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Branding and Wayfinding Project, City of Woburn, MA

A Report Prepared by Favermann Design



Massachusetts Downtown Initiative

Introduction

The City of Woburn applied for a downtown Initiative grant to better orient visitors through and around its downtown. The branding and wayfinding project had been recommended by traffic and parking studies completed by consultants for the city. Soon after it first met, the mayor-appointed committee soon recommended that particular elements of the branding and signage program, where appropriate, be used throughout Woburn. The project was coordinated by Tina Cassidy, Woburn's Planning Board Director/WRA Administrator.

The City's Planning Board/WRA works in conjunction with as well as professionally staffs the Woburn Redevelopment Authority (WRA). The WRA is an independent municipal urban renewal authority established by the City of Woburn in 1961. The Authority is governed by five members, four of whom are appointed by the Mayor, and one by the Governor. In an agreement with the City of Woburn, the WRA functions as the City's community development agency.

Woburn's downtown is called Woburn Square. A concentration of commercial and professional businesses are located there with many restaurants. A roundabout or circle is at the center of the Square. There is a twisting network of roadways through the downtown with connecting roads changing from multiple lanes to two lanes at various junctures. Route 38 provides north-south access through the City and serves at one end as an Exit for I-95/Route 128.

Though there are several historic structures sprinkled throughout the city, far and away the most prominent is the handsome H.H. Richardson designed Winn Memorial Library, Woburn's elegant public library set adjacent to Woburn Square. Opened in 1879, it was the first library designed by acclaimed 19th Century architect H. H. Richardson, the architect of Boston's Trinity Church. The Library building is a National Historic Landmark. Many community logos and brands are based upon the library structure.

Another iconic Woburn structure is the City Hall. The City Hall was erected in 1930-31. It is built in a pleasing Colonial Revival or Neo-Georgian architectural style.

Woburn has a strong youth athletic program culminating in a well-supported high school varsity programs at Woburn Memorial High. The teams are called the Tanners. The Woburn Historical Society is a very active organization with well-attended monthly presentation meetings and a very focused Veterans' Oral History Project. So celebrating local athletics, history and veterans are proud aspects of the citizens' of the City of Woburn's sense of place.



Woburn Public Library



Horn Pond



Downtown Woburn

Background

Located approximately 10 miles north of Boston just south of the intersection of I-93 and I-95, the City of Woburn was first settled in 1640. It initially included the eventual communities of Winchester, Burlington as well as parts of Stoneham and Wilmington. Each separated to form their own town. Those communities and Lexington border Woburn. Woburn was incorporated as a City on June 12, 1888 and has a mayor and city council form of government. Currently, the population of the city is around 39,000.

Residents of Woburn consider it to be a very flexible and resilient community that over the last two centuries, historically has been able to adjust rather easily and determinedly to technological and industrial changes. Woburn's first tannery, Gershom Flagg's tannery, was built in 1668, and today many high tech and biotechnology companies call Woburn home. In fact, Massachusetts Biotechnology Council awarded Woburn the platinum-level "Bio-Ready community" designation in 2011.

The community is less a bedroom community for Boston than many other North Shore towns and cities. More residents live and work in and close to Woburn rather than in Boston proper. Thus, Woburn is a predominantly residential community with strategic areas of offices and commercial areas. Cummings Industrial/Office Park is a major Woburn landlord. Leaving I-95, visually Woburn transitions from office parks and strip malls to a variety of residential neighborhoods. A popular community leisure site of the City of Woburn is Horn Pond, a scenic water location that is used for recreational activities and nature observance.

Transportation facilities to and from Woburn include a transit hub (Anderson Regional Transportation Center) with Amtrak service to Portland, Maine, an MBTA Commuter Rail service to Boston's North Station and Lowell, MA (via two rail stations- ATC and Mishawum), and MBTA regular and express bus routes between Wilmington, Burlington and Boston.



Commuter Rail



Anderson Regional Transportation Center

The Advisory Committee

The following individuals were members of the Woburn Branding and Wayfinding Committee. Members of the WRA also approved/endorsed the final designs. Meetings were held monthly except in August and September 2016.

- Mr. Michael Anderson, Alderman, Ward Four
- Ms. Tina Cassidy, Planning Board Director/
WRA Administrator
- Mr. Arthur Duffy, WRA Member
- Mr. Robert Ferullo, Chief of Police
- Mr. Gary Fuller, WRA Member & Woburn
Business Owner
- Mr. Scott Galvin, Mayor
- Mr. Richard Gately, Alderman, Ward Two
- Ms. Kathy Lucero, resident and historian
- Mr. Wayne McDaniel, WRA Member
- Ms. Sheila McElhiney, Clerk of Committees
- Mr. Don Queenin, WRA Chairman
- Mr. Greg Rheume, City Engineer
- Mr. Dave Ryan, WRA Member & Woburn
Business Owner



Mayor Scott Galvin

The Woburn Branding and Wayfinding Committee members were highly involved in the design process. Bringing their own perspectives to the discussion, their enthusiastic and thoughtful participation enhanced the focus and outcomes of the program.

The Process

Initially, the Consultant assigned by the Downtown Initiative of the DHCD Mark Favermann of Favermann Design presented to the Woburn Branding and Wayfinding Committee an overview slide presentation about community branding. This slide show incorporated the notions of how a brand underscores a sense of arrival for visitors and residents and a sense of place for everyone, as well as a sense of pride of place for residents and businesses.

This presentation was followed up by another presentation focused on case studies of similar projects from other Massachusetts cities and towns. At the following meeting in July 2016, an Ideation Exercise was worked on by the committee. This included a review of images that visually described the essence of Woburn including history, housing and retail examples. In addition, there were examples of strategic structures like the Winn Memorial Library, the City Hall, historic homes, Horn Pond, public bronze statues, etc.



Statue of Colonel Loammi Baldwin

After this image review, the committee was asked to enter into a discussion of descriptive words and phrases describing Woburn in one, two and three or more words along with colors, symbols and future visions for the community. The most descriptive words and phrases were chosen over lesser ones by committee consensus. The exercise's goal was to describe in the clearest way the essence of the City of Woburn—its character. With this in mind, the committee had reinforced the definition of What is Community Branding?

This was defined as

- Identity or Visual Appearance
- Intangible Assets That Add Value
- Image to Visitors and Residents

Additionally, the committee kept in mind What does Branding Reinforce?

- Sense of Arrival
- Sense of Place
- Sense of Shared Experience

The following are the results of the Ideation Exercises that took place on September 27, 2016

One Word Description

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| Community | Historical |
| Diverse | Driven |
| Friendly | Pride |
| Interesting | Accessible |
| Traditional | Settled |
| Loyal | Cooperative |
| Independent | Adaptive |
| Affordable | Grounded |
| Architecture | Safe |
| Evolving | |

Three or More Words

Sense of Pride
Sense of Community
Live, Walk, Play
A Living History
Pride in Military History

Two Word Description

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Tanner Pride | Goal-Oriented |
| Civic-Minded | Traditional Values |
| Helping Others | Cross-cultural |
| Multi-generational | Caring Community |
| Close-knit | Making Change |
| Rooted Community | Ever-Changing |
| Low Taxes | Family-Oriented |
| Moving Forward | Forward Thinking |
| Middlesex Canal | Horn Pond |
| Together united/ | Fiscally Responsible |
| United Together | |

Symbols

Horn Pond
Not the Library
Common
City Hall
Baldwin Statue
Patterns on Historic Buildings

Colors

| | |
|------------|------------|
| Black | Orange |
| White | Silver |
| Gold | Royal Blue |
| Maroon | Tan |
| Leaf Green | Cranberry |

Future

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Continued Prosperity | Welcomes Change |
| Change for the Better | A City of Innovation |
| Strive for Excellence | Embracing Change |
| Work Toward Perfection | |



Count Rumford Birthplace Museum

After going through the Ideation process, Favermann Design translated the information into visual components. Following that, the elements were then applied to sign components to test their appropriateness and readability. The Winn Memorial Library was rejected by the committee as a potential image for being over-used in the City.

At the October Meeting, it became clear that there were two preferred design directions: (1) City Hall and (2) the Statue of Baldwin. The statue of Colonel Loammi Baldwin is located facing the intersection of Main Street, Alfred Street, Elm Street, and the entrance to a mall. It is a statue of a man in Colonial military uniform on a pedestal. Colonel Loammi Baldwin, Senior, was a Colonel in the American Revolutionary War, an engineer and a builder of the Middlesex Canal, a developer of the Baldwin apple, and a devoted public servant.

Favermann Design was asked to explore various graphic approaches to both the City Hall and the Baldwin images. At the November meeting, the Baldwin image was chosen. At that time, red, white and blue were the color schemes chosen for two options.

Reviewing a street map, the committee also discussed sign element placement in and around Woburn Square and at key "gateway" entrances to the city. This led to a discussion of price estimates for various types of signage. Favermann Design provided various costs. The committee recommended a phased implementation of the program.

Parallel to the design review process by the committee, the group also verbally wrestled with the notion of a tagline or slogan that could be used with the graphic representation. After much discussion based upon the historic tradition of the City of Woburn and its innovative and evolving and contemporary environment, the committee initially chose "A Living History" was chosen as a slogan. This was later refined to a verbal phrase rather than just a descriptive one, "Living History."

After a few refinements to the image of the Baldwin statue rendering, the design was shown to Mayor Scott Galvin. At a meeting that included Tina Cassidy, it was recommended by both of them that a fourth design reflecting the Woburn Memorial High School colors—orange, black and white should be developed for review as well. The image was changed by the consultant to reflect these color recommendations. The revised orange image was reviewed via email by all of the committee members. It was unanimously approved, and therefore became the approved brand image.

After the various refinements, a televised presentation by the consultant was made to the Woburn Redevelopment Authority, the agency that would be implementing the program. The complete "family" of sign elements was part of the presentation. These included gateway, directional and parking signage elements as well as decorative banners and sculptural elements to be affixed to light poles and various directional sign posts. The WRA Board approved and endorsed the design unanimously.



Cummings building Complex

Next Steps

To follow-up on the design process, the WRA and related Woburn Departments will take several steps:

- Explore funding sources both public (discretionary funds) and private (institutional grants)
- Refine a phased implementation approach
- Once funding is obtained, finish development of specifications package and vendors bids
- Implement Phase One of program
- Based on Phase One, expand the program to address needs of the City of Woburn

Family of Elements

