Cambridge, Maryland Downtown Wayfinding Study

CAMBRIDGE MAIN STREET



www.downtowncambridge.org

RIVERS & ROADS

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Photos Courtesy of Jameson Harrington

01

INTRODUCTION

The City of Cambridge, Maryland, recognizes the pressing need for a strategic enhancement of its wayfinding system to address the evolving needs of its residents, visitors, and business community. Presently, Cambridge has very limited wayfinding infrastructure, with existing options such as gateway signs and pole banners that do not effectively guide or funnel visitors toward the downtown area. Over the years, Cambridge has experienced changes in traffic patterns, pedestrian movements, and urban development that have necessitated a reevaluation of its navigational signage and information systems. This project aims to create a unified, effective wayfinding strategy that enhances the navigational experience across the city, simplifies the travel and exploration process, and supports the city's economic and cultural objectives.

As part of our comprehensive approach, this assessment identifies existing challenges and opportunities within the current wayfinding framework. The goal is to aid in the development of a cohesive system that not only guides users efficiently but also reinforces the identity and heritage of Cambridge, fostering a sense of place that resonates with both locals and visitors.

The system will not only guide through the city but will also aim to reflect and celebrate the unique historical and cultural identity of Cambridge. By focusing on the "Visitor Voyage" — the stages of preparation, arrival, engagement, and departure — the wayfinding system will serve as a constant, friendly guide that enhances the overall experience of the city.



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PURPOSE OF WAYFINDING

Wayfinding systems are essential in guiding residents and visitors through the spatial environment of a city, providing clear and concise information that helps individuals locate their positions relative to their desired destinations. In Cambridge, the purpose of revitalizing the City's wayfinding system extends beyond mere navigation. It encompasses the integration of city branding, enhancement of visitor experiences, and support for local businesses by encouraging exploration and engagement within the city.

Currently, the minimal wayfinding options available are disjointed, with gateway signs and pole banners that lack a strategic focus on directing traffic to key areas, particularly the downtown. Effective wayfinding systems contribute to a city's accessibility and perceived safety, making it more inviting for pedestrians and motorists alike. They encourage exploration by reducing the anxieties associated with unfamiliar environments. Well-designed wayfinding signage and information help in:

- Reducing visual clutter through organized and strategic placement of signs.
- Providing clear directional guidance to significant cultural, historical, and recreational sites.
- Enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of the urban landscape, which is critical for a city known for its waterfront and historic districts.
- Supporting economic activities by directing visitors to shopping districts, dining options, and entertainment venues, thereby increasing foot traffic and potential consumer spending.

By addressing these aspects, the wayfinding project aims not only to improve functional efficiency but also to enhance the cultural and economic vitality of Cambridge.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE CAMBRIDGE WAYFINDING PROJECT INCLUDE:

Strengthening Community Identity:

Aid in the development of a wayfinding system that enhances and reflects Cambridge's unique historical and cultural heritage, promoting a strong sense of place.

Improving Visitor Experience:

Ensure that visitors can navigate the city with ease, particularly focusing on directing them to the downtown area, which is rich in history, dining, shopping, and cultural offerings.

Enhancing Economic Vitality:

By making the city more navigable and less intimidating, encourage visitors and residents to explore more extensively, increasing foot traffic and potential spending in local businesses.

Reducing Navigation Stress:

Create a coherent and interconnected wayfinding system that replaces the current disjointed signs and banners, thus minimizing confusion and enhancing the overall aesthetic of the city.

Promoting Walkability and Accessibility:

Design the wayfinding system to encourage walking, making it easy for pedestrians to find their way from parking areas to key destinations within the city.

Streamlining City Information:

Develop a system that combines elegance with functionality, providing essential information without overwhelming users, thus reducing visual clutter and focusing on key navigational messages.

Sustainable Design and Maintenance:

Ensure that the new wayfinding elements are easy to maintain and environmentally sustainable, incorporating durable materials and designs that can be easily updated as the city evolves.



03

COMPONENTS OF A WAYFINDING SYSTEM

A successful wayfinding system is comprised of multiple components that work together to guide visitors and residents efficiently and effectively through the cityscape. For Cambridge, the design of each element will aim to complement the city's unique character while providing clear, accessible information. The following components are essential for the Cambridge Wayfinding System:

GATEWAYS



Credit: City of Bartlesville, OK

PURPOSE:

Gateways serve as visual welcomes to the city, marking key entry points and setting the tone for visitors' experiences. They should be prominently placed at major approaches to the city and designed to reflect Cambridge's historical and cultural significance. They require active work with the State Highway Administration due to their common placement on highways, and Cambridge is no different, with Route 50 being the primary distribution road into the city.

DESIGN ELEMENTS:

Incorporation of architectural features, public art, or landscaping that resonates with Cambridge's maritime heritage and vibrant community life.

DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE



Credit: City of Bartlesville, OK

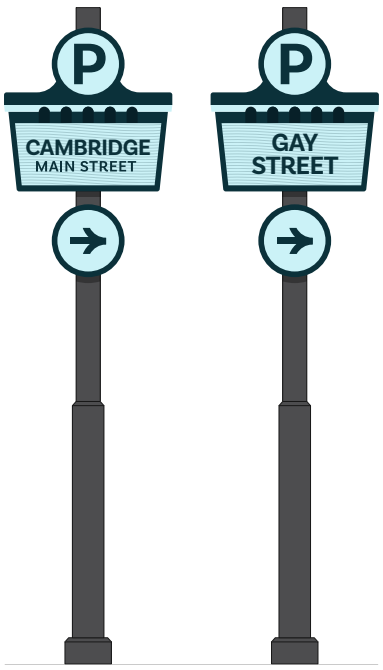
TRAILBLAZER SIGNS:

Positioned along main routes and at critical decision points, these signs guide vehicular traffic toward general areas like downtown or major attractions, also serving pedestrians at a more localized scale.

DESTINATION SIGNS:

These are more specific than trailblazers, used to direct visitors to specific destinations such as museums, parks, or historic sites. These are crucial in pedestrian-heavy areas and slower traffic zones. In Cambridge, these signs would specifically direct people to attractions like the "Take My Hand" mural, Harriet Tubman statue, waterfront, or Pine Street Historic District.

INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGE



PARKING AND IDENTIFICATION SIGNS:

To aid in locating parking and navigating from parking areas to key destinations. These signs should clearly differentiate types of parking (e.g., short-term, long-term, special use) and incorporate real-time availability features where possible.

Pedestrian Signs: Strategically placed in walking areas to guide foot traffic to local attractions, these signs should be easy to read from a walking pace and positioned at pedestrian eye level.

KIOSKS AND INFORMATIONAL DISPLAYS



INTERACTIVE KIOSKS:

These freestanding units provide maps, historical facts, local business directories, and event information. Ideally located in high foot-traffic areas such as public squares, near busy attractions, and at transition points from parking areas to pedestrian zones. Rarely do interactive kiosks work well in small cities and towns, due to their initial costs, maintenance, and content moderation needs. Especially in high-humidity areas like the Eastern Shore, the cost to maintain fan-cooled kiosks or install liquid-cooled versions are typically prohibitive, keeping this from being a recommended sign type for Cambridge.

STATIC MAPS AND CULTURAL DISPLAYS:

Offer static visual and textual information about the city's layout, cultural sites, and events. These should be designed to be both informative and visually appealing, reflecting the city's branding and aesthetic. These are much easier and cost effective to display compared to kiosks, and can be made to be easily reprinted and replaced seasonally as new businesses and attractions come to downtown Cambridge.

BANNERS AND TEMPORARY SIGNAGE

USE:

To promote seasonal events or highlight cultural festivities, these can be used flexibly to enhance the festive atmosphere in the city and draw attention to special events. Cambridge already uses banners throughout the downtown, though the consistency and overall presence can be enhanced to ensure they extend through all areas where we want to send pedestrians.



DESIGN CONSISTENCY:

While temporary, these elements should still align with the overall design language of Cambridge's wayfinding system to maintain visual coherence. When possible, avoid using definitive dates on the banners to allow for easy storage and re-use over multiple years.

DIGITAL INTEGRATION

SMART TECHNOLOGY:

Consider the integration of QR codes and NFC (Near Field Communication) tags on signage to link to digital content such as detailed maps, event listings, or historical narratives. QR codes have been well adopted and are better understood since the pandemic, and allow for the City or Cambridge Main Street to create interactive maps, walking tours, and more information on different landmarks in town. As an example, a QR code on the Destination Sign for the Take My Hand mural may send visitors to an interview with artist Michael Rosato.

MOBILE INTEGRATION:

Encourage the use of a mobile app or mobile website that complements physical wayfinding components, providing real-time updates on city events, downtown pop-ups, and parking availability.



04

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey conducted among business owners, residents, and visitors of Downtown Cambridge provided invaluable insights into the current state of wayfinding and identified several key areas for improvement. The responses highlighted the frequent usage of the downtown area, the challenges faced in navigating it, and the need for a cohesive, culturally reflective wayfinding system.

FREQUENCY OF VISITS AND PRIMARY PURPOSES

A significant portion of respondents visit Downtown Cambridge on a daily or weekly basis, primarily for business-related activities, shopping, dining, and attending local events. This frequent engagement underscores the importance of an effective wayfinding system that can cater to both regular users and occasional visitors. Business-related visits, in particular, emphasize the need for clear and efficient signage to support local commerce and enhance the overall downtown experience.

CURRENT WAYFINDING CHALLENGES

Many respondents rated the current wayfinding signs poorly, indicating widespread dissatisfaction. Common issues reported include the lack of signage for specific locations such as Race Street, where businesses on the backside are difficult to locate. Additionally, parking areas, especially those behind buildings, lack clear signage, leading to confusion for visitors. Public facilities such as libraries and parks also suffer from inadequate signage, making them hard to find. This feedback highlights the critical need for a comprehensive review and overhaul of the existing wayfinding system.

SPECIFIC LOCATIONS NEEDING BETTER SIGNAGE

Respondents identified several specific locations that urgently need improved signage. Parking areas emerged as a top priority, with many respondents stressing the importance of clear, visible signs indicating parking locations and regulations. The backside of Race Street was frequently mentioned, with calls for signs at parking lot entrances and along the street to guide visitors to businesses. Public facilities, including libraries and parks, require enhanced signage to aid navigation. Historic and tourist attractions, such as the Harriet Tubman statue and the Choptank Lighthouse, also need better signage to make them more accessible to visitors.

The downtown commercial district and waterfront areas were highlighted as needing a consistent and comprehensive signage strategy. Respondents noted that Route 50 and other key entry points into the city lack signage directing to downtown Cambridge, leading to missed opportunities for attracting visitors. Maryland Avenue, a critical entry route, was described as confusing, especially for new visitors. Improving signage on Maryland Avenue is essential to create a welcoming and clear entry route into the city.

AESTHETIC DESIGN AND CULTURAL REFLECTION

The survey responses revealed a desire for signage that is not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing and reflective of Cambridge's cultural and historical heritage. Many respondents criticized the current branding elements, such as the flower theme, for lacking connection to the city's identity. There is a strong call for a more thoughtful and authentic design that incorporates historical motifs and thematic colors. Ensuring that the signage is cohesive with the city's maritime and historical themes will create a more appealing urban environment and enhance the visitor experience.

PREFERENCE FOR DIGITAL AND TRADITIONAL OPTIONS

There was a mixed preference for digital wayfinding options among respondents. While some favored traditional signage, others saw value in digital tools like apps and interactive kiosks. This indicates the need for a balanced approach that caters to different user preferences. The importance of using durable materials for signage was also emphasized, with suggestions for UV-resistant coatings and materials that ensure long-term clarity and legibility.

The survey results provide a clear roadmap for developing a more effective wayfinding system in Downtown Cambridge. By addressing the identified challenges and incorporating stakeholder feedback, the city can create a wayfinding system that enhances navigability, supports local businesses, and enriches the overall visitor experience. Focusing on key areas such as parking, public facilities, historic sites, and major entry points will be crucial. Additionally, ensuring that the design is culturally reflective and aesthetically pleasing will create a cohesive and inviting environment for both residents and visitors. Integrating both traditional and digital signage will cater to diverse preferences and enhance the overall effectiveness of the wayfinding system.



WAYFINDING CHALLENGES

Lack of signage:

Many respondents cited difficulty finding locations due to a lack of directional signage throughout and leading to downtown.

Aesthetic consistency lacking:

Any current signs do not have consistent branding or aesthetics and make it hard to see what type of signage they are.

Gateways:

Little to no signage upon entering Cambridge on Route 50, and no directional signage on downtown's major entry roads: Maryland Avenue and Cedar Street.

Historic Sites:

No appropriate markings or guidance to walk to or drive to historic sites and arts-related locations (e.g. Take My Hand mural).

Parking:

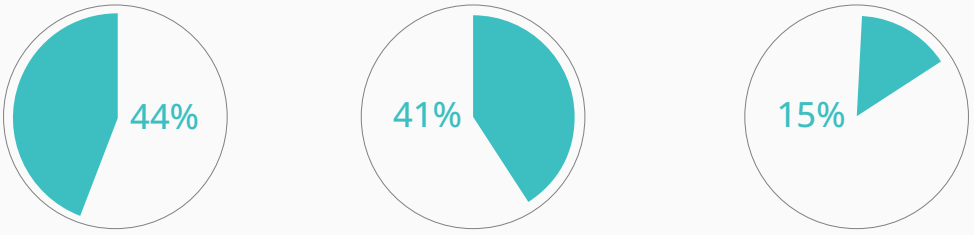
There are not clear signs while parking to find public parking areas, and once parked, no clear pedestrian signage to locate destinations and amenities.

Disconnection:

There is a perceived disconnect from the 500 block of Race Street and south, as well as the Pine Street neighborhood. No existing signage to bring pedestrians to businesses in either location.

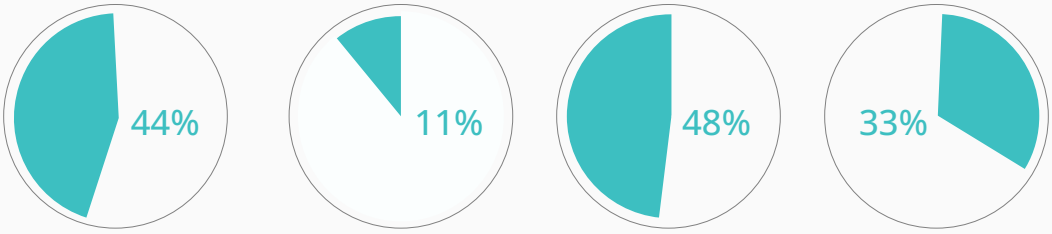
SURVEY RESULTS

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VISIT DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE?



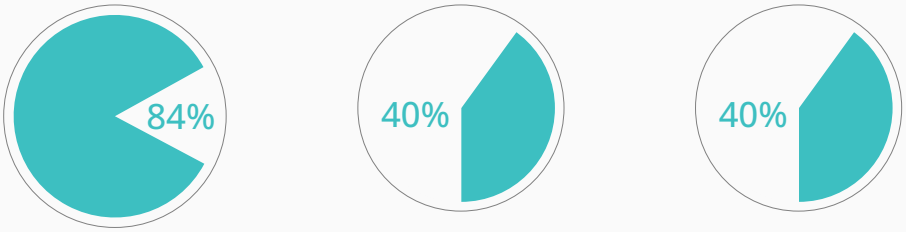
DAILY | WEEKLY | MONTHLY

PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR VISITING



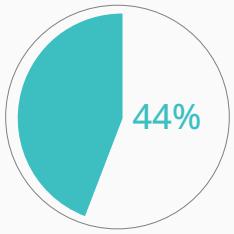
BUSINESS RELATED | TOURISM | EVENTS | DINING

WHAT TYPES OF DESTINATIONS DO YOU THINK NEED BETTER SIGNAGE IN CAMBRIDGE?

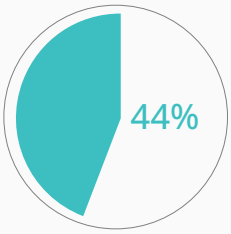


PARKING AREAS | TOURIST ATTRACTIONS | PUBLIC FACILITIES

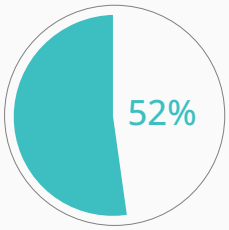
WHAT TYPES OF DESTINATIONS DO YOU THINK NEED BETTER SIGNAGE IN CAMBRIDGE?



BUSINESS DISTRICTS

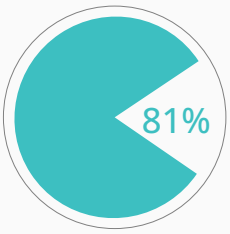


HISTORIC SITES

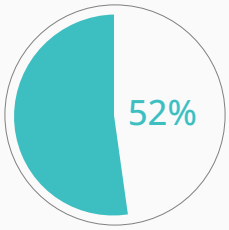


PUBLIC RESTROOMS

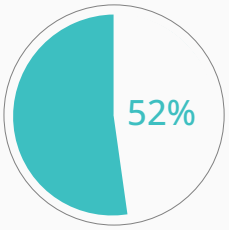
WHAT AREAS OF CAMBRIDGE NEED BETTER SIGNAGE?



DOWNTOWN

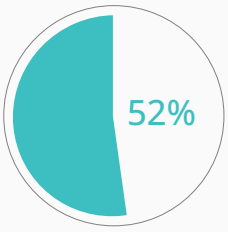


ROUTE 50

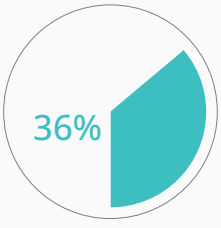


WATERFRONT

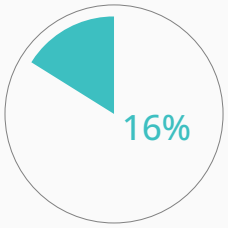
HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU THAT THE WAYFINDING SYSTEM REFLECTS THE CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF CAMBRIDGE?



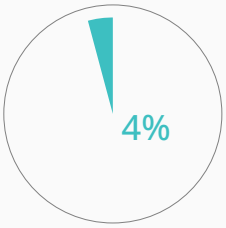
VERY IMPORTANT



SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT



NEUTRAL



NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

05

SIGN TYPE RECOMMENDATIONS

GATEWAY SIGNS

Gateway elements support placemaking and identification of your city and key assets within your community. These structures are implemented to establish pride in the community and introduce the quality and character of place upon entry. While gateway signs are often limited to banners in small downtowns like those on the Eastern Shore, Cambridge is also lacking a significant Monument Sign along Route 50, especially given State Highway Administration's ownership of the developed land directly over the Choptank River Bridge. Cambridge Main Street should consider working with SHA to construct a Monument Sign on the land to introduce travelers to Cambridge, as well as a smaller Directional Sign pulling them down Maryland Avenue.

TYPES OF GATEWAYS:

MONUMENT SIGNS:

Large, freestanding structures that provide a significant visual impact. Ideal for major entrances and high-traffic areas.

POST-MOUNTED SIGNS:

Elevated signs that are visible from a distance, useful for secondary entry points and areas with limited space.

BANNER PROGRAMS:

Series of banners placed on light poles or similar structures, adding a festive and welcoming atmosphere.

LANDSCAPE/HARDSCAPE:

Integration of signage with landscaping elements or built environment, enhancing the natural aesthetics.

DISTRICT/NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTIFICATION:

Smaller signs placed at the entrances of specific districts or neighborhoods, creating a sense of identity and belonging.

PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS:

Artistic elements that also serve as gateway markers, enriching the cultural landscape of the area.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS:

PROMINENT PLACEMENT:

Position gateway signs at key entry points such as highway exits and main roads to ensure visibility.

CONSISTENT BRANDING:

Reflect the city's branding through consistent use of logos, colors, and design elements.

WELCOMING MESSAGE:

Include an inviting message to create a positive first impression.

DURABLE MATERIALS:

Use weather-resistant materials to maintain appearance over time.

ILLUMINATION:

Incorporate lighting to ensure visibility at night.

LANDSCAPING:

Enhance the sign with surrounding plants and decorative elements.

DIRECTIONALS

Directional signs are designed to be easily read by both pedestrians and drivers, guiding them to their destinations efficiently. Currently consistent directional signs are the most glaring thing missing from the greater downtown area. Well-designed directional signs should pull visitors traveling on Route 50 eastbound down Maryland Avenue, and those traveling westbound down Cedar Street. On those downtown entry streets, additional directional signage should be provided to ensure visitors are aware they are traveling in the correct direction. The lack of signage, especially on Maryland Avenue, was a consistent critique during our conversations and as part of the survey.

Once vehicles have entered the city's Main Street district, directionals will typically begin to highlight specific attractions, like dining and retail, or more specific locations like the Take My Hand mural or the Dorchester County Public Library. We usually do not recommend identifying specific businesses on directional signs or any other publicly funded signage, due to concerns related to favoritism and omission, as well as the risk of turnover.

TYPES OF DIRECTIONALS:

PRIMARY DIRECTIONALS:

Larger signs with major destination points, typically used at key decision points where multiple routes converge. These are often visible from vehicles as well as to pedestrians.

SECONDARY DIRECTIONALS:

Smaller signs that provide more detailed guidance within specific areas or districts. Typically pedestrian height.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS:

CLEAR MESSAGING:

Use simple, concise language and universally recognized symbols.

HIERARCHY OF INFORMATION:

Organize information from general to specific to help users quickly identify their desired direction.

CONSISTENT DESIGN:

Maintain a uniform design language across all directional signs, including colors, fonts, and icons.

VISIBILITY:

Ensure signs are visible from a distance and readable at a glance, especially for vehicular traffic.

DURABLE MATERIALS:

Use materials that can withstand environmental conditions and maintain legibility over time.

LIGHTING:

Include lighting for visibility in low-light conditions.



IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Identification signs are used to confirm the arrival at specific landmarks, assets, and points of interest, enhancing wayfinding clarity and promoting the city's investment in its destinations.

TYPES OF IDENTIFICATION SIGNS:

CITY-OWNED/OPERATED FACILITIES:

Signs identifying government buildings, community centers, and other city-operated facilities.

CITY-OWNED/OPERATED PARKS:

Signs for parks and recreational areas, often including maps and information about amenities.

ART INSTALLATIONS:

Signs marking where art installations are located, including information about the piece.

PARKING:

Signs indicating public parking facilities.

STREET SIGNS (HISTORIC AREAS):

Signs that mark historic districts or streets, often including historical information and design elements reflective of the area's heritage.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS:

CONSISTENCY:

Ensure that identification signs use a consistent design that aligns with other wayfinding elements.

CLARITY:

Use clear, legible fonts and high-contrast colors to ensure readability.

CULTURAL REFLECTION:

Incorporate elements that reflect the local culture and history to enhance the visitor experience. This may include depictions of local wildlife or vegetation in the signs or structures created.

DURABLE MATERIALS:

Choose materials that can withstand weather conditions and remain clear and intact over time.

LIGHTING:

Consider lighting for visibility at night and in low-light conditions.

LANDSCAPING:

Enhance signs with appropriate landscaping to integrate them into the environment and improve aesthetics.



BUDGET RANGE EXAMPLES

As part of our process, we like to suggest multiple design possibilities showcasing several sign types based on the budget available for the project. Because the cost of the signage can vary widely based on size, location, materials, and the customization necessary, it is important to see a range of what you may receive depending on the budget of the overall project.

Tier One:

Tier One signs are going to have an overall simpler design, promoting clear readability and consistent fonts, but will also often use existing structures to place the signage, including buildings, light poles, or former sign posts. This is the most economical option, and common throughout many small towns. The drawback to a Tier One wayfinding system is that you are often beholden to the location of existing structures, and may not have full control over the maintenance of those structures. An example of a local town that has primarily Tier One sign designs is Chestertown in Kent County, MD.

Tier 01



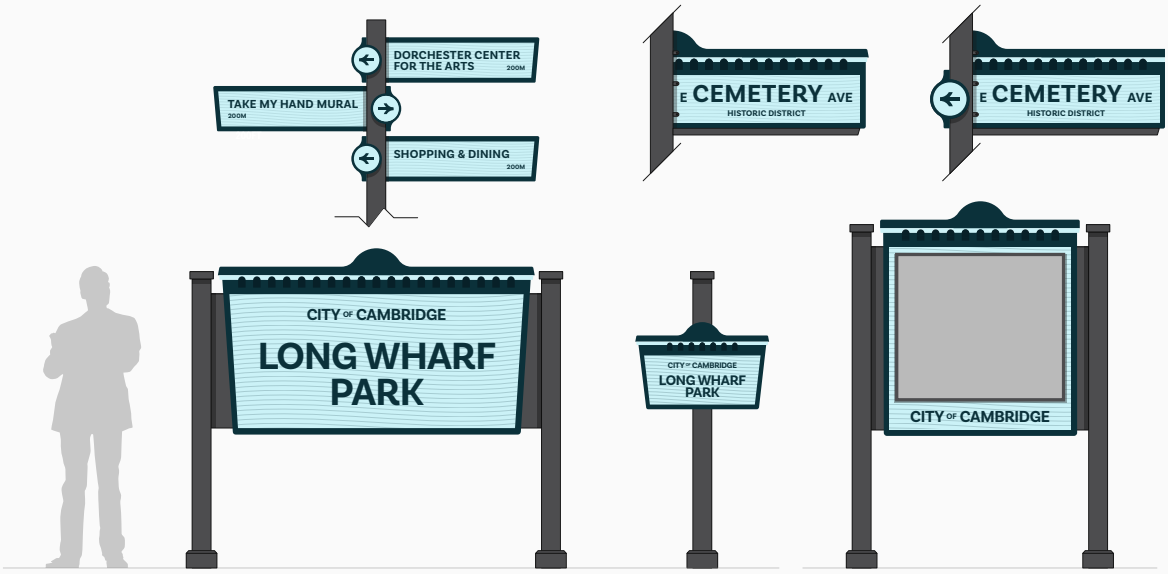
Modern signage with a rustic execution that aims to bring a slight nod to the waterside along with some structural elements of the main street buildings.

The logo is simple, easy to read and easy to adapt to various touchpoints across the different signs.

Tier Two:

Our middle tier, Tier Two, includes readable and consistent fonts, as well as decorative purpose-built posts and panels. This would include custom sign posts, or artistic metal work fashioned to a more uniform sign post. In addition, instead of multiple locations on one panel, Tier Two designs will often include layering, having individual panels and arrows pointing to the destination in question. Tier Two is often what citizens conceptualize when they think of wayfinding systems, as it is the most common type of system in larger urban areas (Baltimore, Washington, DC, and others utilize primarily Tier Two systems). There are other Main Streets in Maryland that utilize a primarily Tier Two system, including downtown Frederick. As expected, Tier Two signage systems typically cost more to install and create than a Tier One system, though rarely do they use a wide variety of materials or sizing that would make them prohibitive.

Tier 02



Tier Three:

The most expensive of our three tiers, Tier Three signage often uses a mix of materials, larger sizing, and are often lit or custom created in their entirety, instead of a sign on a post. These are often part of a significant rebranding for an entire city, much like one that the City of Baltimore undertook in 2015, one that nine years later they have no fully implemented, in large part due to the cost. More commonly, cities and towns will incorporate some Tier Three elements into Tier Two signs. For example, they may use a stone base for their most prominent Gateway signs welcoming visitors to the city.

Tier 03



Overall, our recommendation is to incorporate elements of Tier One and Tier Two designs throughout downtown Cambridge. In high visibility areas, crafting a custom, decorative signpost with local Dorchester County elements will help the signs stand out while being pleasing to both visitors and locals. However, in areas where light posts already exist, utilizing them will save significant upfront money, while also avoiding additional structures and posts being installed that may block visibility or pedestrian access in the downtown area.

An example of a Main Street in Maryland mixing tiers one and two is Frederick. While they utilize Tier Two elements (as we identified above) in high traffic areas of town, the majority of their directional signage is Tier One, well-designed signs that are bracketed to existing light posts in town and around Carroll Creek Park.



MATERIALS AND MATERIAL SELECTION

The materials chosen for wayfinding signage in Cambridge are critical for ensuring durability, visibility, and aesthetic cohesion. Given the city's unique climate, including its location near water and susceptibility to weather extremes, material selection will focus on long-lasting, weather-resistant materials. Additionally, the selection process will emphasize sustainability and low maintenance, ensuring that signage can be easily updated or replaced without significant additional costs.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS FOR WAYFINDING SIGNAGE:

1. ALUMINUM:

PROPERTIES:

Lightweight, durable, and corrosion-resistant, aluminum is a popular choice for outdoor signage, particularly in coastal areas like Cambridge.

ADVANTAGES:

Highly weather-resistant, cost-effective, and can be powder-coated or painted in a variety of colors. It offers flexibility in design and can be easily shaped or customized.

BEST USES:

Ideal for directional signs, parking signs, and identification signage where longevity and minimal maintenance are priorities.

2. HIGH-DENSITY URETHANE (HDU):

PROPERTIES:

A lightweight, durable synthetic material that mimics wood but is more weather-resistant.

ADVANTAGES:

HDU is impervious to water, making it ideal for Cambridge's high-humidity environment. It can be painted or finished in various textures, allowing for more creative, sculptural designs.

BEST USES:

HDU is perfect for gateway signs and monument signs where aesthetics are critical, and a more customized, sculptural appearance is desired. Also a good choice for directional signs in the commercial district.

3. STAINLESS STEEL:

PROPERTIES:

A heavy-duty, corrosion-resistant metal that holds up well against environmental factors such as saltwater, humidity, and extreme temperatures.

ADVANTAGES:

Stainless steel offers a sleek, modern aesthetic and requires little maintenance. It is highly durable and can be used in high-traffic areas without showing wear.

BEST USES:

Best suited for plaques, nameplates, and accent elements in high-visibility, high-traffic areas such as downtown.

4. POWDER-COATED STEEL:

PROPERTIES:

Durable and weather-resistant, steel is a strong option for more permanent signage solutions. The powder-coating provides additional protection against rust and fading.

ADVANTAGES:

Offers excellent strength and durability while allowing for various color options through powder-coating.

BEST USES:

Ideal for structural elements of larger signs such as gateway or district signage, where weight and stability are essential. Powder-coated steel is also the best choice for the signposts in most cases.

5. WOOD (PRESSURE-TREATED OR ENGINEERED):

PROPERTIES:

Engineered or pressure-treated wood offers a natural aesthetic while providing better resistance to weathering than untreated wood.

ADVANTAGES:

Wood signs blend seamlessly with natural landscapes and can be stained or painted to reflect the city's maritime heritage. They provide a more rustic or traditional look, which may align with Cambridge's historic aesthetic.

BEST USES:

Suitable for district identification or signage in parks and recreational areas where a more natural aesthetic is desired.

6. ACRYLIC OR POLYCARBONATE:

PROPERTIES:

These materials are clear, lightweight, and shatter-resistant plastics that offer high impact resistance and UV protection.

ADVANTAGES:

Excellent for creating signs with intricate or detailed designs, particularly for signs with graphic elements or layers. These materials also allow for backlighting or illuminated signs.

BEST USES:

Frequently used for informational displays, kiosks, or indoor signage that requires a modern, polished look.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

ANTI-GRAFFITI COATINGS:

Given the public nature of these signs, adding an anti-graffiti coating ensures that signs can be easily cleaned and maintained without damage.
UV RESISTANT PAINTS AND COATINGS:

For long-term durability, all signs should be coated with UV-resistant paints or finishes to prevent fading over time, especially in areas with high sun exposure.

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS:

Whenever possible, materials that have been sustainably sourced or recycled should be prioritized. This aligns with the City's environmental goals and ensures that the wayfinding system is eco-friendly.





INSTALLATION BEST PRACTICES:

1. FOUNDATIONS AND ANCHORING:

All freestanding signs, particularly gateway and monument signs, should be anchored with durable foundations to prevent damage from strong winds or shifting ground. In areas prone to flooding, elevated foundations or additional protection against moisture should be considered.

2. WEATHER CONSIDERATIONS:

In high-humidity or high-wind areas like Cambridge, signs must be securely installed to prevent corrosion and rusting. Utilizing corrosion-resistant fasteners and protective coatings will ensure longevity.

3. HEIGHT AND VISIBILITY:

Signs, especially directional and identification signs, should be placed at heights that are easily visible to pedestrians and drivers. For pedestrian signage, eye-level placement is recommended, while vehicular signage should be elevated enough to avoid obstruction by parked cars or landscaping.

4. LIGHTING:

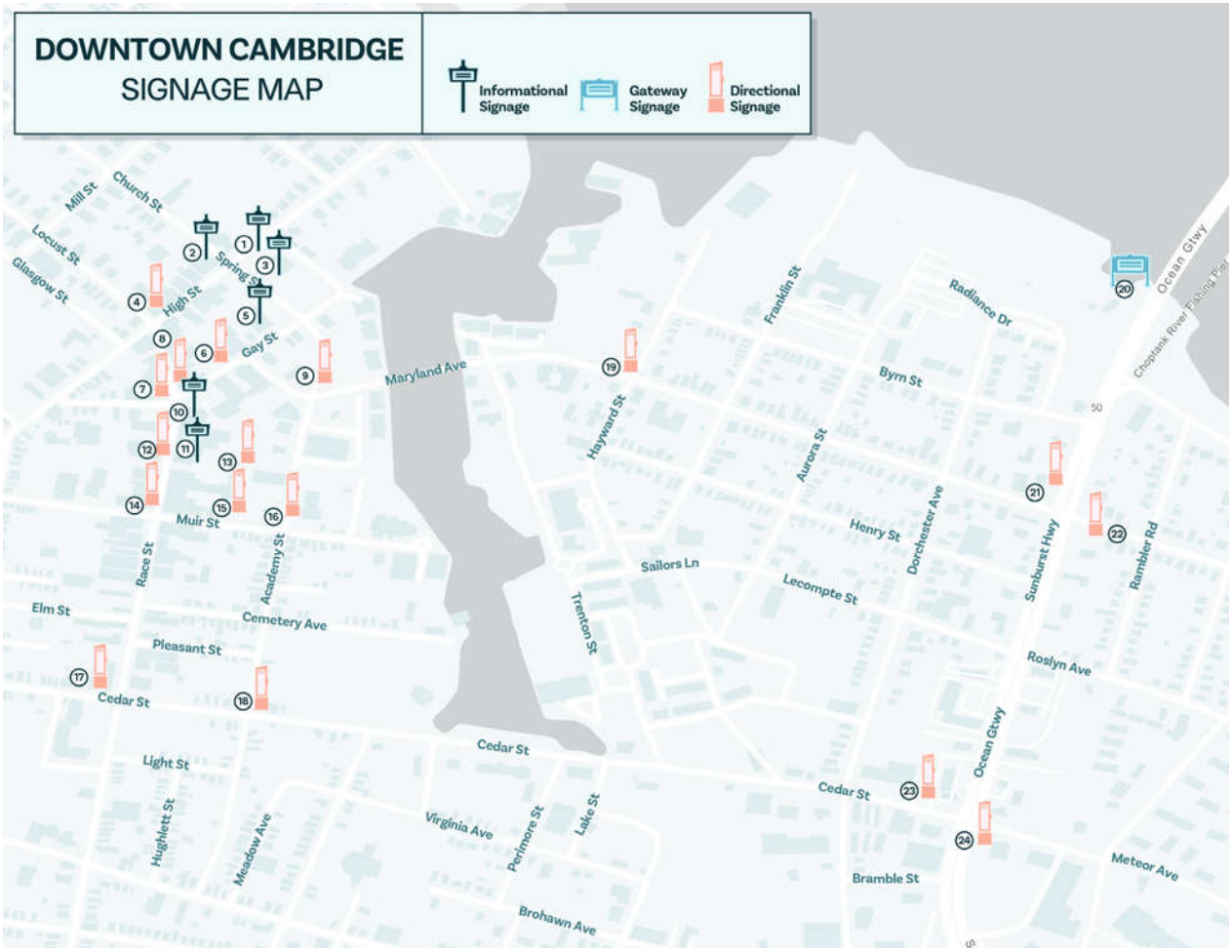
Where nighttime visibility is essential, signs should be illuminated either through external spotlights or internal lighting (in the case of acrylic or polycarbonate signs). Solar-powered lighting options may also be considered for sustainability or in locations where electric access is difficult.
While the list and recommendations above are not exhaustive, it should be helpful to guide in any vetting of proposals for creation and installation of the signage throughout the City.

SUGGESTED LOCATIONS + MAPPING

The mapping below showcases our suggested locations for signage in and around downtown Cambridge. We've broken our recommendations down into two categories, ranked by priority. The map includes a large number of directional signage suggestions, with the goal of helping people discover all consumer-oriented areas of downtown, including the businesses in the Pine Street Historic District. It also focuses on not only helping people find parking, a consistent concern from those surveyed, but also time-oriented directional signage from the parking lot. Studies show that time-oriented signage promotes more pedestrian movement in the downtown, especially when compared to mileage-oriented displays. Pointing out that the Take My Hand mural is only a 4 minute walk from the Gay Street parking lot instead of 0.3 miles helps visitors conceptualize the distance better and promotes how walkable the city is. Finally, you'll see several identification sign recommendations, helping to point out important destinations once reached by the pedestrian or vehicle.



MAPPING



DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE SIGNAGE KEY

1.	Harriet Tubman Beacon of Hope Statue - Informational
2.	Post Office - Informational
3.	Courthouse - Informational
4.	High St (Pointing East) - Directional • **Points to:** Shops/Dining, Waterfront, Courthouse, Farmers Market, Beacon of Hope
5.	Public Library - Informational

6. Parking Area (Library) - Directional
   - **Points to:** Public Library (left), Courthouse (left), Shops/Dining (right)

7. Locust St (Pointing South) - Directional
   - **Points to:** Harriet Tubman Mural, Parking on Locust, Shops/Dining

8. Poplar St (Pointing North) - Directional
   - **Points to:** Shops/Dining, Dorchester Arts, Parking on Locust

9. Muse St (Pointing North) - Directional
   - **Points to:** City Hall (west), Shopping/Dining (north), Harriet Tubman Mural (west), Beacon of Hope (east)

10. Chesapeake College - Informational

11. Harriet Tubman Take My Hand Mural - Informational

12. South Race St (Pointing South) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining, 447 Venue, Harriet Tubman Mural (east)

13. Parking Area (Pointing East) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining (west), Harriet Tubman Mural (west), Town Hall (east)

14. Race St (Pointing South) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Pine St Historic District (west), Shops/Dining (south)

15. Parking Area (Pointing South) - Directional
    - Walking times to: Downtown (4 min), Town Hall (1 min)

16. South Academy St (Pointing West) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining, Harriet Tubman Mural, Pine St Historic District

17. Corner of Cedar and Race Sts (Pointing North) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining (north), Harriet Tubman Mural (north), Pine St Historic District (west)

18. Corner of Cedar and Academy Sts (Pointing West) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining, Pine St Historic District, Parking (west/north)

19. Corner of Maryland and Haywood (Pointing West - Downtown) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Shops/Dining, Harriet Tubman Mural

20. Dorchester Visitor Center (Welcome) - Gateway
    - "Welcome to Cambridge" sign at county entry

21. Route 50 and Maryland Ave (Pointing East/South) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Downtown, Shops/Dining (west)

22. Route 50 and Maryland Ave (Pointing West/North)* - Directional
    - **Points to:** Historic Downtown Cambridge (west)

23. Route 50 and Cedar Street (Pointing East/South) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Historic Downtown Cambridge (west)

24. Route 50 and Cedar Street (Pointing West/North) - Directional
    - **Points to:** Historic Downtown Cambridge (west)

SUGGESTED MAP LOCATIONS:

In addition to the signage above, we recommend static Main Street maps at the following locations:

Near Pedestrian Alleyway on High Street

Near Gay Street Parking Area

Corner of Gay and Race Streets

Near Harriet Tubman Take My Hand Mural

Near Muir Street on South side of Public Parking

NEXT STEPS

To successfully implement the wayfinding system in Cambridge, we recommend that the organization follow these next steps, focusing on finalizing designs, soliciting proposals from qualified sign companies, and securing funding through grants.

1. FINALIZING SIGN DESIGNS

The organization should first work with designers and stakeholders to finalize the design specifications for all types of signage, including gateway, directional, and identification signs. These designs should reflect Cambridge's unique cultural and historical identity while ensuring clarity and visibility for both pedestrians and drivers. Additionally, attention must be given to material selection to ensure the signs withstand environmental conditions, particularly near the waterfront.

As part of this phase, it is also important to consider the durability of materials, such as powder-coated steel, aluminum, and high-density urethane (HDU), ensuring longevity and low maintenance. Lighting options and anti-graffiti coatings should be incorporated where necessary to ensure the signs remain visible and clean over time. These finalized designs will form the foundation for the next steps in the project.

Cambridge Main Street is welcome to use the design concepts we've provided in the budget range section above that our team has created for the organization as a starting point to jump to Step Two in your selection of the sign company.

2. SOLICITING PROPOSALS FROM SIGN COMPANIES

Once designs are finalized, the organization should issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to experienced sign manufacturing and installation companies. The RFP should include all necessary specifications for each type of sign, including dimensions, materials, installation requirements, and an expected timeline for completion. It's important to outline the expectations for the quality of work, adherence to the design guidelines, and long-term maintenance options.

We recommend reaching out to sign companies with expertise in municipal or commercial projects to ensure they understand the scope and significance of a cohesive wayfinding system for a city like Cambridge. The organization should evaluate proposals based on the quality of materials, company experience, project cost, and the ability to meet the installation timeline. Preference should be given to companies that provide sustainable and durable solutions within the proposed budget.

3. SECURING GRANT FUNDING FOR SIGN CREATION

To offset the costs of sign production and installation, the organization should actively pursue available grant funding. This includes exploring local, state, and federal grant opportunities specifically related to urban development, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and tourism. Grants from organizations like the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) could be valuable funding sources for a project of this scale.

Grant proposals should emphasize the economic and cultural impact of improved wayfinding in Cambridge, highlighting the benefits to local businesses, tourism, and the overall visitor experience. Additionally, the organization should stress the project's alignment with ongoing revitalization efforts and how enhanced signage will contribute to the city's long-term growth and success.

By following these recommendations, the organization can ensure a smooth and successful rollout of Cambridge's wayfinding system. This project will not only improve navigation for residents and visitors but also enhance the city's visual identity, supporting both tourism and local commerce.



CAMBRIDGE MAIN STREET

RIVERS &
ROADS