

FAVERMANN  
DESIGN



# ROCKPORT

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





*Motif No.1*

## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Picturesque is a great adjective to describe Rockport. Also colorful, charming, cozy and enticing are descriptions of this artistic harbor community. It is a historic and creative seaside town on the tip of Cape Ann Peninsula in Essex County, Massachusetts. With a population of about 7000, Rockport is located approximately 40 miles (one hour drive) northeast of Boston. It borders the City of Gloucester to the west and is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean in all other directions.



*Vintage Photo of Early Rockport Women Artists at Motif #1*

As an early artists' colony, since the mid-1800's, artists from around the world have been drawn to this scenic coastal village where they have found inspiration and fellowship for their creative work. Artists such as Winslow Homer, Childe Hassam, Helen Stein, Edward Hopper, John Twachtman and John Sloan have all worked and/or lived in Rockport.

With its miles of lovely beaches, boulder-strewn paths through woods and glades, and a seemingly magical light that has been an inspiration to artists since Winslow Homer. Rockport is a convenient, even romantic getaway with appetizing dining (mostly seafood) and a unique shopping experience (with many

locally crafted products) year-round. This experience is full of presentations of artisan wares, paintings and crafts. Today, the artistic atmosphere of the town is so pervasive that almost every shop, restaurant and café serve also as a gallery no matter what they sell.

Founded in 1623, its major industries were first timber for shipbuilding and fishing, then lobstering as well as granite quarrying. Rockport separated from the City of Gloucester as an individual town in 1840. As the demand for its high-grade granite grew during the Industrial Revolution, the quarries of



Granite Quarry



Vintage Rockport Granite Ad from Early 20th Century

Rockport became a major source of the stone during the 19th century. A distinctive form of sloop was developed in Rockport to transport the granite too until the second decade of the 20th century.

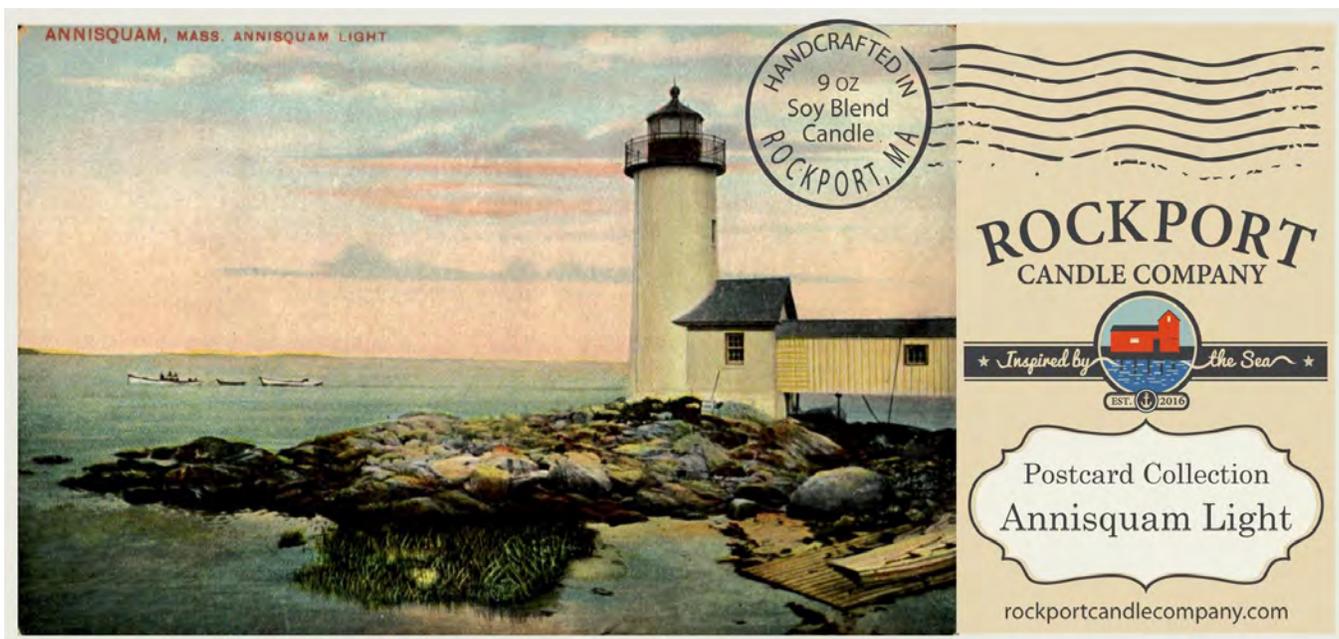
Today Rockport is primarily a suburban residential and tourist town, but it is still home to a significant number of lobstermen and artists. Its rocky beaches and seaside parks have become a favorite place for tourists, skin-divers and biologists.

Downtown Rockport is a designated Massachusetts Cultural Council designated Cultural District. Prominent tourist attractions include Bearskin Neck, a quaint stretch of old fishermen and lobstermen shacks that have been turned into appealing restaurants, shops and galleries; Halibut Point Reservation, a close-in nature reserve; the Rockport Art Association founded in 1921; the frequently painted and photographed Motif #1, the red fishing shack on Bradley Wharf; and the world class Shalin Liu Performance Center, a state of the art performing arts venue spectacularly sited overlooking the harbor and ocean; and a series of seasonal festivals celebrating various aspects of the community. To accommodate first time and returning visitors, Rockport offers a wide array of B&Bs, historic New England inns, boutique hotels and state of the art lodging with a full range of amenities.

Additionally, visitors can explore sandy beaches for swimming, diving, sailing, and kayaking. Public footpaths lead along the sea or through historic Dogtown Common. Besides visits to old granite quarries, the Straitsmouth Island Lighthouse and Thacher Island's Twin Lighthouses can be experienced while appreciating the community's most magical sunrises and sunsets.



Bearskin Neck Shops



*Vintage Postcard of Straitsmouth Island Lighthouse*



*Lobster Dinner*

Interestingly, the Pandemic resulted in attracting more visitors to Town, putting pressure on infrastructure and making more pressing the need to address inadequacies. Covid-19 had a strange effect on Rockport’s commercial district. Because it is a primarily outdoor visitor experience, and its proximity for day trips from Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, made Rockport a tourism magnet. Business in the downtown was actually better in 2020 than 2019. Though this good business news needed to be tempered by

the clarification of several inadequacies that the pandemic underscored in the commercial area pointing out parking and traffic issues, lack of wayfinding, limited staffing and openings for restaurants and cafes, etc.

Reviewing these needs along with several other initiatives, the MDI LRRP 2021 Rockport Study recommended immediate creation of a branding and wayfinding system to make the Town feel more like a connected and cohesive “place.” Also, it was felt that this in turn would improve traffic and parking creating a more welcoming and comfortable visitor experience. This Branding and Wayfinding study was the result of a competitive Commonwealth of Massachusetts grant awarded to Rockport to assist it with reinforcing its Sense of Place, Sense of Arrival and Sense of Shared Experience.

## **BRANDING AND WAYFINDING DEFINED**

Branding or rather community or urban branding is a function of the need for a city or town to find ways to differentiate itself, to bolster its visible distinction for the sake of projecting an individual character. Public character-defining and character-building contribute to perceptions of civic pride and pride of place. In essence, a community brand is the personality of a particular civic entity.

Community or urban branding is not only about logos or representative images, but can also include secondary and tertiary identification elements, such as visual themes, lighting, colors, symbolism and typography. Locations for community branding can be diverse: gateways, entrances, signage, paving, fences, public art, street furniture, monuments, landscapes, and streetscapes

Community branding both adds texture and image reinforcement to the fabric of the city. Why? Because urban branding underscores a sense of arrival, a sense of shared experience—both visual and environmental. It is also about a sense of place, how it creates a particular civic experience, giving visual and even symbolic meaning to a specific location. This sense of civic responsibility underscores tourism, residential appeal, and encouraging a desired retail connection. In an institutional sense, this establishes a strategic identity that will translate into increased image prestige and municipal brand awareness.



*Summer Day at Bearskin Cove*

In an elemental sense, community branding is how a civic or institutional entity defines itself. It is about the establishment of a place's unique place personality. Think of it as applying the concept of 'personality' to a metropolitan area, city, neighborhood, or institution. Now augmented and reinforced by 21st century digital media, urban branding is about strategically adding character, visual interest, even provocative perceptual surprises to our civic environment.

Appropriate wayfinding underscores and interprets this civic character and community personality in very direct, functional and comforting ways.

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment and enhance their understanding and experience of the space. Signs and visual cues are major components of wayfinding. Wayfinding is particularly important in complex built environments including urban centers, commercial districts, healthcare, transportation facilities and campuses. As architectural environments become more complicated, people need visual cues including strategic maps, directions, and symbols to help guide them to their destinations.

Effective wayfinding systems contribute to a sense of comfort underscoring well-being, safety, and security.

By being used repeatedly, these information systems help orient people to develop "mental maps" of the terrain and simplify their routes. Wayfinding systems can help reduce individual stress by providing

easy-to-follow signage and legible directions to destinations. In some settings, reliance on text-based messaging is minimized and systems rely heavily on non-text cues including colors, shapes and symbols.

Comprehensive wayfinding systems combine signage, maps, shapes, symbols, colors, and other communications. Increasingly, they integrate mobile applications, digital displays, QR codes, and other wireless technologies.



*The Old Garrison House Built c. 1700*



*Early 20th Century Image of Thatcher's Island Twin Lighthouses*

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

A Hierarchy of Wayfinding Signs includes several components. These components include:

**Landmarks** - large unique visual or architectural cues serve as a beacon and can lend a sense of place. These could be gateways, public art or monuments.

**Identity** - has brand/name of where you are

**Directional** - points to key destinations

**Informational** - directories, interpretive markers/signs

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

## THE PROCESS

An Advisory Committee was appointed to work through the design and ideation process with the consultant Favermann Design. The individual Advisory Committee members included the following:

**Ross Brackett**, *Brother's Brew and Oceanview, Board of Selectmen*

**John Porter**, *Roy Moore Fish Shack*

**Marshall Tulley**, *Addison Choate Collection, including the Sally Webster Inn*

**Rusty Kinnunnen**, *Rusty and Ingrid Creative Co and Rusty and Ingrid Art & Supply*

**Tom Mikus**, *Resident and town committee member: Green Community Task Force, Open Space and Recreation Committee, Ad Hoc Water Committee, Rights of Way Committee, Planning Board, and Long Beach Options Committee*

**James Ugone**: *Resident and Historic District Commission, Historic Commission, and CPC*

**Christina Willcox**, *Rockport Candle Company*

**Peter Webber**, *Senior Vice President of the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce*

**Mechelle Brown**, **Town of Rockport Cultural District Manager** was the chair of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee took part in a series of meetings where universal, international and national dramatic branding and wayfinding examples, other New England case studies and local Rockport images were shared and discussed with Favermann Design. After that series of examples reviews, the consultant worked through an Ideation Exercise with the committee. This word and phrase exercise gave content and direction to potential designs and taglines for wayfinding and sign elements.

## THE IDEATION

The Ideation Exercise developed the following Advisory Committee responses:

### ROCKPORT DESCRIBED IN ONE WORD:

Peaceful, serene, quaint, touristy, destination, coastal, seaside, village, daytrip, relaxing, livable, beautiful, unique, charming, character, personality, creative, artistic, natural, granite, fishing, music, art, traditional, nostalgic, anachronistic, escape, oasis, memorable, memories, lobster, beaches, whales

### ROCKPORT DESCRIBED IN TWO WORDS:

Family friendly, environmentally sensitive, New England, creative coastal, seaside village, charming character, lobster roll, fish tacos, lasting memories, memorable experiences, creative experiences, soft sands, historic lighthouses, smooth pebbles, silvan hiking, beach town, great views, right whales, Motif No.1, Bearskin Neck, Halibut Point, granite quarry, Shalin Liu, artist colony

### ROCKPORT IN A PHRASE:

Seaside village on Cape Ann  
Seacoast Village on Cape Ann  
A Creative Seaside Village,  
Natural Seaside Home for Art  
Charming coastal destination  
A Creative Place by the Sea  
Art and Nature at the Edge of the Sea  
At the Edge of the Sea

### SYMBOLS / LANDMARKS / ICONS:

Motif No.1	Lobster
Lighthouses	Lobster Buoy
Halibut Point	Artist Easel
Granite Quarry	Twin Lighthouses
Bearskin Neck	Shalin Liu
Fishing Shacks	“Old Sloop”
Fishing Boats	Congregational Church Steeple
Artists	



*Concert at Shalin Liu Performance Center*



*View of Town of Rockport from Harbor*

**COLORS:**

Motif Red, Ocean Blue, Black, White, Rose Pink, Sunset, Sunrise Colors, Harbor Green-blue

**PUBLIC ART QUESTIONS:**

**Should Rockport foster public art?**

Yes, but keeping with Rockport's traditions: (examples: WPA mural at Post Office, more traditional figurative sculpture at Art Association, Granite whale at Millbrook Meadow...)

**Should Rockport support Unique Town Street Furniture?**

Yes, but in local granite. An example would be use of roughhewn slag granite seating at Back Beach.

**What does Rockport aspire to? What would be the town's future-perfect objectives and goals?**

Environmental: "Net Zero"

Sustainable fishing

Plastics ban

Composting

Thriving local industries

Thriving creative businesses

Thriving fishing industry

More affordable housing

Keep character & charm



*Lobster Buoys*



*View of Shops and Restaurants from Dock Square*

From these responses, the Favermann Design team created a number of wayfinding sign design options for the Advisory Committee to review, analyze and suggest changes or refinements. Out of this process, a number of specific design details emerged. These included:

1. Major signs will have a curved or circular top.
2. Signposts will be fabricated from recycled Rockport Granite
3. The use of a silhouette of Motif #1 based on an illustration by Advisory Committee member Rusty Kinnunen.
4. This silhouette is to be used as cutout on the top of many sign elements.
5. It will also be used as repeated images on lower sign bands.
6. The Advisory Committee chose as a preferred sign image and colors

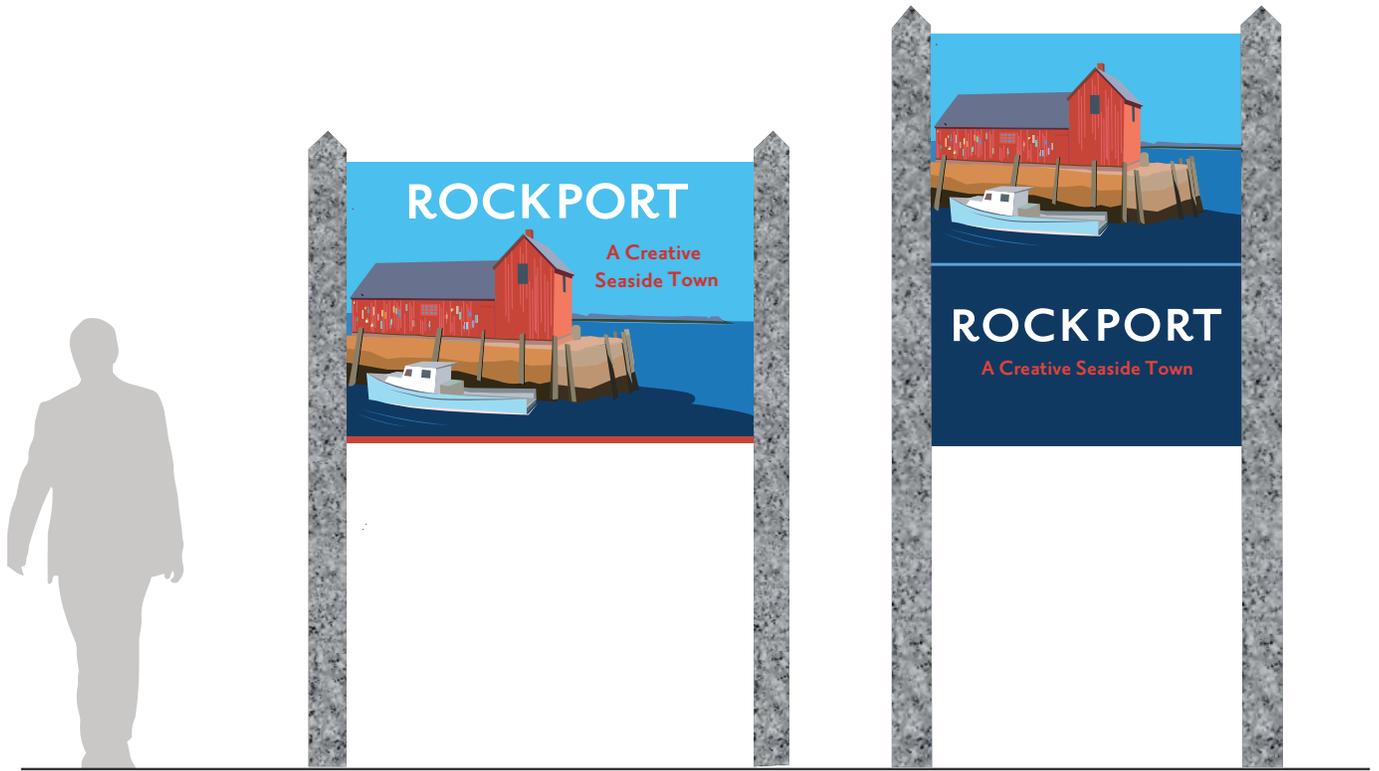
Design schemes explored by the consultant included studies of Motif #1, lobsters, fishing shacks, row boats, views of the town from the sea and others. From these options, the Advisory Committee thoughtfully reviewed each concept and then voiced their likes and dislikes finally focusing on the preferred design.

Additional discussion by the Advisory Committee recommended that wayfinding elements be strategically placed at the following locations:

1. Entrances to the Town of Rockport
2. To and at the major Parking Lot located at the Blue Gate Meadow  
Parking Lot at 5 Blue Gate Lane
3. To and at additional off-street parking locations
4. Decision points in and around the Downtown
5. At beaches and along footpaths
6. Where deemed appropriate, placement of historical or cultural markers

Favermann Design will develop a set of specifications of the complete Family of Elements of the chosen design to allow for vendor bidding, fabrication and installation. The completed designs and a placement map will be presented to the Town of Rockport Select Board for final approval by early Fall 2022. Implementation of Phase One of the Wayfinding and Sign Program should take place during Spring 2023.

# FAMILY OF ELEMENTS



A

B

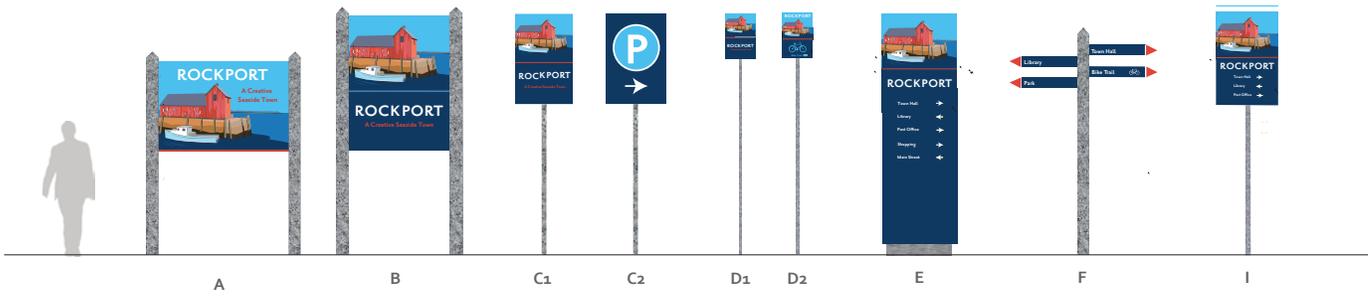
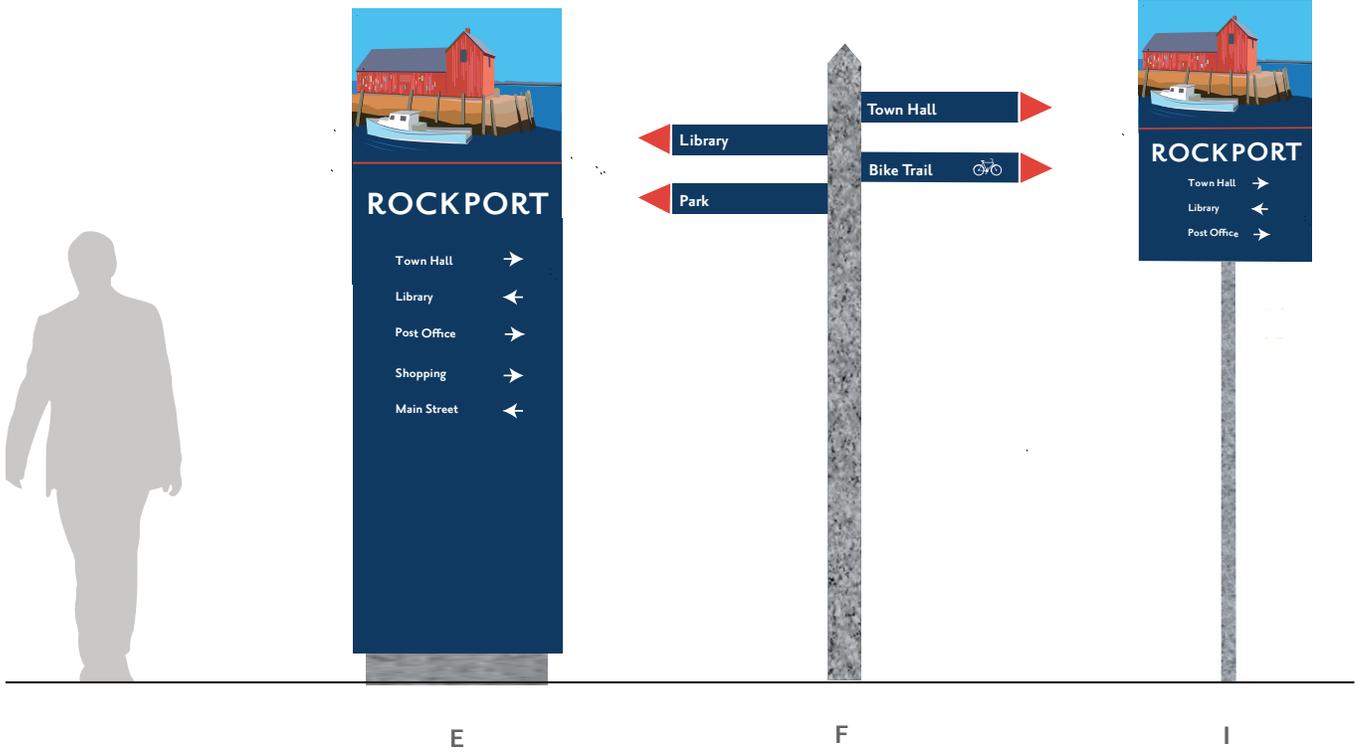


C

C2

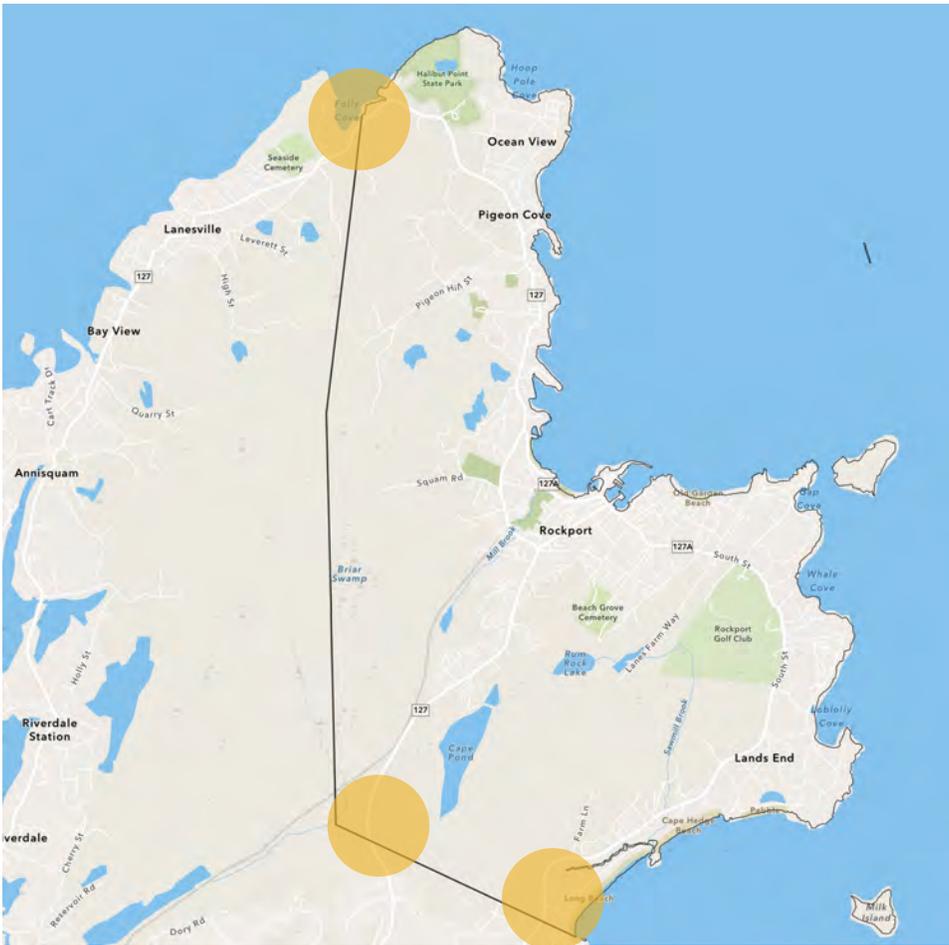
D1

D2



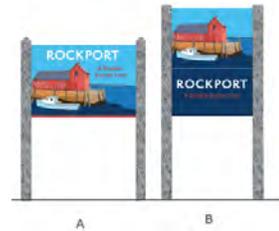
# WAYFINDING LOCATIONS

## Rockport Wayfinding Locations | Gateways



*All locations should be evaluated by Town Staff, including personnel from Public Safety, Fire and Engineering.*

### Welcome Gateway Sign Types



Gateway signs are best used at gateways including main access points into the Town. These can be double sided and include messaging like "See You Soon". It is recommended these be included near Town boundaries along Route 127 (Main Street/Washington Street) and Route 127A.

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ROCKPORT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations

# WAYFINDING LOCATIONS

## Rockport Wayfinding Locations | Directional



*All locations should be evaluated by Town Staff, including personnel from Public Safety, Fire and Engineering.*

### Directional Sign Type

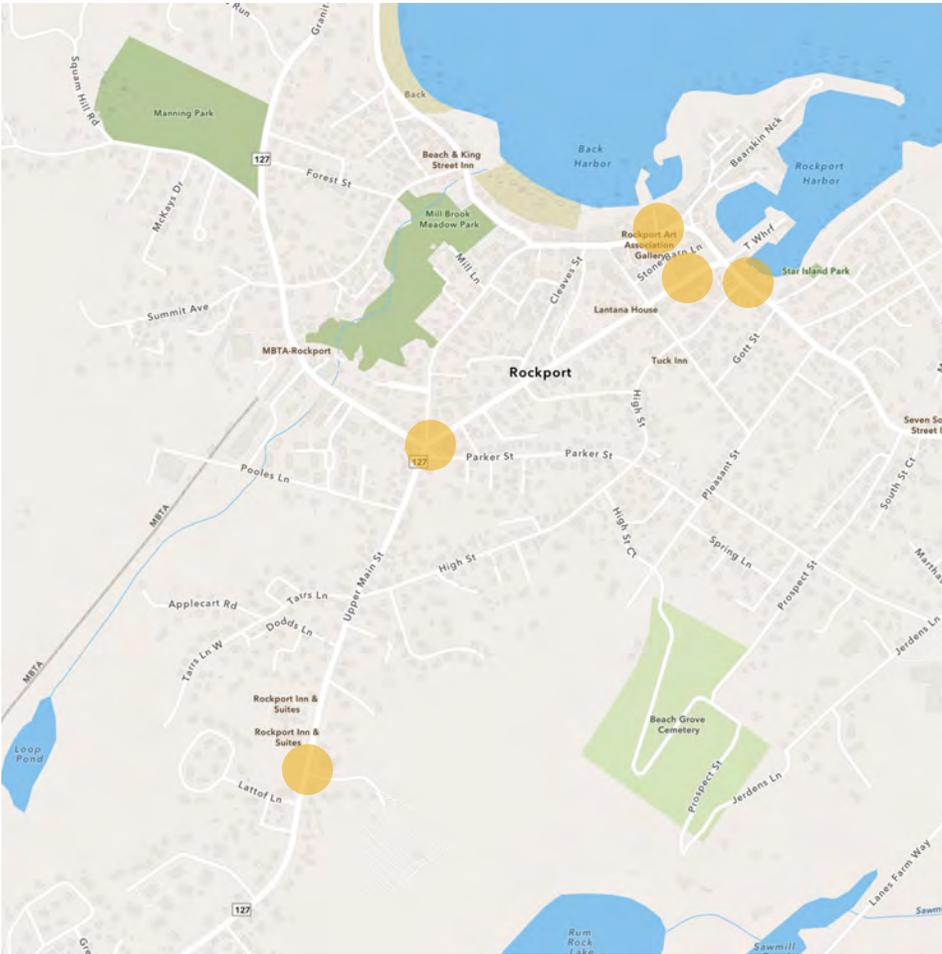


Directional Signs are best used at 'decision points' to help users find key points of interest. This can include municipal buildings such as Town Hall, Library, etc., and may include other points of interest like Shopping Districts, Scenic or Tourism Points.

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ROCKPORT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations

# WAYFINDING LOCATIONS

## Rockport Wayfinding Locations | Parking Signs



All locations should be evaluated by Town Staff, including personnel from Public Safety, Fire and Engineering.

### Parking Sign Type



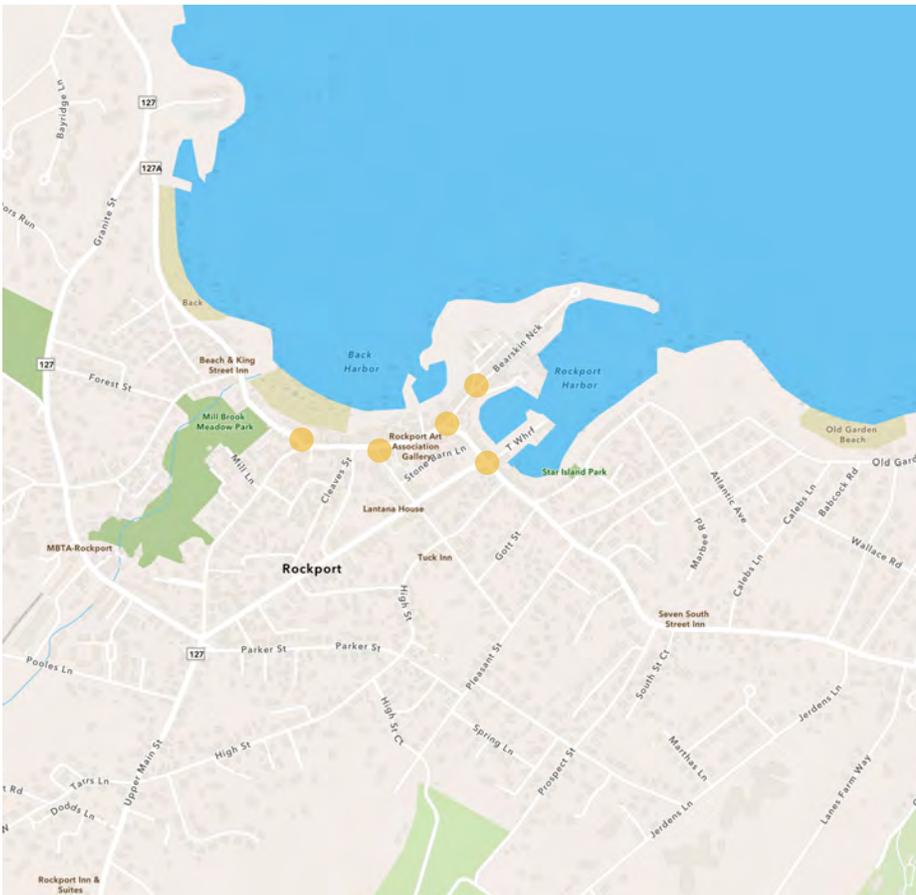
Parking signs are used to direct vehicle users to parking areas. These signs should be placed strategically to direct traffic from the main Gateway points to appropriate metered parking areas, and also Rockport's Park N Ride location off of Blue Gate Lane. Signs can be placed on existing poles or new posts as shown in this example.

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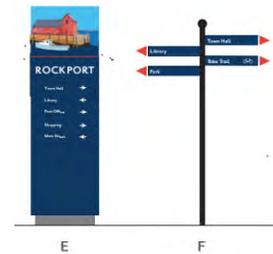
ROCKPORT, MA | Sign Elements and Wayfinding Locations

# WAYFINDING LOCATIONS

## Rockport Wayfinding Locations | Pedestrian Points



### Pedestrian Sign Types



These pedestrian-scale sign types are great in directing individuals on-foot to points of interest. These examples are best used in high-traffic pedestrian areas. Rockport should consider using these sign type primarily downtown serving visitors of Rockport Harbor, Front Beach and Bareskin Neck. Sign messaging can include points of interest such as municipal buildings, shopping areas, access to restroom facilities, scenic and tourist points.

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