

RRP Rubric for Proposed Project*

SME Request: Advise the downtowns on whether it is feasible or effective to procure a wayfinding effort for two separate downtowns on one contract. Provide a cost estimate for design and installation. Share information about funding sources used by similar communities. Share examples of successful projects from similar communities, lessons learned and pitfalls to avoid. Advise on how to work with MassDOT restrictions on wayfinding along a state highway. Advise about how to prioritize wayfinding elements and locations and how to integrate wayfinding with digital outreach and other forms of branding.

Project Title	Create a wayfinding system to promote local businesses and attractions in the downtown.
Origin	RRP Advisory Committee
Location/Census Tract	Manchester-by-the-Sea Downtown, Essex Downtown
Budget & Sources of Funding	Low budget (Under \$50K) per downtown
Timeframe	Short term - Planning and Implementation in one year
Risks	Low Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding and political will • MassDOT restrictions on signage
Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitorship and spending at various businesses and destinations • Utilization of parking • Anecdotal evidence about dwell time of visitors in the downtowns and how much of the downtown a visitor explores • Pedestrian and bicycle counts • Opinion information about the ease of navigating the downtowns; accuracy of residents' and visitors' knowledge of what the downtowns have to offer
Partners & Resources	Town of Essex, Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, business owners, Essex Merchants Group, Essex Economic Development Committee, Manchester Downtown Improvement Committee, Manchester Historic District Commission, Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, community members, MassDOT, local community organizations (Historical Societies, Shipbuilding Museum, etc.).

<p>Diagnostic/ COVID-19 Impacts</p>	<p>Essex</p> <p>Essex has a long downtown with a node of businesses at the east end of Main St/Martin Street, businesses along the causeway (Route 133/Main Street), and scattered businesses along Southern Avenue. Though most businesses have road front visibility and circulation is mostly linear and therefore simple, the downtown lacks cohesion. Most customers—especially tourists--do not patronize multiple businesses in the downtown during a visit. Limited shared parking, very limited and difficult to find public parking, and residences interspersed with businesses have hindered the development of a downtown where visitors park-once and visit multiple businesses. Destinations like the Shipbuilding Museum, and access to the Great Marsh are not obvious and easy to find. Wayfinding would encourage visitors and residents to view the downtown as a cohesive destination and improve utilization of public parking. Essex has a kiosk for the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway, and historic interpretive signs. Essex previously explored wayfinding for downtown, but found that the sign designs that were suitable for MassDOT requirements for Route 133 (Main Street) would not have improved the look and feel of the downtown.</p> <p>Many businesses in Downtown Essex rely heavily on tourists. A large portion of the businesses in the area are restaurants, which experienced prolonged operational and capacity restrictions. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the district with several business closures and a loss of revenue. Improved wayfinding would enable the businesses to recover lost ground and increase their market share in the highly competitive Cape Ann market area.</p> <p>Manchester-by-the-Sea</p> <p>Manchester-by-the-Sea is a residential seashore community with a vibrant mix of locally-owned shops and restaurants in the downtown area. The downtown is adjacent to a beautiful harbor with docks, and close to the popular Singing Beach which serves both residents and visitors. The small-town charm of Manchester-by-the-Sea and Singing Beach attracts visitors, especially during the summer season.</p> <p>Visitors primarily arrive by MBTA train or car, visitors by</p>
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	<p>boat are also a significant customer base. Public parking is quite limited and can be difficult to find because it is not visible from primary streets. Singing Beach is a short way out of town and has limited parking. Likewise, the docks at the harbor are not visible or obviously accessible to visitors. The town has two primary commercial streets (Route 127 and Beach Street) with commercial uses spread over a fairly long distance. Municipal, residential, and ground floor office uses are interspersed with retail, restaurant, and public-facing service uses along Route 127 (Bridge/Central/Union Streets). This combined with the lack of a convenient circular route uniting the primary streets likely reduces foot traffic reaching the commercial uses at the ends of the downtown. The Town recently added a pedestrian passage that will improve the convenience of parking behind Town Hall and better connect Route 127 and the Beach Street area, but the parking and the pedestrian passage could use wayfinding to inform residents of the improvements.</p> <p>COVID-19 reduced business patronage in Manchester-by-the-Sea. Reductions of MBTA service were particularly impactful. A wayfinding system would give a bump to businesses as residents and visitors are becoming reacquainted with Manchester-by-the-Sea, or discovering it for the first time.</p>
Action Item	<p>Develop comprehensive wayfinding systems for downtown Manchester-by-the-Sea and downtown Essex. Key actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define project goals and scope; build local support • Obtain funding • Hire a consultant • Approve designs • Installation • Monitoring • Maintenance and Improvements
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish advisory committee composed of business owners, Town staff and officials, community members, and partner organizations • Hold Advisory Committee meetings to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify key project goals and basic project scope ○ Identify funding sources ○ Develop a process for hiring a consultant ○ Conduct outreach to build support for the project

- Hire a consultant
- In consultation with the Advisory Committee:
 - Map existing circulation patterns
 - identify key destinations that need additional visibility
 - identify key locations where navigational decisions are made
 - identify locations where visitors will need encouragement to continue exploring the downtowns
 - define elements of the “brand” of the downtowns, and how wayfinding can reinforce it.
- Develop concept designs for branding and wayfinding elements
- Create a sign location plan and message schedule (the content on each sign)
- Conduct additional outreach to business owners, the Town, community members, and other stakeholders to obtain feedback on the concept designs and alternatives
- Hold preliminary discussions with permitting agencies
- Finalize the design, number, size, content, and location of the wayfinding elements
- Develop a vendor list and cost estimates in collaboration with local fabricators and installers.
- Revise the project scope and timeline, as needed
- Finalize design. Develop specifications and working drawings. Develop a guidance document for future additions to the wayfinding and branding system.
- Undertake procurement and hire a vendor
- Obtain permits, as needed
- Installation
- Monitor how well signs are working; measure performance indicators.
- Update locations and integrate new elements based on the response to the installations.

References:

1. Mayfield, T (2018, November 6), Branded Wayfinding for Cities, Districts, and Regions, Main Street America. Retrieved from: <https://www.mainstreet.org/blogs/national-main-street->

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2. Public Realm Best Practice Sheets Compendium - Wayfinding on Fairmount Greenway (Boston, MA). Retrieved from:
<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/rapid-recovery-plan-rrp-program>