DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The physical context of Alexandria's varied neighborhoods is a direct expression of the City's history, living traditions, and spirit. The character of Alexandria is vibrant, welcoming, unique and authentic; it is an exciting blend of old and new where quiet charm meets energetic bustle. Above all, it is valued by its citizens—any addition to this environment must be carefully considered.

Before any designs were produced, several key attributes were examined to create a foundation of authenticity:

- ***Design Criteria*** *were developed, with the assistance of the Stakeholder Advisory Group*
- ***Themes and Vocabulary*** *were identified, using the physical environment and historic reference for Alexandria as inspiration*
- *A* ***Wayfinding Strategy*** *was developed, establishing key functional objectives for the solution, and formalizing an approach to circulation, destinations, and the district concept*
- *Artwork for a versatile* ***City Emblem*** *and a design strategy for* ***Maps*** *emerged over the course of the project.*

Design Criteria

The designers worked with the Stakeholder Advisory Group in a team-based work session to identify key design qualities that would characterize a wayfinding system uniquely suited to Alexandria. These qualities became the guiding criteria, constantly referred back to as the design process evolved:

1] *A versatile design palette which can be applied throughout the city*

2] *Interchangeable elements to relate to specific districts (color/pattern/icon/etc)*

3] *Clear & legible text and arrows*

4] *Sophisticated, flexible color palette, yet not too "muddy", with potential for selective pops of brighter color & contrast*

5] *Relief and patterning, using architectural inspiration which lends authenticity*

6] *An authentic, timeless look:*
"Rich history with contemporary flair"

Themes & Vocabulary

COLOR INSPIRATION

The team looked to historical reference for color inspiration, seeking hues that would project an authenticity of place by complementing their surroundings. The colors in this historic illustration form a strong neutral base that is both warm and sophisticated.

Themes & Vocabulary

COLOR INSPIRATION

Alexandria's many neighborhoods display a dynamic combination of muted architectural palettes and pops of vibrant color. The wayfinding system incorporates both of these concepts into its palette to balance the desire for subtlety with the goal of projecting a cheerful image.

Examples of vibrant pops of color from the streets of Alexandria

Themes & Vocabulary

COLOR CONTEXT

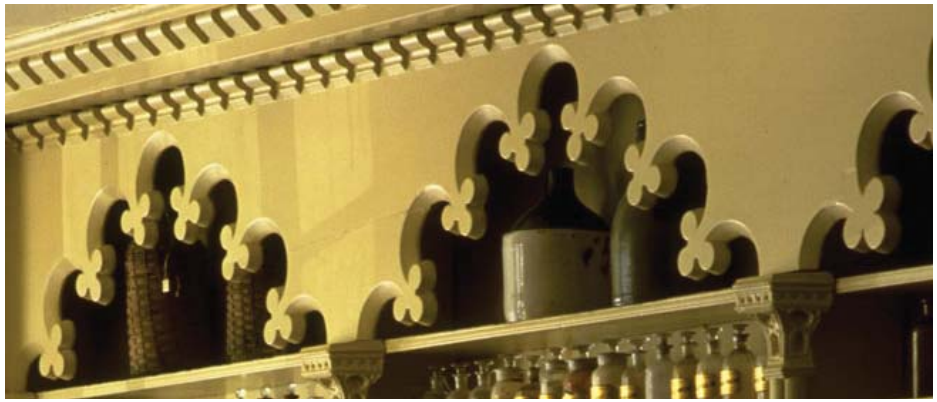
Similarly, it is important to recognize that the colors which inspired the project palette also serve as the background setting for the signs themselves.

Themes & Vocabulary

ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION

The rich and diverse architectural heritage of Alexandria provides ample source material from which to draw inspiration. By looking within the city for design elements to inform the program design, the solution becomes woven into the fabric of the city landscape, rather than inserted into it arbitrarily.

Architectural details in Alexandria which formed a foundation for the design solution.



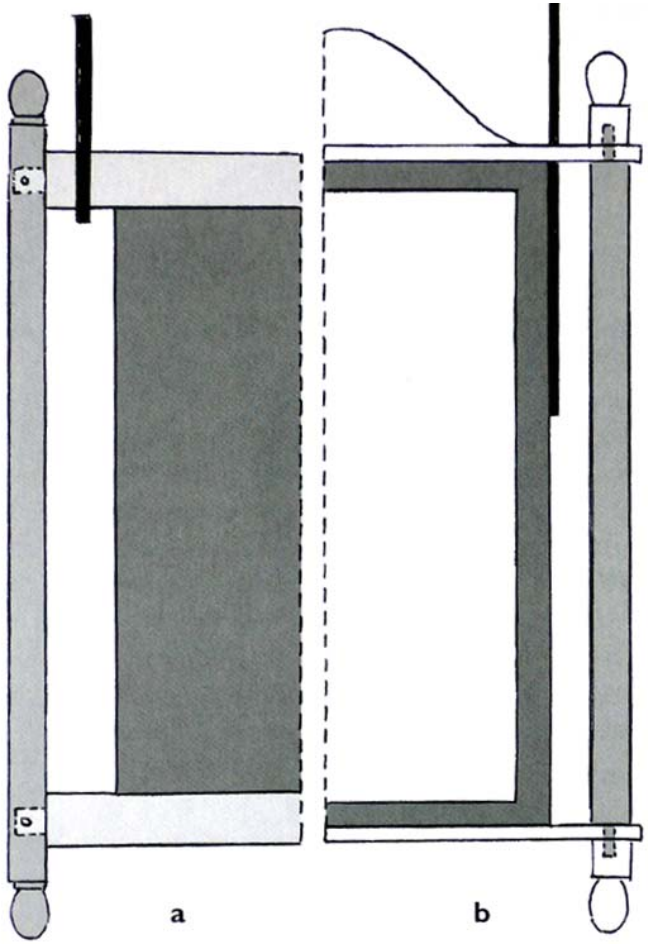
Themes & Vocabulary

ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION

Themes & Vocabulary

SIGN HISTORY

Many signs in the wayfinding system draw inspiration from vintage signs which would have been prevalent in Alexandria when it was an active shipping port in the 18th century. Alluding to historic construction detailing while using contemporary graphics and materials is one way in which the program achieves a fresh look while supporting the notion of authenticity.



An illustration representing the traditional construction of signs typical of those found in Alexandria. in the nineteenth century.

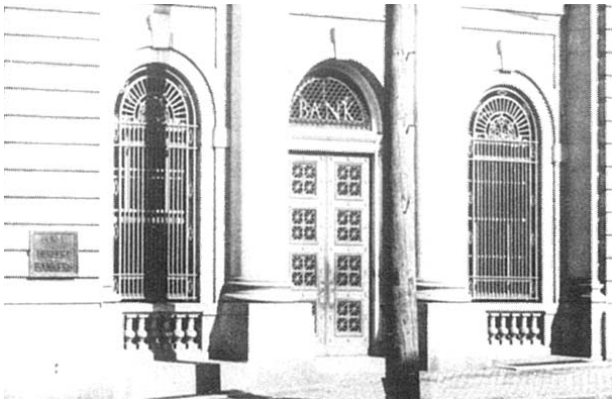
Sample of a historic hotel sign, note the accent of color on the interior edge of the outer frame

Image from the Office of Historic Alexandria, showing a typical nineteenth century Old Town storefront with numerous signs

Themes & Vocabulary

HISTORIC IMAGERY

Images from Alexandria's past helped the design team understand the place it once was, contributing to a sense of authenticity in the solution which feels like it has grown from roots in the history of this place.



Photographs and artifacts from the Office of Historic Alexandria.

Themes & Vocabulary

HISTORIC MAPS

Study of historic maps helped the design team understand not only the growth of key circulation corridors over time, but offers inspiration for color palette and graphic style of geographic information.

Maps from the Office of Historic Alexandria.

Wayfinding Strategy

ANALYSIS & CRITERIA

The design team completed a thorough study of the existing wayfinding experience in Alexandria, including a street by street inventory of existing signs in the Old Town core. This assessment brought to light some key areas for potential improvement of the wayfinding experience in order to accomplish the City's goals.

Four core priorities were identified for the system solution to address the unique wayfinding challenges presented by Alexandria.

1] *Address pedestrian information needs*
An informed pedestrian is comfortable, confident, and ready to explore

2] Streamline vehicular wayfinding
Focus on the essentials: get visitors quickly to parking so they can start enjoying Alexandria on foot

3] Address visitor & community needs
Community destinations are many & far reaching; vehicular signs should account for both groups in a unified design standard

4] Define/direct to districts past Old Town
Identifiable districts give visitors more to explore; plus they make wayfinding easier by creating "bite-size" sections of the city

Wayfinding Strategy

DESTINATION HIERARCHY

A small-group based work session with the Stakeholder Advisory Group resulted in a comprehensive list of destinations in major categories which were deemed appropriate to include in the wayfinding program. This list was further refined into separate tiers of priority, with distinctions among them as noted at right.

Prioritizing destinations is particularly important for vehicular wayfinding signs, where space is at a premium on each sign, and signs are located based on an overall circulation strategy so that routes are efficient and total number of signs is kept in check. (See page 26 for more on the system circulation strategy.) Through the course of the circulation study & programming of sign messages, not all destinations originally identified by the SAG actually appear on vehicular directional signs in the proposed program. However, they may still appear on pedestrian signs and maps.

TIER A—Destination of primary importance; provide direction throughout city via all access routes on vehicular signs. Prominently featured on pedestrian wayfinding signs and maps.

TIER B—Major destination; consider for advance strategic wayfinding on vehicular signs within overall circulation strategy. Direction provided on nearby pedestrian signs. Appears prominently on map.

TIER C—Minor destination, or exclusively civic destination; vehicular wayfinding provided if "hard to find" (e.g. on a side street). Direction provided on nearby pedestrian signs, space permitting. Appears on map.

TIER D—Minor destination or exclusively civic destination; vehicular directional wayfinding not needed. Pedestrian wayfinding is optional. Still may be identified on map or at site.

* indicates destinations scheduled to be included on vehicular directionals

CITY CENTER

Tier A – Old Town*

COURTHOUSES & MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

Tier B – City Court
- City Hall
- Court House Square
- U.S. Bankruptcy Court
- U.S. District Court*

Tier C – Animal Shelter*
- DMV
- Health Department
- Human Services
- Lee Center*
- Office of Sheriff Detention Ctr*
- Police Department*
- Recycling Centers*
- Senior Services*

COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES

Tier B – Northern Virginia CC*
- Virginia Theological Seminary*

Tier C – George Washington Grad School
- Strayer University
- Virginia Tech Architecture Center

REGIONAL COMMERCIAL CENTERS

Tier B – Landmark Mall*
- Potomac Yard*

HOSPITALS

Tier B – Inova Alexandria Hospital*

TRANSIT STATIONS

Tier B – Amtrak/VRE*
- Braddock Road Metro (DASH, Metro)*
- Eisenhower Ave Metro (DASH, Metro, REX)*
- King & Washington (DASH, Metro Bus)
- King Street Metro (DASH, Metro, REX)*
- Landmark Mall (DASH, Metro Bus, Fairfax Conn)*
- Van Dorn Street Metro (DASH, Metro, Fairfax Conn)*
- Water Taxi

Tier C – Bradlee (DASH, Metro Bus)
- Seminary Road & Kenmore Ave (DASH, Metro Bus)
- Southern Towers (DASH, Metro Bus)

PARKS, PUBLIC SQUARES & REC. FACILITIES

Tier B – Cameron Run Regional Park*
- City Marina
- Fort Ward*
- Jones Point Park*
- Market Square*
- Waterfront*

Tier C – Charles Houston Recreation Ctr*
- Chinquapin Park
- Daingerfield Island National Park
- Ivy Hill Cemetery
- King Street Garden Park
- Lee Center*

Tier D – All Other Parks

THEATRE, ARTS & PERFORMING ARTS

Tier B – The Athenaeum
- The Birchmere*
- Del Ray Artisans*
- Little Theatre*
- Metro Stage*
- Schlesinger Center*
- Torpedo Factory Art Center

MUSEUMS / HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS

Tier A – Alexandria Visitor Center*

Tier B – African American Heritage Park*
- Alexandria Archaeology Museum
- Alexandria Black History Museum*
- Alexandria National Cemetery*
- The Athenaeum
- Carlyle House
- Christ Church
- Contrabands and Freedmen's Cemetery Memorial*
- Fort Ward *
- Freedom House*
- Friendship Firehouse*
- G.W. Masonic National Memorial*
- Gadsby's Tavern Museum
- Jones Point Lighthouse*
- Lee-Fendall House
- The Lyceum*
- Old Presbyterian Meeting House*
- Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary
- Torpedo Factory*
- U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Museum*

Tier C – Seaport Foundation

Tier D – Archives and Records Center
- National Register Historic Districts
  - Alexandria Historic District
  - Parkfairfax Historic District
  - Rosemont Historic District
  - Town of Potomac
  - Uptown/Parker-Gray Historic District

REGIONAL DESTINATIONS

Tier B – Mount Vernon Estate*
- Airport*

MAJOR TRAILS & TRAIL ACCESS POINTS

Tier B – Four Mile Run Trail
- Holmes Run Trail
- Mount Vernon Trail
- W & OD Trail

Tier C – Alexandria Heritage Trail

LIBRARIES

Tier C – Barrett Library
- Beatley Library
- Burke Library*
- Duncan Library*

SCHOOLS

Tier B – TC Williams High School

Tier C – Bishop Ireton*
- Episcopal
- George Washington
- Hammond
- St. Stephens St. Agnes*

Tier D – All Other Schools

PUBLIC ARTS SITES

Tier C – King/Fayette
- Canal Square

DISTRICTS

Tier A – Old Town*

Tier B – Arlandria*
- Carlyle*
- Del Ray*
- Eisenhower Valley*
- Potomac Yard*
- West End*

Wayfinding Strategy

CIRCULATION

A circulation plan emerged from a study of major routes between destinations as well as key approaches for visitors via car converging on the Alexandria Visitor Center at King and Fairfax. After reviewing with the Stakeholder Advisory Group as well as T&ES, this plan has become the backbone of the vehicular wayfinding program and vehicular directional signs focus on directing to destinations via these primary routes.

Specific strategies built upon the plan include:

- *Provide periodic reinforcement of Tier A destinations (Old Town/Visitor Center) along routes of vehicular arrival. Keep any other "straight ahead" messages to a minimum.*
- *Focus vehicular wayfinding to other destinations at key decision points created through the overlap of community circulation routes.*
- *Selectively add additional signs leading directly to destinations off of the main circulation routes, looking for opportunities to group destinations on to fewer signs by consolidating routes.*
- *In Old Town east of Washington Street, destinations are dense and rarely offer on-site parking. Rather than directing to these destinations individually, emphasize public parking in the area, then strategically provide kiosks at each parking facility to ease the transition to on-foot exploration.*

1] First, key **routes of visitor arrival** are identified (originating from all directions outside the city, arriving at Tier A destinations: Old Town/Visitor Center.)

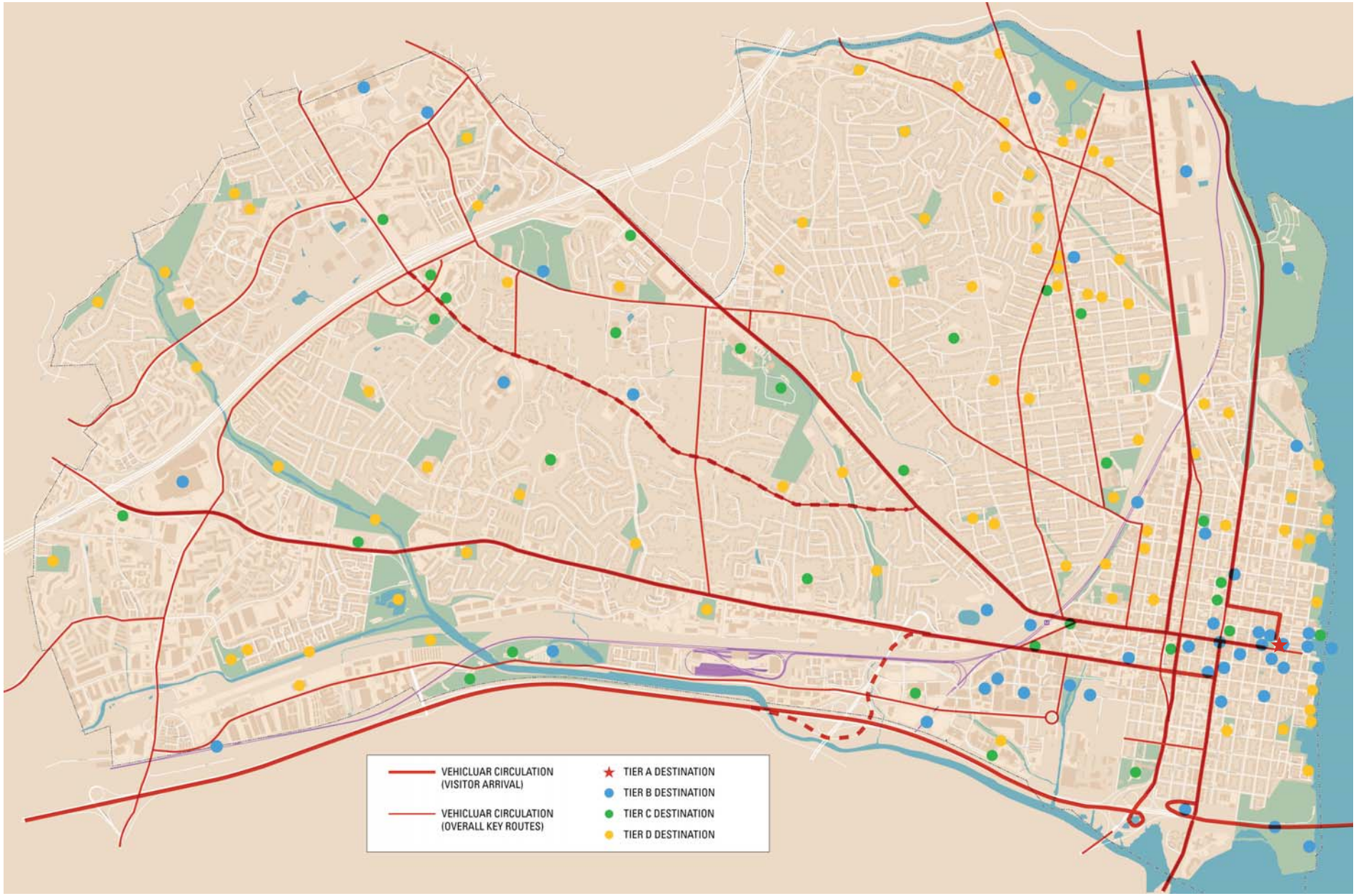
3] Intersections of these routes are key **decision points** where signs will help drivers know when to turn.

2] Next, major cross-**community circulation routes** are identified

4] When tiered **destinations** are added (see map on facing page), one can identify where additional signs will be needed to reach destinations off of the main circulation routes, and where routes may be consolidated for efficiency.

Wayfinding Strategy

CIRCULATION

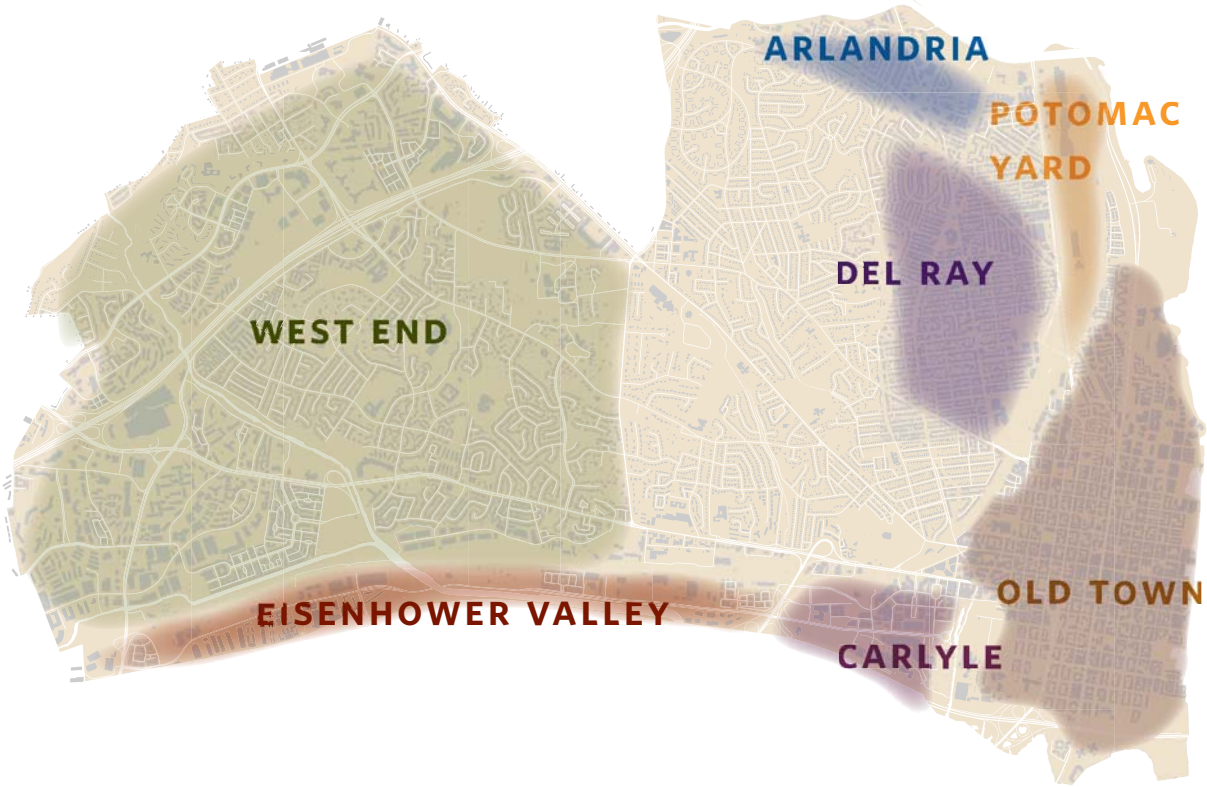


Wayfinding Strategy

DISTRICTS

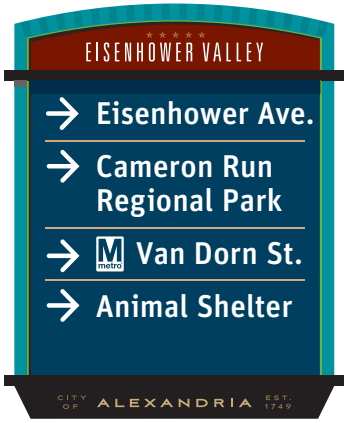
One of the objectives of the Wayfinding program was to identify and highlight the unique districts in the City. During one of their worksessions, the Stakeholder Advisory Group developed criteria to determine which districts should be identified, with consensus that they should be those districts that are geographically distinct with a core area of commercial and visitor destinations. The group named eight districts. Some of the eight proposed districts tested the limits of the criteria by not having enough of a concentrated commercial or visitor core, or by having nebulous geographic borders. In the end, it was determined that while Parker-Gray is a National Historic Register District, it does not yet have a concentrated commercial or visitor core, and that it should more appropriately be included in the Old Town district, with separate markers highlighting its status as a National Historic Register District. Should Parker-Gray emerge to have a more distinct core over time, the wayfinding system has the flexibility to incorporate such a change. Similarly, the West End may evolve to have more definable districts in the future, particularly when Landmark Mall redevelops. As proposed, the Wayfinding program will highlight the seven districts shown at right.

To achieve the objective of differentiating, the design team adopted a strategy of reinforcing district identity through two means. First, district identification signs will be located either in the heart or at the edges of a district. These serve as a distinctive welcome to visitors, while also acknowledging that districts do not always have clear boundaries. Second, a "header panel" has been developed for each district, which will appear on top of vehicular directional signs within each district, as well as on kiosks. Examples of these district-related sign elements are shown on the following page, the design of which set out to:

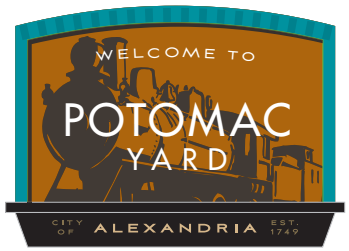


Districts identified by the Stakeholder Advisory Group, showing the general geographic area of each

- *Accurately represent each district's flavor and history*
- *Express brightness and vitality in the color palette*
- *Maintain a simplicity in overall design and information hierarchy*
- *Not compete with directional information that often appears below headers*



Vehicular directional sign showing the Eisenhower district header



District Identification sign for Old Town

City Emblem

To identify the city with a warm, welcoming and memorable image at gateways and kiosks, a new full-color emblem was developed.

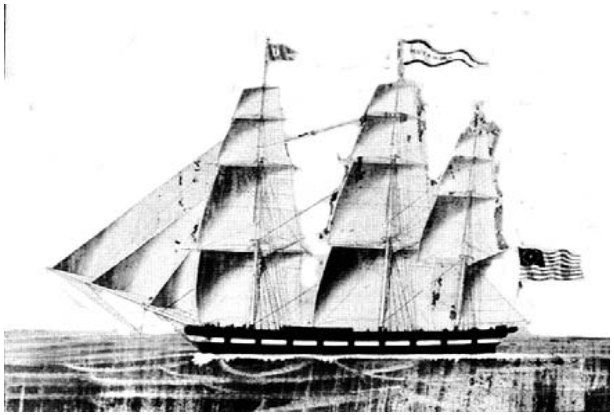
The ship featured is evocative of the ship on the city's official seal, but is more illustrative in character and represents a historically accurate vessel such as those which actually sailed from Alexandria down the Potomac.

The wordmark displays the city name in prominent text along with the founding date, and introduces the design character that will proceed to unify the various elements of the sign program under a consistent City of Alexandria banner.

Back side

Front side

City Emblem



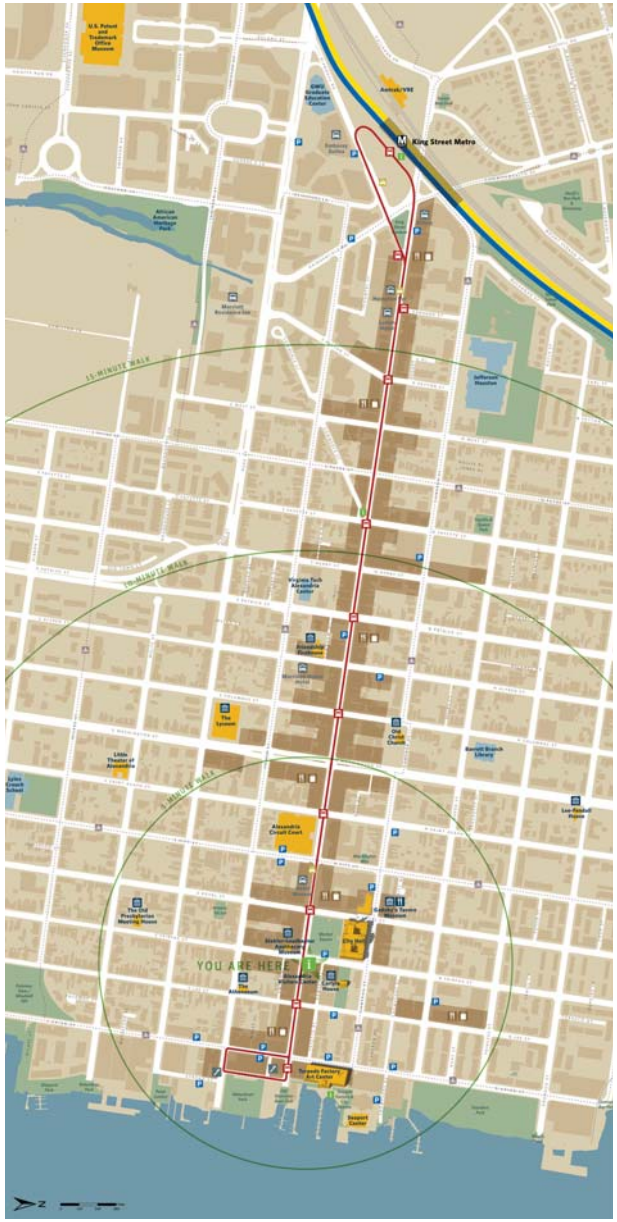
Above: Evolution of the emblem artwork design.

At left, reference material. Top: City of Alexandria Official Seal. Middle: 1864 Bird's Eye view of Alexandria Waterfront inspiration for waterfront activity and ships. Bottom: Typical 18th century sailing vessel.

Maps

The pedestrian wayfinding map for Old Town draws from a historic color palette and features a variety of design elements designed to make information accessible to a wide variety of users:

- *Destinations accentuated in a bright color, with 3D renderings of distinctive buildings to aid in orientation*
- *Shopping and dining indicated by a shaded color zone, reinforcing the extent of these opportunities on and off of King Street*
- *Linear paths represent trolley route and bike trails*
- *Icons represent Museums, Parking, Taxi Stands, Restrooms, Information, Hotels*



Facing page: map detail shown at actual size for a kiosk application

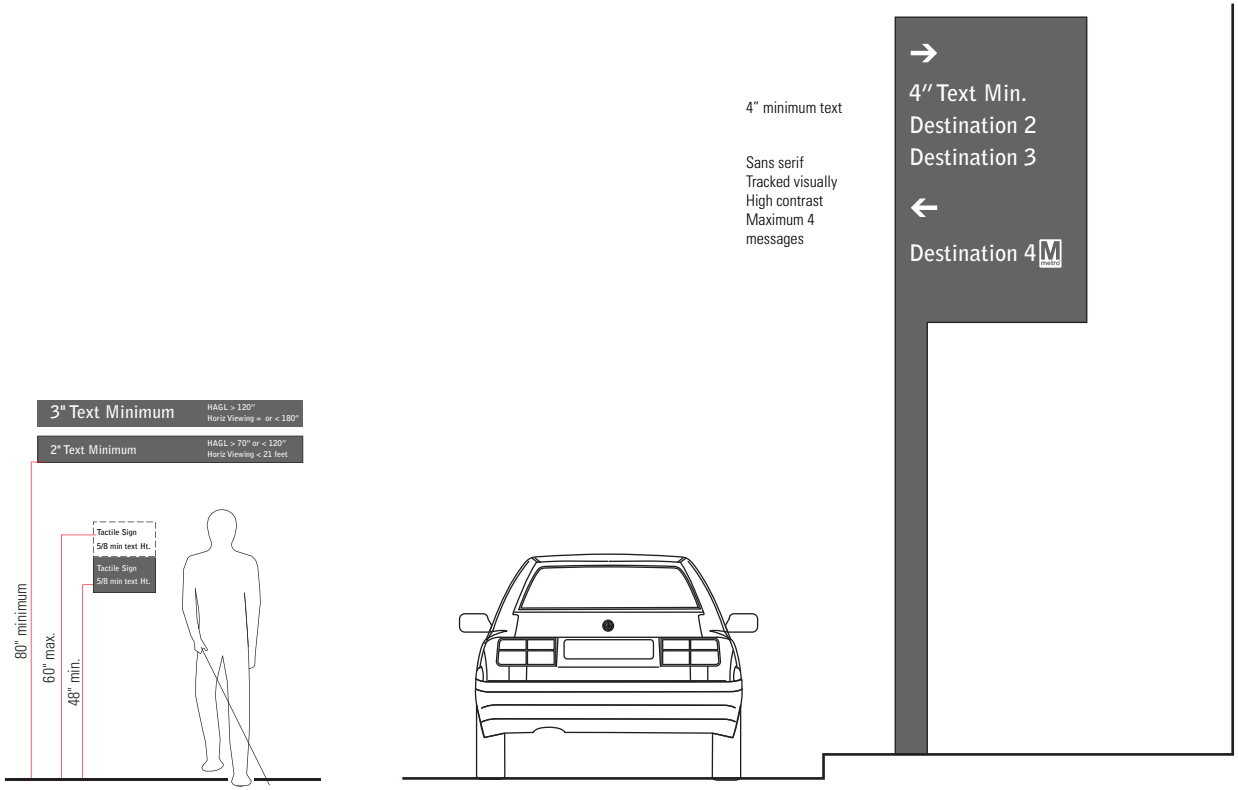
YOU ARE HERE
Armory Tot Lot
Gadsby's Tav
Museum
N ROYAL ST
Market Square
City Hall
Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum
Alexandria Visitors Center
Carlyle House
The Athenaeum
SWILES AL
RAMSAY AL
CAMERON ST
THOMPSONS AL
WALES AL
FAYETTE AL
CAMERON ME

Universal Design Principles

From the outset of the design process, universal design and accessibility were implicit objectives of the wayfinding program. In addition to complying with all required elements of accessibility, the program seeks to exceed them with an eye to maximizing accessibility through design of both sign structure and content.

These diagrams represent a pictorial compilation of the following codes and guidelines, which have been incorporated into the design of all signs in the program:

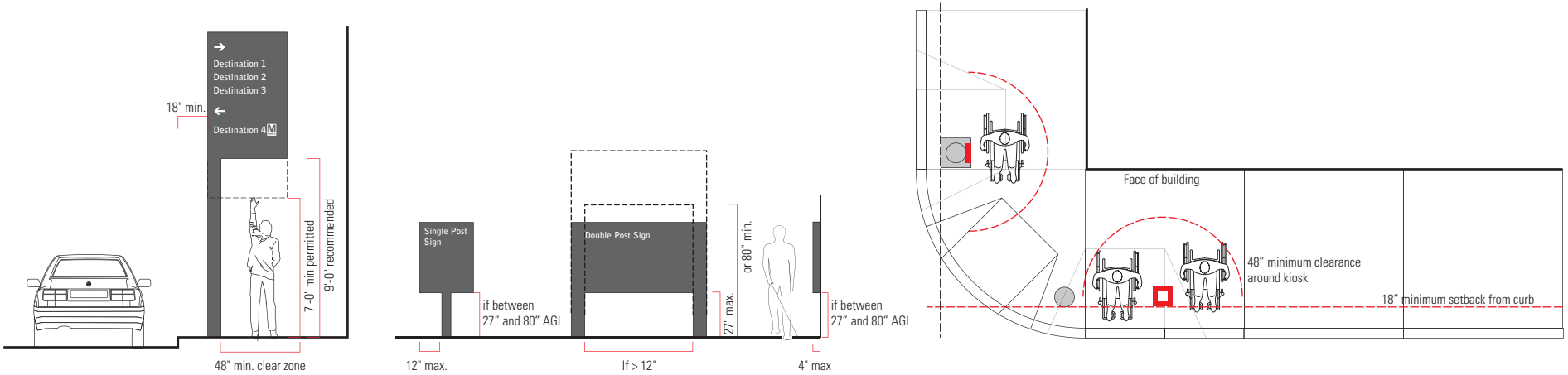
- *MUTCD 2003*
- *ADAAG 2004*
- *ANSI A117.1 1995*
- *IBC 2003*
- *SEGD ADA White Paper Updated 2006*

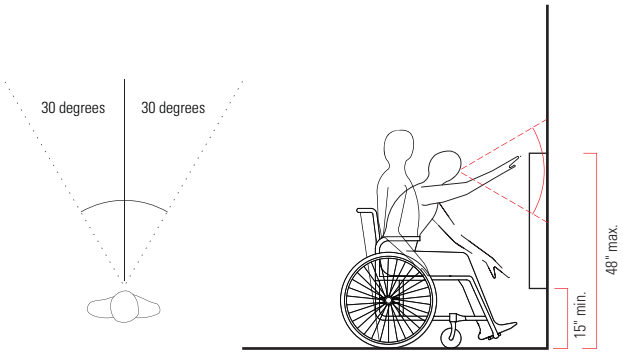
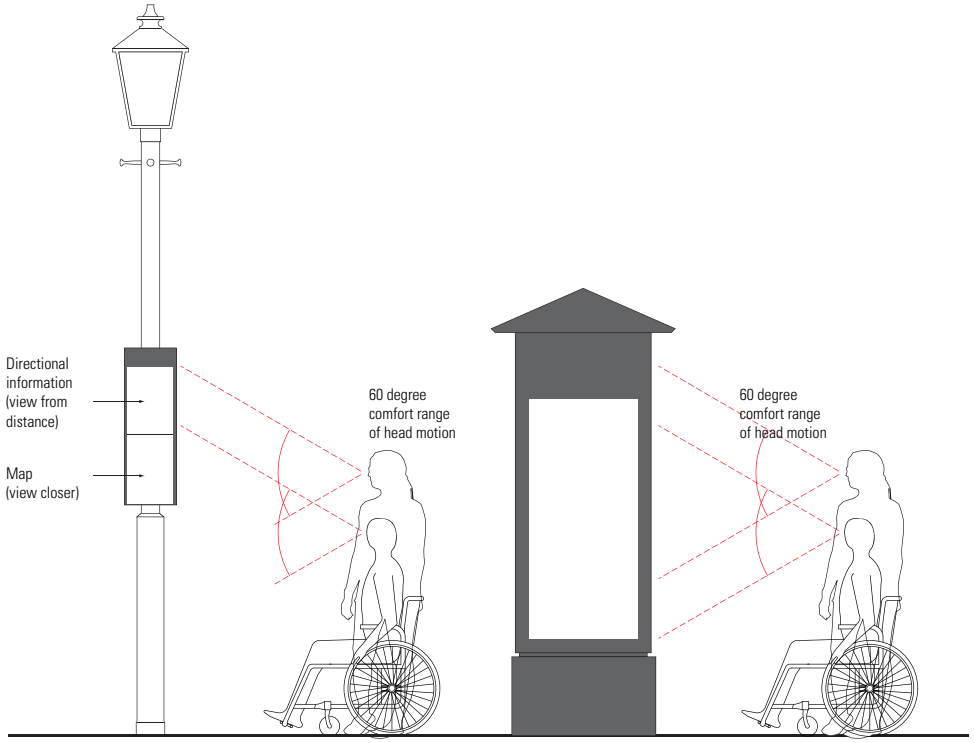


Distance (Feet)	7.5	15	22.5	30	37.5	45	60	75	90	105	120	150	180
Cap Letter Height (Inches)	.25	.5	.75	1	1.25	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	5	6

Text height & legibility for pedestrian & vehicular signs

Universal Design Principles



Setbacks and clearances to maintain accessible pathways. Left to right: signs over sidewalks; single post signs; double post signs; wallmounted signs; top view of signs mounted in sidewalks

Optimal mounting heights for comfortable viewing of various types of information. Left to right: side-to-side viewing; mounting for signs intended to be touched; strategy for mini kiosks and kiosks.