Sign family components, program strategy and initial design vocabulary

Stakeholder Advisory Group & Community Presentation

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The Firm

Collaborative design with a multi-disciplinary approach

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Landscape
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Over 400 design awards
What exactly is a "wayfinding system"?

A coordinated system of sign elements that serves to identify, direct and inform...
Why does Alexandria need a **wayfinding system**?
Why are we here today?

Because a comprehensive wayfinding approach will arise from collective input by city stakeholders & the community

And finally...*The time is now!*
There are big things planned and happening for all of Alexandria
The Process  |  Project Phases

Analysis → Concept Design → Develop Design → Finalize Design → Mockups → Manual → Construct
Agenda

1. The Big Picture
2. What are the signs?
3. Where will they go/what will they say?
4. What could they look like?
Agenda

1. The Big Picture
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The Big Picture

There will be a HIERARCHY of wayfinding signs that guide visitors from the Interstate exits, through town, to parking, and from parking to the pedestrian experience.

Objectives

Streamline Vehicular wayfinding

Focus on the essentials: get visitors quickly to parking so they can start enjoying Alexandria on foot.
Address Pedestrian information needs

An informed pedestrian is comfortable, confident, and ready to explore.
Balance visitor & community needs

Community destinations are many & far reaching; vehicular signs should account for both groups in a unified design standard.
Objectives

Define focal districts past Old Town

Identifiable districts give visitors more to explore; plus they make wayfinding easier by creating "bite-size" sections of the city.
Agenda

1. The Big Picture
2. What are the signs?
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Proposed sign types fall into **six key categories:**

1. Vehicular
2. Pedestrian
3. Bikes
4. Parks and Community Services
5. Interpretive
6. Distinctive Areas

Within all of these categories, we need to balance **visitor and community information**
1. Vehicular

Issues that will drive the sign design

>> Visitors arriving by car
>> Visitor vs. Community needs
>> Legibility
>> Parking

Which sign should I look at?
Is this Old Town?
Are we there yet?

Where should I park?
1. Vehicular

Arriving: Highway exits, key routes & gateways

RECOMMENDATIONS

Plan messages comprehensively, update highway signs as necessary

Reinforce Old Town and King Street as recognized names/common destinations
   i.e. "Old Town Alexandria Visitor Center" instead of "Tourist Info Center"

Consider "King St/Old Town" or "King St Shopping" as trailblazing messages in addition to Visitor Center

New gateway design should be larger/more prominent; integrated landscape scheme where space allows
1. Vehicular

Arriving: Highway exits, key routes & gateways

Historic Old Town Alexandria
EXIT 177B

Seminary Rd

Historic Old Town Alexandria
EXIT 177B

1/4" = 1'-0"

HG Highway Guide
1. **Vehicular**  
Arriving: Highway exits, key routes & gateways

- **GV**: Gateway, Vertical
- **GH**: Gateway, Horizontal
1. Vehicular

Balancing visitor & community needs

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Incorporate both visitor & community message needs in the same system.

Develop a design solution that distinguishes between the two types for clarity, so that neither is compromised.

Community messaging can be more subtle because the program will be familiar to residents.

Examples

Existing signs
1. Vehicular

| Sign legibility |

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Vehicular signs should be both visible & legible

Consider sight lines for design & location

Design with optimal contrast, text height

Develop standard minimum distance for sign in advance of turns; account for various posted traffic speeds

Examples

Existing signs
1. **Vehicular** Balancing visitor & community needs

- **DR1** Vehicular Directional 6 inch copy height
- **DR2** Vehicular Directional 4 inch copy height
- **DR3** Vehicular Directional 4 inch copy height
1. Vehicular

Visitor Parking

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adopt a standard parking graphic vocabulary for use in municipal facilities and adoption by private operators; apply to both parking trailblazing and identification.

Incorporate standard sign for rate information into parking sign system.

Modify sign code as necessary to allow/require posting visible from the street.
1. Vehicular Parking

Visitor Parking

- PK3 Parking Trailblazer
- PK1 Parking Identity - Structure
- PK2 Parking Identity
2. Pedestrians

Issues that will drive the sign design

>> Arriving

>> Moving through the environment

>> Finding attractions and retail

Now What? What is there to do here?
Where am I?
Where is King Street?
Where is the waterfront?
2. Pedestrians

Arriving

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Prioritize pedestrian wayfinding system & utilize transit facilities as "launch points"
- Shopping and dining are critical visitor attractions and should be highlighted
- Consider including shopping/dining in frequently updated directory
- Evaluate PRE-TRIP information (ACVA website, Metro Opens Doors, others) for its effectiveness in communicating walk-ability and public transit options
2. Pedestrians

Proposed Sign Types

- IK1 Visitor Information Kiosk
- Kiosk Side 2
- Kiosk Side 3
- Kiosk Side 4
2. Pedestrians

Moving through the environment

**Recommendations**

Integrate distance & location information: show that King Street is walkable

Feature transit facilities prominently

Wayfind both to and from transit facilities

Promote King Street FREE trolley service as part of pedestrian wayfinding

Include history of each block section; incorporate interpretive info

Use King Street Retail Strategy sub-districts to break King St. down into smaller segments for wayfinding ease

Examples

Existing signs
2. Pedestrians

Finding Attractions and Retail

RECOMMENDATIONS

Provide directional information at key intersections and accentuate side street destinations in orientation information /maps.

Include shopping and dining functions in pedestrian maps with color coding by category, rather than business name.

Coordinate signs with overall retail strategy, including website and printed maps (including handout maps).
2. Pedestrians

Proposed Sign Types: various techniques

- N. Fairfax Street
  - Carlyle House
  - Candie’s Candies
  - McGehee’s Old Town Gallery
  - The Antique Guild

- S. Fairfax Street
  - Apothecary Museum
  - Old Presbyterian Mtg. House
  - Hysteria
  - Enchanted Florist

IK2 Small Kiosk
3. Bikes | Issues

>> Identifying major bike and multi-use trails

>> Bike services

Where can I fix my flat?

Did Mt. Vernon trail just disappear?
3. Bikes

Major bike and multi-use trails

RECOMMENDATIONS

Locate signs along key bike routes that promote bike services and Old Town attractions

Identify trail on city streets in conjunction with additional components

Consider an identity system for Alexandria bike routes

Numbering or otherwise identify distinct routes and coordinate with maps

Examples

Existing signs
3. Bikes

Proposed Sign Types

- **BT1**: Bike Trailblazer
- **BT2**: Trailblazer
- **BP1**: Bike Parking

- **ALEXANDRIA**
- **Mt. Vernon Trail**
- **Destination A**: 5 mi.
- **Destination B**: 7 mi.
4. Destinations

Issues

>> Consistent Park Identity & Info

>> Historic Trail Identity

Are we there yet?

What is there to do here?
4. Destinations

Consistent park identity

**Recommendations**

Incorporate park facilities into wayfinding messages based on a threshold of annual attendance or significance (e.g. Cameron Run, Jones Point)

Create a destination ID standard for city parks to replace current routed-wood signs

Examples

Existing signs
4. Destinations

Consistent park identity

PR1 Large Park Identity
PR2 Small Park Identity
PR3 Park Information Kiosk
4. Destinations | Consistent community services identity

- **CS1** Large Community Services Identity
- **CS2** Small Community Services Identity
- **CS3** Small Community Services ID

Urban destinations include:
- **U.S. District Court**
- **Lyles-Crouch Elementary School**
- **City Hall**
4. Destinations

Historic Trail Identity

**Recommendations**

Identify historic trail stops to tie destinations together as a series, and to reinforce individual destinations for cars & pedestrians.

Incorporate interpretive information.
5. Interpretive Issues

>> The urban museum

What is that?

I wish I knew more about this place...
5. Interpretive

The urban museum

RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordinate attractions in a unified program that is visible to pedestrians/cyclists

Provide identification and interpretive information at historic trail sites

Fold interpretive content into other sign types throughout the city where practical

Examples

Alexandria Heritage Trail

Existing interpretive information
5. Interpretive

Proposed Sign Types

| IN1 | Interpretive: Site Identity Banner |
| IN2 | Interpretive: Wall Plaque |
| IN3 | Interpretive: Wayside Freestanding, “wayside” |
| IN4 | Interpretive: Ground Plane Embedded |
6. Distinctive Areas

Issues

>> Districts

>> Neighborhoods

>> Commercial Areas, Malls & Shopping Centers

>> District Character
6. Distinctive Areas

Districts

RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify districts & incorporate districts as a vehicular message to help in wayfinding

Wayfinding districts reinforce the notion of Alexandria as a "city of neighborhoods" and "more than just Old Town"

Utilize pedestrian system components to reinforce access pathways between Metro and district centers, and to promote walking

Consider use of enhanced gateway, vehicular directional messaging to enhance visibility
6. Distinctive Areas

Neighborhoods

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider the National Historic Register status of the areas.

Residential neighborhoods may be identified by gateways but may not appear in the wayfinding program as destinations.

Residential neighborhoods will be offered an identity sign palette.
6. Distinctive Areas

Commercial Areas, Malls and Shopping Centers

RECOMMENDATIONS

Identify commercial corridors and design "gateway" that responds to the corridor condition

"Areas of commercial concentration": commercial zones with a certain number of independent businesses united under an umbrella association. Suitable for inclusion in maps & vehicular wayfinding, plus gateway signs.

"Retail centers": planned retail developments (malls, shopping plazas). Those which are "regional draws" defined by a minimum # of square feet are suitable for inclusion in maps & vehicular wayfinding. Those meeting a lower minimum are suitable for maps only.
6. Distinctive Areas

District Character
Identification of unique contextual and cultural characteristics

Eisenhower Valley
Old Town
Del Ray
Arlandria
Cameron Station
Carlyle
Braddock/Uptown/Parker-Gray
Landmark
...

[Images of various districts]
6. Distinctive Areas

Proposed Sign Types

DM District Identity Marker

DB1 District Identity Banner

DB2 District Identity Opt. 1 & 2 Banner
6. Distinctive Areas  Proposed Sign Types

NM1  Neighborhood Marker  
*Design palette only*

NM2  Neighborhood Marker  
*Design palette only*
Agenda

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**Wayfinding**

Destination Hierarchy

- Visitor Center
- Courthouses and Municipal Buildings
- College or University
- Metro Stations
- Areas of Commercial Concentration
- Hospitals
- Libraries
- Major Trails & Access Points
- Museums / Historic Attractions
- Theaters, Arts Centers and Performing Arts Centers
- Parking Facilities
- Schools
- Parks, Public Squares and Recreational Facilities
Wayfinding

Destination Hierarchy

**Tier A**
- Destination of primary importance;
- Direction throughout city via all access routes

**Tier B**
- Major destination; advance strategic wayfinding provided

**Tier C**
- Minor destination, or exclusively civic destination;
  wayfinding provided if "hard to find" (e.g. on a side street)

**Tier D**
- Minor destination or exclusively civic destination;
- Directional wayfinding not needed, but still may be identified on map or at site.
Wayfinding | Destination Hierarchy

TIER A
Visitor Center
Ramsay House Visitor Center

TIER B
Named Districts
Old Town
Carlyle
Eisenhower Valley
Arlandria
Del Ray
Landmark
West End
Uptown—Parker-Gray

Courthouses & Municipal Buildings
Court House Square
City Court
U.S. District Court
U.S. Bankruptcy Court
City Hall

College / University
Virginia Theological Seminary
Northern Virginia Community College

Metro Stations
Eisenhower Ave
King Street
Braddock Road
Van Dorn

Areas of Commercial Concentration
Old Town/King Street
Carlyle
Del Ray/Mount Vernon Avenue
Arlandria
Landmark/Van Dorn Area

Shopping Centers
Landmark Mall
Potomac Yard

Museums
African American Heritage Park
Alexandria Archaeology Museum
Alexandria Black History Museum
Archives and Records Center
Fort Ward
Friendship Firehouse
Gadsby's Tavern Museum
J.Q. Adams Otolaryngology Museum
The Lyceum
Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

Parks, Public Squares & Rec Facilities
Jones Point Park
Cameron Run Regional Park

Historic Attractions
Seaport Center
National Cemetery
The Athenaeum
Carlyle House
Christ Church
G.W. Masonic National Memorial
Lee-Fendall House
The Old Presbyterian Meeting House
The Ramsay House

Theatre, Arts Centers & Performing Arts Centers
Schlesinger Center
The Birchmere
The Athenaeum
Torpedo Factory Art Center

Hospitals
Inova Alexandria Hospital
### Wayfinding | Destination Hierarchy

**Tier C**

**Municipal Buildings**
- Animal Shelter
- Police Department
- Senior Services
- Office of Sheriff Detention Center

**Major Trails & Trail Access Points**
- Holmes Run Trail
- Mount Vernon Trail
- Woodrow Wilson Bridge-Ped Bike Trail to MD
- Route 1 Ped Bike Trail to Washington Street and Hunting Creek/Beltway
- Four Mile Run Trail
- C&O RR Trail

**College / University**
- Virginia Tech Architecture Center

**Tier D**

**All Other Parks**
**All Other Schools**

**Historic Attractions**
- George Washington’s Town House on Cameron St.

**Theaters, Art Centers, and Performing Arts Centers**
- Little Theatre of Alexandria
- MetroStage

**Libraries**
- Charles E. Beatley, Jr.
- Central Library
- Kate Waller Barrett Branch
- Ellen Coolidge Burke Branch
- James M. Duncan Branch Library
- Local History/Special Collections

**Shopping Centers**
- Slaters Lane
- Bradlee Center
Key destinations

- Tourism
- Transit
- Major Civic
- Park Facilities
- Schools
Wayfinding 

Destination density

Key destinations
- Tourism
- Transit
- Major Civic
- Park Facilities
Wayfinding | Destination density

Key destinations
- Tourism
- Transit
- Major Civic
Wayfinding

Destination density

King Street density presents a challenge, and an opportunity
**Wayfinding**

Subdivisions of King Street

Aids in directing cars to localized parking for myriad destinations

Aids in pedestrian understanding of distance, character of King Street
Sample Arrival Path

A tourist driving from Maryland to the Visitor Center
Sample Arrival Path

1. Highway Guide
Sample Arrival Path

2. Vehicular Directional
Sample Arrival Path

3. Gateway
Sample Arrival Path

3b. Minor Vehicular Directional
Sample Arrival Path

4. Vehicular Directional

[Map showing a sample arrival path]

- to Upper King Street
- King St Metro
- Carlyle
- US District Court
Sample Arrival Path

5. Vehicular Directional

Visitor Center
Market Square
City Court
Waterfront
Sample Arrival Path

6. Vehicular Directional

[Map showing a sample arrival path with marked points such as Market Square, City Court, City Hall, Visitor Center, and Torpedo Factory.]
Sample Arrival Path 7. Banners
Sample Arrival Path

8. Parking Directional
Sample Arrival Path

9. Vehicular Directional

OLD TOWN

ALEXANDRIA

↑ WATERFRONT P
Visitor Center
Torpedo Factory

→ Old Presb Mtg House

CITY OF
ALEXANDRIA
WAYFINDING DESIGN

SASAKI
Sample Arrival Path 10. Banners
Sample Arrival Path

11. Parking Directional
12. Parking Identity
Agenda

1. The Big Picture
2. What are the signs?
3. Where will they go/what will they say?
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Scheme A  historical / ornamental / charming / timeless
Scheme B  detail-oriented / architectural / subtle / decorative
Scheme D | urban / sleek / utilitarian / civic / modern
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Sign family components, program strategy and initial design vocabulary

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