

# Massachusetts Department of Public Health Success Stories



HEALTHY HOLYOKE



## Turning Holyoke into a Walkable, Pedestrian-friendly City

### SUMMARY

The City of Holyoke's historical and natural assets provide a strong basis for a walking network as part of the city's revitalization. **Holyoke Mass in Motion (Healthy Holyoke)** is working with Mass in Motion technical assistance provider **WalkBoston** to provide walkable, safe and pedestrian-friendly streets and open spaces in the downtown area. The **Pedestrian Working Group** formed to focus on this effort will foster increased physical activity among Holyoke's residents and will provide a Pedestrian Plan containing recommendations for streetscape improvements that complement ongoing economic development.

### CHALLENGE

Holyoke is home to historic Holyoke City Hall and Public Library, the CanalWalk, and tourist attractions such as Holyoke Heritage State Park, Children's Museum, and the Volleyball Hall of Fame. It's also one of the Commonwealth's 24 Gateway Cities — cities with populations of 35,000 to 250,000 and income and education levels below the state median. Obesity rates are high; nearly *one in three adults are overweight or obese*. Healthy Holyoke wanted to address this issue by creating a more walkable city so more residents could be physically active.

### SOLUTION

Healthy Holyoke partnered with WalkBoston to develop a Pedestrian Plan for the City's downtown. The plan is consistent with the sustainable community goals of providing transportation options outlined in Holyoke's Urban Renewal Plan, **Connect. Construct. Create — A Plan to Revitalize Center City Holyoke**. The Holyoke Mass in Motion Pedestrian Working Group partnered with WalkBoston to develop a Downtown Pedestrian Plan that would best complement Mass in Motion's Complete Streets objective and the City's livability goals. In January 2013, Healthy Holyoke Coordinator Matt Lustig convened the Pedestrian Working Group, which includes a City Engineer, City Conservation Director, YMCA Wellness Coordinator, and Senior Planner.

“The successful development of the Downtown Pedestrian Plan is due to the effective collaboration among Mass in Motion, the City of Holyoke Departments of Public Works, and Planning & Economic Development, the Holyoke Board of Health, the Holyoke Conservation Commission, the Greater Holyoke YMCA and WalkBoston.”

**MATT LUSTIG**  
HEALTHY HOLYOKE  
COORDINATOR

For more information, visit [www.mass.gov/massinmotion](http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion)

## PARTNERS

*WalkBoston, the City of Holyoke  
Departments of Public Works, and  
Planning & Economic Development,  
the Holyoke Board of Health, the  
Holyoke Conservation Commission,  
the Greater Holyoke YMCA*

## CONTACT

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## RESULTS

WalkBoston visited Holyoke several times to develop an assessment of walkability within the project area and to conduct a walking audit. Participants of the audit included Holyoke Mayor Alex B. Morse, Director of Planning & Economic Development Marcos A. Marrerro and other City and civic leaders. The primary goal of the walking audit was to identify opportunities for pedestrian improvements that could compliment ongoing economic redevelopment efforts. These assessments were used to help craft recommended improvements to intersections, including traffic calming options, and to identify streetscape improvements to sidewalks, lighting, furniture, and vegetation.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Holyoke is working with WalkBoston to draft the Pedestrian Plan, which will include the recommended pedestrian and streetscape improvements, examples of such improvements in cities and towns across New England, and identification of possible funding sources to implement the recommended improvements. The Pedestrian Plan is scheduled to be completed in July 2013.



For more information, visit [www.mass.gov/massinmotion](http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion)