



MAIN STREET MARKETING, COMMUNICATION, & DESIGN PLAN ABERDEEN, MARYLAND

June 1, 2022



City of Aberdeen
Mahan Rykiel Associates
Arnett Muldrow Associates

MAIN STREET MARKETING, COMMUNICATION, & DESIGN PLAN ABERDEEN, MARYLAND

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PRESENTED TO:
City of Aberdeen

PRESENTED BY:
Mahan Rykiel Associates
Arnett Muldrow Associates

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Councilman Adam Hiob

Councilman Tim Lindecamp

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INTRODUCTION *and* ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The City of Aberdeen, Maryland was awarded grant funding to undertake the Main Street Marketing, Communication, and Design Plan in Spring 2022. The City retained Mahan Rykiel Associates of Baltimore, MD and Arnett Muldrow Associates of Greenville, SC (the Team) to work with them and community stakeholders to analyze existing conditions and develop recommendations for Aberdeen’s community identity, downtown marketing, wayfinding, and downtown gateways. Additionally, the Team developed high level recommendations for Festival Park based upon discussions that occurred during Workshop #1. This report provides an overview of the process, analysis of existing conditions, and recommendations for the City of Aberdeen and Main Street Aberdeen. A detailed style guide (BrandTouch) is provided as a separate detailed document to guide the implementation of the Aberdeen Brand.

At the center of the work developed over the planning and design process was defining the Aberdeen “place brand.”

WHY DO THIS?

A place brand is the differentiation between a product, service, or locale using a set of tools that include logos, taglines, typefaces, and colors. The tools, well deployed, will craft that differentiation and make it clear to the “consumer” — or, in the case of community economic development the three audiences of local resident, investor, and visitor the value proposition of a place.

In short, a place brand is a promise a place makes to people.



It is built over time and capitalizes on the imagery, feeling, and allegiance felt when people see the image of their community whether it is a symbol that evokes history (or progress), a tagline that builds pride of place, or colors and typefaces that evoke images or signals sense of place for the community.

Furthermore, a well-executed brand creates a toolbox for many stakeholder partners to use that is consistent, saves time, and doesn't require a reinvention of the wheel every time a marketing partner develops a new publication, web page, marketing piece, or event. In fact, well executed brands can be deployed in countless ways beyond the logo and tagline. A brand system can unite events, organizations, and other amenities as desired by a community; can be deployed in environmental graphics including banners, wayfinding signs, and gateways to create a "seamless" visitor experience; and can be used for digital graphics such as web page redesigns, social media tools, and smartphones. Ultimately, a sound community marketing strategy creates efficiencies of consistency between message and mission.

Successful place brands can also serve as a way for communities to partner with businesses to better market a locale. Examples here might include ad templates for Aberdeen Main Street and individual business' use. Some communities have used their identity systems to create public art, t-shirts and hats, and even jewelry that would extend the appeal beyond the local community.

■ PROCESS

The process occurred over a three-month period from March to June 2022 and included the following milestones:

- March 15, 2022** Kickoff Meeting with the project Steering Committee (City of Aberdeen and Aberdeen Main Street)
- April 6-8, 2022** Workshop #1-Community tour, round-table discussions with partners, leadership, and business/property owners; public input meeting, development of the place brand recommendations, and presentation to the Steering Committee.
- April-May 2022** Refinements to recommendations
- May 9, 2022** Workshop #2: Presentation of draft plan to Mayor and Council
- May 2022** Final report preparation
- June 1, 2022** Project completion

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

During Workshop #1, Mahan Rykiel and Arnett Muldrow met with numerous stakeholders to better understand the community, its assets and its challenges related to identity, marketing, and wayfinding.

Key themes include:

ASSETS

- ▶ Community pride and friendliness
- ▶ Community diversity
- ▶ Positive change in appearance of downtown
- ▶ Dedicated service businesses committed to downtown
- ▶ Investment on the west side
- ▶ Concentration of hotels
- ▶ Potential to capture visitors to Ripken Experience
- ▶ Historic B&O Train Depot, associated restoration advocacy efforts, and location along a key downtown gateway
- ▶ Aberdeen's history: agriculture, military, train/transportation, baseball
- ▶ Transportation network, including I-95, Route 40, and Amtrak and MARC
- ▶ Victorian architecture along West Bel Air Avenue as part of gateway approach
- ▶ Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) potential
- ▶ Existing events and festivals
- ▶ Festival Park
- ▶ Low crime

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Lacking critical mass of non-service businesses downtown-reasons to stay and browse
- ▶ Perceptions along Route 40 corridor and from Amtrak train station
- ▶ Absentee landlords
- ▶ Property owners who don't invest in property maintenance or enhancements
- ▶ Limited code enforcement
- ▶ Lack of wayfinding to downtown
- ▶ Perception of crime
- ▶ Lingering perceptions of Aberdeen from when there were numerous undesirable businesses
- ▶ Attracting and maintaining new volunteers

STAKEHOLDER ROUNDTABLES

PARTNERS

Visit Harford

Aberdeen Historical Museum

Ripken Baseball

Ripken Experience

B&O Train Depot

LEADERSHIP

Economic Development Commission

Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce

Aberdeen Main Street Committees

Mayor/City Council

BUSINESS/PROPERTY OWNERS

Downtown Services

Downtown Retailers

EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

NEIGHBOR IDENTITIES

A selection of neighboring identities shows a wide variety of approaches. Common themes are the use of script typeface in the case of Perryville and North East; formal seals with heraldic cues as is the case in Havre De Grace, Charlestown, and Bel Air; and a wide array of colors.

LOCAL IDENTITIES

Existing identities in Aberdeen show a variety of concepts with few links among the various partners. The City of Aberdeen is currently using its official seal on formal correspondence from the governing body and is gradually retiring a more “outward facing” brand that uses a modified script and typeface. This script typeface and tagline “home of opportunity” is also being used by the Chamber of Commerce.

NEIGHBOR IDENTITIES



LOCAL IDENTITIES



The school district is using a block blue and yellow letter and the Eagle mascot in its marketing. Harford County uses a formal seal similar in general construct (if not design) to that of the City. Harford County Tourism uses an outward facing brand with the well-known colors of the Maryland Flag incorporated into a stylized word type.

The typefaces and colors used have no consistency or connection though a light green emblematic of the Palouse landscape is frequently used. Interestingly, Pullman community brands expressly avoid using crimson color of Washington State University. While brand guidance may exist for each entity in Pullman, these guides are not available online.

Aberdeen Proving Ground uses a complex logo that incorporates a variety of symbols related to the current and past missions of the base.

Despite the wide array of brand identities in Aberdeen, the existing brands in Aberdeen share some similar color treatments including the use of blue, green, and yellow.

GATEWAYS

From a city-wide perspective, the primary gateways to the city are from the west at I-95 and Route 22; from the northeast along Route 40 (at Route 22); and from the southeast along Route 40 near Route 715. Within that framework, there are three primary gateways to downtown Aberdeen:

North Gateway: North Rogers Street and North Parke Street at Veteran's Memorial Park'

West Gateway: West Bel Air Avenue at the Historic B&O Depot

South/East Gateway: Route 40 at West Bel Air Avenue.

Gateways include more than signage. The adjacent buildings, the landscape, the image-positive or negative-all contribute to one's arrival experience in a community. With this in consideration:

- ▶ The North Gateway currently offers a positive arrival experience to downtown by way of North Rogers and North Parke Streets. The mature tree canopy along the west side of North Rogers Street, Veteran's Memorial Park, and the landscape frontage of the businesses along North Parke Street all contribute to this positive experience. Two aspects that somewhat detract from this gateway experience includes the small ornamental tree located at the junction of North Rogers and North Parke Streets which blocks views to the features located within Veteran's Memorial Park. The other aspect is that with no overhead utilities on the east side of North Parke Street, the small ornamental street trees do little to shade the sidewalk and street.
- ▶ The West Gateway offers the potential for another positive arrival experience to downtown by way of West Bel Air Avenue. The stately Victorian homes and mature trees offer a pleasant approach to downtown. While in poor repair at this time, the proposed renovation to the historic depot will be a signature for downtown. The adjacent vacant land offers the potential to be an asset if developed sensitively and with the right use; or a liability if developed with the wrong use and with little regard to the adjacent depot.
- ▶ The South/East Gateway along Route 40 offers the most challenge. While streetscape has been incorporated along Route 40 on each approach to West Bel Air Avenue, the automobile scale, and condition of many of the adjacent uses make it difficult to distinguish this intersection from other intersections. Long-term potential exists with future TOD uses to have a significant impact on the gateway experience.





PROPOSED COMMUNITY IDENTITY

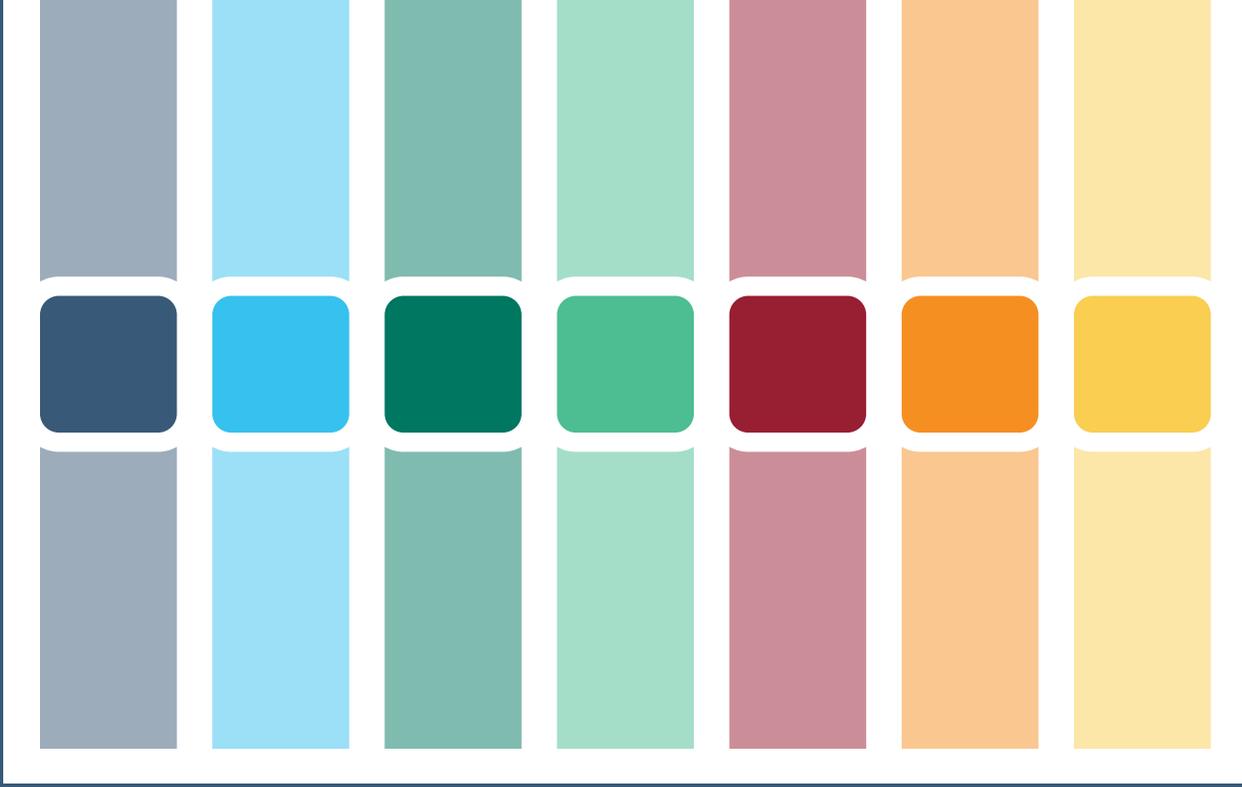
The proposed community identity combines four tools of branding and marketing and expands them into a toolbox for the community. The four tools are: color, typeface, logo, and tagline. Accompanying these tools is a brand narrative that presents the history and future of the community.

PROPOSED COLOR PALETTE

Color choices are used to differentiate items, create depth, add emphasis, and help organize information. The selected colors from each of the logos of the existing identities provides some guidance for a consistent color palette for Aberdeen that uses light and dark blues and greens, Maryland's red and a modified yellow/gold, and a brighter yellow. These colors are provided in RGB, CMYK, Pantone, and Hex style in the accompanying brand style guide.

TYPEFACES

Three typefaces have been selected for the community brand. The first is Fairplex Wide OT. This typeface provides a combination of a bold serif with rounded edges that conveys strength, a nod to history, and flexibility in use. The secondary typeface is Gotham Medium which is a clean sans serif typeface that nods to the future of the community and offers a contrast to the primary typeface. The third is an accent typeface called Voltage Light which is a clean reading script designed to offer a warm invitation for accent headlines. All typefaces are included in the style guide



TYPEFACES

PRIMARY

Fairplex Wide OT

SECONDARY

Gotham Medium

Accent

Voltage Light

POSITION STATEMENT

Our Agricultural Legacy: Our history is rooted in agriculture. It is here that the abundance of fertile land attracted early settlers to farm the rolling fields of early Harford County in the years before the Revolutionary War. Local resident George Washington Baker would create a revolution of his own by inventing the cans that would keep the corn, tomatoes, and peaches preserved to be shipped to the growing cities of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. By the late 1800's there were more canneries based here than in any place in the United States.

Our Transportation Hub: The early growth of Aberdeen village was possible because of its location on the Old Post Road between Alexandria and Philadelphia. This early passage is but a prelude to Aberdeen's transportation legacy that lives on to this day. The legendary B&O Railroad stopped here at a station designed by Frank Furness that has been saved from demolition marking a key entrance to downtown. Today, Aberdeen remains a transportation hub with active passenger and freight rail along with major highway thoroughfares traversing the city.

Our Military Service: World War I would mark a pivotal change in the life of Aberdeen. In 1917, the United States Army established Aberdeen Proving Ground here for its strategic location close to shipping and industrial hubs. By the second World War, the base would be home to over 2,000 officers and 24,000 enlisted personnel. Training here would cement Aberdeen's role in securing victories for America's military on the world stage. The country's first programmable computer was located here where women mathematicians were employed to run the large complex machine.

Our Nation's Pastime: Aberdeen's agriculture, transportation, and military history is woven closely with America's pastime, baseball. Baseball in Aberdeen dates back to 1910 just eighteen years after the incorporation of the City. The Aberdeen Cannons, the early precursor to today's Ironbirds, was a minor league team of the Susquehanna League. The Ripken family's link to Aberdeen baseball has existed for generations and today both the Minor League Baseball's Aberdeen Ironbirds and the Ripken Experience brings thousands of families and young people here each year.

Our Hometown Community: Today, Aberdeen is a dynamic, diverse, and growing city. It is a community where pride of place runs deep, a warm welcome is sincere, and neighbors look after one another. As we continue to thrive, Aberdeen is united to focus on its historic downtown, still a center of connections, community activity, and celebrations. Established businesses based here for decades stand next to start-ups who see downtown as a place where entrepreneurs can thrive. We invite you to explore downtown. Whether you are a long-time resident rediscovering what downtown has to offer, a business looking to invest, or as a visitor exploring the area, Downtown Aberdeen has something for you.

We are Downtown Aberdeen, Maryland

Based in Agriculture

Based in Transportation

Based in Military Service

Based in Our Nation's Pastime

Based in Hometown Pride

Downtown Aberdeen. Our home base.



■ BRAND IDENTITY/LOGO

The brand identity for Aberdeen combined the colors, typeface, and position statement described above into a composite design. The Primary Typeface is used in a bold blue for Aberdeen which is presented in all capital letters. Downtown is placed in the secondary typeface above the name Aberdeen in the secondary typeface using a lighter blue. The tagline “Our Home Base” uses the accent typeface. The tagline has a triple meaning. While the most obvious may be to baseball, the base is also a reference to Aberdeen Proving Ground, and most importantly to the “home base” aspect of the downtown as the base of activity for local residents. In some uses, the tagline can be replaced with the Maryland modifier in the secondary typeface.

The badge devise is a pentagonal shape reminiscent of heraldic seals used in official logos for the City and the County and in the seal of Aberdeen’s namesake city of Aberdeen Scotland. It is evocative of a “home plate” acknowledging the key role that baseball plays in the tourism aspect of the community and is emblematic of the folded ribbon used in military medals to honor Aberdeen’s important contribution in the service of our country. Within the badge is an “A” monogram in white with colors from the palette used in the interstitial spaces. The monogram is designed to evoke forward motion and the movement of people through the community on railways and roadways. It also hints at the convergence of activity that happens in downtown Aberdeen itself.

Additional tests of the composite brand show that it can hold the “Maryland Main Street Community” designation when appropriate for the organizational identity and operate well within a variety of color combinations including black on white and white on various colors. These tests are important in providing a variety of uses when a full color version is not the most practical application.



BRAND EXTENSIONS

Brand extension occurs in a variety of formats. The first is the organizational brand for Main Street Aberdeen using the five points of the Main Street program. Here the badge device is used to form a star that reflects the role of Aberdeen Main Street as a convener of a variety of partners.

Additional brand extension designs use a combination of the typefaces, colors, badge design, and other graphic devices to create a “family” of images that work in tandem with the master brand. Of note, is the use of the red, white, and blue “ribbon” design for patriotic events.



Sample Brand Extensions

BRAND APPLICATION

Community brands have the unique and desired ability to be used on consumer goods. This allows residents, visitors, and businesses to partner with the Main Street program in promoting downtown as a destination. The badge design is shown in a variety of applications that could be used in downtown including hats, tee shirts, and a water bottle.



ADVERTISEMENT TEMPLATES

The ad templates serve several purposes. First they allow for the expanded use of the tagline using both the term “base” and “home” for specific descriptions of businesses in the downtown. A good brand should be applicable to local businesses both to promote them and engage them as partners.

The ad layout itself is designed as a template that can be modified and expanded as needed to include new phrases, photos, descriptions, and headlines. These could be in print media, web pages, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram.

Sample Ads



Our home for celebration

Our history is rooted in agriculture. It is here that the abundance of fertile land attracted early settlers to farm the rolling fields of early Harford County in the years before the Revolutionary War. Local resident George Washington Baker would create a revolution of his own by inventing the cans that would keep the corn, tomatoes, and peaches preserved to be shipped to the growing cities of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. By the late 1800's there were more canneries based here than in any place in the United States.



**DOWNTOWN
ABERDEEN**
Our home base



Your base for pampering

Our history is rooted in agriculture. It is here that the abundance of fertile land attracted early settlers to farm the rolling fields of early Harford County in the years before the Revolutionary War. Local resident George Washington Baker would create a revolution of his own by inventing the cans that would keep the corn, tomatoes, and peaches preserved to be shipped to the growing cities of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. By the late 1800's there were more canneries based here than in any place in the United States.



Your base for creativity

Aberdeen is a dynamic, diverse, and growing city. It is a community where pride of place runs deep, a warm welcome is sincere, and neighbors look after one another. As we continue to thrive, Aberdeen is united to focus on its historic downtown, still a center of connections, community activity, and celebrations. Established businesses based here for decades stand next to startups who see downtown as a place where entrepreneurs can thrive.



Your base for protection

Aberdeen is a dynamic, diverse, and growing city. It is a community where pride of place runs deep, a warm welcome is sincere, and neighbors look after one another. As we continue to thrive, Aberdeen is united to focus on its historic downtown, still a center of connections, community activity, and celebrations. Established businesses based here for decades stand next to startups who see downtown as a place where entrepreneurs can thrive.



Our home for flavor

Our history is rooted in agriculture. It is here that the abundance of fertile land attracted early settlers to farm the rolling fields of early Harford County in the years before the Revolutionary War. Local resident George Washington Baker would create a revolution of his own by inventing the cans that would keep the corn, tomatoes, and peaches preserved to be shipped to the growing cities of Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. By the late 1800's there were more canneries based here than in any place in the United States.





Potential Mural

WEB PAGE

A branded web page for Downtown Aberdeen allows for the Main Street program to promote events, shops, services, and restaurants in the downtown. Ideally, this page should have a stand-alone URL that links to the websites and pages for the City of Aberdeen and the Chamber of Commerce. For search optimization, having local businesses link to the web page would greatly enhance its online presence. The following tips for search optimization should be considered:

- ▶ A uniform hashtag in posting to track posts across all platforms.
- ▶ Links between key partner groups such as Harford Tourism, the City, and Friends of the Aberdeen B&O Rail Station.
- ▶ Links from businesses to the web page and vice-versa.
- ▶ Claiming downtown businesses on Google maps with references to downtown Aberdeen.
- ▶ Coordination with mapping apps for key downtown attractions.
- ▶ Links between events and promotions and the web page itself for every event.



**DOWNTOWN
ABERDEEN**
Our home base

Aberdeen, Maryland BrandTouch™ Manual

Order comes from simplicity. Inside, you will find the simple rules that guide the Aberdeen Brand, and will help create equity as we tell others about Our home base.

PREPARED BY

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For additional guidance with deploying the Downtown Aberdeen brand, see the accompanying BrandTouch™ Manual

■ SOCIAL MEDIA

A round version of the logo is included in the style guide for social media uses as well as a worksheet guide for using social media.







WAYFINDING *and* GATEWAYS

■ FUTURE WAYFINDING SYSTEM

A good wayfinding system plays an important role in the perception of Aberdeen, its place brand and the flow of how visitors are curated and directed to downtown and community attractions. The components of the wayfinding system include the following:

PRIMARY GATEWAYS

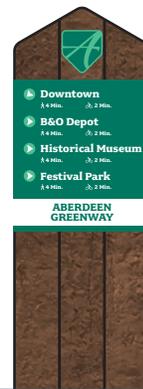
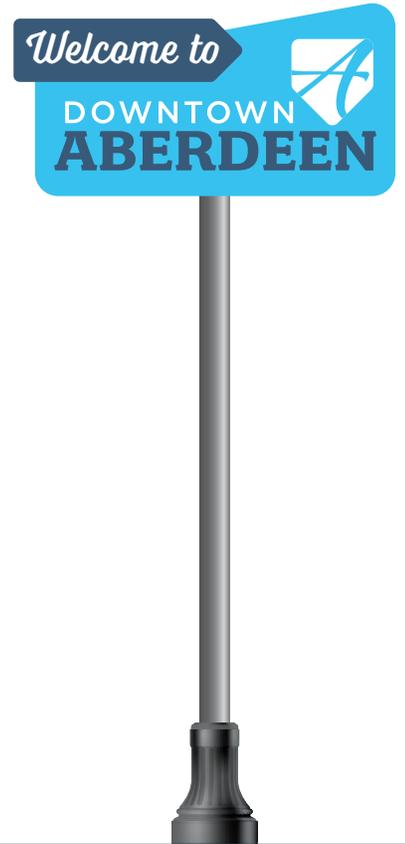
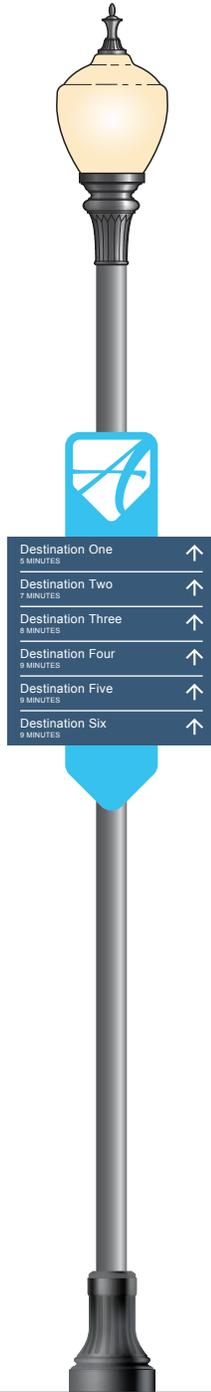
Gateway Signs create a sense of arrival and help establish the community's identity. These highly visible gateway signs should be placed along the main entry ways into town.

TRAILBLAZERS

Trailblazers are the directional signs leading motorists to the main destinations and attractions in the area. These should have a maximum of three locations per sign and carry motorists from gateways to parking resources. Colors can be used to distinguish between different districts. Signs should become smaller as traffic speeds slow and the scale of the roadway narrows.



Conceptual Wayfinding System





STREET BANNERS

Banners are very popular and help to add color and consistency to the lanes of travel, often acting as a speed calming device. They too can be color coded by district and can promote local events, as well as promoting the brand, and in some instances, sponsors.

PARKING SIGNAGE

Well-signed parking resources are an important component to a cohesive, functional wayfinding system. Visitors are more likely to walk a block or two to shop if the signage system leads them directly to a public parking lot and tell them how to proceed. The parking markers can be stand-alone monuments or attached to existing poles or trailblazer signs.

PEDESTRIAN SIGNAGE

Orienting visitors once they have transitioned from motorists to pedestrians is the final step in a comprehensive wayfinding system. These signs should be visible from the prominent parking resources and located along busy sidewalks at relevant intersections.

A community wide wayfinding system will necessitate cooperation and active administration. The day-to-day and long-term management of the wayfinding system will rely on the City of Aberdeen and its partners. Depending upon local resources, other stakeholders and destinations could be engaged for future planning and funding.

As the City begins the implementation process, it should convene its partners to determine roles and responsibilities related to planning, maintenance, and funding. This includes determining costs and financing strategies, which are estimated later in this section.



FIGURE 4. Park Identification Signage

DAY-TO-DAY SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The City of Aberdeen should manage the wayfinding system and be responsible for scheduled system maintenance including cleaning and repair to minor damage of system components. This would include assessing the City's capacity to perform initial or ongoing installation, should an outside vendor not be required. Ultimately, City staff would routinely review system status, address maintenance or repair issues, and determine actions to alter, modify, or expand the existing system. Future design services can be managed by the City or through an as-needed services contract with a qualified firm.

A first step will be to assign a project manager for the implementation phase of the project. This person will be responsible for the execution of the plan and should be given the appropriate staff time, resources, and procurement responsibilities. Ultimately, the City should establish policies for inspections, repairs, and sign replacement, including engaging with sign fabricators. It is critical that the project manager understand all instructions from the fabricator to protect all warranties related to materials, reflective sign sheet, and installation. The project manager should also be familiar with all manufacturer's instructions for installation including hardware. It is recommended that the project manager inventory all signage that is included in the system, recording location, sign content, date of installation of sign supports, as well as of panel placement on supports.

LONG-TERM SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

The City of Aberdeen will need to manage and allocate additional funds to an ongoing wayfinding management program. This plan recommends that five percent of the capital cost outlay be programmed each year for the cost of maintaining supplies for supports, mounting hardware and damaged signs. This budget, including staff time allocated to ongoing management, can be adjusted over time as the City has a better understanding of costs for long-term maintenance.

PERMITTING

A wayfinding system should be based on MUTCD standards. A bid package should be established seeking a vendor for sign fabrication and installation work, including final permitting from Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). While separate vendors can be utilized, engaging a company to both fabricate and install the signs often helps with final costs, but also limit responsibility of damage that may occur in transportation, handling, and installation.

The selected fabricator/installer should be required to seek permits through the MDOT encroachment permitting process to ensure precise final sign locations and that final sign schematics meet all applicable MUTCD and MDOT standards.

CONCEPTUAL WAYFINDING SYSTEM

A full wayfinding system will identify all the routes a visitor might take in Aberdeen and provide a schedule of associated signs and messages along each route. For purposes of this planning effort, the Team identified an example route. “Figure 5. Wayfinding Map” on page 26 shows an example corridor a visitor might use to travel from the Ripken Experience to Downtown. The sample wayfinding schedule below identifies the potential signs and messaging that might occur along this route.

EXAMPLE WAYFINDING SIGN SCHEDULE

Sign #	Orientation	Destinations	Direction
1	South Bound Low Speed	Downtown Aberdeen	<
		Proving Grounds	<
		Amtrak	<
2	East Bound High Speed	Downtown Aberdeen	^
		Amtrak	^
		Proving Grounds	^
3	East Bound High Speed	Downtown	>
		B&O Railroad Park	>
		Amtrak	>
4	East Bound High Speed	Proving Grounds	>
		Downtown Aberdeen	>
		Amtrak	>
5	Southwest Bound Low Speed	Downtown Aberdeen	<
		Festival Park	<

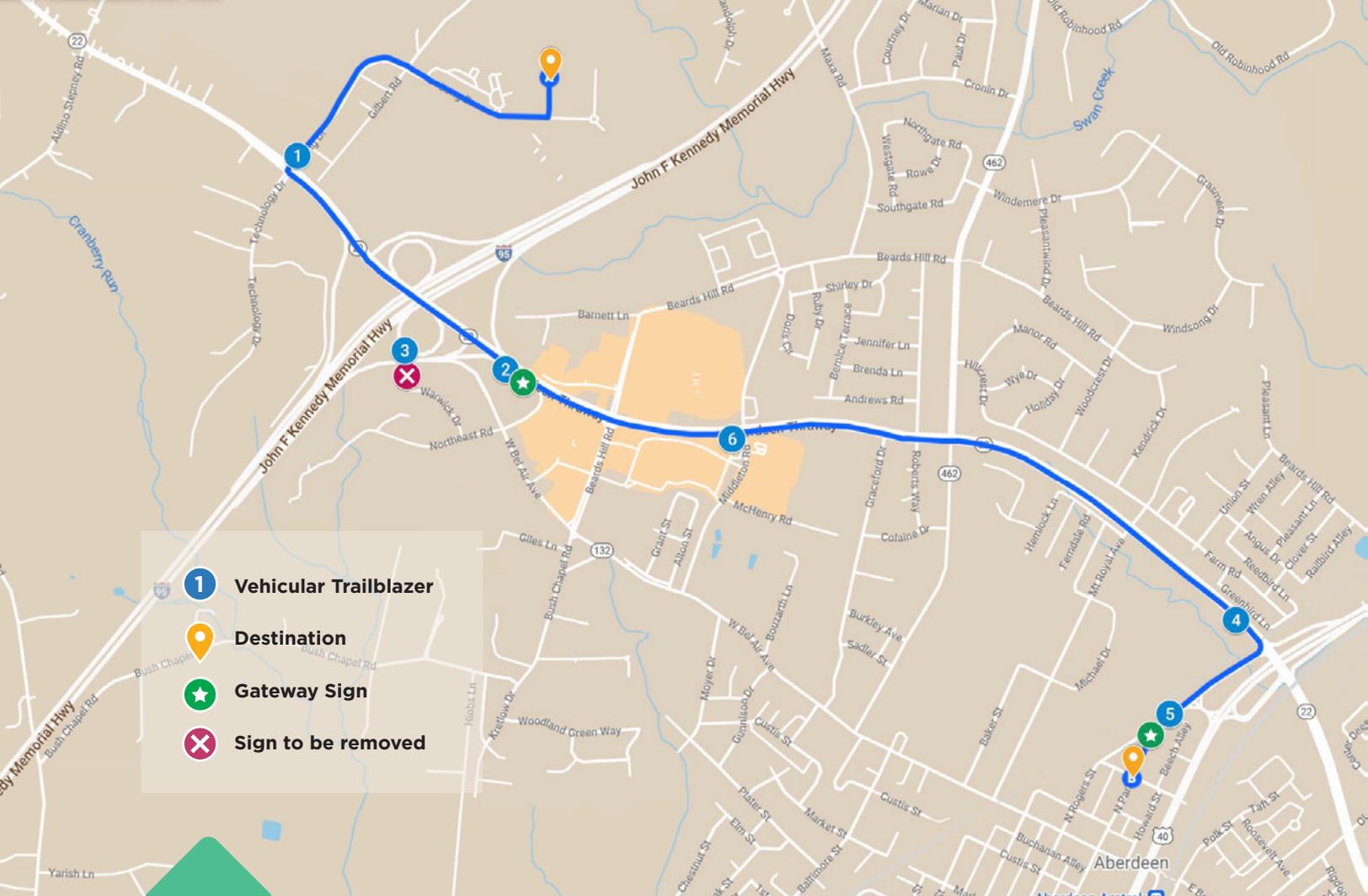


FIGURE 5. Wayfinding Map

COST CONSIDERATIONS

Ultimately, final costs for the fabrication, installation, and maintenance of the signage system will be determined during the construction phase. Based on recent project estimates in other communities, the community can calculate implementation costs by multiplying the number of low speed vehicular trailblazers by \$1,500-\$4,500 and the number of high speed signs by \$2,500-\$6,000 to get a potential range of costs. Monument signs can vary greatly depending on final size, materials, lighting and other factors which are not accounted for in this document. Pedestrian signs will typically cost much less than vehicular signs because they are often mounted on existing poles. It is recommended that the City budget 5% of the total cost of sign fabrication/installation on an annual basis for ongoing maintenance, repair, and replacement.

This sign system is not designed to be exhaustive in nature. Implementation of this plan should be coordinated with an experienced sign fabricator, installer, and with regulatory agencies at the municipal, state, and local level.

Wayfinding projects can be funded through a variety of sources and mechanisms. The following is an outline of potential funding options:

- ▶ **General Funds:** Many communities appropriate an annual budget in their capital improvement plan to pay for phased wayfinding implementation.
- ▶ **Partner Funding:** The signs in this plan direct people to City, County, State, and private destinations. These partners can be approached to determine their potential to fund portions of implementation.
- ▶ **Intergovernmental agreements:** There is the potential to solicit funding from local government partners such as the County, or even nearby communities. This may require an expanded program to propose signage in unincorporated portions of the county, adjacent cities, or contributions from local destination partners.
- ▶ **Local Option Funding:** While the funds below are likely appropriated to existing projects, future revenues could be used to fund phasing in the wayfinding plan.
- ▶ **Occupancy Tax:** Revenues from the Occupancy & Tourism Tax.
- ▶ **Prepared Food & Beverage Tax:** Some counties and communities can leverage a sales tax specifically for prepared meals.
- ▶ **Grants:** Several grants can be used to provide funding for wayfinding projects. These grant monies can be added to any additional funding to pay for portions of phased wayfinding.
- ▶ **Community Development Block Grants:** The Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grants can be used for streetscape improvements including wayfinding signage implementation.
- ▶ **Preserve America Grants:** The National Parks Service administers a matching-grant program to designated Preserve America Communities. These grants are intended to support heritage tourism, education and preservation planning, and have been used for wayfinding implementation
- ▶ **Transportation Alternative Program Grant:** The federally-funded transportation alternative program provides grants streetscape projects as well as improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The grants pay up to 80% of eligible project costs and require a 20% or more local match.
- ▶ **Federal Highway Association (FHA) Grants:** Grants for specific projects can be used to fund portions of wayfinding, particularly for signs that may be in that project area.

It is likely that funding would come from multiple sources, including many mentioned above. One of the first steps of implementation will be to identify potential funding streams and pull together an initial budget.



FIGURE 6. Downtown Gateways

■ DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

The following pages outline and illustrate recommendations for the downtown gateways. The concepts illustrate where a Downtown Gateway Sign can be located as part of the overall wayfinding system, as well as surrounding landscape enhancements that might be considered. The plans are conceptual in nature and should be coordinated with adjacent property owners for any improvements not located on public property.

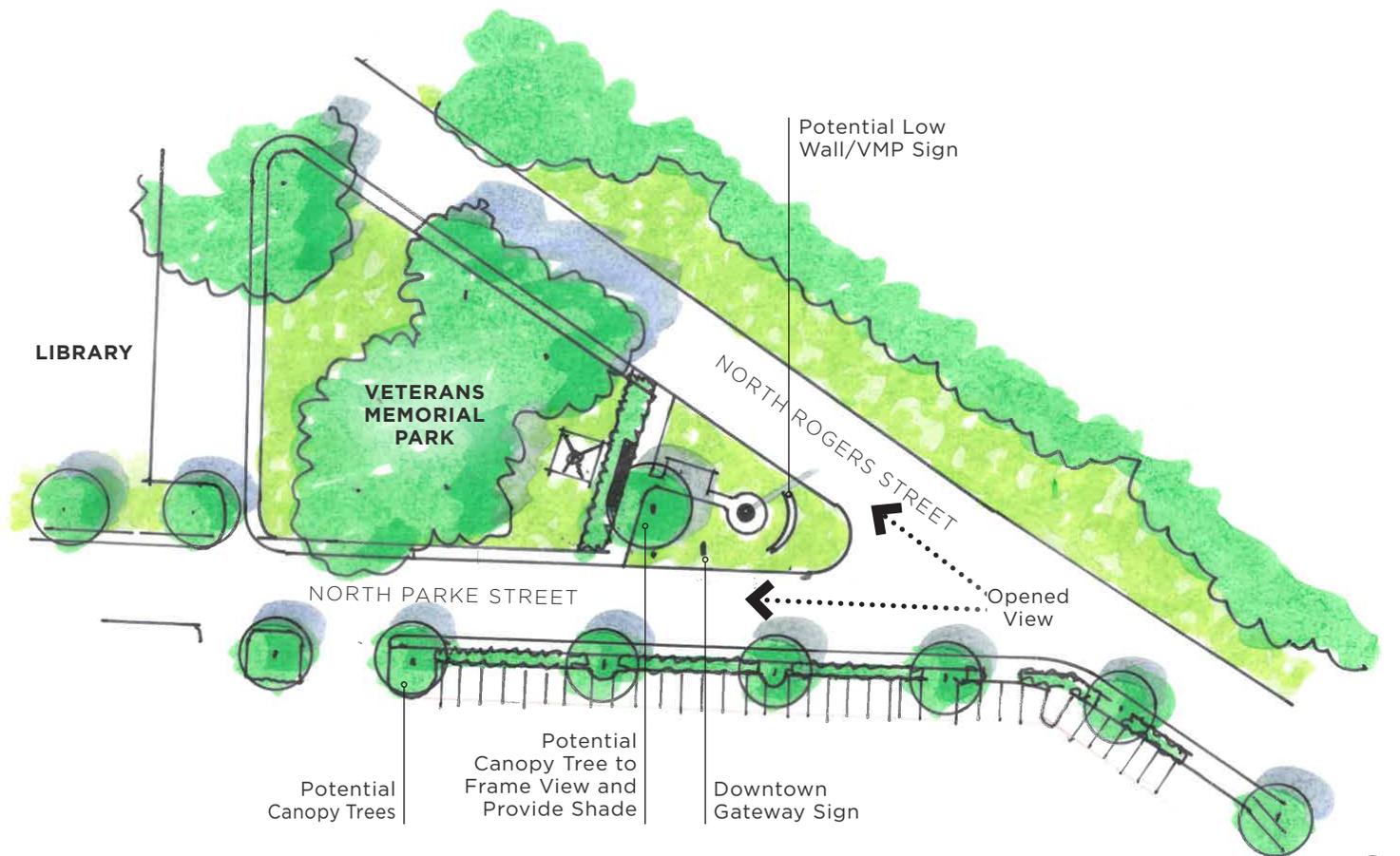


FIGURE 7. North Gateway

NORTH GATEWAY

Take advantage of the “green” approach to downtown associated with the mature trees, streetscape, and attractive Veteran’s Memorial Park and consider the landscape enhancements illustrated on the plan (Figure 7 on page 29). Specifically:

- ▶ Locate a Downtown Aberdeen Gateway sign within Veteran’s Memorial Park along North Parke Street.
- ▶ Remove the ornamental tree at the corner of Veteran’s Memorial Park to open views into the park to the flag and memorial elements.
- ▶ Consider replacing the existing Veteran’s Memorial Park sign with a low, curved stone wall with name of park identified on the wall.
- ▶ Consider working with property owner on the east side of North Parke Street to replace low ornamental tree with taller canopy street trees.
- ▶ Consider planting a large canopy shade tree within the park to ultimately provide shade to visitors of the park. The intent is that a canopy tree would allow views to the memorial beneath its canopy.
- ▶ Strive to preserve existing trees between North Parke Street and the rail line as they contribute significantly to the positive gateway experience.



Existing



Proposed

Proposed North Gateway, at the Intersection of Parke & Rogers Streets



FIGURE 8. West Gateway

WEST GATEWAY

Take advantage of the viewshed to the historic train depot and distinct “sense of place” along West Bel Air Avenue near Baker and Mt. Royal Avenues to establish a downtown gateway from the west. Specifically:

- ▶ Place the Downtown Aberdeen Gateway Sign so that the existing ever-green trees provide a clear backdrop for the sign.
- ▶ Remove/relocate other signs so as to reduce sign clutter that could distract from the gateway sign.
- ▶ Provide a broad planting bed with seasonal color and low shrub masses.
- ▶ As opportunities allow, work with the adjacent property owner to explore long-term development potential of both the depot site and adjacent property in a coordinated fashion, considering the following:
 - » Locate any future buildings so that they preserve and frame the views to the historic depot from West Bel Air Avenue.
 - » Establish a park space in the front of the depot and future development that could be used for events.



Existing



Proposed

View looking East along Bel Air Avenue



Example of narrow canopy street trees planted behind overhead utility lines

- » Consider using special paving (brick, pavers, etc.) for a portion of the parking lot so that it can function as parking most of the time and an attractive event space some of the time.
- » Consider narrow canopy trees along the street that will provide a strong street edge and shade on the sidewalk, while still allowing for views to the depot beneath and between the narrow canopies. The narrow form also allows for these trees to be planted adjacent to overhead utility lines to help minimize their visual impact.



FIGURE 9. South/East Gateway



SOUTH|EAST GATEWAY

Until future transit-oriented development can completely transform downtown’s gateway from Route 40 at West, Bel Air Avenue, locate gateway signage in several locations to help visitors understand that this is the gateway intersection to downtown. Specifically:

- ▶ Explore two different options for locating the Downtown Aberdeen Gateway sign from both the north and south approaches along Route 40. First, explore a location along the right side of the travel lane as pictured. Second, and ideally, explore a location within the median on each side of the intersection, also pictured.
- ▶ Consider a third location along West Bel Air Avenue just west of the intersection with Route 40, on the right side of the road. If needed, coordinate with the adjacent property owner.



FESTIVAL PARK

During the stakeholder discussions, the Team was made aware of some interest in locating a fountain in the center of Festival Park. While a fountain would be an outstanding addition to the park, the Team was concerned that a location in the center of the lawn would impede the flexibility of this lawn for large events. To that end, the Team developed two alternative approaches to how a fountain could be incorporated effectively in the park for further exploration.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to think of Festival Park in terms of the “inner park” and the “outer park”. The inner park is the lawn area and should remain open and flexible to accommodate informal play and large events with unobstructed sightlines to the stage and pavilion. The outer park is comprised of the park edges and beyond to adjacent development. This is where the day-to-day activities and park elements are located-and should continue to be located as they are added. Additionally, the type of fountain most appropriate for Festival Park is an interactive splash feature that, when closed for the season or not in uses, becomes expanded paved area for gathering. With these considerations, the following two options may be explored further:



FIGURE 10. Festival Park Option A

Option A

Locate the splash feature opposite the playground as an extension of the playground and part of this active edge of the park where passersby can engage. Specifically:

- ▶ Replicate the circular form of the playground on the opposite side of the park sidewalk.
- ▶ Provide seating along the perimeter to allow park users to watch the activity in the splash feature and playground and for adults to supervise children.
- ▶ Incorporate shade trees adjacent to the seating.
- ▶ Utilize special paving so that when the splash feature is turned off, it becomes a small paved plaza.
- ▶ Consider public art in the paving.



FIGURE 11. Festival Park Option B

Option B

Locate the splash feature on the north side of the park to provide more of an active edge along Franklin Street. Specifically:

- ▶ Consider a “crescent” shape so that a new inner pathway can maintain the overall oval form of the lawn.
- ▶ Use special planting beds offering seasonal interest to separate splash area from sidewalks.
- ▶ Incorporate seating and shade trees.
- ▶ Utilize special paving so that when the splash feature is turned off, it becomes a small paved plaza.
- ▶ Consider public art in the paving.





IMPLEMENTATION

The style guide (BrandTouch™) report, which was provided to the City of Aberdeen as a separate attachment, includes a series of implementation tools including the following:

- ▶ A **Brand Launch** strategy guide checklist for implementation.
- ▶ How to be a **Brand Partner** guide for businesses and partner organizations.
- ▶ A **BrandScore** sheet to track progress.
- ▶ The **Main5** brand deployment strategy for communication across all channels including social media.
- ▶ An event guide to annually track events in the downtown.

Most of the branding can be implemented in the next 6 months to a year. More capital-intensive projects such as wayfinding and gateways will require a longer implementation schedule, with planning beginning within 6 months to a year and fabrication/installation occurring in phases over the next 6 years and beyond.

The actions identified in the checklist included in the Brand Launch strategy guide are outlined on the following pages as an Implementation Matrix with assignments for approximate implementation phases. Gateways and improvements to Festival Park have also been added to this Implementation Matrix.

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE

	6 Months IMMEDIATE STEPS	1-3 Years SHORT- TERM	3-6 Years MID-TERM	6 Years + LONG- TERM
Adopt Brand				
BRAND ADOPTION	•			
Technical Integration				
INSTALL FONTS	•			
COPY BRAND FOLDER TO LOCAL DRIVE	•			
SHARE BRAND LINK WITH DESIGN PARTNERS	•			
Social Media				
UPDATE FACEBOOK PROFILE	•			
UPDATE INSTAGRAM PROFILE	•			
UPDATE TWITTER PROFILE	•			
UPDATE PINTEREST PROFILE	•			
LOAD PHOTOS AS GALLERY IN FACEBOOK	•			
CREATE PINTEREST BOARD WITH BRAND ELEMENTS	•			
Communication				
UPDATE EMAIL SIGNATURE	•			
ADOPT POWERPOINT TEMPLATE	•			
ADOPT DIGITAL LETTERHEAD	•			
UPLOAD BRAND MATERIALS TO EMAIL NEWSLETTER	•			
ADOPT ENVELOPE TEMPLATE	•			
PRINT UPDATED BUSINESS CARDS	•			
Online				
UPDATE COLORS ON WEBPAGE	•			
ADD NEW GRAPHICS	•			
UPDATE FAVICON	•			
ADD BRAND STATEMENT TO WEBSITE	•			
ADD STYLEGUIDE REQUEST	•			
ADD BRAND RESOURCES PAGE	•			
Collateral				
SHARE BRAND RESOURCES	•	ONGOING »		
SHARE MERCHANDISING EXAMPLES	•	ONGOING »		
SHARE BRAND PARTNER IDEA LIST	•	ONGOING »		

IMPLEMENTATION TABLE (CONTINUED)

	6 Months IMMEDIATE STEPS	1-3 Years SHORT- TERM	3-6 Years MID-TERM	6 Years + LONG- TERM
Wayfinding				
PLAN STRATEGIC BANNER STRATEGY	•			
PLAN EVENT BANNER STRATEGY	•			
EXPLORE PARTNERING FOR COMPREHENSIVE WAYFINDING SYSTEM	•			
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PHASE I		•		
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PHASE II			•	
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT PHASE III				•
Printing				
SHOPPING AND DINING GUIDE		•		
ORGANIZATION BROCHURE		•		
PARKING CARDS		•		
PARTNER BANNERS		•		
VISIT CARDS		•		
HOURS SIGNS		•		
Event Extension				
LOGO ADOPTION	•	ONGOING »		
SOCIAL INTEGRATION	•	ONGOING »		
MARKETING INTEGRATION	•	ONGOING »		
MERCHANDISE EXPANSION	•	ONGOING »		
SIGNAGE	•	ONGOING »		
VOLUNTEER SWAG		•	ONGOING »	
Downtown Gateways				
NORTH GATEWAY		•		
WEST GATEWAY		•		
SOUTH/EAST GATEWAYS		•		
Festival Park				
SPLASH PAD DESIGN		•		
SPLASH PAD CONSTRUCTION		•		

**MAIN STREET MARKETING,
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June 1, 2022