

WAYFINDING & PUBLIC SIGNS

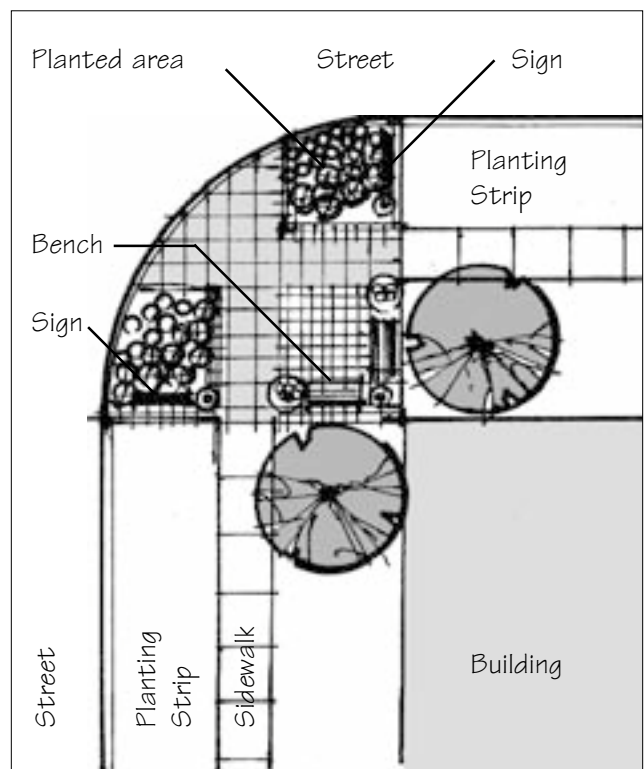
Downtown Georgetown currently has a strong base of local users as well as seasonal tourists and visitors. Many first-time visitors, at whom proposed redevelopment efforts are targeted, do not know how to get to downtown or where individual destinations are once they do arrive. Presently there is no “system” for wayfinding. The city has developed a design for entry signs to be used at the boundaries of Georgetown and other signs are installed on an individual basis to identify locations of some facilities. Overall, wayfinding effectiveness is limited because of a lack of consistent sign design, changing traffic patterns and minimal signage for local attractions. The historic courthouse, public library and farmer’s market are examples of sites that need signs. In addition to finding the location of individual facilities, it is important for users to be able to easily locate parking lots. Presently, signs to public off-street parking are very limited in number. A coordinated and attractive town-wide sign system would greatly aid both downtown entities and other local facilities and attractions.

Wayfinding Strategy

Many visitors entering Georgetown may not be aware of the location of the downtown and have difficulty finding it. Once visitors have reached the downtown, they may have difficulty locating suitable parking areas and local points of interest. And, even though a visitor information center exists, it also is not easily located.

Georgetown’s current signs fail to convey a distinct image for the downtown and its different land use “Character Areas.” A new signage system is needed not only to convey information, but also to reinforce the special identity of downtown Georgetown.

This will become even more of an issue as the community implements the redevelopment action items from this plan. With the advent of more facilities, including civic buildings, housing and retail, it will become increasingly important that people are aware of the features and of facilities in downtown so that they can easily find their way there.



Level 1 Signage Plan

A public information system should be enacted, with the following components:

- Identifiers at major entries into the Downtown
- Secondary signs that lead users to key community resources
- Directional signs that improve circulation for pedestrians and automobiles
- Signs that guide users to appropriate parking facilities

In order to accomplish this, a four-tiered system of wayfinding should be established. Map #10, on the preceding page, illustrates the locations for the following “levels” of sign design and information.

Level I Signage- Downtown Indicators

Provide downtown indicators to point the way to downtown, especially at entry gateways and key outlying intersections. These simply indicate the direction to downtown in general.

Level II Signage – Continuation Signs

Allow for “continuation” signage to notify travelers that they are still approaching the downtown. This

is also an opportunity to begin to call out special attractions and other points of interest. These signs should be positioned between the Level I and Level III signage points, as noted on the wayfinding map.

Level III Signage – Resource Locators

Provide key information point signage to help visitors locate specific resources. The treatment of these key information points can be simple (e.g., to note the entrance to a trail) or more elaborate if



Level III signs provide key information point signage to help visitors locate “special” places.



Level I Sign. These may be combined with landscaping at key intersections. These should have a consistent landscape scheme that is associated with the downtown streetscape.

there is an opportunity to incorporate landscaping or sculptural elements (e.g., to identify areas such as the courthouse). These signs are located in close proximity to the actual site and consideration for turning and entry points should be integrated into circulation framework actions.

Level IV Signage- Pedestrian Directories

Provide orientation maps at key gathering points in the downtown. Areas such as parking facilities, government offices and other key pedestrian destinations should provide maps of downtown that identify important civic, entertainment, dining, emergency and personal facilities.

Landscaped Gateways

In conjunction with the information presented through the different levels of signage, landscaped gateways should also be constructed at key traffic decision points. These should serve as “previews” of downtown and all should have a consistent landscape scheme that is associated with the downtown streetscape. Downtown entries and intermediate gateway points should be identified with coordinated directional signs, distinct landscape elements, and clear pedestrian crossings. Ex-

amples of suggested gateway designs and the hierarchy of gateways are shown in the illustrations at the end of this chapter.

Note that the wayfinding sign system designs presented in this plan are conceptual to illustrate the principles of an organized system that would include a variety of sign types. Before actual construction and installation of any signs, a more detailed plan for location of signs should be developed and more refined graphics should be produced. Note also that, in time, additional locations for signs will be identified. The sign system map in this plan should be considered preliminary, for the purposes of identifying initial locations of signs that are important.

Installation of the wayfinding system should have high priority, because it yields substantial benefits for reasonably low investment costs. Initial funding may come from the city’s CIP program, although a more comprehensive system could be better accomplished with an improvement district, using tax increment financing and assessments. In addition, several entry points in outlying areas should have signs identifying the way to downtown. These include: along I-35 before major intersections, and at Innerspace Cavern and the



Level II: Signage Elevation. This may be combined with other street furnishings and landscaping.

Candle Factory; along Austin Avenue at Williams Drive and also Leander Road; and the intersection of Hwy 29 and Inner Loop Road.

Sign Design

Current directional signage also lacks consistency both in its message and use. Standard highway signs do not convey a sense of place or the information necessary to encourage visitors into downtown and to help them navigate to their final destination.

A consistent image within the public sign system will make it easier for pedestrians and motorists to negotiate their way into and around Georgetown. It will also help reinforce its identity. Signs, landscaping and other design features should be used to create a system of wayfinding that informs travelers of where they are in their approach and travel within downtown Georgetown. This is especially important in relation to the interstate and any future by-passes that may be created.

In order to accomplish this, a special graphics package should be used to establish a strong sense of identity and make it easy for people to identify a public sign that will provide information and help them negotiate the downtown. The proposed public sign concept uses a series of special logos and colors to define each of the proposed "Character Areas." The center panel of the sign uses standard symbols, a consistent type face and layout. Signs may be mounted on a standard square pole or may be supported on a custom metal post, with a distinct finial detail. Those in the core area may be more ornamental, to reflect the heritage of the square. Signs also may be mounted on existing posts and light standards.

The following types of signs should be installed as a part of a public sign system:

Directional signs

These identify the location of public facilities; for example, the courthouse, the Library, and the Justice Center are among the sites to be identified on directional signs. Trail head signs are also in this category.

Regulatory signs

These indicate restrictions on traffic and parking as well as basic health and safety concerns. Signs that limit parking hours, restrict traffic flow and set speed limits are among the signs in this category.

Informational signs

These interpret the history of the community and its natural resources. They may include photographs, maps, sketches and text.

The design concept for these signs is shown at the end of this chapter. This design is provided as a guide with key information elements. Final design concepts must be developed prior to actual installation. Creating and continuing a consistent image for downtown Georgetown is the most important factor in the sign design.

Actions:

- Develop the final graphics package and locations for the sign system.
- Develop gateways into the downtown that include wayfinding elements.
- Install directional signs in a coordinated system.
- Install pedestrian-oriented directories in public parking lots.

Concept for Downtown Directional, Informational & Regulatory Signs



This sign system uses a standard metal panel as a base, but in some areas would incorporate a custom-tailored graphics system that highlights the different land use Character Areas of downtown Georgetown. The background “frame” color would be consistent throughout the downtown. A distinct logo and/or text would then be used to differentiate each Character Area. The panels should be scaled to match those of standard traffic and parking regulatory signs. A decorative cap could be used in the downtown area and a simpler metal cap could be used in the outlying areas. (Note that these are conceptual and that more refined design development should occur before execution.)