



HOLYOKE'S CENTER CITY VISION PLAN

A Plan for the Heart of Our Community

AUGUST 2009

PREPARED FOR

City of Holyoke

Holyoke Redevelopment Authority

PREPARED BY

VHB *Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.*



Acknowledgements

This plan was produced by over *400 Holyokers* who shaped this agenda for our City's future by participating in public forums, interviews, focus groups and other activities. Participants came from all of the city's neighborhoods, and represented a wide range of cultural, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds to be found here.

Center City Vision Plan Steering Committee

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Funding for this study was provided through a Gateway Plus Action Grant awarded by:

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

with special thanks to Mayor Michael J. Sullivan, the support of City Councilors and to the following Holyoke individuals, institutions, merchants, restaurateurs, & residents:

Amedeo's Restaurant & Pizzeria / Church of God Mission Board / The Log Cabin
& The Delaney House / Holyoke Council on Aging / Holyoke School
Department / Holyoke Department of Public Works / McDonald's Restaurant /
Templo Ebenezer / Our Lady of Guadalupe Church / War Memorial
Commissioners / residents Virgenmina Viera and Joseph Kingsley

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1 *Project Overview*

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Overview

This following Center City Vision Plan was prepared to set the framework for the revitalization of the historic core of the city, which was once the vibrant centerpiece of this planned industrial community. As with many other industrial cities throughout New England, Holyoke is proactively planning ahead for the future reinvestment in its Center City area by working closely with its diverse community of residents, business owners, institutions and numerous organizations, to help shape a plan. The Vision Plan identifies opportunities to capitalize on the unique aspects of Holyoke's industrial heritage and green power generation, while embracing new opportunities for job growth, population growth and place making. This will set the direction for the Center City and its neighborhoods to realize their future potential.

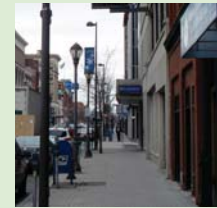
The Center City project area consists of four census tracts (figure 1) and includes the neighborhoods of South Holyoke, The Flats, Downtown/Prospect Heights and Churchill. This area has frontage along the Connecticut River and includes the three power generating canals that helped support the original growth of Holyoke. These neighborhoods once comprised the urban core of the City including a central business district along High and Maple Streets, manufacturing sites along the three canals, associated employee housing surrounding these areas and commercial uses to support urban living. However, this part of the City has seen a significant disinvestment in recent years, leaving many vacant and underutilized parcels and buildings. Presently, the area has a great need for reinvestment and revitalization in order for it to prosper and thrive, and, fortunately, the City is currently taking action and seeing signs of new investment in this area.

Some of the investment that is currently taking place includes:

- Canalwalk Construction *Phase 1 being constructed, Phase 2 under design.*
- Intermodal Center *under construction.*
- Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Project—Circulation improvements designed for Dwight and Heritage streets *in design.*
- South Holyoke Plan *master plan completed.*
- Private Investment in various buildings *ongoing.*

- Proposed Data Center—public private partnership between state, city, private business and universities.
- Proposed Passenger Rail Station—State initiative.

Holyoke Facts...did you know?



Holyoke is a place of many unique attractions

- St. Patrick's Day Parade
- Heritage State Park
- Mount Tom State Reservation
- Connecticut River
- Volleyball Hall of Fame
- Wistariahurst Museum
- Children's Museum
- Holyoke Merry-Go-Round

Holyoke has an exceptional history

- Named after Elizur Holyoke, explored area in 1660.
- The nation's first planned industrial community
- Known as the Paper City of the World.
- Birthplace of Volleyball
- The City is 22.8 mi² and has 1.5 mi² of water

Pages 8 and 9 showcase photographs of some of the more notable buildings and scenes in the Center City area. These photographs are grouped by the Vision Plan topic they best represent, including civic/public buildings, types of housing, open space, mixed-use corridors, historic structures and mills, industrial buildings, vacant buildings/parcels and community character.

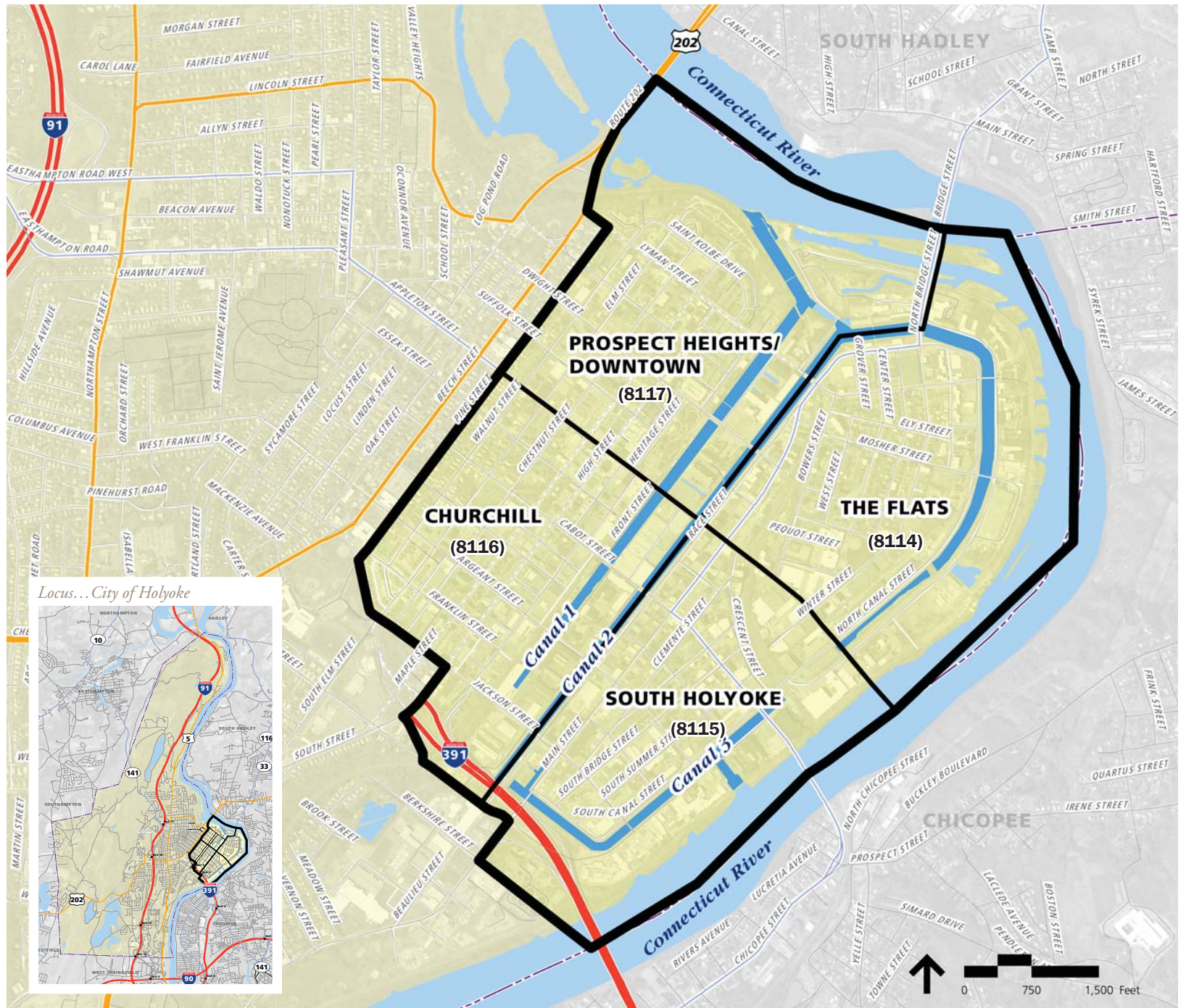
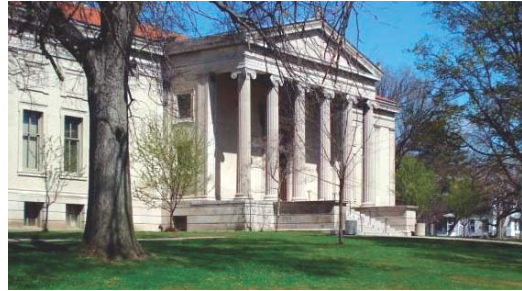


FIGURE I
Locus Map &
Study Area
aerial source: MassGIS

Holyoke Today...a snapshot of the Center City

Civic/Public Uses



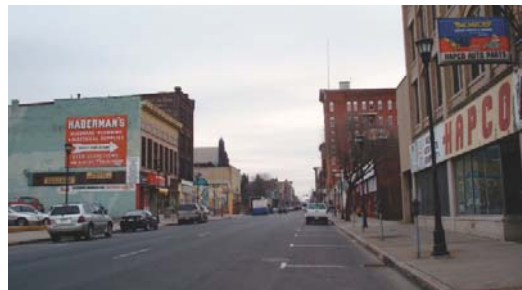
Housing Types



Open Space & the Canal



Mixed Use Centers



Mill Buildings & Structures



Industrial Uses



Vacant Land & Buildings



Community Character





Recently, the City has initiated a number of actions to guide the revitalization effort of the Center City area. The City has recently formed the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA) whose immediate focus is the revitalization of this area of the city.

One of the first tasks undertaken by the HRA was the preparation of this Vision Plan. This process included a comprehensive analysis of the project area, preparation of a development framework for the various sections within the Center City, and recommendations for redevelopment actions to revitalize the area. Actions address all elements of the Center City area including housing, streets and open space along with commercial and industrial development. Anticipated results include job creation, expanded housing choices, improved urban environment and quality of life issues such as walkability, cultural activities and education.

A major component of this planning study was significant public outreach to assure that the Vision Plan evolved from the community. The outreach process included focus group meetings with numerous interest groups, three public meetings and additional outreach by City staff. The outreach concentrated on building and strengthening existing community collaborations and initiatives as well as working to build new relationships with organizations, community groups and individuals.

The result of this visioning process will lay the groundwork for an Urban Renewal Plan to create vibrant, diverse, safe neighborhoods in downtown Holyoke where all residents can live, work and play.

The following report provides a summary of the items considered in the planning process and the elements that constitute the Center City Vision Plan.

- An overview of the process that was undertaken.
- A summary of the issues and opportunities that were considered.
- An overview of the alternatives that were discussed.
- A summary of the elements that constitute the Vision Plan.
- A set of strategies for implementing aspects of the Vision Plan.

(above) Scenes from the public forums



Process

The Center City Vision Plan was developed over a five month period structured around initial stakeholder interviews and three public workshops, each organized to gain input about issues and opportunities, Vision Plan alternatives and the preferred Vision Plan.

The planning process started by conducting a series of interviews with stakeholders over a two-day period to gain insight on the issues and opportunities that were relevant to the Center City study area. The interviews were held at City's Office of Planning and Development and at the Visitors Center in Heritage State Park, where more than 100 people attended. The interviews were organized by topic area and included representatives from the business, non-profit, housing, healthcare, and education industries. In addition, City Councilors, multiple City departments, private property owners, retailers, realtors and developers were interviewed.

The three public workshops were advertised through the local media including the City cable access channel, City web site and Spanish radio Station WSPR, at local churches, as well as through the use of flyers and community boards that were distributed and/or placed within the neighborhoods in the study area. These materials were translated into Spanish to expand community outreach efforts.

The extensive outreach efforts led an average turnout of 80–100 people for each of the public meetings, where the consultants and City staff provided a brief presentation followed by “break-out” group discussions on the material that was presented that evening. Translation services were provided at the public meetings to accommodate Spanish speaking participants. Each group was asked to “report back” what they discussed so that their concerns and goals could be considered in developing the vision for the Center City. The meetings focus on the following topics;

- *First Public Forum* “Understanding the Issues and Opportunities” and “Set a Vision/Framework for the Alternatives”
- *Second Public Forum* “Review the Preliminary Vision Plan Alternatives”
- *Third Public Forum* “Review Downtown Vision Plan” and preliminary “Urban Renewal considerations”

The City appointed a Steering Committee that worked closely with the consultants throughout the development of the Vision Plan. The committee consisted of members from the City Office of Planning and Development and members of the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA), the Holyoke

Planning Board and the Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (HEDIC). Meetings with the Steering Committee were held regularly to provide guidance on project coordination, development of the alternatives, refinement of the preferred Vision Plan and strategies for implementation actions that will result from this plan.

Goals and Objectives

The City of Holyoke and the HRA prepared this Vision Plan to understand community values that will guide the preparation of an Urban Renewal Plan for the Center City area that reflects citizen aspirations and preferences for the future of their community. The broad public involvement and resulting plan are essential to provide guidance to municipal officials and board members as they advance efforts and actions intended to stimulate the revitalization of this area of the City.

In order to address the critical issues that will impact the redevelopment potential of the Center City area, this vision planning process addressed the following goals and objectives:

Goal: Conduct an extensive public outreach process to achieve broad community input into the Center City Vision Plan

- Understand community values and preferences for the Center City area.
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges within the area.
- Achieve broad-based community understanding of the City's plans for this area.

Goal: Solicit community input into a number of issues that impact revitalization activities in the area. Understand community opinion regarding:

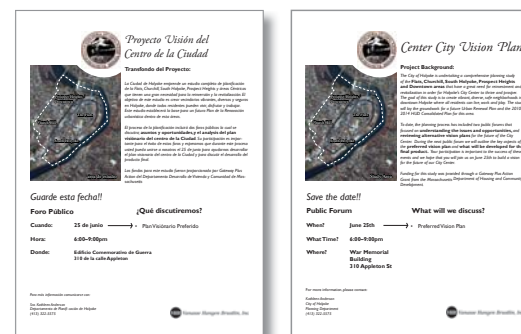
- Preferred mix of land uses—retail, office, entertainment, government/ civic, schools and education, housing, industrial, community/cultural, mixed-use development.
- Improvement of the open space system—large city parks, neighborhood parks, playing fields/courts, Canalwalk, Connecticut River, community gardens.
- Transportation options—vehicular, pedestrian, buses, trains, bicycles, walking, and multimodal.

- Street treatments—arterials and “entry” roads, main streets, secondary or access streets, residential streets, service streets (alleys), streetscape treatments, and gateways.
- Activities or events—cultural/social/ethnic events, entertainment, recreational activities, community celebrations, and family events.
- Schools, Health & Social Services—public and private schools, institutions and colleges, health care.
- Culture and Heritage—community values, historic resources, significant events/resources.

Goal: Develop a preferred Vision Plan that can be used to guide the preparation of an Urban Renewal Plan that will identify specific actions for the redevelopment of the Center City area.

- Identify public actions intended to stimulate private investment, improved housing and job creation.
- Identify principals that will guide future redevelopment.
- Prioritize proposed activities to help focus public actions.

The benefit of this community visioning process was that it provided an opportunity for citizen input into the municipal planning process and revitalization plan. This process provided a sense of community ownership in the development of a plan and, thus, support for its recommendations. Furthermore, this on-going process of communication among the citizens helped reconcile conflicting views resulting in an agreement on preferred courses of action. It also helped to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation and partnerships to resolve problems.



(left) Flyers prepared in both Spanish and English advertised the three public forums.

Opportunities & Challenges

The Opportunities and Challenges Map (opposite page) was developed to identify a series of issues that the Vision Plan should consider and/or build upon. The map reflects observations, community input and information provided at the stakeholder interviews, and has helped set the planning framework for the Vision Plan. Each of the components identified on the map is summarized in the paragraphs below. The adjacent text box includes a list of the ideas that emerged from the stakeholder interviews and first public forum. The list is not organized by priority, but rather by common recommendations that were discussed.

1. *Gateway Opportunities:* Gateway elements such as unique architectural features, signage, landscaping features and streetscape enhancements can be used to accentuate arrival to the Center City.
2. *Streets/Connections:* Enhance the connections along streets that link various portions of the Center City together, connecting neighborhoods and activity centers.
3. *Canal & Canalwalk:* Build on the planned improvements to the Canalwalk and seek opportunities to extend the Canalwalk to other portions of the Center City.
4. *Civic Buildings & Parks:* Leverage civic buildings and parks as assets to the community and a focal point for adjacent redevelopment.
City Initiatives: Advance the planned city initiatives (5 and 6)
5. *Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):* Encourage Transit-Oriented Development.
6. *Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40R (40 R):* Encourage smart growth in accordance with the purposes of 40R.
7. *Arts & Industry:* Expand, encourage reuse, redevelopment, and revitalization of historic resources within the existing Arts & Industry Overlay District, along the canals and on the periphery of Holyoke's traditional city center.
8. *Vacant Properties:* Plan for, redevelop and enhance the numerous vacant properties within the Center City.
9. *Neighborhood Identity:* Capitalize on the unique characteristics of Holyoke's urban neighborhoods.
10. *Enhanced Connections:* Enhance connections to destinations adjacent to the Center City (Springdale Park, Mitchell Field, Pulaski Park).

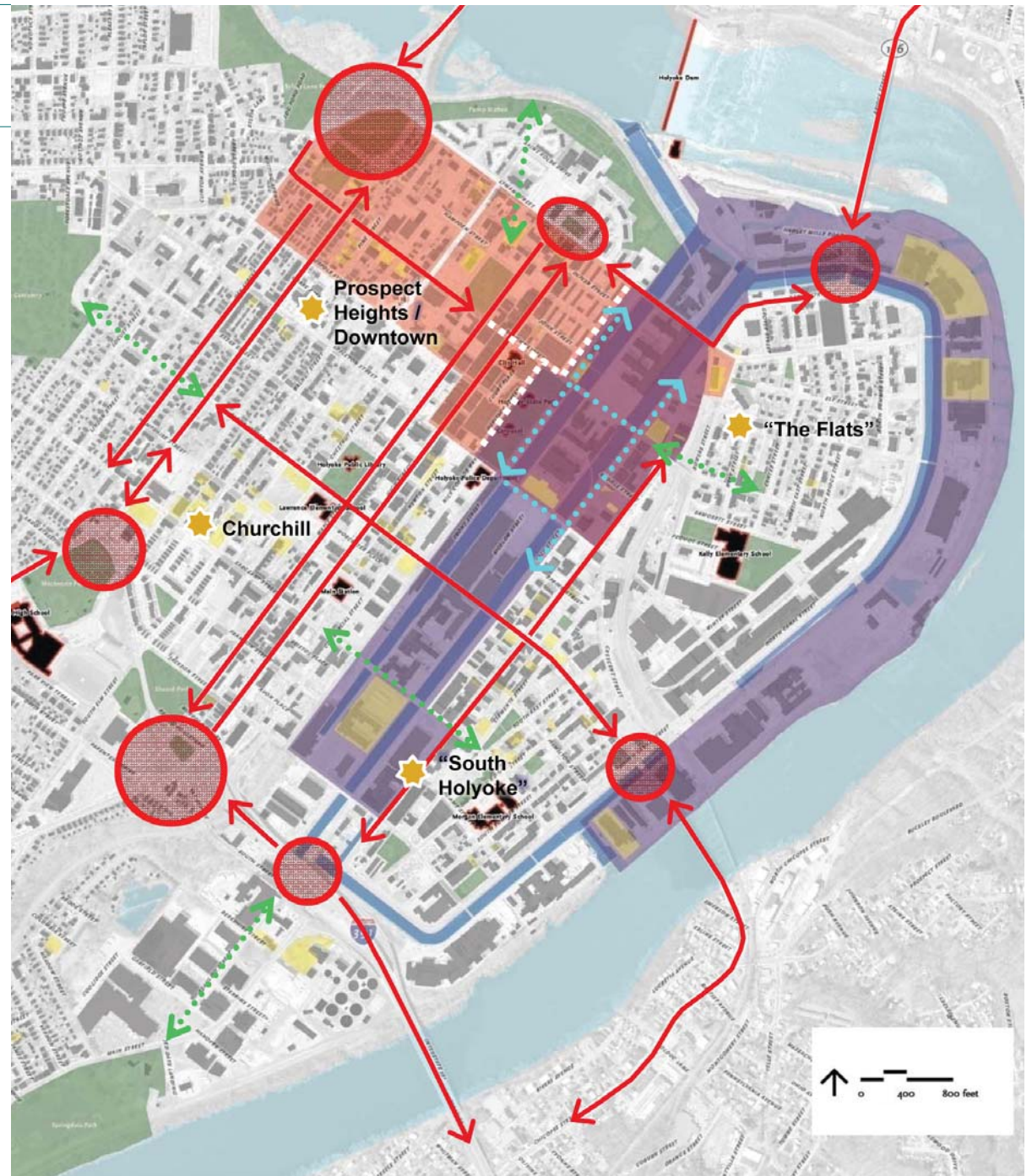
Community & Stakeholder Recommendations

- Creation of jobs.
- Workforce training.
- Higher education opportunities.
- Maintain properties and selectively remove blight.
- Maintain a clean City and educate about littering and clean-up—start clean up in highly visible areas.
- Improve safety (both perceived and real)/implementation of beat police, improved lighting.
- Promote green...green power, green industry, and green identity.
- Celebrate culture and ethnic diversity.
- Preserving the architecture and historical value of the area.
- Build on the City's successes and civic assets.
- More entertainment. e.g. Family-friendly restaurants, movie theatre, family activities.
- Strengthen the Arts District.
- Mixed income, mixed use, mixed housing choices.
- Encouraging small, diverse and local businesses.
- Create a strong downtown core with small businesses and mixed uses.
- Local foods/local markets.
- Address transition areas in land use, create buffers.
- Rename the area. Positive marketing.
- Increase the safety and attractiveness of public parks.
- Creating a walkable City with complete streets.
- Develop an approach for the vacant buildings
- Consider zoning updates and design guidelines, strategic zoning.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES MAP



FIGURE 2
Challenges and Opportunities
 source data: MassGIS, City of Holyoke



2 *Alternatives*

CONTENTS

- Alternatives Overview
 - Alternative 1
 - Alternative 2
 - Alternative 3
-

Alternatives







Three preliminary Alternatives were prepared for the study area based on the issues and opportunities that were identified during the stakeholder interviews, results from the first public forum and the Opportunities Map that was prepared. The alternatives identify a framework for revitalization activities, both public and private, such as areas for future development and redevelopment, areas recommended for rehabilitation, infrastructure improvements, open space and streetscape improvements, recommended land uses and similar activities that will help to revitalize the area.

Each alternative includes a series of elements that are common to all three. These include considerations for: Complete Streets, City Parks, City Bridges, Streetscape, Canalwalk, Neighborhood Initiatives, Mix Use Centers, Arts/History, Jobs/Industry/Commerce, and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Each of these “Common Elements” is shown in the legend on the opposite page.

The differences between the alternatives are denoted by their individual approaches to certain land uses within sub-areas of the Center City. These differences are shown with darker colors as indicated in the legend below. During the initial discussions with the stakeholders and community members, multiple ideas emerged about how to treat future growth within these areas. The summary of these differences are highlighted in the description of each alternative plan.

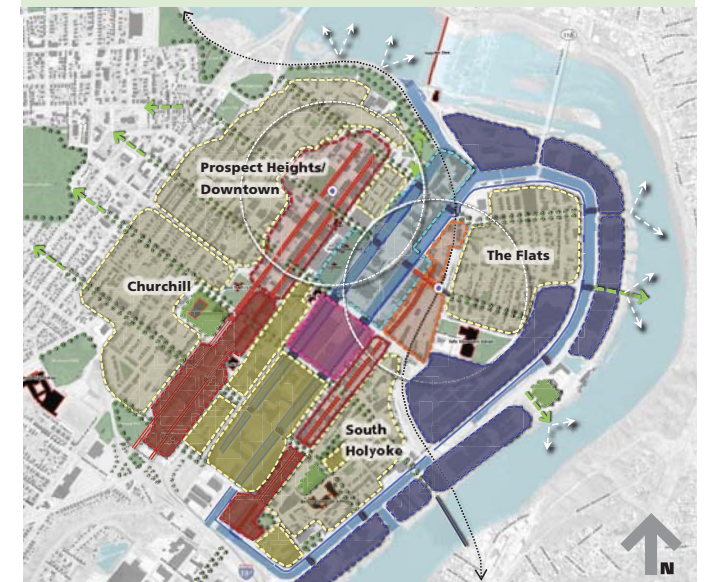
Based on the feedback from the second public forum and comments from the City and Steering Committee, a preferred Vision Plan was created that incorporates many of the aspects shown in alternative three.

Legend

	<i>Mixed Use/Office-Retail Focus</i>		<i>Jobs and Commerce</i>
	<i>Cultural Focus</i>		<i>Expand TOD</i>
	<i>Mixed Use/Housing Focus</i>		<i>Expand Arts/History</i>

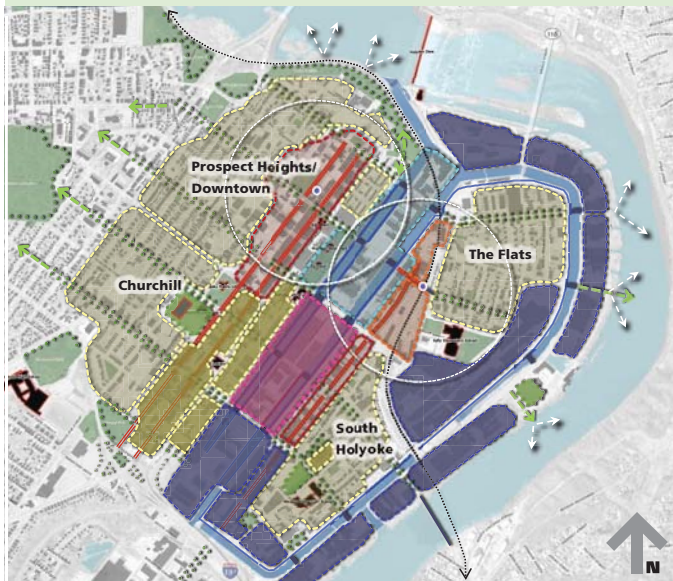
Alternative 1

- Expand the mix of uses along High and Maple Streets south towards I-391 with a focus on Office and Retail.
- Focus Cultural Uses and activities along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals—between Appleton and Cabot Streets.
- Target redevelopment of the southern blocks along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals—between Commercial, Race, Cabot and Jackson Streets as mixed-use with a focus on Housing.
- Expand the mix of uses along Main Street towards I-391 with a focus on Office and Retail.
- Target Jobs and Commerce along the 2nd Level Canal with emphasis on the land between the canal and river. Continue to promote Jobs and Commerce in the southeastern portions of the Flats neighborhood.
- Explore opportunities for views and open spaces along the riverfront, and between redevelopment sites.



Alternative 2

- Expand the mix of uses along High and Maple Streets south towards I-391 with a focus on Retail and Housing.
- Focus the Cultural Uses and activities along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals—between Appleton and Sargeant Streets, one block larger than Alternative 1.
- Target redevelopment of the southern blocks along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals—between Commercial, Sargeant, Main and I-391 for Jobs and Commerce. Extend Jobs and Commerce along the 3rd Level Canal on the southern edges of South Holyoke.
- Target Jobs and Commerce along 2nd Level Canal with emphasis on the land between the canal and the river. Continue to promote Jobs and Commerce in the southeastern portions of the Flats neighborhood.
- Explore opportunities for views and open spaces along the riverfront, and between redevelopment sites



Alternative 3

- Expand the mix of uses along High and Maple Streets south towards I-391 with a focus on Office and Retail
- Focus Cultural Uses along High and Maple Streets within downtown—between Heritage Park, Appleton, Dwight, and Chestnut Streets.
- Target redevelopment of the southern blocks along the 1st and 2nd Level Canals—Between Commercial, Race, Cabot and Jackson Streets with a focus on Jobs and Commerce.
- Expand the mix of uses along Main Street towards I-391 focusing on mixed-use with Retail and Housing
- Extend housing along the 3rd Level Canal in South Holyoke.
- Target Jobs and Commerce along the 3rd Level Canal, emphasizing land between the canal and river. Explore opportunities for housing within the southeastern portions of the Flats.
- Explore opportunities for views and open spaces along the riverfront, near the dam and between redevelopment sites along the 3rd Level Canal.



Legend

- Complete Streets**
 - Sidewalks
 - Street trees
 - Wayfinding
 - Crosswalks
 - Pedestrian friendly
 - Multimodal / bike accommodations
- City Parks**
 - Riverfront connections
 - South Holyoke Plan for open space
 - Morgan School expansion
 - Lawrence School expansion
 - Pulaski Connection to Canal/walk
 - Improvements to Veterans Park
- City Bridges**
 - Signature elements
 - Pedestrian-oriented
 - Lighting
- Streetscape**
 - Sidewalk enhancements
 - Street Furnishing
 - Landscaping
 - Lighting
 - Signage / Wayfinding
 - Pedestrian Comfort & safety
- Canalwalk**
 - Extended south towards I-391
 - Extended north to Pulaski Park
 - Along South Canal Street
- Neighborhood Initiatives**
 - Infill & new housing choices
 - Rehab – as appropriate
 - Neighborhood streets
 - Community gardens
 - Zoning & code enforcement
 - Clean-up programs
 - Lighting program
- Mixed Use Centers**
 - Ground floor active uses
 - Buildings that front the street
 - Higher density
 - Design standards
 - Infill rehab / preservation
- Arts / History**
 - Heart of the arts community
 - Focus on rehab & mill character
 - Planned events
 - Integrate uses with Canalwalk
- Jobs/Industry/Commerce**
 - "Power & Sustainability"
 - Buffers to adjacent uses
 - Improved access for trucks
 - Unique corridor identify
 - Open access to the riverfront
- TOD**
 - Focus on ¼ radius
 - Allow higher densities
 - Connection to Downtown / Flats
 - Rehab/Restoration
 - Active ground floor uses

3 *Vision Plan*

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- The Vision Plan
 - Develop Key Nodes
 - Enhance the Arts & Innovation District
 - Expand Open Space Amenities
 - Transform the Riverfront
 - Enhance the Urban Neighborhoods
 - Reconnect the City through Gateways
& Complete Streets
-

The Vision Plan

Based on the results from the second and third public forums and comments received from the Steering Committee, a Vision Plan and revised framework diagram was created for the Center City area that outlines goals and objectives for its future redevelopment and revitalization. This chapter provides an overview of the six key elements that define the Vision Plan. The plan identifies both site specific strategies and broad principles that will provide guidance to the community and the City as plans and initiatives are advanced and projects are implemented.







Through the community process and feedback received on the Vision Plan, it was evident that increasing the density and types of development, creating new jobs, providing more housing choices and preserving Holyoke's historic character were all important considerations. Equally important was the desire to improve connectivity to and throughout the Center City, making the neighborhoods and the downtown amenities more accessible. These and other "core principles" are outlined on the opposite page. The Vision Plan expands upon these initiatives and is described in the following pages of this chapter that describe:

1. Develop Key "Nodes"
2. Enhance the "Arts and Innovation" District
3. Expand Open Space Amenities
4. Transform the Riverfront
5. Enhance the Urban Neighborhoods
6. Reconnect the City through gateways and complete streets

The Framework

The Vision Plan was prepared in conjunction with the revised Framework Diagram that illustrates various goals for land uses, initiatives, and connections within the Center City.

Legend

	<i>Mixed Use / Office – Retail Focus</i>		<i>Mixed Use / Housing Focus</i>
	<i>Neighborhood Initiatives</i>		<i>Transit-Oriented Development</i>
	<i>Jobs and Commerce</i>		<i>Arts and Innovation</i>



CENTER CITY VISION PLAN

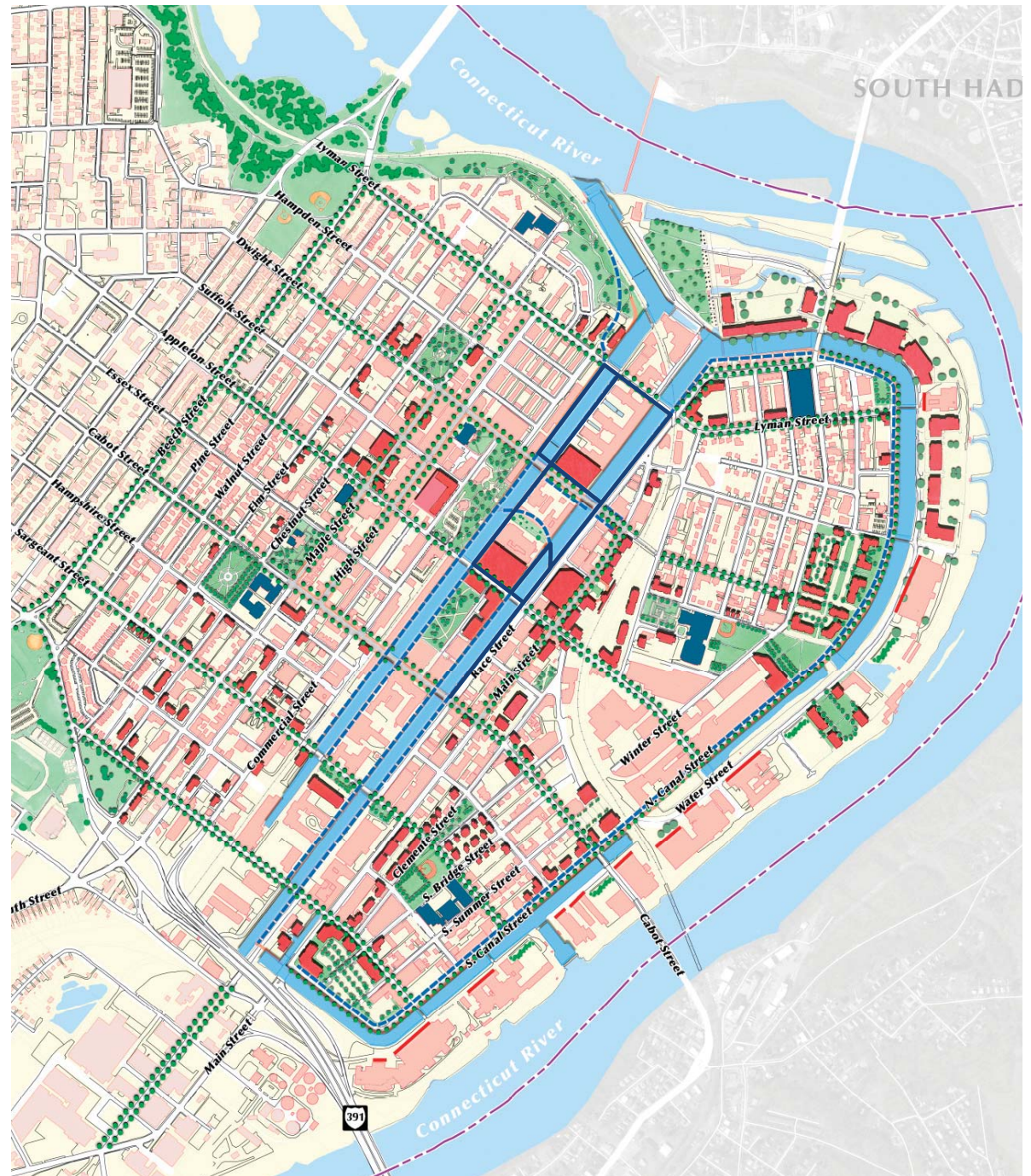
PRINCIPLES

1. Revitalize the Center City by increasing the density and types of development (more residents, more jobs)
2. Create an active Center City with a variety of 24/7 uses for day and night (Events, retail, restaurants, family destinations, etc.)
3. Preserve Holyoke's historic urban character and valuable architectural resources (blocks, streets, buildings)
4. Increase housing choices with building styles that compliment the character within each urban neighborhood (multi-family, townhouse, duplex, etc.)
5. Improve downtown circulation with walkable, safe, and pedestrian-friendly streets and open spaces (Sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, lighting, etc)
6. Promote local utilities, green technology, and the innovative sectors as economic development initiatives (HG&E's water power, renewable energy, creative jobs)

Legend

-  Existing
-  New Development / Redevelopment
-  Public Buildings
-  New or Enhanced Open Spaces/Parks
-  Planned Canalwalk
-  Expanded Canalwalk
-  Street & streetscape improvements

FIGURE 3
Center City Vision Plan
source: City of Holyoke GIS



Develop Key Nodes

Holyoke's Center City is, in part, defined by its grid of streets, location of its mixed use centers, or "Main Streets", proximity of its urban neighborhoods, and the existing mix of uses that are located within each of its areas. High Street, Maple Street and Main Street have historically been the mixed-use activity centers that have catered to Holyoke's retailers and businesses and have provided services to downtown employees and residents. There is an opportunity to reconnect and strengthen these various streets and places within the Center City by focusing redevelopment, future development, streetscape enhancements and cultural activities within four "key nodes" of the downtown. Equally important is connecting these nodes to each other, as well as the neighborhoods that abut them, ultimately becoming a "porthole" that links neighborhoods and the downtown back together.

The Vision Plan identifies four nodes where development and redevelopment should support the overall goal for a vibrant urban center filled with active ground floor and broad mix of retail, office, business, residential and institutional uses. Each node has the potential to build upon a theme based on the existing land uses that help define its existing character and future potential. Connections between these nodes should be enhanced through improved streetscape and transportation choices, such as improved sidewalks and a downtown bus circulator.

"Municipal" Node: Build on the existing municipal uses such as City Hall, Veteran's Park and the planned expansion of a new park behind City Hall. Promote and expand downtown cultural activities such as the St. Patrick's Day Parade and "Celebrate Holyoke Day" to bring events to this civic area.

"Learning" Node: Celebrate the theme of "learning" by advancing the planned improvements to the City Library and the potential to create a new park adjacent to the new or renovated Lawrence School.

"Transit-Oriented Development" Node: Plan for future passenger rail service that will link Holyoke to Hartford and the region's "Innovation Corridor". Promote mixed-use development with active ground floor uses, with opportunities for new high density housing. Restore connections to the Flats by implementing the proposed rail bridge and enhancing connections to downtown via Dwight Street.

"Cabot and Main" Node: Promote infill development and redevelopment that enhances the character of Main and Cabot Streets with a mixed of uses that activate the street. Seek development that creates a sense of place and provides for enhanced connections to the South Holyoke neighborhood.

GOALS

- Promote cultural activities within each node
- Enhance the streetscape to create places for people
- Focus redevelopment and future development to create the sense of place
- Create links or "portholes" to the adjacent neighborhoods
- Connect the nodes through streetscape and transportation enhancements
- Plan for a transportation "Hub" in each node
- Create a transportation "Loop" that connects each node

EXAMPLES



1. KEY "NODES"

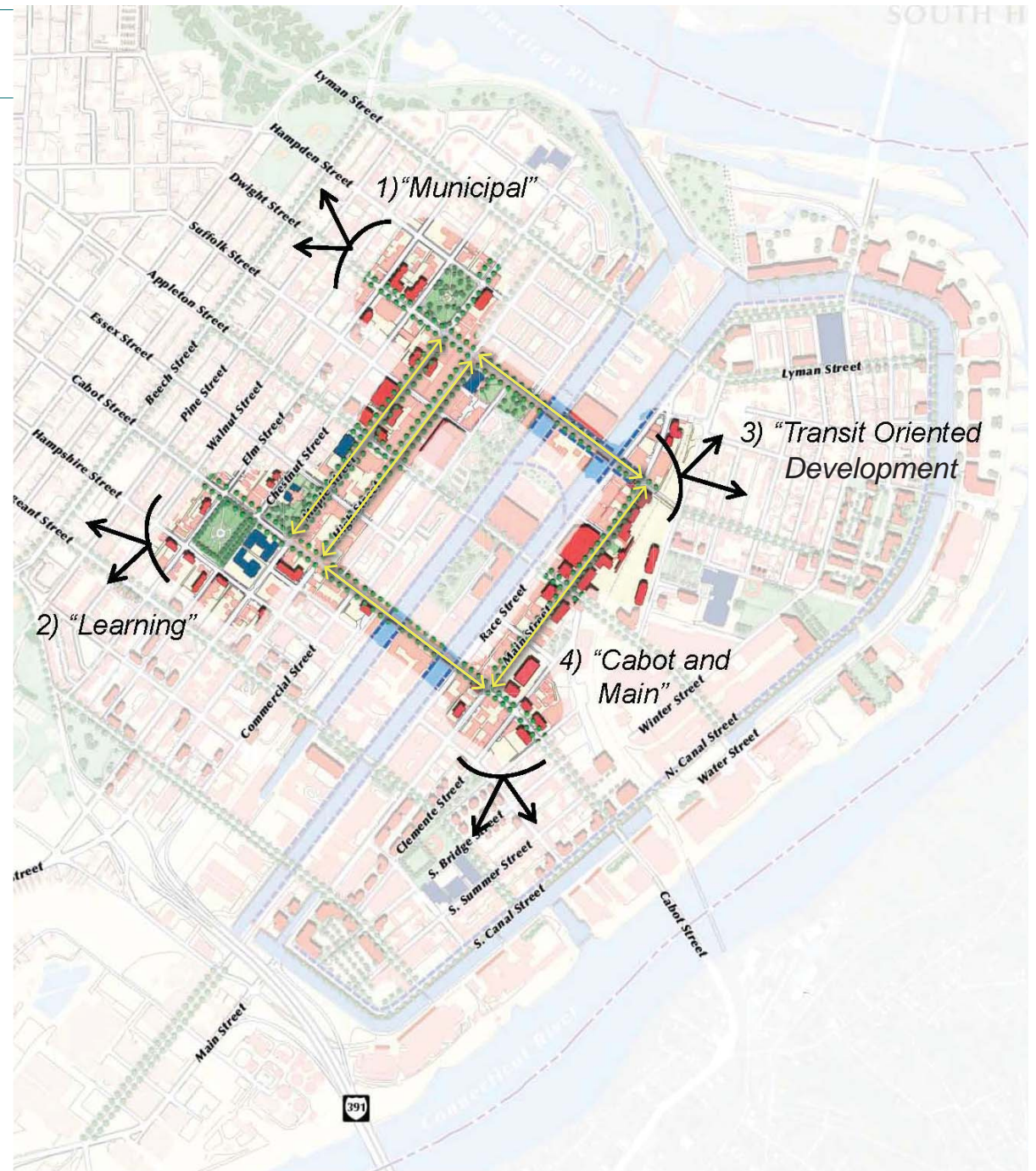


FIGURE 4
Develop Key "Nodes"

1. DEVELOP KEY “NODES” (CONTINUED)

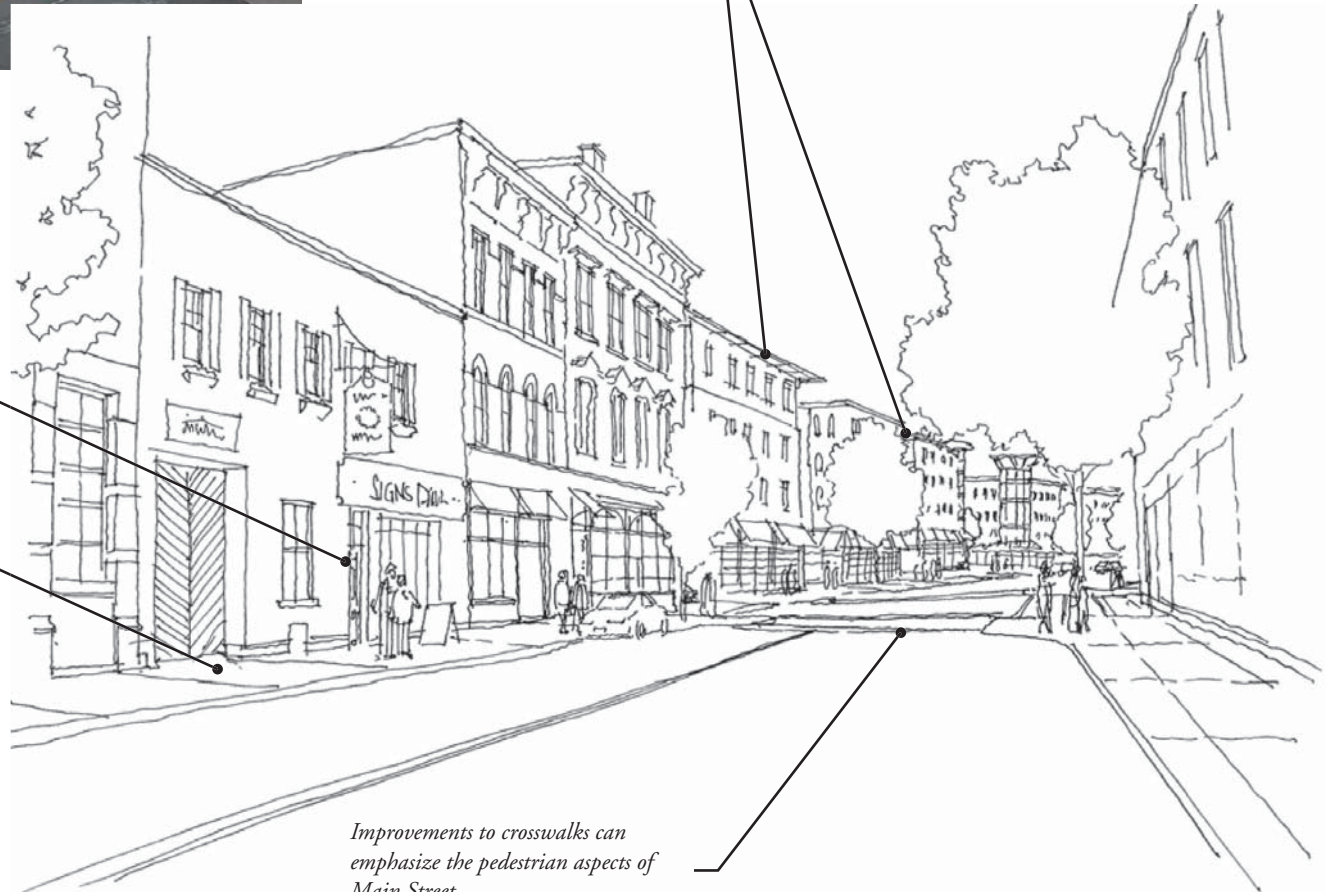


Main Street—Today

Infill development along Main Street, buildings should front the street & be in scale with the existing context.

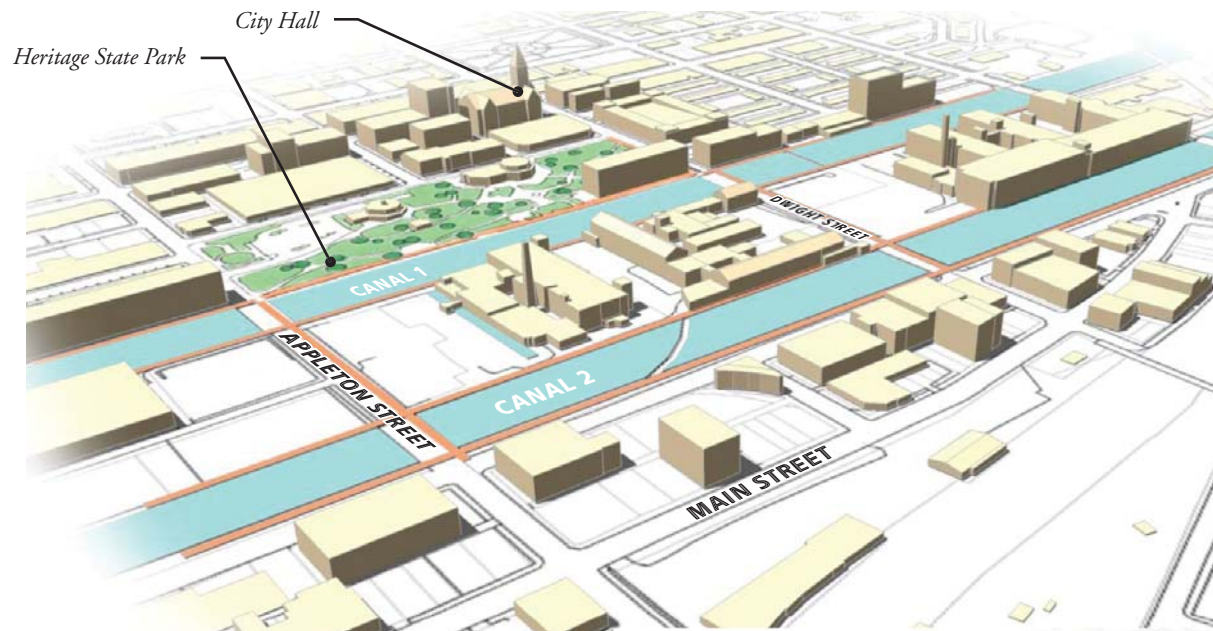
Façade & storefront enhancements

Sidewalk & streetscape improvements

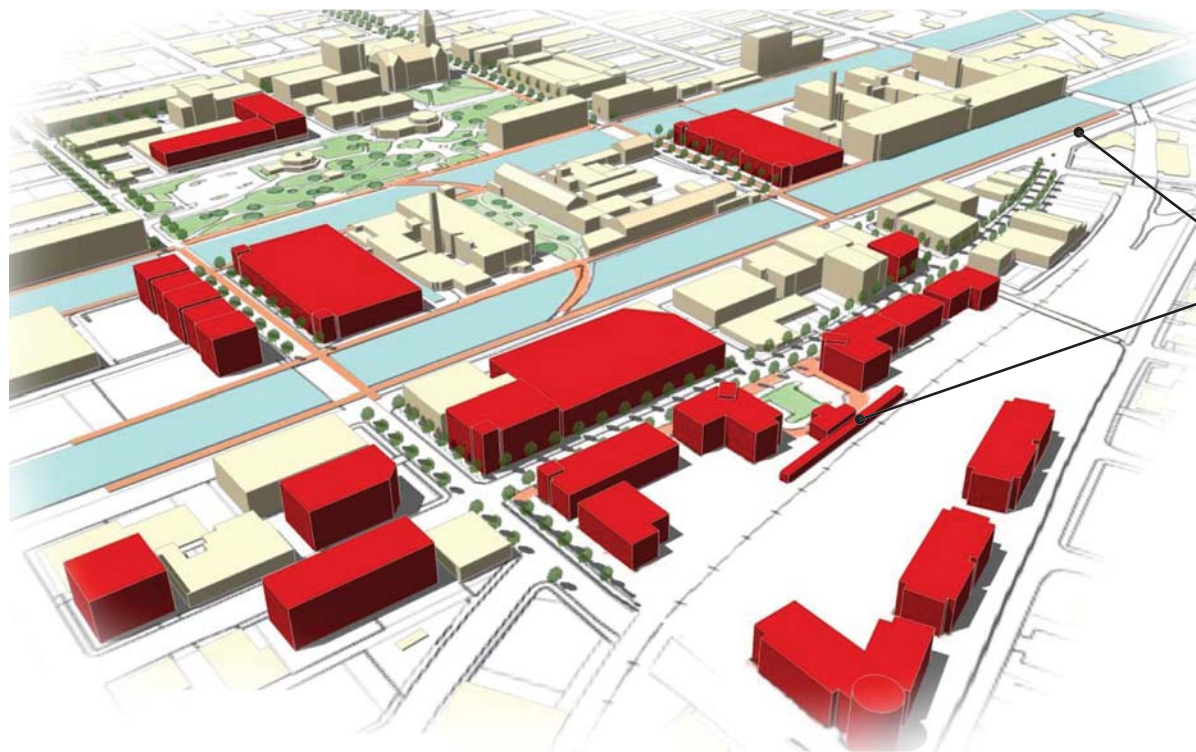


Improvements to crosswalks can emphasize the pedestrian aspects of Main Street.

Main Street—A Mixed-Use Center



Center City—Existing



Center City—Future Development

Legend

- Existing Development
- Potential Future Development
- New or Future Open Space/Parks

Enhance the Arts & Innovation District

Holyoke was founded on its innovative approach to power generation, by capturing energy from the Connecticut River. Its history as an industrial city and inventory of architecturally rich mill buildings provides a unique foundation for a continued emergence of an “Arts and Innovation” district. The community process identified the existing artist community that is occupying space within buildings near the 1st and 2nd Level Canals. In addition, the community stated a preference to extend the Arts & Industry Overlay District to with the Arts and Innovation District extending from the 1st and 2nd Level Canals to Maple and High Streets so that the Victory Theater and War Memorial Building are part of the district.

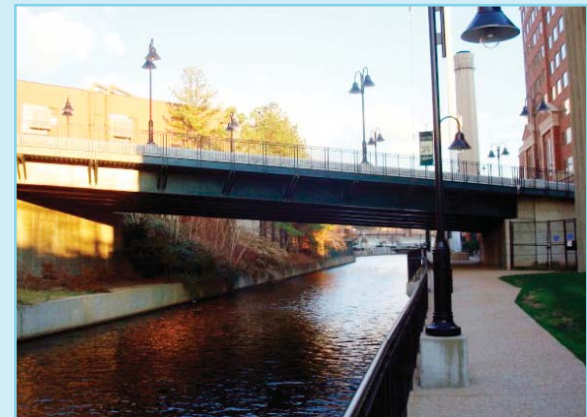
The Vision Plan identifies a general boundary where the theme of Arts and Innovation should be explored (see figure 5). Multiple efforts will continue to support the emergence of this district by:

- Unlocking the development potential for office, commercial, retail and housing to reoccupy the vacant floors of existing buildings that are suitable for renovation.
- Integrating the ground floor uses with the Canalwalk.
- Expanding programmed events within the district to include:
 - Walking & Historic tours—that showcase the unique building inventory and history of the Canal.
 - Cultural events—Bring back Celebrate Holyoke and seek new events that bring together Holyoke’s diverse population.
- Enhancing the edges of streets—By renovating buildings, providing new development and improving the streetscape along the streets that cross the canals (Lyman, Dwight, Appleton, Cabot, Sargeant Streets).
- Making the bridges a design element—Work with Mass Highway to explore ways to illuminate the bridges and improve the sidewalks.
- Seeking opportunities for new parking lots/structures that can facilitate redevelopment.

GOALS

- Celebrate the arts community
- Unlock development potential for office, commercial, retail and housing
- Integrate uses with the Canalwalk
- Expand programmed events
 - Walking tours
 - Historic tours
 - Cultural events
- Enhance the edges of streets
- Make bridges a design element—lighting sidewalks
- New parking lots/structures

EXAMPLES



2. "ARTS AND INNOVATION" DISTRICT

- Public Events on High & Maple
- Victory Theater
- War Memorial
- Heritage State Park, Children's Museum & Volleyball Hall of Fame Merry-Go-Round
- Expanded Canalwalk
- Planned Canalwalk

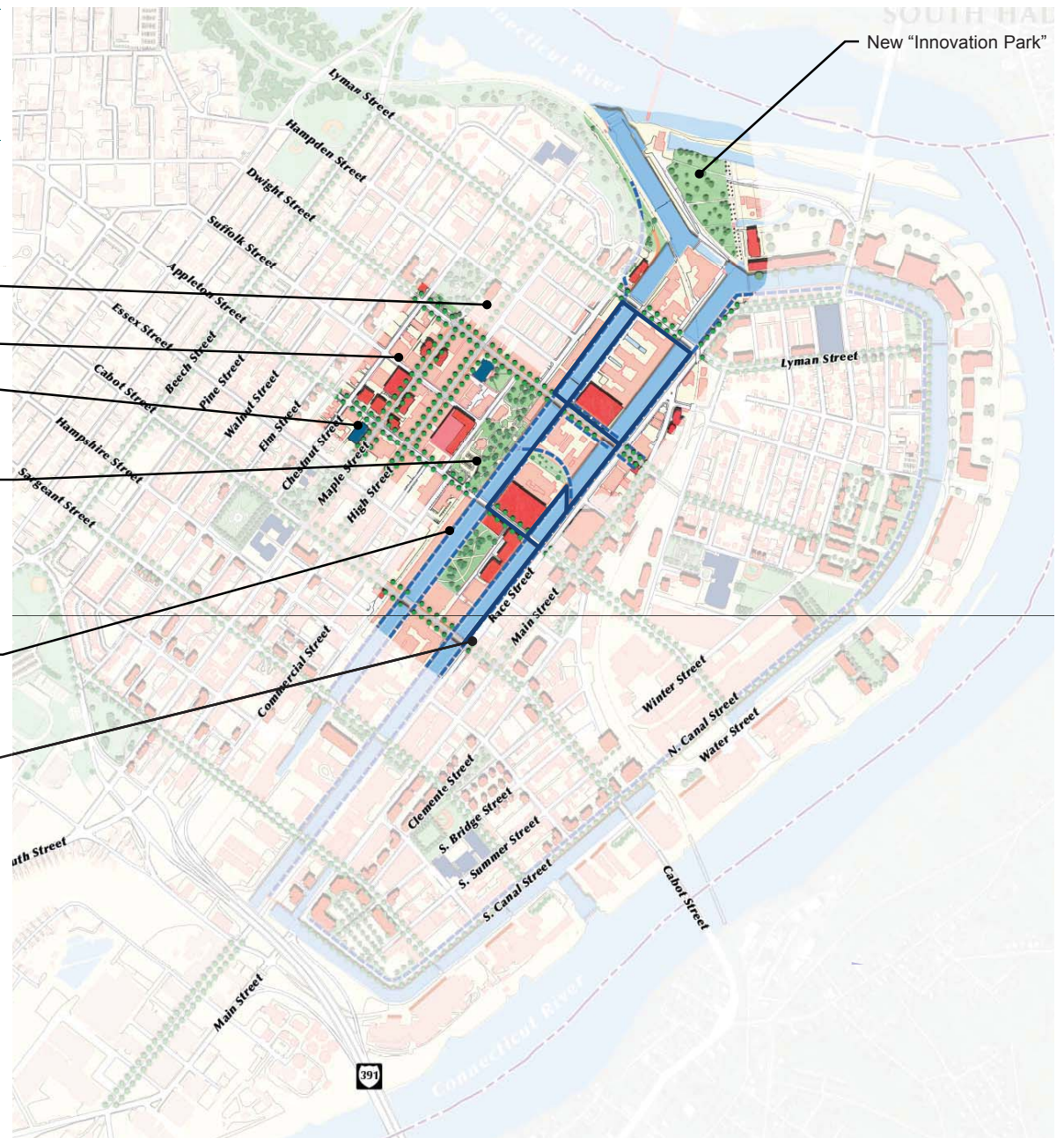


FIGURE 5
"Arts and Innovation" District

Expand Open Space Amenities

Holyoke is home to several notable parks such as the Heritage State Park that celebrates Holyoke's unique history as the first planned industrial city; Pulaski Park, which was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted—an internationally recognized landscape architect. Figure 6 identifies these and other existing parks and suggests ways to introduce new open spaces, parks, expansions to the Canalwalk and potential streetscape enhancements that will connect these amenities throughout the Center City. The following summarizes the potential enhancements to the network of open spaces.

Veterans Park

- Continue with and expand programmed activities that activate the park.
- Seek infill and redevelopment opportunities for sites that surround the park.
- Explore the potential for additional enhancements the park with the conversion of Maple Street into a two-way street (see Chapter 4, Transportation).

Heritage State Park Area

- Advance the City's plan to remove the parking structure behind City Hall, making way for a new park that will abut Heritage State Park.
- Seek opportunities to celebrate Holyoke as “the Birthplace of Volleyball” (park improvements, special events).

New Lawrence School Park

- Work with the School Department to advance plans for the Lawrence School and the opportunity for a new recreational park.
- Infill vacant sites that surround the park to provide more “eyes on the street”.
- Work with the city to explore options to close a portion of Chestnut Street.

Expand McNally Field to Canal

- Explore potential redevelopment opportunities along North Canal Street adjacent to Kelly School to expand the existing playing fields and open views to the canal.
- Expand the Canalwalk System along Canal Street and other potential areas.

Build a network of linkages to connect open spaces

- Enhance sidewalks and the streetscape along key streets that link neighborhoods to parks and open spaces.

Expand South Holyoke's playground at Morgan School

- Advance plans to expand the elementary school.
- Work with the City to develop plans for the new park, considering closing South Bridge Street, building a new ball field and closing Bonin Field off Jackson Street.

GOALS

- Enhance existing open spaces
- Open access to the river in collaboration with redevelopment opportunities
- Build a network of linkages to connect open spaces through streets and the canalwalk
- Expand the Canalwalk System to the second and third canals

EXAMPLES



3. OPEN SPACE AMENITIES

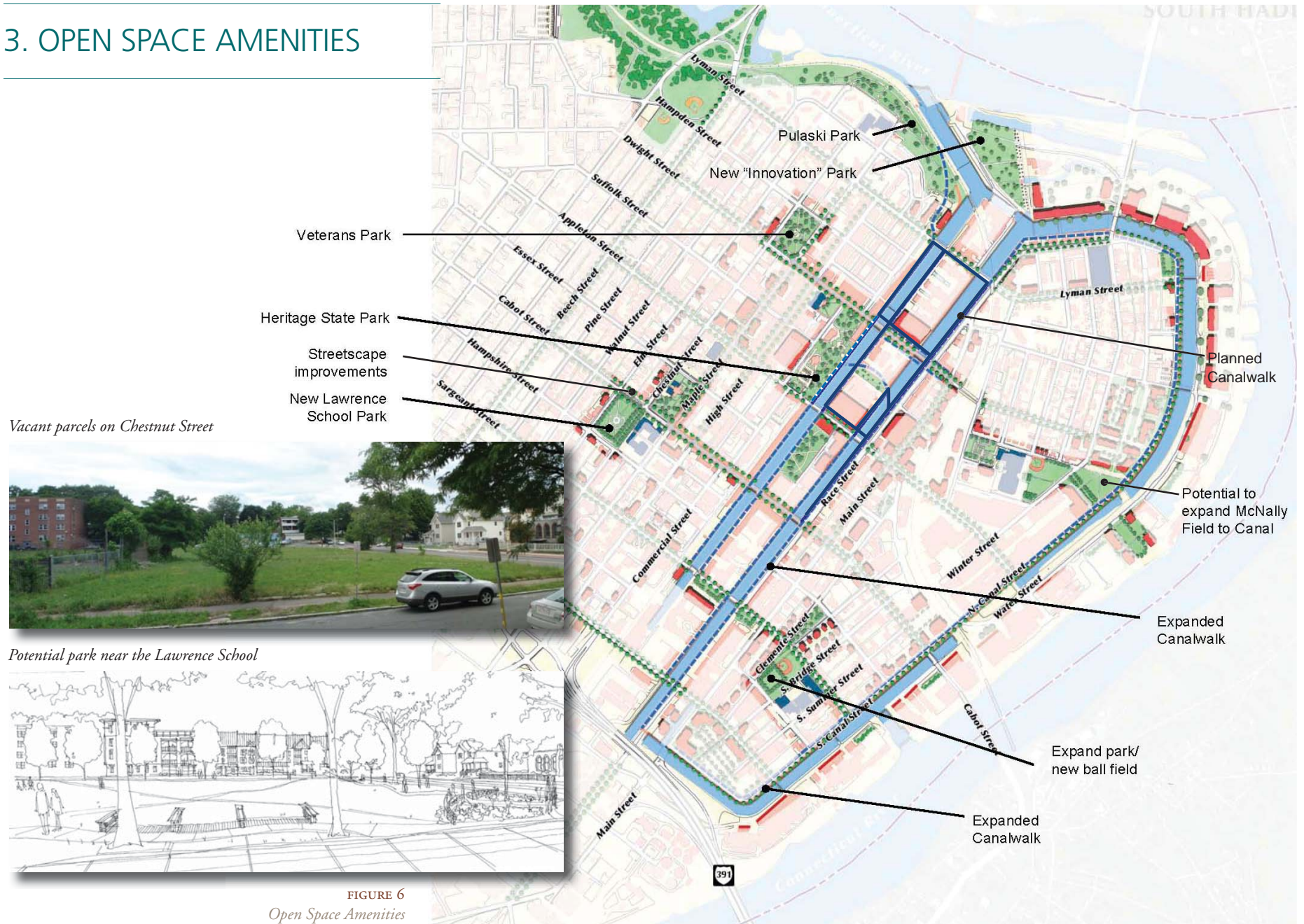


FIGURE 6
Open Space Amenities

Transform the Riverfront

The existing riverfront properties that are located between the Connecticut River and the 2nd Level Canal are mostly occupied by industrial uses. In addition, this area has several vacant buildings, some of which have recently been demolished and are being cleared for their potential future redevelopment. The Vision Plan has identified that this area continue to be used for job creation and commerce, targeting new development that can capitalize on the industrial and green technology industries. The Vision Plan also identifies the potential to extend the Canalwalk on the western side of North and South Canal Streets. As redevelopment and investment occurs along these riverfront properties, emphasis should be placed on the building edges and landscaping that fronts the Canal to enhance the aesthetics of this area. The following goals should be considered as properties redevelop along the riverfront;

- Place emphasis on facades that front the 2nd and 3rd Level Canals—including restoration of existing historic buildings and new development to enhance the character of the building frontage (see adjacent rendering).
- Promote landscape buffers to limit views to loading docks, parking lots and storage areas.
- Seek new green industries/technologies as part of the City's effort to promote its renewable energy supply.
- Work with Holyoke Gas and Electric to advance plans for their properties, including an open space or “innovation park” near the dam and open views to the river for properties along Water Street.

GOALS

- Enhance the edges of development along Water Street—through new development façade treatments
- Seek new development opportunities for vacant sites
- Capitalize on the “Green/Power” Industry

EXAMPLES



4. THE RIVERFRONT

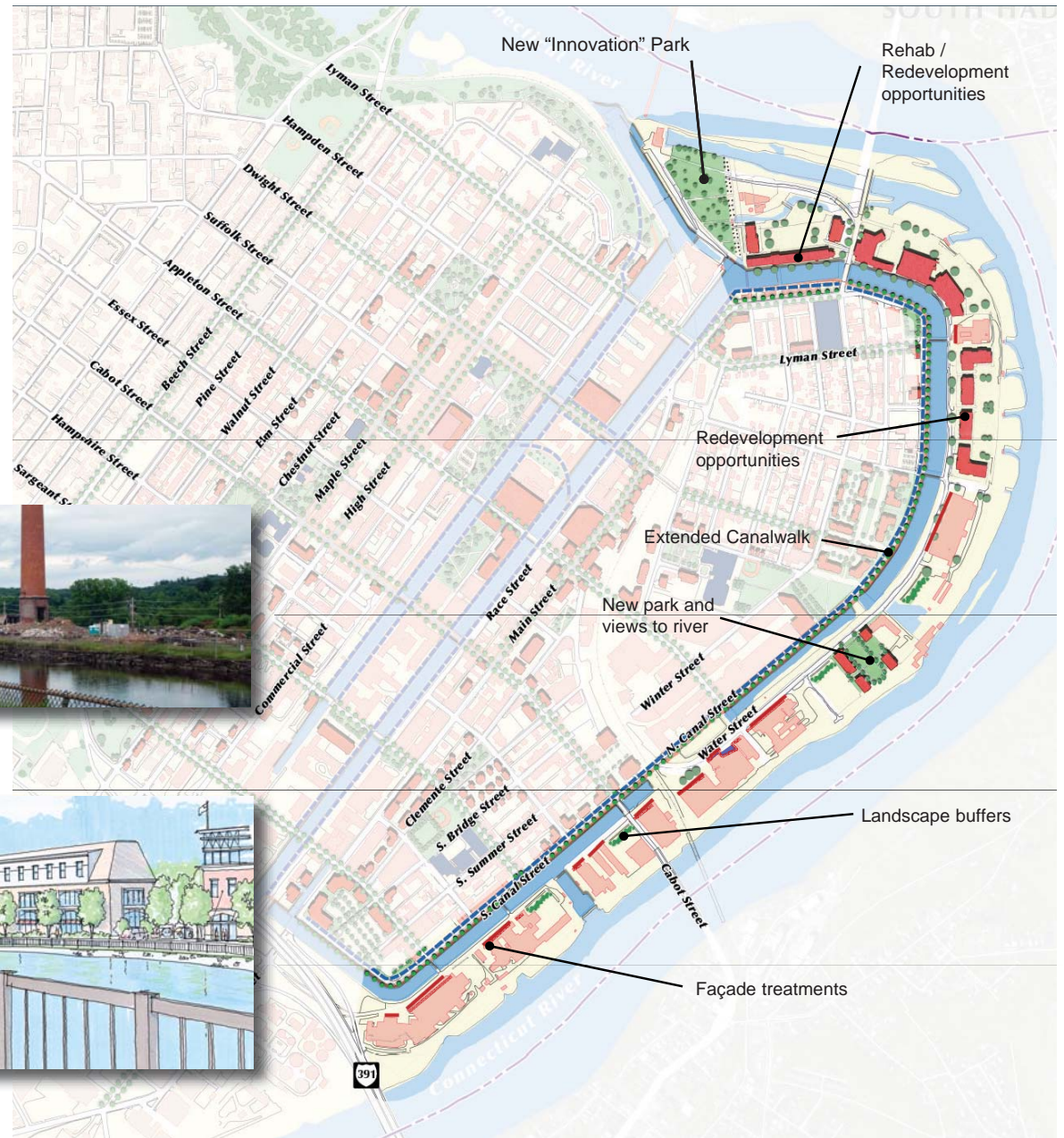
North Canal Street



Future improvements on Canal Street



FIGURE 7
The Riverfront



Enhance the Urban Neighborhoods

There are opportunities to “enhance” each of the four Center City neighborhoods by advancing new infill development, improving their appearance through cleanup programs, and creating new community gardens where residents benefit from access to locally grown foods.

The Vision Plan has identified various opportunities for infill sites that can accommodate a wide range of housing and mixed-use development. These are sites that are vacant, underutilized, or could be redeveloped. Figure 8 illustrates that these sites are scattered throughout each of the Center City’s four census tracts. Future development on these sites should be in scale and character with the surrounding context and should contribute to their urban setting by fronting buildings towards the street and accommodating parking within the internal portions of their lots or at the rear of the buildings.

Many of the existing vacant lots are adjacent to the residential uses. New development should expand upon the existing housing choices to provide a variety of unit types that can cater to Holyoke’s existing and future population and income levels. Opportunities for home ownership should be expanded to provide balance between the higher concentrations of rental units that are located within the Center City.

Existing neighborhood clean-up programs should continue to advance efforts to help these neighborhoods improve their appearance. The City should work closely with its neighborhood-based organizations and the Department of Public Works to advance efforts on trash pick-up and litter education.

During the planning processes, participants noted the need for improved code enforcement to ensure that buildings and properties are in compliance with health and safety codes. In addition, participants expressed a desire to add more community gardens within each neighborhood so that residents can benefit from access to locally grown foods. The City should explore opportunities to convert appropriately placed and accessible vacant lots into community gardens.

GOALS

- Provide a mix of urban housing choices that complement the existing Center City neighborhoods
- Advance infill development opportunities throughout the Center City
- Expand neighborhood clean-up programs to enhance the appearance of the neighborhoods
- Seek opportunities for community gardens with the four neighborhood in the Center City

EXAMPLES



5. URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

"Infill" development opportunities

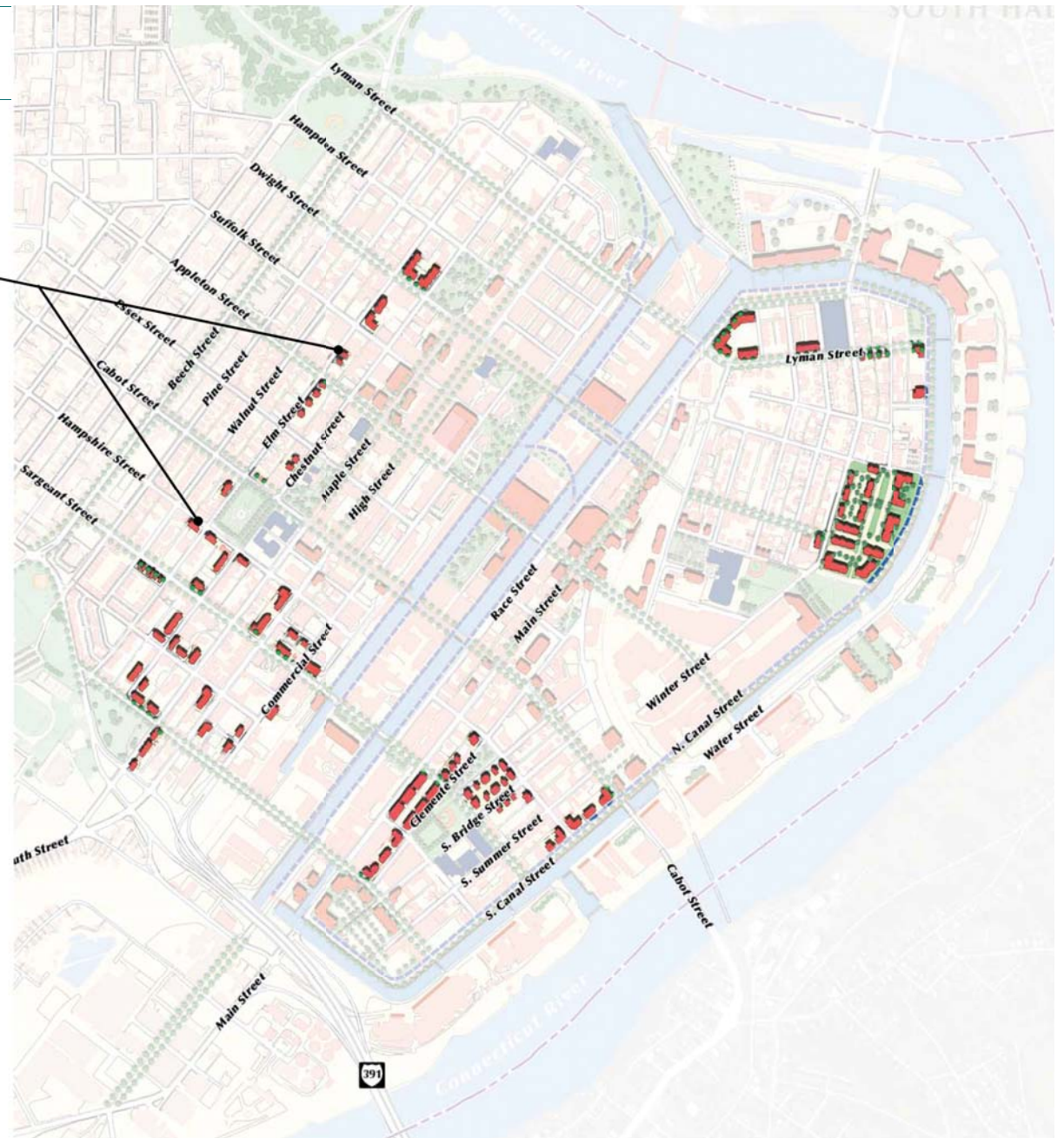


FIGURE 8
Urban Neighborhoods

Reconnect the City through Gateways & Complete Streets

The Center City area has a set of distinct boundaries that include; the Connecticut River to north and east, I-391 to the south and Route 202 to the west. Celebrating arrival to the Center City can be highlighted by making enhancements to key points of entry or “gateways”. Internally, the Center City is home to four urban neighborhoods, each geographically located at its four corners. Improvements to the existing grid of streets offer the opportunity to reconnect these urban neighborhoods to each other and the adjacent mixed-use centers like High and Main Streets.

The Vision Plan has identified a series of gateway locations that should be enhanced to celebrate arrival to the downtown (See figure 9). In addition, the Vision Plan recommends improvements to several east-west streets that will link the four neighborhoods and downtown together. During the planning process, residents, business owners and other stakeholders raised a number of transportation-related issues. These issues included improving the following: existing sidewalks, roadway infrastructure, truck access, traffic circulation and streetscape/gateways. Enhancing these transportation elements, along with strategic roadway planning to improve connectivity, will improve the transportation network and assist in economic development and revitalization of the downtown. See Chapter 4 for further information regarding Transportation improvements.

Gateways locations:

- Beech Street (north near Lyman Street and the River, south near the High School).
- High and Maple Streets (north at Lyman Street, south at the entrance to I-391).
- Main Street (south at the crossing of the 3rd Level Canal and I-391).
- Cabot Street (east at the crossing of the 3rd Level Canal).
- North Bridge Street (north at the between the 3rd Level Canal and river).

Streetscape and Street Improvements:

- Jackson Street, Sargeant Street, Cabot Street, Appleton Street, Dwight Street, Lyman Street, Main Street, High Street, Maple Street.
- Advance plans to convert Maple and High Streets to two-ways streets, from Lyman to Cabot Streets.

GOALS

- Create a network of complete streets that connect the Center City’s neighborhoods and mixed use centers
- Enhance “gateway areas” to identify entry to the Center City
 - Expand and implement wayfinding
 - Highlight new or existing architectural features on buildings
- Improve vehicular circulation and convert sections of High and Maple to two way streets

EXAMPLES

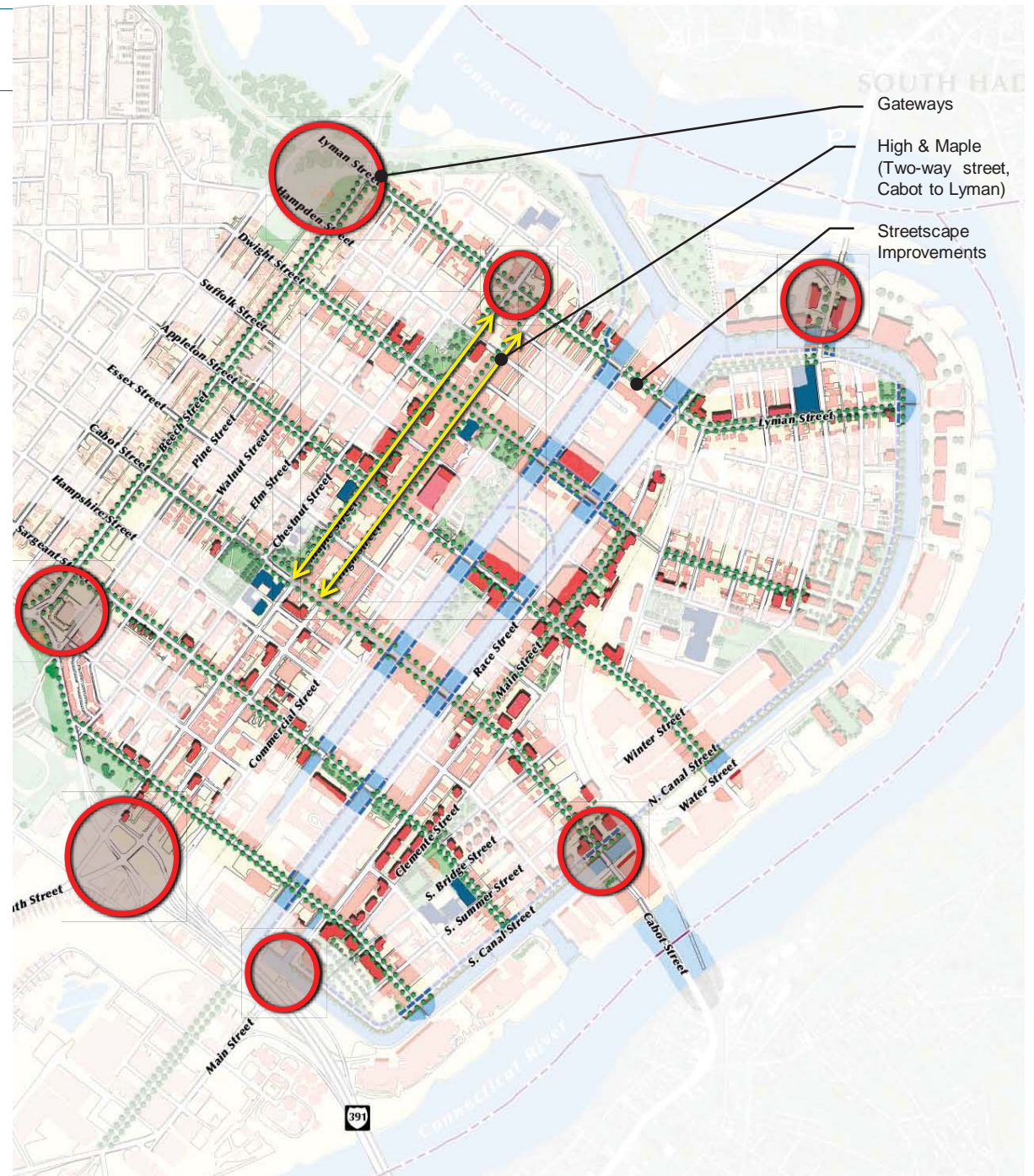


6. Gateways & Complete Streets



Design for streets should consider vehicles, bikes, pedestrians, landscaping and amenities such as lighting and street furniture.

FIGURE 9
Gateways & Complete Streets



4 *Transportation*

CONTENTS

- Connectivity
 - Pedestrian Enhancements
 - Circulation
-

Transportation

During the planning process, residents, business owners and other stakeholders raised a number of transportation-related issues. These issues included improving the following: existing sidewalks, roadway infrastructure, truck access, traffic circulation and streetscape/gateways. Enhancing these transportation elements, along with strategic roadway planning to improve connectivity, will improve the transportation network and assist in economic development and revitalization of the downtown. Furthermore, the transportation elements of this plan present a strategic effort to make the downtown transportation system a safer, more efficient and attractive asset to the City. The following are strategic elements that can be implemented; these elements are highlighted in Chapter 3 of the Vision Plan.

Connectivity

Street connectivity needs to be improved to eliminate the need for vehicles and pedestrians to take indirect and inefficient routes via one-way, residential streets or streets without sidewalks when accessing destinations. Without improvement, increased traffic loads and pedestrian activity could reduce safety and efficiency. Goals for this element could include:

Pedestrian and Bicycle: Creating more attractive opportunities to park and walk, or park and cycle in and around the downtown is a primary goal. An effort is already being made by the City to improve this by revitalizing the Holyoke Canal and creating a Canalwalk that will provide linkage between many cultural amenities, businesses and other destinations. Chapter 3 of the Vision Plan discusses opportunities to reconnect the Center City by creating complete streets, developing key nodes, and restoring the urban neighborhoods. Special consideration should be given to connect parks, civic uses, neighborhoods, schools, open spaces, the canals, and destinations like the Volleyball Hall of Fame, Heritage State Park, Children's Museum, etc. via an enhanced pedestrian and bicycle network.

Non-Motorized Transportation: Decrease the reliance upon the automobile. The Intermodal Transportation Center is a key element that will bring Peter Pan Bus Service to the City. The City should use this as an opportunity to create opportunities to expand bus service throughout the downtown to key destinations to/from the center.

Future Passenger Rail: Planning for future passenger rail can help revitalize the downtown by promoting another alternative transportation mode that can draw people into Holyoke from other cities, towns and states. In addition, this type of service will provide an opportunity to the redevelopment of the area around the passenger rail station, which is often referred to as Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Providing adequate parking, circulation/access for pick-up and drop-off, and designing a transportation/pedestrian network that will connect to the downtown nodes, will ensure the success of passenger rail.

Pedestrian connectivity at Mitchell Field: Mitchell Field is separated by Route 202 between Linden Street and Beech Street on the northerly end of the downtown. Connecting the fields on the northerly and southerly side of Route 202 would improve pedestrian connectivity and increase opportunities to utilize this area more efficiently. However, traffic circulation would need to be reviewed more closely, as joining this park would divert traffic and increase traffic flow on the adjacent streets of Linden Street, Dwight Street and Beech Street.

Truck Circulation: Truck access and circulation is critical to the revitalization of the downtown. A truck routing plan should be prepared to meet the needs for developing key nodes and reconnecting the City. This plan should pay particular attention to the future redevelopment of the riverfront and the major roadways/highways used to access downtown, including I-391, Route 202, Route 141 and Route 116. Additionally, the location of low clearance bridges on local streets should be reviewed, including Jackson Street, Sargeant Street, Cabot Street, Appleton Street (south of Main Street), Mosher Street, and Race Street. Improvements at low clearance bridges or improving infrastructure on adjacent roadways to support a truck route should be explored.

Pedestrian Enhancements

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 can help improve the downtown's sense of character, charm, accessibility, and circulation. As evidenced in future plans to enhance downtown, i.e. the Canalwalk Project and the Intermodal Transportation Center, the importance of establishing a continuous network for non-motorized transportation users is essential. A fluid non-motorized transportation network can significantly decrease the reliance upon the automobile, increase pedestrian circulation (near shops and retail) and help

relieve congestion on area roadways. Additionally, the establishment of such a network can have profound positive impacts on social equity and access as well as the health of a community. Implementing enhancements and sidewalk features along major corridors (Maple, High and Main Street) and other connector streets (Appleton, Dwight and Lyman Street) would reconnect the Center City. The following lists enhancements that could be implemented:

Neckdowns: These curb extensions shorten the walking distance for pedestrians crossing the roadway from curb to curb. These extensions call attention to pedestrians and help define on-street parking. This treatment works well in downtown settings.

Enhanced Crosswalks: Include pavement markings, colored and textured treatments and raised crosswalks which can also be called speed tables. Raised crosswalks are good for locations where drivers may not expect pedestrians to be crossing the roadway and where vehicle speeds are excessive.

Sidewalks Features: Brick accent strips and other sidewalk patterns and amenities can enhance and define a transportation corridor including streetscape and street lighting. The City has made the transformation of the downtown area into a vibrant place a top priority. The underlying goals of this vast revitalization include increased economic development, improved housing and improved community facilities. Aesthetic enhancements will likely not only result in increased pedestrian circulation through downtown but will also likely attract more businesses to the area. Conversely, a poor or unattractive environment can be a repellent to visitors and businesses and hinder economic development.

Circulation

The existing street network in the downtown area has a tendency to detour or direct visitors along specific routes, sometime bypassing key destinations. This has extremely significant consequences for the economic development of certain areas. Visual and aesthetic improvements to the transportation network will help draw visitors to the City, but improved circulation will help bring visitors and businesses in with the ultimate goal of redeveloping key 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. Goals for this element include:

Downtown Gateways: Develop a supplemental gateway program that builds upon the City's signage gateway program already in place. This plan should be harmonious with the City's streetscape elements for the primary gateways into the City that clearly define City character and efficiently guide the roadway user. Gateways often provide the first impression of the City to the visitor.

Two-Way Streets: Creating two-way streets from one-way streets. Previous studies have evaluated the conversion of High Street and Maple Street, between Appleton Street and Lyman Street, to a two-way roadway. The results of this study appeared to be favorable; however, further studies need to be conducted to determine the actual costs to make this transformation and evaluate if the existing roadway cross-section can accommodate two-way traffic flow without widening. In addition, the limits of this improvement should be further reviewed to extend to the limits that are consistent with this Vision Plan and the location of developing key nodes; this may mean extending the two-way configuration to Cabot Street.

Wayfinding Signs: The City is currently in the process of implementing a wayfinding program that creates a visual aid to guide the transportation user to parking and attractions, as well as identify historic areas of the downtown. The intent of a wayfinding signage program is to create a clear and inviting community feel, preserving and enhancing the character of the community while also guiding the roadway user efficiently to their destination. This program can have significant benefits to the community.

One-Way Streets/Dead-Ends: Creating one-way streets or dead-ends in the Flats or South Holyoke to discourage cut-through traffic and promote traffic flow on major corridors.

Pavement Marking, Signage, and Traffic Signals: The presentation of the downtown character can be largely conveyed through its transportation system. A network of signage and pavement markings that is clear, clean, and concise can safely and efficiently guide the transportation network user through the downtown. In addition, ornamental traffic signals and implementation of new traffic signals can help control traffic and still provide character to the downtown.

5 *Implementation*

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- Implementation Strategies
 - Urban Renewal Plan
 - Implementation Table
-

Implementation Strategies

The Center City Vision Plan sets the goals and framework for a number of initiatives to help transform this part of the City into a vibrant Center City. With this Vision Plan in place, many individual but unified actions can occur within the revitalization framework that will support the overall recommendations of this plan. For example, public improvements to streets, parks and buildings, as well as private actions for parcel development or building rehabilitation, can now be planned and occur knowing how they will fit into this larger framework for the entire Center City area.

There are a number of actions the City and HRA can initiate to start achieving the recommendations of the Vision Plan. These include:

- Preparation of an Urban Renewal Plan as a implementation tool.
- Changes to the Zoning Ordinance text and/or Zoning Map to support the redevelopment recommendations for this area of the City.
- Development of Design Guidelines, either as a stand-alone document or as part of the Urban Renewal Plan, to set standards for the rehabilitation or construction of buildings.
- Use of the Vision Plan to guide proposed development to those locations that support the larger vision.
- Use of the Vision Plan by various City Departments and other governmental agencies to guide any initiatives or improvements in the area of the City, such as improvements to parks, streets, utilities, schools, housing, etc.

In addition to these general initiatives for the Center City area, prioritized and key specific initiatives for the six Vision Plan elements are described in the table beginning on the opposite page.

Urban Renewal Plan

One of the primary goals of Vision Plan was to provide the basis for the Holyoke Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to prepare an urban renewal plan for all or a portion of the Center City area. An urban renewal plan is an implementation strategy and tool for revitalization projects, and preparing such a plan will enable the HRA to take certain action to stimulate private investment in the area. One of the main reasons for doing an Urban Renewal

Plan is to document why public investment and actions are needed to stimulate private investment. This is typically referred to as the “But For” factor – “But For” public action, the normal activities of private enterprise alone would not result in economic investment in the identified area. It is important to note that the City and HRA cannot dictate private investment in the area, but they can assist and promote private investment through an urban renewal plan. The Urban Renewal Plan must be prepared and implemented in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 121B, and the Urban Renewal Guidelines prepared by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

One of the first steps in the Urban Renewal Planning process is to define the proposed urban renewal area. Once an initial area is identified, critical data and statistics can be collected, an in-depth analysis can occur and public actions can be identified that are intended to attract private investment into the area. Key elements of an urban renewal plan include:

- Confirm the Project Area—in-depth analysis to verify that the area qualifies as an urban renewal area.
- Parcel and building evaluation—to document existing conditions and, where applicable, determine the redevelopment potential of a vacant or underutilized parcel.
- Documenting that the area qualifies as an Urban Renewal Area.
- Specific recommendations for:
 - Public actions intended to attract and support private investment
 - Private actions expected as the result of public initiatives in the area
- Financing Plan—estimated project costs for public actions and potential funding sources.
- Expected Results—examples include job creation, increased property values, additional housing options.
- Phase implementation—how the entire plan is to be implemented over a 10–20 year period.

The City and HRA should build upon the momentum of the Vision Plan and begin using it as a planning tool for future actions in the Center City area and also as the basis for the preparation of an Urban Renewal Plan.

Implementation Table

VISION PLAN ELEMENT		INITIATIVES	LOCATION
Develop Key Nodes <i>To strengthen the four nodes, City officials should continue to advance various initiatives within each node.</i>	Municipal Node	Work with the potential developer of the Diocese property to advance plans for residential development in those currently vacant buildings. Complete the Intermodal Center and pedestrian connections to this multi-modal facility.	Municipal Node
	Transit-Oriented Development Node	Continue to work with State officials to identify the preferred location for the new passenger rail station and then begin planning for mixed-use Transit Oriented Development around that location.	Transit-Oriented Development Node
	Learning Node	Advance the School Department's plan for the expansion or reuse of the Lawrence school, which will then inform the use of the adjacent vacant block of land.	Learning Node
	Cabot and Main Node	Encourage additional economic development in the area as well as connections into the South Holyoke Neighborhood.	Cabot and Main Node
Enhance the Arts & Innovation District		<p>Continue to encourage and support the growing artist's community and businesses in this area. Support plans to restore the Victory Theater.</p> <p>Look for opportunities to attract new "innovation" businesses into this area.</p> <p>Continue to construct the Canalwalk to improve pedestrian connections throughout this area.</p>	Arts & Innovation District
Expand Open Space Amenities		<p>Design and construct all phases of the current Canalwalk Master Plan and expand the Master Plan to include connections to and along the 3rd Level Canal.</p> <p>Continue to make improvements to Pulaski Park, work with the Friends of Pulaski Park for joint initiatives.</p> <p>Enhance and expand open space resources as funding permits.</p>	Throughout Downtown

Implementation Table

VISION PLAN ELEMENT		INITIATIVES	LOCATION
Transform the Riverfront		<p>There are many opportunities for new development and building rehabilitation along the riverfront. The City should consider using the Holyoke Economic Development and Industrial Corporation as the implementation agency for the redevelopment of this area.</p> <p>Continue brownfield assessments and clean-up as appropriate.</p> <p>Support HG&E plans for improvements to their land, including an open space element at the dam and along Canal Street that provides views to the River.</p>	Riverfront
Restore the Urban Neighborhoods		<p>Continue initiatives to stabilize current housing and introduce new housing options, including moderately priced housing to complement the existing affordable housing in these areas.</p> <p>Support the Holyoke's Housing Authority's application for Hope VI funds to reconstruct the Lyman Terrace complex and the development of housing within a 3 mile radius.</p> <p>Target for rehabilitation key vacant residential units that have valuable architectural character.</p>	Throughout Downtown
Reconnect the City through Gateways & Complete Streets <i>Many improvements can be initiated to begin developing complete streets throughout the Center City area.</i>	Improve Streetscaping	Creating a unified streetscaping program which incorporates elements such as landscaping, roadside furniture and signage along key corridors in the downtown. This program should be more substantial for the downtown than other areas in the City, as this will send a clear message to the transportation network user that the conditions and character of these streets is different than other areas of the City. The differentiation of street conditions will help inform the motorist of the changing environment and better prepare them to drive appropriately.	Throughout Downtown
	Incorporate Wayfinding Signage	The City is developing a local wayfinding signage program that is well defined and bold in appearance for use along major corridors in the downtown. Wayfinding signage located in other areas of City should not be consistent with that which is specifically used in downtown, but could be smaller in magnitude, consistent with the different environment surrounding local roadways.	Throughout Downtown

Implementation Table

VISION PLAN ELEMENT		INITIATIVES	LOCATION
Reconnect the City through Gateways & Complete Streets cont'd...	Gateway Improvements	A combination of enhanced signage, landscaping and streetscaping can highlight a gateway and provide a positive experience. Effective signage should notify the user that they are entering the downtown, provide information regarding primary attractions and provide simple directions to these attractions. Signage, streetscaping and landscaping should be consistent.	Bridge Locations and Key Corridors into the Downtown
	Update Traffic Signage, Signalization and Pavement Markings	Update pavement markings and faded or damaged traffic signs. Investigate antiquated traffic signals to incorporate pedestrian accommodations or new signal timings to improve traffic flow, and investigate opportunities for new traffic signals to improve traffic flow.	At Major Intersections and along Major Corridors
	Connectivity	Investigate traffic flow and circulation patterns in downtown, including the Flats and South Holyoke. Identify a means to complete streets and connections to the riverfront and the center of downtown to promote economic development and preserve traffic capacity and access.	
	Park Connection	Study the feasibility of discontinuing Route 202 between Linden Street and Dwight Street and connect the field on the south side to the field on the north side. Perform traffic studies to evaluate diverted traffic impacts as a result of eliminating this section of Route 202. Redesignating Route 202 may need to be investigated.	Mitchell Field on Route 202
	Maple & High Street	Update traffic signals, pavement markings, signage and parking to accommodate two-way traffic flow. Updated traffic studies would be needed to confirm feasibility and costs of these modifications.	Between Appleton Street and Lyman Street
	Pedestrian Enhancements	Implement crosswalk treatments at major intersection where pedestrian traffic is high and investigate intersections where pedestrian activity may be increased.	At Major Intersections and along Major Corridors

