

8

12.02(8): Relocation

Introduction

It is not the intent of Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to use this URP as a mechanism for displacement, removal or otherwise destruction of the Center City's communities. In fact, approximately 92% of all parcel acquisitions included in the plan are vacant or abandoned lots and buildings. This includes 4 occupied residential buildings and 5 active business properties. The Center City plan is built on the notion that Holyoke is well on its way towards an economic transformation thanks in large part to the energy and commitment of countless community members.

However, a few actions contained in this plan will require the relocation of businesses or residents. The HRA is fully committed to the fair and equitable treatment of all of those displaced by this plan, that it will minimize the adverse impact on those relocated and that they are kept as part of the community whenever possible.

Chapter 79A of the Massachusetts General Laws and 760 CMR 27.00 were written in conjunction with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, 42 U.S.C. Section 4601, et seq., and the applicable implementing regulations set forth in Title 49, Part 24 of the Code of Federal Regulations (together, the "Uniform Act"). These State and Federal statutes and regulations explain that all businesses and residents displaced by public action are entitled to receive relocation assistance and payments and their purpose is to provide for the fair and equitable treatment of all parties to be displaced. 760 CMR 27.00, the applicable state regulation, spells out the terms and procedures for such assistance and payment.

It is the intention of the HRA to assist the affected businesses and residents in relocating successfully, consistent with the parameters set by the State and Federal statutes and regulations and the City invites cooperation of site occupants in that regard. The HRA will provide all notices to occupants required by applicable law.



Under the applicable laws, the HRA must provide certain assistance with respect to the relocation process. For the management of the relocation of occupants identified below including providing required relocation advisory services, review and assessment of relocation claims and payments and other matters pertaining to compliance with the Uniform Act and other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, the HRA will elect to retain a relocation consultant. Working with its consultant, the HRA will:

- Assess each occupant's relocation needs;
- Assist with development of this relocation plan;
- Prepare written notices to the occupants as required; and
- Assist in the timely and accurate preparation and assessment of relocation claims.

The HRA will seek to be designated a "Relocation Advisory Agency" by the Bureau of Relocation within the Department of Housing and Community Development of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the Project. In the case that current staff does not have the required experience in relocating affected parties and knowledge of legislation governing relocation, a relocation consultant may be hired. The HRA may elect to maintain a Relocation Office for this project in a central location. The Relocation Office will be staffed and open as necessary to provide assistance to the affected occupants.

Date Displacement is Expected to Begin

The HRA has prioritized Areas 2, 5, 6 & 7 as short term expected completions. In the event that relocation is required, a relocation process to proceed under the following estimated timeline:

Milestone	Target Date
Relocation Advisory Agency	Prior to any relocation actions taken
Initial Occupant Assessment Meetings	Upon hiring of relocation consultant
Delivery of General Information Notices	30-45 Days after hiring of relocation consultant
Completed Relocation Plan	Within 6 months after hiring of relocation consultant
Commence Negotiations with Property Owners	Within 1 month of approval of relocation plan
Delivery of Notices of Eligibility	Within 1 month of completed negotiations of property owners
Complete Relocation of All Occupants	Within 1 year of completed

Availability of Replacement Locations

All occupants to be displaced will be offered adequate replacement units in a timely manner. A general review of the commercial and residential real estate market in Holyoke and the immediately adjacent communities demonstrate that there are sufficient vacancy rates to support the successful and timely relocation of all affected occupants to replacement locations. Due to the fact that there may be some time between the preparation of this relocation plan and the eventual date that affected occupants would be required to seek replacement locations, it has been determined to be unnecessary at this time to supply actual replacement locations as part of this plan. It is worth noting that pertinent state and federal relocation regulations dictate that replacement dwellings must be provided to displace residents before they are required to relocate. Similarly, displaced businesses will be offered assistance in identifying suitable replacement business locations, regardless of their status as an owner or tenant.

Estimated Relocation Cost

The HRA has estimated that the total cost to relocate the affected occupants cannot yet be determined until a relocation firm is engaged and an inventory of current uses in buildings to be acquired is completed. However, based on current observations, many of the buildings to be acquired are vacant – approximately 92%. For those buildings with occupants, actual costs will depend upon many factors unknown at this time including, but not limited to, unusual or extraordinary specialized services necessary to dismantle, move and reconnect the displaced business' personal property and the condition and accessibility of available replacement location sites. At this time a conservative cost estimate was made of \$25,000 for development of a relocation plan; \$100,000 for hiring of a Relocation Consultant; and \$1,000,000 for Relocation Payments to those affected.

Description of Funds/Funding Commitment

Projects identified in the URP are expected to be funded through a variety of grants programs and other financial mechanisms. Relocation funding is tied to project funding and will be finalized when these funds are received or otherwise identified. The estimated costs will be updated if needed, at the time of relocation.

Assurance Statement

The HRA assures that it will carry out the relocation of occupants for the Project in accordance with the provisions of the Uniform Relocation Act and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 79A. It further assures that before any relocation takes place, it will have in place adequate funding to ensure that all occupants are provided with prompt and complete payments as required. The HRA acknowledges that all displaced persons shall be treated in a fair, equitable and consistent manner; that it will work to minimize the adverse impact of displacement on the occupants to be displaced by this project; and, to the maximum extent feasible, prevent the closure of businesses.

Coordination with Other Land Acquisition Activities

The City of Holyoke has become more aggressive towards owners of tax delinquent properties over the past two years. The number of properties in Tax Title has accumulated over decades and many of those properties have yet to be acted upon in Land Court. Through the leadership of the City Treasurer, Tax Title Custodian, and Director of the Office of Planning & Economic Development, the City has begun pursuing properties that owe years of outstanding taxes. A Public Auction process is currently being established, in order to create a mechanism to dispose of City properties quickly and to move them back onto the tax rolls.

Collaborative efforts have been made to identify those properties in the Center City Plan area the City of Holyoke will retain ownership of, due to tax taking. Ongoing discussions and open-lines of communication are kept between the HRA, City Treasurer and Tax Title Custodian in order to ensure consistency with the Plan. Going forward, those properties located in the area which will be slated for the auction process, will contain additional conditions of sale, restricting the use to that recommended in the Plan. Larger properties with more significant development potential may be held by the Tax Title custodian and transferred to the HRA, who would issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a more selective disposal.

Real/Personal Property Issues

The HRA will actively consult with business owners, tenants, property owners and real estate appraisers to ensure that all items are properly classified as personal property as defined by MGL c. 79A, Section 1.