

Lake Champlain Wayside Exhibit Manual



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Second Edition

Produced by a partnership between the Lake Champlain Basin Program, the Lake Champlain Byways Partnership, and the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.

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Download all completed exhibits and this manual on-line at:
www.lcbp.org/wayside/index.htm.

The Lake Champlain Basin Program provides assistance with planning, interpretive writing, and designing wayside exhibits. Contact us!



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Cover images clockwise from upper left: Detail of "The Battle of Lake Champlain," by J.O. Davidson, 1884, courtesy of the Battle of Plattsburgh Association; photograph by Jeff Nadler; photograph by Paul Boisvert; and "Village Tavern," by John Lewis Krimmel, 1813, oil on canvas, courtesy of the Toledo Museum of Art.

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Overview

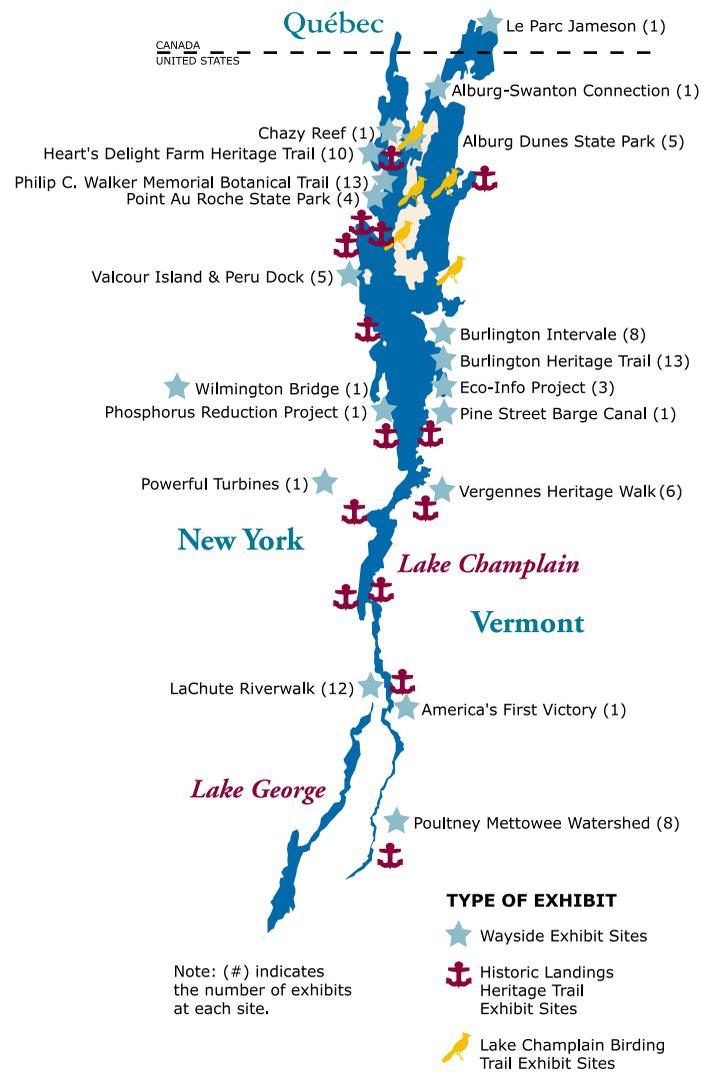
In 2000, a group of planners, tourism representatives, historians, and natural/cultural resource managers identified a need for unified standards and guidelines for interpretive signs in the Champlain region of Vermont, New York, and Québec. In response, the Lake Champlain Basin Program (LCBP) convened these stakeholders to develop and design an outdoor wayside exhibit template for use by organizations and municipalities in the Lake Champlain Basin.

Using this information, the LCBP published the Lake Champlain Wayside Exhibit Manual in 2001. The LCBP has provided in-kind design services grants to organizations using this template for projects that address priorities in the management plan *Opportunities of Action*. This successful program has generated more than 100 new wayside exhibits in the Lake Champlain Basin.

A unified approach to wayside interpretation helps local communities place their unique stories in a broader context. A readily recognizable interpretive sign encourages visitors to stop and learn about another piece of the Champlain Valley's story. The result is a richer sense of history, nature, and culture, and a stronger regional identity among residents and visitors.

Encouraging linkages with the Richelieu Valley of Québec, the LCBP supports bilingual exhibits and provides support for translation services. Applicants for design services grants should contact the LCBP.

LCBP Wayside Exhibit Locations



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

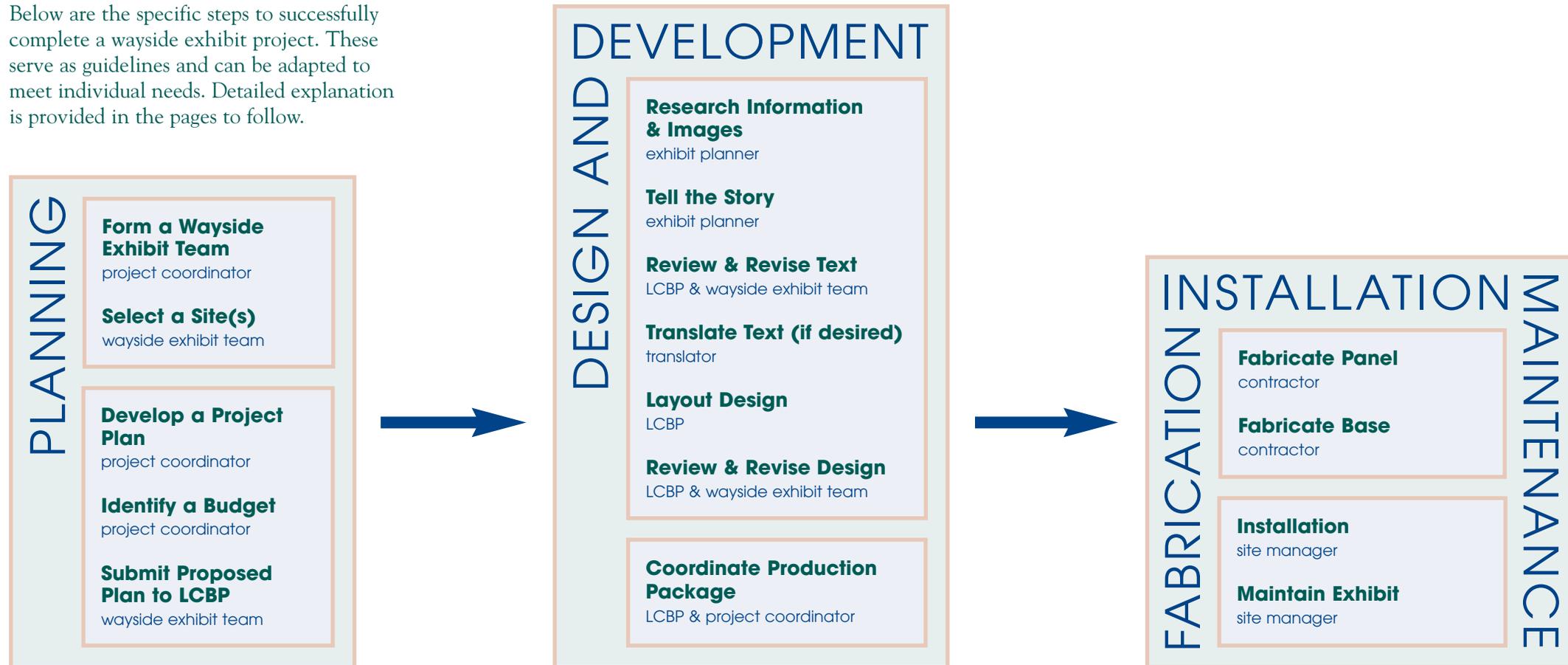
To ensure a smooth and efficient process of developing effective exhibits, there are a few questions you should consider from the start:

- 1) What are your interpretive objectives for the specific site or sites? What is the essence of the message or story that you want to convey?
- 2) Who will be working on the project and what is everyone's specific role? How do you reach consensus to satisfy both local and international audiences?
- 3) What visitors do you expect? Are there any special considerations that should be made for children, families, international visitors, and those with disabilities? To what extent should the exhibit address Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility guidelines?
- 4) What other information exists about your story, including publications, audiovisual shows, films, and audio cassettes? How will your exhibit relate to other media?
- 5) Do you need any sign permits?
- 6) What are your budget constraints?
- 7) What is your timetable? When do you want to break ground?

Introduction

Project Steps: From Planning to Installation

Below are the specific steps to successfully complete a wayside exhibit project. These serve as guidelines and can be adapted to meet individual needs. Detailed explanation is provided in the pages to follow.



Project steps adapted from *Wayside Exhibit Guidelines: The ABCs of Planning, Design, and Fabrication*, United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Center for Recreation and Conservation and the Harpers Ferry Center.

Project Planning

"Interpretation is an information service, a guiding service, an educational service... an inspirational service. Interpretation aims at giving people new understanding, new insights, new enthusiasm, and new interests."

-Yorke Edwards

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Introduction

Wayside exhibits are excellent tools for informing visitors. They can interpret a specific location and relate individual sites to an overall theme or story. Their message reaches a large number of people. They are relatively inexpensive to maintain or replace. Wayside exhibits are initially more expensive to produce than brochures, but do not require costly reproductions.

However, wayside exhibits are only effective if developed, designed, and located correctly. Unfortunately too many wayside exhibits present long, complicated messages that do not get read. Others are located in areas that have little relation to their topic. Some are poorly designed, making the message difficult to understand. The goal of this manual is to provide a basic framework for planning and creating effective and successful interpretive wayside exhibits.

Project Organization

A strong organizational structure is an essential part of developing quality interpretive signs. Ideal wayside exhibit projects are structured as follows.

Wayside Exhibit Team: A Wayside Exhibit Team is comprised of representatives from the project's sponsors, stakeholders, property managers, and interested individuals. The team provides advice and personal insight to the Project Coordinator.

Project Coordinator: The success of the project is the responsibility of the Project Coordinator. He works with the Wayside Exhibit Team to determine interpretive themes, exhibit locations, and site topics. The coordinator edits and approves interpretive text and graphics. Together with the LCBP, he contacts fabricators, negotiates contracts, and facilitates the completion of the final products. The Project Coordinator might also serve as the Exhibit Planner.

Exhibit Planner(s): Ideally, each interpretive wayside exhibit has a champion, often a volunteer. Exhibit Planners are responsible for the historical research, text, and graphics selection.

Exhibit Designer: The Exhibit Designer is responsible for the design and layout of the exhibit panel. The LCBP will provide design services, as resources permit, to organizations in the Champlain region for projects that meet eligibility criteria, including the goals of the LCBP's management plan, *Opportunities for Action*. Once a project proposal has been accepted, graphic designers on the LCBP's staff will work with the text and graphics provided by the Wayside Exhibit Team to create a presentation that is harmonious and pleasing to the eye. (Note: The template may be used by other designers for interpretive work.)

Project Budget

The total fabrication cost for a standard 24"x36" horizontal wayside exhibit is approximately \$900. In addition

to the standard 24"x36" panel, other dimensions are available, as shown on page 11. Estimated costs for various sized exhibits are shown on page 12. There are other costs to consider when planning a budget. For each exhibit, plan on investing approximately \$300 for coordination and \$300 for research and development. Volunteers can reduce a project's coordination and development costs. Remember, costs will decrease as the number of exhibits increase.

Interpretation: Telling the Story

Principles of Successful Interpretation:

1) Interpretation is provocation, not just information. Illustrate with analogies, quotes, metaphors, and examples. Use text that encourages visitor interaction:

- "Look for the..."
- "Can you hear the...?"
- "Imagine the..."
- "Touch the..."
- "See if you can find the..."
- "Smell the..."

2) The best interpretation is succinct. Use short sentences. Concentrate on one subject. Don't worry about including all of the details. Visitors usually ignore long, complex messages. Avoid creating a "textbook on a stick."

3) Individual exhibits should complement each other by presenting a unified theme. This helps advance a project's organizational structure and provides visitors with a better understanding of the site's significance.

Project Planning

4) Help visitors relate the exhibit's topic to their own lives. Use familiar terms and personal language. Use everyday objects and events to illustrate the past, such as: "In 1889, horses were as common as automobiles are today."

5) Use photos, maps, and images to illustrate your point. Use stimulating and revealing graphics—avoid duplicating what can be seen.

6) Reveal message conclusions through unique or unusual viewpoints.

7) Accuracy is essential. Make sure your facts are correct—mistakes on interpretive exhibits live for a very long time!

8) Have fun. Be creative. Learn a little.

Site Planning: Location, Location, Location

The Wayside Exhibit Team should brainstorm exhibit locations and topics at a project's beginning. The group should list as many topics and locations as possible. Listing potential exhibits helps determine the project's overall theme and allows for more flexibility in siting exhibits.

The Project Coordinator should visit proposed exhibit sites with the locale's property manager. This on-the-ground visit is essential. A property manager's working knowledge of the landscape can help: eliminate

weak sites; avoid safety hazards and vandalism; locate exhibits in accessible locations; and choose sites with vistas of the exhibit's topic.

Copy, Photos, and Design

There is a wealth of information out there. Local historians and experts, university libraries, and town, regional, and state historical societies are excellent sources of folklore, facts, and photographs.

Effective wayside exhibits contain less than 300 words and feature no more than four graphic images. The Exhibit Planner should provide the Project Coordinator and the LCBP with exhibit copy along with a selection of photographs or graphics for scanning. Once copy is approved and graphics selected, the LCBP will design a layout for review before digital files are sent to a panel fabricator. Original graphics—photographs, artwork, and maps—reproduce much better than duplicates.

VISITORS REMEMBER

- 10% of what they hear;
- 30% of what they read;
- 50% of what they see;
- 90% of what they do—if an exhibit encourages interaction and stimulates thought, it fulfills its purpose by reaching almost all site visitors.

SAMPLE WAYSIDE EXHIBIT COPY

Trail Name

Burlington Heritage Trail

Title

Steamboats and Shortcuts

Sub Heading

King Street Dock

Main Text

Imagine the scene here in 1825. The dock is crowded with saddle horses, ox carts, fancy horse buggies, pigs, goats, cows, chickens, piles of freight, and people. There are farmers, soldiers, merchants, and sailors. It's noisy. Workmen are yelling, whistles are blowing, and horses are neighing. The smell of barnyard animals, wood smoke from the ferry's smokestack, and food cooking fills the air. Even though the scene is very different today, the Lake Champlain Transportation Company's mission is the same—to safely deliver passengers across Lake Champlain.

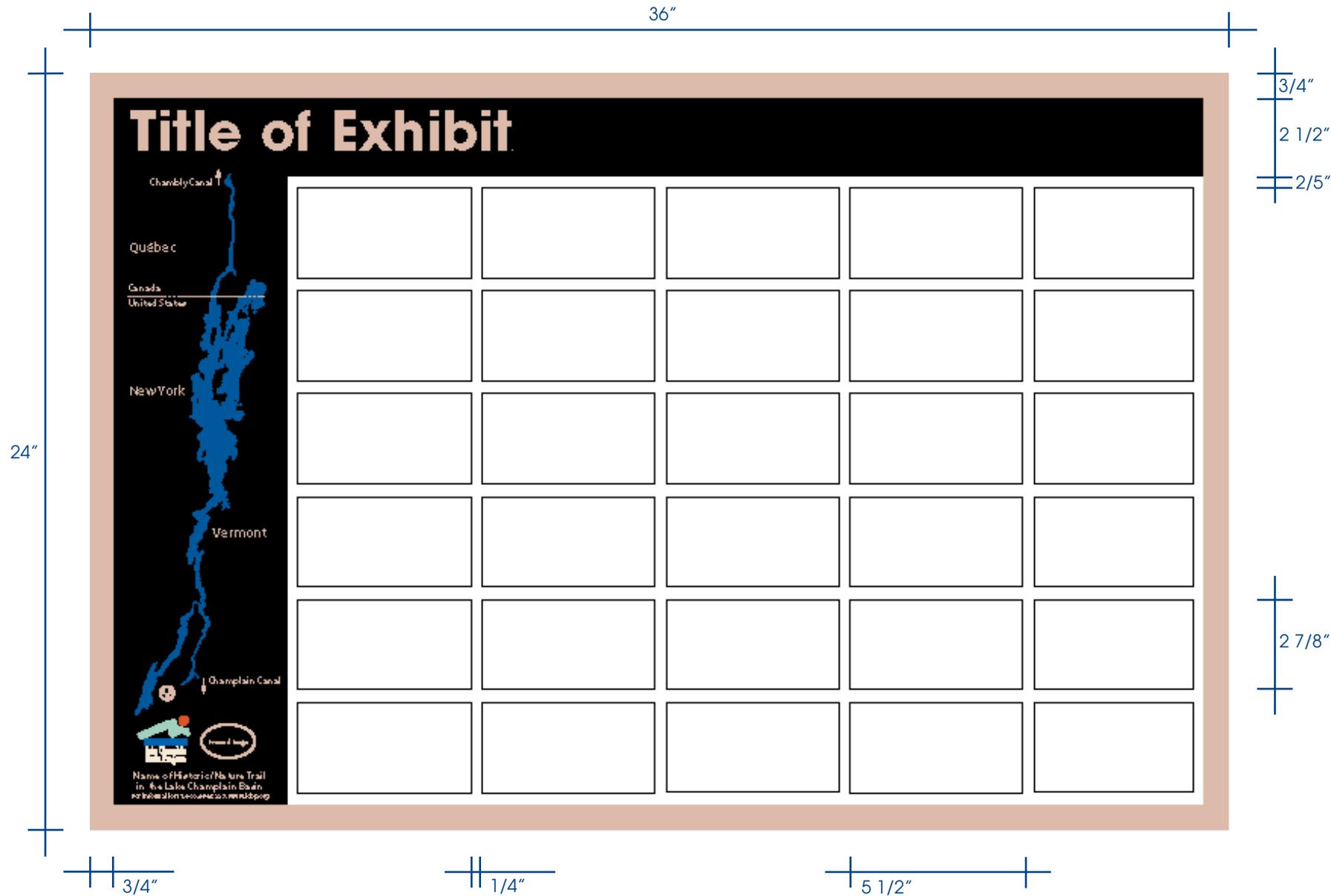
Photo Caption

The Roosevelt—the last wooden-hulled ferry on Lake Champlain—served for 36 years. The president of the Lake Champlain Transportation Company himself sank the boat by chopping holes in its hull when it had outlived its usefulness in 1959. Today, the Roosevelt rests at the bottom of the broad lake before you.

"Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection."

– Freeman Tilden

Design and Development



The Grid System

The LCBP wayside exhibit template is similar to the National Park Service and the NYS Canal Corporation wayside exhibit grid systems. The grid organizes text and graphics in an orderly fashion, making it easy for visitors to understand the information presented. It also lays the foundation for a consistent and unified look, linking wayside exhibits at different locations around the lake. The title bar, lake column, colors, and typography are standard elements found on each exhibit, creating a recognizable identity throughout the region. Although all exhibits adhere to these standards, each is carefully designed for individual expression according to site considerations, message, and graphics composition.

The standard LCBP template includes two variations based on this grid. These are shown on the next two pages.

Design and Development

Typography

Typography has been chosen to achieve an accessible, legible, and inviting presentation. Choice of type size depends on reading distance, height, and importance of information. Typefaces are mixed in a hierarchical fashion to convey levels of information and emphasis.

Logos and Identification

Wayside exhibits using the LCBP template display the LCBP logo in the bottom left-hand corner. There is also space for one or two additional logos of the Wayside Exhibit Team's choice.

The trail or project name and brief contact information, including telephone number and web site address, appear below the logos.

Option A: Full Spread

This option utilizes one primary image, over which type and secondary images are placed.

Main Text
Goudy
29 point

Caption
Goudy Bold
Italic 20 point

Subheading
Myriad Bold
26 point

Feature Labels
Goudy Bold
Italic 24 point

- Title**
Avant Garde
Bold 122 point
- Canal Identifier**
Myriad Bold
22 point
- US/Canadian Border**
Myriad Bold
22 point
- State/Province Identifier**
Myriad Bold
32 point
- You Are Here**
Myriad Bold
18 point
- Sponsor/Name**
Myriad Bold
28 point
- For More Info**
Myriad Bold
18 point

500 Million Years at the Beach

See the Adirondack Mountains across the lake? Try to find the peaks shown in this watercolor. These ancient mountains—made up of rocks over 1 billion years old—grew to their present height 120 million years ago. Today, occasional earthquakes remind us that the Adirondack Mountains are still active!

You can also locate several islands in Lake Champlain. Rock Dunder, located between Shelburne Point and Juniper Island, is sacred to Native Americans. According to Abenaki legend, the deity Ojiohozo turned himself into that rock after he created the lake, so he could admire his creation forever. The islands are made of shale, which was originally deposited as mud in a small sea between the Adirondacks and the newly forming Green Mountains more than 400 million years ago.

The World Turned Upside Down
500 million years ago, North Beach was located along the western edge of an ancient ocean. Over 400 million years ago—even before tectonic plates came together to form the supercontinent Pangaea and the once-lofty Green Mountains—deep layers of bedrock were thrust over the younger shales that make up Lake Champlain's islands. The world-famous Champlain Thrust Fault is exposed along the beach at Lone Rock Point to the north. On the other side of the point, the light-colored, OLDER dolostone sits on top of the dark-colored, YOUNGER shale below it. (Photograph courtesy of Jack Drake, University of Vermont Geology Department.)

Take a Dip
Imagine yourself here 15,000 years ago. You would need diving equipment! Glaciers from the Ice Age were melting, and a huge body of fresh water called Lake Vermont lay between the Green Mountains and the Adirondacks. The lake was 650 feet deep and covered all of Burlington. (Photograph courtesy of the University of Vermont Special Collections.)

A Whale of a Tale
How did this beluga whale skeleton get into the Champlain Valley? It turns out that the water here turned salty 13,300 years ago. After the last Ice Age, heavy glaciers retreated north and depressed the land below sea level. Ocean water flooded the valley to make the Champlain Sea. For the next 2,800 years, seals, porpoises, and whales frolicked in the surf until the land rebounded and blocked the saltwater connection to the St. Lawrence Seaway. (Drawing courtesy of Ian Hodgdon, Perkins Geology Museum, University of Vermont.)

Painting by Janet Kibbitt

The Burlington Heritage Trail, Burlington, VT.

Design and Development

Bilingual Exhibits

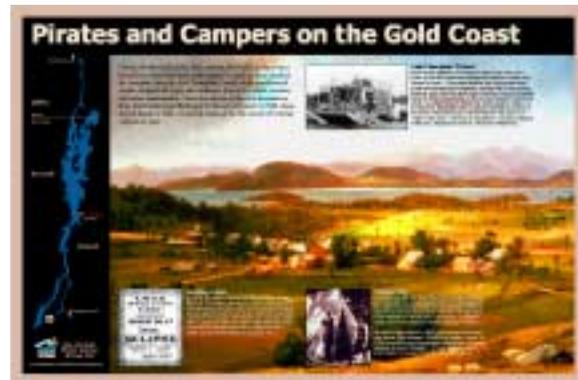
The LCBP recognizes our bilingual region and opportunities for cross-border promotion, and encourages the use of bilingual exhibits. This manual offers a template specifically designed to accommodate translated text in both English and French.

Bilingual exhibits are approximately 16 percent wider than a standard exhibit. The LCBP can make arrangements for text translations in a project's design and development phase.

Alburt Dunes State Park, Albury, VT.

Design and Development

A. 24" x 36"



Low-Profile Panel

B. 24" x 42"



Bilingual Low-Profile Panel

C. 18" x 24"



Low-Profile Panel

D. 12" x 17"



Site Marker

E. 36" x 48"



Upright Panel

Panel Sizes and Orientation

The LCBP wayside exhibit design comes in a variety of sizes depending on the message being conveyed. Low-profile horizontal panels (A, B, C, & D) often tell a story or interpret a specific site or feature. Site markers (D) are designed to be part of a series of displays along a thematic trail, such as a nature walk. Upright panels (E) provide practical travel information, safety tips, and illustrations of special destinations.

Panel A is the most commonly used size for interpretive panels. Panel B is specifically designed for a bilingual presentation. Panels A, C, D, & E are designed for one language, however panel E could be adapted to be bilingual. A range of estimated prices is included on page 12.

Fabrication

Panel Fabrication

Working with a contractor, wayside exhibits are fabricated through full-color ink-jet digital imaging onto a high-pressure laminate material made for exterior use. Specially developed printing papers are digitally imaged, then impregnated with melamine resins and a UV resistant over-laminate, and finally pressed with extreme heat and pressure. The LCBP generally orders exhibit panels at 1/8 inch thickness for framed exhibits or 1/2 inch if a frame is not preferred.

Considering cost, new advancements in digital technology, quality of product, and ease of production, the digital print is the clear choice for most. In vandalism tests, high pressured laminates scored well for scratch and cigarette resistance and spray paint and magic marker removal. Most carry a ten-year guarantee.

The LCBP will assist organizations seeking to select a fabricator that best suits their needs by sharing our current information about product lines and costs. A range of estimated costs from various companies is noted in the adjacent table. The LCBP is willing to work with a panel fabricator of an organization's choice, provided the product meets certain quality standards.

The LCBP recommends obtaining exhibit lab tests prior to final product development to ensure color match and layout accuracy.

ESTIMATED PANEL COSTS

Panel Size	1/8 inch	1/2 inch
12x17 inches	\$70 - \$160	\$90 - \$180
18x24	\$130 - \$250	\$180 - \$290
24x36	\$250 - \$400	\$340 - \$470
24x42	\$310 - \$450	\$420 - \$530
36x48	\$490 - \$660	\$670 - \$810

Prices may vary. Costs do not include packaging, shipping, and a lab sample. Plan on adding \$50-\$100 per exhibit for these additional services, depending on size of order. Lead-time: 30-45 days.

Base and Frame Fabrication

The base and frame product the LCBP uses is a proven durable cast aluminum, widely used by the National Park Service. It generally consists of: 1) legs and a backing plate; or 2) legs with a backing plate that frames the panel with a 3/4 inch lip.

Using the frame option, the exhibit panel slides directly into the frame and its backing plate, making it easy to assemble and replace. This frame is attached to one or two legs, depending on the size of the exhibit. The legs are set in concrete.

Panels without frames are directly screwed to a backing plate which is then attached to the legs. The choice is primarily an aesthetic preference, however the frame does make the exhibit a little more durable and difficult to vandalize. While the difference in initial cost is not significant, a 1/2 inch panel will cost more to replace if choosing the option without a frame. Another choice is a railing mount, which requires no legs. In this case the frame and/or a backing plate is attached directly to a railing.

ESTIMATED BASE COSTS

Panel	Base w/o frame	Base w/ frame
12x17 inches	\$150 - \$385	\$190 - \$470
24x18	\$170 - \$385	\$350 - \$470
24x36	\$310 - \$385	\$450 - \$470
24x42	\$330 - \$530	\$460 - \$620
36x48 Upright	N/A	\$490 - \$730
36x48 Double Upright	N/A	\$910 - \$1,450
36x48 Triangular Upright	N/A	\$1,190 - \$2,170
36x48 Triple inline Upright	N/A	\$1,240 - \$2,170

Prices may vary. Shipping may be included, depending on the company. Lead time: 40-45 days. Note: 1/8 inch panels can be used with bases using frames, while bases not using frames require a 1/2 inch panel.

Installation and Maintenance

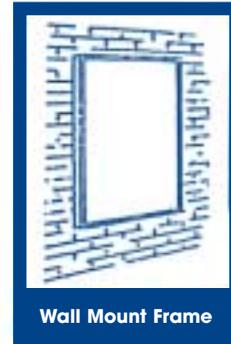
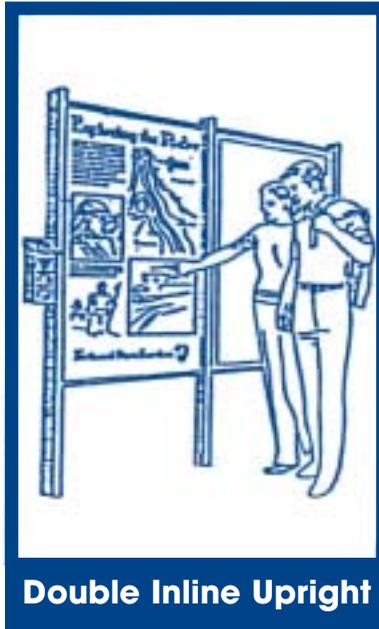
Installation

The site manager is generally responsible for installing wayside exhibits. However, a wayside exhibit team may need to rely on volunteers to accomplish this task.

The LCBP does not install exhibits, although we will guide an organization with technical assistance. Exact locations and positions must be well planned. The project coordinator should visit the site with the site manager to determine the best location and orientation.

Integrate exhibits into the landscape as much as possible. In remote areas, install with as little disturbance to the surface as possible. In not-so-remote areas, wayside exhibits can draw many people. In such cases, locate exhibits on level, hard-surfaced pads to minimize the impact.

Base systems are relatively easy to install. Specific instructions can be obtained from the LCBP or the manufacturer.



Maintenance

After all your hard work, please do not neglect your wayside exhibit. A little maintenance can go a long way to improve the appearance and increase the exhibit's life. Periodic maintenance using the following cleaning tips greatly improves how visitors will view and remember your message and presentation.

Cleaning Tips

- Use a popsicle stick and water (a hose if possible), to clean the weep, or drainage holes, at the bottom of the panel frame so that debris does not collect.
- For simple cleaning, mild soap and water is best. Rinse with clean water after washing. Avoid using abrasive cleaners or acids.
- Graffiti (paint, crayon, felt tip markers) can be removed using an organic solvent, such as *Simple Green*, or similar non-abrasive citrus-based cleaners.

- Very stubborn graffiti may require something stronger, such as mineral spirits. Do not use lacquer thinner or acetone, as they can damage the surface of your panel. Always rinse with clean water.

- Minor blemishes, nicks, marks, or burnishes and very light scratches can be concealed using a polymer based car wax.

- Persistent stains can be removed with a two minute exposure to household bleach. Always rinse with clean water after this procedure.

Getting Started

Contact the LCBP for help in starting the process of developing your wayside exhibit. We are happy to discuss your ideas and to answer any questions that you may have. We look forward to hearing from you soon!