

MIDDLEBOROUGH

COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT FINAL REPORT 2023

Prepared by Favermann Design

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

MASSACHUSETTS
DOWNTOWN
INITIATIVE





Alden Shoe Company



Cranberry Bog

BACKGROUND



C.H. Alden

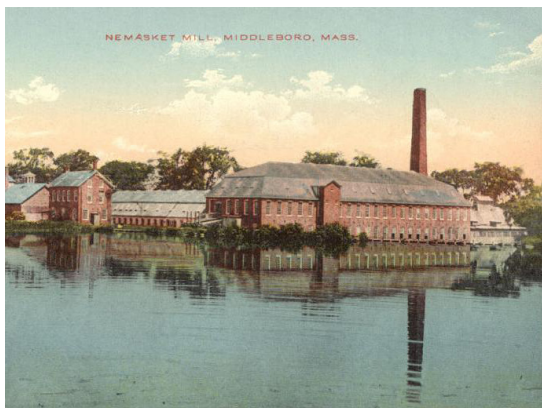
Not only is Middleborough the second largest town by land area in Massachusetts, but it is a unique community made up of several fascinating pieces. Middleborough was once a large producer of shoes and is still home to the Alden Shoe Company, one of the last remaining shoe manufacturers in America. The locally based Maxim Motors manufactured fire engines from 1914 to 1989. Middleborough has since become the location of the corporate headquarters of Spray Cranberries. The Town proclaims itself to be the "Cranberry Capital of the World." For horse and rider boarding, training, and practicing, it also is one of the major equestrian centers of New England.

Middleborough is a unique blend of tradition and progress. Still a farming community, it also has a strategic mix of industry and services. Although industry has increased greatly since the completion of nearby Route US 495, the community continues to represent authentic "country" living with miles of farmland, green open spaces, thick woodlands, and rivers.

Middleborough's town center is made up of many prominent historical buildings and landmarks including the Victorian Second Empire Style 1870s elegant and beloved Town Hall and the Beaux Arts-style town library (1903) along with several "Gingerbread" and "Painted Lady" houses and cottages nearby to the central business district.



The Nemasket River has been very important in the history of Middleborough. Its importance can be traced throughout the development of Middleborough.



The Nemasket Mill in 1914

And each spring, the Nemasket River alewife and blueback herring run upstream to the Assawompset Ponds complex to spawn. This became a traditional celebrated Middleborough annual event.

The town was first settled by Europeans in 1661. It was initially called Nemasket but later changed to Middleborough and officially incorporated in 1669. The earlier Native American name came from an indigenous settlement along what is now called the Nemasket River. Nemasket meant a "place of fish," and probably referred to the plethora of herring that migrated up the river each spring. The name



General Tom Thumb House



Vintage Map

Middleborough was derived from the Dutch city of Middleburg, Zeeland, a place where the Pilgrims developed their governing structures and institutions before emigrating on the Mayflower. Pilgrims were the earliest settlers of what evolved into Middleborough.

During the King Philip War (1675-1676), the town's entire population initially sheltered in a fort constructed along the Nemasket River. The fort was eventually abandoned, and the population withdrew to the greater shelter of the Plymouth Colony. In the settlers' absence, the entire village was burned to the ground during the war, and it would be several years before the town would be rebuilt.

Throughout its history, Middleboro always took great pride in its military participation, furnishing commissioned officers for the militia service, enough to form a regiment. At one time the town had nine infantry companies and one cavalry company. Middleborough citizens took part in the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, The Civil War, WWI and WWII, Korean War and Viet Nam. Citizens of the town have continued to serve in the US military.

On a darker note, before the Revolutionary War, many of the well-to-do citizens of Middleborough owned slaves. Official records were destroyed. After the Revolutionary War, without any legislative act, but from a sense of moral wrong in the holdings of human beings in bondage, slavery virtually disappeared from the town.



Gen Tom Thumb & Family

There have been several Middleborough residents of note. Deborah Sampson, the famous disguised female warrior hero of the Revolutionary War, enlisted from Middleborough and served for two years under the assumed name of Robert Shurtleff. Lavinia, wife of C. G. Stratton (Gen. Tom Thumb) and Minnie Warren, the well-known dwarfs were residents of Middleboro as was General Tom Thumb.



Deborah Sampson

Other famed Middleboro residents include Judge Peter Oliver, the presiding judge at the Boston Massacre trial. He also was a prominent industrialist who operated colonial mills. Colonel Ebenezer Sproat was a hero of the American Revolutionary War and a pioneer in the Northwest Territory of what became the state of Ohio.

Enoch Pratt, a prominent entrepreneur, major visionary, and a major philanthropist was born in Middleborough. Additionally, itinerant early 19th century portrait artist, Cephas Thompson lived in the town when not traveling along the East Coast. More recent distinguished residents include athletes, actors, and politicians.

Today, Middleborough is considered a nice, safe place to live and work. It includes good schools, a strong sense of community, a wonderful family library, and has lots of young families. The Town has a vital and historic commercial downtown as well. Located in Plymouth County, Middleboro is a town of approximately 25,000 with a variety of living and working settings with deep historical roots in the state of Massachusetts and a rich strategic early-colonial history.

With all that as context, the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative program awarded a professional services grant to the Town of Middleborough to create a branding and detailed wayfinding and sign system to reinforce Middleborough as a destination rather than just a location and to underscore the community's unique character.

THE PROCESS

To work in collaboration with the consultants Favermann Design and the town's Economic Development Director Paul DiGiuseppe, Middleborough's Town Administrator appointed a Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group to work through the various aspects of the process. Meetings were to take place at Middleborough Town Hall every three to five weeks until the project was completed.



The Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group members included several individuals who were members of the Downtown Improvement Committee:

Leeann Bradley, Middleborough Town Planner

Paula Faye, Vice President of Friends of the Public Library & multiple committees

Kevin Quackenbush, Realtor, Civic Volunteer & retired executive from the Foxborough Company

Kyle MacPherson, Tourism Committee member

Itamar Chaliff, Vice President, Rockland Trust and member of the Downtown Improvement Committee

Paul DiGiuseppe, Economic Development Director (Ex officio)

Zannah Noe, EDC Communications Specialist (Ex officio)



Herring Run Marker

The first meeting of the Wayfinding Advisory Group included a presentation by the consultant focused on a comprehensive overview of tools and methods of community branding. This gave the group a more universal basis for thought and discussion. It was noted that the process of community branding emphasizes distinctiveness, projects a positive image, and provides a shared sense of arrival and a sense of place. It strongly allows people to be connected to experience.

A brand isn't just a recognizable name

and logo that distinguishes a place in a crowded market. A brand is how people perceive a community wherever they interact with it. This is done by visually defining character, underscoring a community's uniqueness, linking collective memory, and connecting communal familiarity. Community Branding underscores the unique character and personality of a particular place, recognizing it as a destination.



Oliver Mill Park

The second Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group meeting was a presentation of case studies about how other Massachusetts communities approached branding and wayfinding for their town or city. It underscored how wayfinding is an expression of “community character” that adds “comfort.” Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide pedestrians and vehicles through a physical environment and enhance the understanding and experience of a place.

Early at the second meeting, it was strongly pointed out that an previous branding study had been done for Middleborough’s Downtown, the Chandler thinks Brand Navigator Study (2020-21) that focused on Middleborough’s downtown. Favermann Design committed to incorporate aspects of the previous study into this project which will take in all of the town’s commercial areas, districts, borders and edges.

Wayfinding was defined as the following:

Wayfinding is created to develop signage and information systems for both pedestrians and motorists, who each have unique challenges navigating streets and roadways.

By being used repeatedly, these information systems help orient people to develop “mental maps” of the terrain and simplify their routes.

In some settings, reliance on text-based messaging is minimized and orientation systems rely heavily on non-text cues including colors, shapes, and symbols.

The best wayfinding systems provide directional guidance through a carefully planned sequence that delivers information to users at key decision points in their journey.



Alewife Herring

A Hierarchy of Wayfinding Elements includes:

Landmarks - large unique visual or architectural cues serve as a beacon. They can underscore and “brand” a sense of place. These could include gateways, public art or monuments.

Identity - has brand/name of where you are

Directional - points to key destinations

Informational - includes directories, interpretive markers, and contextual signs

Regulatory - guidelines, laws, codes, rules, restrictions, allowable actions, etc.

The third Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group meeting was an interactive workshop focusing on word, phrase, and image association about the Town of Middleborough. It was titled Ideation Exercise. The consultants developed a short presentation focused on historic and contemporary images of the town followed by a series of word association questions. The Advisory Group enthusiastically took part in the process. In this workshop, there were no wrong answers-- just some answers might have been more descriptive and better at characterizing the essence of Middleborough.



Historic Waterworks and Pumping Station

How would you describe Middleborough using one word?

Large	Farms	WetLands
Quaint	Central	Opinionated
Herring	Forested	Rural
Horses	Middle	Local
Historic	Conservative	Agricultural
Spacious	Aquatic	Beautiful
Changing	Swamps	

How would you describe Middleborough using two words?

Town Hall	Pratt Farm
Oliver Mill	Herring
Old Waterworks	Equestrian
Harry's Diner	Veterans Memorial
Cranberry Boggs	
Soule Farm	

What Colors are associated with Middleborough?

How would you describe Middleborough with three words or more (a phrase)?

Largest Small Town
 Whiskey And Wetlands
 Historic While evolving and Growing
 We Love Middleborough
 Home of Cranky Cranberries
 In the Middle of Everything
 Cranberry Crossroads
 Native American Presence
 Cannabis Crossroads

Cranberry
 Forest Green
 Barn Red
 Sky Blue
 Orange (Pumpkin)
 Yellow
 Lite Gold

Bank Building, Middleboro, Mass.



Bank Building c.1910



Should Public Art and Thematic Street Furniture be a priority in Middleborough?

Yes, but thoughtfully done
Temporary and Permanent
Murals and Sculpture
Seasonal Flowers Baskets/Planters

What are significant landmarks, symbols, and memorials in Middleborough?

Town Hall	Soule Farm
Oliver Mill	Pratt Farm
Old Waterworks	Herring
Harry's Diner	Equestrian
Cranberry Boggs	Veterans Memorial



What should Middleborough aspire to?

What are future-perfect goals for the town?

More and Diverse Businesses
More Food and Drink Options
A Major Downtown Park
Art Festivals



DESIGN OPTIONS

From the various meeting presentations and Ideation Workshop discussions, several design options were created and developed by the consultant to be used in Middleborough's Downtown as well as in neighborhoods, institutions, borders with other towns, and parks. These "branding" options were shared with the Advisory Group for review, debate, and analysis.



Town Hall

Along with exploration of various color combinations, these included images with cranberry bogs, farmland, cranberries, river views, Town Hall, and others. Elements that could underscore the community narrative like identification of neighborhoods or parks were considered for bottom sign bands. Artwings were designed to use as punctuation elements on light posts, and a commercial and service locations directory were suggested for directory and directional sign elements. The Advisory Group's reactions were very direct and specific. A number of design options were created based on these. The resulting designs followed the recommendations of the Advisory Group.

Taking all these ideas and thoughts into consideration, the Favermann Design staff created a series of branding design options to share with the Advisory Group. With focus on trying to achieve a brand unique image for the Town of Middleborough, and these graphical alternatives included working with images of the Town Hall, horses, equestrians, cranberries, herring, and natural settings. Each of the visual representations were felt to capture the essence and spirit of the Town of Middleborough.

After much debate and discussion, the Advisory Group wanted to work with some of the recommendations from the earlier Chandlerthinks study for wayfinding for downtown. These included color palette and Historic Downtown image with an Acorn light post fixture. And some of this MDI study's recommendations would be integrated with them. It was also recommended that cranberries be used as a pattern. Herring could be used as a sign band at the bottom of major or "gateway" signs.

The major branding image of the Town Hall was agreed upon. But it needed to be a photo-realistic image that was not distorted. After the consultant photographed the Town Hall, the was redone in duotone of black and the PMS 617 color from the earlier Chandlethinks color scheme.

Additionally, out of the Ideation Exercise, alternatives were developed for the slogan or tagline, but it was felt by the Advisory Group only to be used on larger sign elements. The "Cranberry Crossing" slogan was chosen from the earlier study. The consultants created a hierarchy of sign elements in the format of a "Family of Elements." These illustrate the size and functional varieties of the total Town of Walpole branding and wayfinding program.

Along with the wayfinding and signs, design options were also created of various silhouettes to be used on Artwings—kinetic, painted aluminum sculptural elements, that can be attached to light poles. These are very low-maintenance, permanent sculptural alternatives to high maintenance temporary fabric

banners. The consultants created public art in the form of thematic benches and sundial herrings were created for future phases of implementation.

Estimates of sign and marker element costs for fabrication and installation were provided by the consultant as well. The consultants were tasked with providing a specifications package of all the wayfinding and sign elements for estimates and bids by appropriate vendors. This was completed.

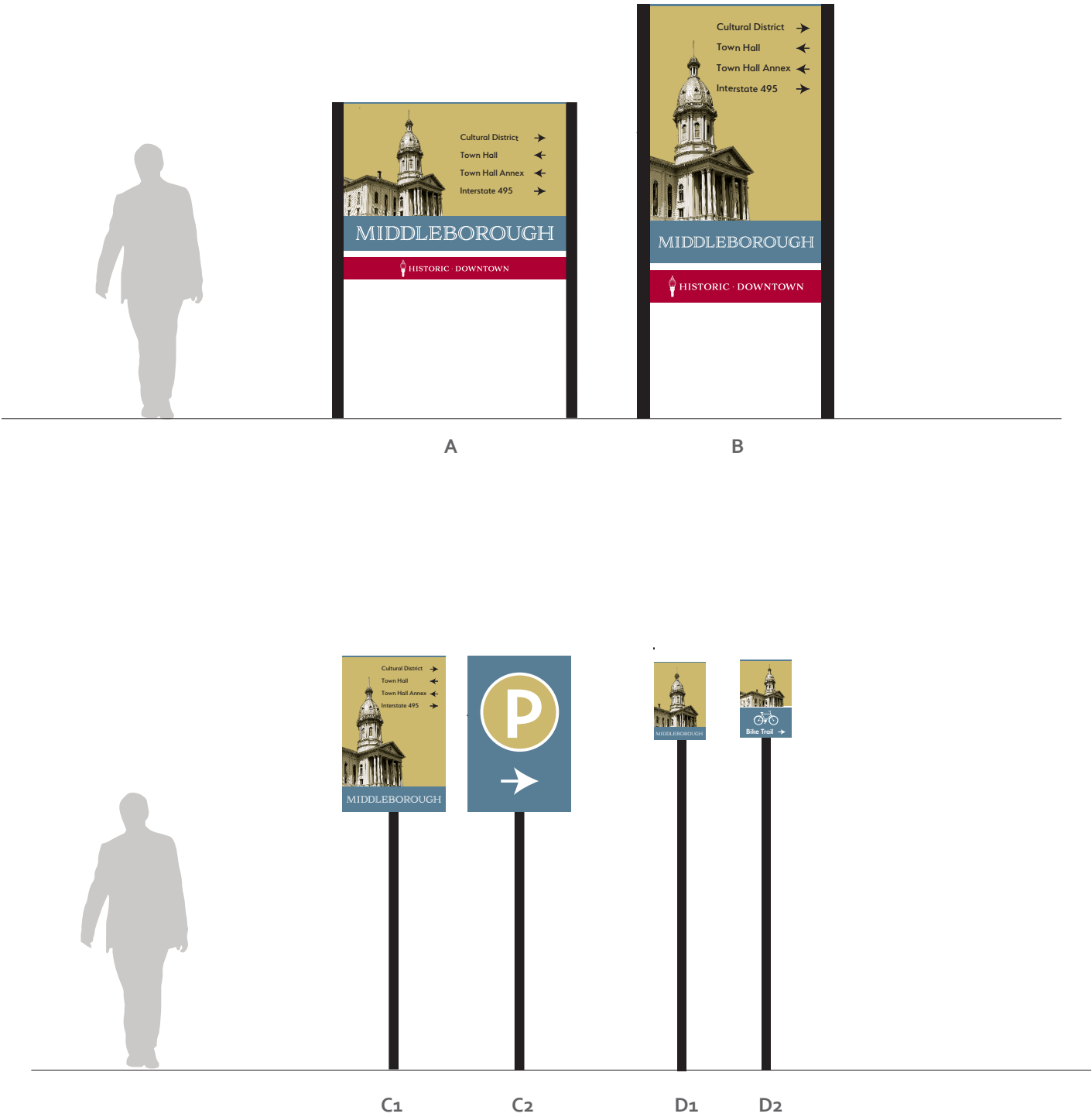
Additionally, Advisory Group members were asked to develop a placement plan for at least the first phase of implementing the wayfinding program. The hierarchy of signs was provided by the consultants to incorporate identity, directions, regulations, and information.

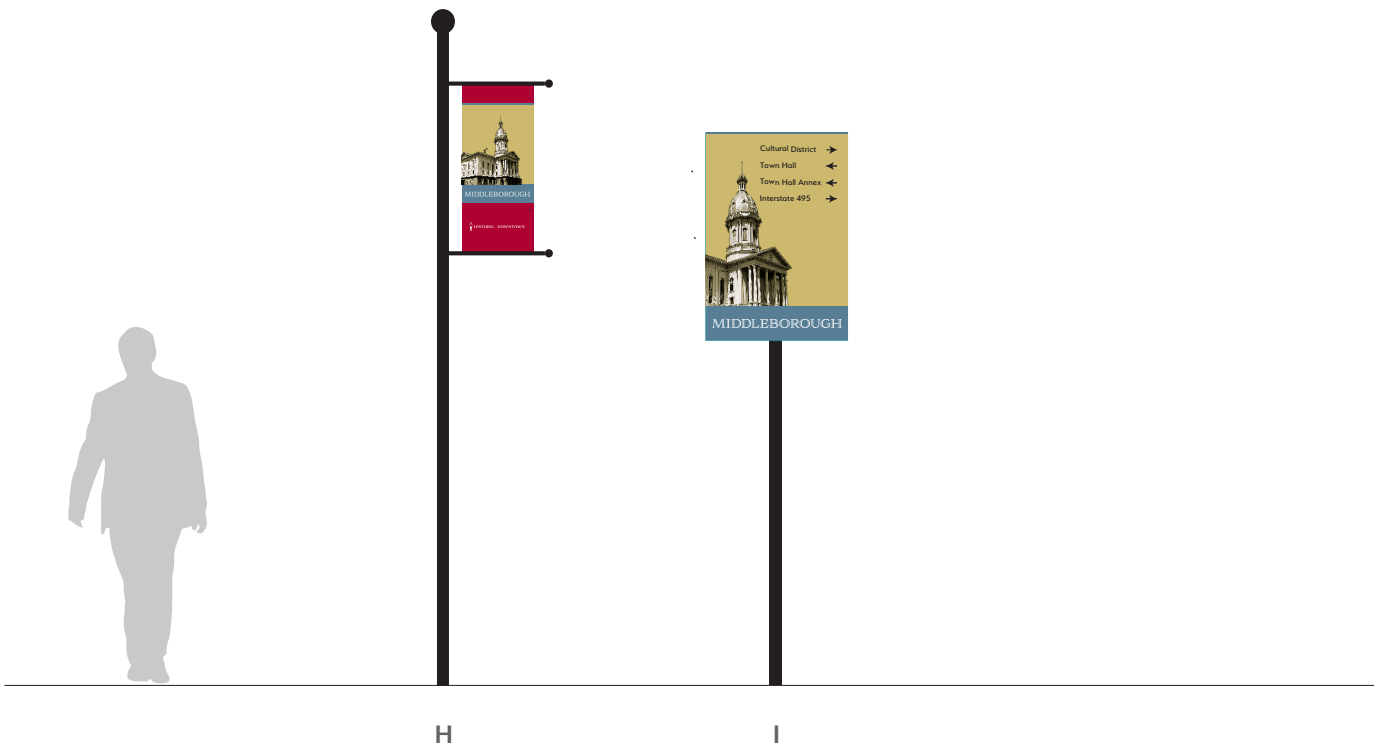
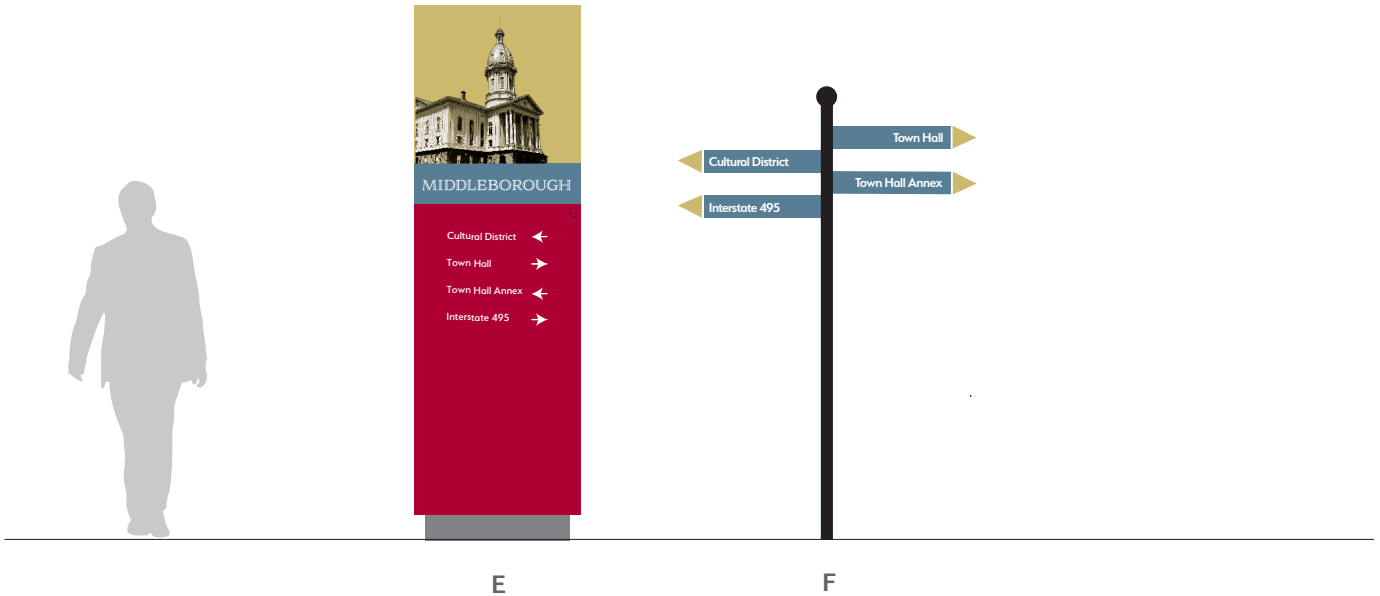
Advisory Committee's responses were very strong desiring not to have more abstracted images or non-historical branding images. In the end, the group chose an image of the iconic Town Hall to be focal point of the program. After approval by the Select Board, eventually the overall program will be implemented in phases by the Town of Middleborough.



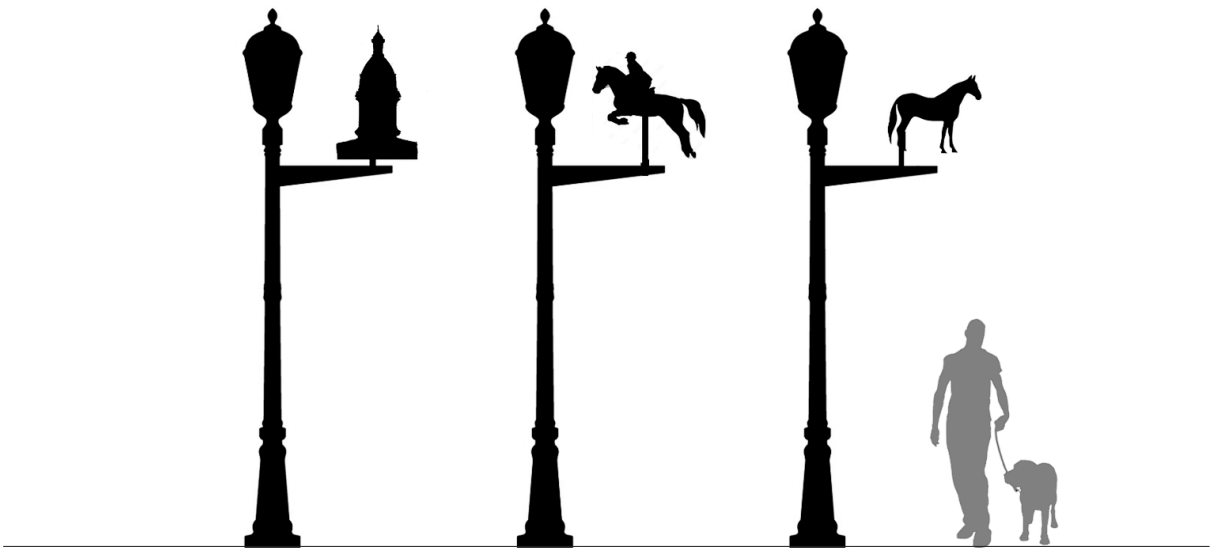
Webster Street c.1910

MIDDLEBOROUGH
FAMILY OF ELEMENTS

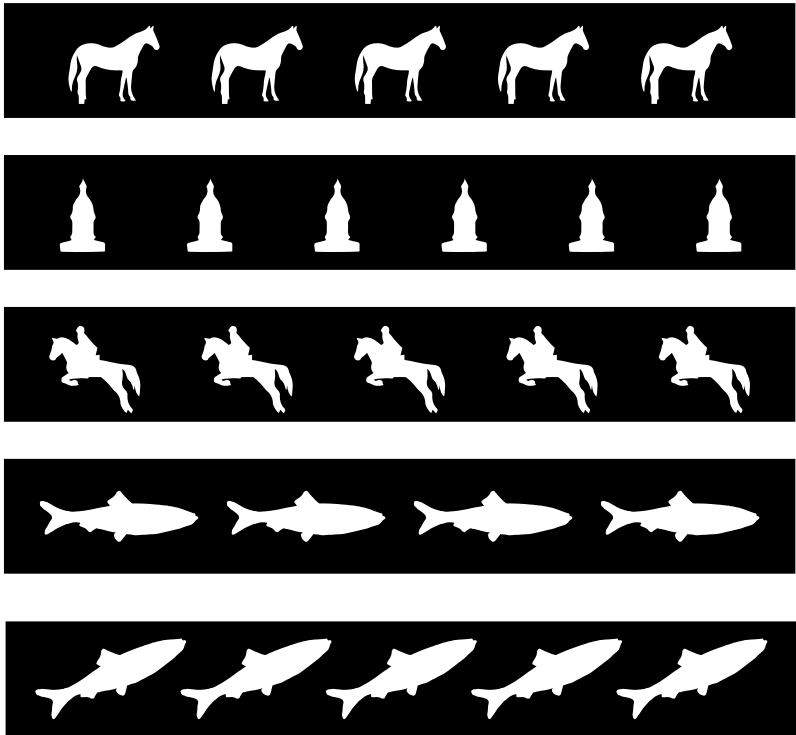




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ARTWINGS

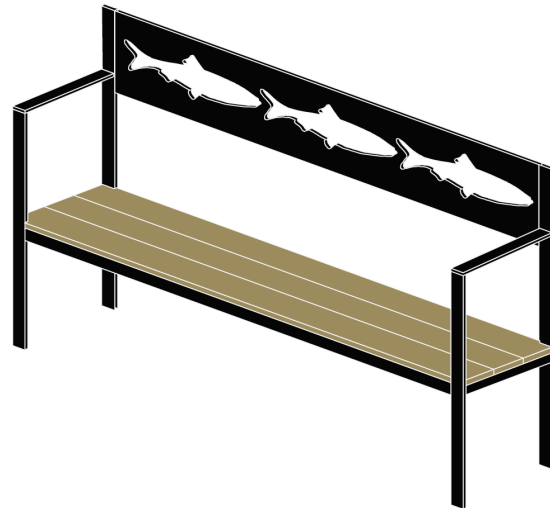
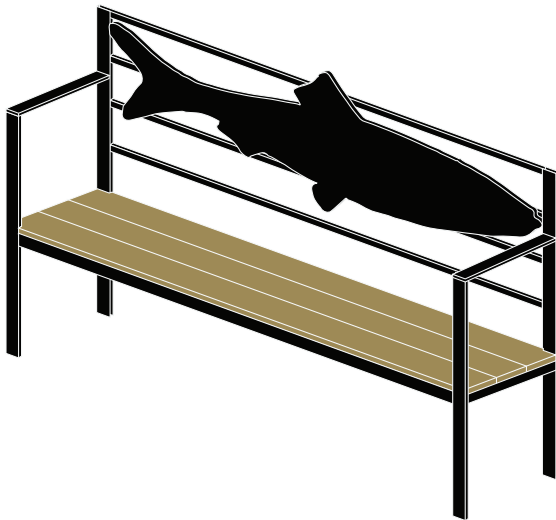
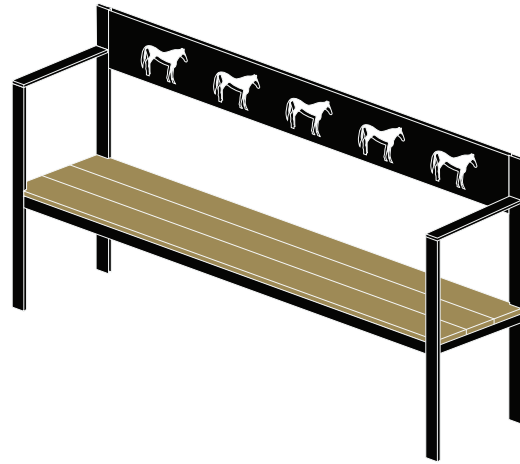
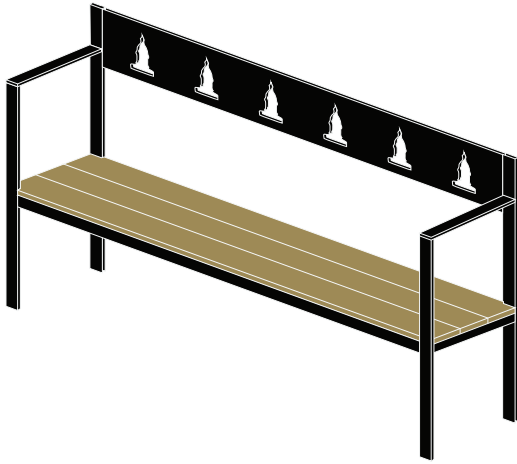


MIDDLEBOROUGH
BANDS



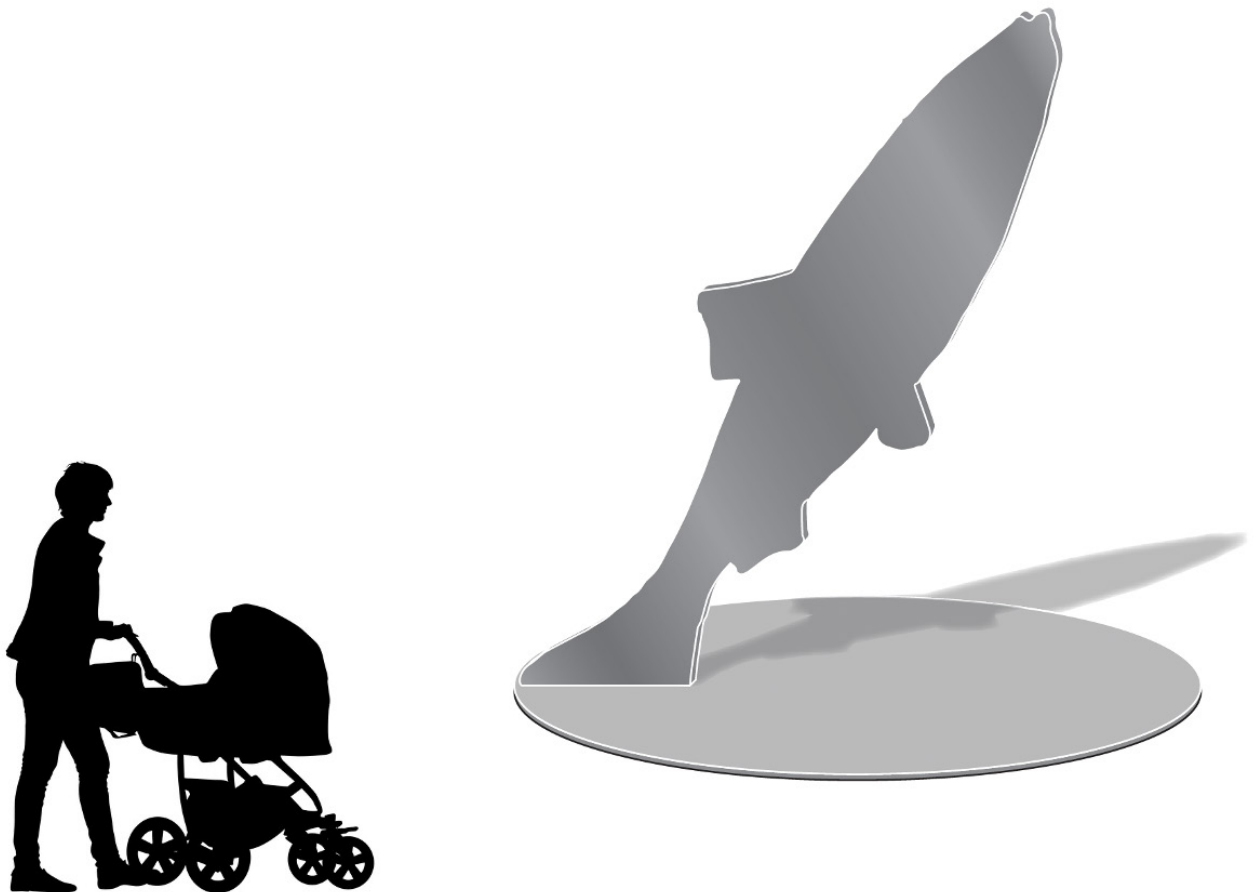
MIDDLEBOROUGH

PROPOSED THEMATIC SCULPTURAL BENCHES



MIDDLEBOROUGH

PROPOSED HERRING SUN DIAL FOR FUTURE DOWNTOWN PARK

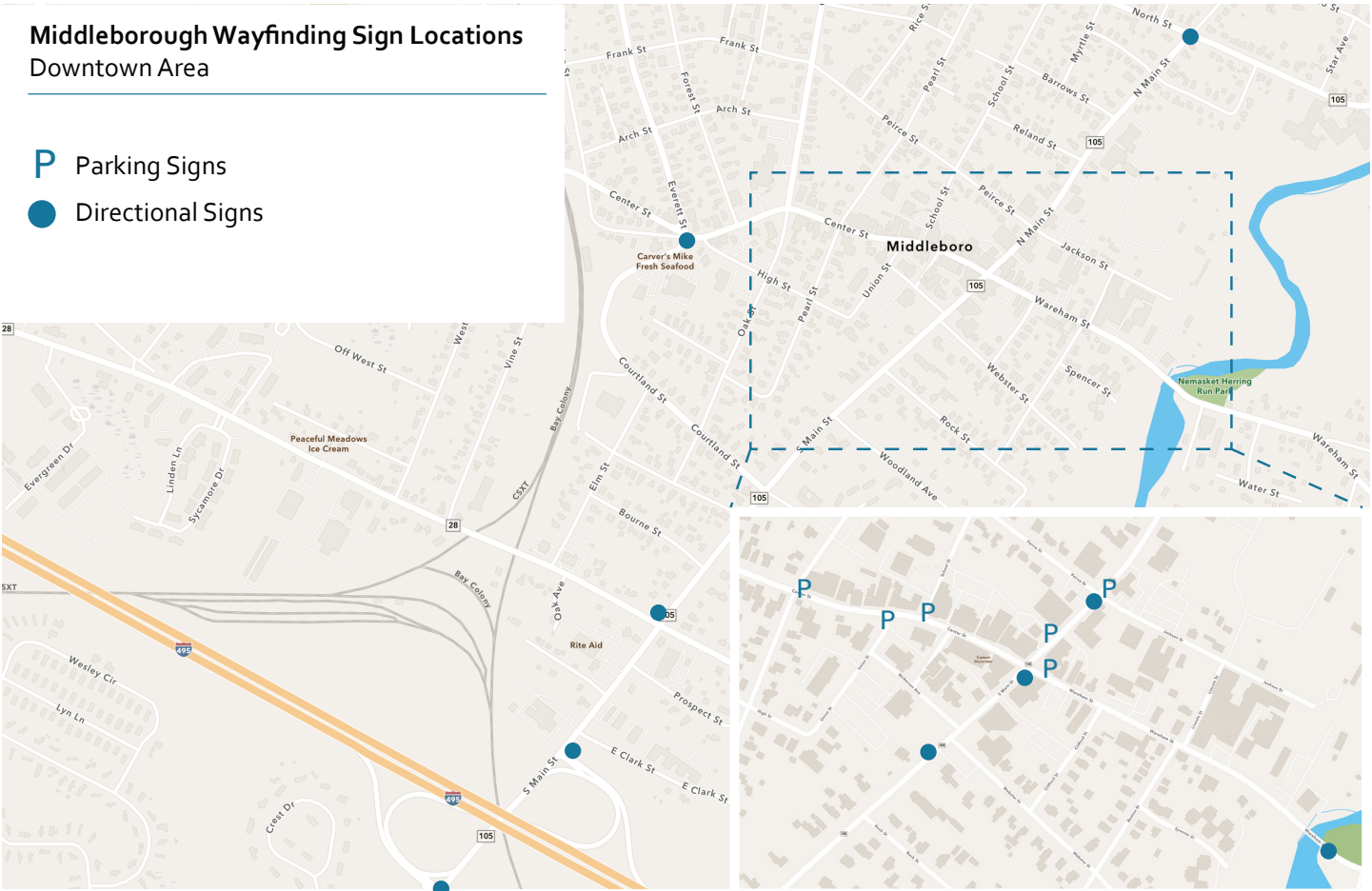


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WAYFINDING SIGN LOCATION MAP

Middleborough Wayfinding Sign Locations Downtown Area

- P Parking Signs
- Directional Signs



Favermann Design | August 2023