holyoke in a strong position relative to the shipping of rail freight in the northeast.

Actions

- Holyoke’s planning department should consider the needs of rail-dependent industrial development in future changes to the city’s zoning. The city’s Office of Industrial and Economic Development and private rail carriers should be consulted on these decisions.
- Efforts to market the city’s assets should include promotion of Holyoke’s freight shipping services.
- The city should support state and federal “brownfields” legislation that would facilitate redevelopment along the city’s rail corridors.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CITY UTILITIES: (Water, Sewer, Gas, Electric, Steam, Telecommunications)

9. Continue, increase and speed efforts to market Holyoke's advantages with regard to utilities.

The City of Holyoke has a strong and competitive utility infrastructure, both in terms of competitive rates and availability of services. These strengths are currently marketed in a variety of ways such as Holyoke's web site, advertisements in Business West and the Springfield Union-News, underwriting on National Public Radio, bill inserts to HG&E customers, and promotional materials distributed by the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts. HG&E is also in the preliminary planning stages for marketing its new telecommunications infrastructure. Marketing efforts may be expanded through the following.

Actions

- Make infrastructure marketing a municipal priority. Utility deregulation and the competitive nature of the emerging telecommunications industry make speed important if Holyoke is to maintain an advantage.
- Create materials for distribution to and use by commercial realtors and property owners and managers.
- Develop a comprehensive utility marketing program that covers Holyoke's complete package of utilities and the advantages and cost savings Holyoke can provide to businesses.
- Coordinate marketing of Holyoke's locational and infrastructure advantages with citywide promotional efforts, such as the Chamber of Commerce marketing group and public relations activities of the mayors' office.
- Identify and market to target industries that could benefit from Holyoke's infrastructure availability — i.e. industries that need access to steam as part of their production process, or require state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure.
- Explore expansion of marketing efforts outside of the region. *

10. Create a program to broaden the benefits of Holyoke's telecommunication capabilities for city residents.

HG&E's fiber optic network has its roots in a project to provide services to the city's schools. The following actions can be taken to increase the public benefit of this investment.

Actions

- Continue and expand efforts to use telecommunications to provide public information to Holyoke's residents, businesses and schools (i.e. zoning & permitting information, building permit data, employment listings, etc.). Increase the number of sites where city residents can access this information, and promote its availability through brochures and public relations activities.
- Increase the number and broaden the geographic distribution of free internet access points in the community. Currently, free access is limited to the Holyoke Public Library.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

- Allow students to access their computer accounts after school hours through free terminals at libraries.
- Provide workshops and training to educate residents about the use of the city's available telecommunication services.
- As described above, actively market the city's telecommunications infrastructure to encourage relocation and retention of businesses in Holyoke.

11. Actively pursue the sale of Holyoke's excess water to neighboring communities.

Holyoke currently has excess water capacity that could potentially be sold to neighboring communities. Several problems, including the expense of adding transmission lines, competitive water rates, and differing municipal policies regarding water fluoridation have prevented efforts to sell excess water. However, the sale remains a potential source of revenue to the city.

Action

- Make efforts to investigate the feasibility of the sale of water to neighboring communities a high priority. Examine the potential revenues of the sale of water to determine if revenues would offset the initial costs involved.

12. Continue and coordinate efforts to comply with the EPA Administrative Order for CSO abatement.

The City of Holyoke, with the engineering firm Tighe & Bond, has undertaken a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Abatement Study in an effort to reduce pollutant loading to the Connecticut River. The CSO Abatement Study is being performed in accordance with an administrative order issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to the city. The final CSO Abatement Plan, to be completed by March, 2000, will be used to guide the selection of the most cost-effective CSO abatement alternatives.

Actions

- Continue participation in the Connecticut River Clean Up Committee, the group of DPW officials from Connecticut River communities working to develop funding sources for CSO abatement and other water quality projects. Use the Committee's staff resources (the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission) to develop grant proposals for CSO related stormwater projects and public education materials.
- The city should evaluate low-cost and environmentally friendly and cost-effective alternatives for CSO abatement such as source reduction through on-site stormwater management and the use of non-chemical disinfection methods.
- The city should take into account upcoming federal stormwater regulations for small cities — Phase II of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) — in the preparation of its sewer system facilities plan. Draft guidelines have been issued; these should be reviewed to determine their potential impact on the city especially in regard to combined sewer separation projects involving the creation of new storm sewers.

13. Continue to explore possible, controlled recreational use of the Whiting Street Reservoir.

The Whiting Street Reservoir is no longer used as a primary water supply for the city and, although this reservoir will remain on stand-by status, future use is unlikely because the water would require filtration. Further, the Ashley and McLean reservoirs provide

primary back-up and Holyoke has excess water capacity available. The reservoir and its watershed may potentially be opened for recreational activities, but numerous issues remain unresolved concerning maintenance and security of the area to protect water quality.

Action

- Identify measures and costs associated with operating the reservoir area — e.g. providing sanitary facilities, controlling dog wastes, preventing the use of gasoline-powered boats, etc.

14. Continue to plan to be competitive in light of utility deregulation.

HG&E is currently working with a consultant to evaluate the effects of electricity deregulation. A financial model to be completed in the spring of 1998 will be used to develop various business options. Major recommendations, when adopted, should be incorporated into the city's master plan.

15. Seek financing for improvements to Holyoke's Canal District from the Holyoke Dam licensee.

The City of Holyoke is pursuing the license to operate the Holyoke dam (the current license expires in 1999). Both Northeast Utilities, the current licensee and the City of Holyoke have submitted applications to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for the license. The City of Holyoke's application includes the commitment to create a redevelopment bank to fund projects in the Canal District. The city should actively pursue financing for Canal District projects from whichever applicant is selected as the licensee.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING ROADS & HIGHWAYS

16. Continue to advance plans for the construction of the Elmwood Bypass.

The Elmwood neighborhood currently experiences a significant amount of cut-through traffic headed for the Holyoke Mall and I-91. A private consultant has completed a study for the City which recommends alignment alternatives for the bypass. A project justification study has been submitted to the Massachusetts Highway Department. This project appears in the current Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley Region.

Actions

- Pursue funding options for the bypass construction.
- Conduct an expanded public participation process, beyond MHD requirements, in regard to project design.
- Incorporate noise control, landscaping and other design features to mitigate neighborhood impacts of the bypass.
- Consider intermediary measures to alleviate congestion in the area.

17. Consider the development of a city-wide pavement management system.

Pavement management focuses on maximizing the effectiveness of a community's roadway improvement budget. Through a greater emphasis on preventive maintenance to

roadways in fair to good condition and a logical program for the rehabilitation of poor roadways, communities can expect a longer life expectancy of their paving projects.

Action

- The Holyoke Board of Public Works should review options for pavement management contracts and weigh them against conducting an in-house pavement management program.

18. Advance and complete the Commercial Street Reconstruction Project.

This project is programmed in PVPC's current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As currently proposed, Nick Cosmos Way and Commercial Street will be upgraded to enhance the connection between I-391 and Appleton Street.

19. Continue ongoing maintenance of traffic signs and pavement markings.

Traffic signs and pavement markings regulate the flow of traffic and highlight restrictions and problem areas. Ongoing maintenance enhances the effectiveness of traffic signs and pavement markings and increases safety through added visibility.

20. Pursue rehabilitation of the Route 116 bridge between Holyoke and Chicopee.

This bridge was recently given a rating of 16.5. Bridges with a rating of 50 or under are considered structurally deficient and require repair. This project is currently programmed in the regional TIP.

Actions

- Continue to work with the Massachusetts Highway Department to move the project forward.
- Work to ensure that adequate bicycle and pedestrian access is incorporated into design of the project.

21. Perform a traffic study for Route 141 in the vicinity of Jarvis Avenue to develop strategies to relieve congestion in this area.

This area was identified by the City of Holyoke during a meeting to discuss the regional congestion management system. A new traffic signal was recently installed at the intersection of Route 141 and I-91 exit 17. This area should continue to be monitored to determine if additional congestion relief strategies are required.

22. Conduct a traffic study to investigate methods to improve traffic flow between I91 and the Mueller Bridge to South Hadley, and to and from the downtown business district.

Congestion in this area has been a long-standing problem. The city should conduct further study of this area and take steps to improve traffic flow.

23. Study the potential effects of the reconstruction of the Calvin Coolidge bridge on Routes 5, 116 and 202, and request appropriate mitigation from the Massachusetts Highway Department.

This project is currently in the design phase and scheduled for construction in FY 1999. MHD has indicated that Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies will be utilized to assist in the mitigation of traffic during construction.

Action

- The City of Holyoke should arrange a meeting with MHD District 2 (while the project is still in the planning phase) to discuss the potential for traffic increases as a result of bridge construction

24. Advance projects programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program

Actions

- Continue efforts to move TIP projects forward from initial planning through design and construction.
- Establish regular, ongoing communication with the Massachusetts Highway Department for projects under their jurisdiction.

Current TIP projects:

Project Name	Project Description	Total Cost	Projected TIP Year
Linden St.	Improvements: 5 intersections	\$400,000	2001
Pleasant St.	Reconstruction: Cabot St. to Route 5	\$2,300,000	2002
Lyman St. Bridge	Replace: BR# H-21-018 First Level Canal	\$2,000,000	2003
Rte. 141 Bridge	Replace: BR# H-21-020 First Level Canal	\$2,000,000	2003
Commercial St.	Construction: I-391 to Appleton St.	\$1,900,000	2003
Intersections	Improvements: Maple St. to Main St.	\$600,000	2004
Cabot St.	Reconstruction: Main St. to S. Canal St.	\$320,000	2004
Northampton St.	Resurface	\$2,000,000	2004
Homestead Ave. & Westfield	Improvement: Intersection & signals	\$400,000	2004

25. Install OPTICOM equipment at all signalized intersections.

OPTICOM is an automatic emergency traffic signal pre-emption equipment system. This system, activated by emergency vehicles as they approach an intersection, changes the traffic signals to allow unimpeded traffic flow in the direction the emergency vehicle is traveling.

Actions

- Upgrade existing intersections to include OPTICOM equipment.
- Install OPTICOM equipment in all new signalized intersections.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION

With a little under a third of Holyoke households not owning a car^{*}, intermodal transportation is an especially important source of mobility for city residents. It is also significant to the city's employers, as public transit and a gridded street network enables roughly ten percent of the city's workers to commute either by bus or on foot.^{*} Because of this, the master plan goals and objectives document calls for preparation of a comprehensive intermodal transportation plan.

Sidewalk & Pedestrian Enhancements

26. The city should continue its efforts to fund sidewalk improvements.

Over the last few years, Holyoke's DPW has been increasing the proportion of state highway funding spent on sidewalks due to increased needs for repairs.

Actions

- Continue to use Chapter 90 funds for sidewalk improvement projects.
- Coordinate sidewalk improvement projects with a sidewalk plan (see below) to ensure the most efficient use of funds.
- Seek alternate funding sources for sidewalk projects.

27. The city should continue to identify and prioritize sidewalk projects in a Holyoke sidewalk plan.

A map and inventory of needed sidewalk repairs was recently completed. This inventory should be used as the basis of the preparation of a sidewalk plan.

Actions

- Continue efforts to map and inventory needed sidewalk repairs and establish a system to update this information regularly.
- Identify areas where new sidewalk construction is needed.
- Develop a policy to guide the prioritization of sidewalk funding needs. Factors to consider include location (e.g. proximity to schools, downtown), needs of the elderly and disabled, condition of pavement, safety conditions, etc.
- Prepare an annual sidewalk plan for adoption by the city council and mayor.

28. The city should actively pursue construction of the Canal Walk.

This project for creating an enhanced walkway system along the city's first and second level canals has been cited in many of the public forums held in connection with the master plan and figures in the recommendations of several other focus groups.

Actions

- The city should take advantage of all funding opportunities for this project (e.g., ISTE A Enhancement Program).
- The city should provide match moneys when needed, and direct municipal funds to the project in the event of a shortfall in State and Federal funding.

* 1990 Census

29. Plan for and provide streetscape amenities, such as shade trees, planters, benches, trash receptacles, lighting and signage, in priority pedestrian routes.

The presence of sidewalks is only one of many factors that combine to create a pedestrian environment where people will actually want to walk. Others include comfort, safety, attractiveness, and convenience. While streetscape amenities cannot address all of these factors, they make a substantial contribution and are important to a walkable city. Street trees were mentioned as needs in master plan public forums and in focus groups on other master plan goal areas.

Actions

- Identify priority pedestrian areas in the sidewalk plan. These should include Holyoke's downtown, proposed canal district, and major transit stops. Neighborhood considerations should also be taken into account, and regional data will be available from the forthcoming PVPC Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan for use in this effort.
- Seek funding for, and provide amenities in the identified priority areas.
- Pursue zoning regulations that would require developers of large-scale projects to include pedestrian amenities on or adjacent to their site.

Public Transit

30. The city should establish a protocol for regular communication with the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority to focus on service needs in Holyoke.

Holyoke has been fortunate to have a municipal employee who is active on the PVTA Board of Directors, thus facilitating communication between the two entities. This relationship should be formalized to ensure that it survives well into the future, withstanding organizational changes.

Actions

- Establish regularly scheduled meetings between the city and the PVTA, perhaps quarterly, to review service needs and problems, track projects and improvements, and collaborate on joint funding opportunities, among other activities.
- Work with the PVTA to review the location and type of bus stops. Consider the relocation of bus stops to allow for better traffic flow.
- Involve the PVTA in site plan review for major development projects with the potential for a public transit connection.
- Involve the PVTA in the development and review of transit-friendly zoning regulations and guidelines. (see below)
- Work with the PVTA to explore the potential to develop and increase park n' ride activity. (see below)

31. Work with the PVTA to access Section 9 funding for transit stop improvements.

Section 9 federal funds are allocated to regional transit agencies for capital expenditures, and can be used to provide transit stop improvements in member communities. As an initial project, the city should pursue improvements to the bus transfer station in Veterans Park. It has been identified by Holyoke, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and PVTA as a heavily used bus stop where improvements are needed, and a brief report has been prepared with preliminary recommendations.

32. Identify and respond to needs for expanded transit service.

While primarily the responsibility of the PVTA, Holyoke can facilitate this task by compiling information on service needs from major employers, developers of new projects, schools and other destination entities within the city. Increased evening service to coordinate with late work shifts has been cited as an initial need.

Bicycling

33. Bring Holyoke into the planned, regional Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway system.

The Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway is being developed as a multi-use path system following the Connecticut River in Massachusetts. At the time of this writing, final design of the project's first segments in Agawam and Springfield is complete and design of the Chicopee segment is getting underway. A feasibility study is planned to explore continuing the Riverwalk from Chicopee through to Holyoke's Canalwalk project and further on to Northampton.

Actions

- The city should collaborate with the multi-community committee planning the regional Riverwalk facility.
- The city should pursue funding for design and construction of Riverwalk connections.

34. Use the city's open space planning process to identify and protect potential corridors for off-road bicycle and multi-use paths.

Trip Reduction/Multi-Modal Travel

35. Participate in regional efforts to improve opportunities for multi-modal transportation improvements.

Actions:

- Participate in regional efforts to develop on-road and off-road bike routes.
- Secure technical assistance to further study the potential costs and benefits of park and ride lots in Holyoke.
- Participate in efforts to facilitate and promote ridesharing through car pools and van pools.

Public Education And Safety

36. Promote pedestrian safety through the Massachusetts crosswalk law.

Compliance with the crosswalk law can be increased through proper enforcement of traffic laws. The use of barrels, pavement markings and signs alerting drivers to the presence of a crosswalk and the possibility of a fine will enhance the safety of pedestrians.

Action

- Identify key locations for enhanced pavement markings, signage and barrels. Include police, school, public safety personnel and neighborhood groups in the process.

37. Plan for and implement traffic calming techniques on heavily traveled neighborhood roads and key intersections.

Traffic can be slowed down (“calmed”) through a variety of road modification techniques to make it easier for cars to stop at crosswalks, and safer and more comfortable for pedestrians. For example, raising the area of a crosswalk slightly to create a plateau will force cars to reduce their speed significantly. Alternatively, widening the sidewalk at an intersection will result in a roadway that narrows, thereby causing cars to slow down; at the same time, the distance between the sidewalks is reduced, making it easier for pedestrians to get across. Any such traffic calming measures would need to be carefully evaluated to consider local road and traffic conditions.

Actions

- Incorporate traffic calming features into the design of road and sidewalk reconstruction projects for the city.
- Identify priority streets and intersections to be retrofitted with traffic calming features. This process can be combined with identification of priority crosswalk areas, the creation of a city-wide sidewalk plan, and/or the creation of neighborhood plans (see recommendations for Homes and Neighborhoods).

38. Provide education in bicycle and pedestrian safety to residents and schoolchildren.

Particular focus should be given to education about the need to wear bicycle helmets. This could help in enforcing the state law requiring riders aged 12 and under to use helmets.

Zoning & Regulations

39. Incorporate bicycle, pedestrian and transit-friendly design guidelines and standards into Holyoke’s municipal code.

Many features of bicycle, pedestrian and transit-friendly environments can be quantified and put into zoning regulations, (e.g.: development density, building setbacks, facade windows, parking and lighting). These should be considered during Phase III of the master plan, when considering changes to the city’s zoning and subdivision regulations. The following model bylaws were prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission:

From *Valley Vision, the Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley*, 1997

- Model Bylaw for Bicycle and Pedestrian Accessibility
- Model Bylaw for Transit Oriented Development: Bus Stop Districts
- Model Traditional Neighborhood District Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations

From the *VMT (Vehicle Miles Traveled) Reduction Workbook*, 1996

- Accessory Apartments
- Mixed Uses in New Commercial Developments
- Parking
- Site Plan and Design Approval

40. Enforce state legislation to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian features into state road reconstruction projects.

State legislation (Chapter 90, Sect. 2, Public Ways, Bicycle, Pedestrian Access) requires that the Massachusetts Highway Department incorporate bicycle and pedestrian elements in road reconstruction projects. Holyoke should be aware of this law when reviewing

state projects in the city and use it to advocate for the inclusion of on-road bicycle facilities and traffic calming measures.

Funding

41. The city should continue to explore and develop additional sources of outside funding for intermodal projects.

Possibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Public Works Economic Development Program (PWED). This state program funds transportation projects tied to economic development and might be especially appropriate for sidewalks in the city's canal area.
- Massachusetts Turnpike Authority Public Works & Tourism Program. Eligible projects for this funding source are being redefined, but it has been used in the past to fund sidewalk construction.
- State Transportation Bond. Earmarked funds for bicycle and pedestrian projects have been included in past transportation bonds. They are made through the legislative process.
- Traffic Mitigation Impact Funds. The city should use these funds for sidewalk construction.
- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Funding is available for bikeway projects, and for "enhanced" sidewalks — i.e. decorative paving, historic elements, etc.
- DEM Greenways Grants. Small grants of up to \$5,000 are available for bikeway planning.
- Massachusetts New and Innovative Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program. TDM refers to activities that promote and provide transportation alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle. Eligible activities include transit promotion and development of park and ride lots and ride share services.
- Section 9 Transit Funds. As noted above these federal funds are channeled through regional transit agencies and are used for capital expenditures. Communities can work with the PVRTA to access funds for local transit stop improvements.

Location & Infrastructure

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

implementation chart to come

6. Crime & Safety

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Crime & Safety

Goals & Objectives

Goal: Create a safe and crime-free city.

Objectives:

1. Create an environment that is clean, safe and free from fear for all residents and visitors to Holyoke.
2. Encourage cooperation between public law enforcement officials and the private security sector.
3. Continue and enhance the visibility and success of community policing.
4. Encourage timely response to issues of crime and safety.
5. Develop a plan for physical improvements, design standards and maintenance which contribute to public safety.
6. Establish a recognition and reward program for innovative and successful crime and safety projects.

Crime & Safety

Information & Assessment

Image & Reality

Crime is a problem in Holyoke on two levels:

- actual incidents of crime, which directly harm city residents and visitors;
- the perception of Holyoke as being crime-ridden, which has a negative impact on feelings of personal safety, property values, economic development, and downtown revitalization, as well as the overall level of pride Holyokers take in their city.

In master plan forums, meetings and interviews, many attribute Holyoke's crime-ridden image to the media — and consequently look to the media for solutions. There is a strongly held view that the perception of crime in Holyoke is worse than the reality.

In January, 1998, the Holyoke Police Department created the position of Public Information Officer. The Officer provides information to the media and general public, schedules school programs, and responds to requests from civic groups for public speakers. Much of the Department's current public relations activity is focused on managing breaking news stories. The information officer position is staffed by a police sergeant.



Statistics

Statistics are important tools for addressing perceptions of excessive crime. In recent years, they have also been recognized as powerful crime fighting tools, allowing police to identify crime patterns and come up with creative solutions. In Holyoke, computerized crime statistics have been kept only since mid-1995, when the HPD gained the capability to do so. The system was upgraded in 1997, allowing more detailed data to be stored and compiled. At this time HPD's Records department is still exploring and learning the full capabilities of the software.

- HPD's crime statistics are broken down into 145 statistical areas. Block by block data is also available, but is more difficult to compile and create.
- HPD prepares customized statistical crime reports in response to requests. Most requests come from banks and businesses considering new development — typically they ask for information on robberies within a given area. Other requests come from city departments and agencies looking for information to bolster grant applications. Requests tend to be specific and vary widely.

- Summary reports are generated for, and provided to the Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit. On occasion, officers will pull statistics to examine an unusual problem or to adjust patrol assignments, an activity that is expected to increase with the police department's use of the Crimestat process (see below). However, HPD does not typically generate summary reports for its own internal use.
- At this time, the police records department can check the response time on particular calls, but cannot generate reports.

Total Crimes Reported to the Crime Reporting Unit of the Massachusetts State Police Selected Massachusetts Communities, 1995

Community	Total # of Crimes Reported	Population
Agawam	693	26,721
Fall River	4,024	90,865
Holyoke	481*	42,461
Lynn	6,225	80,563
New Bedford	5,155	96,903
Northampton	775	28,838
South Hadley	277	17,472
Springfield	11,165	149,948
West Springfield	1,980	26,192
Westfield	1,062	37,539

*Note: 1995 was the first year for which Holyoke tabulated computerized crime statistics, and there were errors which resulted in under-reporting. In 1996, Holyoke reported 7,032 crimes.

Sources: Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit; 1996 MISER est. (population)

Age, Sex, Race and Ethnicity of Persons Arrested in Holyoke (except traffic), 1996

	Age					Sex		Race			Ethnicity	
	<18	18-24	25-29	30-34	35+	M	F	W	B	O	Hisp.	Non-Hisp.
#'s	883	1,563	1,040	895	1,412	4,725	1,068	5,347	434	12	3,723	2,070
%'s	15%	27%	18%	15%	24%	82%	18%	92%	7%	<1%	64%	36%

Total Arrests, 1996: 5,793

Source: Holyoke Police Department report to the Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit

In May, 1998, the Holyoke Police Department embarked on a pilot program to develop an extensive database of information on drug-related arrests in the city's Churchill neighborhood. Using a process known as Compstat (for "compare statistics") data will not only be compiled, but mapped and manipulated to answer such questions as: where are Holyoke's drug hot spots?, who owns those properties?, and when do drug sales

occur? Crime mapping technology has contributed to substantial crime reductions in major cities such as New York and Dallas. Holyoke’s Police Chief hopes to expand the process to cover other neighborhoods and other crimes.

HPD’s initial foray into Compstat is funded by a one-year, \$103,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, covering both labor and equipment. Chief Cournoyer estimates that expansion of the project would require the full-time efforts of between one and three officers.

Holyoke Crime Statistics 1996 - Reported Crime by Neighborhood

Area	Crime Category							
	Drugs, Gangs, Guns	Disturbance/ Loud Music	Prostitution, Rape, Sex Offenses	Accidents / Hit & Run	Larceny, Larceny MV, Shop-lifting	Breaking & Entering	Assault	DUI / MV Homicide
Jarvis and University Apartments	1	9	1	11	11	18	10	0
Westfield Rd./ Mountain Rd. to Westfield/Southampton line	1	6	0	22	8	3	5	0
Lincoln/Pleasant STS - N to Mt. Park 91	2	18	2	46	18	25	12	1
Highlands	20	148	5	112	56	53	41	2
Holyoke Hospital - Community Field - Beaudoin Village	3	81	5	77	33	34	38	1
Holyoke Library to Pulaski Park up to Beech St.	126	209	21	196	108	197	114	2
Jackson Parkway - Lawrence School up to Sycamore	131	204	8	162	76	114	139	2
High School - Peck School up to 91	12	18	4	59	27	30	23	0
Heritage - Beech / Cabot - Lyman	242	336	32	325	200	347	185	5
Ward I (The Flats)	32	169	5	141	61	119	71	2
Ward II	73	91	6	193	89	135	87	2
Ingleside	5	24	1	70	27	28	17	2
K-Mart to South St.	1	42	9	132	135	42	28	0
Holyoke Mall & Whiting Farms Rd.	7	52	7	177	495	129	44	0



Approaches to Crime: from Foot Patrols to Community Policing

Generally, the approaches taken to addressing crime in Holyoke have followed national trends in law enforcement. In the late 1960’s the “team policing” concept led to a cut back on the number of officers on the force in exchange for an increased reliance on technology. The use of patrol teams in cars and motorcycles replaced officers on the beat. A generation later, the drawbacks to the team policing approach are being recognized, and community-oriented policing (COPs) is attempting to redress the distancing of police and citizens that resulted from an over-reliance on cruisers. The COPs approach places an emphasis on crime prevention and social solutions to the root

causes of crime. Most recently, the concept of “zero tolerance” is bringing an emphasis on law enforcement. This approach involves targeting specific crime problems in specific areas, making arrest after arrest, citation after citation, until the message of zero tolerance is effectively communicated and incidents of the targeted crime are substantially diminished

Holyoke’s newly appointed Police Chief Marc Cournoyer, who took office in January 1998, acknowledges the failure of the team policing concept. He notes that in the late ‘60’s and early ‘70’s, the city “saturated” Ward I with officers, only to see crime return once the officers left. “Crime would shift from ward to ward, with lots of arrests but no real progress.” Ward I is now one of Holyoke’s quieter areas, with a level of crime comparable to the city’s Highlands neighborhood. Chief Cournoyer credits this turn around to area redevelopment efforts, and places an emphasis on the HPD working with other city agencies to “bring neighborhoods back” as the main route for approaching crime in Holyoke.

HPD participation in the city’s demolition plan and the Churchill neighborhood redevelopment plan, citywide bicycle patrols, Crime Watch and Neighborhood Watch programs, and a new domestic violence unit may all be broadly construed as aspects of a community-oriented policing approach. However, it is the city’s 6-year grant with the federally funded COPs program that is the focus of community-oriented policing both in and outside the Department.

Holyoke’s COPs project can best be summarized from its most recent funding application, issued in August, 1997 for the fourth year (FY’98) of the 6-year cycle:

For the past three years, the Holyoke Police Department... has systematically planned and developed a community policing program with the intent to create support systems involving all segments of the community — neighborhood, church, school, business, social agencies, law enforcement, and government. The Department... currently operates seven sub-stations, staffs some twelve neighborhood crime watch groups, participates in the Holyoke Leadership Council, has 42 bicycle patrols operational, conducts various youth and neighborhood programs out of these sub-stations, and has developed and participated in a myriad of community-based programs... During the fourth year of operation, the Department desires to pursue a broader mission requiring multi-faceted strategies. The Department... will begin to identify and analyze recurring problems and search for innovative and collaborative solutions that have more long lasting effects...

The FY’98 grant totaled \$413,000, with the bulk of the funds allocated for overtime costs to pay for staffing community-policing substations in high crime neighborhoods of the city. Most of the substations are located in residential apartments, with space provided either by the Holyoke Housing Authority or donated by landlords. One, at the corner of Dwight and Pine, is in a storefront, giving it more visibility and public access than the others.

The Holyoke community policing substations are staffed from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, by volunteers with the GHI-run Americorps program. The

volunteers are young people between the ages of 17 and 25 who undergo a stringent selection process to participate in the program, and who receive training and supervision from the Holyoke Police Department. They assisted with crime watch programs, hold workshops and seminars on such topics as gangs and how to deal with them, oversee a juvenile diversion program where delinquents are assigned community service with Americorps instead of probation, and conduct neighborhood after school programs at the larger substations and, where the stations are too small, at neighborhood centers.

The community-oriented policing concept has been called as much a mindset as a technique, and for this reason progress can be slow. While younger police officers have been trained under the community policing philosophy, older ones have spent much of their careers with an orientation toward law enforcement rather than crime prevention and problem solving, and may be wary of new approaches. Moreover, difficulties and confusion can arise when officers try to perform both the role of friendly service provider and law enforcer.

Civilians, too, must adopt a new mindset for the approach to work. Chief Cournoyer acknowledges that many Holyokers have an adversarial perspective on police-community relations. This situation is not unique to Holyoke; many people are hesitant or reluctant to collaborating with police. The community policing concept is most successful where the police have made unilateral overtures to residents of the neighborhood in which they work to demonstrate that they are committed to and can achieve improvements. For example, the first community policing unit established in Springfield approached neighborhood residents by conducting door-to-door surveys to identify problems, handing out cards with the phone numbers of personal pagers where each officer could be contacted directly, and organizing neighborhood beautification projects such as tree belt plantings and clean ups. Successes were reported at monthly neighborhood meetings. Later, the officers were rewarded with crime tips and tokens of citizen appreciation such as plaques and honors.

In master plan focus groups on other topic areas, as well as in other settings, municipal officials and neighborhood activists have expressed considerable support for the community policing concept while also voicing concern about its implementation in the city. There is little understanding or knowledge of what has been accomplished under the grant, or of how community policing will be continued when the grant's six year term is over. Critics of the program state that the neighborhood rapport building which is a cornerstone of the COPs approach "hasn't happened." Problems cited include:

- officers are not consistently assigned to the same neighborhood;
- neighborhood meetings are held infrequently; and there is limited accountability to the community — i.e. no reporting of "successes;"
- community police officers are frequently pulled away on other duties, such as responding to 911 calls;
- the use of overtime pay to staff the COPs program reduces the total amount of policing available for the grant funding;

- the Americorps volunteers staffing the community policing stations are undervalued and underutilized by the COPs officers;
- there is limited access to some of the substations.

At the same time, participants in the master plan public forum on crime called for more responsibility for crime prevention from community, families and the education system. Overwhelmingly, they saw the solutions to crime in the promotion of values, in keeping youth constructively occupied, and in providing jobs for the city’s poor. The potential of the religious community to address crime prevention was also mentioned repeatedly. Reverend Charles Pink notes that there are close to 50 churches in Holyoke; were they to come together to address crime, they could reach a large portion of the city’s population and have a considerable impact.

At the time of this writing, the Holyoke Police Department is pursuing the addition of six new police officers to form a “zero-tolerance” unit that would be deployed as needed to address specific problems or crime hot spots. The term zero-tolerance refers to an approach where a specific crime in a specific area, typically nuisance crimes such as traffic violations, graffiti or aggressive panhandling, is targeted with sufficient resources and consistency to send the message that it will not be tolerated.

Potential strategies and activities for supporting and expanding such new approaches to crime as zero-tolerance and community policing, include:



Youth

According to HPD submissions to the Massachusetts State Police Crime Reporting Unit, crime in Holyoke increased 26% between 1996 and 1997. Captain Alan Fletcher attributed much of the rise to increases in crime among youths — already a substantial portion of Holyoke’s offenders. In 1996, 15 percent of those arrested were under 18, and 27 percent between the ages of 18 and 24. Nearly half the arrests made in Holyoke are made of young people.

Of the offenses for which arrests were made and reported to the state in 1996, roughly half were listed under the classification “All Other Offenses (except traffic).” Among those identified, most youth arrests involved either theft, drugs or disorderly conduct. There were 2 arrests on rape charges, and 9 on weapons charges.

Problems of youth crime are inextricably wound up with issues of education, and community, social and family services, issues which are beyond the scope of this paper. Further, the master plan will conduct a public forum for and on youth, after this paper is distributed. It is, however, worth noting here some police activities related to youth, and to identify some strategies.

- *Drug Education:* The city has a DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Program) program, given to every 5th grade student in Holyoke's public schools and all 6th graders in the city's private schools, children who are between 10 and 12. The semester-long curriculum covers drug awareness, peer pressure, street smarts, conflict and stress management, and other topics related to drug education. A version geared toward older students is offered to 8th graders in the city's private schools. At the master plan public forum on crime, DARE was cited by several participants as an effective tool in Holyoke's crime fighting arsenal. One mother expressed a wish that a similar course be made available for parents, an idea later repeated by several other participants. A student, however, noted that many of her peers seemed to go through the program unaffected by it. Although her comment went unexplored at the time, it may be related to the age and background of students: a community activist in the Churchill neighborhood observes that gangs are initiating children between the ages of 6 and 8.
- *Safety Education:* The HPD offers a "Stranger Safety" program for 2nd grade students in the public schools, and a bicycle safety course for elementary school children.
- *Gang Prevention:* A Holyoke Police Force officer is assigned to the Western Mass. Task Force on gang activity, serving as a liaison between the Department and the task force. The Department also offers a presentation to neighborhood groups, associations and the like on gang activity and protection, which is well received.
- *Neighborhood Presence:* two Holyoke police officers will be moving into apartments supplied by the Holyoke Housing Authority. While they will not be assigned to the area in which they'll be living, their presence in the neighborhood will allow them to become acquainted with neighborhood youth, and to serve as positive role models. One plans to work with neighborhood youth teaching martial arts.
- *Americorps:* Greater Holyoke, Inc., in conjunction with the Holyoke Police Department, implements an Americorps program in which young people between the ages of 17 and 25 receive a stipend and money for their education in exchange for community service. Americorps volunteers receive 40 hours of training by the HPD and conduct such activities as staffing community police stations, presenting workshops and seminars on crime prevention, installing large house numbers to facilitate location by emergency service personnel, etc. Eighteen young people take part in the program at any one time; GHI is hoping to expand to 24. Most participants are from Holyoke, though not all.

In 1997 the Eisenhower Foundation released the results of 10 years of evaluation and analysis of programs directed at disadvantaged and inner city youth. It found that "success was attributable to multiple solutions to multiple problems, solutions that complimented one another in different combinations in different programs." Common elements in successful programs included:

- safe havens to keep youth off the street;

- police mini-stations;
- counseling of youth by paid civilian staff, “advocates,” “near-peers” and mentors;
- counseling and mentoring of youth by police;
- community-based education and remedial education;
- community organization outreach to schools;
- youth leadership programs and youth media enterprise;
- sports;
- employment training and placement;
- joint police-community patrols that sometimes included visits to homes of families in the neighborhood;
- problem-oriented policing.



Physical Environment

Holyoke’s Police Chief Cournoyer attributes much of the safety improvements in Holyoke’s Ward I to improvements in the area’s physical environment — specifically the replacement of multi-story tenements by townhouses. However, Holyoke still contains extensive areas characterized by empty streets, boarded up and/or dilapidated buildings, vacant, unkempt lots, etc. These condition of these areas contributes both to actual crime, as derelict buildings harbor criminal elements, and to the image of Holyoke as an unsafe city. Housing rehabilitation is one of Holyoke’s primary crime-fighting weapons.

Current activities to improve physical conditions in the city relative to crime include:

- the HOPE VI rehabilitation of the Churchill neighborhood;
- the city demolition plan, which will remove buildings that may harbor crime and/or be physically dangerous;
- aggressive efforts for the city to acquire tax delinquent buildings.

Building code enforcement remains a persistent problem, in large part due to short staffing.



Police-City Relations

Since the 1970’s, there have been discussions and deliberations in Holyoke about whether to establish an independent police commission. During the last year, Holyoke’s city council has been conducting a series of public hearings on the question of whether the city should pursue development of a police commission. While it is generally understood that a commission would be appointed by the mayor, and have oversight on

police department hiring, firing, budget and disciplinary action, no specific proposals have been put forward.

At hearings on the commission question, two major issues have been the focus of discussion. One is disciplinary authority. As an alternative to discipline by an outside commission, the HPD, at the time of this writing, is establishing its own internal review unit. The unit is being located in a separate suite of rooms outside the HPD building, to mitigate concerns that persons with a complaint would hesitate to come to the Police Department to lodge it. Other concerns have been raised, such as how officers in the unit will manage divided allegiances, have yet to be resolved. A new domestic violence unit shares the space.

The second issue is fiscal matters. As a result of the mandatory cap on comptime not being enforced, some police officers have accumulated extensive periods of comptime which, when used, may place a serious strain on police resources. The mayor has proposed hiring an independent accountant to oversee police spending.



Fire and Safety

As its name implies, the Holyoke Fire Department is responsible for fire protection in the city. In recent years, however, its roles and responsibilities have expanded significantly, to become Holyoke's primary safety agency and emergency service provider. The Fire Department responds to such incidents as medical emergencies, water rescues, elevator emergencies, vehicle entrapments, hazardous material spills, carbon monoxide leaks, and water heater leaks. Carbon monoxide detection was initiated two years ago. Recently, the Department acquired defibrillators, expanding its ability to respond to medical emergencies. Holyoke's firefighters are trained EMTs (Emergency Medical Technicians). Between 1996 to 1997, Fire Department responses to medical emergencies increased 44%, rising from 724 to 1,034 and demonstrating the city's increasing reliance on the department for non-fire-related services.

Because of the strategic distribution of fire stations throughout the city, the Fire Department is often able to respond to medical emergencies more quickly than ambulances, which have a single fixed point of departure. The Fire Department has been participating in a city-wide Ambulance Advisory Committee, initiated by the mayor's office to explore improvements in response times to medical emergencies and to coordinate roles among the different emergency service providers. While the Committee's recommendations have not yet been finalized, it has identified the need for a medical protocol for 911 responses.

In the spring of 1988 the Holyoke Fire Department commissioned a study from a consulting firm, Municipal Designs, Inc. of Braintree, MA to evaluate the conditions and distribution of Holyoke's five fire stations relative to their ability to effectively serve the

city. The report was developed working from the basic premise that effective fire and emergency response is dependent on the speed with which fire department personnel can respond to a call, which in turn depends on an optimal distribution of fire stations throughout the community. Major findings and recommendations include:

- Holyoke’s network of fire stations is in need of substantial capital improvements. Two stations are over 100 years old, and the newest is 30 years old; their original structures are inadequate to support the weight of modern day firefighting equipment. The report recommends updating the Department’s headquarters station on Maple Street, razing and rebuilding station #5 on South Street, expanding station #6 on Homestead Avenue, and abandoning station #2 on Main Street. The abandoning of station #2 is made possible by having the response area it covers duplicated by other, existing, stations — when originally built in the age of horse drawn fire wagons, stations were situated closer together than necessary today with the use of motorized vehicles.
- The type of development and infrequency of emergency response calls in West Holyoke near the Westfield and Southampton town lines does not appear to warrant the construction of a new fire station to serve that area of town, despite shifts in city population. Similarly, the northern extremity of the city near the Northampton town line, while beyond the city’s normal response time, also does not support the construction of a fire station.

Fire Chief La Fond has suggested considering incorporating a fire station or life safety complex into the Churchill neighborhood as part of that area’s Hope VI redevelopment project. However, this idea is not addressed in the Municipal Designs study, nor has it been pursued with the city’s Community Development Department. The Churchill redevelopment should sharply reduce fire hazards in that area.

The incidence of fire in Holyoke fluctuates sharply from year to year, with increases and decreases as large as 45%. Yet, looked at over time, the trend is clearly on the upswing: fires in Holyoke nearly doubled between 1992 and 1996, going from 109 to 208.

Incidents of Fire in Holyoke, 1992-1996

Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
# of Fires	109	151	191	155	208

Source: Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System, 1996

Fire statistics for Holyoke compare favorably with those of surrounding communities. Total property damage from fires was considerably less than any other neighboring municipality with the exception of South Hadley. The Department’s 1998 report to the Holyoke City Council notes a “measurable result in terms of effectiveness in fire loss management,” attributing improvements to early detection through city codes mandating the installation of smoke detectors and, in structures exceeding defined areas and heights, requirements for automatic sprinkler systems. However, the Fire Department’s consultants, Municipal Design, Inc., note that the full effect of such regulations will take many years to be seen in the city’s downtown area.

In the fall of 1997, consideration was given to extending requirements for sprinkler systems to all new construction, including single family residential. Such regulations are most common in the arid western part of the country, and have been reported effective in saving lives. However, they are surrounded by controversy because of the costs they add to home and apartment construction. In Holyoke, concerns focused around the question of whether these new costs would serve as a disincentive to developers and prevent the creation of new middle class housing. The measure did not pass the city council.

Fire Experience: Holyoke and Neighboring Communities, 1996

Community	Total Fires	Structure Fires	Vehicle Fires	Other Fires	Civilian		Fire Service		Dollar Loss
					Deaths	Injuries	Deaths	Injuries	
Chicopee	309	117	65	127	1	8	0	2	\$701,162
Holyoke	208	106	51	51	0	5	1	7	\$440,019
Northampton	146	42	29	75	2	3	0	4	\$864,910
Springfield	1,008	680	255	73	5	11	0	44	\$4,289,181
S. Hadley	19	12	6	1	0	1	0	0	\$25,975
W. Springfield	204	68	51	85	0	2	0	6	\$849,096

Source: Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System, 1996

Arson Experience: Holyoke and Neighboring Communities, 1996

Community	Total Fires	Structure Fires	Vehicle Fires	Other Fires	Civilian		Fire Service		Dollar Loss
					Deaths	Injuries	Deaths	Injuries	
Chicopee	66	7	5	54	0	1	0	0	\$31,275
Holyoke	45	20	8	17	0	1	0	4	\$263,800
Northampton	18	3	2	13	0	1	0	0	\$8,300
Springfield	177	79	52	46	0	0	0	16	\$1,254,032
S. Hadley	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	\$15,025
W. Springfield	48	14	7	27	0	0	0	2	\$139,150

Source: Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System, 1996

A little under 25% of fires in Holyoke in 1996 were the result of arson. The city has an arson squad consisting of 3 firefighters, 3 Holyoke police officers and 2 state police officers. Fire Department Chief David LaFond is proud of its effectiveness in identifying and prosecuting arsonists, noting that the unit has been called upon to train others in the state. The Department has initiated an arson awareness program for school children to combat the problem of firesetting by juveniles, which includes working with Americorps volunteers on summer camp activities. However, arson squad Captain Joseph Snyder notes that the requirements of state Education Reform have made school programs difficult, because of the need to devote most of the school day to the basic curriculum.

Other public safety education efforts are targeted at the city's elderly population; the Fire Department participates in activities with the Holyoke Housing Authority. Fire safety and arson prevention education are priorities for the Department. Chief LaFond would like the Department to acquire grantwriting assistance to enable it to expand education and prevention efforts.

Crime & Safety

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS HOLYOKE'S IMAGE AS A "CRIME-RIDDEN" CITY

1. Develop a proactive public relations campaign to conquer the image of Holyoke as an unsafe city, and improve police-community relations.

The Holyoke Police Department's public information officer should work with professionals in the field of public relations and marketing to create a proactive menu of activities designed to improve public perceptions of crime in the city, and generate a spirit of hope and improvement. Volunteer technical assistance may be available from professionals working in Holyoke, such as participants in the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce's Marketing Committee, and also from representatives of the local media. Activities to incorporate in a PR/marketing campaign might include:

- identifying and promoting crime success stories — for example, the "turn-around" of Ward I ("the Flats") which was a high crime area at one time and is now on par with the Highlands neighborhood;
- placing editorials and columns with the by-line of the Holyoke Police Chief in local media;
- adding a component to promote crime successes in HPD's speaking programs;
- providing direct communications — e.g. newsletter, flyer — on crime successes to the business community, realtors, civic leaders, and others whose work relates to the city's image;
- advertising — for example, newspaper announcements of low crime statistics in Philadelphia's Center City district were used in an effort to dispel fears of crime in that area. Posters or billboards should also be considered;
- posting crime and safety successes on the city's Web page.

HPD public relations activities concerning image should be coordinated with efforts coming out of the Mayor's office, the Chamber of Commerce Marketing Committee and the Holyoke Fire Department. A comprehensive public relations campaign for the Police Department should also promote crime prevention techniques, and address police-community relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING CRIME STATISTICS

2. Broaden utilization of the statistical capabilities of Holyoke's Police Department.

HPD's recently acquired statistical and crime mapping capabilities have the potential to establish baseline information which would allow the HPD to:

- track and report improvements and crime successes;
- evaluate approaches to crime prevention, such as community policing and zero tolerance;
- evaluate response rates and time;
- identify and quantify crime factors that could contribute to solution development such as location, times, perpetrator and/or victim characteristics, etc.

Actions

- Produce a summary statistical report on crime on an annual or twice-yearly basis for use internally within the HPD, in public relations efforts, and by municipal and community agencies. Though time consuming, the existence of such a document may result in fewer requests for customized information.
- Provide training in data collection and analysis for HPD officers, to allow them to use the capabilities of the system.
- Identify and implement the means of generating reports on police response times.
- Periodically release statistical updates to the media.
- Make HPD-produced crime data available on Holyoke’s website.*

3. Support and build upon HPD’s efforts to use a “Compstat” process.

Expansion of the Compstat process is labor intensive and costly, the Police Department should also consider interim means of expanding use of its existing statistical resources.

Actions

- Develop a plan for expanding its computerized mapping and statistical comparison capabilities beyond the Churchill neighborhood project.
- Continue the approach of focusing crime data collection activities on an area of the city that is the target of revitalization efforts. Elsewhere in the master plan, the compilation of detailed crime statistics for the city’s downtown is recommended. The Police Department should consider this as the next location for using the Compstat process.
- Identify and implement low-cost alternatives to collecting and mapping crime data.
- Involve neighborhood organizations, Crime Watch groups and business owners in data collection activities. Also collect information from municipal agencies concerned with code enforcement, housing and transportation.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING POLICE APPROACHES TO CRIME

4. Address public concerns about COPs project implementation through pro-active assessment, evaluation, reporting and planning.

Actions

- Initiate and maintain monthly neighborhood meetings for each community policing substation where COPS officers report on the problems identified and successes achieved by the community policing unit.
- Integrate progress reports on community policing with HPD’s public information activities — celebrating COPS successes in the media can boost commitment to the approach from both citizens and officers.
- Plan for the continuation of COPs concepts beyond the 6-year grant cycle. Involve Americorps, neighborhood groups and others in the planning process.*

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

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5. Formally recognize the Americorps program as a community policing partner with the Holyoke Police Department.

The use of a bi-lingual civilian community liaison to provide a range of services out of the substations has been cited as an effective community policing strategy by the National Crime Prevention Council and the Eisenhower Foundation. Holyoke has this function served by its Americorps volunteers. It should be acknowledged, supported and expanded.

Actions

- Conduct a process whereby Americorps and HPD establish partnership roles and responsibilities for community policing. This process might involve community members, and/or “experts” in community policing who can identify ways to make the best use of the partnership.
- Create a formal agreement between the HPD and Americorps outlining the established rules and responsibilities.
- Communicate these roles and responsibilities to CPS officers.

6. Foster the development of relationships between COPS officers and residents of the neighborhoods they serve by maintaining consistent staffing of community policing substations.

While many community police officers in Holyoke do work in a single neighborhood, consistent staffing is not universally applied and this needs to happen if the relationship building that is the foundation of community policing is to occur. Officers should be assigned to a particular neighborhood for a minimum of two years. Additional activities should also be undertaken to promote resident-police cooperation, such as the following.

Actions

- Consider equipping community policing officers with personal beepers. This system, used successfully in Springfield, enables residents to directly contact police they know and have a rapport with.
- Distribute materials to residents explaining the community policing program, introducing the officers and Americorps volunteers assigned to their neighborhood and inviting their participation. Materials should feature basic information on the neighborhood community policing substation, including address, hours of operation, programs and services offered, phone number(s), etc. Materials may be in the form of brochures, door knob hangers, posters, refrigerator magnets, etc.
- Utilize more foot patrols. The National Crime Prevention Council notes that “when police patrol on foot, they are more likely to talk with residents and be seen as community members, rather than reactive police officers...” Currently, Holyoke’s community police officers use bicycles most of the time, switching to foot patrols primarily during inclement weather.
- Conduct neighborhood surveys and house-to-house visits as means of reaching out to the community and identifying problems.

7. Enhance the visibility, and expand the function, of community policing substations.

As noted above, Holyoke’s storefront substation has been observed to be better-used than substations in residential apartments. This corresponds with experiences in other cities, such as Dorchester, MA, Houston, TX and Abington, PA. Research by the National Center for Community Policing led to a Neighborhood Network Center model for using

community policing stations as “one-stop-shopping” places for social services. Between 1990 and 1995, crime in the model’s Lansing, MI neighborhood dropped 75%.

Actions

- Holyoke should pursue Americorps’ proposal to move all substations to ground level.
- Large storefront stations should be considered to enable the city to use them more fully as crime prevention resource centers, distribution points for information on social services, health programs, anti-drug programs, etc., and for the after-school programs run by Americorps.
- Consider establishing a substation in the Holyoke Mall. While such a substation would not be connected with city residents in the way a neighborhood substation is, the mall is frequented by Holyoke youth and could be used as a location for reaching out to them.*

8. Conduct cultural awareness programs and training for both HPD officers and community residents.

While the Holyoke Police Department has conducted “sensitivity training” for officers, it has been suggested that cultural awareness training might be made more effective if efforts were directed at developing mutual understanding and respect between groups (e.g. municipal employees and neighborhood residents; anglos and Hispanics) rather than sensitizing one group to the needs of another.

Actions

- Build on the Crime Watch program’s use of a “culture night” event which brings police and residents together to share food and conversation;
- Provide cultural awareness and language training for relevant government employees, police officers, and community leaders.
- Provide programs in Holyoke history and clutter out of the substations. A Hispanic participant at one master plan culture forum noted that learning about the waves of new arrivals to Holyoke before this most recent migration from Puerto Rico helped put her current experience of cultural conflict in context.
- Work with neighborhood religious institutions to develop cultural awareness programs and incorporate such messages into existing programs and events.

9. Develop and distribute bi-lingual, printed material on Holyoke crime prevention services.

The Hampden County Sheriff’s Dept. publishes a *Domestic Violence Resource and Assistance Manual* providing information and contacts on shelters, advocacy groups and other needs of domestic violence victims. Holyoke should follow this example and prepare a directory of crime prevention services available in the city. In addition to its use for the general public such a directory would also be helpful to officers on the force who may not be fully versed in the services and programs offered by their own Department.

Actions

- Prepare a bi-lingual “Holyoke Crime Prevention Resource Guide,” including information on HPD’s newly created domestic violence and internal investigation units, the Crime Watch and Neighborhood Watch programs, property identification,

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

home and business security audits, the availability of customized statistical reports, gang prevention program, DARE, HPD speakers bureau, etc. Tips on crime prevention should also be included.

- Distribute the guide widely, through the city's website, community policing stations, neighborhood groups, retailers, etc.

10. Support and invigorate HPD's Crime Watch program.

According to Crime Watch officer Jane DeShais, the program's budget is roughly \$1,000/year. She also notes that "police need to step out of the picture" in order for the program to be successful, but that it is difficult and labor intensive to generate the needed community participation. The Crime Watch program is based on concepts of neighbor looking out for neighbor, which many espoused at master plan public forums.

Actions

- Coordinate the HPD Crime Watch program with potential planning and community development efforts to organize neighborhood associations. The master plan focus group on Homes and Neighborhoods noted that associations were easiest to get started when residents were rallied around a cause — crime prevention may be used as a seed cause to get neighborhood associations started.
- Increase the Crime Watch budget, allowing it to utilize, reprint and distribute more information from the National Crime Prevention Council — for example, launching increased efforts during National Crime Prevention Week in October.
- Launch a Crime Watch newsletter providing tips and news of upcoming program events.
- Utilize the Crime Watch program to feed information to, and improve coordination among, private security for the city's businesses and institutions.

11. Focus some community policing efforts on supporting the needs of new arrivals.

Holyoke is a gateway community, and to some extent crime arises from new arrivals' unfamiliarity with cultural norms (e.g. prohibitions against drinking on public streets), and from stresses associated with poverty and transition. Local systems that help deter, detect, punish and redirect criminal behavior may not be understood or even seen as beneficial. The situation is not unique. Cities across the country, including Honolulu, Portland, OR, Sacramento, Milwaukee and Seattle have created police programs geared to developing cooperative relationships between police and new arrivals from different cultures.

Actions

- Have community policing substations partner with city agencies serving troubled populations, such as the HALO Center, Enlace de Familias, neighborhood churches, and others. Develop the capacity of the substations to become a point of referral to these organizations.
- Consider providing community-based transition assistance services out of the substations, such as courses in ESL, banking and managing family budgets, employment, conflict resolution and crime reporting.
- Provide Spanish-language victim and witness services.

12. Develop strategic coalitions organized around combating key problems.

Community coalitions can mobilize the array of city resources needed to target specific problems such as drug traffic, gang activity, domestic violence, shoplifting and abandoned buildings. In the early '90's, the federal Justice Department piloted drug prevention coalitions in ten cities, and the approach is now being embraced and promoted by the National Crime Prevention Council. Holyoke, with its myriad social service agencies and providers, should consider using the coalition approach not only in relation to drugs, but to the key community policing problems identified above. The Holyoke Police Department already participates in several task forces on drugs, gangs and domestic violence at the state and county levels. Strategic coalitions could take the lessons home, and organize action, within the city and its neighborhoods.

13. Conduct a workshop with community policing officers, Americorps volunteers and others to identify what they see as COPs successes, and generate ideas for strengthening the program.

The most effective ideas for supporting and expanding community policing in Holyoke may come from the officers and volunteers involved in the program.

Action

- The HPD should consider holding a workshop, perhaps on an annual basis, where those officers involved in community policing use a facilitated SWOT process (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) to chart the future direction of the program. At the close of the process, participants should be asked to take responsibility for pursuing the ideas generated.

14. Support and monitor zero-tolerance activities.

The rapid success of the zero-tolerance approach in major cities such as New York and Boston raises hopes for its potential to improve crime in Holyoke. However, critics in those cities have noted the potential for the approach to lead to civil liberties abuses.

Actions

- Use the Holyoke Police Department's new statistical capabilities to monitor the effects of the zero-tolerance patrol, so that success can be measured and promoted, and that the approach may be expanded as warranted.
- HPD's new internal investigation unit should analyze complaints to monitor whether those related to zero-tolerance patrols are disproportionate.

15. Combine the zero tolerance approach with community policing.

The first community policing unit in Springfield used a zero tolerance approach to neighborhood problems in order to demonstrate its commitment to the neighborhood, achieve quick, noticeable results and win resident trust and cooperation.

16. Have police work in partnership with city agencies to identify the focus of zero tolerance activities.

Municipal agencies, such as the Office of Community Development, Department of Public Works, Building inspector and others will have first hand knowledge of problem areas needing zero tolerance law enforcement.

Action

- Establish a protocol for communications between city agencies and police officers responsible for targeting zero tolerance activities.

17. Enlist the assistance of Holyoke’s considerable religious community in crime prevention activities.

Each month church leaders in Holyoke get together for an exchange of ideas and information at Fernandez’ restaurant. This gathering presents an opportunity for the religious community to address the issue of crime. Discussion might be facilitated by a presentation by the police, master plan implementation committee members, community groups and others involved in crime prevention. Activities to be considered by the group include:

- prayer vigils related to crime;
- church-sponsored social service activities, especially for youth;
- ecumenical community events;
- church-sponsored Crime Watch and Neighborhood Watch programs;
- approaches to domestic violence, including church-led fundraising for shelters and pastoral counseling.*

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS YOUTH CRIME

18. Expand mentoring programs in the city.

Mentoring programs are a central focus in many youth development/crime prevention programs. The concept is loosely defined, and there a variety of approaches. While some work better than others, all have benefits. The actions listed below suggest promoting a range of programs in order to maximize the number of youths served.

Actions

- Facilitate the expansion of Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Holyoke. BB/BS is the oldest established youth mentoring program in the country, and has a chapter in Hampden County, which covers Holyoke. Efforts should be made to assist the organization in recruiting and training mentors. For example, Crime Watch officers could mention mentoring, and the BB/BS program, in their presentations on community crime prevention.
- Use Police as mentors. Sports and recreation programs help bring young people together with police who can help them make anti-crime, anti-drug choices. Models to consider include the Police Athletic League (PAL) and the Dorchester (MA) Youth Collaborative. The HPD should also consider developing a mentor program to pair officers with young people interested in law enforcement as a career.
- Pair teens with young children — this is already done with success on a limited scale within the Holyoke Public Schools system, and should be expanded; the experience is as valuable for the mentor as for the student receiving guidance;
- Establish a mentoring program with Holyoke Community College;
- Promote mentoring programs by corporations and faith institutions. The city should consider providing an example by establishing a mentor program to help and encourage municipal employees to counsel youth.

19. Create and implement a DARE curriculum for adults.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

As noted above, this was a popular suggestion in the crime public forum. The Holyoke Police Department makes available speakers on a variety of crime prevention topics. A DARE program for adults would go beyond these activities to:

focus on providing parents with the same information their children are getting in elementary school, facilitating family discussion of issues;

use the DARE name, to attract broader interest and participation.

The national DARE program does have a parent track, which the HPD should pursue.

20. Increase and expand school programs directed at preventing criminal behavior.

Many of the ideas at the master plan public form on crime revolved around the need for values education. The sentiment has been echoed in subsequent interviews, and in speaking with teachers and parent volunteers. A number of curriculum packages are available which focus on values education, and on gang and drug-resistance. These include:

- The Heartwood Ethics Curriculum for elementary school students, developed by the Heartwood Institute in Pittsburgh, PA;
- The Character Education program of the Thomas Jefferson Research Center in Pasadena, CA;
- The Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program, developed by the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, with separate curricula for elementary and middle school students, available in both English and Spanish;
- “Project Yes! Yes to Education and Skills,” from the California Governor’s Office, for use in the 2nd through 7th grades. The curriculum links prevention information to traditional school subjects.

In addition, one of Holyoke’s elementary schools has a values program for its kindergarten students.

Action

- The Holyoke Public Schools should team up with the police department to evaluate and plan for implementing values-based and/or gang-resistance education.

21. Establish “safe havens” to provide constructive outlets for youth.

Safe havens are secured locations free of guns, violence and drugs where an array of recreational and social services are provided for youth. They are a common component to the successful crime programs studied by the Eisenhower foundation, and correspond well to needs voiced by Holyokers at master plan public forums for “more youth activities.”

Actions

- Identify sites where safe havens may be established. Possibilities include the YMCA and Boys and Girls, Inc., religious institutions, public schools, or, given adequate facilities, community policing stations. The strategy may be implemented with a single, model site and expanded once success is established.
- Coordinate a team of recreation and service providers to offer activities at the site(s).
- Involve the community policing teams as activity sponsors.
- Arrange for “zero-tolerance” security both at the site and its surrounding area. Arrangements for safe transportation to and from the site(s) may also be needed.

22. Utilize the Holyoke Mall as a venture for providing structured programs for youth.

Mall security director Jack Brida notes that large numbers of youth use the Holyoke Mall as a recreational outlet, resulting in a significant shoplifting problem and many accidents on the mall escalators. At the same time, programs at mall has hosted for youth been very successful, pointing to an opportunity for turning a problem into an asset. The youth drawn to the mall present a substantial audience for constructive programs.

Action

- Facilitate collaborations between the Holyoke Mall, youth service providers in the city, and the Holyoke Police Department.

23. Provide increased opportunities for youth leadership and service.

Programs that organize youth to do community service keep them off the street and provide opportunities for skills development. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, they are a key ingredient in combating youth crime.

Actions

- Support and continue existing programs in Holyoke which provide service opportunities for youth, including Americorps and El Arco Iris;
- Recognize and support the role of the religious community in engaging youth. For example, the Bethlehem Baptist Church currently has a program where teens are trained, using videos and workbooks, to “network spiritually” with at-risk peers. Reproduction of such materials would facilitate expansion of the program to other faith institutions.
- Create new programs to provide young people with leadership and service opportunities. For example, train students to expand DARE-type activities to other grades; utilize students in park maintenance, rehabilitation and other physical activities.

24. Promote youth activities at religious institutions.

The need for more after-school activities, to keep young people away from trouble, was cited repeatedly at the master plan public forum for youth, and at other events as well. Churches and other faith organizations offer numerous venues for youth activities, such as dances and community projects. Moreover, their distribution throughout the community makes them readily accessible. Activities may be organized by the institutions themselves or, alternatively, they can serve as vehicles for programs organized by other organizations.

Action

- Implementation of this strategy will best be undertaken as part of other strategies listed here, such as #17 above which suggests getting crime prevention on the agenda of Holyoke's church leadership.

25. Explore the establishment of a community-based “boot camp” for young people in trouble with the law.

- This suggestion from City Councilor Joe McGiverin would address the problem of juvenile repeat offenders, which currently have no programs available geared to their specific situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASING SAFETY THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

26. Enhance and expand the city's vacant lot program

Unused vacant lots contribute to the derelict appearance of an area. Streets in Holyoke's downtown and lower wards are dotted with them, and more will be created as a result of demolition plans. While the city does engage in such activities as offering city-owned lots for sale to abutters and inviting neighborhood residents to “adopt-a-lot,” more aggressive action is needed to promote beautification — particularly on private lots where the city does not have direct control. Vacant lot programs that facilitate their use by community gardeners until redevelopment plans are secured were mentioned in several Holyoke Master plan public forums and focus groups, including those on image and people and homes and neighborhoods as well as crime.

Actions

- Create “instant pocket parks” on demolition sites by grading and seeding, and adding flowers, benches, trash receptacles and, perhaps, outdoor sculpture. Springfield took this approach after the Steiger's building in its downtown was demolished. Involve neighborhood residents in creation of the pocket parks to give them a sense of ownership, foster volunteer maintenance and prevent vandalism.
- The city should develop a program to broker lease arrangements between community gardeners and private owners of vacant lots. It should identify personnel responsible for developing such arrangements and promote that office as a single point of contact to community members looking for gardening opportunities. While there are legal and administrative distinctions to be made regarding whether a lot is owned by the city or in private hands, such distinctions are not especially relevant to citizens whose primary interest is neighborhood beautification and gardening. It is important that citizens interested in lot beautification have “one stop shopping” regardless of whether the lot they are interested in is in public or private ownership.
- Offer DPW assistance in the initial heavy work of establishing a garden — e.g. moving rubble, grading, digging, — to community groups willing to take on long term maintenance and administration of the lot.
- Have community policing officers and Americorps volunteers help residents and community groups with vacant lot beautification, including working with the city and landlords on lot lease arrangements and organizing donations of plant materials from nurseries.

- Develop innovative means of overcoming barriers to lot beautification. For example, consider portable raised beds that can be installed at one site by the DPW and moved to a new lot when the first needs to be abandoned due to development plans. Such a system would address both problems of poor contaminated soil and preservation of volunteer gardener's sweat equity in a site.
- Consider developing some lots by the city as tree and plant nurseries to supply low cost plant materials to city-wide beautification projects.

27. Promote use of Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) standards.

CPTED standards are most cost-effective and easily implemented in new construction, but may also be applied to existing development.

Actions

- Formalize a procedure to solicit police comments during site plan review of development projects.
- Promote CPTED principles via Crime Watch public information sessions and business audits.
- Provide CPTED training to police and municipal personnel in the city's planning, community development, economic development and building departments. This may be accomplished initially at low cost by bringing planning and development personnel together with police to share expertise — e.g. crime prevention principles, design and plan reading skills, etc. Later, if needed, CPTED experts can be brought in.
- Incorporated CPTED initiatives into revisions of Holyoke's zoning ordinance. Consider special provisions for high-risk businesses such as liquor stores, 24-hour stores, etc.*

28. Use community policing to identify needed neighborhood physical improvements.

A new objective for the Americorps program is to have the program volunteers conduct neighborhood assessments of lighting, street and building access control, visibility, etc. This is an important activity, and should involve community policing officers and neighborhood residents as well.

Actions

- Establish a protocol for reporting needed improvements to the appropriate party (e.g. property owner, city department, etc.) and conducting follow-up to ensure action is taken. Ensure that community policing substation officers, volunteers and neighborhood residents are aware of and understand the protocol.
- Recruit and involve neighborhood young people in neighborhood assessment activities, perhaps through afterschool programs.
- Document both needed and achieved improvements using photographs. Distribute disposable cameras to volunteers involved in assessment activities. Maintain records at the community policing substation.
- Wherever possible, work with neighborhood associations and religious institutions to organize neighborhood volunteers to implement needed improvements.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

- Report on physical improvements at monthly community policing meetings, and to the city at large via the HPD public information office.

29. Focus code enforcement activities on buildings known to harbor crime.

This strategy seeks to make the best use of limited city resources.

Actions

- Identify target buildings and landlords, using police statistics and first hand information from officers and neighborhood residents.
- Create teams of tenant groups, law enforcement, building inspection, board of health, community development, tax, fire and other relevant government personnel to bring about compliance.
- Consider deploying a zero tolerance approach to slum landlords.
- Explore increased use of tax foreclosure and receivership to bring problem properties under city control.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING POLICE-CITY RELATIONS

30. Continue the public discussion over a Holyoke Police Commission.

Actions

- Develop a clear, and perhaps measurable, set of objectives for the commission.
- Monitor the new initiatives of the HPD internal review unit to determine whether they pose an adequate alternative to meeting the objectives for a commission.
- Establish a timetable for resolving the issue. Publicize whatever decision is reached to the public, providing the rationale for the city's choice.

31. Initiate activities designed to promote public trust in the police.

Many of the strategies and actions given above relate to this issue, including:

- public progress reports on community policing and other special initiatives;
- enhanced statistics — in particular, tracking and publicizing response time to calls;
- planning to continue and expand community policing;
- implementing physical improvements to neighborhood safety;
- increased use of foot patrols;
- establishing partnerships with social service agencies.

FIRE AND SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

32. Pursue the recommendations of Municipal Designs, Inc. , working in conjunction with capital planning efforts in the city.

Elsewhere in the master plan is a recommendation for the city to embark on a coordinated Capital Improvement Planning process. The substantial nature of Fire Department capital needs adds to the strength of that recommendation, as they will surely have to compete for resources with other capital projects in the city.

Action

- Ensure Fire Department participation in city capital planning efforts.

33. Explore the concept of regional fire protection contracts for outlying areas of the city that currently do not warrant their own fire stations.

Intermunicipal contracts with neighboring communities might make it feasible to establish fire stations in west Holyoke, allowing the city to provide service to the growing number of families in this developing area. Service contracts might be modeled on existing intermunicipal agreements with Holyoke and neighboring communities concerning water supply.

34. Increase fire prevention activities.

Although the Fire Department has been able to mitigate fire loss, the incidence of fires in Holyoke is increasing at an alarming rate. Efforts should be undertaken to identify and address the causes of this trend.

35. Explore expanded Fire Department collaborations with other city agencies concerning public education and fire prevention activities.

Working with existing programs, such as Crime Watch, can streamline efforts, use municipal resources efficiently, and deliver information to the public in a coordinated manner. Other potential areas of collaboration include grantwriting, promotion of smoke detector use, and possibly building inspection.

Actions

- Incorporate fire prevention programs and information on Fire Department services into the outreach efforts of the community policing program. Opportunities include conducting fire safety and prevention programs through Crime Watch and at the community policing substations. When implemented, fire safety information should be included in printed materials on crime and safety services in the city (see 9, above).
- Identify and pursue opportunities for additional collaborations with youth service organizations, neighborhood groups, community development, etc.
- Investigate the potential for increased collaboration between the city's fire and building inspection officials to identify and crack down on buildings which have a high fire hazard potential

36. Incorporate Fire Department successes into the city's marketing efforts.

As noted above, Holyoke's fire statistics compare favorably with neighboring communities, and the Fire Department offers state of the art emergency services. The Departments' successes are an asset that could be used to the city's advantage in upcoming image and marketing campaigns. Fire Chief LaFond has offered to speak with Holyoke realtors to acquaint them about the city's record in fire safety.

Action

- Establish communications between the Fire Department and those involved in marketing the city, including the Chamber of Commerce marketing committee and local realtors.

37. Pursue the recommendations of the city's Ambulance Advisory Committee, including implementation of a 911 medical protocol.

When released the master plan Committee should consider incorporating major recommendations of the Ambulance Advisory Committee into the master plan.

Crime & Safety

Implementation

What follows are tables containing a succinct, numbered list of the recommendations presented in the previous section, along with those parties identified by a master plan implementation committee as being most appropriate to assume primary and secondary responsibility for carrying them out. These tables are a work in progress. The master plan implementation committee and Holyoke's Planning Department will be working with the entities listed and others to obtain commitments for taking on the projects listed. As these commitments are arranged, the tables will be refined, and information on project schedules and progress will be added.

implementation chart to come

7. Education

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Recommendations Supplement

Implementation

Education

Goals & Objectives

Goal: **Develop the educational resources of the city to their maximum potential.**

Objectives:

1. Provide more educational programs for the entire community, including all age groups.
2. Improve the physical appearance of the schools, both inside the buildings and on the school grounds.
3. Provide job training for those seeking to enter or re-enter the labor force or to enhance their job skills.
4. Expand the use of our public school buildings outside of regular school hours.
5. Consider cultural diversity in making any education decisions.

Education

Information & Assessment

Pride in Holyoke's Educational System

The master plan process involved a series of 14 public forums to air citizen's views on Holyoke's strengths and weaknesses, and to generate ideas for addressing the city's needs. Repeatedly, Holyoke's schools were cited as one of the city's strong points. Much of the discussion at the final event, which focused on Education, concerned the quality of education available in Holyoke, and how much it has improved over the last several years.

When asked for the one thing they would do to change education in the city, several forum participants said they would promote this improvement. Mayoral assistant Elaine Pluta said she would like to see a billboard advertising the quality of Holyoke's schools and inviting people into the schools to see for themselves how good they are. This notion of promoting the schools by showing people around was echoed by others. Many commented on building improvements, and on the quality of the libraries and computer equipment. One mother marveled at the array of physical therapy services available to special needs children. Open houses were suggested, for both Holyoke residents and for people outside the community.

Holyoke has much to be proud of in regard to education. Since state education reform initiatives of 1993, funding for Holyoke's public schools has more than doubled, increasing from \$24 million in 1992 to \$53 million in 1997. Facilities have been improved and updated. Computer labs have been established at each school. New textbooks and other resource materials have been bought. Increases in Special Education and Bilingual Education staff now exceed state requirements. Teacher training options have been expanded. Full-time city funded reading teachers have been added to all schools to help implement the new reading curriculum. And test scores have been creeping up.

Comparisons with neighboring communities and statewide averages, however, can be deflating to Holyoke's pride in its educational system. Student test scores are lower and drop out rates are higher; substantially fewer graduates move from high school to four year colleges, while many more go directly into the workforce, foregoing a college degree.

Context becomes important when considering the achievements of Holyoke's educational system. The city's student population is extremely disadvantaged, with the highest percent in the state of children living in single family households, the highest percent of children in public schools on AFDC, the highest percent of children under five living in poverty, the highest teen pregnancy rate, and the highest incidence of reported child abuse and neglect. While these factors are certainly nothing to be proud of, they

demonstrate the challenges faced by the city's educators and they affect student performance.

**Massachusetts Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) Scores,
Holyoke (FY94 & FY96), Neighboring Communities and Statewide Averages
(FY96)**

Subject District	Reading			Math			Science			Social Studies		
	grade 4	grade 8	grade 10	grade 4	grade 8	grade 10	grade 4	grade 8	grade 10	grade 4	grade 8	grade 10
Holyoke, 1994	1080	1090	1140	1080	1110	1160	1090	1060	1130	1100	1080	1150
Holyoke, 1996	1120	1170	1190	1140	1140	1190	1150	1140	1130	1130	1140	1180
Northampton	1390	1380	1320	1380	1330	1340	1400	1290	1350	1390	1300	1320
Chicopee	1270	1350	1260	1250	1260	1260	1290	1330	1280	1260	1280	1240
South Hadley	1350	1390	1310	1320	1370	1320	1340	1350	1310	1320	1320	1300
Springfield	1230	1230	1170	1240	1190	1180	1250	1190	1200	1230	1170	1170
State	1350	1340	1310	1330	1290	1310	1360	1330	1310	1340	1300	1320

Source: MA Dept. of Education

**School District Comparisons, FY'95
Holyoke, Neighboring Communities and Statewide Averages**

School District	Per Pupil Expenditure		Drop Out Rates	Graduate Plans			1 st Lang. Not Eng.	% in Private Schools	# of Sports	Magne Schools
	Regular	Bilingual		2yr	4yr	work				
Holyoke	5,268	7,536	5.5%	33%	20%	30%	53.9%	* 15.6%	24	yes
Northampton	4,707	7,705	2.7%	19%	51%	6%	8.6%	12.9%	23	no
Chicopee	4,471	8,091	na	38%	31%	22%	7.7%	18.3%	21	no
South Hadley	3,548	6,999	0.5%	30%	49%	11%	1.1%	8.3%	23	no
Springfield	4,289	8,748	3.0%	30%	35%	15%	26.6%	19.6%	59	yes
State Average	4,528	8,241	3.5%	18%	54%	16%	12.7%	10.8%	na	na

Source: MA Dept. of Education

The word about improvements in Holyoke's school system does appear to be getting out. In the fall of 1997, the Holyoke Public Schools produced a video promoting the positive impact of education reform in the city. Representatives of the Holyoke Public Schools meet annually with local realtors, who are encouraged to work with the HPS Parent Information Center to arrange school tours for interested families. Realtors have publicly credited these tours and the increasing reputation of the Holyoke schools, in part, for a resurgence of interest from young families in buying homes in the city.



* This figure is a percentage of the total number of students in both public and private schools in Holyoke, and includes students from other communities attending Holyoke parochial schools. When these students are subtracted, the percent of Holyoke residents attending private schools in Holyoke is closer to 11 percent.

Resources and Programming

As may be expected in a community of Holyoke's size and diversity, the city has a wide variety of educational opportunities, resources and programs:

Daycare and Preschool

There are a number of daycare centers and preschools in Holyoke, including Brighter Beginning, Children's House, Head Start, the Holyoke Day Nursery, Kid's Place, St. Paul's and the Mount Marie Child Care Center. Additionally the Holyoke Public schools offers a free preschool program for several hours a week, which is considered a both a great asset and a well kept secret. John Mahoney, HPS director of federal and state programs, notes that the "pre-school programs offered by the Holyoke Public schools include those serving special needs children... and non-special education students who serve as "role models." [They] are not intended to provide for other needs." Despite the variety of available options, Rosa Frau, the Holyoke Public Schools bi-lingual program director, observes that many bi-lingual students enter the school system unprepared — without either preschool or kindergarten, and lacking such basic skills as knowing numbers and colors. focus group members have observed that quality daycare is an option for middle income families and for those with very low incomes who qualify for subsidies and/or HeadStart. While more than 600 students entered kindergarten in Holyoke in 1997, the school census shows 155 enrolled in public pre-school education. Figures for private enrollments were unavailable.

Holyoke Schools Census, October 1997

	Public Schools		Private Schools	
	# of schools	# of students	# of schools	# of students
pre-K	(6)	155	na	na
elementary	8	3851	4	680
middle	4	1689	4	307
high	2	2029	1	383
ungraded/other	na	178	2	49

source: Holyoke Public Schools

Student Population Demographics

Holyoke's Public and Private Schools, 1997

	% White	% Hispanic	% from low income families
Holyoke Public Schools	27%	69%	70%
Holyoke Private/Parochial Schools	93%	5%	12%

source: Holyoke Public Schools

Grade school

Holyoke has 14 public schools and 11 private and parochial programs. Special features of the public school system include:

- a large, federally funded Title I program providing supplementary services, additional teachers and aides, teacher professional development and parent activities. Title I funds a full-time parent coordinator to teach parents how to work with their children at home;
- Magnet Middle School for the Arts. As shown in the comparative information on neighboring school districts, the presence of a magnet school is an asset unavailable in most other communities;
- an extensive Special Education program. Once concentrated in a few schools, special education classes are now widely dispersed, providing greater choice for families. HPS's 1996 Superintendent's report notes that "the type and severity of handicapping conditions now served within [the Holyoke public schools] requires an ever increasing range of specialists, equipment and programs." Rising costs are an issue needing exploration.
- sizable Transitional Bilingual education (TBE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Thirty-two percent of HPS students are enrolled in TBE. Both programs are undergoing substantial improvements as part of the state's Education Reform program.
- upcoming implementation of a Reading Recovery program to increase literacy. Since being initiated at the Plains School in South Hadley 8 years ago, standardized test scores have risen steadily. An issue in Holyoke with this program, is the lack of available Spanish language trainers. One has been located who will train teachers in Enfield, CT. for the 1998-1999 school year.
- Dean Technical High School, providing education and training in 17 different trades to between 700 and 750 students, as well as evening classes for adults. According to Jerry Cortadino, coordinator of the school's cooperative education program, Dean receives between 250 and 300 applications for 200 freshman slots. Despite this, the *Projected Enrollments and School Capacities* report prepared for HPS stated "no major problems are contemplated at the high school level."
- the Holyoke Intensive Program, an alternative school for 25 - 30 middle school age children with behavior problems, currently located within the Metcalf School — a proposal is being considered to start a new school for up to 70 kids with behavior problems, to be located in a rented facility;
- referrals to the Street School for high school-aged students with severe behavioral problems. The Street School is a small private school (42 students in 1997-98) providing special education services for delinquent and disruptive students, whose tuition is paid for by the sending school district and partially reimbursed by the state. The school's director, Judy Vasquez, notes an 80 percent success rate in graduating students which she credits to the school's small size, team spirit

between administrator, teachers and students, and to giving students a sense of responsibility for both themselves and the program.

Additionally, Education Reform funding has enabled the district to establish a large number of new programs, including a Safety and Security Plan, Megaskills (a parent training program), after-school programs in literacy and tutoring, a middle school pilot of SCORE (a student-to-student mentoring program), collaboration with the Holyoke Children's Museum on health education, school-business partnerships (including business executive mentoring for school principals), and an accountability system for school attendance, discipline and drop outs.

As noted above, the Holyoke public schools received many accolades in both public forums and interviews. This was particularly true for the elementary grades, whose teachers were described as awesome," "very creative," and "incredible." Yet a number of issues were also raised:

- *The high drop out rate.* Hispanics exhibit a high drop out rate across the country, so in Holyoke's high drop out rate is attributable to broader, cultural and social problems outside of the Holyoke Public Schools. However, several persons interviewed suggested that long time teachers and administrators in the Holyoke public school system have not adjusted to the dramatic cultural shifts in the student population in recent years, and that issues of racism and classism influence the efforts made to keep students in the system. More than one person interviewed for this paper expressed the opinion that multiple suspensions were used "with a clear intent" to push undesirable or borderline students to drop out.
- *Diminished parental involvement at the middle school and high school levels.* As with Hispanic drop out rates, this is another trend seen across the country. Moreover, this diminished parental involvement is experienced by students at the same time they make the difficult transition from the nurturing creative atmosphere of the elementary school to the academic-focused upper grades.
- *Teacher attitudes* were mentioned by forum participants and interview subjects alike as being problematic on a selective basis, with some teachers being abusive to students and parents. One person commented that the demands on teachers are different with needier student populations, and with children from a Hispanic culture "of feeling and touching." Teachers need to become "problem solvers" and "role models." Conflicts between old ways and new needs may be resolved somewhat through teacher turnover — retirements and resignations are leading the HPS to hire more than 70 new teachers for the FY98-99 school year. Also, a programmatic self-study of the HPS middle schools included a subcommittee on "school climate."
- *The relative lack of school choices at the high school level.* Springfield, albeit a larger school district, has nine public high schools including several charter schools, a vocational school, and a school of science and technology. Holyoke, in contrast, has two — a general academic school and a vocational school — although it should be recognized that Holyoke High School has five major

courses of study (Competitive College Prep, College Prep, Core Studies, College Business Management and Accounting, and Business Studies). It was suggested that smaller schools, more closely tailored to student interests, might be more successful in keeping high school students in school and raising their post-graduation plans.

- Forum participants wanted to see *more programs for students* directed at improving ethics and preventing risky behaviors. Each school has programs that reward good behavior and positive character traits — e.g. gold stars awarded at Morgan School for positive behavioral traits, and an attempt at a Virtue Tree program at the White School. However, school officials point out that time constraints are a serious obstacle to expanded programming, as most of the day's work needs to be oriented toward equipping students to meet state standards, with its focus on the basic subject areas. The Education Reform initiative requires minimum amounts of time each day for the core curriculum. HPS has already increased the school day by 15 minutes in order to accommodate extra activities such as school assemblies and sports rallies.
- Forum participants expressed dismay that many Holyoke school teachers, administrators and officials send their children to private, religious schools instead of to the public system that employs them. Some parents interviewed explained their choice as being motivated by a desire to give their children a religious education, and to place them in an environment that was less beset with the myriad personal family problems than many Holyoke schoolchildren bring with them into the classroom. It also needs to be acknowledged that Holyoke High School sees many students entering from private schools in order to take advantage of the educational choices and facilities offered there.

Higher education

A total of thirteen colleges lie within a 15 mile radius of Holyoke, providing a broad range higher education opportunities. Most closely linked to the city is Holyoke Community College, which offers a two year, career-oriented program, a "university parallel" leading to transfer to a four year institution, and continuing education providing specialized training for business and industry.

In the fall of 1997, Holyoke residents comprised 13% (448) of the 3,536 students in HCC's day division. The college has an ongoing relationship with Holyoke's two high schools to enhance the transition from high school to community college. The Upward Bound program provides 25 Holyoke students each year with afterschool and summer school enrichment — 3 weeks at HCC and 3 weeks at UMASS. HCC also works with Holyoke High School on federally funded School-to-Career and Tech Prep programs, providing career planning services and developing internship opportunities. HCC also serves Holyoke by opening its facilities to the public, including its library, athletic fields, theater (home of Holyoke's Symphony Orchestra), and space for community meetings.

Colleges in Close Proximity to Holyoke

College	Location	Approx. Distance From Holyoke
Holyoke Community	Holyoke	na
American International	Springfield	10 mi.
Springfield	Springfield	10 mi.
Springfield Technical Community	Springfield	10 mi.
Western New England	Springfield	2 mi.
Bay Path Jr.	Longmeadow	14 mi.
Our Lady of the Elms	Chicopee	6 mi.
Smith	Northampton	10 mi.
Amherst	Amherst	12 mi.
Hampshire	Amherst	10 mi.
University of Massachusetts	Amherst	14 mi.
Mount Holyoke	South Hadley	4 mi.
Westfield State	Westfield	12 mi.

Earlier in the master planning process, during discussions of downtown revitalization, many people expressed a wish for an HCC presence in Holyoke's downtown. Recently, discussions by HCC with the Mayor's Office, the city's Office of Economic Development and Greater Holyoke, Inc. resulted an HCC Downtown Extension Center which opened in the fall of 1998. In the first year pilot HCC began by offering ten evening classes at Holyoke Catholic H.S., marketing them through its continuing education course catalogue. The intent of this extension center is to help acclimate people to college coursework so that they can then transition over to the main campus. It is explicitly not intended to become a satellite campus since the college does not want to be seen as segregating certain students from the campus; in addition HCC resources such as the library and computer labs can be accessed only on campus.

Adult and continuing education

Holyoke has the third highest percentage statewide of adults with limited English language proficiency. The median level of educational attainment among the city's Latino population is 7.7 years. ESL and GED classes are in urgent demand. Opportunities for these classes include the Holyoke Adult Learning Opportunities (HALO), a branch of the Holyoke Public Schools; the CARE Center, a private non-profit serving pregnant and parenting teens who have dropped out of high school; Enlace de Familias, a community service organization in South Holyoke, the Community Education Center and HCC. There are several partnerships between these entities, including:

- the Juntos Partnership between HALO, CARE and CEP, where HPS channels funds to that latter two groups for adult bi-lingual education;
- the Even Start Partnership (HPS, Enlace de Familias, CEP and Headstart), which combines childcare with adult education;
- the Massachusetts Family Network program operated by Enlace de Familias.

Although the different programs and partnerships serve different populations and needs — for example, the CARE program begins at a fourth grade level while HALO's starts earlier — there is no single point of referral to help learners identify which program is

best or most appropriate for them. In the end, it may be whichever one has space available: HALO alone had fifty adults on its waiting list in 1997.

It should be noted here that Holyoke is not a member of the Regional Education and Business Alliance, an organization providing support and training to “achieve measurable improvement and fundamental change in public schools.” The Alliance currently has 16 member districts, including South Hadley, Springfield, Chicopee, Agawam and Longmeadow. Districts join the Alliance through a joint agreement of the Superintendent, union president and School Committee, who then participate in creating a district leadership team anchored by those three entities. Members of the leadership team then undergo training in such areas as systems reorganization, Total Quality Management, using data to assess student performance and redesign programs, consensus building, site-based decision-making, etc. The premise of the Alliance is to bring the tools of successful business management to public schools, increasing accountability and performance. Membership is between \$7,000 and \$8,000 per year per district.



Bi-Lingual Education/Cultural Diversity

The high proportion of Latinos in Holyoke’s public schools has manifested itself within a generation. In 1965, Hispanics were less than five percent of the student population; by 1996, they were more than 70 percent. The rapid change has affected both how teaching is done and the overall school climate and culture.

Only a minority of Holyoke’s Latino students are native English speakers. For most — 66 percent of the student population — Spanish is their first language, and of these, roughly half cannot perform ordinary classwork in English. They participate in the school’s Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program. Of the 32 percent of students currently enrolled in the program, 42 percent are at the elementary level, 28 percent in the middle schools and 18 percent at the high schools. The decreasing percentages may reflect students being mainstreamed into English language classes as they move through the system, or they may indicate a large cohort of Spanish speakers in elementary school who will place additional stresses on the TBE program as they advance into the upper grades.

Racial/Ethic Mix in Holyoke Public Schools

	White	Hispanic
Student Body	1/3	2/3
Education Staff	2/3	1/3

source: HPS Diversity Awareness Committee

In contrast to the composition of the student population, Hispanics are under-represented as teachers and administrators. Teacher Association president Jose Gaud notes a paucity of Hispanic administrators in the Holyoke Public Schools; *there is one Hispanic principal, Mrs. Felicita El Ghadi of the McHugh School*. Gaud also notes that promotion

and career advancement is an issue for Hispanic teachers in Holyoke, pointing to the fact that 25 Hispanic teachers left Holyoke in 1992 to take jobs in Springfield. [*HPS' John Mahoney responds that this was a result of Holyoke's former TBE Director recruiting from his former staff, offering salary increases of more than \$10,000.*] The migration of Hispanic teachers from the Holyoke public schools to Springfield was mentioned by several people interviewed for this paper.

Education reform is beginning to make its mark on bi-lingual education in Holyoke. The system has launched a new reading and language arts series that matches the TBE reading program with the mainstream curriculum, allowing students to make connections between what is learned in their native language and what is learned in English. Other improvements are being made as the K-12 curriculum is revised to meet new state frameworks.

Conversations with Rosa Frau, TBE director for the Holyoke Public Schools, and Migdalia Alicea, head of the TBE parent Advisory Council (TBE PAC) identified the following challenges:

- *Staffing.* Finding qualified staff for Holyoke's large TBE program. Competition from other school districts is stiff. Many are able to offer higher salaries.
- *The student population.* As noted earlier, many bi-lingual students enter the school system unprepared, without having experienced preschool or kindergarten.
- *Student families.* Parents are often ill-equipped, lacking both language and social skills to participate in their child's education. Moreover, the fact that students and their families are Puerto Rican migrants — rather than foreign immigrants — enables them to be transient, moving back and forth between the mainland and the island relatively inexpensively and without the need for passport or visa. Children shuttled between these two very different school experiences suffer educationally.
- *Shortage of bi-lingual school counselors.* The demands on their time are significant, limiting their ability to substantially address student needs.
- *An abrupt transition from Spanish to English classes.* Ms. Alicea would like to see both an increased exposure to English early in the program, plus the continuation of a limited amount of schoolwork in Spanish after students are mainstreamed. HPS's John Mahoney notes that "work is continuing on making the transition from bilingual classroom to a mainstream classroom easier. One approach being implemented is to move students into an ESL class room for one full year before the full mainstream approach."
- *Cultural barriers.* Students who are "mainstreamed" from TBE into regular classes encounter teachers with a poor understanding of their Puerto Rican culture, making the transition a difficult one.
- *Discipline.* Ms. Alicea noted that many Hispanic families have a poor understanding of the Holyoke Public Schools disciplinary code, and are often ill-equipped to respond to situations where students are suspended or penalized for

lateness and absenteeism. Others have commented on an excessive use of suspensions with Hispanic students, suggesting a connection between suspensions and drop outs — i.e. students who are told to leave school frequently on a temporary basis eventually do so permanently of their own accord.

Further, while funding issues were not mentioned by either Ms. Frau or Ms. Alicea, per pupil expenditures for bilingual education are lower in Holyoke than in most surrounding communities, and lower than the state average, though regular per pupil expenditures are higher.

Issues of cultural understanding between an administration and teacher population and whose ethnic composition no longer reflects the majority of students plays itself out in numerous venues affecting student life and performance. To address these issues, School Committee member Gary Enright established a Diversity Awareness Committee in April 1997, which includes two representatives from each school. Committee members receive “diversity awareness training” and they, in turn, are expected to recruit additional participants within their schools to plan and conduct student activities, and to train other staff and students. Committee-founder Enright acknowledges that it has yet to gain momentum; he has not had the time needed to push it along.

Per Pupil Expenditures: Holyoke and Selected Communities, FY’95

School District	Regular	Bilingual
Holyoke	5,268	7,536
Northampton	4,707	7,705
Chicopee	4,471	8,091
South Hadley	3,548	6,999
Springfield	4,289	8,748
State Average	4,528	8,241

source: MA Dept. of Education



After School Activities

"Increasingly, our schools are critical to bringing our communities together. We want them to serve the public not just during school hours but after hours: to function as vital community centers; places for recreation and learning, positive places where children can be when they can't be at home and school is no longer going on; gathering places for young people and adults alike."

President William Jefferson Clinton
July 11, 1996

The concept of schools as *Community Learning Centers*, places buzzing with activity from early morning till late at night, is on the national agenda and on Holyoke’s. Two of the five Education objectives for the master plan, cited above in the opening of this paper, relate to this idea — *Provide more educational programs for the entire*

community, including all age groups. and Expand the use of our public school buildings outside of regular school hours. The concept was also mentioned repeatedly by participants at master plan public forums, as well as forum facilitator Dr. John Mullin. Students at the youth forum mentioned after school activities as something that is both positive and negative about the city — they enjoy and value the activities they have, but want and need more, a position echoed by community leaders. Activities on weekends and for older teens were mentioned as key needs for Holyoke youths.

After school activities in Holyoke are provided by a variety of different agencies, both public and private, including the Holyoke Public Schools (see table, following page), parochial schools, churches, AmeriCorps, Holyoke Youth Alliance, YMCA, El Arco Iris, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Boys and Girls Scouts. There is some collaboration among groups, along with utilization of public school facilities by private organizations, but this is limited at present.

The Community Learning Center concept focuses after-school activities within the public schools. According to the National Education Association, reasons for this include:

- Cost — extending school hours is a cost-effective means of giving students learning opportunities in an enriching, safe and drug-free setting;
- Accessibility — public schools are accessible to all members of the community.
- Collaboration potential — School-based after-school activities facilitates involvement by teachers and other partners in a child's education.

There are as many ways to carry out the goal of turning schools into community learning centers as there are school districts. Many charge minimal fees, subsidizing the use of professional teaching staff with a mix of government and private funding. Some rely heavily on the participation of parents and other volunteers, while others form partnerships with community organizations to provide services within the schools. This is the approach taken in Springfield, with its Time Out For Communities program, praised by several members of the master plan focus group on education.

Springfield's program, now in its fifth year, is run by the city's Parks and Recreation Department using 11 city-owned sites including both schools and community centers, which are kept open until 8 pm on weekdays and 9 pm on weekends. Participating agencies and organizations include the School District, the Parks Department (providing recreation and maintenance personnel), Springfield College (providing student tutors and recreation facilitators, paid by the college), Bay State Medical Center (runs health classes), Boy and Girls Clubs, YMCA (crafts activities), Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts (fashion class), and the Bay State Table Tennis Club (volunteer-run program). In summer, the Parks Department teams up with Springfield College to conduct recreational activities in the city's parks from 9:00 to 3:00, using students in the College's Master's program in Recreation. As with the Time Out program, Springfield College pays the students.

After School Activities in the Holyoke Public Schools

Grade Level	Programs
Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>After School Literacy</u>: Offered at each of Holyoke’s eight elementary schools for 1 hour, three afternoons/week, January- May. Holyoke school teachers provide homework assistance. Free. • <u>Racial Balance Program at the Morgan and Lawrence Elementary Schools</u>. For students who attend a school other than the one closest to their home to improve racial balance and who have working parents. Holyoke school teachers provide homework assistance, arts & crafts and playground activities. \$1/hour fee. At Morgan from 7:30-8:45 am and 3-5 pm; at Lawrence 2-5 pm. • <u>After School at the Sullivan School</u>: The YMCA and Boys & Girls Club staff Arts & Crafts at the school until 5:30 pm. School district provides building space and free transportation to Sullivan for students at other schools, charging the clubs for the cost of custodial staff. Participating students pay a fee to the clubs.
Middle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Homework Assistance</u>: 1 hour, twice a week. • <u>SCORE</u>: Study skills program offered both during and after school. Aimed at improving self image and teaching study and test taking skills. Includes teacher visits to student homes. Free. • <u>Intramural Sports</u>: 1 1/2 hours, twice a week, Oct.-April. Volleyball in fall, basketball in winter. Staffed by Holyoke school teachers. Free. • <u>Unified Sports</u>: Lynch and Peck Middle Schools only. Mixes special ed. and non-special ed students. 1 1/2 hours. Free. • <u>Clubs</u>: Choir, Choruses, Yearbook, Newspaper, etc. • <u>Reach Program</u>: Encourages minority students to pursue careers in health through academic tutoring, career discussions and field trips to employers. 1 1/2 hours, 2 days/week. Free.
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>After School Literacy</u>: Offered at Holyoke High School: Attendance is voluntary. TBE PAC leader Migdalia Alicea would like to see the program reach a targeted population, perhaps made mandatory for those students identified as needing the help. • <u>Extracurricular Activities</u>: band, chorus, speech & drama, etc. These activities may proceed for less than an hour after school at which time a late bus takes participants home.
Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Summer Literacy Program</u>: For elementary grades. Three weeks in July, 5 days/week, 2 hours/day (9:30 -11:30am). • <u>Summer Jobs programs</u>: Several grant funded programs (JTPA and Reach). Jobs in non-profit and public organizations for students 14 - 21. 15-25/week.

Source: Holyoke Public Schools (interviews)

According to Whitney Anderson, the school district’s maintenance administrator, the School Committee wants to expand rental opportunities in the schools to improve utilization of the District’s assets, including facilities such as gyms and auditoriums. A program to market school facilities to organizations running programming would both bring income into the district and achieve the community’s objectives of increased after-school activities.



Parental Involvement

Increased parental involvement is an explicit program objective of the Holyoke Public Schools. According to HPS curriculum coordinator Donna Scanlon, the district is struggling with the question of how it can improve the quality of school-parent communication, and provide parents with real knowledge of what is happening in their children's schools. Parent conferences are held four times a year, but always in the afternoons — the evening hours for teachers being a contractual issue. The conferences have a roughly 60 percent attendance rate.

The federal Title I program requires all participating schools to develop with their Title I parents a compact that outlines how parents, school staff, and students will work to improve student achievement and build partnerships to help children achieve to high standards. In 1996, the Holyoke Public Schools established a program to have all parents enter into contracts with their children's schools to check and sign for homework. Follow-through on those compacts has recently been facilitated by improvements to the HPS phone system, allowing parents to access information about homework assignments via voice mail messages. Recently, this program was cited as a state model by the Massachusetts State Title I Parent Advisory Council.

Holyoke Public Schools has a full time parent coordinator. Programs and events offered include parents' nights for various curriculum projects; MegaSkills, a national program designed to help parents help their children develop broadly applicable skills and values like confidence, effort, and responsibility; a course in Raising Children in Troubled Times, and, initiated in January of 1998, a Parent Empowerment Academy where parents attend a series of talks to learn about the variety of programs available for their children. Initially, 25 parents enrolled in the series; 17 were "graduated" from the Academy. In addition to the district-wide parent coordinator, each school also has an outreach worker who functions as a liaison between parents and school administration.

The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 mandated site-based school management, resulting in School Improvement Councils made up of parents, community members, teachers and the school principal. Scanlon questions whether the Councils are as active as they should be, and also notes they do not reflect the ethnic composition of the student body. There is a separate, city-wide Parent Advisory Committee covering bilingual education, mentioned earlier, but PAC member Migdalia Alicea also acknowledges that meetings are not well-attended, a problem she attributes in large part to transportation issues. Roughly a third of all Holyoke households do not possess a family car.

In the 1980's, Holyoke had a CityWide Parent Planning Committee — referred to as the CWPPC — which is remembered as an organization effective at building community across Holyoke's diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds. CWPPC members were volunteers whose involvement was fueled by a sense of achievement; CWPPC members felt they had the ear of the schools superintendent, with whom they met regularly, and they take credit and pride in improvements in school transportation and the lunch program. Additionally, the CWPPC engaged in social activities, such as dances, which

developed a sense of group cohesion and also fostered good relationships between parents and teachers. It was disbanded in the late 1980's after morale was broken by severe funding cuts. Former member Betty Lichtenstein sees a marked difference between the old group and today's Councils, noting that Council membership is coordinated by school principals, and that teachers have more influence on matters of school governance than parent participants.

A meeting with PTO parents convened by the HPS for the master plan raised the following issues and suggestions:

- parents want more opportunities for volunteering in the schools and suggest the establishment of a volunteer office to organize parents. They note, however, that although the required background checks are necessary and good, their detailed and complicated nature may also serve as a deterrent to parent involvement. Some also expressed a feeling that teachers discourage parental volunteers in the classroom because they do not want to be watched.
- Methods of discipline and suspension were concerns. Parents noted that limited facilities for in-house detentions result in many students spending time in the streets — the detention then becomes a reward for bad behavior and a positive reinforcement cycle is initiated. One parent commented that her child had an in-house suspension but she wasn't notified until several days afterward, causing her to miss a timely opportunity to address the issue at home. Alicea Migdalia, of the bi-lingual PAC, stated that Hispanic parents were often unfamiliar with the disciplinary code, although copies are sent home with students. She feels that 10 absences is too much to wait before notifying parents, would like to see more flexibility put into the code, and would like Hispanic parents involved in revising the code.
- There was a feeling that outreach workers have limited effectiveness relative to the need for their services. A suggestion was made to supply school outreach workers with a van to enable them to transport more parents and students than is possible in their personal cars.
- Parent suggestions for improved communications and parental participation included:
 - establish parent resource rooms at each school;
 - use HG&E bill inserts to reach parents about school issues with long lead times or that are not time sensitive;
 - distribute information about volunteer opportunities when parents register their children at the Parent Information Center, and when they are given the school-nurse permission slips sent home with students each year;
 - organize information nights so that parents may attend the session held at their neighborhood school, regardless of whether their child goes to that school;
 - reach parents through posters and other communications in welfare offices;

- sponsor an orientation “chat” at the beginning of the school year by the TBE PAC to introduce parents to the disciplinary code;
- initiate new and creative avenues for reaching out to Hispanic parents, such as radio, newspapers, flyers and even announcing school meetings by having a car drive through neighborhoods with a loudspeaker.

Additionally, master plan focus group members noted that:

- school security is often intimidating for parents entering schools for the first time;
- school-parent contact is often focused on negative behaviors, tainting the school-family relationship, and
- perceptions of transience affects parent-school relations. These perceptions exist both on the part of parents who do not feel connected with the school system because of expectations about returning to Puerto Rico, and on the part of teachers who may not view parents as permanent member of the community.



School Grounds & Buildings

The District has 14 public school buildings, with the oldest built in 1911 and the newest in 1988 (Dean Technical H.S.). Three elementary school additions were built in the late ‘80s/ early ‘90s.

A report on projected enrollments and school capacities prepared by the New England School Development Council (NESDC) in January 1997, predicted stable enrollments over the next decade with a decreasing population in the younger grades and increases in the upper grades as current high levels of enrollment move through the system. The report identified spatial needs in the city’s elementary schools for music, art and physical education programs, but suggested that classrooms be converted for these uses as declining student populations make the space available. Although the high school student population is expected to rise, current facilities are considered sufficient by the report to handle the projected increase. However, should efforts to reduce the drop out rate prove effective, bringing actual increases to a higher level than that projected by the NESDC, accommodations will be needed.

The public school system’s most pressing facility needs are at the middle school level, which is currently accommodating 350 students more than current facilities can adequately serve. Some of the substandard student accommodations now in use include classes being held in auditorium dressing rooms, partitioned classrooms, library space, an auditorium stage, and a converted gym locker. As the middle school population is expected to increase over the next half decade, the report recommends giving serious consideration to abandoning “one or more of the four buildings currently serving the middle level” — while suggesting that additional planning be undertaken to explore

options for creating additional space. Estimated costs for addressing middle school space problems range from \$10-\$15 million for an addition to one school, to \$20-\$30 million for additions to two schools, to \$40 million for a new middle school. Interim measures, the report suggested, might include relocating the 4,000 s.f. Parent Information Center at the Magnet Middle School, along with the district offices and storage facilities located there.

At the master plan public forum on education, school officials spoke of the need for a new middle school. Several participants responded by calling for the school to be located in the city's downtown to stimulate revitalization efforts, adding hopes that such a school be open into the evening hours for community use. However, any site for a new school will need to take into account the requirements of the Massachusetts Department of Education regarding the size of land needed and the district's Desegregation Plan.

In addition to capital needs for new or expanded facilities, the district faces a number of maintenance issues. Until the early 1990's, Holyoke Public Schools was a "tenant" of the city, with school maintenance the responsibility of the Department of Public Works. Since assuming responsibility for school buildings, the HPS has invested millions of dollars, replacing or repairing roofs at all school buildings, adding an elevator and handicapped accessible lavatories to the Metcalf School, implementing energy conservation programs at Donohue, Sullivan and Lynch Schools, and removing asbestos from Holyoke High, Sullivan, McMahan and other school buildings. School interiors have been painted and other repairs made. These many physical improvements have contributed to the feelings of pride in the schools cited at the beginning of this paper.

Whitney Anderson, the district's maintenance administrator, proposed a \$5 million maintenance budget for FY99, which he says covers 70 percent of immediate maintenance needs — his request was a three hundred percent increase over the FY98 maintenance budget of \$1.2 million. NESDC's estimates for systemwide infrastructure needs total \$16 million.

Although Anderson would like to see aesthetic improvements made to the school buildings, he acknowledges they are a relatively low priority considering the limited maintenance budget. Several years ago the District instituted a "zero tolerance" program for graffiti, where an effort at constant removal has proved successful in discouraging graffiti's proliferation on school property. Landscaping improvements are also made at low cost through students at Dean Tech.

Anderson also raised the issue of interagency coordination on the maintenance of school grounds. Currently, three city agencies are involved in maintaining school grounds — Parks and Recreation deals with the ballfields, the district cares for whatever landscaping around the schools is not a ballfield, and the DPW handles snow plowing. He suggests that improved communication between the municipal departments can yield better use and care of the infrastructure.



The Holyoke Public Library

The Holyoke Public Library is a prominent educational resource for the city, with 18,000 registered users — nearly half the city's population. There is currently just one facility, located at 335 Maple Street in the vicinity of the downtown, although in the past Holyoke did have branch libraries in several neighborhoods. Limited resources make the maintenance of branches unfeasible, as well as preventing the library from functioning optimally. Issues include:

- *Technology deficits.* In this age of widespread computer technology, Holyoke's library collection is still accessible only by card catalogue. While materials are in the process of being computer cataloged, only 20 percent of the collection has been entered to date — 12,000 of 60,000 items. Progress is slow due to lack of available staff, yet computer cataloguing is a prerequisite for automating the circulation system. Additionally, the library lacks basic computer equipment that would allow users on-line access to the CW MARS interlibrary loan system, or to conduct reference research using CD ROMs. The library would also like to acquire computers to make them available for word processing and desktop publishing by students and other users. One computer is currently available to allow library users access to the internet via the City Hall network.
- *Book loss and materials replacement.* Books and other materials that are not returned by users is a serious problem for the library, although its extent has not been documented. Additionally, low budgets hamper the library's ability to keep its collection current. Many reference materials are out of date or in poor condition.
- *Programming.* The library currently offers a wide variety of programming, including a children's story hour, after school movies, a summer reading program, adult lectures, a College Night, job fairs, literacy workshop and legislative education. The librarian, Maria Pagan, would like to be able to offer more — particularly in the way of early childhood and adult literacy programs. Adult Basic Education and ESL had been offered at one time through the Valley Opportunity Council, but ended with the loss of state funding. However, VOC was able to continue classes in Chicopee, since that city provided CDBG funds for the purpose. A third avenue where the librarian would like to initiate programs is concerned with improving understanding of the different cultures in Holyoke, using poetry, literature, music and movies to illustrate cultural similarities and differences.
- *Capital Improvements.* The current children's area in the library, located in the building's basement, is too small for current needs and is not accessible to the disabled.

All these situations are directly related to library funding. The city currently provides 45 percent of the library's \$367,000 budget, with most of the balance derived from an

endowment and state funding. Donations, at \$3,000 for FY98, are an insignificant source of library revenue.

Additional avenues for enhancing public library service, not directly related to budget factors, include:

- *Area Image and Safety.* An adult reading discussion group held at the library dissolved in part because of reluctance of participants to travel to the city's downtown in the evening.
- *Relationship with the Public Schools.* For the last two years, the city librarian has sent Assignment Alert Packages to the District Offices for distribution to schools and teachers. The packages encourage teachers to work with the library on class research assignments so that appropriate materials may be placed on reference and needed books ordered through interlibrary loans. Only two teachers have responded thus far. The Holyoke Public Library has also tried to stimulate use of the library by school children by encouraging class visits and requesting that information about library cards be posted in the schools. Neither of these efforts have met with success — it took one teacher three months to arrange the needed approvals for a class visit, and the request by the children's librarian for information posting was turned down because it was not directly related to a school program.

The library facilities of Holyoke Community College are also available to all Holyoke residents.



Job Training

In 1996, Holyoke and Chicopee joined forces to create the Holyoke-Chicopee School to work program funded by an \$850,000, three year federal grant. While run by the public schools, the program also serves the city's parochial schools. In the 1998-1999 school year, school-to-work programs will be in place in grades K-12:

- at the elementary level, speakers will come to the school(s) and teachers will be provided with supplementary materials to discuss careers with their students;
- middle school students will be given career interest surveys and also hear speakers from various professions. The objective is that by 8th grade students know which high school will best meet their needs in terms of future employment interests.
- at Holyoke High School, career development activities include career trips, career interest surveys, and unpaid internships.

Dean Technical High School is the city's vocational program, providing education in 17 different trades. The co-op program is a central feature of the school, where students alternate weeks in school and at work — one week studying academics, one week gaining on-the-job training in a chosen field. A career development course was recently initiated for students who need assistance in selecting a vocation. The school also offers a postgraduate Licensed Practical Nursing class. A local Industrial Advisory Committee meets regularly to discuss the school's course offerings, and a Dean Team within the Chamber of Commerce also provides oversight.

Holyoke Community College offers extensive job training opportunities, including:

- contract training for area companies, programs to meet specific employer needs
- Work Keys, a program of American College Training geared toward improving worker competency with quantifiable results;
- an Extension Institute of the American Management Association providing training for managers using a variety of different programs including behavior modeling;
- a variety of programs for unemployed, underemployed and dislocated workers. These are primarily grant funded and are therefore not permanent, conducted within the time limitations of the grant. Current offerings include a Certified Nurses-Aid Training Program; a welfare-to-work program providing training in office systems; the Juntos Collaborative, helping people who have completed a training program transition to a college; and a certificate program training people to be customer service representatives. HCC works with CareerPoint and FutureWorks to place the graduates of these programs. CareerPoint has a satellite office at the college for student jobseekers.

Keith Hensley, HCC Director of Workforce Development, states that HCC's Job Training Program goal is to "offer the full range of services that employers need to be competitive and that employees need to find jobs and hold on to them." Specific project objectives that have not yet been realized include:

- helping employers access grant funding for employee training and company expansion. Limited time is the biggest obstacle to accomplishing this objective.
- developing a communications network and forum to address shared the goals of economic development and job creation, to include educators, parents, industry, human service organizations and government. The purpose of the network would be to reduce duplication of effort and promote communication and collaboration.

To a limited extent Hensley's vision of a multi-disciplinary forum to pursue economic development exists at the regional level in the Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress, a diverse group which has been meeting regularly for several years. Subcommittees address issues including workforce training and development, and challenges of the region's urban core.

Other job training resources available to Holyokers include:

- *CareerPoint*, a privately managed regional one-stop center for employers and jobseekers located in downtown Holyoke, offering a variety of computer training classes tailored to meet the needs of older workers and workers in transition.
- *The Western Massachusetts Regional Office of the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center*. Located in Springfield, it offers seminars and training for those in business and those contemplating entry as entrepreneurs.

On the surface, it appears as if Holyoke possesses abundant job training resources and programs. In addition to a large and impressive vocational high school, the city hosts the regional institutions of HCC and CareerPoint. And yet the need for more job training was expressed repeatedly in master plan public forums, both during the general visioning process and those on specific topics such as economic development and crime.



Social Factors

As stated in the first section of this paper, social factors in Holyoke place considerable stresses on the educational system. However, an analysis of poverty, abuse, and health problems are beyond the scope of this paper and the master plan as a whole. Fortunately for the city, Nueva Esperanza has received a state grant to undertake a Community Master Action Plan, alluded to above, which is being implemented by Enlace de Familias. The Master *Action* Plan — as opposed to the master plan — is intended to address the coordination and improvement of the myriad social services functioning in Holyoke. The Community Master Action Plan will involve a grassroots effort to inventory gaps, redundancies and inefficiencies in Holyoke’s social service network.

Teen pregnancy is the social issue most directly connected with education. Holyoke has the highest rate of teen pregnancy in the state. While there is a statistically significant downward trend, the CARE Center’s Kathy Kroll points out the problem is far from disappearing. According to the Holyoke Youth Alliance, 40 percent of teen births are second or third children.

Birth Rates to Women Age 15 - 19 between

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Holyoke	122.4	117.5	121.3	115.0	96.2	102.6
State Average	34.2	33.3	33.7	34.3	33.0	32.6

Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Young mothers in Holyoke can stay in the Holyoke Public School system through a policy on students with temporary disabilities that allows for flexibility in scheduling classes, accounting for absences, and needs of pregnant students. Alternatively, they can complete high school through a joint program between HPS and the CARE center, which provides vocational training, GED classes, parenting and life skills education, and

transportation and on-site child care to program participants. Programs to steer at-risk youth away from teen pregnancy and toward career options are provided by the Holyoke Youth Alliance. Increased pregnancy prevention activity was cited repeatedly as a need by teens participating in the master plan youth forum.

Recommendations for addressing social issues and coordinating services should be reserved for the Community Master Action Plan.

Education

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE MAINTENANCE AND PROMOTION OF PRIDE IN HOLYOKE'S EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

1. Continue and expand efforts to feature improvements in the Holyoke school system as a key component of activities for improving the city's image.

Actions

- Continue to involve the Holyoke Public Schools in city-wide marketing efforts — in particular, activities of the Chamber of Commerce marketing committee. That committee is currently preparing a promotional display at the Holyoke Mall, highlighting the effectiveness of the city's educational system, which is being partially funded by the HPS. Messages of educational quality and achievement are also communicated by the HPS through activities such as Celebrate Holyoke Public Schools Week, the Rising Stars program and two half hour videos shown on public access cable television. Consideration should be given to ways of reinforcing these messages outside the community.
- Give further consideration to the use of billboards visible from the highway — a site at 391 and High Street had been discussed by the Chamber of Commerce group. Suggestions for using outdoor billboards to promote good things about Holyoke was proposed by the master plan working group on Image and People, which covered issues of city public relations — and it came up again, as noted above, in the public forum on education. Because outdoor billboards may have potentially negative effects on surrounding neighborhoods, and may also set precedents for undesirable commercial uses, they need to be given careful consideration.
- Continue and expand the use of school open houses to showcase Holyoke's public schools to the community, Holyoke businesses and prospective residents.
- Consider promoting education in Holyoke through information booths at special events such as Celebrate Holyoke! and the Hispanic Family Festival.

2. Celebrate successful Holyoke graduates, especially those who have come back to contribute to the city.

The education focus group suggested Holyoke might take a cue from Holyoke Community College's advertising campaign featuring successful graduates of that institution — expanding media messages to highlight successes from the city's public schools.

Actions

- Identify and establish a network of successful graduates of Holyoke's public school system, who can be featured in advertising, posters and area media venues.
- Arrange speaking and mentoring opportunities for members of the graduate network, perhaps through sponsorship from the city's service clubs such as Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis.
- Include a focus on Hispanic graduates, and on graduates who continue to live and contribute to Holyoke.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

3. Establish benchmarks for educational performance.

Actions

- Results of the new Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests should be used as a baseline against which to set performance targets and measure student achievement.
- In addition to test scores, targets should also be set for:
 - *reductions in the dropout rate*
 - *increased English language proficiency*

4. Initiate activities to increase opportunities for early learning through quality daycare and preschool.

This is a current goal of the Holyoke Early Childhood Partnership chaired by Headstart.

Actions

- Pursue expansion of existing, well-regarded programs, including HPS' free preschool program and HeadStart. Focus attention and resources on expanding early education opportunities for the city's underserved Spanish-speaking population.
- Explore options for employer-based or employer-sponsored early education with Holyoke's major employers.
- Recruit providers into the city.
- Develop daycare capacity in Holyoke through training programs offered at Dean Technical High School or Holyoke Community College (programs are offered at HCC in Daycare Administration and Early Childhood Education).
- Pursue upgrading the quality of early childhood education given by small, family-based day-care providers, through training and mentorships.

5. Specifically identify reduction of the dropout rate as a Program Objective of the Holyoke Public Schools, and pursue the implementation of a model program to reduce it.

In the introductory section of this paper, it was pointed out the HPS has its own planning documents with its own goals and objectives. Most relate to the drop out problem (e.g. "engage students in a comprehensive learning experience," "encourage activities which promote... life long learning," "establish an organizational and curricular design based on the needs of students," "move forward in the integration of all academic programs in a manner that stresses... high achievement"), but none cite it explicitly. The district should specify cite the drop out problem in its planning materials in order to better target programs to address it. One member of the education focus group stated that it is necessary to "name what's important."

The public schools in Fairfax County, Virginia, have teamed up with George Mason University to implement a federally funded model drop out prevention program called the Transition Support Resource Center (TSRC), focusing on at-risk youth. Efforts are made to provide them with positive adult relationships through counseling, social skills training, career exploration, goal-setting assistance, parenting-skills development, and

other forms of guidance. The relationship between local college and public school system may be appropriate to pursue between HCC and HPS.

Actions

- Adopt drop out prevention as an explicitly stated HPS objective.
- Identify, evaluate and implement a collaborative model, such as Fairfax’s TSRC.
 - Enlist the active participation of secondary and middle school principals, assistant principals and guidance staff in drop out prevention efforts.

- 6. Explore expanded school choices for the upper grades, including charter schools.**
Holyoke high school students have two basic educational options —Holyoke High School or Dean Tech. In contrast, students in Springfield have nine choices, including three charter schools. Many have suggested that students might remain in the Holyoke school system longer if there were more choices, enabling them to find an educational option better tailored to their needs, interests and learning styles. The issue is not simply one of different course offerings — *as noted earlier, HHS has 5 major courses of study and Dean Tech offers training in 17 trades* — but of different school managements, sizes, and other characteristics affecting school climate.

Charter schools are public schools operating on a performance contract negotiated with the local school committee or municipal government. These schools are responsible for the mandatory curriculum, but are formed around a specific education philosophy. They hire staff to implement the specified program, enjoy considerable professional autonomy, and manage their own funding allocations. Charter schools have been organized around a variety of educational themes, including arts, science and culture, and “alternative” education.

Actions

- Use market data on student population preferences and needs to identify market “niches” for expanded upper grade options.
- Plan to address the identified “niches” through either the Charter approach or more conventional means within the district.

- 7. Explore means of incorporating values and ethics into the school curriculum.**
As mentioned above, in various master plan outlets for collecting public comments parents have asked for the educational system to address social as well as academic skills, including character building, learning and study skills, drug and gang resistance, ethics and values. This was stressed by participants at public forums on both education and crime. While it is understood that much is already being done in these areas —including the DARE program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education, given to every 5th grade student in Holyoke’s public schools and all 6th graders in the city’s private schools), full-time mediators at HPS’ middle and secondary schools, the purchasing of student agendas for Grades 2-8, and the incorporation of values education into the HPS health curriculum — the many comments of parents and others suggest the issue is worth revisiting. The district should explore the possibilities for incorporating these ethics, values and study skills into the basic frameworks. Prepared curriculum packages exist which integrate social skills and character education into core subject areas.

- Action
 - The District-Wide Curriculum Frameworks Steering Committee should give additional consideration to ways of addressing learning skills development, character,

values and ethics within the curriculum frameworks. If deemed appropriate, the Committee might collaborate with other groups working with youth on these issues, such as the Police Department, AmeriCorps and the Holyoke Youth Alliance to review and evaluate readily available materials.

8. Expand and coordinate opportunities for GED and ESL classes.

Actions

- Increase the capacity of the HALO program.
 - GED and ESL providers should work together to:
 - *identify and refine respective differences in their programs and the populations they serve;*
 - *identify and address gaps in service/population needs that aren't being met;*
 - *explore the potential to expand service through sharing resources and gaining economies of scale;*
 - *establish an outreach and referral network to ensure learners get connected with the right program;*
 - *explore collaborations with other city agencies with the potential to facilitate program expansion — for example, childcare and transportation providers, to make it easier for people to attend classes; the Office of Economic Development to pursue employer-sponsored programs.*
- Some of these activities are being pursued by the Community Master Action Plan.*
- Consider utilizing public school facilities to offer night classes in GED and ESL.

9. Strongly consider membership in the Regional Education and Business Alliance.

The decision to join the Alliance must come, as noted above, from the entities that exercise control over the school district — Superintendent, union president and School Committee. These entities should engage in a process to give careful consideration to joining the Alliance, as its approach appears to address issues and needs identified in public forums and interviews for this paper. The Alliance stresses school management that is “customer focused and data-driven” and where “stakeholders trust each other to face problems honestly and work together to solve them.” *

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING BI-LINGUAL EDUCATION AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

10. Continue to incorporate evaluation of and improvements to bi-lingual education into the Holyoke Public Schools extensive planning process.

Bi-lingual education reform is a large and controversial issue, but one with intense relevance for Holyoke. As noted above, under Recommendation 6, the HPS has its own planning documents with its own goals and objectives. Given the large proportion of Holyoke students in bi-lingual education (1/3), it should be given specific and visible recognition in school system plans.

Actions

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

- Highlight the significance of, and the need for improvements in, bi-lingual education in Holyoke Public Schools planning documents and activities.
- Utilize the upcoming development of a K-12 World Languages curriculum to evaluate Holyoke’s bi-lingual education program. During the process, consider the suggestions of some parents to provide Spanish language education to native English speakers at an early age, to expose TBE students to more English earlier in the program and to continue some Spanish classes even after students are “mainstreamed.”
- Coordinate language curriculum improvements with other school conditions needed to help Hispanic students thrive, such as increased presence of Hispanic teacher role models and greater cultural awareness and sensitivity in the school system as a whole.
- Utilize revisions to the K-12 Social Studies curriculum as an opportunity to promote greater awareness and understanding of Holyoke’s cultural heritage.

11. Recruit both more qualified TBE teachers and more Latino teachers for the regular program.

Actions

- Utilize teaching staff turnover to aggressively recruit Hispanic teachers and TBE teachers. In recent years, between 40 and 50 new teachers have been hired each year, representing substantial opportunities to create a teaching population that more closely matches the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the student population.
- Have HPS personnel recruiters work with existing Hispanic teachers to identify barriers to retention and recruitment of desired staff, and develop teacher retention and recruitment strategies tailored to the Latino market.
- Revisit the idea of a teacher exchange program with Puerto Rico. San Juan administrators expressed interest in such a program during a recent trip by Mayor Szostkiewicz. However, previous efforts at a Puerto Rican teacher exchange program failed when the exchange teachers elected to return to the island prematurely due to inadequate housing and a poor reception by the Holyoke community. New efforts should involve the development of a support network for the visiting teachers, possibly pairing them with resident Hispanic teachers.
- Place particular emphasis on recruiting Hispanic staff where they are underrepresented, as in school counselors.

12. Stimulate increased activity of the Cultural Awareness Committee.

Education focus group members noted that higher educational institutions in the Pioneer Valley hosted experts in the field of cultural diversity and sensitivity, and suggested that both the HPS and the city draw on these resources to create a plan for widespread cultural sensitivity training. Such activities are already underway — HPS has joined with the Amherst, Northampton and Springfield schools to provide administrative training in diversity issues for the 1998-99 school year.

Actions

- Recruit professionals to work with the Cultural Awareness Committee in planning and developing training for school system staff and administration, and parents. One such professional mentioned was Beverly Daniels Tatum, a professor at Mount Holyoke College whose field is the psychology of racism. Since June 1997, the HPS funded 43 teachers and administrators to enroll in Dr. Tatum's course. In September 1998, 12 additional teachers will be sponsored. Members of the education focus group were particularly interested in having Dr. Tatum address awareness of diversity and cultural issues in Holyoke on a systemic basis.
- Incorporate cultural awareness training into orientation activities for newly hired teachers.
- Disseminate and promote the use of free materials available to promote racial and ethnic understanding, such as those from the Southern Poverty Law Center's "Teaching Tolerance" project.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

13. Establish the creation of Community Learning Centers as a goal of the Holyoke Public Schools.

As noted above, the Phase I visioning process of the master plan resulted in a municipal objective to expand the use of school buildings outside regular school hours. For this to be implemented, it needs to be adopted by the School Committee and school system administration.

Additionally, both the city and the school system should develop clarity, agreement and specificity on what is meant by "expanding the use of school buildings." The recommendations immediately following this one relate to a concept that would:

- expand after-school programming within the public schools, although not necessarily solely by the public school system;
- create multiple partnerships and collaborations among public and private groups in order to expand program offerings;
- result in a dense network of programs and activities lasting from the close of the school day into the evening hours, and also on weekends;
- closely tie after-school programming to student educational and social needs;
- coordinate programming across organizations as much as possible in order to facilitate "one-stop shopping" by students and their families;
- coordinate public services, such as transportation and police protection, in order to encourage maximum use of the programming developed.

14. Conduct a community assessment to identify needs opportunities for after-school programming.

This process is recommended by the NEA as an initial step in moving towards expanded after-school programming in the public schools, making them into Community Learning Centers. Areas to cover in the assessment include an inventory of current programs and providers, numbers of students reached by existing programs, estimated total need, potential program/service providers (i.e. college and high school student resources), and funding needs and sources. A list of questions and tips collected by NEA from successful programs is included in an attachment to this paper.

In addition to its usefulness for designing after-school programs, the assessment may also collect information helpful in working on issues of parental involvement (see the section below).

Actions

- Identify and designate a lead entity to conduct the assessment and move forward on the creation of expanded, coordinated after-school programming. Note that while it is necessary for the school system to be involved, it need not take the lead in coordinating after school programming. In Springfield, the city's Parks and Recreation Department has primary responsibility. In San Diego, CA parents took on the creation of a summer school program serving 2,000 K-12 students. Again, this assessment activity may fit into the Community Master Action Plan.
- Provide municipal support for the assessment, through widespread staff participation, use of meeting space, materials, documents, etc.
- Utilize the assessment to communicate the need, and generate funding, for expanded after school activities, and to design a Community Learning Center program.

15. Design, implement and market a coordinated, city-wide after-school program.

The community needs assessment recommended above should be used as the basis for targeting and developing new programs. Eventually, individual programs could be knit together and marketed to the community under a single umbrella, with a published schedule facilitating use of the programs by students and parents. Guidance from the NEA on designing, implementing and evaluating a Community Learning Center Program is given in the attachment. In addition to program development, issues to be considered in the development of a comprehensive after-school program that are specific to Holyoke include:

- audiences — consideration should be given to programming for all ages, turning schools in the evening hours into family learning environments;
- costs — many after-school programs charge for participation. Even nominal charges may pose barrier to many Holyoke families;
- transportation — bus availability is often a factor in student participation in after-school activities;
- student interest — efforts need to be made to provide activities to engage the range of student interests, particularly those of “at-risk” youth. Since after-school programs are voluntary, many students in need of tutoring do not take advantage of the help available. *

16. Increase summer learning opportunities.

Summer learning programs are particularly important for low-income children who, according to studies by the U.S. Department of Education, suffer serious academic losses over the summer. As seen above, the summer learning opportunities in Holyoke are limited — two hours a day for three weeks for elementary students, plus tutoring for students 14-121 in the summer jobs program. One model program cited as especially successful by the federal government is in Oak Lawn, Illinois, where each summer 100 middle school graduates are given six weeks of tutoring and preparatory classes to facilitate their transition to high school. In addition to helping students directly, outreach workers visit homes to build strong communication between families and schools.

* Shaded text denotes master plan priority recommendation.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

17. Increase partnerships and collaborations to address the need for more parental participation in education.

The U.S. Department of Education notes that parents' disconnection with public education is a key barrier to participation. To overcome this, schools should collaborate with service organizations, neighborhood groups, religious institutions, museums, civic institution and others — whatever organizations parents *are* connected with — in an effort to build bridges between parents and educators. The challenge of involving parents in their children's' education can be addressed in a multiplicity of ways from multiple directions.

One example of a non-profit agency working to increase parental involvement is the National Urban League. Its Partners for Reform of Science and Math (PRISM) program has materials for parents that depict strategies for promoting reforms, using community institutions like museums and science centers, and strengthening home learning environments. Leader's guides and videos also have been developed.

Actions

- Conduct a grassroots survey, with in-person interviews, if possible, to detail and prioritize barriers to parental participation in the schools. Additionally, consider using the survey to establish benchmarks in parental participation that could be used to assess change and evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives.
- Disseminate the information gleaned to all stakeholders and potential collaborators, including both public and private schools in Holyoke, parent groups, service organizations, neighborhood organizations, etc.
- Use the information to inform activities that would reinvigorate parent groups and school councils, reduce cultural and language barriers, guide school communications and events, etc.

18. Review school policies and protocols for soliciting and facilitating parental involvement.

As detailed above, parents have a variety of ideas for reaching out to other parents. Many are not one time projects, but suggestions for systematic changes in ways the schools communicate to parents — i.e. regular use of Spanish-language radio advertising; shifts in how information nights are organized.

Actions

- Holyoke Public Schools should review the parent proposals given earlier, and initiate procedures for collecting more such parent ideas. Those ideas most feasible should then be incorporated into established procedures and policies to be followed by administrators and teachers as they organize events, prepare communications, etc.
- Review and address procedures for reaching out to parents whose children enter the system in the middle of the school year.
- Use technology to overcome language and literacy barriers. For example, a Chapter 1 project in New York worked with a local television station to produce a videotape to give parents information about the Chapter 1 program and the role parents can play.

- Consider training teachers and administrators in building relationships with Latino parents.

19. Accommodate family work schedules when organizing events for parents.

Actions

- Negotiate for teacher availability in evenings for parent conferences and, possibly, other activities, in future contract talks.
- Prioritize school events in order to allocate resources for facilitating parent attendance.

20. Facilitate parent transportation to school visits, School Improvement Council and PTO meetings, and other activities.

Actions

- Organize and promote carpools on a formal basis (*this is currently done informally*).
- Set up a transportation “buddy system” where parents lacking transportation are paired with parents who can drive them to important school activities and events.
- Provide parents with information on public bus routes and schedules that serve school locations.
- Explore using school-run vans or busses to provide transportation for significant, large events.
- Consider transportation issues when organizing events — e.g. when possible, schedule activities so that parents go to their neighborhood school even though their child may attend a school outside the neighborhood.
- Consider creating events where school principals visit parents in their own neighborhoods to conduct orientations.

21. Continue and expand parent training programs, and other HPS programs that foster parental involvement.

Actions

- Expand the SCORE mentoring program, which includes a parent-teacher component, including home visits.
- Consider parental suggestions on communications to expand program promotions — e.g. Spanish language advertising, flyers at social service agencies, etc.
- Create mentoring programs for parents, where parents of older children, experienced in working with the schools, can guide parents of children just entering the system.
- Address scheduling and transportation issues to facilitate program participation.
- Identify and implement means of creating a sense of parental ownership in the schools.
- Use local media to disseminate parent education material. For example, the Utah Center for Families in Education produces newspaper inserts with information for parents on how to improve the home learning environment and how to take a greater part in their children’s education.
- Promote program participation through word of mouth, networking with social service providers, religious institutions, etc.

22. Solicit business support for parental involvement in education.

The business community has been generous in supporting Celebrate Holyoke Public Schools Week and the Rising Stars program. Business support readily lends itself to parent involvement programs, because of the visibility to customers and employees.

Actions

- Work with businesses and job programs to encourage employee participation in parent education programs such as MegaSkills and the Parent Empowerment Academy. Nationwide, MegaSkills has also been adopted or sponsored by 96 businesses for their employees.
- Encourage major employers in Holyoke to provide paid time off to participate in their children's education or to volunteer in an education program. Precedents for this approach include Brattleboro, VT, where employers give parents time off on the first day of classes to allow them to accompany their children to school. In Idaho, state workers are permitted one hour of paid administrative leave per week, or four hours per month, to volunteer in a public school. In Holyoke, workers might be given leave to attend parent-teacher conferences which, as noted above, are held during the working day. To stimulate private sector activity, municipal government can set an example.
- Solicit business funding for parental involvement. In Wisconsin, posters, brochures, and awards for parents have been funded by a fast-food chain.

23. Encourage parental involvement in education from birth.

This is a goal of the Early Childhood partnership, chaired by Headstart. Numerous programs across the country work to stimulate parental involvement in education years before the child ever sets foot in a school.

- In South Carolina, the state developed "birth packets" of information for parents on how to work with their children in developmental and learning activities. The packet includes a letter to the parents from the governor and school superintendent welcoming their child into the world of learning. Recently, the Holyoke Public Library Early Literacy Program received a grant to establish a similar project, with packets to be distributed at Holyoke Hospital.
- In Missouri, a Parents as Teachers (PAT) program features regular home visits by a parent educator to families with children under three. Families who are least likely to use PAT are given special attention and are referred to community services. A study of 37 districts using the program found three-year-old children scoring above national norms on measures of language and school-related success.
- Other programs include the Perry Preschool Project in Ypsilanti, Michigan; the Parent-Child Development Center in Houston, Texas; the Family Development Research Project in Syracuse, New York; and the Yale Child Welfare Project in New Haven, Connecticut. Each combines home visits and parent training with preschool education for the child, resulting in less fighting, impulsiveness, disobedience, restlessness, cheating, and delinquency among children

Action

- Massachusetts has a home visit program for new families comparable to Missouri's PAT initiative, although it is geared toward promoting child health and preventing abuse. Explore incorporating an educational component, either at the statewide level or specifically for its implementation in Holyoke.

24. Facilitate use of computer technology to bring families and schools together.

Computer literacy is a prerequisite for success, and the Holyoke Public School system is distinguished by its state of the art equipment for students. Yet the city's poorer students can neither use their computer skills at home nor share them with parents. A model program in Indiana, called the Buddy System Project, places a computer in the home of every child in the state in grades 4-12. The home computer ensures equal access for all children to many resources and advantages afforded in the information age, and promotes joint parent-child learning. While it would be difficult and costly for Holyoke to follow Indiana's ambitious example, the Buddy System Project could serve as a long-term vision for Holyoke, one particularly well suited for addressing the city's educational inequities. This recommendation, when initially drafted, was rejected by the master plan Focus Group on Education as having little relevance to what the group saw as more serious needs to address cultural issues, drop out rates, and bi-lingual and adult education. Yet the Holyoke Public Schools notes that a pilot project is in the works between HPS, Greater Holyoke Inc. and Marken Properties to set up community-based computer technology centers for students to access computer technology outside of school. A site on Main Street near the fire station has been identified and funding has been secured.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL GROUNDS AND BUILDINGS

25. Give strong consideration to a downtown location for new middle school accommodations.

As noted above, this suggestion was one of the key suggestions to emerge from the master plan forum on education.

Actions

- Solicit and give weight to public preferences in siting new public school facilities.
- Explore the potential for adaptive reuse of existing downtown space for new middle school facilities. In addition to fueling downtown revitalization, use of existing space may accelerate a solution to a pressing need.

26. Coordinate school district needs with citywide infrastructure planning.

Actions

- Involve the school district in citywide coordinated capital planning efforts.
- Explore ways of streamlining school grounds maintenance, clarifying roles of the different city agencies involved.

27. Explore and develop opportunities for low cost aesthetic improvements to school facilities.

Involving students in implementing aesthetic improvements to the public schools would have educational and social benefits which could raise the value and priority of making the improvements. Opportunities to consider include:

- increasing the use of student-painted murals;
- expanding the involvement students in school ground landscaping. A model developed by the University of Florida engages elementary students in the creation and maintenance of “schoolyard ecosystems” — areas planted in native vegetation which then become outdoor science/ecology laboratories. A natural science curriculum for 5th and 6th grade students is part of the program. Students engaged in care of the plots often visit them after school hours, bringing their families.;
- collaborations between students, teachers and local artists, using state arts lottery funding.

Holyoke Public Schools adds a cautionary note regarding landscaping and aesthetic improvements. Plantings should be done in accordance with CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles, so as not to create places where vandals can hide. Some student art projects can elicit negative responses from neighboring residents of the schools.

28. Invest in energy saving measures to cut costs.

Maintenance administrator Anderson estimates that electric bills could be halved by replacing the current lighting system with special bulbs and ballasts, and installing sensors to automatically shut off lights when a room is unoccupied. Replacing old windows with insulated glass would also improve energy efficiency.

29. Move forward on plans to rent school facilities to outside groups.

Actions

- Prepare an inventory and analysis of suitable rental facilities followed by a marketing plan to publicize their availability to outside groups.
- Coordinate school facility rental activities within a context of providing enhanced after school programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HOLYOKE’S PUBLIC LIBRARY

30. Explore alternatives for increasing and stretching the library budget.

Actions

- Invest in hiring professional fundraising assistance on a limited, test case basis. If successful, the consultants would generate income significantly beyond their fees, justifying continued use.
- Aggressively increase fundraising activities, pursuing grants, corporate support, donations of materials and services, etc. Ideas include:
 - *soliciting donations of “hurt” books from bookstores to restore depleted collections;*
 - *recruiting interns from graduate programs in library science to assist in computer cataloging the collection;*

- *developing a circle of high level individual and corporate donors, with annual gifts thresholds of \$500 and \$1,000;*
- *recycling used computer equipment from businesses which frequently update their technology.*
- Pursue increased city funding, perhaps tied to specific “one time” projects such as computer cataloguing.

31. Pursue formal collaborations between the Holyoke Public Library and both the city’s public and private schools.

Explicit support from school leadership should assist in resolving the communications and programming issues detailed above.

Actions

- Establish regular meetings, perhaps monthly or bi-monthly, with school administration officials and teachers to discuss library-school interaction, establish goals, review progress, and identify and resolve problems.
- Promote library use through activities designed to increase parental involvement in education (see section V. above).

32. Include the library in city initiatives related to the library’s mission and function, such as efforts to revitalize downtown and to improve cultural understanding among Holyoke citizens.

Actions

- Potential areas for library involvement include:
 - *municipal capital planning — i.e. library needs should be incorporated into the city’s overall Capital Improvements Plan when a CIP is implemented;*
 - *efforts to address cultural awareness in the city. The Library has plans for a Connecting Cultures program which would use library resources such as books, music and videos to celebrate and teach Holyoke’s diverse cultures;*
 - *the Chamber of Commerce’ marketing committee — this group may be able to assist or collaborate with the library on marketing and fundraising;*
 - *the proposed Downtown Roundtable;*
 - *the Holyoke Police Department’s CrimeWatch program.*

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING JOB TRAINING

33. Ensure Holyoke representation and participation in regional workforce development efforts, and facilitate implementation of HCC’s idea for a local job training/creation network.

Actions

- Connect those working on job training programs in Holyoke with the Pioneer Valley Regional Plan for Progress.
- Initiate a Holyoke job training and creation network, perhaps as a monthly roundtable discussion or an e-mail list server.

34. Identify issues behind expressed needs for more job training programs.

The number and variety of existing job training programs in Holyoke raises such questions as: Do current programs match the needs of Holyoke's job seekers? Are those in need of job training in Holyoke aware of the programs available to them? What barriers exist to increased participation in existing programs — transportation? language? childcare? readiness? Answers to these client-oriented questions can form a foundation for the development of new programs. They may be explored during the Community Master Action Plan now being initiated by Enlace de Familias under a state grant, and should also be pursued by the job training and creation network proposed above.

35. Promote increased awareness of grant funding for employers to conduct job training.

Actions

- Utilize the availability of job training programs — and employer grants — in city efforts to retain and recruit businesses.
- Add information on job training programs to the city's web pages.

Education

Recommendations Supplement

Tips on conducting a Community Learning Center needs assessment:

- Seek reactions from diverse members of the school and community. Ask how an extended school program might help their children and families improve educational opportunities. What mutual goals could be addressed? Would the program affect their responsibilities? What role could they play? How could they volunteer? Who has concerns about the program, and how can they be resolved? For each partner, consider how the agency would interact with school staff and children; how staff would coordinate efforts between and among the school and collaborating agencies; and what hours or days each service could be offered.
- Use existing data to communicate the need for an after-school or summer program. Focus on statistics from unbiased sources: school absence, dropout, and graduation rates; student scores on standardized tests; numbers of students with limited English proficiency or poor literacy skills who could use extra learning opportunities; tobacco, alcohol, and drug use by students; rates of suicide and violence among students; and the availability of community resources.
- Bridge the communication gap among stakeholders from different communities. The terms people use for activities and program participants often reveal their goals and programmatic emphasis. Make sure that educators, service providers, volunteers, and other partners understand these terms. For example, to many private service providers the term "client" refers to an individual child; to many members of the school staff, the word includes parents, other family members, and community residents as well as students.
- Form partnerships with other groups and organizations. Make your stakeholders your partners. Businesses, church and community groups, and non-profit organizations have much to offer, and in many cases are already serving some of the same populations. Indeed, many of these groups can act as a bridge to the populations you hope to serve in the Community Learning Center. In so doing, both partners benefit: the school adds to its resources and services, and the partner can use its resources more cost effectively.

Tips on designing and implementing a Community Learning Center program

- Design an effective program. Successful partnerships have concluded that every school and community must choose its own combination of opportunities to address local conditions and concerns. Nevertheless, effective programs address the following issues: establish vision and focus; address needs in an appropriate

manner; coordinate efforts; and establish a system of accountability from the beginning.

- Consider logistical issues. School governance, liability, and building maintenance issues are paramount to making a Community Learning Center work. Strong leadership, collaborative decisionmaking, a clear understanding of management and organization procedures and policies such as liability, as well as managed, mutually acceptable arrangements for space are elements of successful programs.
- Obtain qualified staff. Staff for after-school or summer learning can come from the school, a partner agency, or the community, but should have appropriate experience, realistic expectations, and a true interest in caring for children. Paid professionals and teachers can be supplemented with volunteers, parents, AmeriCorps participants, federal Work Study students and other volunteers from local colleges or universities, community members, senior citizens, and business representatives. Experts agree that while there are wide variations in staff salaries, hours, benefits, and qualifications, it has generally been true that where key staff are paid reasonably and given benefits and other financial incentives, quality staffing is the result.
- Evaluate a program's accomplishments. Community Learning Center programs are by nature complex, and no matter how well designed, must learn from experience. Continuous monitoring of the progress of a program--in addition to a shared understanding of the program's goals--can help leaders and staff maintain their focus, improve effectiveness and accountability, ensure parent and participant satisfaction, and identify necessary changes. Continuous monitoring allows a program's director to assess whether its key features are working as intended, and helps the program to do better than before.

Source: National Education Association

Education

Implementation

implementation chart to come

8. Historic Preservation

Goals and Objectives

Accessory Documents

Recommendations (partial list)

Implementation

Historic Preservation

Goals & Objectives

Goal: Preserve and restore Holyoke's architectural resources, historic sites, landmark buildings and monuments.

Objectives:

1. Support historic designations and districting
2. Implement the existing Preservation Plan
3. Support work chronicling the economic, cultural, and architectural history of Holyoke
4. Develop programs to recognize and reward historic structures and preservation efforts
5. Build upon historic resources in the revitalization of Holyoke's downtown
6. Consider cultural diversity in making historic resource decisions.

Historic Preservation

Accessory Documents

As previously noted, Historic Preservation is one of two master plan goal areas that were the object of independent planning efforts, conducted recently or concurrently with the master plan.

A comprehensive historic preservation plan was prepared for Holyoke in 1991, which covers strategies for protecting the city's historic resources. An inventory of these resources is maintained by the Holyoke Historical Commission, and was updated in 1998. Both the *Preservation Plan* and the *Historic Inventory* are being considered as accessory documents to this master plan. They are available separately from the Holyoke Historical Commission or the city's Office of Community Development at 534-2230.

Historic Preservation

Recommendations (partial list)

The following recommendations below have been selected and adapted from the *Preservation Plan for the City of Holyoke*. Because they are presented here out of the context of that plan, they have not been given the numbering treatment of recommendations in the other sections of this document. Please refer to the *Preservation Plan* for a complete program of recommended activities to protect and promote Holyoke's heritage.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HISTORIC BUILDING PROTECTION

Holyoke has an impressive array of buildings, cemeteries and monuments that are both historically and architecturally significant, ranging from the Colonial period through the modern age. Many have been formally recognized by the National Register of Historic Places, which makes them eligible for programs providing funding for preservation, and also bestows regulatory protection from inappropriate state or federally-funded development. Yet there are many other sites in Holyoke that have the potential for National Register or other government-bestowed historic status.

1. Establish local historic districts

The establishment of local historic districts would enable the Holyoke Historical Commission to receive annual disbursements from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Actions

- Support the work of the Wycoff Park Historic District Study Committee;
- Reconvene the Fairfield Avenue Historic District Study Committee.

2. Continue to nominate sites for the National Register of Historic Places.

Holyoke's Historic Commission has identified seven potential districts for National Register status, including the Hamden Park, Holy Cross, Highlands, Highland Park, Churchill, Oakland and Elmwood areas. Two cemeteries and over 20 individual buildings outside the potential districts have also been as candidates for the Register.

3. Use local zoning ordinances and permitting procedures to protect historic sites from inappropriate development.

Actions

- Establish zoning overlay districts to regulate new construction in historic areas;
- Establish site plan review to guide new construction on or abutting significant historic buildings;
- Revise Holyoke's sign ordinance and review requirements;
- Establish a demolition ordinance.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE APPRECIATION OF HOLYOKE HISTORY AND HISTORIC SITES

Public understanding and support is vital to the success of Holyoke's preservation efforts.

4. Develop a local history curriculum.

The call to teach Holyoke history in the public schools rang out at several master plan public forums. In addition to its value for promoting historical appreciation, the curriculum was proposed as a means of knitting the community together and enhancing cultural awareness.

5. Produce brochures with self-guided walking and driving tours.

The brochures should be incorporated into Holyoke's tourism promotion and downtown revitalization efforts.

6. Install historic markers.

RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESSING OTHER ISSUES

7. Nominate of the canal system as a National Civil Engineering Landmark.

8. Preserve of the stained glass windows in the City Hall.

9. Organize of a Historical Commission subcommittee to oversee issues related to Holyoke's historic cemeteries.

**Historic Preservation
Implementation**

to come

9. Open Space & Recreation

Goals and Objectives

Accessory Document

Recommendations

Implementation

Open Space & Recreation

Goals & Objectives

Goal: **Preserve and protect natural resources and open space throughout the city of Holyoke. Establish, maintain and expand recreational opportunities for all neighborhoods within Holyoke.**

Objectives:

1. Create a mechanism to purchase land for the intent of protecting open space and natural resources.
2. Mandate the preservation and protection of wetland areas, sensitive wildlife habitat, flood plains, scenic areas and all water resources within Holyoke (including rivers, streams, reservoirs, ponds and vernal pools).
3. Promote the conservation of natural resources through rational land use planning.
4. Promote public awareness of natural resources through a variety of educational programs.
5. Promote the economic benefits of preserving natural resources and open space.
6. Support existing neighborhood recreational facilities with adequate resources and neighborhood input.
7. Create a permanent parks and trails network linking active and passive recreational areas and open space throughout the city.
8. Analyze the present inventory of recreation facilities, plan for the appropriate distribution of these facilities throughout the City, and prioritize and implement where expansion or creation of new facilities is appropriate.
9. Foster private, public and neighborhood partnerships to support the enhancement of Holyoke's recreational facilities.

Open Space & Recreation

Accessory Document

Concurrently with Holyoke's master planning process, the city undertook a separate process to update its *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, as required by state law. That plan is being considered as an accessory document to the complete Holyoke Master Plan, and is available separately from the Holyoke Planning Development.

Open Space & Recreation

Recommendations

The following recommendations below have been selected and adapted from the *Open Space and Recreation Plan*. Because they are presented here out of the context of that plan, they have not been given the numbering treatment of recommendations in the other sections of this document. Please refer to the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* for a complete program of recommended activities to protect Holyoke's natural resources and expand recreational opportunities in the city.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE MOUNT TOM AND EAST MOUNTAIN RANGES

Almost half — 47% — of Holyoke's land area has been identified by the state as rare species habitat, with 33 rare species present within its borders. These are astounding figures considering Holyoke's identity as an urban, industrial city, and are primarily due to the presence of the Mount Tom and East Mountain ranges. Both are remarkably undeveloped. They include watersheds for Holyoke's drinking water reservoirs and a long segment of the Metacomet-Monandock Trail. The imposing presence of their peaks and ridges visually defines the region. While much of these mountain ranges are protected in some fashion, significant areas remain in private ownership. Parcels close to I-91 in particular are subject to development pressures for commercial and industrial growth.

1. Create a vision of appropriate development and land preservation for the mountain range areas

A planning process is needed to identify, in detail, parcels that merit permanent preservation and parcels where development may occur without damaging precious resources.

2. Pursue protection of important areas along the mountain ranges through purchase, conservation easements, and other means, in cooperation with public and private conservation groups.

The potential purchase of the Mount Tom Ski area by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management is a key example of this kind of activity.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HOLYOKE'S PARK SYSTEM

Holyoke has an extensive system of city-owned parks and school playing fields, many developed when the city was first planned and built in the mid-nineteenth century. Maintenance had been deferred during economic downturns, but has been accelerated in recent years with several projects for major renovations of older parks and plans for new ones.

1. Rehabilitate Pulaski Park

This Olmstead designed park connects Holyoke's downtown with the Connecticut River.

2. Create two new neighborhood parks, Highland and Kirtland, on the sites of demolished schools.

3. Implement zero-graffiti and reduced litter policy in the parks.

4. Relocation and renovate parks as part of the Churchill neighborhood revitalization program.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING OTHER OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ISSUES

5. Enhance natural resource protection regulations when revising Holyoke's zoning, subdivision and wetlands ordinances.

6. Increase the activity of local outdoors clubs and conservation organizations in Holyoke.

7. Pursue the abatement of combined sewer overflows into the Connecticut River.

**Open Space & Recreation
Implementation**

10. Land Use

Goals and Objectives

Information & Assessment

Recommendations

Implementation

Land Use

Goals & Objectives

It should be noted that land use is unlike other topic areas of the master plan in that it was not identified as a discreet goal during the plan's Phase I visioning process, and does not appear in the *Voices of Holyoke* document with an accompanying set of objectives. At the same time, it is also unlike other topic areas of the master plan in that an implementation process has been established for it. The city has budgeted some funds, and has received a state planning grant, to undertake a comprehensive review and overhaul of its zoning and permitting processes. Therefore, the primary role of the background information and recommendations given below is to sketch out issues and actions that will be looked at in greater depth in the near future, to inform the scoping process for upcoming activities.

Land Use

Information & Assessment

The land use issues discussed below were identified in a special forum held for planning board members, city councilors, master plan committee members and other relevant civic leaders, and through discussions with Holyoke's planning director and principal planner. Further information was gained from a series of one-on-one interviews.

Area-Specific Issues — Commercial-Industrial

Ingleside:

Holyoke's planning department characterizes commercial land use pressures from retail and office uses seeking to locate in the Ingleside area as intense, due to its excellent interstate highway access and the high traffic volume attracted by the Holyoke mall. Currently, this pressure is verbal and unofficial, but conflicts are expected to arise between these interests and the Planning Board's informal policy regarding land use in the Ingleside area. The policy, which is reflected in current zoning, locates:

- commercial development east of I.91 and west of Tannery Brook;
- light industrial and office development west of I.91, and
- residential development east of Tannery Brook.

There was consensus among those interviewed for this paper, as well as participants in other focus groups, that while business should be encouraged, the surrounding residential areas need protection. Truck traffic is a particularly serious problem for Ingleside dwellers. The city, in response to a recent study by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will prohibit truck traffic on Homestead Ave. between Westfield and Lower Westfield Roads. Additionally, a traffic light will be installed at Whitney and Bobala Roads as part of the Crossroads Development Park project.

A potential exception to the preservation of existing residential uses in the Ingleside area was noted by the Planning Board. Seven homes east of Tannery Brook, on the western edge of the road, were recognized as being potentially appropriate for a change to commercial use.

Downtown

One of the first questions grappled with by the Master Plan focus group on downtown revitalization was What is downtown? Definitions varied broadly, but the group developed a consensus for planning purposes that loosely defined the city's downtown as

bounded by Chestnut, Race, Cabot and Appleton Streets. Main Street was considered outside the downtown, a separate neighborhood with its own special character.

Within the larger area considered by the focus group, two separate districts were proposed — a Central Business District, to encompass the area immediately surrounding High Street, and a Canal Arts and Industry District, potentially encompassing the superblock bounded by Heritage State Park, and Race, Appleton and Dwight Streets. These two smaller districts would better allow for targeting and concentration of revitalization resources.

The City has worked to keep the central business district a government hub, with City Hall, the Police Department, School Department and state offices located within an area roughly bounded by High, Maple, Lyman and Appleton Streets. Social service organizations are also dominant, and although there is some retail at street level, much of the space is occupied by businesses in the FIRE sector (Finance, Insurance and Real Estate). Upper stories for office uses are riddled with vacancies, while residential buildings are fully occupied.

In the past several months, Holyoke's Office of Economic Development, Greater Holyoke Inc. and five private property owners have joined forces to establish the Historic Holyoke Office Park project. The group is marketing vacant office space in 10 central business district buildings with a package of financial incentives including tax rebates and utility discounts. The master plan focus group on downtown revitalization suggested that residential conversions also be considered for the area, in order to give property owners greater flexibility for utilizing their vacant space and also to contribute to the creation of a "24-hour" downtown.

The Canal Arts and Industry District proposed by the master plan focus group on downtown revitalization was also supported by the group on Economic Development. Its concept recognizes and capitalizes on the area's industrial base while bringing new uses to buildings that, while historically and aesthetically valuable, are no longer viable for modern manufacturing. Focusing on the arts acknowledges the traditional and practical connection between artists and the loft space available in old factory buildings. It also builds on existing arts uses in the area, such as the Canal Gallery and studios and El Arco Iris.

A key component of the Arts and Industry District is the planned Holyoke Canal Walk, which will link the potential new uses of currently vacant mill space with existing family and tourist-oriented facilities in Heritage Park. The Canal Walk will also connect with the planned Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway, a regional, multi-community facility extending south to the Connecticut border and north to Northampton. A committee of industrial businesses, property owners and others are currently working with a landscape architect to illustrate a scenario for the Arts and Industry District that will help both Holyoke citizens and prospective developers envision the potential future of this exciting area.

Holyoke Hospital

Holyoke Hospital is located on a 14 acre campus in an R-2 zone. The campus is adjacent to single-family residential neighborhoods, particularly on the north and east, and this has sparked some concern about its expansion, as well as the potential development of other medical uses wanting to locate in its vicinity.

Holyoke has, in the past, explored the creation of a medical services district that would have controlled hospital development while at the same time providing incentives of relaxed height and density restrictions and a fast-tracked permitting process. The proposed incentives for the medical zone proved insufficient to win hospital support for the district. Instead, Holyoke Hospital has preferred to work through the city's existing review process for new construction projects, welcoming input from the planning board, city council and its residential neighbors. It has also worked to mitigate impacts on its neighbors if and when they arise.

Route 202/I-91 Interchange

The existing uses in this area are residential and public recreation (Wyatt Harper Park) with some vacant land. The vacant land includes a two acre property just off of the exit where an apartment building had been demolished, and approximately 10-15 acres adjacent to the park. As this latter acreage contains limited wetlands, its development would require construction of an access road. Given that residential land uses predominate in this area, suggested uses for these vacant lands include additional residential, offices, and limited neighborhood retail/consumer services to serve the existing population. The master plan's economic development focus group recommended that the city explore this area's development potential.

Main Street

Nueva Esperanza is in the process of completing a South Holyoke Neighborhood Development Plan, based on meetings and public workshops with area residents and businesspeople. The plan recognizes a number of new projects at various stages of development along Main Street that will strengthen, revive and define the area as a neighborhood business district with a unique flavor reflecting Holyoke's large Puerto Rican population. These projects include the Mercado, an indoor ethnic market, and an open air plaza that can be used for push cart sales, farmers markets, and neighborhood festivals. According to the plan, "This initiative should therefore serve as the heart of future small retail development in South Holyoke and give a focus to the development of the whole of Main Street into a 'Latin Quarter' of 'Caribbean Colors.'" The term Caribbean Colors refers to another project, supported by Bank Boston, to rehabilitate Main Street facades in the bold color schemes favored in Latin America.

Springdale

The city's Planning Board noted that Springdale is a changing neighborhood and suggested that attention be given to monitoring, assessing and directing the transition occurring on lower Main Street. The area is currently given over to automotive uses,

including several car dealerships. However, one dealership recently closed and others are downsizing. Questions to explore include whether the road can and/or should support continued automotive uses, and whether/what other business uses might be appropriate.



Area-Specific Issues — Residential

Churchill

This neighborhood, long in decline and beset with problems, is the recipient of a multi-million dollar federal grant to demolish existing multi-family apartment buildings, replacing it with a less dense mix of owner-occupied two to three family townhouses. Many see in the Hope VI project the answer to revitalizing the neighborhood, improving the housing stock, removing blight, and even addressing crime and drugs. While there is a great deal of excitement about the project, several people interviewed for this paper also expressed concerns. These included:

- a concern that reduced neighborhood density will result in insufficient units to house the neighborhood's current residents;
- a concern that there will be insufficient rental opportunities for those who cannot afford to purchase their own homes;
- a desire to see limited commercial uses to meet resident shopping, health and employment needs.

City officials involved in the Churchill project believe these issues are being addressed. The fact that they were raised may point to communications and public process needs. It was also noted that the proposed plans for Churchill do not conform to the neighborhood's current zoning.

Much of the deterioration in Churchill is attributed to delinquent landlords who neither maintain their property nor pay their tax and utility bills. Previous focus groups have touched on these problem, the economic development group recommending that the City hire a consultant to review tax policy, and the group on homes and neighborhoods proposing that the city explore increased use of receivership to take title for tax delinquent properties. At least one of the city's not-for-profit housing developers has expressed interest in acquiring and rehabilitating such buildings.

Prospect Heights

During discussions of the master plan focus group on Homes and Neighborhoods, several people cautioned that the Prospect Heights neighborhood was on its way to becoming "the next Churchill." A number of buildings in the area are on the city's demolition list, and while their removal is intended to address blight it may also leave vacant lots. Moreover, as the revitalization of Churchill moves forward, its drug problems may

relocate to other neighborhoods in the city just as they moved some years ago from The Flats (once its revitalization got underway) to Churchill — and Prospect Heights has been mentioned as a likely candidate. If this occurs, it could expedite the neighborhood's deterioration.

Northampton Street

North of the Yankee Peddler Restaurant, Northampton Street is characterized by large Victorian homes which are cherished by Holyokers. Yet however attractive these structures are to passers by, they are less desirable as residences due to the high cost of maintenance combined with the street's high volume traffic. Because of this, the neighborhood is experiencing pressures to convert the large homes to commercial uses. In response to these pressures, and as a way of maintaining the area's residential quality, the city created a Professional Office Overlay district along Northampton Street between Dwight and Beech Streets. The overlay allows for conversions from residential to professional office with a special permit, providing the facade is left unchanged and the business use belongs to the property owner — i.e. the building is not used as a rental property. The overlay has largely achieved its intentions; however, some concerns remain. These include:

- the potential loss of downtown professional offices to Northampton Street. Given the substantial vacant office space downtown, any leakage of downtown professional offices to Northampton Street is seen as unfortunate. This underscores the importance of keeping the professional office use a special permit rather than an as-of-right use on Northampton Street;
- the use of internally lit plastic signs used by some Northampton Street professional office conversions. These signs have a commercial appearance out of character with the residential quality desired for Northampton Street, and may also pose a nuisance to abutters;
- the limitations of the district. Economic development interests would like to revisit the provisions of the overlay.

Northampton Street is also experiencing commercial pressures south of the Yankee Peddler as well, although here they derive primarily from the commercial advantages of a highly traveled road rather than the economic viability of area residences. Like the northern part of the street, there is a strong community sentiment to keep the area in its present one and two-family residential state. Additionally, several problems exist that would be exacerbated by an increased commercial presence on the street:

- numerous curb cuts for the existing residential properties already result in several intersections functioning at level of service F;
- the roadway is narrow and on-street parking is almost non-existent, pointing to potential difficulty in accommodating commercial parking needs.

Despite these problems, and the area's current residential zoning, homeowners along the street have recently been approached by a commercial developer.

Although everyone spoken to about Northampton Street for this paper expressed a desire to see both the northern and southern portions remain residential, the area is the site of numerous conflicting interests and outside forces that warrant further attention.

Forces Affecting Northampton Street

Residential Interests	Commercial Interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire to preserve the area’s attractive housing stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic constraints on owners of large, old single-family homes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire to maintain the neighborhood’s historical function and community spirit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decline of the street’s quality of life/residential suitability due to high traffic volumes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the presence of traffic and parking problems that would be exacerbated by commercial development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shortage of space for commercial uses near I-91 interchanges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • desire to support the downtown as an area for commercial uses 	

Elmwood

The Elmwood neighborhood currently experiences a significant amount of “cut-through” traffic trying to find the shortest path from 391 to the Holyoke Mall. A bypass is proposed that would provide a link between 391 and Lower Westfield Road near the mall, effectively re-routing traffic that currently goes through this residential neighborhood. A project justification study has been submitted to the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the project appears in the current Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley Region. However, the project’s high cost is a concern; MHD officials have stated there insufficient secondary impacts to warrant funding.

Lower Highlands and Fairfield Ave.

This neighborhood, roughly bounded on the north and south by Fairfield Avenue and Dwight Street (although Fairfield Avenue may be considered Upper Highlands) and east and west by Northampton Street and the Connecticut River, is experiencing pressure for conversion of large, older single-family homes to 2 and 3 family homes with rental apartments. These conversions are currently allowed by special permit, and are motivated by the expense of maintaining the existing housing stock. While they help owners retain their property, concerns have arisen over the potential impacts of additional rental housing — e.g. parking problems, reduced property values.

West Holyoke

Most of the land in West Holyoke is zoned RA, Agriculture & Single Family, which requires a minimum lot size of one acre (20,000 s.f. if public water & sewer are available). West Holyoke is also within the Water Protection Area and Aquifer Recharge Area Overlay Districts. Although the area does not appear to be facing a large amount of pressure for development, one realtor noted that there is a strong demand for housing there, with new construction fetching high prices. Demand for housing in Holyoke is

generally high, there is little space for development and what is available in West Holyoke — single-family homes on large lots — meets market demands more closely than other properties in the city. Development in West Holyoke is typically on Approval Not Required lots, one home at a time.



Area-Specific Issues — Other

Mt. Tom

The Mt. Tom area is of particular concern to the City of Holyoke, particularly with the closing of Mountain Park and the Mt. Tom Ski Area, the recent change in status of the Whiting Street Reservoir (it is no longer being used as an active water source), and continued quarry operations. The Department of Environmental Management is investigating the possibility of purchasing land adjacent to the existing Mt. Tom Reservation, including both the former ski area and the quarry. The future of the former Mountain Park area, closed eight years ago and on the market, is uncertain. Many of these issues were evaluated in the Mount Tom Range Study, released in 1995. This study made a series of recommendations to ensure that development in the Mt. Tom area has minimal environmental impact, and that the area remains an asset to the City of Holyoke and the surrounding Pioneer Valley.

Route 141, in the Vicinity of the Log Cabin Restaurant

There are approximately 120 acres of vacant woodland in the area of Route 141 near the Log Cabin restaurant, most of which is part of holdings by the William-Edmunds estates. Currently zoned for commercial and residential uses, the master plan's economic development focus group recommended that the city assess its potential for development. However, others interviewed for this paper suggest that protection as permanent open space may be the most appropriate use. The area contains rare and endangered species, wetlands and some steep slopes, and lies within the city's Aquifer Recharge Area Overlay district. Also, site distances are limited in this mountainous area, making additional curb cuts problematic.



General Land Use Issues

Need for Land for Commercial and Industrial Growth

Holyoke is often referred to as a land-poor city because the acreage remaining for new development is limited. However, the ability to accommodate continued commercial and industrial growth remains an important objective because a strong industrial base provides opportunities for employment, investment and municipal revenue. Developable industrial land is available at the following sites:

- *Crossroads Development Park* —132 acres;
- *Whiting Farms Road* — 29 acres;
- *Smith's Ferry*. Development of available industrial land here is problematic due to floodplain constraints and ownership issues. Northeast Utilities owns a portion of the land in this area and has been, up to now, unwilling to sell.
- *The Lower Wards*. While this area of the city contains the largest and oldest concentration of industrial land it offers limited opportunities for growth. The most viable options are from the expansion of existing manufacturers to adjacent vacant lots. These lots become available when neighboring buildings are lost to fire or taken through tax foreclosure. Industrial development in the lower wards coexists with two thriving residential neighborhoods — the Flats and South Holyoke. Residential uses and needs can conflict with needs for industrial growth and economic development. Concern has also arisen over potential conflicts between industrial and other uses (commercial, entertainment, residential) in the proposed Canal Arts and Industry District.

Riverfront Revitalization

In 1994 and 1995 Holyoke participated in a regional study for revitalization of the Connecticut River conducted by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, the Connecticut River 2020 Strategy, which identified the following action areas:

- *The Canal Walk*: Since the plan was released in 1995, implementation on its recommendation to pursue a Canal Walk has been proceeding. A Canal Walk Committee has been established, funding for design has been secured, and a contractor has been selected for the project.
- *The Connecticut River Walk & Bikeway*: This project was conceived in the 2020 report as a regional multi-use trail comprising the five communities of Longmeadow, Agawam, Springfield, West Springfield and Chicopee, stretching north from the Massachusetts border with Connecticut. Now, with construction of the first two segments, in Agawam and Springfield, anticipated in 1999, concepts for the project have expanded. The scope of work for Canal Walk design (cited above) includes preliminary work to chart the River Walk's route through Holyoke, connecting with the Canal Walk downtown and proceeding

north to join other components of the regional bikeway network in Easthampton and Northampton.

- *Log Pond Cove:* This 65-acre area along the river and just north of the city center was recognized as having the potential to be an urban wildlife sanctuary. The cove has distinct natural environments, including a large forest and meadow floodplain area and a wetlands or “marsh-like” area adjacent to a shallow lagoon. It is currently used informally by area residents in the area for a variety of activities including swimming, camping, walking, and motorbiking. Some of these uses have prompted concerns about their impact on the cove’s sensitive wildlife species as well as on safety. The property is owned by Northeast Utilities. An ad hoc group working to develop plans for the site in 1995 recommended that the city or a private non-profit conservation organization work with state and federal resource agencies to seek a donation of the property from the Utility and create a plan for protecting the cove’s fragile natural environments and the safety of park users. An access bridge is needed, along with entrance signage, gates and trail markers.
- *Jug Handle Road Area:* Just off of Route 5 in the southern section of Holyoke there is an open field between Jug Handle Road and the river. The site was addressed in the Connecticut River 2020 Strategy report as providing an opportunity for a Holyoke riverfront park, with sufficient land to accommodate several playing fields, a small boat access to the river and a parking area.
- The property is owned by the Sisters of Providence. The city has expressed some interest in purchasing the site, but up to now the Sisters have been unwilling to sell.

Other riverfront projects mentioned in the 2020 report include pursuit of Springdale Park River Access, improvements to promote increased tourism at the Holyoke Fish Passageway, and development of a Dinosaur Track hiking trail linking the public access area to the tracks along Route 5 to Ferry Street.

Middle Class Housing

As noted above, Holyoke is land poor and just as there is a shortage of land available for commercial and industrial growth, there is also scarce land available for the development of single family middle class housing. Further, some middle class neighborhoods in the city are being threatened by encroaching pressures for commercial and industrial development, while others suffer from lack of property maintenance, crime, etc.

Land Use

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING COMMERCIAL-INDUSTRIAL AREAS

1. Consider formalizing and strengthening the Planning Boards' current informal policy on Ingleside development.

Actions

- Evaluate the long-term demand for additional commercial development at Ingleside and the resulting pressure to convert existing industrial sites to commercial uses. [Note: This is a recommendations from the master plan focus group on Economic Development.]
- Re-examine the policy to ensure it remains relevant, working with area economic development officials, property owners, realtors, residents, etc.
- Examine district boundaries to explore the potential for creating new industrial or commercial land through rezoning.
- Document and formally adopt the policy to facilitate its execution.
- Ensure zoning conforms to the desired policy.

2. Review residential zoning in the Ingleside area to ensure regulatory protection for residential areas from proximate commercial and industrial uses.

Action

- Consider new and/or stronger requirements for new commercial and industrial uses to provide traffic studies and mitigation, landscaping and buffers, lighting controls, and other measures for protecting the character and quality of life in residential neighborhoods.

3. Establish two districts within the downtown area which have distinct identities and which will complement each other.

Experiences nationwide have shown that “chunking” downtown into reasonably sized focus areas have enhanced revitalization efforts. The smaller areas allow for more specific targeting of resources and programs, and for results to be more visible.

Actions

- Designate and pursue development of a Central Business District, to encompass the area immediately surrounding High Street.
- Designate and pursue development of a Canal Arts and Industry District, potentially encompassing the superblock bounded by High, Race, Appleton and Dwight Streets.
- Undertake a community visioning to define and develop the Canal district.
- Ensure that zoning for these districts permits desired uses such as sidewalk tables in front of cafes and restaurants, and street vending of food, crafts and souvenirs.

4. Support mixed use redevelopment in the upper floors of downtown buildings.

(As mentioned) The Holyoke Office of Economic Development and Greater Holyoke Inc. have begun working with owners of vacant buildings downtown to develop a “downtown office park,” to be marketed with a package of financial incentives including tax rebates and utility discounts.

Actions

- Continue this effort and support it through implementation of the proposed incentives.
- Create an incentives package for residential conversions of upper floor office space.
- Conduct a feasibility study of the potential uses of upper level industrial space for non-industrial uses.

6. Consider formal adoption of the design standards in Holyoke’s *Downtown Design Guidebook*.

The *Guidebook* was prepared in 1988 and provides detailed design standards for the renovation and rehabilitation of Holyoke’s downtown streetscape.

Actions

- Review and update the guidebook to recognize changes that have taken place since its development.
- Stage public meetings to bring the revised guidebook and its recommendations to the attention of downtown property owners, developers, council members, etc., with the intent of reviewing the document for formal incorporation into the municipal code.
- Promote the availability of funding through the city’s facade improvement program to help projects meet the design guidelines.

7. Establish special sign regulations for the North High Street National Register Historic District.

The North High Street Historic District hosts the largest concentration and some of the finest examples of Holyoke’s historic architecture. The commercial signage should be an element that is compatible and complimentary to the buildings and the district, rather than a detraction.

Actions

- Designate the Historic District a sign overlay district.
- Create special regulations for the sign overlay district that control appropriately for such qualities as size, placement and material of signs. The regulations should not result in costly increases for signs that could pose a burden to downtown merchants.
- Communicate the new regulations to downtown business owners and establish enforcement mechanisms.

8. Recruit “destination-type” restaurant development in the downtown with a package of zoning, financial and other incentives.

Destination restaurants are those with a unique, historic or festive atmosphere, or which serve exceptional or unusual food. Drawing customers from long distances, they do not depend on the local market for success. The incentive package might include low-cost, fast-tracked liquor licenses, tax abatements and zoning bonuses.

Actions

- Review zoning and permitting requirements relative to this desired use, and identify and pursue potential incentives to facilitate restaurant development in the downtown.

9. Review Holyoke’s zoning ordinance to ensure an appropriate mix of uses within the proposed Canal Arts and Industry district, including live-work spaces.

Currently, Greater Holyoke, Inc. receives regular inquiries from the public regarding the availability of live-work space for small businesses, including artists.

Actions

- Pursue zoning modifications, where necessary, to allow the mix of uses envisioned by the committee developing proposals for the Arts and Industry District.
- Consider adding incentives for mixed-use conversions consistent with the vision for the district.

10. Make construction of the Canal Walk, and its extensions to the Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway, a municipal priority.

The Canal Walk will be the central feature of the Canal District and a powerful spark for other development efforts.

Actions

- The city should take advantage of all funding opportunities (e.g., ISTEPA Enhancement Program).
- The city should provide match moneys when needed, and direct municipal funds to the project in the event of a shortfall in State and Federal funding.

11. Pursue the development of major tourist attractions such as a Connecticut River Heritage Museum or freshwater aquarium in vacant downtown buildings or sites.

Museum development activities should be tied in with efforts, being spearheaded out of Congressman John Olver’s office, to create a National Heritage Corridor along the Connecticut River. Other relevant programs with potential to support museum development include the Conte National Wildlife Refuge and President Clinton’s American Heritage River’s Program.

Actions

- Review zoning for potential museum sites and modify, if necessary, to allow for cultural institutions and supporting activities (e.g. retail, food establishments).

12. Support planned gateway improvements.

The appearance of major roads leading into the downtown is a source of major concern, as it is widely perceived a deterrent to downtown visitation. An ad hoc committee has been meeting to develop proposals to improve these “gateway” areas. Such plans should be made a municipal priority.

- Evaluate zoning along gateway routes and consider changes to promote higher level uses.

13. Include plans for reuse of the former Holyoke Police Station across from Heritage Park in the development of a vision for the downtown.

This vacant municipal building stands on the cusp of the two districts proposed for the downtown. Redevelopment of the site could serve as a catalyst for other downtown projects.

14. Explore the potential for the use of “institutional zoning” to anticipate and plan for the impacts of expansion of major public and private institutions in the city.

This approach, used with success in Providence, RI and elsewhere, involves soliciting long term physical development plans from institutions meeting specific criteria or thresholds.

15. Review the area surrounding Holyoke Hospital to identify potential sites for ancillary medical development.

16. Assess land uses in the Route 202/I-91 Interchange to identify, and zone for, potential development of existing vacant lands and reuse upgrades of developed lands.

Actions

- Consider retrofit zoning to allow limited neighborhood commercial uses on the vacant properties in the area of the Route 202/I.91 interchange to serve the large residential population in this area.
- Consider modifications in zoning districts or permitted uses to encourage office uses east of I-91 on the vicinity of the Route 202/I.91 interchange.

17. Define a Main Street neighborhood business district and craft zoning to support the vision of the district developed by South Holyoke residents and businesspeople.

The South Holyoke neighborhood plan defines the Main Street commercial district as between Sargeant and Appleton Streets.

Actions

- Review current zoning to ensure that proposed uses, such as pushcarts in the open air market, are allowed. Discourage or prohibit incompatible uses.

18. Develop and establish Main Street design guidelines to support the development of a district character.

Design guidelines should promote the Caribbean Colors concept, and be published in English and Spanish.

Action

- Make Caribbean Colors on Main Street eligible for support from Holyoke’s Facade Improvement Program.

19. Conduct a “mini” corridor study of lower Main Street.

The study should encompass the stretch of road from the 319 overpass to the West Springfield border.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL AREAS

20. Pursue modifications to Churchill neighborhood zoning to support the plans of the HOPE VI project.

Actions

- Identify areas of conflict with HOPE VI proposals.
- Craft zoning that would allow for the townhouse-type development planned, but that would not discourage rehabilitation of existing apartment blocks.
- Ensure that zoning modifications permit limited neighborhood commercial development to serve area residents, allowing such uses as retail and service businesses, day care centers, medical offices/clinics, etc.

21. Address concerns over the fate of existing Churchill residents who may be displaced by, and unable to move into, the new townhouse development.

Actions

- Conduct an analysis of the existing population of the planned development to identify housing options for displaced residents. Share the results of this analysis with city councilors, social service agencies and others.
- Develop proposals and strategies to allow displaced renters to remain in their neighborhood. Consider promoting the rehabilitation of existing multi-family apartments in Churchill through municipal takings of delinquent buildings, and providing assistance to not-for-profit developers for acquisition and renovation.

22. Pursue the creation of a Prospect Heights Partnership, following the model for Churchill neighborhood revitalization.

Actions

- Have the new partnership create a vision for neighborhood preservation and transformation, addressing such land use issues as vacant lot redevelopment, neighborhood density, housing rehabilitation, neighborhood commercial uses, etc.
- Craft zoning to support the partnership vision.

23. Conduct a neighborhood planning process to determine the desired future of Northampton Street.

The process should include the development and evaluation of different scenarios, such as exploring the economic viability of co-op conversions of large Northampton Street Victorians (as an alternative to their conversion for business uses), different types of business development, prospects for traffic mitigation. Consideration should also be given to the long term intent of Northampton Street property owners.

24. Review the Professional Office Overlay district's provisions.

This is a recommendation of the economic development focus group, with the intention of facilitating business uses in the area, yet the process should also be used to consider strengthening protections for abutting homeowners.

Actions

- Consider enlarging the overlay district’s boundaries.
- Clarify and consider changes to better accommodate business interests in the area.
- Prohibit internally lit signs.
- Draft lighting provisions to ensure commercial illumination does not spill over to adjacent properties and is turned off after a designated late evening time.

25. Continue to advance plans for the construction of the Elmwood Bypass. (This recommendation from the Location and Infrastructure focus group; additions are in italics.).

Actions

- Pursue funding options for the bypass construction, *including:*
 - *developing means of increasing the project’s attractiveness to state officials and making it more competitive for state funding;*
 - *securing legislative support for the project.*
- Conduct an expanded public participation process, beyond MHD requirements, in regard to project design.
- Incorporate noise control, landscaping and other design features to mitigate neighborhood impacts of the bypass.
- Consider intermediary measures to alleviate congestion in the area.

26. Review and evaluate special permit conditions for multi-family conversions.

Actions

- Consider requirements for owner-occupancy, adequate provision of parking, etc.

27. Evaluate and address the impact of ANR lot development on the area over the long term.

While the impacts of 2 or 3 new homes in the neighborhood each year may be scarcely noticeable, such incremental development can effect dramatic changes over time, bringing a suburban pattern to an area with an open, rural character. The Mount Tom Range study recommended the city establish and encourage Open Space Community Development, and to create a new zoning classification favoring multi-family units with open space. These kinds of development could both preserve West Holyoke’s scenic qualities while also maximizing Holyoke’s scarce remaining developable land.

Actions

- Conduct a build-out scenario of vacant land in West Holyoke under current residential zoning and the city’s subdivision regulations, and explore alternatives using “innovative” zoning techniques such as open space community development, traditional neighborhood development, etc.

28. Review and evaluate current Aquifer Protection Regulations to ensure they are sufficient to protect the Barnes Aquifer.

RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING SENSITIVE UNDEVELOPED AREAS

29. Holyoke's Planning Board should move to create a vision of appropriate development and land preservation for the Mt. Tom area and to develop zoning to promote development that conforms to that vision.

30. Enforce and, if needed, strengthen existing earth removal regulations.

Holyoke's Earth Removal regulations were amended last Spring to require the replacement of materials removed. The effectiveness of the revised regulations to control quarry operations at Mt. Tom should be monitored and evaluated.

31. Continue to implement recommendations of the Mt. Tom Range Commission, particularly the following that are specifically related to land use and/or zoning:

Actions

- Enact an ordinance aimed at visibility protection in the study area and limiting ridge top areas to extremely low impact uses.
- Preserve the area between Mt. Tom Access Road, the Ski Area parking lot and -91 in its natural state.
- Develop policies dealing with both land use and water conservancy along Rte. 5.
- Update the city's Flood Plain Protection zoning.
- Establish and encourage Open Space Community Development.
- Change the Business Highway (BH) zoning west of Route 5 and East of I91, just south of the Easthampton Town Line to Residential Agriculture (RA).
- Create new zoning classifications favoring: a. Multi-family Units with open space; b. Commercial uses complimentary to the area.

32. Continue to explore possible, controlled recreational use of the Whiting Street Reservoir. (Note: This is a recommendation from the Location & Infrastructure focus group)

The Whiting Street Reservoir is no longer used as a primary water supply for the City and, although this reservoir will remain on stand-by status, future use is unlikely because the water would require filtration. Further, the Ashley and McLean reservoirs provide primary back-up and Holyoke has excess water capacity available. The reservoir and its watershed may potentially be opened for recreational activities, but numerous issues remain unresolved concerning maintenance and security of the area to protect water quality.

Actions

- Identify measures and costs associated with operating the reservoir area — e.g. providing sanitary facilities, controlling dog wastes, preventing the use of gasoline-powered boats, etc.
- Craft municipal regulations to control unwanted recreational uses in the area, such as snowmobiling and motorcycling.

33. Conduct an assessment of the Williams and Edmunds estates lands to document both its environmental value and commercial development potential.

Actions

- Identify and quantify what portions of the site are developable under state and federal environmental regulations.
- Evaluate potential uses for the portions of the site deemed developable.
- Create build-out scenarios under existing zoning and alternatives.

34. Conduct a public process to determine Holyoke’s best interests regarding how the Williams and Edmunds estates lands are used.

Actions

- Develop and implement a process to build consensus among the potentially competing interests of property owners, business people, conservationists, etc.
- Consider the area’s potential role as a pivotal piece in the creation of a north-south corridor of protected land along the Mount Tom and East Mountain Range, and the possibility for municipal acquisition..
- Consider regulatory controls to shape development in the area, in the event it is not purchased for protection.

GENERAL LAND USE ISSUES

35. Explore, inventory and assess new areas of Holyoke which may be appropriate for industrial development.

This recommendation is from the Economic Development focus group. The group identified specific areas for assessment, primarily those in the vicinity of I-91 interchanges, including the following (some of which have been discussed above):

- Ingleside
- I-91/202 area
- Dwight Street/I-91 interchange area (potential for conversions and upgrading of commercial uses)
- the Williams/Edmunds estates sites on Route 141
- the Mountain Park/Smith Ferry area.

The group also suggested exploring the conversion of existing municipal uses to industrial and commercial areas in commercial and industrial zones.

36. Undertake a block by block study of land use and zoning in the lower wards to develop a plan that will guide future development in this area as buildings or lots become vacant.

The purpose of the plan would be to detail appropriate future land uses with the multiple objectives of strengthening this industrial core area, enhancing its residential neighborhoods and supporting the new Canal district. Such a study has already been undertaken by the non-profit development group Nueva Esperanza for a 26 block area in South Holyoke and addresses business needs with proposals to create new industrial lands by closing off several city streets. While some public meetings have been held on Nueva’s plan, such proposals will need to go through additional public process before adoption and implementation. The Flats are not included in the Nueva Esperanza study and also need to be addressed. Zoning should be crafted in response to the vision of development resulting from these block-by-block studies.

37. Continue to pursue implementation of the riverfront revitalization actions recommended in the *Connecticut River 2020 Strategy* (PVPC, 1995).

These focused on development of the regional Connecticut River Walk and Bikeway, the Holyoke Canal Walk, and river access at Jughandle Road.

38. Plan for new housing development, encouraging developers to thoughtfully consider the Holyoke market. [From the Homes and Neighborhoods focus group.]

Actions

- Identify areas of the city suitable for new middle income housing development.
- Craft zoning to promote traditional neighborhood development and cluster forms of developments in these areas.
- Create a streamlined permitting process for residential development.
- Identify potential municipal services and infrastructure that could be provided as incentives to residential development.

39. Conduct an assessment and evaluation of Holyoke’s traditional “ring” of middle-class residential neighborhoods including Elmwood, Oakdale and the Lower Highlands.

Actions

- Chart and analyze development trends in these neighborhoods.
- Identify ways to strengthen and support home ownership opportunities in these areas, and retain and promote owner-occupied dwellings.

40. Ensure adequate protections for residential areas from nearby commercial, institutional and industrial development.

Actions

- Review and consider requirements for:
 - *traffic studies and traffic mitigation measures;*
 - *lighting controls;*
 - *landscaping and buffers;*
 - *transit stops;*
 - *pedestrian connections (sidewalks, paths, etc.);*
 - *site amenities.*
- Review and consider thresholds for triggering various requirements, and the procedures used to implement them (e.g. site plan approval, special permit).

41. Initiate a procedure to review the code enforcement and building permitting procedures, with recommended changes to be issued within two years from the publication of the master plan. [From the Homes and Neighborhoods focus group.]

Actions

- Appoint a task force to review both the city's code enforcement process and the building permitting procedures. Conduct public hearings/meetings to collect first-hand information on how the process has affected developers, property owners and residents.
- Make the task force process highly visible, to promote attention and responsiveness to its findings.
- Support the task force with municipal staff to transform its recommendations into draft regulations.

Land Use

Implementation

Holyoke's Planning Board and Planning Department will be responsible for implementing the land use recommendations of the master plan. As noted earlier, a Phase III of the master plan is being prepared, to review and revise the city's zoning and subdivision regulations.