

3.0 WAYFINDING

3.1 Wayfinding Principles

Wayfinding is an indispensable tool for directing travelers to destinations while creating a positive first impression. The term wayfinding was originally coined by Kevin Lynch in his seminal 1960 book *The Image of the City*. Lynch presented the concept that people use a cognitive map to move through their environment to their destination. Wayfinding develops a system to assist travelers in interpreting a map.

Wayfinding systems have been used for many years in institutions such as colleges and corporate headquarters. As it is commonly recognized today, wayfinding helps travelers *find* their way to the destination, in this case Downtown.

In relation to community planning, and specifically to Downtown Washington, the goal of the wayfinding system is to make the journey to Downtown as seamless as possible. By taking a comprehensive approach in developing a wayfinding system it can reinforce the community's unique identity and sense of place. This can be accomplished through four main aspects, controlled and enhanced through appropriate design and building codes:

Architecture:

- Visual clues of buildings, as well as street features, can assist people with their location and the direction of their destination .
- Strong architecture, such as Washington City Hall, St. Francis Borgia Church, Immanuel Lutheran Church, and the Public Safety Building, serve as landmarks and orientation points.
- Buildings themselves have visual aids that draw our eyes to where we expect an entrance or a shop window to be located.



Existing Monument Sign in Downtown Washington.

Sight Lines:

- The motorist will feel most comfortable in maintaining visual contact with his or her destination and will want to make as few directional changes as possible.
- Clean, clear lines of sight at key intersections should be maintained.
- Buildings should not encroach or block these lines.
- Repetitive landscaping and furnishings can enhance and draw the eye down streets; however care must be taken that important navigational landmarks are not obstructed.

Lighting:

- Lighting can be used to accentuate routes and pathways.
- Warmly lit storefronts and entrances draw the eye and provide the customer with information needed to access the business.
- A repetitive line of lighting can be a very effective navigational tool.
- Poor lighting causes missed information and leaves an unsafe impression.

Signage:

- Uniform signage at important decision points is a critical element of Downtown wayfinding.
- Excessive signage will decrease the effectiveness of individual signs. Fewer, easy to read, appropriately placed signs are preferred.



Existing Wayfinding Signage in Downtown Washington. (Washington, Missouri)



Wayfinding Signage (Webster Groves, Missouri)

3.2 Wayfinding Components

Wayfinding systems are made up of components that create an arrival experience into Downtown. Common themed signs types direct travelers to attractions.

The existing wayfinding signs in Downtown Washington, provide direction to numerous attractions and destinations. The wayfinding signs in the Downtown are part of the larger wayfinding system for the City of Washington. The system includes wayfinding signs on the major arterial roads of the city, most of which lead to Downtown.



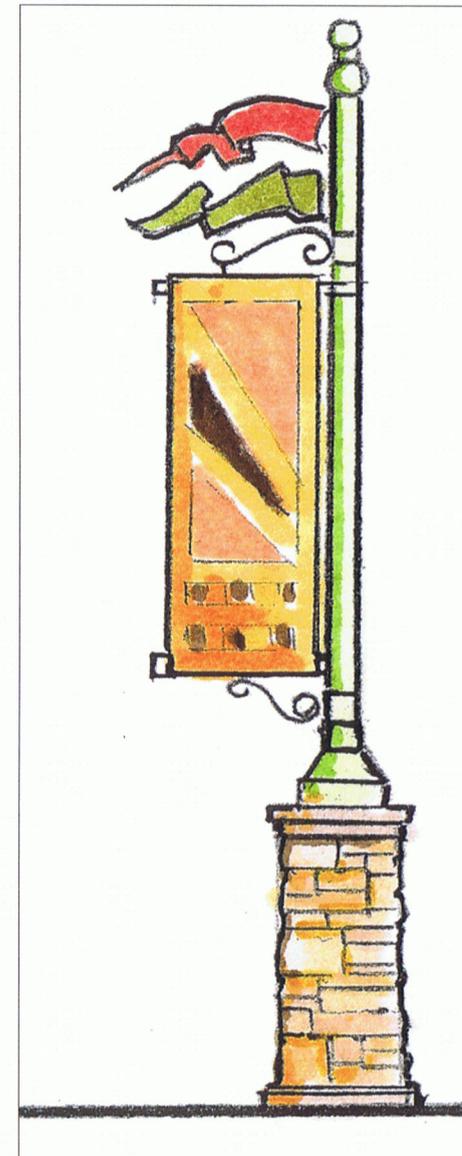
Existing Wayfinding Sign
(Washington, Missouri)

Arterial and local collector streets are typically the location of gateway, historic, historic district, and trailblazing signs. These streets comprise the transportation corridors which focus the traveler into the Downtown. They are discussed in detail as follows:

- Historic District Corridor— The central component and primary focus of the streetscape improvements and wayfinding system. This corridor includes the final approach, as well as main arteries within the historic district. Signage types for this corridor typically include Historical District Gateway and Proximity signs.
- Residential/Commercial Entry Corridor—The areas immediately surrounding Downtown; a secondary focus for streetscape improvements and primary focus for residential improvement programs. Usually contains a small to moderate number of commercial businesses, residential, and converted residential buildings. Signage types for this corridor typically include Trailblazing and Proximity signs.
- Commercial Entry Corridor—Typically the beginning of the wayfinding system for travelers. The corridor consists of commercial and institutional uses. Signs should focus on simple design treatments that are legible from the road. Signage types for this corridor typically include Primary Gateway and Trailblazing signs.

As stated earlier, a successful wayfinding system is made up of many components, including but not limited to these categories of signage:

- Primary Gateway Sign—Serves as a “Welcome” to visitors creating a first impression of the community. The sign should be significant, serving as a landmark.
- Historic District Gateway Sign—Creates a boundary for the Historic District; should be used within the Historic District Corridor. These signs should reflect the size, scale and character of the architecture within the district.



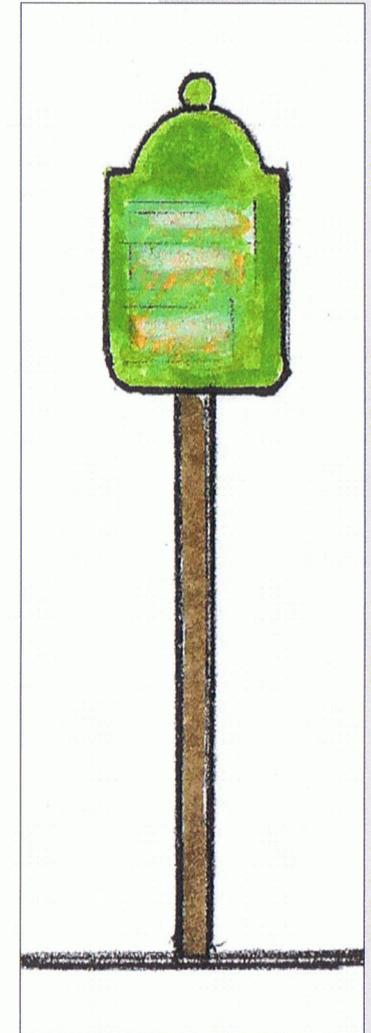
Historic District Gateway Sign

- Trailblazer Sign—Utilitarian purpose combined with unique branding and design elements. Attractions to consider as destinations on Trailblazer Signs include Downtown, Historic Districts, museums, event areas, government offices, parking, colleges/universities and visitor centers. Signs should be located at or near a key transportation node.
- Proximity Signs—In close proximity of attractions, these signs direct visitors to the destination.

All signs and banners included in the wayfinding system should have a simple and uniform design. Above all, the signs need to be brief and easy to read with large type face, appropriate coloring, and adequate character spacing. The wayfinding signs should be unique and stand out in their surroundings. Sign guidelines should be considered using the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).



Trailblazer Sign



Proximity Sign