

BETTER ACCESS/LESS FRUSTRATION:
ANN ARBOR 'WAYFINDING' BEGINS THIS WEEK

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ANN ARBOR, MI After three full years of discussion, scores of meetings and focus groups; a charrette with local designers, mock up designs and decisions on content, placement and timing, the Ann Arbor Wayfinding Project becomes part of the City landscape this week. Installation of nearly 200 new signs guiding both pedestrian and vehicular traffic begins August 20th.

The idea for the project took root at a 2006 summer retreat for the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) with a question: *How do we make downtown Ann Arbor easier to navigate for visitors and new community residents?*



With great help from the community the finalized design, streamlined and attractive, will make it easy for visitors to find their way around. Four downtown commercial districts will be distinguished by color and name, and the downtown signs will be modular in nature so individual destinations can be installed or replaced as needed without replacing the entire sign. The system features a “family” of signs, including signs at highway exits pointing the way to downtown, vehicular scale signs and pedestrian signs, as well as pedestrian-level maps with a ‘You Are Here’ orientation. ([Read more about the history of the project.](#))

“If you live here, you learn the best routes, the best times and places to park and how to maneuver. If you’ve never been here and need to find and park near the University Health Centers, or the Ark or Zingerman’s, the task can be daunting – even with a GPS,” says DDA Executive Director, Susan Pollay.

True to their mission of developing the best ways to strengthen the downtown and attract new private investment, the DDA Board contracted with Corbin Designs, a Michigan company that has developed wayfinding systems for more than 50 cities and towns across North America, including eight of the 50 largest cities in the U.S. (See [Corbin Design’s “Wayfinding Analysis and Recommendations Document for Ann Arbor, Michigan.”](#) (pdf))

Even with years of planning, the new system depends on the continued engagement of local businesses, organizations and residents. “We need to put the wayfinding system to work for the community. To do that, we’ll work closely with our local institutions, businesses and organizations to incorporate this new signage for directions in both online and paper publications as this installation is completed,” says Pollay. “The critical point, especially in these recessionary times, should be: how do we make the heart of Ann Arbor more accessible to our visitors? The Ann Arbor experience should be a metaphysical, not a geographical mystery!”

The Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (DDA) undertakes public improvements that have the greatest impact in strengthening the downtown area and attracting new private investments. For more information, please see the DDA website www.a2dda.org