



FEDERATION OF
CALGARY COMMUNITIES

Wayfinding Toolkit

A guide to understand, inspire,
and create wayfinding in your
community and beyond.

goodplaces.calgarycommunities.com

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What is Wayfinding?

How do you find your way around your neighbourhood? Most of us probably have an innate understanding of where things are and can stitch these locations together by linking one location to another. It's something that happens naturally over time as we live in and explore our neighbourhoods.

But how can we translate our understanding of an area to someone who has never been there before? This process is commonly referred to as wayfinding and is critical to how we, as individuals, and collectively as a city, move through and organize space.

In a practical sense, wayfinding helps people orient themselves within an area, identify a destination, and decide on how to route themselves there. This is often done through a combination of signage, maps, landmarks, and pathing.

Orientation

Where you are now



Destination

Where you want to go



Routing

How you're getting there

The key things to keep in mind when creating wayfinding elements are colour, size, and similarity within a group. Colour tends to be the element in wayfinding that is most recognizable by passersby. As such, choosing attention grabbing colours or ones that contrast with the surrounding environment help things stand out. Sizing will vary depending on what kind of wayfinding tool you'd like to use, but generally speaking, size should vary on what is deemed most important. One last tip: consistent design between each element will help passersby connect them together. This can be done in a variety of ways including proximity, continuity of elements in a given direction, and visual symmetry. It is important to note that there are regulations surrounding the look and placement of, specifically, signs in Calgary. It is against the law to put up any signage that obstructs and/or resembles traffic control devices (like stop signs and traffic lights).

Levels of Wayfinding



Raleigh, North Carolina



Baltimore, Maryland



Calgary, Alberta

Temporary

Temporary wayfinding measures are ones that last for a relatively short period of time. Their strong point is their adaptability, as a short life-span allows for accommodating events, not just permanent fixtures.

Another bonus of temporary interventions is they allow for a more creative approach, that is less affected by pre-existing guidelines for permanent measures.

Examples include: Garage sale signs, event signs

Semi-Permanent

Semi-permanent wayfinding tools share many similarities to temporary ones in the sense that they are both adaptable and tend to be more creative than permanent ones.

However, unlike temporary measures, semi-permanent are better suited for existing fixtures in the area. These tend to last between a year to three years on average.

Examples include: Sidewalk painting, public art installations

Permanent

Permanent wayfinding measures are exactly what they sound like, established directional tools which, most often, are created or sanctioned by the government.

These tools usually focus on central areas and large landmarks in a wide scope. These are considered infrastructure and should, in theory, last indefinitely.

Examples include: Street signs, Riverwalk signs

Choosing Locations

Get in touch with your local community association to run surveys that gather the places and stories residents want to include in neighborhood wayfinding. This could be local nicknames for your neighbourhoods hidden gems!



Cardiff , Wales



London , England

When deciding what locations to feature in your wayfinding elements, it is important to consider how the location is perceived. We divided perceptions into two categories. Formal and informal, the earlier refers to established, well-known locations. i.e. places you can find on Google Maps. Informal spots are places that might be known to the community, but wouldn't be found on a map. Examples of each are below.

Formal

- Schools
- Businesses
- Transit Stops
- Parks
- Community Centres
- Community Gardens
- Churches

Informal

- Lookouts
- Views
- Local Routes
- Social Hubs

Signage

Signage is the most common method of wayfinding, and for good reason. It is often the most recognizable for passersby, and allows for a great deal of information presented in a compact form. They also allow for substantial flexibility in their presentation and lifespan. Signage can range from simple directional arrows to travel time signs or even colourful yarn to highlight a location. Being creative and clear in what you're directing to are the most important aspects!



Calgary, Alberta



Calgary, Alberta



Baltimore, Maryland



Sustainable Calgary

Maps

Maps are the most detailed wayfinding tool and most comprehensive in nature. They tend to cover a much larger scope of information than the previous methods and are best suited as permanent fixtures. Despite their complexity, maps can still be presented in creative and simple ways. Using symbols, or foregoing rigid structure are great ways of improving the flexibility of this tool.



Thorncliffe Greenview, Calgary



Bridgeland Riverside, Calgary



Calgary, Alberta

Paint the Pavement

Paint the pavements are a creative way to celebrate neighbourhood identity. They involve adding painted designs to roadways, sidewalks, or paths. This tends to fall in the semi-permanent category of wayfinding measures. The benefits of paint the pavements are multi-faceted. They are often a cost-effective and simple way to enhance wayfinding through landmarking and pathing while adding vibrancy to an area.



Calgary, Alberta



Las Palmas, Canary Islands



Baltimore, Maryland



Cardiff, Wales

Resource Catalogue



Permits

Permits are project specific. If you have any questions about what permits are applicable for your project, please reach out to 311 or find more information at:

www.calgary.ca/development

Apply for permits:

apply.calgary.ca

Paint the Pavement Guidelines

This webpage outlines all you need to know to get started on a paint the pavement project in Calgary.

www.calgary.ca/communities/paint-the-pavement

Bylaws

Bylaws are project specific. If you have any questions about what bylaws affect your project please reach out to 311 or contact a local bylaw officer. Find more information at:

www.calgary.ca/bylaws

Resources & Inspiration

- [Tactical Urbanism Toolkit by Urban Systems | Trans Link](#)
- [Information Design Unbound by Sheila Pontis and Michael Babwahsingh](#)
- [The Bromo Wayfinding Project, Baltimore](#)