

## **General Planning**

### **Holyoke HUB (along with Stantec)**

The goal of the Neighborhood HUB program is to support cities with high rates of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorating homes, especially those facing increased strain due to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Neighborhood HUB is a multi-agency partnership providing technical assistance grants and related programming to support the neighborhood stabilization project of the cities accepted into the program.

LDS Consulting Group, LLC was hired under the Neighborhood HUB program in June 2021 to work with the City of Holyoke. The first phase of the work occurred from June 2021 to June 2022 to identify locations for housing development in the South Holyoke and Flats Neighborhoods of Holyoke, MA as well as create a toolkit for developers/home buyers to identify funding mechanisms and other tools for housing purchase and creation. We have found that as a result of phase I efforts developers are using the toolkit and it is helping to push housing development forward in Holyoke.

Specifically, we started off our work with a kickoff meeting with area landlords. We created a survey tool through GIS to document existing conditions of the properties in South Holyoke and the Flats as well as examine parking. We had two staff members walk the neighborhoods and enter the data. We also collected data from various city departments. We were able to use this data with the assistance of Stantec to create maps showing parking usage, vacant lots, vacant buildings etc. to identify potential development sites. All the maps and data are available electronically to the City's economic development department. In addition, we worked with One Holyoke and Stantec to map capital needs for their portfolio in these neighborhoods. OneHolyoke needed this data to work on refinancing their portfolio to preserve their existing housing.

The second phase occurred from July 2022 to January 2023 and focused on identifying locations for housing development on the upper floors of buildings along a High Street corridor spanning from Lyman Street to Jackson Street. We also walk this neighborhood and documented conditions. Beyond identifying opportunities, LDS met with building owners along the corridor interested in adding housing units to the upper floors to provide financial analysis and examine ownership structures that would make developing housing on High Street feasible. LDS followed up with one-on-one stakeholder interviews with property owners. LDS reviewed a number of developments proformas and provided financial analysis and referrals. We assisted in the completion of a Neighborhood Stabilization Grant to MassHousing for 8 units of rental housing over retail on High Street which involved partnering them with a local not for profit organization.