

Connect. Construct. Create.

A plan for the revitalization of Center City Holyoke



Holyoke, Massachusetts

Submitted to: **Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic
Development - Division of Community Services**

Prepared for **Holyoke Redevelopment Authority**

Prepared by **The Holyoke Office of Planning & Economic Development and
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.**

In Association with:

RKG Associates Inc.

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This plan was developed with thoughtful input by various community stakeholders including residents, local business owners and employees, community leaders, and City of Holyoke elected officials and staff. Interviews, neighborhood public meetings, Holyoke Redevelopment Committee regular public meetings and Citizen Participation Committee focus groups, were all conducted using the time of dedicated volunteers from the Holyoke community. The plan was built off a culmination of community input received in developing the Master Plan, South Holyoke Revitalization Plan, Innovation-based Economic Development Strategy and finally the Center City Vision Plan. The efforts of individuals in developing those plans should be gratefully acknowledged as well.

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Over the past several years the residents of Holyoke have clamored for a concentrated effort to revitalize and redevelop the Center City; an area that despite its rich history, architectural traits and waterfront views, has suffered the plight of many urban centers, that of abandonment and blight. It is clear that to make Holyoke a vibrant community, a renewed Center City must emerge.

This desire has translated into multiple public, private, and non-profit investments in the downtown area: through the emergence of creative economy industries and activities; redevelopment of the Holyoke Transportation Center, Public Library and Victory Theater; creation of the Canalwalk; construction of the new Senior Center and the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center, all new investments that have triggered the need for better streetscapes and housing opportunities, renewed passenger rail service and access, and will have brought about the transformation of Center City as a source of innovation and a renewed quality of life.

The motivating force created to ignite these aspirations into a realistic plan of action was the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA), created in 2008. The HRA was given the mandate to develop and implement an urban renewal plan that would eliminate blighted conditions and foster neighborhood reinvestment, improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods, promote business expansion and job creation, and maintain and enhance development that will revitalize Holyoke's economic and cultural growth; all while making our community more attractive, prosperous, and self-sufficient.

After several years of civic engagement, through numerous public meetings and hearings, analysis and planning, the HRA has completed their roadmap for action: "**Connect. Construct. Create. - A plan for the revitalization of Center City Holyoke**". Its primary purpose is to promote economic development and growth in Holyoke by capitalizing on the City's unique characteristics, '**connecting**' people and places, '**constructing**' infrastructure, and '**creating**' a more vibrant and prosperous Center City.

The Center City plan is founded on the notion that Holyoke is well on its way towards an economic transformation, thanks in large measure to the energy and commitment of countless community minded citizens. Unlike the (sometimes) tattered history of urban renewal across our nation, this plan will not displace, remove, or otherwise destruct the Center City's existing neighborhoods. On the contrary, approximately 92% of all parcel acquisitions included in this plan's actions are vacant or abandoned lots or buildings. Special attention was given to creating and enhancing market rate housing and affordable housing.

Ours is a plan sufficiently ambitious, yet realistic for the future of Holyoke to encompass a diverse, entrepreneurial and prosperous City, one that can grow its population over the next two decades and can provide for a quality of life where all desire to live, work and play. We have begun the process and welcome all to join in our efforts.

Signed

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

Thomas Creed - Chair

Patricia Duffy

Carl Eger, Jr.

Gladys Lebrón-Martínez

Jacqueline Watson

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- A. Holyoke Master Plan – Executive Summary (1999)**
- B. South Holyoke Revitalization Strategy (2008)**
- C. The Center City Vision Plan (2009)**
- D. Baseline Economic Conditions & Market Characteristics (2010)**
- E. Acquisition Property Descriptions**
- F. CPC Documentation**
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**No changes proposed to existing therefore Not Applicable (NA)