

Grant applications for community preservation initiatives now open in Holyoke

Updated: Sep. 02, 2024, [Story source: MassLive.com](#)

The Holyoke Community Preservation Act Committee awarded \$75,000 to aid in the restoration of the stained-glass windows at Holyoke City Hall. (Steven E. Nanton photo) Steven E. Nanton



- [Aprell May Munford | AMunford@repub.com](mailto:AMunford@repub.com)

HOLYOKE — The Community Preservation Act Committee is now accepting eligibility applications for historic preservation, recreation, open space and community housing initiatives in the city.

The Holyoke Community Preservation Act Committee recently announced the opening of its 2025 grant cycle. Applications must be received from Aug. 15 to Sept. 15.

Funding for the Community Preservation Act comes from a surcharge on local property tax bills and a yearly matching contribution from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund, which is allocated in November to cities and towns that have implemented the act.

The Holyoke CPA has reported over \$4.2 million of matched and leveraged state, federal and foundation grant funding to preserve Holyoke's character and improve quality of life — fulfilling the purpose of the act.

Projects throughout the city have been funded with CPA dollars. These include the new Miracle League Playground, the restoration of the stained-glass windows at City Hall, Lady Liberty and the Korean Conflict Memorial at Veterans Park, among others.

Shrinking the surcharge?

The grant cycle runs parallel to a proposal to [reduce the surcharge](#) from 1.5% to 1%, which Holyoke voters will decide on Nov. 5, Election Day.

The [discussion](#) surrounding the CPA surcharge has persisted for years, but the topic of surcharge reduction gained traction among Holyoke city councilors in [the past year](#). In addition to the weight of the surcharge on taxpayers, debate often centered on the required number of votes to bring it before the electorate and the timing of its inclusion on the ballot.

The Lady Liberty statue in Holyoke's Veterans Memorial Park has been restored to her bronze glory. (Robert Peirent / City of Holyoke, File)



In October 2023, an initial vote was cast to include the surcharge reduction on the local election ballot.

Mayor Joshua Garcia of Holyoke vetoed the City Council's order, contending that postponing the vote until the November presidential election would yield a higher voter turnout, thus more accurately representing residents' opinions on the matter.

Despite attempts by some city councilors to overturn the mayor's veto, a Superior Court judge sided with Garcia.

Some city councilors argue that the funding has enhanced residents' quality of life, while others say that the property tax surcharge is straining residents' finances.

City Councilor and CPA Committee Chair Megan Magrath-Smith has previously stated that, while a reduction would save the average homeowner about \$13.84 annually, it would significantly affect CPA-funded projects.

City Councilor Linda Vacon previously told The Republican since the CPA's adoption in 2016, there has been a marked rise in property values and taxes, as well as in expenses, such as water, sewer, monthly rent, and the prices of food and gasoline.

The city provides an exemption for the first \$100,000 of the value of residential or commercial properties and requires quarterly payments. Additional exemptions are available for low-income households and senior citizens.

The city assessor's office reports that the average home valuation in Holyoke is about \$246,060.

The CPA was established by the state in 2000.