

Holyoke 2017 | P.A.M. Project Community Report



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P.A.M. Project Community Report Holyoke, 2017

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LA&RP Landscape Architecture
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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a two-year collaboration between academia and local communities, with support from the UMass Public Service Endowment Grant. Working closely with Old Holyoke Development Corporation and Nueva Esperanza, we implemented a community assessment strategy that leveraged university expertise and resources alongside the community's leadership and commitment to equity, social development and creativity. The Holyoke community development coalition involved eighteen local organizations,ⁱ dozens of students from local colleges and universities, and several local residents in a citywide effort to gather tangible information on people's values, sense of place, sense of community and perceived well-being.

The **Holyoke Participatory Asset Mapping (PAM)** project was developed as part of an integrated approach to place-based and culture-sensitive sustainability planning. It builds upon the Holyoke Cultural Asset Mapping project, completed with the support of the UMass President's Office Creative Economy Initiative in 2015. The Cultural Asset Mapping project generated baseline data as well as data collection and visualization tools, made available at www.holyoke.creativecommunityweb.org. The goal was to bridge the gap between governmental, non-governmental, academic and local knowledge, and build a shared understanding of different types of assets existing in Holyoke. This project contributed to the state's efforts to develop creative economies and foster the revitalization of post-industrial cities across Massachusetts.

The web platform provided a useful tool for assessment and organizational planning to support the local Holyoke organizations in achieving their goals. These organizations have long been committed to improving the well-being of Holyoke's people through housing, community development, and other programs. With the expansion of the network to involve numerous community leaders and individuals in academic, governmental and non-governmental sectors, we engaged a broad cross-section of Holyoke's culturally and socially diverse community.

In the effort to implement an inclusive process and hear as many voices as possible, we deployed a community-wide survey online and multiple target engagement activities in person. Community partners organized data collection within their own constituencies and UMass students gathered responses door-to-door in underrepresented neighborhoods. Through the dedicated effort of the local organizations and volunteers, we obtained nearly 1,000 valid survey responses representing every city ward. The combination of both online and face-to-face strategies, alongside the use of mixed methods and tools, provided many opportunities to participate. The use of qualitative and quantitative methods to gather deep and wide data provided the added benefit of confirming the study's findings in various ways. A geographic cluster-sampling framework ensured fair representation of all city populations and neighborhoods, while deriving measurements that are locally relevant and actionable.

ⁱ Holyoke Community College CommITTED Club, Holyoke Housing Authority, City of Holyoke Human Rights Commission, Greater Holyoke YMCA, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, Apostolic Christian Church, Holyoke Council On Aging, Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative, Kelly Full Service Community School, Nuestra Raices, Inc., Providence Ministries Service Network, Lighthouse School and Enlace de Familias.

The P.A.M project produced fine-grained information with broad implications for quality of life, computing cultural values, social life and developmental factors. Community partners can use these outcomes to enhance community well-being and to foster cultural diversity and vitality, while capitalizing on local resources. A better understanding of what is valued and what is needed provides a strong foundation for future initiatives intended to advance community goals. While laying out contextualized metrics, this resource is also useful to advance further partnerships and future creative collaborations that will meet common goals more effectively.

As part of a larger research agenda that involves sustainability science, cultural heritage, subjective well-being and collaborative planning, this project offered an invaluable opportunity to fully implement and evaluate an operational framework that articulates multifold values and perceptions in decision-making processes. This transdisciplinary methodology was developed to build knowledge from the ground up in order to reflect the diversity of identities across and within the complex urban environment. As such, it attempts to go beyond preconceived ideas of “needs” and unspoken selection of “priorities” to account for the values that underlie preferences and choices of development strategies, projects and service delivery for improved well-being and livability. This framework was designed to unveil composite relationships and apply site-level, valid and reliable data to help communities articulate their own vision of the future and devise compatible pathways of achievement.

This report provides a brief overview of the City of Holyoke and the context in which this project took place. Following the socioeconomic profile of survey respondents citywide, it delves into particularities from responses at a smaller scale. The analysis, organized into five domains (cultural values, place perception, adverse events, qualities, vision, and desired features), also moves from citywide to specific variations by place of residence and socio-economic factors. Mixed-methods are used to derive benefits from both quantitative and qualitative strategies of inquiry, as well as to cross-validate findings. While reporting research findings, this document attempts to ensure full and accurate expression of community voices, reflecting worldviews, hopes, as well as frustrations – basis upon which further shared understanding and collective action can be built.

We hope this work will support the ongoing efforts of our community partners and other organizations working to foster community development and equity, while cultivating cultural diversity and creativity.

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

HOLYOKE'S HISTORY AND CULTURE

Holyoke lies in the heart of the Pioneer Valley, in western Massachusetts, at the crossroads of the main north-south highway Interstate 91 and the Massachusetts Turnpike linking Boston and Albany, NY. Nestled between Mount Tom and the Connecticut River, the city is defined as much by its natural features as the strategic geographic location and the unique urban landscape that tells its 19th century industrial history. Incorporated as a Town in 1850, then a City in 1873, Holyoke was one of the first planned industrial communities in the United States. The plan laid out a system of canals and streets connecting manufactures in the city that would become an important center of the paper industry. Successive waves of immigrants settled Holyoke in the 19th and 20th centuries, attracted by well-paid jobs. By the 1960s, many of the city's industrial jobs had been lost and the downtown had transitioned away from being a vibrant place where people lived, shopped and worked. Once at the heart of the state's thriving industrial economy, Holyoke's current population of just over 40,000 is only two-thirds what it was a century ago.

The industrial heritage is ingrained within Holyoke's urban identity, despite the loss of many historic buildings to disinvestment over the past fifty years. Similarly, the ancestry of Holyoke's residents reflects historic immigration patterns, particularly people of Irish, French-Canadian, Polish and more recently, Puerto Rican descent. Today, over 42% of Holyoke residents (5 years or older) speak Spanish, or both Spanish and English at home, and only 4.3% speak a language other than English or Spanish, often in addition to English.ⁱⁱ In the 2010 census, Holyoke presented the highest percentage of Puerto Rican residents of any Massachusetts city - nearly 45%. Much of the city's Latino, Puerto Rican or Spanish speaking population is concentrated in and around the central

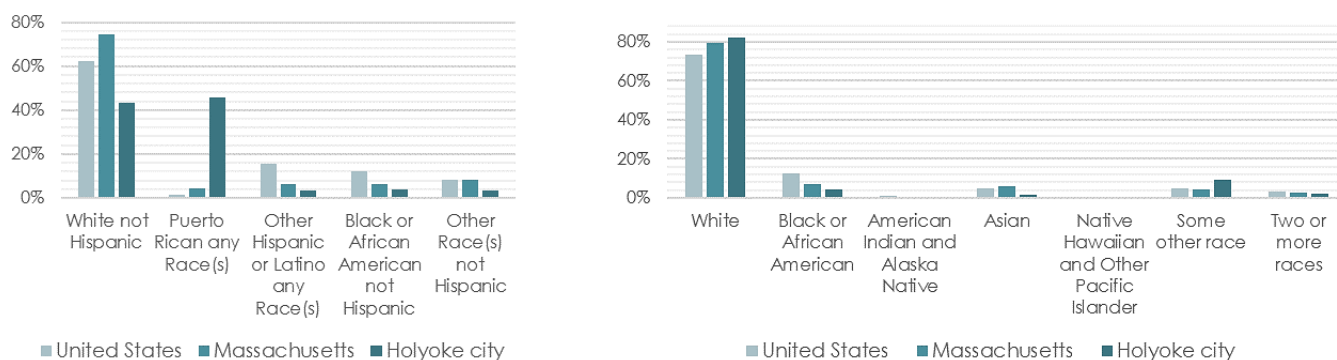


ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 5 year estimates. "Demographic and Housing"

urbanized, downtown areas, rather than in the outlying residential neighborhoods. Conversely, the highest concentrations of people citing Irish, French and Polish ancestry are in the outlying census tracts and in the neighboring communities of Chicopee and South Hadley.

Census data categories have limitations for the understanding of population dynamics in cultural terms. However, according to recent estimates, the four downtown census tracts contain only 26.5% of the city's population, but 47.1% of the Puerto Rican population. In South Holyoke (census tract 8115), 84.5% of residents are Puerto Rican. In contrast, Holyoke's northernmost area (census tract 8119), which has 9.9% of the city's population and the higher median household income (\$61,997), is only .06% Puerto Rican.ⁱⁱⁱ

FIGURE 1: CENSUS DATA ON RACE AND ETHNICITY AT CITY, STATE, AND COUNTRY LEVELS



The U.S. Census Bureau also shows that Holyoke’s residents are quite young if compared with the state’s median age: 35.4 years old for Holyoke and 39.3 for Massachusetts. Families with children under 18 make up 31% (4,805) of the city’s households versus only 28% in the state. Regarding educational attainment, Figure 2 shows that while educational attainment tends to be high in Massachusetts, Holyoke’s lags behind.^{iv}

FIGURE 2: CENSUS DATA ON EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN HOLYOKE AND MASSACHUSETTS (25 YRS AND OVER)

	Massachusetts	Holyoke
High School Degree only	25.4%	28.5%
Some college	23.9%	25.4%
Bachelors	22.8%	14.6%
Graduate Degree	17.1%	8.8%

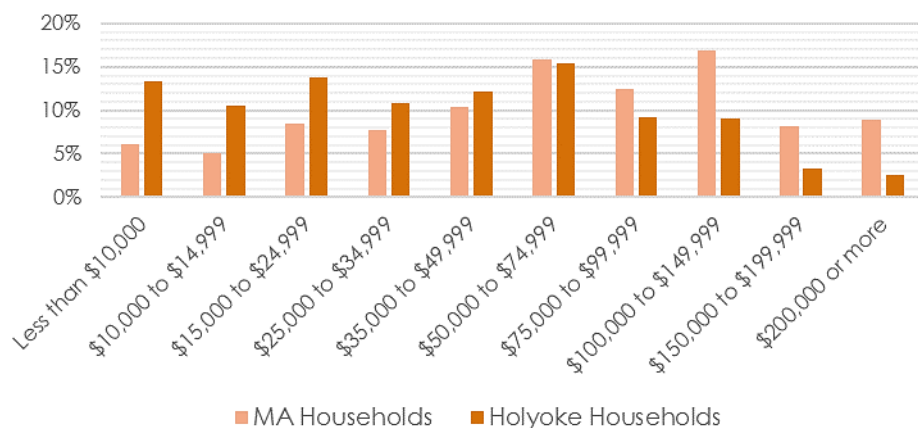
Holyoke’s median income is \$36,608, which is low compared with the Massachusetts median (\$68,563) and the nation’s (\$53,889). However, this number does not fully illustrate an interesting dynamic in Holyoke’s household income distribution. There is a strong presence of households at a variety of income levels up to \$75k per year, and then a drop off in higher income categories where

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau; ACS 2011-2015 5-yr estimates. “Selected Social Characteristics in the United States”

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau; ACS 2011-2015 5-yr estimates. “Educational Attainment”

the state distribution has by contrast many more households proportionally. Figure 3 shows that in addition to high poverty rates and low numbers of affluent households, Holyoke has a large number of households in the moderate and median income range, as compared to the State.^v

FIGURE 3: CENSUS DATA ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN HOLYOKE AND MASSACHUSETTS



Until recently, Holyoke’s unemployment rates were very high –nearly double the state’s rates. This has changed. The city is now trending with rising employment in the region and the state. The most recent data from Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development puts Holyoke’s unemployment rate at 4.4%. Figures for late 2016 showed the state at 2.9% and the nation at 4.6%.^{vi}

CREATIVE ECONOMY AND PLACEMAKING

Holyoke is one of the Massachusetts “Gateway Cities,” which are home to over a third of the state’s population and a disproportionate share of its poorest residents. The Massachusetts’ Gateway Cities



^v U.S. Census Bureau; ACS 2011-2015 5-yr estimates. . “Selected Economic Characteristics”

^{vi} Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Labor Market Information. Retrieved January 2017 from <http://www.mass.gov/lwd/economic-data/>.

research and collaboration network develops strategies for urban renewal through arts, entertainment and creative industries.^{vii} Holyoke's revitalization efforts have made use of a wide range of top-down planning resources, coordinating federal, state, and regional programs for housing, workforce, education, and economic development. The Green High Performance Computing Center, completed in 2012, brought significant investment to link the city with the region's knowledge-based economy. Federally funded planning initiatives include the new Transportation Center in the heart of the Historic Main Street District, and the Churchill Homes New Urban style Hope VI affordable housing. The City is currently in the process of implementing its urban center redevelopment plan with involvement from MassDevelopment in repurposing targeted properties.^{viii}

Bottom-up private, public and non-profit investments recently range from individual retail, restaurants and galleries to the retrofit of historic buildings for events, community spaces, and startups. A number of well-established agencies, civic organizations, businesses, and individuals have invested to deliver positive outcomes for the city's residents, adding to Holyoke's critical mass of activity and capital. With its extraordinary industrial landscape, varied neighborhoods, layered cultures and strong communities, Holyoke is poised to become a regional urban revitalization success story. This means not only restoring the economic opportunity the city once provided, but also creating culturally, socially and environmentally sound solutions that add to the well-being of residents and to the regional systems with which they are connected. Major and conspicuous investments that do not fully address the needs of the local population spark local concern about gentrification and lack of shared understanding of the community's priorities.

PARTICIPATORY ASSET MAPPING

To make effective use of different types of assets in strategic planning, standardized methods to collect, translate and disseminate information across stakeholder groups are needed. The Holyoke Cultural Asset Mapping project framework was conceived to bridge research, policy and local knowledge, from residents who are in the best position to identify its assets and issues. The first phase of this project was completed with the support of the UMass Creative Economy Initiative funds (2014-2015). It involved assembling a broad range of primary and secondary data on cultural development-related assets, from artists and cultural events to historic buildings and social support organizations. Perhaps due to its proximity to the Five Colleges and its unique potential, Holyoke has been extensively researched. Thus, this project also attempted to

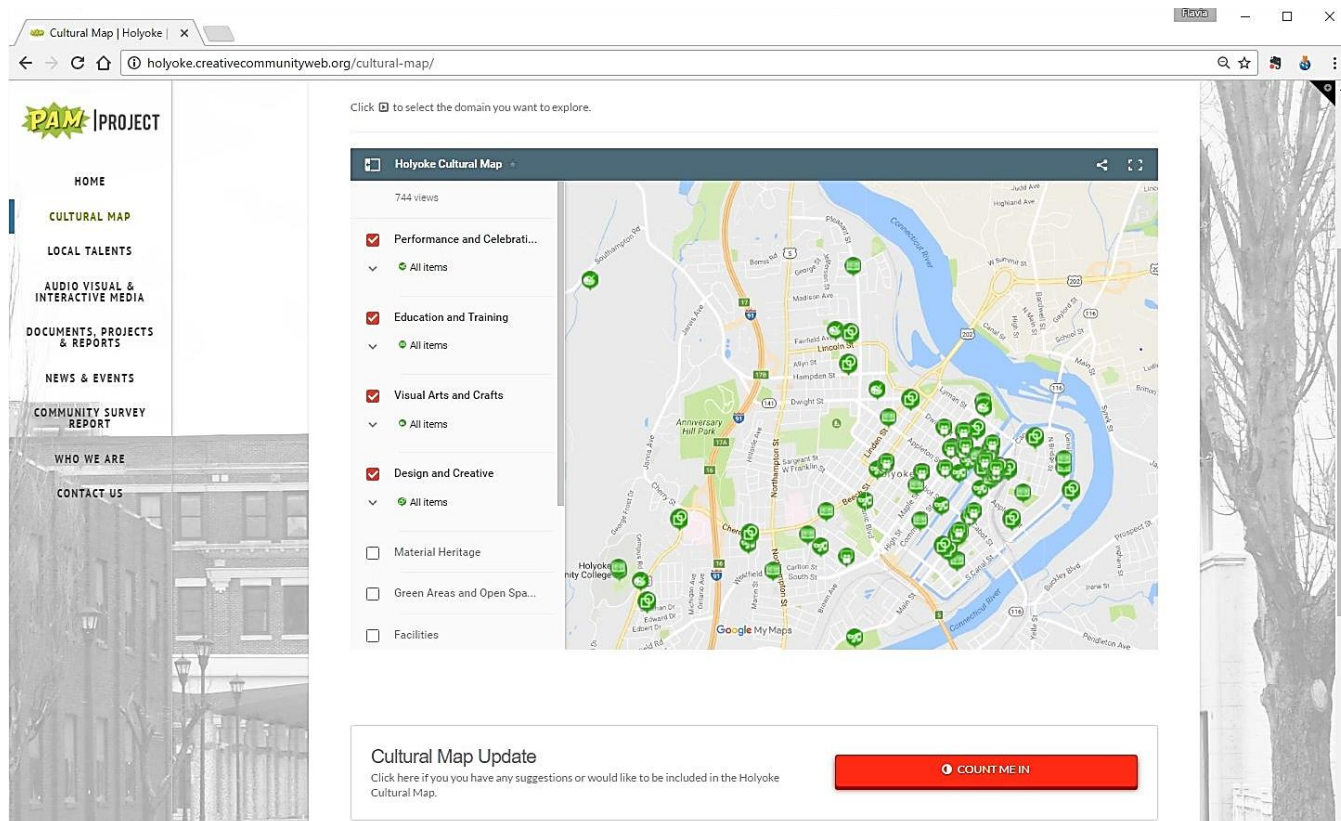


^{vii} Mass Inc. "Building Vibrancy: Creative Placemaking Strategies for Gateway City Growth and Renewal." (2012). Accessed March 2017. <http://www.massinc.org/Research/Building-Vibrancy.aspx>

^{viii} Holyoke Redevelopment. "Connect. Construct. Create. A Plan to revitalize Center City Holyoke." Accessed December 2016. <http://www.holyokeredevelopment.com/plans-studies/urp>.

take research off the shelves and make it accessible to the public, along with other sources of information, such as local media. Outcomes from the Holyoke Cultural Asset Mapping were shared publicly on the holyoke.creativecommunityweb.org site in 2015. In addition to knowledge dissemination, this web-based tool provided the groundwork upon which the Participatory Asset Mapping (PAM) project was developed.

FIGURE 4: HOLYOKE.CREATIVECOMMUNITYWEB.ORG



This second phase of the PAM project, funded by the UMass Public Service Endowment Grant (2015-2016), enabled the establishment of an academic-community partnership between the UMass Regional Planning Program, Olde Holyoke Development Corporation, and Nueva Esperanza, Inc. The PAM platform provided the tools our local partners needed to generate fine-grained data upon which they may expand their organizational capacity by identifying where projects and policies work or fall short, and building partnerships to meet common goals more effectively. Olde Holyoke is a certified Community Development Corporation (CDC) with a long legacy of affordable housing development and an established presence in the Flats section of Holyoke. Nueva Esperanza, Inc. is a non-profit organization with over three decades of community development accomplishments in downtown Holyoke, particularly addressing questions of Latino representation, education and empowerment in matters that affect their community. The Holyoke Community Development Coalition expanded to involve to some degree eighteen local organizations concerned with community development issues, in academic, governmental and non-governmental sectors. These included Holyoke Community College Committed Club, Holyoke Housing Authority, City of

Holyoke Human Rights Commission, Greater Holyoke YMCA, Greater Holyoke Chamber of Commerce, Apostolic Christian Church, Holyoke Council on Aging, Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative, Inc., Kelly Full Service Community School, Nuestra Raices, Inc., Providence Ministries Service Network, Lighthouse School and Enlace de Familias. UMass provided the tools to build shared knowledge from the ground up, and together the Holyoke community partners engaged residents citywide and within their constituencies, collecting survey responses that generated the data presented in this report.

COMMUNITY-WIDE SURVEY

The survey applied in Holyoke was designed to generate context-specific and useful knowledge about a community's culture and priorities from the ground up, by assessing people's values and perceptions of the place where they live – community life and living conditions factors combined. This assessment tool was developed and tested in several diverse sites, within a long-term interdisciplinary research effort to unveil and integrate cultural variables into decision-making frameworks. It draws from cross-cultural research, environmental psychology, and well-being assessment, among other methodologies, to generate culture-sensitive, equitable, transparent, and representative models for specific use in planning and policy. In this multidimensional framework, quality of life is more than the presence or absence of problems but rather the result of preferences, capabilities, tradeoffs and relationships whereby individuals seek to fulfill their needs according to their own values and the resources available to them. Shared meanings and purposes build up from individual perspectives to offer a fresh look at connections between available resources and tangible needs. Through multiple consultation sessions with community partners, we adapted the methodological framework to the Holyoke context.

Our assessment tool combines qualitative and quantitative methods applied both online and in person to gauge in-depth information from the largest number, in the shortest time. Paper survey responses are digitized and combined with responses obtained through mobile app and online, so there is no distinction based on the method of collection. Quantitative data captures basic notions of demographics, self-reported well-being and ideals. Numerical data is processed using Qualtrics survey software and SPSS analytical software across the entire population to identify commonalities and peculiarities within and between sub-groupings based on key factors, particularly location of residence and demographic characteristics. With two open questions, people can write (or speak) in their own words about what matters to them and what needs to change. These open-ended questions provide the space for respondents to expand upon or identify new key themes and issues. Qualitative information is coded using NVivo software through a process that involves both deductive and inductive reasoning. By quantifying themes and ideas that emerge from the responses, we can identify trends and patterns. Frequency diagrams show how often certain themes and words occur, along with quotes to illustrate various findings and ensure the voice of the community members is clearly presented in the research narrative.

SAMPLING FRAME

To collect fine-grained data that is locally relevant and ensure balanced representation from all groups – particularly those who are often voiceless in public decision – survey responses are geotagged and monitored during outreach activities. In Holyoke, neighborhoods are defined by historic buildings type, patterns of activity, a web of social relationships and local organizations, and to some extent a unique identity correlating with the people who live in each area. However, impressions of limits, hubs, and the general character of neighborhoods vary among the diverse groups who live and work in the City.

Municipal wards were found to be boundaries widely acknowledged and understood by residents and, to some extent, shared and recognized across generations and cultural groups. Holyoke is divided into 7 wards, each of which is further divided into two voting precincts (Figure 5). Downtown Holyoke corresponds to wards 1-4, where a remarkable architectural heritage is concentrated along with a large part of the city's low-income population. Wards 5 and 7 occupy a larger area, however, it includes the Mount Tom State Reservation and population density is sparse to moderate. Regardless of the size of the area, each ward encompasses a comparable number of inhabitants (approximately 5,500 each). As such, the use of these boundaries in this study also allowed us to oversee the number of responses as it correlates with the official counting of residents by area.

OUTREACH STRATEGY

The survey was offered in Spanish and Portuguese, in addition to English. To collect responses citywide in the shortest time, we used inexpensive technologies (digital platform and tablet app) applied bottom up by members of the community itself. In order to ensure computer literacy would not affect results we also used paper surveys in face-to-face outreach activities.

From the outset, there was a set of identified challenges and constraints to be overcome in order to achieve an all-inclusive sample. In general, participatory processes require time and intense presence in the field. Limited staff availability in Holyoke was compounded by the diversity in background and socio-economic status of the population. There was also some resistance based on frustration due to previous research and engagement experiences that have yielded little visible benefit to the community. The local partners' commitment made it feasible for anyone who cared to participate to do so, particularly groups often marginalized in decisional processes. This effort involved, in many cases, reading questions aloud to respondents with limited reading skills.

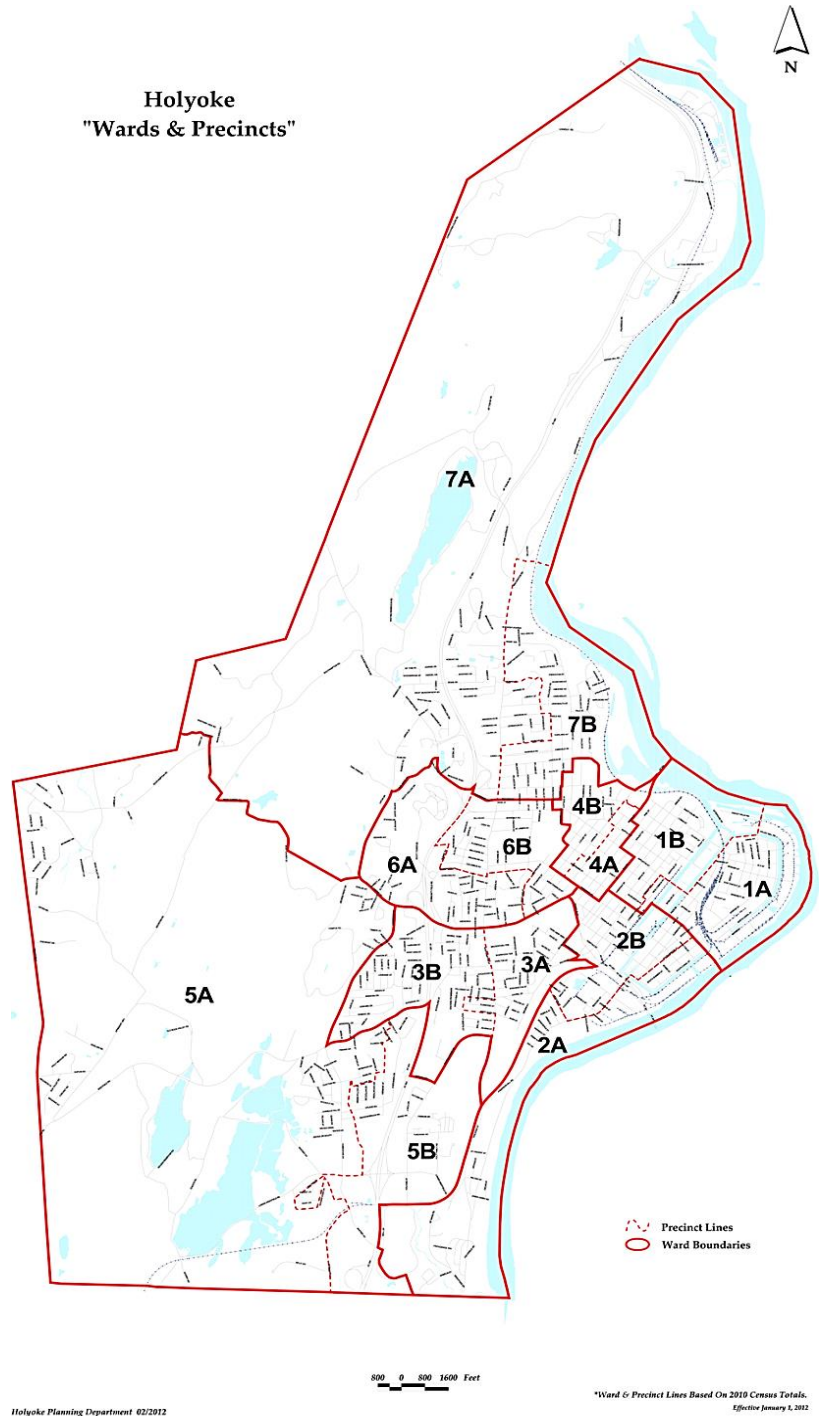
PAM project partners undertook the challenging task of reaching out to the largest possible number of people in all areas and from all constituencies using a variety of tactics. The



online survey was widely disseminated through press releases, social media, and other physical and virtual means. The Holyoke Housing Authority included in their monthly mailing bilingual flyers encouraging recipients to take the survey and use this opportunity to be heard. Posters and flyers were distributed at partner organizations, the library and public locations. One-on-one surveys were conducted at the YMCA, Lighthouse, Providence Ministries and other faith communities. Dedicated assistance was provided at the Senior Center by project staff to ensure seniors' participation. Students at Holyoke Community College conducted surveys on campus during student activity periods, reaching a range of backgrounds and ages. Volunteers and staff were present at various community events, such as the Celebrate Holyoke festival, giving out informational flyers and collecting responses from members of the public using both tablets and paper surveys. In the final stages of the outreach, UMass students conducted door-to-door surveys in underrepresented neighborhoods of the lower wards.

This collaborative effort involved over 1,000 people and led to a total of 983 valid survey responses. The high response rate, particularly to open questions, reflects the high levels of residents' commitment to their community.

FIGURE 5: HOYOKE WARDS AND PRECINCTS

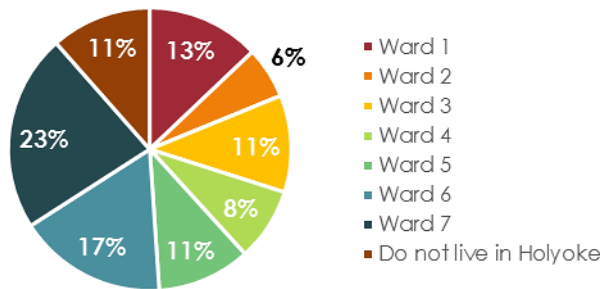


Map Courtesy of Holyoke Planning Department 02/2012

II. SAMPLE POPULATION

Among the 983 valid survey responses, 23% came from residents of ward 7. Ward 6 was not far behind, providing 17% of all responses. Despite focused efforts, response rates from wards 2, 3 and 4 were considerably lower. Ultimately, while greater sampling success occurred in some areas than others, the goal of collecting a minimum of 50 responses per ward was surpassed. All residential areas are represented in our sample, and as such, diverse views are conferred.

FIGURE 6: RESPONSE RATE BY WARD



WARD	COUNT
Ward 1	127
Ward 2	58
Ward 3	109
Ward 4	82
Ward 5	105
Ward 6	167
Ward 7	222
Do not live in Holyoke	113
TOTAL	983

The difference between highest and lowest response rates by area of residence illustrates the ongoing challenge of bridging the engagement gap in the city. Ward 7 is the easiest to engage with, particularly through social media and press releases, whereas people living in wards 1, 2, and 3 are prone to be underrepresented, unless an extra effort is made towards these groups. Increased response rates in ward 1 were obtained through door-to-door survey work by graduate students. Additional fieldwork was recommended in wards 2-4.

FIGURE 7: ONLINE RESPONSES BY WARD

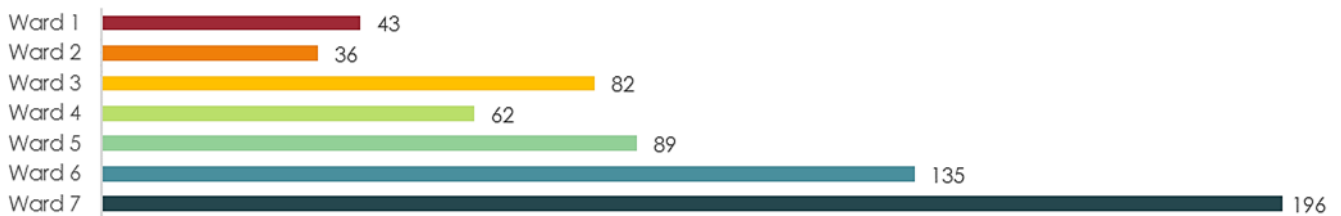


FIGURE 8: OFFLINE RESPONSES BY WARD



PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS COMMUNITY-WIDE

FIGURE 9: AGE OF RESPONDENTS

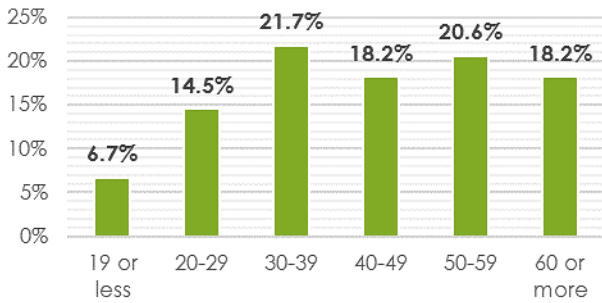


FIGURE 10: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

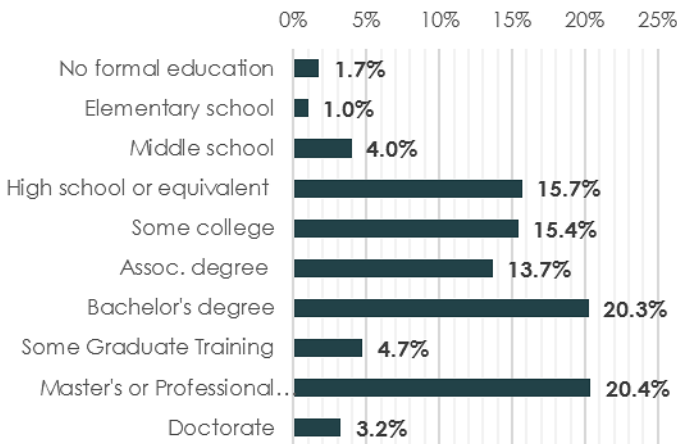
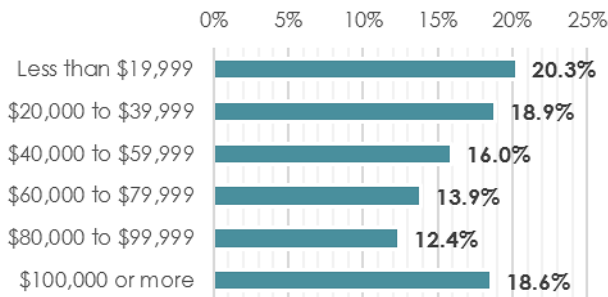


FIGURE 11: INCOME DISTRIBUTION

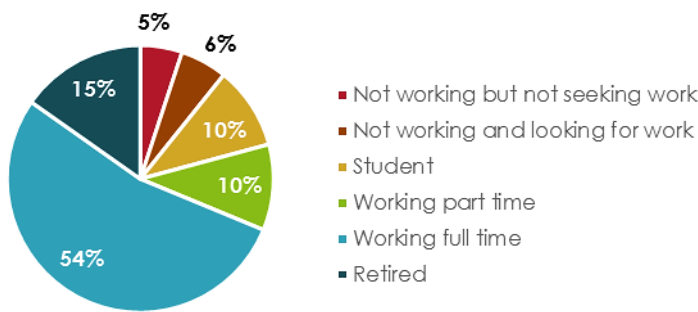


Overall, the survey sample reflects a remarkably broad distribution in terms of age cohorts. People over 50 years of age are slightly over-represented (38.8%), as compared to the population age distribution from Holyoke’s census data (31.5%). However, public decision-making processes in the U.S. tend to reflect a relatively higher engagement from older citizens.

Overall, the city’s diverse range of education levels is well represented although nearly half of survey respondents have a Bachelor’s or more advanced college degree. According to census data, only 23% of Holyoke (25 and older) has a Bachelor’s degree or higher, 39% of Massachusetts. This shows that educational attainment of survey respondents is high compared to the general populace at both city and state level. More effort should be made to engage residents with lower educational levels in participatory processes.

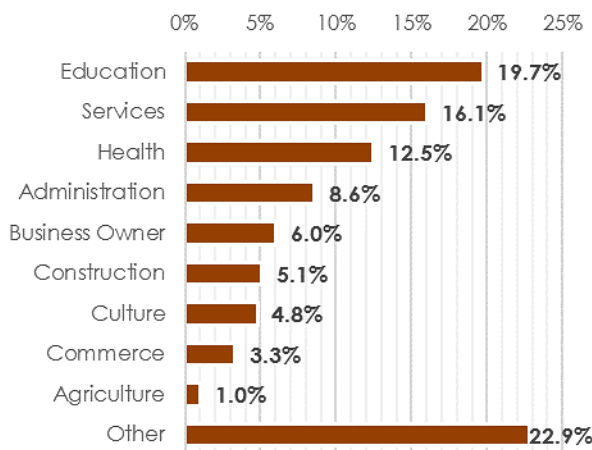
The income distribution of respondents is wide, and includes nearly 1/5 in each of the highest and lowest categories, under \$20k and over \$100k. The majority (61%) fall in the middle-income ranges. This distribution aligns nicely with the city’s overall household income distribution, which is strong in the middle.

FIGURE 12: EMPLOYMENT STATUS



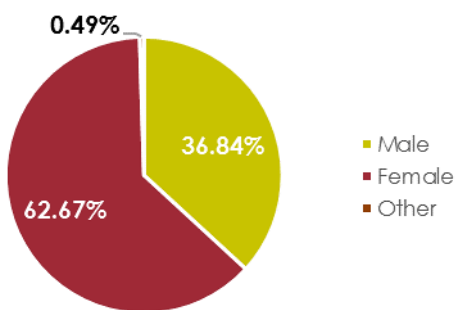
Nearly 2/3 of survey respondents work full or part time. Another 25% are students or retirees and 6% reported being unemployed. This figure reflects Holyoke’s long-term and historically higher rates of unemployment as compared with the state or nation. The reported unemployment rate for the city was 4.4% in late 2016.

FIGURE 13: AREA OF WORK



The largest part of survey respondents (20%) work in the education sector, which reflects that sector’s high employment rate in the State of Massachusetts. The health and service sectors are also well represented by over 28% of respondents combined. About 10% are business owners or work in the arts and culture sector.

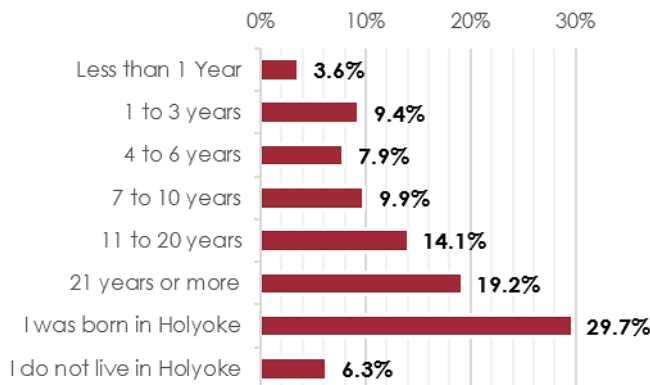
FIGURE 14: GENDER DISTRIBUTION



Two thirds of survey respondents identify themselves as women, whereas according to census data, Holyoke’s population is almost evenly split between self-identified male (49%) and female (51%). A closer look shows that this even distribution is sharper for residents 15-44 years of age than it is for elders and young people.^{ix} The slight overrepresentation of women parallels previous survey studies in multiple contexts that show women tend to be more responsive than men.

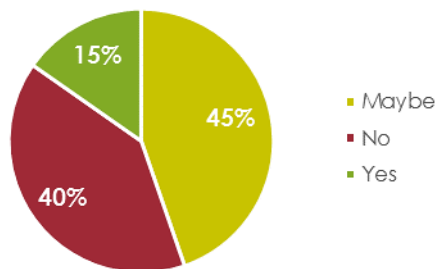
^{ix} U.S. Census Bureau; ACS 2011-2015 5-yr estimates.

FIGURE 15: LENGTH OF RESIDENCE



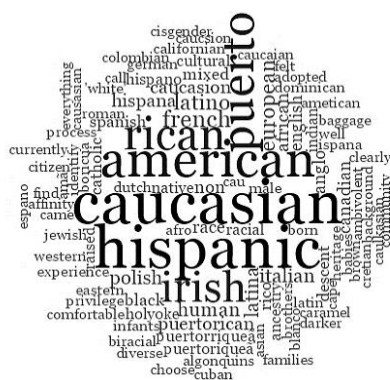
About 2/3 of survey respondents have lived in Holyoke for over ten years. In fact, nearly 1/3 of the people who participated were born in Holyoke. Only 4% were new to Holyoke, having arrived in the past year.

FIGURE 16: INTENTION TO MOVE TO ANOTHER TOWN



When asked whether they would like to live somewhere else, 40% of people said “no”. This reveals a relatively high level of attachment to the community. Only 15% of current residents would like to move to another town, and 45% are neutral, meaning they have no specific plans to leave.

FIGURE 17: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE ON CULTURAL IDENTITY



Acknowledging the diversity of views of how people understand their culture in their own communities, participants were asked to describe in their own words the culture, race or color with which they identify. Responses fell into the broad categories typically identified in demographic analysis. Origin, including place of birth and descent, appear as the most often cited identity-defining factor. Figure 17 illustrates some of the most common terms used.

Among survey respondents, 64% identify themselves as white, caucasian, or of European descent, in particular Irish, French or French Canadian, and Polish, but also German, Dutch, Greek, and others. Only 27% refer to their Latin, Hispanic or Puerto Rican ancestry. As for languages spoken at home, over 3/4 of survey respondents report speaking only English, 12% speak only Spanish, and 11% of the homes are bilingual. Ideal representation of Hispanic and Latin population as compared to official data on race and ethnicity would be close to 50% (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 18: CULTURAL IDENTITY

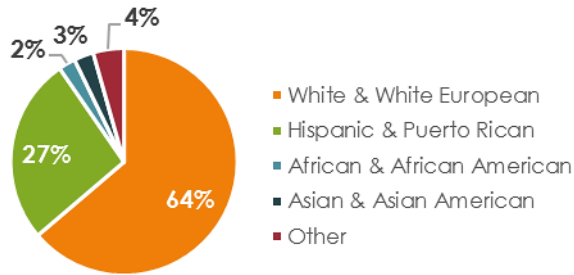


FIGURE 19: LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME

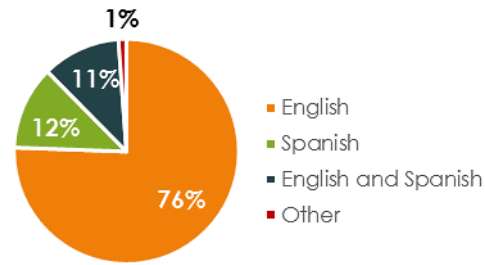


FIGURE 20: OTHER CULTURAL IDENTITY ITEMS



As an open ended response, participants were free to refer to whatever best reflects their own values. Among the 4% of responses that do not fit census race and ethnicity definitions, “human” is the most often cited cultural identity factor. Other descriptive language relates to people’s affinities and values (progressive, hardworking, green, non-religious), beliefs (Catholic, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Jainism, Judaism), social status (middle class, minority), gender (male, lesbian, cisgender), parental status and modern subcultures. Some refer to their heritage, traditions and customs, and others to their local or regional identity, such as Holyoke, Springfield, Manhattan, Californian, or Southern. Some are explicitly all inclusive (everything) whereas a few others are all exclusive, stating “not applicable”, “no answer”, or “irrelevant”.

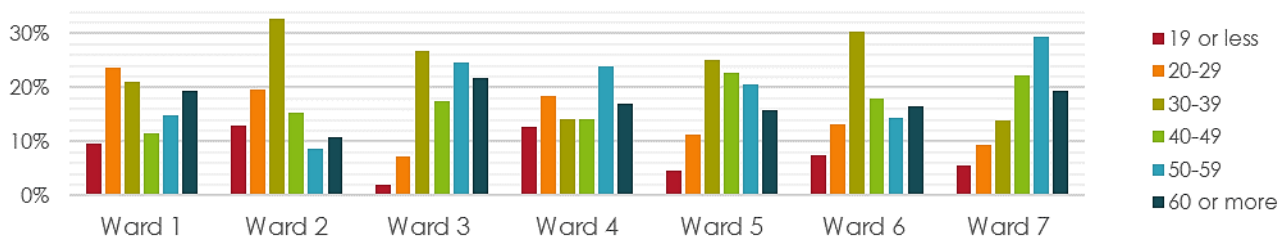
Following this demographic analysis of respondents as it relates to Holyoke’s overall population, a closer look at significant variations by area of residence and other characteristics unveils specific subpopulation groups’ opinions. Some patterns appeared consistently across wards, such as the preponderance of female respondents, ranging from 58% in ward 1 to 72% in ward 2. Any category

that was fairly constant across wards, such as gender, was not broken down in the results presented in this report.

RESPONDENTS' PROFILE BY WARD

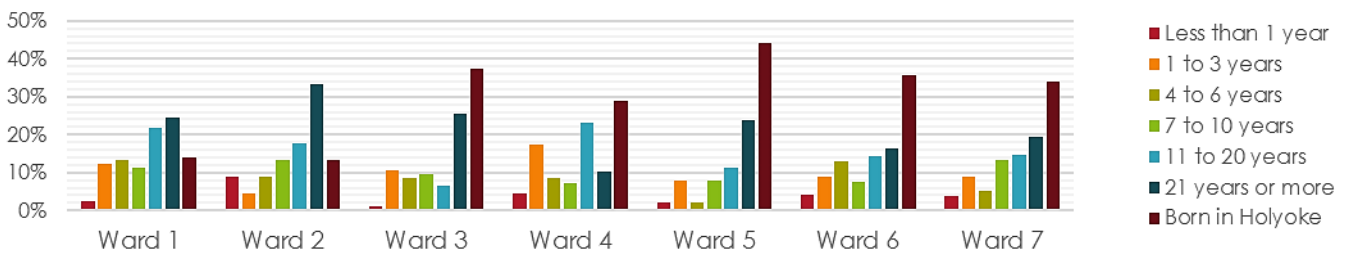
Among the factors that may have shaped distinct points of view within geographic areas, is the age distribution of respondents. Wards 1, 2 and 4 have a substantial number of younger respondents (29 years old and below), whereas the voices of residents 50 years old or above are more prevalent in ward 7. The distribution of ages represented is most even in ward 4.

FIGURE 21: AGE BY WARD



The number of respondents new to Holyoke (less than 1 year) was below 5% in every ward except ward 2, where it approached 10%. The most striking variation was in representation from people born in Holyoke: less than 15% in wards 1 and 2, while wards 3 to 7 had at least one third of lifelong residents. While the number of Holyoke-born was lowest in wards 1 and 2, they had the most long-term respondents, that is, people who arrived in the city two decades ago or more.

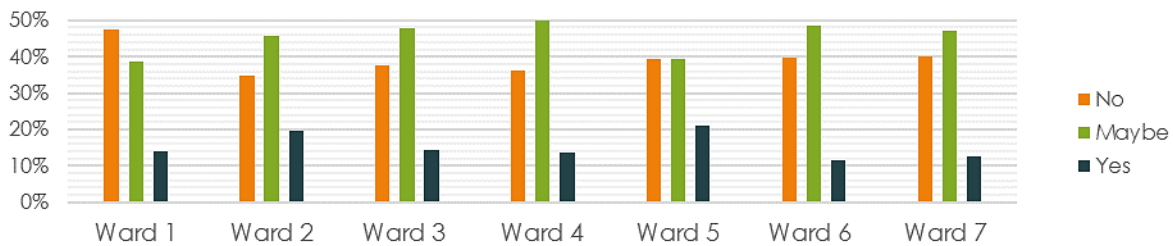
FIGURE 22: LENGTH OF RESIDENCE BY WARD



Perhaps we see, to some extent, a reflection of immigration patterns for people of European and French-Canadian descent, more likely to be second or third generation and therefore lifelong residents, and the more recent Puerto-Rican migration in those long-time residents.

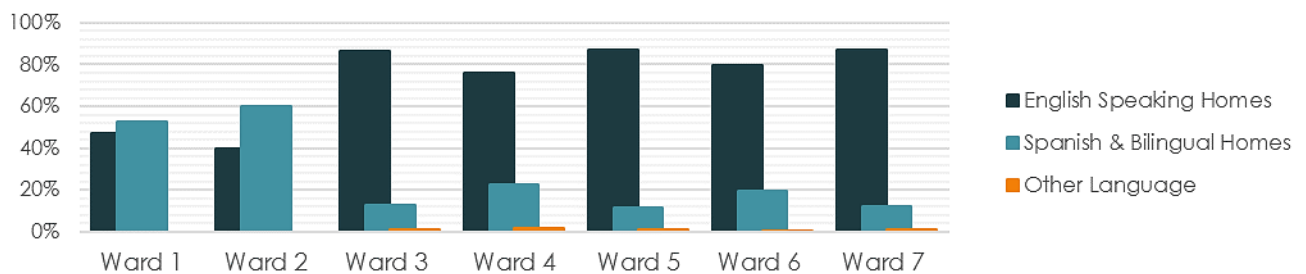
While allegiance to Holyoke was strongest in ward 1, the general distribution of responses about plans to leave the city were quite similar from ward to ward. In general, about 40% of people living in Holyoke have a longterm commitment with the city (Figure 23).

FIGURE 23: INTENTION TO MOVE TO ANOTHER TOWN BY WARD



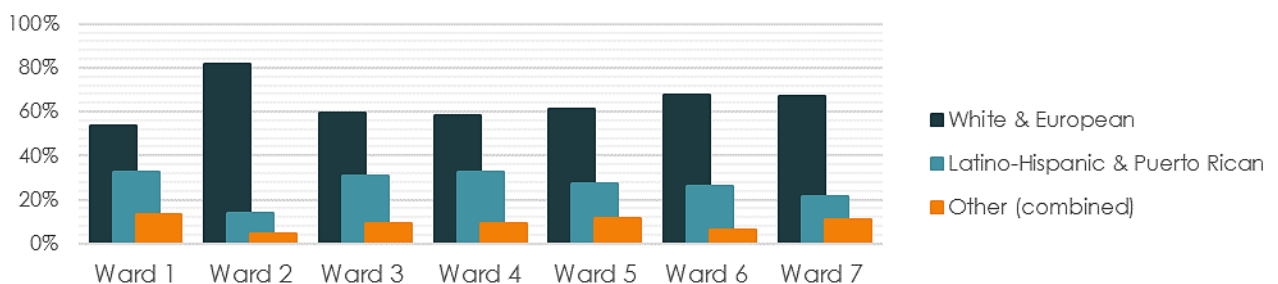
Some of the differences among respondents by ward reflect Holyoke’s diversity of languages, cultures and ethnicities. Respondents from wards 3 through 7 were predominantly from homes where English is the only language spoken, whereas wards 1 and 2, present a higher number of Spanish speaking homes. For languages other than English and Spanish across the city, there were few represented (wards 3 through 7) to none (wards 1 and 2).

FIGURE 24: LANGUAGES BY WARD



This data reflects the representativeness of languages in our sample in relation to census data, which tells us that wards 1 and 2 – around the downtown Flats neighborhood – are where the majority of residents are Spanish speakers. However, it does not line up with the survey’s distribution of cultural identity in ways we might expect, except for ward 1 that has both a high proportion of Spanish speaking/bilingual households and of Latino-Hispanic or Puerto Rican people. Ward 2 had a high number of Spanish speaking and bilingual households, but it presents in contradiction the highest proportion of self-identified White and European residents.

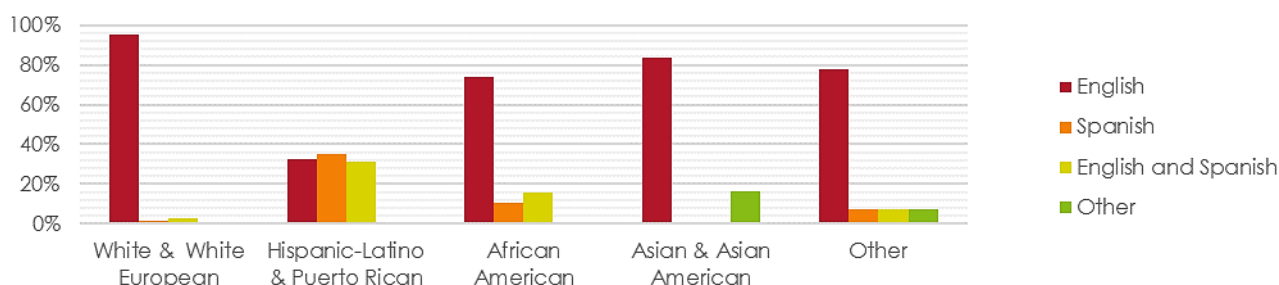
FIGURE 25: CULTURAL IDENTITY BY WARD



This discrepancy may be due to the fact that while this study achieved ambitious goals in terms of outreach, there was still weaker representation from ward 2 where diverse populations are most concentrated, therefore, the sample was not fully representative of the diversity in this neighborhood. Another possible explanation is that the way in which people describe their own cultural identity may not be accurately conveyed through traditional descriptors of race and ethnicity. Many Puerto Ricans may have identified themselves as White.

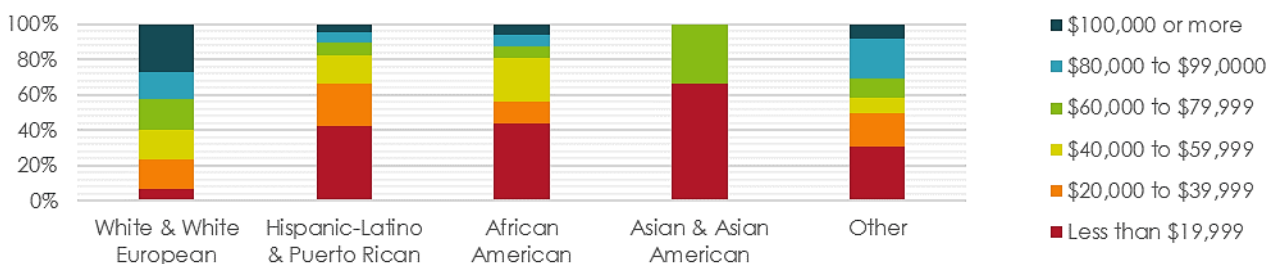
Figure 26 shows that a few Spanish speakers identify themselves as White, whereas among those who identify themselves as Hispanic, Latino or Puerto-Rican there was almost an even split between English, Spanish, and bilingual people.

FIGURE 26: LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY CULTURAL IDENTITY



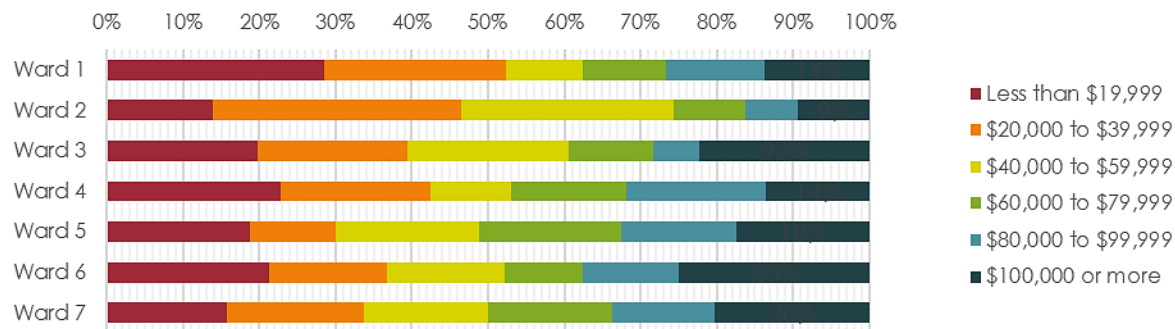
Income was another important variable, particularly in relation to cultural identity. In general, among respondents, those identifying as White are more affluent than Hispanics, Latinos and Puerto Ricans. This aligns with the distribution of households in Holyoke, where concentrations of white residents by ward correlates with higher household income levels.

FIGURE 27: HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY CULTURAL IDENTITY



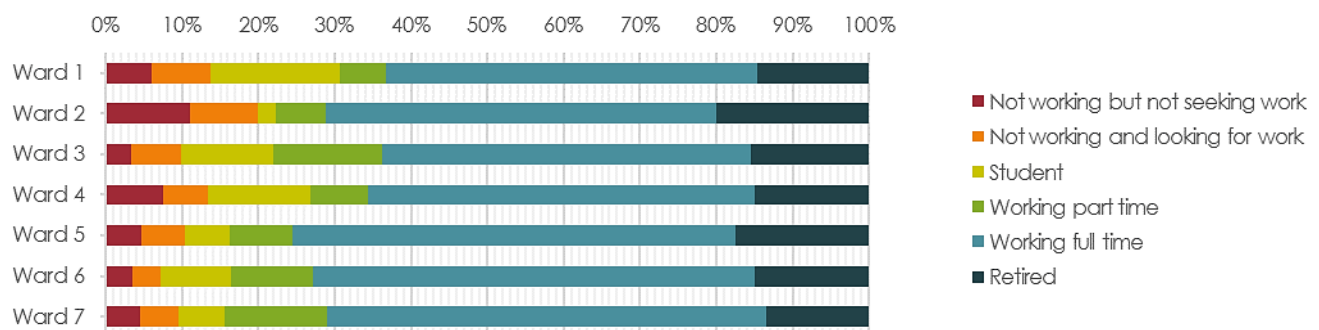
Income level of respondents tended to be lower in wards 1 and 2. Figure 28 shows that 29% of households in ward 1 earn less than \$20,000 and close to 75% in ward 2 earn less than \$60,000 per year. Wards 3, 6 and 7 had the largest number of households earning \$100,000 or more. Our sample also reflects Holyoke’s strong numbers of moderate and middle-income households in the city (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 28: INCOME BY WARD



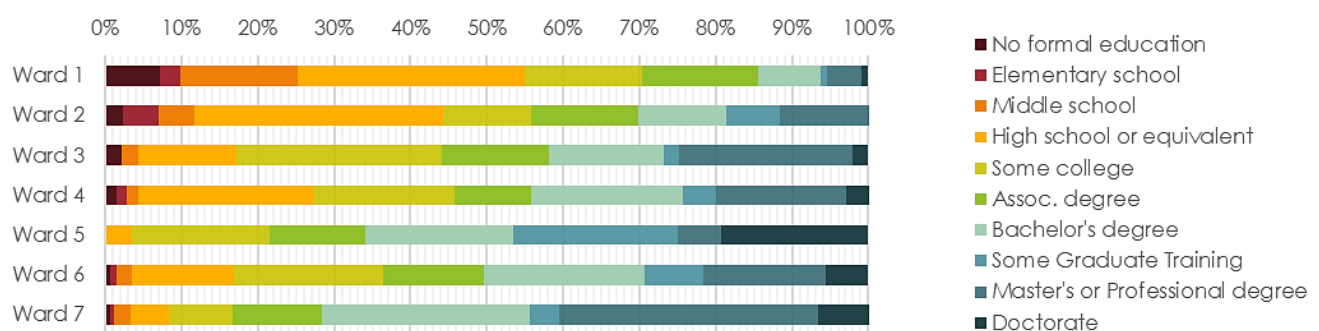
The majority of respondents were employed full or part time, but there were more people actively looking for jobs in wards 1 and 2. A reevaluation of programs that concentrate housing for low-income people, seniors and disabled residents in the lower wards is warranted in light of the higher presence of unemployed people in these areas.

FIGURE 29: EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY WARD



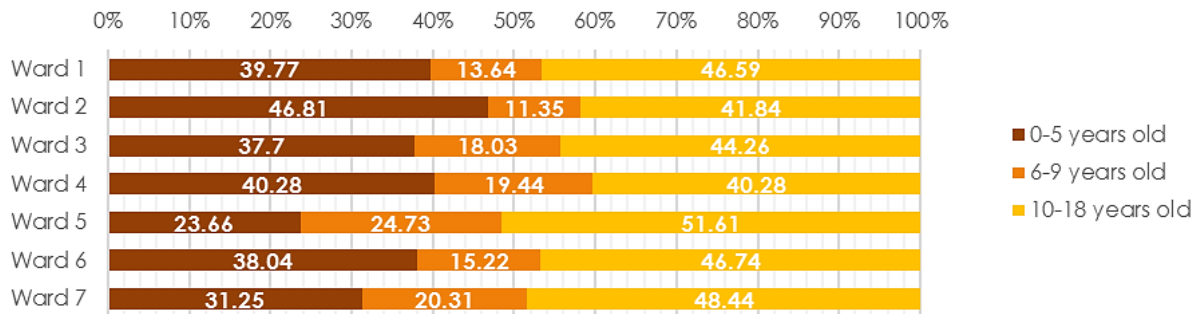
Educational level presented one of the widest points of variation between wards. In ward 1 and 2, people were more likely to have a high school diploma or less. The starkest contrast was with Ward 7 where less than 10% of respondents lack college experience and over 40% have at least a master’s or professional degree.

FIGURE 30: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT BY WARD



For variation by ward in terms of family formation, ward 5 had the lowest percentage of 0-5 year-olds (23%), and ward 2 the highest number of young children (46%). Thus, we can assume that social services and public programs related to prenatal, birth and childcare and early childhood education should pay closer attention to ward 2, where more children were born in the past five years. It is also interesting to note wards 1 and 2 had more respondents aged under 30, those likely to have young children (Figure 21).

FIGURE 31: HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN BY WARD

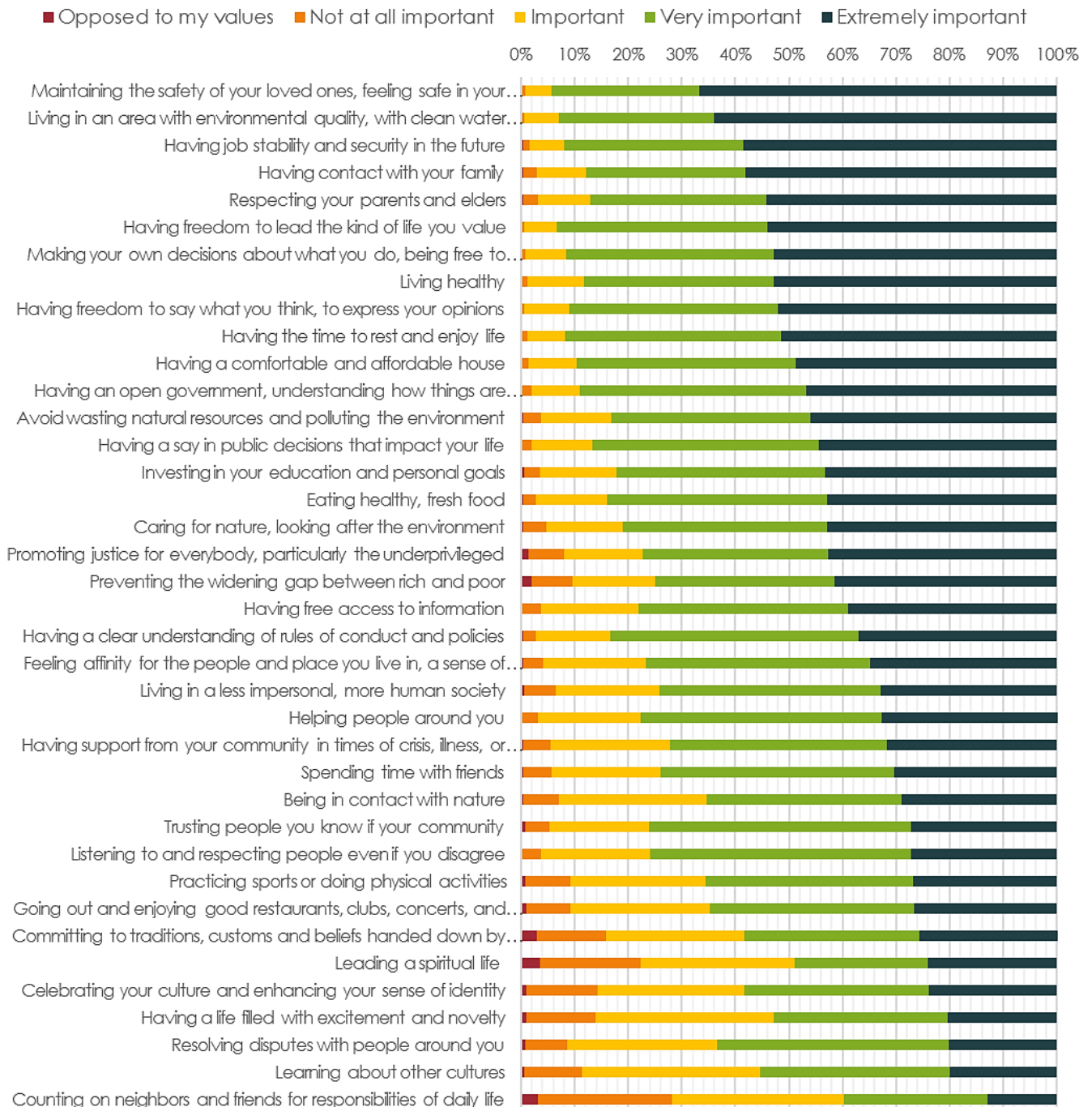


In general, this analysis shows that the sample population is representative of key groups, based on geographic and demographic factors, but in some cases, the proportions do not fully reflect the baseline population distribution described in census data. While interpretation findings presented in this report, the variations from wards and between population groups should be considered.

III. VALUES

To assess what matters to Holyoke residents we used a five-point scale ranging from “opposed to my values” to “extremely important”. The following chart illustrates the extent to which each item is considered important to the well-being of respondents, with those receiving highest scores at the top.

FIGURE 32: COMMUNITY VALUES



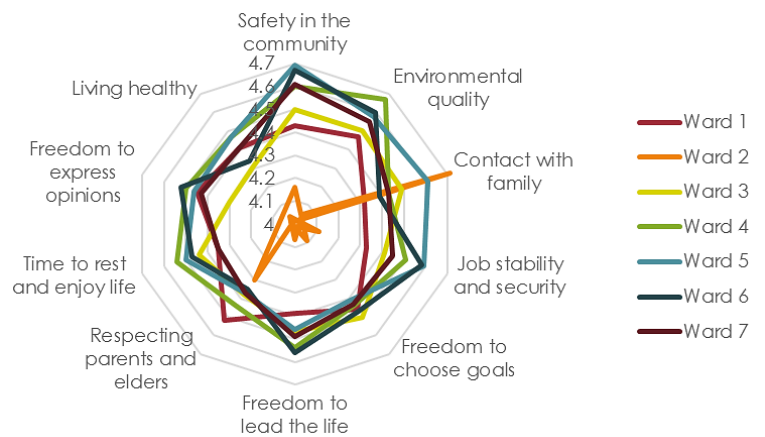
The most widely shared value in Holyoke relates to a sense of safety, freedom and environmental quality. Over 98% of respondents agree on the importance of these items to some degree. However, not a single value was shared by all residents. Opinions were most polarized in statements related to social justice and equity, as well as culture, tradition, and social networks.

VALUES BY POPULATION GROUP

Values considered extremely important to more than 50% of respondents are unequally distributed across wards.

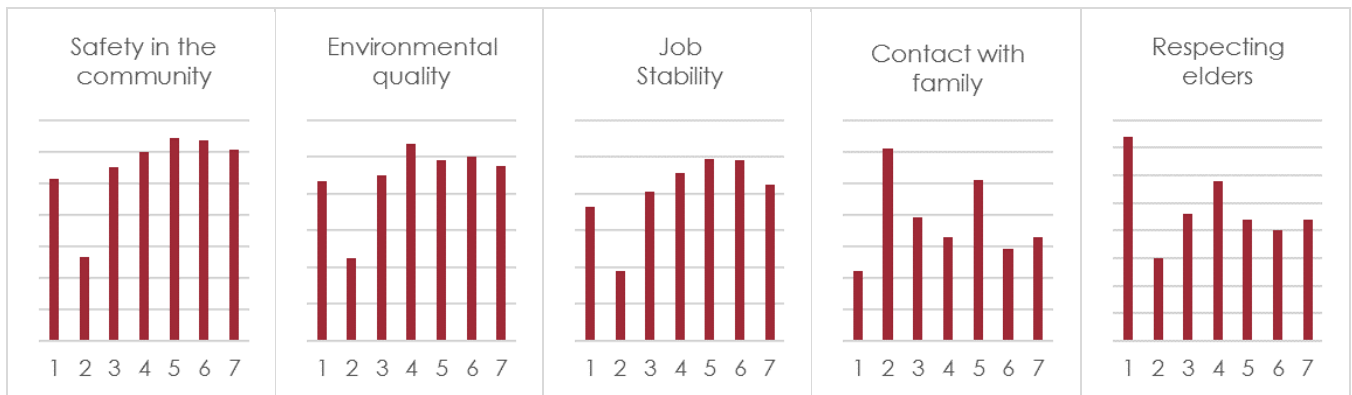
1. safety in the community
2. environmental quality
3. contact with family
4. job stability and security in the future
5. freedom to choose goals
6. freedom to lead life
7. respecting parents and elders
8. time to rest
9. freedom to express opinions
10. living healthy

FIGURE 33: TOP TEN VALUES BY WARD—AVERAGE RATING



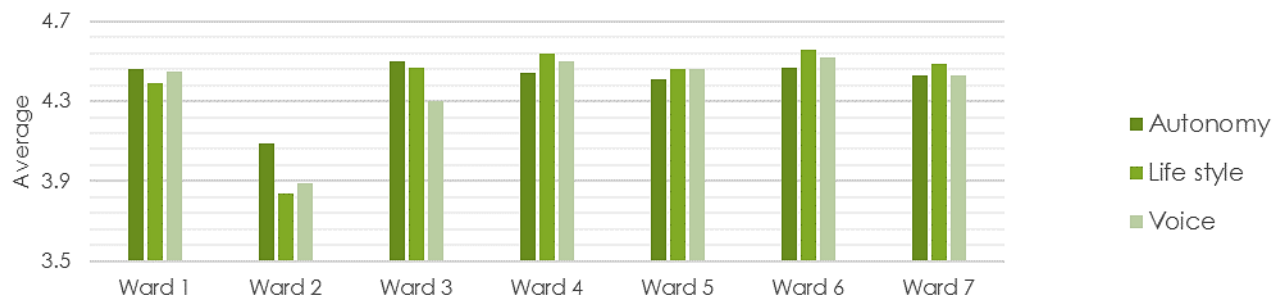
Wards 4 to 7 value safety in the community, environmental quality, and job stability most highly. What distinguishes ward 1 is the highest concern for respect towards parents and elders, and for ward 2 the very high importance of contact with family. Other than that, ward 2 tended to score lower than others overall.

FIGURE 34: SELECTED TOP VALUES AVERAGE BY WARD



Three types of freedom are ranked among the top ten values – autonomy, voice and life style. On average, respondents from ward 2 valued these freedoms relatively less than other wards. For wards 1-3, autonomy is more important, while for wards 4-7, freedom in life style and opinion are more important.

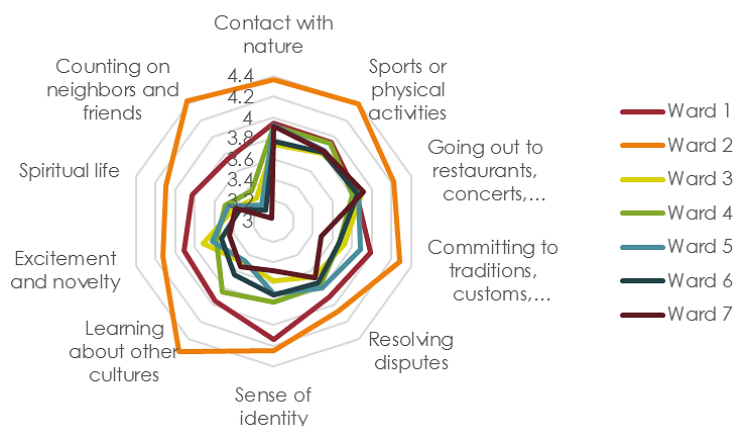
FIGURE 35: THREE TYPES OF FREEDOM BY WARD



The following ten statements are the least important to Holyoke people overall, according to the survey:

1. counting on neighbors and friends for help
2. learning about other cultures
3. resolving disputes
4. excitement and novelty
5. culture and sense of identity
6. leading a spiritual life
7. committing to traditions, customs and beliefs
8. practicing sports or physical activities
9. enjoying restaurants, clubs and concerts
10. trusting people you know in your community

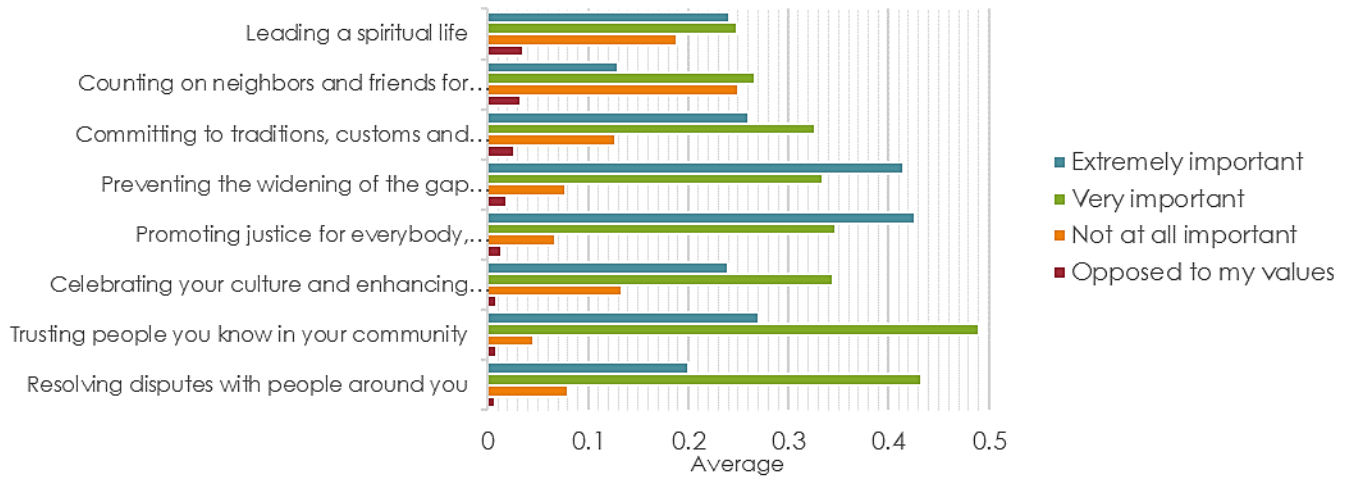
FIGURE 36: LOWEST TEN VALUES BY WARD—AVERAGE RATING



We see a similar pattern in wards 3-7, which means that these ten items are indeed significantly less important to people that live in these areas. However, averages for ward 2 tends to be higher overall, followed by ward 1. Culture diversity and one’s own sense of identity appears to be more important to people’s well-being in wards 1 and 2 than in the others. The higher contrast refer to social capital, which is seems significantly more important in lower than in higher wards.

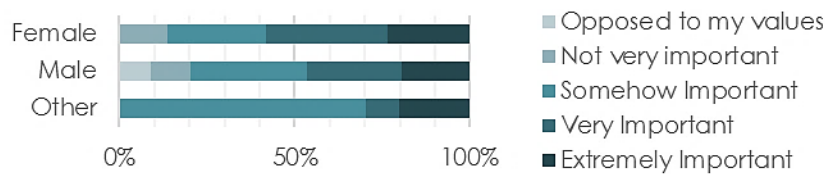
It is important to note that these low ranked values are unimportant to some, but not to all of the respondents. In fact, the most important points of disagreement in the community relate to questions of social justice and cultural diversity. For example, leading a spiritual life and committing to traditions, customs and beliefs, are extremely important to some. Preventing the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor and promoting justice for everybody are extremely important factors of well-being to a large number, but these ideals go against some people’s idea of well-being.

FIGURE 37: POLARIZED VALUES



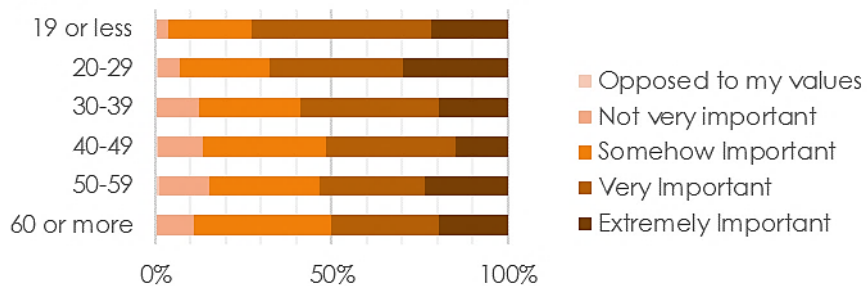
Personal characteristics also shed light on how respondents described their values. For instance, women were more likely to consider helping people as very or extremely important. No women in the survey considered this to be opposed to their values, while some men did.

FIGURE 38: IMPORTANCE OF HELPING PEOPLE BY GENDER



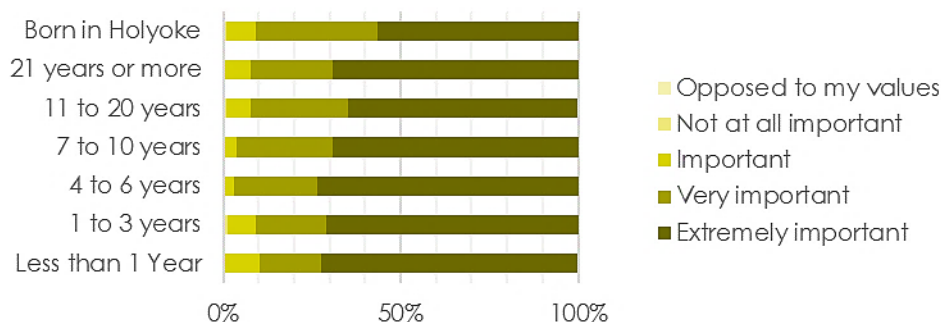
When it came to the importance of learning about other cultures, we saw much stronger positives from the youngest respondents, versus their older counterparts.

FIGURE 39: IMPORTANCE OF LEARNING ABOUT OTHER CULTURES BY AGE



Most agreed that living in an area with environmental quality was very or extremely important, but a divergence holds in light of how long people have lived in Holyoke. Lifelong residents were least likely to place the highest value on clear air and water.

FIGURE 40: IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCE



OTHER VALUES PEOPLE FIND ESSENTIAL

FIGURE 41: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE ON OTHER VALUES PEOPLE FIND ESSENTIAL



Free-write responses usually elaborated upon the statements shown in the previous section. The word cloud shows the frequency with which people used certain language to describe what matters most to them (Figure 41). These qualitative responses corroborated the quantitative data while highlighting the importance of:

- Safety, security, and interpersonal respect in the community;
- Personal freedom, responsibility, and entrepreneurship;
- Access to opportunity including jobs and education;
- Fairness and access to key resources – affordable housing and good schools;
- Good governance and stewardships of the city’s assets, infrastructure, and the environment; and
- Community as it is enriched by diversity, equity, cultural values, and pride.

The added precision here based on responses is that affordable housing as it is referenced includes both market rate housing for moderate or low income people, as well as protected and public affordable housing for low income and other targeted populations, like seniors and homeless. Housing is mentioned in terms of both social mobility for working/middle class and equity and social support. Specific demand for mixed-use housing projects was also revealed in the open responses. More detail on what is needed and desired by the population is provided later.

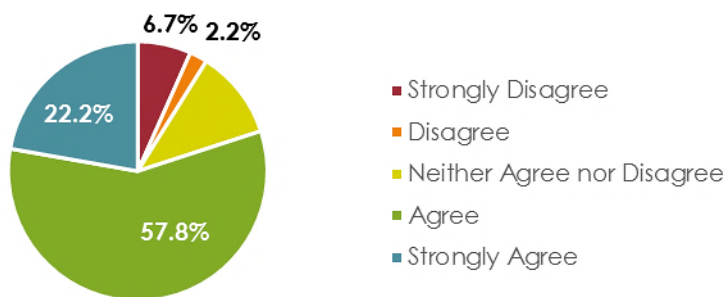
IV. PERCEPTIONS

To investigate quality of life from the perspective of local residents, we asked them to classify statements according to a five-point agreement scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION

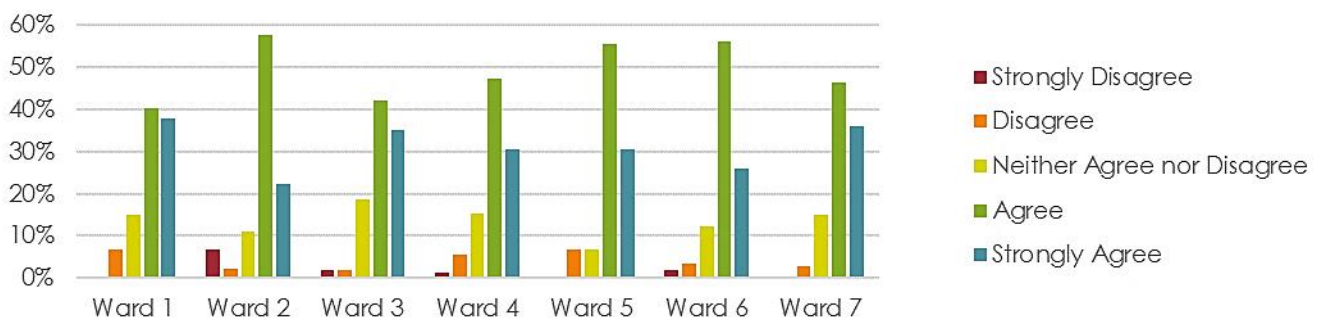
This question measured participants’ level of agreement with the statement: “Overall, I am satisfied with my life”. The graph below shows that 80% of respondents are overall satisfied with their lives, but almost 10% reported being unsatisfied to some extent.

FIGURE 42: OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION



Plotting Overall Life Satisfaction by geographic area shows ward 2 as an outlier, with more strongly negative responses and fewer strongly positive. As illustrated earlier, responses from ward 2 featured relatively low levels of employment, educational attainment and income, as well as a higher number of people with plans to move away. In this light, satisfaction ratings can be interpreted as both discontent and expression of aspiration to improve one’s circumstances.

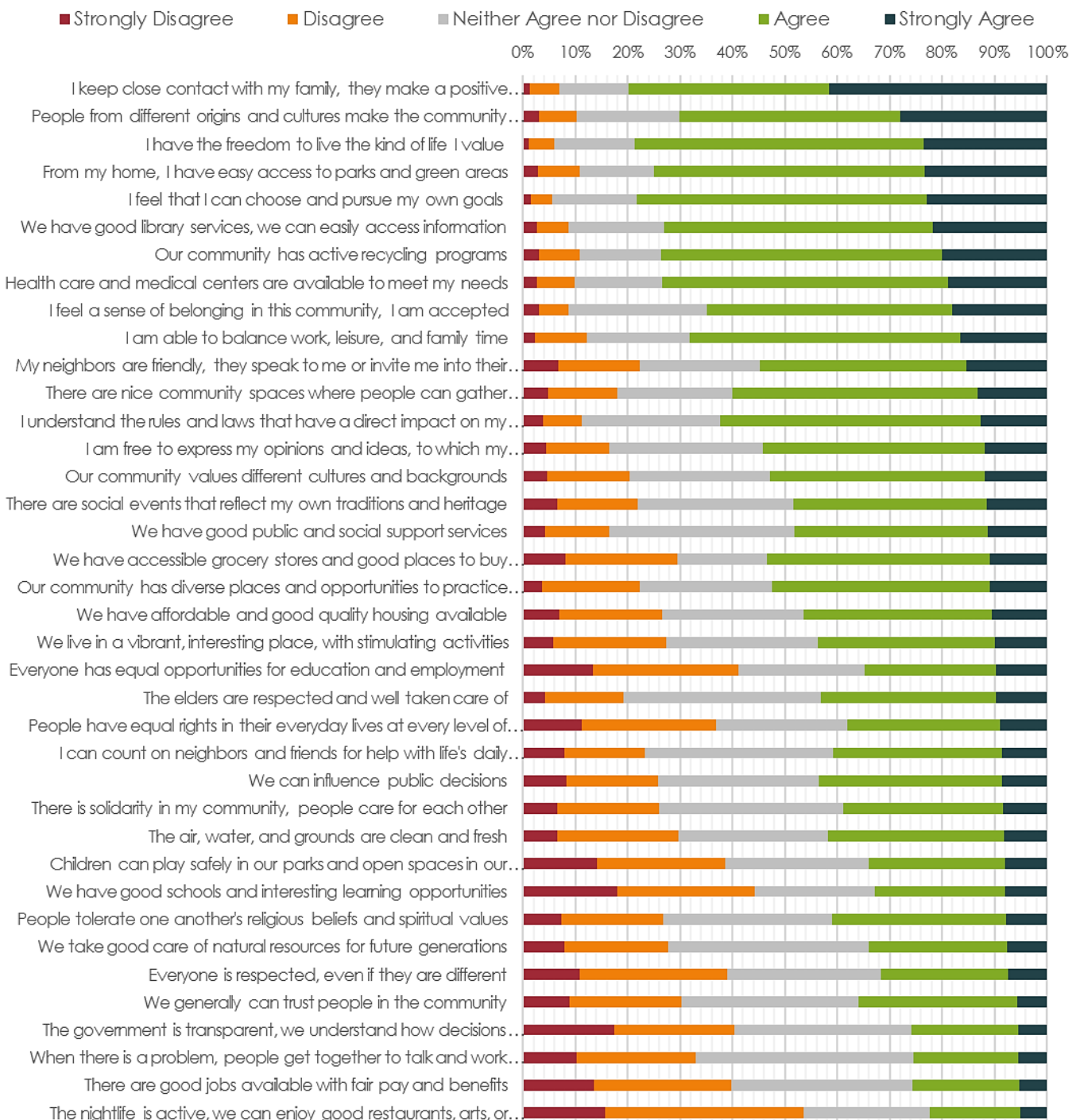
FIGURE 43: OVERALL LIFE SATISFACTION BY WARD



SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF LIFE

Factors contributing to life satisfaction related to diverse aspects of community life and the area where people live. The table below provides an overview of responses from the most highly ranked at the top to the lowest ranked at the bottom.

FIGURE 44: SATISFACTION WITH SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF LIFE



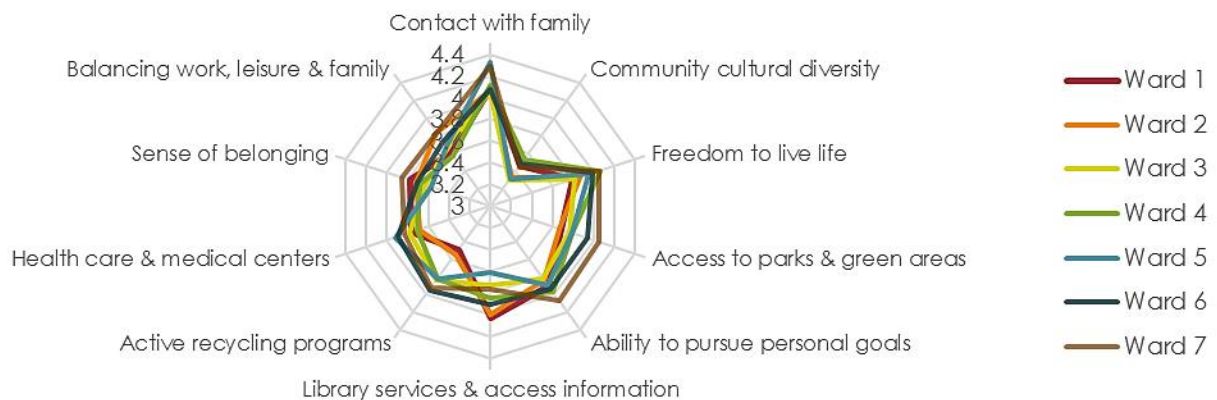
In general, the people of Holyoke seem to be satisfied with their family lives, their sense of freedom and autonomy, their access to parks and information, their sense of belonging, and the cultural diversity of the community. However, people highlighted concerns ranging from the lack of active nightlife to questions of social justice, dialogue, trust, respect, tolerance, and the need for better jobs and schools, environmental stewardship, and government transparency.

- ↑ Close contact with family
- ↑ Community cultural diversity
- ↑ Freedom to live the kind of life people value
- ↑ Easy access to parks and green areas
- ↑ Ability to choose and pursue personal goals
- ↑ Good library services and access information
- ↑ Active recycling programs
- ↑ Appropriate health care and medical centers
- ↗ Sense of belonging to the community
- ➔ Balancing work, leisure, and family time
- ➔ Trust in people in the community
- ➔ Resolving disputes in the community
- ➔ Respect to everyone, regardless of differences
- ➔ Equal rights at every level of society
- ➔ Equal opportunities for jobs and education
- ➔ Good jobs with fair pay and benefits
- ➔ Children’s safety in park and open spaces
- ➔ Active nightlife
- ➔ Transparency of government and public decision making
- ➔ Good schools and interesting learning opportunities

SELECTED LIFE SATISFACTION FACTORS BY POPULATION GROUP

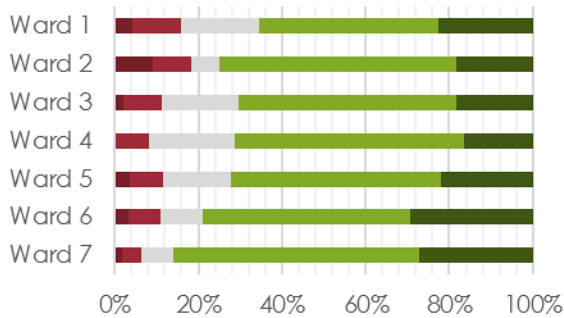
When perceptions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with specific aspects of life are examined by geographic area and by demographic variables, more nuance is given to the interpretation of responses.

FIGURE 45: TOP TEN SATISFACTION ASPECTS BY WARD—AVERAGE RATING



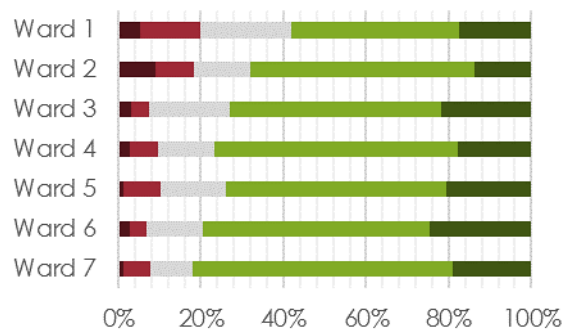
People from wards 1 and 2 are more satisfied than others with their access to library services and information. But for these residents, recycling programs seem to be deficient. It is also clear that there is better access to parks and green areas for ward 7, whose residents are in a better position to choose and pursue personal goals.

FIGURE 46: ACCESS TO PARKS AND GREEN AREAS BY WARD



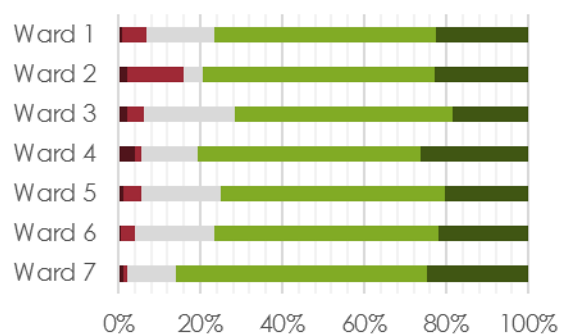
Access to amenities like parks and green areas vary geographically, especially in a city that encompasses an impressive range of landforms for a relatively small area. Nevertheless, in every city ward over 60% of respondents agree that they have easy access to parks and green areas from their home. People living in wards 1 and 2 have less access to parks, but still a high satisfaction rating overall. Wards 6 and 7 had the strongest positives, which is no surprise as they encompass some of the largest natural and mountainous areas, and some of the best access to the Connecticut River.

FIGURE 47: RECYCLING PROGRAMS BY WARD

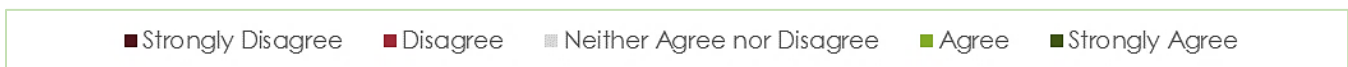


As mentioned, recycling programs present the lowest rankings in wards 1 and 2, and the highest rankings in wards 6 and 7. This may indicate a disparity in services from neighborhood to neighborhood. It may also correlate with a higher quantity of rental and multi-family units in lower wards, versus single family homes in outer wards. Wards 1 and 2 residents may also be experiencing dissatisfaction with disposal arrangements at properties managed by private landlords or public agencies, in addition to curbside pickup.

FIGURE 48: AUTONOMY BY WARD



When it comes to people’s ability to pursue their personal goals, ward 2 has more than twice the number of negative responses, as compared to other wards.



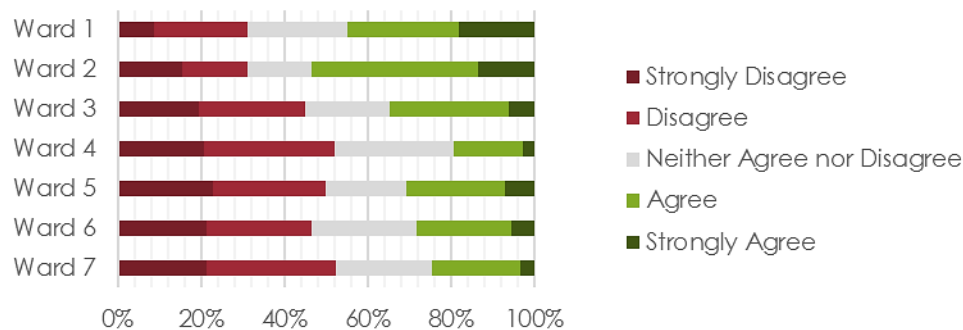
Variance was higher for the lowest ranked aspects of life satisfaction. Perceptions from wards 1 and 2 tend to be more positive overall, but the greatest divergences in satisfaction between wards relate to education and governance (Figure 50).

FIGURE 49: BOTTOM TEN SATISFACTION FACTORS BY WARD—AVERAGE RATING



Schools and learning opportunities showed up in the lowest points of satisfaction. Perceptions of residents from wards 1 and 2 are more positive in this area. By contrast, only about 20% of respondents living in wards 4 and 7 are satisfied with their schools and educational opportunities.

FIGURE 50: SCHOOLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES BY WARD



Delving into the most poorly ranked life satisfaction measure, we observe that parents tend to have a more favorable opinion of schools than non-parents (Figure 52). The age of respondent also influences the way schools and learning opportunities are perceived. Younger respondents (up to 29 years old) had more neutral and positive responses, whereas negative perceptions of schools are predominantly from the middle age cohorts (Figure 53). We may infer a difference between internal and external views of the education system, but it is also possible that college-aged people tend to be more satisfied with their educational options, while opportunities for adult education and enrichment may be lacking.

FIGURE 51: SCHOOLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES BY PARENTAL STATUS

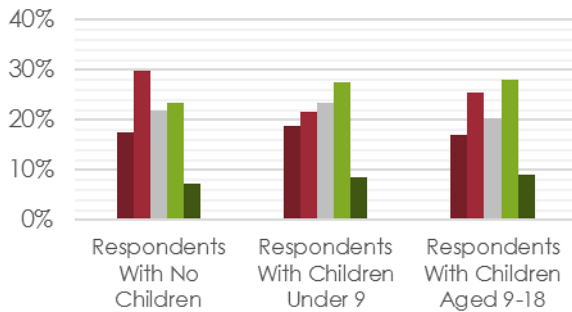


FIGURE 52: SCHOOLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES BY AGE OF RESPONDENT

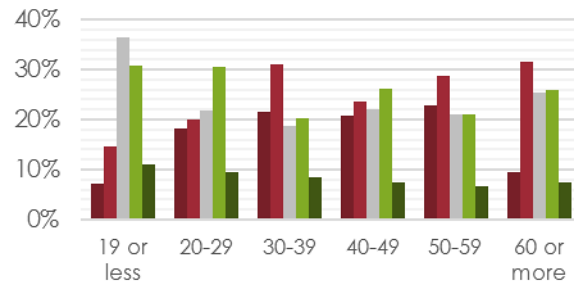


FIGURE 53: GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY BY WARD

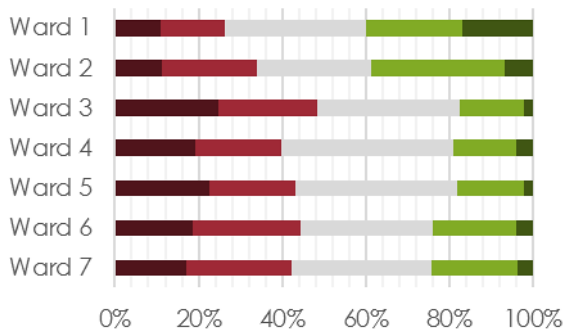
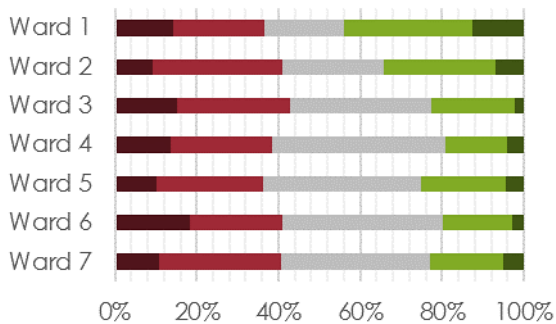


Figure 54 shows that there is room for improvement on public decision-making processes. Between 25% and 50% of residents, across wards, do not understand how decisions are made in the community. Only 1/5 of residents in wards 3 to 7 consider the government to be transparent to some extent.

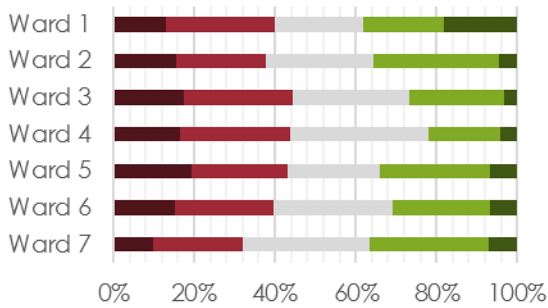
FIGURE 54: JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND FAIR PAY BY WARD



Jobs also appear as a high priority area for improvement in Holyoke. Approximately 40% of respondents disagree that good jobs with fair pay and benefits are available. Interestingly, wards 1 and 2 present more positive perceptions than any other ward, despite having the lowest income and educational attainment levels, and the highest number of unemployed people in the survey sample. Nevertheless, the strongly negative view of the employment situation in the city is striking across every ward.

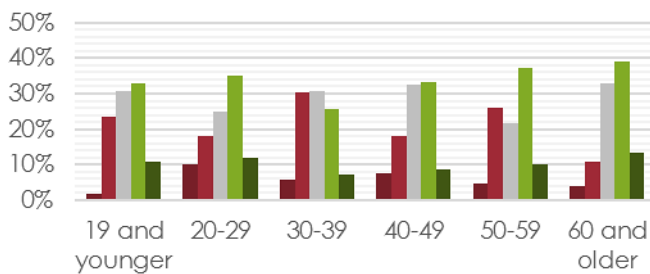
Priority interventions in the physical space should be particularly focused on improving children’s safety in public parks and open spaces, and increasing vibrancy. These two can go hand in hand. Public spaces that are well managed and maintained are more likely to attract people, and increased use of public spaces may in return reinforce sense of security in these spaces. In later sections, specific suggestions are made for more family-oriented events and program to activate spaces, and attract a critical mass of people, more frequently, to community social and cultural events. Reducing crime and drug use in public spaces will also appear as a broadly shared priority.

FIGURE 55: CHILDREN'S SAFETY IN PARKS BY WARD



Every ward has below 40% of respondents with a positive view of children's safety in the parks. Negative perceptions were consistent across the wards. Wards 3 and 4 had the most negative views. Ward 7 was least negative, yet more than 1/3 of residents consider more effort is needed to improve the city parks that these children.

FIGURE 56: PLACE VIBRANCY BY AGE

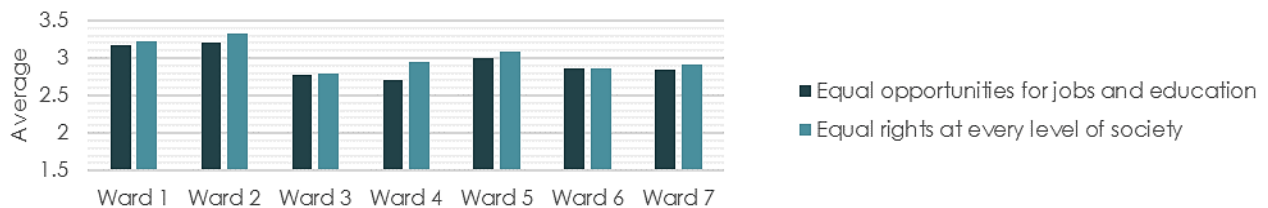


People in their 20s were most likely to strongly disagree that Holyoke's nightlife offers stimulating activities, but different age groups have consistent perceptions of Holyoke's vibrancy. More vibrant and interesting activities are desired at all ages.



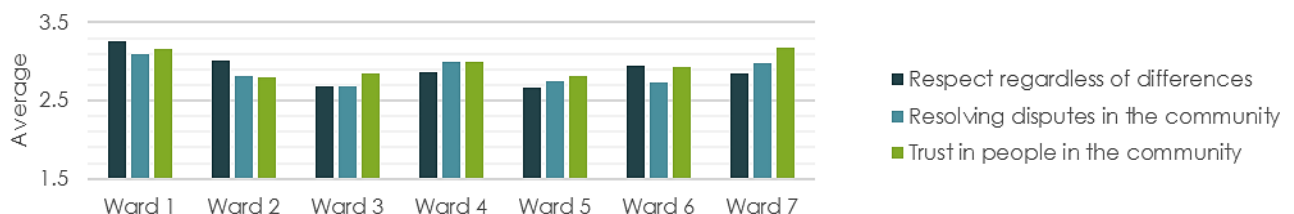
Issues of fairness – equal opportunities and rights – was among the lowest ranked aspects in the city. It is, however, noteworthy that areas where socioeconomic factors are lowest in the total population and sample (1 and 2), did not reflect the lowest averages.

FIGURE 57: EQUALITY BY WARD



On issues related to social connections – respect, conflict resolution and trust – slightly less negative perceptions are found in ward 1, and in ward 7 there is more trust in people in the community.

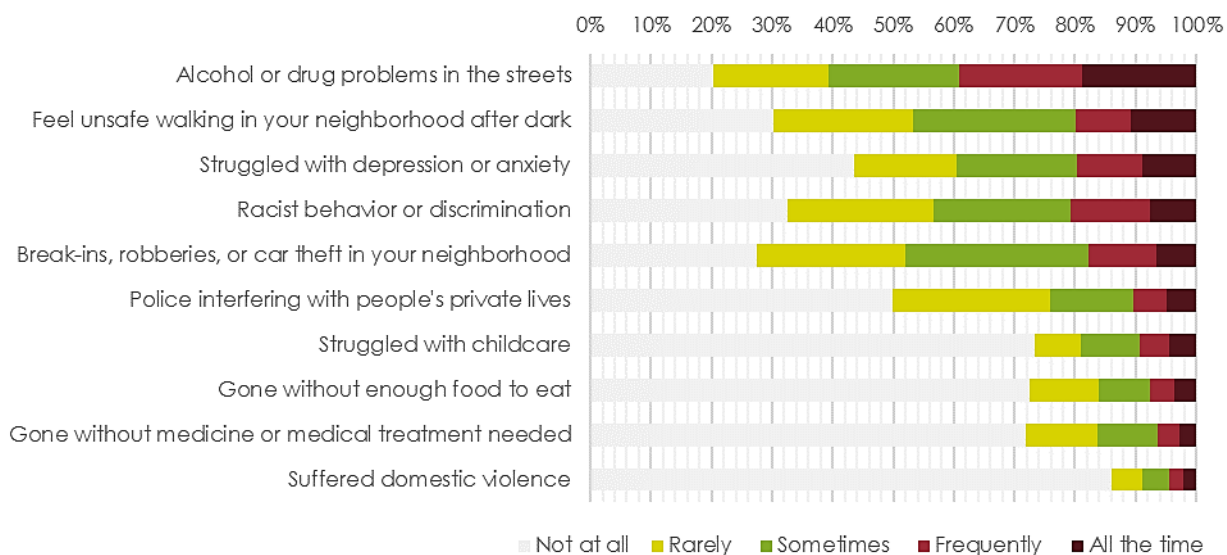
FIGURE 58: SOCIAL TIES BY WARD



V. FREQUENCY OF ADVERSE EVENTS

The frequency of occurrences considered to have a negative impact on people’s well-being was measured on a five-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “all the time”. Predominance of the red colors indicates that these adverse events have strongly affected the lives of a larger number of during the past year.

FIGURE 59: FREQUENCY OF ADVERSE LIFE EVENTS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS



Of the ten types of adverse events that undermine people’s experience of well-being, five are closely linked to the social experience of one’s surroundings. Among those who responded sometimes, frequently, and all the time, to these questions, their experience is as follows:

- approximately 60% of people experienced alcohol or drug problems in the streets;
- almost 50% felt unsafe walking alone at night or experienced robberies in their neighborhood;
- more than 40% experienced racist behavior and discrimination;
- and 24% had problems with police interfering with their private lives to some degree.

At the personal well-being level:

- 40% of people struggled with depression and anxiety;
- 19% struggled with childcare;
- 16% have gone without enough food or medicine, and
- 9% suffered domestic violence in Holyoke.

When we look more closely at these adverse events at the collective level, we find some divergence in experience in light of geographic areas. Wards 1, 2 and 4 report more frequent experience of negative events overall, while wards 5, 6, and 7 are consistently better positioned.

FIGURE 60: DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS IN THE STREETS BY WARD

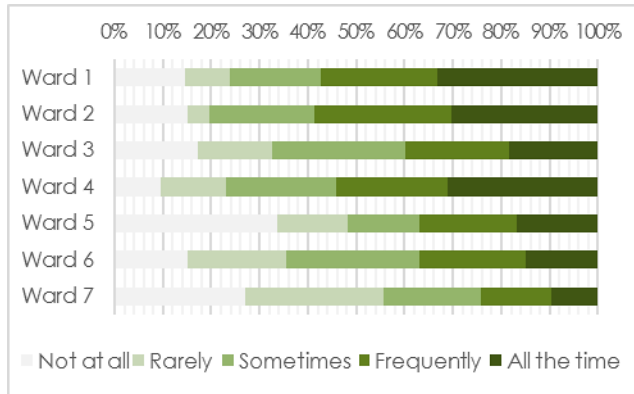


FIGURE 61: BREAK-IN, ROBBERIES OR CAR THEFT IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD BY WARD

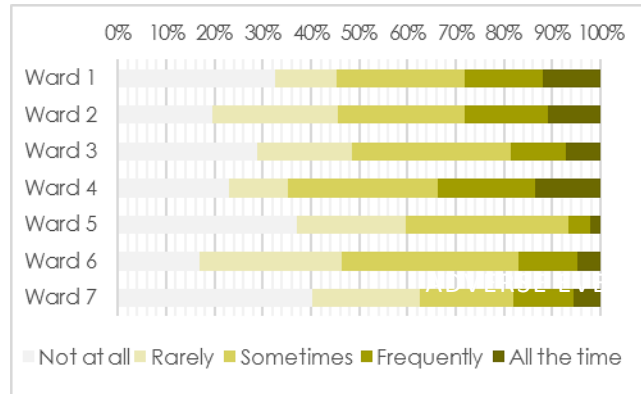
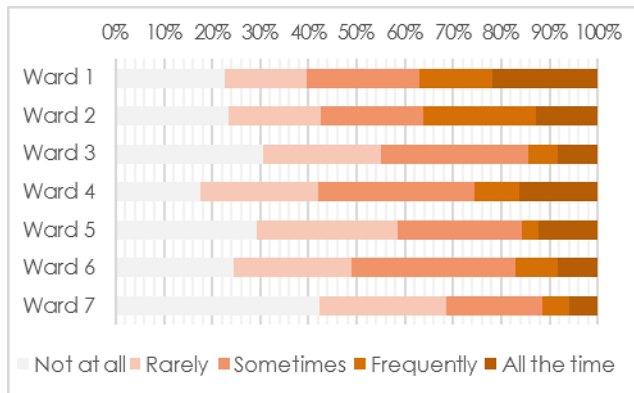


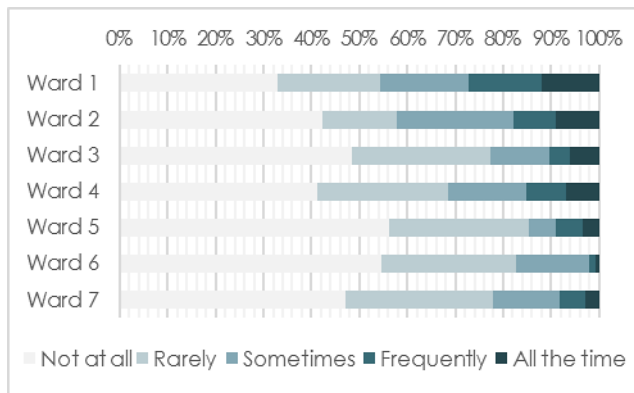
FIGURE 62: FEELING UNSAFE WALKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD AFTER DARK BY WARD



Over half of respondents living in wards 1 and 2 reported having problems with drugs in the streets frequently or all the time. In contrast, ward 7 ranks below 30% on this measure. Robberies seem to happen more often in wards 1, 2 and 4, while wards 5 and 7 reported the lower number of incidences.

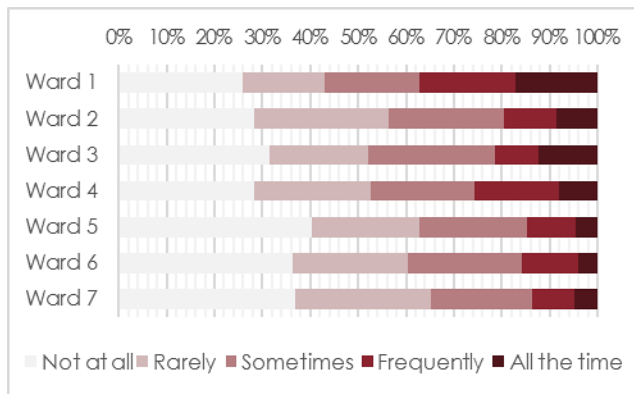
People reported feeling unsafe walking in their neighborhood after dark across the city, but this is clearly of higher concern for those residing in wards 1, 2 and 4, where 60% of respondents felt unsafe at least sometimes.

FIGURE 63: POLICE INTERFERING WITH PEOPLE’S PRIVATE LIVES BY WARD



About half of people reported having experienced police interference in their personal lives to some extent in the past year, but there was sharp divergence in this experience. One quarter of ward 1 respondents stated this occurs frequently or all the time, while in ward 6 this is an infrequent occurrence. This raises a question of whether this distinction is due to demographic differences between wards, or whether there are substantive differences in community policing strategies.

FIGURE 64: RACISM BEHAVIOR AND DISCRIMINATION BY WARD

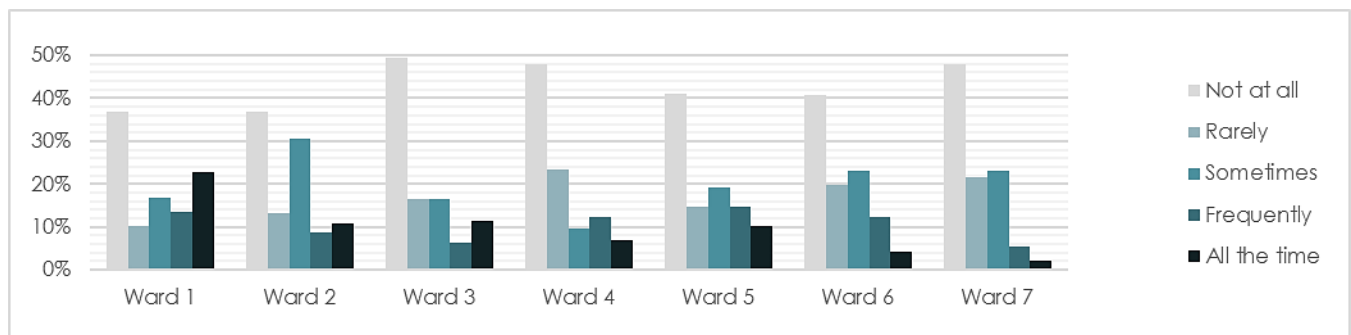


Finally, people living in ward 1 reported experiencing racist behavior or discrimination more frequently than others: Almost 40% of people in this area frequently suffered discrimination in the past year. Approximately 45% of people living in wards 2, 3 and 4 also had this problem at least “sometimes”. Ward 7 reported the lowest concern with discrimination, but the range of responses across the city was similar otherwise. Only 25-40% of people reported never having experienced discrimination in the city.

The five types of experiences above relate to experiences at the collective level. At the personal level, the five events undermining residents’ wellbeing relate to mental and physical health, nutrition, children care and safety at home.

With regard to struggles with depression and anxiety, there was a stark contrast between wards in terms of the most negative and positive responses. Ward 1 had the greatest frequency of respondents who experience depression or anxiety “all the time” and ward 2, the most who responded “sometimes”. Ward 7 presents the fewer frequent occurrences.

FIGURE 65: STRUGGLING WITH DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY BY WARD



When we look across all five factors, what stands out is that respondents in ward 1 report in every case the highest frequency of negative experiences. A third or more of ward 1 respondents struggled to access healthcare, childcare and food in the past year. About 20% of wards 2 and 4 also struggled to access childcare and healthcare at least sometimes. Wards 1 and 4 have 15-20% of respondents reporting domestic violence from sometimes to all the time.

With remarkable consistency, these critical measures of personal well-being track better for respondents living in the upper wards than for those in the downtown neighborhoods.

FIGURE 66: STRUGGLING WITH CHILDCARE BY WARD

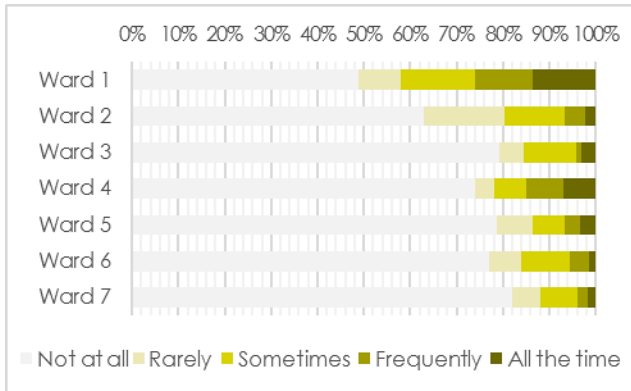


FIGURE 67: GONE WITHOUT ENOUGH FOOD BY WARD

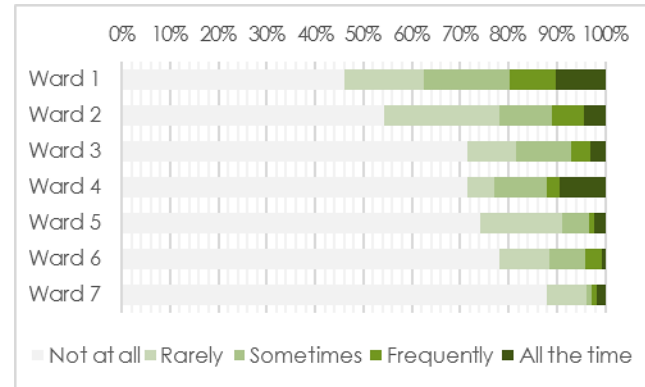


FIGURE 68: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY WARD

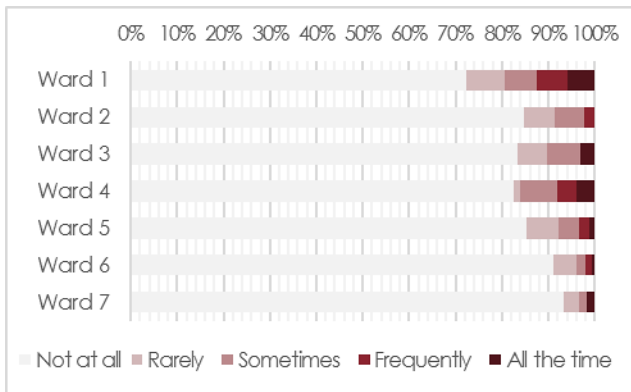
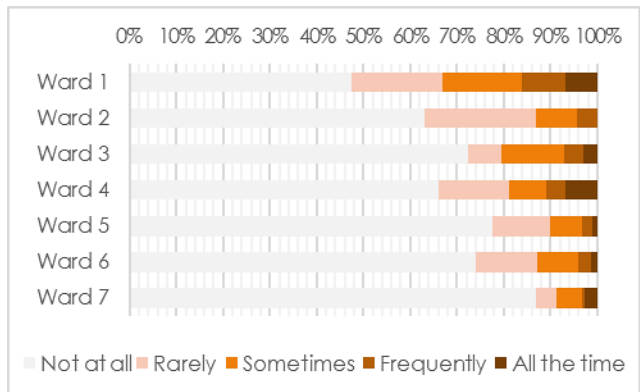


FIGURE 69: GONE WITHOUT MEDICINE/MEDICAL CARE BY WARD



Generally, respondents from upper wards reported very low occurrences of impacts related to these basic needs. Given the socioeconomic and demographic differences between wards, underlying causes such as poverty and language barriers, transportation and housing quality are obvious contributors.

Some other contributing factors come up in the qualitative analysis (Chapter VII), such as insufficient programs serving families in the low-moderate income range, and office hours at social service agencies that make it difficult for people who have 9-5 employment to seek help.

The city’s limited food and recreation options also increase the energy and time households must spend in the pursuit of basic needs and well-being.

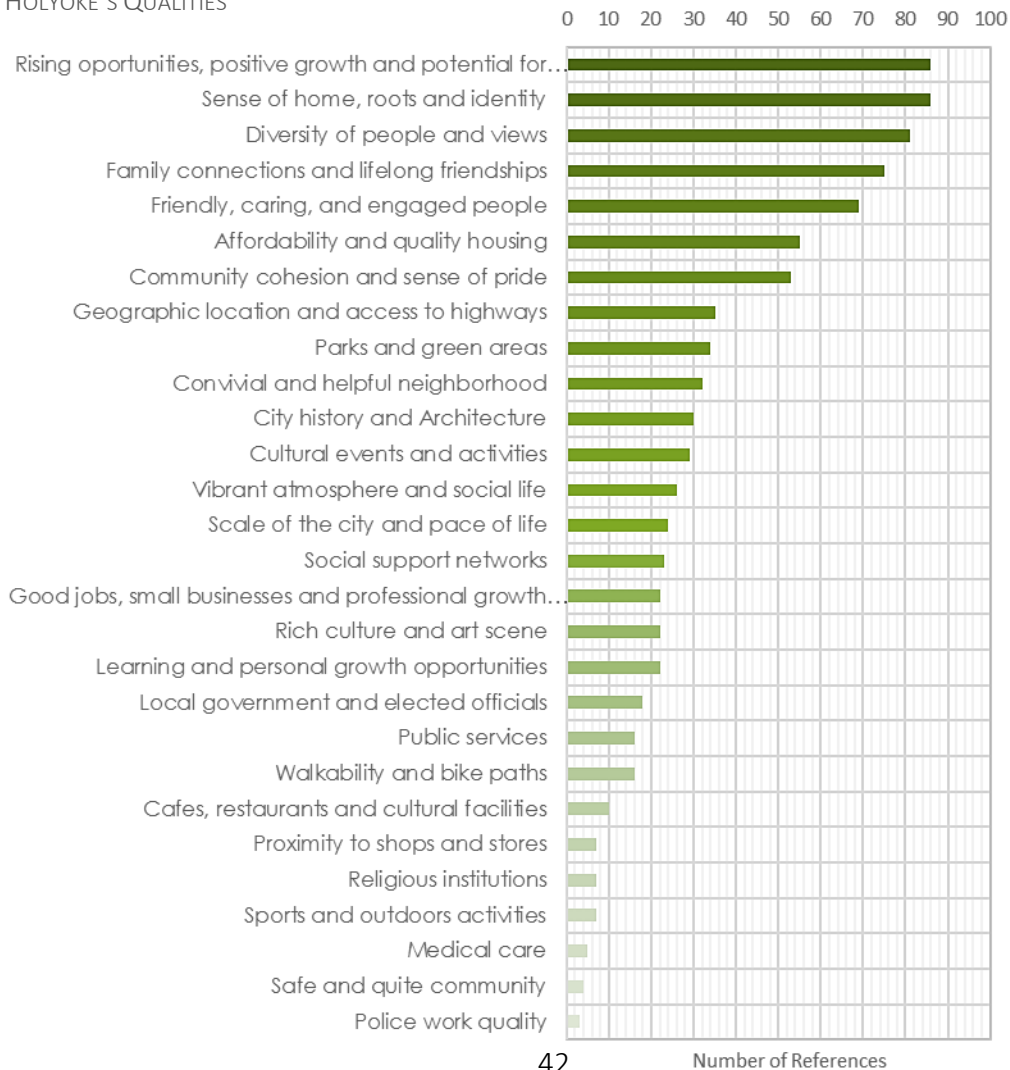
VI. QUALITIES OF THE PLACE

FIGURE 70: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE ON WHAT PEOPLE LIKE MOST ABOUT HOLYOKE



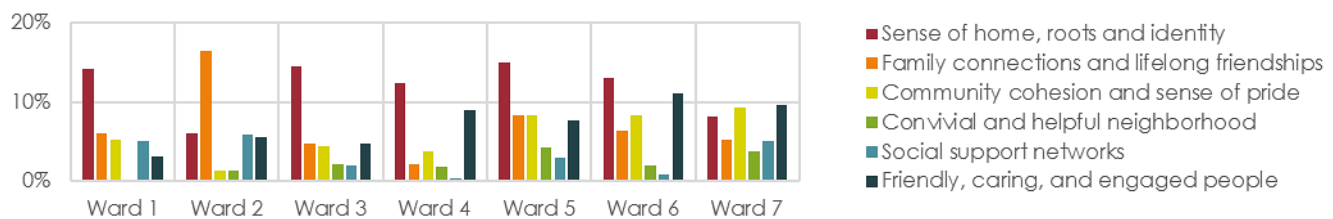
This question asked participants to discuss, in their own words, what they like most about Holyoke. The word cloud on the left suggests that personal and social relations, diversity, as well as housing, affordability and opportunities are among the qualities most strongly associated with Holyoke. Through content analysis, we classified statements and ascertained how often and in which context themes are expressed, and evaluated convergence and divergence in views among population groups. The graph below shows the frequency of themes that emerged from this analysis.

FIGURE 71: HOLYOKE’S QUALITIES



A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND LONGSTANDING BONDS TO PLACE

FIGURE 72: SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY WARD



Themes relating to a strong sense of community and connection with the place are the most frequently cited. Holyoke’s sense of community is characterized by both longstanding attachments to place – roots, family relations and lifelong friendships – and newcomers’ perceptions of cohesion and commitment to the place.

Residents from ward 2 emphasized family connections and lifelong friendships, but a sense of identity was strongly expressed throughout wards 1-6. For ward 7, sense of community was linked less to family and personal history, and more to the current perception of community dynamics involving caring and socially engaged people.

A strong sense of pride among Holyokers was expressed by newcomers in many ways, but most often linked to a sense of identity for people born and raised in the city.

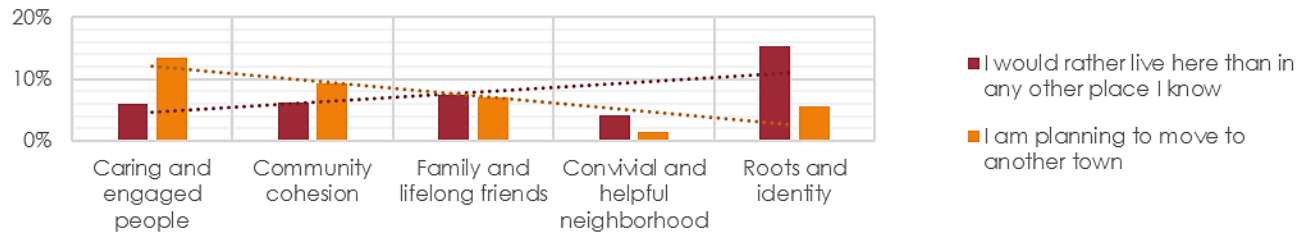
Community appears as a shared value for lifelong residents and newcomers alike, and Holyokers in general are described as good people, welcoming, friendly, with “grit”.

The strong social cohesion that exists in the city involves informal and formal social support networks. People often mention help amongst neighbors in both everyday situations and times of crisis, and support delivered by non-profits and formal organizations, including food, senior centers, and schools. The importance of activism and volunteering to improve people’s lives was often mentioned as a shared personal and community attitude. Perspectives included both those who look for and find support, and those offering support or looking for opportunities to contribute to common goals.

- “People have strong roots to this city. Holyokers both here and afar call Holyoke ‘Home’.”
- “It has been my home all my life, and I am deeply committed to it.”
- “Holyoke is where I’m from. There are interesting things happening and I feel an opportunity to contribute to those things.”
- “Community plays big factor in everyone’s priorities here.”
- “...it really is a community: people know each other’s names and take care of each other in ways that have become uncommon even in other small cities.”
- “Holyoke has many citizens that love the city. It’s very nice to see how many people love their city.”
- “Despite its struggles Holyoke is a city built on pride. People from Holyoke are very proud of this city’s history, rich cultural heritage, and the potential of its future.”
- “There’s a sense that most people have pride in the Holyoke that is theirs. It’s exciting to feel that pride.”
- “Sense that many people are working together for change, improvement.”
- “La gente que lucha por hacer de Holyoke una comunidad saludable, prospera y feliz.”
- “In Holyoke you never have to look for volunteers. We always have them”
- “I have many opportunities to volunteer in the community.”
- “This city gives off a feeling of hope and a sense of willingness to try and make things better.”
- “When the important issues arise or there is a tragedy this community always pulls together from every corner of the city.”
- “Holyoke is a tight knit community that supports one another in good times and bad. Friendships made here are friendships that you can count on to last a lifetime!”

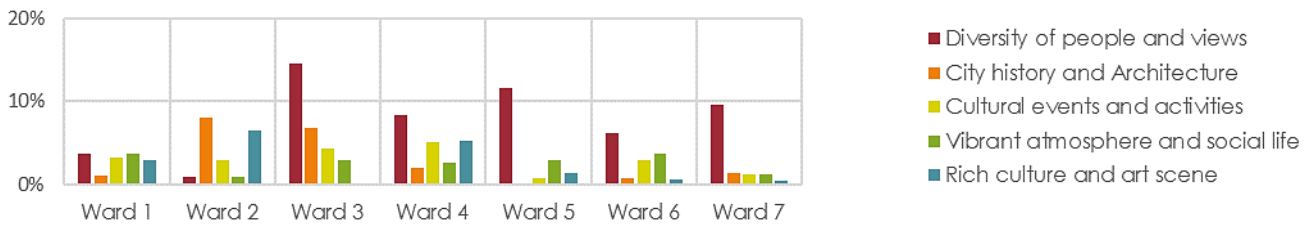
What people like most about Holyoke in terms of its sense of community is embodied by commitment, pride, and solidarity across demographics. However, the younger age cohorts place the most emphasis on friends and family, whereas those 30 years and over mostly associate it with roots, enduring relationships, and commitment to the community. By cross-tabulating responses to this question with people’s intentions to move, we can observe that those who are committed to the place for the long term declared higher appreciation of community life at the neighborhood level.

FIGURE 73: SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY INTENTION TO MOVE



CULTURAL VITALITY: HISTORY, HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND ARTS SCENE

FIGURE 74: CULTURAL VITALITY BY WARD



The diversity of people, backgrounds, views, socio-economic levels, cultural perspectives, affinities and orientations was among the most important qualities of this place to its residents. For some respondents, acceptance and respect for diversity related to autonomy and the ability to live life and raise families according to one’s own principles. Lower value was associated with diversity in wards 1 and 2, but perhaps rather than interpreting this to mean diversity is unimportant, it may be possible that diversity is just part of everyday life in these areas.

“La diversidad cultural y el gran potencial para multiples actividades culturales y educativas.”

“Diversity is key to a thriving community.”

History and heritage are highly valued at both the personal and collective levels, particularly in wards 2 and 3. Holyoke’s history is sometimes related to family ties and the ancestry of the city’s people, but more often, it is linked with a sense of pride in the city’s architecture and the aesthetic qualities associated with Holyoke’s industrial heritage. The term “beautiful” is often used to characterize the city, from the beauty of houses including pride in people’s own homes, to the city’s landmark buildings, green spaces and canals. Most importantly, many shared an understanding that Holyoke’s rich heritage should be safeguarded and promoted in contemporary interventions.

“Es una ciudad con mucha historia la cual debe seguir escribiendose en nuestra contemporaneidad.”

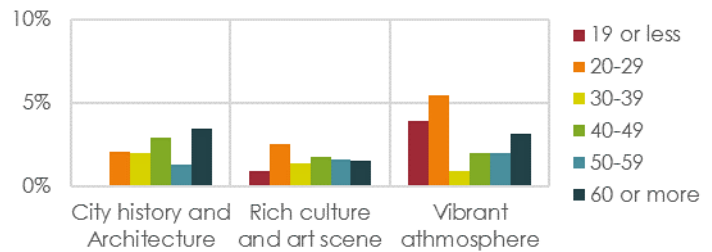
“The contrast between the city’s downtown mills and apartment blocks, and the park-like setting of many nineteenth century estates reminds me of how the city has evolved and developed. It gives me a great sense of pride for our history.”

In addition to elements of culture related to family and collective heritage, Holyoke’s cultural vitality also encompasses annual events and daily activities that are highly appreciated by residents. Responses included specific references to the St. Patrick’s day parade and Celebrate Holyoke, and a few mentioned tangible assets like public institutions (museums, library), private cultural hubs (Gateway City Arts), as well as spaces like the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round and restaurants where people can gather together. Arts and entertainment are often cited in reference to a growing arts community within Holyoke. The arts scene, along with cultural events, are related to creating a vibrant atmosphere and social life sometimes seen as an attractor for young people or visitors.

By cross tabulating the themes raised by residents with their demographic attributes we were able to assess that qualities associated with the city’s cultural vitality are consistently cited across most demographic attributes, but variances emerge when responses are examined by age.

People in the older age ranges tend to place more importance on qualities associated with the city’s history and architecture, and, as expected, people in their 20s value the vibrancy and social life derived from its rich cultural assets.

FIGURE 75: CULTURAL VITALITY FACTORS BY AGE



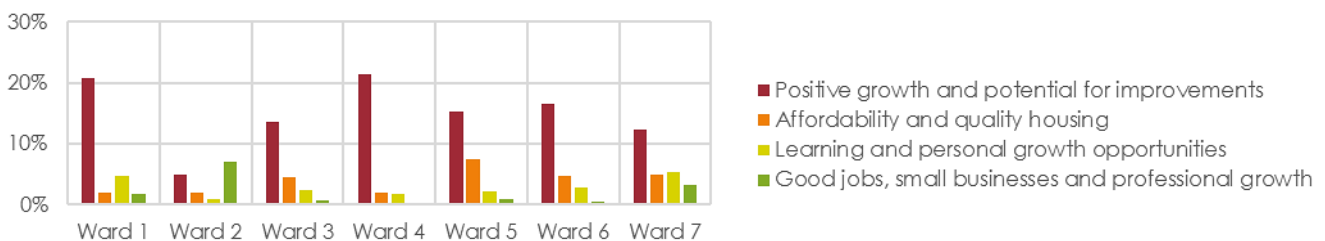
Rich cultures, history and heritage are major features that characterize Holyoke, there is nonetheless room for improvement in this area in terms of inclusion of cultural assets representing the fullest range of Holyoke’s heritage and people. Further details are provided in the next section.

“Bridge the gap between old and new Holyoke.”

“If the diversity of the people that live here was to be seen as opportunities, we could be a stronger community.”

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

FIGURE 76: OPPORTUNITIES BY WARD



The single most frequently cited quality people appreciate in Holyoke is its great potential. Among Holyoke’s residents there is a widely shared sense that the city is “on the rise”, based on its physical assets, diverse people, the arts community, and not least of all, its robust social capital. Residents’ appreciation for social and economic development opportunities encompasses recent improvements and increasing opportunities as well as the city’s untapped potential.

“It’s nice to be in a city where collectively the whole town is trying to be a better space.”

“They are making things look better, Holyoke is getting to be a place to visit, because they are making good changes, fixing parks for the family and our kids, we are getting more help from the police....”

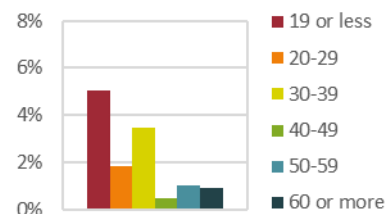
People living in ward 2 had a particular appreciation for opportunities at the personal level, such as good jobs, small business and professional growth. All of the other wards placed stronger emphasis on recent and potential development perspectives for the city as a whole. It is also interesting to note that recent and potential development initiatives are of particular interest to moderate and middle-income residents.

Jobs and professional growth opportunities found in Holyoke are also particularly important to younger people. Since this includes positive references to educational institutions and related resources like Holyoke Community College, the Lighthouse, or the library, their emphasis may be understood as reflecting education and training opportunities. The next chapter will show that job opportunities arise frequently as something that is needed, rather than as a current asset.

FIGURE 77: POSITIVE GROWTH AND POTENTIAL BY INCOME LEVEL



FIGURE 78: JOBS AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES BY AGE



Community development references generally point towards a sense of collective endeavor to improve Holyoke. There are “a lot of people engaged in making change”, however, this does not mean there is a shared understanding of ways in which the city should develop. To most, the city’s future success is directly linked with the future of the people who live there today. Their goal is to create opportunities for Holyokers to “grow and thrive” associating the city’s success with their ability to access opportunity and be personally successful. In contrast, to some, fulfilling the city’s potential means increasing attractiveness and its ability to bring new people and activities to Holyoke. Questions related to place attachment and sentiments of gentrification appear to be of vital importance to residents in defining the city’s development strategies.

“I believe in the city and want to be part of the solution to make it an even better place to live and raise a family.”

“I want this city to be a place where my children take pride in living.”

“There’s a lot of untapped potential, besides: living here is an opportunity to build something new, not merely take advantage of what was here when you arrived.”

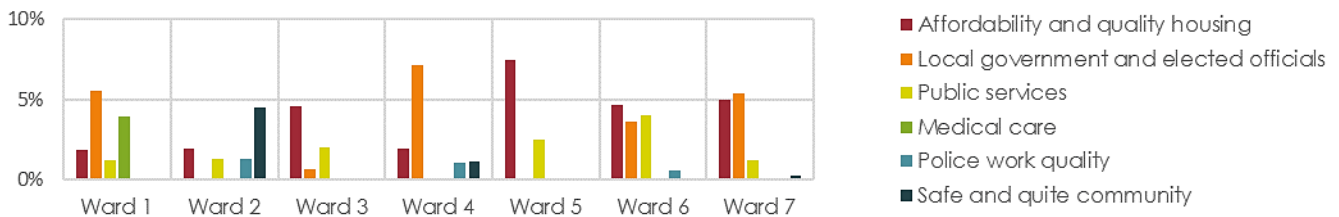
Finally, while there is hope, there is also a desire for more efficient ways of transforming the vision into action and moving forward.

"I feel that there is a lot of potential here, and that we are taking steps toward becoming the place I truly want to live in. Sometimes it feels exhausting working toward and waiting for progress to catch up with the vision."

"I believe that Holyoke has a bright future and I do like what I see. However, this movement takes a long time to accomplish. Not complaining just observing."

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, SERVICES AND AFFORDABILITY

FIGURE 79: LIVING CONDITION QUALITIES BY WARD



Compared with sense of community, cultural vitality and increasing opportunities, there are fewer but still notable mentions of qualities related to city government and public services. An even smaller number of people acknowledged appreciation for medical care and public safety in the city.

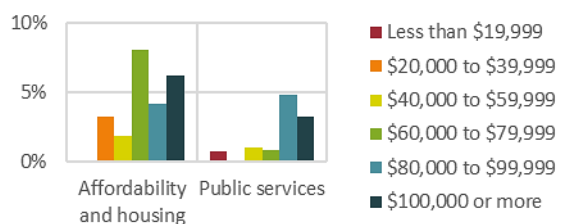
Positive statements about the city’s administration often connect with specific elected officials – the Mayor, a Councilor, or city staff. Some referred to accessibility (literal proximity of city government), while others to pride in young people who are getting involved in government and politics, as well as the city’s LGBT stance. Residents also referred to positive directions taken in city administration and the public’s ability to have political influence.

"If people are willing to put time in and engage with the political process, they can see real results."

For many residents, particularly in ward 5, affordability is one of the top qualities of the city. The question of affordability refers most often to accessing quality housing, but also to the general cost of living and public services including taxes, utilities and waste management. For a few residents, particularly in ward 6, the delivery of public services in the city is excellent.

People feel they can live well in Holyoke for less money, but great houses at affordable prices, along with low taxes, cheap electricity and utilities are qualities identified mostly by mid to high-income households. Similarly, people earning \$80K or more have a more positive view of public services and affordability, and this view is not necessarily shared by lower income populations.

FIGURE 80: HOUSING AND SERVICES BY INCOME LEVEL



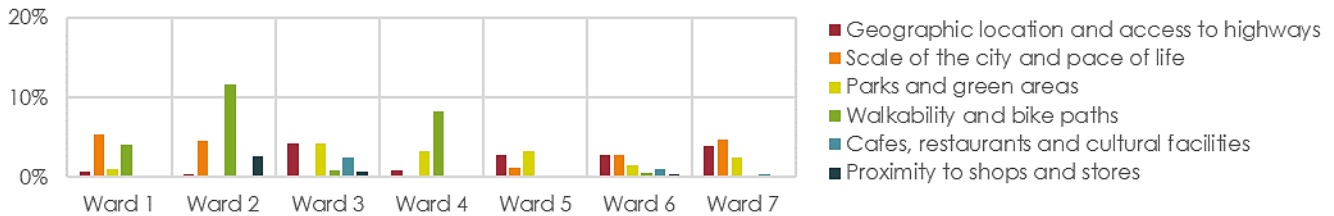
"Great services for our taxes, excellent utility services, trash and recycling pickups, good police and fire."

“I lived in Holyoke, raised my children in Holyoke but rents are higher than in neighboring towns. I want to return to Holyoke but until the rents decrease, I will have to live elsewhere.”

“We need more decent affordable housing for young people who work their two part time jobs can also become independent. So they too can go from renters to homeowners.”

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHIC SETTING

FIGURE 81: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT BY WARD



Although not broadly shared, appreciation of aspects linked to the physical environment was expressed in some instances. References to the city’s “small town feel”, scale and pace of life which some equate with well-being, are consistent across varied demographics, but absent in wards 3 and 4. Holyoke is compared favorably to similar cities, and some praise Holyoke’s mix of urban assets paired with intimacy and safety resulting from its small scale. For ward 2, walking, biking, and the proximity to shops and stores are of particular importance, whereas ward 3 makes clearer note of restaurants and cultural facilities.

“I like that I run into people I know almost everywhere I go”

“It’s like Cheers - in some places, everyone knows your name.”

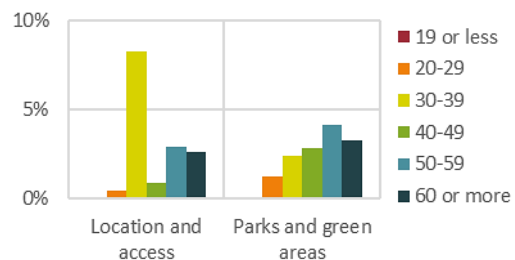
“When I lived in Holyoke I felt like a citizen, in Springfield I feel like a number.”

Some agree on the advantages of Holyoke’s strategic location in the regional context, and the easy access to both larger cities nearby and natural parks. Others mentioned parks downtown or surrounding areas, like the Heritage Park, the Canal Walk and the Reservoir. People appreciate the access to community fields and access to fishing in the river, as well as the aesthetic qualities of Mount Tom and the Connecticut River.

“It is a city close to nature, including the river, the reservation, a nearby Audubon sanctuary.”

It is however important to note that neither parks and green areas, nor location and access, are mentioned across the board. Older residents cited parks more often, whereas people in their 30s placed much more emphasis on the strategic geographic location, and easy access to highways and other towns or cities, as they do on housing quality and affordability.

FIGURE 82: GEOGRAPHIC SETTING QUALITIES BY AGE



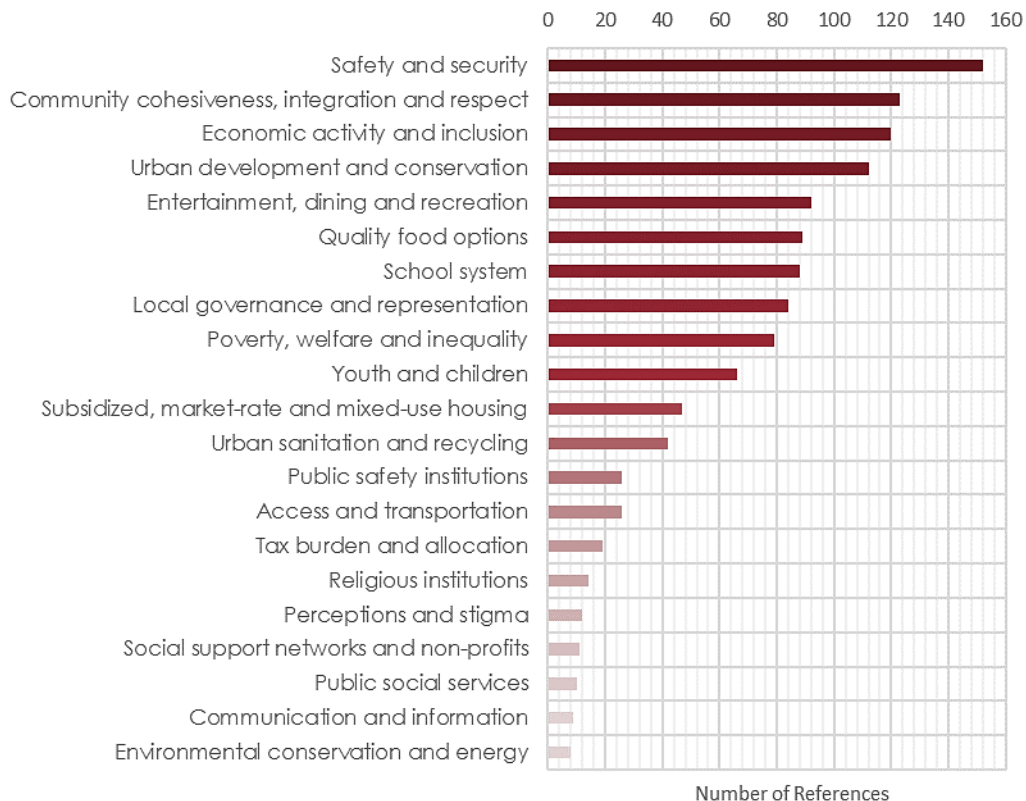
VII. ENVISIONING A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

FIGURE 83: OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE ON WHAT PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE ABOUT HOLYOKE



People were asked to discuss what they would change in Holyoke if they could. A handful of people responded *todo*, another responded *nada*, but for all those in between, the most frequently occurring themes refer to a sense of safety and security, community cohesiveness, cultural integration and interpersonal respect. If the previous chapter showed that sense of community is among the most cherished of Holyoke’s qualities, this section will show there is still room for improvement in this area. In devising a better place to live, economic activity, economic inclusion, urban development and maintenance are also among the top themes. This section shows major patterns in residents’ concerns about the place where they live and highlights the vision of a better future that emerged from content analysis.

FIGURE 84: WHAT PEOPLE WOULD CHANGE IN HOLYOKE IF THEY COULD



COMMUNITY COHESION, CULTURAL INTEGRATION AND INTERPERSONAL RESPECT

When discussing what people would change in Holyoke if they could, cultural integration and interpersonal respect appear as major concerns. Despite the valued diversity and strong social connections that exist in the city, many local residents identify a cultural and socio-economic divide between different groups and areas within the city. Some reference two, others three major groups that share similar concerns, but also have distinct perspectives and aspirations for the city.

"Hay una fuerte division entre la comunidad Hispana y el resto de la poblacion de la ciudad."

"I would like for our three communities (old Holyoke, new Holyoke and Latin @ Holyoke) to find space to build more common ground. Many groups think they are trying to build common ground, but it still feels like not everyone is truly welcomed..."

"Holyoke is divided, even hostile. We need to stop the blaming/good old days routine and learn to appreciate each other and work together. New/Old Holyoke both need to learn to appreciate and include ALL of the city."

"La divison entre las clases sociales y de origen."

"The racial and class divide is bizarrely intense and leads to two very different Holyokes."

"I feel there is still an undercurrent of racism that I wish were not present"

"I feel that Holyoke is in many ways divided. There is excitement/sense of possibility/acceptance/community feeling among many but those feelings don't reach everyone, both because some are still disenfranchised (or having to spend too much energy meeting basic needs) and on the other hand because some are resisting change/diversity."

"Bridge the gap between 'old' and 'new' Holyoke."

"Our fantastic sense of community isn't always extended to all ethnic groups, however, and I would like to change."

"I love the diversity - even though we're not good about mingling as a city."

"We need to integrate the cultures. We have so much to learn from each other's cultures."

While many residents offer specific suggestions to bridge such a divide, others express a persistent resentment and negative ideas with regard to discrimination, racism and prejudice, and the general climate. Discriminatory responses were even present in this survey, from English and Hispanic speakers alike.

"More racial and ethnic diversity and tolerance from all sides"

Resistance to change was among the negative attitudes most often cited as hindering the community's development, but there are also references to resistance towards outsiders' ideas and newcomers' contributions. This could relate to the strong sense of community pride, which is an essential part of committed, cohesive, friendly, and caring communities, but perhaps also to frustration with previous research projects that brought no visible benefit to local people.

"I would like all these New Holyokers to stop trying to tell us lifelong residents how we should live our lives. We all got along really well through the years, without them stirring up problems. The ones who couldn't accept the Hispanic's, left a long time ago and most of us said 'Good Riddance'."

"The thing I would change about Holyoke is the attitude of too many of those who are new to the city who often come across the liberal elite and essentially are saying, 'Oh, you have an adorable city. Here, let us show you how to run things.' New people with new ideas are essential to ensure vibrancy, but that just splinters into tribes without respect for, or at least common decency to, all groups. In short, the lefties need to accept that their way won't always be granted and their way isn't necessarily the right way."

Residents call for an atmosphere of tolerance and respect towards minorities and progressive views. Actionable suggestions were offered to improve cultural integration and inclusion and foster culture-sensitive institutions by increasing the number of bilingual staff in schools, administration, and police force, and incorporating cultural backgrounds into broader planning and projects.

“We struggled with the lack of diversity in the teacher workforce. Cultural and linguistic misunderstandings were frequent.”

“More Spanish speakers in government.”

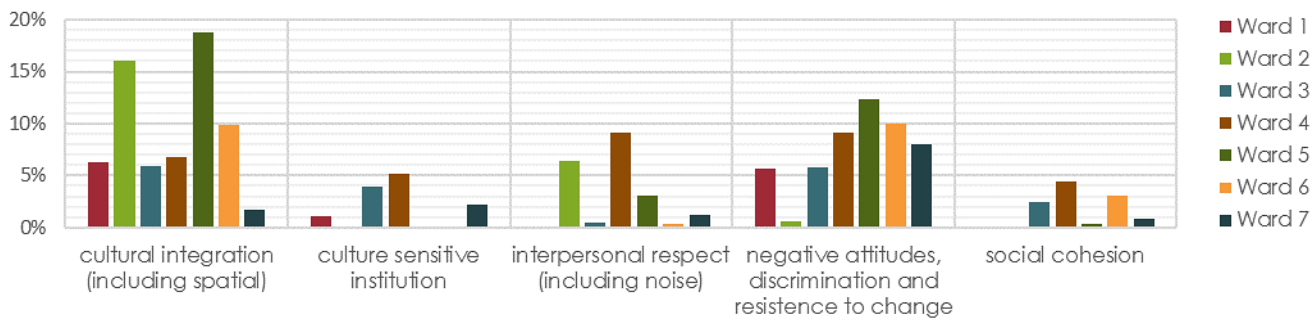
“We have more minorities represented on our city council, but we need MORE. There is much more that needs to be done in terms of equity and opportunity in education, safety, health, housing, and employment.”

“There is so much racism from the cops and other people not from the flats. There are two Holyokes and I don’t like it.”

“[the city] voted down having a Polish district. The Polish have been in the community since the city started.”

“We need a science museum and a museum about immigrants to our city and about Holyoke’s history.”

FIGURE 85: SOCIAL COHESION, INTERPERSONAL RESPECT AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION ITEMS BY WARD



One facet of this discussion touches on how a lack of cultural understanding might be driving ineffective approaches to bilingual students, something that could change to improve educational outcomes. This is another angle on the need for self-determination, making institutional decisions that are adapted to the city’s unique context. There are, however, conflicting views between the desire to officially reflect the population and make institutions bilingual versus calls for “English only” in Holyoke and the schools. A shared understanding on this matter should be built through dialogue, only then can effective measures and strategies be put forward.

“The expectations that have been placed on many of Holyoke’s public schools, staff and students is beyond comprehensible. Second language acquisition is a process that cannot be measured by an Anglo yardstick. I would love to see Holyoke fight the state, take back their schools and listen to staff who know the population and with support could make public education better and enjoyable for all. Diversity is a strength but poverty and prejudice hide its value. Tackling those two basic issues will help to make Holyoke a place where all citizens feel safe, respected, and valued.”

The desire to make Holyoke more cohesive also involved suggestions to bring everyone together to better the community, often at the smaller scale of a street, neighborhood or ward. In this context, people envisioned a move from social cohesion towards cooperation around common goals.

“Make more opportunities for people to really listen and get to know each other; food co-op; neighborhood soup nights - I want more connections with my neighbors.”

“Create a gathering for everyone to come together and discuss how to fix Holyoke.”

“I would like to see more cohesiveness in the community. It sometimes feels like different groups within the city take an ‘us vs. them’ approach. How would a more cooperative community be achieved?...unfortunately I don’t know.”

“There is no common social understanding among people in my neighborhood. That’s what I would change. I would come to some agreement among my neighbors that we all must live together and to make it the nicest possible life for everyone, we would agree on some things.”

“I would also want people to do a better job of recognizing themselves in one another, to recognize that we’re one city and we’re all bound.”

“Animar a la gente de diferentes culturas que trabajen juntos para mejorar la calidad de vida en la ciudad.”

Residents repeatedly used the word “respect” to emphasize the need to improve personal interactions, as well as better listening and tolerance of differences. People also referred to “bullying and how people treat one another” and apathy as factors hindering community cohesion. Joint fact-finding and conflict resolution strategies can help to build a shared understanding of common values and differences, before a consensus can be reached on ways to move forward as community.

“The hard part is that, typically, at first that causes difficulty as we all must learn to adjust to needed change, and make sacrifices, and open minds. And it requires tremendous diligent dedication of many individuals for the good of the whole. We need to find a way to be truthful without being contentious, to be patient, and to learn to give trust and respect in order to receive it. Not easy but worthwhile.”

Desire both for Puerto Rican culture to be more “embraced” and “an acknowledgement of the Irish, Polish and French cultures who built this city” were recurrent themes. There is also a desire for additional diversity, which aligns with the low representation from people of African-American and black, Asian, or other racial and ethnic groups in the survey and in the population in general.

“Embrace the Latino population.”

“Enjoying ALL Cultures not just the Latino, etc.”

“An acknowledgement of the Irish, Polish and French cultures who built this city.”

“Not just Puerto Ricans and Irish people live in Holyoke, other cultures like the Polish of the city deserve to be heard.”

“... I wish Holyoke was more diverse. It feels like there are only two cultures in Holyoke, Irish and Puerto Rican. That’s not diversity.”

Specific recommendations to foster diversity and cultural exchange include culturally adapted recreational activities and the development of physical spaces that reflect the city’s diversity.

“I wish there was an occasional cultural opportunity that I was actually interested in.”

“More opportunities for Latinos/other people of color, in addition to sport services.”

“Night life that integrates the Puerto Rican, Irish, and progressive cultures of our area.”

“Places to hang out in Holyoke for everyone. When I go to Gateway City Arts everyone is white.”

“Making downtown a quality dining, entertainment and arts area with the diversity of all the citizens of Holyoke where minority owners play a major part.”

“Having disenfranchised sections of the community feel like they are a valued part of it.”

“The divisions between the wards. It would be nice if the wards work together. I think it would be a good idea to open up the public schools or at least one school per ward where people can get together.”

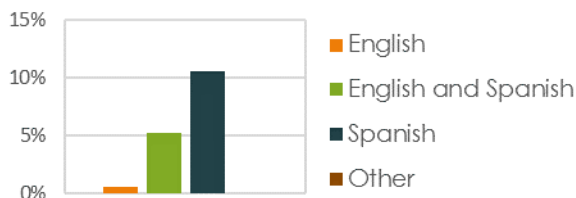
“We need more mixed-income housing in all neighborhoods to break down segregation and concentration of poverty

in just one neighborhood.”

“Downtown which is mainly Hispanic and the residential areas which are primarily non-Hispanic are slowly merging and becoming a cohesive city.”

To a lesser extent, some comments related to the desire for more church presence, concern about the church’s retreat from the community, as well as residual negative effects in terms of both property and cultural values. It is also necessary to acknowledge the presence of one strong position against the expression of faith in public spaces.

FIGURE 86: RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME



The graph shows that religious values were held higher by the Spanish speakers. Religious traditions in Latino culture, which may or may not include direct involvement with the Church, are considered to be ingrained in daily life. In this context, religious or spiritual values were not shared as broadly as the cultural values of personalismo and familismo that characterize Latin cultures (see Figure 32).

SAFETY, SECURITY, AND THE IMAGE OF THE CITY

Safety and security problems are associated with addiction and drug usage on the streets, trafficking, crime and violence in general. These concerns are also linked in people’s comments to issues of poverty and socio-economic inclusion. Residents are particularly concerned with the safety of children and teenagers. In light of the large number of references to this topic, priority should be given to public strategies that improve the sense of safety in the community.

“I realize the drug issue is not Holyoke's problem alone, but it is a huge deterrent, unfortunately.”

“Public safety, my six-year-old doesn't play in the front of my house I'm fearful he will be hit, or worse.”

“Bajar el crimen en Holyoke, se siente muy inseguro. Los nietos no pueden jugar seguro.”

“My daughter goes to a wonderful dance school on High Street, and all around there I see people buying drugs from the businesses and buildings right around the school. I feel like more people in the community would benefit from what the dance school offers, but the dealers are really ruining everything.”

According to residents, strategies that involve social support and integration are needed, but in the short term, there are calls for increased police presence and responsiveness. Suggestions for changes in this area were also geared to improving relationships between the community and public safety officers, increasing respect and tolerance.

“Less crime. By less crime, I do not mean cracking down on all potential or suspected criminals, but a society in which everyone has what they need in terms of job, social support, education, freedom, opportunity, respect such that people do not need to turn to crime to support themselves or their families.”

“I like to think that this kind of economic infusion might also have a positive influence on the drug trade and crime, which are clearly rampant. I don't always feel safe, and we need an alarm at my house for a sense of security, which is sad.”

“Major reduction in drugs, not through a criminalization approach but through concerted community effort to reach people and get them the treatment they need.”

“More police presence, and approaching the drug epidemic as a public health crisis.”

“When I have called about issues with neighbors and drug deals or any other problems it takes them forever to show up or they just don’t.”

“We see drug deals happen...not much seems to happen regarding that...we call the cops, they come, and nothing happens... makes one leery.”

“The police here need to work very hard on being nice and friendly to residents, and need to make appearances more often in neighborhoods.”

“They are making good changes. Fixing parks for the family and our kids. We are getting more help from the police to make things better. They are taking a bite out of crime - Thank you.”

Although some residents referred to feeling unsafe in specific areas of the city, safety and security concerns appear in every neighborhood, which confirms quantitative data on reported occurrences in the past 12 months (Figures 61-63). However, people that identify with cultures other than White and lower-income residents were more likely to cite problems with police.

FIGURE 87: CONCERNS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY INSTITUTIONS BY CULTURAL IDENTITY

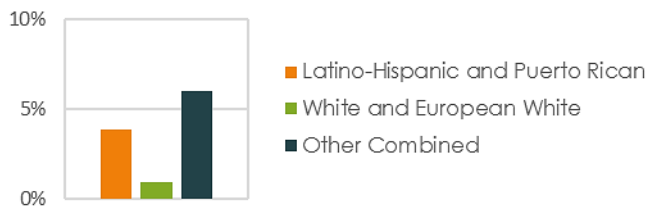
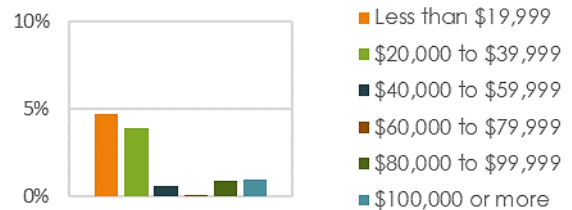
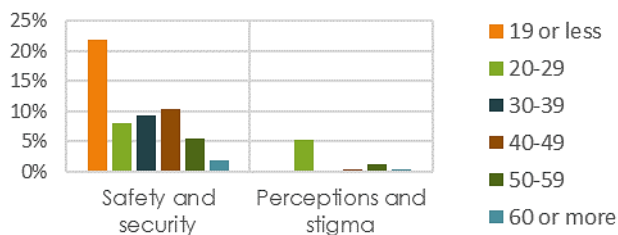


FIGURE 88: CONCERNS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY INSTITUTIONS BY INCOME



It also seems relevant to note that younger residents give more weight to safety and security concerns - they were more likely to feel unsafe or to perceive a lack of safety, which confirms responses from the overall population emphasizing the safety issue with regard to youth. In addition, perception of safety is based on both real problems and representation or stigma. It is possible that people do not feel safe in areas that are unfamiliar to them. A few people commented on how Holyoke is perceived by outsiders, some of whom worried that a lack of safety – real or perceived – holds the city back in attracting visitors.

FIGURE 89: SAFETY AND PERCEPTION OF SAFETY BY AGE



“I would make downtown not so sketchy so that I would feel comfortable down there.”

“I think the biggest issue with Holyoke is perception. I think people, especially those who do not live here, have a perception that it is unsafe, but I don't think that is accurate anymore and I'd like to see continued efforts to change that perception.”

“The stigma that the news puts on Holyoke, it doesn't reflect the community.”

POVERTY, INEQUALITY, WELFARE AND SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORKS

Issues of poverty and inequality were some of the most contentious, for which a common ground should be sought. Opinions are polarized between the need to increase support to serve an increasing number of people in need and a strong critique of poverty as a way of life. The point of agreement is perhaps a need to review current policies to better serve Holyoke's people.

"I would like to see less concentration of poverty without displacement occurring but helping by educating and empowering families through success."

"The poor, neediest people come here to live and we don't have the resources we need to help them - from housing, to education, to basic needs, to jobs, we just can't help the severity of the problems they are coming with - I would fix that."

"I'm all for helping people, but I feel like Holyoke has far too many people that refuse to help themselves."

"I would banish all the welfare freeloaders."

"The number of people unemployed and just hanging around. Perception is that they are not looking for work which is discouraging."

Indeed, free-riding would defeat the purpose of initiatives intended to increase a sense of equity, but beyond examining the question of whether people on welfare do not work by choice rather than due to valid impediment or handicap, attention to social support is needed in a number of areas. According to residents, these include childcare and children's services, teen pregnancy, health care and opioid treatment. Help is also needed for homeless teens and teens in general, victims of domestic violence, the white poor, and those who exceed income thresholds for programs but still struggle to get by.

"I would like to see more inner city programs targeted toward the youth."

"...our young people need safe places that they can have recreational opportunities where they can test their talents and skills and continue to develop them."

"I would like to see more youth empowerment efforts that include social, educational, recreational and professional activities."

"Help that population address their teenage pregnancy issues."

"Children suffer neglect. Some don't eat and are abused."

"We need a homeless shelter for youth!!"

"Getting help with child care is close to impossible."

"A las mujeres abusada y niños sin hogar los preparation."

"Immediate access to opiate treatment on demand."

"Public health."

"It should be easier for the forgotten 'white' poor to receive help, without having to jump through hoops that we know our counterparts of other races/nationalities don't have to."

"More family programs that anyone with any income can enjoy... it feels sometime even if you're working hard and making a better life you get punished because you work and you or your child can't be a part of a program..."

Informal social support organizations and non-profits play a crucial role by assisting households in need and being the first contact point for them to connect with a broader network of services.

Therefore, increased support for neighborhood scale organizations well-positioned to contribute to this work would improve the city's ability to fulfill its mission of helping those who are struggling.

"More support for smaller neighborhood organizations which is where families go to first."

Suggestions to improve the work of non-profits included adapting hours for working people to access help during nights and weekends. A number of residents also argued for more opportunities to provide help through volunteering and cooperation community-wide.

SUBSIDIZED, MIXED-INCOME AND MARKET-RATE HOUSING

Housing citywide touches upon a full range of concerns, from helping those needing "wraparound supportive services" to the availability of low-income, mixed-income and market-rate housing.

"Affordable housing should be for ALL."

"We need more decent affordable housing for young people who work their two part time jobs can also become independent. So they too can go from renters to home owners."

"We are a city with roughly 30% low-income housing, which is more than our mandated 10%. We need more mixed-income housing in all neighborhoods to breakdown segregation and concentration of poverty in just one neighborhood."

"All the abandoned buildings. Make more changes in order to accommodate families like myself that are in need of a place to live."

"When we look at real estate in Holyoke, we find extremely high-priced homes in the highlands and very few opportunities in the flats where we would prefer to live. Would love to see mixed-income housing developments (apartments, government subsidized housing, and single family homes) in the city of Holyoke where it's very diverse."

"Increase the opportunities for affordable housing for families that are not poor and don't qualify for low income housing but can't afford market rate housing. I've known of many families where parents started making money but were afraid of losing all their benefits so they would limit their hours or quit their job I prefer being poor in fear of losing their homes / apartments."

The main question centers on affordability for all, particularly for those around median and moderate income levels. But similarly to the welfare topic, some comments on housing issues imply that subsidy creates a dependency and negatively impact recipients, and that consolidating the poorest households damages individuals and the community as a whole. More clarity and transparency in terms of procedures for allocating housing subsidy would help to create a common ground and increase satisfaction of residents that are directly and indirectly affect by this issue.

"Yo cambiaria la injusticia social que hay con personas que aplican para apartamentos de bajos ingresos por que hay mucho abuso las personas aplican y cuando van a verificar en que numeros se encuentran no aparecen en las listas de espera. Yo necesito que se habra una investigacion ... hay muchas personas involucradas en este asunto ya que estan cobrando a algunas personas para que le den apartamento por eso es que en Holyoke se tarda tanto que a las personas les den un apartamento de bajos ingresos y en Northampton no."

Housing is described as creating the conditions for community building and connection with one's neighbors and as a critical driver of quality of life. It is also linked with social mobility and suggested as an attractor to Holyoke based on a quality-to-price balance that other Valley towns cannot offer.

There are also gentrification concerns expressed, such as a need to guard the housing stock against affluent people coming in to invest and driving up prices.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND INCLUSION

The third most frequently cited area in which changes are needed entails the development of local economies. Within this topic, over half of the comments (56) refer to the need for business development to fill existing gaps in commerce, while also improving the economic opportunities in Holyoke. The other half (50 comments), related to the supply side of that equation – the need for more and better jobs for Holyoke’s people.

FIGURE 90: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND INCLUSION ITEMS COMMUNITY-WIDE

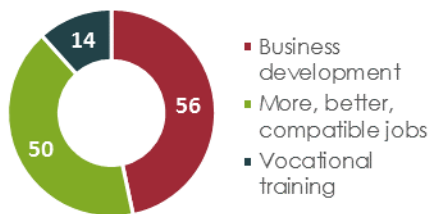
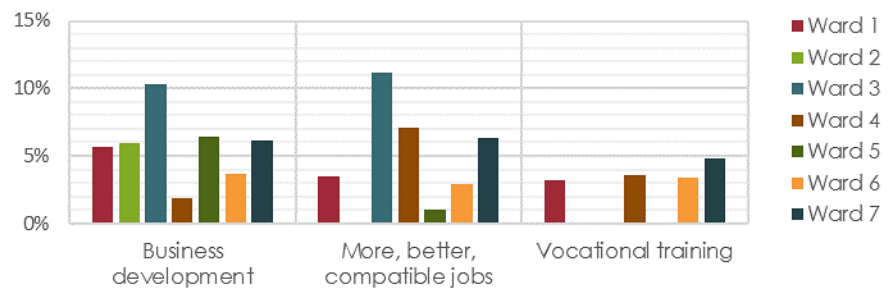


FIGURE 91: ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND INCLUSION ITEMS BY WARD



There are specific suggestions that include general retail and stores, especially downtown and on High Street. There are also concerns that the city has given too much attention to big businesses or outsiders. Some of the responses on this question articulate a more comprehensive vision, aligned with the city’s current redevelopment model.

“I would see all of the beautiful old buildings downtown renovated and have new businesses come into them, creating new jobs and opportunities for residents to eat, drink, shop, and see concerts and plays.”

Residents give particular emphasis to community-based and locally owned business. There are also specific references to a food cooperative and businesses following collaborative governance models.

“Would love to see a partnership between business, Dean culinary and design, HHS engineer students and business to create a place for fun that also provided internships toward college references and jobs.”

“Would like to see an increase in community based food production in underused spaces in the town.”

“Actively bring in new businesses with incentives and encourage locals to realize their small business dreams.”

“More locally owned restaurants...not chains or franchises.”

“Increase in small business downtown.”

“It’s the smaller businesses that need people to shop in our small businesses and not so much in the mall which has out of town retailers. I love the mall but I want to see our local folks gets some attention.”

“Options for our residents, not just those visiting the Holyoke Mall area.”

“I think Holyoke could use more small family businesses and less commercial brands.”

Among these suggestions, a thread identifies a sense that the city could be more proactive and business friendly. This included making it easier to open businesses through licensing, and using the tax code to bring business and development to expand the base.

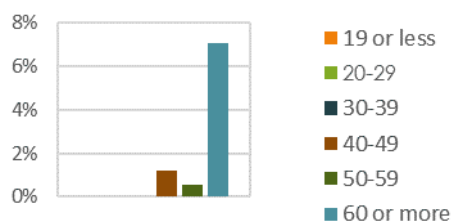
“Licensing process for business.”

“I don't think we are business friendly at all.”

“The government needs to be more proactive to the business community, by being more business friendly to attract more business.”

“Make it easier for new businesses to open in town which will provide a greater tax base.”

FIGURE 92: TAX BURDEN AND ALLOCATION CONCERNS BY AGE



Tax-related issues that influence development strategies included references to high property taxes and enforcement of delinquent taxpayers.

Tax concerns appeared across demographics, except for age. Citizens most likely to voice their opinions in this regard belong to older age cohorts.

In term of employment opportunities, some just stated the need for more and better jobs while others referred to a broad vision of a city where people can do better for themselves while reducing public expenses for assistance programs. In addition to economic outcomes for individuals and the city as a whole, respondents connected the need for jobs to a broader sense of well-being.

“We need jobs...real jobs that pay good living wages, benefits in order for people to live and not just survive from pay check to pay check!”

“I would like to see more opportunities for people to make a living wage and live in Holyoke.”

“I would give Holyoke an industry again. Holyoke lost so much when its industry was lost. No jobs equals no money. No money means not being able to afford food, housing and everyday needs. It leads to depression and desperation.”

Facing the employment challenge in a city that has lost so many manufacturing jobs and experienced dramatic economic changes over the decades elicits frustration in some but inspiration in others, wishing to bring back manufacturing activity.

“...it is not a matter of not having skills, it is the fact that wages are no different from thirty years ago and for working class men they are actually make less in real dollars than they were thirty years ago... can you imagine that?”

“A manufacturing base with job opportunities.”

Most important is a concern with alignment between the type of industry in which jobs are or can become available, and the acquisition of desired skill sets among the populations in need of work.

“I hope that, and have seen in some cases, the city can develop the type of industries where people want to work (not a casino - but the next Mass Mutual - how does Holyoke attract and retain that business that puts a city on the map in a positive way).”

“I would love to have more job opportunities for all types of people. I would like to see everyone working at something

and being more productive.”

“Jobs for a wide range of people, skill sets, etc.”

“Employment opportunities / training for unskilled workers. I’m concerned that the push for jobs in the tech and arts economies will bypass the majority of people who reside in my neighborhood.”

“Attract low skill jobs that the city can fill.”

“Well-paying jobs for skilled workers.”

There is a demand for vocational schools and suggestions for training and opportunities in technical fields, mechanics, as well as fostering a next generation of city employees among local residents.

“More vocational training.”

“Better vocational school options.”

“More educational opportunities in technical fields, mechanics, etc.”

“Dean High School should be opened in the evening so adults can learn a trade. Holyoke Works, Career Point and the REB should all be in this.”

“GROW YOUR OWN as teachers, police, fire and other opportunities for our own students who are being educated in Holyoke.”

“More and better job opportunities with escalator potential and multiplier effects.”

“I would like to see more opportunities available for low income families to raise their standard of living. Possibly by receiving more educational opportunities in technical fields, mechanics, etc. I know some opportunities have been offered but ended because of funds?”

“I want to see jobs for those who have too long gone without.”

Respondents also specified population groups for which job creation is of particular importance, including Hispanic, low income, student and youth populations.

“More opportunities for Latinos/other people of color, in addition to sport services. More activities/businesses that are accessible to them.”

“More opportunities for youth of color.”

“More opportunities for young people.”

While this survey presents an opportunity to further dialogue, a thorough skill assessment is strongly recommended to identify not only the existing resources the community can leverage in development strategies, but also the specific areas in which professional development would be most welcomed. As discussed, there are people within the community hoping for more social cohesion, respect for diversity, and poverty alleviation, so it seems that, to many Holyokers, culturally adapted economic inclusion is at the heart of the very idea of development itself.

“Holyoke is unique in its environment as well as people. I want my children to grow up knowing not everyone is the same and not everyone has equal opportunities.”

“It seems to be moving in a better, more inclusive direction while other communities seem to be becoming more exclusionary.”

“I would use the abundance of our Hispanic population and develop and market downtown as Boricuatown. Chinese culture used this method in most major cities by forming Chinatowns and this helped address discriminatory behavior

while providing a safe haven for Chinese immigrants. Now Chinatowns are highly valued in the cities they're in and attract tourism. This development would not only be lucrative to small businesses in the downtown area but would also generate money for the city and increase tourism as the first city to have a Boricuatown. It would pave the way for non-Latinx Americans to shatter the misconceptions and discriminatory stereotypes of Latinx Americans and begin the very necessary task of highlighting us as the positive contributors we are as Americans and our rich and vibrant culture. It would also act as a vehicle towards tolerance, diversity and bring some flavor to the city while making the Hispanic population in our city that currently feel disfranchised a bit more comfortable by having an area they feel safe in. It would show them that they are an internal part of Holyoke and its history and that they are represented and valued. We would be trailblazers in a movement that cities across the US may adopt as well!"

QUALITY FOOD OPTIONS

Aspirations for both businesses and job creation intersect in many ways with the high need for more quality and varied food options in the city. Cafes and restaurants are often associated with the development of commerce, both downtown and within wards, and with increased dining options and nightlife activity. Food option concerns for residents also involve better grocery stores and places to buy healthy, fresh and organic food, such as farmers’ markets. Here again, particular emphasis is placed on local food and locally owned restaurants and cafes, as well as community-based food solutions such as cooperative food outlets.

"I would like to see an increase in community based food production in underused spaces in the town."

"The lack of fresh and organic foods both in grocery stores & restaurants."

"Local organic produce and meats."

"Wish we had more local shops and healthy grocery store options."

The desire for cafes, restaurants and grocery stores was consistent across demographics, except for people aged 30-40 years old and in wards 3 and 5, for whom this concern appears to a higher degree.

FIGURE 93: QUALITY FOOD OPTIONS BY AGE

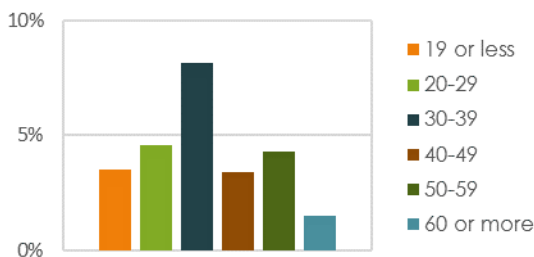
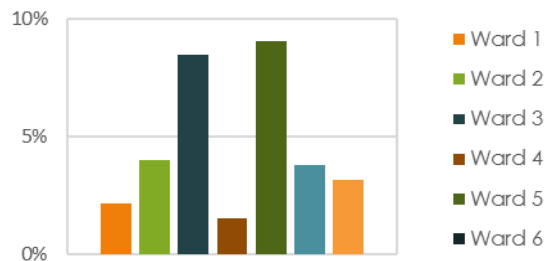


FIGURE 94: QUALITY FOOD OPTIONS BY WARD



SCHOOL SYSTEM

Improvements suggested in the school system involve quality of education, funding for school activities, better pay for teachers, and practical discipline. The responses reflect ongoing discussions on locally adapted systems to serve students better versus standardized education and testing.

"I would also improve the school systems by meeting the children where they are and acknowledging that ELL students, transient students, immigrants, SPED students, etc. all have their own needs and should be supported and 'judged' on improvements made not just a comparison to a bar set for all students in that grade across the state or across the nation."

"Local control of our schools returned to the people of Holyoke."

"Would also love to see the schools brought up to even close to the levels of surrounding cities and towns so that the kids in Holyoke are able to get a good education. I know plenty of people who would love to live here, but they have kids who need better schools, so they live in other places."

"More money for schools and safety programs for the children."

"I would also change the way school system approaches bullying because not many people take that serious and that's a big problem."

"Lack of discipline in the public school system. Students rarely see any consequences for their behavior."

Concern is also for the role schools play in Holyoke's regional competitiveness. For residents, while housing and culture are attraction factors to the city, the schools play the opposite role.

"I wish more of the 'new' comers to Holyoke didn't just move here for the affordable housing, and would utilize the schools, city sponsored sports, etc."

"I would like more people in Holyoke to support the public schools by sending their children to the schools, being involved in the schools, and holding the schools accountable."

"The schools need to be stronger. The teachers work tremendously hard and there are not simple solutions, but I would not buy a home in Holyoke due to this reason."

"I do not feel confident sending my youngest son to Holyoke schools, and I have school-choiced him to another district."

"I would change and greatly improve the school system so I could feel comfortable sending my child to public schools."

"My daughter has to go to school out of town because I do not trust the education here. Please note, I am a graduate of HHS and received a wonderful education, at that time."

As seen above, many urged simply creating "better schools" while some suggested specific actions, such as childcare for teen mothers to continue school and changes in language use regimes to adapt the system to Holyoke's context. In this regard, we can note that despite language barriers having more direct impact on children from Spanish speaking households, the English speaking population in their 30s or 60s were the most vocal on the need to improve schools. Given the conflicting views on culturally adapted institution previously discussed, a systematic assessment of all stakeholder perspectives is called for.

FIGURE 95: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS BY CULTURAL IDENTITY

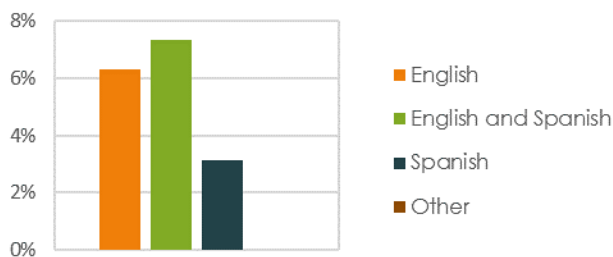
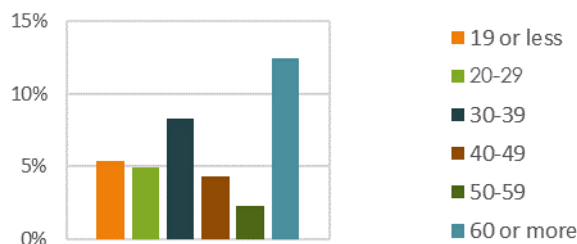


FIGURE 96: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENTS BY AGE



The desire to capitalize on educational institutions as community resources and networks was underscored, but not with one single focus. Some cited offering adult education or a desire to see schools open later with more programming to serve both the children in the system and the community at large. Details aside, what emerges is a strong picture of the schools as an asset critical to community building. Schools are seen as potentially playing a critical role beyond education, as part of a continuum from childcare through college and professional training, and a network upon which people can rely to access opportunity.

“Each school should be opened in the evening with structured programs in order for children to have safe and ongoing learning opportunities.”

“I think it would be a good idea to open up the public schools or at least one school per ward where people can get together. The people themselves can fund the activities they do. Even have activities where they could compete with different wards. In that same setting, the city can work with the citizens of the city with keeping are streets clean, watch out for crimes and helping with local business...”

“Potential opportunity to serve kids by giving them a place to get together, play and get services.”

“...every kid deserves a quality, respectful education that encourages them to dream big. I see too many kids discouraged coming out of our schools.”

“Family involvement in and value of schooling.”

Themes of community cohesion, cultural integration, and social inclusion take a new turn in the context of schools.

“...As far as our schools go, the City promotes segregation by implementing the Zone School policy.”

“I would like the schools to complete the transition from the ‘old boy’ type administration of the past, and move into a more welcoming and encouraging atmosphere for the children and youth they serve... less covering up for the ‘in crowd’ and more sensitivity to the culture of the families of the children.”

“Better educational services delivered to those that live at or below the poverty level.”

“The equality within the school system. Due to the installation of community schools, some schools receive much more funding than others for enrichment activities and extended opportunities for all students. Although it is not through city monies, it is still evident and a problem that is plaguing the city given the current situation of the school system.”

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION

There is broad agreement that maintenance and improvement in the city’s public spaces are needed. Poorly maintained buildings and structures are the most common topic regarding the urban environment. Impatience is clear, and a desire to see faster progress in public works, planting trees, demolishing condemned buildings and fixing up others, repairing streets and restoring brownfields.

“The infra-structure buildings are poorly kept and damaged.”

“Urban blight. The recent collapse of the Armory is tragic (I hope they’ll save the facade/turrets). There are so many buildings that need to be torn down, and areas that need help.”

“More attention to aesthetic details - trimming weeds along streets, painting rusted stop lights, code enforcement.”

“There are dead trees that should be taken down and I have seen live trees taken down instead.”

“The streets need repairing.”

“Streets better lighted.”

“New sidewalks and other improvements would help residents take even more pride in their neighborhood.”

“Would love better natural access to the river for recreation, a place to picnic, boat, etc.”

“More public places, parks, etc. We should have a well-lit river walk. Also more public fruit trees within parks as many other communities have done.”

Many also agree that focused urban renewal efforts should place particular attention to the preservation of built heritage, adaptive reuse, and the integration of local cultures within public spaces. Wards 1 and 2 make no specific mention of downtown development, but to the residents of these historic areas, taking care of buildings, streets and fixtures is of the highest importance.

FIGURE 97: URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION ITEMS BY WARD

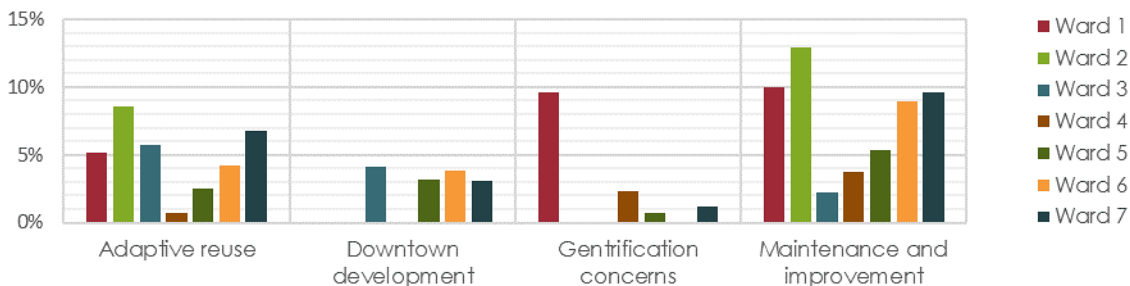
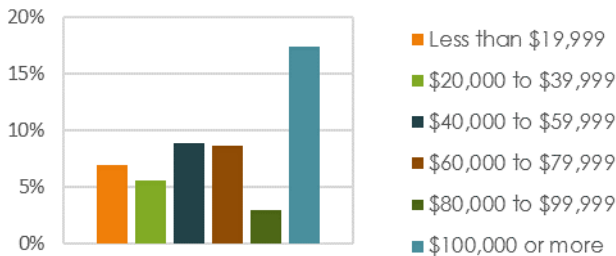


FIGURE 98: URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION BY INCOME



Highest income people are more concerned about urban renewal questions in general. In the current context, in which job creation and gaps in commerce need to be filled, it seems particularly important to engage lower income and unemployed people in the debate around ways to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

The richness of Holyoke’s industrial history and architecture so cherished by residents (Figure 72), is expressed here as a desire to see a greater attempt to preserve what is architecturally unique.

“I want to see the multiple abandoned warehouses downtown put to good use.”

“Better appreciation for and investment in historic preservation and reuse.”

“More development of old mill buildings for stronger small business and residential presence in downtown. Celebrate Holyoke's rich heritage.”

“I would see all of the beautiful old buildings downtown renovated and have new businesses come into them, creating new jobs and opportunities for residents to eat, drink, shop, and see concerts and plays.”

Gentrification is a tangible concern, but here, residents from ward 1 seem particularly affected (Figure 98). Questions are raised as to whether the people who live in Holyoke are, or will be, the prime beneficiaries of urban interventions, and if their real needs are being considered in upcoming improvements. Perspectives emphasize a divergence between Holyokers’ wants and needs, and investment in efforts geared to attracting visitors or aligned with the views of newer residents.

“Stop building a city for individuals who are coming from outside of Holyoke. We need to care for those who have been here and want to stay here.”

“A few people in my neighborhood and in places of power do not feel that having neighborhoods (Lyman Terrace) be mixed class wise - is an 'inviting' thing for new investors. Many people scoff at a fear of displacement.”

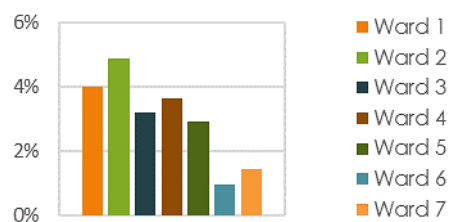
“I would like to see less concentration of poverty without displacement occurring but helping by educating and empowering families through success.”

“I would urge the city to seek developers other than big business and condominium development. No less than 50% of all housing buildings should be affordable. If Holyoke develops itself and forces low income families and non-English speakers out of the city it will destroy itself in the process.”

“Well I am very very poor, I am a person with a disability who is not eligible for SSDI, there are no programs and social safety net. We are a community on the brink of gentrification and when the only community I can afford to live in are Ware or Palmer, I feel as if I might take my own life.”

Suggestions for improvement in city service delivery include single stream recycling and code enforcement for derelict properties. Trash pickup and recycling programs seem to work for some, but not all residents.

FIGURE 99: URBAN SANITATION AND RECYCLING BY WARD



Waste removal – littering, drug paraphernalia – and noise pollution need to involve broader mitigation efforts. As previously mentioned, these issues are often associated with quality of life but also impact how the city is perceived by outsiders and by its own residents.

“If I could change anything in Holyoke it would be the parks kids play in make it more clean and less damaged due to graffiti.”

“Create some sort of street cleaning program, and aggressively fine property owners for not cleaning in front of their buildings.”

“The amount of litter on our streets - add a whole lot more public trash receptacles.”

“I regularly pick up dirty diapers and teeny tiny plastic bags dropped next to the curb out of cars. Honking horns, blaring music, and the grocery carts. There is no community life on my street.”

“Trash is on the streets and I think we live in a dirty city. I would like to see a much cleaner city that we all can be proud of.”

Comments on accessibility and transportation improvements the city needs encompass bike lanes, sidewalks, and safety lighting in the evening. Residents pointed to a need for expanded public transit within, to and from the city. They cite specific bridge and traffic issues, bad signage, accessibility and streets in need of maintenance. A concern that the city’s infrastructure is generally neglected suggests a need to approach these problems strategically as a whole.

“Add sidewalks, specifically west of the exit to the mall heading towards Holyoke Pediatrics. There is a bike lane, but honestly, I never see it used. There are more parents and kids walking to and from Holyoke Pediatrics that I see.”

“Better and more affordable public transportation options for local, regional and long-distance travel.”

“A pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks in ward 7.”

“Concentrated pedestrian areas where residents can meet.”

“Holyoke has excellent transportation infrastructure but now it needs to figure out how to bring people to the places it wants them to be - I could drive around the entire city all day long and never see the heart of it.”

“Fix the intersection of Whiting Farms and Northampton streets. There never was a traffic issue when vehicles were allowed to make a left turn into Kmart plaza off Whiting Farms Rd.”

“It would be nice to have access to the memorial on the mountainside for the B-52 bomber (along the side of Mt. Tom). My husband has limited mobility and cannot walk in that far.”

Lastly, a very small number of residents expressed concerns with the natural environment, urging change to more renewables and efficient energy sources. Some propose far-reaching visions, such as “embracing human and ecological development together” while others had a very specific focus on green areas and natural resources, like full protection for the reservoir area.

ENTERTAINMENT, DINING AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

When it comes to entertainment and nightlife, people’s belief in the untapped potential of Holyoke’s downtown is strongly conveyed.

“I would make Holyoke a destination for going out at night. There are all these beautiful buildings and space for restaurants but not a single place to go for a nice meal or have a drink on a Saturday night.”

“Making downtown a quality dining, entertainment and arts area with the diversity of all the citizens of Holyoke where minority owners play a major part.”

“I would like to make the night life more vibrant. More restaurants, more bars, etc. downtown.”

“I constantly hear stories from my elders how downtown Holyoke use to be beautiful and everyone from the community would hang out down there. It would be great to recreate that.”

“Venues and social activities that would attract people to visit the city.”

The call for attractive, diverse and accessible opportunities includes providing family-oriented or community-based activities and ensuring offerings that are affordable and appropriate for elders, children and youth. Improving outcomes for Holyoke's youth is a recurring topic that relates as much to sports as to safe places where teens can learn and play in the afternoons, and participate in nightlife. Specific requests include swimming pools and a volleyball academy, which could leverage Holyoke's history and heritage as the birthplace of the sport.

"More programs for the young...they are after all our future."

"Our young people need safe places that they can have recreational opportunities where they can test their talents and skills and continue to develop them."

"Make it more teenager friendly, add more things us teenagers could do for fun."

"There REALLY NEEDS to be more safe activities for our youth in the evenings. The teen dances were wonderful."

"We need fun for our teens rather than leaving them to find their own culture only functions online: skiing, bowling, movie theater, mini-golf, community pools, etc. once filled the city."

"Mas sitio de diversion para los enviejecientes."

"Would add more activities for families and children of all ages."

"I'd like to see more activity down at the canal walk."

"More sports arena! Then Lynch school to a AAU arena."

"We need a public gym open all year around for our young folks to play basketball, and to provide city-sponsored out-of-school teen programs beyond our non-profits."

People want to see a performance and movie theaters, a live music venue in the mills, music events on Mount Tom, school dances, more city events, and more culture and entertainment in general. Again, some ideas were straightforward, such as more bars and nightlife, whereas others incorporated a comprehensive vision for the city. A desire for facilities and programs that are public, rather than of a particular non-profit or ideology, was expressed in many ways. Culturally adapted events serving the full range of residents appear as an opportunity to foster community cohesion and diversity.

"We need restaurants to be opened later, shows, concerts, more entertainment."

"We need places to eat that are open later. There are very few non-bar places to socialize later in the day."

"Maybe a movie theater. Get the Victory Theater renovated finally."

"More activities like celebrate Holyoke."

"More arts and performance centers -- not just Gateway City Arts."

"I would aim to develop more cultural meeting places and to make this city more open to arts and cultural events."

"Make a live music venue that can support mid-level touring bands."

"Street musicians."

"A movie theater and more venues for live music, more interesting street life downtown."

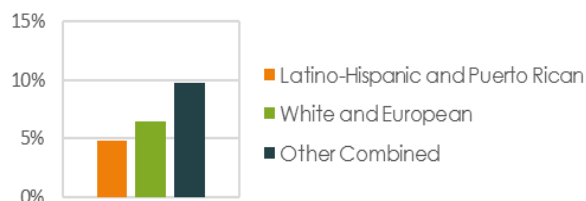
"Night life that integrates the Puerto Rican, Irish, and progressive cultures of our area."

Arts and entertainment is perhaps one of the topics that prompted the most detailed suggestions. This means there is great stewardship potential and capacity for place-based initiatives that respond to the unique needs of specific areas, such as cafes for neighborhood gathering.

- “How about cafes in every ward, to have coffee and meet with friends in the evening?”*
- “We also NEED a public community center! I love being a member of the YMCA but it is not affordable for many people.”*
- “I would have more events available in the community for families and neighbors to get together.”*
- “More community based activities.”*
- “More coffee shops, other gathering places in various centers.”*
- “A family community center for all ages not just youth.”*
- “Community spaces.”*

A lack of entertainment, dining and recreation activities, from sports to nightlife, were pointed out particularly by those self-identified as other than Latino-Hispanic and White-European. However, very few references were made to culture-specific needs, except Hispanic. Further investigation to assess and value the collective memories and backgrounds invested in the city would help to identify opportunities that effectively reflect the diverse range of cultures. This would corroborate a meaningful suggestion to create a “museum about immigrants to our city and about Holyoke's history.”

FIGURE 100: ENTERTAINMENT, DINING AND RECREATION BY CULTURAL IDENTITY



LOCAL GOVERNANCE: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPRESENTATIVE PARTICIPATION

Comments on how to change city government structures touch primarily on questions of government openness (transparency and accountability), participation, and legitimate representation. This entails more effective structures to engage residents in decision-making processes. Respondents convey an underlying sense that the city lacks effective communication and information structures, which leads to misinformation, misunderstanding, and ultimately, mistrust.

- “Government’s openness to community members.”*
- “Transparency in the executive branch of government, i.e., Mayor's office.”*
- “Would like to see more transparency in the Mayor's office.”*
- “Less divisive and more representative government.”*
- “Change the structure of the outmoded and inefficient city government.”*
- “Improved civic and political participation with better representation and fairer processes and outcomes.”*

“La igualdad de tener acceso como todos los demos en gobierno.”

“More recognition for process...”

“Meaningful resident engagement.”

“Create space for large public forums to bring speakers that would engage the community in critical dialogues.”

“I would like to see more action and less rhetoric from our city government.”

The role and representativeness of the City Council was a recurring topic that may deserve review, as for many residents the current structure seems flawed. Some desired changes in this area relate to perceived problems with attitudes and approaches, but the most pressing issue seems to be related to limited success in establishing robust stakeholder representation.

“I don't think the city council speaks for the community...I think there should be a limit on years for councilor and get new people involved in our city every two to four years.”

“City Council. Instead of having most of the at-large candidates disproportionately represent upper-middle / wealthy homeowners in Ward 6 and Ward 7, change council to have 2 reps from each ward instead.”

“Having select persons from each ward without at-large members is better for the long haul and development of Holyoke.”

Questions of political representation come up particularly in the context of Latino-Hispanic residents.

“More Latino representation.”

“The Hispanic community needs to rise up and make their way for themselves and future generations just as the other cultures before them did. They have been part of the community for over 50 years. It is time, past time, to get it together.”

Indeed, Latinos were more likely to address this topic than any other culture combined. City administration issues were also more often addressed by people in their 50s than by other age groups, and by people who plan to stay in Holyoke over the long term.

FIGURE 101: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATION BY CULTURAL IDENTITY

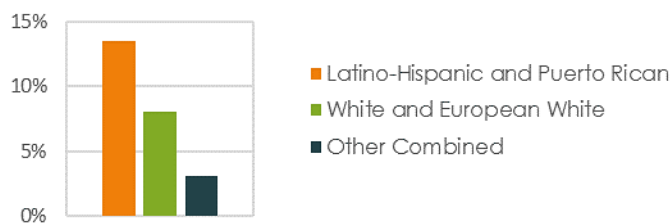
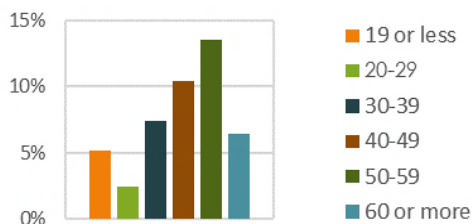
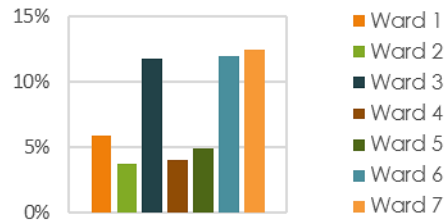


FIGURE 102: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATION BY AGE



Desire for change in governance structures holds strong across every income level, but there is more involvement in these questions from people living in wards 3, 6 and 7.

FIGURE 103: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATION BY WARD



To a lesser extent, references were made to meeting logistics – such as holding meetings in the evenings or at times when concerned people can participate more fully – and to taxes and the allocation of public resources to achieve redevelopment goals. A few residents argued that zoning issues and lack of code enforcement undermine the quality of their neighborhoods and the value of their property. Collaborative work with the population would help to identify inconsistencies between code and use of spaces.

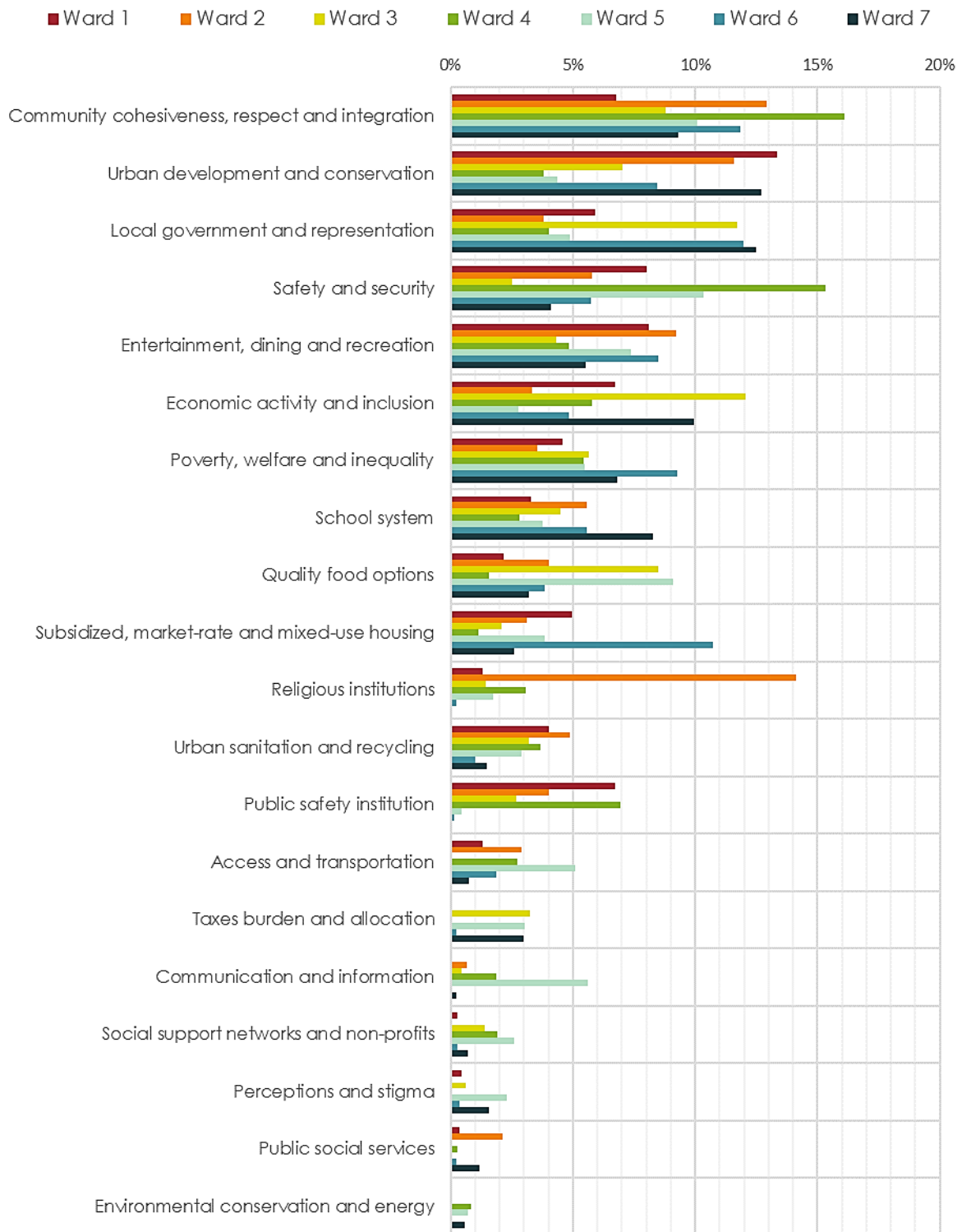
The need for better information and clear communication comes up in relation to public events and activities as well as social services and non-profit organizations.

“I think the city needs to promote what's happening in the city, our commerce, positive activities... they need to promote the downtown businesses, Farmers Market, Canal walk, Volley Ball Hall of Fame, Gateway City Arts, Children's Museum, businesses in the Flats and South Holyoke.”

“Communication of events- opportunities for texting upcoming events. Ways to volunteer for events in the city. I don't get the paper so I don't know what's happening unless I see it on education channels, new or FB which is inconsistent.”

Lastly, it seems fit to note that this study is a part of a direct attempt to increase our ability to share information between academic institutions, decision-makers, civic organizations and local people. It is in that spirit that the creativecommunityweb.org website was developed.

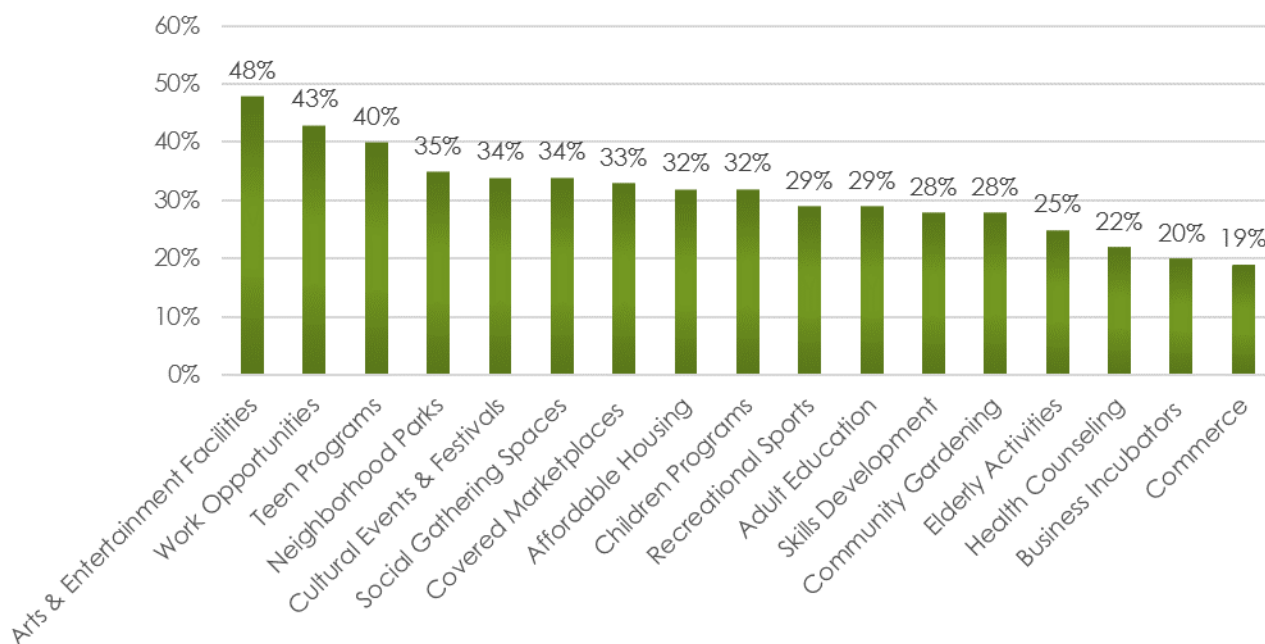
FIGURE 104: PERCENTAGE OF REFERENCES TO DESIRED CHANGES BY WARDS



VIII. DESIRED SPACES AND ACTIVITIES

Participants were asked to select from a list of desirable community spaces and activities the ones they would like to see further developed in Holyoke. Respondents could select more than one type of activity, add to the list, and provide more details. The graph below illustrates the needs or preferences of Holyoke’s residents.

FIGURE 105: PROGRAMS, SPACES AND ACTIVITIES



Nearly half of those surveyed indicated a desire for more arts and entertainment facilities. These range from restaurants and performance centers to community theaters and music schools.

The need for more work opportunities and teen programs is corroborated across data collection methods. Both themes came up frequently in free-write responses, including crossover suggestions for more programs and facilities where young people can learn vocational and career skills.

For cultural events and festivals, residents reiterated a concern with affordability and family-oriented activities that are accessible to all. There is also strong interest in the implementation of social gathering spaces and parks at the neighborhood level.

An indoor community space, able to accommodate a covered marketplace, which is important to 33% of residents, would be a strategic choice to address multiple needs at the same – increased healthy food options and employment in the city, plus the need for entertainment, teen programs, cultural events, and social gathering spaces.

The free-write responses that follow substantiate these findings and provide additional details about what people want to see more of in the city.

Businesses in the area are called to be more involved in the school system, hosting field trips, work-based learning and internships.

A need for jobs is mentioned along with a need for training necessary to get those jobs. Target beneficiaries for job creation are:

- Teens and young adults
- Low income people
- Local potential talent

Suggestions for strategies to create job opportunities are accompanied by support for structures to enable those who need to incubate business ideas, along with general support for manufacturing, which was brought up by many residents.

Increased services, both for neighborhoods and citywide, are needed. The following services were mentioned:

- Affordable childcare
- Support for homeless children
- Holistic healing programs for drug abuse
- General support for underserved populations – elderly, teens, and teen mothers

Furthermore, conceiving community centers as hubs where individuals and families find guidance to supportive services available can improve connections and delivery. Community-based, rather than sector-based, approaches to supporting families can help to overcome a perception and experience of unequal support among some residents.

Improving fit between the city's housing stock and the needs of the city's people, at different life stages, can help to increase quality of life for many and meet multiple redevelopment goals. Desired housing types include:

- Communal-multigenerational housing in a mill
- Subsidized senior housing
- Mixed housing-high end and affordable

Less than 20% of respondents indicate a desire for commerce, but specific types remain unclear, except for grocery stores, restaurants and coffee shops. Suggestions related broadly to the desire for a vibrant and active downtown with shops, lounges, and spaces to socialize, but also for social gathering spaces within neighborhoods.

Several residents considered Race Street and High Street as ideal hubs for dining and social facilities. Some suggested focusing on business and entertainment in other locations beyond just the downtown.

A culturally-driven neighborhood development strategy emerged with an idea for a “Little Ireland” and “Little Puerto Rico”, along the lines of successful ethnic enclaves in other cities where celebrating distinct cultures is central to planning and neighborhood character.

Some comments on public space development target specific populations – e.g. places for in betweeners (18-20 year olds) and for LGBTQ.

In general, as discussed in the previous chapter, access to better food seems imperative, particularly downtown. People desire more, varied and better food options for both:

- Fine dining, bars and coffee shops in general, and
- More cafes and restaurants that are independently owned (not fast food or chains)

There is a strong desire for healthy and fresh food options, delivered via suggested community-oriented venues:

- Year-round indoor Farmers Market and/or Community Swap
- Food co-op
- Gardens to provide fresh vegetables to anyone
- Healthy, organic food market
- Community supported agriculture (CSA)
- Urban farmin

References to desired economic activity include bigger tax paying businesses, but also very strong support for small business development and local ownership. Some desired types of businesses mentioned are:

- Solar energy
- Outdoor shopping
- Cluster of bistro style restaurants in the innovation district downtown
- Flea market every Saturday or Sunday
- Manufacturing, including specifically eco
- Trader Joe's

Participants suggest improving the quality of parks and green areas for recreational use by:

- Better exploiting the river and riverside as a community amenity
- Planting more trees
- Cleaning up the neighborhood parks
- Creating public gardens
- Protecting the reservoir and natural areas

To make use of the many empty spaces in Holyoke, facilities for some activities can be included throughout the city, such as basketball and small public gardens.

There is also a need for programming and appropriate facilities to increase athletic offerings like:

- Hiking trails
- Baseball fields
- Soccer fields

Sports infrastructure is also seen as a means to get youth off the streets. For children and families, suggestions included expanding indoor options for children and families, such as:

- Indoor water parks
- Gyms/ health clubs

Concerns with public office’s transparency were brought up again, but in relation to spaces and activities, ineffective communication translates into lack of access to events, or knowledge of programs. One resident explicitly suggested better advertisement for sport offerings through the Parks and Recreation Department.

Residents indicated the need to rehabilitate empty apartment buildings, mills and the Victory Theater, and for financial support to preserve historic buildings at risk.

In terms of infrastructure, residents reiterated general demands for better roads, more transportation, street cleanup, recycling, more enforcement of property owners taking care of their buildings, and improving how residents treat their own neighborhoods.

The ideas that emerged in this section are focused on spaces, places and activities—the physical environment which contributes to, or undermines, the community well-being. This information is supplemented by detail in the following section, which provides a deeper look into key categories based on breakdowns by area of residence and significant demographic attributes.

SPACES AND ACTIVITIES BY POPULATION GROUP

In examining the variation of responses by wards, we can perceive important contrasts and similarities, which inform the variation both in available resources and in needs among different populations (Figure 108).

One of the most striking contrast relates to affordable housing and children programs and spaces, which are a major concern for wards 1 and 2 but only marginally important to wards 5 to 7. In addition to affordable homes and children programs, neighborhood parks are needed particularly in wards 1 and 2, where demand for recreational sports is also slightly higher. Teen programs is most significant for ward 1, where more than half of respondents rated it as a top priority.

In the lower wards, there is a huge adaptive reuse potential because of the many under-utilized spaces that can be considered in the development of related programs and projects. Ward 1 appears to be a good location for a community space that offers activities for elderly, adults, teenagers and children alike, as people articulate the most demand in these areas. To meet residents' needs, this community space would also include health counseling, and a community run cultural center.

Larger arts and entertainment facilities would primarily respond to the needs of people in the upper wards (4 through 7), but this category constitutes the highest priority for almost 60% of residents in ward 7. In fact, demand for arts and entertainment facilities rises from wards 1 to 7, while demand for neighborhood parks and community gardens decreases – it is higher in wards 1 and 2, and lower in wards 6 and 7.

Although less than a third of the respondents overall expressed an interest in community gardening, the demand was higher in wards 1 and 2, which makes this area an ideal location for future actions in this regard.

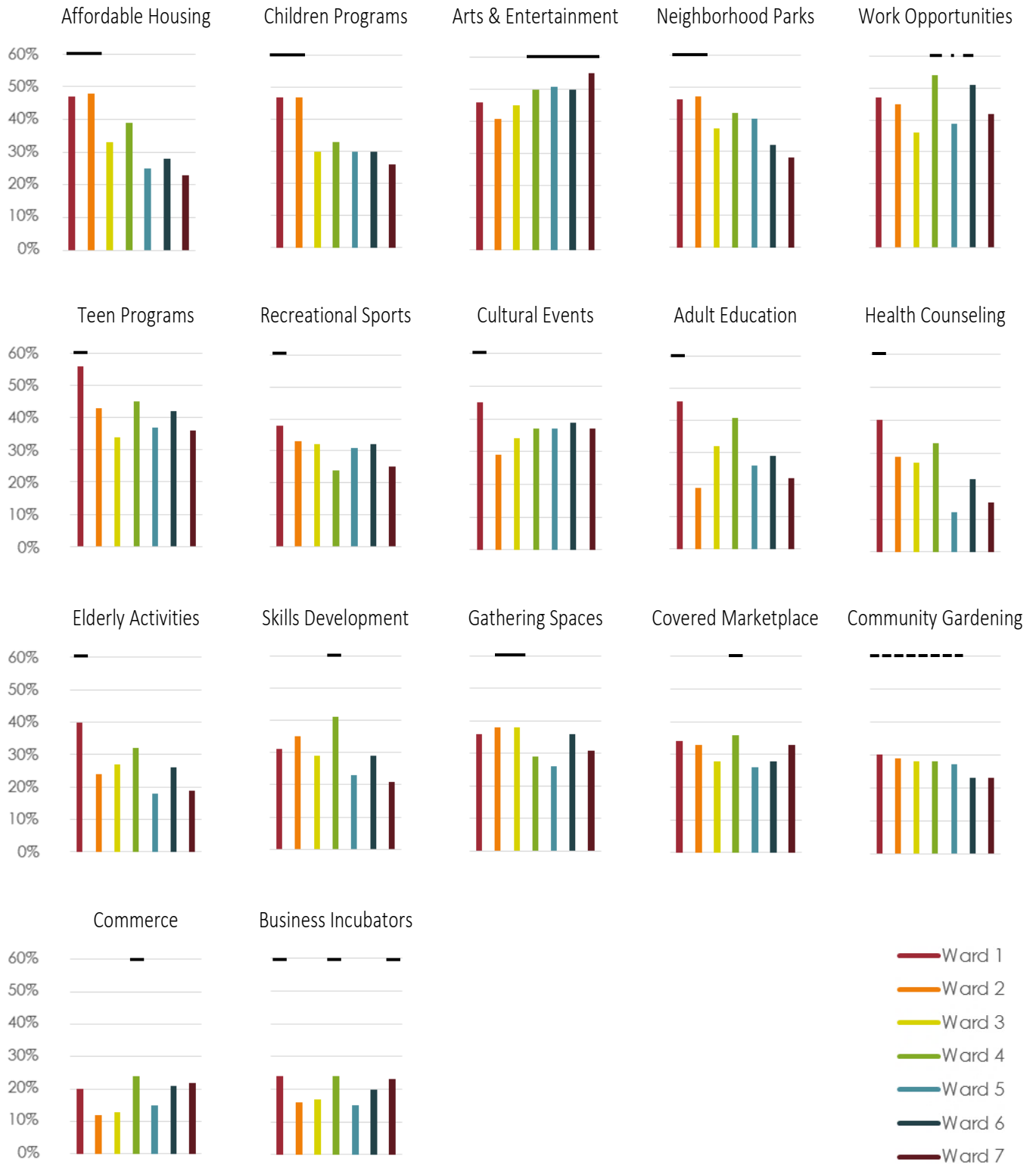
The demand for skill development opportunities is significantly higher in ward 4, which coincides there with a higher demand for businesses incubators and commerce. Job creation would also be of particular interest to people living in this ward (4), along with to people in ward 6. Work opportunities in this area could involve arts and entertainment that meet the needs of users from upper wards.

In fact, the need for work opportunities was important across the city. It appears as a major need for over 50% in wards 4 and 6, and over 40% in wards 1, 2 and 7. This theme came through in both closed and open-ended responses that expressed a need for jobs, training, and housing opportunities to facilitate social and economic mobility. Adult education and skills development needs were ranked higher in downtown wards.

Among factors contributing to economic advancement and opportunity, commerce was at or near the bottom rankings in every ward, despite the fact that a need for more businesses came up frequently in comments.

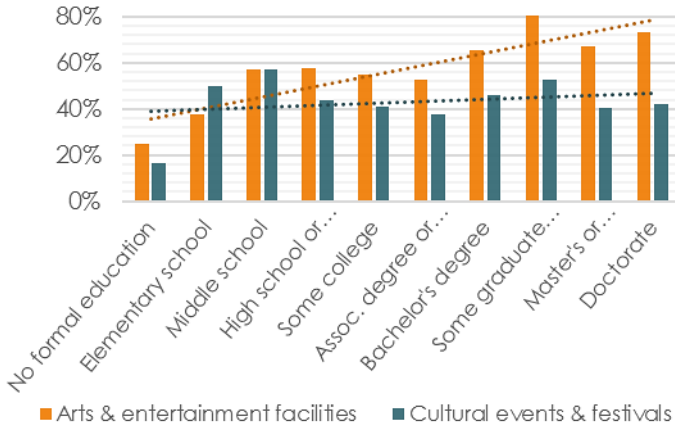
The following graphs highlight possible target areas for public service and programs based on existing demand.

FIGURE 107: TYPES OF SPACES AND ACTIVITIES NEEDED BY WARD



In addition to different patterns of response by ward, some items varied considerably in light of education, age, income, and length of residence in Holyoke.

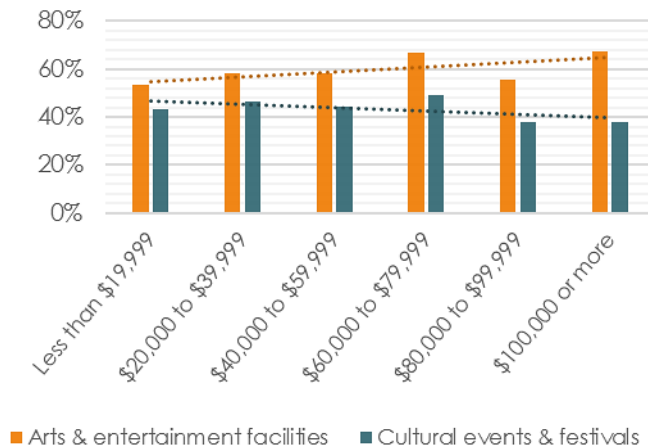
FIGURE 108: ARTS AND CULTURE BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION



The demand for arts and entertainment facilities directly correlates with higher levels of education, while the demand for cultural events and festivals remain constant across educational attainment.

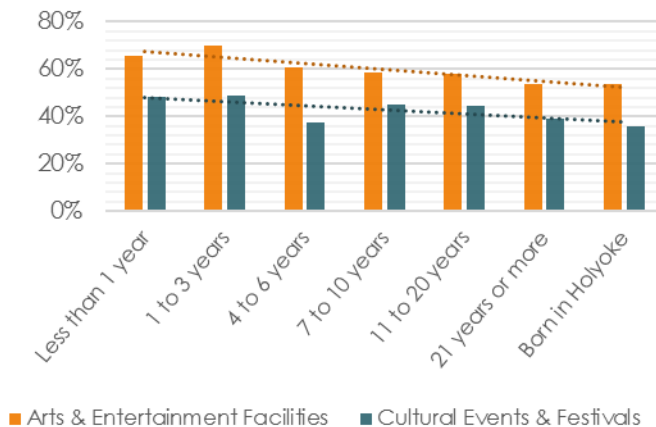
Although not as dramatic, a similar pattern appears in the analysis of demand for arts and entertainment facilities by income levels. That is, higher income residents are more likely to benefit from these facilities than lower income people.

FIGURE 109: ARTS AND CULTURE BY INCOME LEVEL



Conversely, support for this type of investment – both arts and entertainment facilities and cultural events and festivals – declined among those who have lived longest in Holyoke. Again, there is a significant variation in demand for arts and entertainment facilities, but desire for more cultural events and festivals remain nearly constant from newcomers to lifelong residents.

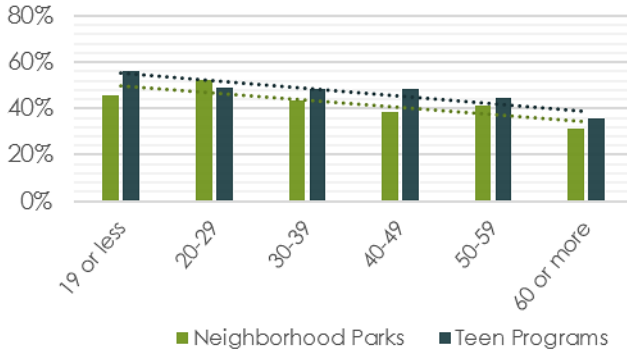
FIGURE 110: ARTS AND CULTURE BY LENGTH OF RESIDENCE



In summary, the overall support for arts and culture is consistent across the city, but these statistically significant trends show that this type of investment best corresponds with the values and needs of new-comers, better educated and more affluent people in the city.

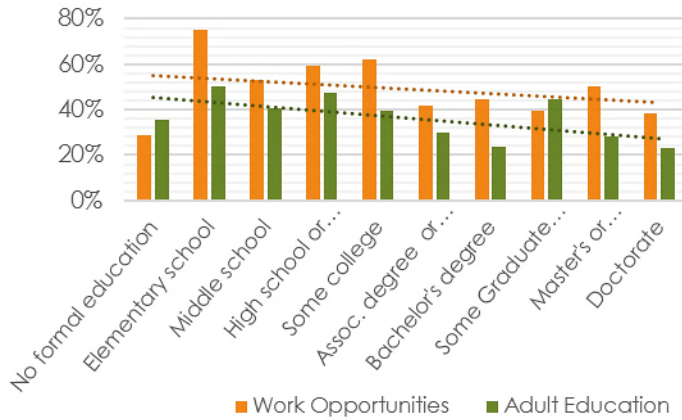
We can also assume that while arts and entertainment is more important to newcomers, long term, lower income and lower educational level residents perceive greater benefit from cultural events and festivals, which may reflect cultural backgrounds and acenstry.

FIGURE 111: TEEN PROGRAMS AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS BY AGE



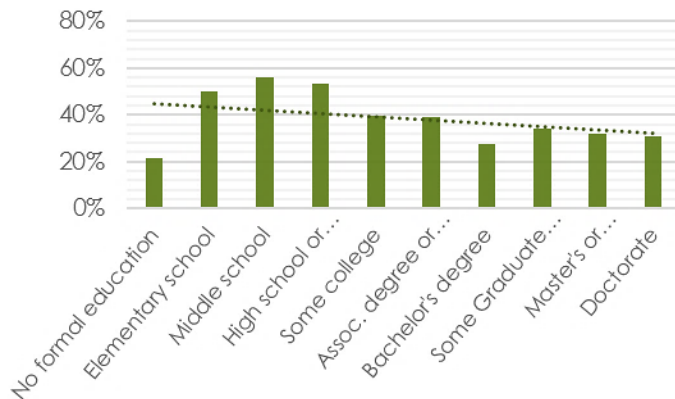
Teen programs, which received widespread support across the city and each ward, find indeed the most support among the youngest residents. Support for neighborhood parks is also strongest among young residents, although more so in young adults than teens. Thus, open space programs and projects targeting the young population are likely to meet multiple goals with a single strategy.

FIGURE 112: WORK AND EDUCATION BY EDUCATION LEVEL



Of course, respondents' educational level correlates with demand for adult education. The demand for jobs follows the same pattern. Work opportunities are most sought by people with lower formal education, although in this case, demand remains relatively high among people with some college education as well.

FIGURE 113: AFFORDABLE HOUSING BY EDUCATION LEVEL



This data implies that strategic choices to increase employment should be accompanied by programs and initiatives that expand individual's corresponding skills, and be particularly adapted to those adults whose educational level is currently among the lowest.

Training people for jobs may also help to alleviate strain on the subsidized housing system and improve people's housing choices. The correlation between income levels and need for affordable housing is self-evident. Figure 114 also shows a correlation between demand for affordable housing and educational attainment. Thus, the need for affordable housing may reflect earning experience and potential earnings among Holyoke residents based on education, in addition to shortcomings in the housing supply.

CONCLUSION

The P.A.M. project report provides a snapshot of the city of Holyoke and of how its residents envision their future. These multifold perspectives reflect both crosscutting concerns and unique conditions, while pointing towards action areas that can help to realize that future. Daily experience places residents in the best position to understand capacities and needs within their own communities, and identify what needs to be conserved or to be further developed. The ideas presented in this report demonstrates the resourcefulness of residents in articulating goals and strategies, as well as their remarkable commitment to the city.

As a common trait, Holyoke people experience strong attachment to their city and to their neighborhoods. Preserving the features that embody the quality of Holyoke's places is critical to the well-being of its people. Particular solutions that differ by area, population or perspectives, are not necessarily presented as incompatible, but rather complementary, opportunities that can build on one another. There is interest, for example, in focused initiatives downtown but also decentralized interventions within neighborhoods. There is a desire for activities that encompass all cultures without distinction, and for spaces tailored by affinity group.

In summary, there is widespread support for future actions leading to sustainable community development outcomes:

Strengthening **community ties** – trust, interpersonal respect, solidarity and conflict resolution to overcome division among wards, between old-timers and newcomers, young and old, or cultural groups.

Mixed-income housing - homes that working people can afford to buy as well as housing for vulnerable people, forging connections between different cultural, social and economic backgrounds.

Building **citizenship** – increased voice, political influence and clarity in rules and conduct in decisions that affect the lives of people in the community, strengthening the base for collective action.

A **compatible economy** – development strategies that are adapted to local resources and capacities, encouraging locals from all backgrounds to realize their small business dreams.

A commitment to **job creation** – facilitating business development that bring revenue to the city and connect it regionally, while fostering individual social mobility.

Building **capacity** to get those jobs – apprenticeship programs with career development, particularly addressing the needs of young adults, local talent and underprivileged people.

A focus on **youth** – providing them with safe, constructive, interesting opportunities as much for recreation and socialization in the evenings, as for vocational training and employment, in addition to services for vulnerable children to mitigate neglect and poverty.

A **safe and active** city – improving the quality of neighborhoods by cleaning up the parks and paths but also addressing social problems at their roots so as to reduce vulnerability.

Increased **cultural offerings and venues** – both downtown, and across neighborhoods, activities that build mutual understanding and celebrate all cultures, including Latin, Irish, Polish, French, among others.

Adaptive reuse of historic buildings – increased activation of historic neighborhoods and old mill buildings for a stronger presence of small and local businesses, amenities and residential elements downtown.

A vibrant **nightlife** – things open at night where local people can go at the end of the day, but also appealing to outsiders, using beautiful buildings for restaurants and public spaces with safety and lighting.

Healthy food – increasing fresh food access for everyone, from grocery stores and traditional restaurants to collective food production and swap formats, as well as farm to table experiences.

Scaling down to the **neighborhood** level – with social gathering spaces beyond downtown, and community centers for recreation, education and culture that respond to the differing needs of neighborhoods, in context.

The data laid out in this report represents the perspectives of many different Holyokes, upon which a common ground of understanding across the city’s diverse people can serve as basis for action. Needs are tangible, but so is the local pool of resources that can be applied to fulfill these needs. However, there are also opposing views on issues, such as ways to harmonize cultures within city life and whether there is too much or too little social assistance and affordable housing. While some express concern with gentrification, others ask to rebuild downtown with more expensive housing and amenities geared to attracting outsiders. There is pride and hope, but also frustration with trash and drugs, potholes, and neighbors who allegedly do not share the same sense of care for the community. Perhaps what is needed are additional ways to bring stakeholder groups together, clarifying views and pulling together assets to be deployed towards solutions.

Participatory structures allow for joint fact-finding, collaborative problem solving, efficient communication and transparency. With broader engagement in the identification of human, social, physical and financial capital, as well as the definition of priorities and strategies, common goals can be achieved more effectively. Although there are no models universally applicable, there are inspiring collaborative structures that have been implemented successfully elsewhere, from within or outside official public processes. Collaborative structures require a high degree of personal investment, but Holyoke seems to have the essential ingredients for success: political willingness, commitment among local residents, and a sense of common purpose and common good. Holyoke has a forward looking city leadership, substantial work has been accomplished in recent years, plus tremendous commitment from the city’s people as illustrated in this report. It seems there is sufficient momentum to fulfill a collective interest in improving the city’s collaborative structures.

- ✓ PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING can help residents to decide on priority investments for their city, aligning allocation of a pre-determined budget with shared goals as well as place-specific needs. Residents can assess the context, identify issues, define priorities, and propose solutions, which are followed by technical and feasibility studies. Created in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, Participatory budgeting is increasingly used in U.S. cities lately.
- ✓ COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT structures can be useful to guide efforts involving private, public and community sectors around common goals. Education, business and non-profit partnerships may help improve pathways to opportunity, such as the collaboration that resulted in the implementation of this study.
- ✓ COMMUNITY-COOPERATIVES can be organized and efforts coordinated for product development and commercialization among interest groups. This process is used to develop production and sales, as well as related businesses and training. A thorough asset analysis would be necessary to identify common

economic, social and cultural needs and shape aspirations into goals.

- ✓ COMMUNITY-BASED HERITAGE CONSERVATION can bridge cultural, social and economic development across diverse constituencies around the restoration and adaptive reuse of buildings. Outcomes from successful experiences lead to capacity building and job creation (during and after, if the restored building is put to use as a community-run center), improved neighborhood quality, and reduced public costs over the long run.

By promoting place-based initiatives, such as centers run by the community, for the community, multiple identified goals can be accomplished:

- ✓ Bridge the participation gap
- ✓ Legitimate representation
- ✓ Meet education and training needs
- ✓ Meet cultural and recreational needs
- ✓ Provide for social support needs
- ✓ Strengthen social ties

This approach can look at place specific needs and adapt offerings to each area with tailored strategies, while addressing crosscutting themes that apply to the city as a whole. Residents offer tangible ideas to realize culture-specific aspirations and desire for commerce under redevelopment goals. For instance, a museum about immigrants to the city and Holyoke's history, or a Boricuatown and a Little Ireland market, could help to celebrate all people's heritages, support small businesses, and generate money for the city by increasing tourism and a sense of pride in the city's heritage.

In Holyoke, investment in the rich pool of social assets, fostering community stewardship, can actually help to overcome lack of financial capital. Based on insightful input from residents, low-cost initiatives that can be run collaboratively include tree-planting campaigns, activating green spaces, monitoring and cleaning public spaces. Immediately actionable suggestions include having one school per ward open in the evenings so people can get together, organizing and promoting their own activities or citywide events, for example a competition between wards. The city can work with citizens on activating potential spaces in this way for accomplishing tasks of common interest, such as keeping streets clean or developing local businesses.

In addition to increasing the pool of resources available to design and implement solutions, collaborative processes can increase satisfaction due to their potential for transparency and accountability among stakeholders. Clarity and effective communication help to create a shared understanding, whereas lack of knowledge leads to misconceptions, misunderstandings, and confusion about whose agenda and priorities are being honored. As such, chances of frustration are reduced even if things discussed and studied are not fully accomplished. Similarly, direct engagement in civic processes helps people understand the complexity of governance, build trust, and create more resilient support for difficult or controversial decisions that must be made.

Regarding political representation, this survey process shows that public opinion would have been primarily concentrated in the upper wards if no additional effort had been made towards other groups. Despite additional efforts, representation of the lower wards was challenging to obtain. The point is that engagement strategies through the usual outreach means – e.g. press releases, social media, and the internet in general – may not reach the whole population equally. Ongoing, equitable engagement, in Holyoke as well as any city, entails face-to-face strategies in neighborhoods,

otherwise, voices from groups that are already more connected, affluent or better educated, will prevail in public discourse.

Lastly, community development can be seen as a process of balancing inward and outward growth. As a city rebuilds and reshapes itself, it also requires investment in diverse forms of capital, strengthening the expression of values associated to community wellbeing. Cultural diversity, attachment to place, and social cohesion, are important assets in Holyoke. Its industrial architecture, history, access to nature, and strategic location are enduring and unique features and attractors that can be used to connect the city regionally, and continue fostering positive perceptions of the city among outsiders and its own people. These bonds, connecting Holyoke's people with one another and with the city they call home, can be a strong foundation for all that Holyoke is to become.

P.A.M. PROJECT

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