

# 1 Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy



The City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PF&R) team has initiated an ambitious project to improve wayfinding across the City's public parks and trails, and we invite you to be part of this exciting process.

Toronto has more than 1,600 public parks and 600 km of trails. The city's parks system covers 13% of the City's land area and is one of its greatest assets - essential for residents' quality of life.

Establishing a unified wayfinding system, and strategy for its implementation, will be critical to the parks' continued success and sustainability.

The first phase of this project is to translate the Toronto 360° Wayfinding Strategy and its principles into a common language for wayfinding that addresses the needs of users of Toronto's parklands and green spaces.

## What is Wayfinding?

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

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

## About Phase One

Toronto Parks & Trail Wayfinding Phase One began in January 2014 and is due for completion in August 2014. The objective of this phase is to establish the strategy and design framework for the project and to provide strategic direction for Phase Two and Phase Three.

- Provide consistent identification, orientation and navigation in and around parks and trails
- Encourage visiting, exploring and appreciation of Toronto's natural assets
- Serve all park and trail user types regardless of their abilities
- Reduce clutter and redundant infrastructure on parks and trails enhancing the natural environment
- Be economically viable and sustainable

## About this open house

This public exhibition constitutes the final activity of the Phase One Consultation Plan and is the last opportunity for stakeholders and the general public to contribute and provide feedback to this project phase.

This exhibition is arranged over 8 panels including this introduction.

## Contact Us

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## Stay involved!

We invite you to talk to members of the consultant team, add sticky notes and comments to the panels or submit your written feedback via email before August 6<sup>th</sup> to:

[parkwayfinding@toronto.ca](mailto:parkwayfinding@toronto.ca)

Please provide us with your contact details on the sign-in sheet if you like to stay informed on the next phases of the project.





# 2 Existing systems



## Existing municipal signage in parks and trails

Toronto has an existing municipal park signage system. These signs are consistent with the City of Toronto's identity program and other municipal signage.

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
- **Age** natural deterioration of timber and finishing

Although the current system has been consistently implemented there are many redundant, duplicated, and outdated legacy municipal signs.



## Other signage and information in parks and trails

### Discovery walks

Discovery Walk trailhead panels offer an overview of the discovery walk and surrounding area. Most of these 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.

### Multi use trails

Various municipal and customized signs can be found along multi use trails such as the Lower Don Trail and the Waterfront. Signage typically includes route identification, exits, destinations, distances, and trail etiquette.

### 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.

### Heritage

Parks and green spaces frequently include heritage information related both to the history of the park and of surrounding local neighborhoods.

### Customized or park specific

Many large parks and also those with specific functions such as community gardens, have developed their own signage systems. Often these duplicate rather than replace municipal signage.

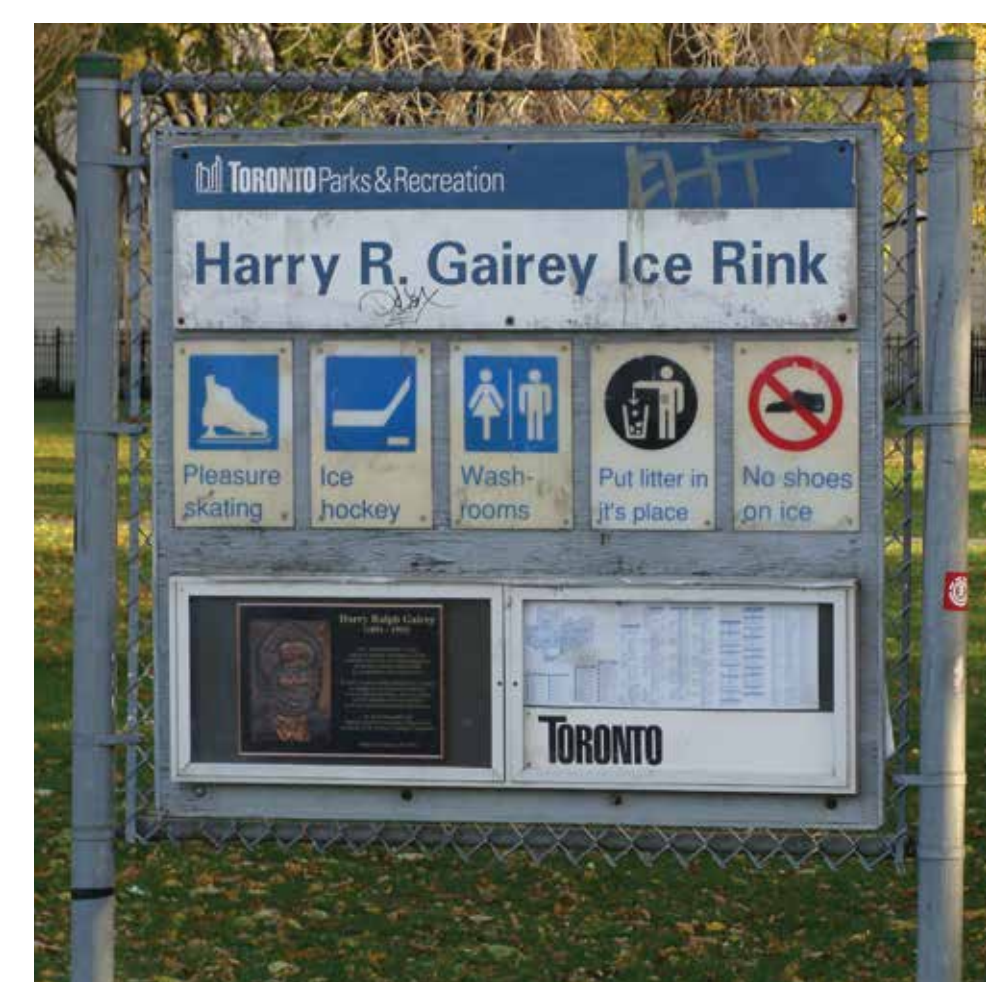
### Other planned and ongoing initiatives

Many parks signage systems are under consideration, planning or moving towards implementation.

## Current wayfinding gaps

Extensive site visits, observations and user engagement across eight case study areas identified five essential gaps in Toronto's parks and trail current wayfinding.

- Attractiveness
- Clutter and repetition
- Information overload/gaps
- Accessibility
- Content and naming hierarchy





# 3 What we heard



## Stakeholder interviews

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

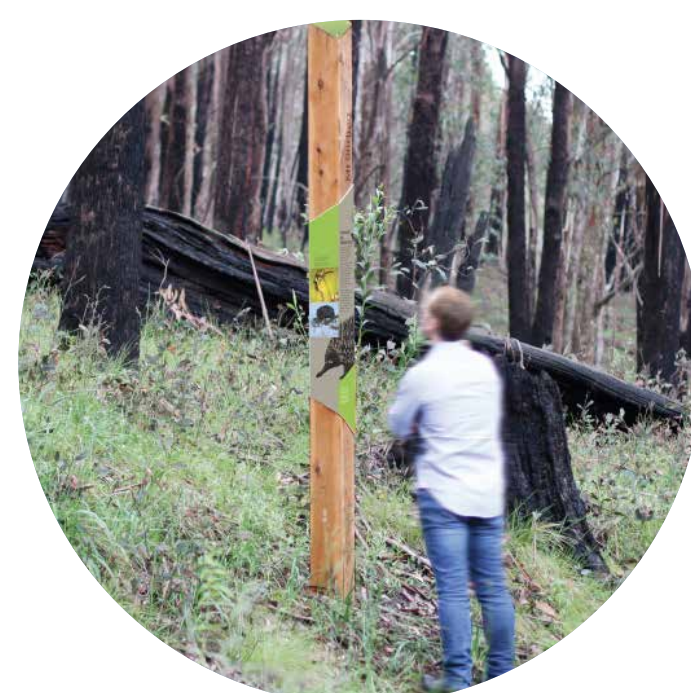
There was broad consensus on the current situation and the gaps that the new system will need to address. Some of the main topics and comments included:

### 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



Consideration should be given to material longevity and sign placement to minimize maintenance and designs should provide for cost effective 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



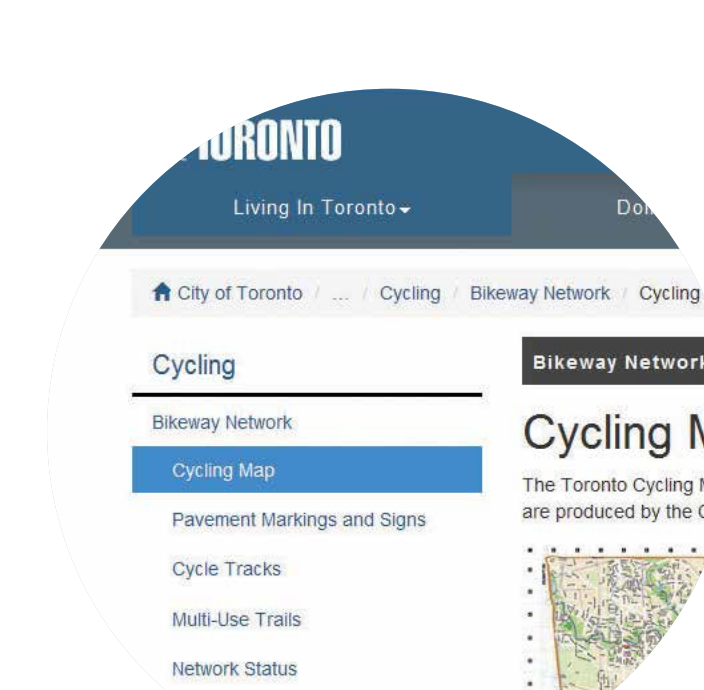
Consider signage and physical design of paths and trails together to reduce user conflicts alongside a balance of road markings and signage. Consider how signage can educate about park etiquette and code of conduct.

## 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, 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 with wayfinding apps and links to existing digital resources such as Google but retaining a balance between new technology vs legacy - physical maps are still very popular.

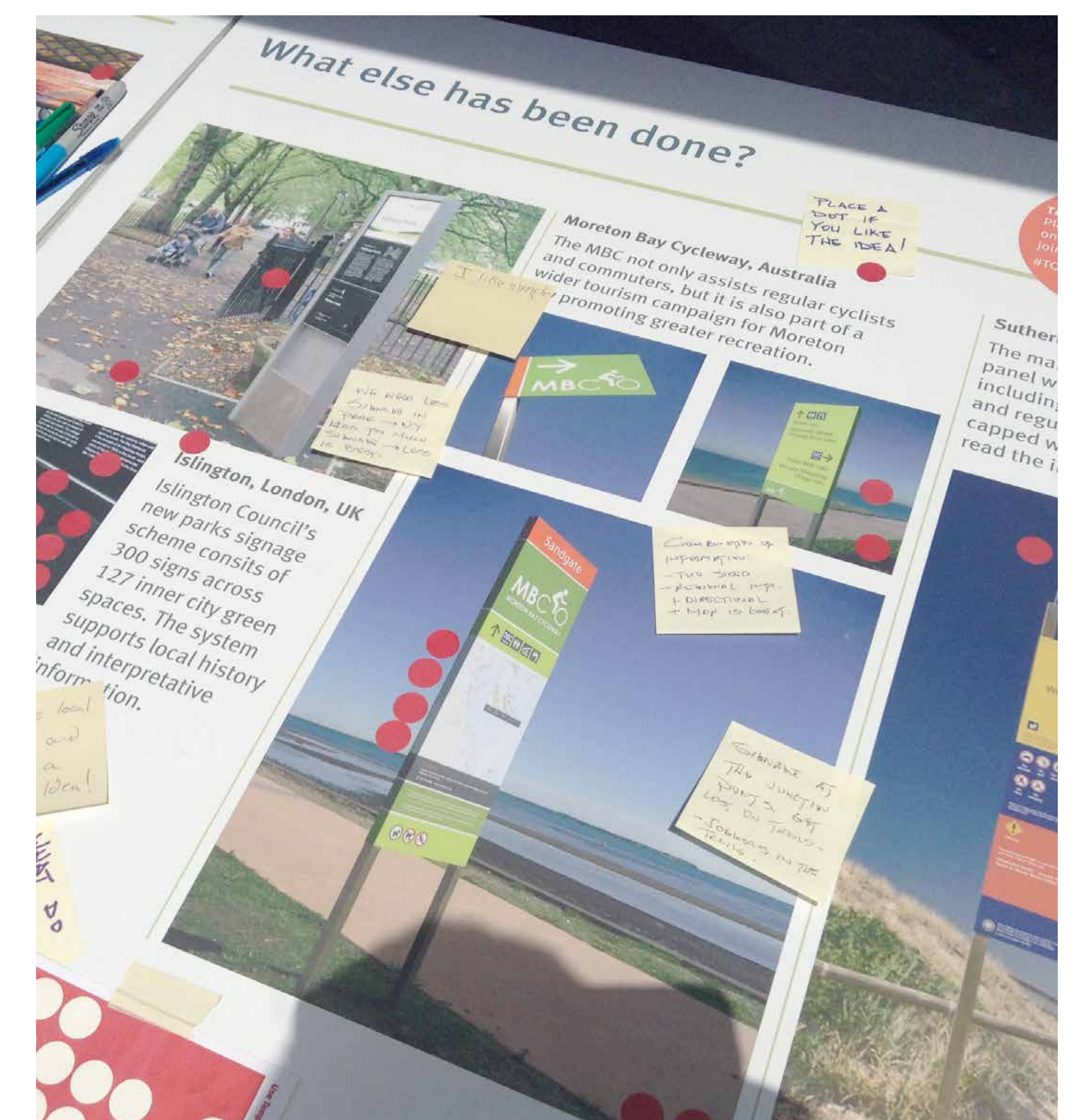
## Pop-up consultation

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

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

The objective of the “pop-up” events was to elicit 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 proposed material palette





# 4 Opportunities and priorities



## Opportunities for Toronto Parks & Trails

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

**Gateways:** consolidate, rationalize and present welcome and contextual information

**Navigation:** improve legibility, visibility and direction to and of key facilities, amenities and features within the parklands

**Connect with the city:** improve transitions between parklands and the city

**Accessibility:** meet with the needs of all parklands users and improve understanding of suitability of routes

**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 and seasonal variations



## 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

Complementary visitor information delivered via printed and digital media will maximise impact and help target and customise content for specific audiences.

On-site wayfinding signage must primarily focus on identification, welcome and point-to-point navigation in and around parklands.





# 5 Design principles



## TO360 Principles

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

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

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.

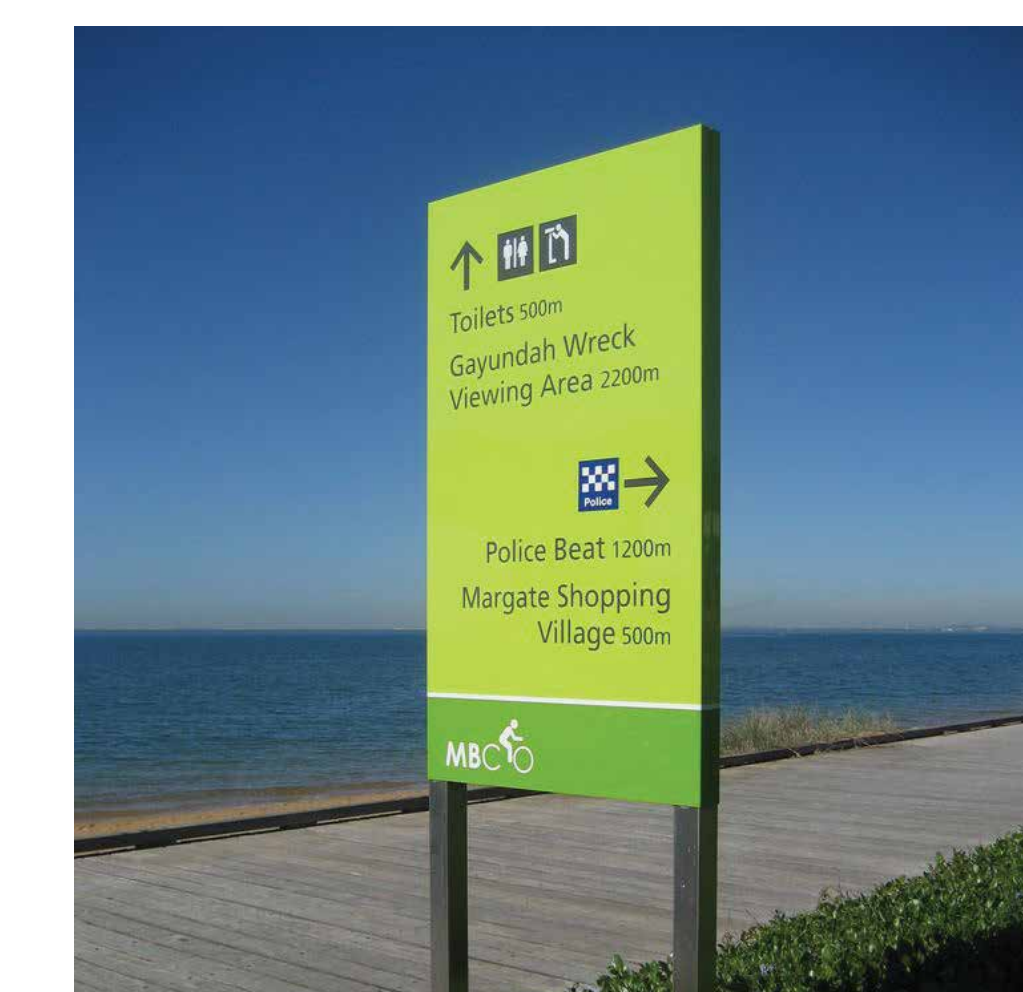
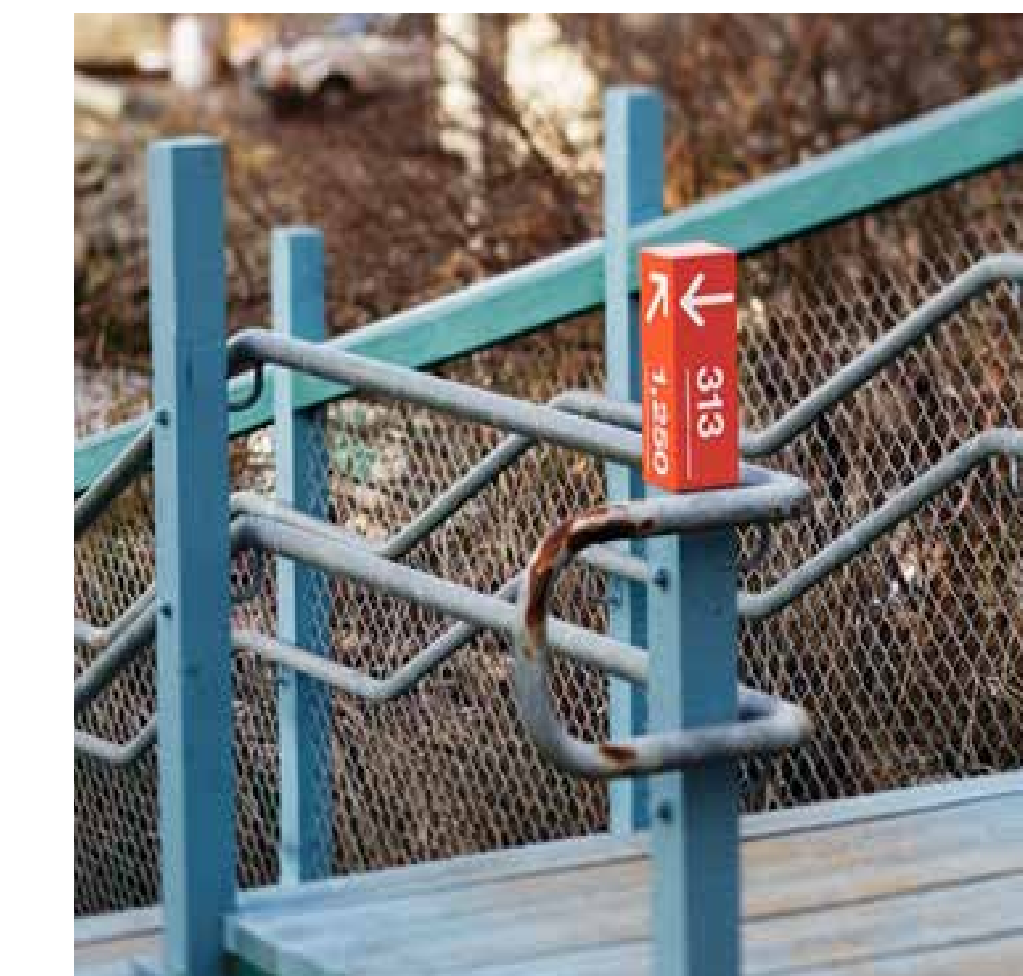
CONSISTENCY	INCLUSIVITY	SUSTAINABILITY	TRANSITION	BEING LOCAL
<p>Consistency of content and presentation is fundamental for effective wayfinding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hierarchy</li> <li>Conventions</li> <li>Positioning</li> <li>Structures</li> </ul>	<p>The system should cater to the needs of all user types</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical access</li> <li>Contrast</li> <li>Accessibility</li> <li>Technology</li> </ul>	<p>Consideration of full life cycle costing and ability to adapt to change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce clutter</li> <li>Flexibility</li> <li>Extendability</li> <li>Future proof</li> </ul>	<p>Connecting places and facilitating third party input to enable people to move seamlessly from one mode, system or area to another</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multi-modal</li> <li>Reciprocity</li> <li>Route legibility</li> <li>Fill the gaps</li> </ul>	<p>Celebrating and promoting the city and its districts. Empowering community participation and input</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landmarks</li> <li>Local character</li> <li>Historic names</li> <li>Placemaking</li> </ul>

## Principles for Toronto Parks & Trails wayfinding

While the TO360 principles are broadly applicable to Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding they need to be translated into relevant design decisions for the project.

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 and offer.
- Visual language and identity:** should reflect Toronto parkland's unique voice and the design of information and products should 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 project 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.

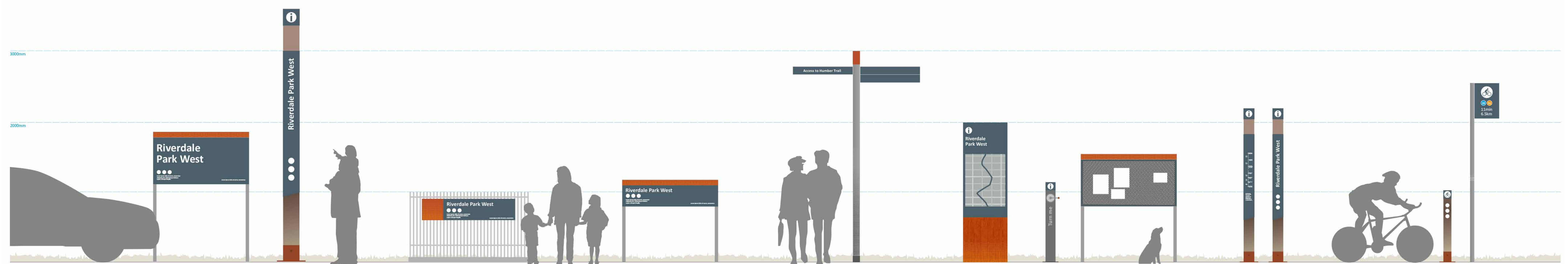




# 6 Indicative sign family



Phase One proposes an indicative sign 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.



## ● Gateway

### Where?

At park & trail pedestrian and vehicular gateways/entrances

### What?

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

## ● Directional

### Where?

At decision points (path intersections) and secondary park entrances

### What?

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

## ● Park Hubs

### Where?

At parks 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
- Emergency contact

## ● Community facilities ● Trail marker

### 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
- Emergency contact

### 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?

- System identification
- 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?

- System identification
- Interpretive information
- Interactive elements



# 7 Integration with other systems



## Integration is at the core of the strategy

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

The following table summarizes initial proposals for 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	TP&T signage will incorporate branded trails
 Waterfront Trail	NO	YES	
 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	
 Heritage Toronto	NO	YES	TP&T will promote the reduction of redundant structures and clutter - Heritage information may be incorporated on TP&T signs
 Heritage Ontario	NO	YES	
 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	
 Life Saving stations	YES	YES	Emergency contact details in TP&T signs
 The Pan Am Path	NO	YES	TP&T design principles are intended to act as guidance for custom signage systems
 Aboriginal Trail Markings	NO	YES	



# 8 Pilot scheme



## 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 us to test sign designs, information and materials and finishes and which will inform design refinements and value engineering prior to a citywide rollout.

From an initial shortlist of eight case studies areas, the length of the Lower Don Trail plus the adjacent parks of Riverdale Park East and West was selected for the Pilot based on the following rationale and opportunities:

- Representative of issues observed across case study areas (shown below)
- Connected to Lower Don Trail and Discovery Walks
- Overlapping Lower Don Trail Accessibility, Environment and Art Master Plan project
- Funding availability
- Implementation possible prior to Pan Am Games

### The Lower Don Trail

The Lower Don Trail is a 4.7 kilometre section of trail that runs along the Don River, from Pottery Road to Corktown Common. It is currently 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.



## Next steps

Following completion of the Toronto Parks & Trails Wayfinding Strategy in August 2014, the City will proceed with Phase Two – pilot implementation. Phase Two includes consultation with stakeholders, detailed graphic and product design, and implementation in the Lower Don Pilot Area. Phase Two is expected to be complete in advance of the Toronto Parapan/ Pan Am Games in July 2015. The City will undertake a pre and post-evaluation of the pilot.