



NEW BEDFORD

COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT
And Downtown New Bedford Beacon Public Art Project Criteria

Final Report 2023

Prepared By Favermann Design

Prepared for the Department of Housing
and Community Development (DHCD)



Painting at the New Bedford Whaling Museum

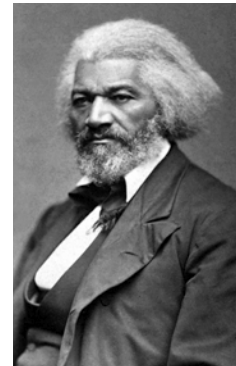
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

"In New Bedford, fathers, they say, give whales for dowers to their daughters, and portion off their nieces with a few porpoises a-piece. You must go to New Bedford to see a brilliant wedding; for, they say, they have reservoirs of oil in every house, and every night recklessly burn their lengths in spermaceti candles."
Chapter 6, *Moby Dick* (1851) by Herman Melville



New Bedford is a city of major historic legacies and geographical character. It has a civic personality intertwined with maritime America. From its prehistory to the present, the City of New Bedford has literally been connected to the sea. As a strategic location of the novel, Hermann Melville's characters in *Moby Dick* (1851) describe its early 19th Century cobblestone streets, fices, and diverse inhabitants in admiring and even awe-inspired terms.

Not expecting its grandeur and elegance, the former slave and Abolitionist Frederick Douglas was impressed by its cleanliness and beauty. Douglas lived there from 1838 until 1841. The city's history can be appreciated as well today.



Frederick Douglas

In the 17th Century, early English colonists "bought" the land on which New Bedford would later be built from the Wampanoag indigenous people in 1652, and the original colonial settlement that would later become the city was founded by English Quakers in the late 17th century. The town of New Bedford was officially incorporated in 1787. From a major fishing port when Cod was King to a whaling port supplying the United States with oil for lighting to a center of scallop fishing

to a potential wind farm center, the City of New Bedford has been a resilient port evolving its commerce and trade on the sea.

The original colonial settlement that would later become the city was founded by English Quakers in the late 17th century. This early Quaker influence was instrumental in the American antislavery movement, and the city became an important stop on the Underground Railroad. The town of New Bedford itself was officially incorporated in 1787.

During the first half of the 19th century, New Bedford was one of the world's most important whaling



19th century map of New Bedford



ports. At its economic height, New Bedford was the wealthiest city in North America per capita. A significant abolitionism center, the city attracted many freed or escaped African American slaves. From 1876 to 1900, New Bedford served as the initial home port for the Revenue Cutter School of Instruction, the predecessor to the United States Coast Guard Academy.

Today, New Bedford had a population of 102,000, making it the Massachusetts's ninth-largest city. The city has a high concentration of Portuguese Americans and descendants of former Azorean islanders. For over two centuries, New Bedford has been known for its fishing

fleet and its vital seafood processing industry. As the whaling industry dissipated, New Bedford became a textile producing town with many mills and warehouses being constructed in the 19th Century. As of 2019, it generated the highest annual value of any fishing port in the United States. In recent years, the port's fishing fleet has focused on scallops and is the largest market for the bivalves in America. A popular tourist magnet for the city is the New Bedford Whaling Museum located in the New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park.

Whaling dominated New Bedford's economy for much of the 19th century, and many families of the city were involved with it as crew, officers, and owners of ships. The Quakers remained prominent and influential in New Bedford throughout the whaling era. They brought religious values into their business models, promoting stability as well as prosperity, investing in infrastructure projects such as rail, and employing without discrimination. Integrating New Bedford into the urban northeastern economy, they established solid social and economic relationships with Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

New Bedford Quakers applied their principles of egalitarianism and community building in businesses and on the boats, at the docks, at factories, or in shops—British, indigenous peoples, British, Irish, Azorean, Cape Verdean, West African and others all took part in the city's commerce. New Bedford also became one of the first centers of abolitionism in the US. It was a strategic stop on stop on the Underground Railroad. Many people were attracted by New Bedford's progressive and relatively open-minded atmosphere.

The world whaling industry went into decline after the 1859 discovery of petroleum in Pennsylvania. Each decade following saw a gradual decrease in whaling work, activity, and revenue. During the Civil War, the Confederacy attacked the Yankee whaling industry to try to sabotage and disrupt its economy. Additionally, the US federal government bought several inactive whalers to try to blockade southern ports. Along with the poor business and lower whale populations, these things dealt a potent blow to a failing industry.

During this decline, greater New Bedford's economy became more dependent on the textile industry. It began to eclipse the whaling industry in the late 19th century. The mills grew and expanded constantly, eventually comprising multiple sites along the Acushnet River. In 1875 the



Whale weathervane



Mills



Fishing Fleet

Wamsutta Mills processed bales of cotton into 20 million yards of cloth, which had a wholesale value comparable to that of the entire whaling catch. The Wamsutta Mills was the world's largest weaving plant until 1892.

The textile mills redefined wealth in New Bedford and gave rise to a prosperity greater than that of the whaling industry. However, in the 1920s, local employers came under competitive pressure from new textile factories in the low-wage South. Various methods were attempted to keep the textile industry flourishing.

Until 1800, New Bedford and its surrounding communities were, by and large, populated by Protestants of English, Scottish, Welsh, and Dutch origin. During the first half of the 19th century many Irish people came to Massachusetts. In 1818, large group of Irish immigrants established the St. Mary's Church. In the following decades, immigrants from Portugal and its Atlantic colonial possessions of Cape Verde, the Azores and Madeira started to settle in and around New Bedford having been attracted by whaling industry jobs. Polish immigrants arrived in the late 19th Century. Also, several Jewish families, came in the late 19th century, were active in the whaling industry, selling provisions and outfitting ships. Leading up to WWI, they were joined by a sizable eastern-European Jewish community in New Bedford. Numbers of Caribbean and Asian residents have also joined the New Bedford population and business community. Today, ethnicity is part of the cultural celebration of the city.

In recent decades, fishing and manufacturing have continued to be two of the largest businesses components in the area, and healthcare has become a major employer as well. Titleist (golf clubs, balls, apparel, manufacturing), and Riverside Manufacturing (apparel manufacturing) are two of the largest manufacturers.

Historically, the arts have flourished in New Bedford in tandem to the wealth of the community. During the 19th Century, local leaders in the whaling industry and the following textile industry were serious patrons of the arts. Many prominent visual artists and entertainers made their home in New Bedford as well. In the 19th century, visual artists like William Bradford, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Clifford Ashley, and Albert Bierstadt grew up in the city or started their careers in New Bedford.

Over the last several decades, there has been the development and encouragement of artists and arts organizations in New Bedford. Following the 1970s and 80s, a vibrant arts scene eventually creatively replaced an often deserted downtown. This has been underscored by a critical mass of artists, performers, galleries, and cultural institutions that flourish in New Bedford and have been the catalyst for the ambience of a vibrant coastal cultural center.



Mural Depicting City's History



A quarter of a century ago, a pioneering artistic effort was carried out and sustained by the cultural engine of AHA! (Art, History and Architecture), a nonprofit organization that fosters monthly community cultural events and activities--festivals, exhibits, workshops, etc. Unused mills became artist studios, an abundance of New Bedford historical districts was developed, and galleries as well as shared workspaces were implemented. Adding to the creative vitality, by their students, faculty, and energy, the University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth College of Visual and Performing Arts

program was located in Downtown New Bedford from 2001 until 2023. Today, arts and culture are an intrinsic, wonderful, and bonding part of the City of New Bedford.

In the last decade, the New Bedford Community has felt that its proximity to Massachusetts' southern coastline will allow it to become a center for the growing wind energy market. However, there are controversial aspects to this endeavor, and it has become a slowly evolving process due to political will, scientific research, government oversight, and financial commitments.

All in all, New Bedford is a model of a resilient city that strategically evolves to meet the needs of the changing times.

With all this as preamble, the City of New Bedford was awarded a highly competitive Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) grant to develop a community branding and an accessible wayfinding program as well as a prominent artistic focal point of a downtown "Beacon." This report will layout the process and results of this grant.

THE PROCESS

Working with the City of New Bedford's Office of City Planning staff, Favermann Design, the MDI Consultant to develop a Scope of Services to ascertain tasks and obtainable goals. The first task was to appoint an Advisory Committee to collaborate to develop all necessary project pieces. The members of the Advisory Committee included:

Lawrence Jenkins, Dean, UMass Dartmouth College of Visual and Performing Arts

Alanna Jaworski, Associate, Union Architects

Alex Jardin, Staff Planner, City of New Bedford; practicing artist

Amy Desrosiers, Marketing Manager, City of New Bedford Tourism and Marketing

Ashley Payne, Director, City of New Bedford Tourism and Marketing

Elissa Paquette, Downtown business owner

Janine da Silva, Program Manager, Visitor Experience and Resource Stewardship, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

Jennifer Smith, Superintendent, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park

Keri Cox, Business owner

Margo Saulnier, Director, Creative Strategies and art-Based Initiatives, New Bedford Economic Development Council

Paul Pawloski, Architect, Urban Planner

Penny Pimentel, Senior Director of marketing and Communication, Zeiterion Theatre

Dena Haden, Director, Co-Creative center, practicing artist

Anne Louro, Assistant Planning Director (ex officio)



Downtown

Phase I: Community Branding and Wayfinding

From the Scope of Services, a calendar of strategic meetings was developed spaced out every three weeks or so. As there were two specific tasks to focus on, meetings were held to specifically discuss and review each one of the projects separately. The first project dealt with was the community branding and wayfinding design, approach, and organization structure.

In order to have all members of the Advisory Committee to start on the same "page," Favermann Design presented a series of slide presentations. The first presentation looked at different approaches to community branding from around the world. The second one looked at several specific community branding and wayfinding examples from towns and cities from around the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The third meeting was an interactive workshop that involved the Advisory Committee reviewing New Bedford's physical, historical, and even spiritual essence. This was called the Ideation Workshop. A series of questions were asked and responded to by the Advisory Committee. The answers were used by the consultant staff to establish design direction and thematic approaches to both community branding as well as strategic wayfinding and signage elements.

The Ideation Exercise asked the following questions:

Please Describe New Bedford in One Word

Vibrant	Neighborhoods
Whales	Innovative
Industrial	Light
Sanctuary	Seafood
Transportation	Interwoven
Lighthouse	Oceans
Sustainability	Resiliency
Harbor	Seagulls
Fish	Harpoon
Ethnicity	Progressive
Wind	Refuge
Energy	Oil
Glass	Cobblestone
Waterfront	Copper
Authentic	Historic
Complicated	Gritty
Seaport	Fishermen
Global	Creative
Cultural	Diverse
Mills	Textiles

Please Describe New Bedford in Two Words

Creative Community
Working Class
Living History
Vertical Integration
Fishing Boats
Past Future
Constantly Evolving
Community Pride
Compellingly historic
Authentic Seaport
Historic Preservation
Timely Changing

Please Describe New Bedford in Three or More Words

(This exercise could lead to a slogan or tagline.)

Connected to the Sea
Harboring Culture
Always Something to Do
Weaving the Past into the Future
Powered by the People
So Close to Everything
A Great Place to Be
A Place to Call Home
On the Verge
Culturally Connected
A Creative Beacon

What are New Bedford's Symbols, Monuments, and Icons?

Hurricane Gate	Codfish
Harbor	Triple Decker
Windmill	Beaches
Ship Mast	Mills
Seagulls	Fort
Whale's Tail	Lighthouse
Scallop Shell	Cobblestones
Wave	Steeples
Fishing Vessels	Porches
St. Anthony	Fireman's Tower
Schooners	Herman Melville
Frederick Douglas	Man with Harpoon
Haskell Public Gardens	(Lewis Temple)
Whaling Museum (Cupola)	

What are New Bedford's Colors?

Blues
Greens
All the Colors of the Rainbow
Brick Red
Burnt Sienna

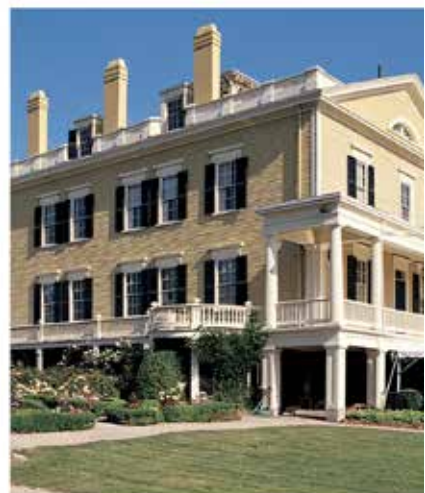
How Do You Imagine New Bedford in the Future?

Inhabited by More People
More Planned Artist Housing
Better Public Transportation
Innovative Hub
Better Food Access
A More Welcoming Environment
Better Community Integration
Climate Change Leadership
Stronger Community Input

From these responses, the consultant developed a series of "brand options" to present to the Advisory Committee at a follow-up workshop. Various colors, styles, and visual approaches were used to demonstrate options. The Advisory Committee discussed the series of design options that included illustrated views of sailing ships (Whalers), contemporary fishing vessels, whale symbolism, scallop shells, light houses with city views as backgrounds, wind turbines, and abstracted waves. The Advisory members recommended that simple approaches seemed best. Also, a slogan or tagline would somehow limit the "brand" use.

Other design features were also presented. These included sign bands that enriched the narrative of the sign elements. There were many options suggested including cutouts of sailing ships, fishing boats, codfish, scallop shells, whales, wind turbines as well as several others. The Advisory Group felt these "sign bands" set at the bottom of major or gateway signs would be more appropriately placed in neighborhood settings to give neighborhoods distinctive visibility. Artwings or kinetic sculptures in the form of silhouettes that are connected to light posts were also presented. These were also recommended for neighborhood placement.

Thematic benches including codfish and other nautical forms were also suggested. These concepts were recommended to be considered in later phases of the project's implementation.



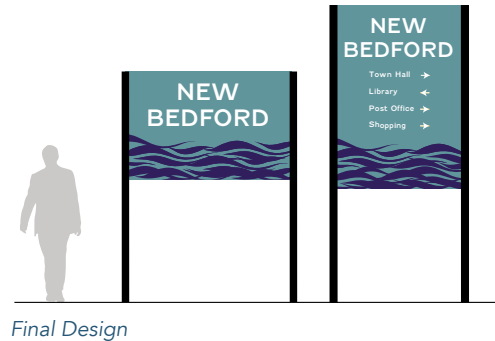
Historic New Bedford Houses

THE FINAL DESIGN

After much conversation and back and forth, the Advisory Group's final design choice was the blue/green background image with the abstracted waves at the bottom. The consensus was that this was an elegant representation of the notion of New Bedford's legacy of connection to the sea.

Based on the final design, a Family of Elements was created to illustrate a flexible hierarchy of signs. To best use these sign elements, the city planning staff and the Advisory Committee members were asked to locate each sign on maps. Favermann Design refined the placement map to act as guidelines for program and systematic implementation. Additionally, a specification package was also developed for use by city agencies, vendors, fabricators and installers.

The recommended design was presented to and approved for implementation by New Bedford Mayor Jon Mitchell's administration. The city's planning staff is presently following up with other city departments to work toward funding and implementation of the overall program.



Phase II: "The Beacon Project" for Downtown New Bedford



Concurrent to the branding and wayfinding design study, the consultants developed an approach to a long-term goal first addressed by the City of New Bedford in 2015. It was for an artistic "Beacon" to connect the historic downtown areas visually and thematically to the more contemporary downtown blocks.

Over time, several criteria had been developed for this strategic project. These included questions to be answered and strategies to be followed:

1. The "Beacon" was to be located at the intersection of Purchase Street and Union Street.
2. There was a desire that it would act as a focal point related to light and compelling motion.
3. And several questions needed to be answered about "The Beacon" itself
 - A. What was it to be exactly?
 - B. How large should it be?
 - C. Should its physical structure be a basic shape (triangle, square, oval, etc.) or a recognizable form (fish-shape, mill, or propeller, etc.)?
 - D. What and how large should radiating elements be, or are they just lights?
 4. The thought was that additional elements could radiate to and from it along Downtown New Bedford Downtown streets.
 5. If possible, the "Beacon" should allow artistic changeability and flexibility. This notion led to other technical and perceptual questions:
 - A. How does it work?
 - B. A structure that allows visual movement and change
 - C. A piece that allows various artists to make personal creative expressions

D. Remote control of visual input from City Hall

E. Project to be part of the city's electrical grid (Eversource)

6. Cost-effective apparatus and digital applications necessitating budget estimates?

7. Artwork was to be the results of an Artist competition

8. A consideration of a program embracing that artwork will change every 3, 6 or 12 months?

9. Workshops for visual artists and students to be taught as workshops about digital art at UMass Dartmouth's The College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA)

A. Animation & Game Arts

B. Film and Media Studies

10. How can it be viewable both during the day and at night?

11. Recognition that the best artwork would be ones that have or suggest movement.

12. Consideration was given to the fact that artwork could be abstract, figurative, animation, lights, lasers, etc.

To discuss these things and to literally "wrestle" with the overall concept, two focused meetings were held with the Advisory Committee. A slide presentation spoke to the general nature of this type of digital, light artwork and the various approaches to address artistic and formal design solutions.

Design Solution Approaches to the Beacon:

Major Premise: This BEACON of Light will become a focal point of emanating light and illumination as well as a compelling interactive experience that draws visitors and locals alike.

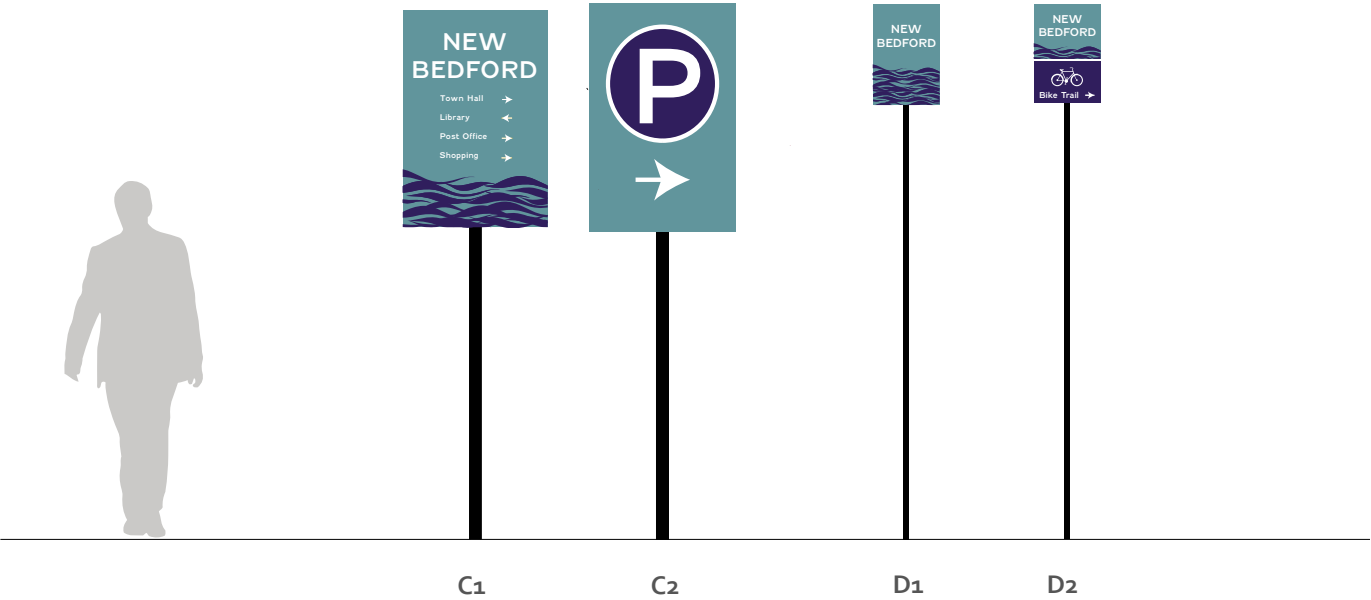
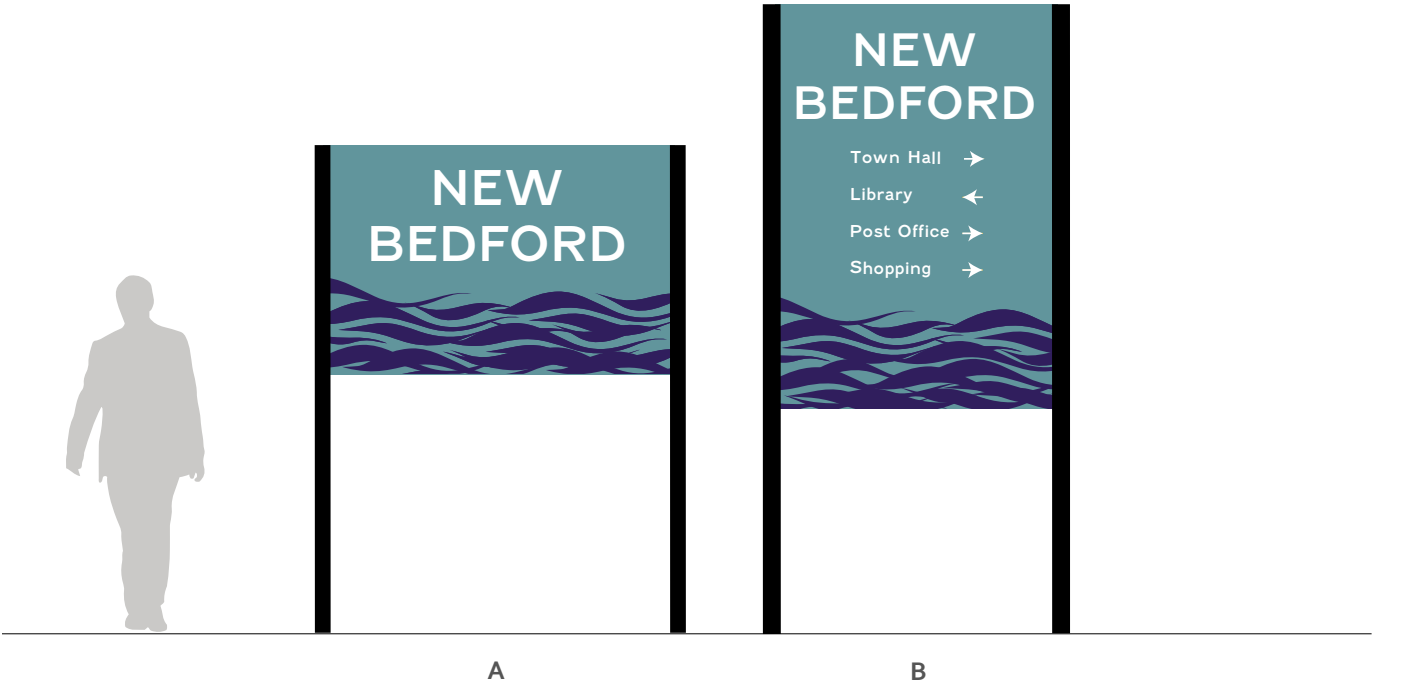
This iconic light installation, located in Downtown New Bedford, has the potential to transform this urban gateway with compelling moments of beauty and intrigue.

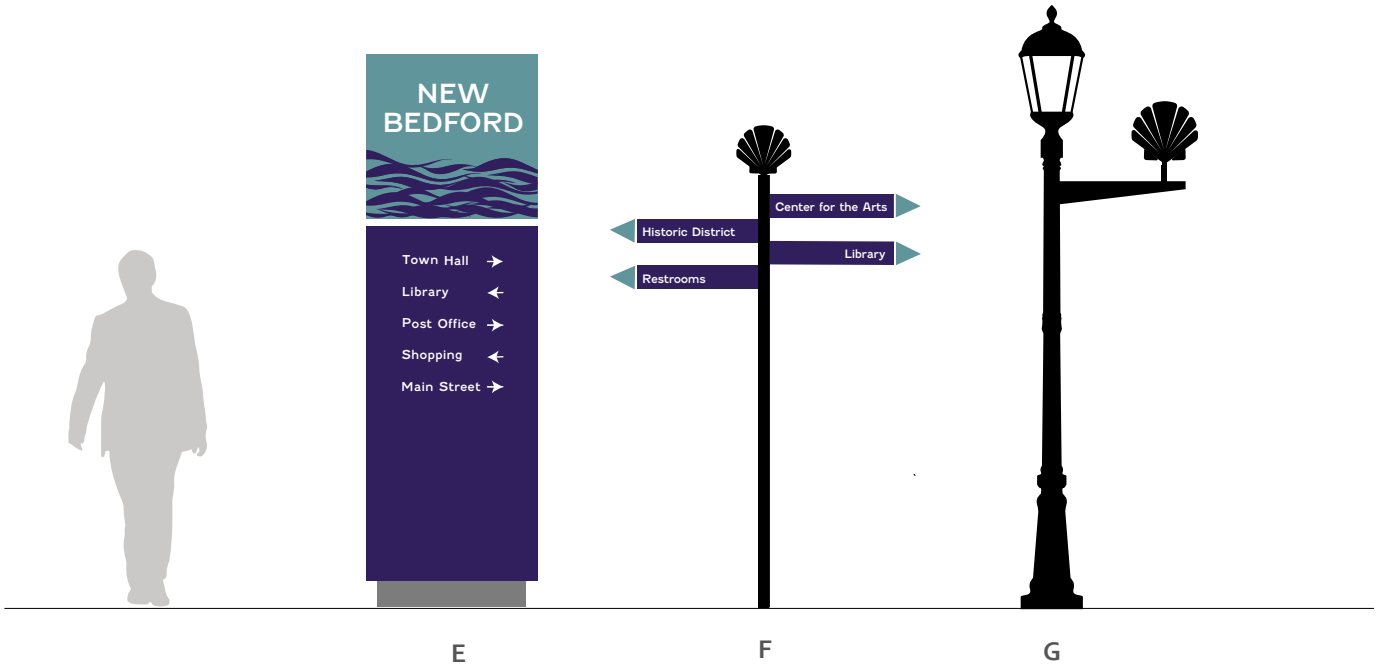
Allowing for a wonderful variety of visual expressions as well as programmable Installation, artistic concepts could include:

1. Gateway Activations
2. Ocean Themed
3. Lightweight Holiday Lighting
4. Interactive Playscapes
5. Projection Mapping on Buildings
6. Digital Media and Activated Light Facades
7. Interactive Light

Considering all the various components of this strategic project, Favermann Design reached out to international artists with major experience with similar creative projects to get a proper perspective on how to approach The Beacon effort. Included in the conversations were development of budget estimates, technologies, and background knowledge needed. This collaboration led to a visual presentation to the Advisory Committee and expression by its members of concerns and conditions to implement the program. With give and take with the city's planning staff, a request for qualifications or RFQ was created and refined by Favermann Design. The final RFQ draft is attached to the end of this report.

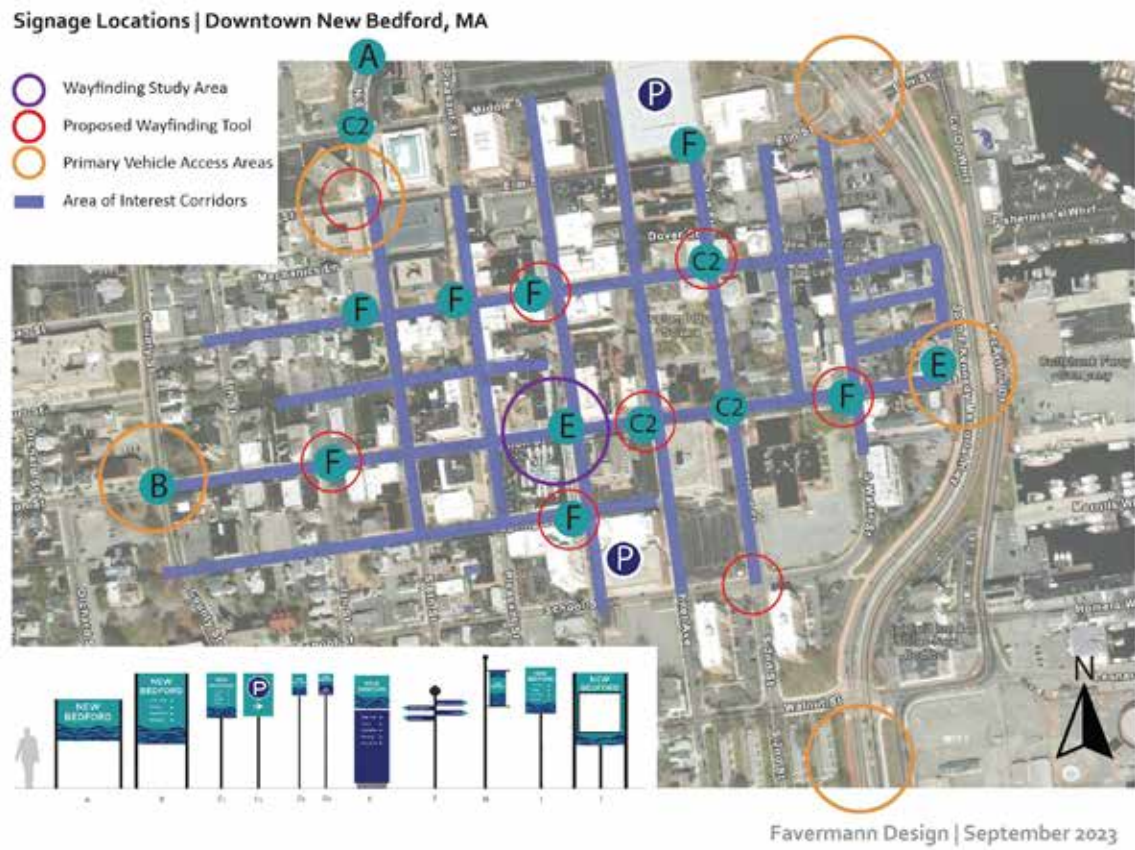
NEW BEDFORD
FAMILY OF ELEMENTS



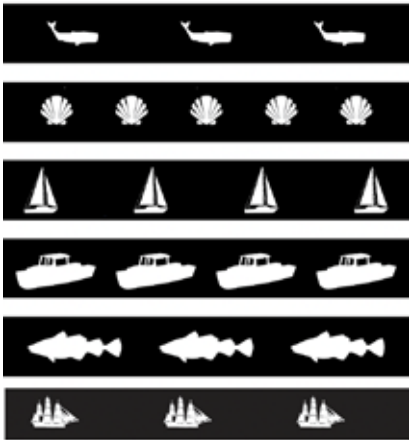


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Signage Location for Downtown New Bedford



Proposed Bands





Downtown New Bedford

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) of Artists or Artist-Led Teams For the “Downtown New Bedford Beacon” Public Art Project

Project Description

The City of New Bedford and the Public Arts Commission are seeking qualified artists or artist-led teams to create an original art installation that will become a visual magnet to draw visitors and locals to the area. It must be suitable for all weather outdoor public space for a long term temporary installation that will enhance the experience of downtown New Bedford and become a placemaking feature of the neighborhood. Located at the intersection of Purchase Street and Union Street, this installation will act as a gateway “beacon” by enhancing the experience for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic with light, color, and subtle motion. The installation will be designed for both day and night viewing, and should be illuminated or have illuminated components. The form can be abstract or figurative, kinetic or fixed. The artwork could be suspended overhead or ground supported. Elements of the installation could radiate outward from along adjacent sidewalks or extend down adjacent streets. Any lighting control or animation should be designed to be accessed and managed remotely via a portal accessible by the city.

This is intended to be the first of a series of artworks and creative interventions. The subsequent activations will rely on the same infrastructure created for the initial artwork. The design challenge will have two parts – the design of the initial installation, as well as the design of infrastructure that can be used for future activations. The infrastructure should be created with changeability and flexibility in mind, optimal for a variety of future artworks to use this same infrastructure system, such as power supplies, data feeds, or rigging points.

DOWNTOWN NEW BEDFORD

Request for RFQ

Scope of Work

Phase 1: Request for Qualifications

Please submit all RFQ packages to _____, attention _____ in a single PDF no later than 5:00pm, Friday, June 23, 2023 and should include the following:

1. **Artist or Artist-Led Team** with current contact information including email address, website and/or social media handles
2. **Artist Statement of Interest** that includes information about artist practice; roles of team members, if a collaborative team; media, format, or technique used
3. **Artist / Artist Team Bio**
4. **Community Engagement Statement** that includes information about how your work will engage with the community before, during, and after installation. Give examples of specific ways you have worked with communities in the past
5. **Relevant Experience / Visual Portfolio**
 - a. PDF Document including up to 10 Images of relevant recent work including completed projects (Please submit only successfully completed projects or works. Do not submit proposals for works that were not achieved).
 - b. PDF should also include annotated image descriptions including title, date, location, medium/materials, total artwork budget, and a brief description
 - c. Optional: Up to 3 Video links may also be submitted with the portfolio
6. **Three Professional References** including contact, phone, and email
7. **Additional Information:** Please provide web links to any additional information you would like to include such as awards or media (traditional or social) about the artist or artist-led team members.

Phase 2: Conceptual Phase (artist will receive compensation)

The selection team will contact three to five finalists to travel to New Bedford, MA for a community tour and to visit the site.

- Finalists will be contacted via phone and email
- Finalists will receive compensation of \$2,000 for the execution of the conceptual phase
- Finalists are responsible for expenses associated with this visit and the final presentation including travel, lodging, and meals

Phase 3: Presentation of Final Design

The finalists will present their final designs in a virtual meeting to the full selection committee selection committee Final Presentation requirements include the following:

- Artist's statement about the proposed installation
- Detailed description of the proposed installation
- Specification of medium, materials, weight, and dimensions
- Detailed fabrication process
- Installation details
- Timeline for project including design, fabrication, and installation
- Detailed budget, including all associated costs for completion and artist fees

Phase 4: Final Selection/Announcement

The final selection of the winning artist or artist-led team will be made at the New Bedford selection committee on _____ (enter date).

Phase 5: Design Development

After the artist/artist-led team is selected, they will have the opportunity to develop their concept into a final design package including all necessary engineering requirements. The process will include the following:

- Coordinate with city's oversight team to create a public presentation for review by relevant committees, departments, and the Mayor's staff
- Prepare design documents with detailed specifications
- Provide materials samples for review and approval
- Work with a licensed structural engineer (if necessary) to develop a suitable design
- Work with the City of New Bedford's team to finalize aesthetic design, the fabrication methods, and appropriate materials for the New Bedford outdoor environment

Phase 6: Fabrication and Installation

Site Description and Technical Specifications



Projected Total Project Budget

Timeline

Contact Information:

All questions or requests for clarifications should be submitted to ____

Submission instructions and Due Date

This submission is for **Phase 1** only, a request for qualifications, not design proposals.

Please submit all RFQ packages to _____, attention _____ in a single PDF no later than 5:00pm, on _____ (enter date)