

Holyoke Art: Economic Development Agent and Tourism Driver

Introduction

Holyoke Art is a non-profit organization committed to leveraging the arts as a catalyst for economic development, tourism, and community revitalization in downtown Holyoke. Our mission is to transform underutilized spaces into vibrant cultural hubs, foster creative entrepreneurship, and support arts programming that engages the community and draws visitors from across the region. By creating spaces, resources, and opportunities for artists, residents, and visitors to come together, we contribute to the economic and social regeneration of Holyoke, positioning the arts as a key driver of the city's resurgence.

Key Spaces: The Print Shop and The ARTery

Holyoke Art operates two main spaces in downtown Holyoke, both of which serve as engines of economic activity and tourism.

1. **The Print Shop** at 62 Main Street is a DIY makerspace equipped with commercial printing tools and production equipment, including wide-format, 3D, and vinyl cutting machines. It serves as a hub for job training in graphic design, print production, and entrepreneurship, particularly for local youth. Through partnerships with organizations such as Holyoke Public Schools and MassHire, The Print Shop provides valuable job skills, helping young people enter the workforce with practical experience. It also offers services to local businesses, contributing to the economic vitality of downtown Holyoke by helping to brand and promote their services with professional signage, decals, and promotional materials. Learn more at printshopholyoke.org
2. **The ARTery** at 289 High Street functions as both a retail marketplace and an economic platform for over 100 local artists and artisans. This space allows creators to sell handmade goods, generating income for both the artists and Holyoke Art. The ARTery attracts visitors from across the region, becoming a tourism destination for those looking for unique, locally crafted items. By supporting local creatives, The ARTery helps build a strong, culturally rich downtown that draws foot traffic and boosts surrounding businesses. Additionally, The SPLATery, a paint room located in The ARTery, serves as a regional draw and major fundraiser, bringing visitors from outside the city and adding to the vibrancy of downtown Holyoke. Learn more at holyokeart.com

Transforming Vacant Buildings and Spaces

Holyoke Art is actively working to repurpose vacant and underutilized buildings, transforming them into thriving cultural spaces that support economic growth and attract tourism.

- **52 Main Street:** We are rehabilitating this vacant four-story building to serve as our future home, complete with ADA-accessible classrooms, office space, and potentially live/work spaces for artists. By transforming this structure, we are not only preserving a historic building but also creating a new destination for artists, educators, and visitors, further increasing foot traffic and economic activity in the area.
- **400 High Street Lot Activation:** Working with partners like the TDI District, the City, and local property owners, we are activating this vacant lot with community programming,

outdoor dining, art classes, and events such as movie nights. This project will transform an empty space into a bustling community hub, driving foot traffic, supporting local businesses, and attracting visitors to downtown Holyoke. Such placemaking initiatives enhance the appeal of the neighborhood for tourists and investors alike. Learn more at www.laplazaholyoke.com

Cultural Events as Economic Drivers

Holyoke Art provides fiscal sponsorship and logistical support for key city events that attract thousands of visitors and generate significant economic activity.

- **Holyoke Pride:** Over the past three years, Holyoke Pride has grown from a single event into a month-long celebration that draws thousands of participants. This event has become a major tourism driver, attracting visitors from across the region who stay in local hotels, eat at local restaurants, and shop at local businesses. By providing administrative support, including assistance with permits and insurance, Holyoke Art ensures the sustainability and growth of this event, which brings both cultural enrichment and economic benefit to the city. Learn more at holyokepride.org
- **The Great Holyoke Brick Race:** This annual event, in which participants of all ages design and race creative cars made from building bricks, continues to grow each year, increasing the number of racers, sponsors, and spectators. As a unique community event, the Brick Race attracts tourists and fosters local pride, while also providing sponsorship opportunities for local businesses and contributing to downtown economic activity. Learn more at www.thegreatholyokebrickrace.com

Supporting Creative Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses

Through our spaces and programs, Holyoke Art plays a vital role in fostering creative entrepreneurship and supporting small businesses. By providing affordable workspaces, selling handmade goods, and offering job training, we help creative professionals thrive, contributing to the city's broader economic development strategy. Our efforts to institutionalize arts programming create a sustainable infrastructure for ongoing growth, ensuring that Holyoke remains a place where the creative economy can flourish.

- **Affordable Artist Studios:** We are working with the landlord of 289 High Street to create affordable artist studios on the building's fourth floor, providing 24/7 access to workspace and fostering a community of creative professionals. This project will not only support local artists but also generate additional foot traffic and tourism in downtown Holyoke, contributing to the economic health of the area.
- **Revenue-Generating Initiatives:** Holyoke Art's business model emphasizes sustainability through revenue-generating programs. The Print Shop offers membership fees, material fees, and contract services, while The ARTery generates income through art sales. These initiatives reduce reliance on grants, helping Holyoke Art become a self-sustaining institution that contributes to the local economy year-round.

Tourism and Economic Impact

Holyoke Art's initiatives have a direct impact on tourism and the local economy. Our spaces and events draw visitors from outside the city, contributing to increased hotel stays, restaurant visits, and retail sales. For example:

- **The SPLATery** has become a regional draw, attracting visitors from Massachusetts, Connecticut, and beyond. These visitors often explore other local attractions, stay in local hotels, and support other downtown businesses, making The SPLATery a key driver of tourism in Holyoke.
- **The ARTery** and **The Print Shop** attract creative professionals and visitors from across Western Massachusetts, further establishing Holyoke as a hub for the arts and a destination for those seeking unique cultural experiences. The retail sales generated by The ARTery help support local artists while contributing to the overall economic vitality of the city.
- **Holyoke Pride** and **The Great Holyoke Brick Race** bring thousands of visitors to the city each year, generating significant economic activity for local businesses. These events enhance Holyoke's reputation as a vibrant cultural destination and demonstrate the power of the arts to drive economic and social revitalization.

Conclusion

Holyoke Art is not just an arts organization—it is a key player in the economic development and tourism landscape of downtown Holyoke. Through our spaces, events, and programs, we contribute to the city's resurgence by fostering creative entrepreneurship, attracting visitors, and supporting the local economy. As we continue to grow and expand our impact, we remain committed to positioning Holyoke as a regional destination for the arts, culture, and creative innovation.