Wayfinding Signage Overview

Wayfinding is an information system that guides people through a physical environment and enhances their understanding and experience of the space (in our context, a town or city). This is more than just a collection of signs that look similar. Civic wayfinding systems include (at a minimum) three distinct components:

- Strategies: the most important ingredient, this is where decisions are made about what should be accomplished and how to do it. Hierarchy is established for program elements and decisions are made on what (or what not) to include in the wayfinding system
- Graphic concepts: the most visible part of wayfinding is really the icing on the cake. Graphic design enhances the connection to the place (e.g., The Birthplace of the Texas Flag) as well as helps people to mentally group similar things together (i.e., parking, shopping, and recreation)
- Recommendations: Local governments must balance the needs and interests of the community, elected and appointed officials, and budgetary constraints. Additionally, civic decisions should be made for long-term success. Cities are not able to rebrand themselves with the frequency that the business world does.
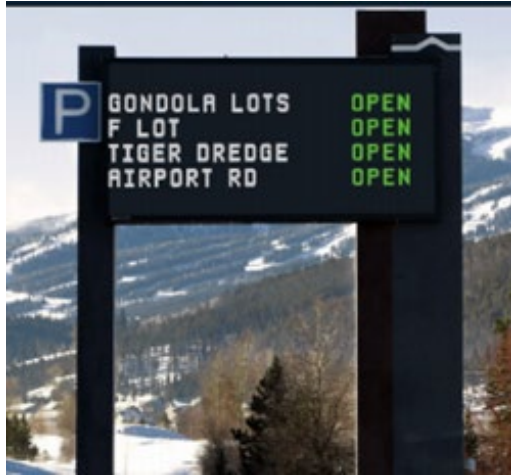
In summary, wayfinding is less about graphics on a collection of signs and more about what signs are needed, where they should be located, and how they relate to one another to accomplish the goal of helping people easily navigate unfamiliar places and make sense of their surroundings.

(and "Here" is a special place)

One example mentioned in a previous MEDC meeting was the wayfinding system used in Breckenridge, CO. This project was designed by Walker Consultants, a national Engineering & Planning firm. Signage elements include static and dynamic signs, allowing certain messages to change as needed. The design centered around a large dynamic message board controlled by a custom-created phone app. The project team coordinated with the Colorado DOT to ensure sign met federal design and safety guidelines. It is not surprising that the Breckenridge wayfinding system is so memorable given the level of professional input and the financial resources of Breckenridge.

Dynamic message sign designed for information only to be interpreted quickly and easily.

District identification and street sign uniformity.

Element signs to guide users to parking areas, restrooms, etc.