Signs Create Safer Communities

There's nothing more frustrating than missing a turn or driving by a building because of poor signage. To alleviate this frustration, many of us make rapid turns so that we don't drive by the location. Or perhaps we get lost and end up somewhere we're not supposed to be. Signs can help prevent both of those unsafe scenarios. Read on for examples of how signs have helped communities improve safety.

Helping Visitors Navigate Safely

New York City's Randall's Island Park, maintained by the Randall's Island Park Alliance, is a 500-acre park that separates Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens. It is home to sports fields and has wetlands, salt marshes and wildflower gardens—all of which draw heavy public use. But it also has areas where the public isn't wanted, such as the New York Fire Department's academy and a DEP wastewater treatment plant.

Making sure people know how to get to where they wanted to go—and not to other areas—was the impetus for a comprehensive wayfinding strategy in the park.

"The majority is amazing park land," said Katie Osborn, principal and wayfinding strategist for the design firm Via Collective, Incorporated. "They wanted to solve the problem of people getting lost."

Via Collective's "focus was enhancing the enjoyment of the park and reducing the visibility of the other aspects," Osborn said. "There was no system that focused on getting around the park. There was a big sign for the hospital and the fire department, but people didn't know how to find a certain location, such as a ball field."

While safety wasn't the focus of the project—usability was—Osborn says signs can help improve all aspects of any public area. "Wayfinding can help guide people 'away from' as much as it can guide people 'to' an area. This had the benefit of directing them away from areas that could be unsafe."

Because the park has few landmarks—except for the Triborough Bridge and several non-public buildings—the project included a 7-ft tall banner system on flag poles. The height

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gave destinations visibility for drivers from afar throughout the long landscape and at a pedestrian level, an icon-based map and directional information sign system were located at landing points and intersections throughout the Island.

The project has been well-received, Osborn said, not only by the stakeholders with facilities on the Island, but also by the visiting public. Randall's Island draws about 3 million visitors per year, all of whom are now better able to find the bathroom or a certain play field without stumbling onto the fire academy's training grounds or the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority offices.

Lighted Signs Provide Safety in Darkness

Signs create safer communities when they help people get to where they are going. But in many cases, that requires illumination in a safe and consistent manner.

Mark Jones, branch manager of Fluoresco Services in Tucson, Ariz., sees it happen all the time, where goals to limit sign brightness can create dangerous driving situations.

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Jones understands the delicate balance that every community must navigate. "We want to be good neighbors and good stewards," he said. "We understand the points. There's still a lot of pushback. We just have to do the best work we can, to let them know that we're not here to make signs as bright as possible. We want them to be safe, so that people can be directed in safe ways."

The right sign in the right size and location can do just that. |

SIGN SAFETY
Resources

ISA and the Signage Foundation have developed a number of resources to help communities capitalize on safety through better signs.

1. "Urban Wayfinding Planning and Implementation Manual," developed by the Signage Foundation (www.thesignagefoundation.org) helps communities plan, finance and maintain this important type of signs for helping people navigate communities.

2. ISA recently updated and republished "Night-Time Brightness Level Recommendations for On-Premise Electronic Message Centers." The new document includes guidance for communities in how to measure EMC brightness, and case studies of communities that have successfully implemented the recommended guidelines. It also includes additional guidance to help communities measure brightness in existing EMCs. Find it at www.signs.org/local

3. "Statistical Analysis of the Relationship between On-Premise Digital Signage and Traffic Safety," published by the Signage Foundation, found no correlation between the installation of digital signs and an increase in traffic accidents. Read the full report at www.thesignagefoundation.org/trafficsafety, or find an executive summary at the Signage Foundation's research portal.

ISA Sign Industry Quarterly Economic Report. Global digital signage advertising revenue grew 10% in 2015 and should average 9% annual growth in 2016 and 2017, *according to the report.* •

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