

Fairfax County, VA

Seven Corners & Bailey's Crossroads Gateways - Community Workshop

June 26, 2025

ashton

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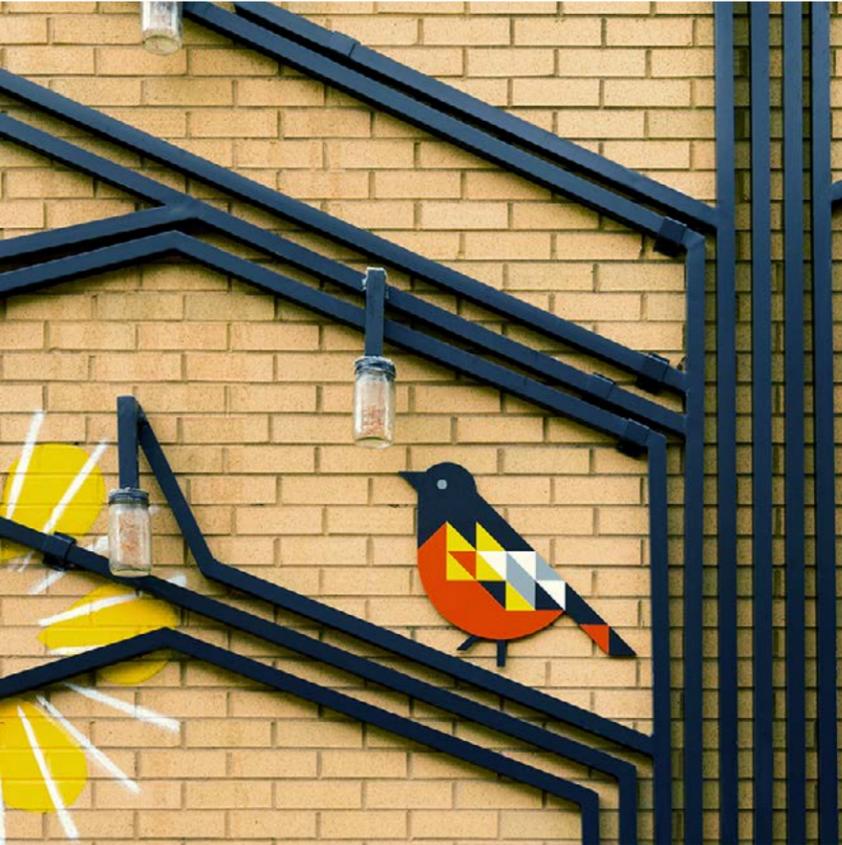
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For over 40 years, Ashton Design has partnered with organizations of every size to build enduring brands, design integrated signage systems, and deliver experiences that connect people to place.

We are most successful when the process is collaborative. We rely on stakeholders' insights combined with our own extensive, immersive research in order to bring a project to life.

ABOUT ASHTON



Project Overview

Introduction

This workshop is a key step in the design process for new signage that will reflect and celebrate the unique identities of Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners. Community input gathered here, in addition to feedback gathered so far will help guide the design direction and ensure the final signage is both meaningful and representative of local character and pride.

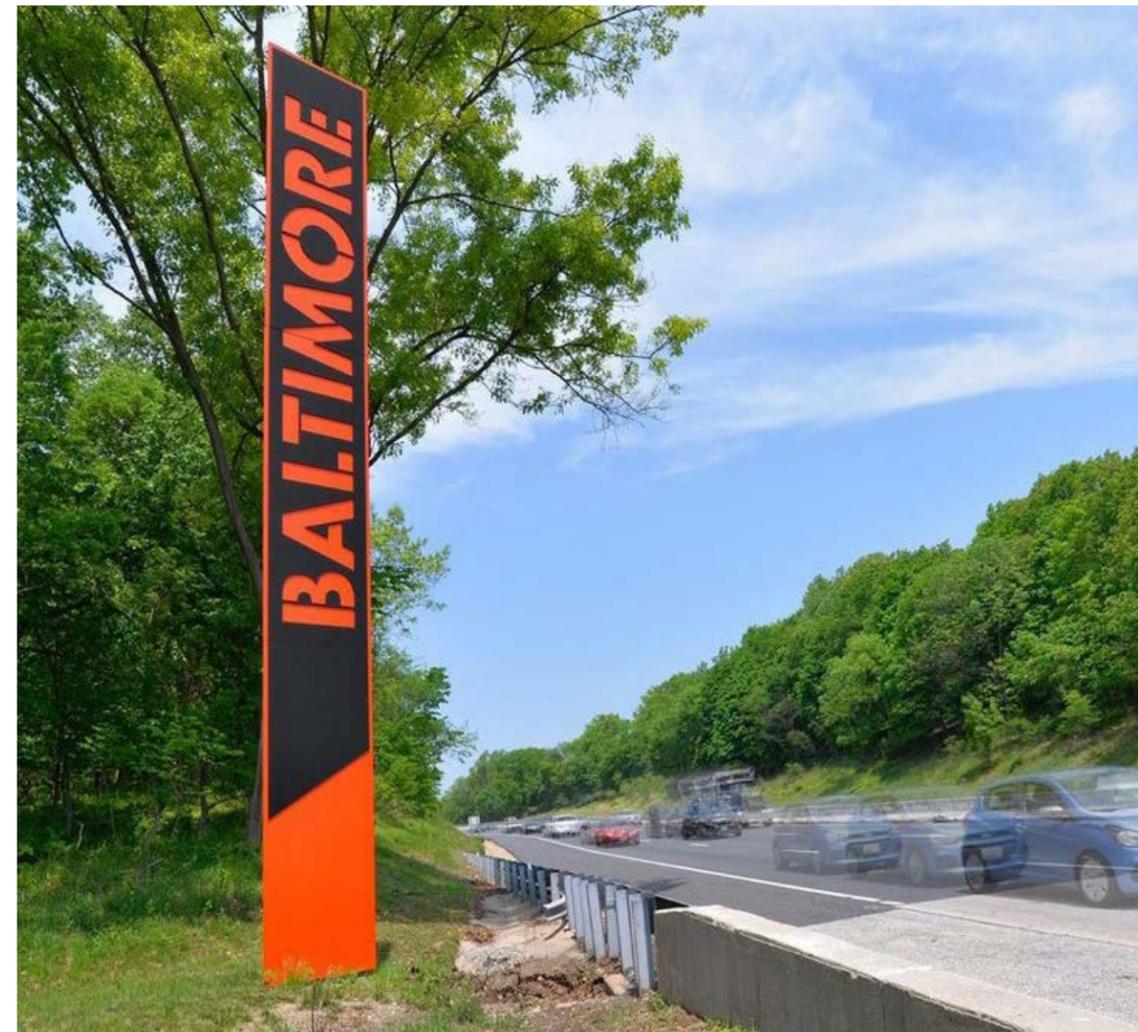
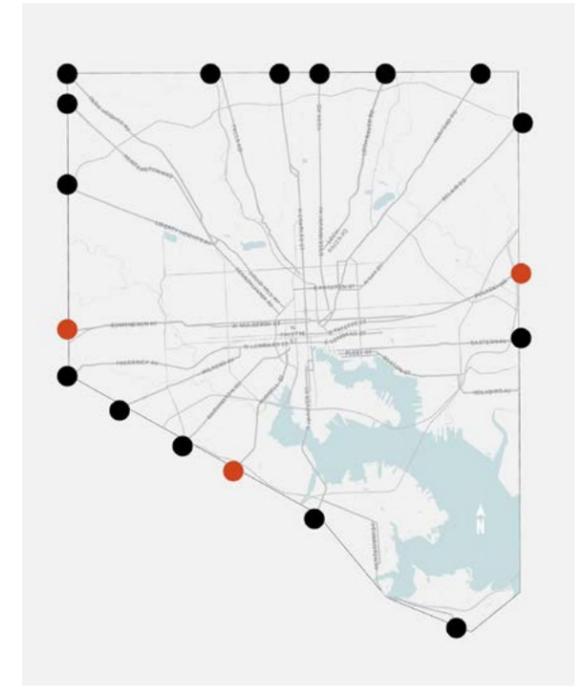
As part of this session, you will review precedent imagery to help identify visual preferences, styles, and themes that will inform the eventual design concepts.

Scope

This project involves the design and implementation of gateway signage, bridge signage, and light pole banners for Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners in Fairfax County. It includes four phases: planning and site analysis, community-informed conceptual design and refinement, final design documentation, and bidding support. The process is rooted in community engagement and site-specific research to ensure the signage enhances district identity and complies with regulatory requirements.

Our Experience

Baltimore City Gateways



Our Experience

Merriweather District



Sign Types

Gateway Signage

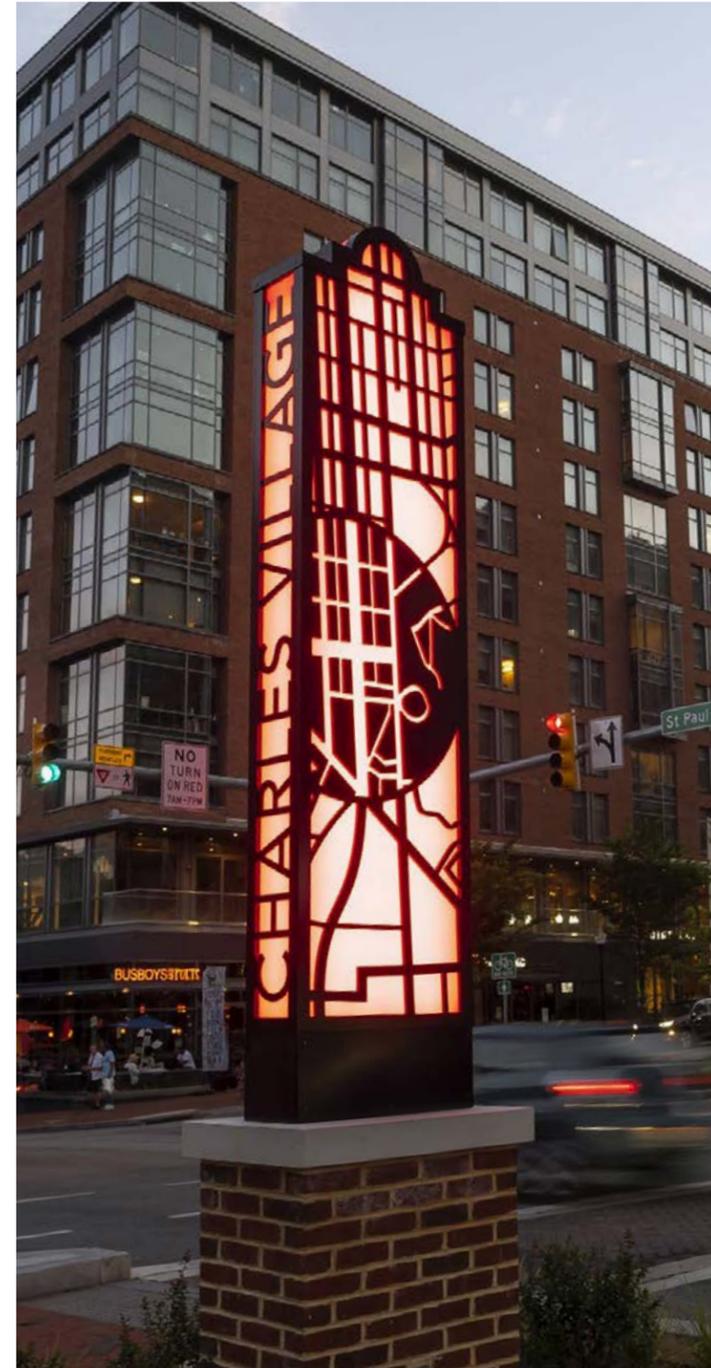
Gateway signage can be...
Identifying



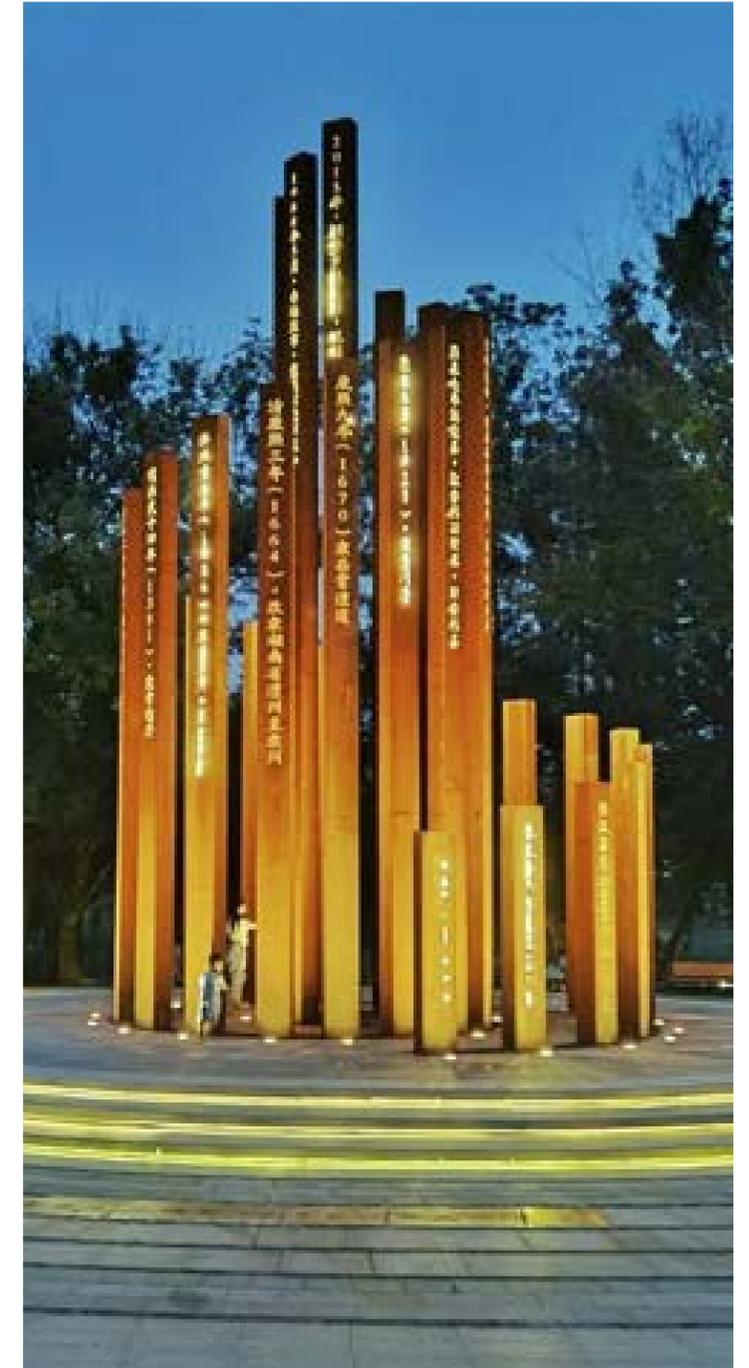
Artistic



Interpretive



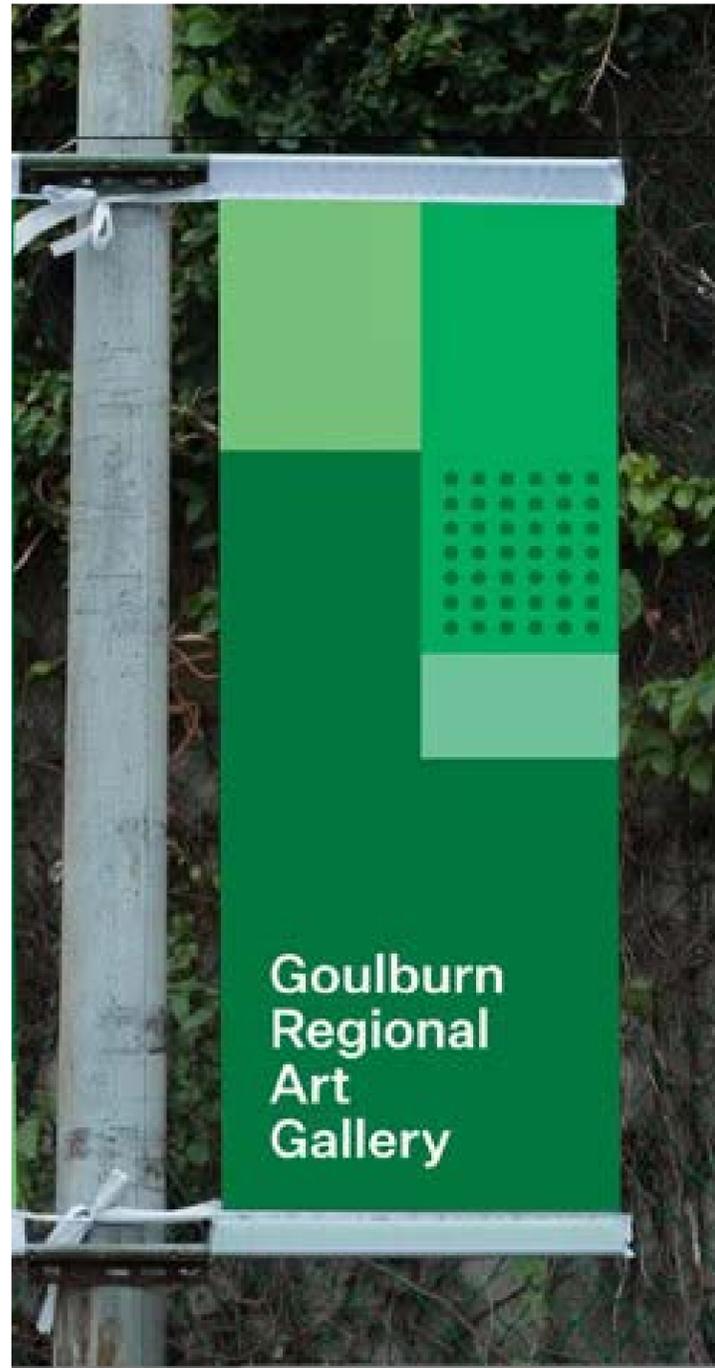
Landmarks



District Banners

Banners can communicate...

Name



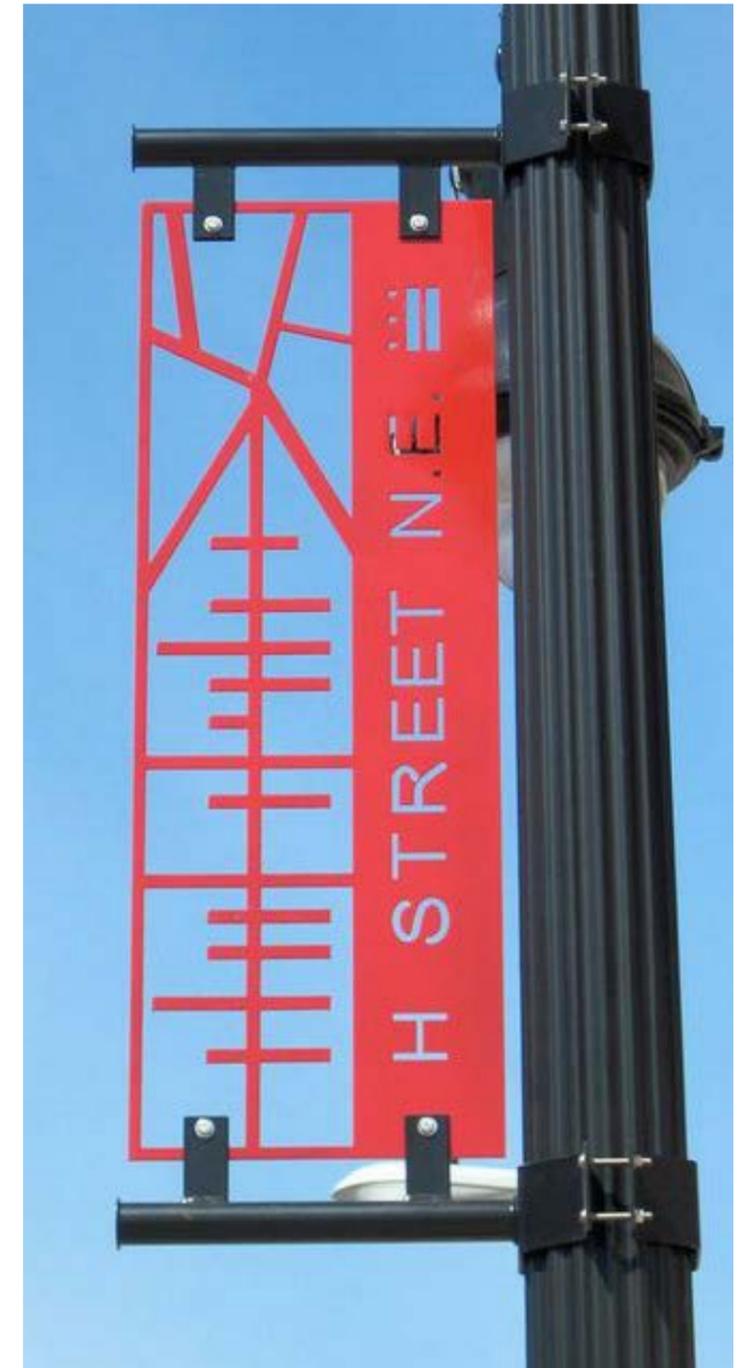
Story



Wayfinding

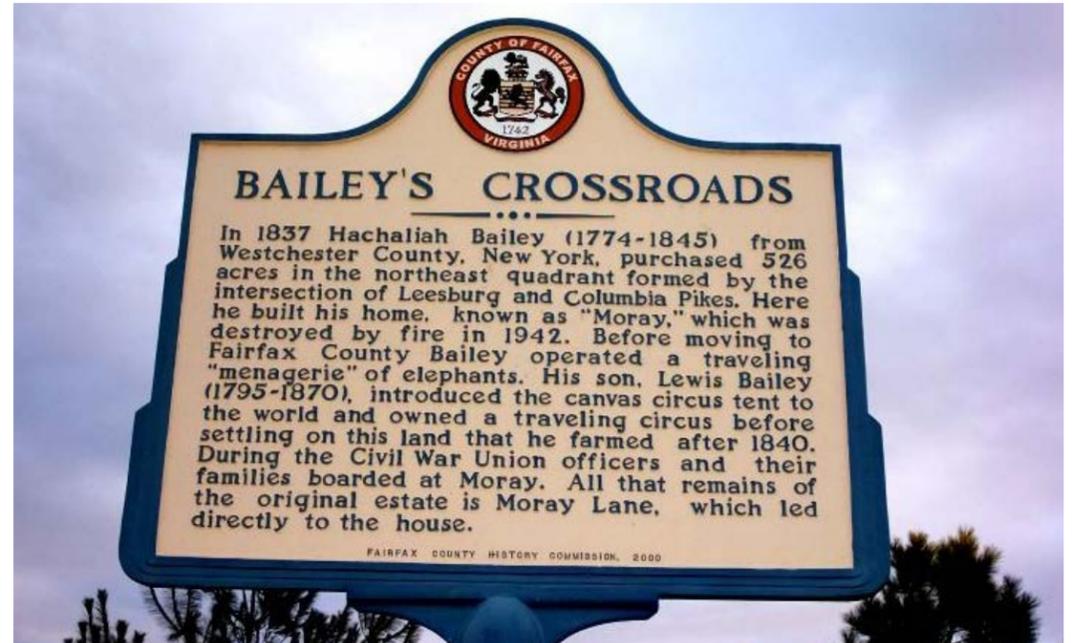


Location & Permanence



Existing Signage

Bailey's Crossroads



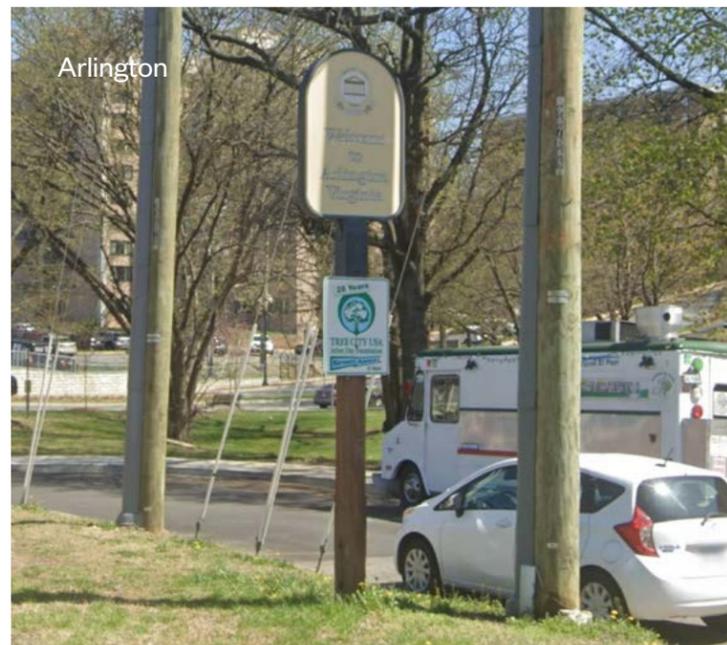
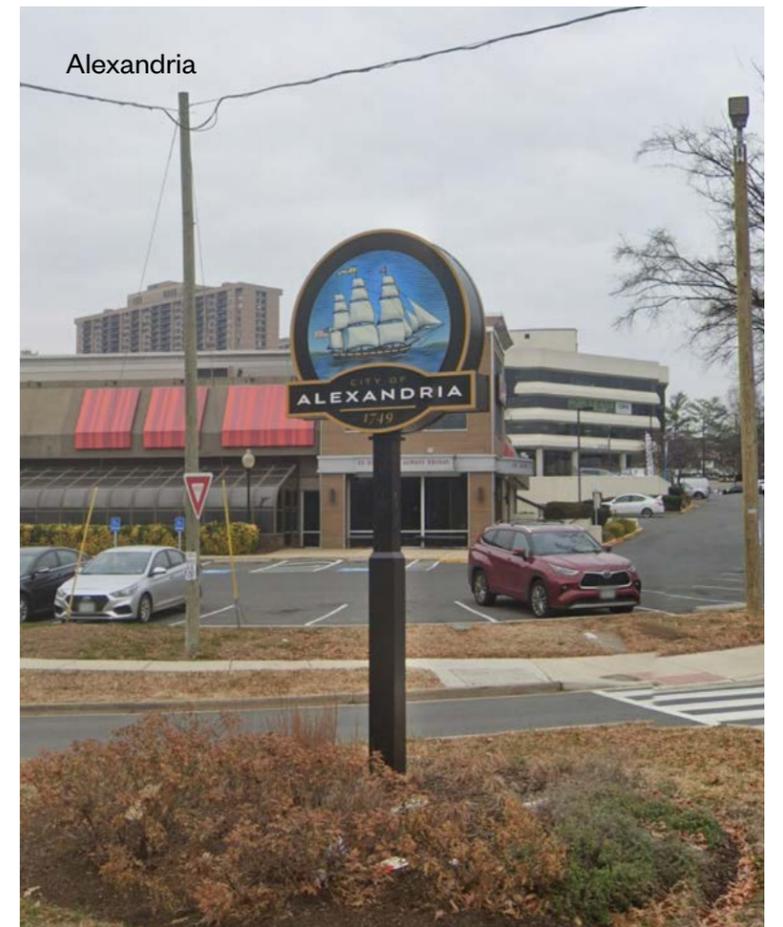
Existing & Former Signage

Seven Corners



Existing Signage

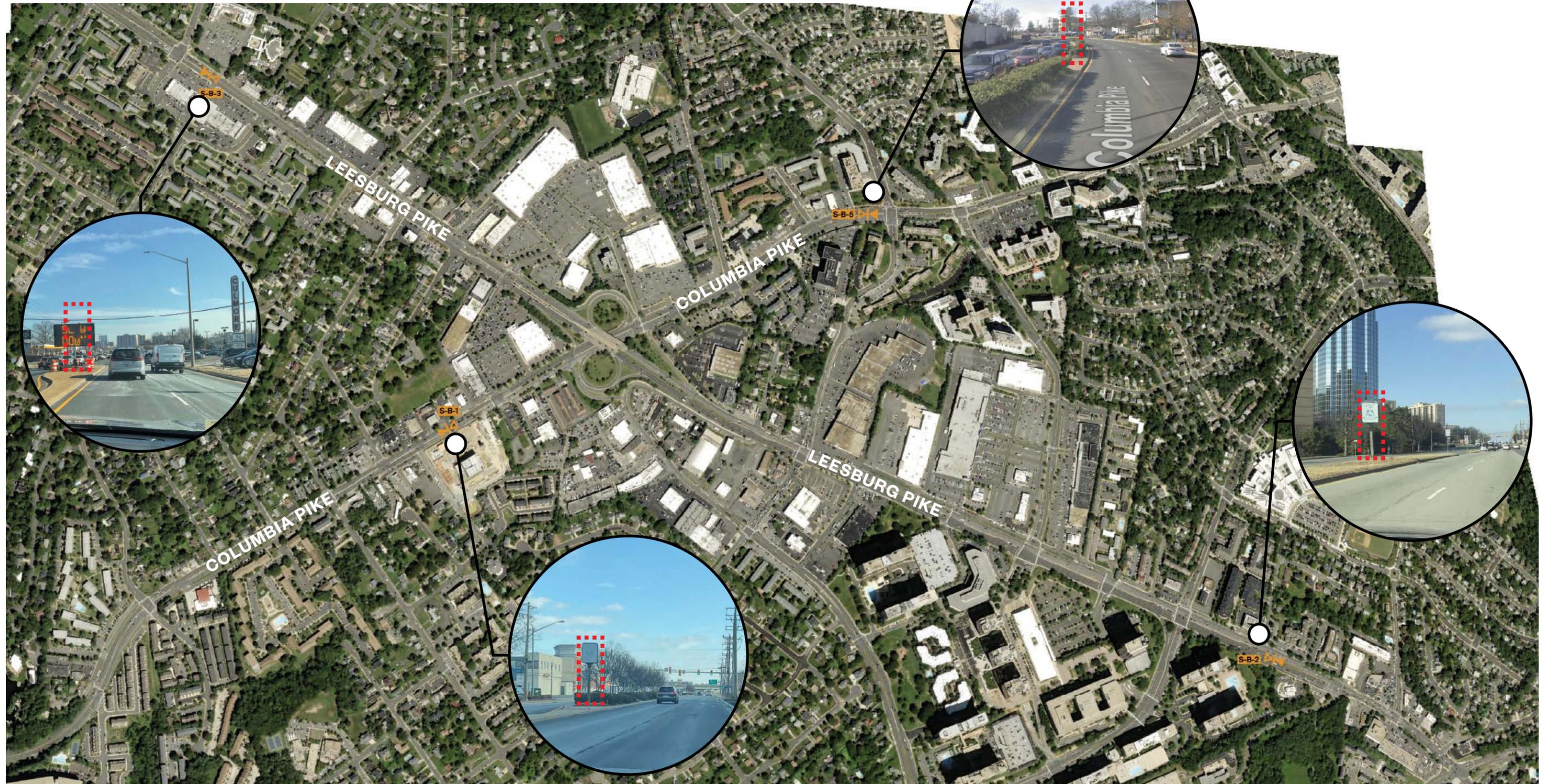
Neighboring Communities



Research & Findings

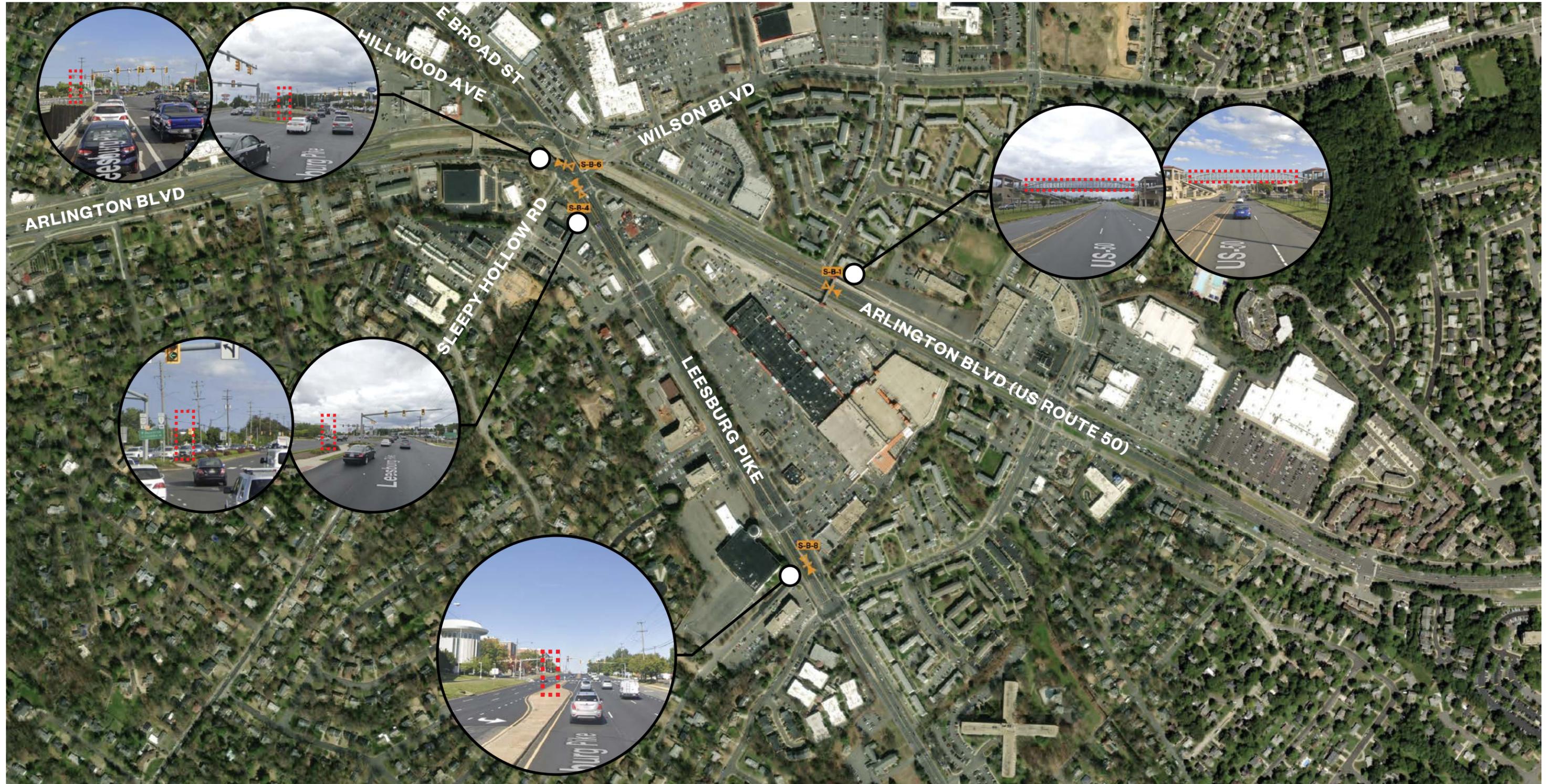
Proposed Sign Locations

Bailey's Crossroads



1 BAILEY'S CROSSROADS SIGN LOCATIONS: PROPOSED
NOT TO SCALE

Seven Corners



1 SEVEN CORNERS SIGN LOCATIONS: PROPOSED
NOT TO SCALE

Community Survey Results

What questions were asked?

1. In your own words, what defines [Seven Corners/Bailey's Crossroads] and makes it a special space?
2. What makes you most proud to be part of this community?
3. Select three (3) defining characteristics from the list below that best represent [Seven Corners/Bailey's Crossroads]:
Diverse, Historic, Cultural Hub, Commercial, Eclectic, Other, Natural, Exciting
4. Are there local stories, figures, or events that should be reflected in the gateway sign design? If so, please share.
5. If the gateway sign design had a short phrase, motto, or theme, what would it say?
6. What impression or feeling should the signs create?
7. What imagery or symbols best represent the community, if any?
8. Gateway signage designs will be developed for both communities. Should the gateway signs have:
A. Separate/distinct designs, but with unifying components, such as colors, fonts, size, shape, type, etc. B. Separate/distinct designs
C. The same design
9. Are there any other comments or suggestions that you would like to share regarding the gateway sign design?

Who responded?

33

Total participants for each survey.

413

Total comments.

Where were respondents from?

Annandale, Arlington, Bailey's Crossroads, Falls Church, Fairfax County, Lincolnia, Seven Corners, Springfield, Vienna, West McLean

Desire for separate/distinct designs for Bailey's Crossroads and Seven Corners gateway signs

Bailey's Crossroads survey responses:

55%

Separate/distinct designs, but with unifying components, such as colors, fonts, size, shape, type, etc.

29%

Separate/distinct designs

16%

The same design

Seven Corners survey responses:

54%

Separate/distinct designs, but with unifying components, such as colors, fonts, size, shape, type, etc.

38%

Separate/distinct designs

8%

The same design

Community Survey Results: Bailey's Crossroads

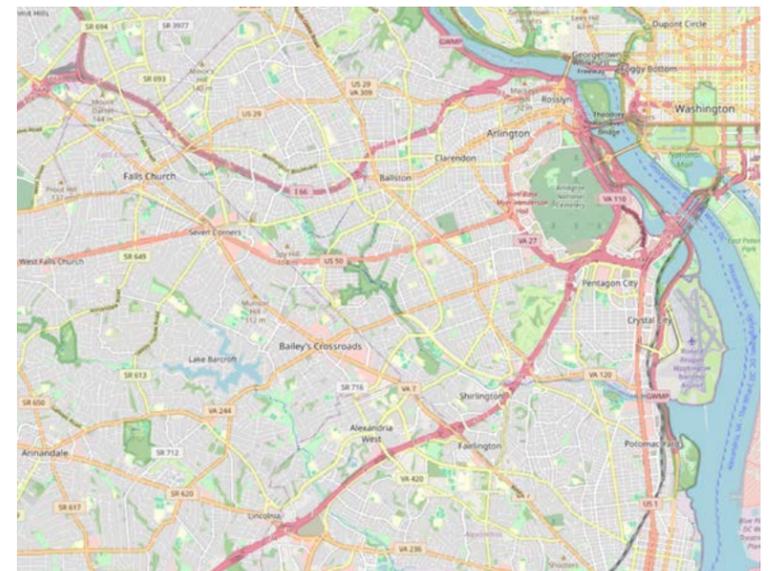
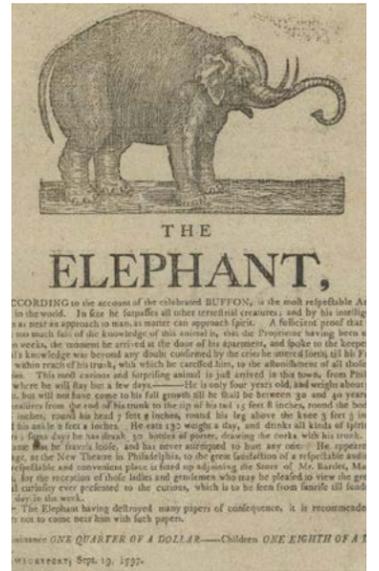
What defines Bailey's Crossroads?

- **Diversity:**
Universally acknowledged as the most defining trait — racial, cultural, culinary, and economic.
- **History:**
Many references to **Hachaliah Bailey and the circus legacy**

Additional references to
 - Lincoln's Grand Review of 1861
 - Former airport and unique past as farmland and encampment
- **Location:**
Centrally situated at a **literal crossroads of major roads and cultures** — access to DC, Arlington, Alexandria.
- **Character:**
Eclectic, community-driven, yet struggling with blight, traffic, and visual clutter.



Hachaliah Bailey



What the community is proud of

Cultural fusion and cooperation among residents.

Local small businesses and affordability.

Being inclusive, **neighborly**, and down-to-earth.

Multigenerational roots for some residents, including historic Black communities.

The signage should:

Be welcoming and distinctive, instilling community pride.

Evoke a sense of place, both past and present.

Avoid corporate or generic aesthetics (e.g. Springfield's sign criticized).

Be visually interesting, but not overly busy.

Community Concerns

Don't gentrify or sterilize character — keep small businesses and affordability.

Need for landscaping and pedestrian-friendly improvements.

Concern that circus theme is outdated or not accurate.

Ask for honest reflection of both the area's challenges and uniqueness.

Evoke a sense of place through native plantings / landscaping around signage.

Be durable and low-maintenance materials with landscaping.

What are possible symbols, stories & historic references?

Circus animals, tent, carousel: Evokes past and friendliness (differing opinions around accuracy).

Joined hands / diversity-focused imagery

Crossroads iconography

Skyline towers, trees, food imagery (multi-cultural table)

Lincoln / Civil War symbolism for history buffs

Suggested Phrases or Mottos

“Where Roads Meet and Communities Grow”

“Rooted in Fun”

“Come Together at the Crossroads”

“Everywhere From Here”

“The World’s Hometown”

Many preferred no motto or just the name itself — “Bailey’s Crossroads” — especially if bold typography and good design tell the story.

“Gateway to Bailey’s Crossroads”



Bailey's Crossroads circa 1861-1865

Community Survey Results: Seven Corners

What defines Seven Corners?

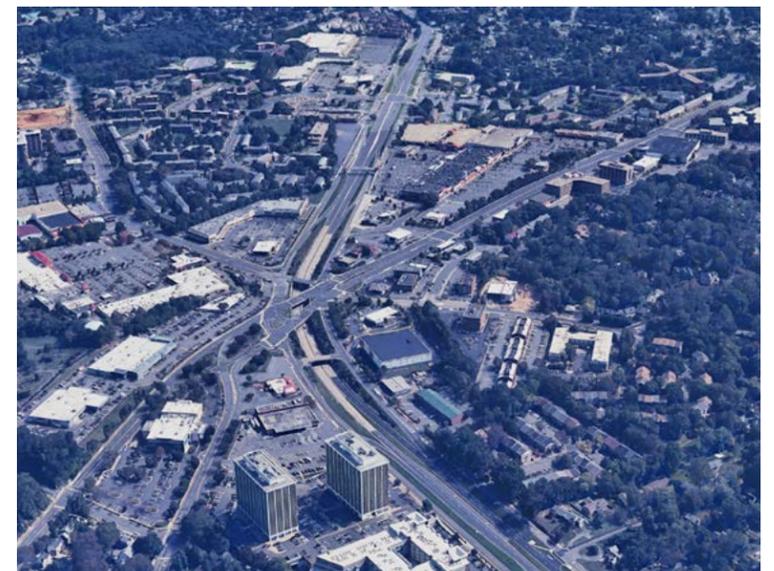
- **Historic Crossroads:**
Long-standing convergence of roads dating back to early footpaths and the Civil War (e.g. Fort Buffalo, Taylor's Tavern, and early malls like Seven Corners Shopping Center).
- **Civic Symbolism:**
Described by many as a microcosm of American history, including Revolutionary, Civil War, post-war suburban development, and modern multiculturalism.
- **Diversity:**
Strong ethnic, racial, and cultural mix—especially through places like Eden Center, a key Vietnamese cultural and commercial hub.
- **Traffic & Infrastructure Challenges:**
Widely cited as chaotic, unsafe, blighted, and poorly maintained. Many community members expressed frustration over VDOT inaction and over-reliance on signage when deeper investment is needed.



Seven Corners circa 1948



Seven Corners circa 1985



Seven Corners 2025

What the community is proud of

Resilience and Multiculturalism

Evolving Identity: Residents note the area's shift from early suburban mall culture to an increasingly diverse, connected place.

Small businesses (commercial heritage) and long-time residents

Those active in redevelopment efforts and civic participation, especially around **affordable housing protections**, express pride.

The signage should:

Create a positive image and set a welcoming tone.

Have visual interest and distinctiveness.

Be durable, clean, low-maintenance.

Be classy, timeless, not trendy, not politicized, not cluttered, not tacky, not too flashy (people are proud of the affordability of the area)

Community Concerns

Warnings against kitschy or flashy design and signs that are “dated,” “trendy,” or “too conceptual”

General desire expressed for broader placemaking improvements in addition to signage

Worry over:

- Overdevelopment/overcrowding
- Neglect
- Cultural erasure & gentrification
- Loss of small/local businesses

Desire for **some visual unity** with Bailey's Crossroads signage, but **most want distinctive elements too.**

What are possible symbols, stories & historic references?

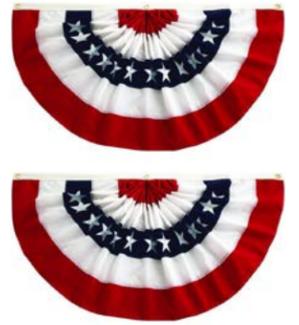
Intersectional imagery (converging roads / Crossroads)

Requests for American flag or patriotic symbols from some respondents.

Original 1950s mall sign – nostalgic importance (Old Seven Corners mall sign)

Fort Buffalo and Taylor’s Tavern (site of the first aerial reconnaissance mission in the U.S.)

Eden Center arch



Suggested Phrases or Mottos

“At the Center of Everything”

“Come Together”

“Seven Corners — Where ALL are Welcome!”

“The Oldest Center Made Fresh”

“7 Corners of American History”

Also strong sentiment that no slogan is necessary if the place is made vibrant and well-designed.



Key Takeaways

Bailey's Crossroads:

An intersection of many things: racial, cultural, culinary, economic, physical locations

Circus connection seems strong with people in general

Select Mottoes (references, potential starting points or general sentiment):

“Where Roads Meet and Neighborhoods Grow”

“The World’s Hometown”

“The Cultural Hub”

Seven Corners:

Convergence point at the center of many things

Americana connection: Microcosm of American history and modern multiculturalism

Select Mottoes (references, potential starting points or general sentiment):

“At the Center of Everything”

“Come Together”

Precedent Imagery Exercise

Materials

A collection of materials to spark conversation around textures, finishes, and colors that will help define the community's visual identity.



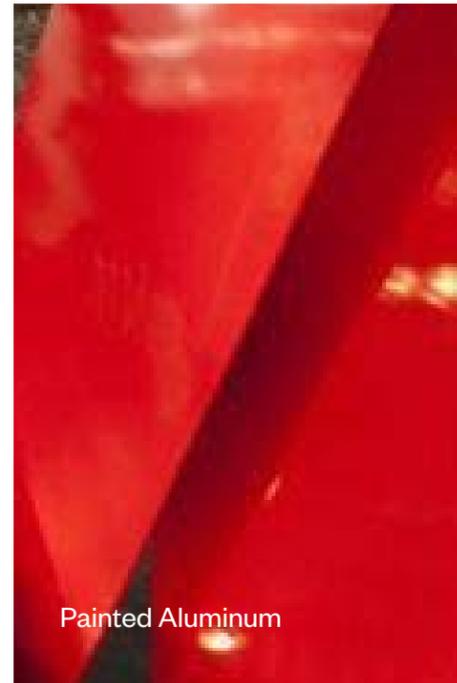
Limestone



Poured Concrete



Corten Steel



Painted Aluminum



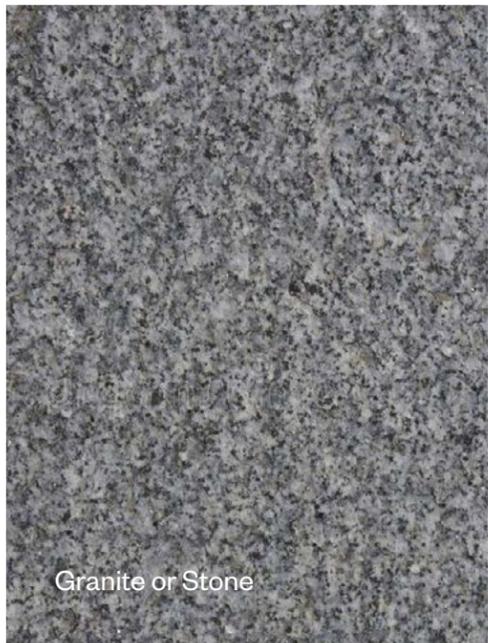
Antique Brass



Anodized Aluminum



Brushed Aluminum



Granite or Stone



Brick



Local Wood



Chrome / Polished Metal



Blackened Steel

Color

Colors have cultural associations. Below are some positive and negative associations among the color spectrum.

Red

Positive Associations: Health, hope, freshness, nature, growth, prosperity

Negative Associations: Boredom, stagnation, envy, blandness, sickness

Green

Positive Associations: Health, hope, freshness, nature, growth, prosperity

Negative Associations: Boredom, stagnation, envy, blandness, sickness

Purple

Positive Associations: Wisdom, luxury, wealth, spirituality, imagination, sophistication

Negative Associations: Introversion, decadence, suppressions, inferiority, extravagance, moodiness

Black

Positive Associations: Sophistication, security, power, elegance, authority, substance.

Negative Associations: Oppression, coldness, menace, heaviness, evil, mourning

Orange

Positive Associations: Courage, confidence, warmth, innovation, friendliness, energy

Negative Associations: Deprivation, frustration, frivolity, immaturity, ignorance, sluggishness

Turquoise

Positive Associations: Communication, clarity, calmness, inspiration, self-expression, healing

Negative Associations: Boastfulness, secrecy, unreliability, reticence

Magenta

Positive Associations: Imaginative, passion, transformation, creative, innovation, balance

Negative Associations: Outrageousness, nonconformity, flippancy, impulsiveness, eccentricity, ephemeralness

Gray

Positive Associations: Timelessness, neutrality, reliability, balance, intelligence, strength

Negative Associations: Lack of confidence, depression, lack of energy, bland

Yellow

Positive Associations: Optimism, warmth, happiness, creativity, intellect, extraversion

Negative Associations: Irrationality, fear, caution, anxiety, frustration, cowardice.

Blue

Positive Associations: Trust, calmness, loyalty, dependability, logic, serenity, security

Negative Associations: Coldness, emotionless, unfriendliness, uncaring, unappetizing

Brown

Positive Associations: Seriousness, warmth, earthiness, reliability, support, authenticity

Negative Associations: Humorlessness, heaviness, lack of sophistication, dirtiness

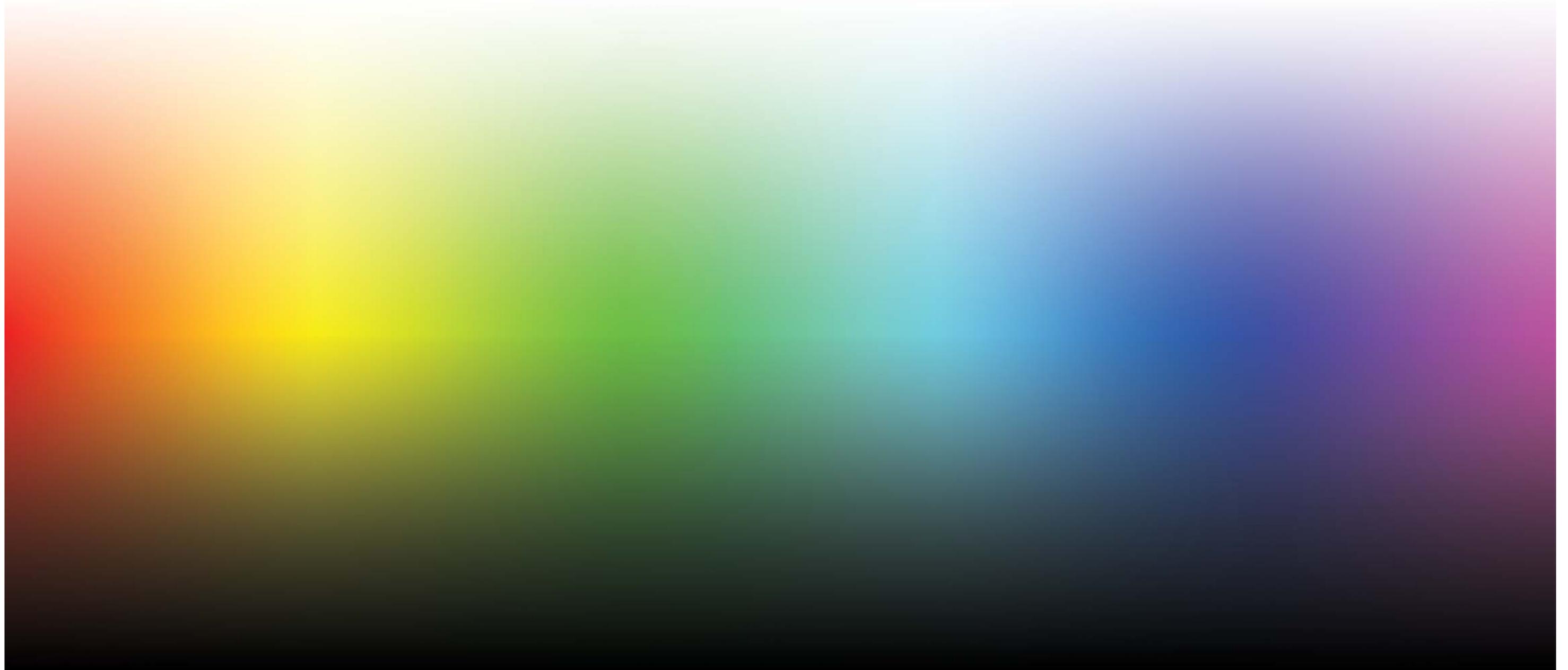
White

Positive Associations: Cleanliness, clarity, purity, simplicity, freshness

Negative Associations: Sterility, coldness, unfriendliness, elitism, isolation, emptiness

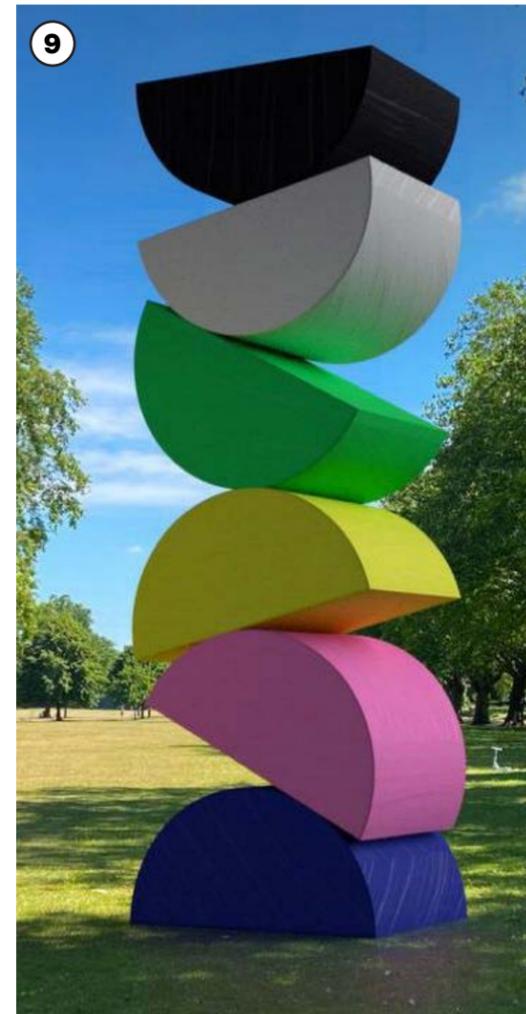
Color

Colors have cultural and personal associations—both are valid ways to connect a place with color. What color(s) do you feel represent each district?



Theme 1: Modern Whimsy

A playful blend of pops of color, nods to the area's circus heritage, Americana, and layered history that evokes a sense of charm and curiosity.



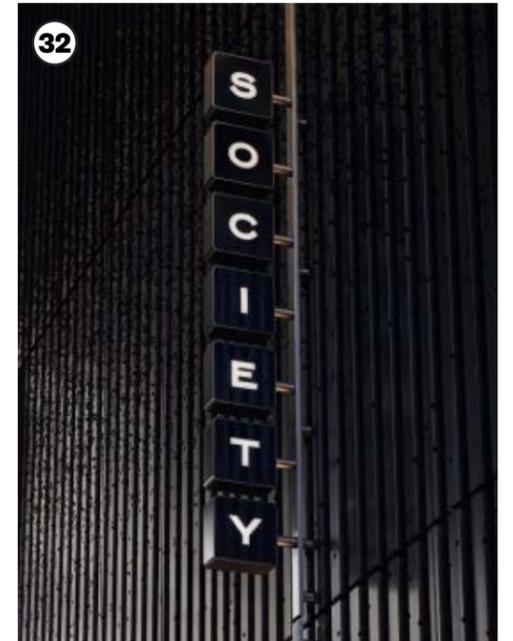
Theme 2: Old meets New

A balanced mix of classic American references and modern typography that reflects the area's evolving character and layered past.



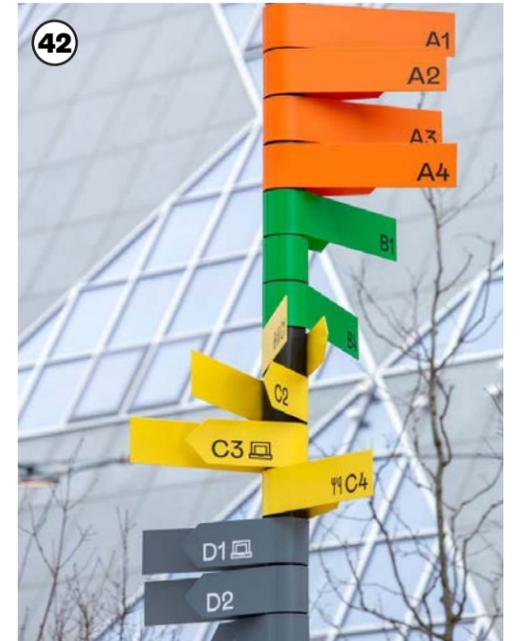
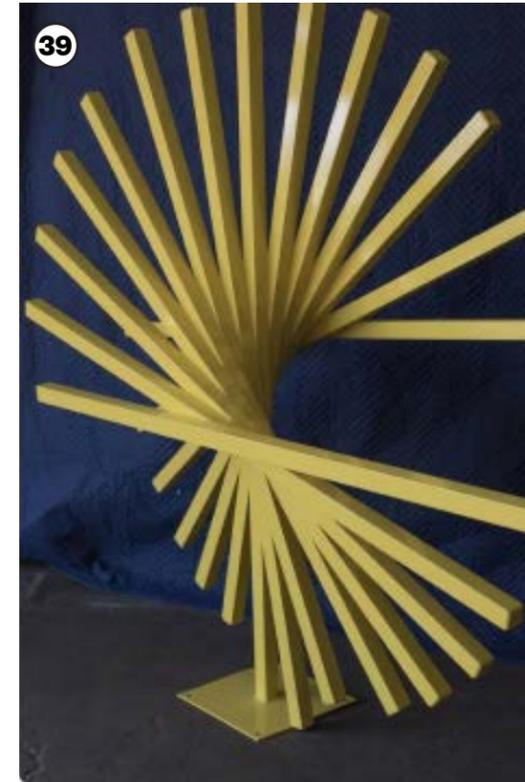
Theme 3: Retrofuturism Re-imagined

Clean, contemporary aesthetics inspired by mid-century redevelopment, aviation history, and the commercial optimism of the future as imagined in the past.



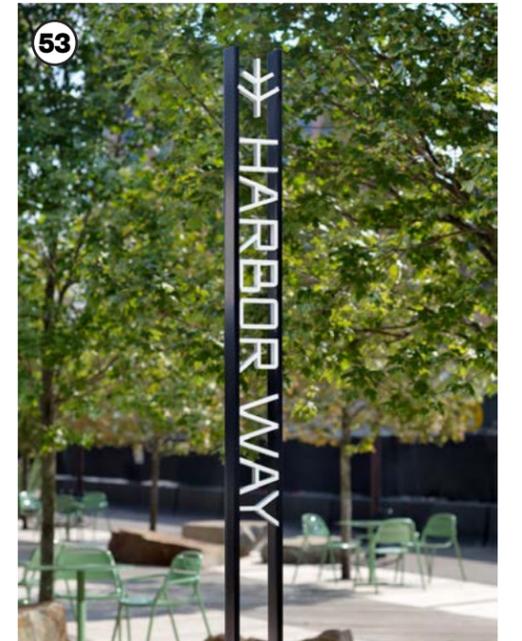
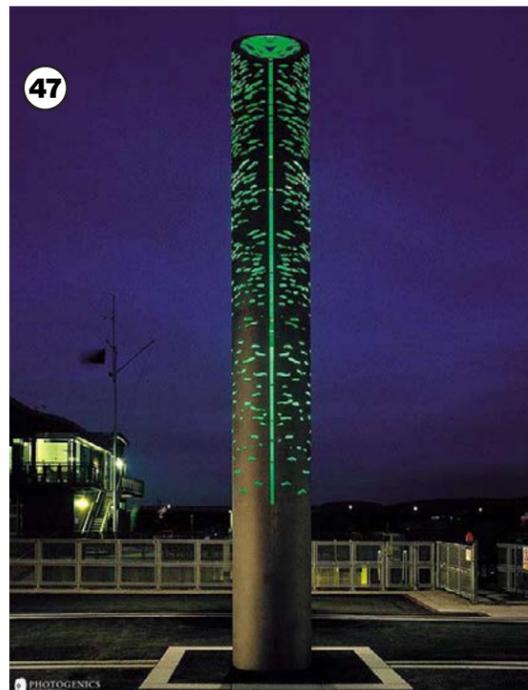
Theme 4: Convergence

Visual themes that highlight intersections—of cultures, ideas, and commerce—reflecting the creative, entrepreneurial and multicultural spirit of the area.



Theme 5: Sleek & Subtle

Less is more. Simple, modern forms, limited color, elegant lighting, and unexpected moments to stand out among the urban clutter.



What did we miss?

A space to capture ideas or themes that may not be reflected in the current boards.

Instructions

1. Grab Your Dots and Supplies

- Each person will get green dots to apply to the printouts— for Seven Corners and for Bailey’s Crossroads.
- If there’s something you strongly dislike, use a red dot.
- Sticky notes and pens are also available if you want to leave comments.

2. Review the Images

- Look closely at the precedent images around the room. These include examples of signs, materials, colors, typefaces, styles, and functions.

3. Place Your Dots

- Use your green dots to mark anything you like—this could be a specific color, material, layout, lettering style, or overall look.
- Place the dot next to or on the feature you’re responding to. Try not to cover things up so other people can see. Use only one dot per element you like.
- Use red dots sparingly for anything you strongly dislike. Try not to cover things up so other people can see. Use only one dot per element you dislike.

4. Add Notes (Optional)

- If you want to explain why you placed a dot, write a quick note on a sticky and place it next to the image or dot. Use the image numbers to refer to specific images or elements you are responding to.
- Leave a note with any additional ideas or questions on the “What did we miss?” sheet.

5. We’ll Take It from Here

- The design team will gather all the input to identify patterns and preferences, which will guide the final aesthetic direction for signage in each community.

Thank you for your input and for helping shape this project and your community!

THANK YOU.



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