

WALPOLE

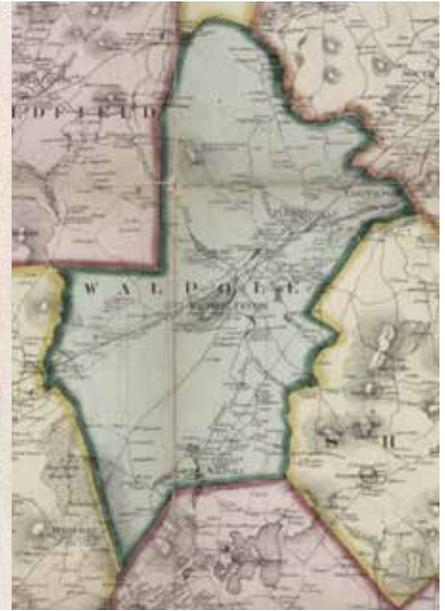
COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT
FINAL REPORT 2023

Prepared by Favermann Design

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



Vintage East Walpole Square



Vintage map

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Early Years

Named in honor of Sir Robert Walpole, who was the Prime Minister of Great Britain at the time, the Town of Walpole, MA was chartered in 1724. It was actually founded three years before in 1721 after a group of sawmill residents who built along the great Cedar Swamp petitioned the Town of Dedham to become a separate Town. Its history dates to when it was first settled in 1659 and was considered a district of Dedham until officially incorporated.

Spectacularly gifted with a leafy tree canopy and seasonal fall foliage, Walpole is located about 18 miles (29 km) south of downtown Boston and about 30 miles (48 km) north of Providence, R.I. Walpole's population was 26,383 at the 2020 census. Today the town is considered one of the safest communities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and an outstanding suburb where to raise a family. Walpole is located in Norfolk County.

The town's origins began as a territory that was claimed by the Neponset band of Massachusetts indigenous people in 1635. In 1636, a deal was made between the Town of Dedham and the Neponset Tribe to grant Dedham lands that now comprise the towns of Walpole and nearby towns of Norwood, Westwood, Medfield, Norfolk, and Dover. The land given to Dedham in this purchase currently includes parts of 16 different towns.

After that, a sawmill industry concentration began to flourish in the area. The first one in Walpole was built near what is now School Meadow Brook and the Neponset River. Located in the area that is now the



Joshua Fisher

Walpole Town Forest, the mill was built and later owned by Joshua Fisher and Major Eleazer Lusher, two wealthy Dedham residents. After its incorporation, the town had a prominent role in the events leading up to the American Revolutionary War. As most of the town's citizens opposed taxes imposed by the British Colonial Government, a town representative, Joshua Clapp, was sent to the pre-state meetings in Boston. These meetings discussed how Massachusetts was going to keep its residents safe and peaceful during the impending events of the American Revolutionary War. In 1775, Walpole sent 157 men to the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Throughout the rest of the war, Walpole sent its Minutemen to fight for the new country.



Old Town Hall

County railroad also connected the town. It was also part of a railroad network connecting Walpole to Boston and Walpole to New York City.

As with any evolving communities, various churches were built and public buildings. Walpole first public library was founded in 1872. It was founded by Walpole resident Miss Mary R. Bird. Actually, the first library in Walpole was founded in 1816 by a group known as The Ladies Literary Moral Society.” It was not public but private and was built to provide books to only selected residents of Walpole.

Walpole grew considerably by population and structures throughout the 1900s. In 1929, \$50,000 (about \$900,000 in today’s money) was donated by Harriet Nevins for the erection of a public building as a memorial to her parents. Her father, George Blackburn, a merchant from Bradford England, once lived and done business in Walpole. Blackburn Memorial Building (known as Blackburn Hall) was designed by the architects Putnam Cox Company of Boston, built by the F.J. Tetreault Company of Walpole, and dedicated in 1932. A red brick building, featuring a neo-classic facade with white pillars, is still owned by the Town of Walpole. It is used for a variety of activities throughout the year. *To the Families of Boston and Eastern Massachusetts*, Harriet Nevins also left \$2500 to fund the construction of a fountain for horses and dogs. Though the fountain is now dry, it still stands on School Street in Walpole opposite the Old Town Hall.



Walpole Historical Society

Following the Revolutionary War, the Town of Walpole began to grow and evolve. Several mills began to be built along the Neponset River in order to harness the power of the adjacent falls.

Following the Civil War, these mills grew and primarily manufactured products that included cotton, lumber, and paper. The most notable of these was the Bird Company, which comprised a large complex on the river in East Walpole. The Bird Company became the most prominent manufacturer and employer in Walpole as well as philanthropist. More to follow about it.

The Neponset River was also used as a transportation corridor between the close towns of Sharon, Foxborough and Medfield. It was also used as a water supply as well as waterpower needs of Walpole. The Norfolk



Blackburn Memorial

After World War II, Walpole followed many other exurban communities outside of a large city and became more of a residential suburb feeding commuting workers and professionals to the Boston metropolitan area. However, Walpole always seemed to capture the charm of a spread out, bucolic place that allowed for nature and recreation to be close by to small town convenience and amenities.

MCI-CEDAR JUNCTION



Opened in 1956 to replace Charleston State Prison, the oldest prison in the nation at that time, the Massachusetts Correctional Institution—Cedar Junction (MCI-Cedar Junction), formerly known as MCI-Walpole, is a maximum-security prison under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Correction. Located in Walpole. MCI-Cedar Junction is one of two maximum security prisons for male offenders in Massachusetts.

During the 1970s, Cedar Junction (then known as Walpole) was one of the most violent prisons in the United States. It is located in both the towns of Walpole and Norfolk. Unfortunately, and unfairly, for years this has somewhat tainted the Town of Walpole's "brand"

and reputation. The wonderful qualities of the Town of Walpole have far superseded any reference to the prison. As of April 2022, Cedar Junction is involved in a three-phased shutting down over the next two years due to reduced incarceration rates (currently the lowest in 35 years) and the high costs of maintenance. Very soon the prison will be only part of the town's history.

THE BIRD CORPORATION

Historically, the Bird Corporation was the largest corporate presence in the Town of Walpole. For well over 200 years, it has manufactured a variety of products, employed generations of residents, and generously contributed to the quality of life of the Walpole community. Opening for business when George Washington was in his second presidential term, the Bird Company is one of the ten oldest companies in the United States. George Bird obtained a license to build waterwheels on the Charles River in the towns of Needham and Dover and set up a small paper mill.



Evolving from the production of five reams of handmade paper per day, by 1812 Bird had established his reputation as a maker of quality paper, and his company was chosen to produce the rag paper on which currency for the new nation was printed. In 1817, Bird's son, Francis, joined the company in 1833 and the business continued to expand steadily, aided by the introduction of new products made with newly developed machinery.

Bird is best known for making asphalt roofing shingles and vinyl siding, popular items in the American construction market. After expanding into window fabrication and environmental services, Bird refocused itself in the mid-1990s and sold these operations. Its remaining business unit was focused totally on the production of commercial and residential asphalt and roll roofing materials, which were marketed through independent wholesalers and retail building materials outlets.

Generations of the Bird family have been generous to their employees and to the Town of Walpole. Scion Charles Bird was a pioneer in employee relations. Between 1900 and 1925, Bird became one of the first American companies to offer an eight-hour workday (as opposed to the standard twelve-hour day at that time), an employee suggestion box, an employee credit union, paid employee vacations, and a benefit association to provide income for sick or disabled employees.



Bird Park

Among their gifts to the town is the spectacular Francis William Bird Park (1925), an 89 acres landscaped and waterscaped park located in East Walpole. It was designed by a protégé of Frederick Law Olmstead, John Nolen, a landscape architect, and town planner. Now overseen by The Trustees of Reservations, it includes over 3 miles (4.8 km) of walking and bicycle paths that wind through the park, crossing winding streams and passing through rolling lawns sprinkled with recent Cherry Trees, Japanese Maples, and Rhodocenioms, facilities at the park include bike racks, benches, trash receptacles, public restroom (open seasonally), a tot lot, four tennis courts, a basketball area, and an outdoor performance stage. An additional donated facility, the Ellis Field is for active forms of recreation. The Bird family provided this sister property for active sports when Bird Park was created. Now known as Ellis Field or Bird Athletic Field, this nearby 7-acre (28,000 m²) recreation area at June and East Streets in Walpole was originally used by workers from mills owned by the Bird family. It is currently used by the town for school and local team sports. Today, Walpole represents all that is good in small town Massachusetts, New England, and American life. A tree-lined, wooded commuter, mostly bedroom community enticing new residents each year with an active civic life. A town of comfortable well spread-out houses, it a wonderful mix of rural and suburban. It was the goal of this Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) branding and wayfinding project by underscoring its civic character to create a new image for town while making its commercial districts, recreational parks and fields and cultural areas distinctive and accessible.



Bird Park





Town Fair



Old Train Station

THE PROCESS

After making a competitive proposal, Walpole 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 Walpole's Town Administrator recruited a Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group to work with the consultant, Favermann Design. Meetings were to take place at Walpole Town Hall very three to four weeks until the project was completed.

The Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group members included:

Glenn Maffei, Select Board Member

Lisa Van der Linden, Destination Downtown

Marc Romeo, Economic Development Commission

Janel Amador de Vries, Historical Commission

John White, Police Department

Rebecca Joyce, At-Large Representative

Patrick Deschenes, Town Planner (ex officio)

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.

The second Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Group meeting was a presentation of case studies about how other 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.

The best 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, as well as 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:

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 Walpole. 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 questions. The Advisory Group enthusiastically took part in the process. In this workshop, there were no wrong answers-- just some answers might have been better, more descriptive and better at characterizing the essence of Walpole.



Adams Farm

Examples of the Ideation Exercise results included:

1. How would you describe Walpole using one word?

Woodsy, Water, Suburban, Quaint, Proud, Wonder, Walkable, Accessible, Friendly, Historic, Parks, Nature, Recreational, Homey, Participatory, Convenient, Affordable, Green, Cedar, Turkeys, Lively, Mills, Crossroads, Patriotic, Neighborhoods, Authentic.

2. How would you describe Walpole with two words?

Open Space, Small Town, Go Pats!, Family Friendly, Woodland Creatures, Trout Lilly, Business Friendly, Community Spirit, Bird Park, Green Space, Natural Beauty.

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

Water and Woods, A river runs through it, small town big heart, Old Town: New Outlook, The Friendly Town, New England Charm, A Tradition of Nature and History, True New England, Authentic in Spirit and Community.

4. What Colors are associated with Walpole?

Green, Brown, Fall Colors, Red Brick, Orange and Blue (high school colors).

5. Should Public Art and Thematic Street Furniture be a priority in Walpole?

Public art and street furniture only if done well.

6. What are significant landmarks, symbols, and memorials in Walpole?

Old Town Hall, Bird Park, Town Forest, Cedar Swamp, Walpole Station, The Common, The Band Stand, East Walpole Clocktower, White Bridge, Red Barn (Adams Farm), Turners Pond, Memorial Pond, Clarks Pond, Lewis Statue, Dog Rock, Memorial Fountain, Birds, Willet Pond.

7. What should Walpole aspire to? What are future-perfect goals for the town?

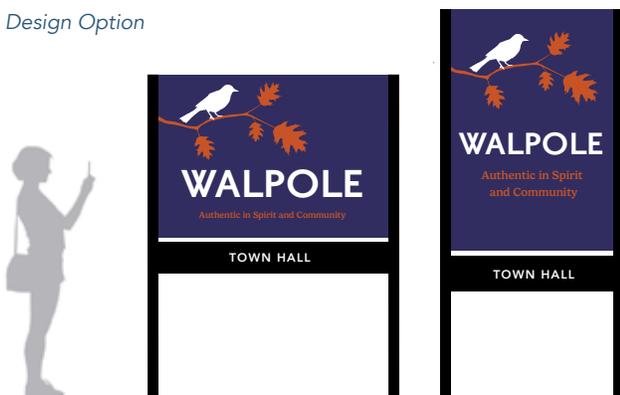
Protected Open Spaces, Preserving, Thriving, Bustling, Quiet and Busy, Accessible.

Design Options

From the various meeting presentations and Ideation Workshop discussions, a number of design options were created and developed by the consultant for use in Walpole’s Downtown as well as in neighborhoods, institutions, and parks. These “branding” options were shared with the Advisory Group for review, debate, and analysis.

Along with exploration of various color combinations, these included images with leaves, birds, water wheels, river, bridges, Old 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 a three legged informational kiosk. The Advisory Group’s reactions were monitored, and a number of clear decisions were made based on these. The resulting designs became the recommendations of the Advisory Group.

Design Option



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 Walpole, these graphical alternatives included working with images of the Old Town Hall, a water wheel, leaves, branches, and birds. Both visual representations were felt to capture the essence and spirit of the Town of Walpole.

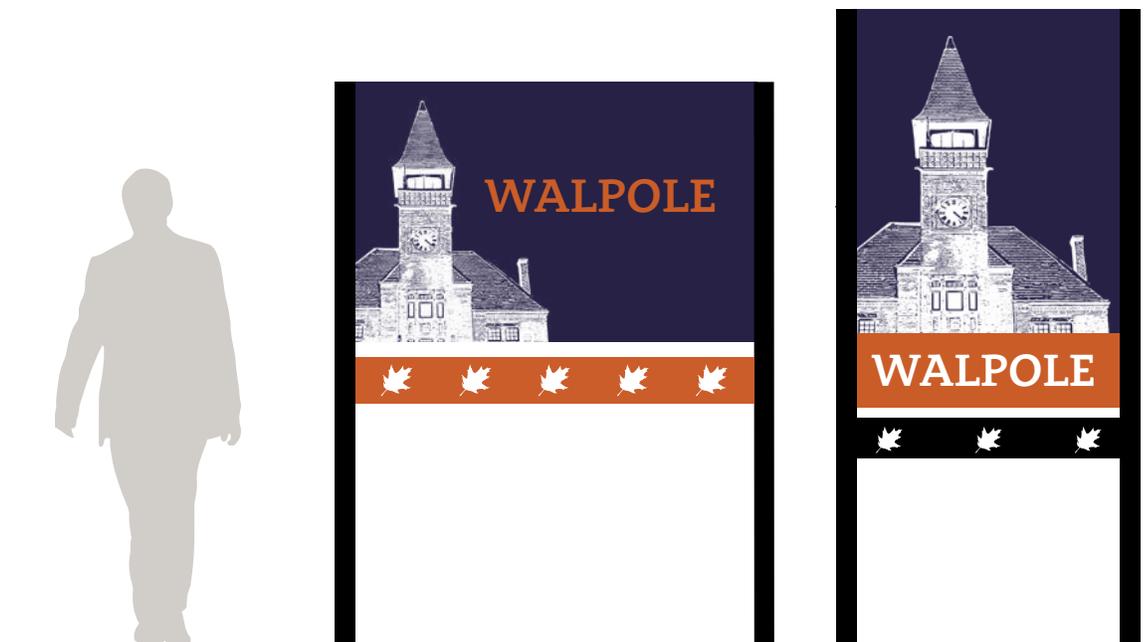
Additionally, out of the Ideation Exercise, two alternatives were developed for the slogan or tagline— These were felt by the Advisory Group only to be used on larger sign elements. Slogans or taglines to be considered for use were “A River of History” and “Authentic in Spirit and Community” slogans. 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.

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 Walpole planning and DPW staff members for estimates and bids by appropriate vendors.

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

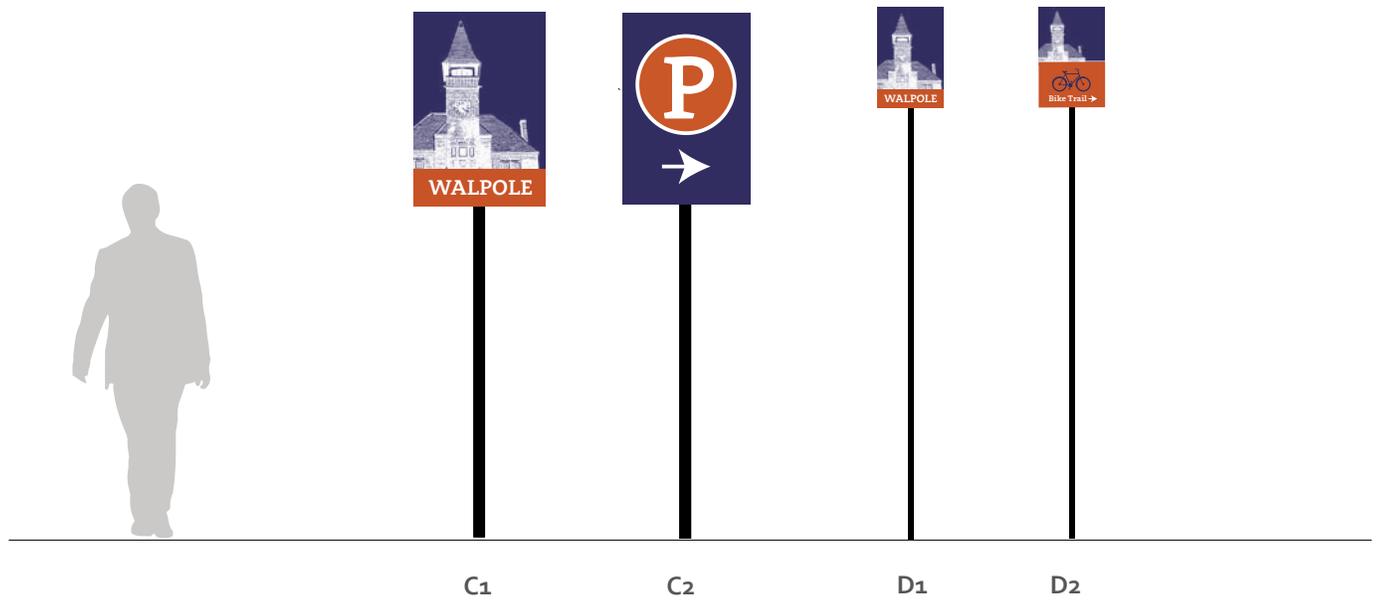
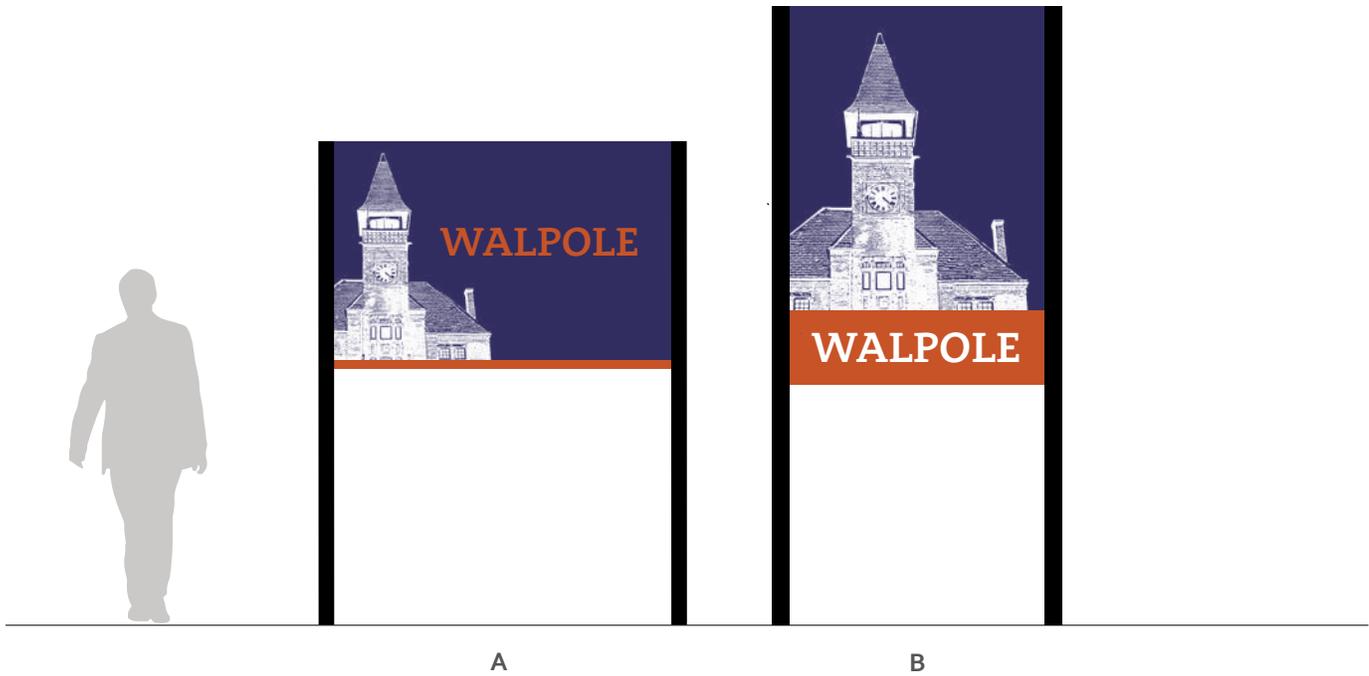
Various branding and wayfinding design options were presented to the Town of Walpole Select Board on June 27, 2022. At that meeting, various Select Board members asked questions and expressed their thoughts and preferences. A 5-0 vote selected a specific version of the Old Town Hall and endorsed the overall comprehensive program.

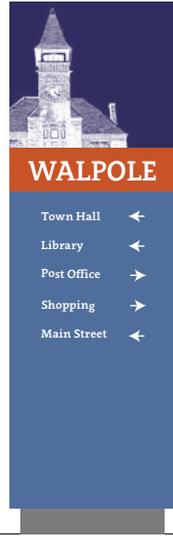


Final Design

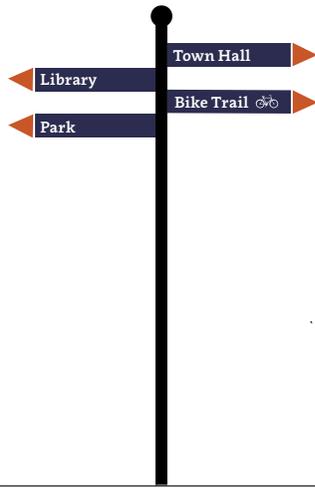
WALPOLE

FAMILY OF ELEMENTS

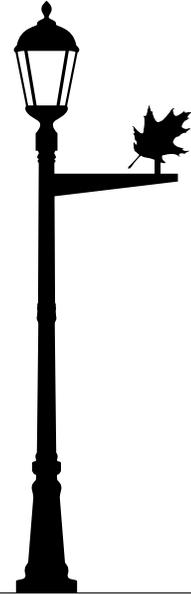




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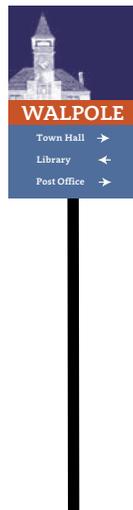
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WALPOLE
BANDS



TOWN HALL

WELCOME TO BIRD PARK

WALPOLE

Signage Placement Map

