

WAYFINDING SYSTEM
STRATEGY FOR TORONTO
PARKS & TRAILS (PHASE ONE)



Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy

FINAL REPORT
DECEMBER 2014



The City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation team has initiated an ambitious project to improve wayfinding across the City parklands.

The project aim is to implement a unified wayfinding system for parks and trails that provides consistent identification, orientation and navigation across parklands.

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Introduction

With more than 1,600 public parks and 600 km of trails Toronto's parks network covers a substantial 13% of the City's land area and is one of its greatest assets - essential to improving residents' quality of life.

The City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PF&R) team has initiated an ambitious project to improve wayfinding across the City parklands. The project aim is to implement a unified wayfinding system for parks and trails that:

- Provides consistent identification, orientation and navigation in and around parks and trails;
- Encourages visiting, exploring and appreciation of Toronto's natural assets;
- Serves all park and trail users regardless of their abilities;
- Reduces clutter and redundant infrastructure on parks and trails, thereby enhancing the natural environment; and
- Is economically sustainable and viable in the long term.

The project builds on the Toronto 360 (TO360) Wayfinding Strategy; an initiative to enhance pedestrian wayfinding around the city and improve connections between all transportation modes.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the outcomes of the Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding (Phase One) study, which began in January 2014. The study aimed to establish a wayfinding strategy and design framework, and to provide strategic direction for subsequent implementation.

The report is structured as three sections, plus an introduction.

- **Introduction** briefly describes the study objectives and policy context.
- **Section 1 "Understanding"** summarizes the findings from on-site observations, including gaps and opportunities. It incorporates an overview of the challenges, a brief review of international best practices, and the results of stakeholder outreach activities.
- **Section 2 "Design principles"** describes the design framework and proposed system components, including an indicative sign family, digital components, placemaking considerations and integration with other signage and information systems.
- **Section 3 "Delivery"** describes the proposed pilot scheme set in the Lower Don Valley, a high-level project plan and budget implications.

Further information on the project process, consultation reports and materials, and presentations can be found on the project website.

Wayfinding in Toronto

Wayfinding encompasses all the ways in which people understand their surroundings and navigate from place to place. Wayfinding is more than signs - it also includes names, landmarks, conventions, maps and new media.

City wayfinding relates to the built and the natural environment and makes streets, neighbourhoods, and the city more 'legible', helping people to find their way. Wayfinding is more than signs—it includes names, maps, new media, and elements of the public realm such as lighting, street furniture and public art. Many cities such as London, New York, Bogota, Vancouver and Moscow have recently developed wayfinding strategies in response to significant transportation challenges and/or major events such as the Olympics. The successful implementation of unified wayfinding systems is proven to deliver significant benefits to residents, businesses, and tourists.

TO360 WAYFINDING STRATEGY

In 2011 the City of Toronto launched the Toronto 360 (TO360) Wayfinding Strategy to develop a unified multi-modal wayfinding system for the city.

The Strategy is a three-phase process:

- **Phase One (2011-2012):** develop guiding principles, themes, and a conceptual design for the system.
- **Phase Two (2014-2015):** detailed design, implementation and evaluation of a pilot scheme in the Financial District.
- **Phase Three (2016 and beyond):** creation of final design guidelines and city-wide implementation rollout.

TORONTO PARKS & TRAILS WAYFINDING STRATEGY

The Toronto Parks & Trails (TP&T) Wayfinding Strategy focus is on improving wayfinding in parklands managed by the City of Toronto.

The TP&T strategy is also a three-phase process:

- **Phase One (2014 - this report):** establish a design framework and provide strategic direction for subsequent phases.
- **Phase Two (2015):** detailed design, implementation and evaluation of a Pilot scheme.
- **Phase Three (2016 and beyond):** creation of final design guidelines and city-wide rollout.

The core objective of Phase One was to interpret and extend the TO360 wayfinding strategy and design principles to develop a common language for wayfinding to address the needs of park and trail users.

Main activities included:

- Background research of current and planned policy and signage initiatives;
- Interviews with over 20 stakeholders and special interest groups;
- Visual audits of eight case study parkland types across Toronto;
- Review of international examples;
- Pop-up consultation events in four locations to garner initial feedback from park users;
- Concept design for a family of signs, including function, content and placement; and
- Definition of a Pilot Scheme for Phase Two.

Key objectives

Parklands across the city serve as landmarks, destinations, and connectors. They are important to pedestrian and cycle movements –both generating and facilitating trips. The project is articulated around five key objectives.



IDENTIFICATION, ORIENTATION AND NAVIGATION

Provide consistent identification, orientation and navigation in and around parks and trails – including connections to/from the city by all modes of transportation.

ENCOURAGE VISITING, EXPLORING AND APPRECIATION

The parkland context provides an opportunity to promote interaction with heritage and conservation, flora and fauna –resulting in better appreciation of Toronto’s heritage and natural assets.

RAISE AWARENESS OF WHAT PARKS HAVE TO OFFER

Promote the use of parks and trails for physical activity, general recreation and relaxation and also facilitate their use as community hubs.

IMPROVE PERCEPTION OF PARK USER SAFETY

Address safety concerns at all levels including warning of hazards, improved emergency information, pedestrian/cycle conflict management, and safe park and trail access for users of all abilities.

IMPROVE CONFIDENCE TO WALK/EXPLORE

Physical and psychological barriers and a frequent overestimation of walk distances/times have been identified as some of the main deterrents for walking and exploration.

Directional policy & related projects

Various studies and related projects have highlighted the need for a unified wayfinding system for Toronto. The solution needs to adhere to existing policies, in particular those related to design guidelines and standards.

A policy review identified the objectives and strategies that underpin current wayfinding-related initiatives in Toronto.

Over a dozen policy and planning documents were reviewed and can be aggregated into a hierarchy of two categories:

Directional policy: provides guiding policy direction for wayfinding and includes:

- Parks Plan (2013-2017)
- Toronto Walking Strategy
- Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy (Phase 1 - Principles)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA, 2005) and City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (2004)
- Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines (Draft)
- Toronto Safer City Guidelines

Related Projects: includes relevant projects, studies, and policy with specific wayfinding and signage strategies. The review included:

- Heritage Toronto Signs
- Pan Am Path
- Emergency Services wayfinding in parks
- Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy (Phase 2 - Design and pilot project implementation)
- Waterfront Trail
- Toronto Island Disc Golf
- Discovery Walks

Initial proposals to integrate with these and other existing and planned sign systems are included on page 38.



PARKS PLAN (2013-2017)

The Parks Plan will guide PF&R's delivery of services between 2013-2017. The Plan recognizes the role of parks in offering

accessible outdoor leisure, recreation, and transportation routes that make Toronto an attractive place to live, work and visit. The plan balances encouraging public use and involvement in the park, while preserving parks for future generations.

Issues addressed in the Parks Plan that are relevant to the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy include:

- A growing and increasingly diverse population means more users, and more competition for use of limited park space;
- High demand for community involvement in park programming, design and decision making;
- Increasing involvement of partners and volunteers;
- Need to protect environmentally sensitive areas, and to preserve parks for future generations;
- The requirement to adapt facilities and services to comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act; and
- Need for data collection to provide consistent information on park use.

The TP&T Wayfinding Strategy should consider the importance of community involvement in developing, implementing and securing a parks wayfinding system.



TORONTO WALKING STRATEGY

The Walking Strategy is supported by a number of other policies such as the Official Plan, the

Toronto Pedestrian Charter, International Charter for Walking, and other guidelines and programs, such as the Vibrant Streets policy. The walkable Toronto concept builds on a number of policies and documents that support walkable communities and the creation of urban environments that support increased pedestrian activity.

Objectives of the Walking Strategy of particular relevance to the development of the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy include:

- To support and nurture a culture of walking throughout the city;
- For all city sidewalks and walkways to be clear, accessible and easy to navigate;
- For public and private city building projects to provide opportunities to create a high-quality walking environment;
- To make walking easy and enjoyable through provision of tools for navigating the city on foot, such as signage and maps;
- To coordinate pedestrian-focused projects and initiatives across city divisions and agencies; and
- To transform areas poorly designed for walking, neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood, into places where people want to walk.



TORONTO 360 WAYFINDING STRATEGY

The Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy set out a design framework to inform the

implementation of a multi-modal wayfinding system in Toronto. The long-term vision is to provide the city with consistent wayfinding, and to enable project partners to adopt the principles for their own schemes. The strategy also aims to influence the city's urban design to support intuitive wayfinding and movement.

Objectives from this strategy that are relevant to the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy include:

- Encourage exploration, wandering and discovery: wayfinding provides the tools for people to rediscover the city and to 'get lost' in the knowledge that they will find their way back; and
- Build confidence and trust to walk.

The TP&T Wayfinding Strategy should seek to integrate with the Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy where possible to create a seamless wayfinding system across the city.

AODA

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) establishes a regulatory framework for accessibility. These regulations apply to Toronto parks as public spaces. The Act lays out mandatory standards on accessibility in all areas of daily life. Public spaces must meet AODA standards for new construction and renovations. While many AODA policies relating to the design of public spaces do not directly affect deliverables of the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy, these policies do provide insight into barriers to accessibility in parks and can help inform signage and wayfinding to mitigate these barriers. Policies relevant to the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy include:

As a minimum requirement, signage for new or redeveloped recreational trails must be placed at each trail head and provide the following information to all trail users:

- Trail length
- Surface type on the trail
- Average and minimum trail width
- Average and maximum running slope
- Average and maximum cross slope, and
- Location of amenities, where provided.

A trail head refers to a point of access to a trail. Trail heads are commonly located close to a sidewalk or parking area. Organizations must identify which entrance/exit points to a recreational trail are trail heads to determine where the signage requirements will apply.

To help people with low or no vision and make the signage easier to read, the text on the signage must:

- Have high tonal contrast with its background, and
- Use a sans serif font for its characters.

Consultation with Toronto's accessibility groups is a requirement for all new or redevelopment projects.

TORONTO MULTI-USE TRAIL DESIGN GUIDELINES (DRAFT)

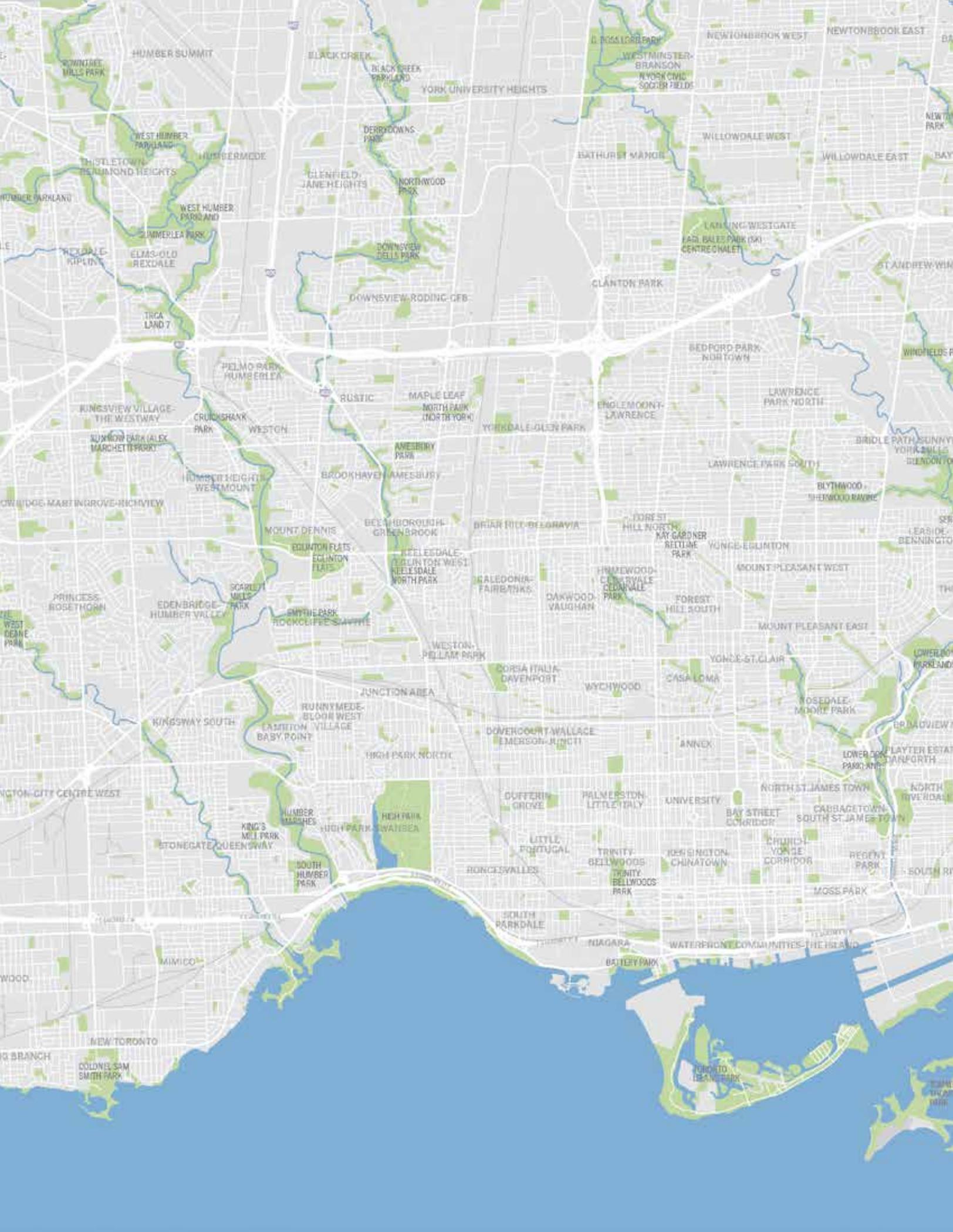
The Toronto Multi-Use Trail Design Guidelines have been developed to direct design of the Toronto off-road trail network. Guiding Principles that are relevant to this strategy include:

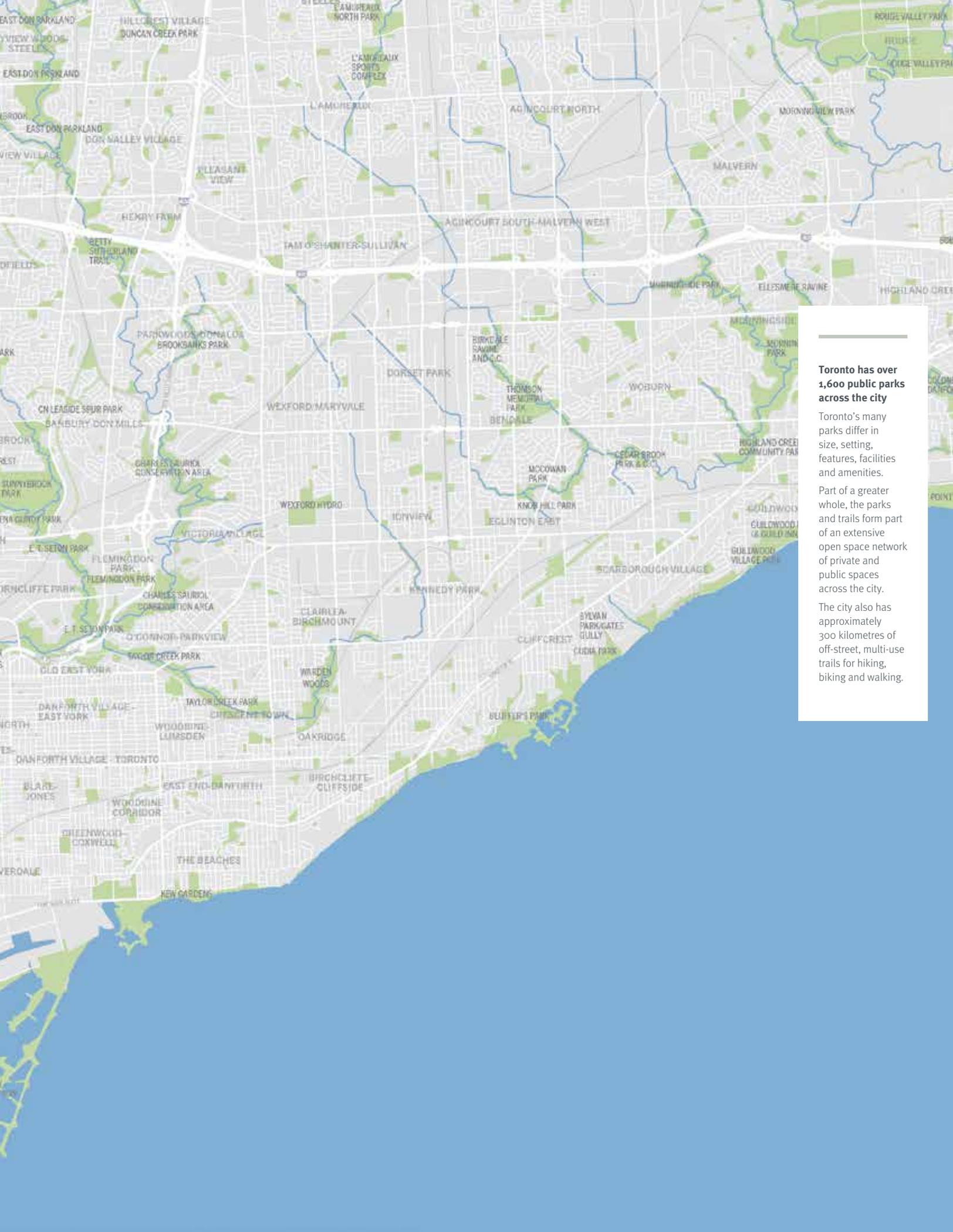
- **Consistency and excellence:** trails need to be consistently designed, constructed, and maintained, and to exceed existing best practice thresholds;
- **Accessibility:** all people are welcome on Toronto's Multi-Use Trails, regardless of ability; and
- **Sustainability:** design, construction and maintenance shall be as sustainable as possible.

TORONTO SAFER CITY GUIDELINES

This document contains a great deal of information regarding best practices for creating safer public spaces, including parks. The Neighbourhood Parks and Playground section specifically refers to signage content such as park identification, location of facilities, identification of more/less isolated paths, how help can be found, and reporting of maintenance problems.

1 Understanding





Toronto has over 1,600 public parks across the city

Toronto's many parks differ in size, setting, features, facilities and amenities.

Part of a greater whole, the parks and trails form part of an extensive open space network of private and public spaces across the city.

The city also has approximately 300 kilometres of off-street, multi-use trails for hiking, biking and walking.

Case study areas

Eight case study parkland areas were selected for detailed observation. The areas exhibit many of Toronto parks typical characteristics and are representative of different settings and scales, park classifications and activities.

The case studies identified a diverse range of Toronto park and trail wayfinding challenges and opportunities. The data collected was used to inform development and testing of the TP&T wayfinding strategy. Observations focused on the following considerations:

- Getting there (information from transit, bus, parking);
- Gateways (how do you know you are there);
- Understanding (welcome, context, park function/role, features, areas);
- Moving around, navigating the parks (washrooms, sport facilities);
- Activities (sports, playgrounds, commuter cycling, dog walking);
- Regulatory signs;
- Interpretation (places, views, flora & fauna, animal life, heritage); and
- Getting away (connecting back to transit/other parks).

Observations were initially made during early April with sites still recovering from a harsh winter and experiencing low level of public activity. Many sites were therefore revisited during spring.



CS1 HUMBER ARBORETUM

PARK NAME

Humber Arboretum

RATIONALE

Large city park.

Tri-party agreement (various stakeholders, wayfinding systems, branding), connected to the Humber Trail, Discovery Walk, natural environment trail improvements, concept master plan for improvements to a portion of the park completed in 2013.

CS2 GARRISON CREEK

PARK NAMES

Christie Pits, Bickford Park, Art Eggleton Park, Trinity Bellwoods

RATIONALE

Various district, community and neighbourhood parks connected via Garrison Creek Discovery Walk.

Trinity Bellwoods is an example of an urban community park which is becoming a more attractive destination due to its success as a community facility and is being sought out beyond the local community.



CS3 RIVERDALE AREA

TRAIL AND PARK NAMES
Lower Don Trail, Riverdale Park East, Riverdale Park West

RATIONALE
Lower Don Trail is part of Pan Am Path route, connections to nearby parks and trails, multiple naming conventions, Discovery Walk.

BACKGROUND INFO
Corktown Commons Plan (2010); Connecting Trails, Communities and the Brickworks in the Lower Don (2011); Lower Don Trail Access, Environment & Art Master Plan (2013).

CS4 CEDAR RIDGE AREA

PARK NAME
Cedar Ridge Park

RATIONALE
Good example of natural surface trails, connection to Morningside Park, cultural facility on site.

BACKGROUND INFO
Cedar Ridge Trail Conceptual Design (2014), implementation scheduled for 2014-2015.

CS5 EGLINTON FLATS AREA

PARK NAMES
Eglinton Flats

RATIONALE
Confusing parkland on all four quadrants of Jane/Eglinton (northwest and southeast are both named Eglinton Flats).



CS6 DOWNTOWN PARKS

PARK NAMES

Roundhouse Park, Cloud Gardens, Berczy Park, Sculpture Garden Parkette

RATIONALE

Roundhouse Park is surrounded by major landmarks & nearby attractions, interface with TO360 wayfinding system. Cloud Gardens represents the urban context and Berczy Park is being redeveloped. Sculpture Garden Parkette is a small urban park with temporary artwork exhibitions.

CS7 WOODBINE PARKS

TRAIL AND PARK NAMES

Martin Goodman Trail, Woodbine Park, Ashbridges Bay Park, Pump House Park

RATIONALE

Woodbine Parks area is an example of waterfront and beach setting and includes the multi-use Martin Goodman Trail (Waterfront Trail).

BACKGROUND INFO

Improving Safety and Awareness on the Martin Goodman Trail: map, signage and markings (implemented in 2012).

CS8 SENTINEL PARK AREA

PARK NAMES

Sentinel Park, Derrydowns Park

RATIONALE

Sentinel Park is poorly connected to nearby Derrydowns Park (selected for geographic diversity). Derrydowns Park was observed only for connections and access to and from Sentinel Park.

Existing conditions

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.



EXISTING MUNICIPAL SIGNAGE IN PARKS AND TRAILS

Toronto already has a municipal park signage system in place. Its primary functions are to identify the park (name and address), to encourage positive/discourage negative behaviors, and enforce by-laws. These signs are visually consistent with the City of Toronto’s corporate identity program and can be easily related back to other municipal signage such as Fire Stations, Emergency Services, and Libraries. The majority of the signs show some level of deterioration due to:

- **Weather:** signs of poor water-proofing;
- **Sun and light exposure:** faded graphics and colours; and
- **Age:** natural deterioration of timber and finishing.

Although the current system has been consistently implemented across the city, many redundant, duplicated, and outdated legacy municipal signs remain. Some of these can be traced back to pre-amalgamated Toronto and many show signs of poor or no maintenance over time – including graffiti, rust, fading, and in some cases, structural issues.

DISCOVERY WALKS

Discovery Walks is a program of self-guided walks that link city ravines, parks, gardens, beaches and neighbourhoods.

Discovery Walk trailhead panels offer an overview of the walk and surrounding area. Most signs are faded and poorly maintained – making them unattractive and difficult to read. Some signs are in poor structural condition.

Discovery Walk discs provide route confirmation within parks and on-street. Discs have no route identification or destinations and are often installed in pairs of logo and directional arrow.



MULTI-USE TRAILS

Various standard municipal and customized signs can be found on multi-use trails such as the Lower Don Trail and along the waterfront. Signage is focused on route identification, exits, destinations, and distances, as well as messaging on trail etiquette.

Signage systems include:

- Multi use recreational trail signage,
- Bikeway Network Wayfinding Signage,
- Martin Goodman Trail,
- Waterfront Trail (regional), and
- Trans Canada Trail (national).



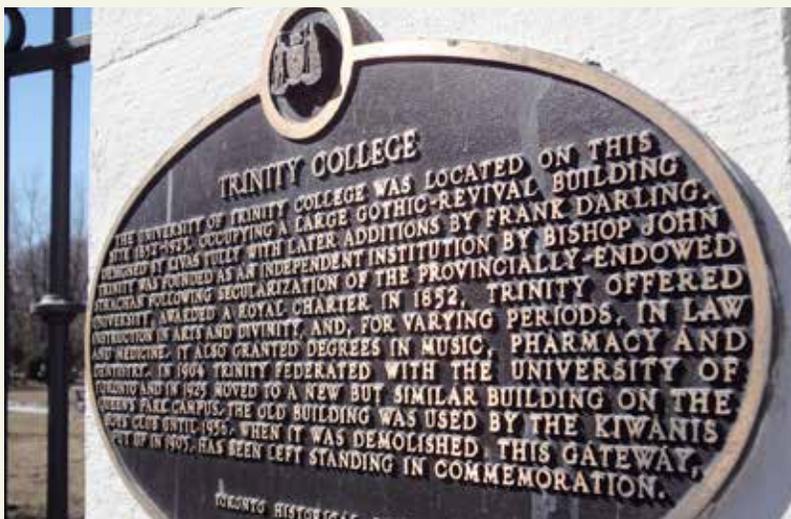


INTERPRETATION

Parks provide an opportunity to engage and reconnect citizens with nature. As such interpretive information regarding flora and fauna in parklands has been installed with various levels of consistency in placement, content and accessibility.

Examples include:

- Parkland naturalization,
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and
- Legacy PF&R signage.



HERITAGE

Parks and green spaces are often considered as suitable places to provide heritage information, both regarding the history of the park and more widely of surrounding neighborhoods.

Examples include:

- Heritage Toronto,
- Ontario Heritage Trust, and
- BIA/Neighbourhood initiatives.



CUSTOMIZED OR PARK SPECIFIC

Many large parks, parks with multiple ownership and/or management, and those with specific functions such as community gardens, have had their own signage systems developed. These systems often duplicate rather than replace standard municipal signage.

Examples include:

- Humber Arboretum,
- High Park, and
- Toronto Botanical Gardens (Edwards Gardens).



OTHER PLANNED AND ONGOING INITIATIVES

Many more signage systems are under consideration, planned or moving towards implementation.

Examples of these projects include:

- Disc golf signage,
- Emergency Services wayfinding in parks,
- The Pan Am Path,
- Aboriginal Trail Markings along the Trans Canada Trail, and
- Fort York.



Wayfinding opportunities

Extensive site visits and observations have identified important gaps in Toronto's parks and trails current wayfinding, among them: attractiveness, clutter and repetition, information overload or shortage, accessibility considerations, and naming hierarchy.

Opportunities to address the identified gaps are expected to include the following considerations:

Gateways

Consolidate, rationalize and re-present welcome and context information

Navigation

Improve legibility, visibility and direction of and to key facilities, amenities and features within the parklands

Connect with the city

Improve transitions between parklands and the city

Accessibility

Meet the needs of all parklands users and improve understanding of route difficulty levels

Clutter

Rationalize signs and reduce repetition

Robust and maintainable

Consider location and design to ensure durability to extreme climatic conditions and minimize impact of vandalism

Modular and adaptable

To meet with the needs of Toronto's varied parkland typologies

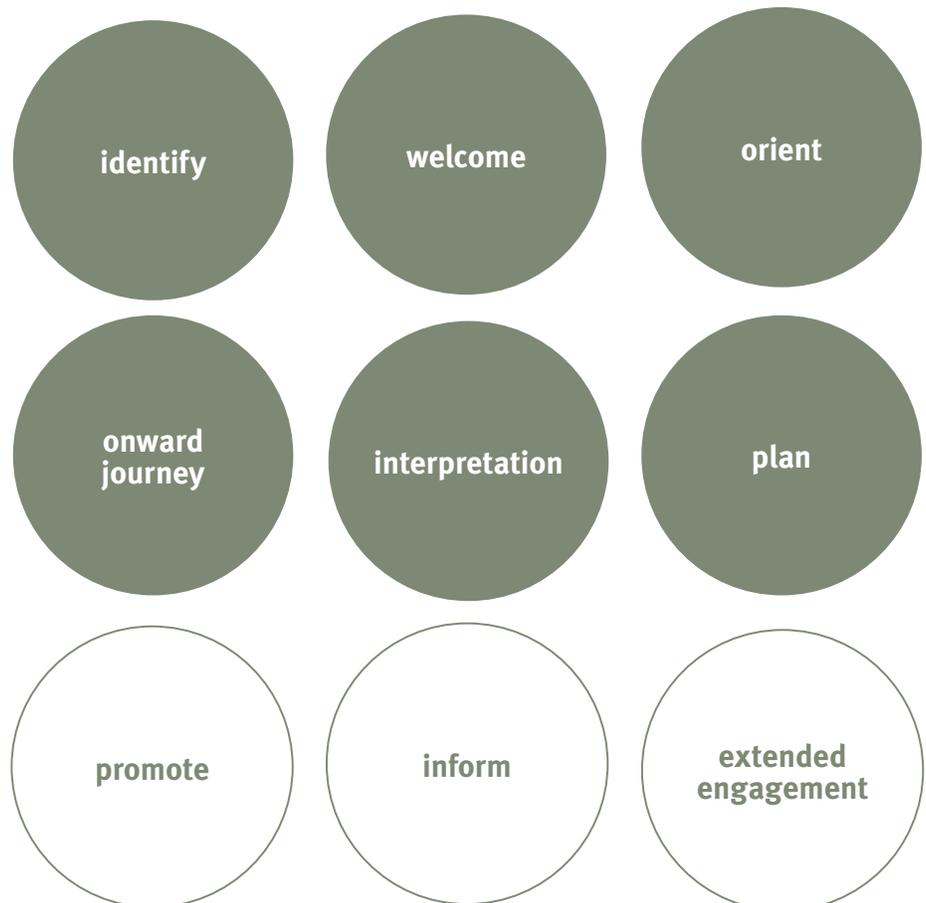


What are the priorities?

Helping people to understand, access, enjoy, appreciate, learn from and respect parklands requires a combined effort before, during and after visits.

Helping people to understand, access, enjoy, appreciate, learn from and respect parklands requires the availability of information across multiple-platforms before, during and after visits. Visitor information delivered via printed and digital media will complement physical signage to maximise the system's impact and will help deliver customised content which may be required for specific audiences.

As illustrated by the graphic below, the focus of on-site wayfinding signage is primarily on identification, welcome and point-to-point navigation in and around parklands. Some level of trip planning and interpretative information may also be provided while promotion, general awareness raising and ongoing maintenance requires use of other channels/media.

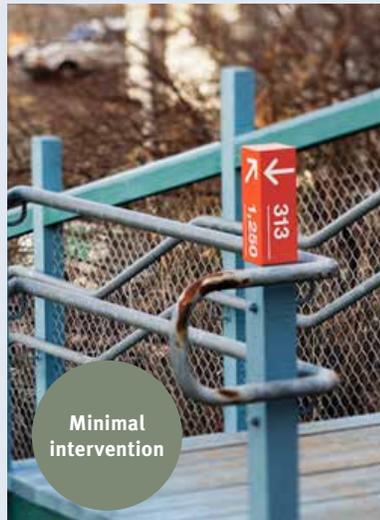


Best Practice Review

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



Source images: SEGD/Futago



Minimal intervention

BATTERY POINT TRAIL, HOBART, TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

- Heritage & environment walking trail.
- Minimal signage interventions with maximum impact on route, including use of brightly coloured markers and interpretive sign boards.
- The signage provides visual impact while being respectful of the environment.



Sense of arrival

Source: TwoTwelve



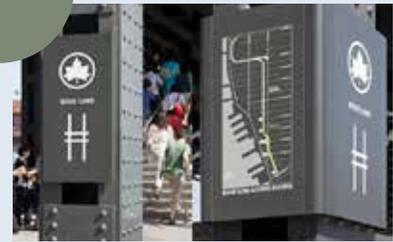
DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION, NORTH CAROLINA, USA

- The aim was to unify parks with a simple, fresh and distinctive visual identity and colour scheme.
- Signage system uses simple construction methods (with elements of modularity).
- The system helps to promote and unify the green spaces providing them with a distinct and easily recognizable identity.
- The visual identity helps to promote gateways and entrances while providing information on the amenities and facilities, and regulatory and statutory information.

NYC PARKS & HIGH LINE, NEW YORK, USA

- The aim was to unify and refresh the agency's image through a distinctive visual identity and flexible sign system.
- Simple modular signage products designed for large scale roll-outs.
- Playful elements including luminescent signage.

Source: SEGD/Pentagram



STOCKWELL PARK, LONDON, UK

- Community led signage system that reflects the diversity of area through artwork created by local residents.
- Modular system that provides flexibility through customization.
- Signs were given a tough clear lacquer coating to deter vandalism.

Source: designboom/hat-trick Design



Defined sense of place



MBC TRAIL, BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

- A 150-km-long cycleway wayfinding system delivered as a kit of parts which includes stainless steel posts and aluminium info panels that are easily removed and updatable.
- Distinctive signage communicates a clear hierarchy of information and visual identity.

Source: SEGD/Dot Dash



Simple construction



NATIONAL MALL & MEMORIAL PARKS, WASHINGTON DC, USA

- A standardized wayfinding and signage system for 400 acres of multi-use parks and open space.
- Simply constructed sign system and iconography to provide a clear sense of place, identity and information.
- \$2 million implementation cost.

Source: SEGD/Hunt Design



THE PARKLANDS, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

- A family of wayfinding and interpretive signs that use a strong aesthetic that reference elements of the sites industrial heritage.
- Simple construction and materials palette.
- Colour coding of trails and routes.

Source: SEGD/Dot Dash



ISLINGTON GREENSPACE, LONDON, UK

- A extension to the pedestrian wayfinding system that provides a robust urban family of 300 products across 127 spaces.
- Sign elements include interpretive 'wind-up' audio and interchangeable information panels.
- \$2.7 million signage implementation (est.).

Source: design week/fwdesign

Stakeholder interviews

We had conversations with over 30 stakeholder organizations and special interest groups, including City divisions; various trail, walking, cycling and park advocates; and representatives of accessibility, heritage and environmental programs.

* A full list of stakeholders can be found at the end of this document.

There was broad consensus on the current situation and the gaps that the new system will need to address. Some of the main topics and comments included:

TORONTO PARK SIGNAGE NEEDS AN OVERHAUL!

Signs should be attractive and welcoming with a better balance between text and graphics. Different park types (urban, natural, neighbourhood, city) have differing needs.



IDENTITY, DIVERSITY, UNIQUENESS OF PLACE

Wayfinding needs to represent Toronto parks, balancing uniqueness with consistency/common language. Signs should be timeless, attractive and adaptable to change.



TOO MUCH CLUTTER! WE NEED TO CONSOLIDATE...

Simplify palette of materials, consolidate information and minimize repeat messaging to reduce visual and physical clutter.



POSITIVE AND CONSISTENT MESSAGING

Reduce regulatory signage, it invites vandalism and reword messages to be more positive and consistent.



SUSTAINABLE AND LOW MAINTENANCE

Consider material longevity and sign placement to minimize maintenance. Designs should support cost effective delivery of seasonal or short term messaging.



MAKE WAYFINDING ACCESSIBLE AND SAFE

Signs need to be visible in all weather conditions and be understood by all. Consider provision of pre-visit information (web), emergency number, identification, street and path naming and audio.



ADDRESS USER CONFLICTS ON PATHS AND TRAILS

Consider signage and physical design of paths and trails together to reduce user conflicts alongside a balance of road markings and signage. Consider how signage can educate about park etiquette and code of conduct.



PRIORITIZE TRAIL DISTANCE, LOCATION, AND EXITS

Signs need to communicate where you are in a park, how long a trail experience will be, how much longer to go, and how to get out of the park. A lack of knowledge discourages users.



NEED A PARK AND TRAIL INFORMATION CENTRE

Need for a (web based) centre for consolidated park and wayfinding information which should include wayfinding apps and links to digital resources such as Google. Retain a balance between new technology vs legacy - physical maps are still very popular.



Pop-up consultation

Community ‘pop-up’ consultations were hosted at four park locations across Toronto in mid June 2014 to garner input from park users.

Community “pop-up” consultations were hosted throughout the city in mid June to garner input from a diversity of park users at:

- Berczy Park,
- Trinity-Bellwoods Park,
- Don Valley Brick Works Park, and
- Toronto Island Ferry Terminal.

The objective of the “pop-up” consultation was to gather information on how communities interact with their parks through spontaneous dialogue and interaction, and observation of park use. The pop-up consultation forum also provided a means of testing preliminary ideas through direct engagement with users and panel interactions.

In summary:

- The public is generally supportive of the project.
- The public generally agrees with stakeholders comments and suggestions.
- Individuals provided feedback on international examples and material palette.



Open House

An Open House (Public Forum) event was held at Metro Hall in Toronto on July 30th. Eleven panels were displayed in the rotunda for all invited stakeholders and passers-by to learn about the wayfinding project, where we were in the process, and what we had heard.

The final consultation plan report of the project, covering summaries of the interviews, pop-up consultation and open house is available as a appendix to this document.

The objective of the event was to gain feedback from participants on the information presented.

The first half of the evening was an open forum with consultants and City staff available to answer questions and interact with participants who wished to discuss content on the display panels. The second half of the evening was dedicated to a presentation by the consultant project team lead, followed by a more formal question and answer period. Participants were also given comment sheets to provide an opportunity for additional input on the information presented.

The majority of comments reflect the key messages conveyed at previous events. The need for accessible park signage and information; improved park connectivity and safety; consistent messaging; long term maintenance and cost; and community representation and involvement were some of the highlights from conversations and sticky notes.



2 Design Principles

TO360 principles

The Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy provides a framework to inform the development of an updated Parks & Trails Wayfinding System. The framework is organized around five themes.

For more information about the design framework principles and themes and more generally about TO360 project, please visit the Toronto 360 Wayfinding Strategy website: www.toronto.ca/wayfinding

The framework is a summary of those elements that need to be considered through the detailed design and implementation process to ensure system delivery is consistent with the strategy vision.

The principles under each theme comprise wide-ranging guidance—from standards to project aspirations and user needs.

As the TO360 pilot progresses through implementation many principles have evolved in specific guidelines and design definitions.

Consistency for example has been rationalized by the creation of a hierarchy of Points of Interest (PoI) in Tiers 1 to 4 –providing a clear framework for stakeholder discussion.

Inclusivity considerations comprise the inclusion of braille and tactile information on the sign prototype, choice of material (to avoid glare) and graphics (to improve contrast and legibility).

Transition across systems and third party inputs have been successfully channelled through integration and coordination with TTC and Metrolinx information systems.

CONSISTENCY

Consistency of content and presentation is fundamental for effective wayfinding.

- Hierarchy
- Conventions
- Positioning
- Structures

The system should cater to the needs of all user types.

- Physical access
- Contrast
- Accessibility
- Technology

Consideration of full life cycle costing and ability to adapt to change.

- Reduce clutter
- Flexibility
- Extendability
- Future proof

Connecting places and facilitating third party input to enable people to move seamlessly from one mode, system or area to another.

- Multi-modal
- Reciprocity
- Route legibility
- Fill the gaps

Celebrating and promoting the city and its districts.

Empowering community participation and input.

- Landmarks
- Local character
- Historic names
- Placemaking

Toronto Parks & Trails wayfinding principles

While the TO360 principles are broadly applicable to Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding they need to be translated into design decisions relevant to the needs of a parkland environment.

Additional and complementary principles for Parks & Trails signing include:

A user-based approach park user experience is the primary consideration for any sign design decisions.

Simplicity signs should be as simple as possible, avoiding non-essential information, e.g. marketing brands, logos, names of organizations, etc. which can be provided on other signs, perhaps near the trailhead.

Consistency a consistent approach to products and information delivery is required across parks.

Placement a balance between information and clutter needs to be considered at a local level, taking into account factors such as park size, location, accessibility and facilities/activities/amenities on offer.

Visual language and identity reflect Toronto parkland's unique voice and design information and products to communicate parkland attributes.

Integrate with surroundings parks should be seen in the context of their surrounding areas and the connections that can be made through and beyond them. Integration with the TO360 wayfinding system is key.

Modular and easily updateable signage products should form a consistent family of parts with the flexibility to adapt depending on information need and park type.

Encourage interaction parks wayfinding should not be purely functional with the need for education and interpretation built into the system.

A sign for all seasons the product family should support seasonal responses to changing information needs including content, contrast and durability.



Indicative sign family

Phase One proposes a conceptual family of six basic products for implementation in a Parks & Trails Wayfinding Pilot aiming to maximize impact and effectiveness while rationalizing the required number of structures.

A Gateway

WHERE?

At park & trail pedestrian and vehicular gateways/entrances

WHAT?

TP&T system identification
Park & Trail name
Address
Park features icons
Park overview map
Parks by-laws
Emergency contact
Accessibility/route difficulty levels

B Directional

WHERE?

At decision points (path intersections) and secondary park entrances

WHAT?

TP&T system identification
Directions (inwards) park destinations and features
Directions (outwards) local area, transit stops, other parks
Trail-marking
Accessibility/route difficulty levels
Emergency contact

NOTE: Sign types shown on the following pages are for illustrative purposes only. These are intended to inform, not constrain, subsequent product or graphic design solutions.



C Park Hubs

WHERE?

At park hubs, i.e. inner gateways, and significant places such as ponds, path intersections/pedestrian access from parking

WHAT?

TP&T system identification

Park name

Address

Park features icons

Park overview map

Parks by-laws

Interpretation/interaction

Accessibility/route difficulty levels

Emergency contact

D Community facilities

WHERE?

At entrances to internal parks facilities, such as sport grounds, community gardens, off-leash dog areas

WHAT?

TP&T system identification

Facility name

Facility features icons

Facility by-laws

Facility open times/days/seasons

Notice board

Accessibility/route difficulty levels

Emergency contact



E Trail marker

WHERE?

At trail entrance-exit points, along trails, at frequent intervals and/or related to memorable places such as bridges and tunnels and at on-street segments of trails

WHAT?

Trail identification (multiple)

Trails users

Directions/distance/time to next entrance/exit or feature (e.g. pond, bridge, beach)

Trail etiquette

Accessibility/route difficulty levels

Emergency contact

F Interpretive panel

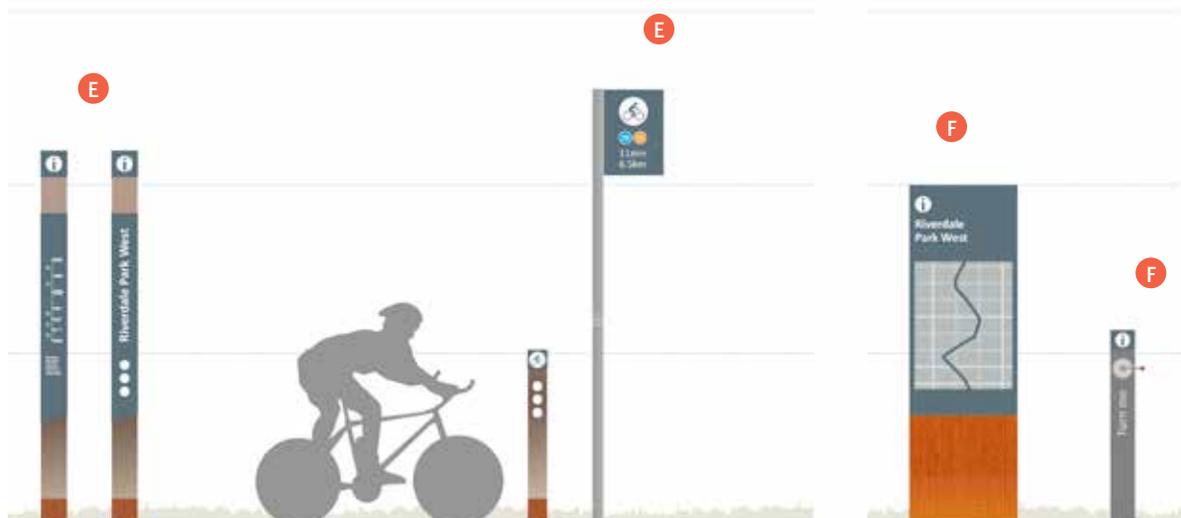
WHERE?

At view points and significant places of natural, historical or cultural interest

WHAT?

Interpretive information

Interactive elements



Digital components

The vision is for a digital wayfinding service to provide users with route, location and context specific information to enable them to explore Toronto's parks & trails.

An appendix to this report presents a high-level evaluation of current and near future technologies with potential application to digital navigation – particularly for visually or learning impaired users. It identifies those technologies with the greatest potential for implementation as part of a controlled wayfinding pilot in the Lower Don Valley Park in Spring 2015, and sets out a functional specification that should form the basis of that pilot.

SERVICE CONCEPT

A digital wayfinding service to provide users with route, location and context specific information to enable them to explore the Lower Don Valley. The service should be scalable for future city-wide application.

PILOT GOALS

- Test and evaluate the potential of current and near future technologies to deliver context specific information to park & trail users.
- Develop a scalable service/ solution that has the potential for future roll-out across the city.
- Adopt technology and delivery methods appropriate for the local environment and the needs of the target user groups.
- Deliver end user information to complement physical signage installed within the pilot area taking advantage of delivery platforms such as smartphones and wearable technology.

RECOMMENDED TECHNOLOGIES

There are a number of useful technologies that may not be directly relevant to this pilot, but may represent useful functions in different environments, such as in a more urban setting. Based on the assessment presented in the appendix, we recommend a combination of the following technologies, but note that their suitability should be discussed with the target user groups prior to implementation.

- Digital application (app) (front-end) in conjunction with either smartphone and/or wearable technology.
- Communications and infrastructure service consisting of:
 - Global Positioning Service (GPS) for location and context information, plus dynamic wayfinding support;
 - Near Field Communications (NFC)/ Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) for point specific information; and
 - Bluetooth beacons for location specific information delivery.
- Data management (back-end) solution to:
 - Manage the front-end app content;
 - Configure the Bluetooth beacons;
 - House and configure the dynamic wayfinding engine; and
 - Provide a management reporting service (for feedback etc.).

A combination of the above technologies offers the best overall support for the required service.

FRONT-END

Use of smartphones is widespread, and there are a number of services targeted at the visually impaired community that make either mass-market smartphones more accessible, or are specifically tailored towards visually impaired user needs. Consequently, there is logic in utilising the technology that people already have and combining it with an appropriate app to deliver the dynamic wayfinding and information service. As well as a smartphone, the concept of wearable technology is emerging and could provide significant future benefits for the user community.

COMMUNICATIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

GPS is prevalent in all smartphones, and could be automatically activated by an app for this service. It is a very familiar technology in routing systems, and would work well with off the shelf routing solutions such as MapQuest. Standard GPS would provide the service with a location, and would offer context information for the routing service.

NFC chips could be used (if required) as a standalone tool to offer the user highly location-specific information (to inform about a specific point of interest, or perhaps to alert users to a hazard). This is a low cost option and would enhance the environment, rather than act as a standalone service.

Bluetooth beacons would provide the user with general point of interest information

when they are within the proximity of the transceiver. This means that users could be provided with information even if they are not walking on a particular pathway.

BACK-END

A back end solution should be developed that will enable the client to manage the service, and receive management level feedback on the user experience.



A Bullseye NFC sticker (source: www.zipnfc.com)

Public art and placemaking

Within the context of wayfinding public art can play an important role, helping to create memorable locations and reveal aspects of a place which may otherwise remain hidden.

Public art within a park environment can add to the stock of attractions that are on offer. The best artworks act as symbols for the park, points of reference for people to meet around, or destinations to reach. Within the context of wayfinding, public art can play an important role, helping to reveal aspects of the place which may otherwise remain hidden.

OPPORTUNITIES

Public art can take many different forms – from large civic sculptures through to small discrete incidental works. It may announce a point of arrival and congregation or it may promote quiet personal contemplation. Public art might not be a permanent artwork at all, it could be the creation of an unusual space, something to sit upon or a marker to guide you through the park, it could be a temporary installation to celebrate an event, it may raise questions, be ephemeral and transitory, it may change with the seasons.

The common thread is that it is a creative act involving the work of artists, produced and displayed for a specific site.

The Parks Plan 2013-2017 sets out a vision for the management and development of Toronto's parks. Within the seven principles upon which the plan is built, and within the four themes, 12 directions and associated actions that constitute the plan it is possible to see many opportunities for the work of artists to help bring the vision to fruition. It is perhaps, in the role of placemaking¹, that public art can make the biggest contribution.

PLACEMAKING

Opportunities for placemaking vary with sites but may include the following:

- Entrance ways, park gates, railings;
- Focal points, landmarks, viewing structures;
- Gathering spaces, amphitheatres, play spaces;
- Information points, route markers, furniture; and
- Character areas, linkages.

Successful placemaking creates a strong and resonant image, specific to the area and grounded on the site. It should provide a unique identity, reflecting the values of a broad community yet be capable of personal interpretation and association. Placemaking is not about imposing ideas upon a site but rather allowing the site and its users to influence the outcome. The language of place making may be very direct or literal or it may be layered and ambiguous, revealed over time and open to speculation, but still centred upon the place. In developing a creative response to a site the following would generally be considered:

- How the site has changed over time, its history and its social context;
- People and events that may be associated with the site, the cultural context;
- The purpose and function of the site, now and in the future;
- The components, condition and potential of the site, the physical context; and
- The relationship between the site and the wider city context, what marks it out.

¹ The process of creating squares, plazas, parks, streets and waterfronts that will attract people because they are distinctive, pleasurable or interesting.

In exploring these issues the fundamentals of good design practice must not be sacrificed, for the sake of a “big idea”.

The place must feel welcoming, legible, be easy to enter and leave, be accessible and comfortable to use. Successful placemaking needs to make allowance for future scenarios, certainly be true to its time, but recognize its roots and allow a diverse range of people to find a point of recognition in the work.

BENEFITS

- Individual artworks can help create a strong identity for a place which in turn can enhance legibility and orientation across a broader area.
- As well as providing a strong image an artwork can interpret and promote the special qualities of a particular park, which will add to the visitor experience.
- A series of linked artworks across a park may encourage users to explore the place a little more extensively and to gain a deeper knowledge of the narrative(s) and stories of the park.
- Creating the work of art may offer user groups of the park the opportunity to become involved, extending a sense of ownership and pride in a place.
- Commissioning public art can be the start of a creative process focused upon the park where the notion of encounter, engagement and dialogue can take root, appealing to a wide cross section of users.

- Public artwork can also be a catalyst for a changing array of animations and events across seasons and sectors of the park, maintaining a sense of relevance and vitality within the city.

RISKS

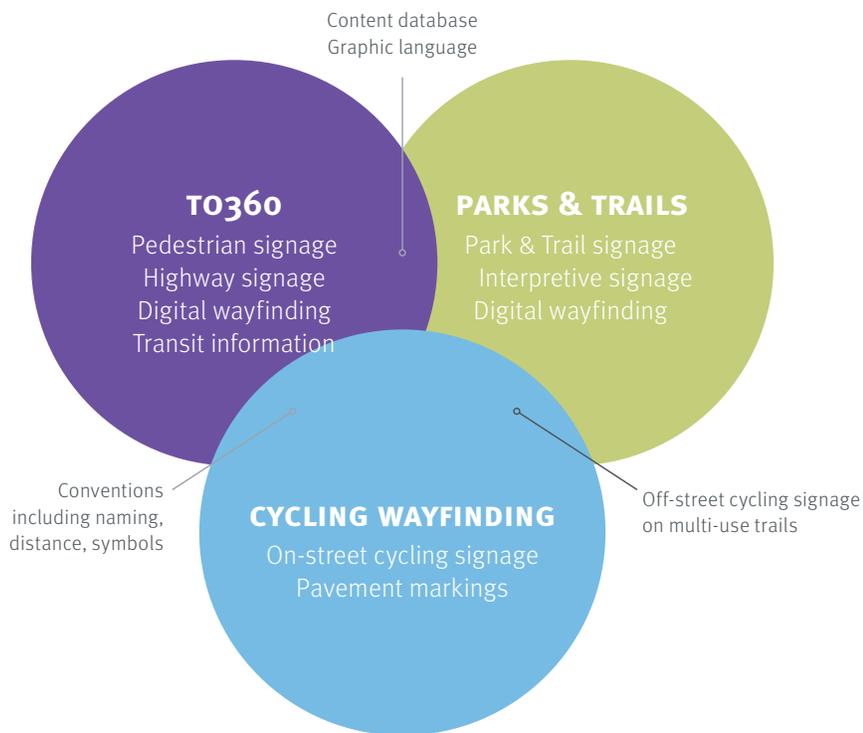
- Unpopular or inappropriate imagery can have a negative impact upon a place and can lead to vandalism, a sense of unwanted imposition and rejection of the work.
- Public artwork, like all aspects of the environment will require maintenance; a lack of commitment to maintain works will result in degradation and a negative impact upon a park.
- Insufficient funding at the outset may encourage short cuts to be taken with fabrication or finishing which may create future maintenance liabilities.
- The notion of a single symbolic gesture embodied in an artwork may be at odds with the pluralistic and democratic mix of park users. It may be more effective, less confrontational and ultimately more culturally enriching to promote changing temporary works within the park setting. This requires proper curatorial expertise and appropriate levels of resourcing.
- People’s safety within a park is of fundamental importance. Artworks will need to be assessed for their performance against anticipated levels of use.

Integration with other systems

Integration with existing systems is at the core of the Toronto Parks & Trails (TP&T) wayfinding strategy.

Integration with existing systems is a core requirement of the TP&T Wayfinding Strategy. Phase One identified opportunities to integrate third-party information such as Discovery Walks, Multi-use Trails and Emergency Services into the Parks & Trails Wayfinding System.

The concept diagram below summarizes planned overlaps between the main wayfinding and signage projects currently sponsored by the City.

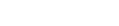


TP&T Wayfinding Strategy

Integration with other systems

The table below summarizes initial proposals for different levels of integration with existing and planned sign systems.

This integration needs to be explored further though detailed design, and engagement with potential project partners in Phase Two.

	SYSTEM	INTEGRATED INTO TP&T?	COORDINATED WITH TP&T?	HOW?
	Toronto 360° (TO360) Wayfinding System	NO	YES	TO360 and TP&T systems will share the design framework, content database and map asset
	Discovery Walks	YES	YES	Discovery Walks routes to be incorporated on maps. Logo could be included on directional route markers/signs
	Multi-use recreational trail signage	YES	YES	Trail signage to be consistently presented under the TP&T system
	Bikeway Network Wayfinding Signage	YES	YES	Bikeway Network route identifiers may feature on the off-street network
	Martin Goodman Trail	YES	YES	
	Waterfront Trail	NO	YES	TP&T signage will incorporate branded trails
	Trans Canada Trail	NO	YES	
	Parkland naturalization	YES	YES	TP&T will feature interpretive information
	Toronto and Region Conservation Authority	YES	YES	
	Legacy PF&R signage	YES	YES	TP&T will promote the reduction of redundant structures and clutter
	Heritage Toronto	NO	YES	
	Ontario Heritage Trust	NO	YES	Heritage information may be incorporated on TP&T signs
	BIA/Neighborhood initiatives	NO	NO	
	Humber Arboretum	NO	YES	TP&T design principles are intended to act as guidance for custom signage systems - further integration may be possible through mutual collaboration
	Toronto Botanical Gardens	NO	YES	
	Disc golf signage	YES	YES	
	Emergency Wayfinding	YES	YES	Emergency contact details in TP&T signs (level of integration tbd)
	The Pan Am Path	YES	YES	
	Various Trail Marking Initiatives	NO	YES	TP&T design principles are intended to act as guidance for custom signage systems

3 Delivery



Phase Two will include consultation with stakeholders, detailed graphic and product design, leading to the the implementation of a pilot scheme in the Lower Don Valley.

Pilot scheme

The Pilot will enable sign designs, information, materials and finishes to be evaluated in context and inform design refinements and value engineering prior to a future citywide rollout.

PILOT SCHEME RATIONALE

The implementation of a Parks & Trails Wayfinding Pilot Scheme is scheduled for 2015. The scheme will see the implementation of a pilot signage system that will allow sign designs, static and digital information, materials and finishes to be tested, and to inform design refinements and value engineering prior to a citywide rollout.

From an initial shortlist of eight case study areas, a section of the Lower Don Trail between Pottery Road and Lake Shore Boulevard East plus the adjacent parks of Riverdale Park East and West was selected for the Pilot based on the following rationale and opportunities:

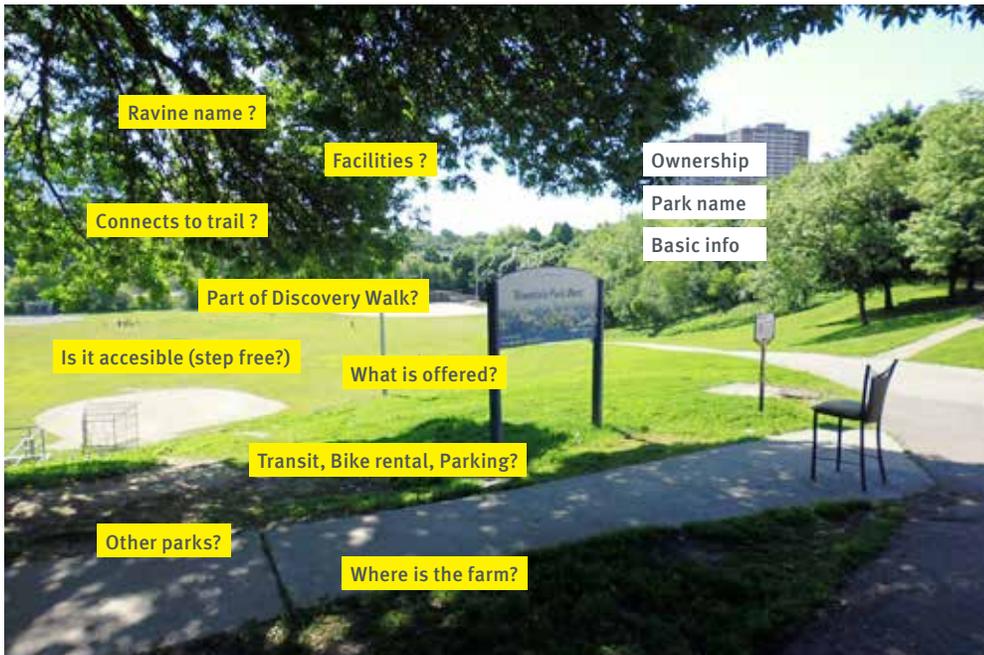
- Broadly representative of issues observed across case study areas: naming, connections to/from city, access and navigation, clutter and poor maintenance;
- Connected to Lower Don Trail and Discovery Walks;
- Lower Don Valley masterplan with implementation underway;
- Funding availability; and
- Implementation prior to PanAm Games.

THE LOWER DON TRAIL

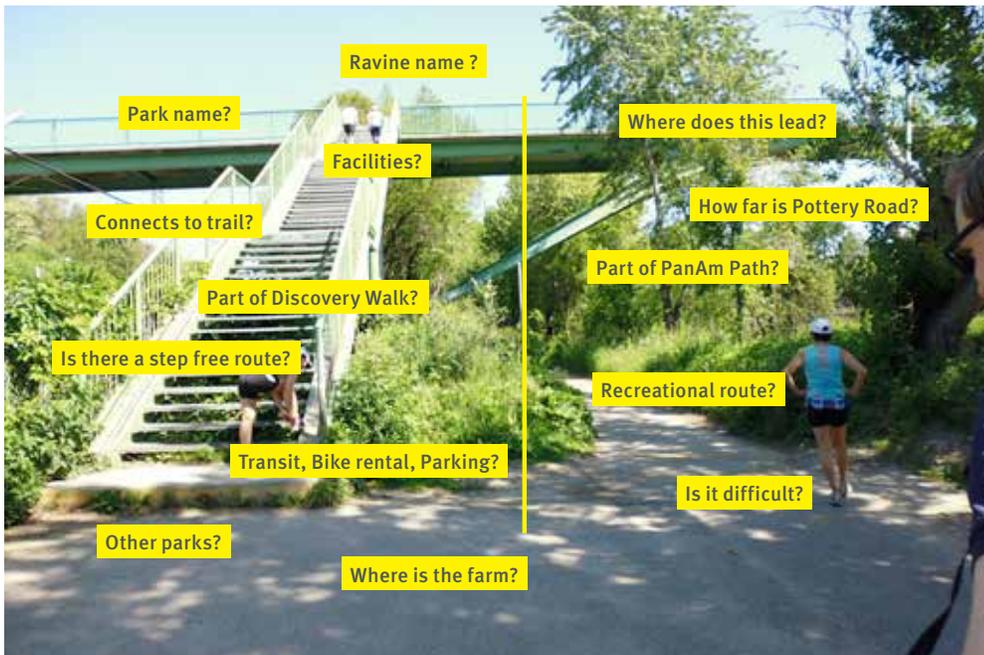
The Lower Don Trail within the Pilot Area is a 4.7 kilometre section of trail that runs along the Don River, from Pottery Road to Corktown Common. It is used as a multi-use trail, designed for pedestrians and cyclists.

Works to improve conditions of the existing trail - and access into the surrounding trail network - are detailed as part of the Lower Don Trail Accessibility, Environment and Art Master Plan project, due for partial implementation during 2015.





Parks and trail users require a broad range of information to help them understand what facilities, features or activities are on offer in the park, where to find them and how to get to them.



TP&T Wayfinding pilot area

Discussion of issues



Naming and identification: a naming hierarchy is required to identify overlaps with the wider area, the trail, adjacent parks and park destinations.



Poor integration and awareness of other parks/trails: Riverdale Park signs do not reference connections to the Lower Don Trail or vice versa.



Connections to/from the city: parks & trails wayfinding signage should link back to city destinations and points of reference. Equally, access to parklands from the city requires additional support as routes are not intuitive.



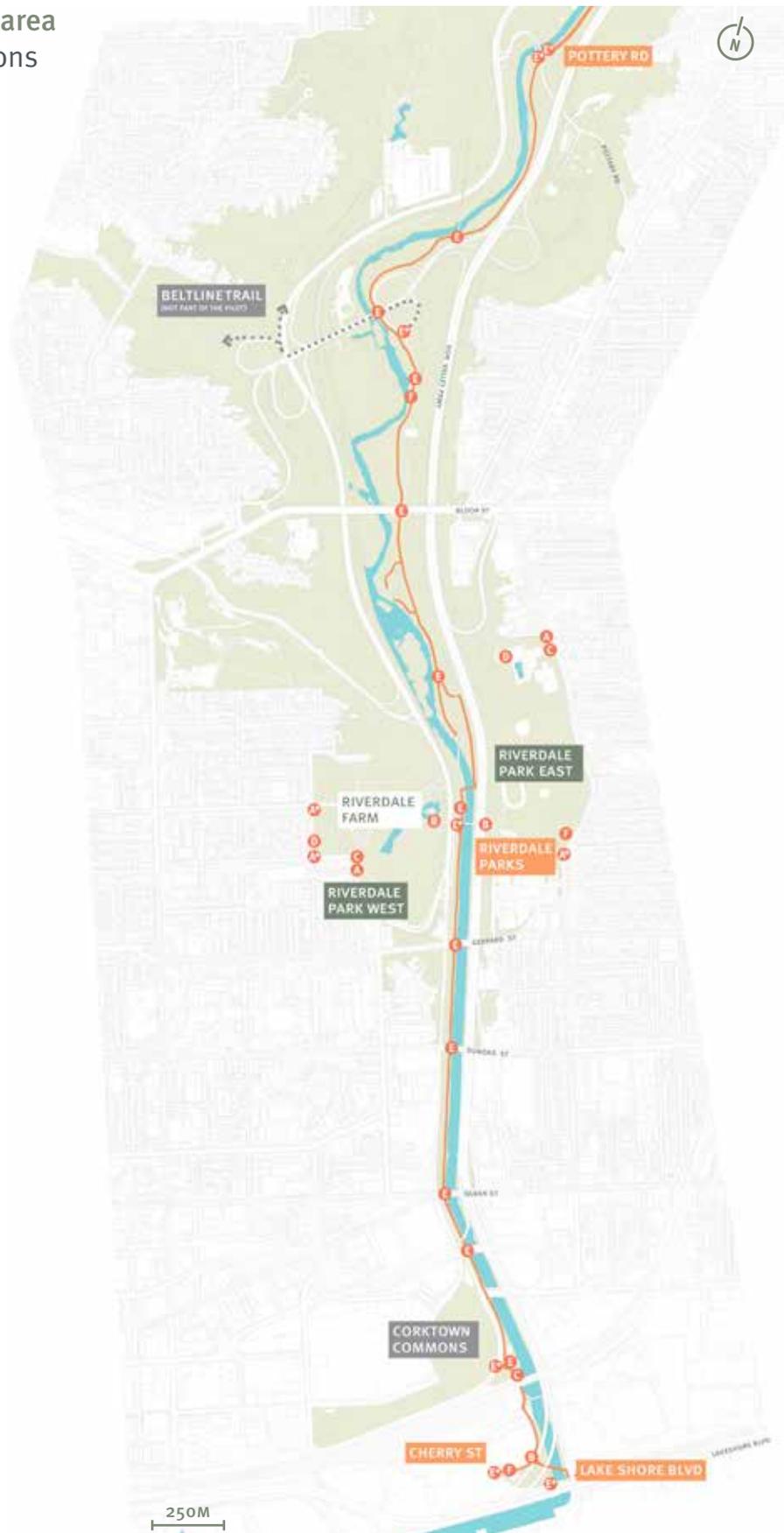
Clutter and poor maintenance: many signs in the Lower Don Trail and some in Riverdale Parks display signs of disrepair, graffiti, fading, or are overgrown with vegetation.



Access and navigation: connections and exits to/from the Lower Don Trail are limited with very few step free routes. Routes are not graded and accessibility and path maintenance varies.

TP&T Wayfinding pilot area Preliminary sign locations

PRODUCT TYPE	QUANTITY
A Gateway	2
	
A* Entrance ID	3
	
B Fingerpost	3
	
C Totem	3
	
D Notice Board	2
	
E Trail marker	11
	
E* Trail head	6
	
F Interpretive panel	3
	



NOTE: Sign types shown are for illustrative purposes only.

Next steps

Implementation of a citywide upgrade of wayfinding signage and proposed complementary measures in parks and trails will not only require a significant capital investment but also commitment for long-term management and maintenance from the City.

PHASE ONE

Summarized by this report (completed September 2014). Phase One defined the wayfinding system framework, including design principles, concept sign family, information hierarchy, and concept graphic treatments, and the parameters for a pilot implementation.

PHASE TWO

Phase Two will result in the implementation of a pilot scheme following detailed graphic and product design development, procurement of product manufacture and installation.

The pilot scheme (described on pages 42-45) will be on a section of the Lower Don Valley from Pottery Road to Lake Shore Boulevard and includes the adjacent parks of Riverdale East and West. Implementation of wayfinding signage is expected in advance of the Toronto Pan Am & Parapan Am Games in July 2015.

Phase Two is also expected to include a Digital Pilot targeted, if not exclusively, to users with visual impairments (described on pages 33-34 of this document).

Integration with existing systems is a core requirement of the wayfinding strategy. Various opportunities were identified during Phase One to integrate third-party information such as Discovery Walks, Multi-use Trails and Emergency Services into the TP&T wayfinding system.

Engagement with owners of these systems and other organizations must continue through Phase Two to define how these should be included in the pilot.

Consultation with citizens and particularly local park users is also key to build support and to shape a solution that delivers to the required local outcomes.

Each of the tasks listed below is expected to involve meetings and/or consultations with stakeholders and City staff to understand, confirm and fulfil the necessary business requirements.

PHASE TWO EVALUATION

Following implementation of the Pilot, the City will evaluate the scheme's impact and effectiveness, and the acceptance and adequacy of the design solutions. Key indicators must be aligned to the project objectives, including to:

- Improve confidence to walk and explore for all users;
- Raise awareness of what parkland has to offer (amenities/facilities/walks);
- Improve perception of park user safety;
- Confirm user awareness, perceptions, level of usage and demand for the wayfinding system – aiming to confirm acceptance and perceived usefulness;
- Improve ability of all park users to find their way around and to navigate to destinations within and beyond the park/ravine; and
- Improve aesthetics/functionality of wayfinding elements and their contribution to the parkland environment.

It is recommended that the pilot scheme evaluation be undertaken independently

from the project development team. Primary research may include face-to-face surveys, mystery shopping and online surveys. Research should be conducted pre- and post-implementation to better measure change. Evaluation of the digital system should be conducted separately although it will be used in conjunction with the physical signs. Small-sample primary research such as interviews and mystery shopping –possibly combined with tracking– will be most appropriate due to the specific needs of the audience. Usage analytic of an app. or mobile website could also provide useful insights on the usability of the different functions.

PHASE THREE

Upon successful completion and positive evaluation of the Phase Two Pilot, the City is expected to proceed with a citywide roll out of the system. The implementation may be delivered in packages driven by:

- City-sponsored implementation of schemes on priority trails and parks;
- Planned capital improvement packages;
- BIA or locally sponsored initiatives;
- Developer contributions; and
- Multi-agency agreements at municipal, provincial and/or federal level.

A Design Guideline document must be completed prior to citywide roll out of the system. This will include updated design specifications

based on any feedback from Phase Two. Signage product design in particular should be further refined to streamline the cost/quality product ratio and achieve economies of scale. An internal management structure should be established to coordinate implementation, consistency, and ensure long-term maintenance, including repairs, renewals and updates.

COST IMPLICATIONS

It is premature at this stage, to anticipate the global capital investment required to update wayfinding signage across all City parks and trails. A formal evaluation of implementation, management and maintenance costs should take place on completion of Phase Two.

Interviews

Stakeholder groups

Canadian Tree Tours

City of Toronto Economic Development
& Culture, Visitor Services

City of Toronto Municipal Licensing & Standards

City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation

- Community Recreation
- Parks
- Natural Environment & Community Programs

Cycle Toronto

Don Watershed Regeneration Council

East Don Parkland Partners

Friends of the Pan Am Path

Heritage Toronto

High Park Natural Environment Committee

High Park Volunteer Stewards

Highland Creek Green Team

Ontario Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs

Park People

PF&R Community Disability Steering Committee

Spacing Magazine

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Toronto Botanical Gardens

Toronto Bruce Trail Club

Toronto Field Naturalists

Toronto Parks & Trees Foundation

Walk Toronto

Ward 32 Transportation Committee

Waterfront Regeneration Trust



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