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12.02(2): Area Eligibility

Introduction

In order to undertake the actions contained in this Urban Renewal Plan (URP), the Project Area must be designated as an Urban Renewal Area, first by Holyoke Redevelopment Authority and the City, and then by the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Specifically, elements discussed in this section include a brief historical overview of the City of Holyoke, and the physical characteristics, existing zoning that regulates downtown redevelopment, existing land uses, existing access and transportation conditions, and property ownership of the Project Area. In accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(2), the following section provides background information such as location, history, relevant statistics, and rationale for the Project Area boundaries, as well as a needs assessment that supports the proposed public actions that aim to meet the project goals and objectives, as presented in Chapter 3, *Project Objectives*. This chapter also presents data, such as inspections of buildings/sites and other descriptive material documenting that the Project Area is "decadent, substandard or blighted," pursuant to the definition in M.G.L c. 121B, Section 1 and, therefore, eligible to be designated as an Urban Renewal Area. The overall purpose of this section is to provide a description of existing conditions and a background, and presents a context for the community's goals.

Background

The City of Holyoke established a Redevelopment Authority in February 2008. Chartered under Chapter 121B, the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA) has the powers to plan and implement activities needed to redevelop underutilized, deteriorated or blighted areas, to encourage new development, promote growth, create tax revenue, and create new jobs for the City of Holyoke:

"The Holyoke Redevelopment Authority's mission is developing and implementing Urban Renewal Plan(s) thus eliminating blighted conditions



that inhibit neighborhood reinvestment; improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods; fostering and promoting business expansion and job creation, and maintaining and attracting development that will revitalize Holyoke's economy and cultural growth while making our community more attractive, prosperous, and self-sufficient."

- Holyoke Redevelopment Authority Mission Statement (2008)

Over the past three years, HRA has worked towards developing an URP. In the spring of 2009, the City received a *Gateway Plus Action Grant* from DHCD, which was used to complete a community visioning process for the Center City of Holyoke. The process included three public planning charettes and numerous stakeholder and one-on-one interviews. The *Center City Vision Plan* (August 2009) serves as the basis of this URP titled: *Connect. Construct. Create. A plan for the revitalization of Center City Holyoke*. Funding for this URP effort is provided through a NeighborWorks America Grant provided to the City through HAP, Inc. as well as funding granted by the City's adoption of MGL Chapter 40R.

In parallel to this planning effort were several others that concentrated on specific implementation strategies including the Massachusetts Gateway Cities Program and the Innovation Based Economic Development Strategies.

Gateway Cities Program

Holyoke is part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Gateway Cities program. A Gateway City in Massachusetts can be defined as a city with a population in between 35,000 and 250,000, with an average household income below the state average and an average educational attainment rate below the state average. The Gateway Cities concept was based on a report issued in 2007 by MassINC and the Brookings Institute: "Reconnecting Massachusetts Gateway Cities: Lessons Learned and an Agenda for Renewal." The report described how these cities have lagged in economic development from previous years. In response to the report, 11 cities established the Gateway Cities Compact, an informal alliance to promote a comprehensive statewide strategy to build on the assets of the state's historic urban centers outside of Boston and its immediate suburbs. On August 5th, 2010 Gov. Deval Patrick signed a bill to enhance the program. Holyoke has benefited from various Gateway Cities Programs including funding for the initial Vision Plan that set the stage for this project, and a Gateway City Park grant to rehabilitate Veterans Park.

Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy

The Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center (MGHPCC) represents a unique collaboration of world-class universities, and public and private partners that will provide unparalleled computing power for MIT, University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Northeastern University, and Harvard University. It is a major investment in downtown Holyoke of \$168 million in buildings and equipment, and attracted \$5 million of investment from Cisco and EMC.



A collaborative regional partnership was established to leverage economic growth from the creation of the MGHPCC in the form of the Holyoke Innovation District Task Force. Members of the Task Force comprised of half from local organizations and half representing the region to ensure that the MGHPCC was leveraged in the entire Pioneer Valley. The plan presents an innovation based economic development strategy to enhance job opportunities and long-term economic viability for Holyoke's Innovation District and the entire Pioneer Valley.

The key strategies are:

- Enhancing the Entrepreneurial Innovation Eco-system
- Outstanding Talent Delivery and Educational Assets
- Site Ready/Policy Ready for Holyoke Innovation District Redevelopment
- Enhanced Economic Development Delivery System
- Digital Technology/IT Cluster
- Clean Energy Innovation and Development
- Manufacturing Industry Cluster
- Urban Agriculture Industry Cluster
- Other Key Strategies and Initiatives

The above key initiatives were also managed by the Office of Planning & Economic Development and all planning processes took into account the others that were occurring to ensure consistency and that there was no overlap in efforts.

More recently, the City partnered with economic development leaders from across the region, including the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Massachusetts Technology Collaborative from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to prepare the *Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley*. This strategy focused on building momentum from the construction of the Massachusetts Green High-Performance Computing Center (MGHPCC) in downtown The MGHPCC represents a unique collaboration of world-class universities, and public and private partners that will provide unparalleled computing power for M.I.T., University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Northeastern University, and Harvard University. It is a major investment in downtown Holyoke of \$168 million in buildings and equipment that has attracted \$5 million of investment from Cisco and EMC. At the request of the Governor, a collaborative regional partnership to leverage economic growth from the creation of MGHPCC was undertaken in the form of the Holyoke Innovation District Task Force. One of the primary missions of this group was the development of an Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley. The ultimate goals of this initiative included Center City Holyoke but also extended well-beyond the MGHPCC facility. These strategies provided recommendations for this leading-edge facility to become a catalytic economic development project for the City of Holyoke and broader region leading to additional industry opportunities and ultimately job opportunities and economic growth. Relevant recommendations from these strategies have been incorporated into this URP document.



Project Area Location and Context

The City of Holyoke is located in western Massachusetts in Hampden County along the banks of the Connecticut River and is bordered by West Springfield on the south; Westfield, Southampton, and Easthampton on the west; and separated from South Hadley and Chicopee by the Connecticut River on the east. Holyoke is 90 miles west of Boston; 34 miles north of Hartford, Connecticut; and 150 miles from New York City. Bradley International Airport in Connecticut is approximately 27 miles south of Holyoke, or approximately 30 minutes driving (Figure A-1).

The City of Holyoke is approximately 23 square miles in land area and has a total population of 39,880 and a population density of 1,874 people per square mile.¹ This density is relatively low as compared to other “Gateway Cities” in the Commonwealth as summarized below:

- Holyoke - 1,874
- Springfield - 4,803
- Chicopee - 2,422
- Pittsfield - 1,105
- Lowell - 7,842
- Lawrence - 11,027
- Fall River - 2,682
- New Bedford - 4,754
- Boston - 12,792

Holyoke is also in close proximity to over 30 colleges and universities that produce a talented and qualified workforce for prospective employers in the Pioneer Valley. In addition to excellent access to major highways and academic institutions, Holyoke offers existing infrastructure, affordable housing costs, a growing workforce, convenient highway access, freight rail service, passenger rail connection under design, and business development incentives.

The Project Area is generally bounded by the Connecticut River to the northeast, east and southeast, Route 391 and Resnic Boulevard to the south/southwest, and Beech Street (Route 202) to the west (Figure A-2). The approximately 712-acre Project Area includes the entire Center City area, which is comprised of census tracts 8114, 8115, 8116, and 8117. The Project Area has frontage on the Connecticut River and includes the downtown Canal District with three power-generating human-made canals and includes the neighborhoods of:

- South Holyoke;
- The Flats;



¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Population.



- Downtown/Prospect Heights; and
- Churchill.

The Center City neighborhoods once comprised the urban core of the City, including a central business district along High, Maple and Main Streets, flourishing manufacturing sites along the three levels of canals with employee housing developments, and neighborhood commercial/retail/institutional uses and services that supported the downtown residents. Significant disinvestment over the years has resulted as manufacturing companies went out of business and/or relocated and the once flourishing industrial and central business districts are now plagued by vacant and underutilized properties.

The HRA designated the Project Area for revitalization under this URP because it has the most distressed economic conditions within the City of Holyoke. This is evident by the run-down conditions of many old mill properties and the many vacant and/or partially vacant lots and buildings throughout the Project Area (several of which have been vacant for at least the past 20 years). It was determined that no one area of the Center City could be singled out for the development of an Urban Renewal Plan, but instead each neighborhood is connected to the successful revitalization of the Center City. Instead there were 10 target areas selected to focus public activities that would spur private investment dispersed throughout the Center City.



Local History

Before European settlement, the area that eventually became the City of Holyoke was used by Native Americans of the Algonquin and Iroquois tribes for hunting and fishing, particularly around the great falls on the Connecticut River. A north-south trail along the eastern base of the mountain range ran along the site of the present-day Northampton Street.² In 1633, the region of the Connecticut River Valley was first inhabited by Englishmen by virtue of a post established at Windsor Connecticut by traders from the Plymouth Plantation. In 1635-36, a warehouse and wharf, for purposes of trading with the Indians, was constructed in nearby Agawam. Out of this "trading post" grew Springfield, which later evolved into West Springfield, whose third Parish, called North Parish, or "Ireland Parish," became Holyoke. Holyoke was first settled in 1745 and was officially incorporated as a town in 1850 and later as a city in 1873.

The first of several dams was constructed in 1848 by a group of wealthy Boston businessmen to take advantage of a 57-foot drop in the river level. The water power created by the dam was transferred to planned industrial sites through an extensive



² 2005 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, produced by the City of Holyoke Planning Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Conservation Commission, 2005.



series of 7.5 miles of hand dug canals and raceways to bring that power to machine mills, factories.³ The businessmen also planned for, and constructed within, a system of gridded streets factory worker housing and building lots for grander homes for factory owners, giving Holyoke the moniker of being the first planned industrial city in America. At one point, more than 25 paper mills were in operation in Holyoke, annually producing the greatest tonnage of paper of any city in the world giving the city its nickname of “Paper City”. Although there are no longer any paper manufacturers, the dam, canals and much of the industrial and commercial architecture remain intact. The history of paper related manufacturing continues with a strong base of paper converting in place of the former paper manufacturing. Today, Holyoke continues to strongly reflect its industrial history with many of the mills and associated housing still standing in and near downtown. The City still follows the original grid pattern and mix of uses that was planned by its designers, and which would today be considered “smart growth”.

Because of the growth of industry, Holyoke’s population grew by over 100 percent between 1860 and 1880⁴ and was established by working-class immigrants, where the first wave of mill workers was predominantly of Irish heritage. Immigrant populations continued with significant populations of French Canadian, Polish, German, and most recently a wave of migrant population from Puerto Rico since the 1970’s. As of the 1970 Census, only 3.7% of Holyoke’s population was of Puerto Rican heritage, while today nearly half of Holyoke’s population is of Puerto Rican heritage.

The Urban Renewal Plan area historically has contained higher percentages of minority populations due to its proximity to jobs and its abundance of affordable housing. Today, the percentage of residents of Puerto Rican heritage within the Urban Renewal Area is, on average, closer to 90%⁵, creating a rich culture and a unique asset to have the highest percentage of Puerto Rican population in any City outside of Puerto Rico itself.

With the industrial expansion came commercial development, centered around High, Maple and Main Streets, and residential development spreading out from the City center west into the Highlands, Oakdale and Elmwood neighborhoods. These neighborhoods were single-, two-, and three-family homes, while the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the mills and downtown (South Holyoke, the Flats, Churchill, and Prospect Heights) historically had many tenements and multi-family apartment buildings.⁶



³ *The Holyoke Master Plan*, City of Holyoke, final draft 3/10/99.

⁴ U.S. Census

⁵ U.S. Census 2010

⁶ 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan, produced by the City of Holyoke Planning Department, Parks and Recreation Department, and Conservation Commission, 2005.



The City saw the loss of many large manufacturing facilities and jobs over the last two decades. Companies moved their manufacturing elsewhere, or closed altogether. In 1994 Holyoke had 140 manufacturers with about 5,400 jobs, while today Holyoke has more companies, 160 total, but 400 fewer jobs.⁷ In addition to Atlas Copco, AMPAD, Anitec (Kodak Polychrome), BASF, Permalin, Laminated Paper, Autron, Parsons Paper, Gretag Imaging, and Pratt & Austin are also gone. Smaller niche manufacturers are taking the place of the large scale ones and require smaller facilities, employ fewer workers, and have less capital to construct new facilities.

These losses were part of a trend much larger than the City. From 1980 to 2000, the Pioneer Valley region experienced a major structural change from a manufacturing-based to a service-based economy. According to the Massachusetts "Benchmarks" quarterly journal of the Massachusetts economy published by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute in cooperation with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston and managed by the Institute's Economic and Public Policy Research unit, "the Valley's economic decline during the second half of the twentieth century was primarily the result of its heavy dependence on manufacturing". The region, including Holyoke, needs to reorient the economic base from its roots in the industrial revolution to thrive in the decades ahead.⁸

Over the past 20 years, there has been a change in Holyoke's manufacturing base from large national companies in single tenant buildings, to smaller local companies, with more limited resources who are either forced or sometimes prefer to locate within affordable multi-tenant buildings. This can be seen in buildings across the City, especially those larger manufacturers that left the City in the last decade, including Ampad on Jackson Street, Pratt & Austin, and Laminated Paper.

In the past several years, there have been efforts to bring jobs into Holyoke and diversify the economic base. Since the Holyoke Mall, one of the largest shopping malls in New England, opened in 1979 the retail sector has been a major employer in the city. However, this and other similar commercial sectors have left downtown for greenfield sites located near Interstates 90 and 91, and along Route 5. This has caused significant decline in what once was the commercial core of Holyoke along High,

⁹ HEDIC data

¹⁰ UMass & Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. MASSACHUSETTS BENCHMARKS, From the Field: The Pioneer Valley Region. 1999.

⁷ HEDIC data

⁸ UMass & Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. MASSACHUSETTS BENCHMARKS, From the Field: The Pioneer Valley Region. 1999.

Maple and Main Streets and has reduced access to goods and services for those living downtown.



Project Area Today/ Neighborhood Characteristics

Today, Holyoke strongly reflects its industrial history, with many of the mills and associated housing still standing in and near the downtown. The City still follows, in large part, the original plan proposed by the developers of the City. More recent development has filled in much of the area between the downtown and the mountains, leaving the City with a dense urban core and a less densely developed mountain range and western half of the City.

The planned improvements of the URP will create a more attractive downtown area through multiple public infrastructure investments, such as a new rail connection, improved streetscapes and neighborhood connections as well as facilitating multiple sites for development, all of which will result in increased private investment in Holyoke's abandoned and dilapidated properties.

The following sections describe the existing conditions of the Project Area by neighborhood, including local regulatory context/zoning, land use, building types and conditions, and property ownership.

Local Regulatory Context/Zoning

Figure D-3 shows the existing zoning districts that currently regulate development within the Project Area. The land surrounding the canal system and along the riverfront is generally zoned for industrial/manufacturing uses. In the Flats and South Holyoke neighborhoods, residential zoning districts are generally located in the cores surrounded by the industrial zones. Prospect Heights/Downtown includes residential zoning districts along the northwestern edge and riverfront with commercial districts in the center. The Churchill neighborhood consists mostly of residential zoning districts with commercial zoning districts southeast along Maple and High Streets. Table 2-1 lists the existing zoning districts within the Project Area and their land area.

**Table 2-1
Zoning Districts**

Zoning Classification	Number of Parcels	Zone Area (sq. ft.)	Zone Area (acres)	Percent of Total Project Land Area
General Industry (IG)	527	17,528,089	402.39	56.5%
Downtown Residential (DR)	863	7,925,109	181.94	25.6%
Downtown Business (BC)	221	1,796,823	41.25	5.8%
Highway Business (BH)	217	1,672,514	38.40	5.4%
Not Zoned/Undesignated?? ¹	33	433,581	9.95	1.4%
Multi-Family Residence and Professional Office (RO)	45	429,973	9.87	1.4%
Multi-Family Residence (RM40) ²	7	336,978	7.74	1.1%
Limited Neighborhood Business (BL)	39	281,877	6.47	0.91%
Single-Family Residential (R-1)	7	271,531	6.23	0.88%
Multi-Family Residence (RM20) ³	16	201,803	4.63	0.65%
General Business (BG)	3	86,256	1.98	0.28%
Multi-Family Residence (RM60) ⁴	1	44,127	1.01	0.14%
Total	1,979	31,008,644	711.86	100%

Source: City of Holyoke Assessor's Office parcel data, March 2011.

- (1) Explain what this means?
- (2) 40 units/acre
- (3) 20 units/acre
- (4) 60 units/acre

Description of Zoning Classifications

Zoning information is based on the City of Holyoke's Zoning Ordinance adopted February 19, 2002 as amended. The sections below describe in general the allowed uses within each Project Area zoning district.

General Industry (IG)

More than half of the Project Area is covered by the "General Industry" zoning district (IG). As illustrated in Figure D-3, the IG District is located along the canals and riverfront. In general, this category allows a number of institutional uses (except private cemeteries and hospitals), retail, hotels/motels, restaurants, offices, parking (lots or garages), public transit facilities, and all industrial/manufacturing uses (except quarrying, waste disposal and/or refuse transfer stations). Multi-family dwellings, auto repair/service uses, commercial drive-through uses, adult



entertainment, wireless communication facilities, and essential services⁹ are allowed by special permit from the City Council. The City has a four-story (or 60 feet) height limitation on buildings within this IG District. This zoning designation generally supports the proposed redevelopment actions and uses.

Downtown Residential (DR)

Over 25 percent of the Project Area is zoned “Downtown Residential” (DR), which is located within the cores of the neighborhoods of South Holyoke and The Flats and north of the first canal within Churchill and Prospect Heights/Downtown, as illustrated on Figure D-3. The purpose of this zone is to encourage infill and redevelopment that is in keeping with the exiting neighborhood buildings and structures. The commercial uses shall occupy the 1st floor only of a building, provided that at least 2 dwelling units are in the rest of the building, and the building contains not less than 3 stories. The DR District permits all types of housing as-of-right with the exception of mobile home park housing (a prohibited use). Special permit from the City Council is required for boarding house, a Planned Unit Development, independent/retirement/assisted living housing, or for conversion to residential dwellings. The DR District also allows as-of-right all exempt/institutional uses (except hospitals and private cemeteries) and retail, restaurant, and ground-floor office/retail. No industrial/manufacturing uses are permitted within the DR District. Under the special district regulations, building heights are limited to seven stories, or 90 feet. This zoning designation generally supports the proposed redevelopment actions and uses.

Downtown Business (BC)

Almost six percent of the Project Area is zoned “Downtown Business” (BC), which is located within the downtown core surrounding the central business district around Maple and High Streets within the Prospect Heights/Downtown and Churchill neighborhoods. The BC District allows, as-of-right, most housing types (with the exception of mobile homes, Planned Unit Development, residential care, and conversion to dwellings), all institutional uses except private cemeteries, hospitals, most types of commercial uses, including parking lot or garage (except wholesale retail, animal hospitals, nursing homes, motels, auto repair/service, medical office/clinic, indoor and outdoor commercial recreation, and adult entertainment). No industrial/manufacturing uses are permitted in the BC District. According to Table 5.2 (Dimensional Regulations) of the Holyoke Zoning Ordinance, there are no building height or other dimensional requirements for the BC District.¹⁰ This zoning designation generally supports the proposed redevelopment actions and uses.



⁹ According to the Holyoke Zoning Code, “essential services” are those “provided by a public service corporation or by governmental agencies through erection, construction, alteration, or maintenance of gas, electrical, steam, or water transmission or distribution systems and collection, communication, supply, or disposal systems whether underground or overhead, but not including wireless communications facilities. Facilities necessary for the provision of essential services include poles, wires, drains, sewers, pipes, conduits, cables, fire alarm boxes, police call boxes, traffic signals, hydrants and other similar equipment in connection therewith.”

¹⁰ Holyoke Planning Board, *City of Holyoke Zoning Ordinance*, effective February 19, 2002, last printed June, 26, 2009.



Highway Business (BH)

Over five percent of the Project Area is zoned “Highway Business” (BH), or vehicle-oriented business, which is generally located adjacent to the IG District in South Holyoke, along High and Commercial Streets in Churchill, and in the northwest portion of Prospect Heights/Downtown, as illustrated by Figure D-3. The BH District allows, as-of-right, most housing types (with the exception of mobile homes Planned Unit Development, residential care, housing on second story, and conversion to dwellings), all institutional uses (except private cemeteries, hospitals), most types of commercial uses, including parking lot or garage and amusement park (except nursing homes, auto repair/service, medical office/clinic, and indoor and outdoor commercial recreation). Auto repair/service and adult entertainment uses are allowed by special permit from the City Council. All industrial/manufacturing uses are prohibited within the BH District except storage, warehousing and/or distribution facilities and bulk fuel storage/distribution facility (allowed by special permit from the City Council). Buildings in the BH District are limited to two stories, or 35 feet in height. In general, BH District does not support the proposed redevelopment actions and uses because it encourages the development of vehicle-oriented businesses and discourages a mix of uses or higher densities.

Other Zoning Districts

The remaining zoning districts within the Project Area range from around only one percent of the total area (Table 2-1). These districts include: Multi-Family Residence and Professional Office (RO); Multi-Family Residence (including RM-20, RM-40 and RM-60 zones); Limited Neighborhood Business (BL); Single-Family Residential (R-1); and General Business (BG). These ‘other’ zoning designations generally support the proposed redevelopment actions and uses.

In general, the RM and RO districts allow single-, two- and multi-family residential and home care/rehabilitation center uses by right and all institutional uses (except cemeteries). Commercial and industrial uses are prohibited in RM districts. In the RO District, office uses (i.e., bank) and nursing and funeral homes are allowed by right. The City Council may grant a special permit for a structure in an RM-20, RM-40, RM-60, or RO district to exceed the height regulation.

In general, residential uses (single-, two- and multi-family) and office uses are allowed by right in the BL and BG Districts and well as most institutional uses (except cemeteries and hospitals). The BL District is generally more restrictive than the BG District as to the types of commercial uses that are allowed by right (i.e., hotel/motel and commercial parking uses are not allowed by right in the BL District but area allowed by right in the BG District) and no auto-repair/service uses are allowed by right in either district.

Other Land Use Regulations

Special Districts

In addition to the underlying zoning districts described above, there are a number of special overlay districts that fall within the Project Area boundaries, as shown in Figure D-3. These overlay districts, which are described below are generally consistent with the redevelopment proposed in this URP.

Arts & Industry Overlay District (AIOD)

The purpose of the Arts & Industry Overlay District (AIOD) is to promote mixed use development and live/work space, and encourage reuse, redevelopment and revitalization of historic mill structures along the City's canals and in Downtown. The AIOD generally applies to the existing industrial properties that run along both sides of the 1st and 2nd Level Canals (Figure D-3). The AIOD allows any uses allowed as of right in the

IG District (described previously) as well as multi-family residential by-right by renovation of an existing building, second or higher floor residential, and live/work space.

Chapter 40R - Smart Growth District

In accordance with the purposes of G.L. Chapter 40R (to encourage downtown revitalization and economic development and promote mixed-use development), the Holyoke Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District (SGZD) consists of 152 acres of land and includes the following sub-districts: (i) Gateway Sub-district; and (ii) Downtown Mixed Use Sub-district. The Gateway Sub-district includes Dwight, Linden and Elm Streets and the Downtown Mixed Use Sub-district Dwight Street and Elm Street to Main Street (Figure D-3). Permitted uses include residential (single-, 2 and 3-, and multi-family), mixed use, including neighborhood- and/or downtown-scale commercial or institutional uses, mill renovation for mixed use, and parking (surface or garage). There are reduced parking regulations in this Overlay District requiring one space per residential unit which can be provided off-site by-right. Commercial use parking spaces may also be provided off-site by-right to promote shared central parking locations instead of large single-use parking lots within the Center City. The SGZD requires at least 20 percent affordable housing for projects proposing more than 12 residential units and puts forth dimensional, density and parking requirements as well as special review procedures. A developer may choose either to develop a project in accordance with the requirements of the SGZD or the underlying zoning.

Floodplain Overlay District (FOD)

The Connecticut River is a great asset to the City and the downtown area. Riverfront development that is environmentally sensitive will support the downtown revitalization process. Areas along the immediate river banks of the Connecticut



River, which flows along the eastern border of the Project Area, are included in the FEMA 100-year flooding zone. Some small areas within the Project Area also fall within the 500-year floodplain. Refer to Figure A-3 for these areas. The remainder of the Project Area has been determined to be outside of the 100- and 500-year floodplains.

Conservation Commission

The Holyoke Conservation Commission serves the city in a regulatory and advisory way. The Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Holyoke Wetlands Protection Bylaw and the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act. Through these laws the Commission ensures the environment is protected in order to:

- Safeguard the city water supply
- Protect groundwater quality and availability
- Control flooding and storm damage
- Prevent pollution and erosion
- Ensure that habitats for wildlife are preserved

Green Communities Act

In May 2010, Holyoke met the five specific criteria to be designated a 'Green Community' (one of the first of 35 communities) under the State's Green Communities Act of July 2008 leading the way on energy reduction as a community.¹¹ The Green Communities Grant Program, which is an initiative of the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER), aims to empower the Commonwealth's cities and towns to reduce their energy use and their carbon footprint on the journey towards healthier communities and stronger economies.

With the Green Community designation, the City of Holyoke has become formally recognized as a sustainability leader in the Commonwealth, and will gain financial and environmental benefits through municipal energy savings and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and potentially attract new economic development opportunities within a rapidly expanding green economy. As an official Green Community, Holyoke is qualified to apply for grant funding for studying, designing, constructing or implementing energy efficiency and renewable or alternative energy projects.

As part of the requirements, Holyoke has adopted an above-code appendix to the State's building code - the 120 AA 'Stretch' Energy Code; completed an Energy



¹¹ Boston.com article dated May 25, 2010: *Green communities named by state* (website: http://www.boston.com/lifestyle/green/greenblog/2010/05/green_communities_named_by_stat.html)



Reduction Plan outlining implementation strategies to reduce Holyoke's energy consumption by 20% over 5 years; adopted a Fuel Efficient Vehicle Policy; and adopted Chapter 43D Expedited Permitting; has adopted a Solar Facilities Zoning Ordinance that allows solar facilities by right in every zone; and; allows R&D and manufacturing of renewable energy products by-right in industrial zones.

Land Use and Building Types and Conditions

The Project Area's developed landscape is generally characterized by a mix of land uses in an urban-like setting with commercial corridors, a mix of housing types, civic/institutional uses, public open space, vacant buildings and parcels, historic mills, and industrial/manufacturing uses. However, each neighborhood is uniquely characterized by its land uses.

The predominant land uses in the project area are classified as Tax Exempt Property and Industrial. Tax exempt is not unusual for an urban downtown because it includes a number of parcels/buildings owned by the City, Housing Authority, Holyoke Gas and Electric (HG&E) and non-profit organizations. In addition, there are a number of parcels classified as industrial, many of which are vacant, and some which currently house a mix of uses. Figure D-1 illustrates the City-classified land uses based on the City of Holyoke Assessor's Department parcel data.

A visual survey of the exterior of the buildings was completed to determine general condition. The survey included an exterior visual evaluation of the properties in those areas identified as most in need of revitalization actions. In general, the evaluation took into consideration the apparent visual conditions of a building's foundation, walls, windows, doors, cornices/eaves, porch/balcony, exterior stairs, loading dock, (if present), chimney and roof, (if visible). Interior inspection was not part of this visual evaluation. The building conditions evaluation used a rating system of the following four categories:

- **Good Condition** - The buildings within this category appeared to be in a structurally stable condition. In some cases, there were clear signs of current building maintenance or recent rehabilitation, such as new paint, fresh masonry re-pointing, new doors and windows.
- **Satisfactory Condition** - Buildings in this category exhibited stable conditions and required only minor rehabilitation, or maintenance, such as new paint on wall surfaces and windows. Loose, but intact masonry and mortar, and, in some cases, exterior features, such as the entranceways requiring moderate improvements to make them code compliant.
- **Moderate Disrepair** - This category includes buildings in need of minor, but obvious structural repairs, masonry and joint deterioration, or porch, roof, or siding replacements. Certain building components and fabric appeared to be

reaching the end of their useful periods. Some of the buildings appear to require considerable maintenance overall and, possibly, structurally.

- **Severe Disrepair** - Buildings that are visually dilapidated and need extensive repairs are categorized in this group. Most of these buildings require major investment in façade improvements and correction of extensive masonry deterioration, storefronts, windows, walls and/or other architectural features.

This building survey indicated that a majoring of the buildings in the identified areas were in moderate to severe disrepair (53%). Many were boarded up, some had been identified by the City as being a public safety concern, a few had failing roofs, broken windows or crumbling walls.

This inspection also showed that building uses throughout the Project Area are quite varied including residential, retail, office, commercial, civic, religious, mixed use, and industrial/manufacturing. Residential occupancy generally consists of detached, single-family or two-family, attached townhouses, row-houses (many converted to flats), multi-story apartment houses and high-rise apartments. All housing appears to be either wood frame or masonry, in a wide range of conditions.

Retail, office, and commercial structures characterize the main corridors of Downtown, with extensive street level retail conversions. As with residential buildings, the conditions of commercial properties vary widely mainly due to use and occupancy.

Holyoke architecture is dominated by the expansive masonry mill and industrial structures, which flank the vast canal network and Connecticut River. Much of this industrial network continues to be in operation as manufacturing facilities, office, or commercial space. Some mills have fallen into disrepair, and are abandoned, vacant, deteriorating or have collapsed.

Table 2-3 summarizes the building conditions of those representative buildings evaluated within the Project Area.

Table 2-3
Summary of Building Conditions

Building Condition	Number	Percent (%) of Total Buildings
Good Condition	32	13
Satisfactory Condition	84	34
Moderate Disrepair	90	37
Severe Disrepair	39	16
Total		

Source: VHB, Inc. site survey conducted in July 2009.

Table 2-4 summarizes the age of the buildings within the Project Area based on the City's Assessor's data.

Table 2-4
Age of Buildings within the Project Area

Years Old (Year Built)	Number of Parcels	Percent (%) of Total Parcels with Buildings
0 – 20 (2011-1991)	136	11%
21 – 40 (1990-1971)	92	7%
41 – 60 (1970-1951)	61	5%
61 – 80 (1950-1931)	68	5%
81 – 100 (1930-1911)	182	15%
>100 (before 1911)	712	57%
Vacant Land ¹	732	NA
Total	1,983	100%

Source: City of Holyoke Assessor's Office parcel data, March 2011.

¹ Represents parcels without buildings. A total of 1,251 parcels have structures.

In summary, the URP Area is dominated by older properties where more than half of the buildings are more than 100 years old and 72 percent of the buildings are older than 80 years. Only 11 percent of the structures within the URP Area have been built within the last 20 years. There is a high percentage of buildings consider in moderate to severe disrepair. Some of these buildings with significant architectural character may be suitable for rehabilitation, while others will need to be demolished.

South Holyoke

South Holyoke is situated between the 2nd and 3rd Level Canals south of Appleton Street (Figure A-2). It has a core of primarily residential (multi-family and single-family housing) and a public school and is surrounded by commercial and industrial/light manufacturing uses (most of which are along the canals) as well as vacant buildings and parcels scattered throughout and on the edges.

South Holyoke, like the adjacent Flats is primarily an island of residential uses, dominated by rental units, surrounded by large industrial structures adjacent to the bordering canals and the River. Residential units consist mainly of two- and three-story apartment houses or converted row houses of masonry construction. Much of the housing stock is in moderate disrepair. Specifically, groups of houses along South East and South Bridge Street are in need of rehabilitation. Small industrial facilities and many vacant lots are interspersed with the residential areas..



Churchill

The neighborhood of Churchill is located north of the 2nd Level Canal and includes part of the commercial corridors of High and Maple Streets with civic/institutional uses as well as industrial uses and vacant properties and buildings along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals (Figure A-2). The area northwest of Maple Street is a largely residential (predominantly single-family with some multi-family housing) and includes a public school, the new Senior Center and the Holyoke Public Library

Buildings in the Churchill neighborhood range from the multi-story masonry, commercial and retail structures along High Street to an almost a suburban neighborhood quality of detached single or multi-family units on individual lots along tree lined shaded streets. A significant investment was completed HOPE VI funding to transform the Jackson Parkway project into a mixed income neighborhood which has significantly stabilized that area of the neighborhood. Most housing is either wood frame or masonry, in satisfactory to good condition. The Public Library, school, church, and municipal buildings are well maintained, construction to renovate and expand the Library is underway. Many of the larger multi-story masonry structures at the commercial edge of the neighborhood, and the larger structures along the canals, are underutilized, and in less sound condition.

Prospect Heights/Downtown

Northeast of Churchill is the Prospect Heights/Downtown neighborhood, which includes the commercial core of the Project Area and includes, City Hall, Heritage State Park, the Children's Museum, Merry-Go-Round and the Volleyball Hall of Fame. This neighborhood is boarded to the north by the Connecticut River and is surrounded by residential uses to the north and northwest and industrial uses and vacant properties in-between the 1st and 2nd Level Canals (Figure A-2). It also features several recently planned or expended public and private investment, such as the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center, Open Square, many arts institutions, the renovation of Veterans Park, the first and second phases of the Holyoke Canalwalk, the Holyoke Transportation Center, the planned Transportation Connections Project, and the upcoming passenger rail stop.

Many of the residential units in this area are large multi-story apartment blocks, with a lesser number of single, detached housing units. Along Front Street, the multi-block densely populated complex of attached row-housing/garden apartments is well maintained and unique to the housing stock type. As in the Churchill neighborhood, many of the commercial buildings, and the industrial structures along the canal appear to be underutilized, and in a less good physical condition. The well-preserved, historically important City Hall and the court house facilities along the downtown park's edge are well maintained. The main parking deck and some of the surrounding infrastructure are beginning to deteriorate and is in need of maintenance.

The Flats

The neighborhood of The Flats is located east of the 2nd Level Canal and is boarded by the Connecticut River (Figure A-2). This neighborhood has a distinct hill that overlooks Downtown and is characterized by its residential core surrounded by commercial and industrial uses as well as vacant or partially vacant buildings/parcels along the canal and River.

The Flats housing stock is primarily single-family, detached, and in good condition, with a dispersed multi-family attached units, some under rehabilitation. This area of the City appears to have the most recently constructed housing stock, of all types, including a high-rise apartment tower, which is in good physical condition. On occasion, a seriously deteriorated housing unit stands out in the quadrant of well-maintained buildings. The large mill structures along the canal on North Canal Street appear to have a higher utilization and are in satisfactory condition. The large mill complexes along Water Street appear to be vacant, severely deteriorated, or under deconstruction.

Existing Historic Resources

There are a number of historic buildings that play a significant role in shaping the unique historic characteristics of downtown Holyoke. Figure E-3 identifies the historic resources within the Project Area. Historic resources include officially designated properties (i.e., listed on the National Register of Historic Places) and those identified by the City as potentially eligible for designation.

Holyoke has one designated National Register Historic District, the North High Street Historic District, which is located in Downtown (Figure E-3). This district includes approximately 40 contributing properties and stretches from a half-block south of Appleton Street north to Lyman Street on High Street, with commercial storefronts as well as several buildings on Maple and Suffolk Streets (Figure E-3). Historic resources in Holyoke's Center City that are listed on the National Register include:

- North High Street Historic District
- The Canal System
- The Caledonian Building
- City Hall
- U.S. Post Office (Main Branch)
- Wistariahurst Museum
- Hadley Mills Townhouses
- Prospect Park (also known as Pulaski Park)

A local historic inventory includes over 1,100 buildings and sites in Holyoke. Approximately 110 of these buildings and sites are located within the Project Area, many of which may be eligible for the National Register.¹²

Existing Property Ownership

Table 2-5 summarizes the parcels ownership in the Project Area.

Table 2-5
Summary of Land Ownership

Parcel Type	No. of Parcels	Area (acres)	Area (sq. ft.)	Percent of Total Area (%)
Private Parcels ¹³	1,664	484	21,083,040	65%
City-owned Parcels	277	217.5	9,474,300	29%
Railroad	29	27.6	1,202,256	3.3%
State-owned Parcels	12	17.1	744,876	2.3%
Right-of-Way	NA	1.8	79,271	0.2%
Federal-owned Parcels	1	1.1	47,916	0.2%
Total	1,983	749.2	32,631,659	100%

Source: City of Holyoke Assessor's Office parcel data (2011).

Of the total parcels, 1,664 parcels totaling approximately 484 acres (21 million square feet) are privately-owned parcels representing 65 percent of the total Project Area. The City owns a total of 277 parcels totaling approximately 217.5 acres (9.5 million square feet), which represents 29 percent of the total Project Area. Approximately half of the City-owned parcels, including the canal system, are owned by the Holyoke Gas & Electric Department. City-owned parcels also include parks and recreation land (e.g., Pulaski Park; community gardens), public school properties, fire/police properties, and public parking lots among other municipal uses as well as a number of vacant parcels as a result of takings due to owed property taxes (discussed further below). Two railroad entities, the PanAm Railways and Pioneer Valley Railroad (PVRP), own 29 parcels within the Project Area totaling approximately 27.6 acres (1.2 million square feet). The majority of the PanAm Railways properties create the barrier between The Flats and the South Holyoke neighborhoods. PVRP properties are located primarily along the canal system. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns 12 parcels totaling 17.1 acres (744,876 square feet). State agencies that control this land include MassDOT, the Division of Fisheries



¹² Based on an inventory of historic resources provided by the City of Holyoke.

¹³ Still in private ownership, pending transfer of ownership in Land Court



and Wildlife, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. One 1.1-acre parcel is owned by the U.S. Postal Service.

The Holyoke Housing Authority (HHA), a quasi-public entity governed by MGL 121B, is the largest private owner of land with approximately 64 acres (2.8 million square feet), or 8.5 percent of the total land in the Project Area. These properties include affordable and public/low-income housing as well as playgrounds and parks, and are generally located in the core residential areas throughout the Project Area neighborhoods. The major area owned by the HHA is Lyman Terrace, and the HHA is in the process of evaluating an arrangement which would give them the financial ability to engage a private party to rehabilitate or redevelop this property. The next largest private property owner in the Project Area after PanAm Railways is Sonoco Products Company with a total of approximately 15.3 acres of land. Majority of the Sonoco Product Company properties are located along the 2nd and 3rd Level Canals, including one of the largest properties within the Project Area –an almost 8-acre parcel located off of Water Street.

The remaining Project Area is comprised of many different private owners with varying sized lots. Excluding the larger private property owners mentioned above, 1,369 parcels, or 84 percent of the privately-owned properties are less than 15,000 square feet in size. The fragmented ownership and small parcel sizes are a key constraint to attracting new private development within the Project Area.

While there are many smaller lots with fragmented ownership, due to the historic uses (manufacturing/industry) the Project Area also has a number of very large sized parcels that offer tremendous opportunity for redevelopment and reuse of unique industrial or mill buildings situated primarily along the canals and riverfront, as illustrated by Figure C-1, which could be adapted to a variety of uses.

There are several existing landowners within the Project Area who have plans to improve and better utilize their properties. This Plan recommends actions to support these private redevelopment plans, or support redevelopment of underutilized properties in the vicinity of these projects, for the purpose to revitalizing an entire area. These properties include:

- The former Diocese property on Hampden Street and Dwight Streets across from Veterans Park, which is slated for rehabilitation and reuse for residential, including affordable units;
- Private property on Appleton Street between the 1st and 2nd Level Canals which is being redeveloped as the Massachusetts Green High-Performance Computing Center;
- A Passenger Rail platform to be constructed on the rail line near the intersection of Dwight and Main streets;
- The Victory Theatre area where plans are being developed to restore the theatre and reuse the adjacent former hotel.



- The Connecticut River Waterfront area where a developer is preparing plans for four large privately-owned parcels slated for redevelopment.
- Open Square is a large former mill building that is being transformed into a mixed use structure.

Existing Infrastructure

Existing utilities that service the Project Area include electricity, gas, water, sewer, drainage and telecommunications, including high speed fiber optics. The following existing conditions descriptions are based on GIS information and discussions with the City's Department of Public Works and Holyoke Gas & Electric.

Energy

Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E) is a municipal not-for-profit utility company providing electricity, gas and telecommunications to the businesses and residents of Holyoke. The City of Holyoke was originally built on hydroelectric power and continues to use this important asset through the municipally-run dam and canal system. HG&E is the primary supplier of electricity for residents and businesses in Holyoke locally generated at the I power plant and at hydroelectric facilities (at five renewable, non-greenhouse gas producing hydroelectric generation sites along the canals).

The system is upgraded and maintained on an ongoing basis. Although there are no expansions for generation currently underway, HG&E will expand electric service as needed. Holyoke Gas & Electric have a number of improvement projects either in the works or planned. In the near-term, there is plans to upgrade electric transmission and distribution infrastructure to provide greater reliability and additional capacity, and to extend its fiber optic network to accommodate additional potential development within the Innovation District. That will be done by replacing an aged and inefficient electric distribution substation (Prospect Substation) with a modernized substation (Riverside Substation). Additionally, several reliability improvements are being made throughout Downtown. Improvements related to generation are required and funding for priority improvements exists from current customers. For example, the HG&E has recently developed large solar panel fields on two sites in the City (one of which is just southwest of the Project Area), which have ranked Holyoke second in the Commonwealth in total solar energy production. The HG&E has also created a fiber optic redundant ring in the area of the MGHPCC and businesses have expressed interest in connecting and taking advantage of the redundancy. Infrastructure improvements like these promote an advantageous environment for economic activity and the HG&E strives to constantly address the community's needs.



Major improvements are currently underway within the Project Area to provide upgrades the electrical service primarily for the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center, which will also support additional development in this area. The City is also planning to bury utilities along a portion of race Street for the Canalwalk project. A significant ongoing energy project consists of the , energy upgrades that are being implemented city-wide by the City and the HG&E through Green Communities funding and HG&E funds. To date, all traffic lights have been upgraded to LED lights, and street lights are currently being retrofitted across the City with LED luminaries. All new or upgraded lighting with the Project Area are proposed as LED lighting.

In the long-term, HG&E would like to extend Smart Grid metering throughout Holyoke in order to obtain real-time consumption data in order to better respond and/or anticipate customer energy demands. The HG&E is also striving to establish Holyoke as a “test-bed” for new renewable energy technologies. One of the strategies in the Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke, addresses clean energy and innovation by capitalizing on Holyoke’s unique power generation sources and low cost utilities. By partnering with local Universities and private businesses, the HG&E looks for innovative ways to create new technologies with the result of spurring long-term green business development.

Water Supply

Holyoke Water Works, a city entity, operates and maintains the municipal water supply and distribution system. Four reservoirs (McLean, Whiting Street, Ashley, and Tighe-Carmody) supply four pressure zones within the City (High Service, Low Service, West Heights, and West Holyoke). The Tighe-Carmody Reservoir, located in the Town of Southampton, is the primary source of water for the City. The other three reservoirs are all located within the City limits. The Tighe-Carmody Reservoir has a surface area of 365 acres, a storage capacity of 4.8 billion gallons, and a watershed area of 14.5 square miles. It has an estimated safe yield of 13 million gallons per day. A recently completed 42-inch transmission main carries water from this reservoir to a treatment facility located next to the McLean Reservoir.

The water withdrawal capacity permitted by the state (the Department of Environmental Protection) is almost maxed out; however, there are no major improvements planned for the water supply infrastructure as the City does not have the funding available. The following lists additional existing conditions findings of the Project Area related to water supply:

- The water capacity within the Project Area is good.
- The water lines coming down Cabot Street start at a 30-inch, drop to a 20-inch, then drop to a 16-inch. The water lines are within an easement down Cabot Street then stops at Hampden Papers on North Canal Street. The city is looking to get an easement down North Canal Street to connect the 16-inch to a 12-inch.



Under existing conditions, there is a 12-inch that runs throughout the streets and buildings.

- South Canal Street has a new section of 12-inch water line; however, the services are very old and there are often many leaks. Shut downs are common in the winter due to frozen and broken pipes.
- The 10-inch water pipe on Appleton Street and the 8-inch water pipe on Cabot Street are privately owned and are in good condition.

Wastewater Conveyance & Combined Sewer Overflows

Sanitary sewage conveyance infrastructure serves the Project Area. The wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is designed to handle 17.5 million gallons per day and currently handles approximately six million gallons per day on average.

As an old industrial developed community with a sewer system over 100 years old, the City of Holyoke has approximately 15 combined sewer overflows which discharge a total of 700 to 850 million gallons of wastewater on average 52 to 80 times annually to the Connecticut River. Currently, the City requires an easement to access or conduct work within the stormwater conveyance system. The following lists other existing conditions found in the Project Area related to sewer conveyance:

- The majority of the sewers are located within the alleys and dump out into the main sewer lines.
- There are interceptor sewers located along Canal Street.
- There have been no recent sewer improvements northwest of Race Street
- There are no sewers in Race Street.
- There is a sewer separation project southeast of Race Street (the combined sewer was built in the late 70's).
- A new drain line is planned within Sargeant Street from High Street down to the railroad spur (this area is problematic in that it experiences flooding that has resulted in a sinking roadway).
- City funding is limited for future sewer improvements; however, the City indicated that there is plenty of sewer capacity at the WWTP (17.5 MGD designed and 6 MGD actual).

As part of the Plan actions, sewer separation should be associated with any street reconstruction project. The City is doing so with Heritage Street as a part of the Transit Connections Project that has funding to be designed. Otherwise, CSO improvements within the project area may have to wait until the bond for past CSO improvements is retired.

Vehicular Access and Circulation

Holyoke is located in the Pioneer Valley, known as the crossroads of New England because of its strategic position along the Connecticut River and its excellent transportation facilities. The Massachusetts Turnpike (Interstate 90, or I-90) connects the region east-west from Boston to Albany and links directly to Holyoke via I-91. Interstate-91 runs north-south providing direct access to Hartford, Connecticut, and to Brattleboro, Vermont. U.S. Route 5, which runs north-south, connects Holyoke with neighboring cities of Northampton and West Springfield.

Existing traffic conditions are based off of the transportation assessment conducted as part of the visioning process for the *Center City Vision Plan* (Attachment C). During the visionary planning process, residents, business owners and other stakeholders raised a number of transportation-related issues. These issues included:

- Indirect/inefficient street connectivity for vehicles and pedestrians;
- Lack of safe pedestrian or bicycle facilities (e.g., sidewalks; crossings; bike lanes); and
- Inadequate signage/pavement markings resulting in inefficient circulation by vehicles and pedestrians.

Enhancing the transportation elements, along with strategic roadway planning to improve connectivity, will improve the transportation network and assist in economic development and revitalization of the Center City. The transportation elements of the Vision Plan present a strategic effort to make the transportation system a safer, more efficient and attractive asset to the Center City.

The following lists other existing conditions found in the Project Area related to transportation infrastructure:

- There are many truck restrictions in the Project Area due to height restrictions at many of the railroad bridge underpasses. Investigation needs to be performed to determine if the railroad underpasses should be fixed (increased height or at-grade crossings) or whether trucks should have a controlled route through the city. The necessity and feasibility will be considered by the City and the HRA.
- The current driver preferred truck route to the Flats and South Holyoke Industrial Areas is from I-391 to Main Street; Canal Street is the desired truck route.
- North Canal Street may need pavement upgrades and added shoulders.
- Many streets have a concrete sub-base which makes it extremely challenging to conduct any subsurface upgrades to utilities. Many streets need full-depth reconstruction.
- Race Street has brick sub-base.



- Intersection and the bridge at Cabot Street and South Canal Street will need improvements to complement the Willamansett bridge upgrades currently underway.
- Canal bridges need reconstruction including those on the 1st Level Canal on Lyman Street and Appleton Streets, and on Appleton Street over both the 1st and 2nd Level Canals.
- Canal Street does not need any sub-grade improvements.
- High Street and Maple Street have had full depth pavement reconstruction within the last 20 years.
- The Gateway at Cabot Street and South Canal Street will need upgrades.
- The Gateway at the Route 116 Bridge from South Hadley will need traffic control improvements and possible roadway geometry improvements.
- The Gateway at Jackson Street and Commercial Street will possibly need a traffic light.
- The Gateway at Jackson Street and High Street will need signal improvements.
- The Dwight and Main Street intersection will potentially need a traffic signal, particularly once the passenger rail stop is built in the very near future.

Existing Parking

In 2012 the city received technical assistance through the EPA Building Blocks Program for a parking analysis. The audit revealed that there is significant excess parking capacity within downtown Holyoke's public parking supply, as well as significant opportunity to re-distribute on-street demand to create more consistent parking opportunities on the most popular streets. These findings point to opportunities to both support existing retail businesses and new land use development with demand-management, rather than supply-expansion investments.

Utilization survey findings reveal many conditions typical of downtown environments. There is a clear core of on-street blocks for which parking demand is comparatively elevated. Meantime, off-street facilities within this core remain under-utilized, indicating a strong preference for on-street parking, despite higher costs (\$0.50 per hour, versus \$0.25 per hour) and restrictions of parking duration (mostly one- or two-hours). These are conditions that commonly generate demands for "more parking," despite the fact that parking resources of the type that could be built already sit half-empty when downtown is at its busiest.



Type of Parking	Supply	Utilization	Excess Capacity
On-street	1,708	40%	775
Off-street	757	53%	280
Combined	2,465	44%	1,055

Audit findings indicate that, during the busiest times of a typical week, there are more than 1,000 empty spaces that could be utilized, while still maintaining optimal levels of utilization; generally about 85% (mostly full, but still relatively easy to find a space where you want to park). Using this as the target utilization rate, on-street resources could accommodate around 800 additional parked cars, with 1 or 2 empty space still remaining on most blocks. Assuming a 90% target utilization rate for off-street facilities, based on the more long-term nature of parking demand in these locations and the fact that vehicles searching for spaces off-street are not circling on downtown streets, existing resources could comfortably accommodate demand from around 300 new cars during the midday peak. These spaces, in particular, attest to a significant capacity to support growth in long-term, monthly, commuter and residential parking from new development.

There was a conversation begun regarding parking in the Center City which is a resource for future strategies for improved management of parking. Those that participated had interest in continuing the conversation through a Parking Advisory Committee or something similar.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Access and Circulation

Holyoke’s central location in the Pioneer Valley and frontage along the Connecticut River makes it a key component of a regional bicycle network. According to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission’s *Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan*, no facilities currently exist that provide access for bicyclist into the Center City of Holyoke.¹⁴ Table 2-6 summarizes existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian projects in Holyoke. However, there is a need for an overall Bicycle Facility Plan to create a linked bicycle circulation network. This plan should be conducted under the supervision of the City’s Mass In Motion Wellness Coordinator.

Work has been done through the advocacy of the Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council to encourage improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure in order to encourage more fitness activities.



¹⁴ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, *The Pioneer Valley Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan*, September 2000.



Table 2-6
Existing and Planned Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects in Holyoke

Project Name	Existing Facilities	Planned Facilities
Connecticut River Greenway	Segments of the Greenway have been completed in each community within the region	Four Holyoke projects are proposed as part of the Regional Bikeway Network: -Northampton/Holyoke (Rte. 5) (8 miles) -Holyoke/W. Springfield (Rte. 5) (5.2 miles) -Holyoke 202 Corridor (2 miles) -Holyoke-Chicopee 116/141 (.24 miles) -Holyoke Canalwalk (listed separately below)
Holyoke Canalwalk	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 Volleyball Hall of Fame. . Phase I of the Canalwalk has been completed and runs along the east side of 1 st Level Canal between Appleton and Dwight Streets.	Funding has been secured for the design of Phases I and II. Phase II has been constructed. Phase II is currently being designed with construction planned for 2013. The design and construction of the remaining phases are being planned as part of this URP.

Source: Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Canalwalk

The canals were built within the industrial core of Holyoke to provide energy to those businesses through waterpower. These areas of the City has not been historically areas open for private recreation along this significant water resource in the Center City. These areas are being opened to the public for recreation and enjoyment through infrastructure enhancements known as the Canalwalk.

The Holyoke Canalwalk is multi-modal transportation system that is currently being planned and constructed in phases as a pedestrian and bicycle promenade along the canals within the historic mill district. The Canalwalk is an urban revitalization project, which is expected to be a catalyst for economic development in Holyoke. Phase IA of the Canalwalk project has been completed and has shown an increase in activity and an interest in economic development in the area. Table 2-6 lists the status of the Canalwalk project.

The Canalwalk will feature a 12 to 20 foot wide promenade with benches, decorative paving, historic lighting, public art installations and canal-front landscaping. The Canalwalk will link City Hall, Holyoke Heritage State Park, Holyoke Arts Corridor, Holyoke Children's Museum, the future Connecticut Riverwalk, as well as other existing and future shops, cafes, galleries/artist studios, and businesses expanding with the area's development. Additionally, the existing abandoned railway bridge



across the 2nd Level Canal will be a pedestrian crossing as part of the Canalwalk's Phase II. Signage will be provided to direct pedestrians and bicyclists to nearby attractions. Future regional connections to the Canalwalk are being considered and include links to Pulaski Park, the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway, and the expansion of the Canalwalk system to the north and east along North Canal Street..

Public Transportation

Rail

The Pioneer Valley Railroad (PVRR) and the Pan Am Southern Railways provide freight service and interchange traffic in Holyoke. The PVRR operates transloading facilities in the City.

Daily Amtrak passenger rail service is available from nearby Springfield on the Vermonter route, which runs north-south connecting St. Albans and Burlington in Vermont with Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Washington, DC.

High-Speed Passenger Rail Project

Passenger rail service to the City of Holyoke ceased in the mid-1960's. The high-speed passenger rail currently being planned for Holyoke as part of the "Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Project" will connect Holyoke to New York City to the south and north into Vermont. The proposed restoration of passenger rail service on a route through Holyoke is an outgrowth of PVPC's 2009 *Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Feasibility Study* (Knowledge Corridor Study).¹⁵ A key goal of this study was to restore service to the Connecticut River Rail Line of the Pam Am Southern railroad. Previously the route for the Montrealer, the precursor to the current Vermonter, the plan for the Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Project involves moving the current Vermonter service over to the line that serves the larger population cities of Western Massachusetts, including Greenfield, Northampton and Holyoke. The Knowledge Corridor Study concluded that significant local and regional economic and mobility benefits could be achieved by restoring passenger rail service to these communities.

Subsequent to the completion of the Knowledge Corridor Study, MassDOT was successful in obtaining a Federal Railroad Administration grant (FRA Grant) for the funding of Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail improvements between Springfield and East Northfield.¹⁶ This project will provide for the restoration of operation of the



¹⁵ *Knowledge Corridor Passenger Rail Feasibility Study*, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2009.

¹⁶ *Holyoke Station Feasibility Study and Site Analysis*, prepared for Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, submitted by HDR Engineering, Inc., March 2011.



current daily round trip of the Amtrak Vermonter to the Rail Line that passes through Holyoke. The 2011 *Holyoke Station Feasibility Study and Site Analysis* examined various options for a station in the vicinity of Dwight Street at Main Street, and the former station site. In the summer of 2012, the City contracted a rail engineering firm to design the new passenger train platform. As a complement to the Holyoke Transportation Center on Maple Street, the train platform will make up the eastern portion of the Center City's Transit Connections Corridor.

Bus Service

Peter Pan Bus Lines provides regional bus service to Boston via Springfield. Holyoke is a member of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) – the largest regional transit authority in Massachusetts, which provides fixed route service within Holyoke as well as to Chicopee, Springfield, South Hadley, and other neighboring towns. The PVTA also offers paratransit services¹⁷ to the elderly and disabled. Six PVTA bus routes service the Project Area, including B23, B48, P20, P21, R22, R24, and R25. Routes P21 and R22 both connect Holyoke to Chicopee and Route R25 connects Holyoke to South Hadley.

Holyoke Transportation Center

The \$8.4 million Holyoke Transportation Center was a joint development project between the PVTA, the City of Holyoke, and the Holyoke Intermodal Facility, LLC, a private development firm from Springfield. The facility was completed in fall 2010 and includes the adaptive reuse and conversion of the former Holyoke Fire Department Headquarters at 206 Maple Street in Downtown into a multi-use, transportation center with a new bus port and parking facility constructed on the adjacent city parking lot as well as improved streetscape and sidewalk system. The former fire house now includes a four-floor facility with a first-floor PVTA bus ticketing counter and information booth as well as a customer waiting area, driver rest area, small coffee shop and public restrooms. The Bus Port facilitates intra- and intercity bus service provided by the PVTA and regional bus service provided by Peter Pan Bus Lines. The second floor is currently leased to the Springfield-Holyoke-Chicopee Head Start for daycare and preschool programs. The third and fourth floors are currently leased to Holyoke Community College as a centralized location for its adult literacy programs.

Existing and Planned Open Space

There are a variety of open space resources within the Project Area including some larger regional and neighborhood parks, some pocket parks, small playgrounds and play courts, school yards, the Canalwalk, and community gardens. According to the



¹⁷ Paratransit is an alternative mode of flexible passenger transportation that does not follow fixed routes or schedules. Typically mini-buses are used to provide paratransit service, but also shared taxis and jitneys are important providers.



City of Holyoke's 2005 *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*, which is being updated in 2012, even though the City has continually depended on the river for its industry and growth, Holyoke has very little public waterfront access along its twelve (12) miles of riverfront. Railroads, mills, and flood control dikes line almost the entire riverfront. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is overseeing a regional plan known as the Connecticut River Greenway to connect the communities along the River through a pedestrian and bicycle pathway. The communities include from Agawam and Longmeadow through Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke to Northampton. In Holyoke, the Connecticut River Greenway would connect with a planned Canalwalk – providing a pedestrian loop along the two upper canals. Each community is responsible for developing their own plans and financing and have all made progress; however all have significant amounts of work to go.

There are a number of public parks within the Project Area, including:

- Heritage State Park
- Veterans Park (originally known as Hampden Park; improvements planned);
- Pulaski Park (originally known as Prospect Park);
- Valley Arena Park:
- Ward Two Park:
- McNally Field:
- Deroy Park:
- Library Park

In addition, there are a number of community gardens located in residential areas throughout the Project Area that provide an important resource for residents for both fresh food and greenspace.

Attractions/Entertainment Destinations

The Project Area includes a number of attractions for visitors and residents, including:

- Heritage State Park and Visitor's Center;
- Volleyball Hall of Fame;
- Children's Museum;
- Merry-Go-Round;
- Canal Gallery, Parson's Hall Project Space, Paper City Studios, Gateway City Arts;

- Wistariahurst Museum; and
- War Memorial and Auditorium.
- Robert Barrett Fish Lift
- Paper City Brewery
- Winter Palace Theater

Other historic destinations include:

- City Hall;
- U.S. Post Office; and
- Public Library (including art gallery). (under renovation and new construction)

Additionally, downtown Holyoke hosts a number of ongoing and/or annual events and festivals, including:

- Weekly Farmers' Market;
- St. Patrick's Day Road Race and Parade.
- Puerto Rican Day Parade and Hispanic Family Festival
- Bring Your Own Restaurant
- Race Street Brick Race
- First Night Holyoke, Jr.;
- Easter Egg Hunt at Heritage State Park
- Christmas Tree Lighting
- Positively Holyoke Summer Concerts by the Holyoke Rotary

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Objectives*, the Plan intends to build on and expand facilities (e.g., public open space) to further encourage out-of-town visitors and residents alike to visit Center City Holyoke.



Market Context

RKG Associates, Inc. (RKG), in association with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., was retained by the City of Holyoke to assist in preparing the Plan. In October 2010, a market study was developed by RKG that establishes baseline conditions and identifies market characteristics in the Project Area, the City as a whole, and Hampden County (the region). A copy of the market study is provided in Attachment B of this Plan. The following provides a summary of findings from this market study for two key topics: employment; and housing.

Economic Conditions

The following lists the market study findings related to employment both city- and region-wide compared to the Project Area:

- Over the last 25 years, the economic base in Holyoke was severely impacted from the loss of 5,300 manufacturing jobs causing an estimated 4.0 million square feet of building area that became vacant/went idle.
 - The Project Area was directly affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs since it represented 84 percent of the City's industrial building area (over 9.1 million square feet).
- In 2009, Holyoke had an employment base of 20,500 jobs, including 10,250 jobs at the City's major employers, which included Holyoke Medical Center, ISO New England, and the Holyoke Mall.
 - The Project Area represented 23 percent of this employment, or 2,400 jobs, including a large portion of municipal employees.
- In June 2012, the unemployment rate for Holyoke was 9.4 % which is higher than the national average of 8.2% and markedly higher than the State average of 6.3%.
- Over 2.9 million square feet of commercial/industrial building area was either idle (1.3 million square feet) or vacant/available to the market (1.6 million square feet) in the Project Area in 2010.

The following lists the market study findings related to business types/activity both city- and region-wide compared to the Project Area:

- In 2010, the Project Area had a total 222 businesses, or 37% of those city-wide, which consist of the following business types:
 - 53 percent are either retail or services businesses (mostly "mom & pop" type operations, such as convenience stores, small retail shops, nail and hair salons, and barber shops).
 - 18 percent are auto-related businesses (which represents 60% of all auto-related businesses city-wide).
 - 11percent are restaurants (mostly sandwich shops and bars/pubs).
- Prospect Heights (Census Tract 8117) had the highest number of businesses (98) in the Project Area.
- Holyoke has the region's largest shopping mall, therefore, only 32% of the city-wide retail businesses were in the Project Area.
- While some of the old industrial buildings are architecturally unique, the reuse potential is limited and continues to act as a drain the City's tax base by providing fewer taxes revenues and higher public service costs. Additionally, redevelopment costs are higher in the Project Area due to potential environmental contamination.



- The energy efficiency and enhanced functionality of modern buildings is typically better than re-used older building; thereby, lowering the costs of doing business for the companies that occupy them.

Social Conditions

The following lists the market study findings related to housing and income both city- and region-wide compared to the Project Area:

- In 2010, the vacancy rate was 12.8 percent in the Project Area.
- Nearly 90 percent of the occupied housing within the Project Area was rental and the median household income was \$16,000, which make it difficult to support a vibrant retail market downtown due to lack of disposable income from residents.
- Within the Project Area, there were 420 vacant housing units in 39 abandoned residential buildings totaling 482,000 square feet, and 16 vacant, city-owned buildings totaling 265,000 square feet.
- Housing values in the Project Area are at least 50 percent lower than indicated city-wide, which drain the City's tax base since these buildings pay fewer, if any, taxes and require the same, or higher, levels of municipal services.
- Issues affecting livability of the Project Area include lack of cultural and entertainment amenities, the perception of danger from crime, and evidence of blight.

Socioeconomic Forecasts

The following lists the market study findings related demographic projections for the region, the City and/or the Project Area:

- Demographic forecasts over the next five years are positive for the region where households with incomes of \$75,000 or more are projected to increase by 7,600, including 500 households in Holyoke.
- Based on a state-wide employment forecast, within the next five to six years Holyoke could capture between 800 and 1,000 new jobs, which could translate into approximately 300,000 to 360,000 square feet of building area demand during city-wide.
- Health Care and Educational services are two major sectors that are forecasted to grow as well as alternative energy research and development, and manufacturing.

Summary of Recommendations

The following summarizes the market study recommendations:



- For the short term, the City should encourage local developers to construct infill housing (owner-occupied/taxable units) on the 28 vacant city-owned lots (totaling 4.3 acres) in order to encourage a mix of incomes and housing types.
- The City needs to be active in preparing a strategy for dealing with the excess building supply in order to correct the market imbalance and strengthen the City's tax base. While the City's overall tax base is increasing, it is at a slow rate and, therefore, additional resources from the Commonwealth would be required to implement such a strategy.
- Workforce training through Holyoke Community College, Career Point, Dean Vocational High School, Holyoke Works, New England Farm Worker Council and Halo Center, among others, should be provided/coordinated given the poor educational attainment levels of those in Project Area.
- The City should consider undertaking a residential market study to identify how best to reposition and support the Study Area housing stock over the long-term.
- To encourage a "live, work, and play" community, the City should focus on enhancing and improving the cultural, dining, events and entertainment sector as a means to attract people downtown after work and on weekends, which would create a more balanced residential market.

Area Eligibility Designation

In order to designate the Project Area as an Urban Renewal Area, the City of Holyoke and the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA) are required to make a finding that the Project Area is either "substandard, decadent, or blighted", in accordance with the M.G.L. Chapter 121B, Section 1. Such a designation will enable the HRA to undertake certain revitalization activities to stimulate economic development within the Project Area. Consequently, this URP assembles data from a variety of sources to support its recommendation that the Project Area can be designated as "decadent" and that it is improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise without a catalytic effort by the public sector. The data includes City records identifying parcel ownership, land and building assessments, square footage of land and buildings and building usage. In addition, VHB staff performed field inspections of most of the parcels and building exteriors within the Project Area.

The most appropriate finding for this area is that it is decadent, as the Project Area exhibits many of the decadent conditions described in the definition below:

Decadent - an area which is detrimental to the sound growth of a community as a result of the existence of buildings which are out of repair, physically deteriorated, unfit for human habitation, obsolete, or in need of major maintenance or repair, or because much of the real estate in recent years has been sold, or taken for nonpayment of taxes upon foreclosure of mortgages, or because buildings have been torn down and not replaced and under existing conditions it is improbable that the buildings will be



replaced, or because of a substantial change in business or economic conditions, or because of inadequate light, air, or open space, or because of excessive land coverage or because diversity of ownership, irregular lot sizes or obsolete street patterns make it improbable that the area will be redeveloped by the ordinary operations of private enterprise, or by reason of any combination of the foregoing conditions (760 CMR 12.01)...

Area Eligibility Findings

According to the URP Criteria for Plan Approval, per M.G.L. Chapter 121B, the findings presented below show that the Project Area is considered decadent, substandard and blighted due to the high percentage of unoccupied buildings, buildings in disrepair and underutilized or vacant land. In general, redevelopment has been stagnant because of the presence of abandoned and poorly maintained properties with diverse ownership, incompatible land uses, , irregular lot sizes, substandard public infrastructure and inadequate vehicular, transit or pedestrian access. The following eligibility findings are based on-site surveys, in accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(2)(f), which were conducted in July 2010.



Diversity of Property Ownership and Small/Irregular Lot Size

Finding: small irregular lot size and diversity of land ownership makes it problematic to assemble development parcels

The ownership of many of the underutilized or vacant privately owned parcels in the project area is quite varied. In addition, many of these parcels are small or irregular in size, which is typical in many older northeast cities, but difficult for affordable redevelopment. Therefore, there are a limited number of parcels that can accommodate major redevelopment or expansion. As a result, some property owners, business owners and developers that wish to relocate or expand in the area do so in a haphazard way as property comes on the market for sale. Actions to assemble larger parcels for redevelopment are needed in some areas to make redevelopment financially feasible.



Buildings in Disrepair

Finding: A majority of the buildings within the project area are either in moderate disrepair or severe disrepair condition.

Based on the building conditions survey documented in Section 12.02 (2) Section 1.6, a majority of buildings inspected within the Project Area are classified as in



“Moderate Disrepair” or “Severe Disrepair”. They require extensive investments for repair and maintenance for improving the façade (siding, windows) and building features such as porches, entrances and roofs. In a large number of cases, building frontages were well maintained but the rear portion showed severe disrepair.



Vacant or Underutilized Parcels

Finding: There is a high percentage of developable lot area within the Project Area (excluding streets and railroad property) that is vacant or used for parking.

Numerous vacant buildings and lots can be found throughout the Project Area. The number and quantity of vacant parcels and lots seems to change on a monthly basis, but it is evident from driving through the project area that numerous vacant lots and buildings are present in the area. This indicates the potential for much more development in the Project Area. The proposed redevelopment actions included in this plan focus on the most opportune areas and parcels where redevelopment is not likely to occur unless public action is taken to facilitate private investment.



Foreclosure of Property due to Back Taxes

Finding: The City has taken or is the process of taking numerous parcels due to the Owner's inability to pay property taxes.

Recently, the City has acquired a number of parcels within the Project area due to nonpayment of property taxes. Most of these parcels and buildings were vacant at the time of the taking. Some buildings were in severe disrepair, others may be able to be rehabilitated. It is the intent of the City that several parcels which were identified for action by the HRA in this URP will be transferred to the HRA instead of being immediately auctioned to private owners.



Inadequate Vehicular Access and Circulation

Finding: Narrow streets, streets in disrepair and poor vehicular access, specifically truck access and circulation are a hindrance to the redevelopment of the Project Area.

Field investigations and various studies have concluded that vehicular access, specifically for truck access, into the downtown area is generally poor. Insufficient/low truck clearance under bridges resulting in inadequate and inappropriate (through local residential streets) truck routes is evident at various locations within the Project Area. Locations of low bridge clearance on local streets, include Jackson Street, Sargeant Street, Cabot Street, Appleton Street (south of Main



Street), Mosher Street, and Race Street, where trailer trucks are commonly caught and marred.

Inefficient traffic circulation has extremely significant consequences for the economic development of certain areas. The circulation patterns of traffic can be very influential because they can help dictate future economic development areas by exposing more traffic to businesses. Enhancing these transportation elements, along with strategic roadway planning to improve connectivity, including a truck routing plan will improve the transportation network and assist in economic development and revitalization of the downtown. Also, a network of signage and pavement markings that is clear, clean, and concise can safely and efficiently guide the transportation network user through the Project Area as well as provide character.



Poor Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation and Accommodation

***Finding:** Narrow streets, indirect and inefficient pedestrian routes as well as inadequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks in disrepair and conflicts with vehicles at intersections are evident throughout the Project Area.*

Many of the sidewalks throughout the Project Area are in general disrepair. Also, in general, the Project Area is not fully handicap accessible and pedestrian amenities are sparse, making pedestrian circulation unappealing and potentially dangerous. A key example of inadequate pedestrian access is the lack of a safe connection from The Flats neighborhood to the other neighborhoods and Downtown (residents currently walk private properties and through holes in fences). Without improvement, increased traffic loads and pedestrian activity could reduce safety and efficiency.

Creating more attractive opportunities to park vehicles and walk, or park and cycle in and around the downtown should be a priority goal. An effort is already being made by the City to improve public access to the historic canals by creating a Canalwalk that will provide linkage between many cultural amenities, businesses and other destinations. Bicycling, walking and the use of other non-motorized forms of transportation are integral elements of the downtown transportation network. Attractive and safe pedestrian, bicycle and recreation facilities, as proposed in this Plan, can help improve the downtown's sense of character, charm, accessibility, and circulation.

URP Conformity to Local Comprehensive Plan

In accordance with 760 CMR 12.02(2)(f), this URP is based on local survey conducted by VHB, Inc. in July 2010 and conforms to the most recent comprehensive Master Plan undertaken for the City of Holyoke - *The Holyoke Master Plan*, which was



completed in 1999 after several years of community input.¹⁸ *The Holyoke Master Plan* is a document that is intended to guide the City's actions over the next several decades. It provides recommendations for all branches of municipal government as well as for private agencies, the business community, and individuals. The following ten key goal areas were identified by the community through public forums and meetings:

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

Following the completion of the Plan, a complete recodification of the Zoning Ordinance was completed, as well as an Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan was developed to aid in the successful completion of each goal.

The following are some of the priorities in *The Holyoke Master Plan* that are relevant to and consistent with this URP:

- *Beautify Holyoke's gateways*

In order to beautify gateways to the city, *The Holyoke Master Plan* recommends improvements such as new/coordinated entry point and directional signage and a mural program. The URP also calls for reconnecting the City through 'gateways' and complete streets by improving the transportation network, including sidewalks, roadway infrastructure, truck access, traffic circulation and streetscape at key locations to assist in economic development and revitalization of the downtown.

- *Increase sites for business growth*

The Holyoke Master Plan identifies two key objectives aimed at promoting commercial and industrial business growth:

1. Identify appropriate areas for new development and redevelopment; and



¹⁸ City of Holyoke, *The Holyoke Master Plan Final Draft*, March 10, 1999.



2. Analyze unused and under-used commercial and industrial properties to determine how they can be upgraded or converted to a more productive use.”¹⁹

The URP identifies specific underutilized sites and proposes public actions to support redevelopment recommendations of the Vision Plan.

The Holyoke Master Plan also recommends increasing arts and entertainment in the downtown as an economic development strategy to encourage visitors and residents to downtown day and night to support downtown businesses. The URP proposes public actions that support the expansion of the “Arts and Innovation District” from the existing district along the first and second canals to Maple and High Streets to include the Victory Theater and War Memorial Building.

➤ *Clean up and landscape our neighborhoods*

The Holyoke Master Plan recommends ‘gateway’ improvements, including improving the appearance of those roads and streets that lead into the downtown from neighboring communities and major highways such as I-91 and 391. The URP plans for streetscape improvements as specific ‘gateway’ locations.

➤ *Reconnect Holyoke with its waterfront*

The Holyoke Master Plan calls for providing better public connections to the City’s water resources. A key goal of the URP is to transform the Center City’s waterfront and proposes for the extension of the CanalWalk on the western side of North and South Canal Streets and new/better public access (improved/new signage to guide/attract the public) at Pulaski Park.

➤ *Preserve and restore Holyoke’s historic resources*

Through an extensive building and site condition survey, the URP identifies designated and potential historic resources within the Project Area, and recommends and plans for rehabilitation and reuse for specific structures. Due to the historical significance of the canals and development along the canals, a local historic district should be considered for this area. Such a district would also provide the opportunity for tax incentives for developers.

➤ *Improve and expand the city’s park system*

A key goal of the URP is to expand open space amenities. Proposed public actions aimed at implementing include improvements to Veterans Park, new open space in South Holyoke, expansion of the Canalwalk, and opportunities to develop community gardens.



¹⁹ *The Holyoke Master Plan*, City of Holyoke, final draft 3/10/99.