

FAVERMANN
DESIGN



BELMONT

COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT

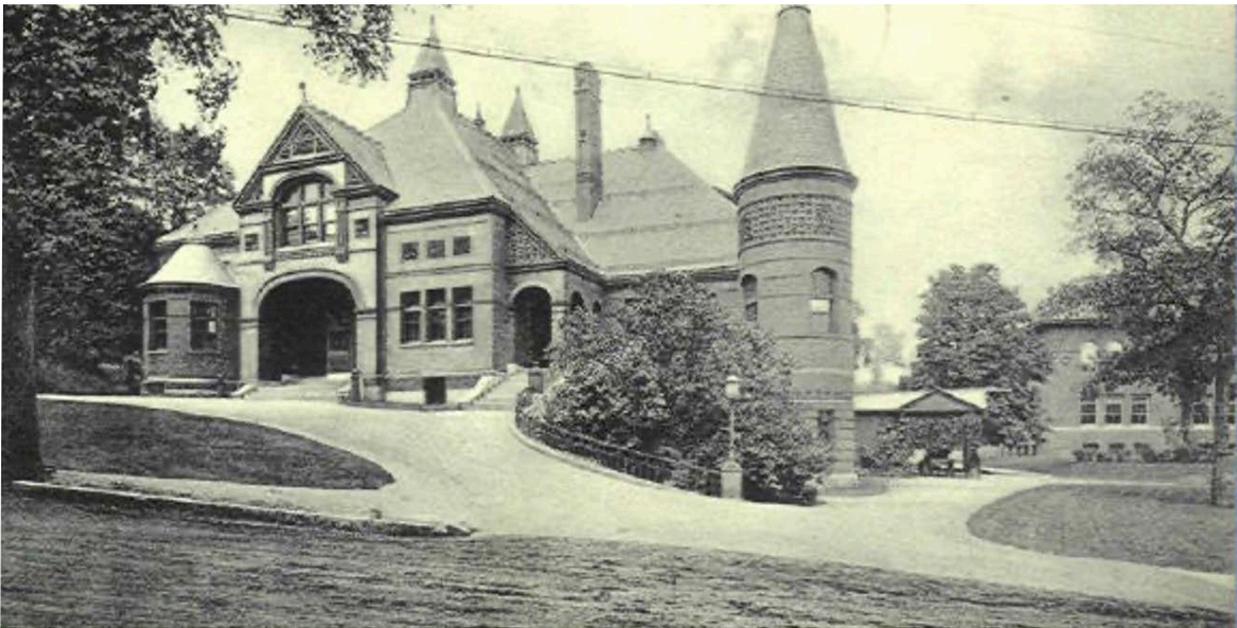
FINAL REPORT JUNE 2022

Prepared by Favermann Design

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

MASSACHUSETTS
DOWNTOWN
INITIATIVE





Vintage Postcard of Town Hall

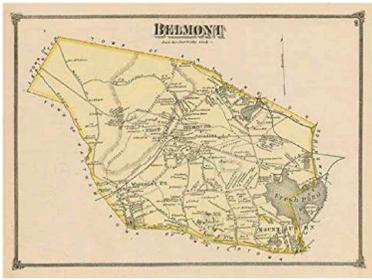
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

A nearby comfortable suburb of Boston, the Town of Belmont is in Middlesex County and has a population of about 27,300 residents in 2020. It has a dense, leafy suburban feel. Most residents own their homes in this bedroom community. Sprinkled throughout Belmont are many restaurants, coffee shops, and parks. The Town is known for its elegant mansion-filled Belmont Hill neighborhood. However, most Belmont residents live in more densely settled, low-lying areas around the Hill. In addition to Belmont Center, there are three other major commercial centers in the town: along the Trapelo Road Corridor are Cushing Square in the south, the Beech Street area and Waverley Square in the west. The focus of this MDI Branding and Wayfinding study was to address all of the town’s commercial districts along Trapelo Road

The first settlement in the Town of Belmont was in 1630 when Sir Richard Saltonstall and 40 other families moved to the area and started an agricultural community. At the time, this area was known as Pequosette, after the Indian tribe dwelling there. The tribal lands extended over present-day Waltham, Weston, Lincoln, and Watertown. However, the name of the area was soon changed to Watertown.

Established in 1849, by 1000 former citizens of nearby Watertown, Waltham and Arlington (then known as West Cambridge), the town was named after Belmont, a 200-acre estate owned by John

Perkins Cushing, the area’s biggest taxpayer. Prior to its incorporation, Belmont was an agrarian-based community, with several large farms providing the City of Boston with produce and livestock. The new town was formed from an area of 5 square miles of the neighboring towns. Belmont’s farms and market



Vintage Maps of Belmont

gardens were widely known for quality produce of celery, berries, tomatoes, other fruits, and livestock. It continued to be a major food provider until the beginning of the 20th century, when trolley service and better roads were instituted making the town more attractive as a residential community. Notably these transportation improvements directly led to the building of the town's large estates.

Eventually, the town's farm-based economy shifted to a commercial greenhouse focus. Therefore, much of the flower and vegetable needs of Boston were met from the Belmont 'hothouses'. They persisted until about 1983 when the last commercial greenhouse closed. Belmont's significant other commercial enterprises included mining clay and waste management. A lasting example of environmental planning is the strategic reclamation of a large dump and quarry into sites for Belmont High School and the Clay Pit Pond. With the proliferation of cars and better roads and highways, Belmont continued its transition to a convenient handsome commuter-based suburb throughout the 20th Century.



Gardens

Trains have been a significant part of Belmont's history. It was once served by two railroads, the Fitchburg Railroad and the Central Massachusetts Railroad which later became part of the Boston & Maine system. Today the MBTA owns the trackage that runs through Belmont, which is part of the Fitchburg Line with station stops at Belmont Center and Waverley. In 1907, the grade at Belmont Center was eliminated by constructing a stone arch bridge with an elevated embankment to carry the tracks past a new station building. At Waverley, the grade was lowered so that the tracks ran under Trapelo Road.

A second historic railroad station building, the one-room Wellington Hill Station was originally built in the 1840s as a private school, not far from Belmont Center. Used by the Fitchburg Railroad from 1852 to 1879, when the railroad replaced the station with a larger structure, the building was moved to the Underwood Estate to be used as a summer house. After the station was donated to the Belmont Historical Society in 1974, it was restored and relocated to its current location near Belmont Center.

The town government consists of a three-person Select Board that appoints a Town Administrator who oversees daily town operations. Belmont's legislative branch is a representative town meeting elected from eight districts plus ex-officio members and overseen by a Town Moderator. The Belmont Public Schools are administered by an independently elected school committee. There are four public elementary schools, one middle school and Belmont High School. The town's schools are consistently rated highly in Massachusetts and nationally. Private Belmont Hill School and Belmont Day School are also located in the town.



Belmont High School

As farmlands eventually morphed into residential developments, the Town of Belmont strategically maintained a residential standard of excellence. This is reflected in the quality of neighborhoods and infrastructure. Today, the prestigious McLean Hospital, a psychiatric hospital and research center, is Belmont's largest land owner in town.

Many notable individuals have lived in Belmont. Due to its proximity to Harvard and MIT and other universities, Belmont has had several Nobel prize recipients in residence over time. Several notable



Belmont Historic Buildings

past and present residents include China Trader John Perkins Cushing, Star Market founder Stephen P. Mugar, Empress Masako of Japan, Former Governor of Massachusetts and current Senator from Utah Mitt Romney, former Harvard Professor, Secretary of State and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Henry Kissinger and former Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors Martin Feldstein.

Other notables included artist Winslow Homer, landscape architect pioneer Frederick Law Olmsted, TV producer and writer David E. Kelley, author and documentary filmmaker Sebastian Junger, author William Dean Howell, MIT professor and Nobel Prize Winner in Physics Wolfgang Ketterle, MIT Economics Professors and Nobel Prize recipients in Economics Paul A. Samuelson and Franco Modigliani, Ambassador to Japan and Harvard Professor Edwin Reischauer, Mathematician Norbert Wiener and Organic Chemist and Nobel Prize Winner Robert Burns Woodward.



McClean Hospital

With abundant private gardens, public parks and playgrounds, Belmont is admired for its beautifully landscaped homes and its striking multitude of flowers and trees. Over the years, Belmont's citizens have become more and more involved in riding bicycles throughout the town. Belmont's historic town center is full of special events, music, and visual arts on a variety of occasions ranging from Belmont Town Day to the Holiday Tree Lighting. Belmont Center includes vintage buildings, local businesses, and a range of seasonal hometown activities. The COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in a distinctive increase in outdoor dining at restaurants and cafes.

During the last few decades, the town's nickname was "A Town of Homes."

As part of the Commonwealth's MDI Local Rapid Response Program (LRRP) in 2021, it was determined that the Trapelo Road Corridor, a 2-lane roadway which extends through the commercial nodes at Waverley Square, Cushing Square, and the intersection with Beech Street. Trapelo Road also serves as a cut-through for many heading into adjacent Cambridge and the nearby City of Boston and was in need of a tactical wayfinding system. The entire corridor, in Belmont, is approximately 1.3 miles long,



Belmont Center

with residential uses separating the three commercial nodes by approximately ½ mile. While on-site the Project Team observed very little wayfinding signage to help drivers and pedestrians navigate the project area or understand what to expect in their journey.

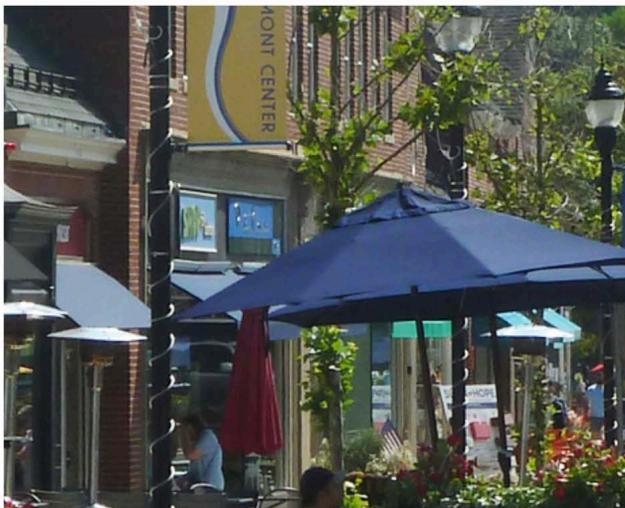


Trapelo Road

Furthermore, it was learned through the focus groups that businesses would like to see more wayfinding signage in and around Belmont Center as well as along the corridor. In implementing a wayfinding system that would give visitors a sense of arrival, help them navigate to various destinations and begin to give a sense of place. This system can be leveraged as a way to connect the various shopping districts along the corridor. Wayfinding has been previously identified as a priority in the 2019 Belmont Business Strategy as necessary to

guide visitors to Belmont’s commercial districts.

With this history and economic context in mind, Favermann Design worked with the town’s staff and the Wayfinding Advisory Working Group to create a brand that can be applied not only to wayfinding and signage but to underscore other aspects of Belmont’s image and identity.



Outdoor Dining



THE PROCESS

After making a competitive proposal, Belmont was awarded a grant for Branding and Wayfinding consulting services by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI), a program of the Department of Housing and Community Development. Following up on this, the Town of Belmont's planning staff recruited a Wayfinding Advisory Working Group to work with the consultant, Favermann Design.

The Wayfinding Advisory Working Group members included:

Erin Brown, Economic Development Committee Member

Gabriel Distler, Town of Belmont Staff Planner

Matthew Haskell, Town of Belmont Budget Analyst

Robert Hummel, Town of Belmont Senior Planner

Mark Hurley, Assistant Police Chief

Paul Joy, Economic Development Committee Co-Chair

Jack Sy, Chief Executive Officer of N1 Group



Mormon Church

The first meeting of the Wayfinding Advisory Working Group included a presentation by the consultant focused on a comprehensive overview of tools and methods of community branding. This gave the group a 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 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.

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



Belmont Lions Club

the understanding and experience of a space. Comprehensive wayfinding systems combine signage, maps, shapes, symbols, colors, and other communications. Signs and visual cues are major components of wayfinding. Wayfinding Element Systems are living entities that can be expanded, contracted or repaired.

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.

A Hierarchy of Wayfinding Elements includes:

- A. 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.
- B. Identity** - has brand/name of where you are
- C. Directional** - points to key destinations
- D. Informational** - includes directories, interpretive markers and contextual signs
- E. Regulatory**—guidelines, laws, codes, rules, restrictions, allowable actions, etc.

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



Houses in Belmont

Examples of the Ideation Exercise results included:

1. How would you describe Belmont using one word?

Habitat	Sanctuary	Community	Verdant
Vibrant	Town	Colorful	Trees
Convenient	Accessible	Gateway	Friendly
Friendship	Pretty	Attractive	Comfortable
Welcoming	Leadership	Proximity	Convenient
Prominent	Schools	Connecting	

2. How would you describe Belmont with two words?

Family Friendly	Educated Population	Commuter Rail
Urban Escape	Human Scale	Visible Appeal
Former Agricultural	Farmers Marker	Deep Roots
Urban Sanctuary	Urban Oasis	Hidden Gem
An Oasis		

3. How would you describe Belmont with three words or more (a phrase)?

Lifelong learning	Helping fashion the future
Reaching for the future	A gateway to the future
A garden community	Leaning to the future
Where education brings diversity together	Past and Present
A blossoming community	Fostering the future
An educational community	Building on history
Where education and family meet	An educational tradition
A Town of Bikes	Building new traditions
Town of promise	A visual oasis
Building on the future	

4. What Colors are associated with Belmont?

They are Green, Yellow, Red, Blue, Burgundy and White

5. Should Public Art be a priority in Belmont? If so, what kind?

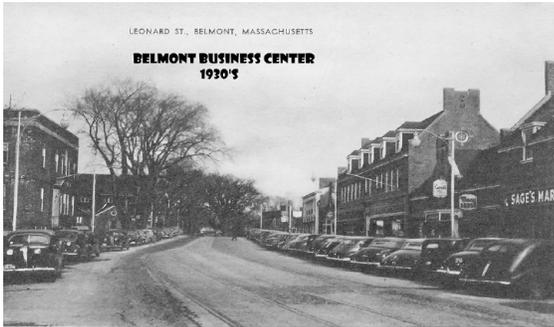
Yes. Artwork should be created in contemporary styles.

6. Should Belmont have unique street furniture?

Working Group supported exploring different street furniture ideas
Supported having local artists and gardeners/landscapers work together

7. What are significant landmarks, symbols, and memorials in Belmont?

McLean Hospital	Belmont Woman’s Club building
Town Hall	Habitat trails
The design on exterior of Town Hall Building that looks like the sun	New Belmont High School (and adjacent pond)
Little yellow former train station building	Underwood Pool
Railroad overpass	Lions Club/Train Station building



8. What should Belmont aspire to? What are future-perfect goals for the town?

- Equity and affordability
- More retail and restaurants
- To be more business friendly
- More of an opened environment

Taking all these ideas and thoughts into consideration, the Favermann Design staff created a series of branding design options to share with the Working Group. With focus on trying to achieve a brand unique image for the Town of Belmont, these graphical alternatives included working with images of Town Hall, Flowers, Trees, Historic Structures, Flower Urn and Bicycles. The reaction of the Working Group members was strongly in favor of either a silhouette tree image or a colorful image of cherry blossom branches. Both visual representations were felt to capture the essence and spirit of the Town of Belmont.

Additionally, out of the Ideation Exercise, three alternatives were developed for the slogan or tagline—“Fostering the Future,” “Reaching for the Future” or no slogan/tagline. These were felt by the Working Group to best reflect the Town of Belmont in the past, present, and future. The slogan will only be used on larger sign elements. 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 Belmont branding and wayfinding program.

Along with the wayfinding and signs, design options were also created of various bicycle 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.

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

Additionally, Working 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. Once all locations were collated, Favermann Design refined the maps for distribution.

The two branding and wayfinding design options were presented to the Belmont Select Board on June 27, 2022. At that meeting, various Select Board members felt that the “cherry blossom” design was appealing but did not reflect the Town of Belmont historically or contextually and asked Favermann Design to create other design options for review by the Belmont Select Board at their August 15th meeting.



Historic Belmont Gardens Card

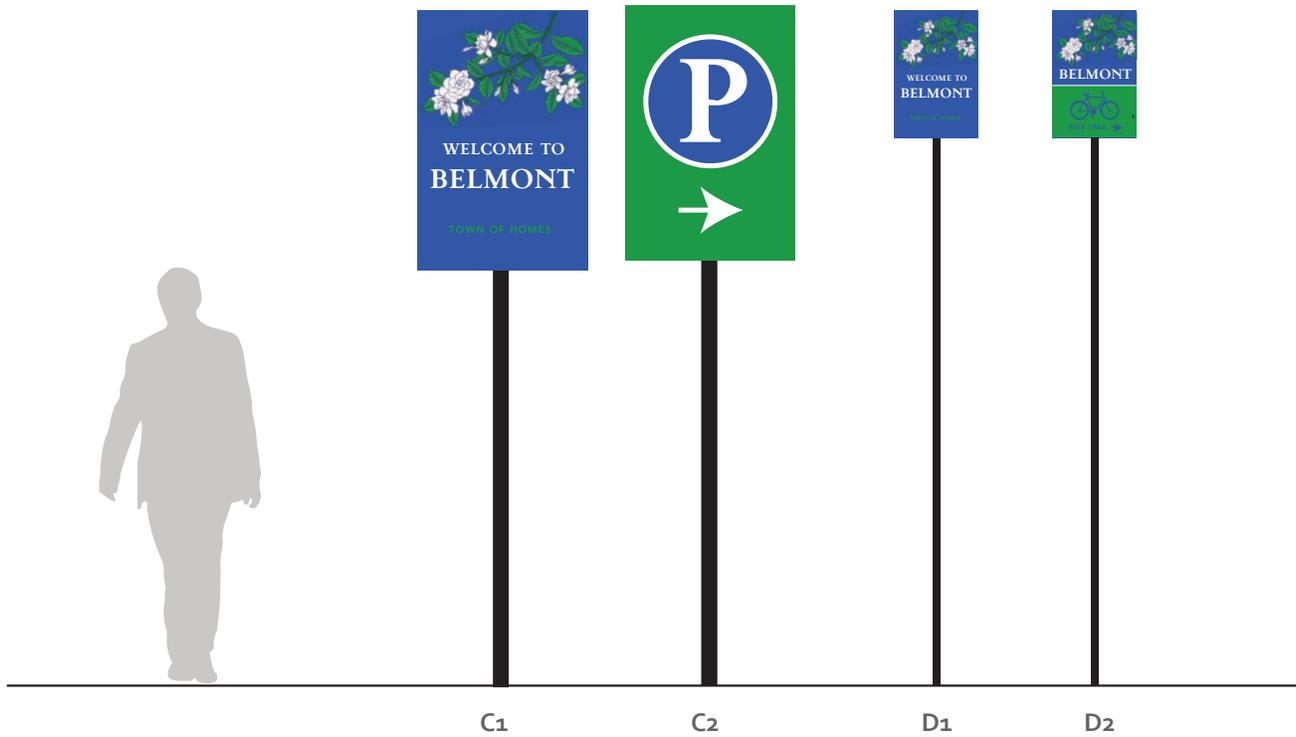
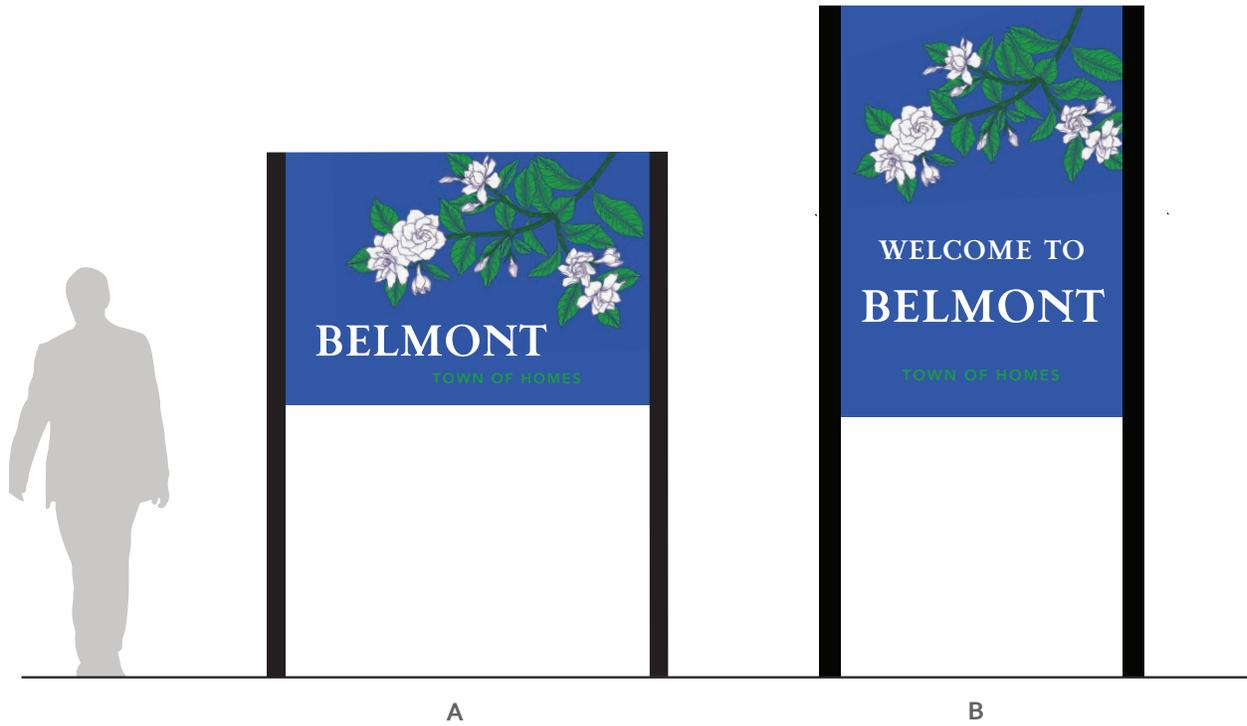
Following the June 27th, after following the meeting on local access cable television, Belmont resident Allison Lenk reached out to the Select Board and suggest that the Wayfinding Working Group consider adopting the Belmont Gardenia on as a civic brand to be used on wayfinding and other strategic signage. The Belmont Gardenia was developed in Belmont in the mid-20th century as an affordable, yet beautiful gardenia by her grandfather Walter E. Lenk in the 1920s and 1930s at Belmont Gardens, his flower nursery. Mr. Lenk received a patent for his beautiful hybrid flower. The white Belmont Gardenias was so popular that for a time the nursery was shipping 40,000 gardenias a day and were even provided to the White House for special events.

After having three gardenia image design options presented to them by the consultants-- a red gardenia version and two white gardenia versions with light and dark blue options, the Working Group voted unanimously to incorporate the Belmont Gardenia with a royal blue background onto the wayfinding signage. The various design options were presented to the Select Board on August 15th. After a very lively discussion, it was unanimously voted 3-0 to approve the Belmont Gardenia design with the royal blue background option. The Select Board was particularly pleased by the historical context and local basis of the design. Here was a truly "authentic" Town of Belmont design.

Town of Belmont Select Board Meeting Video August 15, 2022:

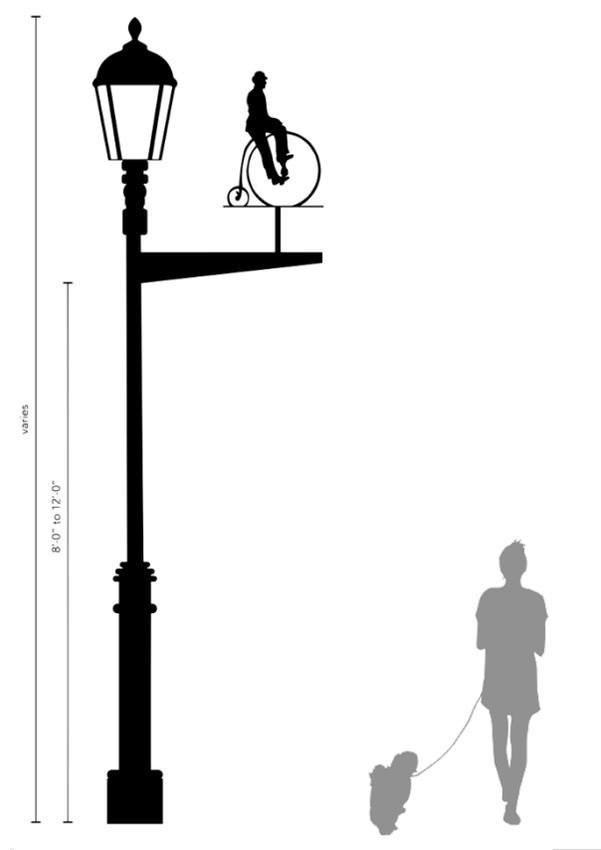
<https://www.belmontmedia.org/watch/belmont-select-board-081522>

BELMONT
FAMILY OF ELEMENTS





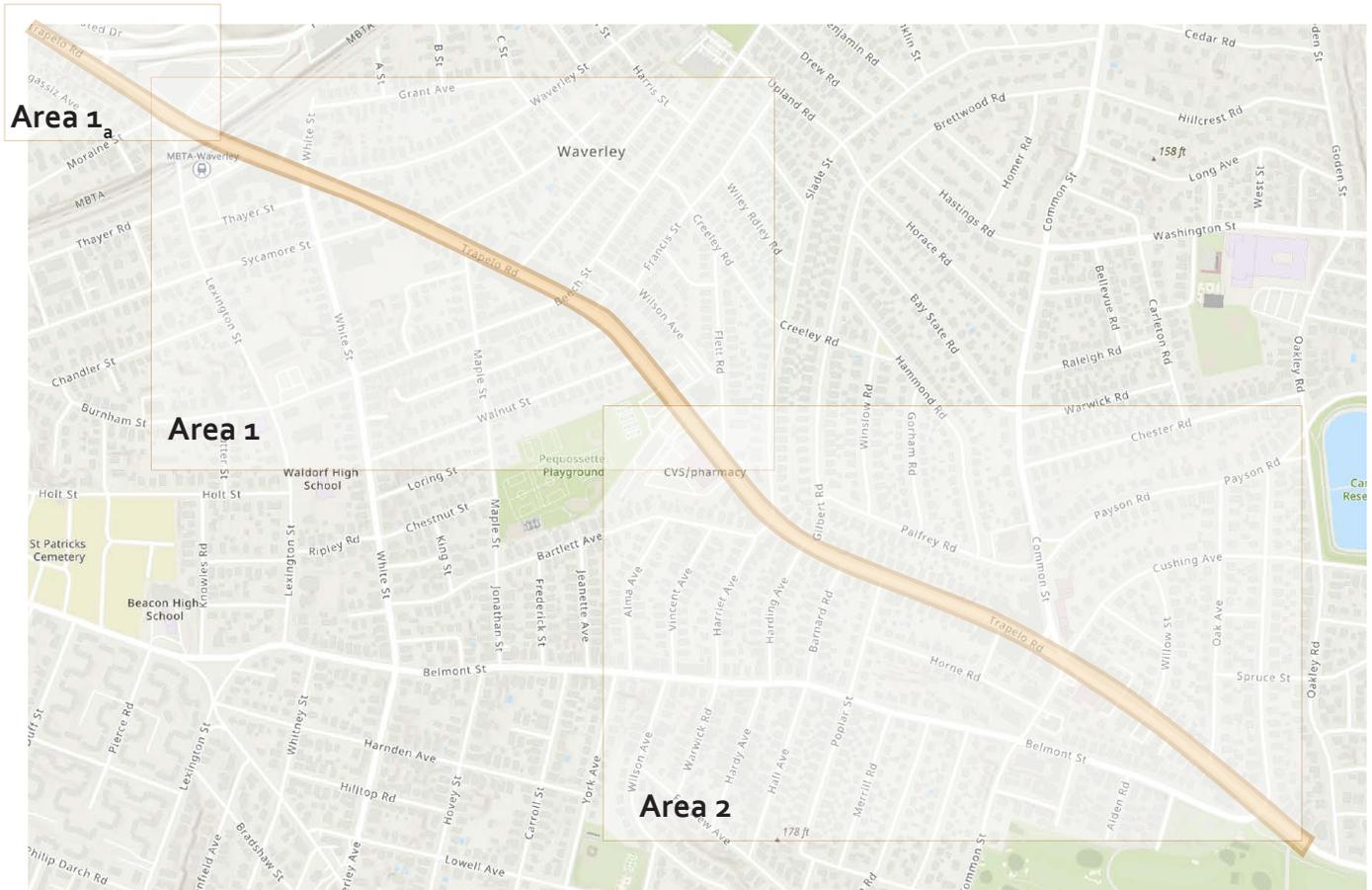
BELMONT
ARTWINGS



BELMONT

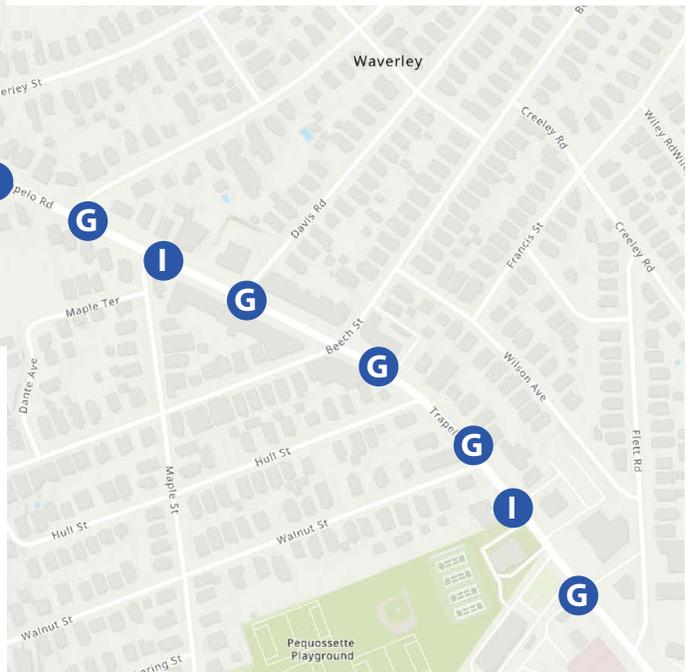
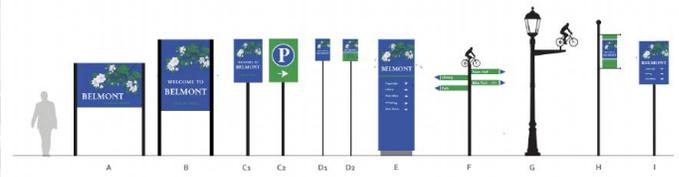
Locator MAP

Locator Map | Trapelo Road



Favermann Design | June 2022
TRAPELO ROAD, BELMONT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations

Area 1/1_a | Trapelo Road



Favermann Design | August 2022
TRAPELO ROAD, BELMONT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations

BELMONT

Locator MAP

Area 2 | Trapelo Road



Favermann Design | August 2022
 TRAPELO ROAD, BELMONT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations