

FAVERMANN  
DESIGN



# TOWN OF WINCHENDON

COMMUNITY BRANDING & WAYFINDING PROJECT

FINAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2019

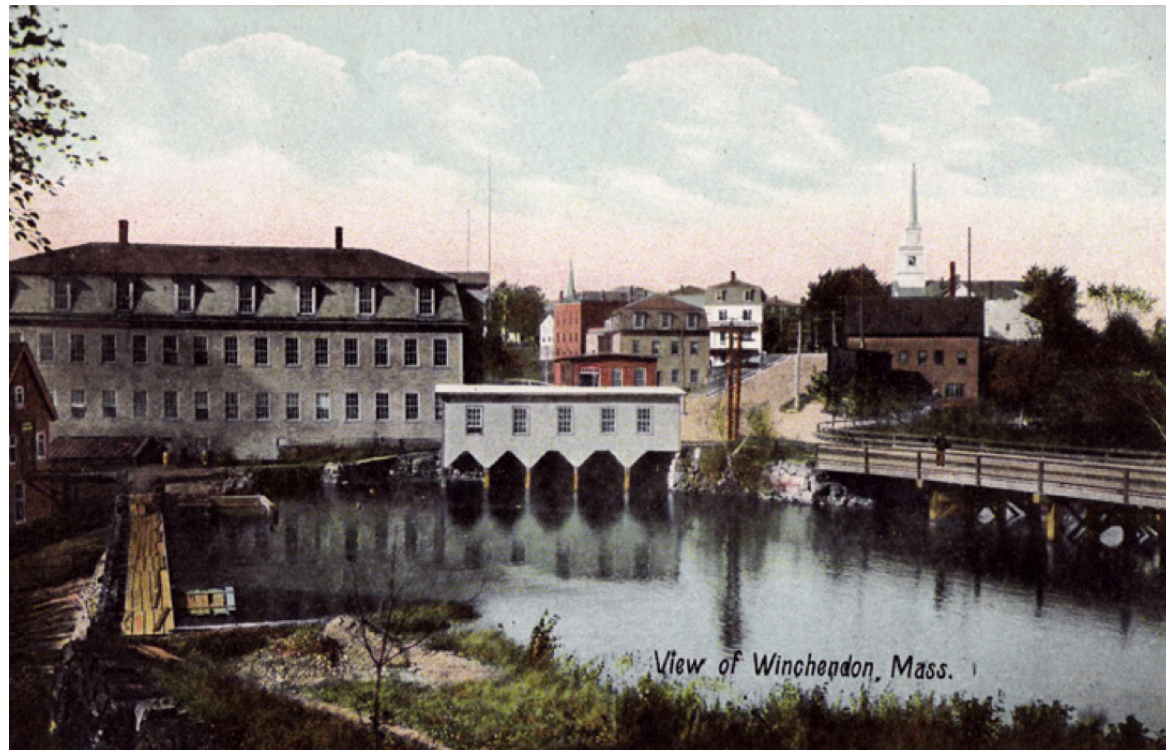
Prepared by Favermann Design

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

MASSACHUSETTS  
DOWNTOWN  
INITIATIVE







## BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Winchendon is a small town located in a heavily forested area in north-central Massachusetts in Northern Worcester County located South of Keene, New Hampshire. Its rural nature is underscored by Moose Crossing signs within the Town limits. The Town was set originally on the land of the Nipmuck Tribe of the Pennacook Indians. The Colonial Massachusetts House of Representatives granted permission for the settlement of New Ipswich Canada, now Winchendon, on June 10, 1735, in answer to a petition from Lt. Abraham Tilton of Ipswich. The petition was on behalf of veterans or their surviving heirs of who participated in the 1690 expeditions against then French Canada.

Winchendon was officially incorporated in 1764. The Town was named after Nether Winchendon, Buckinghamshire, England, which was the site of land owned by Governor Francis Bernard, who signed the town's incorporation into law. At the time, the number of inhabitants totaled two hundred, and the communal voice of the people ruled every detail of daily life.



Downtown Street

For the first fifty years of the town's existence, the village centered around what is now referred to as Old Center. Later, more and more people saw the advantage of moving down the hill to the vicinity of Millers River (presently the foot of High Street) where there was an opportunity to utilize the water as a source of power. This vicinity became the nucleus for the present-day Town of Winchendon. By 1800, there were about twenty two-story houses in Winchendon. These handsome, charming buildings have survived the decades and given the town a historical richness.

The Millers River provided water power for many mills. For a time, the Winchendon mills produced so many wooden shingles that it was nicknamed "Shingletown." Next came wooden pails, tubs, clothespins, bobbins and a variety of other small wooden-ware products. These were expanded to include furniture and so many toys.

In 1873, Morton E. Converse purchased a mill to make wooden products. Converse also started making toys there, and Converse Toy & Woodenware Company was formed. In 1887, the company changed its name to Morton E. Converse & Company and remained in business until 1934. The Converse Company made a great variety of toys that included Noah's Arks, doll furniture, kiddie riding racers, hobby horses, floor whirligigs, drums, wagon blocks, building blocks, pianos, trunks, ten pins, farm houses, and musical chimes. Such a large number of toys were made in Winchendon that it became known as Toy Town.



Damn



Abandoned Factory



Toy Ship

The original Giant Rocking Horse was built in 1912 by Morton Converse. The 12-foot grey hobby horse was named Clyde, and made from nine pine trees. It was a copy of the company's #12 rocking horse. In 1914, Clyde entered the local parade to celebrate the town's 150th anniversary. Clyde was moved to the railroad station for about 20 years. Then in 1934, he was moved to the edge of the Toy Town Tavern for about 30 years. After that, he was put in storage and fell into disrepair. A replica, Clyde II, was sculpted in 1988 using the original as a model. It is now on display year-round in a covered pavilion.

Although known as a "wooden-ware town," the textile industry of the White's Mill became of equal importance to the prosperity of Winchendon during the Industrial Revolution. Joseph 'Deacon' White of West Boylston, Massachusetts, with his son Nelson, purchased a textile mill in Spring Village in 1843. It was located at the headwaters of Millers River.

Nelson White traveled to Canada to recruit additional workers from Quebec. Thus, a French-Canadian group of workers began to settle in Winchendon. Spring Village became a prototype 'company town' with jobs, housing and a school for its workers. A second mill was built in 1887 and was known as the



Horse and Buggy Toy

Glenallan Mill. The business thrived during the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. As the South was modernized and electrified during the 1930s, textile operations in New England migrated south.





*Girl working in the Textile Mill*

In 1911, the sociologist/photographer Lewis Hine documented the children working in the textile mills. These images along with other mill images that he photographed throughout the Eastern United States led to the change of Federal Child Labor Laws during the first decades of the 20th Century.

White Brothers, Inc. ceased operations in 1956 due to economic pressures from industrialization of the South. Currently, the town's largest employer is Saloom Furniture Company, a dining furniture manufacturer, that has two factories with 100,000 square of space.

Due to its rural nature with its woodlands, salt marshes, open waters, etc., Winchendon's future potential is its natural environment opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, cycling and camping. The town looks to these as engines for economic prosperity.

The Town's new schools and affordable housing represent very livable aspects for the future for Winchendon's aging and emerging populations.

## TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

From its town center, Winchendon is 16 miles northwest of Fitchburg, 20 miles southeast of Keene, New Hampshire, 35 miles north-northwest of Worcester and 60 miles northwest of Boston.

Winchendon has no interstate or limited access highways within town; the nearest is MA Route 2, the major east-west route through the northern part of the state, in Templeton and Gardner. U.S. Route 202 passes through the town before heading into New Hampshire. Route 12 also passes through the town, from Ashburnham towards Fitzwilliam and Keene, NH. The northern terminus of Route 140 is also within town, at its intersection with Route 12. This intersection was improved around the turn of the 21st century to include stoplights. When Route 140 was rerouted to bypass the Town of Gardner in the 1970s,

Winchendon's status as a bedroom community was facilitated by easy access to Route 2 and points east toward Greater Boston, I-495 and I-95. A bus line of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MRTA) links the town with Gardner and, in the mornings, directly with Fitchburg where MBTA Commuter Rail to Boston is located. The nearest small airport to Winchendon is Gardner Municipal Airport in Templeton, and the nearest national air service is located at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport in New Hampshire.



*Various Housing*



## THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND OTHER PROMINENT BUILDINGS IN WINCHENDON

The Winchendon public library began in 1867. Initially, it was paid for in part by Carnegie, but in 1907 the library trustees approached philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie to fund a new facility. However, when Carnegie declined to increase his funding from \$12,500 to \$25,000, Charles L. Beals, a local businessman, presented the Selectman of Winchendon a check for \$25,000 to build the new library in 1915. It had a major library renovation in fiscal year 2018. At the time, the town of Winchendon spent 0.62% (\$149,399) of its budget on its public library—about \$14 per person.

Other prominent buildings that add to the history and charm in the Town of Winchendon include the following:

- The Town Hall was built in 1850. It was constructed in a modified Italianate Style.
- The Winchendon School was founded in 1926. Its structures were built throughout the following decades.



*Town Hall*



*Winchendon School*

- The original Winchendon U.S. Post Office was built 1858 across from the Town Hall. The current one was built in 1942.
- The former School Administration Building now Winchendon Senior Center (aka Old Murdock Building) was built in a Victorian Gothic Style in 1887.

- The Immaculate Heart Catholic Church was built in 1909.
- The Unitarian Church (The North Congregational Church) was built 1844.
- Historically, The Old Center Church was the first church and town meeting house until the Town Hall was built. No longer there, it was first constructed in 1752.
- The Church of Unity (Unitarian/Universalist) was built in 1866.
- Marchmont or "The Castle" was literally an estate mansion that was constructed in 1888 and demolished in 1956.
- The elegant white Whitney House, the location of the Winchendon Historical Society and toy museum, was built between 1820-30.

These structures and others add to the character and distinct personality of the town.



*Senior Center*



*Marchmont or "The Castle"*

## THE PROCESS

In the late Spring of 2018, the Town of Winchendon received a technical services grant from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The grant was for design and development of a community brand and its application to signage and wayfinding. The Town Manager and Town Planner appointed an advisory committee to work with the consultants to create a viable brand and strategic signage and wayfinding system.

### BRANDING AND WAYFINDING Advisory Committee Members:

**Keith Hickey**, Town Manager

**David Walsh**, Police Department Chief

**Manuel King**, Librarian

**David Romanowski**, Winchendon Community Park Director

**Leston Goodrich**, Winchendon Redevelopment Authority, Winchendon Housing Authority Member

**Arthur Amenta**, Winchendon Planning Board, Toy Town Community Partnership,  
Council on Aging Member

**Don O'Neil**, Winchendon Historic Commission, Winchendon History and Cultural Center

**Rose Goodrich**, Community Member

**Shirley Chodin**, Community Member

**Tracy Murphy**, Director of Planning and Development

**Nicole Roberts**, Land Use Coordinator

The Advisory Committee worked with Favermann Design over a period of several months through site visits, tours, presentations and interactive descriptive discussions to eventually created a verbal expressive and evocative image representing the Town of Winchendon. The first presentation focused on what community branding could mean and how it could be used to make a location more of a destination.

The second presentation reviewed a series of case studies of other cities and towns that had gone through a similar process. At the following meeting, there was a short presentation reviewing the where and what of Winchendon that lead to an ideation exercise that allowed the advisory committee members to best describe all aspects of Winchendon. From that discussion, the consultants developed a number of design options that were presented at the follow-up meeting.

Attempting to capture the essence of Winchester's character, these design options included a series of designs that reflected the emphasis of the committee's comments. These included images of trees and foliage, factory buildings, toys, "Clyde" the rocking horse and landscape images included water and woodlands.

As a design option, a series of "Clyde" rocking horse cutouts were recommended for a bottom band to each major sign element. A "Clyde" silhouette will be used for arty wings attached to light poles as well. With more discussion, the Advisory Committee and town administrators made a strategic statement about the perception of Winchendon as a destination for outdoor recreation. This desire for future reinforcement and implementation of this major function of the town and its merchants and residents. After deciding upon the more natural scene of the water and woods, the staff at Favermann Design gave to the image a colored foliage treatment, thus reinforcing the notion of seasonal attraction to the Town.

Additionally, the consultants worked on specific related sign and identification treatments for signage for the Winchendon Police Department and the Winchendon Fire Department stations.

The Advisory Committee also developed a phased plan for located all of the sign elements throughout the Town of Winchendon. After this was completed and the designs and location plan were submitted to the town's board of selectmen. A unanimous vote by the Board of Selectmen of 5-0 approved the program. Subsequently, application by the town was made to the Converse Fund, a private trust for Winchendon town improvements. It is expected that this funding will pay for the Town of Winchendon signage and wayfinding elements. Implementation of the program is schedule for the Spring and Summer of 2020.

# FAMILY OF ELEMENTS

