

## Wayfinding:

# Planning and Design at Work

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## Communities at Work

The first publication of the wayfinding series, *Effective Navigation through Your Community: Wayfinding and Signage Systems for Communities*, addressed why and how wayfinding systems can benefit both individuals and communities by making positive first impressions and enhancing the impact of a traveler's decisions. The initial interactions between a person and a place, mediated by wayfinding, can play a pivotal role in recommending a visit to a network of people that may not have considered visiting certain communities. The second publication, *Wayfinding Planning and Design with Communities*, presented steps to help communities plan and design wayfinding projects that fit their needs. This document presents two case studies of communities that are implementing wayfinding projects, examining phases and processes associated with each project.

Communities can learn from one another's successes, challenges, and limitations for going about wayfinding projects. What worked for one community may not always work for another. However, it is also important to note that what did not work for one community may work for another community depending on the context, scale, scope, or support of a community. With this in mind, the following case studies can help identify types of signage, potential locations, and serve as an effective starting point to pursue your own community's wayfinding project, including potential funding sources.

### Downtown Wayfinding Signage Project, Knoxville, Tennessee

The goal of the 2009 wayfinding project in Knoxville, TN, was to support convenient navigation around downtown Knoxville for visitors and residents, while also highlighting its attractions. An earlier study by the East Tennessee Community Design Center in 2007 found that directional signage and pedestrian-oriented kiosks that were installed in 2002 and 2003 were confusing, outdated, poorly maintained, not comprehensive, and lacked consistency in the design, maintenance, and management program. The purpose of the 2009 study was

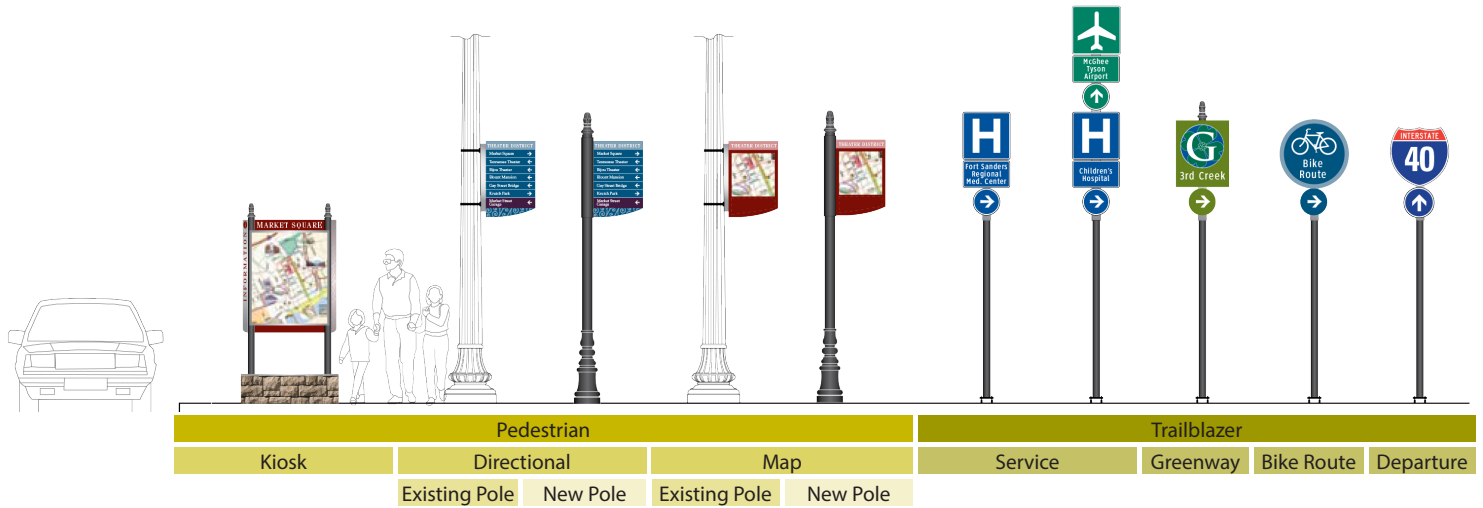
to create a well-designed and consistent system with enhanced pedestrian-scale signage, maps, trailblazer signs, KAT trolley signs, and signs directing automobiles to and from parking garages and major traffic arteries. The city hired MERJE Design to facilitate the public input process, develop a design that included establishing sign locations and to create a manual for maintenance of the signs and overall system. The city and MERJE Design worked with various stakeholder groups that represented city departments, businesses, and districts, where public participation was essential (Figure 1, Table 1).

The city requested the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to include a Downtown Wayfinding program in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to make it eligible for federal highway funding (FHWA). Knoxville received a \$1.2 million grant to implement the Downtown Wayfinding program as a local government guidelines project. The city's wayfinding project included routes, destinations, and districts highlighted with signage along identified routes.

**Table 1.** Downtown Knoxville Wayfinding and Signage Project summary.

Project Name	Downtown Wayfinding Signage Project
Location	Knoxville, Tennessee
Date Designed/ Planned	Plan started February 2009, guidelines produced in 2012 Phase 1: Planning and Design Study Phase 2: Schematic Design and Specifications Phase 3: Fabrication and Implementation
Construction Completed	In progress, project bid 2014
Implementation Funding	\$1.2 Million from TDOT [Local Government Guidelines project (80% FHWA, 20% City)]
Size/Location	Downtown Knoxville, World's Fair Park, Hall of Fame Drive and Volunteer Landing (approximately 0.7 square miles, 425 acres)
Landscape Architect/ Consultant	MERJE Design; Gresham, Smith and Partners
Client/Contact	City of Knoxville
Goal	Convenient navigation in and around downtown, economic development and branding.
Project Background and History	To establish a wayfinding signage system that would be comprehensive and consistent for its residents and visitors in and around downtown. In 2007, the city funded a Pedestrian Wayfinding Study in the Downtown District prepared by The East Tennessee Community Design Center. The recommendations of the study led to the Downtown Knoxville Wayfinding Signage Project which started in 2008 with 3 phases.
Design, Development, Decision Making Processes	The city and MERJE Design worked with various stakeholder groups to gather public input for the signage system. MERJE Design inventoried existing signage and developed guidelines that focused on graphic standards, sign types, placement plans, graphic layout and implementation.
Program Elements	Design of coordinated and complementary types of signs, layout and placement.
Significance or Uniqueness	The comprehensive, strategic and efficient wayfinding program united and clarified paths in and around downtown with fewer signs.

Source: City of Knoxville, 2014; MERJE, 2010



**Figure 1.** Downtown Knoxville Wayfinding and Signage program. Illustrations of coordinated and complementary signage family style. Source: MERJE, 2010, C1

Through this process, the City of Knoxville was able to design a coordinated and complementary system of wayfinding signs, layout, and placement. The comprehensive, strategic and efficient wayfinding program was able to unite and clarify paths in and around downtown with fewer signs and a stronger consistent identity that help visitors recognize where they are and where and how to get to other attractions and services in downtown Knoxville (Figure 1).

### Louisville Loop Wayfinding Master Plan, Louisville, Kentucky

The Louisville Loop Wayfinding Master Plan complements the Louisville Loop Design Guidelines Manual and develops further the visions, ideas, and strategies for the proposed 100-mile shared use path system throughout the Louisville metropolitan region. The wayfinding plan highlights directional and interpretive signs to support the Design Guidelines Manual (Table 2).

The project was partly funded through an anti-obesity effort with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and managed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness. The goal of this wayfinding project is to inform potential users about the Loop path system and its connections throughout area neighborhoods so that the paths can be utilized as everyday routes and encourage physical activity. Ultimately, the project aims to make

**Table 2.** Louisville Loop Wayfinding Master Plan summary.

Project Name	Louisville Loop Wayfinding Master Plan
Location	Louisville, Kentucky
Date Designed/Planned	2012
Construction Completed	In progress
Implementation Funding	Funded as part of the \$7.9 million Louisville Putting Prevention to Work (LPPW) grant (2010-2012)
Size/Location	Louisville Loop is a proposed 100-mile shared-use path, 23 miles completed as of 2011
Client/ Management	City of Louisville/ Louisville Metro Parks
Designers	HNTB Corporation, Environs Inc., Swope Design Group
Goals	Five main goals from promoting health and wellness to connectivity, and reinforcing identity in that all signs are informative, functional, and capture the character of the Louisville Loop
Project Background and History	Catalyzed from the LPPW grant through the US Department of Health and Human Services. The wayfinding project aims to combat obesity issues and promote activity along the Loop.
Design, Development, Decision Making Processes	Community members were incorporated into the decision making process. Three public workshops were held to inform, gather, and share ideas, suggestions, and comments
Program Elements	Uniformity in design layout, materials, and style for signature marker signs, directional signs, trailhead signs, identity signs, mile marker signs and interpretive signs for 5 different regions of Louisville
Significance	The series of wayfinding signs serves to complement and reinforce the Louisville Loop's goals to promote health and wellness, support clearer orientation, direct easier use, highlight and promote connections along the unified recreational trail system and reinforce identity of the Louisville Loop
Limitation	Full completion dependent on the construction of the entire 100-mile trail system
Future Concerns	Cost and time to finish the entire Loop without losing the momentum

**Source:** HNTB Corp et al., 2009; HNTB Corp et al., 2012

the Louisville Loop a user-friendly destination and travel route which can become part of everyone's daily routine. The signage system for the Louisville Loop informs and directs potential users to individually acknowledge their locations in the physical environment along the Loop.



Interpretive Sign (IS)



Mile Marker (MM)

Pedestrian Directional Sign (PDS) Signature Marker (SM)

Trailhead Sign (TH)

**Figure 2.** Louisville Loop Wayfinding System signage family styles in Riverwalk: Lannan Park area  
Aerial Image Source: USDA, FSA, NAIP, 2012

Although the completion date of the Loop is undetermined, the wayfinding plan proposes sign family style elements for the entire city-county by categorizing the Louisville region into five physiographic areas based on the topography, geology, native flora and fauna, and history (Figure 2).

**Conclusion**

The wayfinding projects presented here provide a wide range of ideas that could be considered and extracted for effective and efficient signage systems. The graphic examples conveyed through the case studies represent a range of styles and types of signs that could be adapted to reflect the cultural identity of a particular community. Depending on the size of a community, a coherent combi-

nation of a gateway signs, trailhead signs, and mile markers may be sufficient. For a downtown district, a central kiosk and a couple of directional signs may suffice. Therefore, communities should reference these and other examples for their ideas and design concepts rather than for the specific signage types or dimensions.

If your community is interested in planning or designing a wayfinding system, please contact the author with inquiries.

## References

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*To contact the author or to request technical assistance with wayfinding or community design, visit the CEDIK website: [cedik.ca.uky.edu](http://cedik.ca.uky.edu).*

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