

# **STAT210 (Mining the History of Holyoke) Riverview Renewal Area Report**

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2023-05-21

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## **Introduction**

In the 1960s, the City of Holyoke underwent a renewal process to reconstruct formerly thriving industrial neighborhoods. This process was not unique to Holyoke; much like other American cities, Holyoke needed to grapple with the influx of changes brought about in the post-War period, especially the rise of the automobile and highway construction, suburbia and the nuclear family, and large-scale economic transitions. Across the country, industry and workers moved outwards, leaving city centers desolate and economically unstable. Plagued with these problems, Holyoke hoped to revitalize different sections of the city through the bulldozing and reconstruction of obsolete industrial buildings and housing.

This renewal process resulted in the demolition of entire neighborhoods that had existed for several decades. This project contains scanned documents from the Holyoke Public Library History Room regarding a major urban renewal project targeting the Riverview section of the Downtown area. The collection contains information sheets with property details (including building conditions, valuations, and owners), maps of property locations, and photos of the properties.

As seen below, the Riverview Renewal Area (now referred to as “Riverview/Prospect Heights”) was bounded by Lyman Street to the West, Pulaski Park to the East, Front Street to the South, and Pine Street to the North.



Figure 1: View of the Riverview Renewal Area as shown on a 1960s map.

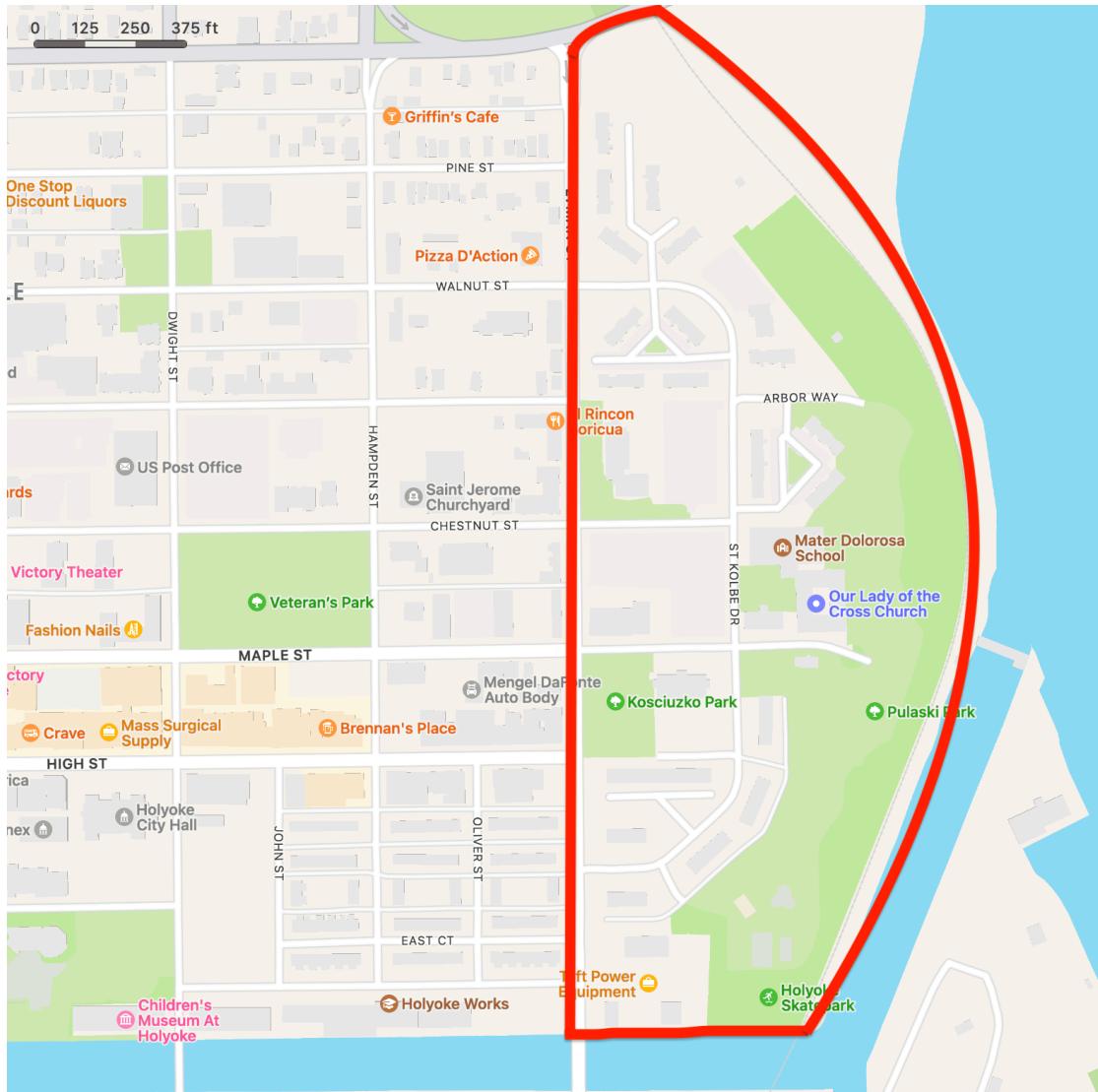


Figure 2: Riverview Renewal Area as seen on Apple Maps.

## Property Scans

There are 116 properties in the area are grouped into blocks and parcels. Any given block has several properties (parcels) associated with it. The `riverview_organized` folder contains image files that provide information about parcels in blocks 1 to 16 of the neighborhood. The images in the folder are named in the following structure:

**Parcel information sheets - `block_x.Parcel_y.info.png`** These sheets include information about the property's location, owners, valuation, tax assessments, among other characteristics. The information provided varies across properties. A few parcels are associated with more than one information sheet - for these parcels there are numbers at the end of the file name denoting the order of the information sheets.

**Maps - `block_x.Parcel_y.map_z.png`** These images shows where the parcels are located on the map. Some parcels have more than one map.

**Photos - `block_x.Parcel_y.photo_z.png`** These images show photographs of the parcels. Some parcels have more than one photograph.

## Riverview Renewal Data Scans and Spreadsheet

Copies of the curated scans and spreadsheet can be found at the public GitHub repository:  
[https://github.com/STAT210-S23/STAT210-Holyoke-History-Room/blob/main/Riverview\\_Renewal\\_Project](https://github.com/STAT210-S23/STAT210-Holyoke-History-Room/blob/main/Riverview_Renewal_Project)

The `riverview_renewal_data.xlsx` spreadsheet includes information about each property's location, owners, valuation, tax assessments, among numerous other characteristics which vary across properties. Table 1 presents a glimpse of the spreadsheet.

Table 1: A glimpse of the first few columns and rows of the Riverview Renewal Area Properties spreadsheet.

file_name	block	parcel	property_location	owner	owner_address
block_02_parcel_01_info	2	1.0	Union & Prospect Streets	Whiting Oil Corp.	1 Fountain Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_02_parcel_05_info	2	5.0	Westerly side Front Street, Fountain Street and Prospect Street	Whiting Oil Corporation	458 Dwight Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_01_info	3	1.0	16-20 Prospect Street	Theodore J. & Tita V. Dec	1663 Northampton Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_02_info	3	2.0	8-10 High Street	Ronald G. Giguere & Pauline Bernier	64 Hanover St., West Springfield, Mass.
block_03_parcel_03_info	3	3.0	14-16 High Street	Bronislaw & Stefania Lukomski	16 High Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_04_info	3	4.0	18 & 20 High Street 22 High Street	Dorothy J. Galary, c/o Atty. Jos. P. Zajac 225 High Street	22 High Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_05_info	3	5.0	30 High Street	Jane V. Kane, Mary Ann Grzyb	30 High Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_06_info	3	6.0	34-40 High Street	Stephen M. & Jennie R. Szlosek	40 High Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_07_info	3	7.0	29 Fountain Street	Kazimierz & Weslawa Kukawka	29 Fountain Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_10_info	3	10.0	Westside of Union Street between Fountain and Prospect Streets	Holyoke Housing Authority	Jackson Parkway, Holyoke, Mass.
block_03_parcel_11_info	3	11.0	Northwest Corner of Union and Prospect Streets	Holyoke Housing Authority	Jackson Parkway, Holyoke, Mass.
block_04_parcel_01_info	4	1.0	21 Prospect Street	Maciej & Stefania Hermanowski	21 Prospect Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_04_parcel_02_info	4	2.0	23 Prospect Street, Corner Maple Street	William S. Starzyk	16 Maple Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_04_parcel_02_info_02	4	2.0	23 Prospect Street, Corner Maple Street	William S. Starzyk	16 Maple Street, Holyoke, Mass.
block_04_parcel_03_info	4	3.0	16 Maple Street	William S. Starzyk, Sr.	16 Maple Street, Holyoke, Mass.

## Property Information Analysis

While the owners of these properties were mostly individuals, a few organizations and companies held ownership of buildings. The top ten owners of properties are shown in Table 2. The Holyoke Housing Authority owned four different parcels, which were all located on or around Union Street. Both the Socony (Standard Oil Company of NY) Mobil Oil Company and the Whiting Oil Corporation owned two properties. The United Forces Post 351 of the American Legion was located at 50 Prospect Street, and interestingly remains at the same location today (although its address is now 50 Saint Kolbe Drive). The Holyoke Ice & Fuel Company and Donally Realty Corporation were also owners.

Did many of these owners live in Holyoke? Most of them did. As seen in Table 3, Only 11 properties had owners that had non-Holyoke addresses. These owners lived in nearby towns such as West Springfield, Hatfield, Fairview, South Hadley, South Hadley Falls, Chicopee, and Aldenville. Only one owner had a non-Massachusetts address, and this owner was based out of the Forest Hills neighborhood in New York City's borough of Queens.

## Property valuation

The properties were evaluated by different grantors before the demolition and assigned dollar value to the land and the building.

A sample valuation of a property, lets say block\_03\_parcel\_02, looked like this:

- Wood Block - \$2,400.

Table 2: Top ten owners of properties.

Owners	Count
Holyoke Housing Authority	4
Antoni Ciolek	2
Harold & Frances J. Adelson	2
Loretta Tenczar	2
Robert S. & Winifred M. Murphy	2
Stephen & Anna J. Szymanski	2
William S. Starzyk	2
Adam & Antonia Wojciechowski	1
Alphonse & Ann T. Ciereszko	1
Amos R. & Constance N. Cundiff	1

- Land - \$1,500.
- Total - \$3,900.

Some properties had additional characteristics like a garage or a shop attached to their valuation. For example, block\_03\_parcel\_06 valuation looked like this:

- Wood House - \$2,200
- Concrete Bldg. & Store - \$1,800.
- Land - \$1,900
- Total - \$5,900.

The valuation was a reflection of the condition of the buildings at the time of the demolition. The histogram below shows the distribution of all the property values.

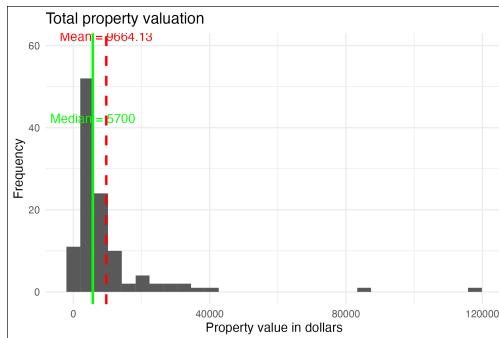


Figure 3: Total building valuation at the time of the demolition

There was an uneven distribution of the property values with majority of the houses being less than \$10000.

Here is a graph that shows the distribution of the house after removing the outlier valuation values.

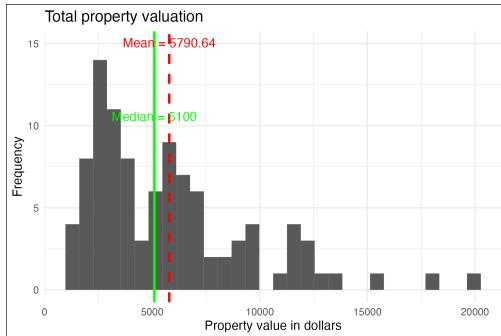


Figure 4: Property value after removing the outliers

The average value of a property is now \$5,790.64 (with a median value of \$5,100) without the outliers. We can now observe the bi-modal distribution of the property values. This is due to the difference in the material used for constructing the properties. Properties that were made using bricks had higher valuation than those that were made using wood.

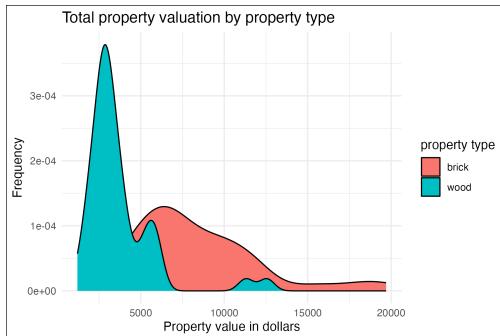


Figure 5: property valuation by construction material

There were 13 outliers that were valued >\$20,000 and 10 out of the 13 properties were owned by several companies.

The building with the highest valuation was valued at \$118,866. This property was located at 111 Lyman Street (block 16, parcel 01) and owned by Socony Mobil Oil Co., Inc. It was a commercial building that accommodated several other business in the Riverview area, and occupied the entire block 16. Here is a photo of the building.



Figure 6: block 16 parcel 1

## Polish Community

The Riverview Renewal Area was a historically Polish neighborhood. A section of the second information sheet for Block 2 Parcel 4 states that “there are many vacancies and the building at the corner of Prospect and Maple Street is 100 per cent vacant. Occupied apartments are tenanted by wage earners who are mostly of Polish extraction.” Additionally, located on 117-121 Lyman Street was the Tadeusz Kosciuszko Club. Named after the Polish General, the Kosciuszko Club served as a place for socialization within the Polish community. While the Club’s social hall was removed in 1971, a park with the namesake (Kosciuszko Park) remains at the corner of Maple and Lyman Streets. Most important to the Polish immigrants was the Mater Dolorosa Church, which was built in 1901 and was located at 71 Maple Street (Comeau, n.d.).

In 2014, residents of Holyoke motioned to establish a Polish Historic District around Lyman Street. The idea was controversial, as the designation of such a district would make it difficult and costly to make cosmetic and structural changes to the properties within the district. While the motion ultimately did not pass, it brought to light the historical importance of this area to Holyoke’s Polish population. Olivia Maulen, the Chair of the City of Holyoke’s Historical Commission noted that

“The Polish Heritage Local Historic District is important because it represents the very industrial facet of Holyoke, that the immigrants, the Polish immigrants settled in a particular part of town, and they worked, went to school, went to

Table 3: Properties of owners who live outside of Holyoke.

block	parcel	property_location	owner	owner_address
3	2.0	8-10 High Street	Ronald G. Giguere & Pauline Bernier	64 Hanover St., West Springfield, Mass.
6	6A	19 Chestnut Street	Arthur M. & Mary V. Trudeau	15 Chestnut Street, Molyoke, Mass.
7	3.0	89 Fountain Street	Sophie & George Moskowicz	Box 634 Elm St., Hatfield, Mass.
8	7.0	48 Pine Street	Madeline D. F. Diehm	102-39 68 Ave. Forest Hills, L.I. N.Y.
10	8.0	44 & 46 Walnut Street	Francis G. & Stasia A. Hamel	250 Britton St., Fairview, Mass.
10	10.0	215-221 Lyman St. & 43-47 Elm St.	Stanley J. & Wladyslawa Bys	216 Pearl St.,South Hadley, Mass.
11	13.0	29-31 Chestnut Street	Edward R. & Adele J. Mengel	30 North Street, South Hadley Falls
11	14.0	25-27 Chestnut Street	Homer A. Harnois	c/o Edmund Harnois c/o Stein's Auto Exchange 961 Meadow Street, Chicopee, Mass.
14	2.0	54-56 High Street	Lawrence Bergeron	932 Grattan St., Aldenville, Mass.
14	10.0	133-135 Lyman Street	Antoni Ciolek	259 Lathrop St., South Hadley Falls
14	11.0	123-129 Lyman Street	Frank Wlazlo	28 Ducharme Ave., Chicopee, Mass.
14	12.0	57-59 Union Street	Antoni Ciolek	259 Lathrop St., South Hadley Falls

church, worked in the mills, came home, went to the Kosciuszko Club.” (Plaisance 2014)

The map below shows the portion of the Riverview neighborhood that constituted the proposed Polish Historic District.

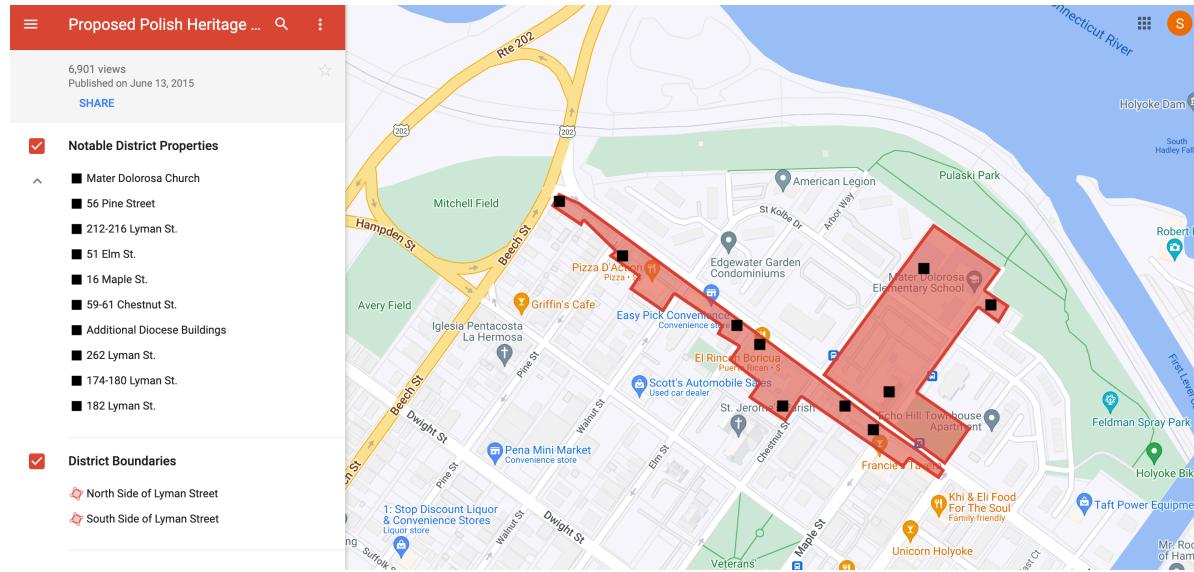


Figure 7: Screenshot of [map](#) for the proposed Polish Heritage Local Historic District in Holyoke.

The Riverview Urban Renewal Project is now referred to as the “Riverview/Prospect Heights” neighborhood. An article on the neighborhood by Robert Comeau, who gives walking tours of Holyoke, provides a rationale for this official name:

“The neighborhood of Union, High, Maple, Chestnut, and Elm Streets were filled with many tenement houses. During the urban renewal of the late 1960s, two streets were removed – Union and Prospect. **Two high rise apartment buildings were put in – Pulaski Heights and Prospect Heights.** These were built in the Brutalist architectural style of the 1950s and 1960s. The last of Thomas Dillon’s tenement houses and stores was removed in the 1980s when Kosciuszko Park was built.” (Comeau, n.d.)

Ultimately, it seems that the Riverview area was comprised of mainly Polish immigrants, many of whom worked in the mills and lived in dilapidated tenement houses in the early twentieth-century. Interestingly, while many urban renewal projects in the 1960s cloaked the displacement of marginalized populations as the “revitalization” of areas, the Riverview project seemed to not have that goal. The Church remained intact, the Pulaski Heights apartment complex was named after the Polish General Casimir Pulaski, and new streets were named after Father Kolbe, a Polish Friar.

## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Eileen Crosby for providing us with the scans and information about the collection: this project would not have been possible without her efforts. Thank you to Professor Nick Horton for his guidance, feedback, and technical assistance throughout the semester.

## References

- Comeau, Robert. n.d. “Mater Dolorosa Church Campus History.” Historical Tours of Greater Holyoke. <http://www.holyokecanaltour.org/special-topics/neighborhoods-in-holyoke/mater-dolorosa-church-campus-history/>.
- Plaisance, Mike. 2014. “Holyoke Polish Historic District Dispute Features Battle over Mater Dolorosa Church; 4th Public Hearing Scheduled Thursday.” [https://www.masslive.com/news/2014/03/holyoke\\_polish\\_historic\\_distri.html](https://www.masslive.com/news/2014/03/holyoke_polish_historic_distri.html).
- “Proposed Polish Heritage Local Historic District, Holyoke.” n.d. <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1gOvdbdZPJapbF2xwj98SqC7TcS0&ll=42.21067572333166%2C72.60771185159683&z=17>.