



TOWN OF SUNDERLAND

COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT

FINAL REPORT SEPTEMBER 2018

Prepared by Favermann Design

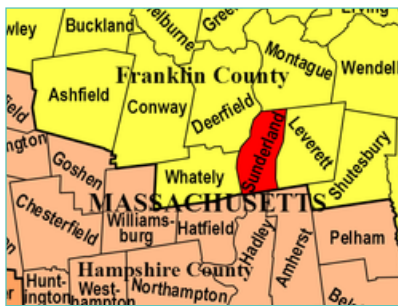
Prepared for the Department of Housing
and Community Development (DHCD)



BACKGROUND

Located on the east bank of the Connecticut River, Sunderland, Massachusetts is a small, primarily rural town in Franklin County, a part of the Pioneer Valley. A bedroom community for Amherst and Springfield, its current population is estimated to be about 3800 people. It is part of the Greater Springfield, Massachusetts Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The town was first settled in 1713 and incorporated in 1718. Initially known as Swampfield, its name was strategically changed to attract more residents. It was renamed in honor of Charles Spencer, the Earl of Sunderland. Historically, the majority of its land has largely been used for farming.



The town has a total area of 14.7 square miles. Mount Toby, a mountain with a firetower lookout, stands at the east border of the town and is crisscrossed by the 47-mile Robert Frost Trail. Surrounded by Mount Toby State Forest, the area is known for its waterfalls, scenic vistas, and biologically diverse ecosystem. Sunderland is home to the Buttonball Tree, an American sycamore famous for its size and age.

Sunderland is bordered by the Town of Montague to the north, Leverett to the east, Amherst and Hadley to the south, as well as Whately and Deerfield to the west. Sunderland is 10 miles south of the county seat of the City of Greenfield, 28 miles north of Springfield, and 90 miles west of Boston. Most of the town's population lies in the western part of town, along the river, though there is a small village north of Mount Toby.



Route 116 passes through the town, coming from Amherst and passing into Deerfield along the Sunderland Bridge. Route 47 passes through the western part of town, crossing Route 116 and heading north before ending at Route 63 in Montague. Route 63 passes through the town for a short distance in its northeast corner.

Alongside Route 63, the New England Central Railroad passes through the town, carrying the Amtrak Vermonter line through Sunderland towards Vermont. The town is served by two bus routes: a route of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) bus line, between Amherst and Greenfield, and a route of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTa) bus line, between Amherst and South Deerfield.

Sunderland has a town meeting/board of selectman form of government. There are three (3) selectman. A town administrator oversees the day-to-day government operations. The town hall is situated in a former school building. Nearby, the Sunderland Public Library is housed in a state-of-the-art facility completed in 2004.



First Congregational Church

An appealing recreational natural area, Sunderland visitors can hike, bicycle and explore nature. The town has a number of eateries including Goten Steak House of Japan, Wild Roots (organic) Café and the upscale Blue Heron Restaurant located in the former town hall. A number of other restaurants and small businesses are located along Rt. 116 (Amherst Road).

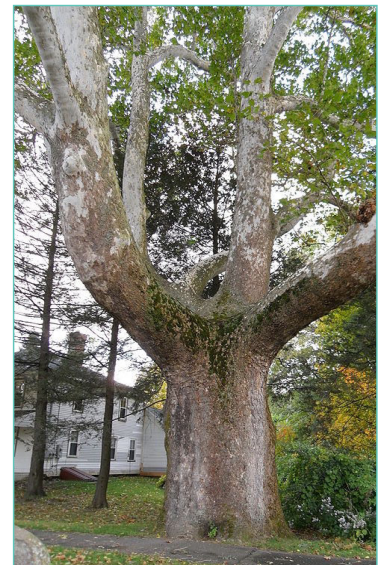
Laurenitis Farm Stand, the Millstone Farm Market and Smiarowski Farm Stand and Creamery sell

seasonal produce and products adjacent to picturesque working farms. Drawing visitors from New York and New England, Sunderland is the home of the very popular seasonal Mike's Maze corn maze. Interestingly, Cooks' Source Magazine is also based in Sunderland.

During the last few years, various community members have had continued discussions about the possibilities of greater Agrotourism or Ecotourism as ways to develop economic stimulus for the Town of Sunderland.

Agrotourism is the use of farms as tourist attractions and can range from afternoon visits for simple apple or berry picking to learning about milking and cheese-making to wine-tasting to spending several days in residence at a working farm or farm stays. Ecotourism would make use of the area's natural surroundings to investigate the multiple aspects of the environment. Seasonal festivals would underscore the special interest tourism efforts.

To begin the economic stimulus strategy, this branding and wayfinding project will help make the Town of Sunderland a distinct destination.



Buttonball Sycamore Tree

PROCESS

After receiving notification of the MDI grant, the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator appointed an Advisory Committee to work with the consultant Favermann Design to develop branding and wayfinding for the Town of Sunderland. Appointed to the Advisory Committee were the following:

Sara Snyder, Planning Board

Nancy Pick, Conservation Commission

Jess Wissemann, Planning Board

David Pierce, Selectman

Cindy Bennett, Admin. Assistant

Phyllis Berman, Town Newsletter Editor

Brent Hale, Art Director and Designer

Gary Briere, Community Pathways Commission

Larry Rivaïs, Resident

Lorin Starr, Library Trustee/Graphic Designer

Sherry Patch, Town Administrator



Including long-term and recent residents, business owners, retirees and even designers as well as town staff and committee members, these individuals represented a good cross-section of the town. Skipping December, the schedule of meetings was to follow 4 to 6 week intervals.

At the first meeting, the consultant presented a large number of creative ways to explore community branding. Looking at ways to underscore a sense of arrival, a sense of place and a sense of shared community ethos, the visual review included thoughtful ways of organizing branded elements, gateways, street furniture, signage, tree grates/guards, crosswalks, use of color, symbol applications, etc.

A presentation of case studies of other communities branding efforts was shared with the Advisory Committee at the second meeting. This led to an in-depth discussion of how other cities and towns developed their distinct brand and how it was applied to their signs and wayfinding elements. In several cases, the brand was shown applied to social media applications as well including the town's website, facebook page as well as internal communications.

The Ideation Exercises took place at the third meeting. Focusing on the questions of "Where is Sunderland?" and "What is Sunderland?" the consultants presented a visual overview of the town's location and its various important physical structures and iconic elements. After a review and discussion of the various notable places, natural forms, vistas, structures and symbols of Sunderland, the Advisory Committee was asked to develop word descriptions of the town. First one word was suggested, then two words and then thoughtful recommendations of three or more words. In some case the multiple words led to proposals for taglines, descriptive phrases or mottos.



Corn Maze



Smiarowski Farm Stand and Creamy

The IDEATION EXERCISE results:

ONE WORD

Agrarian	Historic	Starry
Representative	Generational	Patina
Crossroads	Fertile	Connected
Corny	Convenient	Egalitarian
Rustic	Commuter	Bountiful
Riverside	Verdant	
Bridge	Gateway	
Rooted	Button Ball	
Evolving	Layered	
Welcoming	Charming	
Scenic	Beautiful	



TWO WORDS

Diverse Population	Farm Stands
Deeply Rooted	Home Grown
Agricultural History	Mikes Mazes
Blue Heron	Beautiful Scenery
Open Skies	Happy Medium
Centrally Located	Old/New
Bird Migration	Fish Hatchery
Student Housing	Rare Species
Natural Beauty	Bike Routes
Walking Paths	Hiking Trails
Connecticut River	Paddling Destination

THREE WORDS

Farmy Fresh and Fun	Small Town, Big Tree
Agriculture and Culture	Weekend Destination
River-Mountain-Fields	River Runs Through It
Over the River and Through the Woods	Bridging the Centuries
You Can Get There from Here	Root and Routes
Crossroads of the Valley	
Bridging the Valley	

SYMBOLS

Buttonball Tree	Tobacco Barns
Church Steeple	Library Door
Bridge	Connecticut River
Cornfields	Rotary (future)

ASPIRATIONS

Agritourism
Ecotourism
Downtown Density
Greater Citizen Participation
Green/Sustainable
Walkability
Seasonal Destination



Following these word ideation exercises, the committee members were asked to suggest symbols, colors and aspirations unique or at least special to Sunderland. From the words and other elements, Favermann Design's staff took the next several weeks to explore creating visual images that reflected the essence of Sunderland as described by the Advisory Committee.

Starting with the notion of vibrant cornfields, the designers began to create and develop images that reflected these. Sunderland's distinctive Buttonball Sycamore tree was explored initially, but was rejected

as not being visually appealing enough. Farmland images were also tried but were found to be too generic. Additionally, illustrations of wild grasses were explored as well as views along the Connecticut River. These two directions resonated with the Advisory Committee members.

As no striking or beloved town symbols were uncovered in the Ideation discussions, no symbol was developed for strategic enhancement--applied to the bottom band of the major gateway or directional signs or placement on top of signage. Also, there was no distinctive phrase or tagline that was embraced by the Advisory Committee either.

After several different design options were presented and debated, two distinct rather painterly options were presented to the Board of Selectman at one of their scheduled public meetings.

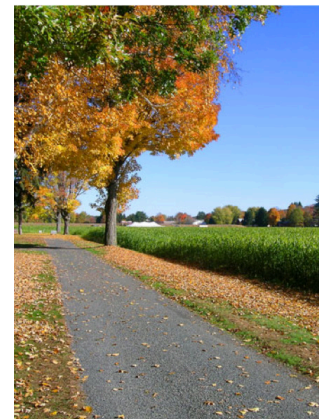
One option was a view of a bend in the Connecticut River, and the other option was a depiction of colored Wild Grasses. After a thorough discussion that included interested residents and merchants, Advisory Committee members as well as the selectmen, the Board voted 3-0 to approve the design of the Wild Grass for the new brand and signage elements.

The "Family of Elements" are created as a hierarchy of gateway signs, directional markers and site signs. In order to allow for a phased, cost-effective fabrication and installation, the elements can be placed into a visual menu or *Kit of Parts*. Also, an easy to read specifications package can be developed to assist with pricing, bidding and fabrication.

SUMMARY

In terms of application of the brand and recommended sign elements, the next steps are up to the Town of Sunderland. Budget organization needs to follow up to determine practical costs and affordability. A phased implementation process over a few years is being considered. Funding sources for fabrication and installation are being researched.

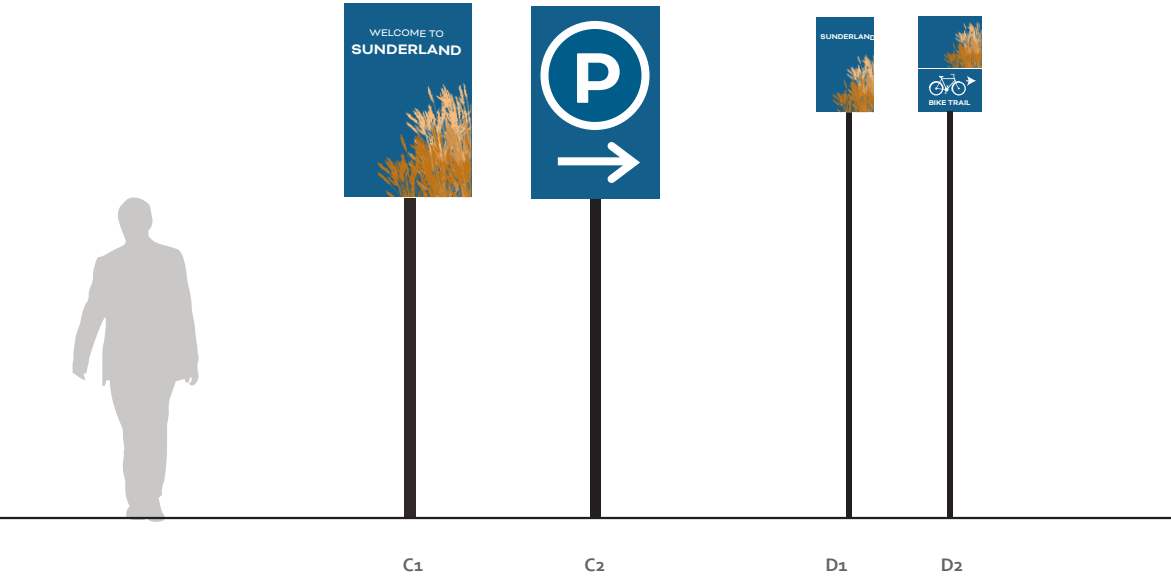
The Wild Grass image depicted underscores the notion of the town's bucolic location and its rural essence. The town speaks to the perception of comfortable, convenient living surrounded by a nurturing sense of nature. The Wild Grass also visually speaks to the natural beauty of Sunderland's expansive, spectacular environment.



GATEWAY ELEMENTS



FAMILY OF ELEMENTS



FAMILY OF ELEMENTS

