



**Wayfinding Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting
March 25, 2009**

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

SAG Members in attendance:

Christy Blake, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership
Stephanie Brown, Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association
Bill Harris, Commission on Aging
Stacy Langsdale, Bike/Walk Alexandria
David Martin, Chamber of Commerce
Cindy McCartney, Alexandria Retailers Off King Street
Pat Miller, Commission on the Arts
Sandy Modell, DASH
Amy Slack, Federation of Civic Associations
Ellen Stanton, Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
John Varghese, Westin / PTO
Jennifer Walker, Del Ray Business Association
Tara Zimmick Calico, Torpedo Factory/Old Town Business Association
Julie Crenshaw Van Fleet, Federation of Civic Associations

Members of the public in attendance:

John Gosling, Old Town Civic Association, Executive Board

City Staff, Members of the Wayfinding City Working Group in attendance:

Carrie Beach, P&Z
Andrea Barlow, P&Z
Steve Milone, P&Z
Pam Cressey, OHA
Patrice McAuliffe, GS

Sasaki and Associates

Brian Pearce, Associate (participating by phone)

Meeting Content (available at www.alexandriava.gov/wayfinding)

Agenda
Presentation

Staff opened the meeting at 8:10am with introductions around the room.

1. Update on the Wayfinding program process

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Carrie Beach, Wayfinding Project Manager, outlined the upcoming process for review and completion of the Wayfinding Program:

- April 1: BAR Hearing on conceptual approval of Phase 1
- April 7: Planning Commission Hearing on conceptual approval of Phase 1
- April 27: City Council CIP Hearing – determination on whether Phase 1 will be funded
- May-September: Complete review/refinement of citywide program (Final two SAG meetings will be held mid-late May & early September, with potential for interim online survey). Consultant will complete the “Citywide Wayfinding Program Design Guidelines Manual”
- September – October: Public review and hearings
- November – if Phase 1 is funded, these signs would be ready for installation (bid and fabrication in late summer)

In response to a question regarding whether the public will be allowed to comment at the BAR and Planning Commission Hearings in April, staff confirmed that the Wayfinding program is on the docket as a public hearing item, and members of the public are invited to speak.

2. Review of signs proposed for Phase 1

Andrea Barlow, Principal Planner, reviewed each of the sign types proposed for Phase 1 implementation in Old Town, providing general information about each and soliciting input from the SAG on each.

Parking Directionals

The purpose of the parking trailblazers is to lead visitors efficiently from main roads to parking lots. The new signs will replace existing signs one-for-one, unless Sasaki identifies specific existing locations where a sign isn't needed, or vice versa. There are two types of parking trailblazers proposed, a vertical sign (measuring approximately 32"H x 18"W) mounted to existing light poles, and a horizontal sign measuring approximately 18"H x 5'6-1/2"W mounted to existing signal cross-arms. Signs will feature a large “P” message, the name of the parking zone (if this strategy is determined to be appropriate) and an arrow. Andrea noted that Sasaki is looking into reducing the overall size of both signs and that a determination as to whether or not the system will include parking zones still has not been made.

Discussion:

- SAG members did not have any specific comments on the Parking Directional signs.

Parking lot identification signs

The purpose of the parking lot identification signs is to identify public surface and garage parking lots in Old Town. Signs for structured garages will be mounted to building façades with brackets and those for surface parking lots will be mounted to freestanding poles. The new signs (measuring approximately 6'H x 3'3"W) will replace existing signs

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

one-for-one, and will feature a “P,” the name of the garage, name of parking zone and “Old Town.” Andrea noted that Sasaki will study the overall size of these signs to determine if they can be reduced, particularly if messaging (such as the parking zone information) is reduced. Sasaki recommends that both signs be illuminated and believes that a facelit/downwash LED strip at the top of the sign could work well. The BAR has suggested that the signs do not need to be illuminated because of sufficient ambient light, but if lighting is required, then it should be external and not internal.

Discussion:

- Has the BAR considered that in terms of lumen output, internally illuminated signs probably have less of an impact than those lit externally?
- Lighting is critical so that people can recognize the P brand.
- Like the design of the sign, but concerned about the lighting issue in terms of maintenance. In Carlyle, there have been over 20 streetlights out for over a month and it takes the City a very long time to replace/fix issues. We shouldn't make the Parking signs and lighting system too complicated.
- Continuity makes a big difference when people are looking for parking. Good that all the lots will be signed in the same way so people recognize the public lots as part of a system.
- Pricing should be visible from the outside of the lot and understandable in terms of the price structure. Many lots are confusing in terms of 1st hour and all day pricing. If possible, the pricing should be consistent for all the lots so people know what to expect.

Pedestrian pointer signs

The purpose of these signs is to direct pedestrians at confusing points of entry such as the Metro Station and Waterfront. These are new elements in the Wayfinding system. They will be mounted to new posts approximately 12' tall and the arrow shaped pointer panels are approximately 22"H x 3'W. The arrows will feature information such as destinations; “x min walk to y”; and symbols.

Discussion:

- Should there be a pedestrian pointer at Rte 1 and Washington Street intersections with King?
- Prefer the international “i” symbol rather than the “?” symbol for information.
- Could the pointer be mounted on top of the large freestanding kiosk?
- Should also feature a hotel symbol.
- These could help eliminate/consolidate some of the existing signs at the King Street Metro.
- The Water Taxi symbol is confusing. Could be omitted since there are so many other water activities and since the water taxi doesn't run year round. Perhaps a symbol featuring waves would be better. Sasaki will investigate other options.
- Important to note that there is a transit option at the waterfront. The consultants will explore other options for that symbol.
- Add color emphasis on leading edge of arrow.

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Large kiosks

The purpose of the freestanding kiosks is to provide comprehensive information to pedestrians regarding attractions, orientation, events and Alexandria history in large plaza-type areas. Two kiosks will be installed in Phase 1 in Market Square and at the Metro Station. The kiosk will be a four-sided rectangular box approximately 11'H x 3'W, containing four pedestrian information display panels measuring approximately 6'6"H x 3'W. The panels could feature a large scale map, interpretive information, event information and the gateway emblem. Sasaki originally recommended internal illumination because they believe it provides visual clarity but in a subtle manner. However, at the request of the BAR, Sasaki will investigate options for external illumination and provide precedent examples of both types of kiosk illumination for review and discussion.

Discussion:

- Sasaki noted that the external illumination will require a larger roof to accommodate the lighting underneath the roof.
- This is a commercial use in a commercial area – not a residential area. Who gets to make the final decision?
- Most important factor to weigh is that the lighting should be functional.
- Diffuse internal illumination will be less jarring visually and will have fewer problems with bugs and dirt.
- Agree that internal illumination will be cleaner.
- One of the key recommendations of the retail study is that the commercial district needs more light.
- Would only the map be illuminated? Answer: Lighting can be set up so that we can light all or some panels as desired.
- Maybe it would be appropriate to internally illuminate the kiosk at the Metro and externally illuminate the kiosk at Market Square.
- Don't understand why external illumination is considered more "historic"?
- External lighting can appear more charming.
- Need to weigh effective and useful vs. charming.
- Consultant will find images of existing internally illuminated kiosks to share with the group.
- Summary: The group approves of the large kiosk in general. Would prefer internal illumination at least in some cases (at the Metro Station) with details to be worked out over the summer.

Wall mounted kiosks

The purpose of the wall mounted kiosks is to provide initial orientation to visitors exiting parking garages on foot. They will be mounted on exterior walls of garages. The panel measures approximately 6'6"H x 3'W and will contain a large map and "Old Town."

Discussion:

None, these are fine.

Mini-kiosks

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

The purpose of the mini-kiosks is to provide reinforcing orientation and information to visitors along pedestrian corridors such as King Street. Mini-kiosks are small four-sided rectangular “boxes” that would be wrapped around existing light poles. The interchangeable panels are approximately 36"H x 12"W. Proposed components include an orientation map, interpretive information, visitor attractions, symbols, “x blocks, about y mins”, and arrows. To address the expressed desire by businesses off King Street for more visibility, Staff has explored three options for the programming of the mini-kiosks, ranging from detailed inclusion of the names of businesses off-King Street, to a more generic listing of amenities with the focus instead on historic attractions. The options are:

- Option A: In addition to historic attractions and general visitor information, list each business located on side streets; kiosks would be located 2 per King Street intersection;
 - Option B: In addition to historic attractions and general visitor information, indicate businesses on side streets using colorful categories such as “Antiques,” “Café’s” etc; kiosks would be located 2 per intersection;
 - Option C: List historic attractions and general visitor information; use generic symbols to indicate businesses on side streets. This option would be supplemented with a permanent A-frame program coordinated in design with the Wayfinding Program; kiosks would be located at periodic intervals on King Street as dictated by historic attractions.
- *The decision on how or whether to include the retail component of the pedestrian mini-kiosks is pending further study that will include a trial of the A-frame program during the summer months. As outlined above, the options will result in different quantities of signs and sign locations, and therefore additional time is warranted to review the options.*

Discussion:

- The kiosks should have slide in slats so that updating is not so time consuming and costly, and can be done on a more frequent as needed basis.
- Sasaki doesn’t recommend slide-ins because they can look sloppy and cheap over time. New slats will appear as a slightly different color as a result of natural fading. In general, it would be cheaper and easier to replace the whole panel, which would cost around \$150.
- How often would you realistically change/maintain the panel? A slide-in system, even if it looks a little sloppy, would be preferable to a panel that is out of date.
- The benefits of easily changeable business names outweigh the aesthetic issues of color variation or gaps in the sign.
- Not opposed to the A-frames – in fact they have been very effective – but I believe that the mini-kiosk as a permanent long-term solution is better aesthetically. Also, A-frames do not stay out on the street 24 hours a day.
- The current A-frames look very good and have been very effective.
- Some current A-frames are too flimsy and light and they frequently blow down.
- Option A, with mini-kiosks at every corner actually results in fewer signs overall because A-frames would not be needed.

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

- Like the flexibility of the A-frames and the fact that businesses can include logo and brief description of business.
- Businesses could still be in charge of organizing their presence on the mini-kiosks.
- A Business Improvement District could take that responsibility and help pay for the cost of constructing the signs.
- Businesses already pay a lot of taxes. Is it so much to ask that the City administer the mini-kiosks for the businesses?
- The slide-in option would definitely require City administration -- not the businesses.
- The businesses' tax to service ratio is incredibly high in this City; businesses should be able to expect basic services
- Prefer Option C – fewer mini-kiosks that don't include the long list of shops and restaurants. A-frames are more descriptive of the businesses.
- Prefer Option C – the hierarchy of info on the mini-kiosks gets too crowded and confusing when you add the private businesses. Clearer to have the civic/historic attractions on one sign and the private businesses on another.
- Prefer Option A – which will look better 10 years from now? The A-frames or the kiosks? Need to think about a long term solution.
- Prefer Option C because the A-frames do provide better visibility for the businesses, but concerned that they are not permanent enough, and not protected enough. There's a good chance that at some point in the future, someone will find an objection with them and City Council will revoke the program, leaving the businesses with no visibility at all.
- If Option C is chosen, then A-frames should be allowed out at all times, and they should have better options for anchoring.

A vote was taken on SAG members' preference for Options A, B or C, with the following results:

- Option A: 1
- Option B: 0
- Option C: 8

Additional Discussion:

- Choosing Option A means that the City and businesses will be missing out on an opportunity to implement a comprehensive sign system as opposed to a mix of various pieces and parts
- Would prefer a combination of Option A and Option C – particularly for Carlyle
- What about a combination system with slotted in signs....? The mini-kiosks are too small, the A-frames are too large – what about something in between?
- It was noted that some Old Town residents have many complaints about the A-frame signs and are therefore not happy with Option C as the agreed solution. It seems that more weight is being given to the needs of the businesses than the concerns of the residents.
- The Executive Committee of the Old Town Civic Association does not have an objection to Option C, and in fact thinks that the A-frames provide a bit of flair to

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

the streetscape. However, this is an ongoing process and the Board will be communicating with the membership in order to develop an OTCA position.

Summary:

Move ahead with the concept of the pedestrian mini-kiosk Options A and C.

Revised Sign Types for SAG Review

Brian Pearce, a member of the Sasaki design team led a review of revised sign designs. He emphasized that none of these signs are part of the Phase 1 implementation, and that all will be reviewed and developed further over the summer.

Bike Signs

Discussion:

- The post is 5' tall. The sign is 12" wide.
- These are multi-use trails, so the sign as proposed is too bike-centric. Need to de-emphasize the bike symbol at top. The scale and level of detail for amenities might be considered too small for a biker. On the other hand, that may be OK since someone who is looking for amenities will slow down to read.
- For out of town visitors, would it be possible to provide a rough sketch of the whole path/route for orientation purposes? Perhaps at entrance points to the trails.
- Prefer the blue/green proposal over the green/green proposal.
- Like the contrast of blue/green.
- Should the name of the trail be at the top, getting the most visual prominence, rather than the bike?

Gateway and City emblem

Discussion:

- Like the simplified icon – fewer sails, no extra flag on top
- Agree
- Prefer ship in profile, like on page 24
- Pointy spear is too pointy and aggressive
- Should be more charming, friendly, welcoming
- Like the happy quality of the blue sky page 25
- Why not use a simplified City Seal – it has historic origins.
- Prefer blue background, City seal with no scales, and keep the radiating lines
- Need to be clear that this is a ship in port not at sea
- Like the stylized, blue, 1 ship, no city outline on page 24
- Like p25 bottom right, no sails
- Reminder that Gateways are for vehicular traffic and the image needs to be recognizable from a car. Sails on the ship will make that possible.
- Sails are not correct on the existing city seal
- Current design evolved from original historic images that were accurate for a colonial era ship that would have been in port in Alexandria

Summary:

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

Sasaki will develop a new round of emblem designs for review with a blue background, ship in profile (similar to city seal without the scales or cartoony water), with an effort to capture a sense of charming, historic, modern, and welcoming.

District headers on vehicular directional signs

Discussion:

- “DEL RAY” font type is better but still not clear. Currently reads from a distance as DCI RAY.
- Yellow is not good choice for font color with purple background because contrast not strong enough; more orange or white would work better.
- West End – Why is it the only one with a symbol? Should come off to be consistent with other districts.
- The district headers will be further reviewed by respective district groups.

Messaging on vehicular directional signs

Discussion:

- Sasaki noted that they will be taking a hard look at messages on vehicular directional signs. Currently showing worst case scenario in terms of number of messages, but would like to reduce that by 1-2 messages.
- Use “Airport” instead of “National Airport” to avoid issue with complete name.
- Should Washington DC really be included? Important to cross-promote districts within Alexandria over promoting other places.
- Daingerfield Island is a low priority destination.
- Only regional destinations that will be used are: Washington DC, Airport and Mount Vernon

District Gateway Signs

Discussion:

- Alexandria portion on the footer of the sign is too small.
- For Parker Gray, remove the established date – will be difficult to reach consensus as to district founding date.
- Add “welcome to”
- “Welcome” and “City of Alexandria” should have the same weight.

Size reduction study for vehicular signs:

Sasaki has analyzed ways in which vehicular directional sign sizes can be reduced in Old Town – almost 40% from the originally proposed size. The smaller scale can be applied to other small scale, slow driving speed districts.

Discussion:

- Good idea

National Park Service:

Staff provided a summary of National Park Service comments on those elements of the system proposed for and visible from Washington Street. NPS has expressed concern regarding the overall quantity of signs and the potential that they would detract from historic buildings. Staff will meet with NPS in April to present data/analysis showing

Wayfinding SAG 3/25/09 DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

that the Wayfinding program will result in no net increase of signs on Washington Street – the proposed signs will replace existing signs but in a more cohesive, attractive and strategic manner. In addition, Staff will share with NPS the sign reduction study that Sasaki performed for King Street vehicular signs in an effort to strike the appropriate balance between efficient function of the sign and not detracting from the scale and historic character of the corridor. Lastly, NPS has expressed an objection to the Gateway designs as currently proposed. The design is still very much in the development phase and Staff will provide the consultant with NPS input to take into consideration while further developing the design. NPS prefers the more traditional Park Service stone (or brick) wall with the City's name.

Discussion:

It would be good to provide some interpretive signage on Washington Street that highlights its history as a Memorial Parkway and that it is one of 5 historic districts in the City.

Next Steps

Staff will contact SAG members to set up a meeting in May. A final meeting is tentatively anticipated for September.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10am.

Questions, need more information?

Call Carrie Beach at 703-838-4666 X325

Or email carrie.beach@alexandriava.gov

Or visit the Wayfinding page at: www.alexandriava.gov/wayfinding