



CITY OF MELROSE

2023

Wayfinding + Creative Placemaking Master Plan



Welcome

LETTER FROM THE CITY



Dear Melrose Community Members,

It is our great pleasure to introduce the Melrose Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Master Plan. First launched in 2020, the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative sought to engage with Melrose residents to create art for the public to enjoy and signage to direct the public to popular destinations around the city. As a result of the incredible level of community participation and the hard work of the Melrose Wayfinding & Placemaking Committee, city staff, and our consultant, Selbert Perkins Design, we have enhanced our city and fostered a more welcoming environment for visitors and residents alike.

We are fortunate to have a wealth of natural, historic, and cultural resources in Melrose that make it an attractive place to live and to visit. In addition to our vibrant arts and cultural scene, we have many unique shops, restaurants, and beautiful open spaces that draw people from near and far. Our assets cater to many different interests, which are reflected in the range of community groups and events that add vitality and regularly bring our community together.

Our community's devotion to one another became especially apparent in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. We understood the need to create outdoor gathering spaces for friends and neighbors to come together and connect, and that steered the first phase of the Initiative toward a focus on public art. Through a collaborative effort, we installed parklets in our business districts so residents could dine outdoors and safely spend time together. In November 2020, the city invited the community to a socially-distanced celebration of public art in Melrose where residents could meet artists, see installations, and participate in fun activities, including creating artwork to enliven the parklets. Finally, in the Spring of 2022, the Central Terrace mural was completed and seating was added, which finalized the transformation of this alley into a place for people instead of cars. The mural celebrates joy and our diversity and adds to the downtown experience.

During the second phase of the Initiative, our effort shifted to developing signage that would communicate a cohesive message and help residents and visitors navigate around the city. A design for the signage that speaks to the city's rich architectural heritage was selected with input from the public, and sign types and locations were finalized. To support our health and sustainability initiatives, walking and biking distances are included on the signs to encourage these modes of travel and create a supportive environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Master Plan represents a culmination of the collaborative effort to enhance the community through public art, engagement and placemaking during a time of disruption brought on by the pandemic. Over the course of the last three years, we witnessed the community's resilience and dedication to uplifting one another. With the release of the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Master Plan, we are confident that our city will continue to work together to promote our local business community and create vibrant spaces to be enjoyed by all who visit and reside in Melrose.

With Warmest Regards,

Mayor Paul Brodeur
City of Melrose

Denise Gaffey, Director
Office of Planning and Community Development



PROJECT CONTRIBUTORS

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01



City of Melrose
CENTRAL TERRACE

Seating is open to the public!

PROJECT SUMMARY

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Wayfinding and Creative Placemaking Initiative is a long-range plan to improve wayfinding and engage local artists in improving the experience of residents and visitors in the city of Melrose. While the City had long been interested in developing a wayfinding system that would provide wayfinding options for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles, a strong desire also emerged from Mayor Paul Brodeur and his administration in 2020 to incorporate creative placemaking and public art into a comprehensive planning effort. After a solicitation for quotes, the City selected Selbert Perkins Design (SPD), in collaboration with the Civic Space Collaborative, to lead the effort and, thus, Melrose's Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative was born.

This Initiative was made possible by State and City resources. The City received an earmark from the 2020 Massachusetts State Budget and grants from the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism and Mass in Motion. The project later received additional funding from the City's free cash allocation and the Executive Office of Administration and Finance for Streetscape Infrastructure Upgrades, which allowed for the expanded scope of the project.

WHAT IS WAYFINDING & PLACEMAKING?

Wayfinding is the process of using spatial and environmental information to find one's way in the built environment. Wayfinding includes traditional signage design, but is a broader, more inclusive way of assessing all the environmental issues which affect one's ability to find their way around. Examples include: gateway signage; signage for vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes; trail signage; and interpretive signage that documents history and other information.

Placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to the planning, design and management of public spaces. Placemaking capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well-being. Examples include: murals, banners, pavement art, temporary installations, seating and other street furniture, outdoor sculptures, performances and community events.



GOALS

The following goals were outlined in the beginning of the project and they have framed the recommendations, solutions, and avenues for completion offered throughout the course of the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative:

- Engage the Melrose community in creating a vision for what a placemaking and wayfinding system should look like.
- Greet residents and visitors with attractive placemaking and wayfinding to make a good first impression and reinforce the community's identity.
- Expand the public art offerings in Melrose by engaging local artists and bringing community art, culture, and civic groups together.
- Enhance the customer and visitor experience in all of Melrose's business districts, particularly Downtown.
- Create a more supportive environment to encourage walking and biking by helping pedestrians and cyclists navigate to, from, and around major destinations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

From the beginning of this effort, there was a high level of engagement provided by the residents of Melrose through the outreach described in the research findings section of this report. They were eager to voice their opinion, provide thoughtful feedback and followed the project closely.

The following overarching themes arose from our engagement with residents:

- Diversity is welcome in Melrose.
- Supporting local business is a top priority.
- The "old" should be balanced with the "new."
- Promote walkability in Melrose.
- Connect commercial nodes to Downtown.
- Showcase and direct to local assets.
- Public art should engage youth and seniors in the process.

ART AND PLACEMAKING

The desire to invest in public art as a part of the Wayfinding and Creative Placemaking Initiative was validated by the strong response to the Call for Public Art that the City released early in this effort as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of 24 outstanding project submissions, nine artists were selected for public art installations throughout Melrose.

These installations were highlighted at a socially-distant celebration on November 7, 2020 where residents could meet artists, see works in progress and completed installations, and participate in fun activities along the way.

Recommendations for art and placemaking include:

- Identify and dedicate funding to continue adding temporary and permanent public art installations each year.
- Explore a switch-box art program, and an artistic trash/recycling bin program.
- Add seating, especially near natural features and open spaces.
- Continue to populate alleyways and other opportunity areas with art.
- Request permission for installations at other sites like the DCR Pool, etc.
- Map out an art walk to tour public art in Melrose.
- Designate a Cultural District through the Mass Cultural Council.
- Add a stage or alternative area for outdoor performances.
- Give the art initiative a name and visual identity to include on labels and other promotional materials.
- Continue to engage with the committee and community stakeholders to build on this pilot initiative.
- Create outdoor seating, street narrowing, and other measures to support small businesses in the downtown and other commercial areas.



PROJECT SUMMARY

SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING

Signage concepts were developed with residents on the committee and then through the virtual community meeting, with the community at large.

Recommendations for signage and wayfinding that emerged from this process include:

- Create and install signage in the preferred design locations identified on the signage location plan to help residents and visitors find their way around the city and create gateways at city borders.
- Remove outdated signs and use existing posts (or replace in kind) so as to not add unnecessary visual clutter with the installation of new signs.
- The use of “flag-mounted” signs reduces the cost since one sign provides messages on both sides and the sign is more sleek in appearance.
- Direct visitors and residents to downtown, other business districts and points of interest identified.
- Prioritize signs for pedestrians over vehicles and include walking and bicycle distances on these signs to encourage these methods of transportation.
- Install signage downtown to direct drivers to the municipal parking lots with the chosen signage design.
- Install trail signage to help residents and visitors successfully use the trails in Melrose.
- Since the City Hall kiosk could use some cosmetic upgrades but is otherwise in good shape and well used, keep it and move/replace the veteran’s billboard which is blocking it. Locate new kiosks in other locations.
- Provide historical information on Kiosk signs in consultation with the Melrose Historical Commission.
- Develop a refreshed identity for the City of Melrose to support and reflect the city’s diversifying population by updating the City’s typography, color palette, and visual elements.

IDENTITY

Residents of Melrose indicated that they are ready to update the city’s identity. Modern cities have robust brands that help communicate their identity and message, and Melrose could certainly benefit from branding as it looks to welcome new residents and a diversity of new viewpoints. A community as vibrant and engaged as Melrose deserves to have its identity refined and visually developed, as it is locally regarded as a Victorian gem north of Boston.

Recommendations for identity include:

- Develop a refreshed identity for the City of Melrose to support and reflect the city’s diversifying population.
- Update the City’s typography, color palette, visual elements, and tagline to support a successful adaptation of the newly developed identity.
- Use this updated identity as a platform to promote Melrose for being a welcoming place: “One Community, Open to All”.





02

RESEARCH

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engagement with Melrose residents, business owners, and other stakeholder groups has been an integral component of the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative from the start. As the project kicked off, City officials identified nine members of the community that would be ideal candidates to helm a Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Committee. This group, which represents a cross-section of Melrose stakeholders, was engaged on a regular basis to help steer the project, and members were also privately interviewed on the subject matter.

Soon after the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative was launched in March 2020, the COVID-19 virus became a global pandemic and necessary social distancing restrictions were put in place by the Governor of Massachusetts. While this impacted the ability to hold in-person meetings, it also created new opportunities to collaborate via web-based resources. The project team adapted to the crisis, pivoting to web-based resources and virtual meetings for project team, interviews and community meetings.

The research findings include the information that was gathered for this project from the community through several Committee meetings and interviews, three separate focus group discussions with civic leaders, community leaders, and arts & cultural leaders, two online community surveys and a community meeting. The results of these engagement opportunities are summarized in this section except for the final online survey results, which are located in the Signage and Wayfinding Section.

COMMITTEE MEMBER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

During the week of April 15th, 2020, the project team interviewed the appointed committee members individually. The interviews were 30 minutes, covering committee members' thoughts on their experiences with the City of Melrose, and Melrose's identity, and opportunities for wayfinding and placemaking. Summaries of the interviews are below.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MELROSE RESIDENTS:

There was consensus among the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Committee members that Melrose is a tight-knit community where residents help one another and have a strong sense of local pride. While it is a city, Melrose has a "small town" feel. It is a welcoming place that is increasingly open to diversity and new residents.

ABOUT THE CITY OF MELROSE:

Committee members pointed out that wherever you are in Melrose, you are able to walk to most destinations in under 20 minutes. There are excellent public transit options, including three Commuter Rail Stations, multiple bus lines, and accessibility to the Oak Grove Orange Line Station. Melrose is recognized for its Victorian-era architecture and it has many open spaces, including playgrounds, parks, and other natural features.

DESIRED PLACEMAKING AND AMENITIES:

There was agreement that more seating is needed in Downtown Melrose as there are limited options for people to sit or eat a meal outside. The downtown could benefit from banners or other amenities typical of a Cultural District. Sandwich Cultural District was named as an inspiration, specifically in regard to their public art installation downtown.

PUBLIC ART:

According to Committee members, public art in Melrose should have a clear purpose, whether it serves as a visual pop of color or has a deeper meaning. New art should balance the old and the new and reflect the increasing diversity of Melrose.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE:

There was considerable mention of wayfinding and signage opportunities for Melrose during the interviews with Committee members. In terms of the downtown, members spoke about the need for signage that indicates the number of destinations that are in close proximity to each other. If the walkability of certain locations was advertised with the average time it would take to get there, vehicular traffic may diminish, which would support the city's goals of promoting alternative modes of transportation and increasing physical activity among residents. Improved signage for parking could also help reduce traffic on Main Street.

It was suggested that the Chamber may be interested in partnering with the City to create an online resource that promotes local businesses and contributes to the City's identity and branding. Additionally, the City's smaller commercial districts, particularly those around the three Commuter Rail Stations and Franklin Square, are interested in branding themselves and signage in these locations will help. In the short term, signage could be added to each of the districts along with an element that connects them visually to the downtown.

Other locations that would benefit from new or improved signage are Pine Banks, Mount Hood, Ell Pond, as well as the city's passive parks. Lesser known locations, such as DCR's Lloyd Memorial Swimming Pool should also be considered. Members stated that the signage should be supplemented with printed maps and/or an app.

FOCUS GROUP 1: CIVIC LEADERS

On May 27, 2020, the project team conducted a focus group with Melrose city officials. These individuals represented the City Council, Melrose Public Library, Memorial Hall, Melrose Police Department, and Council on Aging, and were able to offer targeted suggestions based on their in-depth knowledge of Melrose and its local government.

WAYFINDING AND PLACEMAKING

Civic leaders identified the areas around the commuter rail stations as opportune locations for wayfinding and placemaking. Participants also suggested exploring the alleyways in the downtown for placemaking as a way to activate these spaces & direct people from the municipal parking lots to the downtown businesses.

Participants discussed that a project near Pine Banks Park may help promote the businesses nearby, but it may not have the same “bang for the buck” as a project in a location with more pedestrian traffic. They suggested looping in the Middle and High Schools for partnership ideas.

Specific suggestions were offered for the City Hall property. While the kiosk is well-used for promoting events, there may be an opportunity to revamp it. Participants also noted that the tribute to veterans on the City Hall lawn could be improved. The area near City Hall was mentioned as a great place to beautify and add gateway signage to welcome people entering the district from that direction.

THIS INITIATIVE AND COVID-19

The group had an important discussion about how the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative could help in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seating in alleyways may help social distancing strategies for restaurants downtown as people wait for their food to be prepared. Similarly, parklets could provide a crucial resource for business owners during the pandemic who lack outdoor seating options. Civic leaders suggested that projects beautifying the downtown may be very desirable for the community as people are spending more time outside, although the city would have to be sensitive to residents’ feelings prior to undertaking a beautification project considering some have economic uncertainty due to the pandemic. Messaging will be important to convey the opportunity of the grant funding and the economic and social benefits of this work.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- The commuter rail stations and alleyways in the downtown are opportune location for wayfinding and placemaking.
- The area near City Hall is a great place to add gateway signage.
- Parklets could provide a crucial resource for business owners who lack outdoor seating options.
- Messaging will be important to convey the economic and social benefits of this work.

FOCUS GROUP 2: COMMUNITY LEADERS

The project team hosted a focus group meeting with community leaders from Melrose on May 20, 2020. Together, these individuals represent important community organizations including the Melrose YMCA, Melrose Symphony Orchestra, and Look What’s Happening Melrose, as well as Melrose High School students.

MELROSE IDENTITY

Similar to other conversations with stakeholders, participants noted that a key element of Melrose’s identity that should be highlighted is its embrace of new residents. They suggested decorating public trash and recycling bins with expressions of the city’s identity. At a minimum, some type of placemaking element should connect all of the neighborhoods.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

While some felt that the “Welcome to Melrose” sign is iconic, others felt that it is old and outdated. Generally, participants felt that there is no need to “overdo it” with the signage. A walking path or route with signage was suggested as an opportunity to help promote walking in the community, specifically around the schools.

PUBLIC ART AND PLACEMAKING

There was agreement among participants that public art should invoke a sense of community. Crosswalks were mentioned as an opportunity for creating public art that also promotes walkability. Suggestions for public art and placemaking included digital art, an “open streets” event like Victorian Day, a film festival, art projected onto walls, a bi-annual “art walk,” and events like a drive-in movie.

ADDITIONAL GOALS AND COMMENTS

Participants pointed out that the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative should consider sustainability and discussed how public art can encourage environmentally friendly behavior. One example could include using attractive or interactive trash bins to encourage people to properly dispose of their waste. They also suggested that the City engage families, youth (including Middle and High School students), and seniors in this process.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- All neighborhoods should be connected through placemaking elements.
- Public art should invoke a sense of community.
- The Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Initiative should consider sustainability and encourage environmentally friendly behavior.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

FOCUS GROUP 3: ART AND CULTURAL LEADERS

The focus group meeting with prominent Melrose artists and cultural stakeholders was held on April 23, 2020, with representatives from Follow Your Art Community Studios, Melrose Cultural Council, Melrose Messina Fund for the Arts, Melrose Open Studios, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and a local gallery and gift store. These individuals were able to offer targeted goals for the public art portion of the initiative and ways to support the city's increasing diversity.

GOALS FOR THE ART INITIATIVE

The art and cultural leaders identified business promotion, documenting Melrose's identity, and being welcoming to all residents as overarching goals for the art initiative. Melrose has a strong local pride that needs to be highlighted. Many of the businesses throughout the city are arts-oriented and serve as the pulse of Melrose's public life. They felt that the Victorian theme is a key part of the community's history but the arts initiative should show the evolution of the city's identity by bringing the old and the new together in a way that captures the Victorian history and the city's increasing diversity. A pilot public art program would be a great way to "test the water."

HONORING DIVERSITY IN MELROSE

The need to honor diversity and promote inclusivity in Melrose, both generally and specifically as a part of the public art initiative, was a main topic of conversation. Focus group attendees felt that there has been a great deal of positive change over the past 20 years in Melrose and the changes have made Melrose stand out. Ways to incorporate the city's diversity were discussed and art was identified as a tool to help include new families who have just moved to Melrose. Creating public pieces that promoted different languages was also suggested. Participants stated that equity in the public art process will be essential and they suggested that the project team connect with a diverse group of artists. They supported expanding the eligibility for public artists to not just be Melrose artists but artists from elsewhere in Massachusetts to ensure that more non-white artists are reached.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Business promotion, documenting Melrose's identity, and being welcoming are overarching goals for the art initiative.
- The arts initiative should show the evolution of the city's identity by bringing the old and the new together in a way that captures the Victorian history and the city's increasing diversity.
- Call for Public Art should extend beyond just Melrose artists to those from elsewhere in Massachusetts to ensure that more non-white artists are reached.

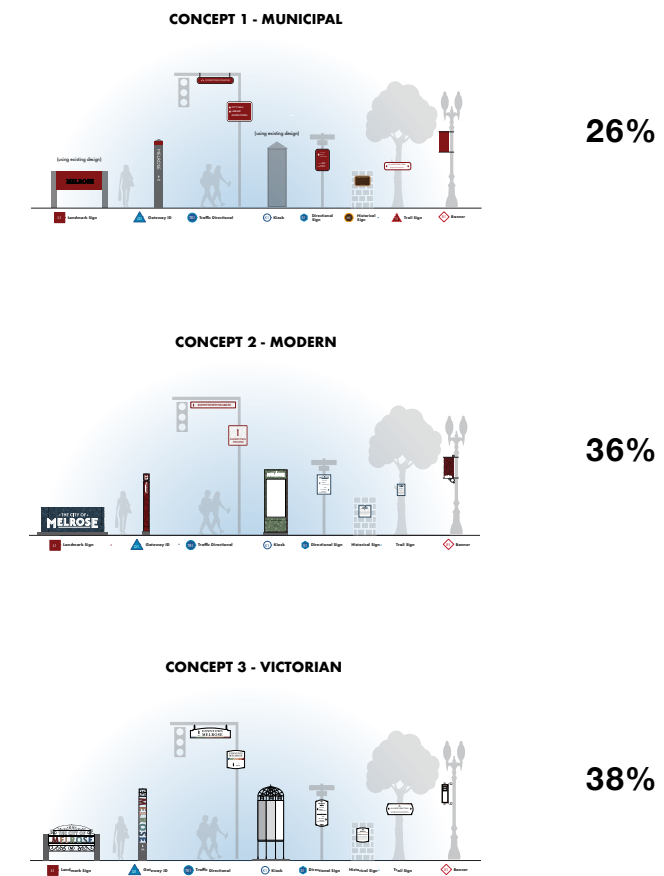
VIRTUAL COMMUNITY MEETING

A community meeting was held virtually on June 3, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to provide background information on wayfinding and placemaking, introduce the signage concepts prepared by Selbert Perkins Design, share the online survey results, and give attendees the opportunity to ask questions about this process. Over 70 people took part in the webinar and were polled for their preferences on the following prompts:

• Are you a current resident?

- 87% of attendees were current residents of Melrose, with the remainder being either Government employees or professionals that work in the area.

• Which conceptual signage family do you prefer? (See larger version in the Signage Section)



After a presentation, there was a 45-minute question and answer session with attendees. Most questions were general inquiries in regard to the initiative, its funding sources, and the timeline of the project.

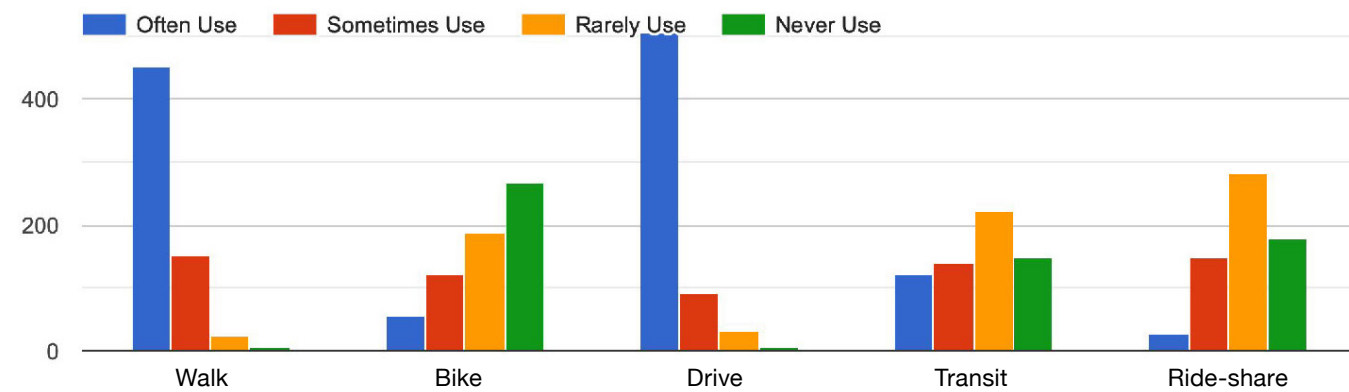
RESEARCH FINDINGS

ONLINE COMMUNITY SUREY RESULTS

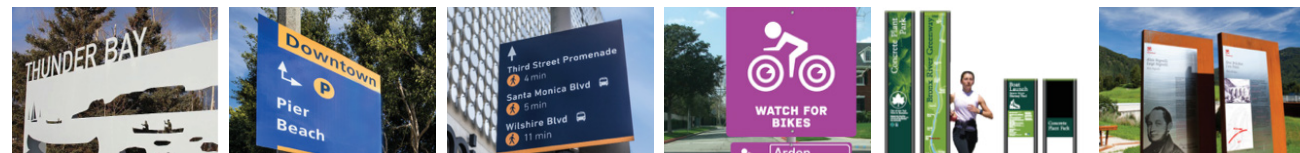
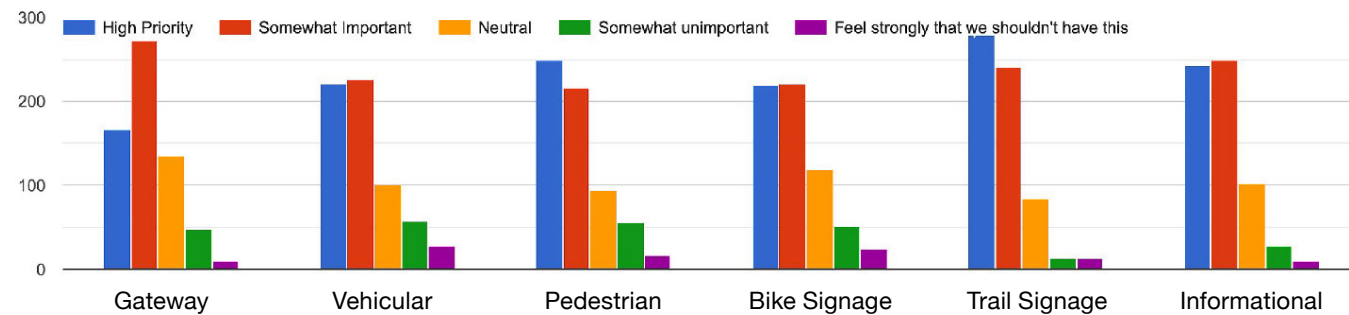
From May 5th to May 18th 2020, an online survey was conducted with Melrose residents and stakeholders. In total, 639 responses were recorded over this period of time. The survey was designed to collect opinions on current conditions relevant to signage and wayfinding, opinions on public art and amenities, and demographic information about the respondents.

WAYFINDING

• Please indicate how often you use the following modes of transportation during a normal week. (Pre-COVID 19)



• What types of signage would you most like to see in Melrose?



• Which places do you feel are the most important places to direct residents and visitors to via signage? Check as many boxes as apply.



• Please list any amenities or destinations you feel are hard to find in Melrose.

Most recorded responses:

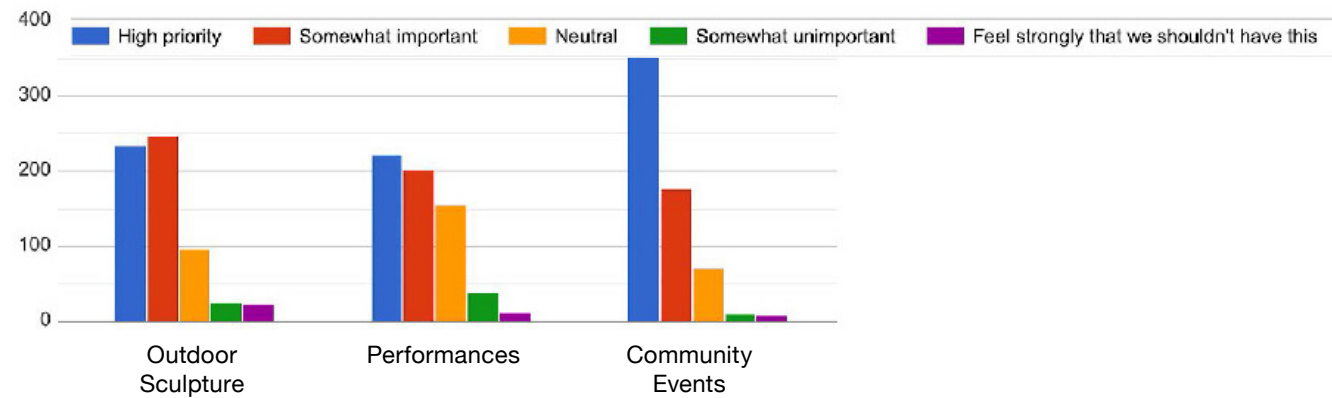
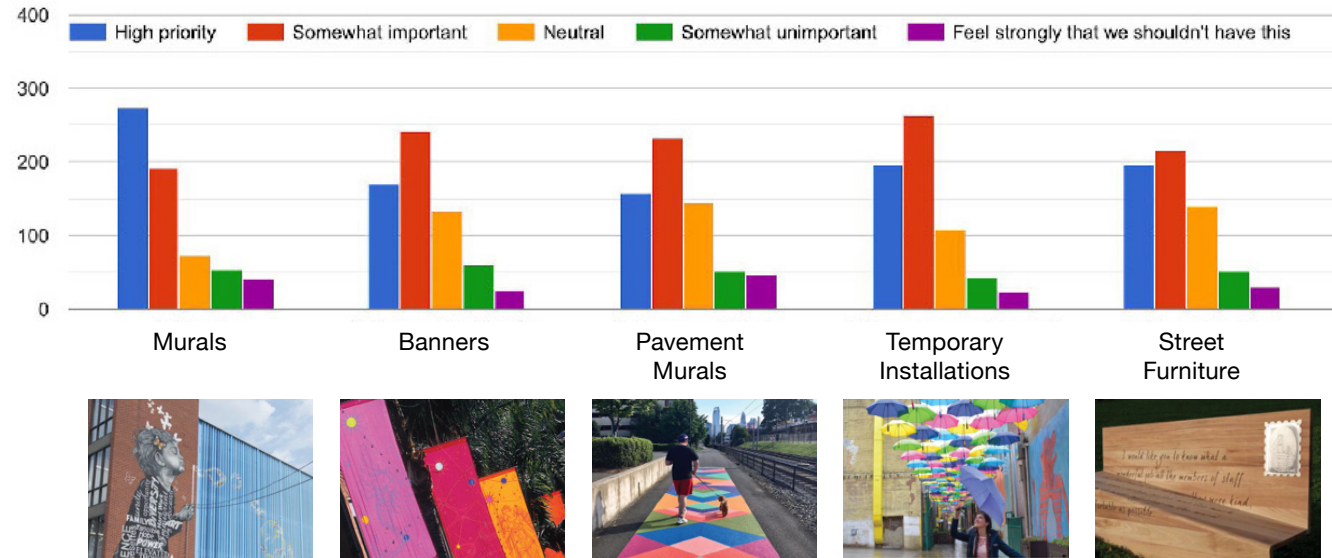
- Walking trails/trail heads for the Fells
- Mt Hood
- Automobile parking
- Bike parking
- Shopping around Cedar Park
- Police Station
- Farmers Market
- Youth sports fields
- All shopping areas NOT in the Downtown
- Small conservation areas, parks and ponds (Swains Pond, Flagg Acres, Knox Park)
- Highlands
- Navigation within Pine Banks
- Library
- Memorial Hall

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

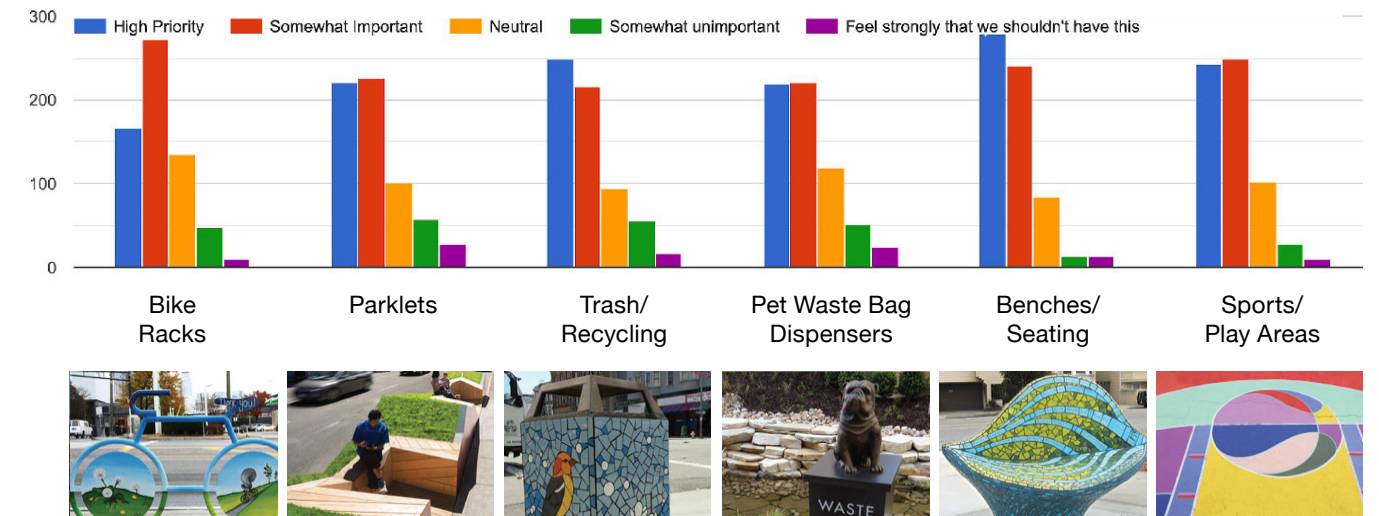
- Most residents walk and drive to their destinations in a normal week.
- Residents would like to see Trail & Pedestrian signage added to the current program.
- Downtown, Melrose Public Library & Oak Grove MBTA are the most important places to direct residents and visitors.
- Trail heads, downtown destinations and smaller parks/recreation areas could use more signage.

PLACEMAKING

• Which types of public art would you most like to see in Melrose?



• What types of amenities would you most like to see in Melrose?



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Community events and murals are the most requested types of art.
- Trash/recycling bins and benches are the most requested types of amenities.

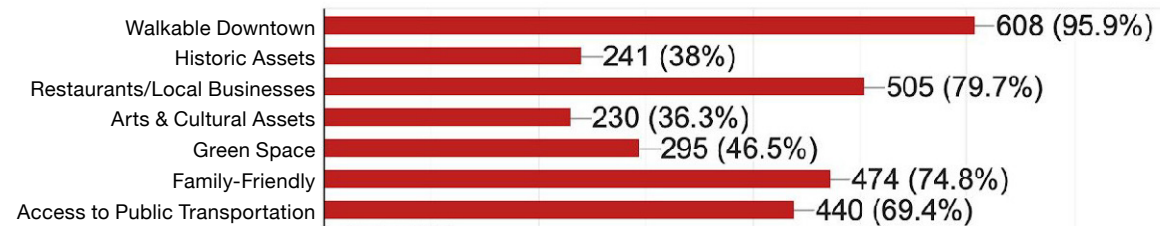
RESEARCH FINDINGS

WHAT MAKES MELROSE SPECIAL?

• What three words would you use to describe the Melrose you hope for in the future?



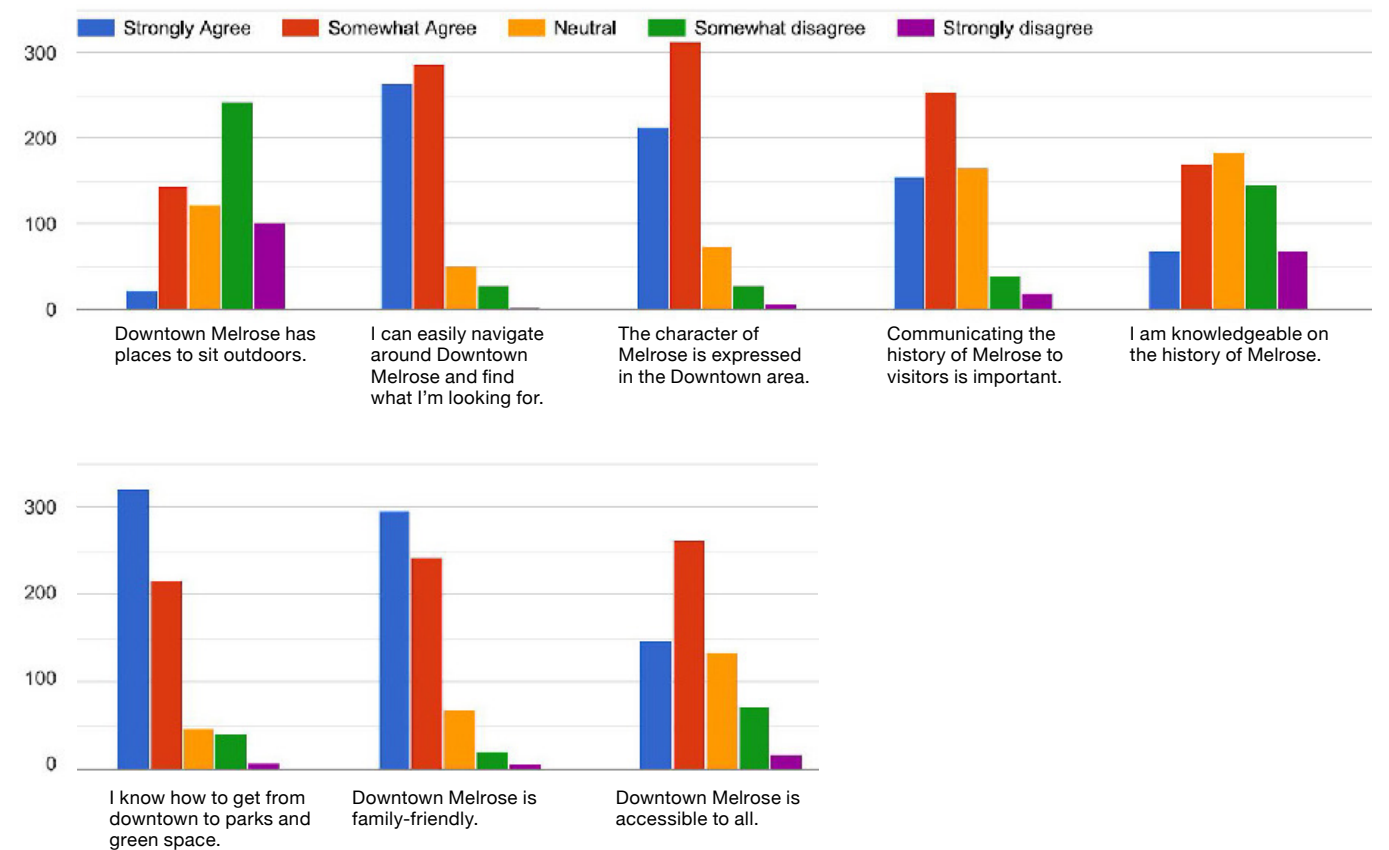
• Select the top characteristics you feel make Melrose unique.



KEY TAKEAWAY:

- Residents and stakeholders characterize Melrose as unique because of its walkable downtown, local businesses and restaurants, and how family friendly it is.

• Please indicate how you feel about the following statements (strongly agree to strongly disagree)



• When friends or family visit you in Melrose, where do you take them?

Most recorded responses:

- Downtown
- Fells
- Commons
- Ell Pond
- Local parks
- Restaurants

Sample Responses:

- "To play at the Common playground, ice cream at the Common Market, oysters at Turners, shopping at Buckalews and Pepperberry, Melrose Public Library."
- "The Common, Pine Banks, Mt Hood for walks, restaurants."
- "Restaurants, library, Melrose Common."
- "Walk around the neighborhood to look at pretty houses, the Fells, Turner's."

RESEARCH FINDINGS

• What downtown areas in other cities (either nearby or far) do you enjoy visiting? Please tell us why.

Most recorded cities:

- Wakefield - with frequent mention of Lake Quannapowitt
- Winchester
- Cambridge and Somerville including Bow Market, Davis Square, and Union Square
- North Shore including Salem/ Newburyport/Gloucester/Beverly/Rockport
- Portsmouth, NH
- Boston including Waterfront, Seaport, Back Bay, Beacon Hill

Most popular reasons:

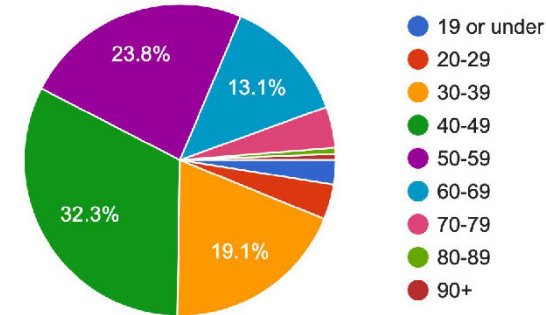
- More variety of businesses
- More than one "Main Street" area
- Ample green space
- Walkability
- History
- Stores with character, no corporate stores
- Streets closed off for people
- Many food options
- Nice architecture
- Attractions and Scenic views

Sample Responses:

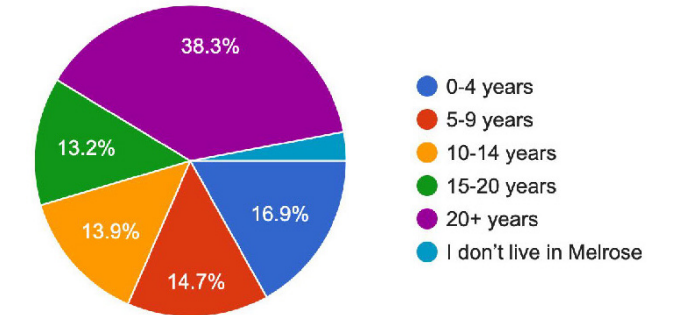
- "We love the Rose Kennedy Greenway and have been going there for years. It's even better since they added the Boston Public Market nearby - great place for gathering! When you can get a coffee, or a bite to eat, and then easily walk somewhere safe to sit down and allow your kids to run around, families are going to flock to that, which is exactly what you see on the Greenway."
- "Walking around the lake in Wakefield. It would be nice to have walking routes measured and posted in Melrose."
- "Diverse restaurants and shops, and are not overrun with pizza places, nail salons and hair dressers. There are more outdoor dining/seating options."
- "I enjoy a downtown space that is more than a single street. It would be lovely to see the downtown area grow beyond just main street and offer opportunities to "do" things beyond shop or eat."
- "Salem - there is a lot in their downtown, nice cafes. It's very easy to walk around as they don't allow cars in their downtown. Beverly - easy to get from downtown to beautiful parks which makes for a nice afternoon out. "

DEMOGRAPHICS

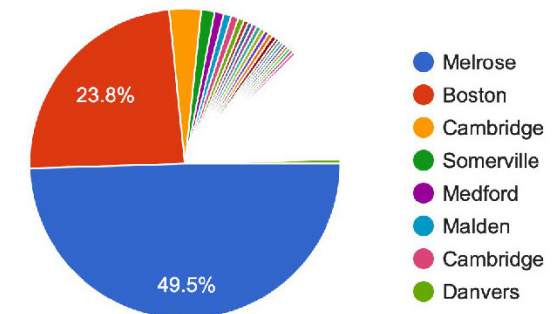
• What is your age?



• How long have you lived in Melrose?



• Where do you work, go to school, or spend most of your time? (during a normal week pre-Covid-19)



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 56.1% of survey participants are between the ages of 40-59.
- Participants spend most of their time in Melrose, followed by Boston, Cambridge & Somerville.
- Over half of survey participants have lived in Melrose for 15+ years.

KEY FINDINGS

Based on the insight collected from the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Committee meetings and member interviews, focus groups, online survey, and virtual community meeting, the following major takeaways were noted:

SUMMARY:

- Diversity is welcome in Melrose.
- Supporting local business is a top priority.
- Public art should engage youth and seniors in the process.
- The “old” style should be balanced with the “new.”
- Promote walkability in Melrose.
- Connect commercial nodes to Downtown.
- Showcase and direct to local assets.

DIVERSITY IS WELCOME IN MELROSE

Committee and focus group members believe that Melrosians value diversity and would like to see more of a mix of incomes, races, and generations in their community. They felt that public art and placemaking needs to make clear that all people are welcome in Melrose. This can be done through engaging youth, seniors, and people of color in both the process, and the implementation of any public art.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES IS A TOP PRIORITY

Public art and wayfinding should promote Downtown Melrose as a destination for residents and visitors. Respondents felt that with COVID-19 and closures for businesses, it is even more important to focus on signage and public art that helps elevate small businesses in Downtown and other commercial nodes around the city.

PUBLIC ART SHOULD ENGAGE YOUTH AND SENIORS IN THE PROCESS

Seniors and youth were both underrepresented in the online survey. Approximately 5% of respondents were over the age of 70 and 6% were under the age of 29. Focus group members stressed that it is important that this initiative engage both youth and older adults. The pandemic has only increased the need for engagement with these two groups. Students dealt with the struggles of learning outside of the classroom, unable to socialize with friends, and many are still affected by the disruption that it caused. On the other spectrum, older adults are facing an increase in the epidemic of loneliness and isolation in our country. Efforts that can engage and brighten the spirits of these groups are encouraged.

THE “OLD” STYLE SHOULD BE BALANCED WITH THE “NEW”

All committee and focus group conversations noted the balance that needs to be achieved between honoring the “old” Melrose, including the iconic Victorian architecture and the history of the city, and incorporating the “new” Melrose. The “new” includes increasing demographic diversity, new families moving in, and a desire by many to update the aesthetics to include more modern styles and bold artwork that brings in a fresh perspective.

PROMOTE WALKABILITY IN MELROSE

Melrose is a small, walkable city. Nevertheless, according to the survey write-in responses, many do not know how to get to local green spaces or other commercial nodes outside of the downtown. Signage that includes distances to certain areas could accomplish many different goals from local economic development to improving public health. These overlaps could help to identify other sources of funding related to these initiatives. In addition, there is also a desire for historical or interpretive signage that could guide residents and visitors on a walking tour of Melrose or certain areas.

CONNECT COMMERCIAL NODES TO DOWNTOWN

While Downtown Melrose was a major focus of this project, it was clear from the community engagement process, that other areas outside of the downtown need to be elevated and connected to the downtown through signage, public art, or other identity/branding. The Melrose Chamber of Commerce is a partner for this work. Some ideas mentioned were to have signage that directs people to other districts, to have banners or signs that brand the different neighborhoods, or to have public art elements in each commercial node that helps to tie them all together across the city.

SHOWCASE AND DIRECT TO LOCAL ASSETS

The survey results from both the multiple-choice questions and write-in responses pointed to a strong desire by Melrosians to have more signage for trails and conservation areas. While longtime residents may know of the best trail-heads, many newer residents expressed that they either did not know how to find them, or that they feel they are hidden gems that others would not be able to easily find. COVID-19 likely amplified this interest in the trails as people were isolating at-home and walking outside in nature was one of a few safe activities.



03

ART & PLACEMAKING

CALL FOR ART

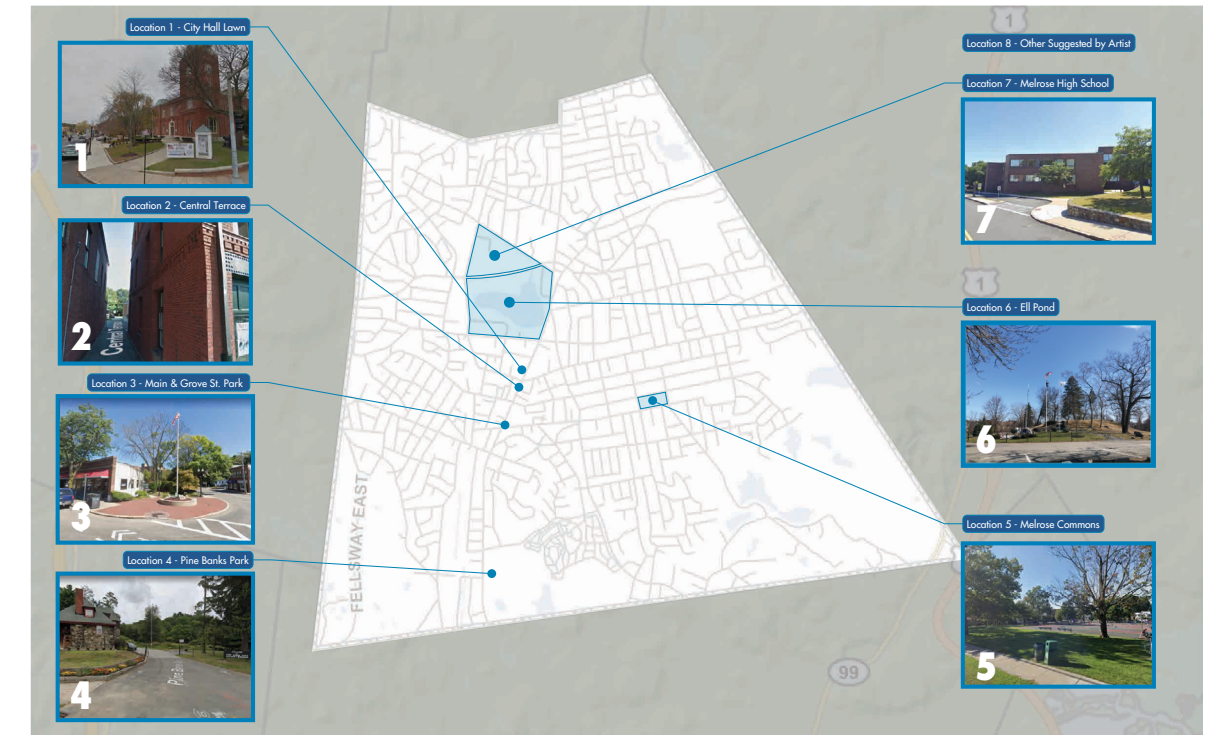
Early on in this process, the City of Melrose committed to allocating a substantial portion of the wayfinding earmark to fund public art installations. This part of the project went quickly from planning to implementation as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The public art provided something fun and new for the community to see in a safe way and employed artists during this difficult time. Working with City staff and select members of the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Committee, Selbert Perkins Design developed a Call for Art, for artists to create site-specific art installations.

The program was advertised through different channels. It was posted on the City’s website, announced in the Mayor’s digital newsletter, and distributed via social media by members of the committee.

The Call for Art was initially limited to only Melrose residents but, based on feedback received at the Virtual Community Meeting, the pool was widened to include all Massachusetts artists. This was done to promote inclusivity and to provide opportunities for a more diverse group of artists. The project sought to include a larger community, but maintained an authentic connection to Melrose by asking artists to consider how they might involve the community in the design or fabrication of their work. Non-Melrose artists who applied for the Call for Art were encouraged to partner with a community organization or work with Melrose residents to bring their projects to life.

The Call for Art launched on May 18, 2020 and closed just over a month later on June 28, 2020. On June 30th, the Placemaking & Wayfinding committee met to review the 24 proposals and a smaller working group had a difficult job of choosing which would be funded. Committee member Kristina Rodolico and her organization Follow Your Art acted as the artist liaison while projects were implemented.

ART LOCATION PLAN



To expedite the timeline of potential installations, the above locations were selected by the committee. These 7 locations are City owned property. An “other” option was provided to respondents, should they wish to propose an alternate location.

As pieces are added over the years, an Arts Corridor or other self-led tour is recommended as a way to highlight artwork and help people explore Melrose.

Other tours may include historic sites, including those pertaining to people of color. Art installations may be used to draw attention to these sites and the two programs can collaborate.

CALL FOR ART GUIDELINES

- Projects may be \$1,000 to \$8,000, inclusive of all expenses.
- Artists who live or work in Massachusetts may apply.
- Request to engage with the Melrose community.
- Materials must be safe and suitable for outdoor use.
- Work proposed can be temporary or permanent.
- Artists will be evaluated based on their previous work. Sketches or designs are not required to apply.
- The goal was to commission 5-8 projects for completion by the fall of 2020.

ART SELECTION



The following artists were selected to create the first round of public art.

- Silvia Lopez Chavez - Melrose High School Mural
- Sagie Vangelina - Central Terrace Mural
- Catie Nasser - Tiny Art Gallery
- David Winkler - Utility Boxes
- Sheila Farren Billings - Utility Boxes
- Lisa Tiemann - Greenman Community Mosaic
- John Pegoraro - Sculpture at Ell Pond
- Adria Arch and Jessie Brown - Poetry Installations
- April Jakubec Duggal - Utility Boxes

MELROSE MAKES

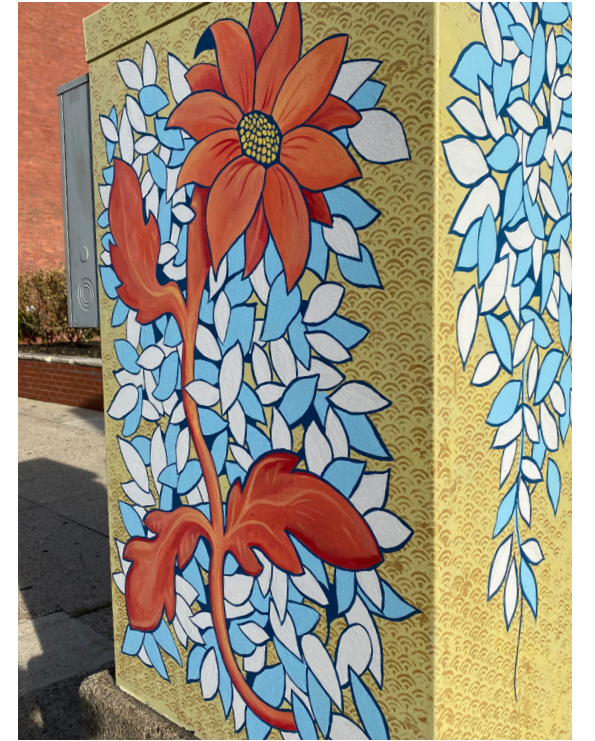
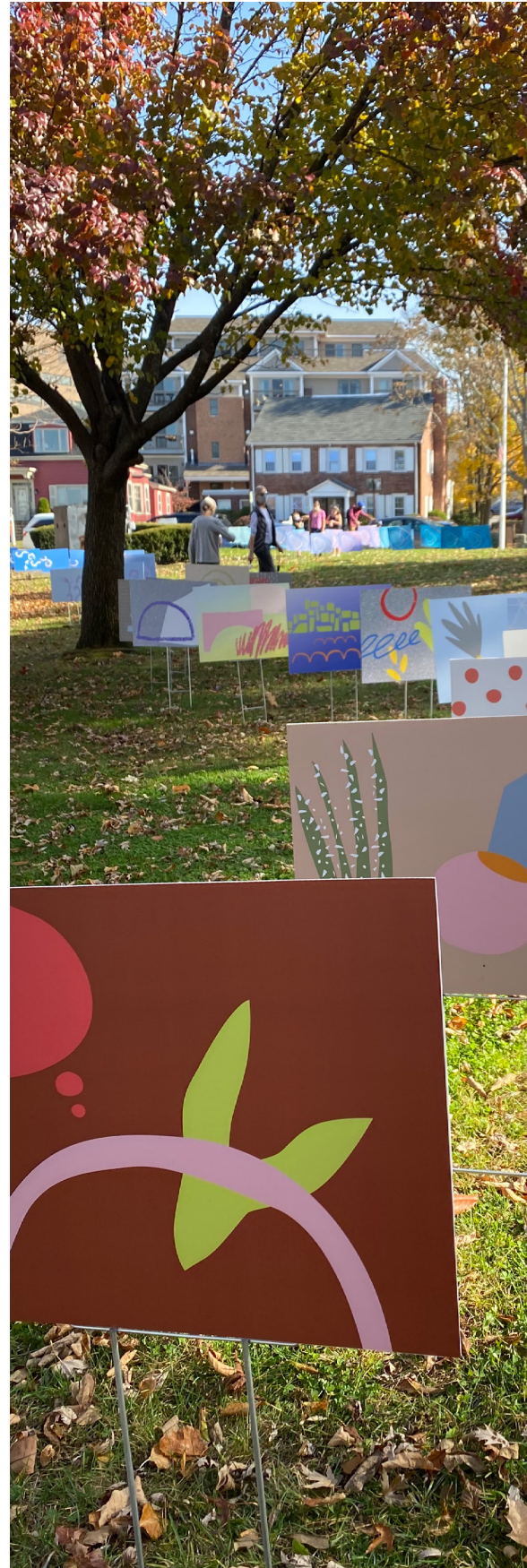
Once the nine artists were selected to install public art around Melrose, the City collaborated with Follow Your Art to host an event that was branded Melrose Makes. It was a very successful event that invited community members to take a self-guided walking tour of the different creations in various phases of completion. Beginning at the Ell Pond Park Gazebo, participants could venture either north or south along Main Street. Artists were stationed by their installations working and/or welcoming visitors by explaining the intention behind their work and answering any questions. Activities were also offered downtown where those in attendance could paint and draw.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on the call for Public Art and Melrose Makes event as well as the research findings, these key recommendations emerged for art & placemaking:

- Identify and dedicate funding to continue adding temporary and permanent public art installations each year.
- Explore a switch-box art program, and an artistic trash/recycling bin program.
- Add seating, especially near natural features and open spaces.
- Continue to populate alleyways and other opportunity areas with art.
- Request permission for installations at other sites like the DCR Pool, etc.
- Map out an art walk to tour public art in Melrose.
- Designate a Cultural District through the Mass Cultural Council.
- Add a stage or alternative area for outdoor performances.
- Give the art initiative a name and visual identity to include on labels and other promotional materials.
- Continue to engage with the committee and community stakeholders to build on this pilot initiative.
- Create outdoor seating, street narrowing, and other measures to support small businesses in the downtown and other commercial areas.



Melrose Makes: Celebrating Public Art in the City of Melrose

Saturday, November 7th from 11AM to 2PM
(Rain Date Sunday, November 8th)

Meet at the Ell Pond Park Gazebo on Main Street

Questions? Contact Emma Schnur Battaglia, Senior Planner,
Melrose Office of Planning & Community Development, at
eschnur@cityofmelrose.org or 781-979-4193.

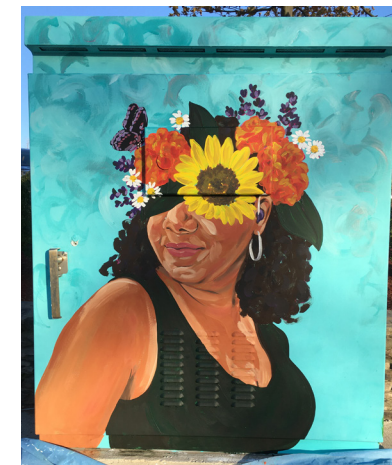


Mayor Paul Brodeur is thrilled to invite the community to a socially-distant celebration of public art in Melrose! Join us on Saturday, November 7th (rain date Sunday, November 8th) from 11AM to 2PM to meet artists, see works in progress and completed installations, and participate in fun activities along the way. We will start centrally with a welcome at the Ell Pond Park gazebo along Main Street and then attendees can branch off north and south to visit sites at their own pace.

- Mural, Melrose High School, Silvia López Chavez
- Painted Utility Box, Main @ Lynn Fells, Sheila Farren Billings
- Painted Utility Box, Main @ Porter, April Jakubec Duggal
- Walking Poetry Installation, Ell Pond, Adria Arch & Jessie Brown
- Dragon Sculpture, Ell Pond, John Pegoraro
- Painted Utility Box, Main @ Emerson, David Winkler
- Miniature Art Gallery, 647 Main Street, Catie Nasser
- Mural, Central Terrace Alleyway, Sagie Vangelina
- Painted Utility Box, Main @ Foster, David Winkler
- Painted Utility Box, Main @ Grove, April Jakubec Duggal

Note: Lisa Tiemann's Green Man Mosaic will be installed at Cedar Park at a later date

Melrose Makes is a collaboration between the City of Melrose and Follow Your Art Community Studios.
Visit www.fyamelrose.org/public-art to learn more about the artists and their public art projects.





SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

OVERVIEW

The City could benefit from updated signage and wayfinding. Despite the municipality's relatively small size of 4.8 square miles it is helpful to install signage for people to understand what is around and to bring a sense of identity to the City. Signage families were developed based off of the results from the background research and an audit of Melrose's road network. The goal was to design signage types that would easily incorporate into Melrose's current infrastructure.

An extensive audit of Melrose's current signage and wayfinding took place in March and April 2020. All of the city's major intersections and pass-throughs were diagrammed by SPD to find points of commonality, and then visited in person via car and on foot to record signage elements and determine needs. The goal of this preliminary study was to determine "decision points," or areas where first time visitors and residents need information to successfully navigate to their destination. In addition to visiting these "decision points," the team from SPD drove around Melrose to learn how visitors enter and exit Melrose from major access points.

The data collected was used to develop a map of major decisions points, which provided the basis for recommended locations for signage along with the quality and amount of existing signage. From there, a proposed signage family was presented to the City of Melrose that included all the possible sign types, such as large landmark signs, small directional signs, and more. SPD developed three different conceptual designs for the signage family to show the opportunities of a revitalized brand for the City of Melrose and how that can amplify a signage package's impact. These designs were presented to the Wayfinding & Creative Placemaking Committee and the community through an online survey.

AUDIT PHOTOS



AUDIT FINDINGS

The following section identifies the successes and opportunities for the City to improve wayfinding.

ENTERING MELROSE

Given the current technological advantages of GPS, getting to Melrose via car from the surrounding region poses no major challenge. Coming from the north or south on either Route 93 or Route 1, the associated exits are clearly marked as directing you to Melrose. Drivers must take mostly back roads to get to Melrose from the east or west, a result of the hub-and-spoke model that is designed to funnel traffic in and out of the City of Boston.

Most visitors will enter Melrose by car from Stoneham or Malden via the Fellsway, Main Street, Lebanon Street, and W.Wyoming Avenue. While landmark signs exist in some locations welcoming you to Melrose, other entries to the city are not clearly marked. This is a major opportunity for the city to identify its municipal boundaries as neighboring cities including Medford and Malden, have done. Signage directing visitors to some of the parking lots downtown are present but are not clearly visible from Main Street, which can become crowded with vehicles and be cumbersome for residents and visitors alike. After several on-site visits and collaboration with City officials, SPD's strategy to make parking lot access more visible became clear.

Should visitors arrive by public transit, depending on the method of arrival, things can become less clear due to a lack of directional signage. Melrose is home to three MBTA Commuter Rail stations—Wyoming Hill, Cedar Park, and Melrose Highlands—that exist on a longitudinal vector through the city. Most visitors looking to visit Downtown Melrose would be best served by Cedar Park Station. Still, no signage exists at any stations to direct them to downtown.

Visitors arriving via MBTA Rapid Transit system will arrive at the northern border of neighboring Malden. Oak Grove, the northern-most destination on the MBTA Orange Line lies just to the south of Melrose along Washington Street. Visitors would then either walk or take the bus (Routes 131 or 137) north to Melrose.

Visitors entering the city via car will likely have the easiest time. Signage could do more to direct all visitors to the downtown, and let visitors know when they have entered the city. Visitors arriving via public transit have no signage directing them to their destinations.

FINDING YOUR DESTINATION

Once visitors have entered the city, not much signage exists to direct them to their destinations. Major destinations like the high school and the hospital have signs, but beyond that visitors must rely on GPS.

As the Historic Downtown District is likely the primary destination of most visitors, the City of Melrose should do more to direct visitors into the heart of the city. Beyond the macro lens of directing visitors to downtown, including the method of transportation and travel times would increase the impact of implemented signage.

Visitors arriving via car need parking signage that directs them to the public lots by use of standardized iconography. Public transit visitors would be best served with directional signage pointing out major points of interest within walking distances.

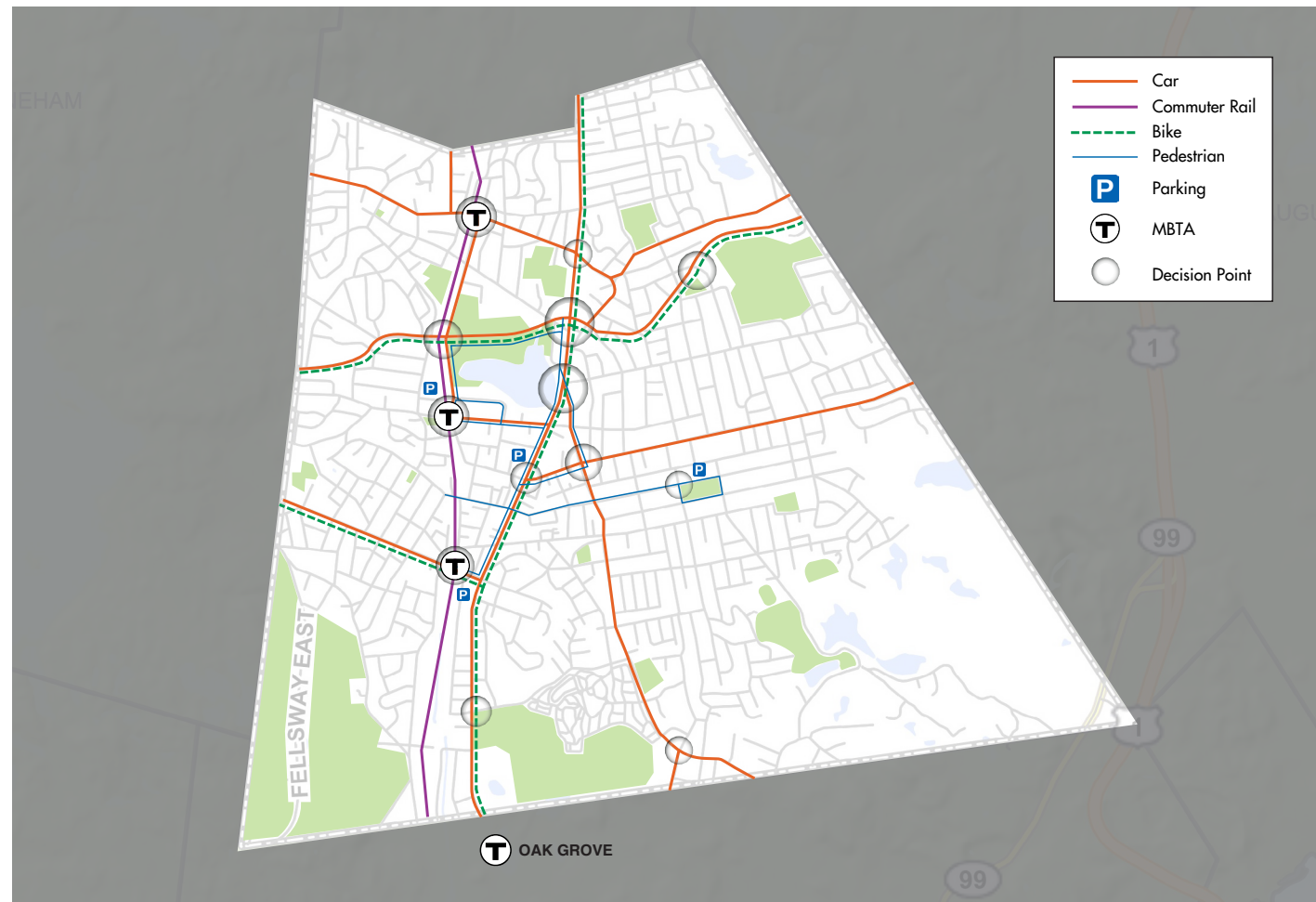
Major points of interest should have better directional signage. Current Parking signage is redundant in some cases, and major intersections have no clear indication of which direction leads to the center of town.

A WALKABLE CITY

One of the things that was instantly identifiable was the ability to traverse the city largely on foot. Melrose consists of roughly 4 square miles, and the Historic Downtown District sits almost squarely in the middle of the city. In addition to the downtown, Ell Pond and the adjacent veteran's memorial serve as landmarks to help visitors orient themselves. Despite being a smaller city, it can still be difficult to find your way relying solely on mental maps and landmarks definitely help.

Capitalizing on these landmarks to create a walking tour of central Melrose would undoubtedly help with navigation on foot. Local businesses benefit from the walkability of the city, and having well-signed parking amplifies this desirable trait if people are willing to park slightly farther away and walk to their destination.

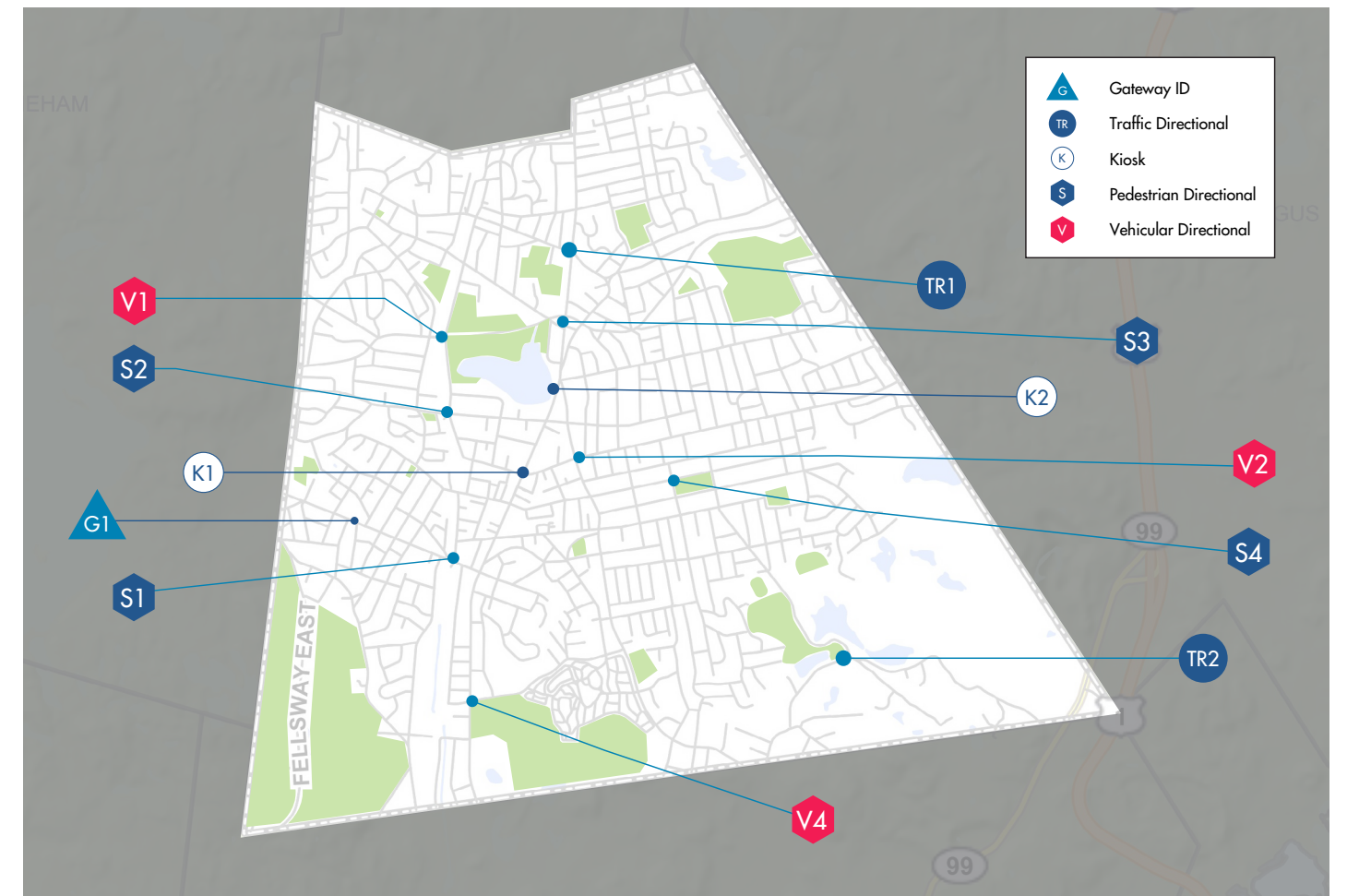
MAJOR DECISION POINTS/ PATHS OF TRAVEL



Travel paths for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles were overlaid onto the city map. Other relevant information, such as MBTA stations, Commuter Rail stations and public parking were layered into the map to help understand traffic flow.

Based on the audit and the layered information, the project team was able to identify major “decision points”. These locations are junctions where users need additional information to make an informed decision on their travel path to their destination.

SIGNAGE LOCATION PLAN



A sign location plan was drafted and underwent several revisions with the Wayfinding and Creative Placemaking Committee. Locations were reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and suggestions were made based on site specific details and objectives.

Considering all of the feedback received regarding wayfinding and signage, the Wayfinding and Creative Placemaking Committee met again with SPD to refine the wayfinding signage design, location and messages. They helped craft another online community survey which was released in July of 2022 to assess the community's opinion on the advanced design and priorities for the signs content.

WAYFINDING REFINEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was successful in reaching many people, as approximately 300 respondents participated. Half of the respondents had participated in the City's Creative Placemaking and Wayfinding efforts in some way over the past year. Of those that participated 32% gave the top score, 10 out of 10, for enjoyment of the program and 91% gave at least a 5 out of 10.

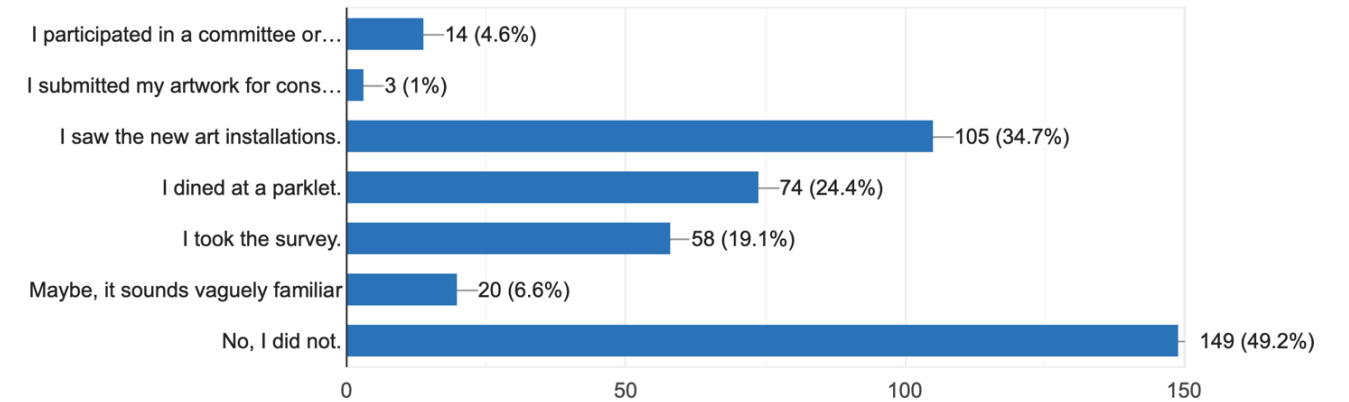
The multiple choice questions provided a winner for the "Victorian" style but only slightly, 42% versus 38%, over the "Arts and Crafts" style for the preferred signage style in Melrose. The "Art Deco" style came in last. The images were not labeled so that respondents would not be biased by them and would be responding solely to the images provided.

The "Victorian/Traditional" was the winner for the signage form question as well with 50% of respondents choosing it. The "Art Deco/Modern" form was second with 33% and the "Arts and Crafts" form was third with 17%.

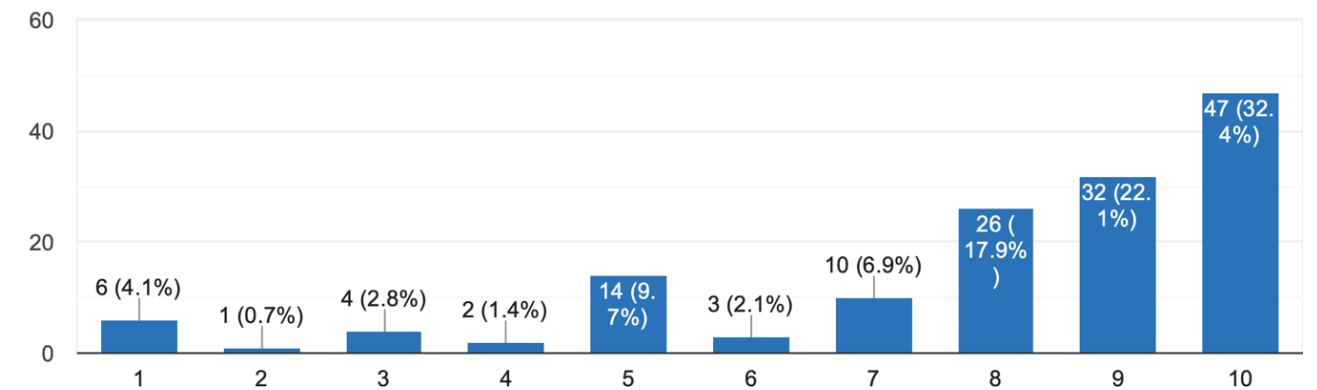
The question about which characteristics are most important for signage had similar response rates for knowing how far it is to walk; knowing where to park; and timeless/classic design. The creative/fun design option was less of a priority for respondents.

SURVEY RESULTS

• Did you participate in any of the Creative Placemaking and Wayfinding efforts over the past few years?

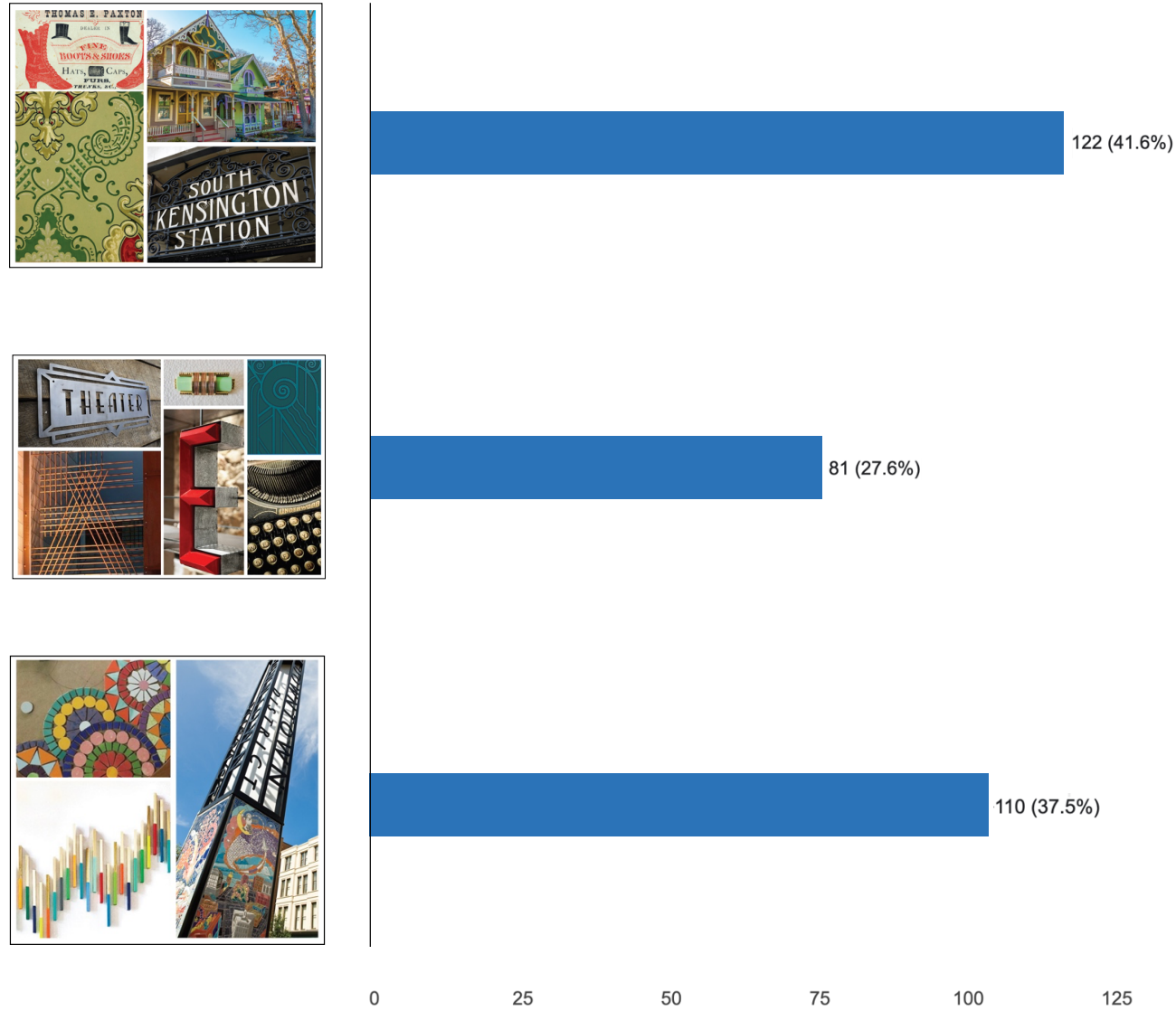


• If you participated in any of the Creative Placemaking efforts, how much did you enjoy the ones that have been installed so far?

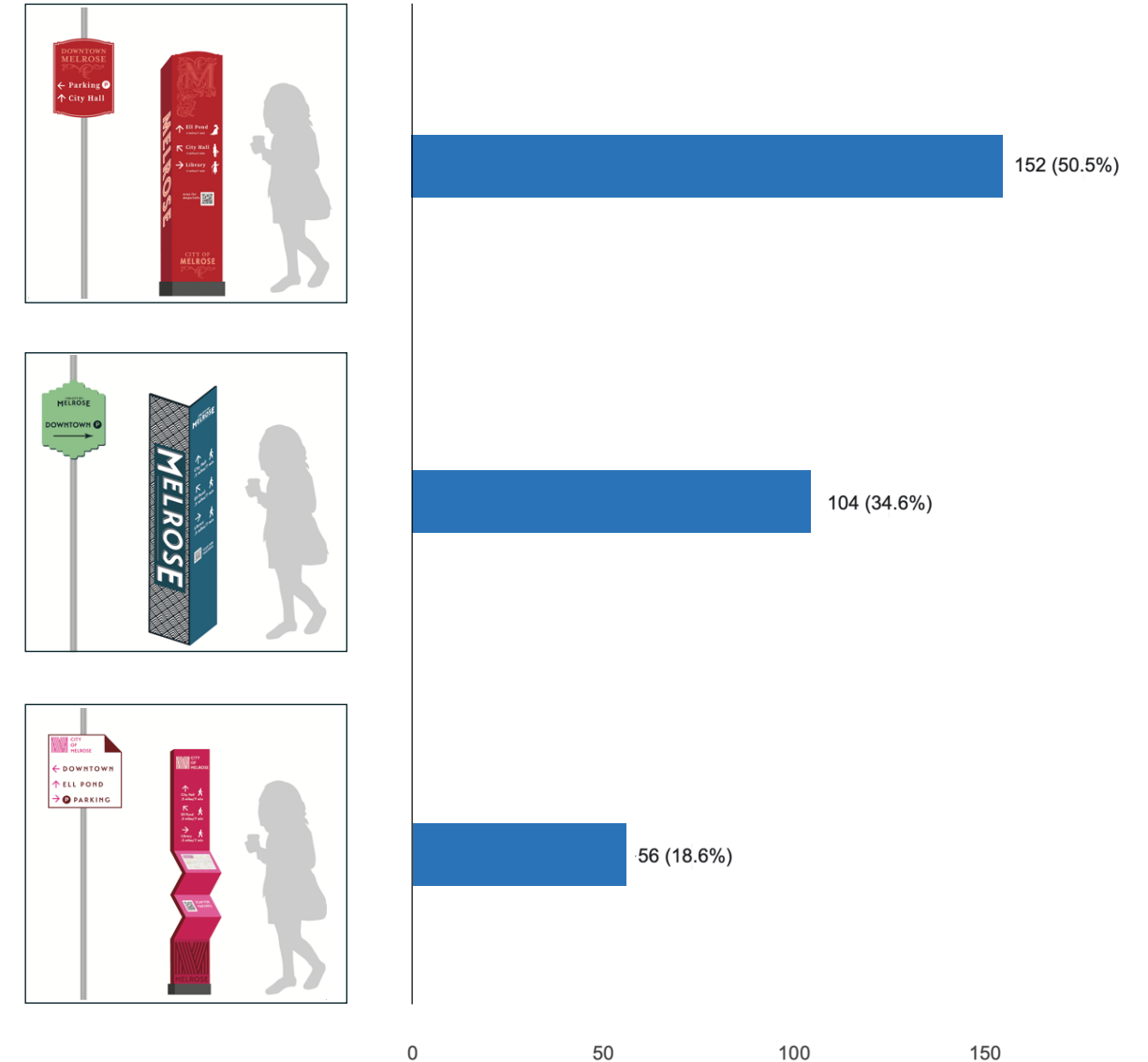


SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

• Which group of images best represents the style that you would prefer to see for signage in Melrose?



• Of these three concepts, which do you prefer if they were installed in Melrose?



• Which signage characteristics are most important to you?



There was an open-ended request for comments or suggestions for the wayfinding effort and the results are summarized here.

CONTENT

Several respondents requested that the City consider directing visitors and residents to open space and recreational areas, civic and cultural institutions, and businesses in other commercial nodes, in addition to those in the downtown district. It was also recommended that signs include directions to bike parking locations and transit stations, and provide walking and biking times, to encourage nonvehicular transportation. Others suggested adding historical narratives or dates of establishments for different buildings, and historical photographs and images of the City.

To ensure that the signs were functional for a diverse group of people, respondents suggested creating multilingual signs and signs that were accessible for a variety of people including those with visual disabilities. Others requested that the lettering be visible in the dark. Participants were supportive of adding a QR code to the kiosks as a way to connect with additional wayfinding information.

LOCATION

Participants shared that signs should be adequately spread across the City so that they do not overwhelm the existing streetscape and appear cluttered.

MAINTENANCE

Several concerns were raised about the durability of the signs. Respondents noted that the materials used should be able to withstand the elements and prevent the colors and letters from fading.

DESIGN

Participants had many different design ideas including wanting the signs to be catchy, simple, and clear. Similar to comments received during the placemaking survey, residents wanted a design that blends the old with the new and reflects the City's values. Some suggested creating consistent signage while others wanted certain neighborhoods and districts to have a unique brand. Overall, respondents agreed that the design should be timeless.

Once the survey closed, the responses were sorted and reviewed with the Committee. SPD took the directive to create a final signage design that was traditional/Victorian in having classic forms with straight lines and arches and the traditional Melrose's red color. Additionally, they were asked to add elements of the Arts and Craft style, which was a close runner-up, which resulted in including a floral pattern, three shades of red, and a more contemporary font.

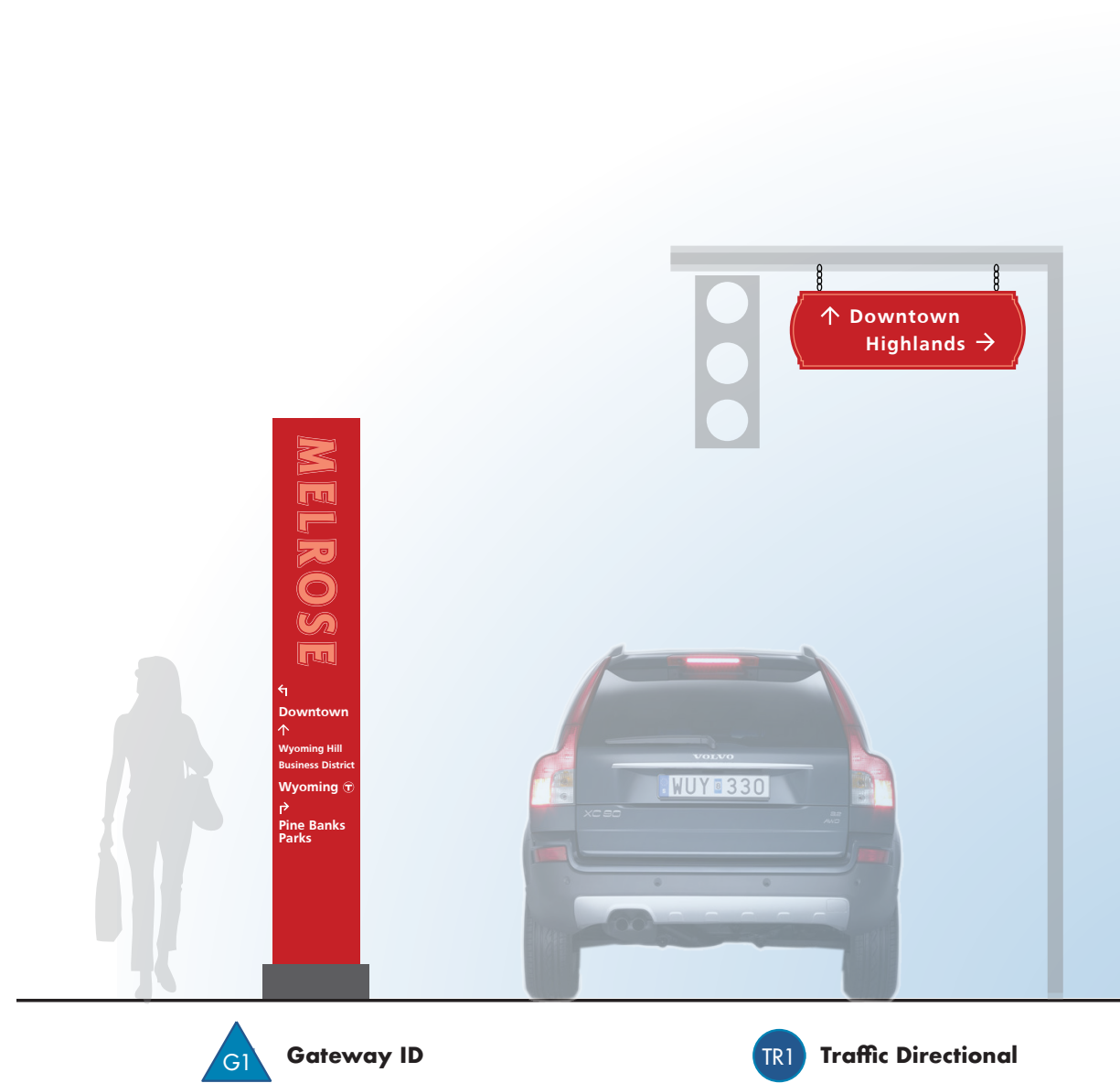
The Committee appreciated the look of the final design presented as it responded to the style requests. They discussed the different sign types, prioritized locations where signage will be installed, and finalized points of interest based on what they knew about the community and the feedback received.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Key recommendations for signage and wayfinding include:

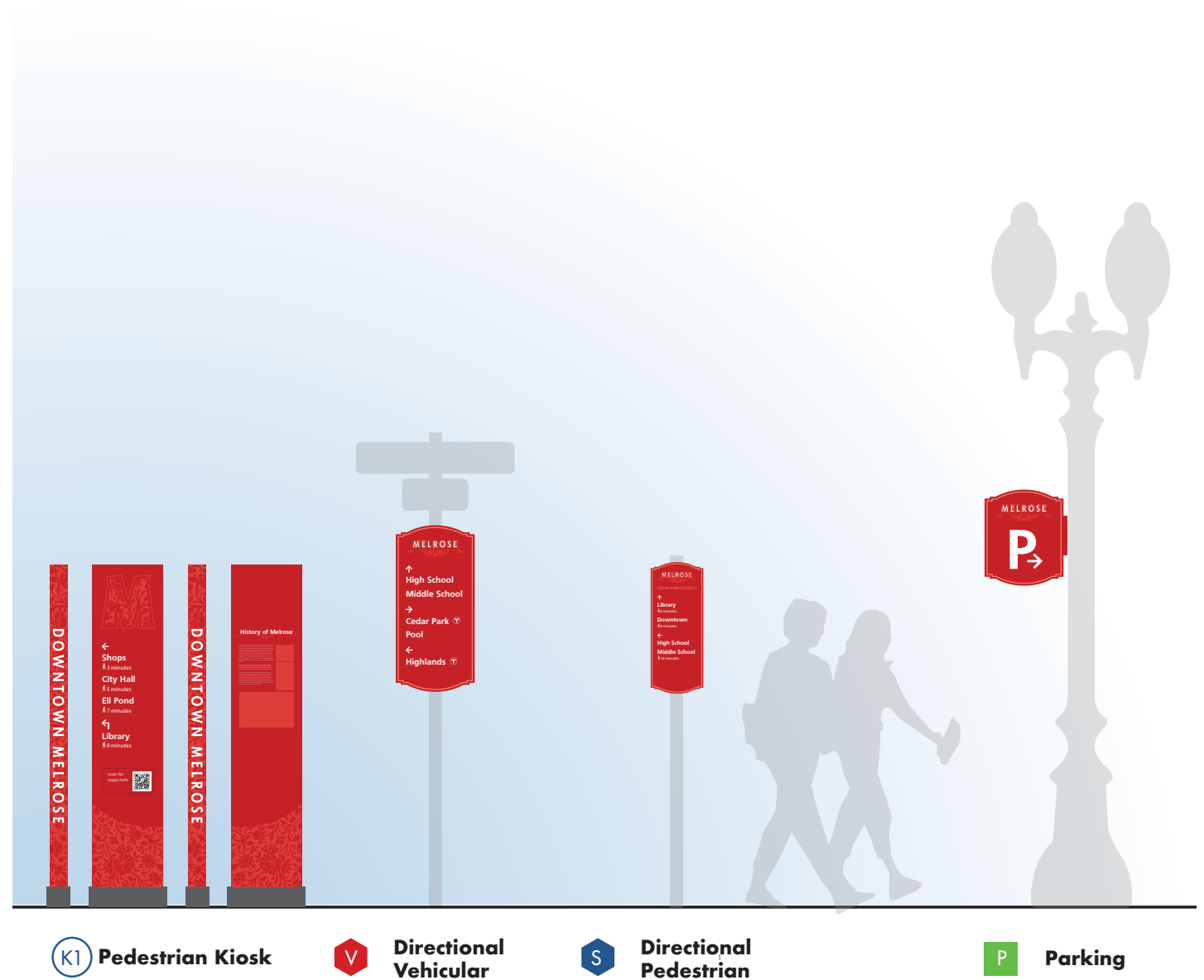
- Create and install signage in the preferred design in locations identified on the signage location plan to help residents and visitors find their way around the city and create gateways at city borders.
- Remove outdated signs and use existing posts (or replace in kind) so as to not add unnecessary visual clutter with the installation of new signs.
- The use of "flag-mounted" signs reduces the cost since one sign provides messages on both sides and the sign is more sleek in appearance.
- Direct visitors and residents to downtown, other business districts and points of interest identified.
- Prioritize signs for pedestrians over vehicles and include walking and bicycle distances on these signs to encourage these methods of transportation.
- Install signage downtown to direct drivers to the municipal parking lots with the chosen signage design.
- Install trail signage to help residents and visitors successfully use the trails in Melrose.
- Since the City Hall kiosk could use some cosmetic upgrades but is otherwise in good shape and well used, keep it and move/replace the veteran's billboard which is blocking it. Locate new kiosks in other locations.
- Provide historical information on kiosk designs in consultation with the Melrose Historical Commission.
- Develop a refreshed identity for the City of Melrose to support and reflect the city's diversifying population by updating the City's typography, color palette, and visual elements.

PROPOSED SIGNAGE FAMILY



G1 Gateway ID

TR1 Traffic Directional



K1 Pedestrian Kiosk

V Directional Vehicular

S Directional Pedestrian

P Parking

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & NEXT STEPS

SPD and City Staff revised the sign location plan, created a plan for downtown parking lot signs, finalized sign types, and identified quantities of signage needed to accomplish the recommendations in this report. SPD put these final details into a package of Design Intent drawings, which specify dimensions, materials, colors, installation notes, etc. Batten Bros. Signs & Awnings was chosen to fabricate all of the wayfinding signs contemplated in this document and used the Design Intent drawings to create their signage plans. The signs will be installed in the Fall of 2023.

The Design Intent drawings include colors, typography and logos that were defined for the signs through this initiative. These elements are useful to have documented so that the City can use this established identity/branding for visuals of all types moving forward in addition to having the specifications to fabricate and install future signages that match.

The initiative placed a significant emphasis on public engagement and benefited from the thoughtful input provided by the community. Many of the goals that emerged through this dynamic planning process were able to be accomplished quickly with the available funding. The accomplishments included:

- 8 public art installations.
- Community event that engaged participants in the public art installations.
- The Melrose Makes brand and logo for the City's public art initiative.
- 4 parklet installations with a MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grant in collaboration with the Melrose Pedestrian and Bicyclist Committee, Follow Your Art Community Studios and others on the design and installation.
- Central Terrace Alley transformation from vehicular passage to a pleasant spot where people can hangout.
- Sign installations: 1 Gateway ID, 2 Traffic Directional, 2 Kiosk, 4 Vehicular Directional, 4 Pedestrian Directional, and 8 Parking Signs.
- Collaborated with the Melrose Historical Commission to provide historical information to include on the kiosk signs located at Ell Pond and Milano Park.
- 12 new trash barrels installed in parks and playgrounds that allow for art to be installed with a sustainability theme in the future.
- Establishment of branding elements of colors, typography and logos for the City.
- A wayfinding webpage called Explore Melrose – accessed through QR codes on the kiosk signs and the City's website – which provides past and present information about the City, and options for how to get around, what to visit and where to shop.

The wayfinding work which has been documented in this report will function as a framework for additional signage that could be fabricated in the future after the first group of signs are installed and their effectiveness is evaluated. Additionally, there is always room for more public art and placemaking and a strong desire from the community for these initiatives. The Call for Art was hugely successful and could be replicated with the Melrose Makes event as well. The City will look to install additional wayfinding and placemaking elements and look to this document as a guide for where and what to incorporate into new opportunities.



**Selbert
Perkins
Design.**

