



City of Holyoke - Center City **Downtown Pedestrian Plan**

September 2013

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Community Health/Community Transformation Grant

Mass in Motion, an initiative of the MA Department of Public Health

MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

Old City Hall | 45 School Street | Boston MA 02108 | T: 617.367.9255 | F: 617.367.9285 | info@walkboston.org | www.walkboston.org



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who participated in the walkability assessment and contributed to the completion of this report including:

City of Holyoke

Matt Sokop, City Engineer
Andrew Smith, Conservation Director
Marcos Marrero, Director, Planning & Economic Development
Karen Mendrala, Senior Planner, Planning & Economic Development
Claire Ricker, Senior Planner, Planning & Economic Development
Matt Lustig, Healthy Holyoke Coordinator

Community Partners

Liz Budd, Community Wellness Coordinator, Greater Holyoke YMCA
Kathy Anderson, President, Chamber of Commerce

WalkBoston

Stacey Beuttell
Dorothea Hass

Executive Summary

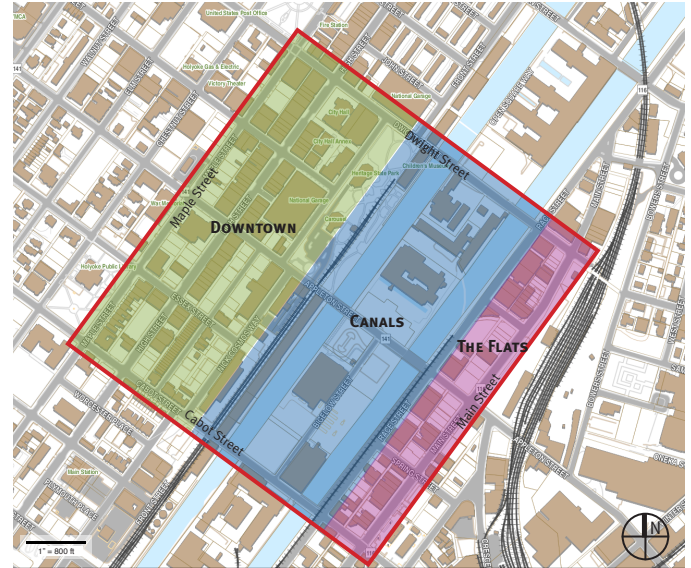
In writing this Downtown Pedestrian Plan, we were impressed over and over again at the palpable excitement and energy with which Holyoke is revitalizing. This revitalization is both physical – mill building re-use, library and park renovations, Canal Walk expansion and downtown streets re-designed – and societal with civic and public groups coming together to create new forums for all members of the community to work together.

The fund-raising that has and is continuing to fund the revitalization has been a vehicle for bringing together groups and residents who until now have not worked closely together. Today, the City, the Chamber of Commerce and the Innovation District Task Force are gathering forces to encourage local skill building and entrepreneurship as the city revitalizes.

The Downtown Pedestrian Plan calls for the City and property owners to make low cost, easily implementable improvements. Holyoke is fortunate to have retained its downtown block structure intact. The narrow streets, lined with historical buildings create an appealing walkable environment and discourage speeding. Intersections are designed with tight curb radii, and WALK signals and crosswalks provide easy street crossings. Finally, the sidewalks are sufficiently wide and well maintained. Livelier storefronts and a greater range of shops would enliven the walking and customer experience.



WalkBoston walk audit with City officials, public health advocates and business representatives



ASSESSMENT OF WALKING ENVIRONMENT

The Downtown Pedestrian Plan covers a four- by six-block section of the Central City district of Holyoke. The study area is broken into three distinctive zones based on geography and similar characteristics. Within each zone, we provide a summary and assessment of the general conditions as well as specific descriptions of sidewalks and intersections; street trees, lighting and furniture; and building facades and unoccupied areas. The specific descriptions of the walking infrastructure can be found in the body of this report.

Downtown

The Downtown Zone's walking environment has regularized intersections and well-proportioned streets. The walking infrastructure in this zone is in good condition and relatively complete with consistent crosswalks, traffic signals, and sidewalks. Beautiful, historic buildings frame the streets and create a wonderful city character at a comfortable scale. While many of the buildings house successful businesses, social services, and medical clinics, there are many unoccupied buildings that can detract from the walking experience.

Canals

The Canal Zone includes the First-Level and Second-Level Canals, warehouses and industrial buildings in between and along their banks, the Heritage State Park, the Children's Museum, the Volleyball Hall of Fame, and the Canal Walk. The district has

brehtaking views of the canals with historical industrial buildings lining their banks. While the buildings are an incredible link with the past, many have not been occupied since industry left in the 1950s. Overall, the zone feels underutilized and disconnected from the Downtown or the Flats/Main Street districts.

The Flats

On the east side of the Canal District is Main Street and The Flats. Main Street functions as an arterial road connecting Holyoke with South Hadley to the north and West Springfield to the south. Car traffic moves quickly and few cars stop along Main Street except to support some auto-oriented commercial businesses, such as gas stations and car repair shops. The sidewalk infrastructure is sufficient to support a vibrant pedestrian environment, but there are few retail destinations or service organizations currently open for business.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations suggest specific walking infrastructure improvements, provide guidance on economic revitalization programs, and outline municipal policy that can aid in implementing these strategies.

Physical Improvements

While much of Holyoke's walking infrastructure is in good condition, there are some physical improvements that can be made to specific intersections and streets. We recommend that the City:

1. Add, repaint and upgrade **crosswalks** in areas of high pedestrian activity and along streets that define the downtown commercial district
2. **Paint** center lines, fog lines and parking stalls to give order to the different roadway zones and maintain low traffic speeds
3. Install **curb bulb-outs** consistently along Maple and High Streets and consider adding them to Main Street and Dwight Street
4. Plant **trees** as recommended in the Urban Forestry Plan (in process)

5. Undertake a street **lighting** study to identify low light areas and zones where ornamental pedestrian-scaled lighting should be considered

Social and Economic Development

These recommendations focus on reinvigorating the City's business and social networks.

1. Establish a downtown revitalization committee, within the Planning & Economic Development Department that will work closely with the Redevelopment Authority and the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce.
2. Consider establishing a Main Streets program as a non-profit within the Chamber of Commerce or another similar entity. The Main Streets Program is described later in this report.
3. Take advantage of the flourishing Arts Community by encouraging the Chamber to raise funds to support local artists to work with store owners/managers to create more appealing window displays. Undertake civic beautification with a PaintBox program in which artists for modest stipends paint utility boxes with colorful designs.
4. Work closely with the Latino Community, especially property owners and store owners/managers. The substantial Latino community offers an untapped market.

Policy Initiatives

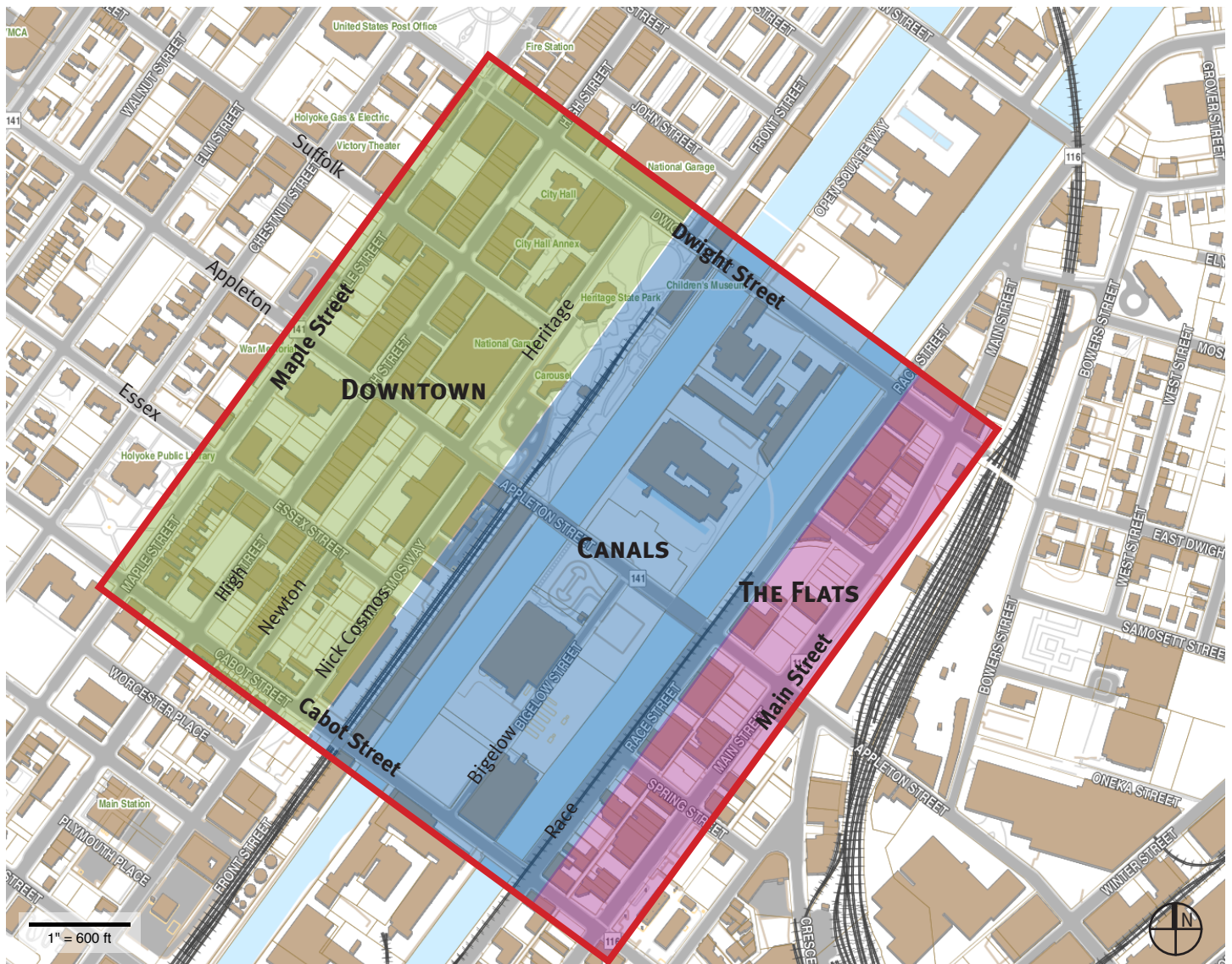
Two policy initiatives that address pedestrian safety issues and walkability are Complete Streets and the Site Plan Review Process. Complete Streets is an approach to transportation planning that puts walking, biking and transit use on par with driving interests. Road infrastructure projects become opportunities to address multi-modal needs and the needs of users of all abilities.

The Site Plan Review Process, required in zoning ordinances, should include an evaluation of the provisions made for pedestrians when new development and/or road projects are approved. Adoption of Complete Streets and an improved Site Plan Review Process would foster greater awareness of pedestrian needs and the value of walkable communities.

Scope of Project

The Downtown Pedestrian Plan covers a four- by six-block section of the Central City district of Holyoke. The streets defining our study area include Maple Street to the west, Main Street to the east, Dwight Street to the North, and Cabot Street to the south. The study area was divided into three zones based on geography and similar characteristics: (1) Downtown, (2) Canals, and (3) Main Street/The Flats. This plan was completed by WalkBoston, in conjunction with the Mass In Motion program and the City of Holyoke.

This report both documents the current condition of the pedestrian infrastructure and recommends strategies for improvement. These strategies include both physical modifications to the walking infrastructure and urban revitalization programs focused on creating vibrant, economically successful walkable streets. Potential funding sources are also listed in the back of this report.



The study area was divided into 3 districts: (1) Downtown, (2) Canals, and (3) The Flats

Project Goals

Four overarching goals for the downtown pedestrian plan complement both Holyoke's *Center City Vision Plan: A Plan for the Heart of Our Community* and the *Urban Renewal Plan: Connect. Construct. Create.*

- Enhance pedestrian safety with the addition of traffic calming strategies and low-cost infrastructure maintenance
- Link the three distinct zones of the city with enhanced walking routes. While the quality of the walking environment within each zone is generally good, the connections between them need improvement
- Document the positive aspects of the existing pedestrian network
- Improve the quality of the walking environment

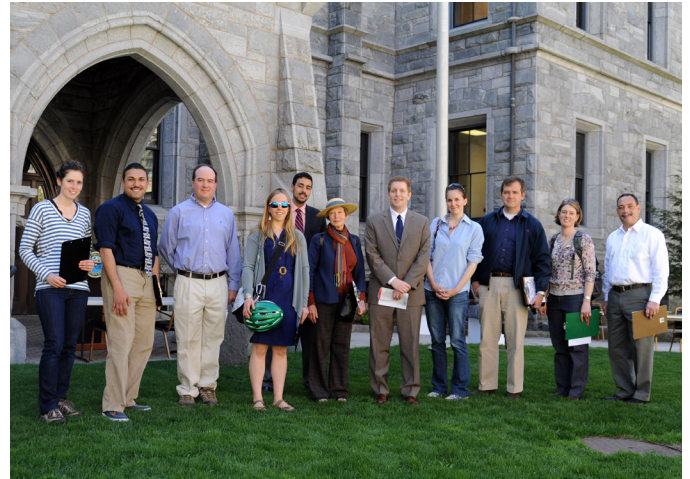
The *Urban Renewal Plan - Connect. Construct. Create.* describes economic revitalization strategies to increase occupancy and promote reconstruction. The city is in the process of completing an Urban Forestry Plan, which will assess the current condition of the city's trees and identify locations for new street trees.



Concrete paver crosswalks at the Dwight Street and High Street intersection

Physical Assessment of Current Walking Conditions

WalkBoston visited the study area on several occasions to observe pedestrian movement patterns and assess the physical condition of the pedestrian network. In addition to WalkBoston's assessment, a walk audit with city stakeholders was conducted on May 1, 2013, during which ideas to stimulate change and continue positive momentum were discussed.



Walk audit participants included Mayor Alex B. Morse, Director of Planning & Economic Development Marcos A. Marrero, City Engineer Matt Sokop, Healthy Holyoke Coordinator Matt Lustig, citizens and business representatives.
(photo credit: Emily Sper, DPH)

DOWNTOWN

The Downtown zone's walking environment has regularized intersections and well-proportioned streets.

Streets, Sidewalks and Intersections

The walking infrastructure in this zone is in good condition and relatively complete with consistent crosswalks, traffic signals, and sidewalks. Pedestrian WALK signals are automatic and concurrent with vehicular traffic lights – no manual push buttons are required. Concurrent WALK signals, WalkBoston's preferred configuration, reduce wait times for both pedestrians and vehicles. Decorative paving and bulb-outs alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians. On-street parking provides pedestrian protection from moving cars and slows down traffic by narrowing the perceived travel lanes. Parked cars also indicate activity, which downtown business-owners value.

Many streets in this district use bulb-outs to calm traffic and increase awareness of pedestrians.

The width of streets, including both travel lanes and parking lanes, is reasonable for a downtown setting (average of 38 -40-foot wide curb to curb). Together with the sidewalk widths (avg. 10 feet) and building edges, the streets maintain a pedestrian scale while accommodating city traffic. With the exception of Maple and High Streets, a one-way pair, all streets in this district allow vehicular traffic in both directions, which provides flexibility for drivers to access businesses and services. Heritage Street will soon be redesigned as a one-way street from Dwight to Appleton, which will allow a wider sidewalk to be installed along the western edge of Heritage Park.

Newton Street, a residential street, is just two blocks long between Cabot and Appleton. The west side of the street between Cabot and Essex is intact with rowhouses. The remaining street edge has a few residences and storefronts, but mostly surface parking lots and unoccupied land.



The townhouses along Newton Street are unlike any other housing option in the Downtown Zone.



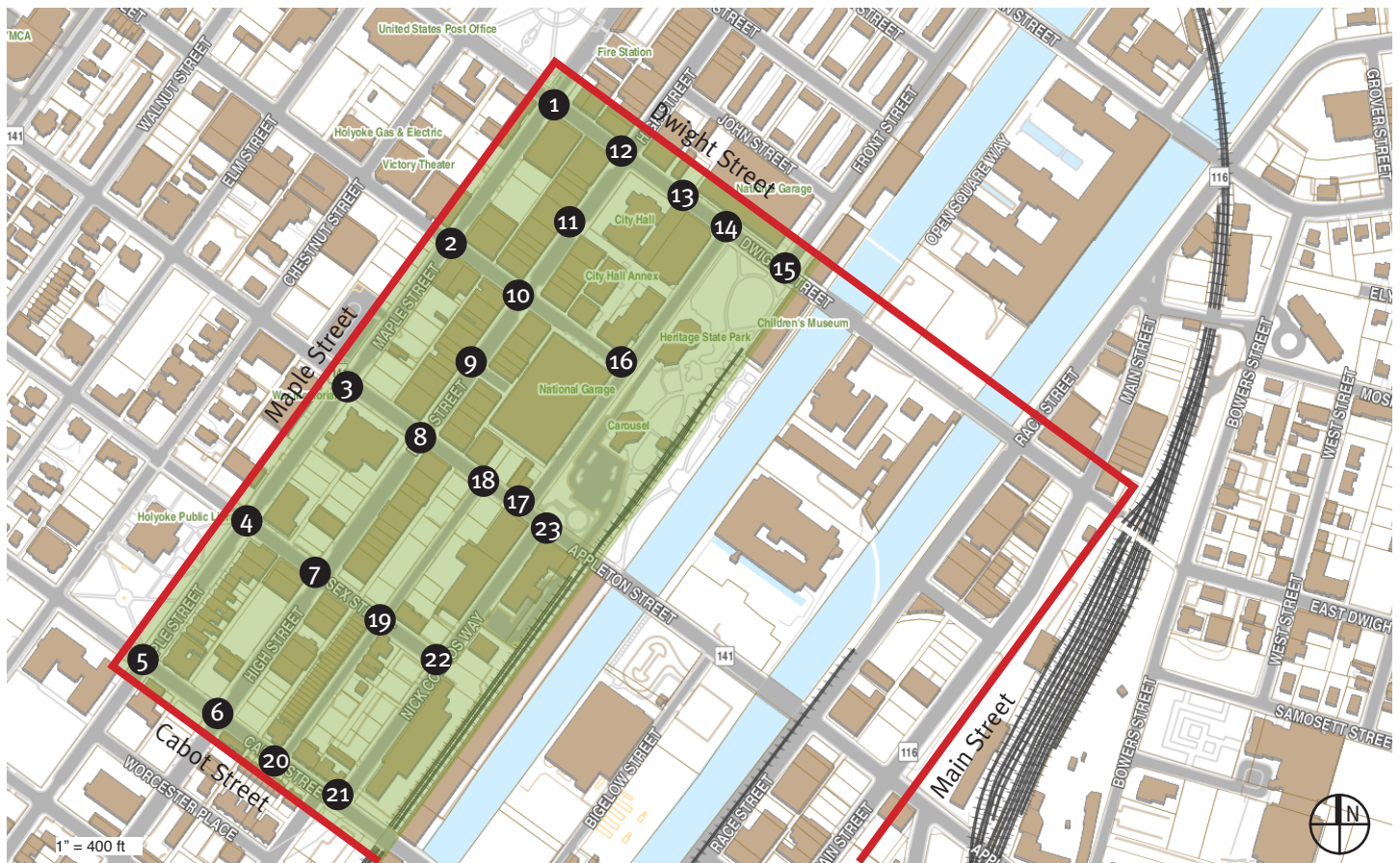
Nick Cosmos Way was recently improved with new sidewalks, curb ramps, and roadway striping. Trees were planned for, but not ultimately planted along the street.



Maple Street has a wide sidewalk, ornamental lighting, trees, on-street parking, and intact building edge - all the components of a walkable street

Nick Cosmos Way has a relatively new streetscape with tree grates, but lack of funding prevented the planting of street trees. Because the infrastructure is in place to accommodate trees, they could be added when adequate funding is secured. The police station is an imposing presence at the intersection of Appleton and Nick Cosmos Way and, according to residents, designed that way to help thwart crime in this section of the city.

WalkBoston analyzed 23 intersections in the Downtown district for their pedestrian safety attributes and their contribution to a walkable, urban environment. The table and map below summarize our analysis. Appendix A defines each of the terms used in the table below and provides photographs of examples found in Holyoke.



	INTERSECTION	CROSSWALKS	CURB RAMPS	BULB-OUTS	PARKING	NOTES
1	Maple/Dwight	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	SW corner only	both sides of Maple and Dwight	
2	Maple/Suffolk	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not W	both sides of Maple and Suffolk	
3	Maple/Appleton	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not W	both sides of Maple and Appleton	
4	Maple/Essex	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not W	both sides of Maple and Essex	
5	Maple/Cabot	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not W	both sides of Maple and Cabot	
6	High/Cabot	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not E	both sides of High and Cabot	
7	High/Essex	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	3 corners, not E	both sides of High and Essex	
8	High/Appleton	3 painted w/stop lines; 1 concrete pavers	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	W and S corners; painted stripes N and E corners	both sides of High and Appleton	
9	High/Division - access to parking structure	2 concrete pavers	3 ramps - no detectable warnings	painted stripes on S,E, and W corners	both sides of High; no parking on Division	
10	High/Suffolk	4 concrete pavers	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	painted stripes on all corners	both sides of High and Suffolk	

	INTERSECTION	CROSSWALKS	CURB RAMPS	BULB-OUTS	PARKING	NOTES
11	High - mid-block crossing	concrete pavers	2 ramps - no detectable warnings	painted stripes on all corners	both sides of High	
12	High/Dwight	4 concrete pavers	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	painted stripes on all corners except S on High and E on Dwight	both sides of High and Dwight	
13	Dwight - mid-block crossing	painted - will move in redesign of Dwight	2 ramps - no detectable warnings; 1 access point in driveway	none	both sides of Dwight	
14	Dwight/Heritage	1 painted across Heritage	2 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Dwight; 1 side of Heritage	
15	Dwight/Front	2 painted; stop line on Front	2 ramps - no detectable warnings; 3 corner at-grade asphalt patch	none	both sides of Dwight and Front	
16	Heritage/Suffolk	1 painted across Suffolk - faded	2 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	1 side of Suffolk; 1 side of Heritage	
17	Heritage/Appleton	1 painted across Heritage	2 ramps - ADA tactile strip	none	both sides of Appleton; 1 side of Heritage	
18	Newton/Appleton	1 painted across Newton	2 ramps - ADA tactile strip	none	none on Newton; both sides of Appleton	
19	Newton/Essex	none	none	none	none on Newton; both sides of Essex	
20	Newton/Cabot	none	none	none	none on Newton; both sides of Cabot	Newton: sidewalk on northern side is concrete; southern side is asphalt
21	Nick Cosmos Way/ Commercial/Cabot	4 painted w/stop lines; crosswalk on Nick Cosmos Way is set back from Cabot Street	4 ramps - ADA tactile strips; not located on the corners	none	both sides of Cabot	recently improved; joins two streets that used to be offset; wide turning radii; large intersection; fog lines on Commercial and part of Nick Cosmos Way
22	Nick Cosmos/ Essex	4 painted w/stop lines; setback from corners	4 ramps - ADA tactile strips; not located on the corners	none	both sides of Nick Cosmos and Essex	recently improved
23	Nick Cosmos Way/ Appleton	2 painted; 1 stop line, 1 mid-block crossing	3 ramps - ADA tactile strips	none	both sides of Nick Cosmos and Appleton	



High Street has wide sidewalks, tree grates (and some trees) and ornamental lighting.

Building Facades and Available Land

The Downtown Zone has beautiful, historic buildings that frame the streets and create a wonderful city character at a comfortable scale. While many of the buildings house successful businesses, social services, and medical clinics, there are many unoccupied buildings that can detract from the pedestrian character. The lack of vibrant storefronts can make the walk along the street feel longer and potentially discourage people from choosing to walk.

Available land once occupied by buildings is often used as surface parking lots. While this may be an interim use, the lots have multiple curb cuts, which have the potential to create vehicular/pedestrian conflicts. Vehicular access to the lots is intermittent and infrequent so pedestrians are not conditioned to look for cars crossing their route. In these situations, curb cuts should be minimized both in number and in width.

Trees, Lighting and Furniture

While trees were present on many streets in this district at one time, few survive today. This could be attributed to their location on the sidewalk (in walking zone), soil compaction, poor maintenance, limited irrigation, insufficient growing medium or most likely a combination of these factors. Many tree grates remain in the sidewalks. Trees could be used in combination with bulb-outs to emphasize intersections, narrow perspective on the street, provide shade, and enhance aesthetics. The City of Holyoke Conservation Commission has funding to complete an urban forestry plan this Spring/Summer (2013).

Many of the curb bulb-outs in the district have benches in them. Benches give people a space to rest and gather, which can foster a healthy, positive public realm. These singular benches could become more inviting if they were part of a pair that faced each other. Trees would also provide shade and further encourage people to linger in warmer weather.

Most of the streets are lit with cobra-head style lights scaled for vehicles. These fixtures provide adequate light, but do not add to the pedestrian character of the district.



The residential district across from the library on Maple Street has well-defined streetscape with sidewalks, street trees and ornamental lighting.

CANAL ZONE

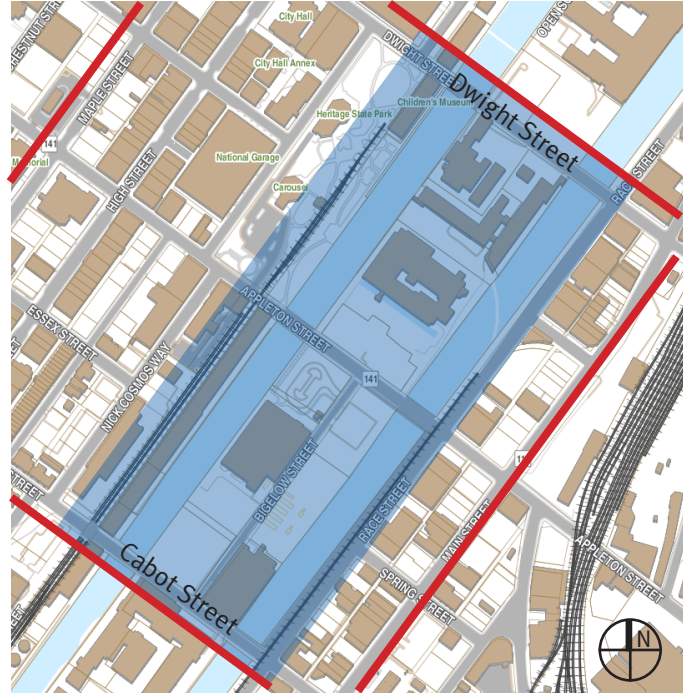
The Canal Zone includes the First-Level and Second-Level Canals, the warehouses and industrial buildings in between and along their banks, Heritage State Park, the Children’s Museum, the Volleyball Hall of Fame, and the Canal Walk. The district has breathtaking views of the canals with historical industrial buildings lining their banks. While the buildings are an incredible link with the past, many have not been occupied since industry left in the 1950s. Overall, the zone feels underutilized and disconnected from the Downtown or the Flats/Main Street Zones.



View of First-Level Canal and brick industrial buildings

Streets, Sidewalks and Intersections

The important street sections in this district are the bridge crossings over both canals and the length of Race Street to its intersection with Dwight Street. The width of streets, including both travel lanes and parking lanes, is reasonable for a downtown setting (average of 38 -40-foot wide curb to curb). The sidewalk widths (avg. 10 feet) are consistent except on the Cabot Street bridge crossing where the sidewalk narrows to approximately 5 feet. In general, the sidewalks on the east side of First-Level Canal are in better condition than those on the west side of Second-Level Canal. Asphalt has been used to patch the concrete sidewalks and is now cracked and deteriorating. The amount of sand, gravel and weeds along the walks is also higher beyond the Second-Level Canal.



Canal Zone

While Race Street does measure approximately 40 feet, it feels much wider due to lack of painted lines, broken curbs, and unmaintained sidewalks. Traffic volumes seem high given the few businesses located along Race Street. The street seems to function as an alternative route to Main Street without traffic signals.



Race Street has few pavement markings and sidewalks in need of repair.

WalkBoston analyzed the canal crossings and 5 other intersections in the Canal district for their pedestrian safety attributes and their contribution to a walkable, urban environment. The table and map below summarize our analysis. Appendix A defines each the terms used in the table below and provides photographs of examples found in Holyoke.



	INTERSECTION	CROSSWALKS	CURB RAMPS	BULB-OUTS	PARKING	NOTES
24	Cabot Street canal crossings (3)	none	over 1st level canal - accessibility issues over 2nd level canal - no ADA issues	none	none	sidewalks not in good shape - some asphalt; some asphalt patching
25	Appleton Street canal crossings	1 to MGCPCC	accessibility looks good	none	none	sidewalk on west side of street before the bridge is asphalt; new crosswalk and curb ramps to MGCPCC; asphalt sidewalk to 2nd level canal on east side; new concrete sidewalk on west side of street until 2nd level canal. Bridge over 2nd level canal appears under construction - crumbling asphalt, orange construction barriers
26	Dwight Street canal crossings	none	accessibility issues on bridge over 2nd level canal on north side of street	none	none	Bridge over 1st canal has concrete barrier between pedestrians and cars. After 1st level canal, sidewalks change to asphalt with depressed curbs. Street trees on east side.
27	Dwight/Race Street	4 painted; stop lines on Race	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Dwight and Race	
28	Race/Middle	none	none	none	both sides of Race; undefined on Middle	asphalt sidewalks at intersections; no sidewalk along canal-side of Race Street; incomplete sidewalks on Middle
29	Race/Appleton	4 painted; 2 stop lines on Race	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Race and Appleton	no sidewalk on canal side of Race Street; sidewalk material varies from concrete to asphalt on Race
30	Race/Spring	none	1 ramp in SW corner - no detectable warning	none	both sides of Race and Cabot	no sidewalk on canal side of Race Street; sidewalk on north side of Spring is concrete; sidewalk on south side is asphalt. Race - asphalt sidewalk on non-canal side with depressed curb
31	Race/Cabot	none	none	none	both sides of Race and Cabot	

The Holyoke Canal Walk between Appleton and Dwight Street is well executed. The walk width allows multiple people to walk side by side. Benches are located at opportune locations. Vegetation accents building facades. Ornamental, pedestrian-scaled lighting lines the wide promenade. Phases 2 – 4 of the Canal Walk project include several new connections and loops to extend the character of the Canal Walk to other parts of the district: (1) a new walk along Race Street between Cabot and Lyman Streets and connection across a pedestrian bridge on First-Level Canal to the Children’s Museum; (2) a second loop between Dwight Street and Lyman Street; and (3) future connections going south on Race Street and north on the west side of First-Level Canal to Lyman Street.



Holyoke Canal Walk adds reason to come to the district

Trees, Lighting and Furniture

Other than along the Canal Walk and in Heritage State Park, there are few plantings, street trees, or street furniture in this district. Given its industrial heritage, street trees may not be appropriate along the Canal Walk or among the industrial warehouse buildings. As the Canal Walk is extended and businesses occupy vacant buildings, new opportunities for gathering spaces and plantings may become evident.

Building Facades and Available Land

The historic character of the industrial buildings in this zone represents the distinctive development pattern of industrial cities across the Commonwealth. While some of the buildings are occupied and well maintained, many others are still waiting for revitalization. All inhabited buildings on the east side of First-Level Canal are north of Dwight Street.

The Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center (MGHPCC) adds a presence to canal district between Cabot and Appleton. The crosswalk leading from MGHPCC across Appleton Street to the Canal Walk is downhill from desired crossing point. While we did not observe people walking across Appleton here, it is unlikely that they would use the crosswalk unless in a wheelchair or walking with a stroller.

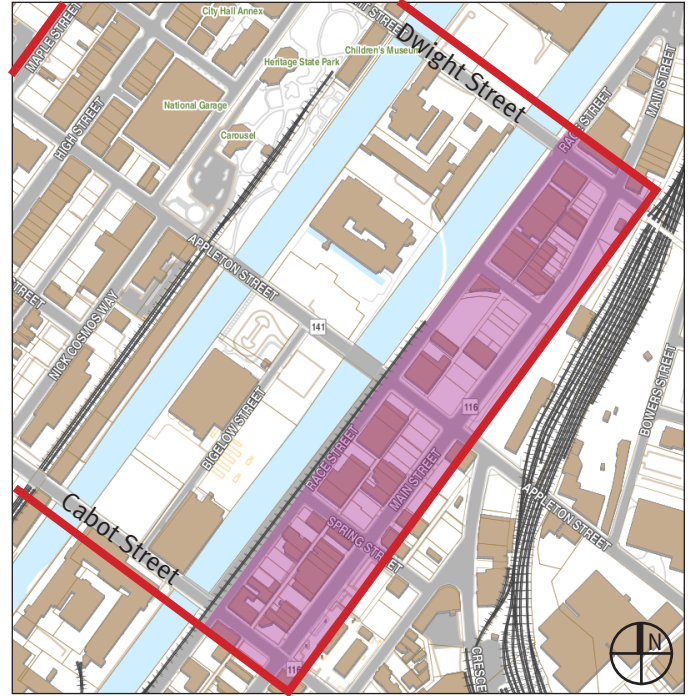


Industrial buildings ready for redevelopment

MAIN STREET/THE FLATS

On the east side of the Canal District is Main Street and The Flats. The grid street structure that exists above the canals is disrupted by railroad tracks, which reduces the number of intersections along Main Street north of Appleton. Fewer intersections can encourage vehicles to travel at higher speeds.

Main Street functions as an arterial road connecting Holyoke with South Hadley to the north and West Springfield to the south. Car traffic moves quickly and few cars stop along Main Street except to support some auto-oriented commercial businesses, such as gas stations and car repair shops. The sidewalk infrastructure is sufficient to support a vibrant pedestrian environment, but there are few retail destinations or service organizations currently open for business. Nuestras Raices has a location at the intersection of Cabot and Main Streets with outdoor seating and a bright building facade.



Main Street/The Flats



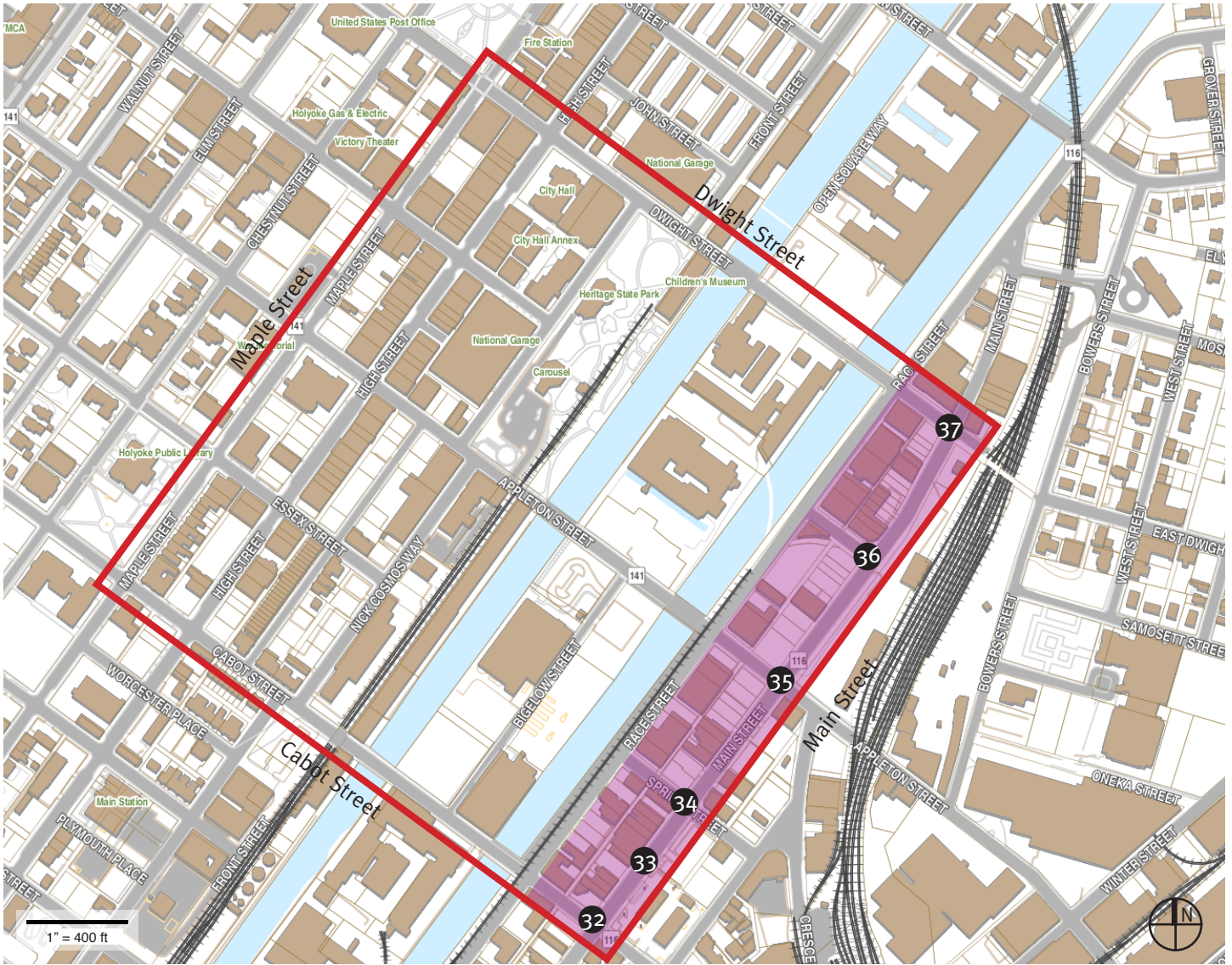
Main Street sidewalk

Streets, Sidewalks and Intersections

In general, the walking infrastructure in this zone is in good condition and relatively complete with consistent crosswalks, traffic signals, and sidewalks. On-street parking provides pedestrian protection from moving cars and slows down traffic by narrowing the perceived travel lanes. Parked cars also indicate activity, which downtown business-owners value.

The width of Main Street is similar to that of other streets in the City (approximately 38 -40-foot wide curb to curb). The street is two-way with parking lanes on both sides of the street. At major intersections, the parking lane is removed and a left-turn lane takes up the remaining width of the street. Cobblestones are used to calm traffic and divert through traffic toward the curb allowing left turns to occur without impeding traffic. Main Street does not have curb bulb-outs or decorative paving to indicate pedestrian crossings, simply painted crosswalks. As Main Street is upgraded with the Amtrak train platform planned between Dwight and Appleton, bulb-outs and decorative paving should be considered.

WalkBoston analyzed 6 intersections along Main Street for their pedestrian safety attributes and their contribution to a walkable, urban environment. The table and map below summarize our analysis. Appendix A defines each the terms used in the table below and provides photographs of examples found in Holyoke.



	INTERSECTION	CROSSWALKS	CURB RAMPS	BULB-OUTS	PARKING	NOTES
32	Cabot/Main	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Main and Cabot	Main - parking lane becomes travel lane and travel lane becomes left-turn lane; cobble median
33	Main - mid-block crossing	painted	2 ramps - no detectable warnings	none; no painted stripes adjacent to crosswalk	both sides of Main	crosswalk sign
34	Main/Spring	4 painted; w/stop lines on Spring	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Spring and Main	
35	Main/Appleton	4 painted w/stop lines	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Appleton and Main	
36	Main/Middle	1 painted w/stop line across Middle	2 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Main and Middle	Middle - sidewalks missing; where they exist they are asphalt
37	Dwight/Main	3 painted w/stop lines on Dwight	4 ramps - no detectable warnings	none	both sides of Main and Dwight	Dwight sidewalks vary from concrete to asphalt; Dwight ends at RR tracks - site of new proposed train platform and TOD

Pedestrians moving between The Flats and Main Street must cross under the railroad tracks. These underpasses are dark, litter- and glass-filled, and intimidating. Water often leaks into them from above. Improvements to these underpasses would greatly enhance the pedestrian links between Main Street and the neighborhoods to the east.



The railroad bridge on Appleton Street would benefit from lighting, improved drainage, and regular trash removal.



Trees along Main Street help to enhance the pedestrian environment. The cobra-head style lighting fixtures provide adequate light, but are scaled for cars rather than people.

Trees, Lighting and Furniture

The Main Street streetscape has trees that define its edge and add a green element to the urban context. While some trees are missing and in need of maintenance, they improve the pedestrian environment that would otherwise be dominated by cars. The Holyoke Center City Urban Revitalization and Development Plan (Figure L-2) indicates that Main Street will be upgraded with a new streetscape and tree-planting program.

Cobra-head style fixtures provide adequate lighting along the street, but shorter, pedestrian-scaled lighting would improve the aesthetics and walking environment along Main.

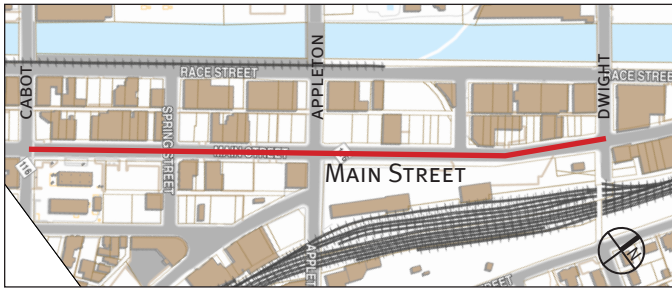
At the Cabot and Main intersection, Nuestras Raices has a large outdoor gathering space on the northern corner. Benches and tables provide opportunities for people to meet and enjoy the outdoors in good weather.



Nuestras Raices has a large outdoor gathering space at the intersection of Main Street and Cabot Street.

Building Facades and Available Land

The city block between Cabot and Spring Streets is intact (i.e., buildings form a complete edge along the sidewalk) with functioning businesses. As Main Street continues toward the northeast, buildings become more spread out and parking lots occupy some of the available land. Car dealerships, repair shops and a scrap metal yard occupy the east side between Dwight and Appleton. While the open land allows views to the canals and downtown, they are in need of maintenance and would be more appealing if programmed in some way, such as pocket parks or community gardens. These uses could be interim until revitalization efforts supplant them. The feasibility of these uses would need to be studied further.



Main Street urban fabric



A view through a parking lot back to City Hall from Main Street

Recommendations

Walkable communities provide safe, enjoyable walking experiences through economically vital places where people can interact with other community members. Holyoke's Center City has the basics of a solid walking infrastructure in place. Generally, the streets are well proportioned, the intersections have crosswalks and pedestrian signals, and the sidewalks are adequately sized and well maintained. There are some infrastructure elements that need attention, but Holyoke's real need lies in economic revitalization and policy initiatives that reinvigorate the community's business and social networks.

Holyoke's *Center City Vision Plan: A Plan for the Heart of Our Community* sets the following goals for the pedestrian environment:

- Improve streetscapes
- Update traffic signage, signalization and pavement markings
- Implement crosswalk treatments at major intersections where pedestrian traffic is high

Our recommendations support these goals, suggesting specific walking infrastructure improvements and providing guidance on economic revitalization efforts that may assist Holyoke in its resurgence. We have also included information on municipal policy initiatives that would ensure that pedestrian issues are addressed as development continues.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

While much of Holyoke's walking infrastructure is in good condition, there are several intersections and streets that would benefit from some improvements. There are five strategies we recommend to make the walking environment safer and more enjoyable in Holyoke:

- Add, repaint and upgrade **crosswalks** in areas of high pedestrian activity and along streets that define the downtown commercial district

- **Paint** center lines, fog lines and parking stalls to give order to the different roadway zones and maintain low traffic speeds
- Install **curb bulb-outs** consistently along Maple and High Streets and consider adding them to Main Street and Dwight Street
- Plant **trees** as recommended in the Urban Forestry Plan (to be completed)
- Undertake a street **lighting** study to identify low light areas and zones where ornamental pedestrian-scaled lighting should be considered

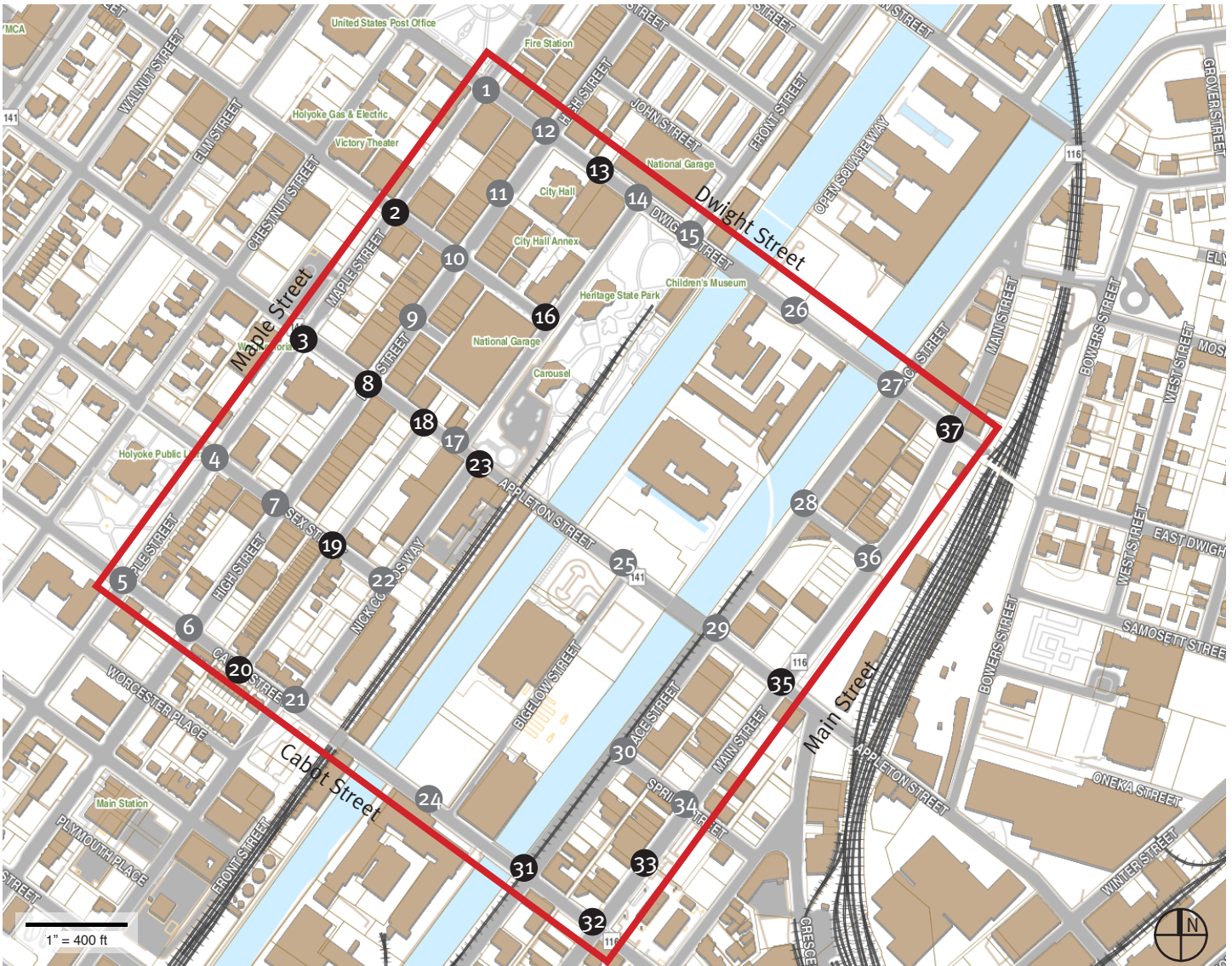
Crosswalks

The vast majority of intersections surveyed in Holyoke have crosswalks across all sides of the intersection. There are two basic crosswalk designs found in Holyoke: (1) concrete pavers found primarily on High and Maple Streets, and (2) painted crosswalks. The painted crosswalks use the continental pattern (thick horizontal lines running between street corners), which provides adequate markings to alert cars that pedestrians may be present.

Crosswalks must be maintained on a regular painting schedule to ensure that they do not fade. WalkBoston has identified the intersections in need of additional crosswalks and those in need of re-painting. Department of Public Works (DPW) may already be aware of and have resolved these insufficiencies - we did not consult their maintenance schedule.



The painted crosswalks throughout the study area use the continental painting pattern.



Intersections where crosswalks need to be repainted, upgraded, or added

intersection to be improved

Concrete paver crosswalks add to the aesthetics of the street while also adding a tactile element to the roadway. We recommend that concrete pavers continue to be used in areas with heavy pedestrian use in the commercial business district. The pavers should be considered along Dwight Street between Maple Street and Main Street, on Main Street itself, and around the planned train platform.



Concrete paver crosswalks found in the downtown district. (photo credit: Emily Sper, DPH)

Paint

Paint is a low-cost, temporary measure that can be highly effective in influencing driving, biking and walking behavior. Fog lines and center-lines can narrow lanes and reduce speeds without major infrastructure changes to the right-of-way. Striping adjacent to crosswalks delineate no parking zones that increase pedestrian sight lines across intersections. Painted parking stalls can give order to a roadway and increase parking capacities. Paint gives the public an indication that the street is well maintained and important to the municipality.

Race Street in the Canal district stands out as a street in need of striping. Center lines, parking stalls, and/or fog lines would better define uses on the roadway and possibly reduce traffic speeds for those using Race Street as an alternate route to Main Street. Paint will also demonstrate a commitment to safety on Race Street.



Painting center lines and parking stalls would better define uses on Race Street and help to reduce speeds.



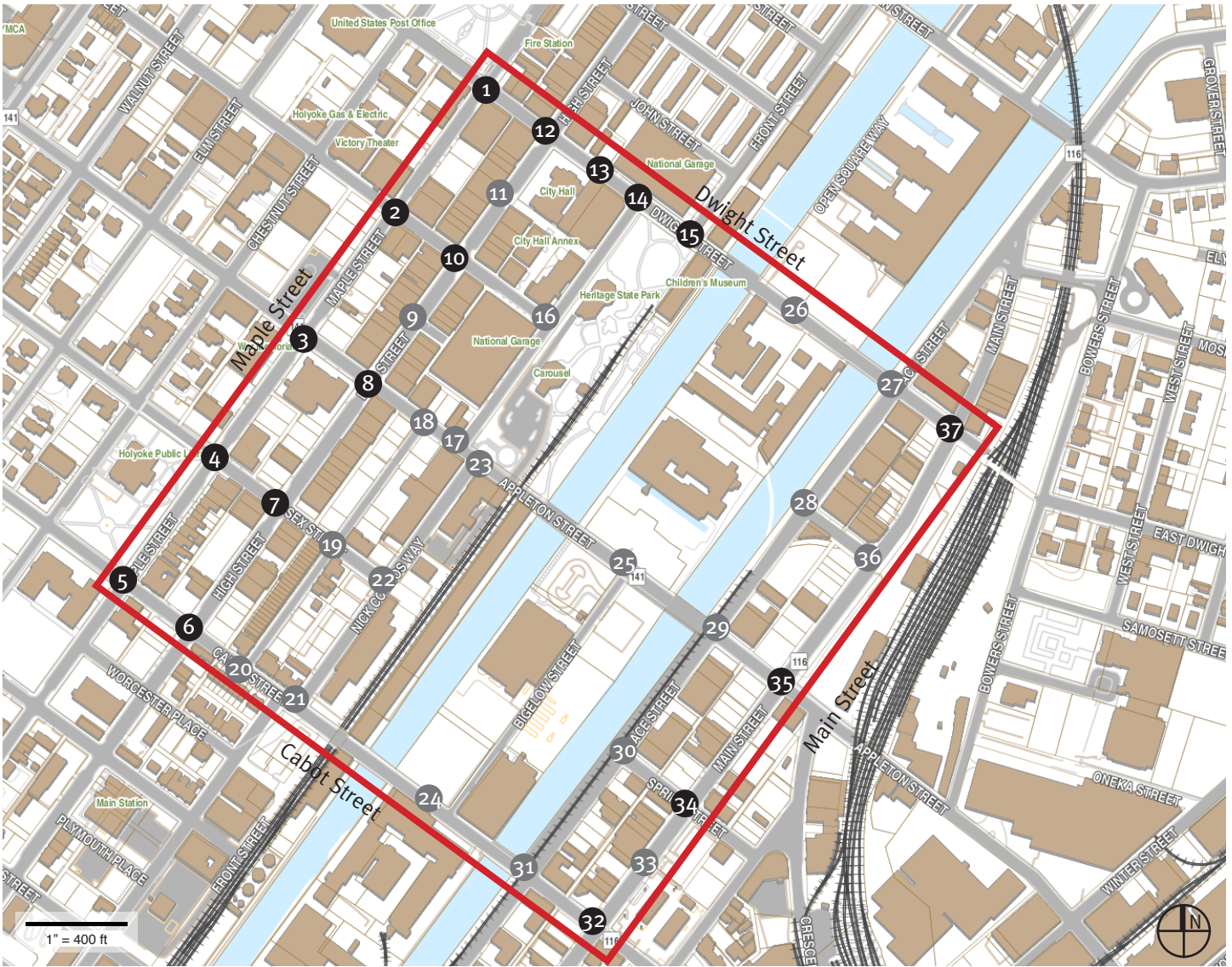
Curb bulb-outs at the intersection of Maple and Appleton Streets

Some intersections on Maple and High Street use bulb-outs to articulate the corners and allow pedestrians to see beyond the parking lane. More consistent and extensive use of the bulb-outs would further improve pedestrian visibility and shorten distances at crossing points. We recommend that bulb-outs also be used in the redesign of Dwight Street between the First-Level Canal and Maple Street. With the planned construction of the train platform at the intersection of Dwight and Main, pedestrian traffic may increase along Dwight Street to reach downtown and the intermodal station on Maple Street.

Curb bulb-outs can involve considerable road reconstruction depending on road drainage and grading issues, therefore they may be reserved for a time when major road construction is already planned. In the meantime, painted curb extensions (with or without flexible delineators) could begin to train drivers and walkers in the new street pattern.

Curb Bulb-Outs

Curb bulb-outs, also called curb extensions, are traffic-calming devices used to shorten the distance pedestrians need to walk across the vehicular travel lanes on a street. Bulb-outs have other safety benefits including improved sight lines for both pedestrians and cars, and slower traffic speeds, particularly for cars turning right in an intersection. In addition to the safety benefits, curb bulb-outs can be aesthetically appealing when designed with trees, benches and paving patterns.



Intersections where curb bulb-outs could be added

intersection to be improved

Trees

Street trees provide shade and shelter; form and frame distinct sidewalk edges; increase pedestrian safety; and have economic benefits that far exceed their installation and maintenance costs. Research has shown that an investment of \$250-\$600 for a single street tree can yield returns of over \$90,000 in direct benefits over the lifetime of the tree. (Burden, 2006) Street trees also have aesthetic, social and environmental values not measured in a dollar figure.

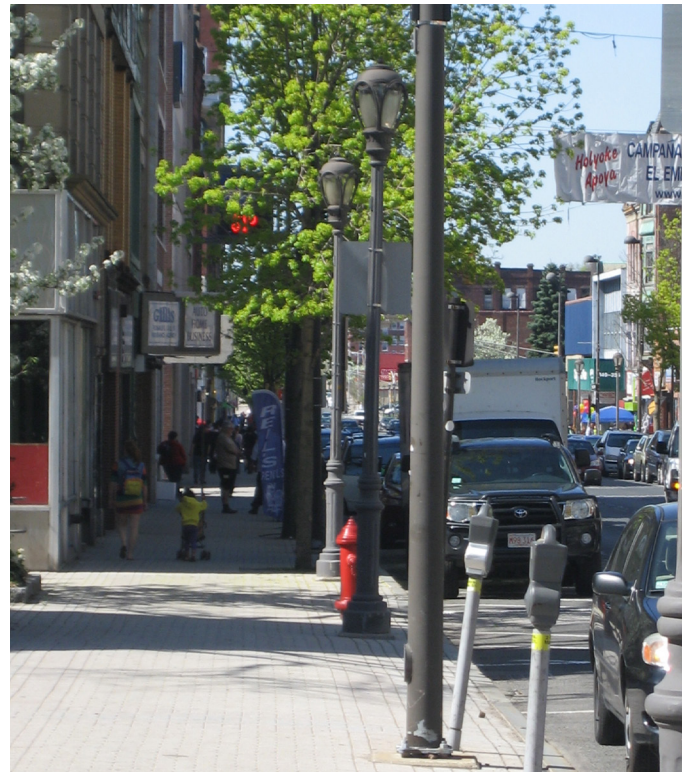
Most streets in the study area do not have trees. Where trees are present, they have not thrived. Some streets, such as Nick Costas Way, were designed to have street trees, but the trees were not planted due to budget overruns. Holyoke is in the process of conducting a street tree inventory and developing an Urban Forestry Plan to increase the number of trees in the City. WalkBoston supports these efforts and endorses all opportunities to plant trees throughout the study area.

Lighting

Holyoke relies on cobra-head light fixtures along all streets in the study area except downtown on High and Maple Streets. In addition to cobra-heads, these two streets have ornamental pedestrian-scaled lighting that contributes to the character of the downtown. Similar ornamental lighting is used along the Canal Walk. Ornamental lighting is not recommended throughout the study area, however a lighting study should be conducted to determine appropriate locations and evaluate current lighting levels.



Street trees along Main Street provide visual interest, narrow views when driving on the street, and help to articulate the sidewalk edge. (photo credit: Emily Sper, DPH)



Ornamental lights along High Street provide pedestrian-scaled lighting in the Downtown Zone.

Connections

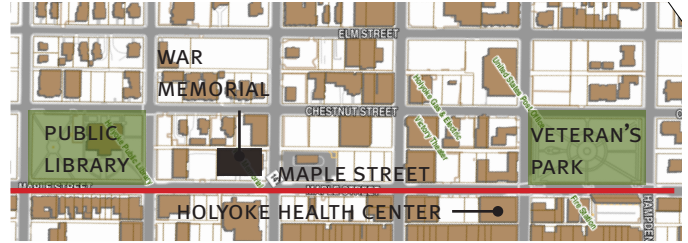
In addition to the specific physical improvement recommendations, there are some planning level issues we recommend the City address regarding connections.

Maple Street Corridor

The Maple Street Corridor could be a great pedestrian connection between the library, War Memorial, Veteran's Park, Holyoke Health Center, and the Holyoke Transportation Center. Also identified in the City's vision plan, improvements along Maple would promote walking from the residential neighborhoods west and south of downtown.

Links Between Zones

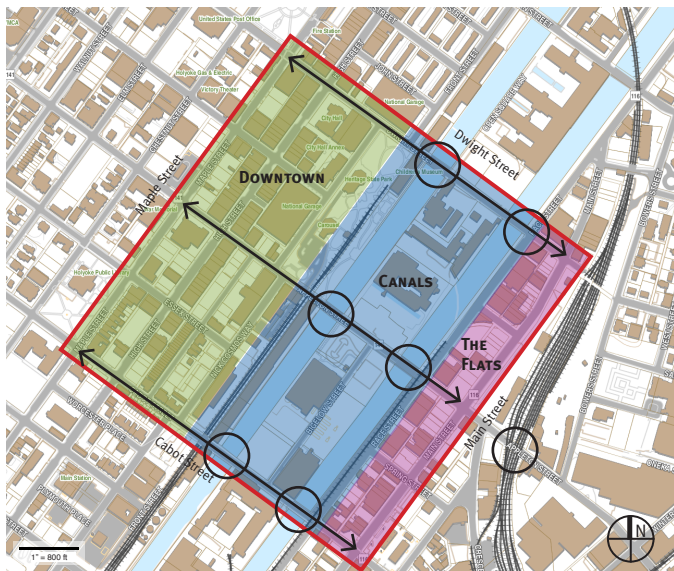
One of the goals of the pedestrian plan is to improve the connections between the flats, canals, and downtown. There are real physical barriers to these connections: topography, lack of universal access across the canal bridges, and unappealing underpasses below railroad bridges. The topography is a given, but prioritizing maintenance and reconstruction efforts at the canal bridges and railroad bridges along Dwight Street, Appleton Street and Cabot Streets would benefit everyone, but particularly those people dependent on these pedestrian connections to reach services and employment.




Maple Street Corridor



Renovations to the public library will increase its popularity as a destination along the Maple Street Corridor.



The links between the zones should be prioritized for improvement to better connect the Flats with Downtown.

 connection to be improved

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

As stated in the executive summary, WalkBoston continues to be impressed with the level of excitement and energy around Holyoke's revitalization. This transformation is both physical – mill building re-use, library and park renovations, Canal Walk expansion and downtown streets re-designed – and societal with civic and public groups coming together to create new forums for all members of the community to work together. Our central recommendation in this section is the establishment of a Main Streets program within the Chamber of Commerce.

Main Streets Program

For the longest time, we all waited for a white knight to ride into town and fix the problem. But the Main Street people made us realize that the only way to get it done right was to do it ourselves.”

Russell Thomas, Mayor of Americus, Georgia
From National Main Street Center Website www.mainstreet.org

WalkBoston strongly recommends that Holyoke establish a Main Streets Program within the Chamber of Commerce to aid in revitalizing its downtown. The Main Streets Program has been extremely successful in revitalizing older urban centers throughout the U.S. Today, there are over 2,000 Main Street programs throughout the country in both large cities and small towns. The City of Boston has 20 Main Street programs that helped create 1,125 businesses and 6,774 new jobs since the programs inception in 1995. These programs have been highly successful in turning around commercial centers, particularly in economically challenged neighborhoods, such as St. Marks and Fields Corner in Dorchester and Mission Hill in Roxbury.

Main Streets' goal is to revitalize and sustain older commercial centers that contain architecturally significant buildings is particularly well suited to Holyoke. Because the architectural fabric of the City is intact and the pedestrian scale has been maintained, the city is well positioned to benefit from Main Streets. WalkBoston has heard that there are small scale entrepreneurial activities in Holyoke that are not connected to the broader commercial community and could expand and systematize their operations with technical support and greater business connections.

How Main Streets Work

1. **Promotion:** Creation of a positive image to foster community pride and increase consumer and investor confidence in the commercial core is crucial. Retail promotions, special events and marketing campaigns are primary components of the promotion.
2. **Design:** The Main Streets Program works to ensure that the commercial core is an attractive destination for shoppers, workers and visitors. An appealing atmosphere is created through attention to good design in street furniture, landscaping, storefronts and window displays.
3. **Economic Development:** Technical assistance, usually provided by volunteers, helps local businesses sharpen merchandising skills, bookkeeping practices and use of technology.

Main Streets Organizational Structure

The first step in organizing a Main Streets Program is to get stakeholders on board. Stakeholders meet informally with business men and women as well as the local government and influential local leaders. Holyoke's Chamber of Commerce is very well positioned to develop the Main Streets Program. It has experience in working with local businesses and raising funds for beautification projects.

This fall, the Chamber is offering a series of “Ask a Chamber Expert” workshops to provide practical assistance on a range of topics including:

- How to write a business plan
- Private consultation with an attorney
- Marketing and Branding
- Accounting
- Customer service
- Using social media to promote business
- How to go to trade shows
- How to read blue prints
- How to start a business
- How to write loan application

The Chamber is also considering hosting a fund-raiser to provide stipends to local artists to assist shop owners enliven their storefronts with colorful window displays. The Office of Planning & Economic Development had a similar program for store owners/residents several years ago.

With the Chamber's track record in working with local businesses, establishment of a Main Streets Program would be a natural outgrowth of their mission and programs.

Utility Box Project

Several communities in Massachusetts have established projects with local artists to paint utility and switch boxes found along streets. These programs, such as PaintBox run by the Boston Arts Commission and the SwitchBox Project in Malden, highlight local artists' work within their communities and brighten streets and deter vandalism of the utility boxes.

In Malden, artists submit sketches and preferred locations to a selection committee who matches up designs with locations. Even small interventions such as these artistic expressions can generate the momentum needed for more substantive neighborhood change.

The utility boxes in Boston are municipal property, therefore no legal issues regarding modification of the utility box exterior have arisen. Note that the PaintBox Program requires that the box hinges, vents, locks and keyholes cannot be painted over and dark palettes are to be avoided to prevent overheating. In Holyoke, utility boxes are also owned by the city, and hence should not present legal issues. None of the communities that have developed the PaintBox program have had liability issues of which we are aware.



Artist: Martha O' Connel
Allston, MA



Artist: Corey Corcoran
Jamaica Plain, MA

POLICY INITIATIVES

Policy initiatives can address pedestrian needs when streetscape improvements and new development are planned. While they often do not have the teeth of regulations, these policies foster an awareness of pedestrian issues in the City.

Complete Streets

Complete Streets policies require that road infrastructure improvements address all modes of transportation (e.g., bicycles, pedestrians, transit as well as cars) and all users (e.g., elderly, children, the disabled as well as the able-bodied). A Complete Streets approach puts pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users on equal footing with motor-vehicle drivers. It aims to improve the quality of life in communities by creating streets that are both great public spaces and sustainable transportation networks.

This Downtown Pedestrian Plan and recent bicycling needs assessment completed by MassBike provide an excellent platform to launch a campaign to adopt a complete streets policy in Holyoke. There are additional resources through the Mass in Motion program that can further assist in promoting the adoption of complete streets policies in municipalities.

City Site Plan Review Process

Pedestrian and bicyclist needs should be integrated in the City site plan review process. Site plan review allows communities to address the impacts of development by working with property owners before construction. Any and all road construction or reconstruction projects should address pedestrian and bicyclists needs as well as car interests. State projects are required to consider bikes and people, but many local governments do not have such policies. If not already incorporated, Holyoke should work to include these interests in the site plan review process.

Potential Funding Sources

Holyoke has been successful in procuring funds for its revitalization and is well poised to obtain additional funds. Below is a list of some of the potential funding sources. In some cases, funding applications have already been or are being submitted. The report, *A Plan for the Revitalization of Center City Holyoke Connect. Construct. Create.* included an extensive section on funding sources. This chapter only addresses immediate funding initiatives.

Funding Programs Underway in Holyoke

There are several initiatives currently underway in Holyoke that could provide funding for the Main Streets Program described above and/or other revitalization efforts. It is very important for the Mass in Motion program to connect with these funding initiatives.

Chamber of Commerce

As mentioned above, the Chamber is offering a series of workshops for local businesses and is funding façade improvements for local businesses. It is also interested in conducting a fund-raiser to obtain funds to cover artists' stipends to work with local businesses.

Over the next year the Chamber has allocated \$50,000, received through Community Development Bloc Grants (CDBG) to be spent on façade improvements. Up to \$25,000 can be spent on each store, but the storeowner must put up 1:1 matching funds. Because coming up with this amount of money may be difficult for some owners, the Chamber is working with a Holyoke bank to provide loans for the store's match.

Holyoke as a Gateway Community

Holyoke is well positioned as a Gateway Community to apply for many funding state and federal programs that are available solely to older mid-sized cities that face substantial social and economic challenges while retaining "many assets of unrealized potential."

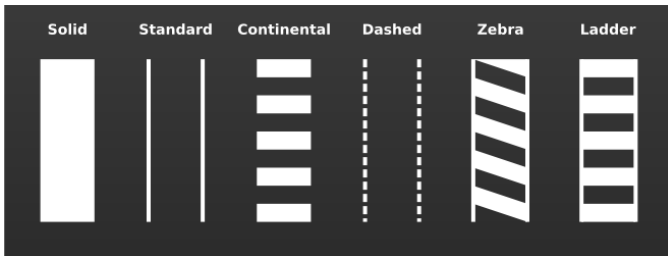


Facade improvements could be simple such as this canvas storefront banner found in Open Square.

Appendix A. Definition of terms used to describe walking environment

CROSSWALK

Crosswalks can be painted in a variety of ways, some of which are more effective in warning drivers of pedestrians. Holyoke uses the continental design shown as one of the options below which is effective at alerting drivers. Crosswalks are usually accompanied with stop lines. These lines act as the legally mandated stopping point for vehicles, and discourages drivers from stopping in the middle of the crosswalk.



Crosswalk patterns - courtesy of USFHA

CURB RAMP

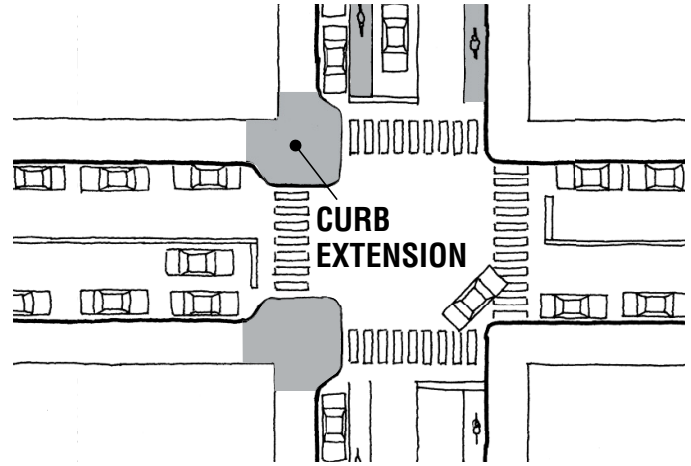
Curb ramps provide access from the sidewalk to the street for people using wheel chairs. They are most commonly found at intersections. While curb ramps have improved access for wheelchair-bound people, they are problematic for visually impaired people who use the curb as an indication of the side of the street. Detectable warning strips, a distinctive surface pattern of domes detectable by cane or underfoot, are now used to alert people with vision impairments of their approach to streets and hazardous drop-offs.



Curb ramp with detectable warning strip - sacdot.com

CURB EXTENSION/CURB BULB-OUT

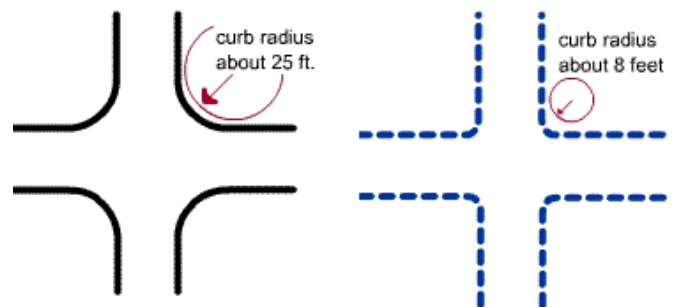
A sidewalk extension into the street (into the parking lane) shortens crossing distance, increases visibility for walkers and encourages eye contact between drivers and walkers. Holyoke has curb bulb-outs on both Maple and High Streets.



Curb extension - WalkBoston: Making Streets Safe

CURB RADII

A longer curb radius (left) allows vehicles to turn more quickly and creates longer crossing distance for pedestrians. A shorter curb radius (right) slows turning speeds and provides pedestrians shorter crossing distances.



FOG LINE

A fog line is a solid white line painted along the roadside curb that defines the driving lane and narrows the driver's perspective. Fog lines are more often used in suburban and rural locations, but may be appropriate in some urban conditions such as on Race Street in Holyoke.



Fog lines delineate the vehicular driving zone on wide roadways.

