

City of Medford Wayfinding Master Plan



March 2026



City of Medford

Wayfinding Master Plan

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CITY OF MEDFORD

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Many thanks to the Medford community members and city staff who have contributed their time and insight to this Wayfinding Study.



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Introduction



Wayfinding typically consists of signage, but also includes paths, nodes, landmarks, neighborhoods, open spaces, and districts.

What Is Wayfinding?

The idea of wayfinding was developed here in Massachusetts. In his 1960 classic *The Image of the City*, urbanist Kevin Lynch outlined five key elements that enable users to clearly orient themselves and to ultimately arrive at their destination: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.

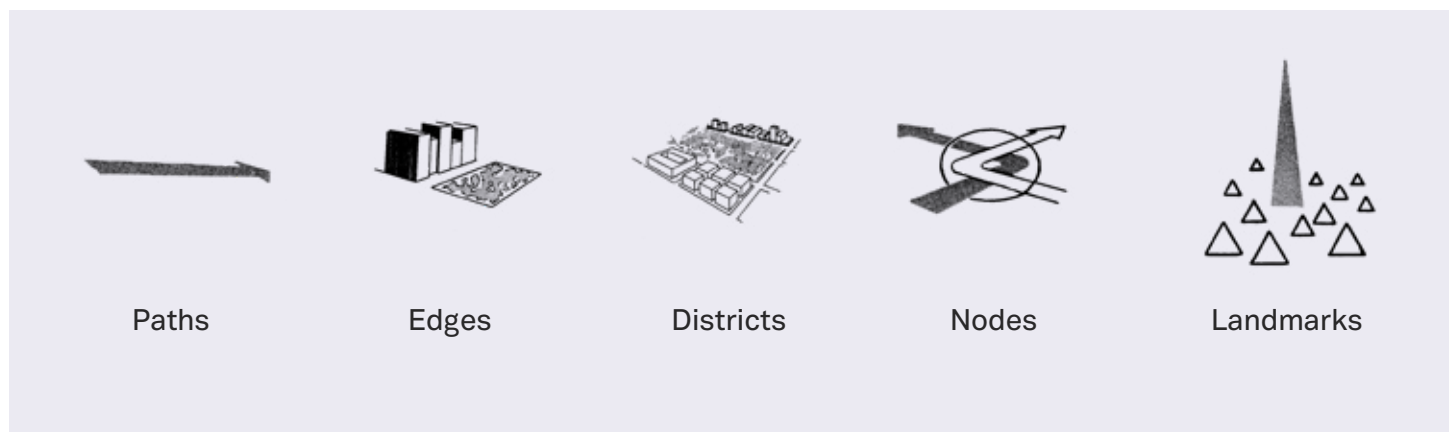
A wayfinding system utilizes primarily signage, but also other design elements (like buildings, public art, sidewalk paving, and lighting) to help people get to where they need to go. Wayfinding not only connects different parts of a city, it showcases different local identities. By promoting places to explore, creating a coherent brand, and connecting people to destinations, wayfinding plays a key role in achieving transportation goals as well as economic growth.

Wayfinding solves typical navigation problems, like showing people where they are, how to get from A to B, the time a journey takes, and what destinations can be reached en route. At its best, a wayfinding system doesn't simply help people find their way to a destination, it also introduces new destinations, enticing exploration. Additionally, it can promote specific behaviors, like pedestrian travel and taking safe routes.

Signage is a typical feature of wayfinding systems. These are designed to inform and direct people. Signs differ based on the users; for instance, drivers benefit from simple, bold information related to road networks, while hikers can benefit from more detailed information about geography and trails networks.

“Wayfinding can help an overarching goal to invite visitors to stay longer, spend more money, and come back.”

- Focus group participant



from *The Image of the City* (1960) by Kevin Lynch

Community Engagement

Hundreds of community members contributed to this wayfinding master plan. The Discovery Phase provided an opportunity to engage with many different community members and stakeholders. The design team and City used a variety of engagement methods and outreach to receive information and feedback.

FOCUS GROUPS

The initial stage of the Discovery Phase involved meeting with stakeholders and leadership in Medford, starting in 2025. The design team hosted 14 focus groups including a total of 34 people. The sessions took an informal interview format. Though each conversation was tailored to each group, all sessions share similar themes that touched on Medford's character, popular and hidden destinations, wayfinding issues, and envisioning ways that wayfinding would benefit the city.

- The Chevalier Theater (07/01)
- Senior Center (07/03)
- Chamber of Commerce & Tufts University (07/16)
- City Transportation (07/17)
- The Mayor's Office (07/17)
- River's Edge (07/17)
- Hormel Stadium Athletics (07/24)
- Historic & Cultural Assets (08/05)
- OOP Community Liaisons (08/06)
- Lisa Colaianni, Cultural Affairs Director (08/11)
- Encore Casino (08/13)
- Medford Economic Study (08/26)
- Friends of the Fells (09/05)
- Institute for Human Centered Design (01/20)

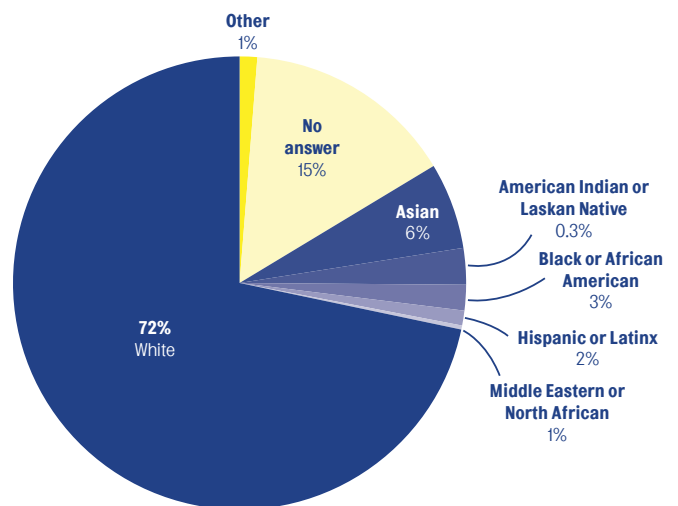
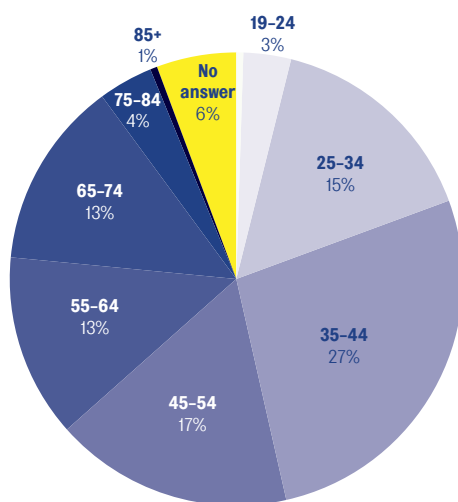
SURVEY

The digital survey sampled a significant number of community members, receiving a total of 394 responses. The survey consisted of 44 self-identified visitors to Medford, meaning the vast majority of the respondents were residents of the city. The survey questions and prompts were made accessible, both through the use of plain language and through translation into Arabic, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, and Spanish. The survey was promoted using fliers at the pop-up events and through a concerted effort by city staff that involved outreach in their social channels, and the use of physical signs at key locations.

Respondents completed the survey online, and were briefly introduced to the project and the concept of wayfinding. They were asked to provide information on Medford’s character, popular destinations, navigational challenges, sign location and design preferences, and personal demographics. These responses informed the wayfinding framework and sign design.



The survey respondents were mostly residents, and the overall racial and age demographics were representative of Medford’s population.



POP-UPS

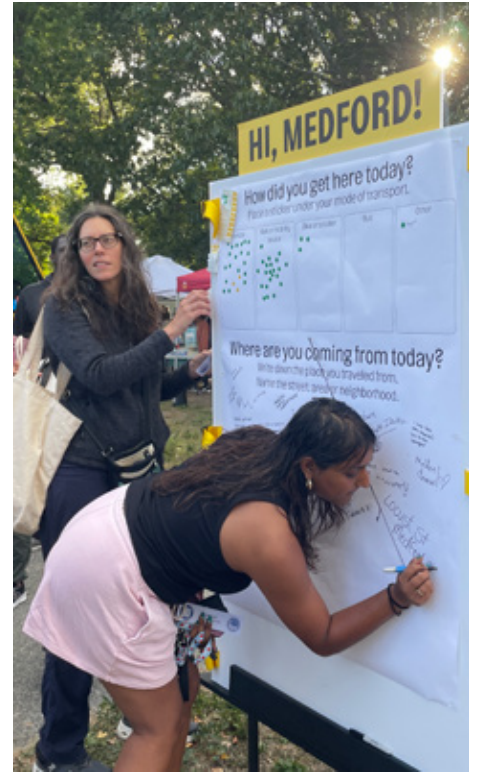
Four pop-up engagement events were conducted at different locations in Medford. The pop-ups involved a bespoke three-sided totem with interactive exercises on each side. These were designed to draw interest and allow participants to provide un-guided feedback, or strike up conversations with the design team. This enabled a low bar to entry for the public to provide information, while also offering opportunities for deeper, more detailed conversations. The three called for different feedback from participants, designed to inform sign design, branding approach, and destination/route prioritization:

- **Choose a Sign Design.** Participants used stickers to select the best sign designs from a select of two dozen wayfinding projects. They were also able to explain their choices in writing or verbally.
- **What Makes Medford, Medford?** Participants wrote three words or phrases that they believed captured the character of Medford.
- **Mapping Destinations.** Using a large map of the city and stickers, participants identified places in Medford they thought represented Medford.

An open house event allowed the public and city staff to provide feedback as the brand and sign designs progressed. The three-sided totem displayed an overview of two design directions for the brand and signage on one side, and citywide maps on the other two sides which differed in graphic style—one darker in color palette, the other lighter. Participants interacted with the totem and other pop-ups at the event, providing verbal feedback and using sticky notes.

The public and city staff provided feedback on the maps and sign designs during the open house.





Pop-ups allowed community members to provide their perspective on three questions that informed the wayfinding system design.

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

A workshop ensured city staff and stakeholders interviewed previously, were able to provide additional input as the wayfinding approach developed. The workshop consisted of two exercises. The first allowed participants to add ideas and notes to maps that presented the initial wayfinding framework—the routes and destinations that the wayfinding system will direct users along and to. During the second exercise, they used cards to assign design principles (see Approach) to the sign design precedents. This exercise also gave participants the option to write what they did and didn't like about the designs.

City Staff Review

The project involved frequent reviews from city staff. Biweekly meetings ensured each stage of the project received review from key staff members at the office of Planning, Development & Sustainability.

Two meetings with Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn shaped the design of the wayfinding system. At separate stages of design development, the design team presented the branding and sign design development to the Mayor and her staff.

USER/EXPERT ACCESSIBILITY REVIEW

To ensure the sign designs were accessible, a review of sign mockups took place on January 20, 2026. The session was run by the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD) and supported by City staff. The review aimed to evaluate the signage's effectiveness and inclusivity through the lens of individual lived experience. IHCD engaged nine local residents with various physical and cognitive limitations (user/experts) to interact with full-size sign mockups at locations in Medford, followed by an in-depth debriefing at City Hall. The exercise resulted in critical design feedback that led to design changes in the final map and sign designs.



Mapping exercise during a stakeholder workshop to refine the wayfinding framework.



Nine user/experts assessed sign mock-ups in-situ to evaluate their accessibility.

Prior Work

The Medford Comprehensive Plan and City's Wayfinding Pilot Project were useful starting points for this wayfinding master plan. The design team reviewed both projects for relevant information and lessons.

The Comprehensive plan gathered significant community input to understand the needs and ambitions of the community. Wayfinding is mentioned in many places throughout The Medford Comprehensive Plan. Many actions advocate for improved signage and wayfinding. There are four that provided helpful pretext for this master plan project:

- **AA.3.1.6** “Develop and implement consistent signage and street markings for streets in use by motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists.”
- **CR.3.2.4** “Introduce interpretive and educational signage along trails and in open spaces to educate and communicate about natural systems.”
- **VP.1.6.2** “Develop appropriate design guidelines for storefronts and signage that reinforce the unique identity of each commercial center.”
- **WS.2.1.6** “Improve signage, wayfinding, and interpretation in Medford parks, trails, and plazas.”

The master plan builds off of the master plan's Geographic Strategies:

- **Gateway Nodes** This Strategy directly references signage to indicate when people are entering/exiting the area. This use of wayfinding for this purpose is leveraged in this master plan.
- **Centers & Squares** These are significant areas that informed this project's approach to districts as a primary organizational unit of the wayfinding framework
- **Corridors** This master plan aims to support a multimodal network in Medford, guiding drivers and pedestrians at routes and nodes (key intersections and rotaries) where corridors meet.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Plan describes the features of the city that make Medford, Medford. The plan describes the Mystic River as the city's most significant geographic asset. It is viewed as both a historical corridor and a modern recreational spine. The plan prioritizes making the river into more of a primary destination. The Middlesex Fells is identified as a defining feature of Medford's green character. The plan emphasizes the need to better connect the city's residential core to this large natural asset.

“ ‘Celebrate the River’ was a commonly heard proposal in public meetings, the online maps, and one-on-one conversations with residents.”

— Medford Comp Plan

The City's Wayfinding Pilot Project acted as a first step for the city to deliver a more comprehensive, permanent wayfinding system. It provided a proof of concept; using wayfinding to direct pedestrians to/from Medford Square. The pilot also defined pedestrian routes from Medford to key destinations like West Medford and the Fells, which became the basis for this master plan's pedestrian network.

The sign design had many effective qualities that are developed further in this master plan. Members of the public could provide feedback through a scannable QR code. Though the respondents were relatively few, the majority wanted to see permanent signage and the signage initiative to expand beyond Medford Square.



Approach

What We Heard

During the Discovery Phase, we learned of five primary wayfinding challenges in Medford:

1. MULTIMODAL ASPIRATIONS

Though driving dominates travel in Medford, the city possesses physical characteristics to be highly walkable and there is a desire to use wayfinding to support pedestrian travel.

- Drivers and pedestrians alike need guidance navigating key nodes (like intersections and rotaries), but would like signage to promote pedestrian travel, especially within districts.
- MBTA stations and the Mystic River Greenway are important pedestrian assets. Both residents and visitors require better last-mile navigation to connect these transit hubs to commercial districts and vice versa.
- Parking for the Chevalier is a recurring issue. People driving to Medford Square to attend the Chevalier have difficulty knowing where to park in advance and require clear on-site directional signage as they arrive.
- Large road infrastructure divides the city, and acts as a physical and psychological barrier, making the city feel disconnected and unsafe for those on foot.

“Wayfinding should address two main audiences, pedestrians and drivers.”

- Focus group participant

“I would like wayfinding that encourages walking over driving!”

- Survey respondent



The Clippership Connector is a vital, recent addition to the Mystic River Greenway by Medford Square.

2. DISTRICT FOCUS

Medford is a city of districts, defined by small businesses, recreation, and cultural/historical destinations, but they feel isolated and will benefit from unification.

- Medford square functions as the heart of the city and presents the best opportunities for branding and guidance. However, its has a confusing intersection, and hidden routes that make it difficult to access its best assets (like Condon shell and John D. Hand Bridge).
- Many residents do not know the names of the districts and have difficulty defining their locations.
- Visitors are unaware of district attractions. Despite the districts being seen by residents as a major local asset with their own unique identity and history, and all are within a 25 minute walking distance of another.

“As long as I’ve lived in Medford (decades), I’ve never known where various squares are”

- Survey respondent

“Connect people to other squares and their offerings.”

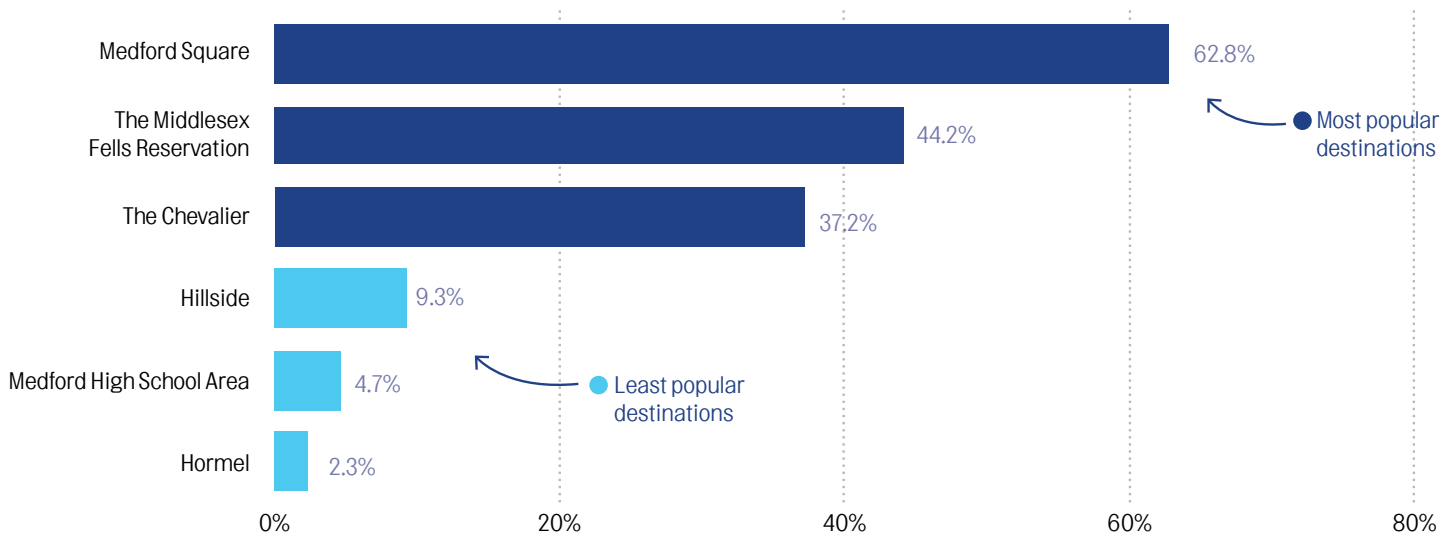
- Focus group participant

Medford Square, The Fells, and the Chevalier are the most popular places that are frequently visited by visitors.

“[Medford needs] signs from square to square.”

- Survey respondent

Visitors: What places do you usually visit in Medford?
43 respondents



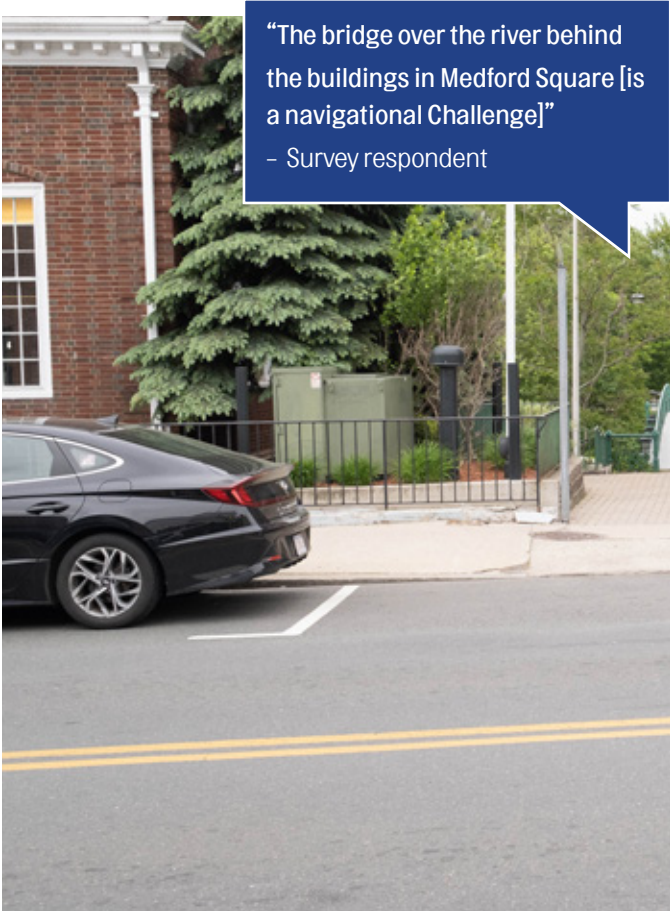


Major intersections like this one by Wellington Circle are confusing to navigate for drivers and pedestrians alike.



“Medford center is hard to navigate”
– Survey respondent

Medford Square’s intersection is particularly challenging to navigate. The public parking on Clippership Drive can be hard to find.



“The bridge over the river behind the buildings in Medford Square [is a navigational Challenge]”
– Survey respondent



The John D. Hand footbridge connects Medford Square to the south side of the river, but can easily be missed.

3. LEVERAGING POPULAR DESTINATIONS

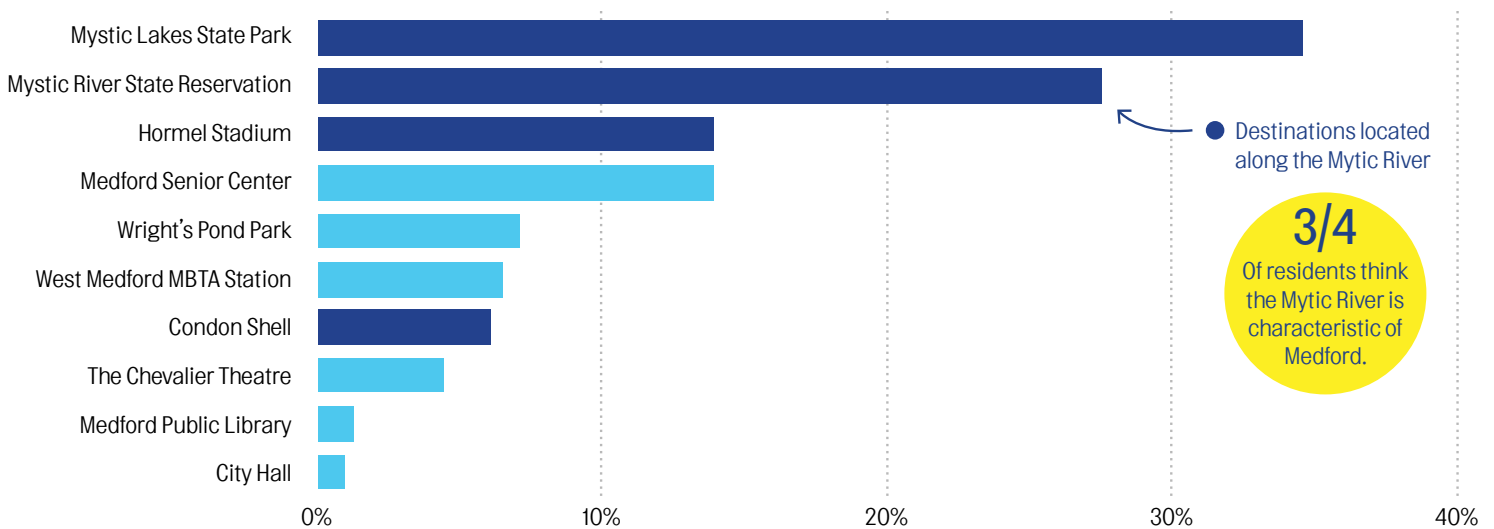
The Middlesex Fells and Chevalier are beacons, drawing visitors, and the Mystic River has potential to be a destination in its own right.

- The Middlesex Fells draws thousands of visitors a year and the Chevalier is very popular for visitors, but they do not necessarily use them as jumping off points to other districts and destinations.
- Survey results indicate that while people think of the Mystic River as a major feature of Medford, they don't necessarily travel to it as a primary destination.

Though most respondents view the Mystic River as a major landmark, a significant proportion did not know key destinations along the river.

“We should make more use of the river [it’s a] great benefit to city”
– Survey respondent

Residents: Which of these places have you not heard of?
309 respondents



4. BRAND & IDENTITY

To reflect a city that is historic, green, and changing, Medford's signage should be straightforward, contemporary, and prioritize legibility over ornamentation.

- Medford blue is an essential part of Medford's brand.
- The Mystic River and the Fells play a dual role, representing nature and history. The river is not just as essential to Medford at present, but it is a historical site and a physical link between neighborhoods.
- While history is a major part of identity, the community also sees contemporary themes of community, family, residential, and diversity as important aspects of Medford.
- Survey respondents felt mixed about historical looking signs, and preferred clean, straightforward, and contemporary design that prioritizes legibility over ornamentation.
- Concerns are dominated by the potential for increased sign clutter and the choice of historical information displayed.

"historic, green,
and changing"
- Survey respondent

"Community, friendly,
and strong"
- Survey respondent

"Mystic River is a historical,
and physical, connector"
- Focus group participant

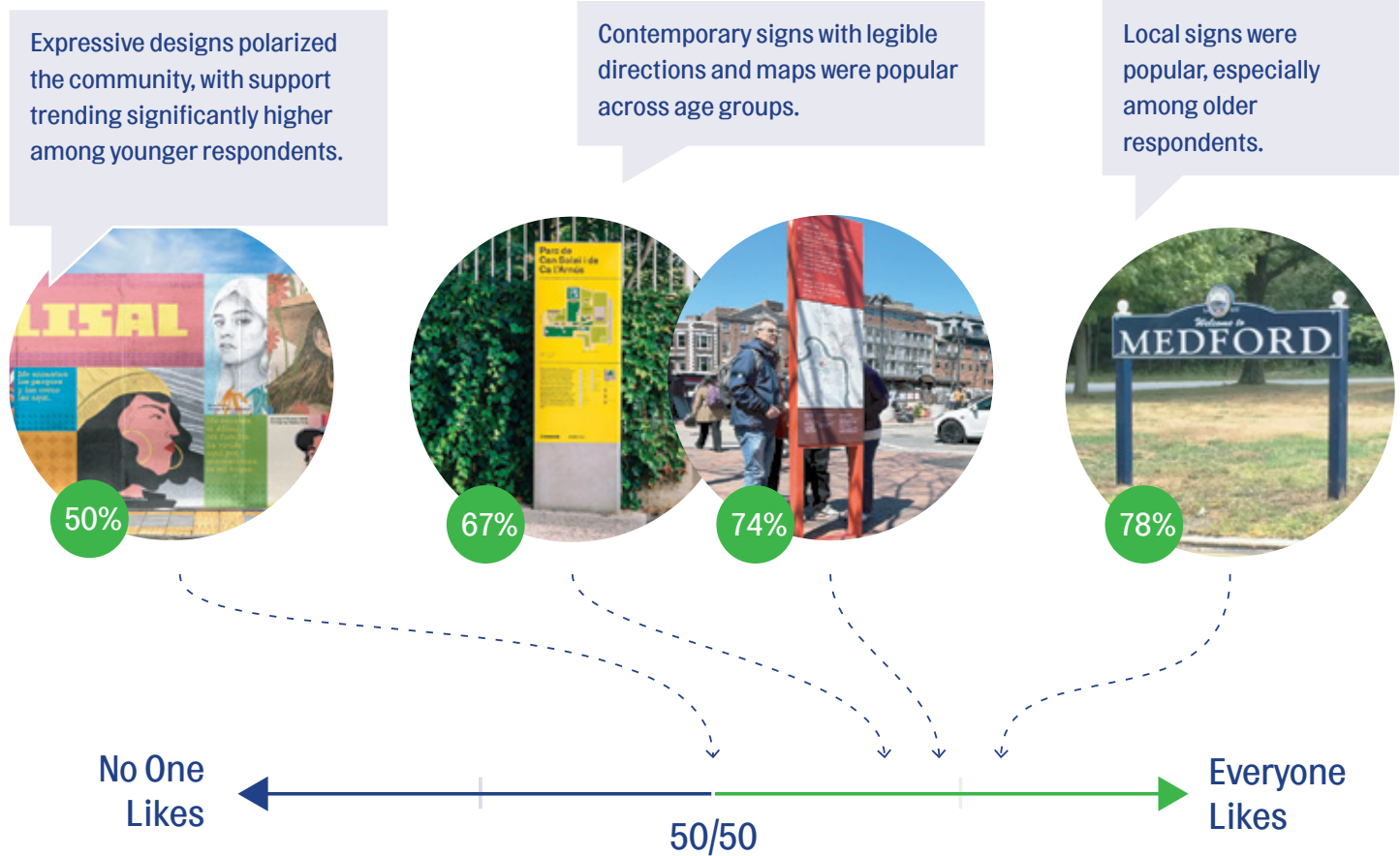


5. USER KNOWLEDGE AND ACCESSIBILITY

A successful system must be attractive while ensuring legibility and accessible to all users, regardless of age or ability.

- Younger and older age groups differed on their local knowledge and sign preference. Younger survey respondents preferred contemporary and expressive signs more than older respondents. Highlight sign preference
- IHCD’s user/expert review underscored the importance of bold, high-contrast text, and sentence case for accessibility.
- Participants in the pop-ups displayed map literacy, and many survey respondents indicated a preference for maps, even though many noted the prevalence of digital maps for navigation.

“I would love to know what is walkable from Medford square.”
– Survey respondent



Expressive designs polarized the community, with support trending significantly higher among younger respondents.

Contemporary signs with legible directions and maps were popular across age groups.

Local signs were popular, especially among older respondents.

Results from digital survey sign design preference question.

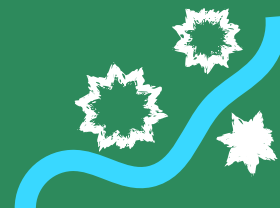
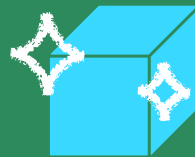
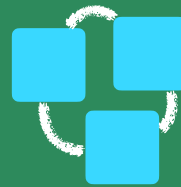
Design Goals & Principles

DESIGN GOALS

- Establish cohesive signage & wayfinding for the city
- Help visitors and residents navigate easily
- Bring more visitors to Medford to stay and encourage them to be pedestrians

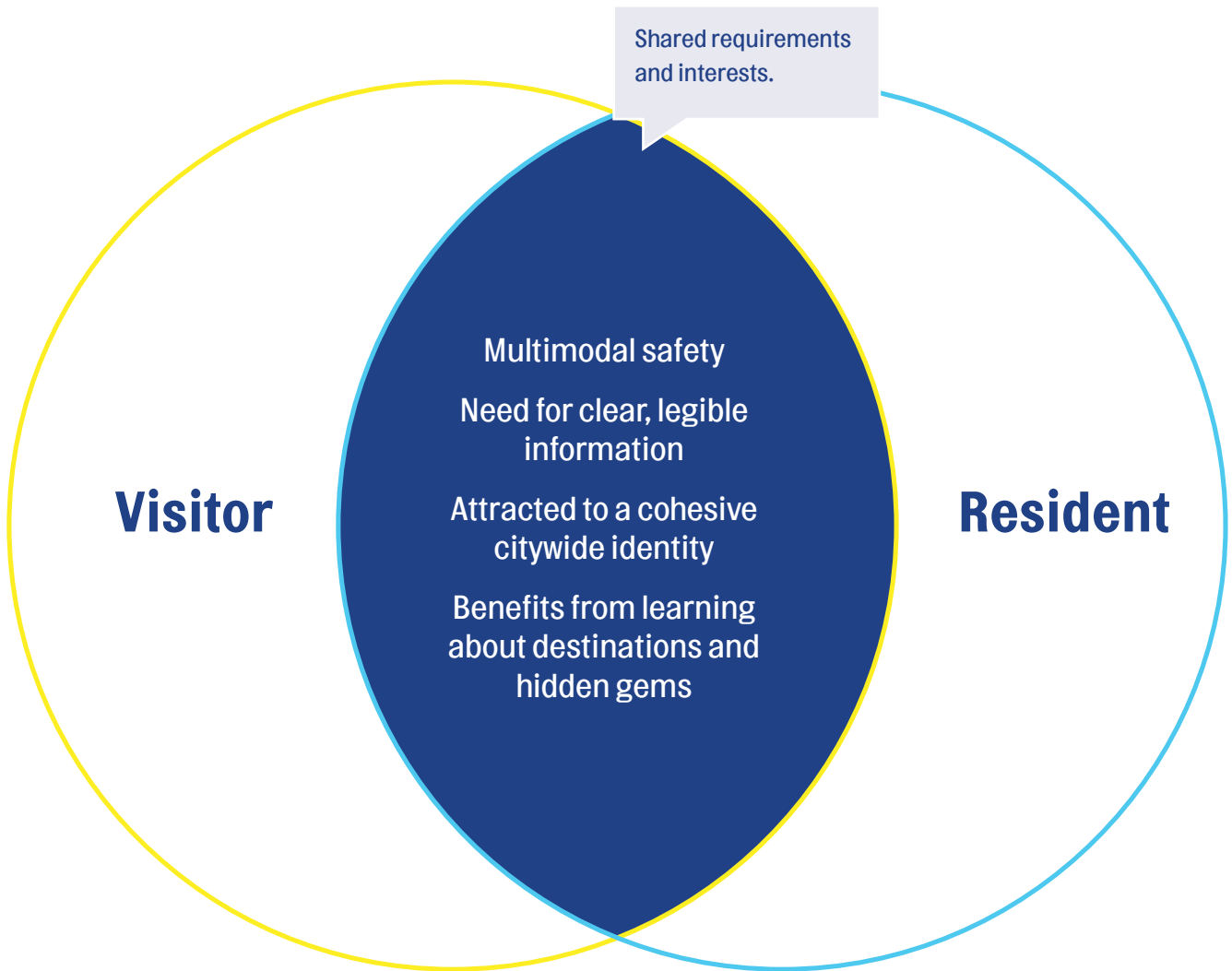
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Highlight and connect the squares/districts.
2. Better identify and communicate the extensive open space.
3. Celebrate and highlight Medford's institutions.
4. Make Medford's 400-year-history more relevant to people today.
5. Make the river a more prominent part of Medford's identity.



Users

The Medford wayfinding system is designed to bridge the gap between two primary audiences: Visitors and Residents. By addressing the unique pain points of each, the system will foster a cohesive city identity and encourage deeper exploration of Medford's diverse districts.



1. VISITOR

- Open to discovery but lacks a mental map of the city beyond specific landmarks.
- Often visits Medford specifically for the Middlesex Fells, but remains unaware of the offerings in the surrounding squares.
- Overlooks Medford's squares for commercial hubs like Davis Square which are perceived to be better connected and identifiable.
- Struggles to distinguish Medford's borders from neighboring cities.

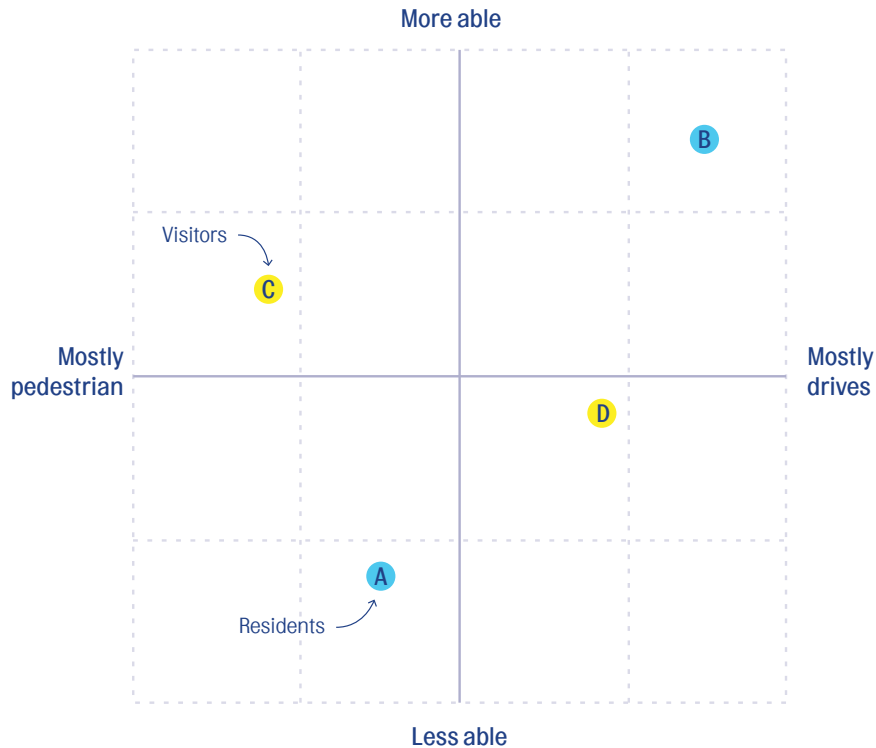
2. RESIDENT

- Prioritizes efficiency and the fastest route for daily routines.
- While familiar with their immediate neighborhood, they may be unaware of hidden gems, such as the Clippership Connector.
- Often reliant on driving between districts.
- Protective of the city's visual character and concerned about signage clutter.

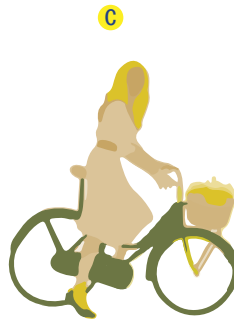
Despite their different levels of city knowledge, the wayfinding system must serve both simultaneously. In practice, there is no neat fit into either group: a resident shares a visitor's ambitions and knowledge as they explore a new district.

There is also no typical user. A successful system must provide universal accessibility—reflecting the reality that individual needs differ based on the time of day, their mode of transport, and their physical, social, financial, and cognitive abilities. Therefore, the wayfinding system must ensure accessibility and legibility for as many users as possible, from first-time visitors and long-term locals, from pedestrians to drivers, and from a high level of abilities to a low level.

Virtually all users share a common ability to access online and digital information. The use of devices like smartphones is ubiquitous, even among older generations. Though the proposed wayfinding system will work independent of devices, they are designed to complement the use of personal devices which can add detail and precision for users.



Busy Parent. These residents possess high local knowledge of schools, parks, and shopping routes but face high cognitive and physical demands when navigating with young children. While they prefer walking for short trips, they sometimes drive to destinations that are further away, or when tight on time.



Active Explorer. These visitors come to Medford for the Fells and sometimes use the Mystic River Greenway. They are multimodal pedestrians, going between public transit, cycling, and hiking, and use digital tools to plan their trips. However, they rarely think about visiting Medford's other destinations or districts.



Regular Driver. These residents drive for most trips. While they have a deep knowledge of Medford's main roads, they are less aware of its natural assets, like the lakes or Mystic River Greenway. Their physical ability is high, yet their motivation to explore is low due to ingrained driving habits.



Event-Goer. These visitors have some spatial knowledge of Medford, but focus on single destinations like the Chevalier Theater. They often manage physical or cognitive difficulties, leading to anxiety regarding driving, parking proximity, and arrival/departure times. Though, they would be interested in going to other events and destinations in the city.

The Framework

The framework represents a way of organizing the city to develop the wayfinding strategy. This spatial framework organizes Medford into a logical navigational hierarchy to guide the wayfinding strategy. It serves as the structure for the final system, defining areas in Medford and destinations the signage guides users to, and routes users will use to reach destinations. By categorizing the city into five core components, this framework ensures that signage is both strategically placed and effectively guides users through the city.

ZONES

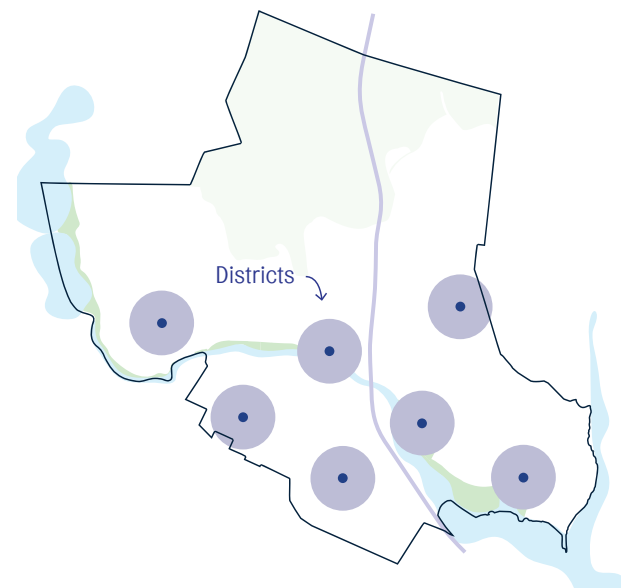
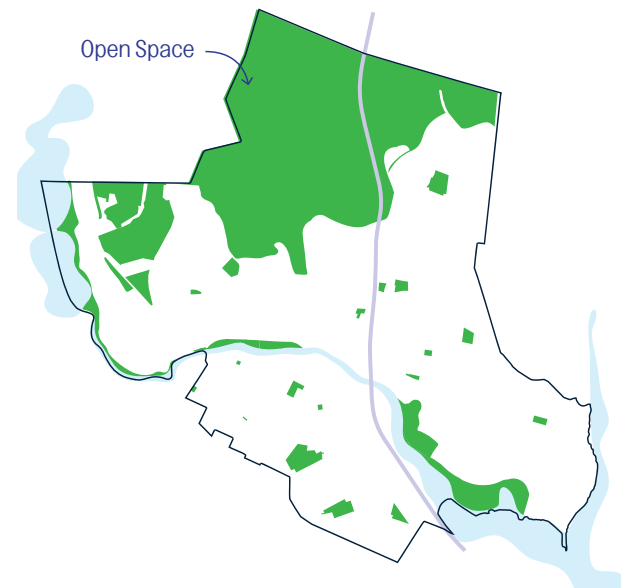
Zones are large areas defined by the city's boundaries and prominent physical edges. The Mystic River runs along an east/west axis through the center of Medford, crossing directly through Medford Square. While shown here as an edge, the Mystic also serves as a path and orientation device for users, providing a consistent point of reference. Interstate 93 runs perpendicular to the Mystic until the southern portion of the city where it joins and runs alongside the river. The highway has a greater sense of edge within the city. Its scale and position make it difficult or unpleasant to cross. Like the river, it is also a path, connecting Medford to the north, continuing up through New Hampshire, as well as Cambridge and Boston to the south. Together, these two features form three legible zones within Medford.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Medford's parks and open space comprise over 118 acres of land in Medford. Among the largest are the state-owned Middlesex Fells and Torbert MacDonald Park. Throughout Medford, twenty-four city-owned parks provide an abundance of open space within the city and recreational opportunities including tennis and basketball courts, soccer and football fields, baseball diamonds and playgrounds. Comprising almost a quarter of the city is the Middlesex Fells Reservation. With a direct connection to Interstate 93, the park draws visitors from the greater Boston region as well as Medford residents.

DISTRICTS

Districts are significant commercial or cultural areas in the city. Medford has several commercial districts including Medford Square, Haines Square, West Medford, Hillside, and Wellington. Riverside, though not commercial, has a significant cultural presence being home to multiple sports facilities, schools, and large public green spaces. Tufts University also holds a major presence in Medford, and its campus that extends across the boundary between Medford and Somerville contains one of Medford's three MBTA Train stops.

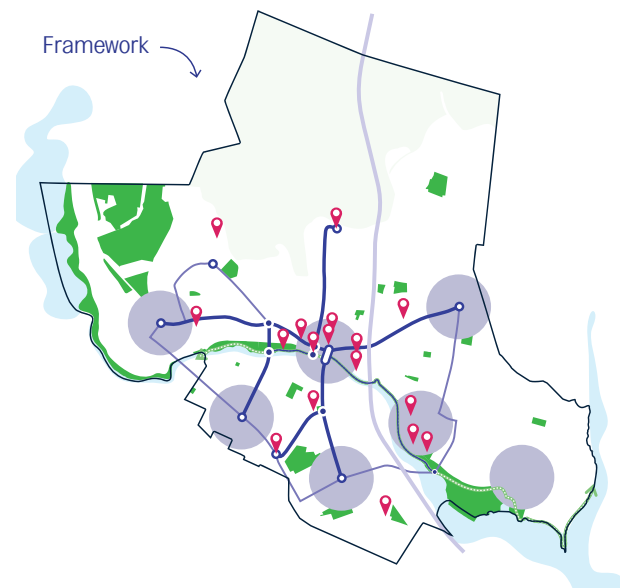


DESTINATIONS

Destinations are places where people linger or stay. The destinations selected consist of public and municipal buildings and significant cultural places or features within Medford. For residents, highlighted destinations can serve as directional references while for visitors they identify a probable place of interest.

ROUTES AND NODES

A route is a path to get from one place to another; and can be pedestrian, bike, or vehicular. A node is a decision point on a path; often an intersection of paths. Together, multiple connected routes and nodes form a network. The primary routes of Medford connect each district to the city center, Medford Square. The radial connections form a secondary family of routes that connect the outlying districts to one another as well as significant destinations that may lie beyond the primary network, like Medford's high school. Each node signifies a decision point, where the user has a choice on their destination and how they chose to get there. While intended for pedestrians, most of the paths can also be driven. A non-driving route, and incorporated into this network, is the Mystic River Greenway. The greenway is a collection of pedestrian and cycling paths that run alongside the Mystic River. It runs directly through Medford Square and provides convenient access to places like Riverbend and Hillside.



Brand & Identity

It was determined that the visual identity of the signs should be:

- Reflective of Medford's identity
- Legible at multiple scales
- High contrast
- A consistent system
- Using color/shapes/illustrations to distinguish between destinations

Two things that we heard were characteristically Medford were:

1. **Medford Blue** — typically associated with the city's brand, Medford High School, and the water of the Mystic River
2. **The Mystic River** — especially useful in wayfinding and orientation, as it bisects the city east-west.



Medford City Seal



Medford High School logo



The Mystic River in Medford Square

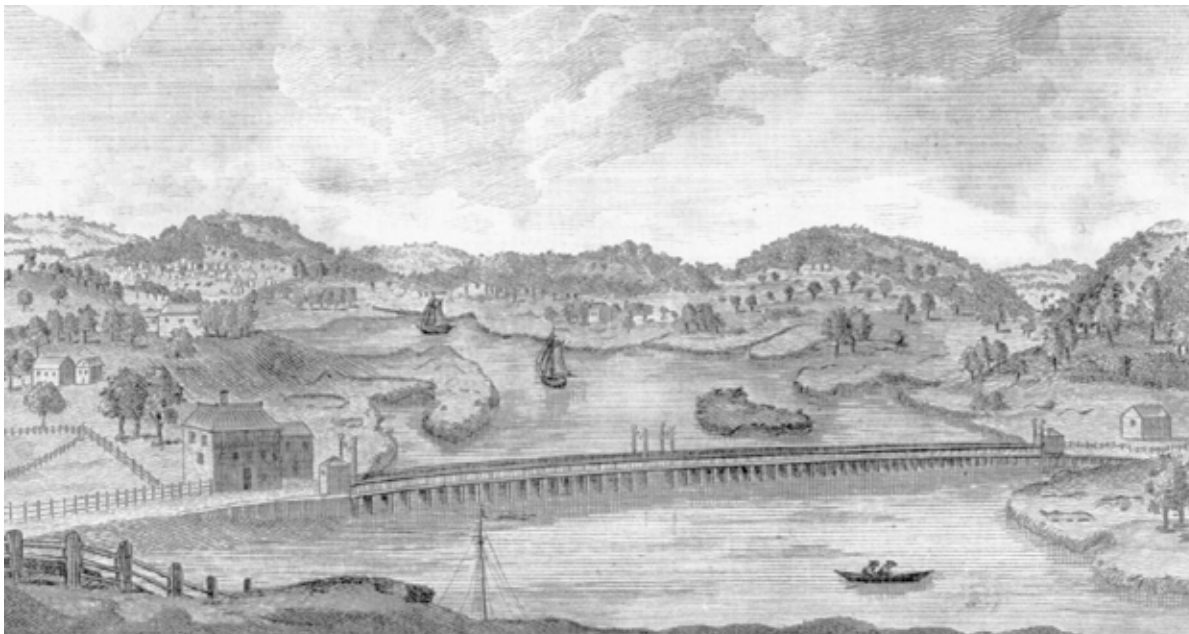


Image of the Mystic River c. 1790 via the Library of Congress.

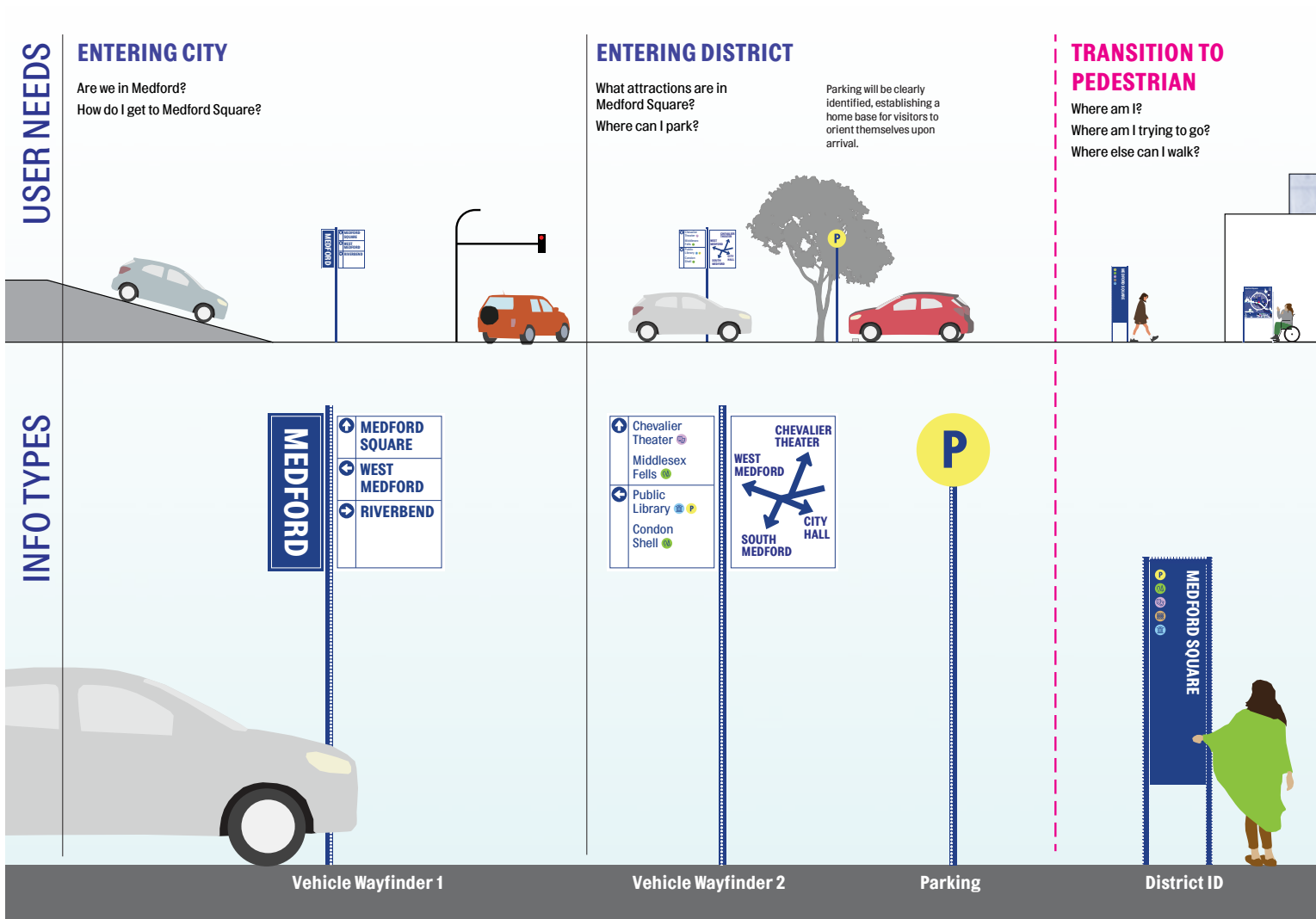
Design Strategy

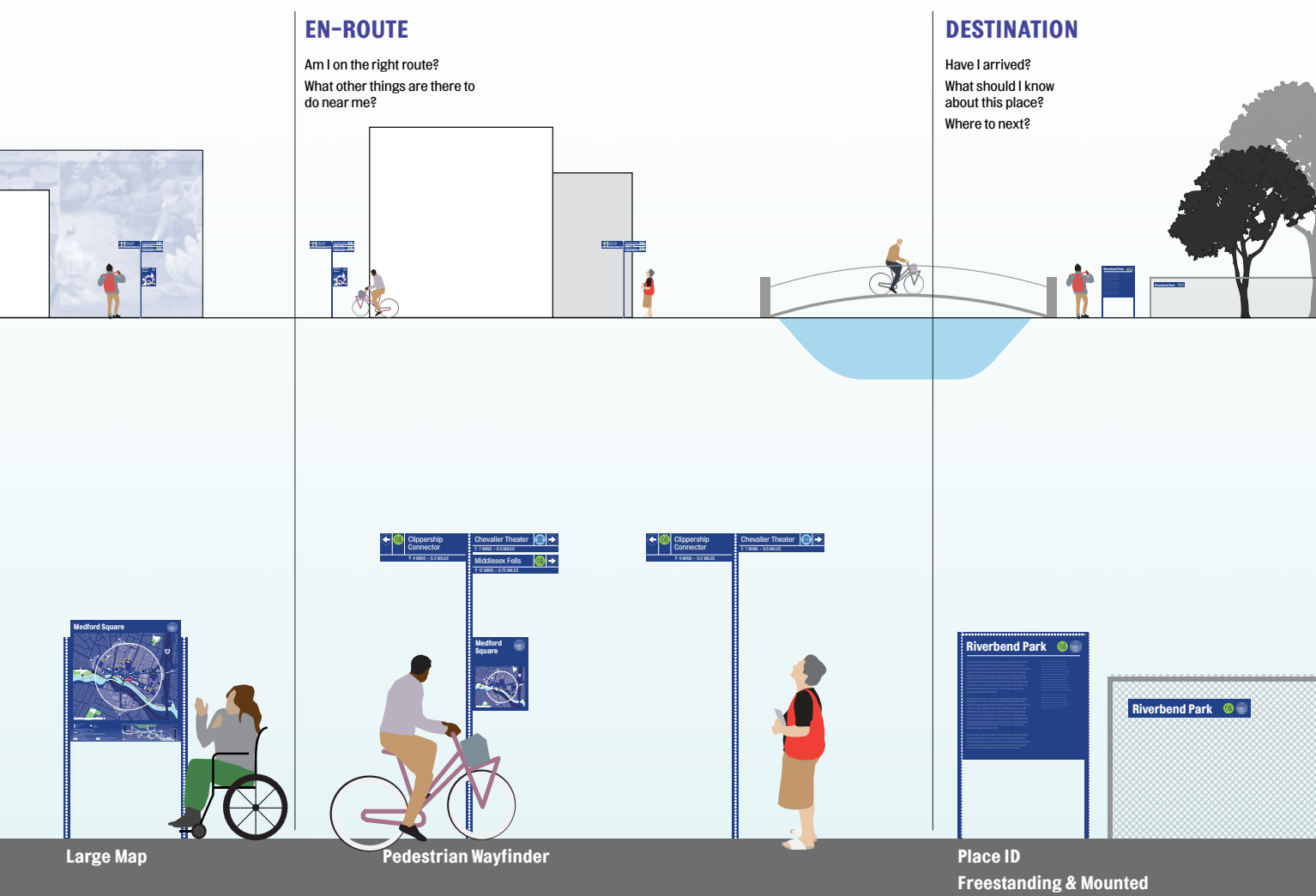
Overall Strategy

To achieve the project's Design Goals and embody its Principles, strong consideration is given to how a driver, pedestrian, or cyclist enters Medford and is able to successfully navigate the city to find their desired destination. Just as crucially, users should feel encouraged to explore the various districts in Medford.

It's important to think about the types of questions a user might ask at various thresholds, and how different types of signage and information will help guide and alleviate confusion.

One simple method for showing this transition from driving to walking, is by giving the vehicle-centered signs white backgrounds, while pedestrian-centered signs are primarily blue.

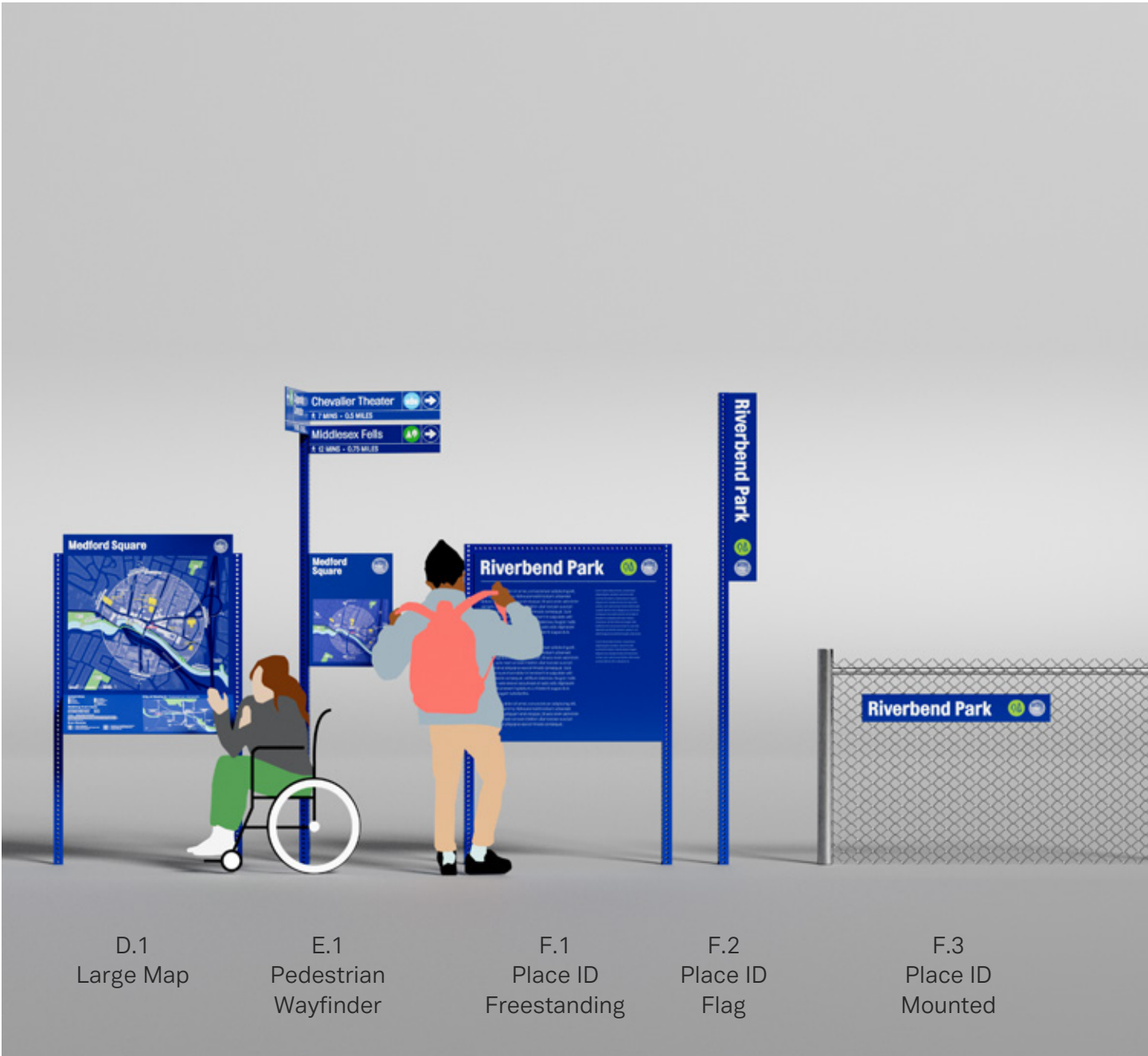




Sign Family

The sign family was developed to include most of the major sign types needed. It is not comprehensive, but can be expanded to include additional types as future needs arise. The family tries to strike a balance between affordable and premium, standardized and bespoke.





D.1
Large Map

E.1
Pedestrian
Wayfinder

F.1
Place ID
Freestanding

F.2
Place ID
Flag

F.3
Place ID
Mounted

Strategies for Sign Content

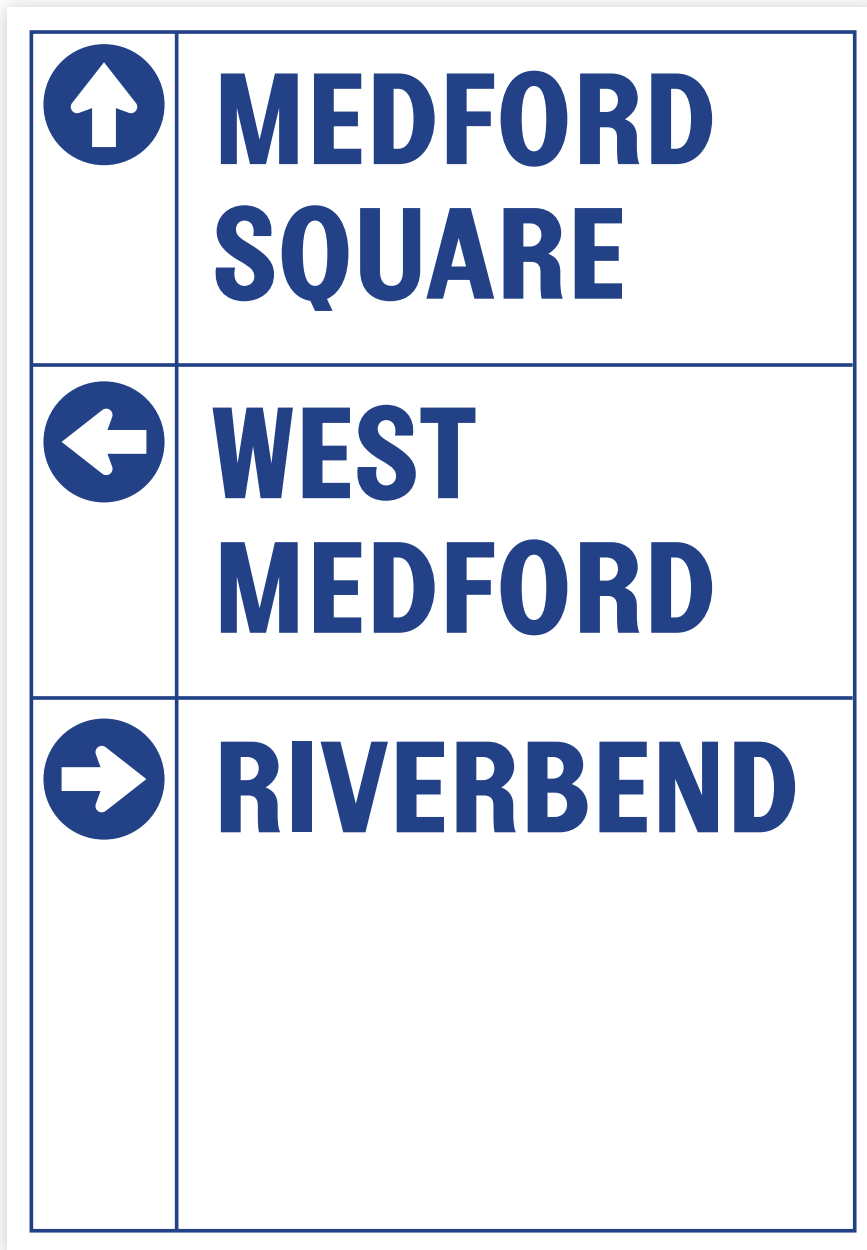
“What should go on a sign?” is a broad question that will typically depend on the sign type. For instance, vehicular-centered signs will focus on high-level destinations and districts, while pedestrian-centered signs might include more detail about locations closer to the sign.

In most cases, brevity is key. For example: don't use “Medford Public Library” when “Public Library” communicates the same, but with fewer words.

The following are some guidelines for content by sign type.

B.1 VEHICLE WAYFINDER, ENTERING CITY

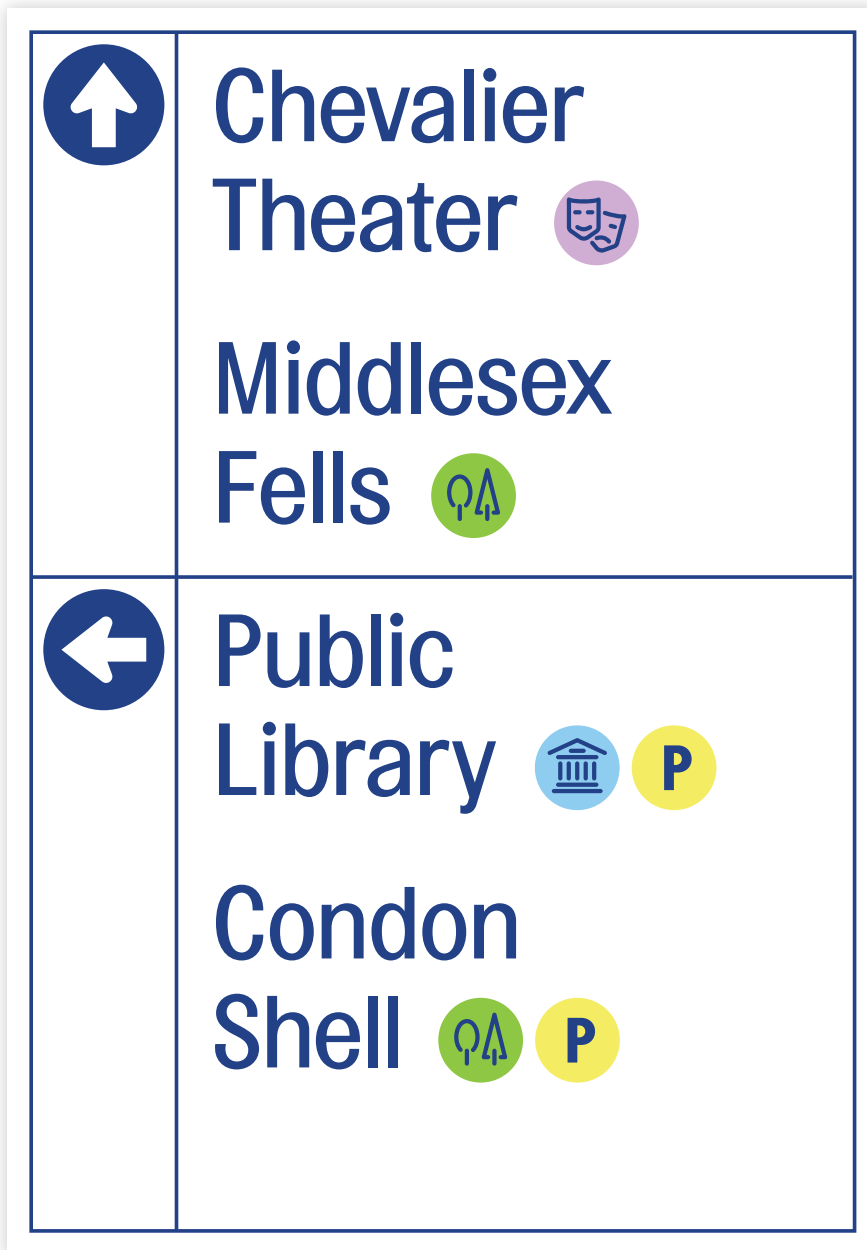
- District Names (e.g. West Medford, Medford Square, Hillside) directly adjacent to sign location. Medford Square should be on every sign, as it is a central node of the city
- Ideally, do not list more than 3 districts per sign
- Order by priority



Example of a Vehicle
Wayfinder sign

B.2 VEHICLE WAYFINDER, ENTERING DISTRICT

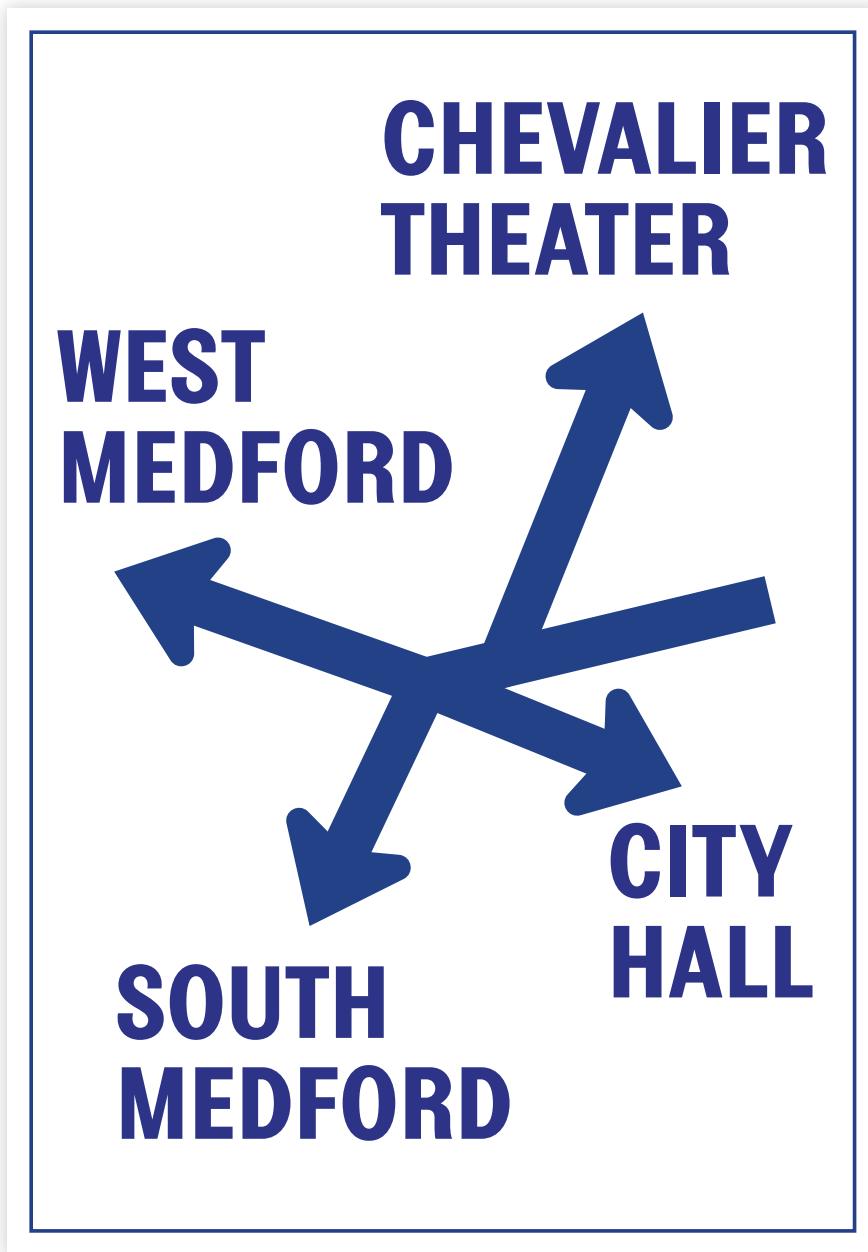
- Significant destinations within the current district
- More “important” destinations should come first, followed by secondary/tertiary. This level of priority will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on sign location
- Destination icons should be used where relevant



Example of a Vehicle Wayfinder sign

B.3 VEHICLE WAYFINDER, MAJOR INTERSECTION

- Draw the intersection as simply as possible. List significant destinations OR adjacent districts as destination points



Example of a Vehicle Wayfinder sign

C.1 DISTRICT ID

- Name of district
- Relevant icons located inside the district



Example of a District ID sign

E.1 PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDER

- Significant destinations within the current district, with corresponding travel times/distances
- It is not advised to have more than 2 flags on each side of the post (N, S, E, W), and is best practice to not use more than 3 sides of each sign post
- Arrow should always be located on the **opposite side** of the mounting post

ONE-LINE FLAG – RIGHT



ONE-LINE FLAG – LEFT



TWO-LINE FLAG — RIGHT



TWO-LINE FLAG — LEFT



Example of Pedestrian Wayfinder signs

F.1 PLACE ID

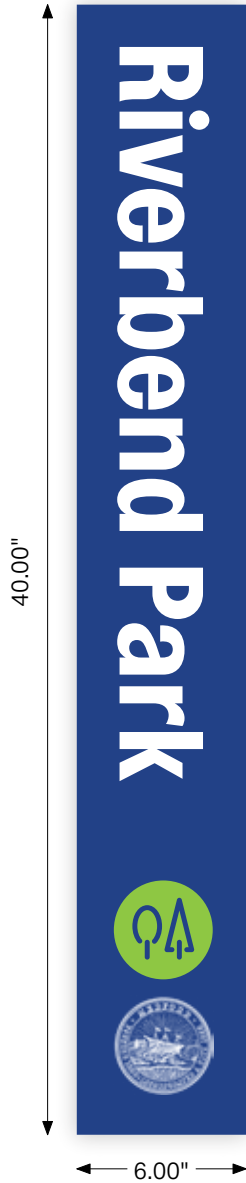
- Identification of all parks, and for any significant destinations, especially historic places
- Include corresponding icon(s), where possible
- **ID + Additional Text** — Larger panel where additional information and/or rules are necessary, and can be either freestanding or mounted
- **ID Only (Mounted)** — for place identification only, where it can be mounted to fence or wall
- **ID Only (Freestanding)** — for place identification only, where it needs to be freestanding. Installed vertically so as to minimize conflicts with pedestrian movement



ID ONLY (MOUNTED)



ID ONLY (FREESTANDING)



Strategies for Sign Locations

Planning for sign placement locations requires diagramming the study area for route hierarchy, decision points/nodes, and destinations. This is not a science, but a starting point to help guide decisions and preferences.

While specific sign locations will require verifying available space, existing signs and utilities, and potential interference, the table at right can help identify which sign types should go where.

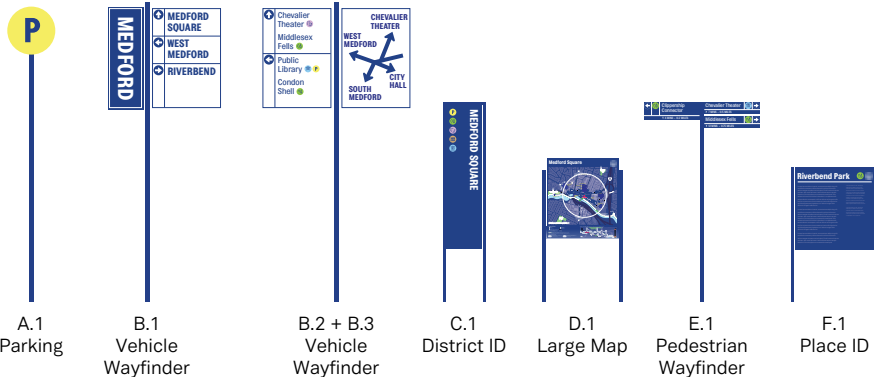
Important definitions can be found below:

- **District Boundary** the estimated edge of the seven districts: Medford Square, West Medford, South Medford, Haines Square, Hillside, Riverbend, and Wellington.
- **Primary District Route** a main route for pedestrian travel that connects Medford Square to the other six districts and main destinations.
- **Secondary District Route** a secondary route for pedestrian travel that connects the districts to each other and main destinations.
- **Destination Route** a path that leads from a District Route to a destination.
- **District Center** a main intersection or central location within a district along the primary District Route.
- **Major Decision Point** where the Primary/Secondary District Route changes direction and requires information to help users make the right decision.
- **Minor Decision Point** where a Destination Route branches off the Primary/Secondary District Route.
- **Destination** a place to visit and spend time such as an open space/park, significant building, or parking.
- **Parking** a city-owned parking area or lot.

	A.1 Parking	B.1 Vehicle Wayfinder	B.2 + B.3 Vehicle Wayfinder	C.1 District ID	D.1 Large Map	E.1 Ped Wayfinder	F.1 Place ID
Entering City		●					
Along District Route			●			●	
District Boundary			●	●			
District Center			●	●	●		
Major Decision Point			●			●	
Minor Decision Point			●			●	
Destination							●
Parking	●						

Table to help identify where each sign type can be located

Sign Types



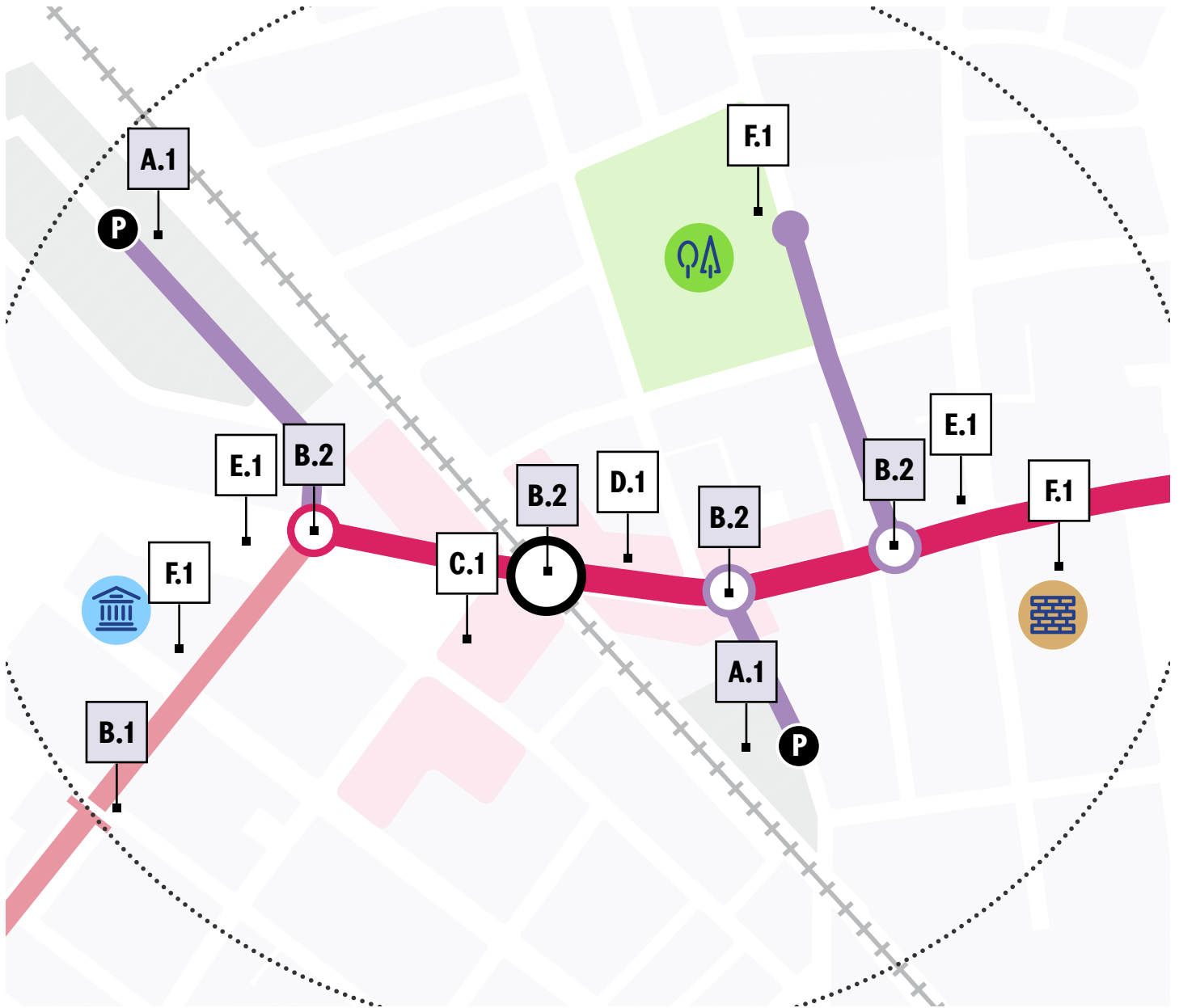
EXAMPLE OF DIAGRAMMING A STUDY AREA



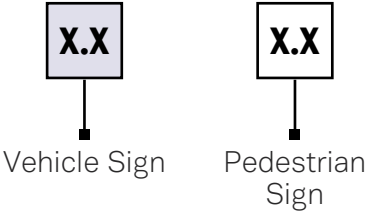
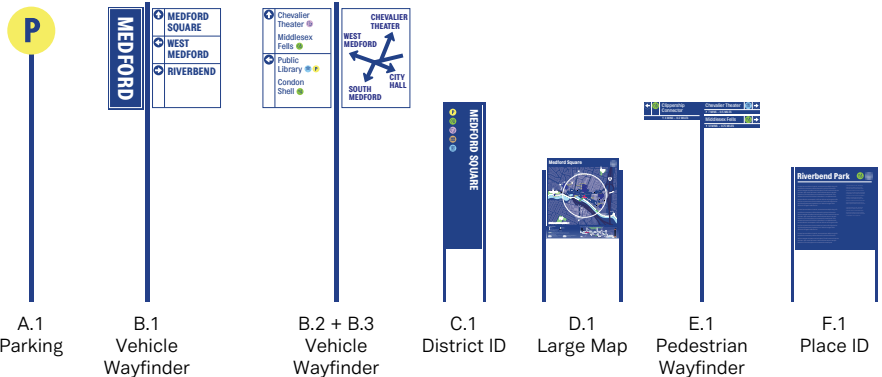
Diagramming a study area should start with locating the Primary District Route(s) and Secondary District Route(s), which are determined mostly by the overall city framework. Intersections of those routes create nodes and decision points, where signs can start to be placed.

Major Decision Points occur where the Primary/Secondary District Route changes direction and requires information to help users make the right decision. Minor Decision Points occur where a Destination Route branches off the Primary/Secondary District Route.

EXAMPLE PLACEMENT OF SIGN TYPES



Sign Types



Phasing

With the project likely to be funded in portions, phasing is important to prioritize the rollout of signage. It seems logical that the order should proceed from areas of highest visitation to areas of least visitation.

This is by no means meant to neglect quieter areas, but to help and to capture the attention of the greatest number of people. In fact, this will allow the City to direct people from locations like Medford Square to areas like the less-visited West Medford.

It might be an attractive option for one of the phases to be by sign type, especially for parks/open spaces.

The recommended order of priority is:

1. Medford Square
2. Primary Districts — as determined by City Staff and stakeholders
3. [OPTION] All Parks & Open Spaces — Type F "Place ID" signs only
4. Secondary Districts — districts not covered in the prior category
5. Areas along District Routes, outside of Districts themselves
6. Remainder of the city

Design Standards Guide

System & Graphic Identity

The following pages describe the color palette, typography, and iconography used in the sign system.



Medford Blue



Green



Purple



Light Blue



Tan



Yellow

Secondary Colors

"Medford Blue" is the primary color used, as text color, sign post color, and as background. Simple white is used for contrast.

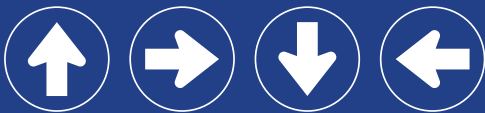
The secondary colors are used sparingly, and in accordance with the icons on the following page.

Topol Bold

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIi
JjKkLlMmNnOoPpQq
RrSsTtUuVvXxYyZz
0123456789

Topol Regular

AaBbCcDdEeFfGgHhIi
JjKkLlMmNnOoPpQq
RrSsTtUuVvXxYyZz
0123456789



Topol Bold and Regular, in both title case and upper case, are the only typefaces used in the system

condensed letters

CHEVALIER THEATER

open apertures

Medford Public Library Clippership Connector

short descenders

Topol was chosen because of its condensed letters (allowing efficient use of space on signs), open apertures and short descenders for legibility.

Primary Icons



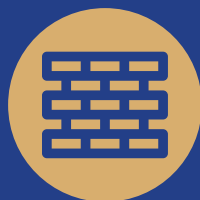
Open Space/
Parks



Culture



Institutions



Historic



Parking

Secondary/Map Icons



Food &
Dining



Shopping



Playground



Recreation



Lodging



Grocery



Salon / Barber



Hiking

Icons were developed to highlight categories of key destinations. The secondary icons are primarily used on the city/district maps to highlight amenities.

Sign Family Design

The following pages illustrate each sign type, overall dimensions, some basic rules/guides for content, and a rendering to scale.

All sign types utilize standard square metal posts, in a few sizes. These posts are used widely in street sign applications, and are thus inexpensive to fabricate and install. As a simple modification to make these more specific to Medford, they are painted “Medford Blue”.

Additionally, panels mounted to this system are not mounted to the front face (as is typical) but on the sides. This accomplishes two things: it removes fasteners from obscuring anything on the sign face, and it allows multiple signs to be located on each post.



Example of typical square metal post

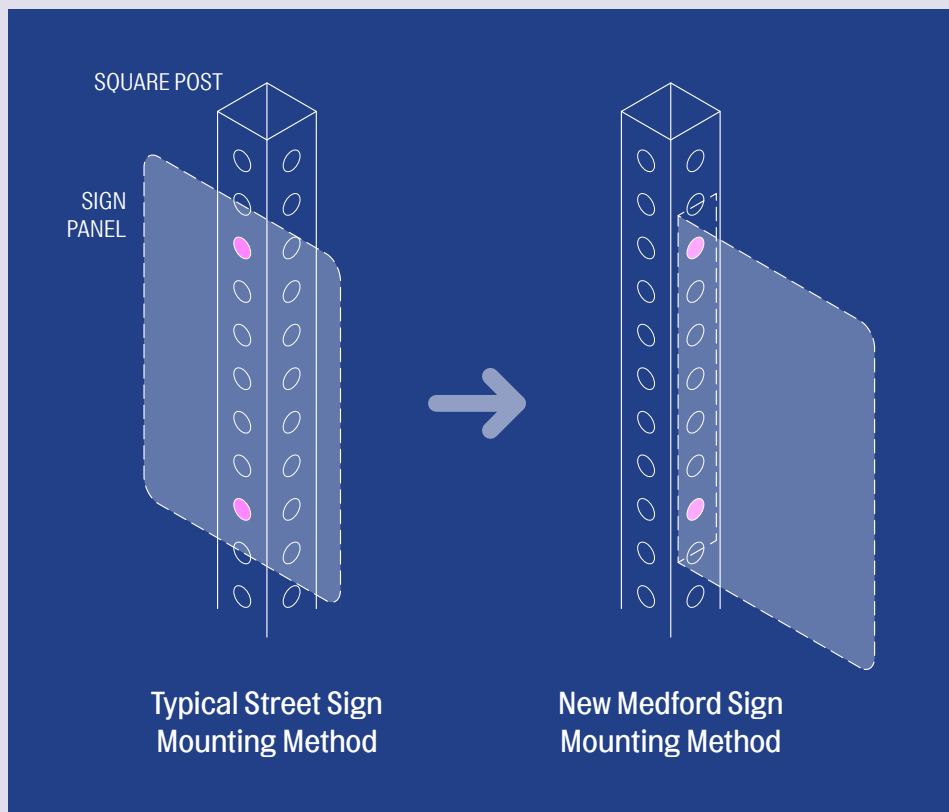
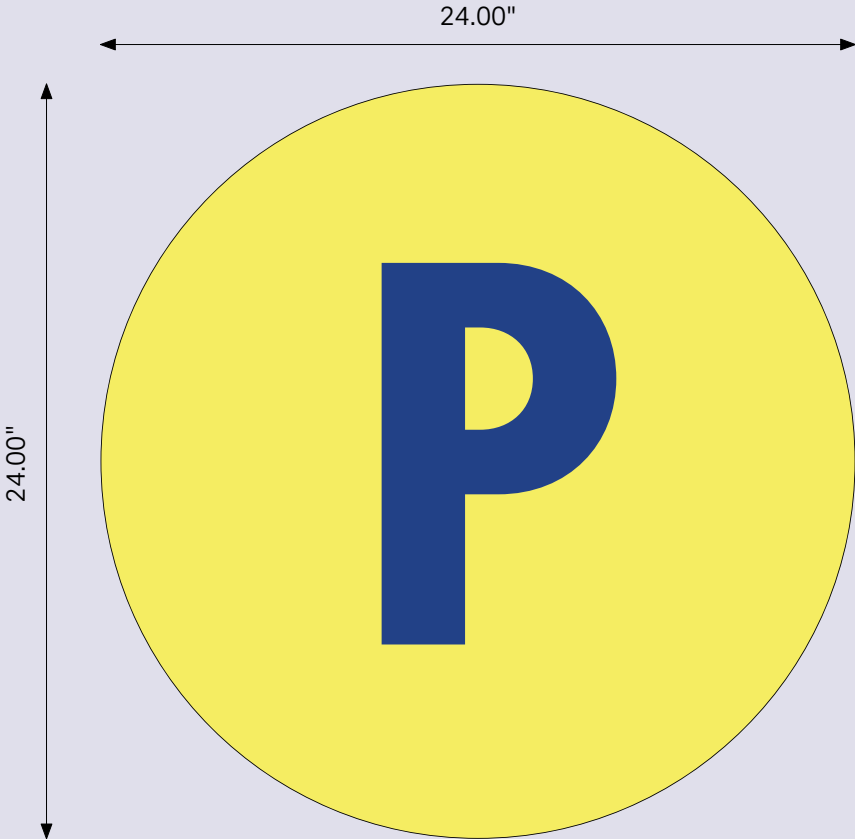
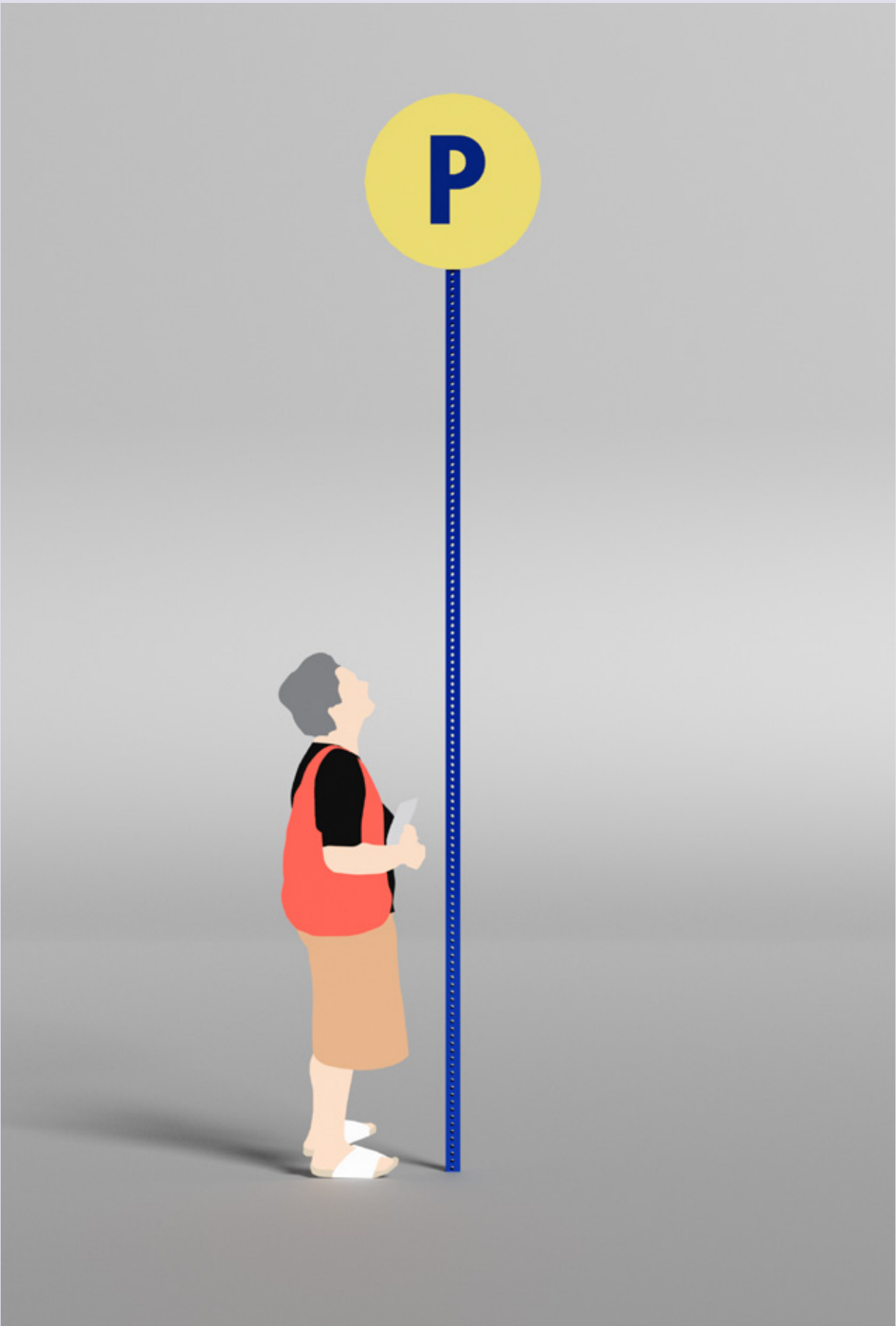


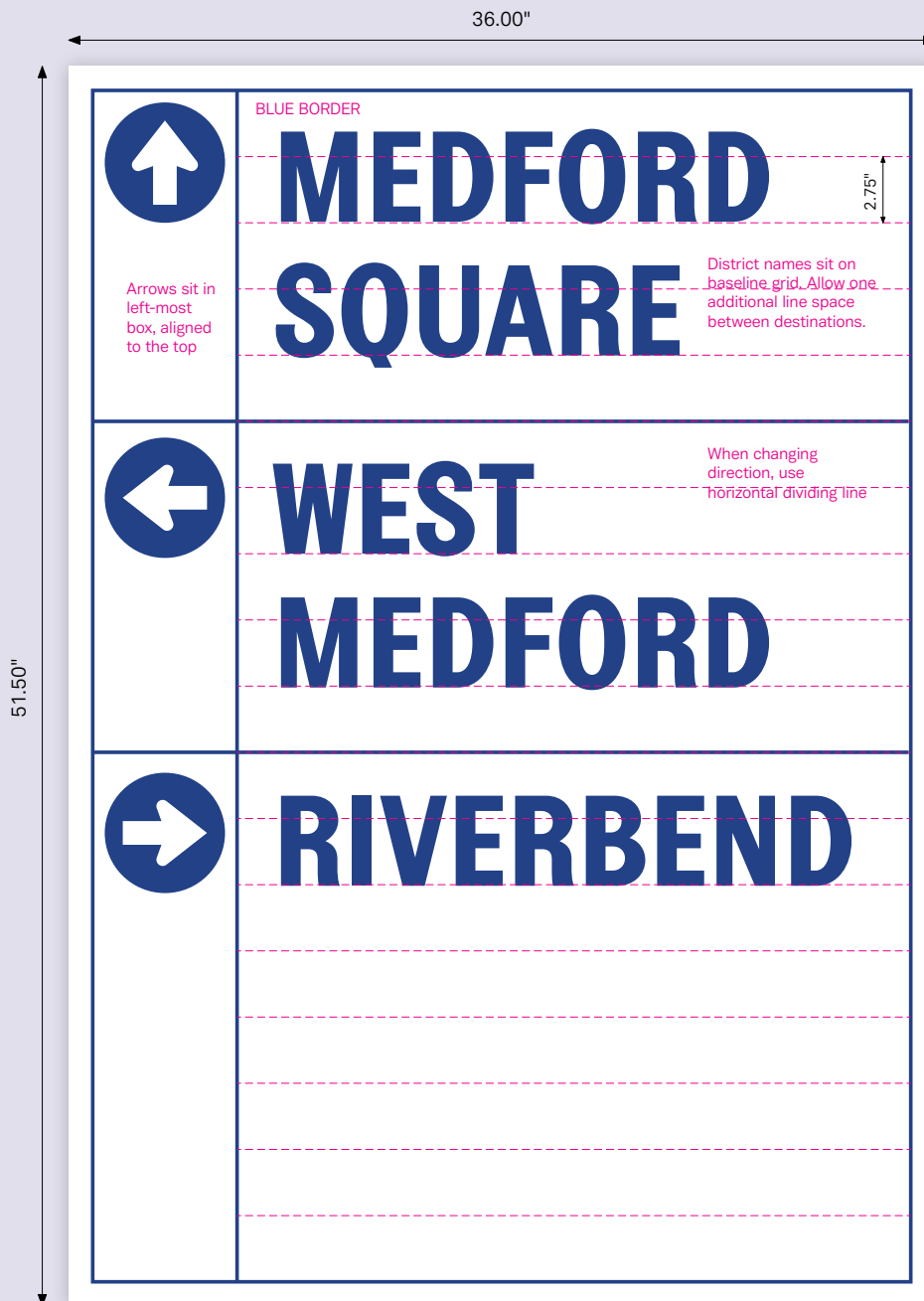
Illustration of how the new Medford sign system differs from the typical mounting method

A.1 PARKING



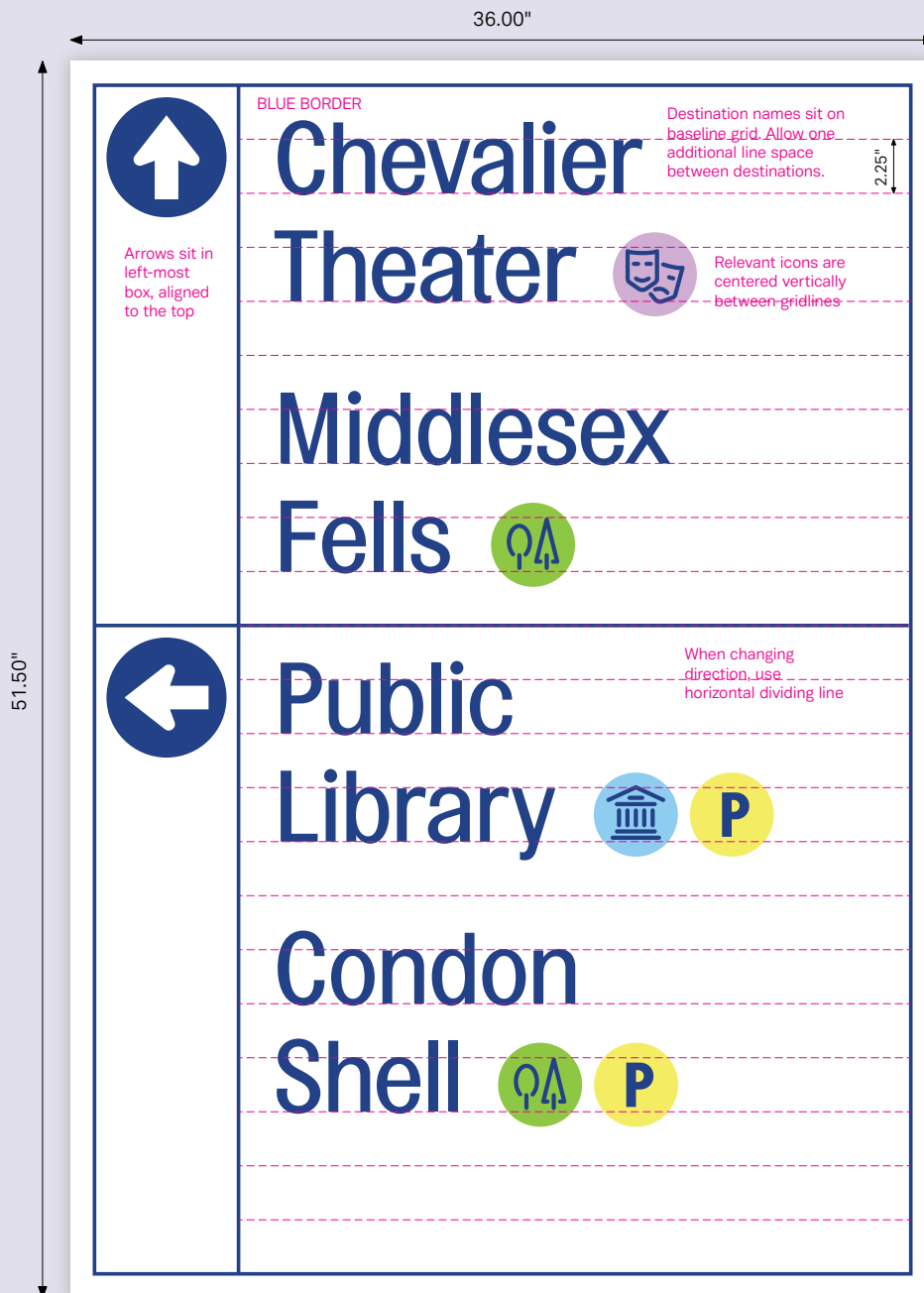



B.1 VEHICLE WAYFINDER – ENTERING CITY





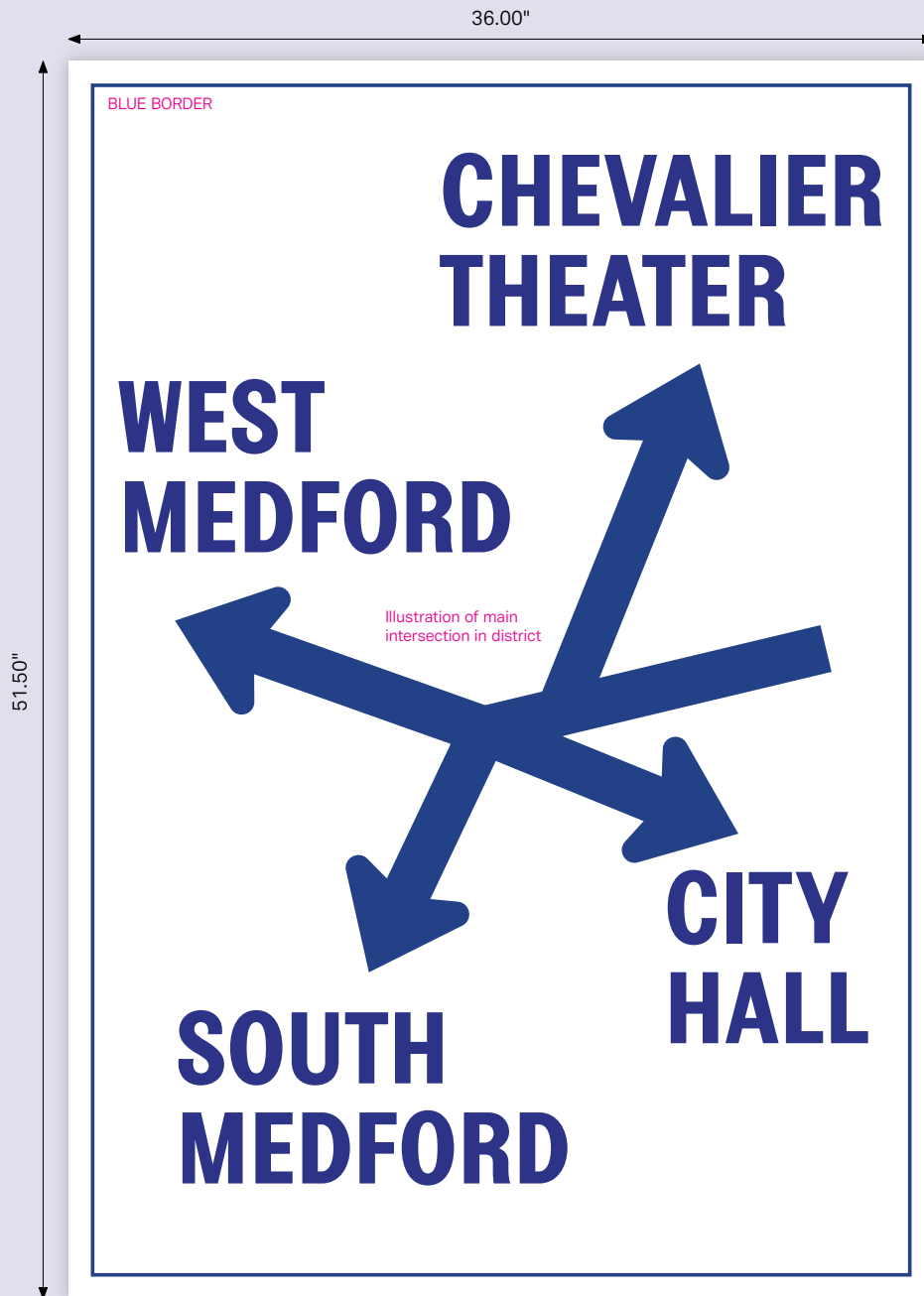
B.2 VEHICLE WAYFINDER – ENTERING DISTRICT




↑	Chevalier Theater 🎭	<p>CHEVALIER THEATER</p> <p>WEST MEDFORD</p>  <p>SOUTH MEDFORD</p> <p>CITY HALL</p>
	Middlesex Fells 🌳	
←	Public Library 📖 P	
	Condon Shell 🌊	



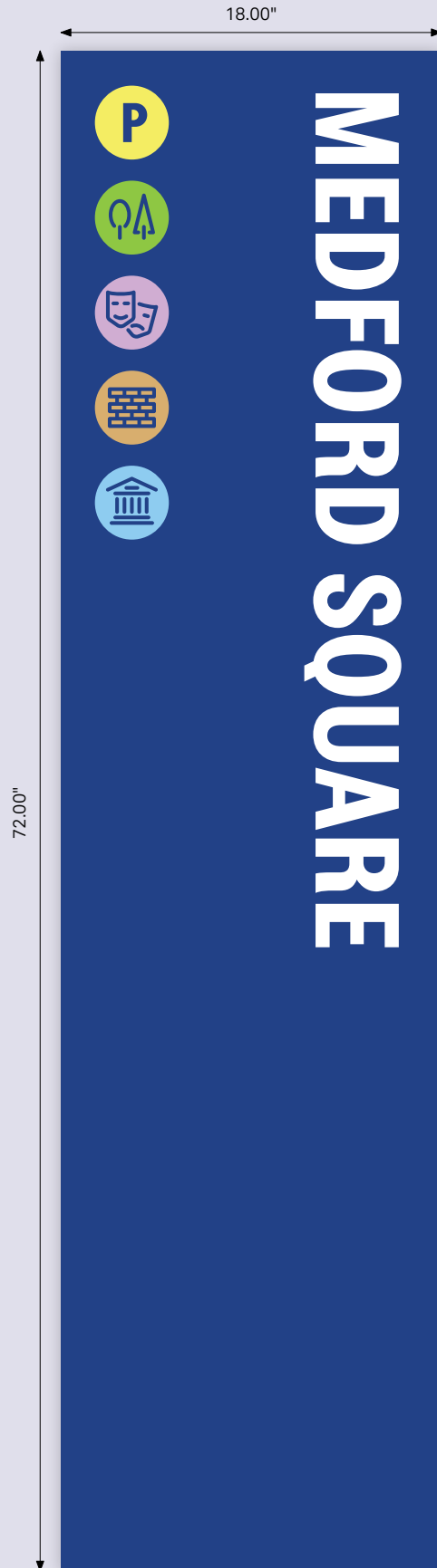
B.3 VEHICLE WAYFINDER – MAJOR INTERSECTION



↑	Chevalier Theater 🎭	<p>CHEVALIER THEATER</p> <p>WEST MEDFORD</p>  <p>SOUTH MEDFORD</p> <p>CITY HALL</p>
	Middlesex Fells 🌳	
←	Public Library 📖 P	
	Condon Shell 🌊	

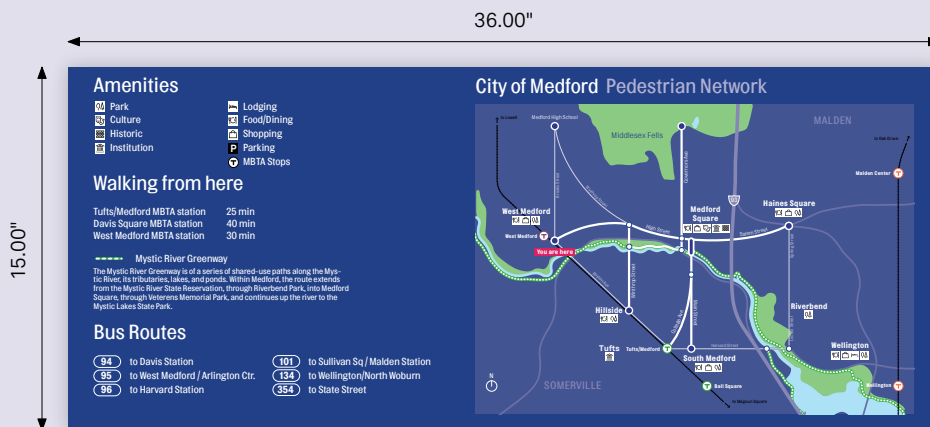
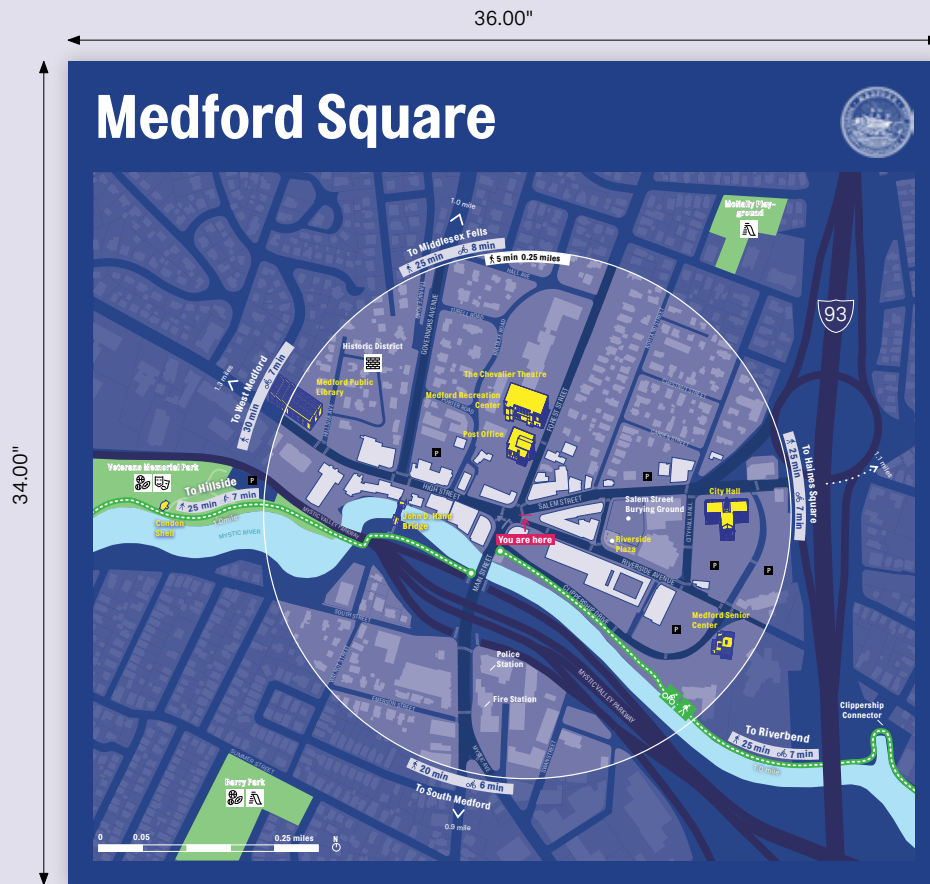


C.1 DISTRICT ID





D.1 LARGE MAP

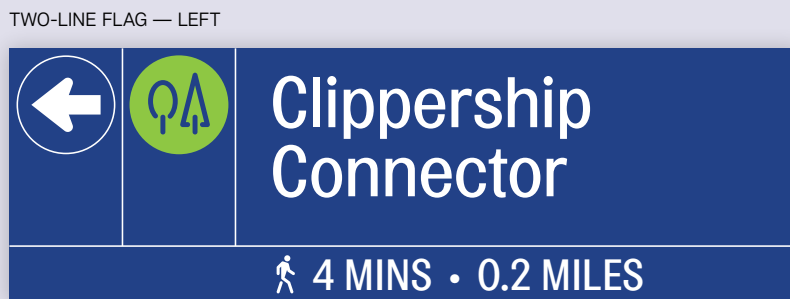
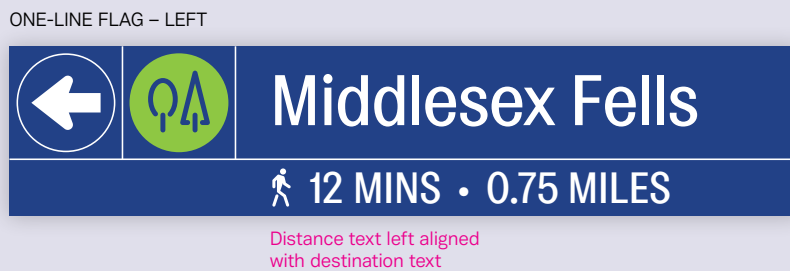
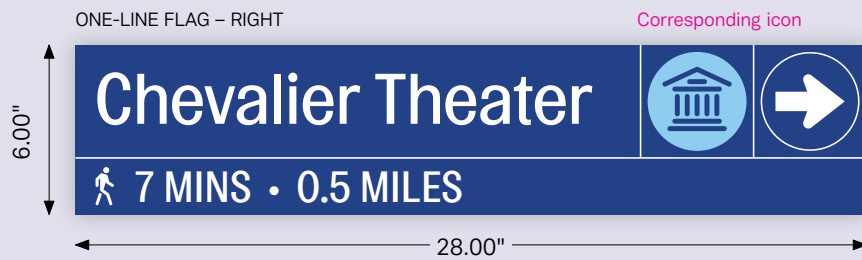


FRONT

BACK



E.1 PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDER





F.1 + F.2 + F.3 PLACE ID – FREESTANDING, FLAG, AND MOUNTED

ID + ADDITIONAL TEXT



ID ONLY (FREESTANDING)



ID ONLY (MOUNTED)





Map Design

The maps orient users and communicate both nearby routes and destinations while also providing the bigger picture. This representation of a city helps shape a user's mental map—their internal understanding of the spatial environment of a place and how different features relate to one another. Users build familiarity with Medford through these maps—remembering district names and the distinct shape of the Mystic River— gaining a stronger sense of Medford's identity.

While digital maps have become increasingly popular, physical and stationary “you are here” maps remain a useful tool for highlighting specific features of a city, and encouraging specific travel behaviors. In this spirit, the three maps in this wayfinding system are designed for specific purposes.

DISTRICT MAP

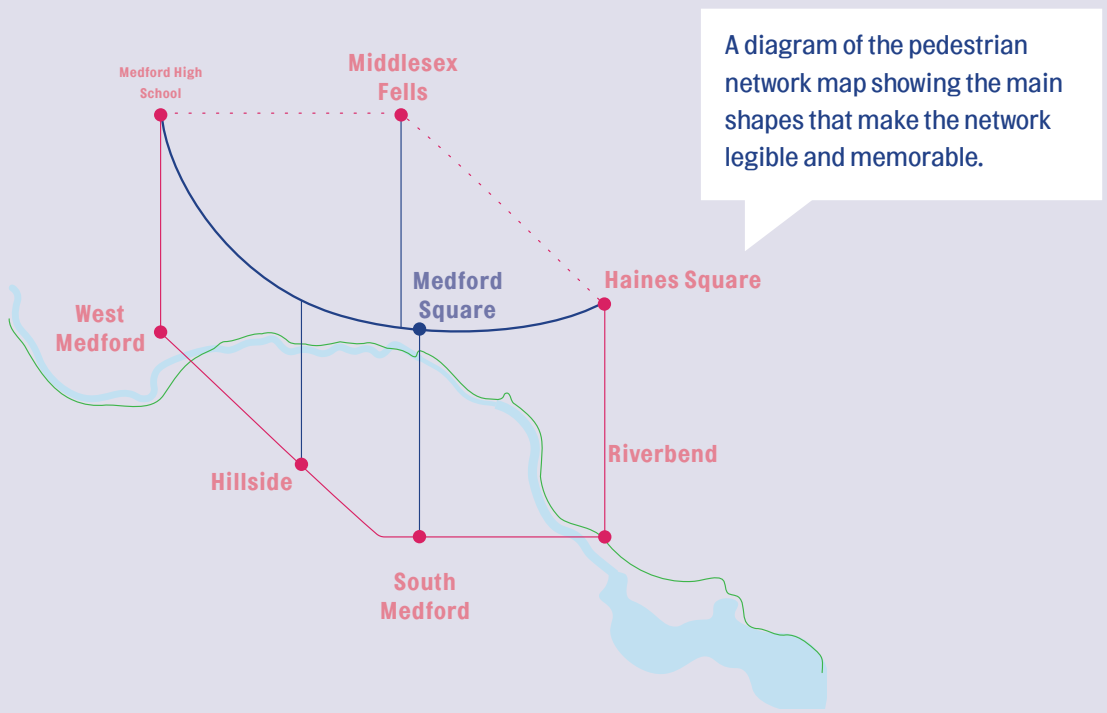
This map orients users to their immediate surroundings. These provide information about nearby destinations, commercial areas, streets and transport hubs, giving users a sense of what can be reached within five minutes. They show what lies beyond this immediate area through arrows that direct to other districts along the pedestrian network. There are seven district maps for each selected district.

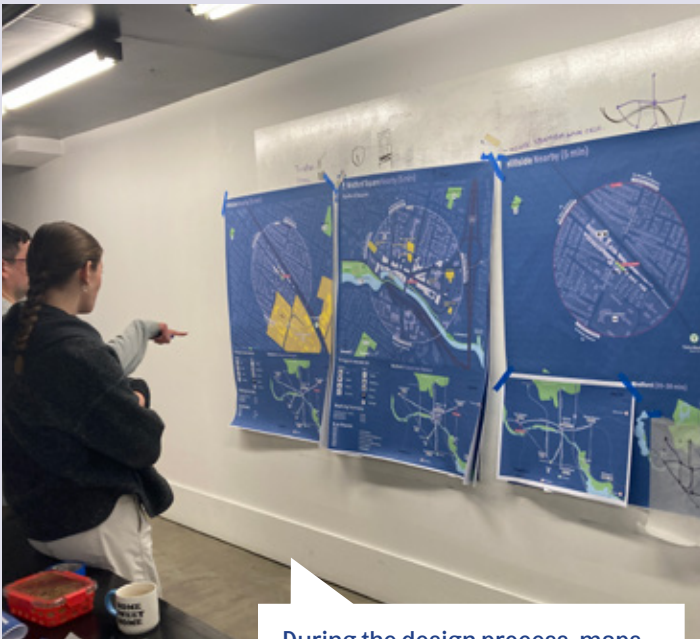
PEDESTRIAN NETWORK MAP

This map highlights the connectivity of Medford's squares via a pedestrian network. Its main purpose is to encourage pedestrian travel between districts and major destinations like the fells and Medford High School. The map uses simplified geometry to rapidly communicate routes to users. This schematic style has the advantage of providing a memorable shape to the network defined by a strong curve running through Medford Square, vertical lines for north-south routes, districts aligned on a symmetric hexagonal shape, and a distinct natural geometry for the Mystic River.

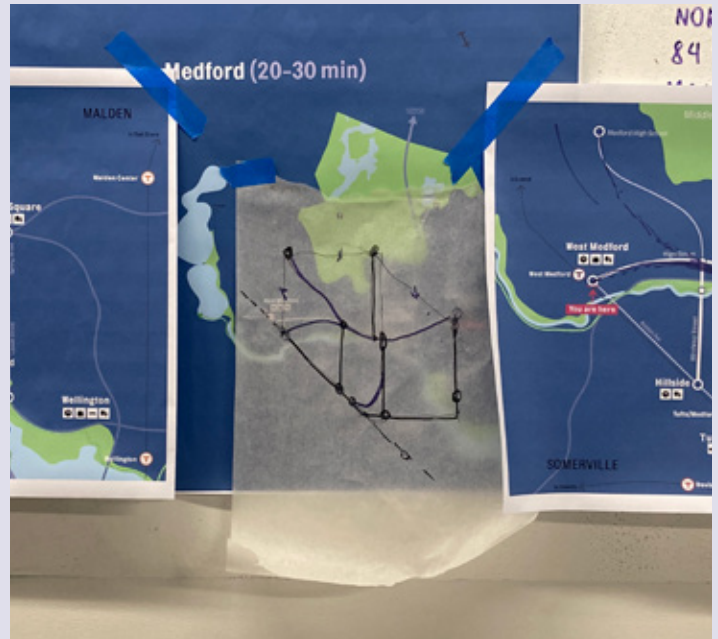
CITY-WIDE MAP

This map provides the most complete picture of Medford. It is geometrically accurate to display the locations of major roads, districts, destinations, parks, MBTA network, and main bodies of water. Users can use this map as a deep-dive; searching for specific places to go and also to become more familiar with the range of places that Medford has to offer.





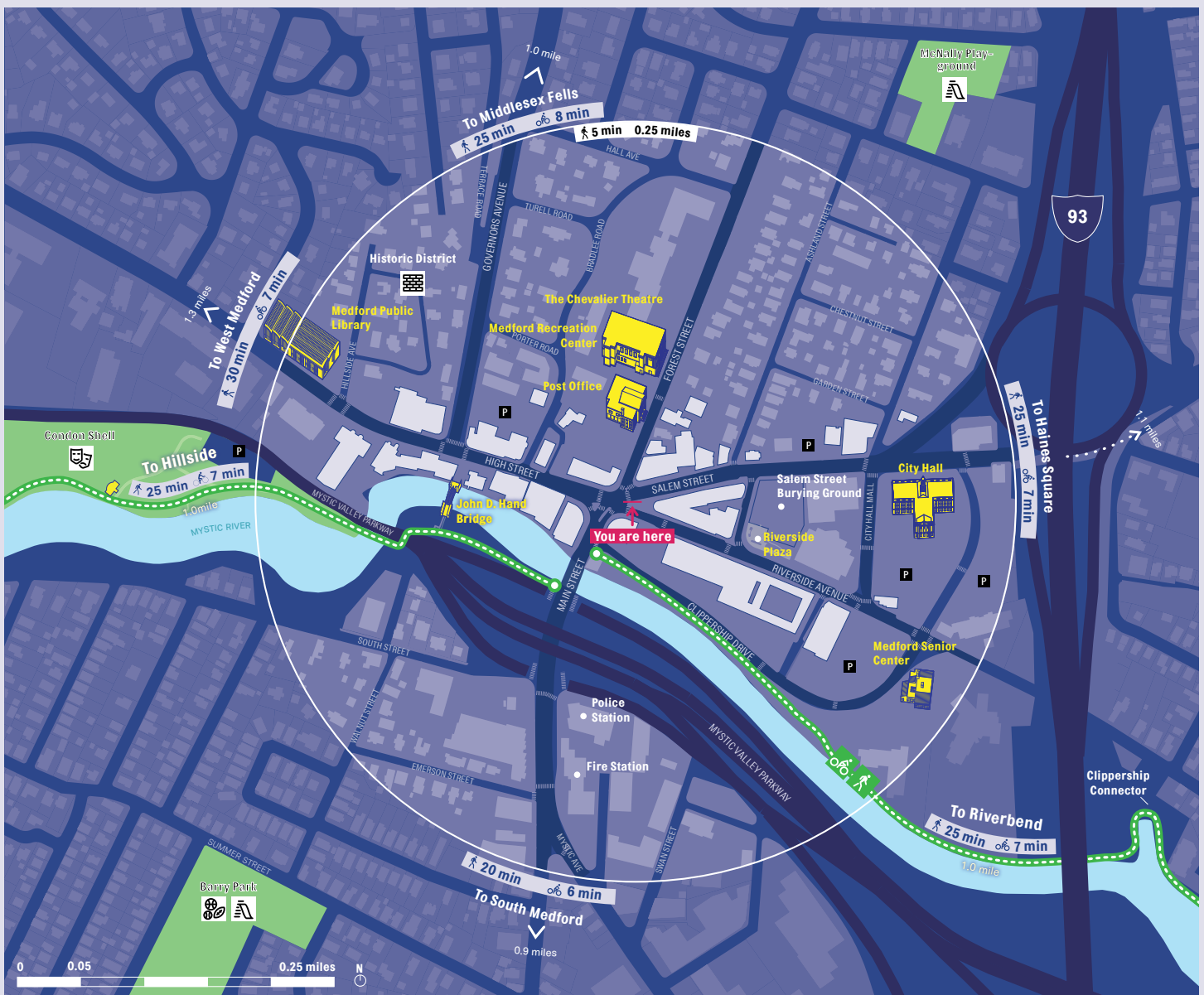
During the design process, maps were regularly printed at one-to-one ensuring improvements to their legibility and utility.



This table shows some of the design elements that represent key parts of Medford's physical and cultural infrastructure.

DESTINATIONS	WATER	GREEN SPACE	ICONS

DISTRICT MAP MEDFORD SQUARE



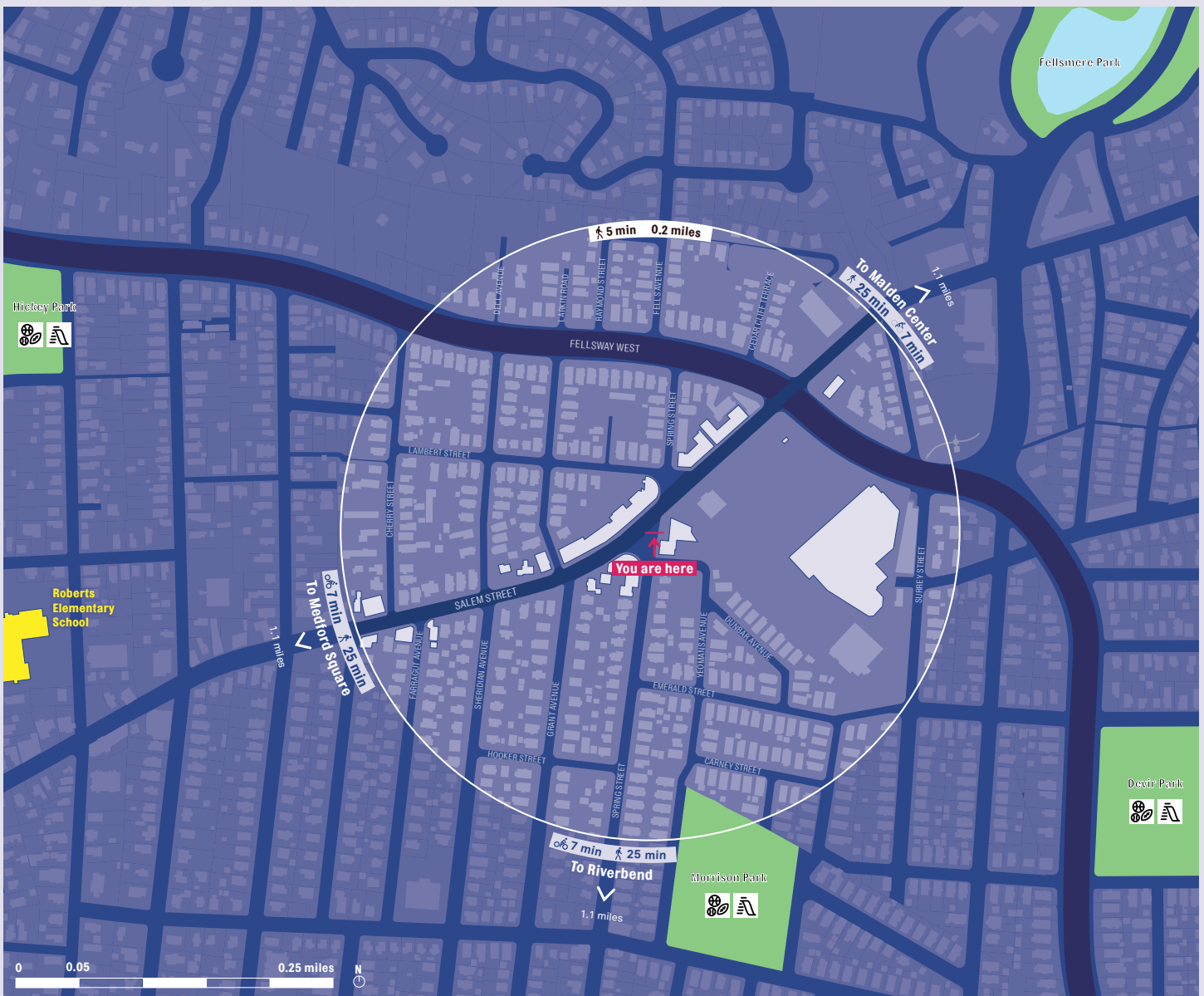
DISTRICT MAP RIVERSIDE



DISTRICT MAP HILLSIDE



DISTRICT MAP HAINES SQUARE



DISTRICT MAP WEST MEDFORD



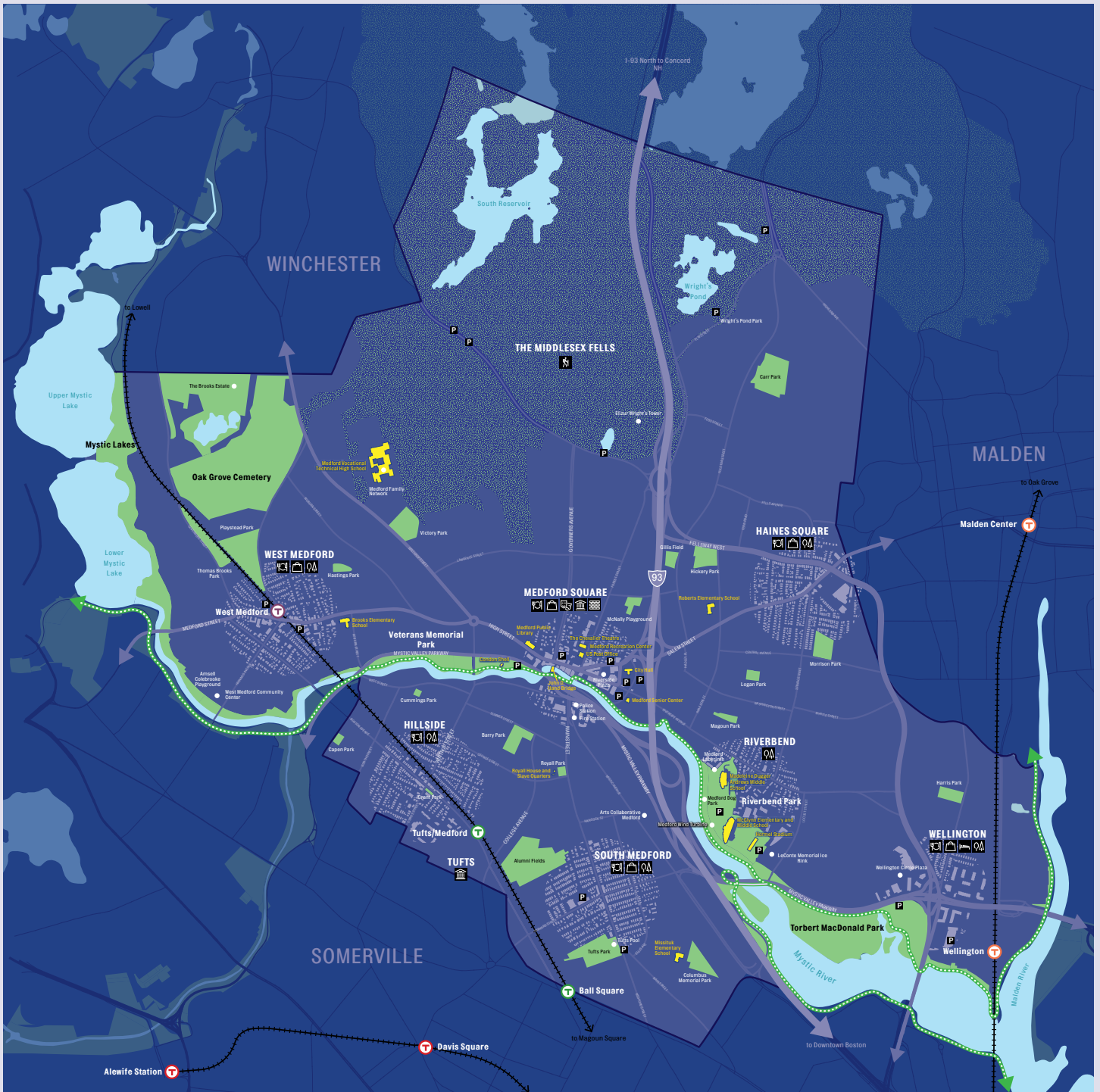
DISTRICT MAP WELLINGTON



PEDESTRIAN NETWORK MAP



CITY-WIDE MAP



Accessibility & Inclusiveness

Accessibility and inclusivity is a key part of the signage system design. Beginning with an expansive view of the wayfinding system's user group, signs were designed to respond to a universal user. By accommodating people with limitations, the designs inherently create a more intuitive and effective system for the general public. This ambition was supported by the accessibility review conducted by the IHCD.

Where possible, the signs have integrated a variety of design features that support accessibility:

- The use of icons instead of words
- Bold, high-contrast text and, where appropriate, sentence case.
- Plain language
- "Tilt table" map installations set at heights comfortable for wheelchair users

Design Intent Drawings

The following pages contain a preliminary set of drawings for pricing for three of the major sign types.

The implementation phase will require additional design intent drawings, and coordination with a chosen fabricator.

City of Medford

Preliminary Schematic Design

Wayfinding Signage

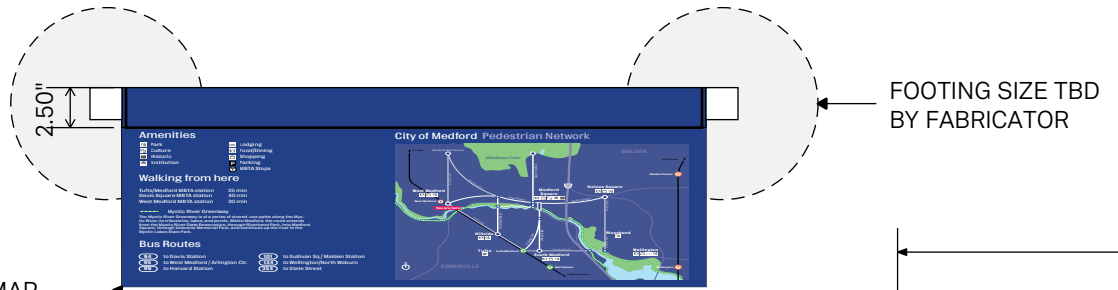
OverUnder

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

17 March 2026

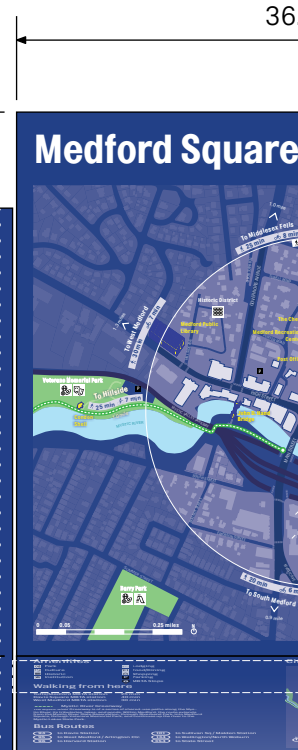
Sign Type A

Large Map



DISTRICT MAP
DIRECT PRINTED
ON ANGLED PANEL

③ PLAN VIEW
1/2" = 1'-0"



① FRONT VIEW
1/2" = 1'-0"

PROJECT NAME
City of Medford
Wayfinding and Signage

CLIENT
City of Medford

DESIGNER

OverUnder
46 Waltham Street
Courtyard One
Boston, MA 02118
+1 617 426 4466

DATE
MARCH 17, 2026

SCALE
AS NOTED

REVISIONS

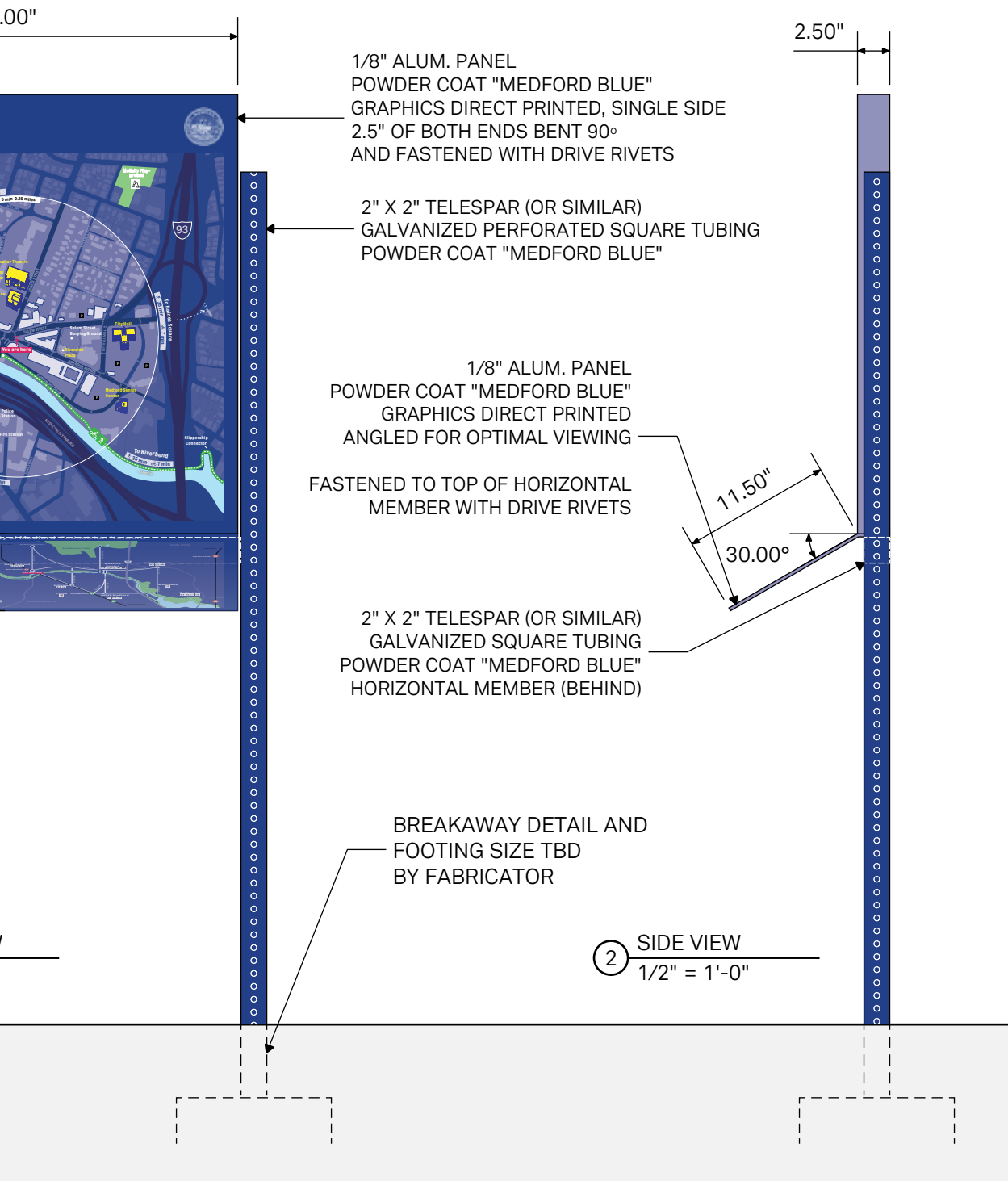
It is the sole responsibility of the fabricator to verify and ensure the structural integrity of this design with a licensed engineer prior to fabrication. These drawings are not for construction. Fabricators shall verify and be responsible for all dimensions and conditions and inform this office of all variations prior to undertaking work. Written dimensions have authority over scaled dimensions. OverUnder must review and approve all fabricator's shop drawings.
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PROJECT STATUS

Schematic Design

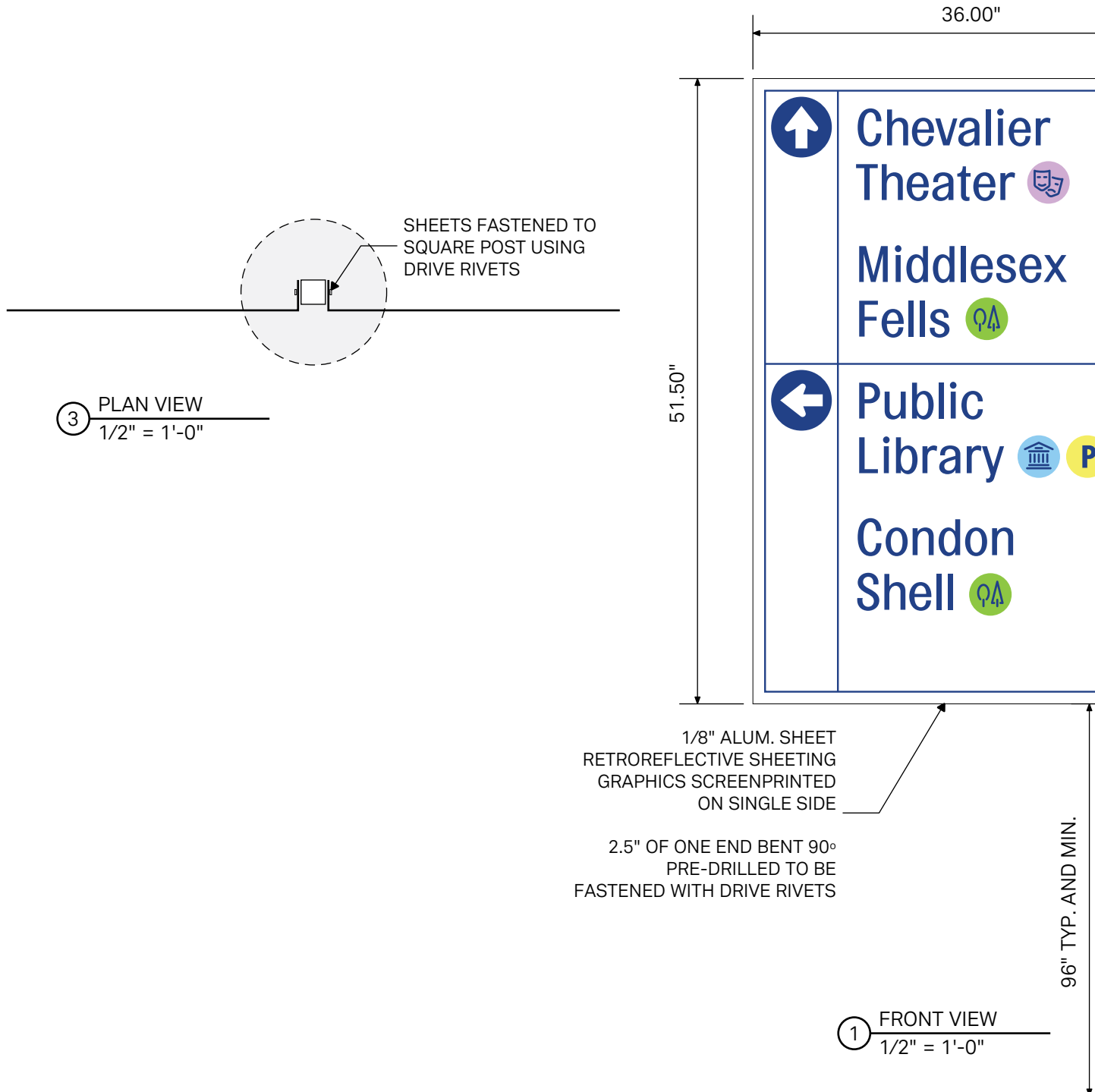
SHEET TITLE
Sign Type A
Large Map

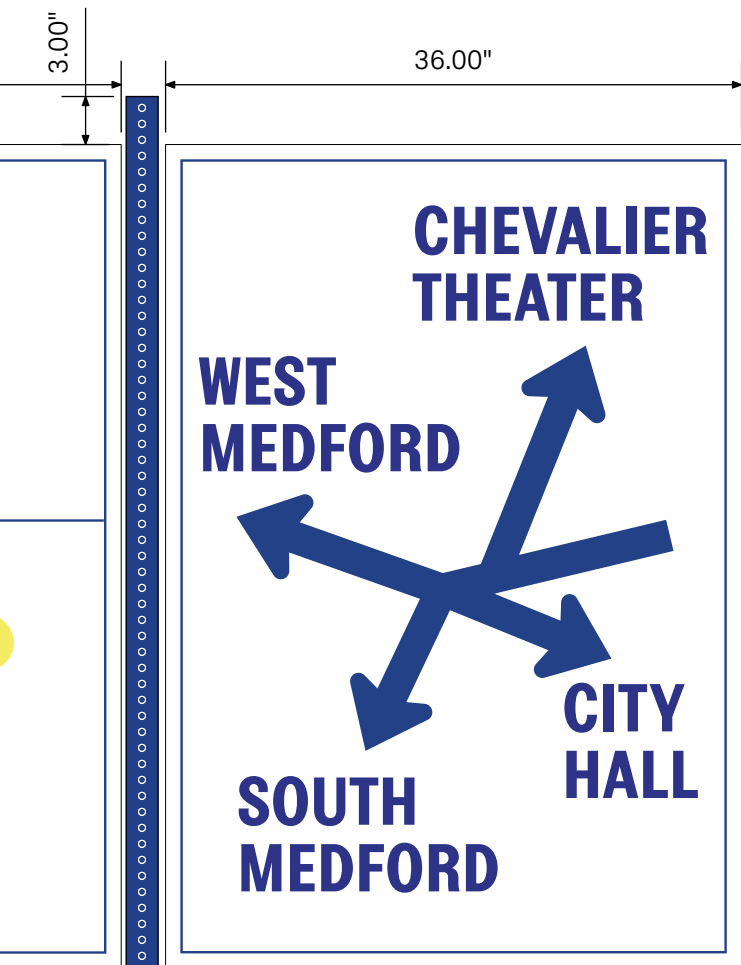
SHEET NUMBER



Sign Type B

Vehicle Wayfinding

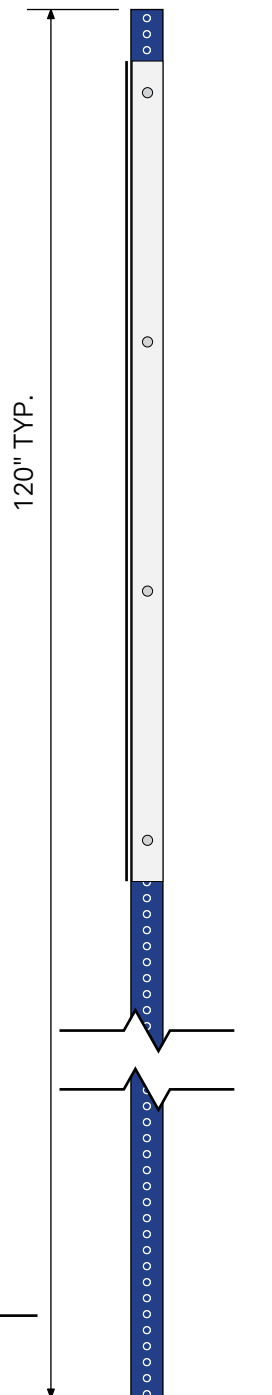




2" X 2" TELES PAR (OR SIMILAR)
GALVANIZED PERFORATED SQUARE TUBING
POWDER COAT "MEDFORD BLUE"

BREAKAWAY DETAIL AND
FOOTING SIZE TBD
BY FABRICATOR

② SIDE VIEW
1/2" = 1'-0"



PROJECT NAME
City of Medford
Wayfinding and Signage

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PROJECT STATUS

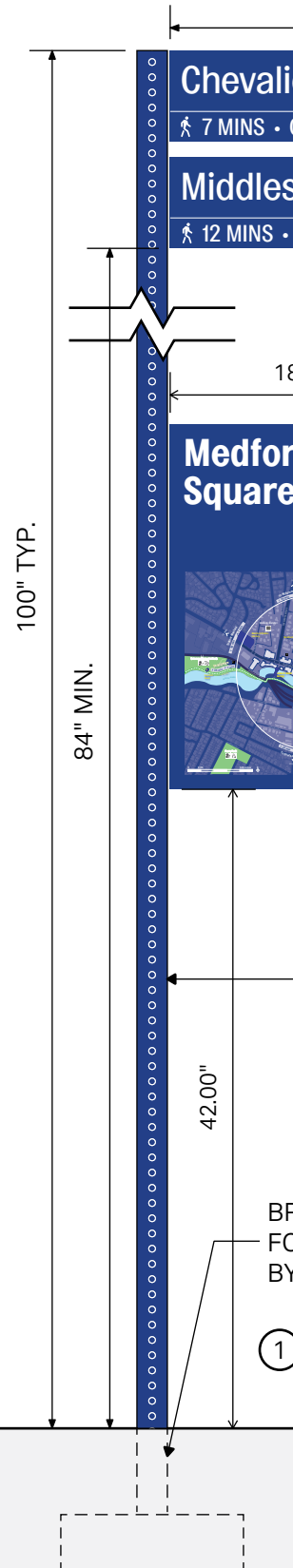
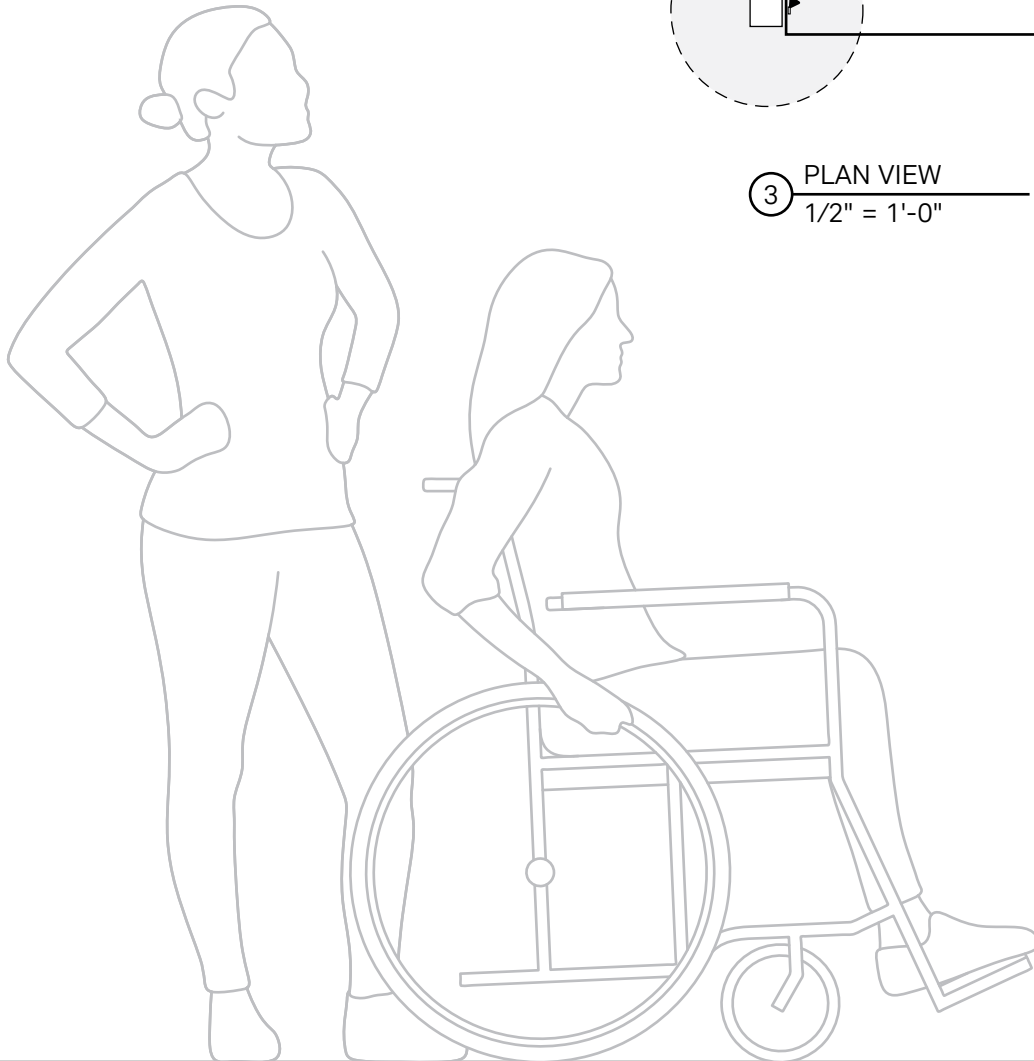
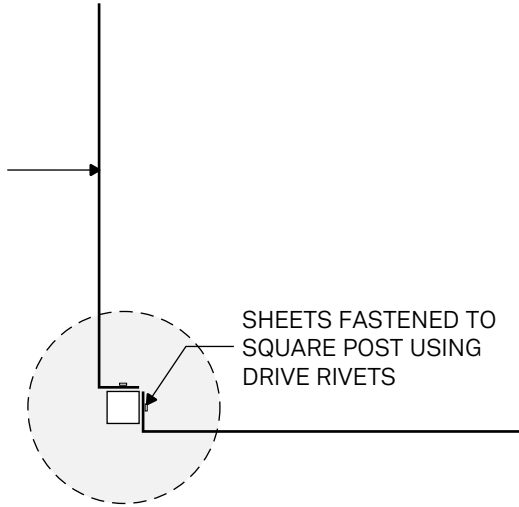
Schematic Design

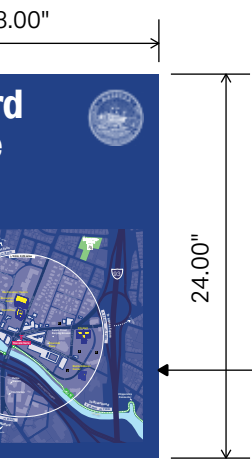
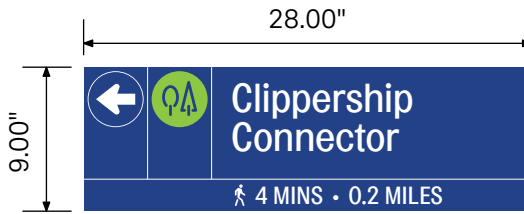
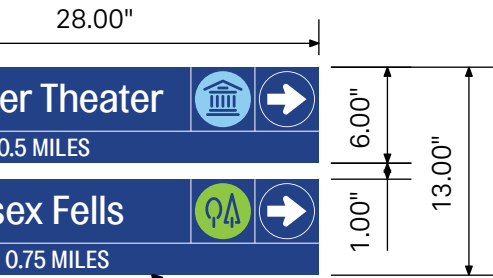
SHEET TITLE
Sign Type B
Vehicle Wayfinding

SHEET NUMBER

Sign Types C and D Ped Wayfinder and District Map

BLADES CAN BE MOUNTED
TO ANY OF THE FOUR SIDES
OF THE SQUARE POST





1/8" ALUM. PANEL
POWDER COAT "MEDFORD BLUE"
GRAPHICS SCREENPRINTED, SINGLE SIDE
2.5" OF ONE END BENT 90°
AND FASTENED WITH DRIVE RIVETS

PANELS MAY BE 6" OR 9" TALL

1/8" ALUM. PANEL
POWDER COAT "MEDFORD BLUE"
GRAPHICS DIRECT PRINTED, SINGLE SIDE
2.5" OF ONE END BENT 90°
AND FASTENED WITH DRIVE RIVETS

2" X 2" TELES PAR (OR SIMILAR)
GALVANIZED PERFORATED SQUARE TUBING
POWDER COAT "MEDFORD BLUE"

BREAKAWAY DETAIL AND
FOOTING SIZE TBD
BY FABRICATOR

FRONT VIEW
1/2" = 1'-0"

② SIDE VIEW
1/2" = 1'-0"

PROJECT NAME
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PROJECT STATUS

Schematic Design

SHEET TITLE
Sign Types C and D
Ped Wayfinder and
District Map

SHEET NUMBER

Medford Square Study

The following are preliminary investigations on how to approach implementation of signage and wayfinding in Medford Square. It is not for implementation. Additional study in an implementation phase will be required.

DIAGRAM OF MEDFORD SQUARE



The complexity of Medford Square is already well-known. Mapping of the District Routes is only one layer of a tapestry of networks and landmarks to start determining proper sign locations. In an implementation phase, it will be necessary to delaminate vehicular and pedestrian/cyclist routes, as well as more specifically study known issues: parking and walking to the Chevalier Theater; parking at City Hall; walking to/from the Condon Shell. Each of these particular issues will require its own diagrammatic exercise, that will be folded into an overall cohesive implementation plan.

- Primary District Route
- Secondary District Route
- Destination Route
- Greenway
- District Center
- Major Decision Point
- Minor Decision Point
- Destination
- P Parking Area

PRELIMINARY SIGN LOCATION PLAN



Sign Types

