



City of Alexandria Wayfinding Sign Program

Consolidated public comments received in response to

**May 2010 mock-ups evaluation
and
May 14, 2010 Draft Design Guidelines Manual**

June 30, 2010

**Comments received from members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group and the public on Wayfinding Program Mockups and Overall Design
May-June 2010**

North Gateway

- I'd like to add a suggestion that we include the names and logos/symbols of our four Sister Cities on the monument signs welcoming people to Alexandria. We really don't have any acknowledgement for these international ties and I understand that they do this in their cities for us.
- Location is good. Would be nicer if it said, "Welcome to the City of Alexandria". Size using the current wording should be smaller in length than shown.
- I disagree with the suggestion to include the names and logos/symbols of our four Sister Cities on the monument signs welcoming people to Alexandria.
- On both CG 1 and CG2 with their brick foundation construction and to use that to be able to create a memorial area or engrave bricks like the King Street Garden Park Foundation does to sell bricks to finance their expenses and so can the City sell either some of the bricks or a plaque engraved to suit the Sponsor of that Gateway. Or, as I mentioned to use them as memorials as well as the beautiful Gateways they will be.
- "City of" and "Est. 1749" is very difficult to read on most signs. Why bother? A larger "Alexandria" label would be clearer and more functional than including redundant text on every sign that's too light to read. The established date should be on the gateway signs, however, and should be large enough there to be legible--not sure it is with the present design of either gateway sign.
- The white-on-blue City of Alexandria sign looks like a billboard--specifically, like a sign board you'd see behind home plate of a major league ball game. I can't tell whether it's just the mock-up or whether it would actually look that way. I suggest that the full build out of this type of sign include raised letters in front of the blue field to give it a little more depth or definition. Might also consider applying a larger seal. The oversized seal on the South Gateway sign is stunning--can something like that be done with this one similar to that one? Ensure "established" date is legible.
- As an Alexandria resident living on West Abingdon Drive, adjacent to the George Washington Parkway near Bashford Lane, I'd like to note that the new mockup wayfinding sign near my home is quite large, and needs to be more in scale with the current sign. It also seems that it's too big given the low speed limit in that area. The sign is so large it appears less like a sympathetic/coordinated element within the park-like median, and more like a colorful billboard and a point of demarcation (Perhaps only the homes and buildings that appear after the sign are part of Alexandria, and everything else isn't part of the city?).

- The North entrance should be smaller scale. Although the color scheme is pleasant, it just too overwhelming.
- The "Gateway signs " N+S are lacking finesse.....I have some strong ideas on those.....simple, elegant, classic, and " befitting ". Those signs should convey the depth of history....and the depth of wealth, (past & present), of the City. Afterall, Alexandria was one of the most important trading ports in Colonial America, hometown of President Washington, and the Lees, and many other central figures in our early national history.

South Gateway

- An ideal entry sign for this and similar portals to the city. Really like the oversized city seal. Ensure "established" date is legible.
- I drove past this twice without realizing this was the gateway marker. I disagree with BAR that having a raised planter bed would improve this sign, it's the upper portion of the sign combined with placement in the median that fails to attract attention away from glimpses of the Potomac. Compared to the northern gateway sign, this sign fails to announce the city limit.
- On the South, the scale works, but hard to make out the ship until very close. On the backside, granted this is mock up cardboard, but it does emphasize that it very much diminishes the parkway view when leaving Alexandria. Therefore, the backside warrants some effort, because it cannot be left as just a big piece of whatever, that is too disrespectful of the Parkway.

Vehicular Directional on King

- While I have not had a chance to visit all the mock-up signs in Old Town, I was surprised at the size of the "vehicular wayfinding" sign on King Street between Washington and Columbus. I think at that scale, the signage is a visual distraction from its surroundings. Signs at a scale that could help guide both pedestrians and vehicles, similar to the blue signs found all over Washington DC, seem more appropriate to an in-town setting.
- This sign seemed large and out of place on King Street. Was difficult to read from a car due to its placement behind trees. King Street signs need to respect the scale of the neighborhood. Signs should be placed closer to intersections or other locations where they can more easily be read without being blocked by tree branches.
- The only problem I saw was that trees obstructed the view of the sign headed east on King just before Washington. That shouldn't happen too often.
- Unlike other comments, I have no problem with the size of this sign since it must compete with shop signs, trees and regulatory signs. I have no doubt that visitors will appreciate the size of this sign more than residents ever will.
- Signs along King Street are too high and too large

Vehicular Directional on Washington

- The second sign at the web site directs traffic to Carlyle West on Duke Street from traffic going North on Washington Street. This is confusing. There is also a very popular Historic Property in Alexandria which is the Carlyle House. I think this will only confuse those who are seeking the Carlyle House.
- This sign had the right scale and legibility for drivers on Washington Street. Would be a welcome addition to the streetscape--an attractive and clear way to direct motorists through the city.
- Again, a sign I drove past and missed.

Pedestrian Mini Kiosk

- I think that the curved U-turn-looking arrow on the pedestrian kiosks is confusing in trying to direct people to the Waterfront and Metro. I think it should be a down arrow instead.
- Really liked these. Thought it had the right mix of interpretive and directional information. Glad that these were not overly cluttered with specific (and quickly dated) information about local businesses. Would be handy for visitors to have these all along King Street. Liked the dual placement kitty-corner from each other at two of the four corners of King and Lee. Couple of issues with the maps: should be "Christ Church," not "Old Christ Church"; the Chart House Restaurant is incorrectly labeled as the Seaport Center; and the Alexandria Courthouse was incorrectly labeled the "Alexandria Circuit Court"--the building houses the Circuit and General District court as well as the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court. I see potential for something similar to this (maybe two- instead of four-sided) to be implemented along the waterfront, which is in need of updated directional and interpretive signage.
- Because the 'information icon' is placed at the top of this sign, I found it too subtle. The 'information icon' should be bolder on pedestrian signs. I'm 5'5" tall so I needed to either crane my head back for or stand back away from all the pedestrian signs.
- Visitors liked the sign; they said it was clean & uncluttered. They also liked not having to refer to a paper map. (They also liked the A-frame signs.)

Parking Signs (Trailblazers and Garage ID)

- A nice improvement over the existing hodgepodge of parking signs. Attractive, simple, straight forward. Seems we should try to limit the placement of these signs on lampposts, however. They are much more appropriate on traffic signal mast arms.
- Perfect sign, right down to the contrasting shades of blue. I could easily see it from King Street.

- I like the mast arm mounted sign better anyway.
- Perfect - location/size/legibility/mounting right down to the contrasting shades of blue.
- The garage signage (system of signs), is really coming along well.

General Comments

- I fully support everything I am seeing at this time for the signage.
- think the "idea" of a standardized system across the city has merit, especially to at least unify the major signage for our primary "corridors",.... ie Eisenhower valley...Old Town.....Del Ray.....Seminary Hill.....Landmark / Van Dorn.
- Overall, the broad program It is getting simpler, and less busy and cluttered, which is good
- Some sign types are too numerous.
- Some types of signs may be unnecessary, or at least warrant heavy editing....(content and/or number of signs).
- Some sign types are way too large, we have emphasized smaller pedestrian, (walking) oriented signage, where appropriate, and larger, car oriented signage where appropriate....it is important to make that distinction.....to evaluate locations as to what are the purposes...and what should be the resultant size, frequency, and location(s).
- Looks good to me. I don't have any concerns. I like the pages focusing on the accessibility requirements and elements and the citation of sources.
- After briefly reviewing the draft manual, I find I agree with many of its conclusions, especially that signage around the city would benefit from a unified "brand", both for aesthetic reasons and to help people navigate. I also think that the styles created by the design team are clear, legible, and suit the city's image.
- Overall, I was pleased at how good they looked.
- I found all the signs legible and appropriate size/scale
- Color: palates are neighborhood dependent but this shade blue is fitting for OT and need not 'match' the blue street ID signs.
- Location: Mast arm and corner placements are better in that they don't conflict with trees.
- I'm pleasantly surprised about how well the scale fits into King Street. They look a little monolithic in the pictures, but blend in nicely on the street. In fact, my staff encountered them and thought they blended in.
- The coordinated design makes the old signs look even worse!
- Thanks for sharing – this all looks great – Looks to me like you and the SAG have everything well under control and nearing the finish line!
- Has anyone at the City thought to contact disability (physical, blind, deaf, etc.) service agencies to get their feedback on the accessibility aspects of the new signage?

- They (& the people they serve) are the experts on what does (& does not work) in terms of accessibility – they should be consulted.
- Have you consulted with the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities to get their input specifically on accessibility features? Thanks for your consideration of this input – now is the time!
- The key, in my opinion, is finding an appropriate way to get people who have special needs to actually test the accessibility features of the new signs to see if those needs will be met and, if not, why not and what can we do to make them more accessible.
- If Old Town is to survive we must get motorists out of their cars sooner rather than later. So having directional signs for the historic features within Old Town geared towards motorists is a contradiction. The signs on the main approach streets should be geared towards directing motorists to the nearest garages and the directional signs for sightseeing geared to pedestrian..

Other

- Let's explore ideas for how to integrate some online options into the signs. One example is to have some kind of URL that is location-specific, and another is to have a barcode that can be scanned with an iPhone to get local information. You may have already thought about some kind of URL, so we wanted to see about coordinating
- Looks great - My only suggestion would be to include a web address on each sign for more information. Over time, this could be used to indicate maps to parking lots with availability, more details on historic sites or walking directions from a smartphone. Each sign could have its own address or it could be general. Good luck with this initiative.
- The sandwich boards have been very successful for small business in Old Town. By allowing for the names or type of business we are much more apt to reap the rewards of all the effort of wayfinding. I believe that actual logos of business is really important, an annual fee for the marketing opportunity would be in the best interest of the city and the business. A fee would allow for annual upkeep and at 25.00 per month might make the program viable. But the business would really benefit from its logo and or name being posted. Thank you for all your efforts.
- The "gateway" signs into Old Town should also indicate, in a more dramatic fashion, speed limits and the fact that motorists are entering a pedestrian dominant area and not another sprawling suburb and must adjust their driving style accordingly. Tricky message i know but somehow we have to master this - maybe with a series of 'gateway' signs?

Joint BAR Wayfinding Work Session Summary

May 19, 2010

6:00 pm to 7:30 pm

City Council Work Room

Parker-Gray BAR Members in Attendance

Robert Duffy
Christina Kelley
Phil Moffat
Doug Meick
Deborah Rankin

Old and Historic BAR Members in Attendance

Tom Hulfish, Chairman
Oscar Fitzgerald
Arthur Keleher
Wayne Neale
John von Senden
Peter Smeallie
James Spencer

City Staff

Faroll Hamer, Director P&Z
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director P&Z
Carrie Beach, P&Z
Catherine Miliaras, P&Z
Al Cox, P&Z
Yon Lambert, T&ES
Joanna Frizzell, City Attorney's Office

AGENDA

1. Introduction and Purpose of Work Session (Carrie Beach)
2. Review of BAR concerns previously identified and overview of Wayfinding system and Design Guidelines Manual (Carrie Beach)
3. Discussion re: BAR's authority to review signs (Joanna Frizzell)
4. Feedback from BAR Members on Design Guidelines Manual and Mock-ups

MOCK-UP REVIEW

North-End Washington Street City Gateway (monument style sign)

- Very nice-looking, well proportioned and perfect for the amount of open space at this specific site.
- "Alexandria" on both the monument-style sign and the emblem is redundant. Eliminate the "Alexandria" text on the emblem in this instance.

- Difficult to see the date on the emblem.
- Discussion about why the sign does not say “City of” and “Est. 1749” with the recommendation that it say both “Welcome to Alexandria” and “Est. 1749”.

South-End Washington Street City Gateway

- Mock-up appears a bit flat. Will have a more three dimensional appearance once it is constructed.
- Could be improved by adding more definition, such as plantings or a more horizontal element, such as a broader brick base/plinth to anchor the sign and soften the “lollipop” look. Another suggestion was to surround the circular City emblem within a frame.
- Staff confirmed that City Gateway signs similar to this one would be located in the same locations as the existing thistle gateway signs throughout the City.
- Staff confirmed that illumination would be a soft external up-wash from the base.

DR.2 Vehicular Directional – King Street

- All BAR members thought the sign was too big and noted that people drive very slowly on King Street because of the traffic. It was suggested that the sign height and width be reduced by approximately 30% on 66’ wide streets and suggested reducing the number of messages, and/or using 2 ½ inch tall letters.
- Shouldn’t use the posted road speed as the standard for determining the appropriate font size – but the actual road speed. On King Street, this is more like 5 mph.
- In order to better balance pedestrian scale with vehicular signage needs, the Design Guidelines should recommend sign sizes in proportion to the street and sidewalk widths.
- “Old Town” at the top of the sign does not have enough contrast with the background and fades away.
- Difficult to read “City of Alexandria” at bottom of sign as well as noting that is superfluous on signs in this location.
- Consider treatment of the back of these signs. A lighter color might make the sign recede in lieu of the existing dark, overbearing color.

DR.1 Vehicular Directional – Washington Street

- Most Board members believed that the DR1 is perfect, proportional and works well with the scale of the multi-lane wide roadway. One member felt it was still too large and the DR2 might be more appropriate on the Parkway.

Pedestrian Mini-Kiosk

- Terrific, great and outstanding.
- Staff discussed reducing the number based on the need for information at an intersection.
- The colors on the map are too subtle and blend together too much. Needs more contrast.

Historic Destination ID Signs (large – eg: Lyceum and Lee-Fendall)

- These signs are trying to provide information at both a vehicular and pedestrian may, therefore, not be successful at either.
- Most members agreed that interpretive information about the site should not be put on these signs but instead provided via a cell phone tour or inside the building.
- Increase size of letters to emphasize the destination and remove extraneous information (no smoking and accessibility symbols, description of site, address, etc...). Most agreed that it is useful to have a site's hours posted.
- One person mentioned that the need for the accessibility symbol should be confirmed with the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities.
- Like the three color schemes for civic, historic, parks.
- Existing Lyceum sign is much easier to read (Staff confirmed that the existing sign does not comply with the Washington St. sign guidelines because it is a freestanding sign).

Historic Destination ID Signs (small – eg: Apothecary and Friendship Firehouse)

- The Board members suggested that the existing museum signs be removed and that the Wayfinding signs be used throughout to provide immediate identification as a public facility.

Parking Trailblazers

- Blue on trailblazer sign should coordinate/match blue on the City standard street sign.
- Size and information provided is appropriate.

Parking Garage ID Signs

- The Boards understood that a Certificate of Appropriateness would be required for commercial text on parking garage signs and that staff would return with this application in June, 2010.
- The Board members wanted to remove all extraneous signs, such as A-frame signs. However they acknowledged that reasonable accommodation could be made for additional signs such as “garage full” and evening parking rates where these provided significant convenience for the public – but they should comply with uniform specifications for design, color, etc.
- Keep parking sign colors consistent on all garages throughout the City.

A-Frames

- One member commented that the existing A-frames are “pretty trashy” and is not convinced that the proposed uniform design and stricter fabrication guidelines will result in better signs. He asked who will monitor the condition of the signs over time and who will remove the names of stores when they leave. He also noted that King Street is not wide enough in places to accommodate the A-frames because there are too many pedestrians. While he understands the benefit to the side street businesses, he believes that the negatives outweigh the positives.

General Comments

- Where multiple sizes of a sign type are approved, some form of Design Guideline overview is needed to insure that the proper size (smallest functional) sign is used at each site.
- One member noted that there is a reluctance by staff to enforce the existing sign ordinance regulations because of the economy, leading to a proliferation of illegal commercial signs. There should be improved follow-up on sign complaints and sign violations (neon “open” signs for example), so that signs do not overwhelm the historic ambience.
- The proposed sign fonts are very readable and legible.
- The circulation map is difficult to read in the Design Guidelines Manual.
- The thermometer style map on the current blue and white pedestrian orientation signs on King Street is very easy to read to determine one’s location in on King. Consider using that simplified graphic style map in the new program.
- The entire West End should not be grouped together. Need to distinguish different areas of the City at a finer scale.
- The text on the district headers can be difficult to read in some places.
- Torpedo Factory needs to have more directional signage than currently exists.
- Consider signs with changeable text and have a well-thought out plan to add and remove places/allow for temporary events (such as the Waterfront Festival).
- Overall, the BAR members commended the Wayfinding program and how it has evolved, noting they are very pleased with what they have seen so far.



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
George Washington Memorial Parkway
c/o Turkey Run Park
McLean, Virginia 22101

IN REPLY REFER TO:

S82 (GMWP)

June 29, 2010

Ms. Carrie Beach
Neighborhood Planning
Planning and Zoning Dept.
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

RE: City of Alexandria Proposed Wayfinding Program

Dear Ms. Beach:

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to view the mock-ups of the proposed wayfinding signs. It was helpful for our evaluation to see the proposed signs in the locations where you are proposing to install them. We have reviewed the signs and have the following comments:

CG.1 Washington Street North Gateway

The style of the sign, particularly as it is shown in the Design Guidelines Manual, is appropriate and the amount of depth and relief will provide visual interest to the sign that was not evident in the mock-up. A deep red brick, rather than a salmon colored brick, would be more historically appropriate for Old Town Alexandria. The plantings shown in the Design Guidelines Manual look like low growing annual color which is not consistent with historical planting concepts; a sign set on turf would be more appropriate. The size of the sign, however, is still too large. In our previous comments, we stated that the sign should be no larger than 6' x 11', which is the largest entry sign on the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This sign is 6' x 20' and it is proposed to be set on a berm which will further increase the perceived size of the sign. Its size should also take into account that NPS may propose installing an entry sign opposite to this one as was agreed by NPS and the city in 1996.

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CG.2 City Gateway

This sign has an awkward, top heavy look and seems to be too tall. The tapered brick "pylon" with chamfered edges does not look strong enough to support the 5' diameter metal sign. A visually more substantial vertical-sided brick pier (32" to 48" square) with a base and projecting brick band at top would be more appropriate. Eliminating the metal post and setting the circular sign on top of pier or pylon would make it appear more balanced. Consider mounting the sign either: a) directly onto a low brick pier similar to Gateway North wall; or b) on (or offset from) a cast iron fluted Washington Standard Light Pole, below a single or double globe; or c) a larger Gadsby Light post) set on a brick pedestal/base.

DR.1 Vehicular Directional

The proposed layout of the signs with city and district identifiers has created fairly large signs. Because of their size it was evident that the signs will be partially obscured by trees and will block views to the second story of historic buildings. The format, font, and arrows are not consistent with MUTCD standards and will require an engineering study to obtain the approval of the Federal Highway Administration. What was most evident by the mock-ups was that the existing sign clutter that occurs at a lower and more visible height competes for the attention of drivers. The MUTCD standards state that "community guide signs shall not be installed where adequate spacing cannot be provided between community wayfinding guide signs and other higher priority signs." In order to meet this requirement an evaluation of what regulatory and warning signs are necessary and unnecessary signs be removed.

Other Signs

The parking lot directional signs and the pedestrian mini-kiosk signs are appropriate in size and location. The mini-kiosk in particular is attractive and informative.

There were no mock-ups of the destination identity signs that are proposed for Washington Street. We would like more information regarding the proposed locations and the size of the signs.

Quantity of Signs

The Design Guidelines Manual does not provide a comprehensive list of all the signs to be installed along Washington Street. We would like to review how many signs of all types are proposed and how many signs will be removed.

We appreciate your efforts to work with us on this project. If you have any questions, please contact Kate Barrett 703-419-6426.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "DPMarshall". The letters are cursive and connected, with a large initial "D".

Dottie P. Marshall
Superintendent



ALEXANDRIA CITY WAYFINDING PLAN COMMENTS

As previously outlined in our Legislative Agenda for 2010, the Chamber supports the implementation of an integrated signage system that will enable persons to navigate City streets and easily locate parking, shopping, dining and other destinations of interest. The system should provide a consistent image for the entire City while allowing flexibility for individual neighborhood branding; reduce the number of signs currently in place; and, promote walking, bicycling, and the use of mass transit.

We believe the proposed Wayfinding plan meets the above criteria needed for a successful system.

With regards to the mock signs that have been installed throughout the City, comments that we have received from Chamber members have been overall, very positive with regards to usability and design.

We therefore encourage the City to focus its attention on implementation of the Wayfinding plan versus re-engaging in a discussion about design elements. The development of the wayfinding design and program has been based on an open, participative process with broad based representation and public review. Highly skilled consultants were hired and much time and expense has been invested in that process—moving forward to implementation is the best way to more quickly realize a return on this investment.

Finally, we ask the City to consider defining requirements to allow businesses to purchase signs as outlined under the plan which may promote more rapid implementation of signage throughout the City. For example, the localized business associations (Del Ray, West End, Old Town, etc.) could be encouraged to work with business members and the City to develop creative methods, such as public-private partnerships, to finance the approved signage system for their areas.

May 17, 2010

To whom it may concern:

The Alexandria Convention & Visitors Association (ACVA) supports the proposed Citywide Wayfinding Program as an economic development tool. The program will assist residents and visitors in becoming aware of civic and commercial assets while providing multi-modal access to easily navigate the City.

Existing directional signs are the culmination of decades of unrelated initiatives that have resulted in an unsightly collection of unusable signs. We encourage you to think of the new signs as eliminating sign clutter while providing one uniform system to guide users.

Each year Alexandria attracts more than 3.3 million visitors who spend a total of \$645 million and generate \$22 million in City tax revenue. Visitors rely on printed visitors guides and maps to learn about the history and activities available in the city. More than a million pieces of collateral are distributed annually, demonstrating a high demand for visitor information.

We agree with prioritizing parking directional signs to assist visitors in finding garages that will, in turn, encourage longer visits and more spending. Each percentage point of increased visitor spending results in \$220,000 in city tax revenue. And, increases are achievable as demonstrated by the 11 percent increase in visitor-generated spending measured from 2007 to 2008.

The extensive process of community input has resulted in a scale and design that is appropriate and effective. We look forward to seeing this important initiative come to fruition.

Sincerely,



Charlotte Hall

Chair, ACVA Board of Governors



APPENDIX 1

Old Town Civic Board Meeting June 2, 2010

Verbal Comments as heard and summarized by Carrie Beach, City Staff

Northern Gateway

- Scale is slightly too large
- Make sure sign is in right location with regard to the “ceremonial circle”
- Would like something that looks more historic, emphasizes Alexandria historic character
- This looks too modern and bland, office park, suburban
- Add established 1749 to text of the large message panel (Welcome to Alexandria Established 1749)
- The text (see date comment above) on the emblem is not legible -- and partly redundant
- Background of the words should better convey sense of history
- Should be gold leaf letters on black metal wrought iron – classy and simple – 1-2’ low wall
- Need to concentrate more on exceptional landscape design/flowers around sign

Southern Gateway

- Established date needs to be bigger and more legible
- Like this better than the northern gateway
- Don’t like the brick
- Location is good, doesn’t interfere with view of parkway as heading south

Vehicular Directional on King Street

- Too big
- Out of scale with pedestrians and buildings
- Can’t see it from the car because of trees – so doesn’t serve cars
- Worrisome from a safety standpoint
- Too much info – need to limit to 3 messages
- Don’t need Old Town on top, don’t need Alexandria below

Vehicular Directional on Washington Street

- Counter productive to be trailblazing to destinations – should only trailblaze to parking
- Critical that location of the signs doesn’t interfere with the buildings and the memorial character
- In both cases, (on King and Wash), the signs are too big and too busy
- Signs look too modern, not historic
- These signs are not necessary
- Disagree with most of above – (two people)

Pedestrian Kiosks

- Excellent

Parking Signs

- Excellent

Destination ID Signs

- Don’t like these signs at all
- Signs too big, font too small
- Visually detract from historic fabric
- Out of scale
- Unclear if they are for pedestrians or vehicles
- Would like to see something more like plaques – evocative of historic character
- Or maybe a small post with armature and consistent look/feel for all sites – similar to Charleston. Pedestrian focused.