BLUEPRINT FOR FLOURISHING NEIGHBORHOODS

CITY OF HOLLAND

Neighborhood Improvement Committee
December 2022

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Acknowledgments and Appreciation

Tremendous gratitude is due to the members of the Blueprint Work Group – Ruth Stegeman, Viola Jackson-Cleveland, and Jay VanGroningen – who met for over a year providing wise guidance, feedback and direction throughout the development of the report. Above all else, they displayed genuine care, respect, and regard for the flourishing of Holland's neighborhoods.

Appreciation is also due to the many residents of Holland who, whether independently or through their involvement with one of the Neighborhood Connection organizations or other groups, are working to develop improved conditions within Holland's neighborhoods.

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BLUEPRINT FOR FLOURISHING NEIGHBORHOODS

The report that follows seeks to provide a framework and roadmap for Holland's neighborhoods to advance toward greater flourishing. A place that is flourishing, in this context, means one that is *thriving, resilient, inclusive, and one that offers an equitable opportunity for all to prosper*. It is noted in several places within the report that Holland's neighborhoods have many positive qualities and offer a high quality of life which rings true with the City's mission of maximizing livability to many who reside within those neighborhoods. Yet there is room for growth and improvement, as well as an ongoing need to adjust to changing conditions and realities. In addition, not all experience that quality of life or benefit from the City's offerings to an equal degree, and the reasons for that are varied and oftentimes complex. This report suggests that both individual residents and City leaders have agency to influence the conditions and characteristics of the neighborhoods in which we live.

It is very much in the gift of the community to enrich individual lives, and it is in the gift of any individual to enlarge and enrich community. – Marilynne Robinson

The Neighborhood Improvement Committee "serves as an advocate for City of Holland neighborhood improvement" as charged by City Council. To fulfill that role in a meaningful way, the committee would clearly benefit from having a thorough strategy, and this report is designed to serve that purpose.

The report consists of eight sections. Several contain background information on the need for such a report and introductions to key concepts. A framework for defining flourishing neighborhoods is introduced, consisting of six elements:

- Connectedness, Engagement, and Inclusiveness
- Safety and Resilience
- Diversity
- Sense of Place and Character
- Accessibility of Amenities
- Economic Vitality and Opportunity

One section of the report provides a broad overview of data that paints a portion of the picture of Holland's neighborhoods and those who live there. The data provided is organized according to the elements of flourishing neighborhoods listed above. Data is included from the most recent City of Holland Citizen Survey pertaining to key issues impacting neighborhoods. There is data provided about public safety, traffic safety, demographics of the population of Holland, income and housing affordability, tree density, and access to parks, among other subjects.

Another section is devoted to evaluating which areas of Holland have sufficient "walkability" to be considered "fifteen-minute neighborhoods," using a definition that is becoming increasingly popular by many municipalities and planners.

The review of the data and analysis of best practices culminates in a list of 39 prospective strategies deemed likely to improve the strength and health of Holland's neighborhoods. These strategies are categorized according to implementation priority based on several factors.

The process used for seeking public feedback in preparing the report and confirming that the themes and direction of the report aligned with the opinions expressed by constituents is described in another section.

A central conclusion of the report is that there is a growing sense of social isolation within the greater society, including within Holland's neighborhoods. Meanwhile, it is both intuitive and well-documented that neighborhoods are healthier and more vibrant when there are more and varied exchanges among neighbors. Connectedness brings with it many important benefits, benefits that are good for individuals but also for the greater good of the community. **Personal flourishing and community flourishing are inextricably intertwined.** Yet societal trends are making social engagement and genuine inclusion more challenging to achieve.

The report concludes that indeed there are effective tools and strategies available to effect positive and desirable change within neighborhoods. The actions and behaviors of residents and the decisions of community leaders can either create or detract from the potential for neighborhood and personal flourishing. To that end, the report seeks to communicate a call for anyone interested in working toward the goals of greater connectedness and social equity to join the effort. While there are countless ways to do so, those interested might best begin either by exploring the work of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee, or by reaching out to one of the Neighborhood Connection organizations or other community partners currently working within Holland's neighborhoods. (The Neighborhood Connection organizations are introduced in Section 3, and contact information is located in Appendix B.)

Everyone can find a place to join in the work of helping our neighborhoods to be places of flourishing and connection.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Neighborhood Improvement Committee of the City of Holland completed an evaluation of Holland's neighborhoods titled the *Neighborhood Improvement Strategy*. The report challenged the city, including its leadership, business community and residents to work together to ensure that "all of the neighborhoods are on a path to become Neighborhoods of Choice, by being safe, attractive, having places to gather, being conveniently located, diverse and both worthy and protective of investment." The report was born out of the very challenging impacts of the Great Recession of 2008-2010, which left the City and region with a flattened economy, including high unemployment and a dramatically altered housing market with steeply falling prices and general market instability. In response, the report's stated purpose was to "develop public policies and incentives for private investment that ensure all of Holland's neighborhoods are Neighborhoods of Choice for the broadest diversity of residents."

In 2020, the Neighborhood Improvement Committee acknowledged that while the report from 2010 still had much value, it didn't fully speak to the current conditions of the City and its various neighborhoods. Of course, 2020, and continuing into 2022, witnessed the many and varied impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which, with some parallels to the Great Recession, saw deep and challenging impacts to the local and regional economy, along with devastating public health impacts. As these pages are being written, the actual depth and longevity of these impacts is still being assessed and understood.

As a result of these and many other factors, Holland is in a different place than it was in 2010. As countless others have noted, the pace of societal change as a result of demographic changes, advancements in technology, and so on, has accelerated dramatically. Alternative modes of travel have become more common. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of people working remotely, notably in direct response to the pandemic, yet many believe this will be a continuing and growing trend. The local housing market stabilized by around 2014 following the end of the great recession, but since then has seen substantial price inflation for all types of housing.

> *Who knows whether the good old days were really that good? What we can assume with some confidence, though, is that people who shopped, played and worshipped in their own neighborhoods knew each other.*
> - Dale Wyngarden, Holland Sentinel, 11/21/2021

While not a new challenge, as costs have risen, the local market has also seen a trend toward lower income owners and renters being priced out and, in some cases, pushed out of neighborhoods where lower income options used to exist in larger number. Other recent trends have led to an increased demand for less common housing options such as townhouses and "small-plexes" (2, 3 or 4 attached units). Meanwhile, at the neighborhood level, new thoughts and models of what makes for "livability" in this new era have emerged. One result is that there appears to be growing interest among the general population in living in neighborhoods that are more compact and near parks, retail shops, restaurants, and other "third spaces." Concerns tied to climate change have also influenced this growing interest in development models that provide a greater degree of sustainability.

The Growing Challenge of Social Isolation

Regrettably, a growing and all too common malady of our present society is that many people feel a sense of social isolation. There are many reasons behind this trend, and oftentimes, once one or more isolating factors occur, this leads to a compounding of increasing isolation. The trend toward increased isolation is evident in data showing decreased frequency of interactions with neighbors and in decreased attendance at religious services, service clubs, and the like.

A report from the AARP Foundation lists the following as primary risk factors associated with social isolation:
- Living alone,
- Major life transitions,
- Socioeconomic status (low income, limited resources),
- Location, e.g., unsafe or inaccessible neighborhood,
- Small social network and/or inadequate social support,
- Language (non-English speaking),
- Membership in a vulnerable group, and,
- Disability (mobility, sensory impairment, or psychological vulnerability).

34% of Holland City households in 2020 were single person households, up from 28.9% in 2010. [US Census Bureau]

The best antidote to isolation, of course, is connectedness, and living in neighborhoods that afford as many opportunities as possible for connection undoubtedly reduces the likelihood that isolation will take root and persist. Improving upon the characteristics of flourishing places that build in more connectedness will result in an enhanced buffer of protection against social isolation and its myriad impacts on individuals and communities. While connectedness at the block or neighborhood level is important, cities also create opportunities for connection by way of offering city-wide amenities, such as libraries, recreation centers, or an ice rink, along with community resources such as a senior center.

"We need to address social isolation not as a personal choice or an individual problem, but as a challenge that is rooted in community design, social norms, and systemic injustices." (HealthyPlacesbyDesign.org)

What has become more and more evident is that neighborhoods and cities are healthier, their economies are stronger, and their social problems more limited and manageable when people who live in proximity to one another experience more exchanges with each other and have places and spaces for both planned and spontaneous interactions with each other.

Lee Hardy, professor of Philosophy at Calvin University put it this way in his book, *The Embrace of Buildings*,

> Streets and squares have distinct primary functions. One is to facilitate movement. The other is to accommodate activities. But they both have this in common: they create a public realm for social interaction. We can think of our social interactions with others on a continuum. At one end lie our encounters with complete strangers and at the other end our exchanges with intimate friends and family members. In the middle are our relations to what we might call civic acquaintances. ... These are neighbors you might meet on the sidewalks, in the squares, and at the local parks. They are the people you chat with about the weather, upcoming street repairs, the noisy party last night, the new restaurant in town, the last movie you saw, or the change in the local bus schedule. ... Social interaction in the middle of this continuum builds up public trust and social capital. It makes us less fearful of our neighbors, and makes the neighborhood more resilient as regular communication coordinates responses to issues of common concern.

While the social and demographic trends are moving toward increasing isolation, there is general agreement that life is better together. The "together" part of life builds to some extent spontaneously through random and planned interactions, but more substantially when there are entities (organizations, non-profits, businesses, and associations) whose role is to invite, connect, and facilitate togetherness and cooperation around shared activities and agendas. [For a great resource on the causes and costs of social isolation, as well as some potential solutions, see the free booklet *Untethered: A Primer on Social Isolation*, by David Hsu, available at www.readuntethered.com.]

This report strives to speak to these new and evolving realities. It seeks to both give a snapshot of the health of neighborhoods at this point in time by way of available data, and also point to some strategies that the City may wish to prioritize in the near future – strategies that have been shown to have the potential to strengthen Holland's neighborhoods. **The throughline of this report, and its primary goal, is that Holland's neighborhoods, along with the greater community, would increasingly become places of social connection and belonging.**

In addition to providing a way forward for the City, a secondary hope is that this report will find its way in one form or another to the residents of Holland's neighborhoods. It is hoped that the report will provide encouragement for residents to commit to being positive contributors to their place. This can take many forms, such as joining a group or getting involved in a project located in their neighborhood. For those living in one of the neighborhoods with an existing neighborhood connector organization, it is hoped they will reach out to that organization and begin to get involved.

> *"One of the enduring lessons of COVID 19 is that we really do need each other, that we are better when we are together, that we are stronger and more resilient as a society when we are grounded in strong human connection."*
> - Dr. Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

Flourishing Neighborhoods and Social Equity

While much of this report is universally applicable to all neighborhoods in Holland, a key intention of its writers is that this report would call for the greatest attention to be given to those neighborhoods with the greatest representation of households that are marginalized or under-resourced. This could be due to any number of factors, but perhaps most notably a result of incomes being below the median for the City. The desire to place the greatest attention on these areas is rooted in a belief that resolving current and prior inequities is of significant importance, and that doing so will require a concentration of effort. The writers believe that improved conditions in under-resourced neighborhoods will result in improved conditions throughout the entire City – a trickle-up effect, if you will.

Thus, a second goal of this report is that, along with being places of social connection, each neighborhood will provide the foundation for social equity within the City. Each resident of the City is connected to the physical place of their neighborhood. We share this community. Everyone belongs. Everyone matters.

> *Equity: Equal treatment or fairness, the achievement of which requires addressing barriers to equal treatment or fairness for historically marginalized groups.* (Gehl Institute)
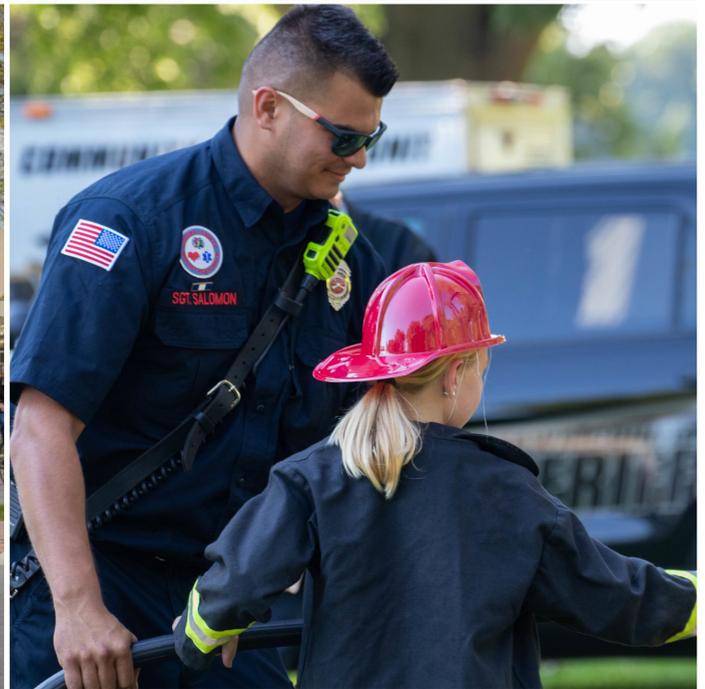
SECTION 2: SIX ELEMENTS OF FLOURISHING NEIGHBORHOODS

At the outset of this project, the Neighborhood Improvement Committee sought to create a framework encapsulating and describing the principal factors that create an environment in which neighborhoods flourish. The work group primarily responsible for writing this report considered a number of adjectives to describe the chief goal we wished to achieve for Holland's neighborhoods. The term "flourishing" was chosen because it seemed both appropriately broad and aspirational. By "**flourishing**," we mean **a neighborhood that is thriving, growing, healthy, and prosperous for all residents, such that no one is left out from benefitting fully from what the neighborhood has to offer.**

Members of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee submitted lists and descriptions of what they considered to be the core elements of a healthy, thriving neighborhood. These lists were compared with examples of frameworks found from various sources. Eventually, over the course of several meetings, the work group refined these lists and definitions and agreed on the following framework of six key factors.

Economic Vitality and Opportunity#

Connectedness, Engagement, and Inclusiveness

Accessibility of Amenities

Elements of Flourishing Neighborhoods

Safety and Resilience

Sense of Place and Character

Diversity

CONNECTEDNESS, ENGAGEMENT, AND INCLUSIVENESS

The neighborhood is socially cohesive and inclusive, has a positive social climate with a strong sense of collective well-being, community, and neighborhood identity. Residents report a sense of belonging, in particular those who are frequently on the fringes of mainstream society. Residents regularly engage in neighborhood life. The neighborhood is capable of organizing itself either for social purposes or to address particular needs or challenges, whether through the organizing efforts of a neighborhood-based organization, or by neighbors organizing of their own accord.

SAFETY AND RESILIENCE

The neighborhood consists of a safe environment that is resilient in response to difficulties and challenges. Health and safety infrastructure and services are effective and integrated (e.g., mental health services blended with traditional public safety services) and provide residents with a general sense of safety and well-being. Formal and informal communication between local government, public safety entities, neighborhood-based organizations, businesses, and among neighbors is effective at providing all with an adequate level of awareness of safety related matters.

"When we talk about healthy communities, we often talk about economic prosperity, access to fresh produce, or chronic disease among populations. But there's more than one way to gauge a community's health, and it's not about dollars or waistlines or longevity statistics. It's about engaging in your community and being a part of the world around you." (Sarah Kobos)

DIVERSITY

The neighborhood both exhibits and welcomes diversity (socio-economic, race, ethnicity, age, religion, ability) among its residents and visitors. An assortment of housing types is present, such that suitable and affordable housing options are available for a range of household sizes, configurations, and income levels. Individuals and households are able to remain in a particular neighborhood, if desired, throughout changes in household size and life transitions.

SENSE OF PLACE AND CHARACTER

A sufficient number and variety of gathering spaces, such as parks, plazas, and certain businesses function as neighborhood gathering spaces. Public infrastructure, such as sidewalks and safe street crossings, and other features, such as the tree canopy and right-of-way landscaping, increase walkability and attract residents to neighborhood gathering spaces. Art, signage, and logos reflect the neighborhood's features and identity. The built environment exhibits a variety of designs and uses providing a sense of place and character.

"Walkability describes the degree of pleasantness of the walking experience, which in turn relates to safety, comfort and convenience." (Becky P.Y. Loo)

ACCESSIBILITY OF AMENITIES

Sufficient, accessible, and quality services (social, health, education, employment, and childcare, etc.), along with amenities (such as public transit, libraries, schools, parks, and recreation facilities and programs) are present and accessible within neighborhoods. Accessibility must include an absence of structural, design, or programmatic barriers to the use of such services and amenities for people with disabilities.

ECONOMIC VITALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

The neighborhood fosters, attracts, and sustains appropriate business and economic development. Residents have the opportunity to flourish financially by participating in a vibrant, sustainable, multi-sector economy. Residents have the opportunity to participate in varied economic roles, such as business owners, employees, consumers, and volunteers. The neighborhood's economy allows for maximum economic exchanges, such that residents can purchase most of what they want or need in the neighborhood.

"A good community insures itself by trust, by good faith and good will, by mutual help. A good community, in other words, is a good local economy." (Wendell Berry)

Why the Six Elements Matter

Many of Holland's neighborhoods could be described as having each of these various elements, to greater and lesser degrees. All neighborhoods have opportunity for improvement. The list above should be considered aspirational. The six factors represent an ideal that won't likely be achieved in full, yet they provide a vision

of what is desirable and worth working toward. These factors formed the lens from which the remaining sections of the report, the analysis of the data provided, and the selection of proposed tools and strategies, were viewed and considered. They provided the framework undergirding the entirety of the report.

Alignment with Other Studies and Approaches

Upon settling on this framework, it was found that the selected factors align quite closely with the findings of a landmark study, *Soul of the Community*, subtitled *"Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters, A National Perspective."* This study consisted of a three-year survey conducted within 26 US cities by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Key findings from this research were that the core factors that attach residents to communities differ very little across the country. "Whether you live in San Jose, Calif., or State College, Pa., the things that connect you to your community are generally the same." They include:

> *"Children are a kind of indicator species. If we can build a successful city for children, we will have a successful city for all people."* (Enrique Penalosa)

- **Social offerings** – places for people to meet each other and the feeling that people in their community care about each other,
- **Openness** – how welcoming the community is to different types of people, including families with young children, minorities, immigrants, older people, and college graduates, and,
- **Aesthetics** – the physical beauty of the community including the availability of parks, playgrounds, trails, and greenspace.

As compared with other possible factors, such as the state of the community's economy, the availability of jobs, and a city's basic services, the three factors noted above "have an even larger effect than previously thought when it comes to residents' attachment to their communities." It is noteworthy that these results apply to larger geographic areas (communities/cities), as compared to neighborhoods, which are the direct focus of this report.

Similarly, a related set of concepts can be found in reports and community development tools created by the AARP, in particular their Livable Communities division. The AARP defines a "Livable Community" as "one that is safe and secure. It offers choices as to where to live and how to get around. And it equitably serves

residents of all ages, ability levels, incomes, races, ethnicities, and other backgrounds." The AARP publishes a wealth of material providing recommendations and tools for creating what they refer to as livable communities. Several of these resources are referenced in Appendix A: Sources and Resources.

The writers also found alignment with the work of the organization *8 80 Cities*. The goal of *8 80 Cities* is to help create safe, happy and resilient cities that prioritize the well-being of all members. This organization summarizes its approach as follows: "We believe that if everything we do in our public spaces is great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year old, then it will be great for all people."

Appropriately, *8 80 Cities* strongly promotes seeking citizen engagement as cities explore strategies toward the improvement of parks, streets, and public spaces for all. They acknowledge that seeking such engagement from residents can be challenging yet assert that it is of tremendous value toward achieving genuinely positive outcomes that meet the broad approval of the public.

Overall, this approach to considering what makes for a flourishing neighborhood for *all* by focusing on how the neighborhood serves and benefits those who are more vulnerable or require special consideration, along with placing strong emphasis on garnering citizen engagement along the way, provides helpful guidance for the way forward as the City of Holland continues to pursue a strategy for helping all neighborhoods to flourish.

The Relevance of the Built Environment

The role of the built environment on neighborhood flourishing shows up in several of the six elements noted above, such as the call for diversity in housing types and styles, its contribution to a neighborhood's sense of place and character, and its role in creating the conditions for economic vitality. The argument goes further that these factors combined help to frame the environment that will facilitate connection and engagement within neighborhoods. For some, this may seem intuitive, but perhaps not so to others.

> *"The physical disposition of buildings, the arrangement of land uses, streets, and transit can serve to foster human community or to frustrate it; they can work to isolate others or incorporate them; they can reflect and inspire a sense of the common good or obscure it; they can pay attention to the needs and capacities of the human body or largely ignore them."* (Lee Hardy)

The argument in favor of paying attention to the built environment and striving to create conditions that will allow for and encourage the conditions laid out in the six elements is perhaps best articulated in the following excerpts from the charter document of the Congress for the New Urbanism:

We stand for the restoration of existing urban centers and towns within coherent metropolitan regions, the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods and diverse districts, the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy.

We recognize that physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.

Cities and towns should bring into proximity a broad spectrum of public and private uses to support a regional economy that benefits people of all incomes.

The development and redevelopment of towns and cities should respect historical patterns, precedents, and boundaries.

Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian friendly, and mixed-use. Within neighborhoods, a broad range of housing types and price levels can bring people of diverse ages, races, and incomes into daily interaction, strengthening the personal and civic bonds essential to an authentic community.

In other words, neighborhood health and vitality, while not guaranteed when the built environment is designed well, is unlikely to be fully realized when those conditions are absent.

SECTION 3: NEIGHBORHOODS OF HOLLAND

One of the clear goals of this report is to seek and promote ways of encouraging a greater sense of belonging and connectedness among those living in Holland, and one strategy to do that is through identification within one's neighborhood. For connectedness to occur within a place, it's beneficial for that place, whether that be a neighborhood, community, or city, to have a sense of identity. Some degree of neighborhood identification is important for its residents to develop a sense of attachment to and pride in the place in which they live.

While Holland has some neighborhoods that are generally well defined, that is not true of all areas or neighborhoods throughout the City. This report does not seek to remedy that situation per se, but we do see value in seeking to enhance neighborhood identity, and we believe that if the types of recommendations suggested in later sections are implemented, the result will be a growing sense of place-based identification.

For background, as noted in the Neighborhood Improvement Strategy (2010), Holland's neighborhoods fall generally into two categories:
- Those built pre-World War II – which consisted primarily of the area north of 26th St and between Fairbanks and VanRaalte Avenues. This area was developed during a time when the automobile was not yet the primary means of transportation for the majority of people. These neighborhoods are well-connected through a grid-like network of streets and sidewalks. Mixed in among the houses are a number of small neighborhood commercial districts, parks, and institutions such as schools and churches where residents gather and interact. These neighborhoods are often-times referred to as Holland's Central Neighborhoods.

- Those built post-World War II – this growth extended the city to the south, west and east to its current boundaries. In general, these areas reflect the growing dominance of the automobile. Residential lots are larger to accommodate larger garages and a minimized concern for efficient use of space. Apart from some of the larger traditional subdivisions (e.g., Holland Heights and Maplewood), the street network does not consist of a complete grid, and the presence of sidewalks is not universal, with the result being less connectivity and a general reliance on using cars for most if not all transportation needs. Commercial developments within these areas are not common, but are more likely to be adjacent or located at some distance and located on high traffic streets that are generally unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Different Ways of Describing and Delineating City of Holland Neighborhoods

There is not one clear, commonly recognized way of defining all or even the majority of the various neighborhoods located within the city. As noted above, some neighborhoods have clear definition geographically, and some of those also have a sense of neighborhood identity, but others seem to have neither. What follows are some different ways of defining Holland's various neighborhoods.

> *"Cities are made up of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods are the basic units of place-based human communities."*
> (Lee Hardy)

Holland neighborhoods as understood historically

The map below shows the delineation of the general areas of Holland as defined over many years. As is evident, some of the areas are smaller and are commonly regarded by many as "neighborhoods," while other areas are considerably larger geographically and likely represent a number of distinct neighborhoods.

If someone were to say that they live in the Washington Square neighborhood, or Rosa Parks Green, or the Historic District, most residents would have a relatively accurate picture of that neighborhood location. Conversely, if someone were to say that they live on the Westside, a number of different parts of that area might come to mind, such as the Central Park neighborhood, Montello Park, the Southshore Village area, or Ottawa Hills. Many might not recognize these broader descriptions yet understand the smaller neighborhood-based references. While these historical area delineations are helpful, they don't provide a complete or sufficiently specific delineation in the interest of describing all of Holland's neighborhoods.
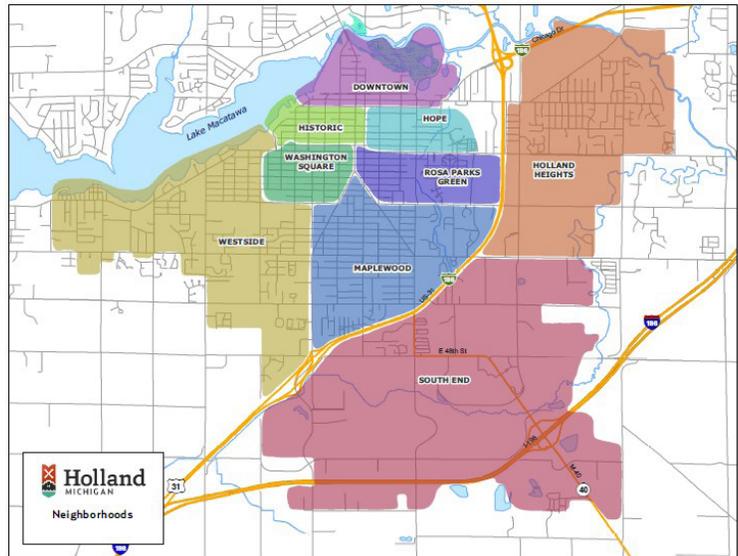
Neighborhood Connections

Another way of defining some Holland neighborhoods is derived by looking at how the five existing neighborhood connection organizations (Westcore Neighbors, Heights of Hope, Washington School Neighbors, 3sixty, and West of Washington) have defined the neighborhoods in which they are located and engaged. As a bit of background for those readers who may not be familiar with these five organizations, they are each independent, small neighborhood-based non-profit organizations, yet with a very similar mission of seeking to strengthen neighborhoods by organizing and activating the assets – people, organizations, businesses – found within those neighborhoods. To date, these groups have generally formed around areas of the city that could reasonably be characterized as facing more pronounced challenges, such as aging housing stock, a higher percentage of residents with lower incomes, or high rental housing density. The City of Holland provides operational matching funds to these five organizations because the City views them as important allies with a common goal of maintaining and building healthy, vibrant neighborhoods.

The map to the right overlays the locations of the areas in which these five neighborhood connection organizations are located onto the same map showing the larger neighborhood areas described above. While the areas served by the Neighborhood Connection organizations don't come close to defining Holland's neighborhoods in their entirety, it does provide better definition and clarification as to how particular neighborhoods understand themselves and are able to organize for healthier neighborhoods. It can be argued that while positive neighbor to neighbor networking happens throughout the city, these five organizations have shown how doing so intentionally and with access to needed resources can result in positive outcomes tied to stronger and more vibrant neighborhoods.
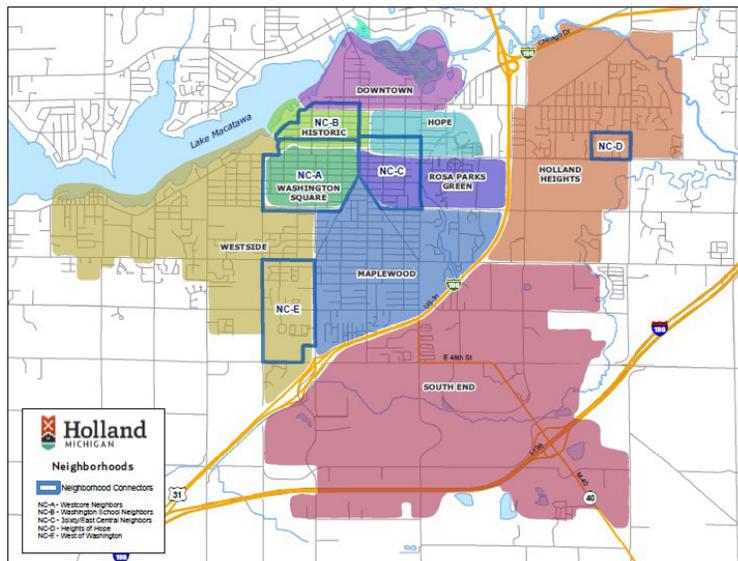
How Nextdoor.com has influenced the definition of neighborhoods

One of the offshoots of social networking via the internet has been the desire and ability to connect with others around very particular topics, such as a geographic area. Nextdoor.com has quickly become the most popular tool for this purpose. *Nextdoor* has similarities to Facebook, but instead of connecting you to friends and family, it connects you to those living nearby within an established area. At last count, over 25 "neighborhoods" have been established within the City of Holland on the *Nextdoor* website. The neighborhoods range in size from over 1,000 members to as few as single digits. It is roughly estimated that over 4,200 persons have an account on the site and are linked with one of the recognized neighborhoods within the City.

Many have found the site to be a helpful tool by which to easily let others living nearby know, for example, of a lost cat, or an upcoming event. A common use of the site is to ask for recommendations for a good plumber or electrician, etc. Holland Public Safety has used the site to inform neighbors about an incident of concern. How the boundaries of these respective "neighborhoods" on the *Nextdoor* website are formed shows how groups of residents are choosing to identify with those living near them. The popularity of the site demonstrates that people see a benefit of associating with those living in near proximity, in particular for the purpose of networking around specific matters, such as the types of examples noted above.

The Complete Neighborhood

One simplified definition of a neighborhood is "a geographically localized community within a larger city or town; neighborhoods are often social communities with considerable face-to-face interaction among members." A more detailed checklist of neighborhood characteristics includes:
 1) it has a name,
  2) residents know where it is and whether they belong to it,
  3) it has at least one place that serves as its "center,"
  4) it has generally agreed upon spatial extent (boundaries),
  5) it has everyday facilities and services within it or nearby,
  6) it has internal and external connectivity,
  7) it has social diversity within it, or is open to enabling it, and
  8) it has a means by which residents can be involved in its affairs and an ability to speak with a collective voice.

These eight characteristics, plus adding in the presence of the six factors of flourishing neighborhoods described in the prior section, set a rather high aspirational bar for what constitutes a "complete neighborhood." It is understood that not all neighborhoods can or will in the near future meet this broad and ambitious description. **Yet the goal of the Neighborhood Improvement Committee remains to encourage and make reasonable efforts to move Holland's neighborhoods in the direction of this aspirational state.**

Holland's neighborhoods have been in a constant state of evolution to get to the point that they are today, and to be sure they will continue to change and evolve. Ed McMahon, former Chair of Main Street America, notes the importance of a two-pronged approach to achieving community vitality – placemaking, and placekeeping. Placemaking essentially entails "reimagining and reinventing public spaces" in order to achieve the desired goal, such as creating places for human connection. Placekeeping, meanwhile, requires "the active care and maintenance of a place and its natural, cultural and social fabric; … keeping the social memories associated with a place alive, while supporting the ability of local people to maintain their way of life." The interplay and balance between these two complementary approaches should ultimately be guided by the residents living there. Later sections of this report will offer a number of strategies that, if implemented, can predictably help move some neighborhoods closer to this picture of health and flourishing.

What is being encouraged in this report is not a "one size fits all" approach to neighborhood development. The City is one player, albeit an important one, in this larger effort of community and neighborhood development. The extent to which positive change occurs also depends on many factors (e.g., economic conditions), and the participation of a large number of partners, including the non-profit sector, the business sector, and philanthropic partners. But an additional essential partnership role comes from everyday neighbors. There is not only room for, but in fact there is an essential need for neighbors and neighborhoods to claim their own agency and take an active part in guiding their own future.
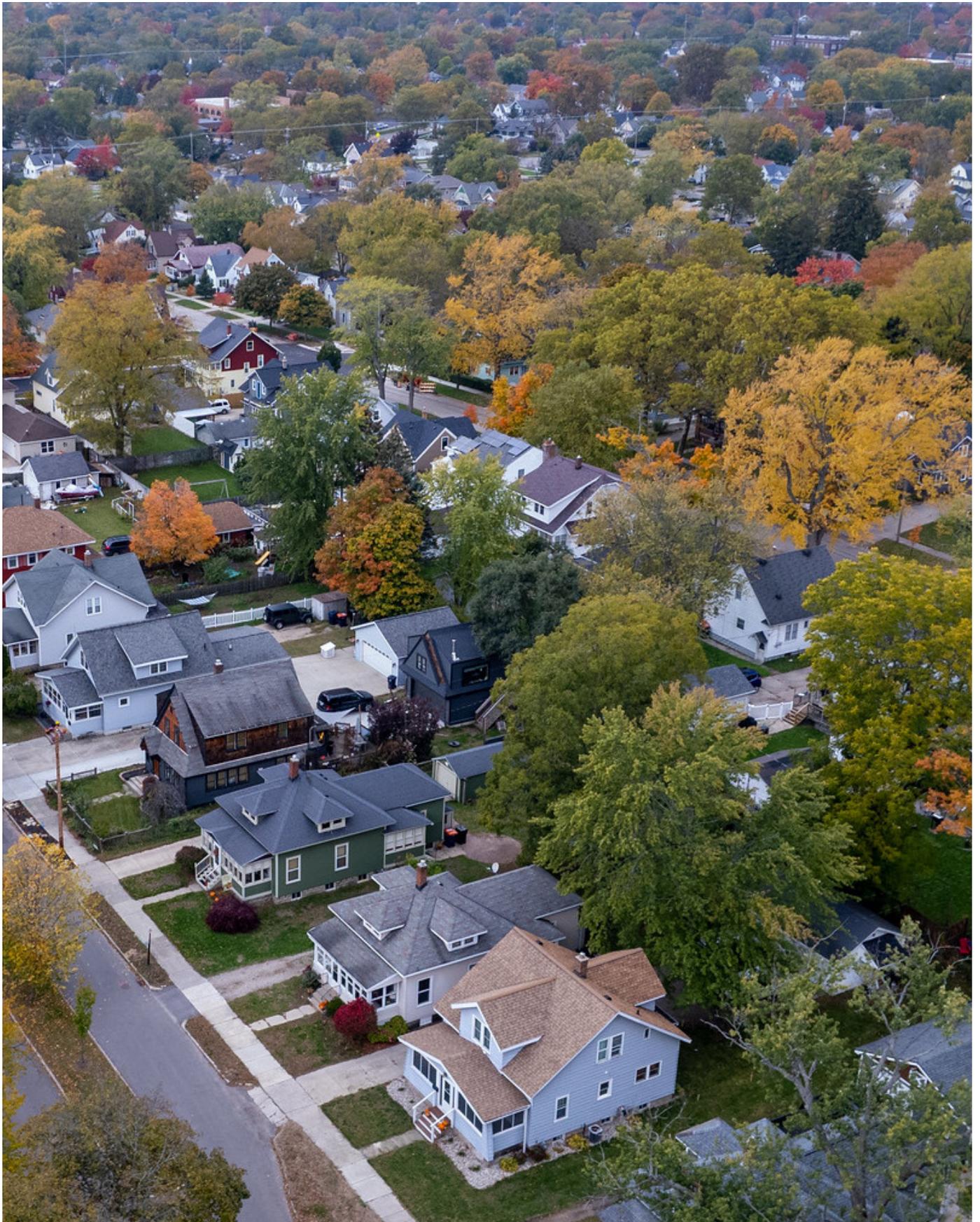
SECTION 4: WHAT AVAILABLE DATA TELL US ABOUT NEIGHBORHOOD CONDITIONS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

A wide variety of data is available which can provide some very helpful context related to the health and viability of the City's neighborhoods. This contextual data will expectedly vary from one neighborhood to the next. Neighborhoods have differing levels of income stratification, educational attainment, mix of rental units versus units that are owner-occupied, racial and ethnic composition, and so forth. Unfortunately, most demographic data is not able to be accurately determined for specific neighborhoods. This is the case for at least two reasons. Nearly all of this data is gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau, and census data is available according to census tracts and block groups. The lines determining those specific areas were established decades ago and do not change significantly (though there are minor updates made following each 10-years census). In most cases these boundaries don't align well with recognized neighborhood boundaries. Second, the smaller the area under consideration, the more likely the available data pertaining to that area will be unreliable, and consequently, not meaningful. If the population in a particular area isn't large enough to meet statistical thresholds, the data will have a large margin of error, rendering it unreliable and therefore not helpful for most purposes.

Despite these limitations, various data is provided below that we feel helpfully informs the conversation pertaining to the health of the Holland community and its respective neighborhoods. Some general demographic data relative to the City can be found in Appendix C. The data contained in this section is organized according to factors we have termed the Six Elements of a Flourishing Neighborhood, as presented in Section 2. The selected data is intended to enhance our understanding of the context within which people are living, such as crime incidence, poverty rates, and indicators of housing instability. Some data that directly

measures the feelings or opinions of residents is available from the City of Holland Citizen Survey that was conducted most recently in the fall of 2020 and is being repeated in the fall of 2022. Selected data from this survey is presented below.

Additional data which would be helpful to know but isn't currently gathered includes:
- the extent to which residents feel a sense of belonging within the neighborhood in which they live,
- whether residents feel that they have a voice about matters directly impacting their neighborhood, and
- whether residents are able to fulfill most of their daily needs or access most goods and services for their day-to-day life within their neighborhood (as well as whether this is even a goal that they share).

The absence of such data presents an opportunity for the future, namely being able to measure such sentiments and assess over time whether or not these factors are improving, remaining static, or worsening. The Neighborhood Improvement Committee will likely explore options for gathering such information in the future.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a clear intention in reviewing this data to not attempt to compare the relative health or desirability of neighborhoods based on their respective strengths and challenges. All neighborhoods have unique strengths and value, and all neighborhoods are part of the larger mosaic that makes up a diverse, healthy, and vibrant city. Yet all neighborhoods are evolving, and consequently have the opportunity to change in such a way that better creates the potential for the six elements of flourishing neighborhoods to improve.
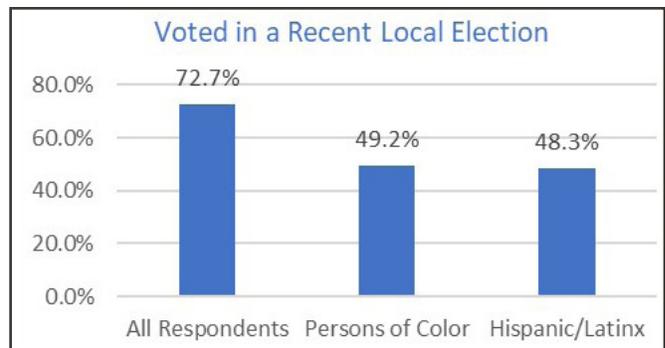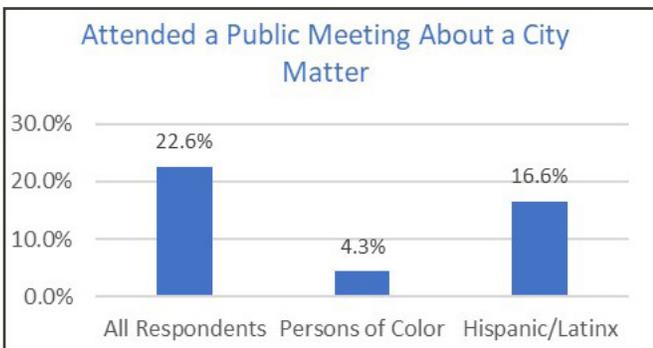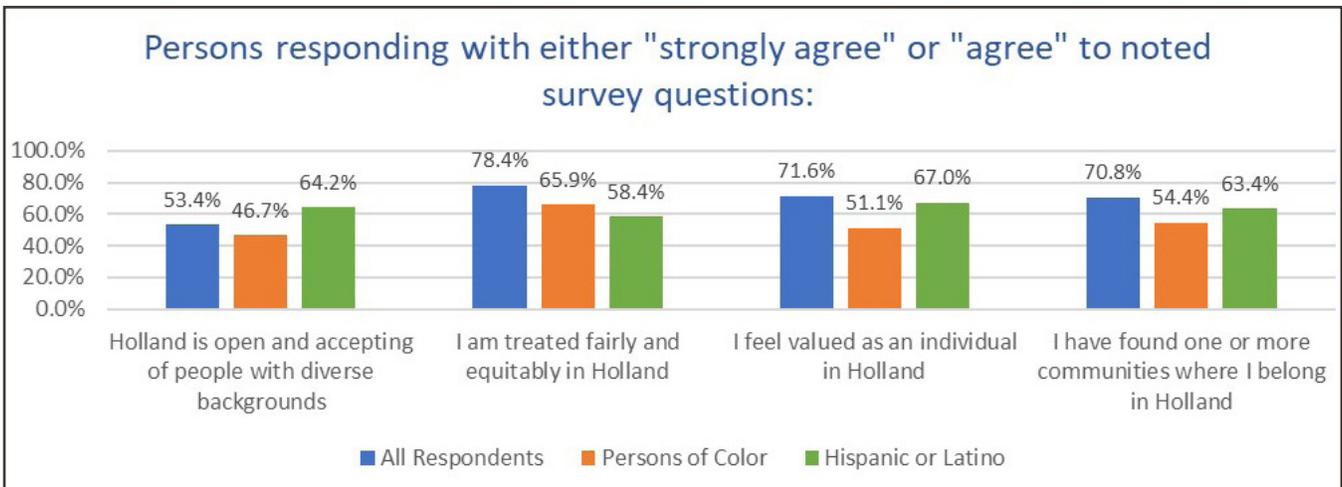
Connectedness, Engagement, Inclusiveness

The neighborhood is socially cohesive and inclusive, has a positive social climate with a strong sense of collective well-being, community, and neighborhood identity. Residents report a sense of belonging, in particular those who are frequently on the fringes of mainstream society. Residents regularly engage in neighborhood life. The neighborhood is capable of organizing itself either for social purposes or to address particular needs or challenges, whether through the organizing efforts of a neighborhood-based organization, or by neighbors organizing of their own accord.

Much of the data presented in this section is derived from a City-wide survey conducted in the fall of 2020 by the Frost Center for Data and Research at Hope College. The City surveys residents about a wide range of issues, such as the quality of city-provided amenities and services, satisfaction with allocation of city resources, and level of trust in various city departments approximately every two years. The results from the fall of 2020 provided some helpful information on several matters that pertain to connectedness, engagement, and inclusion. Selected data is provided below in the following graphs. The full survey results can be found at www.cityofholland.com.

It's not a simple task to draw clear and definitive conclusions about the overall sense of connectedness, engagement and inclusion among City residents based on these responses above. They do provide a benchmark, from which changes can be assessed and measured over time. It can be clearly observed, however, that there are differences in responses when broken down by race and ethnicity. It's likely, if not quite clear, that such results are not solely rooted in local conditions but are significantly influenced by state and national factors. Nevertheless, it remains concerning that some groups indicate feeling less of a sense of connection and inclusion within the City than others.

Fortunately, we know that there are steps that can be taken and that there are tools available to make real improvements in these areas. Inclusion and engagement are very often heavily influenced by the presence or extent of invitation. A central goal must be to invite residents into circles of community. One effective way to facilitate greater invitation is through support for those organizations and places that directly invite or encourage greater inclusion and engagement. One example of how the City does this is through its offering of operational support for Neighborhood Connection organizations.

Persons responding with either "strongly agree" or "agree" to noted survey questions:

- Holland is open and accepting of people with diverse backgrounds: All Respondents 53.4%, Persons of Color 46.7%, Hispanic or Latino 64.2%
- I am treated fairly and equitably in Holland: All Respondents 78.4%, Persons of Color 65.9%, Hispanic or Latino 58.4%
- I feel valued as an individual in Holland: All Respondents 71.6%, Persons of Color 51.1%, Hispanic or Latino 67.0%
- I have found one or more communities where I belong in Holland: All Respondents 70.8%, Persons of Color 54.4%, Hispanic or Latino 63.4%

Attended a Public Meeting About a City Matter: All Respondents 22.6%, Persons of Color 4.3%, Hispanic/Latinx 16.6%

Voted in a Recent Local Election: All Respondents 72.7%, Persons of Color 49.2%, Hispanic/Latinx 48.3%
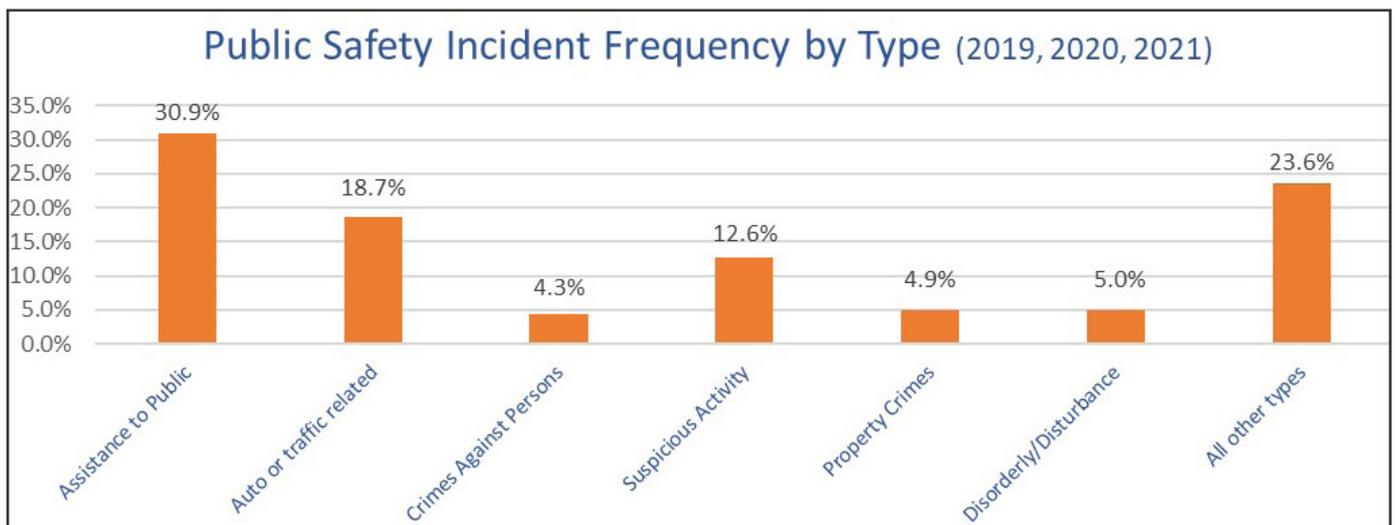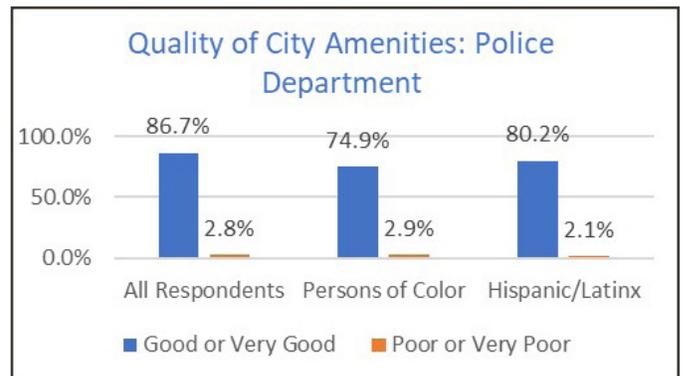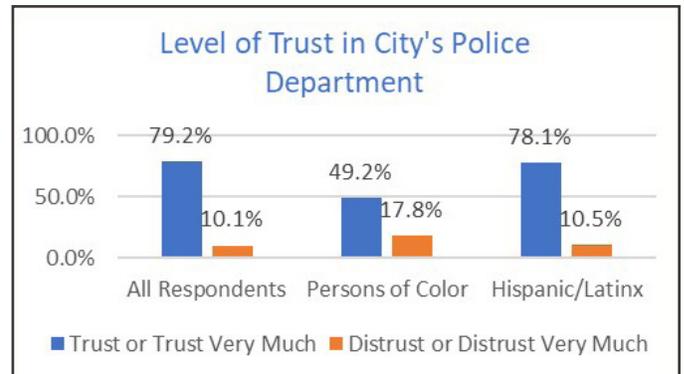
Safety and Resilience

The neighborhood consists of a safe environment that is resilient in response to difficulties and challenges. Health and safety infrastructure and services are effective and integrated (e.g., mental health services blended with traditional public safety services) and provide residents with a general sense of safety and well-being. Formal and informal communication between local government, public safety entities, neighborhood-based organizations, businesses, and among neighbors is effective at providing all with an adequate level of awareness of safety related matters.

The 2020 City of Holland Resident Survey provides some helpful information relative to public safety, as presented in the two graphs to the right. The first seeks to show the level of trust in the Holland Police Department, with a breakdown by race and ethnicity, and the second shows the respondents' opinion as to the quality of the department.

It seems reasonable to assume that these responses would correlate generally to the "sense of safety" experienced by City residents, such that those who assess the department to be of good quality and who have a moderate to high degree of trust in the department would likely have a corresponding positive sense of safety.

The below table shows crime and incident frequency data for the Holland Public Safety Department for the years 2019 through 2021, broken down by incident categories.

Level of Trust in City's Police Department

- All Respondents: Trust or Trust Very Much 79.2%, Distrust or Distrust Very Much 10.1%
- Persons of Color: Trust or Trust Very Much 49.2%, Distrust or Distrust Very Much 17.8%
- Hispanic/Latinx: Trust or Trust Very Much 78.1%, Distrust or Distrust Very Much 10.5%

Quality of City Amenities: Police Department

- All Respondents: Good or Very Good 86.7%, Poor or Very Poor 2.8%
- Persons of Color: Good or Very Good 74.9%, Poor or Very Poor 2.9%
- Hispanic/Latinx: Good or Very Good 80.2%, Poor or Very Poor 2.1%

Public Safety Incident Frequency by Type (2019, 2020, 2021)

- Assistance to Public: 30.9%
- Auto or traffic related: 18.7%
- Crimes Against Persons: 4.3%
- Suspicious Activity: 12.6%
- Property Crimes: 4.9%
- Disorderly/Disturbance: 5.0%
- All other types: 23.6%

Density and Locations of Neighborhood-Based Public Safety Incidents

The map below shows the density of crime and police incident locations throughout the city. The map captures incident data for the same three years - 2019 through 2021. Most crime and incident types requiring a response from the Department of Public Safety are represented in the map. Some that have no or a negligible impact on the immediate area of the call were not included.

As is evidenced by reviewing the Public Safety Incident Density Map, it is apparent that incidents are clustered around particular neighborhood areas. Many of these are areas with increased residential density. Drawing conclusions about correlations should be done carefully, however. It is logical and entirely expected that there will be increased public safety activity where there are more people present. That is different from concluding that increased residential density necessarily creates the probability that more crime will occur on a per capita basis. It is acknowledged that certain types of residential density, i.e., neighborhoods or housing developments with a highly disproportionate number of very low-income households, are more likely to create highly stressed and challenging living environments. One would expect such areas to be more prone to requiring more public safety attention. Certain types of density, with insufficient social supports and amenities, are those more likely to result in conditions in which more public safety activity will occur. At the same time, we know that there are remedies for those conditions, notably:

    a) encouraging the creation of/or transition to more mixed income environments,
    b) intentionally creating healthier environments through the efforts of neighborhood-based development programs (known locally as Neighborhood Connection organizations),
    c) creating opportunities and invitations for increased person to person interactions at the block and neighborhood level,
d) encouraging the continued growth of community policing initiatives, and
e) implementation of best practice community safety interventions, such as those espoused through movements like "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED).

> *"A robust body of evidence demonstrates the relationship between social cohesion and violent crime, with neighborhood attachment (resident's feeling of belonging to a neighborhood) and social cohesion associated with lower violent crime rates. ... Research has also found that increasing the number of spaces for informal contact between neighbors is linked to a greater sense of safety for people in urban areas."*
> - Hanna Love, Brookings Institution
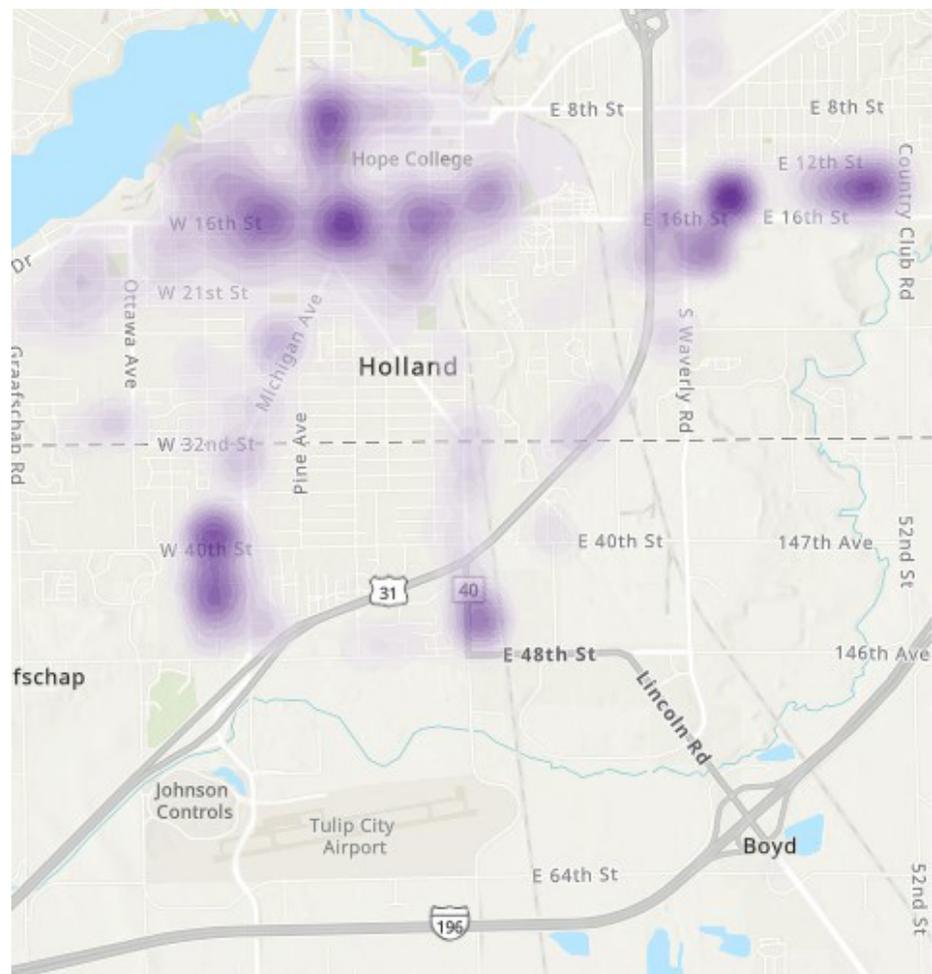
Public Safety Incident Density Map

Traffic Safety

Another key safety component is the relative safety of the transportation network within and among neighborhoods. The Michigan Traffic Crash Facts website (www.michigantrafficcrashfacts.org) offers a wealth of data regarding frequency and location of all types of traffic-related crashes. Here we will focus just on crash data involving pedestrians and bicyclists.

The following two maps show the location of crashes involving either pedestrians or bicyclists with cars during the 10-year period from 2011 to 2020.

One unfortunate trend noted recently is that during the peak period of the pandemic, while vehicle miles traveled (VMT) decreased overall in the United States, crashes increased, including those impacting pedestrians and bicyclists. One theory that may explain some of the increase in crashes despite fewer VMTs is that drivers became more reckless during the pandemic. A recent New York Times article ("Pedestrian Deaths Spike in U.S. as Reckless Driving Surges," Feb 14, 2022) explains how, despite falling crash rates since the late 1960's, due primarily to vehicle safety improvements, lower speed limits and reduced incidence of drunken driving, crash and death rates increased significantly as of the summer of 2020. It would have seemed intuitive to expect that lower rates of driving and generally quieter roads would result in fewer crashes and fatalities, but that was not the case. Instead, the country saw the largest two-year increase in deaths from crashes since the years following WW II, a 17.5% spike. Some see the primary cause of the presumed increase in recklessness as being directly tied to the increased stress of the pandemic, and that people acted out their frustration when getting behind the wheel of a car. Others see the primary cause being that decreased congestion and more open roadways created the conditions for higher speeds and therefore increased occurrences of random interactions, which leads to more crashes. The first theory would

suggest that what is needed is an attitude and behavior change on the part of drivers. The second theory suggests a need for changes in road design that don't induce higher speeds when less congestion is present.

Data also show a higher incidence of traffic fatalities in low-income neighborhoods. While reasons for this are varied, one key reason is that there is a disproportionate number of persons who walk or bike by necessity within low-income neighborhoods, with the effect being that walkers and bicyclists must use infrastructure that may not be sufficiently safe for the conditions.
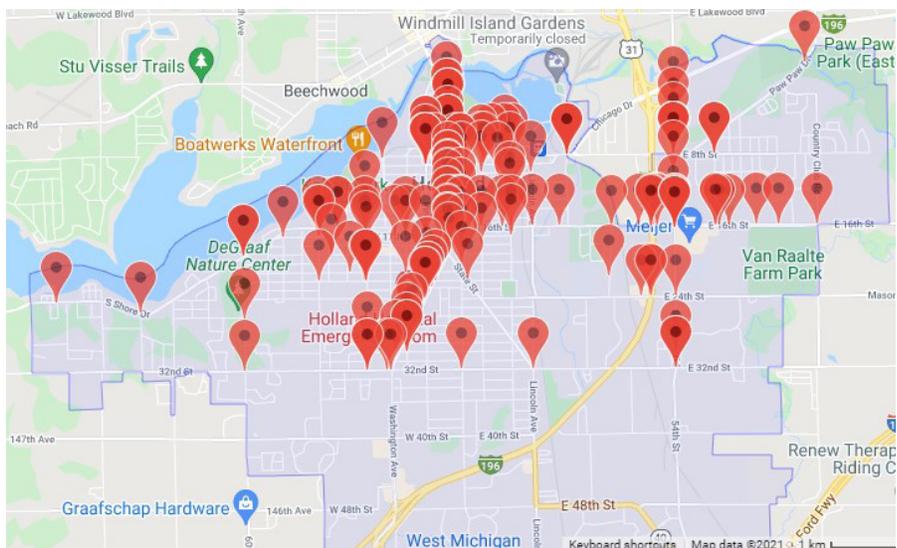
Auto Crashes with Pedestrians Involved (2011-2020)
Total: 96   Number resulting in injury: 84   Number resulting in a fatality: 0
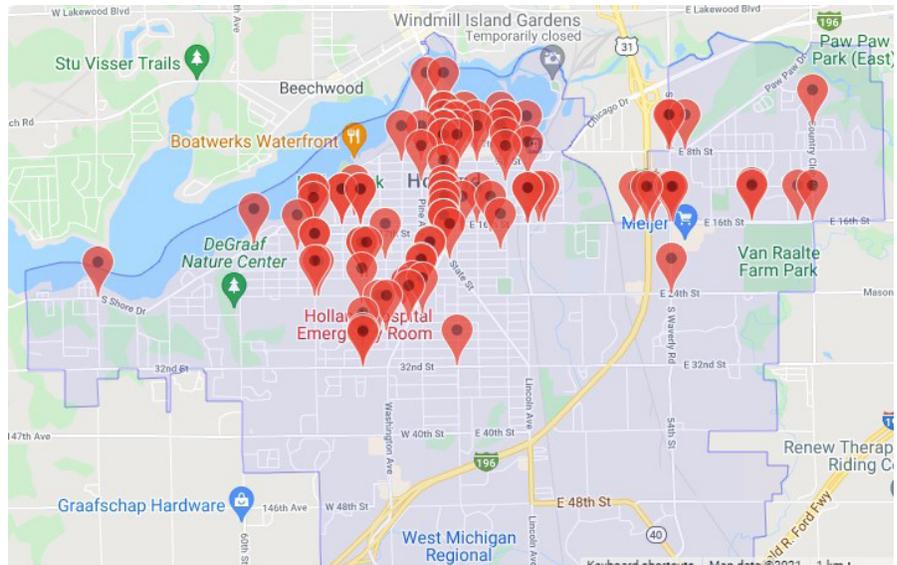
Auto Crashes Bicyclists Involved (2011-2020)
Total: 173   Number resulting in injury: 120   Number resulting in a fatality: 4

Data showing the relative risk of a fatality when pedestrians are struck by a vehicle makes a strong case for reducing speed limits where possible. See the graphic below from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration showing two-fold increase in likelihood of a fatality at 40 mph versus 30 mph, and an eight-fold increase at 40 mph compared to 20 mph. The benefits of decreased speeds are not just limited to increased safety for those sharing the public space. Other benefits include substantially lower emissions, as well as overall public health improvements resulting from improved air quality and increased participation in active travel due to increased sense of safety when using streets, sidewalks and paths.

DEATH DUE TO SPEED

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, LITERATURE REVIEWED ON VEHICLE TRAVEL SPEEDS AND PEDESTRIAN INJURIES. MARCH 2000. WWW.NHTSA.GOV/ABOUT-NHTSA/TRAFFIC-TECHS/ CURRENT/LITERATURE+REVIEWED+ON+VEHICLE+TRAVEL+SPEEDS+AND+PEDESTRIAN+INJURIES

A neighborhood that has many positive attributes yet seems to lack sufficient safety for pedestrians and bicyclists will be considered by some as a less desirable place to live, and neither will it be a desirable destination for others to visit as pedestrians or bicyclists. Yet remedies do exist, including:

1) Ensuring a focus is placed on traffic safety as it impacts users of non-motorized transportation, in particular the most vulnerable members of the community (children, older persons, and those with mobility-related disabilities), including consideration of reduced speed limits where possible,

2) Continued adherence to the *Complete Streets* strategy, as organized by the National Complete Streets Coalition, a strategy which the City of Holland signed on to in 2011,

3) Consider adopting further strategies, such as those endorsed by the *Vision Zero Network*, and systematic use of the *Safe System* model promoted by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE).

4) Align future planning with the goals identified in the following section, Fifteen Minute Neighborhoods.

Diversity

The neighborhood both exhibits and welcomes diversity (socio-economic, race, ethnicity, age, religion, ability) among its residents and visitors. An assortment of housing types is present, such that suitable and affordable housing options are available for a range of household sizes, configurations, and income levels. Individuals and households are able to remain in a particular neighborhood, if desired, throughout changes in household size and life transitions.

As explained in Section 2, the matter of diversity as it pertains to neighborhood flourishing, is intended to encompass various types of demographic diversity, including socio-economic, race, ethnicity, age, religion, and ability, as well as diversity within the built environment and land uses. Some demographic profile data is presented below. Further, the 2020 City of Holland Resident Survey provides some helpful information relative to an exploration of diversity.

Two questions from the 2020 survey allowed respondents to provide open-ended answers to several questions. First, when asked "*what three things would you most like to change about living in Holland,*" the response offered by survey respondents most frequently was "*lack of diversity, equity and inclusion*" (offered by nearly 18% of all respondents). Similarly, when asked *"what do you think are the three most important local issues the City of Holland will face in the next few years," "Diversity"* was the second most frequent response, behind *"Affordable Housing"* (offered by 19% and 21%, respectively, of all respondents). These responses seem to make clear that matters of diversity are viewed by many city residents as an area requiring ongoing attention and as an opportunity for positive change.

Also, as already noted above in the discussion about connectedness and inclusion, the question about whether Holland is "*open and accepting of people with diverse backgrounds*" yielded varied responses according to race and ethnicity. Whereas 53.4% of all persons surveyed responded to the question with either moderate or strong agreement, those identifying as persons of color agreed at a rate of 46.7%, and those indicating Hispanic/Latino/a ethnicity responded with 64.2% agreement.

As for socioeconomic diversity within the City, the following additional data is provided for added context.

Population by Race
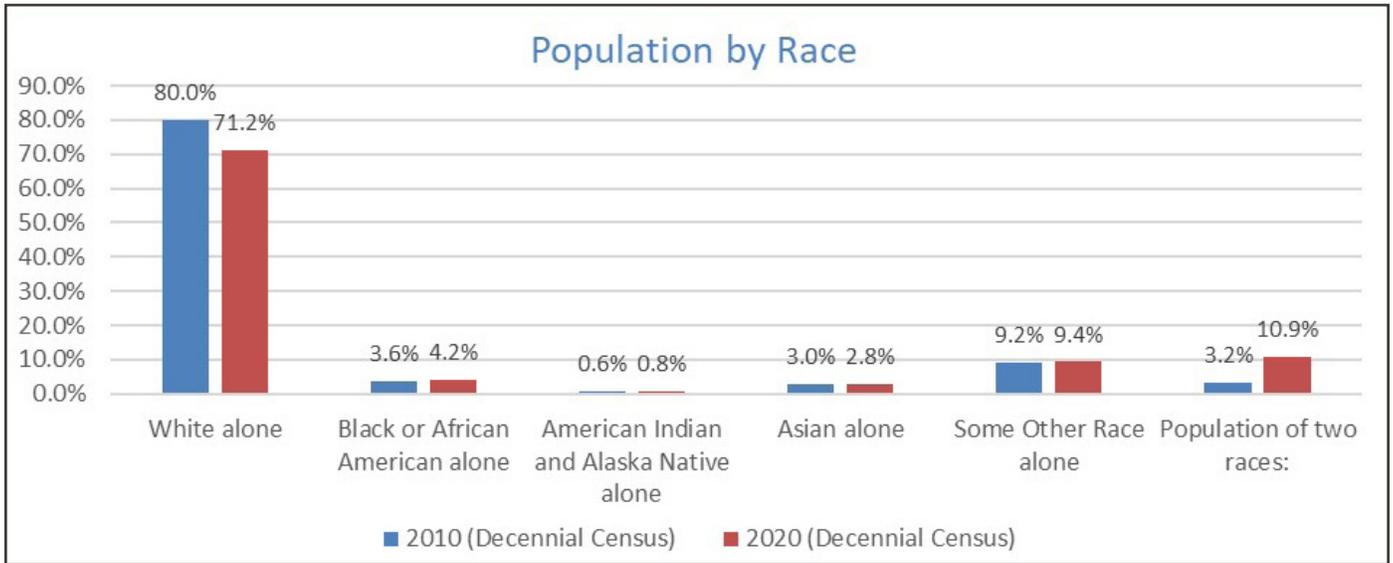
Race and Ethnicity

The table above shows the percent of Holland residents according to the primary racial groups established by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data is provided for both 2010 and 2020. The most significant changes between 2010 and 2020 are the reduction in the percentage of persons identifying as white alone, and an even larger change proportionately in the number of persons identifying as being two or more races. Both of these changes coincide closely with national trends. Demographers note that these trends need to be interpreted with caution. As of the 1960 census, race is self-identified when completing census forms, and being able to check off more than one race began to be permitted with the 2000 census.

Racial identity can be subject to differing interpretations and changes in understandings. For instance, between 2010 and 2020, it's possible and likely that some changed their response on the census form from one single race designation to "two or more races" after learning more about their family history, such as through genetic testing. Another factor at play in racial identification is the ambiguity many persons of Hispanic or Latino/a ethnicity experience in responding to questions about race, given that the Hispanic/Latino/a ethnicity is not treated by the census as a racial category. Changes in percentages of persons who are Black, American Indian and Alaskan Native, or Asian over the past ten years appear to be marginal.

The adjacent table shows the breakdown of Holland residents based on identification of Hispanic or Latino/a ethnicity, comparing numbers from 2010 with 2020. The data show only a slight increase in the number of Hispanic/Latino/a neighbors in Holland.

Population by Hispanic or Latino/a Ethnicity
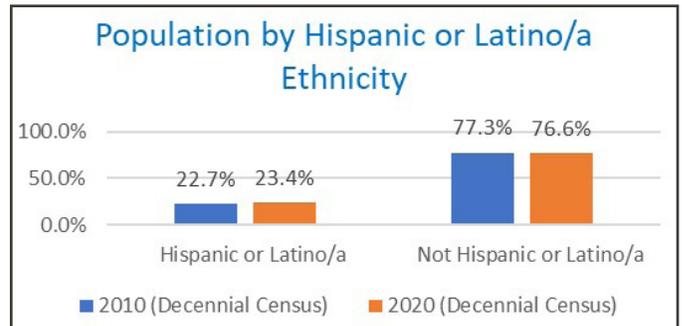
People with Disabilities

As the chart on the following page indicates, people with a known disability (who are not inst8tionalized) make up 12.6 percent of the Holland populaton. This includes individuals with a range of disability types, including those with ambulatory difficulties, cognitive difficulties, and vision and hearing difficulties. Pertinent to this report, this data suggests the need for continual review in order to ensure that the individuals who make up this group have full access to and can participate in City services and amenities, that they can pursue the same opportunties available to others, and also feel they belong in each neighborhood. Key questions include:

- are streets, sidewalks and street crossings designed with the accommodation requirements of this group?;
- has the City and partners acccommodated adequately for those needing other transit options, notably Max Transit, including ensuring availability of associated facilities (e.g., benches and shelters at bus stops)?;

Disability Characteristics, 2020 (5-Year Estimates)

- Total civilian noninstitutionalized... — 11.7%
- With an independent living difficulty — 4.3%
- With an ambulatory difficulty — 5.7%
- With a cognitive difficulty — 5.1%
- With a vision difficulty — 2.1%
- With a hearing difficulty — 3.4%
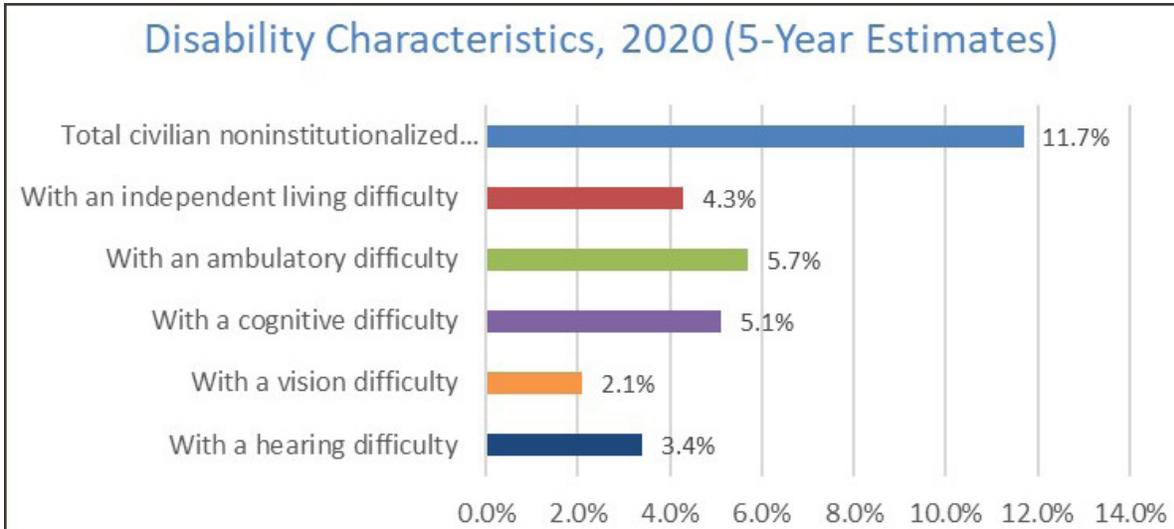
- do parks and other facilities plan adequately for the various accommodation requirements of this group?; and,
- does the City and its civic partners proactively seek ways to fully include invididuals with disabilities in all aspects of City life, such as encouraging partcipation on City boards and commissions, and engagement with special events and festivals?

Poverty and Housing Cost Burden
There are unique challenges to counting and understanding the needs of those City residents facing substantial economic challenges due to limited income. The most common way of attempting to count such persons is to count the number of persons with incomes below a certain threshold. In the 1950's the federal government established a formula for determining the "poverty level" based largely on the price of food commodities. The majority of demographers and other experts acknowledge that this formula is long-overdue for an overhaul. Many social programs establish eligibility based on a household's income being below twice the established poverty rate, concluding that this adjusted figure better reflects the number of households experiencing substantial economic hardship. Nevertheless, the census continues to gather data using this formula, but it should be regarded as providing a substantial undercount of those experiencing material poverty.
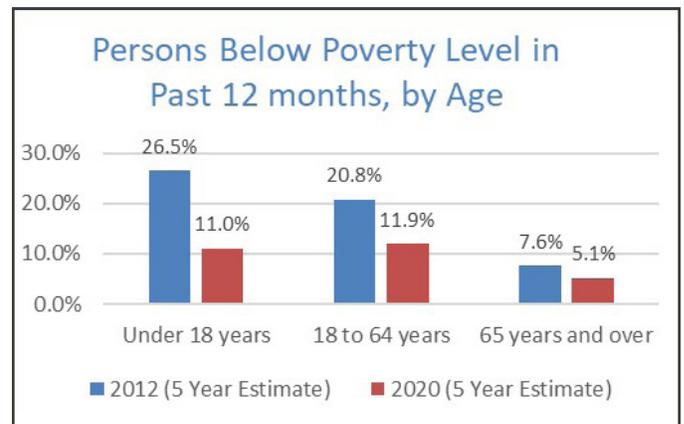
The adjacent chart below shows the percent of persons with incomes below the federal poverty level according to three age categories and comparing rate estimates from 2012 and 2020. The apparent good news in this data is that the rates decreased substantially during this time period, in particular for children under 18, and

for adults 18 through 64 years old. The data populating the 2012 estimates is derived by the Census using the five years of data from 2008 through 2012, which included years heavily impacted by the great recession. Despite these improvements, a poverty rate of 11% for children in 2020 reflects a reality that few would find satisfactory. It should also be understood that in addition to the personal impacts of material poverty on individuals and families, neighborhoods and cities also experience the secondary effects of material poverty among its residents, such as homes that are unable to be reasonably maintained due to limited financial resources, and individuals being unable to be fully engaged in the community.
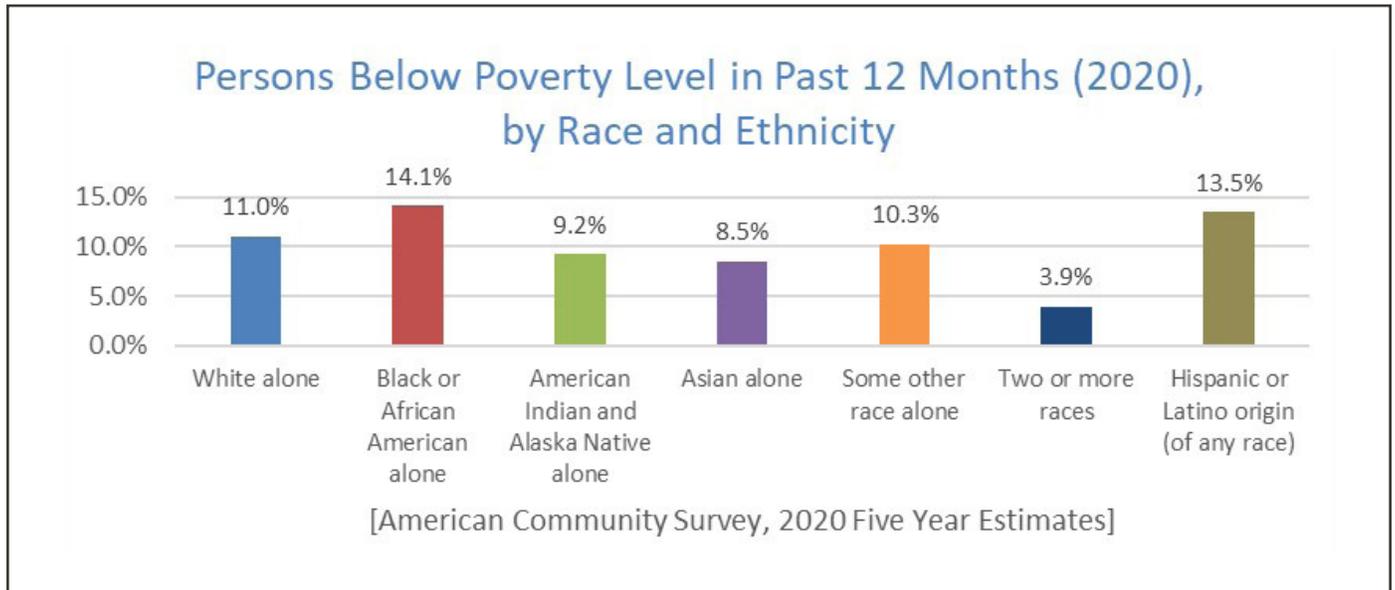

Persons Below Poverty Level in Past 12 months, by Age

- Under 18 years: 26.5% (2012), 11.0% (2020)
- 18 to 64 years: 20.8% (2012), 11.9% (2020)
- 65 years and over: 7.6% (2012), 5.1% (2020)

■ 2012 (5 Year Estimate)   ■ 2020 (5 Year Estimate)

The graph below shows the breakdown of poverty rates based on race and ethnicity. As is evident from the data presented in the chart, substantial disparities in poverty persist within the City, as is the case regionally and nationally. While the levers of change available to a City to address the impacts of poverty are admittedly limited, there are a few meaningful levers available. These are outlined briefly below as well as within the *Strategies for Building Flourishing Neighborhoods* section. Along with federal, state and county services, the City is fortunate to have working within the region multiple non-profit agencies seeking to address a broad spectrum of needs of persons dealing with material poverty, such as those experiencing homelessness, housing instability, food insecurity, and overall financial stability.

Persons Below Poverty Level in Past 12 Months (2020), by Race and Ethnicity

| Race and Ethnicity	Percentage
White alone	11.0%
Black or African American alone	14.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	9.2%
Asian alone	8.5%
Some other race alone	10.3%
Two or more races	3.9%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	13.5%

[American Community Survey, 2020 Five Year Estimates]

For the great majority of households, housing costs are the most important cost of living factor in determining whether a household can maintain financial and housing stability. What has become clear more recently is that housing and transportation costs need to be considered in combination when seeking to understand a household's economic condition. In fact, for the City of Holland, average transportation costs are actually somewhat greater than average housing costs, as noted in the adjacent graph, according to data compiled by the Center for Neighborhood Technology. Transportation and housing costs are considered to be affordable if they are no more than 15% and 30% of household income, respectively, or 45% in total. Holland's combined cost of 42% compares favorably to the average for Ottawa County, which is 48% (23% for Housing and 25% for Transportation).
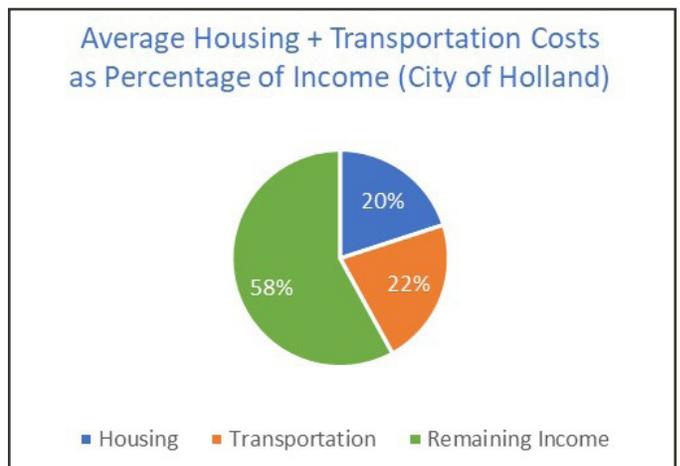
As the adjacent chart shows (Households Paying 30% or more of Income for Housing Costs), a troublingly large percentage of Holland's households (16.5 % of homeowners, and 41.6% of renters) are seeking to maintain housing stability while paying what is considered an unsustainable percentage of their income for housing (30% or greater; 2020 data).
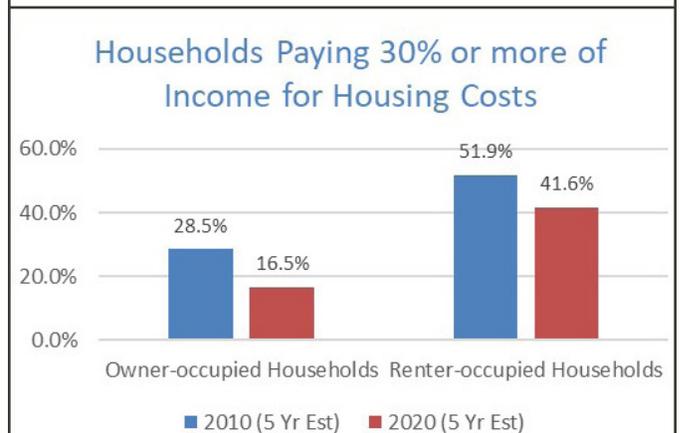
The improvement in this indicator compared to the rate in 2010 is a welcome development, yet the reality for over four out of ten renter households in the City is that they face day

Average Housing + Transportation Costs as Percentage of Income (City of Holland)

Category	Percentage
Housing	20%
Transportation	22%
Remaining Income	58%

Households Paying 30% or more of Income for Housing Costs

Household Type	2010 (5 Yr Est)	2020 (5 Yr Est)
Owner-occupied Households	28.5%	16.5%
Renter-occupied Households	51.9%	41.6%

to day challenges with meeting all of their obligations and needs as a result of paying an disproportionate percentage of their income for housing. As a result, many of these households experience an ongoing struggle to afford all other basic needs, such as a sufficient food supply, prescription medications, vehicle repairs, and recreation opportunities for children.

Where one lives can have a significant bearing on the transportation costs that will be needed to sustain a household's budget. Factoring in a household's needed transportation costs provides a more accurate picture of overall affordability.

> **Transportation Data – City of Holland**
>
> **$14,004** - Average annual household transportation costs
>
> **$11,146** - Average annual auto ownership cost
>
> **1.86** - Average autos per household
>
> **18,927** - Average vehicles miles traveled per household
>
> **1%** - Percent of workers using mass transit

Data show that places that are more compact and closer to jobs and services, and that offer a variety of transportation choices, allow those living there to spend less time and financial resources on transportation, meaning that they can use more income as needed for housing and other basic needs.

"In the U.S., the poorest 20% pay an average of 29% of their earnings on transportation, while in the E.U., the poorest 20% pay only 7.5% of total income on transportation."
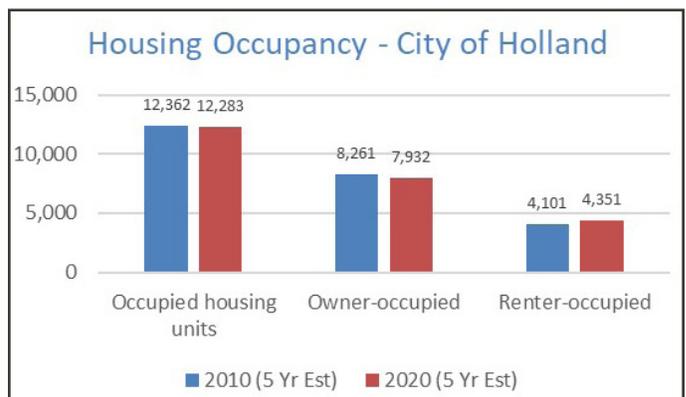[Institute for Transportation & Development Policy]

A comprehensive strategy to address poverty must go beyond improving the income potential of low-income persons and families. It must incorporate improvements to the places low-income persons find themselves. Demographers have clearly demonstrated that a highly accurate predictor of undesirable life outcomes, such as poor physical or mental health, diminished academic achievement, among many others, is the block one lives on as a child. While the causes of the conditions that lead to the perpetuation of poverty are many and complex, there are in fact several ways in which cities and their key partners can have a positive and meaningful impact, such as improving conditions within neighborhoods, improving access to affordable housing in targeted areas close to services, and increasing transportation options, all areas which the City has and continues to effect positive change.

Another lever that cities have at their disposal is their use of tax incentives offered to businesses. Cities can ensure, as much as possible, that businesses receiving financial incentives will be providing livable wages to their employees. In this regard, it is routine for the City to examine wage levels of companies seeking tax incentives.

Diversity in the Built Environment

The intention of including diversity within the built environment as part of the larger vision for diversity within neighborhoods is to make clear the goal that neighborhoods would contain a mix of housing types (i.e., single-family and multi-family, detached and townhomes), architectural styles, and sizes, along with other uses, such as commercial, civic, schools, religious, etc. Variation is a key ingredient to what makes a place interesting and worthy of one's attention. What makes a place interesting will surely vary from one person to the next, but a certain degree of variation seems essential.

One data point is the relative mix of owner-occupied housing and rental housing. Comparing the change from 2010 to 2020, the chart below shows a 2.7% decrease in occupied units overall. The data show a 3.9% decrease in units that are owner-occupied, and a corresponding 6% increase in the number of units that are renter-occupied. It is assumed that these changes are predominantly market-driven in response to recent housing trends. Millennials, the largest population bubble in over 50 years, as well as the generations following them, have been slower than older generations to adopt the previous pattern of seeking homeownership as soon as possible after acquiring some measure of financial independence. These groups commonly prioritize the selection of the location where they want to live over settling on employment. For a majority of millennials (58% according to data from the National Association of Realtors), the preference is for that place to be in an urban-like, mixed use environment.

Housing Occupancy - City of Holland

	2010 (5 Yr Est)	2020 (5 Yr Est)
Occupied housing units	12,362	12,283
Owner-occupied	8,261	7,932
Renter-occupied	4,101	4,351

Likewise, as older generations age out of traditional, single-family homes that are now larger than needed or desired, many are seeking living environments with a mix of amenities, options for greater social engagement, and good walkability, which translates into a greater demand for a variety of housing options that are in more compact, urban settings.

Age of the city's housing stock speaks to several issues, such as the diversity of housing types and styles, the need for programs to help repair and retain older housing stock, as well as the pace of new housing construction. The table to the right shows that for period before 1940, and for the two-decade periods beginning in 1940, 1960, and 1980, new construction contributed to over 20% of the city's housing stock, whereas for the period of 2000 to 2020, new construction contributed only 8% of the current housing stock. As recent housing studies have demonstrated, additional housing of all types is needed to meet current and future demand.
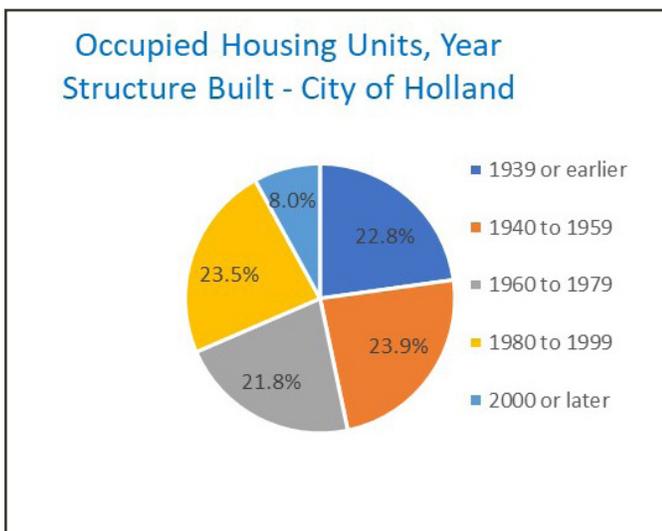
At the same time, efforts are needed to maintain and retain existing housing. Older homes are less likely to be energy-efficient, and they are likely to require more maintenance and to have more safety and habitability concerns than newer homes. Improving energy-efficiency through programs such as the City and BPW's Home Energy 101 program, and assisting with essential home repairs through the City's Home Repair Program are wise strategies to improve and retain Holland's older housing stock.

As for the goal of creating or maintaining diversity within the built environment, the best tool cities have to guide desirable development is through their zoning ordinances. In the case of the City of Holland, the passing of the City's new development ordinance

(the Unified Development Ordinance, or UDO) in 2021 made great strides toward allowing, if not encouraging progress toward a greater number of diverse, mixed-use areas throughout the city.

Sense of Place and Character

A sufficient number and variety of gathering spaces, such as parks, plazas, and certain businesses function as neighborhood gathering spaces. Public infrastructure, such as sidewalks and safe street crossings, and other features, such as the tree canopy and right-of-way landscaping, increase walkability and attract residents to neighborhood gathering spaces. Art, signage and logos reflect the neighborhood's features and identity. The built environment exhibits a variety of designs and uses providing a sense of place and character.

Reliable data that gives context to the topic of "sense of place and character" is a bit hard to come by. Some of what does exist is covered in substantial detail in the following chapter, titled "The Fifteen-Minute Neighborhood." That section provides great context regarding the relative proximity of all parts of the City to key amenities, such as parks, grocery stores, and other commercial businesses, alongside analysis of the sidewalk network, safe street crossings, and availability of public transit. The "Fifteen-Minute Neighborhood" analysis focuses on walkability, which is understood to consist of not only the safety and adequacy of the walking-related infrastructure (sidewalks and street-crossings), but also the quality of the walking experience, i.e., is there a sense of place and character, and does it afford the users of that infrastructure an opportunity to interact with other people.

When considering walkability, it's also important to think of walkable conditions as not just a *desirable* feature for residents to use a means of recreation and leisure. It's great, of course, that it's there for that purpose, but the reality is that for a significant portion of our population, access to non-motorized transportation options is *essential* to their ability to get to and from work and to meet their daily needs. This is a wide-ranging group consisting of:
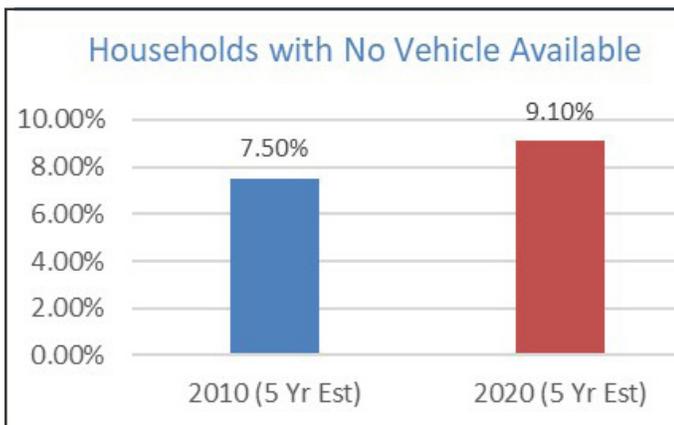- those who cannot afford to purchase a car or the costs associated with owning a car,
- those who are unable to drive for various legal reasons, or due to a disability or impairment, including many seniors,
- children, and
- those who could reasonably afford a car but elect not to drive or do so only rarely for health, environmental, safety, or other reasons.

As the data from Holland shows in the adjacent chart, the percentage of Holland households with no access to a car increased substantially from 2010 to 2020. This is a sizable percentage of the population, and because it's based on *households*, the percent of *people* without access to a car is higher yet. To be sure, those who no longer have a need to drive (people living in a senior care facility) make up a substantial percentage of this group, yet even so, the data appear to suggest that this may be a growing trend. The safety of those who rely on non-motorized transport deserves at least as much attention as the attention given to planning for the safety of drivers. The availability of safe walking and other non-motorized transportation infrastructure is essential for all residents using this infrastructure. Transportation planners need to consider that this group has been expanding, with indications being that it will likely continue to expand. The demand for better and safer non-motorized transportation infrastructure will likely grow as a result.

> *"Younger people today … no longer see the car as a necessary expense or a source of personal freedom. In fact, it is increasingly just the opposite: not owning a car and not owning a house are seen by more and more as a path to greater flexibility, choice, and personal autonomy."*
> - Richard Florida

Households with No Vehicle Available

- 2010 (5 Yr Est): 7.50%
- 2020 (5 Yr Est): 9.10%

Another key ingredient of sense of place and character is the integration of the place with natural features, principally trees. Jeff Speck, who wrote a frequently referenced book on walkability (Walkable City, 2012), catalogues the benefits of street trees as follows:

> Street trees are the key to pedestrian comfort and urban livability in so many ways. In addition to offering shade, they reduce ambient temperatures in hot weather, absorb rainwater and tailpipe

emissions, provide UV protection, and limit the effects of wind. Trees also slow cars and improve the sense of enclosure by "necking down" the street space with their canopies. (J. Speck, *Walkable City*, page 223)

Additional benefits include those to businesses located on treescaped streets (estimated to increase the business' income stream by 12%), added value to adjacent homes (estimated to add value of $20,000 per home), a reduction in atmospheric carbon (both through storage of CO_2 and through reduced emissions as a result of decreased demand for heating and cooling), health benefits (including reduced blood pressure and overall improvements in emotional health), and reduced costs of drainage infrastructure. Street trees are a rare example of a municipal asset that increases in value over time.

The City of Holland recently achieved its 42nd year of designation as a *Tree City* by Tree Cities USA. To qualify as a Tree City, a city must demonstrate that it meets several standards each year, including having a tree care ordinance, and spending at least $2 per capita on urban forestry. An assessment of Holland's Urban Tree Canopy was conducted by Grand Valley State University in 2013, in partnership with the MI DNR, US Forest Service, and the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council. Their analysis of street tree density on primarily residential streets within the City showed street canopy coverage ranging from 0% coverage to 77% coverage. Most the City's residential areas appear to fall within the 30.1 to 45% coverage range. It would be great to replicate this portion of this study to demonstrate where progress has been made since 2013. While no data could be found to support this claim, it is assumed that Holland's tree canopy coverage is above average among similar sized cities within the upper Midwest region. Given the totality of benefits outlined above, continuing a concerted

strategy to increase the street tree coverage, with a strong emphasis on those areas with the least coverage currently, would be a sound investment. (The Urban Tree Canopy Assessment can be found on the City's website at www.cityofholland.com/296/Urban-Tree-Canopy-Assessment.)

Accessibility of Amenities

Sufficient, accessible, and quality services (such as social, health, education, employment, and childcare, etc.), along with amenities (such as public transit, libraries, schools, parks, and recreation facilities and programs) are present and accessible within neighborhoods. Accessibility must include an absence of structural, design, or programmatic barriers to the use of such services and amenities for persons with disabilities.

A large section of the Citizen Survey conducted in 2020 seeks to determine the sense of satisfaction with amenities and services provided by the City. The list of amenities queried about includes services such as the fire department and police department, parks, recreation facilities, sidewalks, street snow removal, downtown parking, and so forth. Of the 18 items listed, the average responses on the five-point scale (with 1 being "very poor" and 5 being "very good") range from a low of 3.76 for downtown parking, to a high of 4.67 for the fire department. The average score of all 18 amenities combined appears to be about 4.2, reflecting rather strong overall satisfaction with City amenities. The two indicators of most interest to this report, in that they are called out in the goal statement, are City Parks and Recreational Programming. Charts showing satisfaction with those amenities, split out by race and ethnicity, are provided to the right, showing some disparity in responses, yet still strong overall satisfaction.
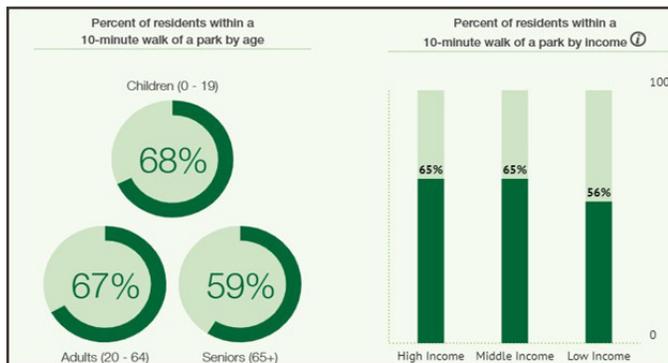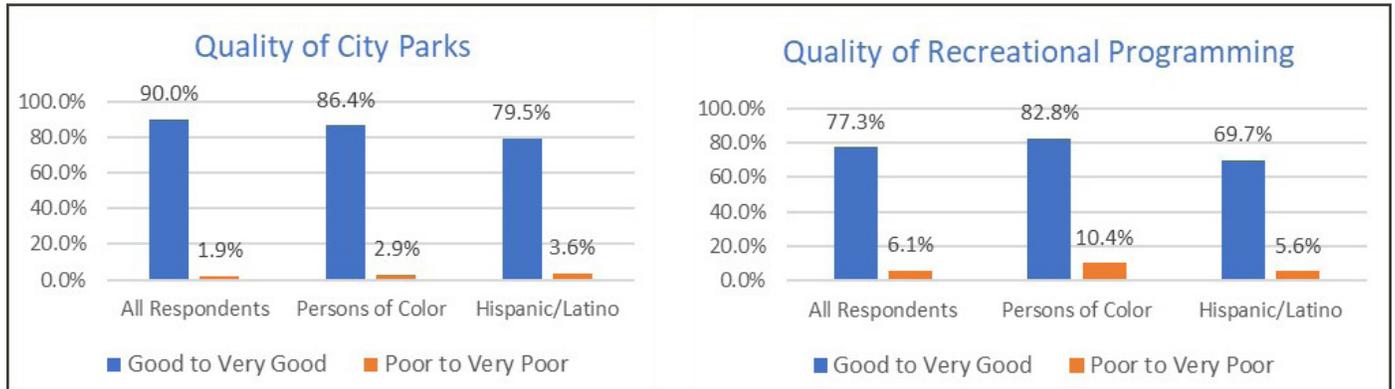
Another key indicator is that of ease of access to city parks. Proximity to parks is built into the Fifteen Minute Neighborhood analysis contained in the next section, but is also addressed by a group called The Trust for Public Land. Their analysis found that 66.3% of Holland residents live within a 10-minute walk (1/2 mile) of a park using a walkable network, whereas the national average is 55%. The two adjacent graphs break that analysis down by age groups and income categories. The results show that fewer seniors compared with other age groups, and fewer low-income residents compared with higher income groups, can access a park by way of a 10-minute walk or less.

The below map shows the proximity of park spaces within neighborhoods in the City, with measurements based on an available walking route (City parks are outlined in black). Areas in green area located within a quarter-mile of a park; yellow areas are between ¼ to ½ mile; and red areas are ½ mile or greater from a park. Not included in the analysis are the locations of schools with schoolyard greenspace and playgrounds, most of which are open to the public during hours when schools are not in operation.

Parks, trails and urban green spaces "serve as fundamental building blocks to create healthy, vibrant communities," according to Elva Yanez, Director of Health Equity at the *Prevention Institute*. She notes a number of key findings in a 2019 article she wrote titled *Why We Need Park Equity.*

- Parks facilitate social interaction and bring communities together; parks provide meeting places where social ties are strengthened, making residents feel more connected and secure.
- People who live within walking distance of parks are three times more likely to meet recommended levels of physical activity.
- Proximity to parks and natural spaces lengthen lifespan and improve people's moods and sense of wellbeing.

- Access to parks results in the prevention of youth crime, aggression, and violence.
- Parks provide environmental benefits such as regulating air temperature, capturing stormwater runoff, and protecting habitats for urban wildlife.

Yanez's article goes on to suggest several strategies for cities to consider in their plans to promote greater and more equitable access to parks:

- Increase funding allocations for green space and recreation services, prioritizing areas of demonstrated inequity.
- Ensure broad community input in selecting, designing, and improving parks and green spaces.
- Acquire small and non-traditional parcels in park-poor areas, such as vacant lots, alleyways, public utility right-of-ways and unnecessarily wide streets, and transform them into parks or public open space.
- Ensure that parks are safe and welcoming places for all people to socialize and be physically active, paying particular attention groups that often face additional barriers to taking advantage of parks and recreation areas, such as low-income individuals and families, people of color, non-English speakers, older adults, people with disabilities, and women.
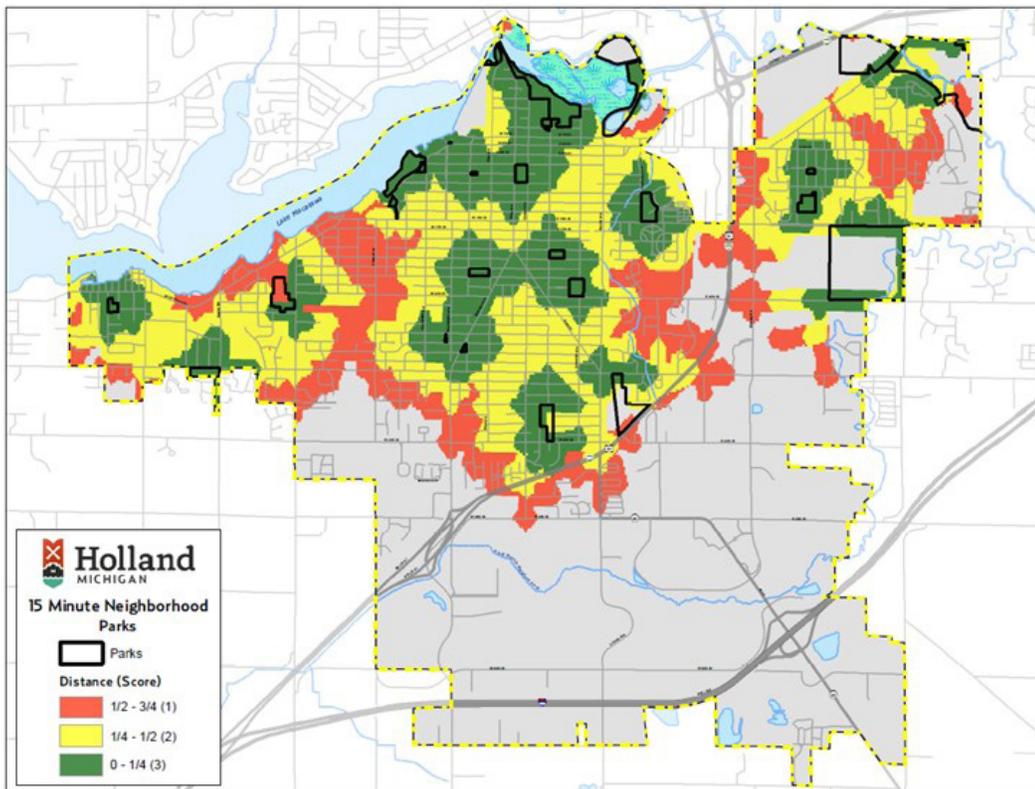
Results from a joint study by Clemson University and Kaiser Permanente provides further evidence of the direct link between access to green space and benefits to community health. The study released in March 2022 found that "the average annual health care cost was $374 lower per person per year for those living near the most green space than it was for those living near the least green space." The study's lead author, Stephen VanDenEeden noted the following, "Our study showed that across the whole range of neighborhoods there was a consistent pattern between living in areas with more green space and lower health care

costs." The findings add to a growing body of research supporting increased investments in green space near residential areas.

Finally, as noted within the Accessibility of Amenities vision statement, it is important for the sake of equity that all planning pertaining to City amenities ensures an absence of structural, design, or programmatic barriers to the use of such services and amenities for persons with disabilities. This is best done by intentionally incorporating a review of the *ADA Standards for Accessible Design* and other related ADA standards of all City sponsored or managed programs, services and facilities.

Economic Vitality and Opportunity

The neighborhood fosters, attracts, and sustains appropriate business and economic development. Residents have the opportunity to flourish financially by participating in a vibrant, sustainable, multi-sector economy. Residents have the opportunity to participate in varied economic roles, such as business owners, employees, consumers, volunteers, etc. The neighborhood's economy allows for maximum economic exchanges, such that residents can purchase most of what they want or need in the neighborhood.

This final element appears to offer the least data from which to assess the current level of attainment. The vision is for neighborhoods to be economically robust by offering residents the ability to meet as many of their day to day needs within the neighborhood as possible. The Fifteen Minute Neighborhood analysis in the next section provides the best available data on which areas of the city are within a 15-minute walking distance from a broad range of businesses, including grocery stores and markets, convenience stores and drug stores, along with coffee shops, restaurants, and many other commonly visited businesses.

The goal of allowing for and encouraging the greatest number of economic exchanges within neighborhoods is important for various reasons. It has already been noted that neighborhoods that offer a broad range of amenities and a mix of businesses are becoming increasingly desirable by many. Such places offer both convenience and a greater sense of place and character. They offer opportunity for small business owners to be rooted in a place. They offer employment opportunities to residents that provide convenience and reduced transportation costs. They provide various options for "third places" – places where people hang out away from home (one's first place) and work (second place). Lee Hardy defines third places as "typically free or inexpensive, located on neutral ground, open to all

irrespective of social status, accessible by walking, visited by regulars, and conducive to conversation." Examples include coffee shops, diners, pubs, barber shops, bookstores, libraries, places of worship, and community centers. Zoning regulations frequently disallow such places from existing in some neighborhoods.

Walkable neighborhoods that contain a variety of businesses also have a lessened environmental impact in that residents are able to meet their day to day needs without always having to resort to driving to larger commercial districts to obtain needed items and services. Finally, such neighborhoods offer hidden economic benefits. Dollars spent at locally owned businesses recirculate within the local economy at a significantly higher rate. Data highlighted by *Fundera*, a small business advocacy group and lender, note that small businesses generate $68 of local economic return for every $100 spent at a small business. Locally owned businesses, moreover, generate 70% more local economic activity per square foot than "big box" or chain retail stores. Altogether, neighborhoods containing a broad range of amenities and small businesses provide a greater degree of resiliency and sustainability. Local economic exchanges grow connectedness and social capital.

"Rather than expecting economic development investments at the city or regional level to "trickle down" to disinvested neighborhoods, ... by improving economic outcomes in underinvested places, these positive outcomes will "trickle up" to strengthen the city and region at large."
- Hanna Love and Teresa Garcia, The Brookings Institution

SECTION 5: THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE NEIGHBORHOOD

Why a 15-minute neighborhood?

The desirability of living in a neighborhood in which residents can meet many of their day-to-day needs, such as being able to access grocery staples, walk to a café, park, or bookstore, or be able to simply take a safe and pleasant neighborhood walk, is gaining in popularity. A publication of the Congress for the New Urbanism defines the 15-minute neighborhood as "an ideal geography where most human needs and many desires are located within a travel distance of 15 minutes" by modes of travel such as walking or bicycling. Recently, city leaders and planners in places as diverse as Paris, France to Carmel, Indiana have been touting the various benefits of cities and neighborhoods being re-designed around this concept.

> *Walkable cities are easier and more attractive to live in, making for happier, healthier citizens. Health, prosperity, and sustainability go hand in hand.* [@pedestrianspace]

Prior to the time when the automobile became ubiquitous, and the development patterns of cities changed accordingly, nearly all people living in cities and small towns lived in environments that would qualify as a 15-minute neighborhood. Historically, neighborhoods even smaller than a 15-minute area included most essential commerce, education, recreation, culture, services, as well as employment. Even though much has changed about the way most people organize and live their day to day lives, it remains a goal of many to retain as much of the 15-minute neighborhood model as possible as a way of holding onto a deeper sense of community, along with lessening a community's carbon footprint by reducing its dependence on motorized transport.

Many cities have begun utilizing the 15-minute neighborhood model to assess community livability and walkability. Most people can walk one mile in around 15-20 minutes. The evaluation that follows measures walkability based upon a conservative distance of ¾ of a mile.

Each person's 15-minute neighborhood is the area around their home that they can reasonably access by walking within 15 minutes. Depending on the existence of sidewalks and the presence or absence of obstructions, such as highways, private property, natural features, or one's personal sense of safety, that area may be a near perfect circle with a ¾-mile radius, or it might be a much more limited area. Those capable of running errands or getting to a park by bicycle can significantly extend their 15-minute neighborhood, again with the limitation of the existence of safe and accessible routes.

While the benefits of the 15-minute neighborhood concept are many, it is acknowledged that living in such a location is not a priority or even an interest of all persons. A significant number of people prefer to live in settings that do not afford the types of amenities available in more urban, walkable areas. The literature suggests, however, that the alternative is indeed a growing preference among the general population, and for that reason alone, a great many cities are seeking to find ways of encouraging the development of such neighborhood environments whenever and wherever possible.

One example suggestive of this trend comes from a recent survey by the National Association of Realtors, which found that "62% of people ages 18 to 29 would prefer to live in a neighborhood with public transit options, sidewalks and businesses nearby than in a

neighborhood with large lots but without transit or sidewalks" (Walljasper, Eleven Reasons). Similar analysis reported by the Congress for the New Urbanism predicts that during the two decades from 2017 to 2038, demand for both attached dwelling units and detached units on small lots will nearly double. Conversely, demand for single family homes on large lots will decline by around 25%.
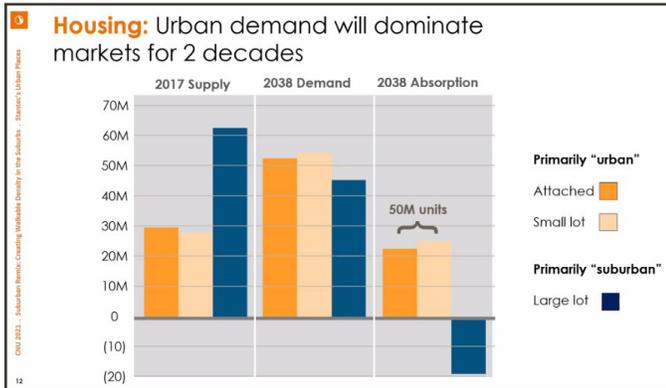
As for those over 50, AARP data show a strong and increasing trend toward seniors desiring to remain in their current residence and within their current community. This trend, referred to as "aging in place," requires that cities wishing to help seniors achieve this goal will need to give more attention to helping seniors meet their ongoing transportation needs, among other needs associated with daily living. According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, on average, adults in the U.S. outlive their driving years by ten years. Moreover, "one in five people over 65 don't drive. By age 80, 65 percent are no longer driving, while only 40 percent have difficulty walking" (Krankel McCullough). These data suggest quite clearly that for seniors to age in place successfully, they will greatly benefit from living in a walkable, 15-minute neighborhood. Locally, Evergreen Commons is ensuring effective planning relative to the unique needs of the senior population, including walkability.

It would be a glaring omission to not highlight Holland's success at offering much better conditions for pedestrians in the winter than likely any other city in the country that receives substantial snowfall. This, of course, is due to the presence of approximately five miles of sidewalk in the central city that remain essentially snow and ice free all winter as a result of the largest municipal snowmelt system in North America. A second reason is the City's sidewalk plowing service that is applied city-wide wherever there is existing sidewalk. These two conditions allow for far more people to walk for errands and recreation in the winter months than would otherwise be safe and feasible. Also noteworthy

is Holland's choice to make 5 feet the standard sidewalk width throughout the City. This allows two persons to walk comfortably side by side, which greatly enhances the walking experience for those walking together.

Benefits of the 15-minute neighborhood

The ability to retain, create, and enhance 15-minute neighborhoods has benefits for not only those living within such neighborhoods but also for the community as a whole. Key benefits include:

- *Health*. Residents who walk or bike regularly are healthier and therefore walkable communities make it easier to live healthy lifestyles. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, people living in walkable neighborhoods get about 35 to 45 more minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week and are substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than people of a similar socioeconomic status living in neighborhoods that do not provide reasonable walkability.
- *Mobility*. Walkable environments allow for much improved mobility access for those with mobility limitations, including youth, seniors, and persons with mobility-related disabilities.
- *Traffic*. Residents with convenient access to local goods and services are less likely to drive. If they do drive, they have a shorter travel distance.
- *Transit*. Better access to transit equates to more transit users. Research demonstrates that people living in walkable neighborhoods and within a half mile of a transit node commute less often by single-occupant vehicle (SOV), with a higher percentage using transit, carpooling, and walking or bicycling to work.
- *Demographics*. Twenty-one percent of the population aged 65 and older does not drive – and that segment of the population is projected to grow significantly. Older non-drivers need options so they remain engaged with their communities.
- *Cleaner Air and Watersheds*. Less traffic means cleaner air, less greenhouse gas emissions, and less pollutant runoff into watersheds.

According to data gathered by the National Association of Realtors:
- *56% of college educated Millennials,*
- *50% of the general US population, and*
- *36% of active boomers,*
prefer walkable communities.

- *Social Connectivity*. Pedestrian activity and local gathering places help build social cohesion and eyes on the street help people feel safer in their communities.
- *Market Forces*. Recent surveys indicate that a majority of Americans want to live in walkable neighborhoods with increased transit options. Those numbers are significantly stronger for younger Americans and those who plan to move in the future, a strong representation of the future real estate market.
- *Stronger Retail*. Neighborhood businesses in walkable communities benefit from the increase in localized economic activity.

Secondary economic effects, moreover, include personal economic benefits for those living in walkable neighborhoods. Walkability creates the opportunity to reduce or eliminate transportation costs, thereby decreasing one's overall living expenses. The ability to reduce a household's needed number of vehicles from two to one, or one to none, can result in savings of approximately $8,700 per year (based on estimates from AAA). As discussed in the previous section, the ability to substantially decrease transportation costs allows households to achieve greater financial stability, in particular for low to moderate income households. A more flexible household budget results also in greater housing choice, meaning having more options and locations to choose from in selecting housing.

People living in walkable areas are:
- 45% more likely to walk 30 minutes or more for transportation,
- 45% less likely to be obese, and
- 39% less likely to have diabetes.
(Source: America Walks)

Finally, with respect to the economic implications relative to city government and school systems, walkable, urban communities require substantially decreased costs for the provision of basic city and educational services. Various analyses have shown that the cost of providing municipal services (parks, public safety, bussing, roads, sidewalks, water and waste removal, etc.) is typically 2 to 2.5 times more costly in suburban environments than in urban areas. Other related analysis has shown, moreover, that there is a net benefit to cities by means of higher municipal tax revenues received from more dense, mixed-use areas as compared with suburban areas. For cities, 15-minute neighborhoods offer a "win-win" – reduced cost of providing basic services and infrastructure, and increased revenue per capita.

Holland's 15-minute neighborhood map

The map on the following page demonstrates the current state of Holland's walkability based on the layering of multiple scoring criteria. Overall walkability depends on multiple factors, each related to two key characteristics: ***the presence of destinations*** – places that meet certain commercial, educational, recreational or transportation criteria, *and* ***accessibility*** – the ability of people to conveniently get to such destinations. The map overlays scores derived from eight different criteria, namely:

1) proximity to full-service grocery stores,
2) proximity to convenience stores and drug stores or pharmacies,
3) the presence and clustering of businesses and related entities that people are likely to visit with regular frequency, such as coffee shops, restaurants, gyms, daycare centers, bookstores, the library, post office, etc.,
4) the presence of sidewalks and walking trails,
5) proximity to parks or green space,
6) the presence of schools and related institutions,
7) the presence of intersections that provide safe crossing opportunities, and
8) the presence of public transit access points (transit stops).

The map represents the overlay of each of those eight criteria into a composite score. The deeper green shows those areas of the City that provide the most walkable access to the above-listed destinations, and red represent those areas with the least walkable access.

Separate maps were created demonstrating the individualized scoring for each of the eight inputs. These can be found on the City's website at www.cityofholland.com/1167/The-15-Minute-Neighborhood-Analysis.

Conclusions

The map shows that there are substantial areas of Holland that provide at least a moderate to good degree of walkability, likely qualifying them as 15-minute neighborhoods. Other areas provide a substantially lesser degree of walkability. Many areas that are red or orange are predominantly industrial in nature, making the matter of walkability of lesser importance in most instances. These areas should be considered high priority though for access to transit and for safe bicycling

infrastructure. Most areas that are yellow and some that are orange are largely residential, and therefore should receive strong consideration for walkability improvements.

To be sure, there is room for improvement in all areas, yet City leaders and planners will need to determine where attention is needed the most, based in large part on input and feedback received from residents in the various neighborhoods. Some may argue for focusing on improvements to those residential areas with the lowest scores, while others may argue for making improvements using a more balanced approach. Some areas would benefit most from improved access to parks and greenspace, while others from small-scale commercial or mixed-use developments.

It deserves noting that adoption of Holland's new Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) has created new opportunities for certain areas to see more mixed-use development in the future. The UDO also encourages more pedestrian friendly building and parking designs.

Finally, along with other considerations noted, it is essential that equity considerations also be factored into the decision-making processes related to neighborhood improvements impacting walkability, such as how the City decides where to invest its Community Development Block Grant funds when considering infrastructure improvement projects. The following section will offer a wide-ranging list of prospective tools and strategies, many of which will help move neighborhoods in the direction of the 15-minute neighborhood principles.
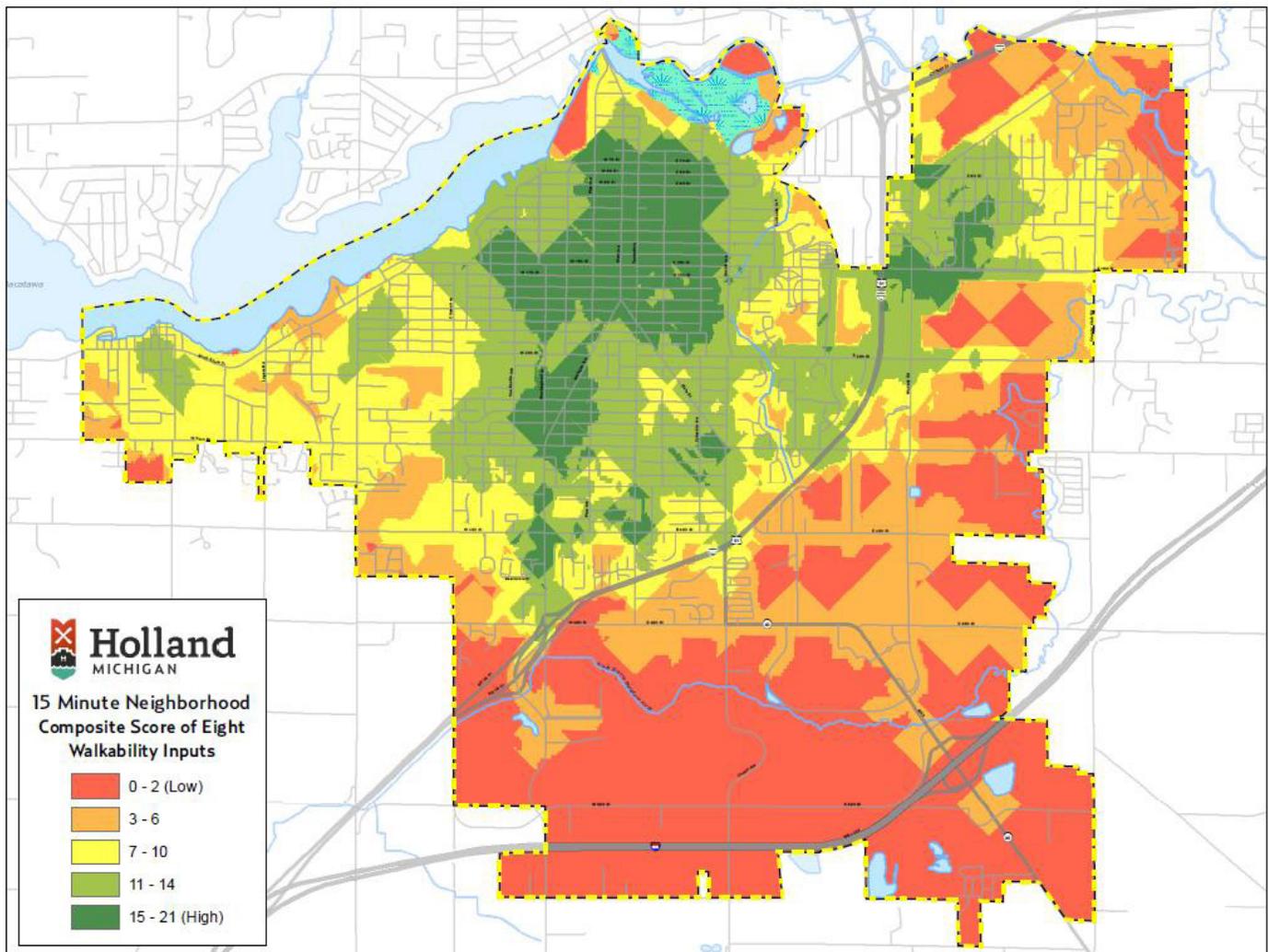
[The methodology used in creating this map relied heavily on the model used by the city of Kirkland, WA, and was used with permission.]

SECTION 6: STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING FLOURISHING NEIGHBORHOODS

In considering the development of a community strategy providing a roadmap for Holland's neighborhoods to achieve greater flourishing, the report acknowledges several assumptions:

- that neighborhoods are diverse, and as such require individualized strategies for ongoing development,
- that neighborhood flourishing and individual wellbeing are interconnected,
- that well-considered and properly-designed interventions or strategies can positively impact neighborhood flourishing, and,
- that change is cyclical, and the ideal is to create a pattern of neighborhood wellbeing that is continuous and sustainable.

Taken together, these assumptions create the framework for a theory of change, as represented in the following diagram:

[Source: Building Community Wellbeing: A Theory of Change. (May 2017)]

A related presumption that may impact whether and how to proceed with any given strategy is that in most instances it is best to proceed in an incremental manner. An incrementalistic approach is most often more feasible to implement as opposed to waiting for all the pieces of a large-scale project to fall into place. It also is more likely to allow for making adjustments based on feedback received along the way.

Before turning the focus on the list of prospective strategies, it seems worthwhile to note again that while there is room for improvement within each neighborhood, there is much to acknowledge and commend about the neighborhoods as they exist today. The City's neighborhoods have many great features, such as their existing sidewalk networks, expanding bicycling infrastructure, healthy neighborhood commercial districts, highly effective neighborhood associations, tree canopy, unique characteristics, and of course great residents who make great neighbors. Other positive features already noted in previous sections are Holland's community policing division, its snowmelt system, and its winter sidewalk plowing program. Noteworthy also is the recent adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance, which was intentional in seeking to create conditions for healthy neighborhood growth. Finally, it deserves noting that Holland benefits tremendously from its existing network of community-based organizations striving to address many of the social service support needs within the community and provide resource to Holland's neighborhoods. Nevertheless, nothing remains stagnant, so to the extent that change is inevitable, the goal of this report is to continue creating those conditions that will allow each neighborhood to evolve and flourish in its own unique way.

Below is a list of prospective interventions and strategies organized according to the six elements of flourishing neighborhoods laid out in Section 2. Not all proposed strategies will fit each neighborhood, and it is understood that not everyone within any neighborhood will be in agreement with regard to the value of pursuing proposed strategies. Strategy consideration and implementation should begin with gathering feedback from neighborhood residents and seeking consensus when feasible.

Further, it is not assumed that the list below is comprehensive. Engaged and activated neighborhoods will undoubtedly create strategies and interventions that are uniquely suited to their situation and environments. The Neighborhood Connections organization can be very instrumental in helping neighbors incubate ideas for neighborhood improvement that best fit their strengths and interests.

Each prospective strategy has also been coded according to three factors: a) priority for implementation, using a scale of 1, 2 or 3 (defined below), b) likelihood that activation of the strategy will result in enhanced equity, and c) identification of the lead entity to initiate implementation.

IMPLEMENTATION **PRIORITY** - strategy is likely to have: 1 Strong benefit, high interest, reasonable effort or cost 2 Strong benefit and solid interest, yet effort, cost or other barriers may pose challenges to implementation 3 Reasonable degree of effort or cost, yet substantial time may be needed to generate critical mass of interest or energy	1	2	3

EQUITY IMPACT: if the strategy is activated, is it likely to have a positive impact on promoting greater equity outcomes?	YES

IMPLEMENTATION **LEAD**:
- CITY = City of Holland (including Public Safety Dept and Board of Public Works)
- NDP = Neighborhood Development Partners or other Community-based Organizations
- DEV = Property Development Partners
- BUS = Business Partners
- MAX = Macatawa Area Express
- HDL = Herrick District Library

CONNECTEDNESS, ENGAGEMENT, AND INCLUSIVENESS

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
1. Support the expansion of the Neighborhood Connector network within interested neighborhoods (both in number of NC orgs and in their capacity)	1	YES	NDP/CITY
2. Develop a strategy to encourage enhanced neighborhood connection efforts within areas not currently being served by a Neighborhood Connector organization	1	YES	NDP/CITY
3. Support neighborhood community gardens and urban agriculture	3		NDP/CITY
4. Encourage the development of neighborhood-based interest groups (for example: walking groups, fitness groups, crafting groups, support groups).	3		NDP/CITY
5. Explore expansion of Herrick District Library as unique place of connection, especially for marginalized groups (i.e., collaborating with partners on outreach efforts with persons experiencing homelessness)	2	YES	HDL/NDP
6. Seek designation as an *Age-Friendly Community* by the AARP, and thereby develop a plan for neighborhoods to support people of all ages	2	YES	NDP/CITY

SAFETY AND RESILIENCE

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
7. Explore and consider implementation of strategies promoted through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to promote community-building initiatives as a public safety strategy	3	YES	CITY
8. Support and consider expansion of the Community Policing program within the Holland Public Safety Dept	3	YES	CITY
9. Support implementation of the "Complete Streets" approach, and consider implementing supplementary goals or projects that will enhance mobility safety	2	YES	CITY
10. Recruit neighborhood groups or individuals to clean and clear sidewalks during the winter, and/or other similar mutual aid projects	1	YES	NDP

DIVERSITY

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
11. Support efforts of community-based organizations to promote enhanced diversity within Holland neighborhoods	1	YES	NDP/CITY
12. Continue current strategies and explore potential new strategies to increase affordable and accessible housing within the community	2	YES	CITY/DEV
13. Continue to prioritize incentives for projects of all sizes that incorporate mixed-income, mixed-use and housing affordability	2	YES	CITY

SENSE OF PLACE AND CHARACTER

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
14. Offer and provide assistance to neighborhoods with the process of neighborhood identification and branding	1		CITY/NDP
15. Increase availability of mini-grants for neighborhood-based projects	1	YES	CITY
16. Support increasing the tree canopy in targeted neighborhoods	1	YES	CITY
17. Establish incentives for developers to create inclusive public spaces in commercial areas	3		DEV
18. Support opportunities to use vacant areas for food-related events, such as food trucks, fruit and vegetable stands, and community gardens	2	YES	CITY

ACCESSIBILITY OF AMENITIES

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
19. Ensure that parks are safe and welcoming places for people to socialize and be physically active	1	YES	CITY
20. Support park, greenspace and recreational programming improvements and enhancements, in particular with an emphasis on lesser-resourced areas and groups	2	YES	CITY

21. Encourage co-location of greenspaces, community centers, playgrounds, etc., within or near multi-family or other dense housing developments	2	YES	DEV/NDP
22. Encourage the provision of green spaces within new developments	1	YES	DEV
23. Encourage and facilitate public-private partnerships that encourage green space in private developments or green space stewardship by private entities on public lands, such as community gardens organized by nonprofits on public lots or nature-based activities in public parks.	2	YES	DEV
24. Public Transit – increase route frequency and amenities at bus stops (benches, shelters, etc.)	2	YES	MAX/CITY
25. Support ongoing investment in bike and pedestrian infrastructure; establish goals for new infrastructure in alignment with the City's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan	2	YES	CITY
26. Explore options for places of worship, schools, or similar institutions to make available space for neighborhood development/community centers (see proximityprojectinc.com)	3		NDP
27. Use greenspace programming to encourage community members to explore natural areas (e.g., parks and recreation department/ODC hosting hikes and waterway tours)	1	YES	CITY

ECONOMIC VITALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

STRATEGY	PRIORITY	EQUITY	LEAD
28. Support existing, and encourage development of new, commercial neighborhood centers that meet daily needs	2	YES	BUS/CITY
29. Support community based economic development – creating opportunity for economic exchanges within neighborhoods	2	YES	BUS/CITY
30. Support a local emphasis on "shop, hire, work local;" encourage anchor institutions within the City to commit to this goal	2	YES	BUS
31. Explore avenues for incentivizing neighborhood-based small business incubation (e.g., StartGarden.com)	2	YES	BUS/NDP

RESERVE STRATEGIES

The following strategies were considered to have good potential value but deemed to likely require either too much effort or cost, or too much time, to generate a critical mass of interest at this time (4 rating). They are included here, however, for future consideration should circumstances change and their prospect for activation become more promising.

32. Provide education to residents about the benefits of participating in the creation of more flourishing neighborhoods and engaging with opportunities for neighborhood connection	4		NDP
33. Create the means to provide technical and other means of support for a variety of placemaking initiatives, including: • hosting community events • creating pop-up installations • encouraging partnerships between developers and/or community-based group and local artists to create public installations in publicly accessible spaces	4		CITY
34. Explore development of mobility hubs (co-location of micro-transit, micro-mobility) at targeted bus stops	4		CITY
35. Promote transit-oriented design standards (encouraging housing development to occur with reasonable transit access OR expand transit options where new housing is developed)	4	YES	CITY
36. Create opportunities for people to walk/bike to work	4		BUS
37. Sponsor and promote events that highlight commercial districts	4		CITY
38. Create opportunities for community leaders to facilitate culturally sensitive conversations around green space visioning and decision making	4	YES	CITY
39. Encourage co-location of multi-generational services, such as senior centers/adult care centers with childcare centers/Headstart/preschool programs.	4	YES	NDP

SECTION 7:
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Seeking public input on questions such as, *"What attracted you to your neighborhood and what attributes do you appreciate the most,?" "What changes in your neighborhood are you noticing that are concerning to you,?", and "What would make your neighborhood stronger, healthier, safer, more resilient, or more complete?"* was an important component of the report preparation process. Feedback was received during four public engagement sessions offered in different areas of the city, during one focus group meeting held with neighborhood development leaders in the community, and also from an on-line survey of City residents. In-person feedback was received from 35 individuals, and 15 responses were received via the on-line survey. The in-person meetings were held between May 19 and June 20, 2022.

The four slides on the following pages offer a summary of the feedback received in response to the four questions asked at each of the public engagement meetings and on the on-line survey. The extent of overall agreement among those offering feedback was notable. There was strong general agreement expressed with the framework of the six components of a flourishing neighborhood, as well as for the types of neighborhood conditions promoted within the report, notably walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with a wide variety of destination types, along with creating more opportunities for connectedness and engagement among residents and neighbors. Perhaps the only area where there was disagreement was about the desirability of increased residential density, in particular within the central city area. While some expressed hope for increased density and a belief that this would result in broad community benefits, others expressed their belief that more density would result in various negative impacts.

Neighborhood attributes I appreciate the most:

Location/Proximity (33)
- o Proximity to parks, schools, stores, work, church

Place/Character/Amenities (26)
- o Tree canopy, historic homes/architecture, quiet streets, homes well-cared for, gardens/yards, park quality, vibrant downtown

Walking/Biking/Transit (16)
- o Overall walkability, snow melt, bikeability

Connectedness/Engagement (9)
- o My neighbors, friendliness, ability of neighbors to address concerns

Housing/Property (8)
- o Housing was affordable (at the time), location

Diversity (7)
- o Race, ethnicity, ages, socioeconomic

Safety (3)
- o Overall sense of safety for the area

Changes being welcomed:

Place/Character/Amenities (17)
- o Park improvements, more families, community garden, new businesses, street trees

Connectedness/Engagement (6)
- o Improving connections among neighbors, more involvement, better communication with community policing

Diversity (4)
- o Increasing diversity within neighborhood

Housing (2)
- o New affordable units in central city (10th and 36th)

Changes that are <u>concerning</u>:

Housing (14)
- o Homes becoming unaffordable, loss of housing diversity, increase in low-income housing and out-of-town landlords, push for more density

Safety (9)
- o Speeding, traffic, more crime, property theft

Place/Character/Amenities (13)
- o Loss of open lots, loss of nbhd schools

Connectedness/Engagement (6)
- o Polarization, increased transient population

Walking/Biking/Transit (4)
- o Lack of safe alternatives to auto transport, limited availability of bus, no light rail

My neighborhood would be <u>stronger if</u>:

Connectedness/Engagement (16)
- o More connection among neighbors, more liaisons, better communication, more commonality/unity, more common areas

Place/Character/Amenities (18)
- o More commercial diversity, restaurants, more pollinator and bird-friendly yards, sidewalks in better repair, protections of greenspace

Housing (9)
- o More affordable housing, mixed income and mixed use, fewer rentals, protections for single family homeownership, more help for repairs for low-income households

Safety (9)
- o More traffic calming, safer street crossings, more visible crosswalks, more community policing presence

Biking and other Transit (2)
- o Better, safer bike infrastructure, better bus system/ light rail

Diversity (1)
- o More diversity within neighborhoods (race/ethnicity/economic)

Members of the focus group also expressed broad agreement with the feedback received during the previous four open public engagement meetings. Their added feedback revolved around some of the unique challenges and barriers to engaging in neighborhood and community life experienced by those estranged from the mainstream community in some way, such as those with very limited income, persons of minority race or ethnicity, at-risk youth, those with limited access to transportation, and those with mobility challenges due to age or disability. It was noted by the focus group attendees that particular focus needs to be paid to such groups in identifying needs and possible interventions.

SECTION 8:
CONCLUSION

"A community is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's lives." - Wendell Berry

The content of the first six sections of this report seeks to explore the state of Holland's neighborhoods and identify various trends impacting neighborhoods. Key trends include the growing impact of social isolation, along with a growing desire among many for greater connectedness and more walkability. One key lesson reinforced during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic was the importance of social connection. We have a better understanding now about the individual and societal impacts when social connection is lacking. We also have a better understanding than we've had in the past about how the built environment and neighborhood design can play an important role in shaping the overall health and well-being of the people inhabiting a place. Gathering all of that information together, and drawing on the best practices being implemented here and in other places, the report seeks to provide a framework for the pursuit of healthier, more resilient, and more equitable conditions within Holland's neighborhoods. To that end, it also includes a rather lengthy list of interventions and strategies that we believe have the potential, if not likelihood, of creating more flourishing neighborhoods.

As stated in the first section of the report, the report's primary goals are: "that Holland's neighborhoods would be places of social connection," and that the conditions within neighborhoods "will provide the foundation for social equity within the City." The report writers believe that while many things impacting neighborhood life are outside their direct influence, residents and city leaders can make a difference in creating the conditions for such outcomes. We believe that by working to activate and implement many of the strategies proposed in Section Six, along with others yet to be developed at the neighborhood level, Holland's neighborhoods can move forward toward achieving both of those critical goals. At the same time, doing so will achieve many of the changes hoped for by residents as expressed during the public engagement period.

Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Those living within this city do, as a matter of fact, share this community. We are already connected, but we can do more to make sure everyone experiences that connection and the many benefits the city has to offer to a similar, equitable degree. Our hope is that advocates and champions within each neighborhood will step forward and take the opportunity to come together as neighbors and with community partners to work for the types of changes that will enable each individual and every neighborhood to flourish. We hope that those who feel drawn to be a part of this effort will reach out and join in.

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APPENDIX A: SOURCES AND RESOURCES

The following is a list of resources used in examining the various subjects addressed in the Blueprint report. They are listed and categorized below according to the main subject of the respective resource, beginning with those that address the subject of neighborhood health rather broadly.

Neighborhood Health and Livability - General

Child in the City: Planning Communities for Children and their Families. Summary: A toolkit designed to help local government and partners support child and family-friendly development practices. Kristen N. Agnello, Plassurban, https://plassurban.com/, April, 2020.

A Complete Community is All Mixed Up (Blog). Summary: A complete community includes an optimal mix of people, activities, and transport modes in each neighborhood. Like a chef, planners need the right ingredients. Here is the recipe. Todd Litman, Planetizen, www.Planetizen.com, March 15, 2021.

The Embrace of Buildings: A Second Look at Walkable City Neighborhoods. Summary: This relatively short book is an invitation to readers to reconsider the many advantages of living and working in walkable neighborhoods. Lee Hardy. Calvin College Press. 2017. [Web-based resources related to the book can be found at https://calvin.edu/directory/publications/the-embrace-of-buildings]

Enabling Better Places: A Handbook for Improving Neighborhoods. Summary: AARP believes that communities should have safe and walkable streets, age-friendly housing and transportation options, access to needed services, and opportunities for residents of all ages to participate in community life. AARP and Congress for New Urbanism, 2020-21, www.AARP.org/Livable.

Neighborhood Necessities: Seven Functions that Only Effectively Organized Neighborhoods Can Provide. Summary: Institutions have taken over many of the functions once performed by local communities, neighbors and their collective groups and associations. The article presents seven unique functions best provided within localized communities. John McKnight, available at https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/Documents/2013_NeighborhoodNecessities.pdf. October 2013.

Strong Neighborhoods. Summary: A research brief focused on creating a social sustainability framework for strong neighborhoods developed by the City of Calgary, Community & Neighborhood Services. www.calgary.ca. February 2014.

Soul of the Community 2010: Why People Love Where They Live and Why It Matters, A National Perspective. Summary: National survey of 26 communities explores what emotionally attaches people to a community – what makes them want to put down roots and build a life there. John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Gallup. 2010. https://knightfoundation.org/sotc/.

Web Resources

8 80 Cities: https://www.880cities.org/
AARP Livable Communities: https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/
Build a Better Burb: https://buildabetterburb.org
Community Tool Box: https://ctb.ku.edu/en
Congress for the New Urbanism: https://www.cnu.org/who-we-are/charter-new-urbanism
Healthy Places by Design: https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/
Smart Growth America: https://smartgrowthamerica.org/

Access to Amenities within Neighborhoods

Why Health Care Systems are Funding or Building Grocery Stores. Summary: This article notes the public health advantages of having full-service grocery stores within under-resourced neighborhoods. https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/. Nov 17, 2020.

Active Transportation

10-Minute Walk – Improving Access to Parks and Green Spaces. Website encouraging the improvement of access to parks and green spaces such that all residents have access to a park within a 10-minute walk from home by 2050. https://10minutewalk.org.

Active Transportation Transforms America: The Case for Increased Public Investment in Walking and Biking Connectivity. Summary: In a variety of urban environments, there are opportunities to shift short trips from driving to walking and biking by creating safe active transportation networks, which in turn can create remarkable economic returns and improve the quality of lives. T. Bhattacharya, K. Mills, and T. Mulally. Rails to Trails Conservancy; www.railstotrails.org. October, 2019.

Aging Population Needs Walkable, Bikeable Cities. Summary: Seniors have the most to gain from pedestrian and cycling improvements, yet they often feel threatened by changes the provide alternatives to driving. K. Krankel McCullough, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for the New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, March 5, 2020.

Bicycling and Walking by Older Adults – Data about cyclists and pedestrians age 50-plus is both insightful and inadequate. Summary: Data shows continued growth in pedestrian and cycling activity among older adults. S. Mencher. AARP Livable Communities, www.AARP.org/livable.

Big Benefits from Small Modes. Summary: Active and motorized micro modes of transportation (walking, bicycling, e-scooters, e-bikes, etc.) can provide huge benefits, such as improved mobility for non-drivers, consumer savings and affordability, reduced road and parking congestion, improved fitness and public health, reduced noise and pollutant emissions. T. Litman. Planetizen, www.planetizen.com, 2/25/2021.

Cities Alive: Towards a Walking World. Summary: This extensive report makes the case for policies that encourage walking to be placed at the heart of all decisions about the built environment, with the underlying belief that walkable cities are better cities for everyone. ARUP, lead contact: Susan Claris. www.arup.com, June 2016.

Defining the 15-minute City. Summary: The "15-minute city" may be defined as an ideal geography where most human needs and many desires are located within a travel distance of 15 minutes. Andres Duany & Robert Steuteville, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, Feb. 8, 2021.

Does Walkability Matter? An Examination of Walkability's Impact on Housing Values, Foreclosures and Crime. Summary: Analysis of data shows a positive impact not only on neighborhood housing valuation but also on neighborhood crime and foreclosure. These results provide policy opportunities for planners and citizen groups to pursue strategies to encourage the development of more walkable and sustainable neighborhoods. J. Gilderbloom, W. Riggs, W. Mears. Cities, Vol 42, Part A, February 2015, Pages 13-24.

Eleven Reasons Why Public Transit, Bicycles and Our Feet are Moving Us Toward a Brighter Future. Summary: Broader transportation choices are linked to a bounty of social and economic benefits, including expanded economic development, revitalized urban and suburban communities, increased social equity, reduced costs, improved public health, decreased traffic congestion and improved environmental conditions. J. Walljasper. AARP Livable Communities, www.AARP.org/Livable.

Not So Fast! Slower Is Often Better. Summary: Faster travel has both benefits and costs. It increases the destinations that people can access in a given time period, but also increases many costs to users and communities, resulting in decreased overall affordability, health, equity, and accessibility. Todd Litman. Planetizen, Blog Post, www.planetizen.com, June 21, 2021.

We shape our cities, and then they shape us. Summary: A listing and explanation of ten social benefits of designing and building walkable cities and towns. R. Steuteville, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for the New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, Aug 12, 2021.

Connectedness, Engagement, and Inclusion

Connecting IRL: How the Built Environment Can Foster Social Health. Summary: A report providing research-informed guidelines on how to use space to foster connection, social health, and well-being. Erin Peave, www.hksinc.com.

The Cost of Loneliness Project. Summary: A website and project with the goal of sparking a commitment to, and investment in, combating loneliness and its devastating emotional, physical and economic consequences. www.thecostofloneliness.org.

Framework for Isolation in Adults Over 50. Summary: A detailed report summarizing research on social isolation and offering promising directions for future research. AARP Foundation, www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/, 2012.

How Local Leaders Can Create Socially Connected Communities. Summary: This report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation offers suggestions that can help reduce social isolation and improve health, well-being, and civic engagement. Risa Wilkerson, RWJF, www.rwjf.org, Nov, 2021.

Social Capital: Why We Need It and How We Can Create More of It. Summary: Social capital is the glue that makes a society work; this report presents data and makes the case for the importance of rebuilding social trust and norms that make for a strong society, including neighborhoods. Isabel V. Sawhill, Brookings Institution, July 2020.

Socially Connected Communities: Solutions for Social Isolation. Summary: People in the United States are experiencing soaring rates of social isolation, with profound impacts on health and well-being. This report outlines creative approaches to connect with one another while acknowledging inequitable access to information technology and other widening disparities. Healthy Places by Design (Lead author: Risa Wilkerson); https://healthyplacesbydesign.org, 2021.

Social networks as important as exercise, diet across the span or our lives. Summary: Research shows how social relationships reduce health risk in each stage of life. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Science Daily, Jan. 4, 2016.

Want community? Build Walkability. Summary: Personal account of how walkability goes a long way toward facilitating connectedness and sense of community. Sarah Kobos, Strong Towns, www.strongtowns.org/journal, February 23, 2016.

Want to build a strong town? Make it work for people with disabilities. Summary: An accessible built environment that works for a person with a disability works for all and is a wise investment. Steve Wright, Strong Towns, www.strongtowns.org/journal, May 7, 2021.

Crime Prevention and Public Safety

Primer in Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design – What is CPTED? Summary: Explains the strategy aimed at reducing the incidence of crime and creating safer neighborhoods through enhanced social cohesion, connectivity, and building community. The International CPTED Association. www.cpted.net.

Want to Reduce Violence? Invest in Place. Summary: A growing body of evidence demonstrates the promise off micro-level place-based interventions in significantly decreasing violence within neighborhoods. H. Love, The Brookings Institution; www.brookings.edu/research/, November 16, 2021.

Demographic and Survey Data

https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/frost.center.for.data.and.research/viz/CityofHolland20201_11/Story1 -- 2020 City of Holland Resident Survey results.

www.census.data.gov – access to decennial census data and data gathered via the American Community Survey.

Economic Vitality and Opportunity

Ten Economic Benefits of Walkable Places. Summary: Cities that are built to a human-scale offer a number of economic advantages. R. Steuteville, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for the New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, Aug 18, 2021.

Centering Neighborhood Priorities for Economic Inclusion: Early Outcomes from Five Cities. Summary: A strategy of community-centered economic inclusion with a focus on disinvested neighborhoods is effective at achieving both hyper-local as well as regional economic recovery and growth. H. Love and T. Garcia, The Brookings Institution, www.brookings.edu/research/, April, 2022.

Health Equity

Inclusive Health Places: A Guide to Inclusion and Health in Public Spaces. Summary: A research-based framework and set of guiding principles for evaluating and creating public spaces that support health equity. Gehl Institute. https://gehlpeople.com/shopfront/inclusive-healthy-places/. June 2018.

Housing

Housing and Transportation Affordability Index (Website). Summary: Provides a comprehensive view of affordability that includes both the cost of housing and the cost of transportation at the neighborhood level; the index is part of a broader effort to explore urban sustainability through local efficiency. Center for Neighborhood Technology. https://HTAindex.cnt.org.

The Connectedness of Our Housing Ecosystem. Summary: Analysis the demonstrates that changes to the built environment, such as a new apartment complex, opening a grocery store, and so forth, set off an intricate web of causes and effects that ripple down the line. Planners need to understand the larger ecosystem in order to achieve a healthy, self-sustaining equilibrium. Daniel Herriges. Strong Towns, www.strongtowns.org/journal, April 24, 2019.

Housing and Livable Neighborhoods. Summary: A summary of a collaborative study focusing on the housing needs of older adults which found that the most livable neighborhoods offer the most diverse set of housing options, including multifamily and rental opportunities as well as single-family and owner-occupied homes. J. Molinsky and W. Airgood-Obrycki. Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University. www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog, February 10, 2021.

Happy Homes: A toolkit for building sociability through multi-family housing design. Website providing a visual toolkit to identify principles, strategies and actions to nurture social connections and trust, and boost social wellbeing in multi-family housing and urban environments. https://thehappycity.com/resources/happy-homes/.

Parks and Greenspace

Green Health: A Tree-filled Street Can Positively Influence Depression, Study Finds. Summary: The adverse effects of treeless neighborhoods are well-known and many. In addition to heat-related illnesses, residents who lack tree cover consume more energy to stay cool, endure poorer air quality and report diminished mental health. Ashley Stimpson, The Guardian, www.theguardian.com, March 12, 2021.

The Magic of Tree-Lines Streets. Summary: This article catalogues the many benefits of street trees, including reducing stormwater runoff, improving air quality, improving pedestrian and driver safety, and reducing heat island effects. Sarah Kobos. Strong Towns, www.strongtowns.org/journal, June 27, 2016.

More Parks, Longer Lives. Summary: Urban parks and green spaces protect our health by providing opportunities for physical activity, time in nature, social connection, and respite. Parks also filter air, remove pollution, buffer noise, cool temperatures, filter stormwater and replenish groundwater. But access to parks and green spaces is starkly unequal across lines of race and class. National Recreation and Park Assoc., www.NRPA.org.

The Powerful Virtuous Cycles of Street Trees. Summary: Street trees affect city residents in multiple ways, include climate impact mitigation, beautification, improved safety, increased real estate value, crime reduction, improved wellness, etc. S. Mouzon, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for the New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, August 31, 2020

Research finds neighborhood green space tied to lower health care costs. Summary: Research study finds strong association between access to green space and decreased health care costs. S. K. Van Den Eeden, et. al., Clemson News; College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences; https://news.clemson.edu, March 18, 2022.

Safe Routes to Parks: Action Framework. Summary: Offers evidence- and practice-based guidance on best practices for ensuring safe and equitable access to parks. National Recreation and Parks Association. www.nrpa.org. 2016.

Street Trees: A wonder of climate adaptation. Summary: Increasing the number of street trees is a cost-effective strategy that offers multiple health, safety and economic benefits to cities and their inhabitants. R. Steuteville, Public Square, A CNU Journal; Congress for the New Urbanism; www.CNU.org/publicsquare, October 19, 2021.

The Toolkit for Health, Arts, Parks & Equity. Summary: This toolkit proposes a strategy to address the structures, institutions, and the determinants that shape health equity, with a focus on parks and open spaces – as places for community building – and arts and culture – as conduits for community building. Matthew Clark and Geneva Vest. The Trust for Public Land and the National Association of County and City Health Officials, 2020

Why We Need Park Equity. Summary: Parks, trails, community gardens, and other urban green spaces serve as fundamental building blocks to create healthy, vibrant communities, yet some demographic groups, such as low-income households and communities of

color experience less access to such spaces. Elva Yanez, Prevention Institute, www.preventioninstitute.org/blog/why-we-need-park-equity. February 28, 2019.

Placemaking

Furnishing Your Public Spaces. Summary: This webpage provides links to resources pertaining to making public spaces welcoming and usable, such as seating, food, bus shelters, lighting, and water features. Project for Public Spaces. www.pps.org/article/furnishing-your-pulbic-spaces. Jan. 1, 2009.

The Importance of Place. Summary: A discussion of the inevitability of change and the need to take care to preserve community character and identity. Ed McMahon. Main Street America. www.mainstreet.org/blogs. January 5, 2022.

Places in the Making: How placemaking builds spaces and communities. Summary: An examination of ten placemaking initiatives around the country, exploring successful approaches and methods, each with a common theme of creating positive change for people and communities through the transformation of a physical space. Susan Silberberg, et. al. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Dept. of Urban Studies and Planning. www.dusp.mit.edu. 2013.

Sitwalls, Ledges & Steps. Summary: A how-to guide on how to create seating in public spaces where people will want to sit. Project for Public Spaces. www.pps.org/article/sitwalls. Dec. 31, 2008.

The Virtuous Cycle of Placemaking. Summary: By understanding the process of placemaking, we can create meaningful physical spaces that help build community. Scott A Sjolander. PennState Extension. https://extension.psu.edu. July 17, 2020.

Understanding Child-friendly Urban Design. Summary: Installations and programming that promote children and families' learning through play in the public realm can be an effective tool to enhance skill development and child-caregiver interaction in ways that build social and mental capital. H. S. Vadani, et.al. The Brookings Institution, www.brookings.edu/research/, October 19, 2021.

Theories of Neighborhood Change

Building Community Wellbeing: A Theory of Change. Summary: Provides a theory to explain how change can happen in communities to improve wellbeing. Jane South, et. al. What Works Wellbeing. https://whatworkswellbeing.org. May 2017.

Traffic Safety

Recommendations of the Safe System Consortium. Summary: Guidebook on the Safe System approach to traffic safety, with the goal of improving the value of roads, enhancing their benefits to mobility, and reducing their negative consequences through an equitable approach. Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Center for Injury Research and Policy. www.jhsph.edu/researchbsph, 2021.

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APPENDIX B: CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

City of Holland / Neighborhood Improvement Committee

For more information, contact the Community Development Coordinator at 616-355-3139, or explore further via the Neighborhood Improvement Committee webpage: https://www.cityofholland.com/345/Neighborhood-Improvement-Committee

Neighborhood Connection Organizations (current as of December 2022)

- **3sixty** (Eastcore Neighborhood / 12th Street to 24th Street; River/State Street to Lincoln Avenue)
  https://www.3-sixty.org/

- **Heights of Hope** (Stratford Way/Abbey Court Neighborhood)
  https://www.heightsofhope.org/

- **Washington School Neighbors** (Neighborhood around the former Washington School at 11th Street and Maple Avenue, west of River Avenue)
  https://washingtonschoolneighbors.com/

- **West of Washington** (Neighborhood generally from 32nd Street to 48th Street west of Washington Avenue)
  Email: info@greatlakesurban.com

- **Westcore Neighbors** (Westcore Neighborhood / 14th Street to 24th Street; River Avenue to Ottawa Avenue)
  http://westcoreneighbors.org/
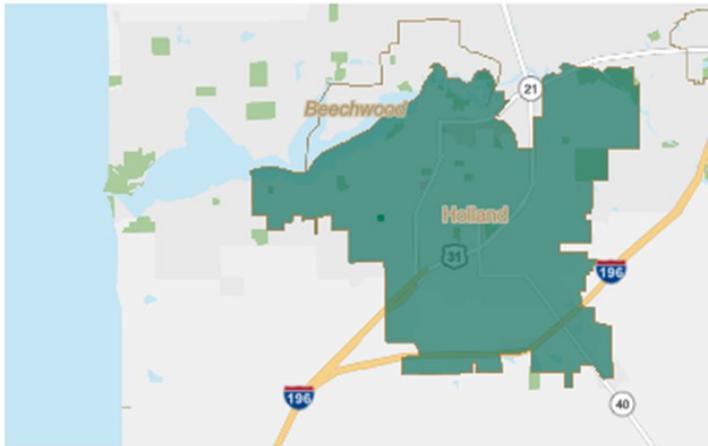
In Development

As this document is being completed, a sixth neighborhood is organizing with help from 3sixty.
- **Montello Park Neighbors** (16th Street / South Shore Drive to 32nd Street; Ottawa Avenue to Graafschap Road)

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APPENDIX C: HOLLAND, MI - DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Holland, MI - Demographic Profile

Total Population
34,378

Total Households
12,027

Total Housing Units
13,512

Median Household Income
$57,002

Without Health Care Coverage
6.0%

Population by Age Range

Under 5 years	5.7 %
Under 18 years	20.8 %
18 years and over	79.2 %
65 years and over	16.1 %

Poverty by Age

Under 18 years	11.0 %
18 to 64 years	11.9 %
65 years and over	5.1 %

Language Spoken at Home

English only	85.3 %
Spanish	12.6 %
Other Indo-European lang	0.6 %
Asian and Pacific Isl lang	1.2 %

Disabled Population 11.7 %

Types of Disabilities

Ambulatory difficulty	5.7 %
Cognitive difficulty	5.1 %
Independent living difficulty	4.3 %
Hearing difficulty	3.4 %
Vision difficulty	2.1 %

Population by Race

White alone	71.2 %
Black or African Am alone	4.2 %
Am Indian or Alaskan Native alone	0.8 %
Asian alone	2.8 %
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Isl alone	0.1 %
Some other race alone	9.4 %
Population of two or more races	11.6 %

Population by Ethnicity

Hispanic or Latinx	23.4 %
Not Hispanic or Latinx	76.6 %

Educational Attainment (25 yrs and Older)

High school or equivalent degree	29.0 %
Some college, no degree	22.8 %
Associate's degree	7.4 %
Bachelor's degree	17.8 %
Graduate or professional degree	14.7 %

Housing Unit Occupancy

Occupied (owner or renter)	94.3 %
Vacant	5.7 %

Occupied Housing Units by Type

Owner-occupied	64.7 %
Renter-occupied	35.4 %

Households by Type

Married-couple family	44.4 %
Cohabitating couple household	4.9 %
Male householder, no spouse/partner	19.6 %
Male householder living alone	(14.0 %)
Female householder, no spouse/partner	30.3 %
Female householder living alone	(20.0 %)

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Census, and 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Holland, MI - Demographic Profile, Area Comparisons
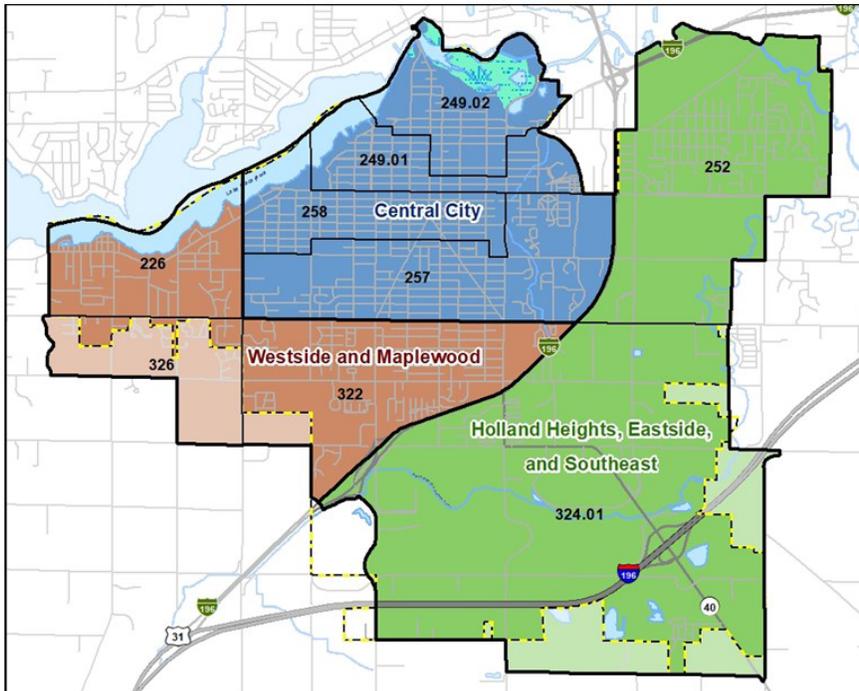
	HOLLAND CITY	WESTSIDE & MAPLE-WOOD	CENTRAL CITY	HOLLAND HEIGHTS, EASTSIDE & SOUTH-EAST
Total Population	34,378	8,826	18,364	7,286
Total Housing Units	13,117	4,066	6,681	3,078
Occupancy Rate	93.2%	89.4%	93.9%	96.2%
Vacancy Rate	6.8%	10.6%	6.1%	3.8%
Owner-occupied	64.6%	79.7%	63.4%	50.7%
Renter-occupied	35.4%	20.3%	36.6%	49.3%
Housing Units Built 1959 or earlier	48.4%	32.1%	67.4%	20.3%
Overall Poverty Rate	10.6%	7.2%	13.7%	7.4%
Under 18 Years	11.0%	12.4%	13.2%	5.1%
18 to 64 Years	11.9%	6.5%	17.0%	7.6%
65 Years and Older	5.1%	3.4%	3.8%	10.8%
Gross Rent is 30% of Total Income or Greater	44.4%	51.8%	51.2%	30.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates

CITY OF HOLLAND
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