



Memorandum

TO: COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
FROM: Blage Zelalich
Jessica Zenk
SUBJECT: DOWNTOWN AND REGIONAL WAYFINDING PROGRAM UPDATE
DATE: February 10, 2021

Approved *Kin Walel* Date 2/11/2021

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the Downtown Wayfinding Program and Regional Transit Mapping and Wayfinding updates, which provide a status report of activities undertaken since February 2020 for a permanent wayfinding system for Downtown San José.

BACKGROUND

Downtown San José is home to hundreds of dining, retail, and entertainment venues in a very walkable setting at the hub of the Valley's transit network. Unfortunately, trying to find your way around Downtown can be challenging, particularly for a new or infrequent visitor because:

- Downtown has multiple distinct subareas and districts with varying levels of activity and identity.
- “Dead blocks” – stretches of parking lots, vacant units, underutilized lots, or blank walls – frequently separate subareas and keep people from exploring.
- Existing wayfinding measures are primarily auto-oriented, directing drivers to parking lots and garages or freeways.
- Signage that may be relevant to pedestrians is not pedestrian-scale or predictable.

With new development, an emphasis on urban placemaking, activation of parks and plazas, investment in bicycle and transit infrastructure, and an increase in conventions and national and international sporting events, San José needs a wayfinding program that helps people navigate its urban core and encourages them to explore Downtown amenities.

Staff has been working with local and regional partners to advance wayfinding for San

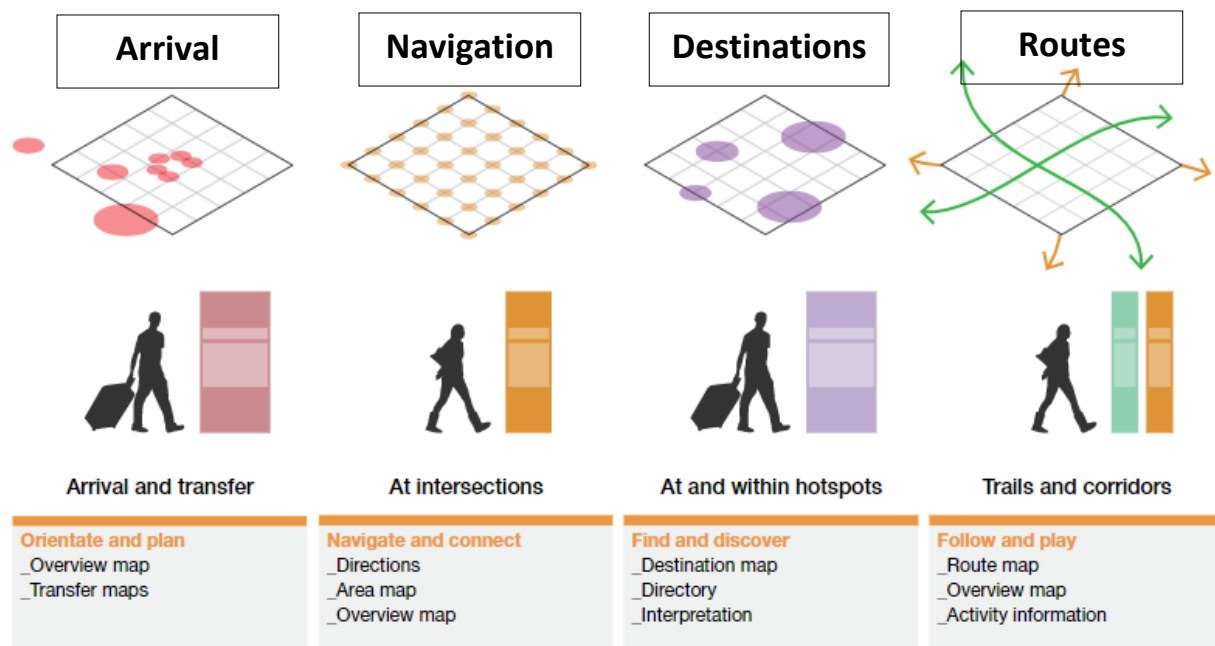
José. These efforts began with a 2015 partnership with the Knight Foundation ([Wayfinding Program Development Final Report](#)¹) and complementary work with SPUR and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to make Bay Area transit more seamless and navigable.

This section provides background on the recommended Wayfinding Program and related City Council actions and policy. The Analysis section includes details of efforts underway by the City of San José (City) and its partners to advance the Program.

San José Wayfinding Program

San José’s Wayfinding Program focuses on pedestrian and non-auto travel and employs user-centric design. The wayfinding information will be accessible through multiple channels (digital, print, signs). It is designed to complement other efforts such as enhanced urban design and new transit infrastructure that help people navigate the city.

The wayfinding system is designed to grow over time with diverse but integrated wayfinding products and funding. Specifically, San José’s local wayfinding system should ultimately include four primary product types – Arrival, Navigation, Destinations, and Routes.



The first phase of the Program focuses on delivering static, potentially illuminated, navigation products. This type of signage will be deployed at key intersections and is designed to help a user orient themselves and then plan and navigate their route to an

¹ <https://www.sjeconomy.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=53649>

intended destination. The wayfinding information will contain a downtown district and landmark map, combined with a ten-minute walk map highlighting specific types of street-level activity.

In April 2018, City Council accepted a report on the Downtown Wayfinding System, which included findings and recommendations for a phased wayfinding program for Downtown San José and a commitment to collaborate with the work of the Regional Mapping and Wayfinding Partnership, led by the MTC.

Additionally, Council authorized the City Manager to negotiate and execute a Master Consulting Agreement with City ID, LLC for wayfinding and placemaking design services for an initial three-year term ending June 2021 for an aggregate maximum compensation not to exceed \$2,000,000, subject to the appropriation of funds. The City has budgeted \$800,000 for work through this agreement, \$550,000 for design services by City ID, and \$250,000 to fabricate and install the Pilot Program funded by the City's Parking Fund General Fund. The Parking Fund has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff is currently determining what effect this has on the Program.

As detailed in the Analysis section, the City is working smarter by sharing implementation resources with partners: MTC, San José State University, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), San Jose Downtown Association, and Team San Jose. This process is designed to achieve economies of scale and will be delivered in phases, as resources are made available and opportunities arise.

ANALYSIS

This section details efforts underway by the City and its partners to advance the Wayfinding Program. It focuses on ongoing efforts by the City, San José State University, VTA, and MTC. Bay Wheels, the region's bikeshare provider, completed wayfinding and maps in 2018.

City of San José Wayfinding Program

To date, staff and City ID have developed digitally-based maps; product design standards; and prototypes of physical wayfinding structures. These efforts were built and refined based upon input from stakeholder workshops held in July, October and November 2018 and June 2019 with representatives from the Knight Foundation, SPUR, San Jose Downtown Association, VTA, Team San Jose, Walk San Jose, California Walks, Friends of CalTrain, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, Ride ESSJ, Bike Party, Notre Dame High School, San José State University and City Staff from the Departments of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Transportation, Public Works, and Planning, Building and Code Enforcement. Stakeholder engagement included site-visit observations, user testing, and workshops. Key considerations focused on information design and relevant levels of information to create a seamless pedestrian experience based on the path of travel and placement of the various wayfinding products providing the information at the locations where pedestrians will need it. The [Interactive Downtown Map](#)² was also expanded to include areas like Japantown, The Alameda, East Santa Clara Street, South First Street, Calle Willow, and San José State University South Campus based on this feedback.



Mock-up wayfinding information in front of the McEnery Convention Center during the Silicon Valley Comic Convention.

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the project timeline and proposed pilot area. At the last update to the Community and Economic Development Committee in February 2020, staff was preparing to issue a contract to fabricate the Navigation totem prototype in March 2020. Project staff was activated to the City's Emergency Operations Center due to the Shelter in Place order issued by Santa Clara County on March 6, 2020, and the project was put on hold as part of the larger city-wide freeze on issuing new non-Covid-related agreements. In the Summer 2020, some Office of Economic Development (OED) staff were deactivated from the emergency operations center and were able to meet with Department of Transportation (DOT) staff and City ID in order to pivot the Program to adjust for the pilot area impacts and feasibility to conduct a viable prototype phase.

The proposed pilot project area was planned to be placed between the McEnery Convention Center and San José State University to capture feedback from event attendees and encourage students to explore downtown. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pilot project area is no longer an immediately viable option as conventions and classes have been canceled for the year and potentially into the Summer of 2021.

² <https://www.sjeconomy.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=53651>

City staff is instead initiating a procurement process to deliver the wayfinding elements funded in Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities grants awarded for new affordable housing along Balbach Street in the SoFA district and Bassett Street in North San Pedro (\$179,978). The request for proposals will be issued in March with award of the contract in June 2021. Staff will continue to identify and leverage funding and partnership opportunities for program implementation, including and beyond the efforts listed below. Staff has coordinated with the San Pedro Square Committee and San Jose Downtown Association staff.

San José State University

San José State University has been an active participant in the Wayfinding Program workshops and, as a result, decided to update their on-campus wayfinding program utilizing the same design standards and family of products. In Fall 2019, they secured funding to work with City ID on a campus scoping study and prototype and to test two Destination totems with the ambition to add more. This project was also put on hold due to the pandemic as the university shifted to distance learning and all on-campus, in-person events were canceled. San José State University continues to be committed to better student integration into downtown and intends to deploy Destination wayfinding products on campus in the coming year.

Valley Transportation Authority

In June 2020, VTA and City staff identified the installation of Arrival information at downtown light rail stations as a way to further expand the Downtown Wayfinding Program – again, utilizing the same design standards and family of products. The VTA submitted for and was granted funding for the project and is in the process of procuring City ID for design services through the regional model established by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

Metropolitan Transportation Commission and SPUR

In 2019, MTC staff released a prototype, print-ready, [regional transit map](#)³ showing an overview of all principal transit modes in the Bay Area. The map represented Phase I of MTC's work and is a combined effort of 28 transit agencies, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, SPUR, and consultant City ID. The map provides a sense of the region's overall transit network and calls for 'harmonization of information' for transit users, which was documented in SPUR's white paper, [Finding Transit](#)⁴.

MTC is also investing \$950,000 for a second phase of work proposed to explore further harmonization and the potential development of a network brand (including product form and size, map scales, colors, pictograms, illustrations, textures, etc.), which would enable future funding to assist transit agencies and local jurisdictions to implement an integrated, seamless program. In January 2020, the MTC and City ID released a Regional Mapping and Wayfinding

³ <https://www.sjeconomy.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=69276>

⁴ https://www.spur.org/sites/default/files/publications_pdfs/SPUR_Finding_Transit.pdf

Program [Update](#)⁵ and [Next Steps](#)⁶ for Phase I and II of the regional effort. Phase II began with a questionnaire released in January, a listening tour with transit stakeholders in February/March 2020, a second workshop in April/May 2020, and additional stakeholder engagement and presentations through Summer and Fall.

In January 2021, a presentation was provided to transit agency general managers and to the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force to consider a recommendation for funding Phase III of the Program. Phase III will develop regional design standards, a kit of mapping resources, a digital mapping platform, and a regional graphic identity/branding. Funding may also include a partnership with transit operators and cities for phased implementation of standardized, static and digital maps, wayfinding products, and a graphic identity throughout the region.

Interactive Wayfinding Kiosks

Over the years, including recently, media companies, telecommunications companies, and kiosk vendors have approached the City wishing to put interactive digital kiosks in the Downtown public right of ways. These interactive kiosks have been developed in some other cities providing Arrival and Destination wayfinding information, as they offer interactive and welcoming messages or timely announcements and search features, respectively. Interactive product types involve complex technologies that require additional design and more robust system requirements to function properly.

Interactive wayfinding kiosks typically include a substantial amount of private advertising or sponsorships and integrate information from city government and other partners. In exchange for use of the public right of way and rights to advertise, the commercial kiosk vendors typically offer free community benefits that include the wayfinding service itself, public Wi-Fi, USB device charging stations, 311/211/911 public assistance, public service messaging, and/or municipal dark fiber.

Environmental work is underway (Council Policy Priority #2: Electronic Billboards) that could open the door for consideration of interactive kiosks with commercial advertising in the public right-of-way, along with other street furniture with advertising. Initial public outreach occurred during summer 2020. At its November 2020 meeting, the Community and Economic Development Committee recommended Council re-evaluate this priority, which includes several different elements, at the Council Roadmap priority-setting session on February 25, 2021.

Numerous issues would need to be addressed before the City could move forward with the implementation of a commercial digital kiosk program, including:

- ***Creating the appropriate regulatory framework*** – While existing Council Policy 1-7 allows for sponsorships, there is no existing City policy that allows commercial advertising in the public right-of-way.

⁵ <https://www.sjeconomy.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=53629>

⁶ <https://www.sjeconomy.com/home/showpublisheddocument?id=53631>

- ***Identifying the proper procurement process*** – Multiple companies have approached the City advocating for advertising-based kiosk solutions. If the City decides to pursue this, a procurement process would need to be identified.
- ***Determining the potential for revenue*** – Securing the ability to advertise in the public right-of-way is potentially a lucrative opportunity for the selected company. The City would need to ensure that it secures the appropriate value in revenue or services in exchange for allowing commercial kiosks in the public right-of-way.
- ***Clarifying third-party participation*** – The City has been approached about the possibility of assigning the ability to place interactive kiosks in the public right-of-way to a third-party entity. Staff would need clarification on whether or how the City could authorize another entity to implement a wayfinding kiosk program in the public right-of-way.
- ***Properly integrating privacy/data/Smart City initiatives*** – The City will need to incorporate emerging Privacy Principles and Privacy Policy work into a kiosk program and develop a consistent approach to the funding and placement of connected devices on the public right-of-way to support economic development, digital inclusion, and smart cities initiatives while protecting the City's investment in pavement and sidewalks.
- ***Ensuring an integrated approach*** – It would be imperative to coordinate and integrate Downtown's local wayfinding system with potential interactive commercial kiosks as well as any other proposed street furniture such as benches or newspaper condominiums. Other cities that have gone down this path have experienced "clutter creep" on sidewalks due to a lack of a holistic approach.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The local and regional wayfinding programs contain explicit evaluation provisions. The results of those evaluations and an update about both programs will continue to be shared annually with the Community and Economic Development Committee at the February Committee meetings.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the February 22, 2021 Community and Economic Development Committee meeting.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Subject: Downtown Wayfinding Program Update

February 10, 2021

Page 8

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office.

/s/

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/s/

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