

**MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT  
DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING #9**

---

**Wednesday, February 9, 2011 at 1:30 p.m.**

**Holyoke Transportation Center  
206 Maple Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Holyoke, Massachusetts**

Task Force Members Present:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Bay, Holyoke Works   | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patrick Larkin, John Adams Innovation Institute – Massachusetts Technology Collaborative |
| <input checked="" 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 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Natalie Blais, Office of U.S. Congressman John Olver  |
| <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Carlos Gonzalez, Western Mass. Latino Chamber of Commerce (Holyoke & Springfield)        | <input type="checkbox"/> Donald R. Welch, Holyoke City Council   |

Guests present:

Esthela Bergeron, Carousel Studios, Inc.  
Jeff Brancato, Office of the President, UMass  
Ann Burke, Western Mass EDC  
Jeff Burkott, City of Holyoke  
David Caputo, Positronic Design  
Maurice Carroll, Carroll Investment Group  
Frank DeToma, South Hadley Select Board  
Michael M. Fisher, CEDC South Hadley  
Indrani Kowlessar Gallagher, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Dan Hodge, HDR, Inc.  
Shareda Hosein, BAC

Nancy Howard  
Marianne Iarossi, City of Holyoke  
Constance Kennedy, Holyoke Library  
Robert Kispert, Massachusetts Technology Collaborative  
Wayne Lehman, Laborers Union  
Kathy McCabe, McCabe Enterprises  
Kevin McCaffrey, Mount Holyoke College  
Andrew Smith  
Don Upton, Fairfield Index  
Michael Wright, Western Mass EDC

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

The ninth meeting of the Innovation District Design and Development Task Force was called to order at 1:35 p.m. by Co-Chair Kathy Anderson who welcomed all those present. Mr. Brennan asked Task Force members to take note that the next meeting date is scheduled for Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brennan further noted that the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held in the same time frame as today, specifically 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in order to allow an ample amount of time with the consultant team. There being no objections raised, the April 6<sup>th</sup> meeting date was agreed upon by consensus.

2. Minutes of Previous Task Force Meeting Which Was Held on December 15, 2010

Mr. Brennan then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous Task Force meeting which was held on December 15, 2010.

MOVED BY ALLAN BLAIR, SECONDED BY JAMES LAVELLE, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 15, 2010.

Mr. Brennan asked if there were any questions, comments or corrections regarding the subject December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes but none were forthcoming.

THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE MINUTES OF THE INNOVATION DISTRICT DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TASK FORCE MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 15, 2010 WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

3. Overview of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis – Objectives and Engagement With the Task Force

Mr. Brennan commented that the bulk of this meeting will be spent on the consultant team's draft SWOT analysis including an updated assessment of and by City of Holyoke officials about the City's capability to perform in a competitive market. At this point, Mr. Brennan asked Don Upton to take up the discussion of the consultant team's SWOT assessment.

Mr. Upton displayed a PowerPoint slide which depicted the Innovation District Strategy Project schedule and he underscored that the Task Force is working off of a clear timeline for action which is research and conversation heavy. Mr. Upton then reviewed today's meeting agenda which consists of: an overview of the SWOT analysis which will be led by Dan Hodge of HDR; a review of the findings of the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) update for Holyoke by Dr. Barry Bluestone; a review of the draft SWOT analysis for Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley which will be a discussion facilitated by Mr. Upton and Mr. Hodge providing most of the data; and a review of next steps including a project schedule update.

Mr. Upton stated that at the December 15<sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting a statement of intent was created to answer questions from other sectors on the Innovation District project. Mr. Upton then read the final version of the statement of intent that had been agreed upon by Task Force members:

*We intend to identify and activate assets for jobs, enterprises, entrepreneurs, and investment by:*

- *Testing ideas and assumptions every step of the way with the people who make the real decisions about jobs and investment*
- *Making honest, data-driven decisions about **the most meaningful opportunities** for our community*
- *Producing and continuously updating an **Innovation District Strategy** with our expectations for growth and redevelopment, drawing on our strengths and heritage, and linking to enterprises and jobs of the future*
- *Leveraging the full extent of **Pioneer Valley regional assets and connectivity** with state and federal resources, and doing our part in transforming the reputation of our region*

Mr. Upton next outlined his suggestions on how to use the following objectives and standards for the SWOT analysis as applied to the Innovation District project. First, he asked Task Force members to ensure that there is an honest assessment and understanding in every SWOT category. Mr. Upton added that to give an honest appraisal Task Force members needed to wear two hats: 1) as a civic volunteer; and 2) as a third party objectively looking at the SWOT analysis for the first time. Other key objectives and standards that Mr. Upton reviewed with the Task Force members included:

- Identify issues and opportunities relative to project objectives
- Learn and dispose of bad assumptions
- Identify follow-ups and data requests
- Shine a light on real pathways for intervention
- Ensure there is a consensus on project pathways for the coming weeks
- Honor surprises, delight in opportunities and don't wallow in weaknesses

Mr. Upton noted that Mr. Hodge will use a classic four-quad format for the review of the draft SWOT analysis and throughout this presentation there will be opportunities for feedback and discussion. Mr. Upton added that session notes will be posted on the Innovate Holyoke website shortly after the meeting. Mr. Upton stated that if time allows, he will review the pathway from SWOT analysis to the strategic plan which would include discussing near- and long-term strategic objectives; identifying opportunities for economic growth; investment needs and focused policy changes. Mr. Upton then called on Dr. Barry Bluestone of the consultant team to explain how the Economic Development Self-Assessment (EDSAT) tool works as well as what the use of the EDSAT has uncovered regarding Holyoke's economic development marketing and delivery systems.

#### 4. Presentation of Findings Resulting From the Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) Update for Holyoke

Dr. Bluestone thanked Mr. Upton for his introduction and stated that he will first provide background information on Northeastern University's Dukakis Center and its work. Dr. Bluestone stated that the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy was founded at Northeastern University in 1999. Dr. Bluestone further explained that the Dukakis Center has done an enormous amount of work in the housing field and in fact helped write Chapter 40R and Chapter 40S which are the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' most recent innovative housing laws.

Dr. Bluestone explained that from the very beginning, the Dukakis Center has done considerable work in the realm of economic development and that he has personally worked in the local economic development field for over 40 years. Dr. Bluestone further stated that several years ago he and a number of people including staff from the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties working in Massachusetts began work on the EDSAT. Dr. Bluestone noted that during the development of the EDSAT tool, it made sense to do a self-assessment of a community in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. However, Dr. Bluestone noted that this assessment should also provide evaluations on what outside parties such as private developers and site selectors from Massachusetts and elsewhere thought about the community in question and its overall competitiveness.

Dr. Bluestone noted that the EDSAT tool consists of almost 200 questions that local public officials must fill out. The data subsequently gathered from this assessment tool is compared with information that has been gathered from other cities and towns throughout New England which have also completed the EDSAT and out of this exercise a community-specific report card is generated. Dr. Bluestone further explained that Dukakis Center staff members then carefully review the report card and summarize the information in terms of a community's economic development strengths versus its weaknesses.

Dr. Bluestone stated that before going over the details of the Holyoke EDSAT, he would first provide the Task Force members with an overview of the Massachusetts economy, pointing out key issues along the way. Dr. Bluestone further emphasized that this is the ideal time to pursue the tasks that the Task Force and the City of Holyoke are striving to accomplish given that the Massachusetts economy is beginning to make its recovery and therefore businesses are going to start making decisions on where to expand operations and job opportunities.

Dr. Bluestone next reviewed the components of his presentation which consisted of: Massachusetts' Economic condition and demographic trends; state and local fiscal conditions; economic development for cities; and lastly, Holyoke's strengths

and weaknesses. Dr. Bluestone began by displaying a PowerPoint slide with a bar chart depicting the Massachusetts vs. U.S. unemployment rates from December 2007 to December 2010. Dr. Bluestone pointed out that according to the National Bureau of Economic Research the U.S. recession officially began in December 2007. However, Dr. Bluestone noted that in the above-mentioned graph, Massachusetts unemployment rate had gone up more slowly than the rest of the nation which he underscored is the first time this has occurred during our nation's last three recessions.

Dr. Bluestone next presented a PowerPoint slide which depicted the national projected growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) from 2008-2020, and he noted that the data source of this graph is the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Dr. Bluestone stated that if this graph proves to be correct then the economic recovery of the United States is now underway but moving very slowly. However, Dr. Bluestone underscored that the nation's return to full employment is going to be delayed and we therefore won't see something akin to normal employment rates until perhaps 2014. Dr. Bluestone commented that, nevertheless, over next year or two, the United States should see a significant re-expansion of the economy and new jobs will be created.

Dr. Bluestone then turned to Massachusetts' demographic challenge. Dr. Bluestone noted that the United States will likely experience an 8.7% increase in the national population between 2010 and 2020. However, in the case of Massachusetts, it is expected that there will only be a 3.1% rate of population growth which is one of the slowest growth rates anywhere in the country. Dr. Bluestone added that the real challenge regarding slow population growth in Massachusetts is that the state's population is becoming older more quickly especially in comparison to the rest of the country. Dr. Bluestone stressed that the U.S. Census has projected that the Massachusetts adult population will grow by almost 200,000 between now and 2020. However, he emphasized this number is made up of approximately 378,000 adults who are age 55 and older while there will be approximately 181,000 fewer people in Massachusetts between the age of 18 and 54. Dr. Bluestone underscored that cities like Holyoke are particularly susceptible to these demographic challenges. Dr. Bluestone then stated that this region therefore needs to find ways to hold onto its young people because companies relocate to where young and talented people are living.

Dr. Bluestone emphasized that the real answer to sustained fiscal health is boosting local economic development by attracting and retaining business opportunities and jobs as well as generating additional tax revenues from new and expanded business which choose to locate in Holyoke and the surrounding region. Dr. Bluestone then addressed the challenge of boosting local economic development, and he noted that every mayor needs to become the "CEO" for economic development in their community. Dr. Bluestone added that this can best be accomplished by implementing the following five, essential steps:

- Become SWOT aware
- Capitalize on strengths and mitigate weaknesses
- Identify appropriate industry sectors
- Know the language and requirements of businesses
- Build a business friendly environment

Dr. Bluestone noted that the City of Holyoke previously went through the EDSAT process back in 2006 and has recently completed this evaluation process once again. Dr. Bluestone observed that a strength that was uncovered after the EDSAT analysis is the fact that Holyoke has a very efficient permitting process. However, Dr. Bluestone observed that permitting could be better streamlined with a single presentation format. Dr. Bluestone also stated that another strength of this community is that Holyoke has much lower cost electricity rates due to the City's direct access to hydropower. In addition, Dr. Bluestone noted that Holyoke is highly proactive in using state and federal grants and is located near universities, four-year colleges and community colleges which are increasingly important especially with regard to training a skilled workforce.

Dr. Bluestone noted that Holyoke's weaknesses include: many vacant commercial buildings; an increasingly dilapidated housing stock; a limited number of manufacturing facilities and general office space sites with on-site parking; higher property taxes and parking fees; higher rents most especially at uptown sites relative to other Pioneer Valley communities; and finally a workforce which appears to be less educated.

Dr. Bluestone next reviewed the changes in strengths as compared with the City's first EDSAT analysis completed in 2006. Based on the results of Holyoke's just-completed EDSAT, Dr. Bluestone highlighted the following improvements:

- Stronger enforcement of codes and regulations on abandoned buildings and trash
- Increase in the proportion of greenfield sites that are available
- Increase in proportion of commercial sites five acres or larger
- Small increase in home ownership rate

Dr. Bluestone then reviewed the following changes in the City's weaknesses from the 2006 EDSAT analysis versus the new 2011 results which include:

- Increase of vacant commercial buildings by 5%
- Increase of rent by about \$4 – \$5 per square foot in uptown and downtown
- Increase in the crime rate
- Decrease in the percentage of high school students proficient in English and Math

Dr. Bluestone then stated that his Dukakis Center staff will refine the EDSAT data in order to find ways to effectively change the cognitive maps of both site locators and developers about where is Holyoke today and help these firms make the decision to locate new businesses in Holyoke.

At this point, Mr. Upton asked if any Task Force members had any questions to pose for Dr. Bluestone. Mr. Ward commented that it will be important to take a hard look at Holyoke's youth population in terms of its skill sets because community colleges in this area need to gear up and redesign their curriculum to better prepare these young people for employment. Dr. Bluestone said that in his opinion too much time is spent in this state on saluting the elite, private educational institutions and he added that the action is really in the Commonwealth's community colleges because the real question is whether this region can provide the middle level skill workers that businesses especially need. An audience member commented that although Dr. Bluestone's presentation noted that Holyoke has competitive electricity rates, it did not mention that at least 60% of it comes from carbon-free sources. This audience member added that Holyoke was founded as a green energy industrial city in 1850 and still has a high-functioning green energy infrastructure, and this fact should be noted as an important strength in promoting Holyoke. Dr. Bluestone agreed this was an asset and the City should use this strength to maximum advantage.

There being no more questions or comments, Mr. Upton thanked Dr. Bluestone for his informative presentation and he moved to take up the next agenda item.

5. Facilitated Discussion/In-Depth Workshop Focusing on the Draft SWOT Analysis of Holyoke and the Pioneer Valley as Prepared by the Consultant Team

Mr. Upton asked Mr. Hodge to begin his presentation on the consultant team's draft SWOT analysis. Mr. Hodge underscored that the SWOT analysis is data driven but has also been informed by extensive stakeholder interviews. Furthermore, he stressed that the draft SWOT is focused on metrics that matter from a site selection as well as economic development perspective. Mr. Hodge next noted that he would do a summary demographics review and will then present the draft SWOT analysis which will list the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in a four-quad format.

Mr. Hodge displayed a PowerPoint slide focused on population growth which indicated that the U.S. population is growing much faster than Massachusetts, while the region is growing slower than Massachusetts and Holyoke, over the past 15 years, has steadily lost population. Mr. Hodge next reviewed a slide that indicated 2009 poverty rates in Holyoke, Springfield, Massachusetts and the United States and noted that over 25% of Holyoke's population lives in poverty in comparison to only 7.5% statewide. Mr. Hodge then touched on other important demographic characteristics of Holyoke including its large Hispanic population; the fact that Holyoke's Center City contains 27% of Holyoke's population; and that the population of Holyoke's Center City is very young which goes against the demographic trend seen elsewhere throughout the state.

Mr. Hodge next reviewed the SWOT quad of demographics as depicted in his PowerPoint presentation and he highlighted key findings in the draft SWOT analysis which included:

*Strengths:*

- Holyoke's young and diverse population

*Weaknesses:*

- Loss of population in Holyoke and high concentration of poverty

*Opportunities:*

- Residential growth in Holyoke's Center City
- Available, young workforce proximate to Innovation District

*Threats:*

- Entrenched poverty

Mr. Ward asked if HDR would take a harder look at the young population in Holyoke's Center City to determine the education level and level of poverty within this group. Mr. Hodge acknowledged that this was good point and he noted that there is more work that needs to be done to make this a successful strength. An audience member observed that having a large bilingual population in a global economy can be viewed as a potential asset and opportunity and she further commented that not acknowledging this asset would be a mistake.

Mr. Hodge then turned to review PowerPoint slides focused on MCAS test performance, educational attainment figures, college enrollment as well as the share of degrees conferred by major in Holyoke, the region and Massachusetts. Mr. Upton then outlined the results of Holyoke's talent SWOT which included the following key findings:

*Strengths:*

- Five College network and other colleges in the region attract students from across the nation
- Strong community college system

*Weaknesses:*

- Low K-12 MCAS test performance
- Relatively smaller share of degrees in engineering and science

*Opportunities:*

- Regional workforce and talent development initiatives
- Cisco Smart + Connected Community initiative in Holyoke

*Threats:*

- Providing job opportunities to retain more graduates and young skilled workers
- Resources and initiatives to improve Holyoke public schools and performance

Mr. Upton then asked if there were any questions or comments on this portion of the consultant team's SWOT presentation. Mr. Brennan noted that the first issue for him is geography and underscored that it is important when framing the SWOT analysis to know which piece of geography we're in when discussing strengths, weaknesses opportunities and threats. Mr. Brennan also issued a caution regarding site selectors because a great deal of economic activity is not driven by this group but instead is driven by what happens inside the region by its business leaders and entrepreneurs. Larry Bay observed that there seemed to be an emphasis in the SWOT analysis to pigeon hole these issues and forget that many of these problems are interconnected. Mr. Bay further commented that the Holyoke school system is made up of a diverse population, which is a good thing, but there is a large percentage of this group that's impoverished and transient. Mr. Bay added that this population being largely bilingual is moving from Spanish-speaking school systems to English-speaking ones.

Mr. Hodge then moved to the Energy SWOT and reviewed PowerPoint slides which depicted data on Holyoke energy production, as well as 2010 energy prices by source and use. Mr. Hodge then reviewed the energy SWOT which included the following key findings:

*Strengths:*

- Low cost rates in Holyoke, driven by hydropower capacity
- Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E) is a distinguished center of innovation with opportunities to expand low cost renewable energy

*Weaknesses:*

- Low cost energy advantage currently limited to Holyoke – region as a whole is in line with Massachusetts

*Opportunities:*

- HG&E plans to implement multiple renewable energy projects to expand competitive green capacity
- Green Communities Act in Holyoke

*Threats:*

- Regulatory and cost challenges for renewable energy projects
- Companies seeking low-cost, high energy use may not produce significant jobs

Mr. Hodge next moved to the transportation portion of the SWOT and reviewed PowerPoint slides on the region's transportation infrastructure, the traffic congestion, commute times as well as modes of commuting to work. Mr. Hodge then highlighted the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat for transportation which included the following key findings:

*Strengths:*

- Low level of congestion for medium-size metro area
- North-south (I-91) and east-west (I-90) interstate highways
- Knowledge Corridor passenger rail project

*Weaknesses:*

- Disproportionate share of region's congestion and safety issues in Holyoke
- Lack of transit connections between colleges and Center City of Holyoke

*Opportunities:*

- Train station feasibility study
- Springfield as a passenger rail hub with planned projects north-south and east-west

*Threats:*

- Funding and timing of train station in Holyoke
- Prospects for enhanced train service north of Springfield

Allan Blair of the Economic Development Council noted that the region has good access to airports and pointed out that there are two airports within 20 minutes of the Holyoke Innovation District, specifically Westover and Westfield, and Bradley, which is located in Hartford, Connecticut is approximately 40 minutes away. Eric Nakajima noted that the development of rail is a real opportunity for the region but the future won't build itself. Mr. Nakajima added that it is important to provide sustained attention to what good planning and development there is around these around potential sites and getting the service up and running. Mr. Hodge then asked Mr. Brennan to talk briefly on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rail project. Mr. Brennan stated that there is a potential commitment for the HUD project which covers the Knowledge Corridor and one piece consists of looking at each of the train location stops from a transit oriented development (TOD) marketing point of view. Ms. Anderson added that the City of Holyoke is partnering with the PVPC on an in-depth master planning process in a two-block area around both train sites which looks at what needs to be put in place in that particular area in order to support passenger rail.

An audience member stated that PVTA needs to be listed as a transportation asset as a regional and a local strength. This audience member also observed that the fact that Holyoke is a walkable area should be listed as an asset and termed as an asset as a way of retaining a younger population since this is the population that wants to live in downtown areas. Mr. Brennan noted that another noteworthy regional transportation strength includes the CSX freight yard in West Springfield. Mr. Brennan added that on the weaknesses side is a continuing constraint on federal and state transportation funding.

Mr. Hodge next moved to the physical infrastructure portion of the draft SWOT analysis and reviewed a PowerPoint slide which depicted Holyoke's center city commercial and industrial business development from 1979 through 2008 noting that there was virtually no new development evident in Holyoke between 1999 and 2008. Mr. Hodge then reviewed a PowerPoint slide presenting a comparison of property tax rates in 2010 between and among the various communities in the Pioneer Valley region as well as Boston and Worcester. Mr. Hodge observed that the region's business, commercial and industrial property tax rates on a value basis are relatively high.

Mr. Hodge then highlighted the results of the physical infrastructure SWOT analysis which included the following significant findings:

*Strengths:*

- Strong fiber optic and broadband infrastructure
- Low land costs and housing prices

*Weaknesses:*

- Sites in Holyoke's Center City are dilapidated and lack "curb appeal"
- High commercial/industrial property tax rates

*Opportunities:*

- Extend Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to 15-20 years to mitigate the City's property tax disadvantage
- Work with HG&E and the Pioneer Valley Rail Road (PVRR) to prototype industrial facilities/site

*Threats:*

- Potential lack of funding to improve sites to a level that attracts site selectors and businesses
- Political challenge of lowering long-term property tax rates for business development

Mr. Hodge asked if there were any questions regarding the draft SWOT assessment focusing on physical infrastructure. Mr. Nakajima stated that this is a perfect example of where the SWOT process has to run in parallel with Holyoke's new Urban Renewal Plan. Mr. Nakajima further emphasized that the context of the SWOT has to be run tightly with the broader question of what are the community development challenges and opportunities in Holyoke generally and how does that process work with this one in order to make sure that Holyoke's neighborhoods and families are coming together even as opportunity sites for commercial and industrial development activity are being identified. Mr. Nakajima also stressed that there is a need to build upon the interest that the private sector has shown in Holyoke by identifying opportunity sites and creating development ready sites in the near future.

Task Force member John Doyle observed that because of the strong green energy aspects in place in Holyoke, universities and large companies such as EMC and Cisco should plan to invest in this area. Mr. Doyle noted that it is equally important to leverage connections among these educational institutions and large companies since they have ample funds available which they can invest. Dianne Fuller Doherty added that it is also important to leverage the small business community and the entrepreneurial environment in Holyoke as well as the region at large.

Mr. Hodge next moved to address the industries section of the draft SWOT analysis. He first reviewed a series of PowerPoint slides with data points dealing with regional employment shares by industry; industry concentrations and growth trends; and jobs totals by occupation across the region. Mr. Hodge also reviewed maps that depicted the concentration of biomedical, health, digital technology, and manufacturing companies based in the Pioneer Valley region.

Mr. Hodge then presented and reviewed the results of the draft SWOT for industries in Holyoke which included the following key findings:

*Strengths:*

- Concentrations in manufacturing industries
- Renewable energy

*Weaknesses:*

- Relatively low concentration in professional and technical services
- Small construction sector reflects low investment and growth

*Opportunities:*

- Growth digital technologies
- Renewable energy
- Expand and improve entrepreneurial support system

*Threats:*

- Uncertain what industries will be attracted due to the Green High Performance Computing Center (GHPCC)
- Trend of manufacturing to locate labor intensive operations in less expensive areas

Mr. Upton asked if there were any Task Force members who thought there were any glaring omissions to the consultant team's draft SWOT analysis. Kip Foley responded that he feels there needs to be a focus on creating jobs that will employ local residents of the City as soon as possible. Mr. Foley also emphasized that due to the concentrated poverty and unemployment in Holyoke, it is important to focus on solving these local problems as quickly as possible. Mr. Upton thanked Mr. Foley for his feedback and he then moved to the next item on the agenda.

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

Mr. Hodge reviewed the next steps for the project noting that the HDR team will revise the draft SWOT analysis based on today's feedback and will submit a draft report document that will accompany the SWOT. Mr. Hodge further explained that the consultant team's work will quickly transition into work on a strategic plan. Mr. Hodge noted that Holyoke's Urban Renewal Plan public meetings are scheduled to start up shortly and the HDR team will participate in these gatherings. Mr. Hodge stated that HDR will be conducting a series of community stakeholder focus group meetings during March to gather more community input that can help shape a strategic plan for the City and surrounding region.

Mr. Brennan commented that there may be Task Force and audience members who will want to give additional feedback after the meeting and he asked who should receive this information as well as the deadline for these submissions. Mr. Hodge stated that comments should be emailed to him and that Task Force and audience members will have one and a half weeks from the date of today's Task Force meeting to submit their comments, questions and concerns to the HDR consultant team.

Mr. Upton stated that when he compiles the session notes he will add a list of key site selection factors by rank and key quality of life factors by rank as well. Mr. Upton also noted that he will add a section on where leaders may step up on behalf of the Holyoke Innovation District and Pioneer Valley and also will include a comparison with communities such as East Baltimore, Maryland and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to demonstrate that there are other cities and towns that have grappled with similar issues that the Innovation District Task Force is presently working on.

Mr. Brennan thanked Mr. Hodge and Mr. Upton for their informative and engaging presentations and moved to the next agenda item.

7. Informational Updates from the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computing Center (MGHPCC) University Consortium (i.e. MIT, University of Massachusetts, Boston University, Northeastern University and Harvard University)

Mr. Brennan asked Jeff Brancato to update the Task Force on the work of the MGHPCC. Mr. Brancato said that the University Consortium is working through the construction planning process and is getting close to a final detailed design for the Holyoke HPCC facility. Mr. Brancato further noted that the Consortium had a number of productive meetings with the City of Holyoke and HG&E over the past two weeks working on planning issues related to energy supply, permit approvals and regulatory issues.

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

Mr. Brennan asked if Ms. Anderson and any project updates from the City of Holyoke. Ms. Anderson noted that she did not and extended her thanks to Dr. Bluestone, Mr. Upton and Mr. Hodge for their hard work and noted that their efforts will be a great benefit for the region.

9. Other Business Including Confirming a Date for the Next Full Innovation District Task Force Meeting on April 6, 2011

Mr. Brennan confirmed once again that the next Task Force meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at the Holyoke Transportation Center beginning at 1:30 p.m. There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Brennan adjourned the meeting at 4:10 p.m. without objection.