

The map sample displays a hierarchical ordering of the city's areas, corridors, neighbourhoods, main streets and places of interest. This ordering includes less formalized names, such as those used by BIAs and other groups. A BIA name could, for instance, represent both a main street and the neighbourhood.

A consolidated GIS map base will become an important study asset and the data will form the basis of a citywide Toronto map in Phase Two of the project.

1.3 Case study areas

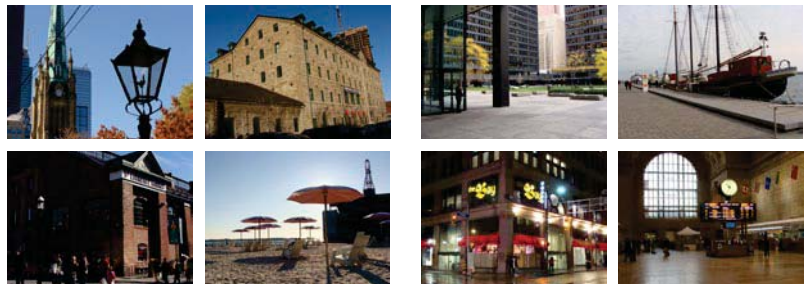
Five case study areas were selected for detailed observation and urban analysis. The areas exhibit many of the city’s typical characteristics that define the quality of legibility and movement.

The case studies identified a diverse range of Toronto’s wayfinding challenges and opportunities. The data collected was used to support development and testing of the wayfinding strategy.

The areas demonstrated many typical characteristics of the city—including barriers, edges, connections, and destinations—to highlight the legibility and walkability of the public realm.

The areas also had to be significant for tourists, transit users, and residents, and to include a concentration of amenities, destinations and activities.

Areas were all of a walkable scale (approx 1.5 km radius). Locations are shown below.



A EAST DOWNTOWN

The Esplanade has a dual role, both as a leisure walk and as a key pedestrian and cycle link from St Lawrence Market to the Distillery District.

Internal and external areas around St Lawrence Market create pleasant spaces that invite people to wander and shop.

High levels of activity to/from on-street and municipal parking was observed around the Distillery District area.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Gardiner Expressway, Lakeshore Drive and railroad underpasses as barriers to the Waterfront.

Construction sites and uninviting sidewalks around development sites.

B DOWNTOWN CENTRE

Pedestrian activity is generated by employees, business visitors, service people and other office-related activities—particularly around the Financial District.

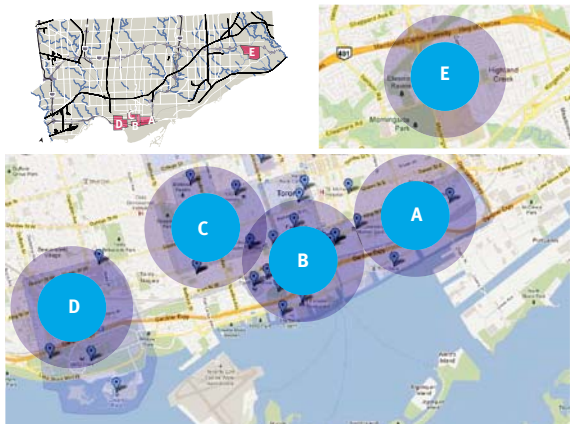
Commuters from Union Station combine with passengers from other transit modes in central downtown resulting in the city’s greatest concentration of transit-related activity.

Retail and leisure activities generate consistently high levels of pedestrian movements on Yonge Street, Dundas Square and the main shopping centres.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Lack of active frontages in the financial centre, with activities and convenience retail happening below grade (PATH).

Connection to waterfront: intimidating underpasses and sidewalks.





It was intended that one or more of these areas would become Pilot Area(s) for Phase Two of this project. See pages 42-43 for more detail on the selected interim Pilot Areas (East Downtown and Morningside).

C QUEEN/SPADINA

Retail activity dominates in Queen Street with a concentration of active frontages and high number of pedestrians. Strong pedestrian activity was also observed in Chinatown.

The Kensington Market and Chinatown areas encourage leisurely strolling around the sometimes narrow sidewalks and stalls.

The area has many individual theatres and cultural institutions that act as destinations generating one-off or infrequent trips from visitors and residents.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Negotiating residential areas (mostly for visitors).
On-street obstacles related to retail/street market activities.

D LIBERTY VILLAGE

Pedestrian activity around Exhibition Place is limited to special events and sports venues—otherwise activity is almost exclusively car dominated. The area is a destination, not a link, so it feels abandoned when not in use.

Commuting activity was observed to/from GO Exhibition Stop and from the Liberty Village area.

The area has continuous, if not intense, pedestrian traffic generated by local retail. (weekday observation)

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

The railroad separates Liberty Village from West Queen West.
Long walk distances between areas of interest.

E MORNINGSIDE/MILITARY TRAIL

Pedestrian activity around the residential area is mainly practical trips to/from main streets, bus stops, and local destinations such as schools.

Students generate much of the walking activity to/from around the campus. This includes movements from local parking lots and bus stops.

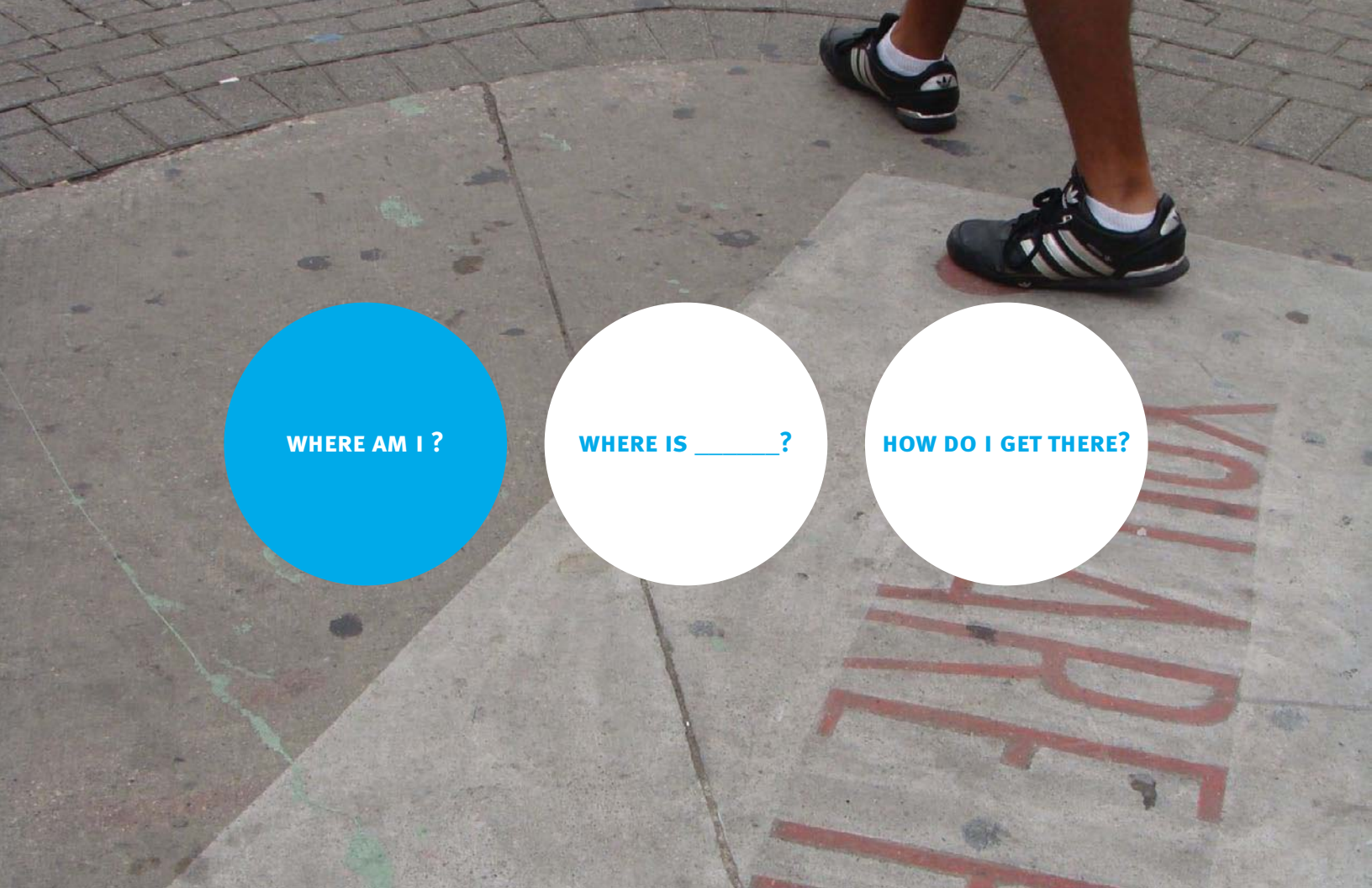
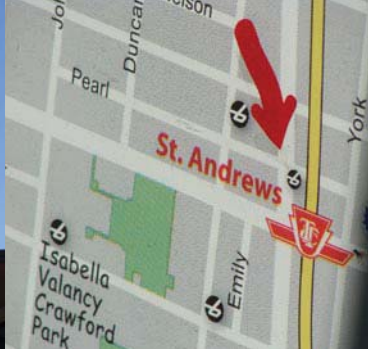
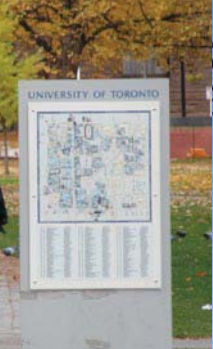
Leisure walking and dog walking were observed in residential areas and local parks.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

Non-existent sidewalks.
Long walking distances.



WHERE AM I ?



WHERE AM I ?

WHERE IS _____ ?

HOW DO I GET THERE?

1.4 Wayfinding opportunities

The nature of the city’s street layout, together with the many urban and natural characteristics that are particular to Toronto, provide a generous resource to explore and incorporate in a formal wayfinding system.

ORIENTATION

The CN Tower and downtown highrises provide intuitive wayfinding reference points from much of central Toronto.

Definition of the city’s southern edge by Lake Ontario along with unobstructed views to the downtown combine to aid pedestrian orientation and understanding of walk distances.

The outer highrises pin-point more remote areas for walkers with greater local knowledge—particularly along the Yonge corridor comprising Deer Park/St Clair, Eglinton Ave/ Uptown Yonge, North York/Willowdale.

The highrises and flat/clear views offset Toronto’s lack of distinctive natural features such as numerous hills.

CLEAR BOUNDARIES

The Lake Ontario shore limits the city’s southern edge and defines its layout. Toronto’s street grid acknowledges this feature and is laid-out mostly parallel and perpendicular to it resulting in a street grid that is almost exactly aligned N.S.E.W. Elevated highways—such Gardiner Expressway and Macdonald-Cartier Freeway (401)—are clearly visible and act as distinctive landmarks aiding mental mapping.

Natural features, such as the Humber and Don valleys, run mostly north to south and delimit central Toronto. Boundaries with the wider GTA are less obvious. A downside of these strong edges is that they can form perceptual barriers to movement.

STATEMENT BUILDINGS

Toronto has many civic and cultural buildings with bold architectural features that make them recognizable city-wide and as local reference points.

Recognizable landmarks are an important asset for the construction of a wayfinding strategy and help users to build their mental map of the city.

STREET NAMES / CORRIDORS

Many streets in Toronto, not only Yonge “the longest street in the world”, run for miles in the same general direction and—more importantly— retain the same names. On-street, roads are generally well labelled and form links for short pedestrian trips as well as longer car/transit/streetcar journeys.

NEIGHBOURHOODS / BIAS

Neighbourhood and BIA names and logos are incorporated across street name plates, signs and banners, as well as less obvious street furniture such as litter bins and newspaper dispensers, making it relatively easy to know the names of places when walking in central Toronto.

The cultural heritage of neighbourhoods and formal BIA initiatives have also shaped the urban landscape, making many places in Toronto instantly recognizable.

Institutional districts are also well labelled and contribute to a network of recognizable, named areas. There would appear to be minimal conflict between historical, BIAs and “new” names.



1.5 Streetscape & wayfinding

Toronto has a profusion of formal and informal signage and information systems. From humble road signs to interactive booths, all of these contribute to people’s understanding of the city with varying levels of success.

ROAD SIGNS



Blue street name plates are consistently positioned at intersections.



Street names provide drivers and pedestrian with predictable locational information.



Cycle routes form part of a numbered route system and are signified by blue plates.



Road signs that direct people to destinations are hard to find.



The few observed copy the colour scheme but without adhering to a standard layout.

TRADITIONAL STREET NAMES PLATES



A standardization process is gradually replacing older name plates, including traditional “acorns”.

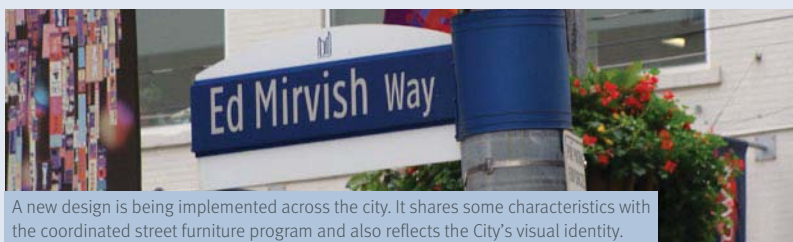


Acorn signs were traditionally personalized to reflect the identities of neighbourhoods and BIAs.



Forming part of a coordinated strategy to break district into smaller quarters in In Old Town Toronto.

NEW STREET NAMES PLATES



A new design is being implemented across the city. It shares some characteristics with the coordinated street furniture program and also reflects the City’s visual identity.



The new design retains opportunities to personalize the plates.

BANNERS



Banners on lighting columns are common, serving both wayfinding and advertising.



Cultural and educational institutions use banners in their immediate surroundings.



Banners are also used to advertise events or simply as advertising.

Streetscape & Wayfinding



Reshaping the city's image through the installation of contemporary urban furniture.



The street furniture products share a common material and colour palette creating a consistent feel and coordinated appearance.

COORDINATED STREET FURNITURE PROGRAM



The design proven impractical.



The original design was abandoned and a revised design has recently been launched.



A street map of central Toronto and a list of key destinations was installed on the unit.

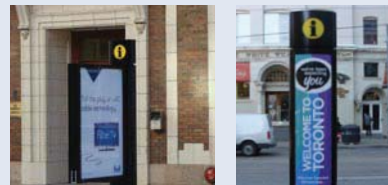
INFO TO GO (PROTOTYPE)



The new info pillar incorporates two advertising panels with a map case facing the sidewalk.



The information function is advertised by a yellow circle with an "i" that acts as a beacon.



INFO PILLAR



Discovery Walk boards include a map showing designated routes around a given area.

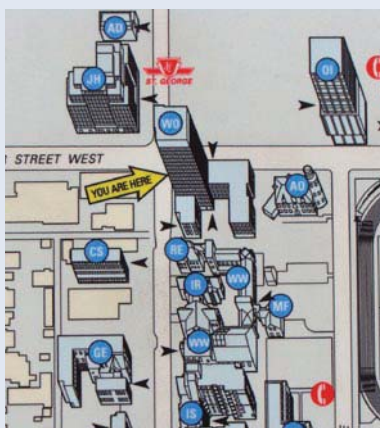


The boards are reinforced on-street by directional discs and markers.

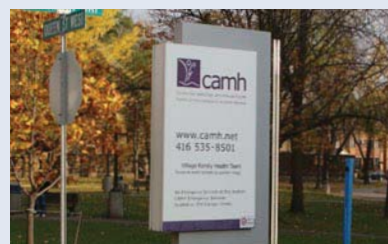


Although visually related to the boards, these signs may be misinterpreted as road signs.

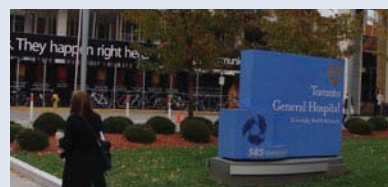
DISCOVERY WALK(S)



An example of good practice, the University of Toronto wayfinding system is delivered across a range of signing structures combining permanent and semi-permanent strategies.



INSTITUTIONAL



Many health institutions provide distinctive wayfinding for their customers.

Streetscape & Wayfinding

BIAS
(EXAMPLES
OF SIGNAGE
OTHER THAN
STREET NAME
PLATES)



RETAIL
COMPLEXES



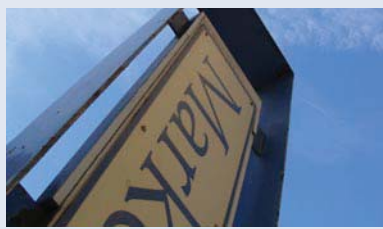
ONTARIO /
TORONTO
HERITAGE



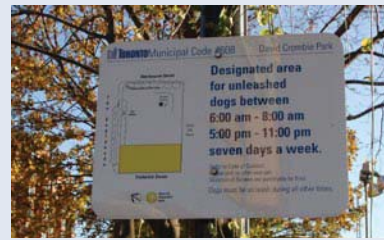
PARKS



LEGACY -
PARKS AND
RECREATION



Streetscape & Wayfinding



STATUTORY



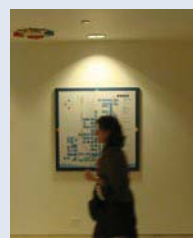
TTC SUBWAY



TTC STOPS



BIXI



PATH

1.6 Existing systems - gaps

Extensive site visits and observation of user behaviours identified four important gaps in Toronto’s current wayfinding—above all, that current systems are sporadic and fragmented, lacking integration and coherence.

CONTINUITY

Wayfinding in Toronto, other than street names, is sporadic and fragmented—it does not operate as a system or a network.

Systems overlap haphazardly without any obvious coherence. While some systems cover a definable area (PATH, TTC, Parks), others lack a clear extension or boundary. Central Downtown has a profusion of wayfinding systems with no underlying strategy.



CONSISTENCY

The use of material, location, finish and general appearance of signs is varied and lacks consistency.

Wayfinding structures located in right-of-ways may comply with City policy yet often fail to harmonize with their surrounding built environment.

The Coordinated Street Furniture program provides a consistent approach to location, material and look & feel for the various products installed on-street. Such an approach is financially and aesthetically efficient.

Unfortunately the program’s wayfinding component (INFOTOGO) does not fully address local wayfinding needs.



CONNECTIVITY

Most of Toronto’s wayfinding systems are self referential, rarely connecting with non-proprietary systems or adjacent areas.

The majority of the systems deliver point specific information (you are here, this area/place is...), but fail to provide the context for a given location in relation to the city or its immediate surroundings.

Some systems that utilize maps do incorporate contextual information on the immediate surroundings; however, their geographic extent is limited and it is very rare to find directions or directional signs for pedestrians.



ACCESSIBILITY

Most information systems have considerable room for improvement when it comes to physical and cognitive accessibility.

Location, height, reading angle and material often combine to compromise the ability of the signs to be read—let alone touched.

Information is predominantly visual and is largely unavailable in alternative media.



1.7 What users look for?

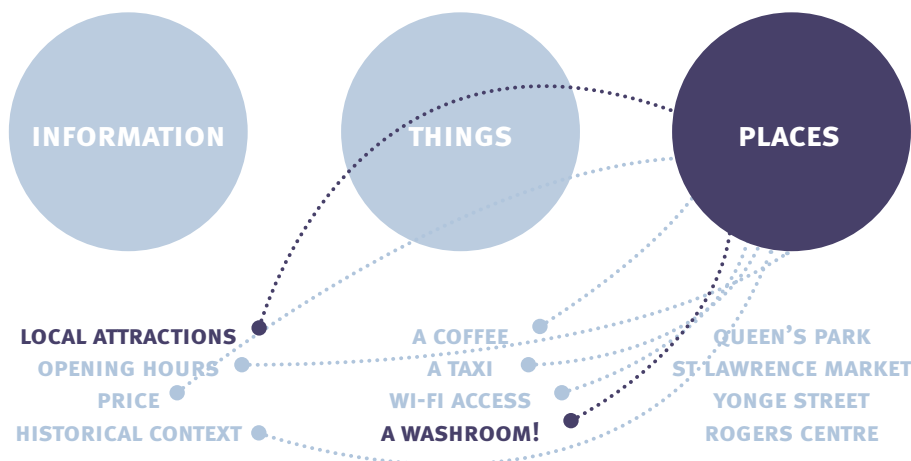
Previous experience of city and transit wayfinding systems demonstrates that user needs exceed the limitations of static signage and that gaps are commonly satisfied by a mix of information delivered across multiple touch points.

User needs and requests need to be “translated” into places in order to be direction-able. Not all information needs are locational, on most occasions we know what we want but not where to find it. Toronto has numerous communication channels that provide information to residents and visitors. Wayfinding terminology (naming) must be consistent across all these channels. Information can be more, or less, appropriate on different wayfinding structures. What may be redundant in one place, may be a landmark in another. Information that is likely to change frequently should be channelled through less permanent media.

KEY USER PROFILES

For the wayfinding system to work, it must be able to support the movement needs of all—including visitors.

Understanding how different groups navigate and what type of information they need forms a fundamental part of the wayfinding strategy. Three constituency groups (tourists, residents and transit users) were identified and referenced through the study.



1.8 Best Practice Review

A review of international wayfinding systems covering wayfinding strategies, signage elements, content, system identity, funding, delivery and evaluation models was undertaken to identify considerations that were relevant to Toronto.

New York, USA

The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) is working on a project to deliver a comprehensive pedestrian information system to sidewalks in key New York neighbourhoods. The initiative is seen as a critical first step in making New York City's world-class streets easier to navigate and even more accessible for New Yorkers and visitors.



Lower Manhattan existing system



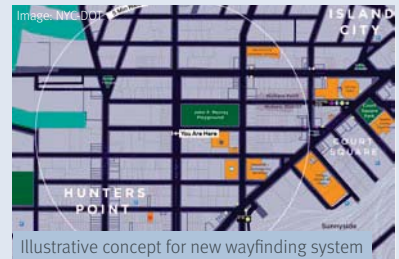
Lower Manhattan wayfinding map



Illustrative concept for new wayfinding system



Lower Manhattan directional post



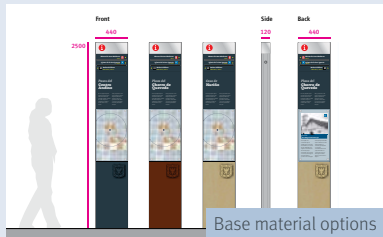
Illustrative concept for new wayfinding system

Bogotá, Colombia

Bogotá's Tourism Signing Plan is a pedestrian and vehicular wayfinding system to enhance the experience of national and international tourists in the city.



Waymarker



Base material options



Illustrative placement

Legible Bristol, UK

The first part of the Bristol Legible City initiative was a pedestrian wayfinding system in Bristol City Centre. This was the most comprehensive system in Europe at the time of implementation and was designed specifically to encourage walking and to aid wayfinding in a complex city centre environment.

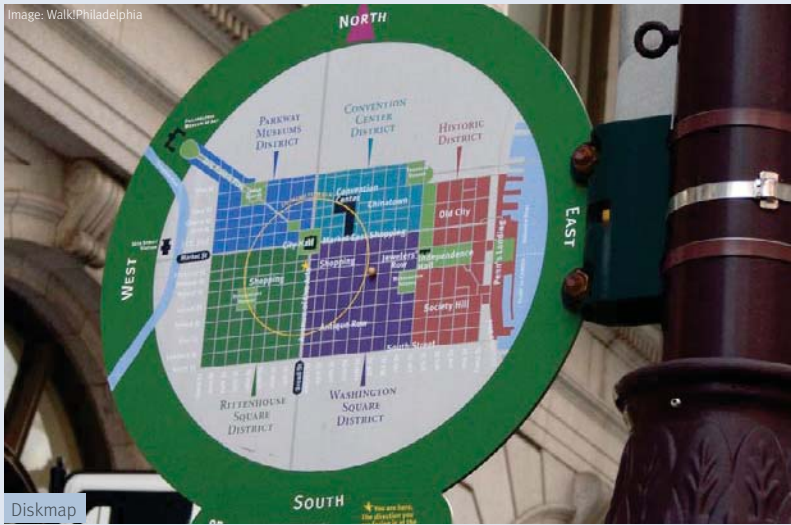


Combined totem and fingerpost

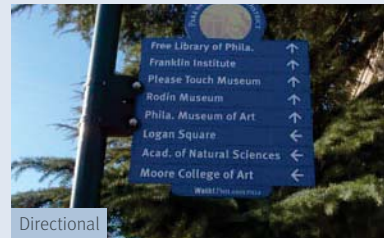


Context and local area maps

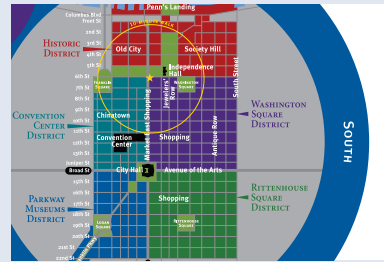
Image: Walk!Philadelphia



Diskmap



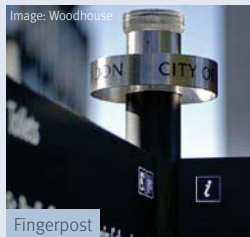
Directional



Walk!Philadelphia, USA Conceived as part of a \$26 million Streetscape Improvement Project, Walk!Philadelphia is the largest comprehensive pedestrian sign system in North America. It consists of two major components: diskmaps and directional. The design strategy reflects a “district approach” where the downtown area is organized as 5 colour-coded districts. This approach is favoured by many cities in the US.



Gateway Map



Fingerpost

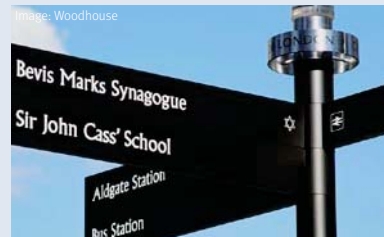
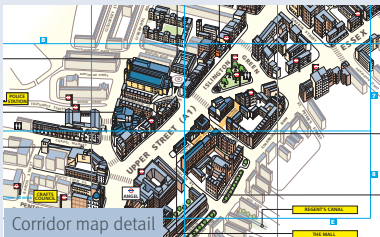


Image: Woodhouse

City of London (local), UK. A review of the City's wayfinding led to the development of a new wayfinding strategy based on a high-quality bespoke signs that reached the £1 million mark (CAD \$1,6 million).



Corridor map detail



Garden entrances sign



Interpretative sign

Image: Wood & Wood

Islington (local), London, UK. This local authority-funded wayfinding pilot showcased the quality of the products and generated financial support from local businesses and other privates.

Image: Legible London / TfL



Narrow map totem



Map on underground exits



Wide map totem

Image: Legible London / TfL

Legible London (citywide) - UK Legible London was designed to provide predictable and consistent on-street pedestrian signing across all of London's boroughs to encourage more people to walk. An evaluation at various stages of Legible London's implementation demonstrates broad support for the system.

1.9 Consultation

A number of outreach activities and events were held with stakeholders and the general public to gain local insight and build support for the project.

* A full stakeholder consultation list (workshop, interview, and open house attendants) can be found in the appendix at the end of this document.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews were undertaken with a broad range of stakeholders from the community including: residents, associations, agencies, businesses, BIAs, and cultural institutions.* The objective was for early identification of issues, opportunities, and challenges across a range of the city’s stakeholders. The interviews also provided an opportunity to build a dialogue with stakeholders related to wayfinding in Toronto aimed to generate interest and support for the project.

“the system must be sustainable, accessible, and inclusive”

“the system should consider all modes of transportation”

“we need a map that everybody can recognize... and build upon”

“there should be opportunities for others to contribute to the wayfinding system... BIAs, PanAM,... and to have a legacy”

“wayfinding should work for all... use pictograms”

“we need to enhance both: a city identity and a neighbourhood identity”

“wayfinding should motivate people to walk... to discover the city... parks, events, museums... the neighbourhoods”

“Embrace technology... QR codes... digital markers... apps”

STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP

A stakeholder workshop was held half-way through the study process to identify and agree on key objectives and principles to guide the development of the wayfinding system strategy. Participants were divided into 5 groups, corresponding to 5 case study areas:

- Downtown East (Old Town, St Lawrence, East Bayfront, Distillery District)
- Central Downtown (Union Station, Financial District, Yonge St, Queen St)
- Kings/Spadina (Chinatown, Fashion District, Queen St West , Entertainment District)
- West Downtown (Liberty Village, Art and Design District, Exhibition Place)
- Morningside (Military Trail, University of Toronto Scarborough Campus)

Localized wayfinding issues and opportunities were discussed for each case study area. These were then extrapolated to identify wayfinding strategies and principles that could be applied city-wide.

