

**MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING #10**

Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 1:30 p.m.

**Holyoke Transportation Center
206 Maple Street, 4th Floor, Holyoke, Massachusetts**

Task Force Members Present:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tim Brennan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Ward, Regional Employment Board |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kathy Anderson, City of Holyoke | <input type="checkbox"/> John Judge, Springfield Office of Planning and Development |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Robert Gilbert, James Dowd and Sons/Holyoke Chamber of Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Felix Morales, Premier Accounting |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Messner, Holyoke Community College | <input type="checkbox"/> Gladys Lebron-Martinez, CareerPoint |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kip Foley, Cover Technologies, Inc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Dan D'Alma, IBEW, Local 7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Larry Bay, Holyoke Works | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elaine Pluta, City of Holyoke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Michael Malone, University of Massachusetts | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eric Nakajima, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Doyle, CPA Consultant | <input type="checkbox"/> Patrick Larkin, John Adams Innovation Institute – Massachusetts Technology Collaborative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> James Lavelle, Holyoke Gas & Electric | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Vedovelli, Massachusetts Office of Business Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Douglas Bowen, Peoples Bank (Holyoke) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Henderson, MassDevelopment |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allan Blair, Western Mass. Economic Development Council | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Kurose, UMass/Dept. Computer Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments/Pioneer Valley Connect | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Helene Florio, Office of State Senator Michael Knapik |
| <input type="checkbox"/> John Mullin, UMass Amherst | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natalie Blais, Office of U.S. Congressman John Olver |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dianne Fuller Doherty, Western Mass. Regional Office – Small Business Development Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Brenna E. Murphy, Office of State Representative Michael Kane |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ira Rubenzahl, Springfield Technical Community College | <input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Kennedy, Office of U.S. Congressman Richard Neal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carlos Gonzalez, Western Mass. Latino Chamber of Commerce (Holyoke & Springfield) | <input type="checkbox"/> Donald R. Welch, Holyoke City Council |

Guests present:

Melissa Ablett, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative	Jeff Hayden, Holyoke Community College
Jeff Brancato, Office of the President, UMass	Dan Hodge, HDR, Inc.
Ann Burke, Western Mass EDC	Jack Jemsek, Sovereign Consulting
Ray Feyre, GTE Commission	Robert Kispert, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative
Daniel Fitzgerald, Holyoke Historic Commission	Kathy McCabe, McCabe Enterprises
Indrani Kowlessar Gallagher, PVPC	David Scher, Canal Gallery
John Goodhue, MA Green High Performance Computing Center	Don Upton, Fairfield Index

1. Call to Order and Welcome With Brief Opening Remarks/Announcements by Co-Chairs

The tenth meeting of the Innovation District Design and Development Task Force was called to order at 1:41 p.m. by Co-chairs Kathy Anderson and Tim Brennan who welcomed all those present. Ms. Anderson asked Mayor Elaine Pluta if she had any announcements that she would like to make. Mayor Pluta stated that on Thursday, April 7th, there will be a

grand opening of a medical business in the Innovation District which has moved into the first floor of a recently renovated older mill building. Mayor Pluta added that there are also plans to put an IT business in the second floor of this building which is an indication of positive development already underway within the Innovation District.

Ms. Anderson next updated Task Force members on other relevant Holyoke projects and activities. Ms. Anderson noted that all public meetings have now been held regarding Holyoke's new Urban Renewal Plan. She commented that there were four neighborhood meetings and at least 50 people attended each of these gatherings. Ms. Anderson added that there were also stakeholder meetings with a manufacturers group as well as with local businesses. Ms. Anderson further explained that at the next Holyoke Redevelopment Authority meeting, which is scheduled to take place next month, there will be a detailed review conducted of Holyoke's proposed draft Urban Renewal Plan. In addition, Ms. Anderson stated that the feasibility study for the passenger rail station has been completed and will be finalized later this month by the PVPC and the consultant firm HDR, Incorporated. Mr. Brennan then noted that the following Task Force members could not attend this meeting due to scheduling conflicts and had sent along their regrets: James Lavelle, Carlos Gonzalez, Michael Malone, John Mullin, John Judge, Larry Bay and Linda Dunlavy.

Mr. Brennan then moved to take up the next agenda item.

2. Minutes of Previous Task Force Meeting Which Was Held on February 9, 2011

Mr. Brennan called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Task Force meeting which was held on February 9, 2011.

MOVED BY ERIC NAKAJIMA, SECONDED BY HELENE FLORIO, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 9, 2011

Mr. Brennan asked if there were any questions, comments or corrections regarding the subject February 9th meeting minutes.

THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 9, 2011 WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

Mr. Brennan then moved to the next agenda item.

3. Project Status Update on Timeline, Interviews, Stakeholder Meetings, Etc.

Mr. Brennan commented that before taking up agenda item #3, he first wanted to confirm the next meeting date of the Innovation District Task Force. Specifically, Mr. Brennan stated that the next meeting would be held Wednesday, June 8th and would need to be extended to four to five hours in length. Mr. Brennan stated that Task Force members will be asked to arrive at 12:00 PM, and he added that boxed lunches will be provided for them. Mr. Brennan then stated that following a brief lunch the business meeting would begin promptly at 12:30 p.m. and will run until 4:30-5:00 p.m. Mr. Brennan further explained this will be a critically important meeting because the specific details of the action strategies that will be recommended by the HDR consultant team will be presented and discussed at length at this June 8th meeting. Mr. Brennan underscored that since this is anticipated to be the closeout meeting with the consultant team for the Innovation District project he urged all Task Force members to make every effort to attend. Mr. Brennan then called on Dan Hodge of HDR and Don Upton of Fairfield Index to take up the next item on the agenda.

4. Strategic Planning Framework – Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Actions, Reporting/Measurement

Mr. Upton noted that the recurring theme for today's meeting will be specifics and actions. Mr. Upton further stated if the consultant team gets sufficient feedback on the draft strategies from Task Force members today, the next step will be the commissioning of another level of work from the group. Mr. Upton encouraged Task Force members to review the session notes that the consultant team produces after each meeting and he thanked those Task Force members who have provided feedback thus far on these materials.

After briefly reviewing the main points of the consultant team's action agenda, Mr. Upton asked Mr. Hodge to begin by providing the Task Force members with an overview of the project schedule. Mr. Hodge noted that today's meeting, which occurs in month five of the consultant team's project schedule, is the third of a total of four in-depth working sessions. Mr. Hodge added at the fourth of these working sessions, which has now been scheduled for June 8th, there will be a comprehensive and in-depth review of the consultant team's draft strategic plan. Mr. Hodge noted that after this fourth meeting, the consultant team work will be focused on finalizing the Innovation District's strategy development. However, Mr. Hodge stated that before the consultant team advances too far along in the strategy development process, the team needs to first present the overarching goals and objectives as well as a draft strategic framework and this is the goal of today's meeting. Mr. Hodge then noted that he had recently emailed to Task Force members this draft strategy framework which is to serve as an outline to assemble the consultants' final products.

Mr. Hodge next presented a project status update describing specific work activities that have been completed by the consultant team. Mr. Hodge stated that the between consultant team along with staff of the MTC's John Adams Innovation Institute, they had attended all four of the City's recent Urban Renewal Plan public meetings. Mr. Hodge stated that the consultant team had also conducted several community stakeholder focus group meetings in Holyoke and more are anticipated in Holyoke and throughout the region. Mr. Hodge reported that the consultant team had previously drafted the strategic plan framework based on an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) which was discussed at the previous Task Force meeting. Mr. Hodge added that this draft framework was reviewed with input provided by Tim Brennan, PVPC Staff, Kathy Anderson of Holyoke, and Eric Nakajima of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. Mr. Hodge also noted that additional consultant team work activities included creating a draft version of economic development performance measures as well as a draft energy strategy.

Mr. Hodge next presented the some of the major themes and findings had been noted at the public outreach and stakeholder meetings which included:

- Education is critical for business attraction
- Enhance labor pool to meet job opportunities
- Revitalize Holyoke for stronger business opportunities
- Increase home ownership and quality of rent portfolio
- Improve site marketability to help attract businesses to downtown Holyoke
- Promote art galleries and live/work space in Holyoke
- Provide safe and creative activities for children and teenagers
- Make recreation a part of a development strategy

Mr. Hodge asked if there were any questions or comments on these findings. William Ward asked Mr. Hodge if there were any comments made during the public meetings that surprised him. Mr. Hodge stated that one topic that made an impression on him was the concern expressed regarding the importance of education in terms of long-term development opportunities in Holyoke. Mr. Hodge noted that there was a fair amount of debate in at one session as to what that actually meant and ways that the pre-K-12 system could be substantially improved. Mr. Hodge added that part of HDR's work in conjunction with Holyoke's new Urban Renewal Plan is to set a vision for the area in terms of what it can and should be. However, Mr. Hodge stated that there was some frustration expressed by some City residents that a true vision for this community hadn't been established earlier.

Robert Gilbert said that as the Chair of the Governmental Affairs Committee at the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce one topic that has repeatedly come up over the last 20 years is the issue of property taxes since Holyoke's taxes are ranked the second highest in the state. Mr. Gilbert asked Mr. Hodge if this subject was cited as a barrier to community development in the public meetings Mr. Hodge has attended. Mr. Hodge responded that this subject had frequently come up, and he added that a near-term action strategy is to find a way to mitigate higher property taxes on the business side. Mr. Hodge remarked that at the last Task Force meeting, he had presented data which indicated that Holyoke's high commercial property tax rates was considered as a weakness in the SWOT analysis, and therefore, higher taxes have been recognized as a significant issue. Mr. Hodge suggested that a current idea under consideration is to extend Holyoke's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a possible way to mitigate tax rates.

Michael Vedovelli asked if there were any issues raised in focus groups that HDR has facilitated in other communities that haven't been brought up in Holyoke's public and stakeholder meetings that should be considered for the Innovation District project. Mr. Hodge noted the urban revitalization challenge is a common problem particularly in the Northeast U.S. and that the depth of economic distress is greater here. Mr. Hodge also observed that Holyoke has many interesting assets including low-cost, renewable energy; fiber optics and the high-performance computer center. Mr. Hodge observed that at many of the public meetings held to date, more pessimism than optimism about the City and surrounding region has been expressed. Mr. Hodge further stated that there are many assets in this region, but sometimes its residents compare this area to the Boston and New York metropolitan areas and as a result they understandably feel inferior. Mr. Hodge then asked Mr. Upton for his input on this question since he works in different markets. Mr. Upton stated that in his work with other communities he had not observed any significant differences at all between Holyoke or other regions around the U.S. that he has worked in. He further stated that in this instance overlap is a good thing since it demonstrates there are no problems that are unique to this area. However, Mr. Upton stated that the set of assets here in the Pioneer Valley are different and as long as there is a focus on excellence and execution that translates to good news.

Eric Nakajima noted that there are a number of issues being discussed today that can be tracked back to quality of life and business performance issues, but the reality is that the concerns that the Task Force is dealing with are also within the venue of conversation tied to Holyoke's new Urban Renewal Plan. Mr. Nakajima wondered, how do we organize this venue to act in a strategic and engaged fashion while also providing validity and insight to the work that the City of Holyoke is doing anyway? Mr. Nakajima added that both the consultant team work and the City's Urban Renewal plan are not mutually exclusive, but instead are clear partners. Mr. Hodge agreed and emphasized the efforts being made to make that partnership real.

There being no more comments or questions, Mr. Hodge moved to take up the next agenda item.

5. Facilitated Discussion of Draft Strategies for Innovation Eco-System (talent/workforce, entrepreneurship, sites, transportation policies, etc.)

Mr. Upton began the discussion by outlining the following suggested guidelines to manage the Task Force's strategic goals which in the past have been used with workforce boards, economic development offices (EDOs), and departments of commerce, among others. More specifically, Mr. Upton suggested that the Task Force's strategic goals should have the following qualities:

- Support and elaborate on the mission of the organization
- Are actionable and achievable
- Utilize adjectives in order to promote measurement and definition
- Should be defined by achievements
- Should demand proof of concept
- Challenge staff experts to write operating plans
- Overlap and interrelate to create balanced score card
- Identify and leverage collaborative partners and missing resources

Mr. Upton next displayed a PowerPoint slide of the Task Force's Statement of Intent which the Task Force had finalized at its February 9th Task Force meeting. Next, Mr. Upton displayed a PowerPoint slide which graphically depicted the enterprise goals model of the Innovation District project.

Mr. Upton then presented a PowerPoint slide which depicted the following four proposed strategic goals for the Innovation District project:

- Increased job opportunities for the residents of Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley
- Enhanced pathways to productive careers
- Increased levels of private investment in Holyoke
- Successful connection of the GHPCC and regional economic assets into a compelling and integrated economic development marketing and delivery system

Mr. Messner asked the consultants for clarification on what is meant by “enhance pathways”. Mr. Upton explained that it means that the delivery system is seamless, predictable and has the best protocol and customer service. Mr. Nakajima observed that the first, third and fourth bullet points were specific, straightforward and measurable. However, he noted that the second bullet point was more of a process outcome. Mr. Nakajima then suggested that the language for the second bullet point be altered slightly to state that people are experiencing successful career ladders and bringing their own abilities to the job market and community.

Mr. Hodge stated that it was the intent of the consultant team with the second bullet to get at education and workforce training throughout the entire life cycle and at the same time to determine measurable outcomes. Mr. Hodge added that the consultant team will modify the wording of this draft strategic goal and he asked for Task Force members to contact him regarding any suggestion they may have regarding this particular goal.

Mr. Upton asked if there were any additional questions or comments on his presentation thus far. An audience member commented that it was difficult to look at these four strategic goals and tie them into the context of the Innovation District project. He wondered if the reason for this is because these are actually strategies and not strategic goals. He thought that it would be much simpler to set more concrete goals for the Innovation District such as to increase the tax base of Holyoke by 100% or create 5,000 jobs within five years.

Mr. Hodge next reviewed a PowerPoint slide entitled, “Innovation-Based Economic Development Strategy for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley” which depicted the overarching strategic framework for the Innovation District project. Mr. Hodge added that the draft strategic framework which was emailed to Task Force members on Monday, April 4th includes most of the points captured in this PowerPoint slide and is a visual representation of the draft framework. Mr. Hodge explained that this particular slide lists on each row the goals that were previously reviewed by Mr. Upton, the strategic objectives as well as the three strategies of the project. Mr. Hodge further commented the objectives correspond to the three-part strategy that the Task Force had discussed at previous meetings. These strategies consist of an innovative eco-system, and energy strategy and industry clusters and opportunities. Mr. Hodge then reviewed the objectives in detail and noted the key elements which are linked to the three strategies. Afterward, Mr. Hodge again asked if there were any comments or questions on this draft framework from Task Force members.

Mr. Brennan commented that that he wanted to take a step back and comment on the goals. Specifically, Mr. Brennan remarked that a great deal of discussion in previous meetings has focused on green, low cost energy. He wondered, aren't we trying to build a new energy infrastructure that would drive the Innovation District as well as the broader region? Isn't this a premier goal? Mr. Hodge commented that Mr. Brennan's observation was correct and noted that Joan Fitzgerald of Northeastern University, who is part of the consultant team, had recently compiled a draft of ideas on energy strategies. However, there was not enough time to fully incorporate her report into today's presentation. Mr. Hodge further explained that the consultant team is looking for more opportunities for renewable energy and energy efficiency to make it part of a development strategy and he added that an additional goal is needed to get at some of these elements.

Richard Henderson observed that what is missing in the goals and objectives is a sharp focus on strengthening the key assets that Holyoke has that other communities do not. Mr. Henderson noted that energy is one asset as well as the fiber optic network and he underscored the importance of putting together a package together to demonstrate why Holyoke is significantly better than any other place in the Commonwealth to locate given these extraordinary assets.

John Goodhue noted that the only one infrastructure has been discussed but no others. For example Mr. Goodhue observed that there has been a lot of talk about the importance of the education pipeline and bringing it up to world class status. He noted that this is just as important as an energy strategy and deserves special attention. Mr. Goodhue added that overall he felt that the three strategies seemed unbalanced with too much of an emphasis on energy. Bob Kispert stated that an important component of HDR's assignment in the RFP was to develop three strategies on the innovation eco-system, energy and industry clusters and it was assumed that there were going to be overlaps.

Mr. Henderson remarked that in his opinion the four goals stated in the draft framework were not equal. Specifically, he felt that the goals on increasing job opportunities for Holyoke residents and providing enhanced pathways to productive careers were more important than the other two goals and therefore should not be in the same row in the PowerPoint slide depicting the strategies framework.

Mr. Doyle suggested that the consultant team should contact EMC and Cisco to explore how the framework strategies would apply to them to see if either organization would be interested in expanding to Holyoke and then apply the strategies to this goal. An audience member who is a Cisco employee stated that while he understood that low-cost energy is a key driver this is not enough because if it were it would have worked much earlier to attract more businesses here. This audience member then stated it would be good to examine what are the barriers to success for this region and the specific actions that need to be taken. Another audience member who is also a Cisco employee noted that another issue involves attracting companies to this area. He noted that although economic advantages are important to companies it is also important for them to locate to a community that can attract a qualified workforce. This audience member also noted that this workforce has to want to live here and be comfortable with the quality of education for their children as well as a quality of life that's supported by local government and the community.

Mr. Hodge next quickly reviewed the strategic objectives which were listed in the strategic framework PowerPoint slide. After Mr. Hodge read the objective, "Achieve goals by leveraging and connecting the region's educational assets for a world-class, business focused talent delivery system," he asked Allan Blair to report on a recent work session that he and Mr. Upton had participated in at the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Council (EDC). Mr. Blair noted that the people who participated in this session represented almost all of the colleges in the western Massachusetts area. Mr. Blair observed that after this meeting, this group came to the realization that although this area does have great colleges, these institutions do not collaborate in the true sense of the word. Secondly, the group concluded that the pre K-16 system needs to be able to provide data from an economic development standpoint to those who are interested in the local market. Mr. Blair added that this data needs to be generated in a seamless way to efficiently respond to site selectors. Additionally, it was agreed that at the K-12 public education level, there are higher dropout rates which are not confined to Holyoke and in fact extend to Springfield. Additionally, Mr. Blair noted there are pools of unskilled people in these communities as well. Mr. Blair stated that the participants at this meeting agreed that these problem systems are everyone's problem to solve. Mr. Blair then commented that the simple reason for addressing this problem in this way is that the data that indicate quality are available to everyone on the internet today. Mr. Blair underscored that because information on MCAS scores and dropout rates are so readily available to site selectors and used to assess workforce quality in western Massachusetts, this area can be passed over without anyone knowing about it. Therefore, Mr. Blair concluded that solving these problems is extremely important from a workforce quality point of view.

Mr. Hodge noted that one interest that has been expressed by Task Force members is to tie the Task Force's work to metrics. Mr. Hodge then displayed a PowerPoint slide which listed current economic development indicators and corresponding 2020 targets for Holyoke and the region. Mr. Hodge noted that it was the consultant team's goal to come up with ambitious yet realistic targets for improvement for Holyoke as well as the region. Mr. Hodge then reviewed the specific metrics for Holyoke and the region for total jobs, the unemployment rate; population; education; income and poverty rates; and innovative and high growth industries. Mr. Hodge added that it is the consultant team's intent to select a few metrics to track over time to ideally demonstrate ongoing improvements are underway in Holyoke.

Mr. Ward asked if at some point the consultant team could provide clearer descriptions of these indicators. Mr. Ward also noted that the consultant team should eventually explain how it arrived at these target figures. Mr. Ward noted that it would be helpful for Task Force members to have this information before the group focuses more closely on these key indicators. An audience member commented that she found it interesting that the consultant team proposed to increase Holyoke's population by 20%. She noted that Holyoke has more jobs than a labor force participation rate would indicate. She underscored that just because jobs are increasing in Holyoke doesn't mean that unemployment is going down because Holyoke is a regional employer and there are more jobs than residents even though it has a high unemployment rate. She noted that this disconnect had not been indicated in the consultant team's metrics. Additionally, it was noted the consultant team had projected a 20% increase, and she wondered what the strategy would be to lower poverty levels and to decrease unemployment in Holyoke. She concluded that these are fundamental and interrelated questions that need to be addressed. Mr. Hodge acknowledged that these were good points and he explained when the consultant team looked at what job growth would mean to lower unemployment, they had to take into account the fact that there are a lot of people who commute into Holyoke for their jobs. Mr. Hodge added that the consultant team is trying to both grow and provide job opportunities for existing residents as well as trying to make Holyoke more attractive for businesses residents to locate here. Mr. Hodge next reviewed the key elements of the draft strategy for the innovation eco-system.

These elements include:

- Talent/Workforce
- Sites/Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Live, Work, Play, Learn Environment
- Policies and Business Environment
- Site Selection and Delivery of Economic Development Services

Mr. Hodge added that this is the draft framework for this particular strategy and he further explained that at a later date the consultant team will work on providing more detail on actions and responsibilities. Mr. Hodge then began his review of the key elements and strategies beginning with the Talent/Workforce category.

Strategy: leverage and connect the region's educational assets for a world-class, business-focused talent delivery system.

Actions and initiatives under consideration include:

- PreK-12 educational improvements with an emphasis on partnering with the GHPCC, Five Colleges and regional 2/4 year schools
- Develop a seamless regional talent delivery system
- Increase presence of college students in downtown Holyoke
- Retain greater share of region's college graduates

Mr. Hodge then asked Task Force members if these are the right areas that the consultant team should explore in the realm of Talent/Workforce. Mr. Messner noted that the above-noted initiatives only hint at what is currently being done already in the area of adult education. Mr. Messner added that there is a host of strategies in Holyoke and the region that are focused on adult learning such as teaching them English and helping them earn a GED so that they can be eligible for full employment. Mr. Messner added that it is an unfortunate fact of life that in this region there are lots of adults who need access to the educational system but don't have it. Mr. Ward observed that what's missing here is that there is a regional public workforce development system that serves 4,000-5000 people, and approximately 2,000 are here in the Holyoke area. Mr. Ward added that when the above-noted actions and initiatives refer to "preK-12 education improvements," it seems to point to the current education system in place. However, there is a community educational system in place here that deals with adult literacy and thus the above-noted actions and initiatives do not seem to be comprehensive enough to include adult education which is especially needed in Holyoke as well as Springfield. Mr. Upton suggested that what's really needed is to define a model "talent delivery system" that encompasses PreK-12 as well as adult education.

There being no more comments on the Talent/Workforce component Mr. Hodge moved on to address the strategy, actions and initiatives for the Sites/Infrastructure category.

Strategy: Provide an appealing business friendly portfolio of sites and development opportunities in the Innovation District

Actions and initiatives under consideration include:

- Selectively clean and demolish industrial sites
- Provide environmental remediation and guaranteed expedited permitting for "ready to go" sites
- Designate areas of Innovation district for arts/innovation and industrial manufacturing
- Expand and promote fiber optic IT infrastructure

Mr. Hodge next reviewed the strategy and actions and initiatives for Transportation category under consideration listed in his PowerPoint presentation.

Strategy: Market and implement local/regional transportation connections and opportunities to support economic growth and transit-oriented development (TOD) opportunities

Actions and initiatives under consideration include:

- Locate, design, fund and build the Holyoke train station
- Fund and implement regional passenger rail services enhancements
- More frequent and direct bus service to downtown Holyoke from area colleges and Five Colleges bus system
- Designate and improve truck routes to/from industrial sites of Innovation District and I-91 and I-391

Mr. Doyle wondered why there was no mention of airports. Mr. Hodge asked Mr. Doyle what was the strategic idea behind noting airports. Mr. Doyle stated that in order to develop industry you need to consider the airports given the close proximity of Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee, Westfield Airport in Westfield as well as the Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. Mr. Hodge agreed and noted that perhaps airports could be better marketed in order to improve transportation in Holyoke.

Mr. Hodge next reviewed the strategy as well as actions and initiatives for the Live, Work, Play, Learn Environment category under consideration listed in his PowerPoint presentation.

Strategy: Provide a desirable walkable urban environment that supports business and residential growth in the Innovation District

Actions and initiatives under consideration include:

- Complete the Canal Walk, improve streetscapes and sidewalks, clean up trash, etc.
- Expand the residential base of population in Holyoke through market-rate and affordable housing options
- Focus commercial/retail activity on key corridors such as High Street and Main Street with façade program
- Host downtown Holyoke social, cultural, artistic events

Mr. Hodge next reviewed the strategy and actions and initiatives for Policies and Business Environment category under consideration listed in his PowerPoint presentation.

Strategy: Provide a world-class economic development environment through entrepreneurship, financing, marketing, and delivery of services

Actions and initiatives under consideration include:

- Expand small business and entrepreneurial support
- Streamline Holyoke's permitting process
- Extend Holyoke's TIF program to 15-20 years
- Promote and target Holyoke's Free Trade Zone
- Identify teams to implement strategy

Mr. Hodge then asked Mr. Upton to talk about his ideas regarding site selection and the delivery of economic development services. Mr. Upton made the following key points which were also outlined as part of his PowerPoint presentation:

- Site consultants are receptive to exactly what markets want to position on web site as long as credibility and updates are maintained
- If a market does not position the data in a credible and useful way and on the terms expected by site consultants, they will create their own portfolio

- If a lack of teamwork and parochial challenges are in plain view of the communities of a region, then it is in the plain view of the site consultant
- Talent matters most
- Regions will win and lose based on customer service
- Economic development customer service from city, to region, to state must be clear to all teams
- Document entrepreneurial activity, especially when it is in the supply chains of target industry clusters
- Link the GHPCC site decision to related decisions of the past decade in Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley
- Draw on the site expertise residents in the Pioneer Valley, with a special focus on technology/innovation companies, IT, energy and security/homeland defense

Mr. Upton then asked Mr. Hodge to take up the next agenda item which was the review of next steps and an update on the project schedule.

6. Review of Next Steps and an Update on the Project Schedule

Mr. Hodge noted that next steps include revising the draft strategy framework and the goal's objectives; completing draft energy strategy; and following up on the strategic workshops in such key areas as digital technologies and entrepreneurship as well as smart grid and energy. Mr. Hodge added that Mr. Upton will work on exploring strategic opportunities including interviews with site selectors and higher education officials. Lastly, Mr. Hodge stated that the consultant team will finalize the draft strategies with the goal of meeting with the Task Force on June 8th with a significantly longer working session.

Mr. Gilbert asked what Mr. Hodge expected from Task Force members in the next ten days. Mr. Hodge explained that he would like Task Force members to submit feedback on the draft strategic framework which was recently emailed to them. Additionally, Mr. Hodge stated that he would welcome comments and specific ideas on what can be done in the various areas laid out in the draft document. Mr. Gilbert then asked if Mr. Hodge would like an indication from Task Force members as to specific committee work they might be interested in. Mr. Hodge explained that shortly after this meeting the consultant team will be doing a follow-up email with Task Force members with ideas on strategic workshops in specific areas. Mr. Messner asked Mr. Hodge if it was the consultant team's plan to produce a recommended plan of action after the June 8th Task Force Meeting. Mr. Hodge confirmed that it has always been the intent of the consultant team to make the final plan action oriented with responsible parties assigned to each task or action step.

Mr. Brennan asked when the final strategy document was going to be available for the Task Force's review since this document will be the primary focus of the June 8th meeting. Mr. Brennan added that it was critical that the Task Force had ample time to review these materials. Mr. Hodge stated that he would make sure that this document would be distributed to Task Force members to allow them a sufficient period of time for them to review it.

There being no more questions or comments for Mr. Hodge and Mr. Upton, Mr. Brennan moved to take up the next agenda item.

7. Informational Update from the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center (MGHPCC) University Consortium

Mr. Brennan asked Mr. Goodhue for a brief update on the status of the MGHPCC project. Mr. Goodhue said that cement mixers were at the MGHPCC site a couple of weeks ago and added that site plan documentation was recently submitted Holyoke's Planning and Development Department to go through the permitting process. Additionally, Mr. Goodhue noted that a major milestone has been passed in the design process. Specifically, the interior of the building design has been locked down which is keeping this project ahead of schedule to start construction work.

There being no questions for questions for Mr. Goodhue, Mr. Brennan moved to the next agenda item.

8. Announcements and Updates from the City of Holyoke, the PVPC and the MTC on Various Projects and Planning Activities Relevant to the MGHPCC Facility and the Innovation District Task Force

Mr. Brennan noted since Ms. Anderson had already provided updates on projects related to the City of Holyoke he would move to the next agenda item.

9. Other Business Including Confirming a Date for the Next Full Innovation District Task Force Meeting

There being no further business to conduct since the next meeting date for the Task Force had been confirmed for June 8th earlier in the meeting, Mr. Brennan adjourned the April 6th Task Force meeting at 4:14 p.m. without objection.