

# **Creating Vibrant Downtown Districts with Wayfinding Signage & Strategic District Branding**

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## — THE CONCEPT

**When Combined**, Wayfinding Signage, Civic Branding & District Naming is a key strategy that has proven successful for more than a century. Just one of the reasons for success is that savvy business owners connect with the location, this creates multiplied search engine opportunities.

For example: The Pearl District in Austin Texas has grown in reputation as the Destination to visit for the cool and quirky experience. It is named after a Brewery that closed in the 1940's ( but still a legacy brand ).

Initially is was anchored by a Farmer's Market, but it has grown into a major tourist destination.



# ABOUT



City visionaries  
literally used the  
name of a  
closed business  
to brand a new  
District and  
bring life to a  
troubled area.



A District Name Can Create  
the Beginning of Revitalization



Branding Districts will help you divide  
and conquer  
Downtown revitalization.  
Amazingly, real estate development  
opportunities  
will follow the trends put into place.  
Wayfinding Signage & Streetscape  
Graphics  
Allow You to Tell ***Your*** Story.



**GUIDE**

**“ The Psychological Benefits of Graphic Communication ”**





Kansas City's Power & Light district was designed to revitalize a blighted section of Downtown. Suburban stadiums drew thousands away from the downtown area.

By defining the district and creating a stage and gathering space for sporting event overflow the food and entertainment opportunities quickly revitalized the downtown area.

They now sell tickets to the events.



A special district  
overlay sign  
code was  
created to  
enhance  
the Brand and  
encourage  
investment in  
graphic  
communication.







As the district boundaries spread window signs and large kiosks reinforce the brand and connect future shops to the theme.





Scale is an important factor when placing a kiosk. We should think in terms of a clock tower or statue when designing. This way the image can become an iconic symbol within your streetscape.

Art & info





To understand what makes a downtown district vibrant and how **Wayfinding Signage** can be a key link, I study successful

downtowns across the country. The experience of visiting a successful town ( or district ) in person is invaluable.

On a recent trip to Chicago, I took the opportunity to explore the **Oak Park District**. For those who appreciate Art,

Architecture and amazing Landplanning, Oak Park just may have the best " planning DNA " assembled in the country. Frank

Lloyd Wright, Fredrick Law Olmstead & Ernest Hemmingway to mention a few.

But for our visit, we were introduced to another **great Visionary**, his name is Ike. Ike is a waiter at the famous Lou

Malnati's ( Chicago Style Pizza ). Ike fully understood the History and unique significance of where he lived and worked. His

job as a waiter and his enthusiasm about being a small part of it all made our visit very memorable.

**How is Ike's experience connected to Branding and Wayfinding?**

In all small downtown areas, a big part of revitalization and creating a destination type main street is education training

and reminding those who work on "Main Street" that they are a significant part of the visitor and residential experience.

But realistically, we are all too busy to attend history classes or lectures. But we can, as planners, and main street

managers, do this by osmosis, well, kind of.

One of the unseen attributes of pedestrian wayfinding program is the information, **the history and the details of these**

**signs help to remind the downtown shopkeepers and staff where they are.** Walking by a historic marker, or

directional sign to a park reminds them how to help connect a visitor to their surroundings.

**When I asked Ike how he became such a downtown history and events expert, he replied, "It's all on the signs at the train station"**





Kiosks help visitors and residents understand what is happening in a downtown district.

Keep in mind that information about upcoming events is more effective than business lists.

— ***Milestone***



Within your downtown area, district naming can create energy for a stagnate downtown. District vision can also allow civic leaders and entrepreneurs to make improvements in **achievable portions**. The formula is simple.

**1** Develop an achievable vision for the district based on the desired improvement of a few buildings, or just one block.

**2** Create a vision plan and share it through social media.

Anchor the District with a key destination. Civic participation can be as simple as a farmers' market or a food truck gathering space.

**4** Create wayfinding signage specific to the district. Include thematic designs for street signs and parking lots.

**3**





# STORY

Before



Great plans for district rebranding and revitalized buildings are **invisible** to visitors and potential investors.



After

Note how simple use of graphic expression can create a welcome space at the parking lot.

Murals that connect with authentic area attractions create a downtown connection to the destination.

A set of beveled address numbers can perform as a place holder for an empty building

Parking signage invites a visitor to park and walk to shops.

Wayfinding signage reinforces the district brand.



Signage and strategic messaging creates an immediate understanding of what is happening.  
This attracts visitors and downtown investment.



# WELCOME



Welcome to  
West Avenue.  
A sports and  
entertainment  
district focusing  
on one street  
in  
Downtown  
Kannapolis.

# ENJOY



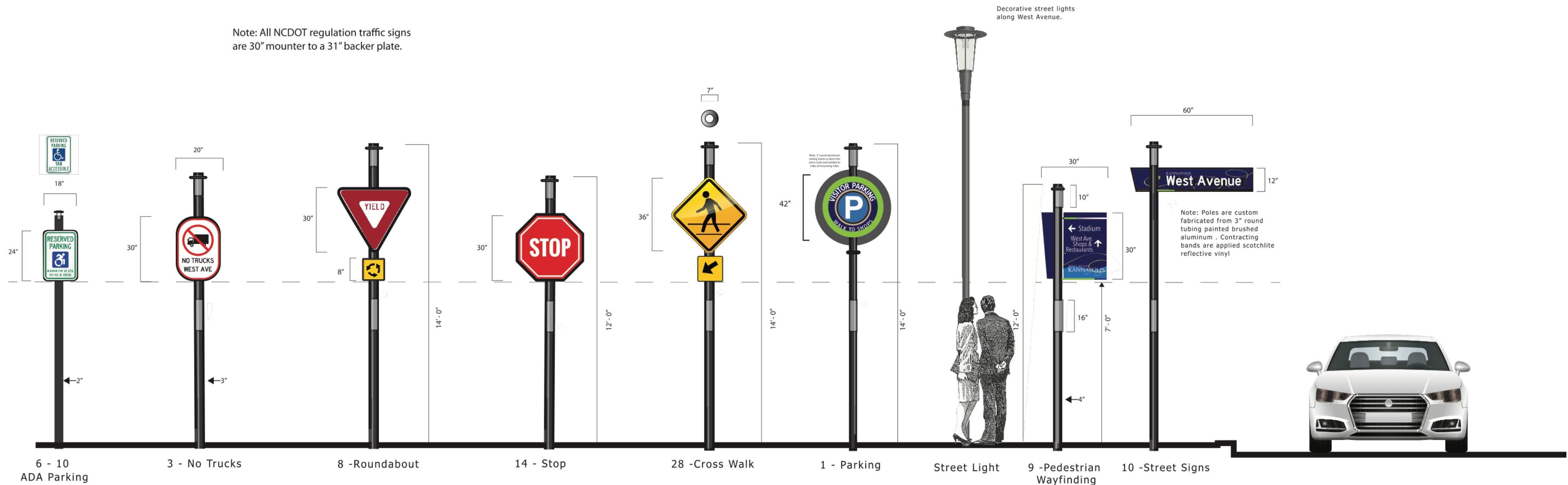
The preliminary land plan only effects the areas the city can control.

Street scape, pocket parks, parking and branding.



WEST AVENUE  
KANNAPOLIS





#### How many accessible parking spaces are needed?

The minimum number of accessible parking spaces required depends on the total number of parking spaces in the lot, as seen in the table below. Furthermore, one of every six accessible parking spaces, or fraction of six, must be "van-accessible." For example: A parking lot with 400 total spaces needs eight accessible spaces, and two of those eight spaces must be van-accessible.

Total Number of Parking Spaces in Parking Facility (Lot or Garage)	Minimum Total Number of Accessible Parking Spaces Required	Minimum Number of Van Accessible Parking Spaces
1 - 25	1	1
26 - 50	2	1
51 - 75	3	1
76 - 100	4	1
101 - 150	5	1
151 - 200	6	1
201 - 300	7	2
301 - 400	8	2
401 - 500	9	2
501 - 1000	2% of total	
1001 and over	20, plus 1 for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1000	

#### Typical Fabrication Specifications:

Post are 3" diameter aluminum, painted with Matthews Acrylic Polyurethane in brushed aluminum. Reflective sleeves are 3M Scotchlite reflective media applied per manufacturers specifications.

Finial is 3.5" aluminum, painted with brushed aluminum and then coated with M Scotchlite reflective media. The decorative ring finishing the top detail is CNC routed disk sliding over the top detail and fastened with 3 aluminum 45 degree angle clips rosette welded to the disk and then secured to the pole with #3 self tapping machine screws.

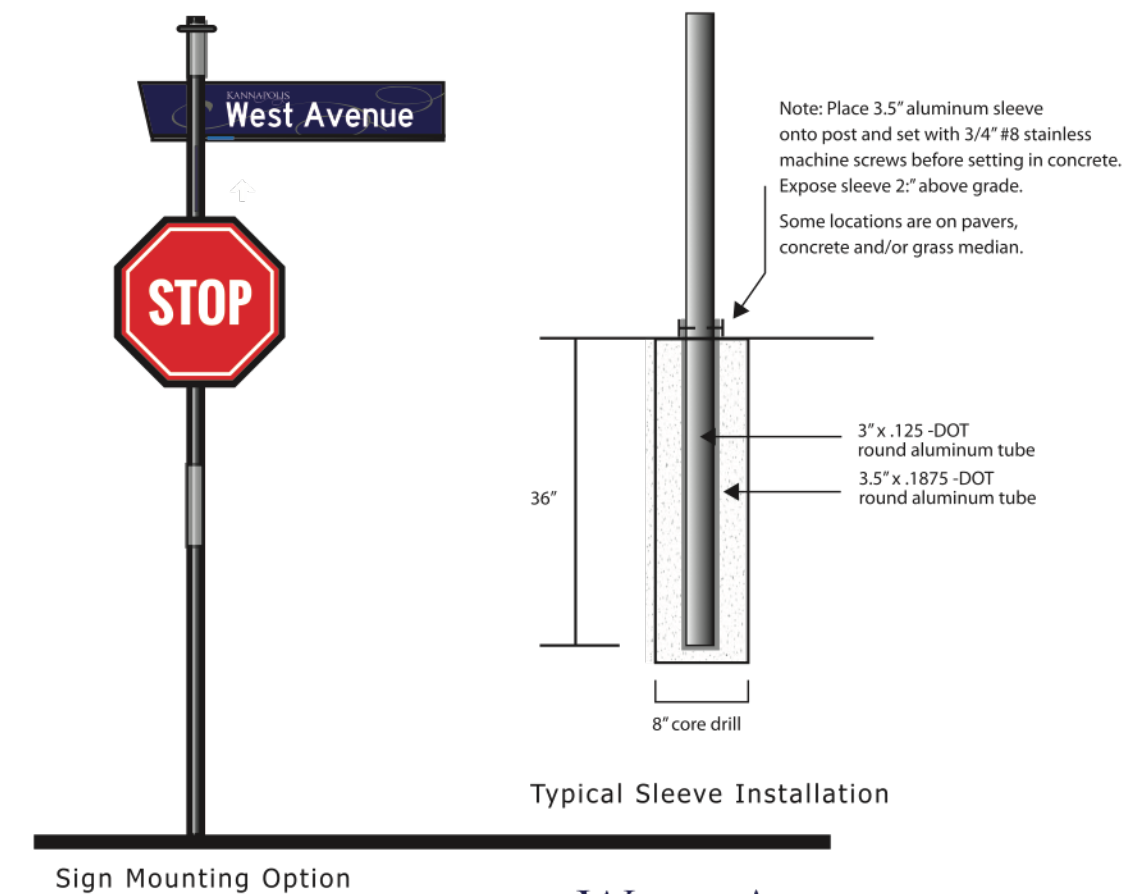
Typically these poles will be direct buried with sleeve - in - concrete 36" deep. A site visit will be required 2-weeks prior to installation to verify installation locations and ground conditions. Some locations may require core drilling.

Sign panels are 1/8" thick aluminum, painted with Matthews Acrylic Polyurethane, ( black ) unless otherwise specified before applying NCDOT approved reflective media Reflective Media 3M™ Diamond Grade™ Reflective Sheeting Series 4000 is digitally printed per manufacturers specifications.

Wayfinding signs and street sign panels are 3/16" thick aluminum painted with Matthews Acrylic Polyurethane, Brushed aluminum before applying NCDOT approved reflective media Reflective Media 3M™ Diamond Grade™ Reflective Sheeting Series 4000 is digitally printed per manufacturers specifications. The signs mount through the pole via 1/4" slot. Once signs are in position the 1/4" base detail is applied to hold the panel in place.

A custom fabricated flange covers the ground mounting and is set into place with set screws.

Fabricator shall be knowledgeable of relevant local code & NCDOT requirements and honor same in fabrication and installation. Fabricator is responsible for securing any and all necessary permits for signage installation. It is the responsibility of the Owner to secure encroachment permissions from property Owners including Department of Transportation. It is the responsibility of the Owner to secure encroachment permissions from property Owners including Department of Transportation. It is the responsibility of the Owner to secure variances, should any be required. It is the Owner's responsibility to call the appropriate agency to have all underground utilities properly located and marked. Any damage to below-grade utilities or structures for which the Owner has provided adequate location information is the responsibility of the Fabricator.



WEST AVENUE  
KANNAPOLIS

Overall signage designed specifically for the district.

The distinctive look serves as a gateway to the new area.





← Stadium  
West Ave.  
Shops &  
Restaurants ↑  
Sculpture  
Garden  
WEST AVENUE  
KANNAPOLIS

Before shops and restaurants open, the graphic language ( signs and murals ) tell the story.





Approx 12' x 18'

Created to be a “ghost image” this timeless mural by Coca-cola will be a key visual at what we hope will be the iconic Hot Dog stand again someday.

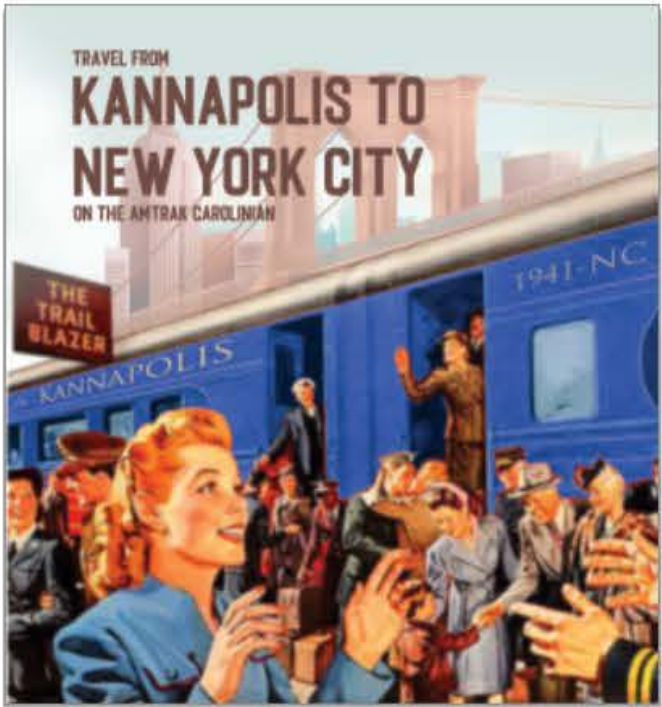


West B Street

You can *Design* and *Create*  
and **Build** the most wonderful place in the world ...  
But it takes **PEOPLE** to make the DREAM a reality.

Approx 6' x 30'

Walt Disney



Approx 10' x 12'

WEST AVENUE  
KANNAPOLIS





Murals create a sense of place on streetscapes without doors or windows. We named this "district" **Pinstripe Alley** connecting the area to the new baseball stadium.



# Take advantage of Vacant Spaces

A small alley between vacant buildings was uplifted to become an information kiosk.



Murals also become social media stars spreading positive comments about your town.



Downtown Matthews

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# NORTHEND

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District



Est. 2013



North End Matthews  
was simply an idea  
anchored by a mural.

Town leaders wanted  
to unite a big suburban  
style development plan  
close to downtown in  
design and spirit.

The project name was  
disconnected with town  
vision. We suggested  
to the developer to  
visualize his project as  
a "downtown district"

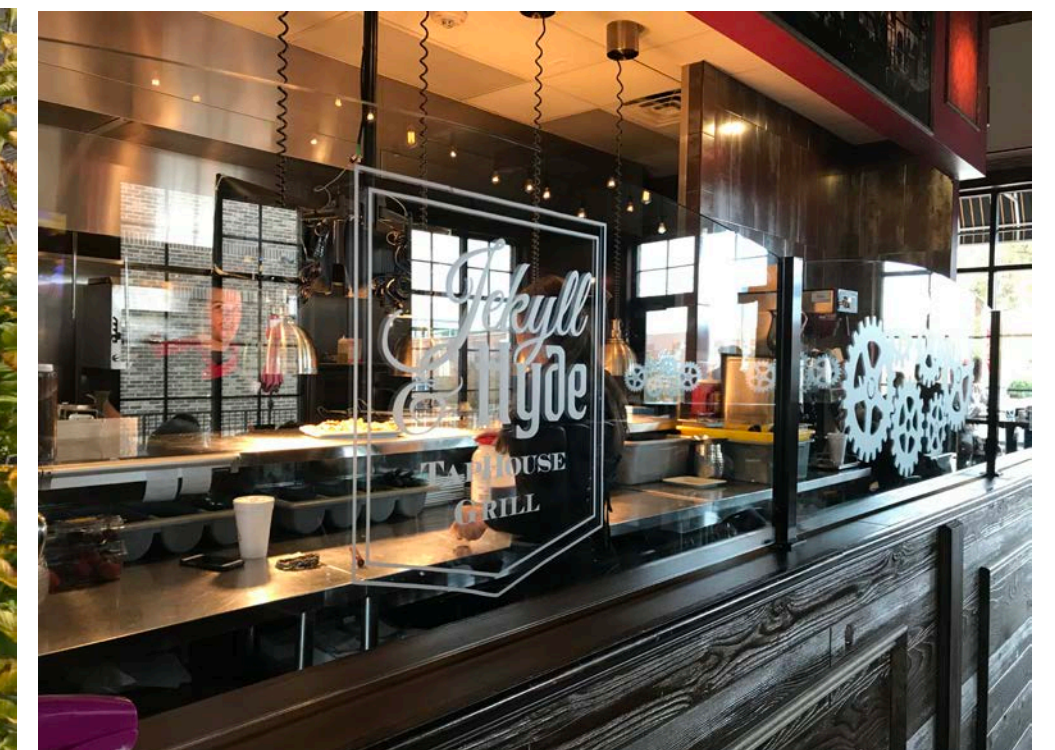
He immediately  
recognized the value in  
this and rebranded the  
project.



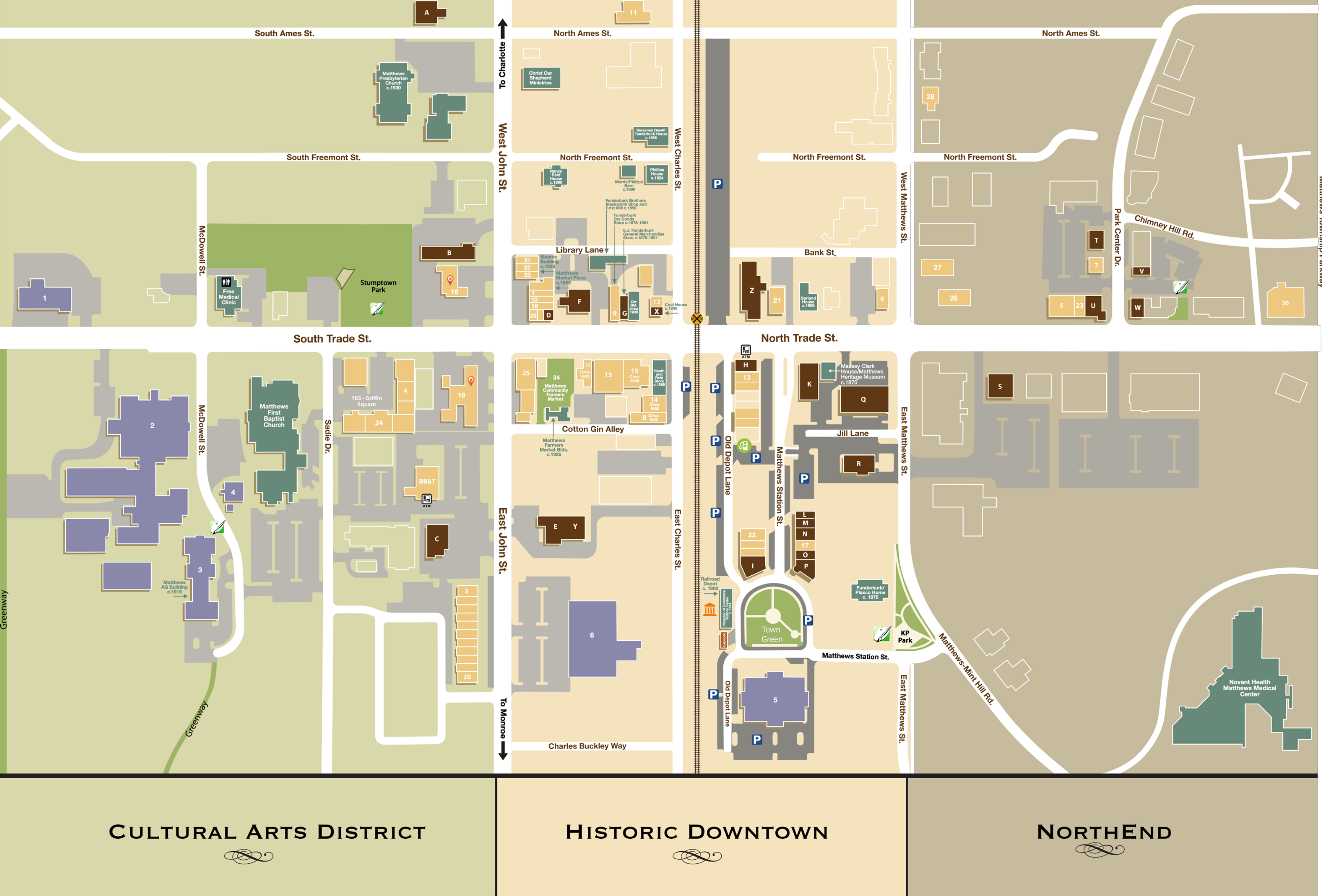




Local business embraced the NorthEnd identity and followed the branding as a benchmark for their identity as well.







### FOOD & BEVERAGE

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| A - El Valle Mexican Restaurant | N - Carolina Beer Temple                 |
| B - Ming Fu Chinese and Sushi   | O - Royal Cafe & Creperie                |
| C - Coming Soon                 | P - Thai Taste                           |
| D - Coming Soon                 | Q - Kristopher's Sports Bar & Restaurant |
| E - Pita Kabab                  | R - Coming Soon                          |
| F - Cafe' 157                   | S - Jekyll & Hyde Taphouse and Grill     |
| G - Sante'                      | T - Jet's Pizza                          |
| H - Dilworth Coffee             | U - Which Wich                           |
| I - Beantown Tavern             | V - Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory     |
| J - Coming Soon                 | W - Wayback Burgers                      |
| K - Moe's Original BBQ          | X - Temple Mojo                          |
| L - Subway                      | Y - South Charlotte Chef                 |
| M - Black Chicken Wine Cellar   | Z - Seaboard Brewery                     |

### RETAIL SHOPS & SALONS

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1 - AAA Collectibles                       | 18 - Trade Street Jewelers        |
| 2 - A Perfect Fit Healthcare Uniforms      | 19 - Kangaroo Express             |
| 3 - Buffalo Jackson Trading Company        | 20 - Your Local Game Store, LLC   |
| 4 - Designs by Shirlee                     | 21 - 105 Cigar                    |
| 5 - Riz Salon                              | 22 - Nail 3                       |
| 6 - First Choice Medical Equip. & Supplies | 23 - IN2 Nails                    |
| 7 - Foot Solutions                         | 24 - Standing Ovation Barber Shop |
| 8 - Karrousel Kids                         | 25 - ZABS Place                   |
| 9 - LAM Home Design                        | 26 - Carolina Pools and Spa       |
| 10 - Libby & Leaf                          | 27 - J.R. Renditions Salon        |
| 11 - Backporch Treasures Thrift Boutique   | 28 - Barber Shop                  |
| 12 - Mojo Cycles                           | 29 - Sir Blake                    |
| 13 - Orr & Orr Art Studio and Gallery      | 30 - Walgreens                    |
| 14 - Portrait Gallery                      | 31 - Cutie Patootie Kids' Spa     |
| 15 - Renfrow Hardware                      | 32 - Topsy Paintbrush             |
| 16 - Exxon Station                         | 33 - Blue Monkey                  |
| 17 - Salon 131                             | 34 - Matthews Cmty Farmers Market |

### TOWN SERVICES

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1 - Fire Station 1                                 | 4 - McDowell Arts Center         |
| 2 - Matthews Elementary School                     | 5 - Matthews Town Hall/Charlotte |
| 3 - Matthews Community Center/<br>Fullwood Theatre | Mecklenburg Library-Matthews     |
|  | 6 - Post Office                  |

### LEGEND

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| Public Restrooms | Chamber of Commerce  |
| Fueling Station  | Visitors Center      |
| Public Parking   | ATM Locations        |
| Charging Station | Public Art Locations |
|                  | Points of Interest   |

Downtown map defines three new districts.  
NorthEnd has experienced major growth and now enjoys a walkable connection  
to downtown.





# Five attributes

1-The **wayfinding study** itself will create an organized approach to navigating the city features that can be used to create a unified approach to giving and advertising directions through google maps, etc.

2- **Location association.** While a visitor following the path to a particular destination for the first time stays the course. Each sign gives them vital location information ( Parks, Town Hall, Civic Center, Arts Districts, etc. ) to increase their knowledge about the downtown area. They will be more likely to extend their stay and visit longer during future trips.

3- **Where to stop.** Parking is a key component to wayfinding. Our goal is to create a good feeling about using surface parking. Unified signage gives the visitor permission without worry of being towed or ticketed for being in the wrong place. Again, increasing the length of the visit.

4- **Branding** - This is the highest value attributed to wayfinding signage. The brand ( logo, colors, architectural style ) all combine to create hundreds of thousands of good impressions. These signs tell each visitor they are welcome. Because of the wayfinding function, Departments of Transportation allow for dozens of signs to be placed within their wight of way. This amount of brand positioning would be impossible otherwise.

5-**Benchmarking.** Towns like Davidson have already realized the benefits of placing high quality, architecturally beautiful signage throughout the towns streetscape. The style becomes a standard for shop keepers and other civic departments to follow.

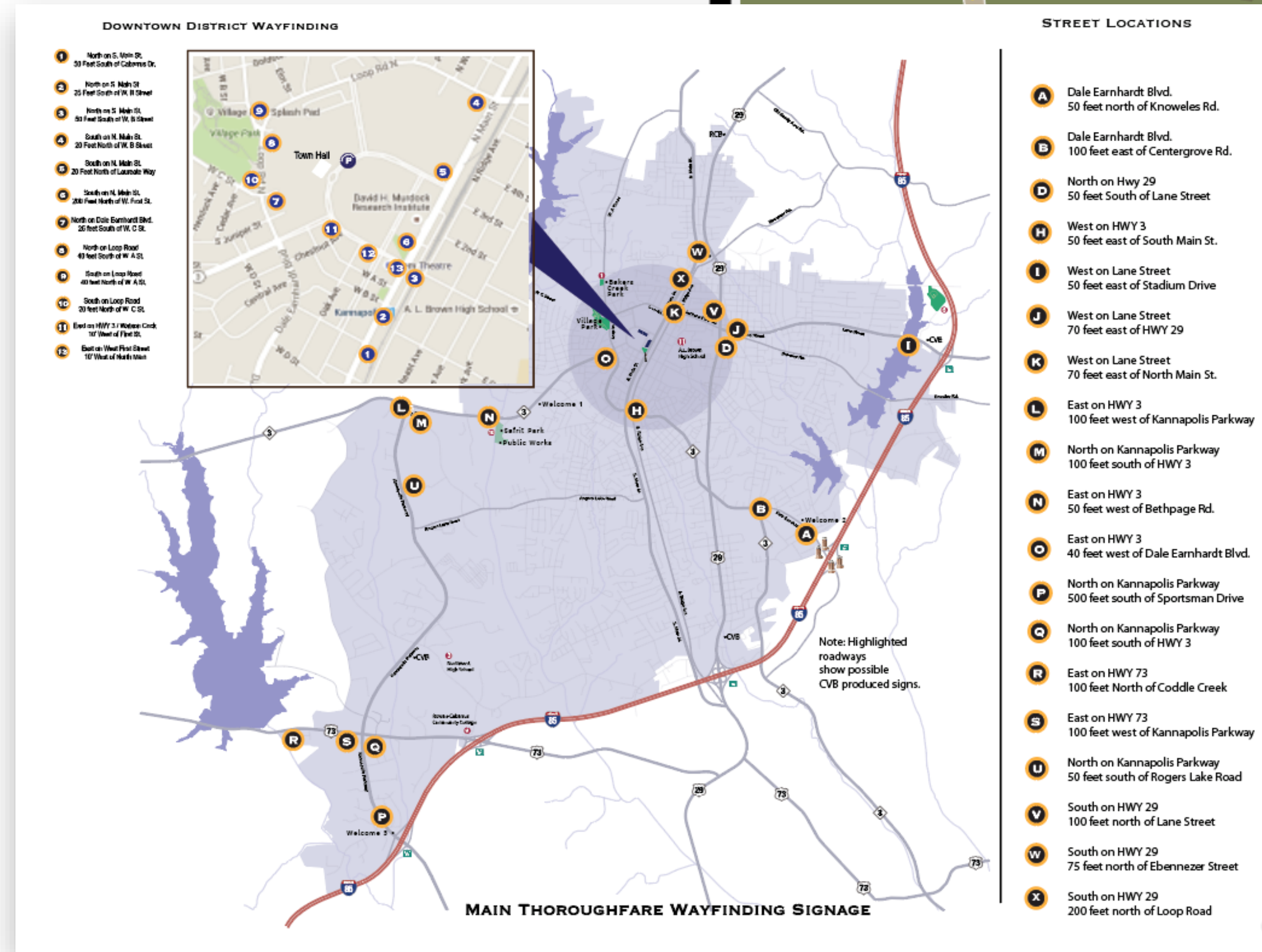
By including merchants in the way finding planning process exposes them to great signage and facade design ideas.



# DIRECTION

## Mapping 1

The wayfinding study itself will create an organized approach to navigating the city features that can be used to create a unified approach to giving and advertising directions through google maps, etc.







## 2 Location Association

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# WHERE TO STOP

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4

## Branding

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City of  
**Northville**  
Michigan





# 5 Benchmarking

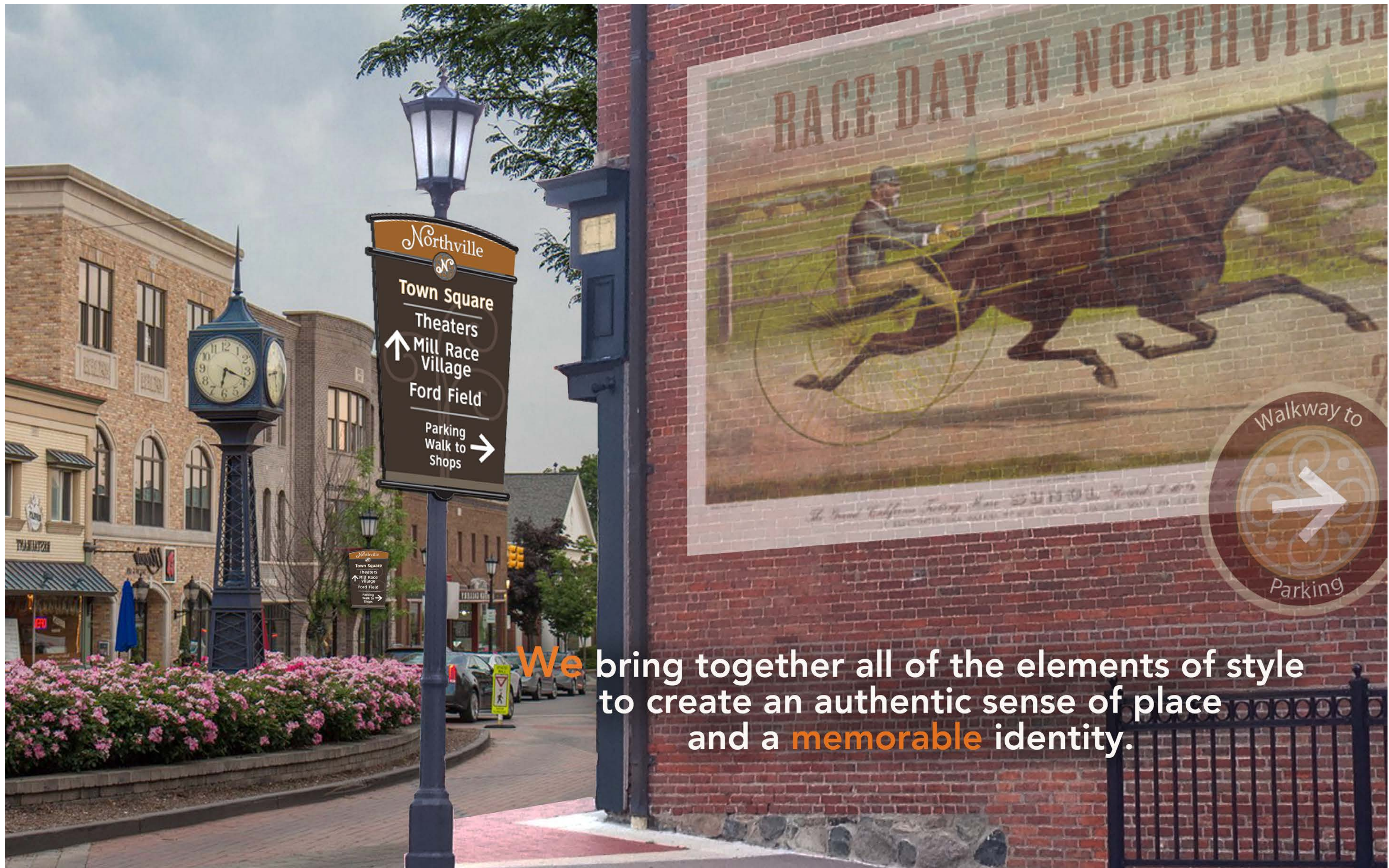
Towns have already realized the benefits of placing high quality, architecturally beautiful signage throughout the towns streetscape. The style becomes a standard for shop keepers and other civic departments to follow.











We bring together all of the elements of style to create an authentic sense of place and a **memorable** identity.





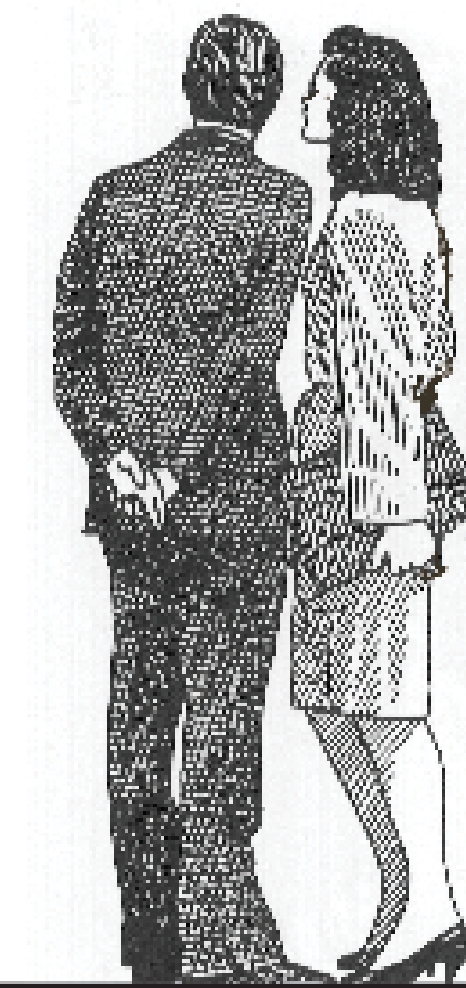
Boulevard sign design has the Gastonia Name.



It is crucial at this stage in Gastonia Downtown re-development to highly emphasize visitor parking areas. Large detailed signage will add interest to the streetscape.

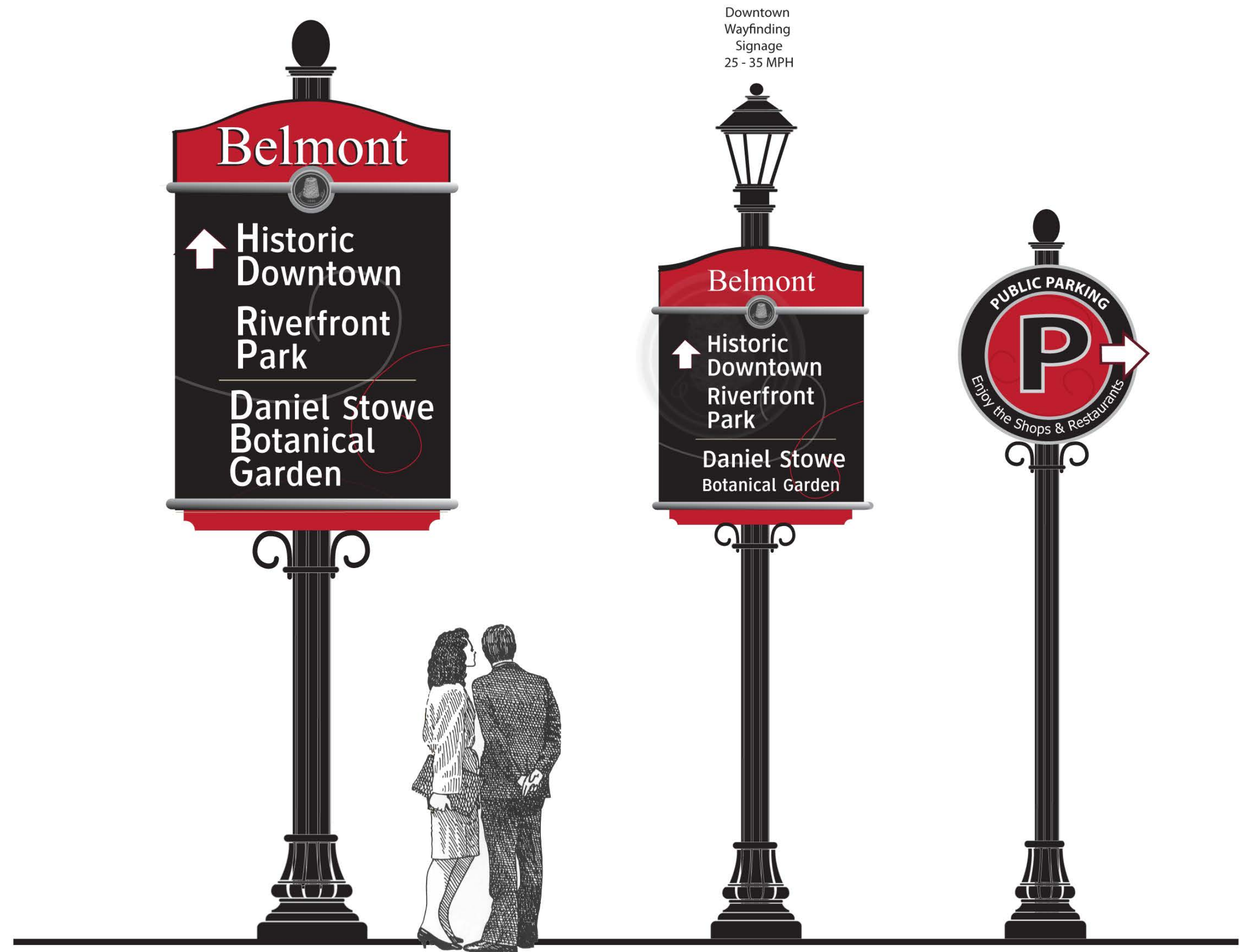


Park & Facility Sign



The Go Gaston logo is a key part of the way finding signage program.





Belmont Signage has been very effective as it identifies districts and a new orientation from Lake Wylie area north to downtown.





Making a  
memorable  
impression requires  
us to think outside  
the box.

