
6-GATEWAYS, WAYFINDING & PUBLIC SIGNS

Downtown Georgetown has a strong base of local users as well as seasonal tourists and visitors. Many first-time visitors, and those who only visit downtown infrequently, do not know how to get to downtown or where individual destinations are once they arrive. Providing a highly visible, and distinctive wayfinding system is an essential component of a downtown plan. In response to original master plan recommendations, the city adopted a *Wayfinding and Signage Master Plan* in 2005 and subsequently installed several wayfinding signs downtown. However the program ceased shortly afterward, so the system remains incomplete. Prominent thresholds into downtown should also be celebrated as iconic “gateways.”

GEORGETOWN ENTRANCE

The primary source of entry into the historic downtown from the interstate is currently by way of University Avenue, which runs on an east-west axis. This approach forces automobiles to have to turn at the intersection of University and Austin Avenues, which is not pronounced and therefore is easily overlooked. Another issue, which is confusing to users, is that the City of Round Rock also has a University Avenue exit off I-35.

The city has recently begun dialogue about the potential to re-sign the Georgetown I-35 exits to direct visitors to enter from the north and south, rather than from the west, or University Avenue. This would include a primary northbound exit from the new service road to Austin Avenue and a primary southbound exit from Williams Drive to Austin Avenue.

Directing traffic into the city on a north-south axis provides direct access to downtown and offers natural wayfinding opportunities with vistas of the historic Williamson County Courthouse dome, which naturally informs people that they are approaching their destination.

SIGNAGE GRAPHICS NOTE:

All signage designs shown herein are conceptual, and are not intended to be exactly replicated. Actual sign designs should be bid on and reviewed by the City.

Vehicular and Pedestrian Signs, are as shown in the *Wayfinding and Signage Master Plan* of 2005 as developed by Barbendure Design Group.

LEGEND:

- Close-in Gateways
- Landscaped Gateway
- Identifier Sign
- Vehicular Sign
- Pedestrian Sign
- Primary Auto Route
- River Trails
- Downtown Overlay District Boundary
- Proposed Extension of District Boundary



MAP 15 | WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE STRATEGY

Georgetown Master Plan Update
 Georgetown, TX
 March, 2014



www.winterandcompany.net

GATEWAYS

LANDSCAPED GATEWAYS

Landscaped gateways should be constructed at key traffic decision points. These should serve as “previews” of downtown and all should have a consistent landscape palette that is associated with the downtown streetscape.



Landscaped gateways should serve as “previews” of downtown and include a similar landscape palette.

CLOSE-IN GATEWAYS

Close-in gateways to downtown are still not well defined and therefore it is not overly apparent when one has entered the downtown. Close-in downtown gateways should be identified with coordinated directional signs, distinct landscaping, iconic urban design gateway elements and clear pedestrian crossings. These gateways should indicate a unique identity for the city and appear as “grand entrances” into downtown. New development should orient to the gateways and complement them as special places. The two close-in gateways are identified as:

- **Northern Gateway** - South San Gabriel River Bridge (and adjacent proposed development)
- **Southern Gateway** - intersection of University and Austin Avenues (and adjacent proposed development)



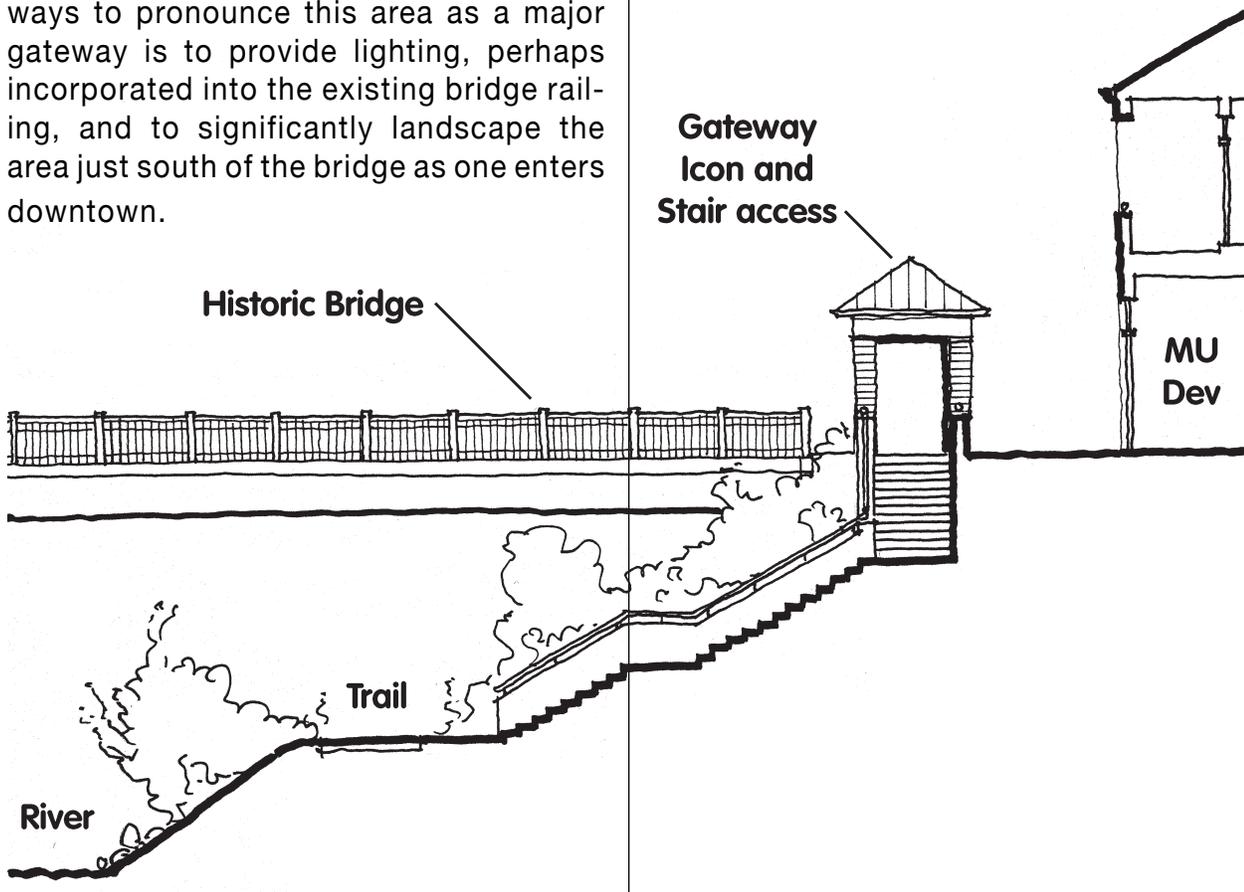
New development should orient to the gateways and complement them as special places.

NORTHERN GATEWAY

The northern gateway is identified as the historic bridge over the South San Gabriel River. There are opportunities to create a significant identity here. Public comments suggested the idea of cantilevering a wider sidewalk on either side of the bridge to accommodate pedestrians better. This new sidewalk could incorporate a “look-out” area with benches and other amenities to provide views up and down the river and overlooking the trails (also refer to Chapter 3 North Austin Avenue opportunity area concepts.) The existing trails could then be accessed by a grand staircase and ramp. The stair access point could be a pronounced architectural element that would accent the threshold into downtown and therefore significantly pronounce this area as a “gateway.” Other ways to pronounce this area as a major gateway is to provide lighting, perhaps incorporated into the existing bridge railing, and to significantly landscape the area just south of the bridge as one enters downtown.



A “look-out” area could be incorporated into a new sidewalk over the South San Gabriel River.

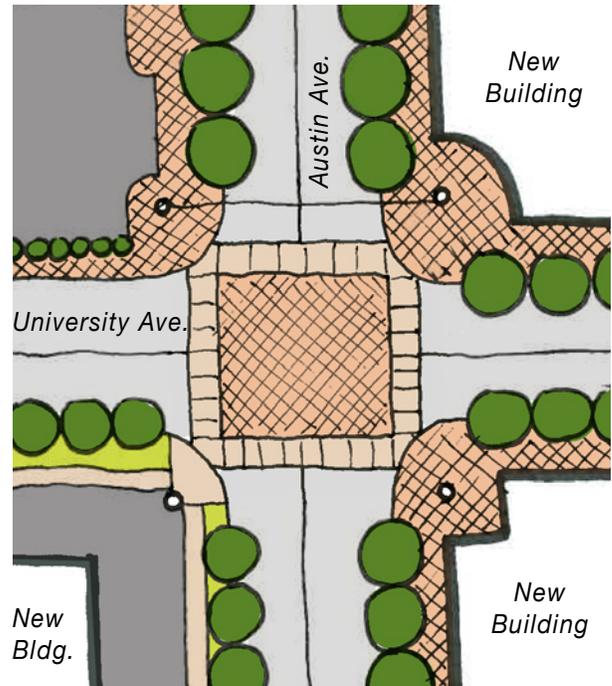


SOUTHERN GATEWAY

The southern gateway is identified as the intersection of University and Austin Avenues. This intersection is currently a missed opportunity to pronounce the major entry into downtown as something special.

Incorporating an iconic “gateway” with a pronounced threshold into downtown will serve as a reminder that one has entered a special place. This could be accomplished in various ways. Two possible options are shown below: one with pylons (or other vertical elements), and a banner or sign overhead, and one showing improved landscaping and a smaller-scaled gateway sign.

Other streetscape and landscape improvements should be made along each block face of the intersection to make it more pedestrian-friendly and inviting and new building should be encouraged to orient to the streets and intersection. The intersection of Main and University should also include improvements as a secondary southern gateway.



The intersection of University and Austin should include a prominent gateway sign over Austin Avenue and include streetscape and landscape improvements.



An overhead sign establishes a threshold and lets one know they are crossing into a special place.



Corner signs, perhaps made from area limestone, and improved landscaping also serves as a gateway.

WAYFINDING AND SIGNAGE

Georgetown's current signs begin to convey a distinct image for the downtown, but more signs are needed for the wayfinding strategy to become truly effective.

The public critiqued the existing signs, saying that a more unique identity is needed. Community members expressed ideas about adding graphic icons such as an historic courthouse dome or poppy emblem to signage or changing the color scheme to be more vibrant. Moving forward, there may be ways to use the already implemented signs while sprucing up the design of new ones. The important thing is to propel the existing system, not start over.

Georgetown should also consider integrating technology into new signs. Including QR codes on pedestrian signs that sync to the city's smart phone application or website. Other ideas about interactive kiosks throughout downtown, especially around the square, were also expressed through the public process. This type of technology could allow user interaction through touch screen options and would also allow information on upcoming events to be updated in real time.

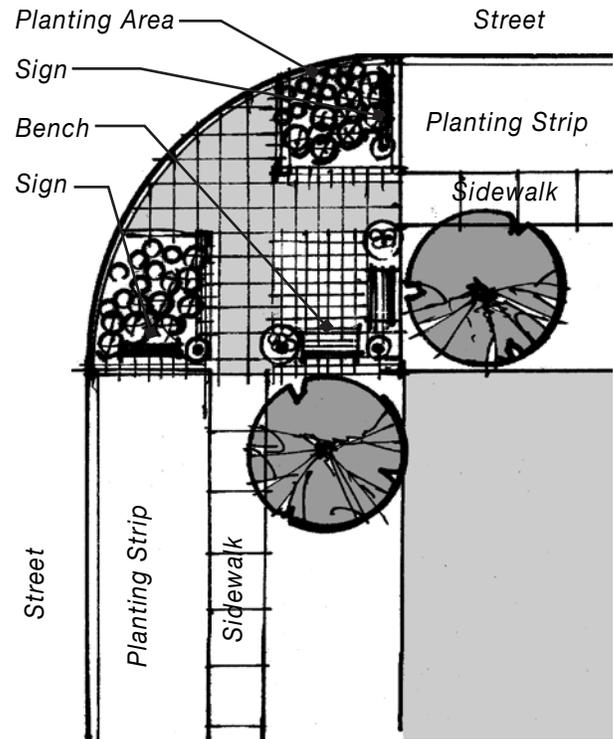
The wayfinding and public signs strategy should include the following components:

- **Identification signs** at major entries into the city.
- **Vehicular signs** that lead autos to key community resources and public parking and improve overall circulation.
- **Pedestrian signs** that orient users with maps of downtown, give information about a particular place, or note the direction and walking distance or time it takes to walk to a specific destination.

Map #15 illustrates locations for the wayfinding strategy elements. At this point, the locations shown are approximate, and more detail would be needed moving forward.

IDENTIFICATION SIGNS

Provide large signs in combination with landscaping and streetscape elements at key locations to call out the entry to the City of Georgetown. This level of signage should be placed at predominant intersections or locations along major vehicular routes into the city. They should be designed with a grand appearance and large enough text to be read at higher traffic speeds.



Identification Signage Plan



Identification Signage Elevation

VEHICULAR SIGNS

This level of signage is the majority of what has been implemented since the 2003 Master Plan. These signs provide information to help visitors locate broad resources within downtown. These signs are located in close proximity to the actual site and consideration for turning and entry points should be integrated into circulation framework actions. Consideration should be given to redesigning them for higher visibility and identity.

There are different levels within the vehicular signage package, as identified in the *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan*.

Vehicular Directional

These signs are larger to accommodate higher speeds of vehicles. They should be placed on major arterials, such as University and Austin Avenues. The text on vehicular directional signs should be generic, such as to direct visitors to “parking,” “shopping,” or “historic downtown” as opposed to identifying specific business names.

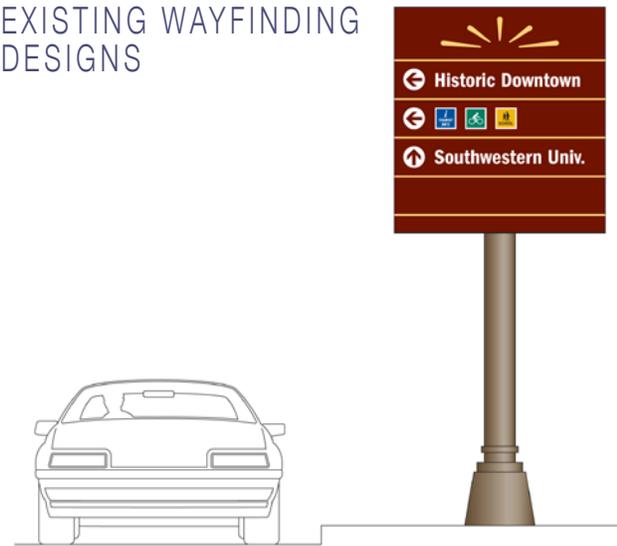
Vehicular Trailblazer

These signs should also be used on major arterials. These allow single destinations to be called out, such as “post office” or “courthouse.”

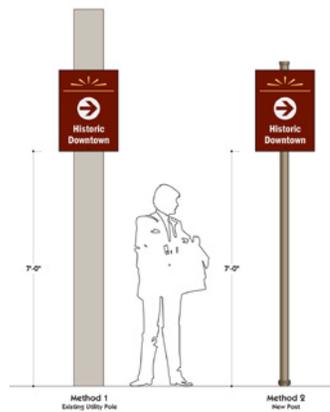
Small Vehicular Directional

These signs should be placed on minor arterials within downtown. They include similar content as the larger signs, but can be smaller in scale based on lower traffic speeds.

EXISTING WAYFINDING DESIGNS



Vehicular Directional Sign - major arterials



Vehicular Trailblazer Sign - major arterials



Small Vehicular Directional Sign - minor arterials

PEDESTRIAN SIGNS

This level of signage should be provided where the highest level of foot traffic is anticipated. Therefore, placement of these signs should coordinate with Map #11 in Chapter 4. As in the vehicular category, there are multiple levels of design within the pedestrian signs. Refer to the *Signage and Wayfinding Master Plan* for more detailed information.

Pedestrian Directory

Provide orientation maps at key gathering points in the downtown. Areas such as parking facilities, government offices and other key pedestrian destinations should provide maps of downtown that identify important civic, entertainment, dining, emergency and personal facilities.

There is potential to make these signs interactive through the use of high-technology. These signs could use touch-screen technology to engage the user and provide more detailed information when prompted. Local advertising could be integrated into the system as well.

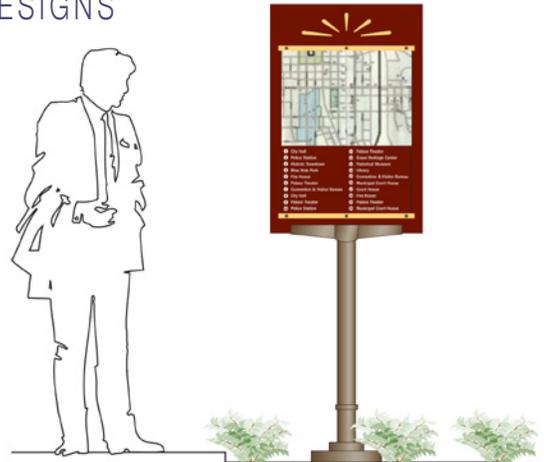
Pedestrian Interpretive

These signs should be used to identify significant buildings or events/places within downtown. These signs could help elevate the heritage tourism sector that has been mentioned throughout this plan.

Pedestrian Trailblazer

These signs are intended to notify pedestrians of a singular destination. These signs could also indicate the distance to or time it takes to walk to certain destinations to give people comfort in walking to such places.

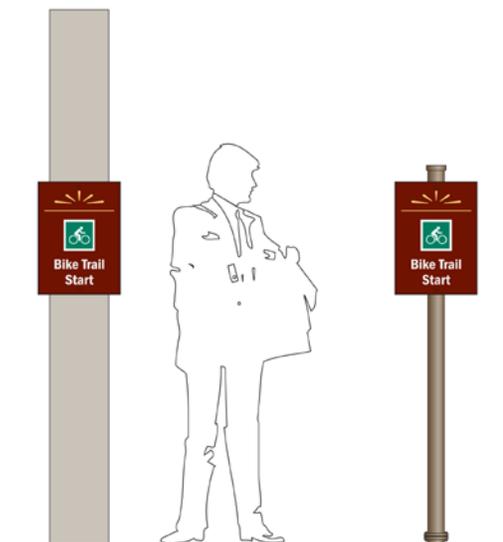
EXISTING WAYFINDING DESIGNS



Pedestrian Directory Sign - major destinations and pedestrian ways



Pedestrian Interpretive Sign - historic locations



Pedestrian Trailblazer Sign - major pedestrian ways

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Installation of the major gateways and wayfinding system should have high priority, because it yields substantial benefits for reasonably low investment costs. Initial funding may come from the city's CIP program, although a more comprehensive system could be better accomplished with an improvement district, using tax increment financing and assessments.

IMPLEMENT IMPROVED DESIGNS AT THE MAJOR GATEWAYS

Close-in gateways, as identified previously, need to be called out with improved designs to accent the arrival into downtown. Designs for gateways should incorporate notions of the public wayfinding sign system, as well as incorporate a familiar landscape palette and perhaps include notable public art installations.

RE-IMPLEMENT AND IMPROVE SIGNAGE PROGRAM

A well-designed, cohesive signage program will make visitors feel at ease and could boost tourism and therefore, economic development. The city should re-implement the signage and wayfinding plan, but with refined designs that provide a unique identity for Georgetown. The city should secure funds to assure that a complete signage package can be implemented.