

**FAVERMANN
DESIGN**



CITY OF EASTHAMPTON
COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT
FINAL REPORT 2020-2021

Prepared by Favermann Design

Prepared for the Department of Housing
and Community Development (DHCD)

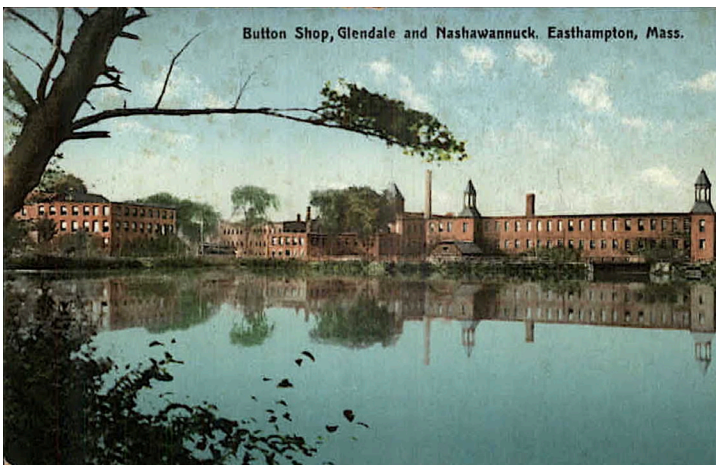




1856 Easthampton Map

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Located on the southeastern edge of the Pioneer Valley, the small city of Easthampton, Massachusetts is a vital community that has transformed itself from a decaying mill town into a creative economy. Over the last centuries, Easthampton has evolved from a rural farming village to a flourishing mill town and now to a vibrant and diverse community with a wealth of artists, retail shops, award-winning restaurants and numerous recreational opportunities.



In its industrial zenith, Easthampton was a booming mill town with a manufacturing industry that produced a range of textile products from buttons and felt to cosmetics and cleaning supplies. By the mid-20th Century, the working mills slowed down and closed. Manufacturing jobs had been abandoning the area for decades. For several years, the town had no clear direction.

Instead of being stymied by the lack of traditional mill manufacturing activity, by the 1970s, Easthampton's politicians, city administration, businesses and residents began to envision the old



Old Town Hall

mills as community assets rather than as blighted remnants of a once vibrant past. The shift away from industry brought opportunity. However, it took several years to achieve tangible results.

The One Cottage Street Mill was built in 1859 to produce twine. In 1976, that mill space became home to artists and artisans, thus lighting a spark for creativity. Where empty storefronts and a few bars accompanied an adult movie theatre on an otherwise quiet street had once existed, Easthampton began to revitalize itself from a decaying locality into a blooming locale.



Eastworks Mill

In the 1990s, a lot of thought went into shaping the future of the city. Former Mayor Tautznik credits Will Bundy's 1997 purchase of the Stanley Home Products Mill as Easthampton's "first big success story." Renaming the former mill Eastworks, Bundy began converting the structure into a mixed-use space with work, loft and retail spaces. Other significant mill renovations and restorations have followed.

As part of the thoughtful civic turnaround, reinforcing and promoting the city's economic growth and supporting local artists, Easthampton's was the 16th cultural district in the Commonwealth recognized by the Mass Cultural Council. This "marriage" of culture and business in a distinct area of the city incorporating downtown underscored the city's strong commitment as a city to the arts in particular, and to culture in general. The creative economy became fact in Easthampton, not just words.





A revitalized Downtown Easthampton was due in part to an upgraded waterfront connection

The new Boardwalk, surrounding the Nashawannuck Pond in the center of the city, serves as a gathering place for many and affords residents and visitors with an array of opportunities for leisure activity. A six mile-long bike path runs from the Southampton border all the way to the OxBow section of the Connecticut River, providing opportunities for many different segments of the population to enjoy variety of outdoor activities including a leisurely walk, a fast-paced run, roller blading and bicycling.

Unveiled in 2015, it was made possible by \$645,000 funding from the Community Preservation Act and a PARC grant. An idea spearheaded by former Mayor Tautznik, the Boardwalk, with its comfortable benches and appealing flowerbeds overlooking the water, further enriches the appeal of the downtown area. It replacing an unsightly iron fence that separated the mills' source of power from the residents. Since this transformation, there has been a significant hike in residential and visitor foot traffic between nearby businesses and the short distance down the street to enjoy the views on the boardwalk.

Galleries and art supply shops have proliferated along with eateries and cafes. Cottage Street has become a favorite destination for many area residents. According to Mayor Nicole LaChapelle, "While the cultural district has developed as a tourist attraction, this designation also allows for the city to receive grants from the Mass Cultural Council, to fund local events like the Art Walk and Cultural Chaos."

Beginning in 1664, Easthampton was first settled by European immigrants it was incorporated as a town in 1809. The town grew up around the Manhan River both through its agricultural beginnings and later, using its water power when mills and factories were first built in Easthampton. Textile manufacturing was the product focus of the community in the 19th Century. The first of the textile mills, the Williston-Knight Button Company, was established in 1847 by Samuel Williston. The company specialized in cloth-covered buttons. Other textile product mills soon opened nearby.

Easthampton's first public high school and its first national bank opened in 1864, and a town hall was built in 1869. The same year that Easthampton became a regular stop on the railroad 1871, constables were replaced by the town's first police officer. The town's public library opened in 1881, and in 1895 the community was introduced to two new innovations, telephones and streetcars. In 1899, the West Boylston Manufacturing Company and the Hampton Company, both specializing in cloth production, moved to Easthampton, recruiting a larger immigrant labor force, particularly from Poland and Canada.

During the First world War, the town's mills all obtained federal wartime contracts and did well financially. But after the war, during the 1920s, many factories owners were already laying off employees, seeking mergers with other companies, or looking for buyers for their facilities. One of the few successes during this time was The American Character Doll Company, also known as Paragon Rubber. Its cofounder, Edward Schaeffer, was credited with inventing the first rubber doll mass-marketed in the United States.

The Second World War provided some financial relief for the Easthampton economy, as several of the older textile companies as well as newer heavy manufacturing corporations received another round of federal contracts. However, beginning in the early 1960s a number of critical closures hit the town very hard. Revitalization attempts began with the opening of a new industrial park and continued with a joint government-private industrial mall which failed to solve significantly higher rates of unemployment and poverty compared to the rest of Hampshire County.



Marigold Theater on Cottage Street

A number of small farms and well-established small businesses have remained a significant part of the economic core of Easthampton. Easthampton changed its charter in 1996 to become a city. And the downtown area since 1996 has attracted a small community of artists, professors and young professionals migrating due to Easthampton's lower cost of living compared to nearby Northampton and Amherst. Small stores around Main Street, Union Street, and Cottage Street have begun to prosper due to the influx of this new residents. Reinforcement of this growth has produced new arts and cultural events including the monthly Art Walk Easthampton, held each "Second Saturday." Here visual, music and performance artists showcase their talents at venues around the city. In November 2018, the Baker Administration announced a \$3.5 million grant through the MassWorks program to the Ferry Street Mill redevelopment project in the city. Thus, adding to the continuing vibrancy of the city in the future.

As a destination, Easthampton has a number of points of interest. These include nearby Mount Tom State Reservation that extends into the eastern part the city. Many local residents and visitors hike up to enjoy the view of the Pioneer Valley from the rock ledges. Characterized by its high cliffs, sweeping vistas, and microclimate ecosystems, Mount Tom is a very visible and beloved regional natural resource. The 110-mile Metacomb-Monadnock Trail traverses the mountain.



Mount Tom can be seen from a distance

The Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, is split between Easthampton and neighboring Northampton. Recently, the Manhan Rail Trail bicycle path was built over an old railroad line, and there are plans to connect the path to others in the area. Near the rail trail and wildlife sanctuary are three conservation areas owned by the local non-profit land trust Pascommuck Conservation Trust and part of the trust's 200 acres of holdings in Easthampton.



Easthampton Mural



Sculptured bike racks are part of city improvements in Easthampton

In and around downtown Easthampton, other attractions include:

- The Cottage Street Cultural District as designated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2013.
- The Emily Williston Memorial Library was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. It provides a collection of over 45,000 books, movies, and other media for Easthampton and the surrounding towns.
- One Cottage Street, an old factory building, renovated in the late 1970s to make workshops and studios for artists and craftspeople Eastworks, the old Stanley Home Products factory building, recently converted into artists' studios, offices, and restaurant space
- Old Town Hall, an historic town hall built in 1869, located in the main Street Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987, and is a city-owned building managed by the nonprofit CitySpace, Inc. as a space for the performing arts.
- The historic old fire station, transformed into a workshop by local furniture maker Silas Kopf.
- Additionally, Easthampton City Arts (ECA) is a city organization that creates positive, innovative and accessible arts programming and cultural events to generate increased opportunities for artists and the local economy.
- Public art occupies a special place in the Easthampton community by enhancing our surroundings, weaving creativity and culture into the fabric of the City. Successful public art invites the viewer to participate actively in their own experience of time and space.



Including a number of others, several events are held in Easthampton. every summer, MillPond Live brings a festival series designed to unite people from all walks of life in Easthampton's Millside Park, with local and international music, food, art, and community. Every second Saturday of every month, Easthampton City Arts+ organizes an Art Walk throughout the city. This event is free and family-friendly. In June 2014, Cultural Chaos, a street festival celebrating the Cottage Street Cultural District, was held. Thousands of people attended and has become, except for during Covid-19 shutdown, an annual event ever since.

During Covid, the city administration has awarded small grants of up to \$1,500 to help small businesses. Easthampton took the lead in a program that provided businesses with loans of up to \$10,000. State and federal grants have also helped some businesses to stay afloat.

In recent years, there has been a real proliferation of new and enhanced restaurants, bars and eateries in Easthampton. "With the multitude of food and beverage options popping up throughout the city in combination with the variety of arts and cultural venues, there is an ability for people to come back to Easthampton and do something different each time is really a driver," said Easthampton's City Planner Jeffery Bagg.

Even with this delicious stew of dining and entertainment, the administration of the City of Easthampton, local merchants and cultural organizations realized that it had to fill a yawning gap. This gap was the utter lack of ease of orientation for visitors and new residents. Therefore, the city applied to and was awarded by the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Program an MDI assistance grant for Branding and Wayfinding consultation.



*photo of Downtown Easthampton
by Sven Kielhorn*

BRANDING AND WAYFINDING PROCESS

As Easthampton is a very special place, the working process was very different from other previous city and towns' branding and wayfinding design, planning and development processes. The graphic designation of parts of the city had been developing previously over many months. During that prior process, a preliminary map had been created. Therefore, there was a need for the consultants to work with existing designs and attempt to integrate them into the overall branding and wayfinding process. This caveat was not optional to Easthampton; it was to be an integral part of the design and planning effort. Additionally, this earlier design effort was not all together completed as logos and imaging were still in the design and approval stages for various cultural organizations and city agencies.

Not only were the earlier and ongoing created icons needed to be integrated into the project, but earlier color choices needed to be used as well. To create consistency, these colors were to be applied to the branding and wayfinding designs. Concern was expressed throughout the preliminary conversations that visitors from out of state needed clear point to point directions, and that needed to be part of the finished product as well.

In order to begin the design and planning process, an advisory committee was appointed by the city to work with the consultants Favermann Design. The members of the City of Easthampton's Branding and Wayfinding Advisory Committee included the following individuals:

ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Jeff Bagg - City Planner

Pasqualina Azzerello - Easthampton City Arts Coordinator

Denise Riggs - Easthampton Public Art Committee member

Beverly Wodicka - Easthampton Historical Commission

Homar Gomez - City Councilor

Owen Zaret - City Councilor

Sam Dibble - Business owner



Due to Covid-19, all meetings were held online. These Zoom calls allowed the most individuals to participate in the creative discourse. The first meeting was an overview of community branding approaches. This was followed up with a presentation by the consultant of case studies of other cities and towns who had developed their own branding and wayfinding systems with Favermann Design.

The third meeting, October 19, 2020, was a focused workshop that developed image ideas through word and phrase descriptions. This was called an Ideation Exercise. Before the word association exercise, the consultants showed relevant image slides of local sites and related community aspects of the City of Easthampton. Though not necessarily used by all communities, some of the longer phrases suggested in the ideation process were considered by the advisors as potential branding taglines or slogans. This tagline consideration was not pursued by the Easthampton Advisory Committee.

From this exercise, the consultants then created a series of design options which they shared at the following meeting in March 2021. Earlier in the process, it was recommended that the consultants explore as a design motif the iconic “bottle image” of Mount Tom created by Mount Tom seen reflected in the Nashawannuck Pond in Easthampton. These included a series of color studies of a very minimalist line drawing of the shape of Mount Tom’s ridge, a more solid version of a silhouette image of Mount Tom, and a series of color studies of a reflected image of Mount Tom called “the Bottle.” This bottle image has previously been extensively used in old photographs, historic illustrations and vintage post cards of Mount Tom and is a beloved image of the Easthampton

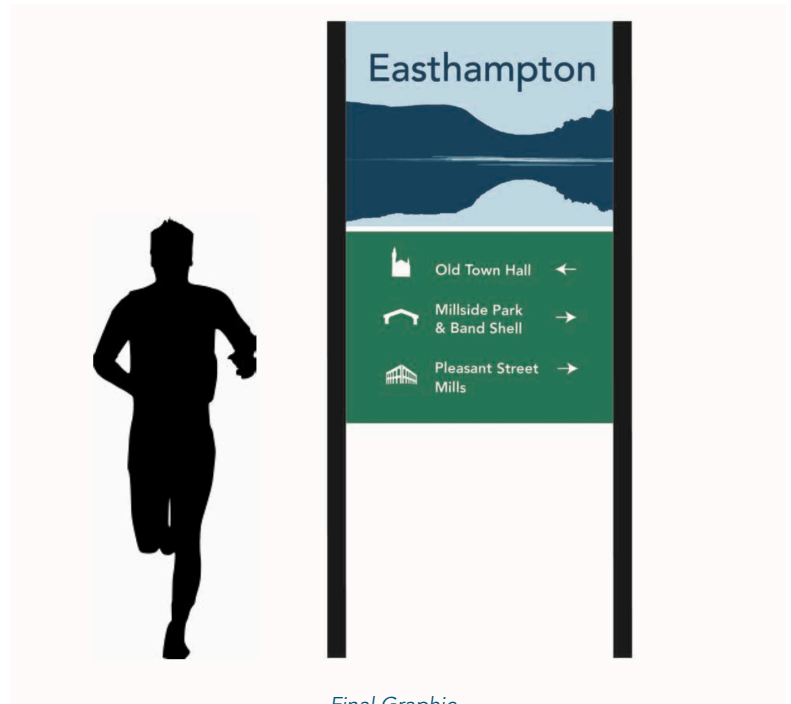


community.

Either by email circulation or at a formal zoom meeting in April 2021, based on committee comments, a series of refined images were presented to the city staff and Advisory Committee during the following weeks and months. A number of design options were presented to the committee that illustrated directional signs. Also, it was determined that one of the elements in the Family of Elements would be a larger format display marker that would include historic descriptive information and directional maps. Trail signs of various sizes were also part of the Family of Elements.

In short progression, the Advisory Committee seemed to all embrace the Mount Tom “Bottle” image and its roll out. After a clear design choice was made by the advisory committee, the city administration wanted to gain expanded insight into the efficacy of the utilization of the design choice by the Advisory Committee. So additional community stakeholders were invited to a meeting to review and discuss the design. On July 15, 2021 the expanded stakeholder meeting was attended by the following individuals:

- Arts Coordinator** – Pasqualina Azzarello
- City Space** – Carolyn Smith
- Easthampton Cultural Council (Chair)** – Rachel P
- School Committee** – Shannon Dunham
- Planning Board** – James Zarvis
- Public Art Committee** – Denise Riggs (Chair)
- ECA** – Tracey Eller (Chair)
- City Council** – Owen Zaret & Homar Gomez
- Chamber of Commerce** – Moe Belliveau
- EDIC** – Josh Rosenblatt
- Commission on Disability** – Angelique Baker (Chair)



Final Graphic

A presentation was made by the consultants. This larger group also showed deep appreciation of the “Bottle” image and color choices. As several individuals on both the Advisory Committee and the Stakeholder group were members of the City Council, the eventual official approval of the design was evident. Easthampton’s City Planner Jeffery Bagg sees this project being followed up by a second phase that will lead to an implementation program. Prior to this, there will take place strategic design of actual final sign messaging and element placement. Once completed, the City Council will approve all all aspects of the branding and wayfinding program.

See meeting video:

[Easthampton Wayfinding Stakeholder Meeting 7/15/2021 - YouTube](#)

EASTHAMPTON

FAMILY OF ELEMENTS

