Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy
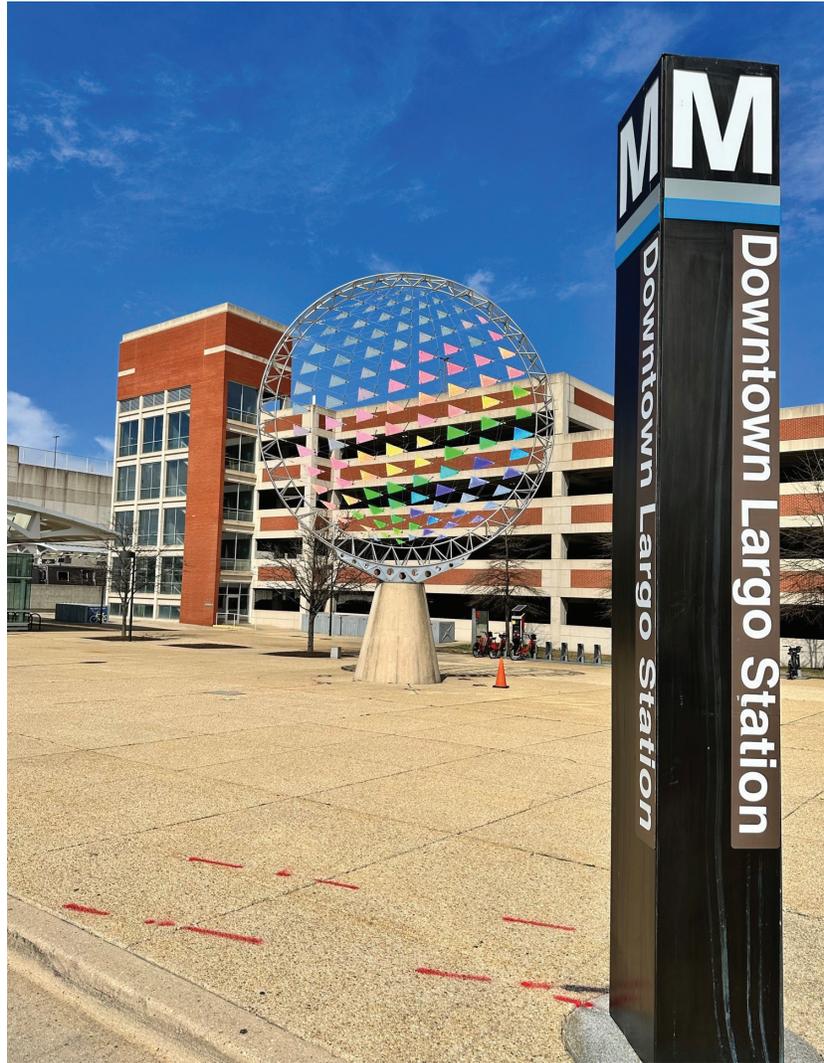

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION
Prince George's County Planning Department

Abstract

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Downtown Largo is a vibrant and diverse area poised to become a regional downtown with unique destinations, and a range of transportation modes available to residents and visitors. This Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy seeks to capture the momentum of the transitioning nature of Largo Town Center into a walkable urban core. There are many existing and planned residential, commercial, and industrial branding efforts within and adjacent to the study area, and this strategy can help tie these disparate identities together.

The strategy makes recommendations for locations in Downtown Largo to be activated through various means of placemaking. Further, through community engagement, the strategy proposes a 'brand' for Largo and explores wayfinding options to improve walkability and increase a sense of place in Downtown Largo.

Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy

Elvert Barnes

July 2023

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Prince George's County Planning Department
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

www.pgplanning.org

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The Commission has three major functions:

- The preparation, adoption, and, from time to time, amendment or extension of the General Plan for the physical development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District.
- The acquisition, development, operation, and maintenance of a public park system.
- In Prince George's County only, the operation of the entire county public recreation program.

The Commission operates in each county through a Planning Board appointed by and responsible to the County government. All local plans, recommendations on zoning amendments, administration of subdivision regulations, and general administration of parks are responsibilities of the Planning Boards.

The Prince George's County Planning Department:

- Our mission is to help preserve, protect and manage the County's resources by providing the highest quality planning services and growth management guidance and by facilitating effective intergovernmental and citizen involvement through education and technical assistance.
- Our vision is to be a model planning department of responsive and respected staff who provide superior planning and technical services and work cooperatively with decision makers, citizens, and other agencies to continuously improve development quality and the environment and act as a catalyst for positive change

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Section 1
Introduction

Study Area

William Paca
Elementary School

Prince George's Sports
and Learning Complex

FedEx
Field

BISHOP PEEBLES DR

Nalley Road
Park

Cora L. Rice
Elementary School

G. James Gholson
Middle School

GARRETT A MORGAN BLVD

Thomas G. Pullen
School

Summerfield Park

Hill Road Park

M metro

Morgan Blvd
Station

Future Headquarters for M-NCPPC Prince George's County

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building

MCCORMICK DR

Kaiser Permanente

APOLLO DR

MEDICAL CENTER DR

LANDOVER RD

Ernest Everett Just Middle School

Lake Arbor Community Center

LAKE ARBOR WAY

Arbor Park

Lake Arbor Elementary School

U.S.P.S.

University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center

Downtown Largo Metro Station

Largo Town Center Shopping Center

LARGO CTR DR

LOTTSFORD RD

HARRY S TRUMAN DR N

Largo Town Center Park

LARGO DR W

CENTRAL AVE

LARGO RD

N

What's In A Name?

A recurring theme throughout the development of the strategy was: How should we refer to the study area? Several options were used in stakeholder meetings, public forums, and in survey responses. Names included:

Largo Town Center. This was the name of the Metro station until August 2022, and was used for prior planning documents. It is also the name of one specific shopping center in the area.

Largo. This is how many local people refer to the area, but technically Largo is a Census Designated Place stretching two miles south of MD 214 between I-495 and MD 202, outside the study area.

Upper Marlboro. Many of the local mailing addresses in the study area are Upper Marlboro, although the town of that name is some 10 miles away. The Post Office in the study area uses an Upper Marlboro zip code.

Downtown Largo. This name reflects the establishment of this area as one of the County's downtowns; it is now the name of the Metro station.

We have chosen to use Downtown Largo as the name for the study area. References to Largo Town Center remain in some places, for example in relation to the Metro station, where it is used in the title of earlier planning documents such as the Largo Town Center Sector Plan, or when referring to the shopping center.

Introduction

What are Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding?

Placemaking is about creating public spaces that encourage people to meet, interact, enjoy shared experiences, be physically active, or simply watch people and the world go by. Sometimes a place engages people with art, sculpture, activities, and games; sometimes it is a place of exchange or interchange; and sometimes it encourages quiet contemplation and renewal.

Branding differentiates a community or place by capturing its unique collective identity and representing it in a distinct manner using visuals, words, and phrases. A successful brand unites the community and captures the imagination of people outside the area.

Wayfinding helps people successfully navigate through an area using visual and other sensory cues such as signs and digital displays. Wayfinding tools and resources help orient people to their current location and assist them in planning and following a route to reach a different destination. The specific elements of a wayfinding system may be influenced by the existing transportation infrastructure, landmark buildings, natural features, urban form and land use patterns, lighting, and the presence of people.

The future of Downtown Largo is envisioned as a health and wellness hub for Prince George's County, anchored by the new University of Maryland Medical Center.

Purpose of this Strategy

Downtown Largo is transitioning into a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use regional center. The *2013 Largo Town Center Sector Plan* contains policies and strategies that aim to improve wayfinding in the study area. The Sector Plan outlines the need for a stronger identity for the Largo area and opportunities in the physical environment for greater connection between the people and the place. The purpose of this project was to develop a placemaking, branding, and wayfinding strategy to:

- Identify placemaking and public art efforts that reinforce the urban design goals for Downtown Largo.
- Coordinate with the existing and planned residential, commercial, and industrial branding efforts within the study area.
- Create a wayfinding system that makes navigating the Downtown Largo area easier for both residents and visitors. This system should target pedestrians, cyclists and mass transit riders.

This document summarizes the research, planning, and public engagement efforts used to develop the Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy and serves as a guidebook for implementing the strategy.

Guiding Principles

Placemaking, branding, and wayfinding support the social, economic, and cultural relationships that are important to a place. Effectively implemented strategies promoting placemaking, branding, and wayfinding contribute to people feeling deeper connections to a place that establishes a positive reputation for that location. The most important principles guiding the development of the Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy are:

Make Connections: The foundation of this project is connecting people to places. This strategy will play an important role in linking Downtown Largo residents and visitors to the destinations and places that are most important to them, such as landmarks, institutions, transit centers, shopping, entertainment venues, and parks.

Champion Community Narratives and Identity: Public art and placemaking can bring authentic meaning to a place in a way that transcends basic branding. Cultural narratives and local history should be celebrated and reflected in the future identity of Downtown Largo as a hub for life sciences, health, and wellness.

Promote Active Travel and Exploration: Motorists traveling in Downtown Largo can navigate via an extensive system of signs. However, there is a lack of signs targeting pedestrians, cyclists, and mass transit riders. Many streets feature landscaped buffers and medians but lack amenities such as benches, shelters, or bike racks. A goal of this project is to make it easier for everyone to navigate and encourage all modes of transit throughout Downtown Largo.

The high level of design and construction quality of Largo Town Center Park suggests a language that may be carried through the Downtown Largo streetscape and open spaces.

Provide a Flexible and Manageable System:
Downtown Largo is rapidly evolving as development adds new businesses,residents, and attractions. The wayfinding system for Downtown Largo needs to anticipate this evolution to make changes and updates with minimal expense.

Make Information Simple and Predictable:
The most effective wayfinding signage systems incorporate information and placement that is consistent, uniform, and predictable.

Use Technology: The experience of both residents and visitors in Downtown Largo can be enhanced with technology and communications platforms. In addition to traditional signs and printed information, people should be able to access targeted, digital information on mobile devices, at interactive kiosks, and via online platforms.
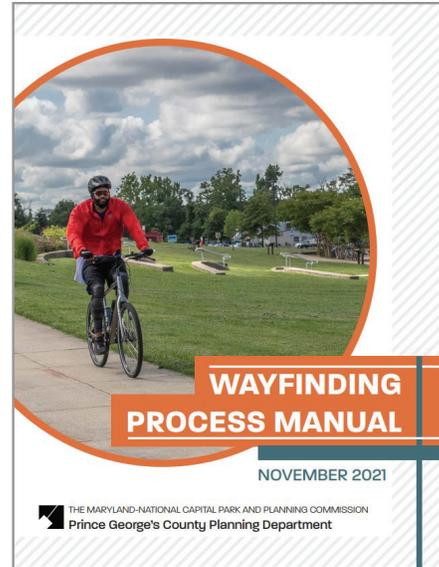
Related Prince George's County Studies

Two countywide studies reflect the ongoing commitment of Prince George's County to placemaking, branding, and wayfinding: the Prince George's County Wayfinding Strategy and the Prince George's County Cultural Arts Study.

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY WAYFINDING PROCESS MANUAL

Prince George's County Planning Department staff worked with consultants to study how wayfinding is planned, approved, and implemented within the County. The manual will assist community organizations and municipalities in implementing a wayfinding project in their neighborhood or community. The study was completed in November 2021.[1]

Project goals:

- Help communities understand the value of wayfinding systems
- Educate wayfinding sponsors within the County on the regulations and regulatory processes
- Identify responsible parties for installation and maintenance
- Make recommendations to streamline the implementation process
- Encourage consistent approaches in preparation, planning, and designing wayfinding projects across the County

Project outcomes:

- Recommendations to make the process of installing wayfinding signs more efficient
- Identification of places for improvement of community wayfinding systems
- A toolkit for communities to plan wayfinding

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY CULTURAL ARTS STUDY

Prince George's County Planning Department, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), and the Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council (PGAHC) worked collaboratively with arts advisors and key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive assessment of the diverse arts and culture ecology in Prince George's County.

The purpose of the study is to:

- Develop strategies and recommendations for integrating cultural arts activities into the County's economic development and land use planning strategies.
- Build upon, strengthen, and invest in the people, places, communities, and ideas that define art and culture within Prince George's County.
- Examine the economic impact of cultural arts in the County.

Guidance in the development of this study came from significant planning and background work completed as part of the 2014 Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan 2035). The study was released in January 2022.[2]

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1   https://www.M-NCPPCapps.org/planning/publications/BookDetail.cfm?item_id=398&Category_id=2

2   https://www.M-NCPPC.org/4860/Cultural-Arts-Study

STEP 1 : PREPARATION

A group of businesses want to encourage visitors to explore downtown.
The first step is to get organized by:

Forming a project steering group

Defining the boundaries of the project area

Deciding who to engage with and form a plan

Identifying who will fund and maintain the project

The project is in a municipality so they start by contacting the Mayor, City Manager and City Engineer, as well as community stakeholders and interest groups for support and funding ideas.

Having agreed their objectives and engaged the community, they think about the motorist they are targeting and what agencies need to be consulted. They use this information to prepare a resource report.

They are focused on pedestrians in an area that is all City-owned streets.
They don't need to contact the State or County so they arrange to meet the municipality to check transportation and planning ordinances.

They survey the project area. There is a welcome gateway sign but this is unaffected by the plans.

STEP 2 : PLANNING

They keep the municipality informed and hire a professional engineer to advise as they develop the project plan. They work together to:

Determine the key destinations and rules for being included on the signs

Prioritize the routes to be signed with input from the community

Prepare a concept plan and check-in with the municipality

Identify the decision points where signs will be needed as a preliminary plan

Create a table of sign locations, types and messages

Consult with the municipality and finalize a sign plan

Estimate the cost and agree upon construction and maintenance funding

Determine who will maintain and upgrade signs once installed

The municipality approves the project plan concept.

STEP 3 : IMPLEMENT

The steering group would like to include a brand design in the pedestrian signs so they hire a professional designer to prepare sign designs:

Their designer produces ADA-compliant designs and brand standards

They coordinate with the municipality to obtain permits for construction

They hire a contractor to fabricate and install signs

Once installed, long-term ownership and maintenance is turned over to the responsible party as agreed upon during planning.

A sample wayfinding project from the County's Wayfinding Process Manual (Page 57).

Section 2
Research and Analysis

Planning Process

The Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy was developed to reflect the needs of both residents and visitors to the area and to contribute towards ongoing efforts to make Downtown Largo more walkable, bike-friendly, and accessible by transit. The strategy also identifies ways to incorporate placemaking as a part of all County projects in the study area. An extensive planning process was followed and included these key elements:

Physical Assessment

The project team conducted fieldwork to understand the existing placemaking, branding, and wayfinding assets and challenges.

Existing Plans and Studies Research

The project team conducted a review of the most relevant local and regional plans and studies that address wayfinding, branding and placemaking in Downtown Largo.

Public Engagement

Outreach strategies were adjusted to reflect public health regulations implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. Engagement activities included:

- Four stakeholder focus group discussions
- An online survey
- A virtual community workshop
- A final virtual public meeting to review and discuss the findings of the strategy

A view across Lake Largo in the Town Center Park

Physical Assessment

A walking tour of Downtown Largo was conducted on August 7, 2020. Staff from The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), the consultant team, and then-Prince George's County Councilman Derrick Leon Davis participated in the tour. The goal was to understand the area's existing conditions, assets, and challenges with respect to placemaking, branding, and wayfinding. The team carried out additional in-person and virtual site evaluations the following week. The following is a summary of observations and opportunities for improvement identified by participants.

Former Councilman Derrick Leon Davis, M-NCPPC staff, and the consultant team on the Largo Town Center site tour.

Lack of Consistency and Clarity

Participants on the site tour noted that Downtown Largo's streets lack consistency and clarity; for example, it is not clear which streets are the main roads serving primary destinations in the area, versus those streets that mostly serve internal trips to secondary or local locations.

- It is not clear that Medical Center Drive and Lottsford Road are the main east-west and north-south routes through Downtown Largo.

- It is not clear where and when Medical Center Drive becomes Arena Drive.

- Key intersections are not emphasized strongly enough with street design, urban design, or architectural design cues, though this might be changing because of the development at Medical Center Drive and Lottsford Road.

- Harry S Truman Drive is not easily identifiable as an internal circulation route, and it takes on different characteristics in different areas with no continuity.

- Of the three exits from I-495 that serve Largo, only Exit 15 (MD 214) indicates Largo as a destination.

Looking North on Lottsford Road

Intersection of Lottsford Road and Medical Center Drive

A lack of gateway features or visual cues at entry to Downtown Largo from Route 202

Streetscapes

Older residential condo developments are designed to be screened from the street, expressing a suburban design pattern. Newer residential buildings, like Ascend Apollo and Tapestry Largo Station, are built closer to the street. However, they continue to be set back in a suburban style and are not designed to activate the streetscape. Many streets feature landscaped buffers, landscaped medians, and lighting, but lack amenities, like seating and shelters, discouraging people from lingering in these places.

Largo Town Center Condominium

Ascend Apollo

Placemaking

Downtown Largo currently lacks a sense of place because it lacks common features that make public spaces successful. Features like lively plazas, walkable streets, points of interest, and natural gathering places all attract people to an area.

Downtown Largo does have some public locations with a high standard of design and construction that could serve as a model for the area. Largo Town Center Park, for example, has shade, intricate stonework, extensive landscaping, and an overall design that is welcoming to people. Too many other spaces—even those with public art, such as the plaza immediately outside the Metro station—are not welcoming or attractive places to walk, wait, or linger.

Largo Town Center Park

Branding

Downtown Largo lacks strong, consistent branding. Existing branding in the study area varies by individual residential, commercial, and institutional development. A decorative geometric "L" motif is repeated in some instances, but it is not used consistently.

Examples of existing branding in Downtown Largo

Wayfinding

The minimal wayfinding in Downtown Largo today is entirely oriented toward motor vehicle drivers. The signage placement prioritizes directing drivers to and from boundary roadways, the Beltway, and FedEx Field, rather than destinations within Downtown Largo. In prior years, wayfinding oriented visitors to the Capital Center and its successor (Boulevard at Cap Center); today the medical center is a key destination that has resulted in Arena Drive being renamed to Medical Center Drive from the Beltway through Downtown Largo.


Directional signage for motor vehicles provides wayfinding in Downtown Largo

Existing Plans and Studies

The consultant team reviewed a range of documents to gain an understanding of the many planning and design studies related to Downtown Largo. Placemaking, branding, and wayfinding must work hand in hand with the varied infrastructure elements throughout the study area. A clear understanding of the existing and future plans for Downtown Largo has informed this effort.

Plan 2035 Prince George's County General Plan

M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department, May 2014
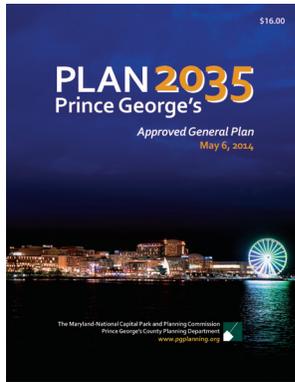
Plan 2035 includes comprehensive recommendations for guiding future development within Prince George's County. The Plan designates Largo Town Center as one of three Downtowns to be developed in the near term into vibrant,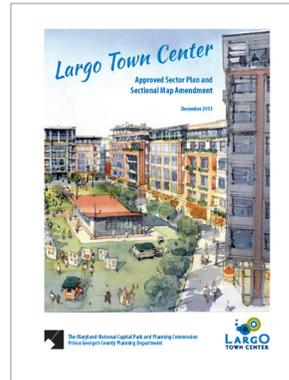 walkable, regional-serving centers. The Downtowns are to offer a distinct sense of place and identity and capitalize on transit-oriented development opportunities.

Further, with the construction of the new University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center, Plan 2035 identifies Largo Town Center as the locus of the County's healthcare and life sciences cluster. Largo Town Center is expected to become a hot spot for medical and biopharmaceutical research, healthcare services, and health-related training and education, creating opportunities for attracting investment, expanding the job base, and growing the commercial tax base.

Largo Town Center Sector Plan

M-NCPPC Prince George's County Planning Department, December 2013

The 2013 *Largo Town Center Approved Sector Plan* begins with a strong summary of the current urban design character of Largo Town Center — the isolation of the district, the lack of internal and external connectivity, and the suburban sprawl-type development that results in nearly every internal or external trip requiring an automobile. In contrast, the Sector Plan visualizes a transformation for Largo Town Center to a "premier mixed-use downtown" with abundant activity and engaging destinations. Key recommendations related to the current study include:

- Segmentation of the town center into four quadrants, with the quadrant that includes the Metro station designated as the TOD core, and a fifth area east of Landover Road

- A land-use framework with a mixed-use retail center in the TOD core and the consolidation of retail elsewhere; addition of a major institutional use, preferably in the core; and generally, redevelopment at a much higher density

- A public realm framework with an extended Harry S. Truman Drive connection, an urban street grid, and green infrastructure, including trails and riparian corridors

- Development district standards for street types and blocks based on the Complete Streets approach, open space design criteria with a hierarchy of urban spaces (plazas, civic squares, greens, passages) and architectural design criteria.

Opportunities for Placemaking and Public Art

The *Sector Plan* provides specific Architectural/ Building Design recommendations within the TOD quadrant that indicate opportunities for features that could be created through public art. These include:

- The buildings at the corner of Medical Center Drive and North Harry S. Truman Drive should have special design features, such as a pronounced corner element. These could be achieved through integrated public art.

- The buildings at the corner of Lottsford Road and North Harry S. Truman Drive should have special articulation and massing at the corners.

- The green space located at the north entrance of the new main street, North Harry S. Truman Drive Extended, should be anchored by a civic building or retail pavilion.
- The building directly south of the Metro station should be a "signature building" or "iconic tower," with "materials and lighting as a beacon for Largo Town Center."
- Gateway elements like pylons or monuments are recommended at the intersection of Largo Center Drive and Harry S. Truman Drive, the south gateway to Largo Town Center.

The Sector Plan lays out a strong vision for the potential public realm framework of the study area. This strategy will build on that vision to develop specific design details and strategies for placemaking, branding, and wayfinding.

Wayfinding Guidance

The *Sector Plan* provides general design criteria for street furniture and signage. The guidance on signs is specific to retail advertising/identification sign types, area identification signs, and wayfinding signs.

Design criteria include:
- The need to maintain consistency of design and materials
- Orienting visitors to public services and parking
- Maximum dimensions and vertical clearance requirements for both vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding

Blue Line Corridor Vision

Prince George's County Office of Economic Development, November 2021

The *Blue Line Corridor Vision* places Downtown Largo at the heart of the County's overall economic development strategy. The Blue Line Corridor Vision identifies the tremendous growth opportunities along the four stops of Metro's Blue Line in Prince George's County and the opportunity to reimagine Central Avenue and the areas around Downtown Largo and FedEx Field. The Vision plan anticipates considerable investment in placemaking, branding, and wayfinding to establish Downtown Largo as a thriving, vibrant, walkable center for residents and visitors alike. The Vision plan brings together numerous ongoing plans, programs, projects, and initiatives in the corridor to maximize their effectiveness and impact on the community.
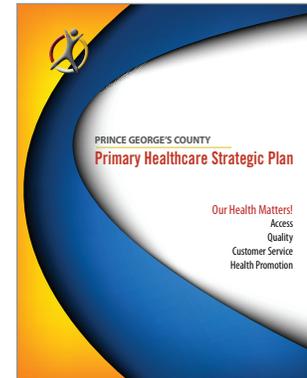
Prince George's County Primary Healthcare Strategic Plan

The Prince George's County Government, August 2015

The *Prince George's County Primary Healthcare Strategic Plan* identifies Largo Town Center as a Life Sciences Center, and recommends promoting it as a hub for "one stop shopping for health." The center will include medical care, social services, pharmacy, fitness centers, and other health-supporting products and services. The Plan recommends implementing a branding and marketing strategy to engender a positive emotional connection between residents and the healthcare services in the County. The goal of the brand strategy is to communicate a commitment to high-quality healthcare in Prince George's County using the tagline, P**rince George's County, Our Health Matters!** Conceptual marketing communications provide examples of implementation methods featuring this tagline.

Sample billboard rendering featuring the branding tagline from the *Prince George's County Primary Healthcare Strategic Plan*.

ULI Advisory Services Panel Report

Guidance for the Development of Largo Town Center, December 2015

The *ULI Advisory Services Panel Report* cites Largo Town Center's confluence of jobs, housing, services, and other destinations as creating a considerable opportunity for establishing Largo as a mixed-use hub of regional importance. The presence of the Metro station offers direct transit connections to the rest of the Washington metropolitan region and gives Largo Town Center advantages over similar areas without transit. A premier mixed-use downtown with a range of small and large businesses would serve the needs of both citizens and visitors.
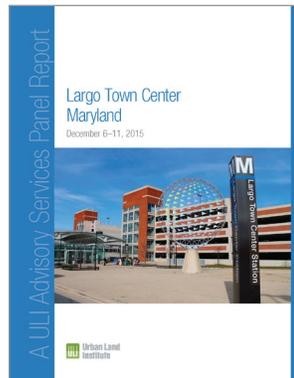
Recommendations related to the current study emphasize:

- A complete rebranding process for Downtown Largo and the development of a marketing strategy

- Development of a wayfinding strategy to establish a consistent Largo Town Center identity and improve directional orientation for both vehicle users and pedestrians

- Implementation of Plan 2035 recommendations that establish green space, streetscape, parks, and a town square adjacent to the Downtown Largo Metro Station

- Creation of a more welcoming pedestrian environment throughout Largo Town Center

- Implementation of road diets and complete streets solutions to meet the needs of all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists

- Construction of a medium-sized event center with an adjacent urban plaza for community gathering

- Relocation of the County Government closer to the Largo Metro Station and creation of a "one-stop" government service station.

Economic Drivers and Catalysts Report

Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore, and Green Door Advisors, May 2013

The *Economic Drivers and Catalysts Report* provides recommendations to prioritize marketing of Prince George's County, promote start-up businesses, and encourage the growth of this robust region. While the report focuses on the County as a whole, many of the strategic needs apply directly to the justification for the current Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy's reasoning and scope. The report states that, from a brand perspective, a location should use a single voice to unify messages towards the development of the economy.
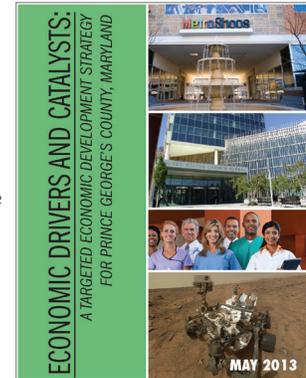
Making Place: Transit-Oriented Development for Largo, MD

Prepared by the University of Maryland Department of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Fall 2019

Making Place: Transit-Oriented Development for Largo, MD is a student studio project developed by students from the University of Maryland Department of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. It describes Downtown Largo as an "edge city" and a "simple automobile-oriented pit stop" for people commuting to and from Washington, D.C. The report recommends a TOD approach to redevelopment with a commercial district adjacent to the existing Metro station, offices and public spaces radiating around the station, and a residential area to fill in the outskirts of the TOD sphere. This would situate employment, entertainment, shopping, public space, and residential options within a five- to ten-minute walk of the station.
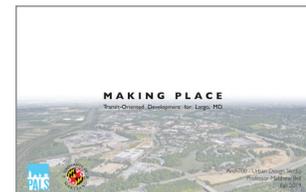
Public Engagement

Introduction

Public engagement for the Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The consultant team and M-NCPPC staff pivoted from traditional in-person outreach activities to various virtual and on-line techniques. These activities generated valuable input and insight from stakeholders and community members. Virtual focus groups, public meetings, and on-line surveys enabled people to participate from home and in their own time; polls and surveys during these events allowed people to share their views and respond to questions. In addition, socially distanced site visits and walking tours provided an opportunity to experience the study area in person. Materials related to the engagement activities are in Appendix 4. They include promotional items; presentations; responses to questions, polls and surveys; and summaries of discussions from the meetings.

Focus Groups

To initiate the stakeholder outreach effort, the consultant team hosted four focus group meetings with various stakeholder groups, including government agencies, community associations, developers, and landowners. Each meeting began with an introduction of the project consultant team and an overview of the project. The project study area was viewed using PGAtlas, the Planning Department's interactive geospatial information system (GIS) platform to facilitate the discussions.

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

- Largo is unincorporated, and thus does not have a municipal government to play a key role in the placemaking, branding, and wayfinding effort. However, this can be an advantage, as it may allow for easier integration with the rest of the County's wayfinding efforts.
- Largo is primarily comprised of County-owned streets, and it is the center of the County's administration and services.
- Largo was designated as one of three Prince George's County "downtowns" in the Prince George's County Plan 2035. There was an emphasis on the importance of making Largo a "downtown" among many of the stakeholders.
- Postal codes in the area are based on an older understanding of place in Prince George's County. This system affects many residents understanding of where they live. For example, some zip codes for Upper Marlboro extend to areas now considered Largo.
- There is a need for signage or other treatments at gateways to introduce Downtown Largo and establish it as a place. Potential gateways discussed include:
  - Landover Road and Medical Center Drive
  - Landover Road and McCormick Drive
  - Landover Road and Lottsford Road
  - Harry S. Truman Drive and Largo Drive
  - Lottsford Road—main spine road and pedestrian/bike route
  - Central Avenue
- Wayfinding should prioritize points of entry, circulation landmarks, destinations, and connections with multi-modal transportation facilities. The wayfinding signage should coordinate with other sign systems from the hospital, private development, Metro, and government buildings.
- A preliminary list of key destinations to consider for inclusion on wayfinding includes the county government agencies, the Metro Station, University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center, Prince George's Community College, shopping centers, restaurant/entertainment areas, and residential areas. Significant destinations outside of the study area should still be considered on wayfinding signs, especially vehicular wayfinding signs.
- Suggestions for placemaking efforts in the study area included a new park and a new amphitheater to serve as a landmark culture and entertainment hub.
- Comparable areas to reference as precedents include the Mosaic District in Fairfax, VA; Union Market in Washington, DC; Santana Row in San Jose, CA; and Pike & Rose in Bethesda, MD.

Photo © by Elvert Barnes

Online Survey

The Largo Town Center Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Survey was published on Alchemer.com on October 15, 2020 and it was available until January 18, 2021.

The online survey was promoted through the Prince George's County Planning website and social media channels.

RESPONDENTS

The survey received 320 responses (182 complete responses and 138 partial responses).

Almost half of respondents (47%) said they live in the Downtown Largo study area and another 48% said they live in the County but outside the study area.   The remaining respondents indicated that they worked in the study area or were visiting. Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 65, and were primarily female.

Age of survey respondents

- 1% 15–24
- 17% 25–34
- 26% 35–44
- 28% 45–54
- 12% 55–64
- 17% 65+
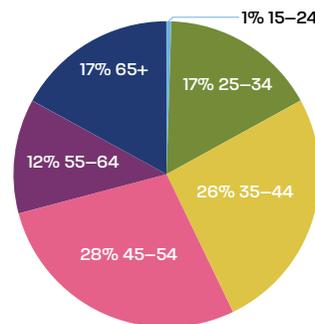
Gender of survey respondents

- No answer
- 21% Male
- 78% Female
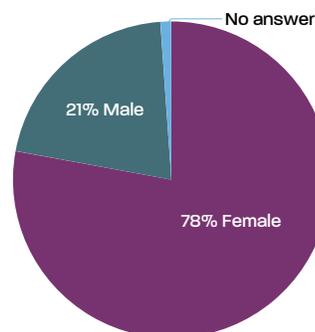
FINDINGS

Key Destinations and Visual Landmarks

Survey respondents identified the Metro station, shopping, and restaurants as their primary destinations. The Metro station and the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center stood out as the primary visual landmarks in Downtown Largo.

Destinations favored by Downtown Largo survey respondents.

Visual Landmarks used by survey respondents to navigate in Largo Town Center survey respondents.

Navigating to—and around—Downtown Largo

Currently, Downtown Largo's development follows a car-centric, suburban development pattern. This is reflected in survey responses:

- 98% of respondents said they most frequently travel to and around Downtown Largo by car
- 37% said they take public transit to Downtown Largo at least a few times per month
- 25% bike and 35% walk around Downtown Largo at least one per month

When asked for which reasons they would want to walk or ride a bike in Downtown Largo, respondents favored recreation (67% walking, 82% biking), for fitness (65% walking, 78% biking), and to attend entertainment events (60% walking, 28% biking).

Respondents were asked how far they would be willing to walk to engage in these activities, and most respondents said they would be willing to walk up to 20 minutes or ride a bike up to 5 miles (approximately 30 minutes). Those interested in walking or biking for fitness indicated a willingness to go for longer time periods and distances.

Use of public transit internal to Downtown Largo (TheBus or Metrobus) was low among survey respondents, though 53% expressed a willingness to use transit if they had enough information on the best way to get to their destinations.
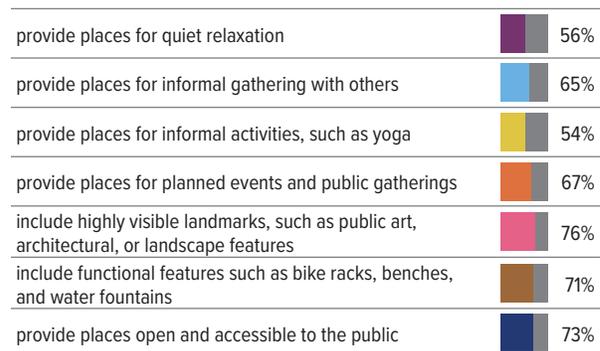
Wayfinding, Branding, and Placemaking

When asked for the most important functions of a new wayfinding strategy for Downtown Largo, respondents indicated that wayfinding should help them while walking and serve a branding function by visually distinguishing the identity of Downtown Largo.

A new wayfinding system for Downtown Largo should:
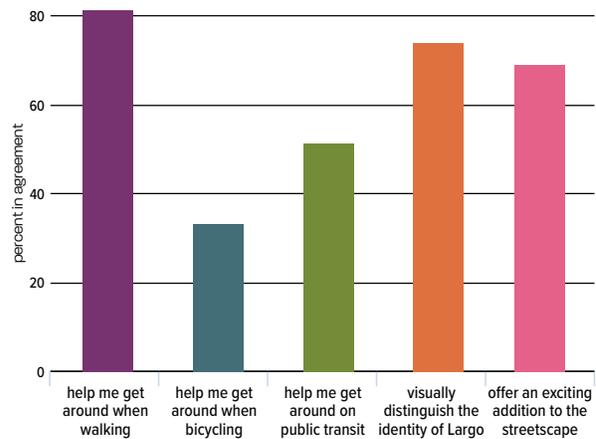
The survey also asked which strategies respondents would use to make Downtown Largo public spaces better able to promote health and wellbeing. Respondents responded positively to all of the suggestions offered.

Placemaking strategies in Downtown Largo should:

provide places for quiet relaxation	56%
provide places for informal gathering with others	65%
provide places for informal activities, such as yoga	54%
provide places for planned events and public gatherings	67%
include highly visible landmarks, such as public art, architectural, or landscape features	76%
include functional features such as bike racks, benches, and water fountains	71%
provide places open and accessible to the public	73%

Community Workshop

On January 12, 2021, the team hosted a public virtual workshop with approximately 65 Largo community members to discuss the area and the development of the Downtown Largo Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Strategy. After introducing the consultant team and M-NCPPC staff members, then-Prince George's County District 6 Councilmember Derrick Leon Davis discussed the importance of the project. He stressed that Largo Town Center is transitioning to become "Downtown Prince George's County" and described how the Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Plan Strategy will play a central role in helping the area reach its highest potential.

The consultant team presented an overview of the project schedule and a summary of work done to date, which included a site tour, stakeholder focus groups, and the public survey.

Subject matter experts from the team introduced placemaking, branding, and wayfinding concepts. They discussed using placemaking to bring historical, cultural, and environmental stories to the forefront, employing branding to communicate the vision of the future Downtown Largo, and best practices for helping people navigate in complex environments.

At the conclusion of the main presentation, participants were led to virtual breakout rooms to consider how people in various scenarios live, work, and play in Downtown Largo. Facilitators presented four scenarios and asked questions to prompt community input (see sidebar on following page).

OUTCOMES

Several themes and ideas emerged from the breakout discussions. Among the issues raised by participants were:

Safety and Security Issues

- Pedestrian and cyclist safety
- Adequacy of street lighting
- Signage to avoid getting lost
- Need for unobstructed sidewalks

Wayfinding Issues

- Regardless of transportation mode or purpose for visiting, proper wayfinding could be a key component to a successful journey to the area
- Safety is linked to wayfinding, and using wayfinding to choose the safest route for each mode of transportation (biking, driving, walking, etc.)

Q&A POLLING

Throughout the main presentation, community input was solicited using Slido, an interactive, virtual Q&A and polling platform. Some of the most popular responses follow:

What is a memory you associate with Largo?

- Capital Centre
- The Boulevard
- First home
- Magic Johnson AMC Theater

Name a place or activity in Largo that you enjoy with your family or with visitors.

- Movie theater
- Library
- Shopping
- Dining out

What are the first few words that come to mind when you think about Largo?

- Business
- New hospital
- Metro
- "Up and coming"
- Growing
- Suburban
- Young professionals

What do you visualize when you think about Largo?

- Family & community
- Walkable
- Restaurants
- New opportunities
- Shopping
- Vibrant
- Jobs

Make up a slogan you would use to attract people to Largo.

- The New Downtown
- Our Downtown
- Lar-GROW
- Livable Largo
- Largo Live!
- Largo Life!
- Love Largo!

- Stakeholders often rely on user-friendly online resources to help prepare for their journey
- Signage for all—to include pedestrians, bikers, and drivers

Issues Affecting Residents and Visitors
- Misleading signage leads to frustration
- Weather can have a significant impact on the user experience
- Construction and development can significantly impact how a stakeholder experiences the area
- Accessibility for people with differing abilities is key

Among the suggested improvements for the area were:

Transportation-related Solutions
- Bike accessibility is desired, via bike lanes, bikeshare
- A shuttle or circulator bus could help community members access the area and avoid traffic and parking frustrations
- Desire for some on-street parking
- More frequent and improved crosswalks
- End of trip services and facilities such as bike parking and benches are as important as the on-road experience
- Community members sometimes use ridesharing options in place of public transportation
- The Metro Station provides transportation and is a source of information
- Multi-modal transportation is necessary

Placemaking, Branding, and Wayfinding Solutions
- Largo should be seen as downtown Prince George's!
- Themes, logos, and slogans that capture the essence of the place can be used on wayfinding elements
- Art and design features, such as sculptures and murals, can be used to showcase the brand
- Develop concepts to promote the brand on street furniture (benches, trash receptacles, painted utility boxes, etc.)

JOURNEY MAPS

The Scenarios:

- Scenario 1—Don is a retired military veteran who lives in Suitland. His bum knee has been giving him trouble lately, so he's traveling by metro to visit the new University of Maryland Medical Center to have it checked out.

- Scenario 2—Jeff and Deb are driving to Largo Town Center with their 3-year-old daughter to visit a friend who lives in the Tapestry Largo Station complex. They plan to make a day of it and include some shopping and dinner at a local restaurant.

- Scenario 3—Selena commutes to her job at the Wayne K. Curry Administration Building via Metro, then bikes the last 1.5 miles to the office. At noon she bikes over to the Boulevard at the Capital Centre to meet a friend and get lunch.

- Scenario 4—Elizabeth lives at the Largo Town Center Condominium complex. She uses a mobility scooter to get around town. Her typical weekly outings include shopping at the Largo Town Center shopping center, traveling to other areas via metro and Metrobus, and regular visits to the hospital.

The Prompts:

- What tools will they use to prepare for their journey?

- What could prevent them from having a positive experience during their journey?

- What methods of information finding will they use?

- What could be improved to make their journey easier?

- What are they thinking and feeling as they make their journey?

- What are some risks or obstacles that they might face on their journey?

Credit: M-NCPPC

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

A final public meeting was held on October 14, 2021, to present the draft findings and recommendations of the study. More than 40 people attended the virtual meeting, at which participants were able to learn more about the proposed strategy for placemaking, branding, and wayfinding in the downtown Largo area, and to share their thoughts on the conclusions and recommendations.

An audience poll during the presentation confirmed that participants most closely identify the area with the Metro station. Metro was the primary destination and defining feature in the area for more than half of respondents, and one-third reported that the Metro station is how they experience Largo. One-quarter of respondents work in the area compared to 8% that live in Downtown Largo. Picking up permits or visiting the County offices for some purpose was mentioned by 17 percent of respondents as their reason for being in the area.

Numerous suggestions were made for organizations that could be involved in placemaking activities in the area, with most frequent mentions including

homeowner associations and local non-profits and businesses. There was a high level of interest in placemaking; 35 percent of respondents said they were already involved in related activities, and an additional 40 percent said they would like to be.

Participants were asked for their initial reaction to the "Living Largo" branding concept. One quarter of respondents loved the concept, and another sixty percent said it was "okay." Thirteen percent acknowledged it needed work, but no one hated it.

The final question asked participants what name they most closely associated with the area. The largest percentage of respondents chose Largo (37 percent), while 21 percent chose either Downtown Largo or Largo Town Center. Largo Downtown and Downtown Prince George's County were each favored by 11 percent of participants; Prince George's Downtown received no votes.

Overall, the strategy appeared to be well-received. After the approach and findings of the survey were presented, there was relatively little discussion. The feedback on the strategy and meeting was generally positive.

Section 3

Placemaking Strategies

What Does Placemaking Mean?

"Placemaking" is a term that has been used for many years by planners, designers, and community leaders to describe a variety of strategies for enhancing places, particularly places that are undergoing a deeper transformation. The idea has evolved as it has gained more popularity, with each community developing its own meaning to suit its own context.

"Placemaking" has generally been used to refer to several aspects of a place; its visual appearance (such as its architecture), urban design, landscape, streetscape, and everyday amenities. It also includes activities, whether spontaneous or organized, that occur in the space. Both types of activities indicate the social, economic and cultural relationships embodied there.

In 2007, planner Ron Fleming's book *The Art of Placemaking*[1] encapsulated early ideas about placemaking, focusing on its relationship to the appearance of places. Fleming identified two key goals for placemaking and public art. One was to focus on urban design objectives, particularly the visual character of a place. The other was to imbue a place with local meaning through processes by which people take ownership of their surroundings, "staking a claim to the narratives that brought them to this place," and "reclaiming both their visual environment and community memory from . . . banal local development besieging the contemporary landscape."

Since then, ideas about placemaking have evolved significantly. In 2018, cultural planner Maria Rosario Jackson[2] noted that the idea of "creative placemaking" had begun to focus on connecting artists with grassroots initiatives to promote economic, environmental, and social change—"approaches to community development [that] build on the creativity and wisdom of residents [and] lift up cultural assets."

Jackson described a holistic view of placemaking, including "the inclusion of artists, designers and culture-bearers in the crafting and implementation of community organizing, empowerment and visioning efforts; the creation of physical structures and changes in the built environment that are meaningful and beautiful; the delivery of social services that are culturally relevant and appropriate; and the creation of businesses and other enterprises that tap into community imagination, talents and heritage."

Bill Shelton, the former CEO of Buxton, says "placemaking is a multi-faceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces"[3]. Expanding on this theme, the University of Alabama Center for Economic Development adds that "placemaking capitalizes on local assets, inspiration, and potential, with the intention of creating public spaces that promote broad-based outcomes such as a community's well-being, vitality and equity"[4].

As a result, the approaches to placemaking vary widely from community to community but always draw on a place's physical, cultural, and organizational assets, the stage of its development history, and its aspirations for the future.

What People are Saying About Placemaking

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

"**Placemaking** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value."

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

"**Creative placemaking** integrates arts, culture, and design activities into efforts that strengthen communities. Creative placemaking requires partnership across sectors, deeply engages the community, involves artists, designers, and culture bearers. It's implementation helps advance local economic, physical, and/or social change, which ultimately lays the groundwork for systems change. This definition is intentionally open and broad because creative placemaking draws on all artistic disciplines and can be deployed as a strategy to address a wide range of community issues or challenges from public health to safety, economic development to housing."

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1   *The Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community Through Public Art and Urban Design*, Ronald Lee Fleming, 2007

2   *Creative Placemaking Rethinking Neighborhood Change and Tracking Progress*, Maria Rosario Jackson, 2018

3   https://www.buxtonco.com/blog/placemaking-economic-development-strategy

4   https://www.uaced.ua.edu/mural.html

BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

"Transformative placemaking marshals programs and investments in specific places to spur the creativity, talent development, and entrepreneurship needed to excel in today's rapidly shifting economy. It aims to nurture an economic ecosystem that is regionally connected, innovative, and rooted in the assets of its local residents and businesses."

Branded street furniture, Rosslyn, VA

Placemaking event in Burtonsville, MD
Event hosted by Montgomery County Planning Department and Better Block Foundation

What People are Doing About Placemaking

BALLSTON

Ballston, a mixed-use district on the Orange Metrorail line in Arlington, VA, is known for its research and technology orientation. Over the past decade, as Ballston expanded beyond its core around the Metro station, its streets and public spaces became livelier—Ballston's brand as a crossroads and connector of digital innovation was sharpened—through its placemaking efforts.

Strategies have included events focusing on business networking and neighborhood activities, public space amenities (banners, streetscaping) that identify the area, and artworks that involve technical innovation. Projects are managed by the Ballston Business Improvement District, a county partner organization.

ROSSLYN

Rosslyn, VA, a gateway to Arlington across the Potomac from Georgetown and Foggy Bottom in the District of Columbia, is transitioning from a sterile edge-city office district to a lively mixed-use community. Rosslyn invested in a comprehensive streetscape and wayfinding plan, supported major arts festivals and events, and is anticipating new public spaces built throughout its sector plan. Projects are managed by the Rosslyn Business Improvement District, a county partner organization.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

The M-NCPPC's Montgomery County planning department has been experimenting with placemaking for nearly five years. It sees placemaking as a vehicle for public engagement in planning processes and the future of its communities. Some of its early demonstration projects (in places like White Flint and Burtonsville) sought areas where public space was planned but was not developed either due to a lack of demand or entity prepared to create those spaces. Key goals were to seed ideas that could evolve and leverage resources through funding from other public agencies.

What Can Placemaking Accomplish for Downtown Largo?

VISUAL AND URBAN DESIGN STRATEGIES

Placemaking, along with the related branding and wayfinding strategies in Sections 4 and 5 of this report can help reinforce the design goals of the 2013 *Largo Town Center Sector Plan*

The 2013 Sector Plan establishes broad goals for the public realm, such as "walkable urbanism" and "environmentally and security conscious design." The plan also provides a general diagram of future street and open space networks, and outlines general design criteria for street types, open space types, corner buildings and parking garages. It also identifies five locations in the Downtown Largo area for special design treatment.

Placemaking can bring these sector plan recommendations to fruition in many ways.

- Placemaking elements can help create a sense of human scale and walkability, contribute to the visual cues that help people navigate through downtown, and create a feeling of activity that makes it interesting to explore Downtown Largo.

- Special features at key locations can provide a sense of arrival and orientation, help differentiate distinct locations in Downtown Largo , and create memorable landmarks for Largo.

- General design standards, such as materials for landscapes, hardscapes, streetscapes and other civic features, can create a sense of continuity and connectivity and convey Downtown Largo's identity and brand.

- Special treatments for the upper levels of parking garages can expand the existing goal to "relegate parking (surface or structured) behind buildings, masking it from the public realm."

AUTHENTICITY, IDENTITY AND MEANING

Placemaking can convey stories about Largo's past and inspire stories about it's future, tapping into authentic meaning.

Placemaking projects can explore a variety of themes specific to Largo:

- Historical and cultural narratives
- Ecological and watershed characteristics
- Economic factors such as health care, global education, government and professional sports

Public art installation, Upper Marlboro, MD
Credit: M-NCPPC

Maggie L. Walker Memorial Plaza. Richmond VA; 2021
Source: wikicommons; WomenArtistUpdates

While Downtown Largo is re-creating itself, placemaking can introduce new narratives through events, traditions or places shaped by the community to meet its current and future needs.

PLACE ACTIVATION

Placemaking can breathe life into Downtown Largo's open spaces.

Place activation projects encourage people to experiment with public spaces to test ideas for locations and uses of public space. These projects demonstrate how underused spaces can be repurposed as public amenities. Community networks can evolve to create and sustain programming in these areas. These projects can be flexible and temporary, using a combination of events, ongoing programming, and temporary physical interventions, before investing capital improvements in these spaces.

ECONOMIC, ECOLOGICAL, SOCIAL CHANGE

Placemaking can increase people's involvement in Downtown Largo's future.

Downtown Largo is experiencing significant change. Placemaking projects can strengthen the community's voice by helping them envision options for the future. In this context, placemaking activities can focus on issues of environmental sustainability, community health, cultural diversity, and social change. They also help develop transportation alternatives.

COMMUNITY NETWORKING AND RESILIENCY

Placemaking can help build Downtown Largo's social capital and community capacity.

While placemaking initiatives are often led by public agencies or non-profits, their success often relies on harnessing broader community resources such as grassroots organizations, major local institutions, and the business sector.

There are strong entities in Downtown Largo leading the public, private, civic, institutional, and business sectors. Placemaking projects strengthen their ability to address collaboratively the opportunities and challenges in the area.

Kids learning to ride at pop-up bike station during San Antonio's Siclovia event

Mural painting on the canal
Richmond, VA

Asheville urban trail sites,
Asheville, NC

Placemaking Opportunities: Places

Placemaking begins with places.

It doesn't matter whether they exist already, are envisioned in a plan, or are simply imagined.

Downtown Largo offers a broad canvas for placemaking invention including the beautifully designed Town Center Park, underused Metro station plaza, unimproved stream corridors and wetlands, extra-wide streets, expansive parking lots and structures, and undeveloped properties. This map shows a range of places with opportunities to repurpose spaces with formal and informal activities.

Parking Areas are characteristics of Largo's suburban design. Temporary or interim placemaking can demonstrate new uses for these underused spaces.

Open Spaces include vacant lots waiting to be developed, or open areas around buildings. Pop-up activities and interim improvements can put these assets to community use by activating them until they are developed.

Parks in this context refer to formal parks operated by M-NCPPC . Pop-up activities and long-term improvements might increase community use and improve the environmental benefits of these spaces**.**

PARKING AREAS / POP-UP ACTIVITIES / INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS

Outdoor Movies	Food Trucks	Community Festivals	Wildflowers	Habitat	WiFi

OPEN SPACES / POP-UP ACTIVITIES / INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS

Wellness	Games	Outdoor Movies	Picnic	Play	Sports	Dog Park	WiFi

PARKS / POP-UP ACTIVITIES / LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

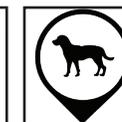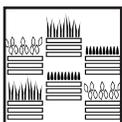|					
Wellness	Games	Outdoor Movies	Picnic	Play	Sports	Dog Park

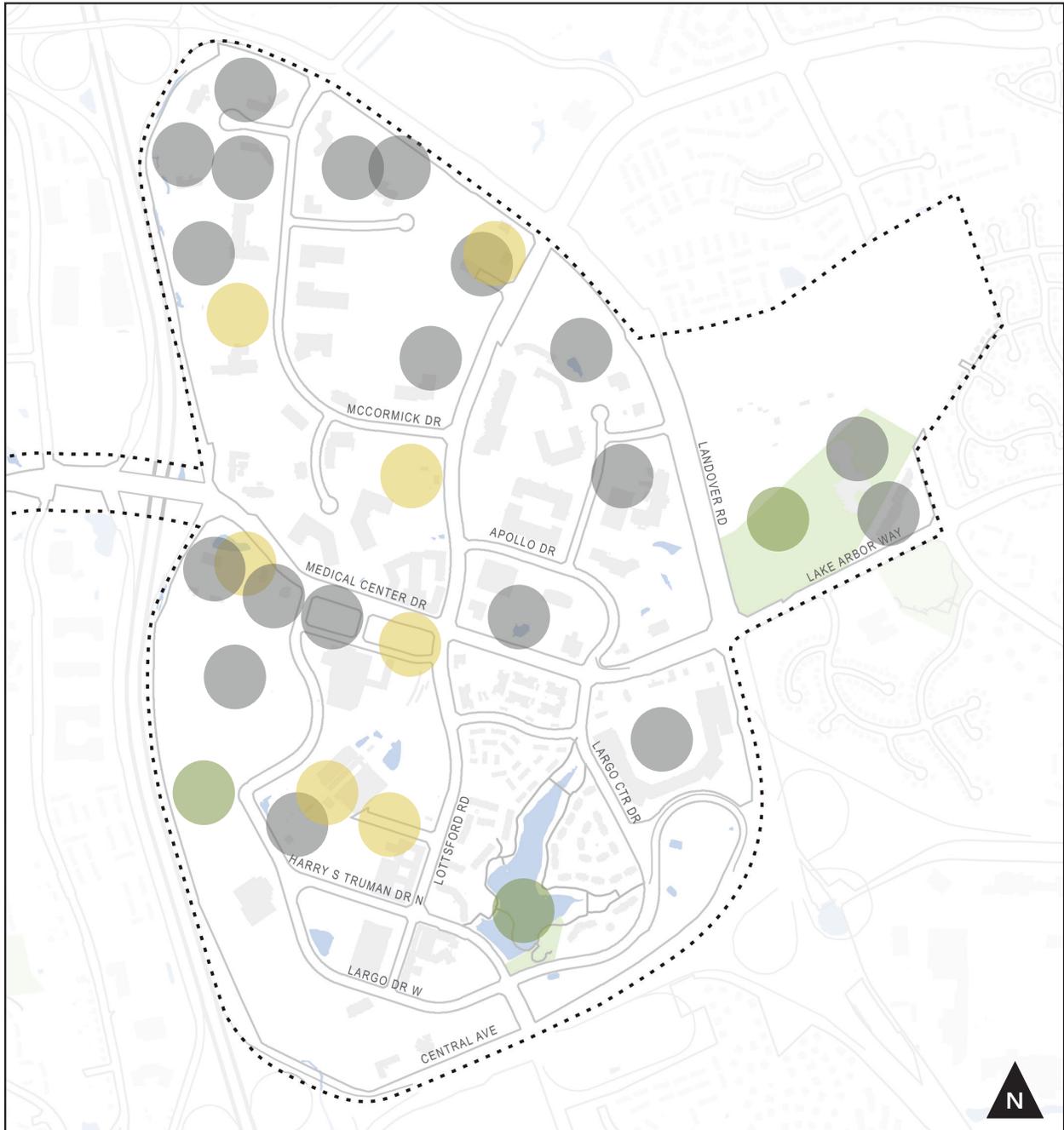|				
Community Garden	Team Sports	Wildflowers	Habitat	WiFi

Potential "places" in Downtown Largo (detail, excluding FedEx Field, Morgan Boulevard area)

Placemaking Opportunities: Corridors

Placemaking connects places.

Placemaking connects people, places, and activities in ways that help communities achieve a healthy, sustainable, and resilient future.

The mixed-used, vibrant community envisioned in Downtown Largo will depend on connectivity between its major hubs (retail, civic, institutional) and its residential areas, as well as connections to resources beyond the study area. These corridors will ultimately include boulevards, streets, trails, and greenways.

Multi-Use Paths are part of the County's broader network of paths used for biking, jogging, walking and similar types of recreation. They also include localized feeder paths that connect from the County network to destinations in Downtown Largo.

Pedestrian Corridors are the main routes the pedestrians would take to get between Largo's major destinations and activity areas.

Vehicular Corridors are the main arterial routes within Downtown Largo, serving as main through routes that connect local streets to state highways.
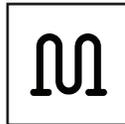
MULTI-USE PATHS

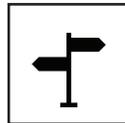| Wayfinding	Bike Repair Station	Bike Rack	Wildflowers	Wellness

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS

Low Cost Landscaping	Public Art	Wayfinding	Restrooms

VEHICULAR CORRIDORS

Banner	Wildflowers	Traffic Calming	Streetscaping	Wayfinding	Bus Shelter
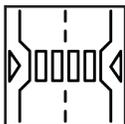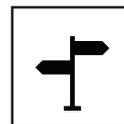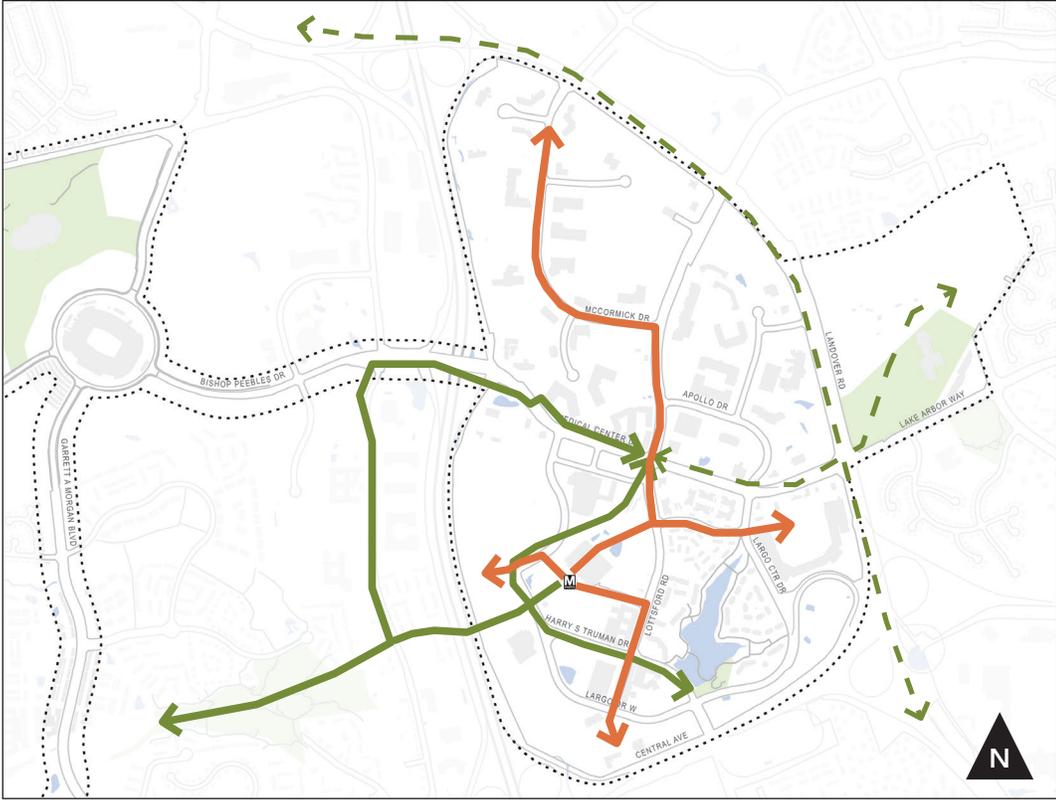
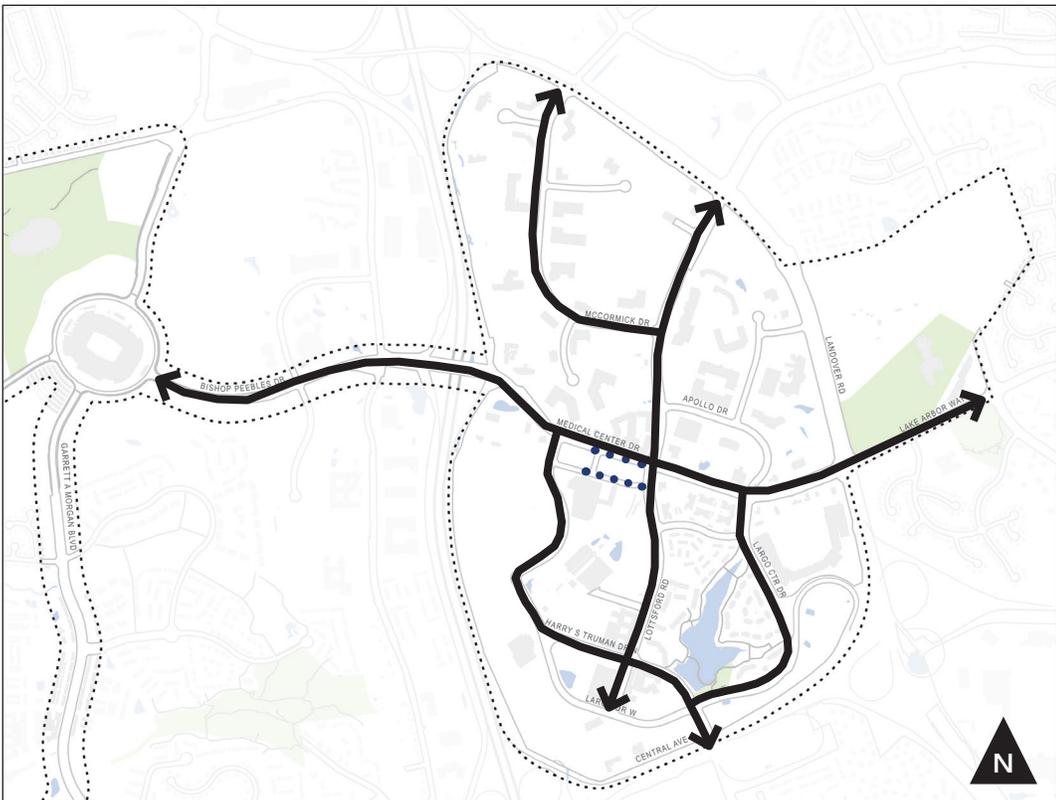## MULTI-USE CORRIDORS

— Central Ave Connector Trail

- - - Downtown Largo Feeder Routes
Connections to Town Center Park,
Lake Arbor Park

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDORS

— County Government Center
Medical Center
Town Center Shopping
Hotel District

— Game-Day Pop-Up Promenade

VEHICULAR CORRIDORS

— Internal Arterials

•••• Potential Circulator Route

Placemaking Opportunities: Moments

Placemaking involves unique experiences that set one place apart from another.

This aspect of placemaking can include an architectural or landscape detail, a piece of public artwork, a historical remnant, a directional marker, or something that signals changes to come. Visual features such as these can help create an ongoing series of moments that makes a place interesting and meaningful and conveys the sense that people care about the place.

Gateways or thresholds can signal entry into Downtown Largo and orientation points at key arterial intersections and transportation hub arrival points. They can also highlight utilitarian features such as the upper-level facades of parking garages or a signature pedestrian bridge across the Beltway.

LANDMARK FEATURES

These are points of arrival in the major activity areas in Largo, such as the Metro Plaza, Town Center Shopping Center, and the proposed Carrillon and amphitheater projects. These points of arrival should be marked by special features, such as public art.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

These are key locations within downtown Largo where new buildings should have architectural design and embellishments that addresses the intersection they face.
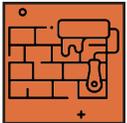
GARAGE FACADE ART PROJECTS

These are locations of parking garages that currently have facades that face the public. These facades should be retrofitted with design or artistic features.
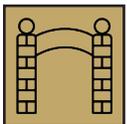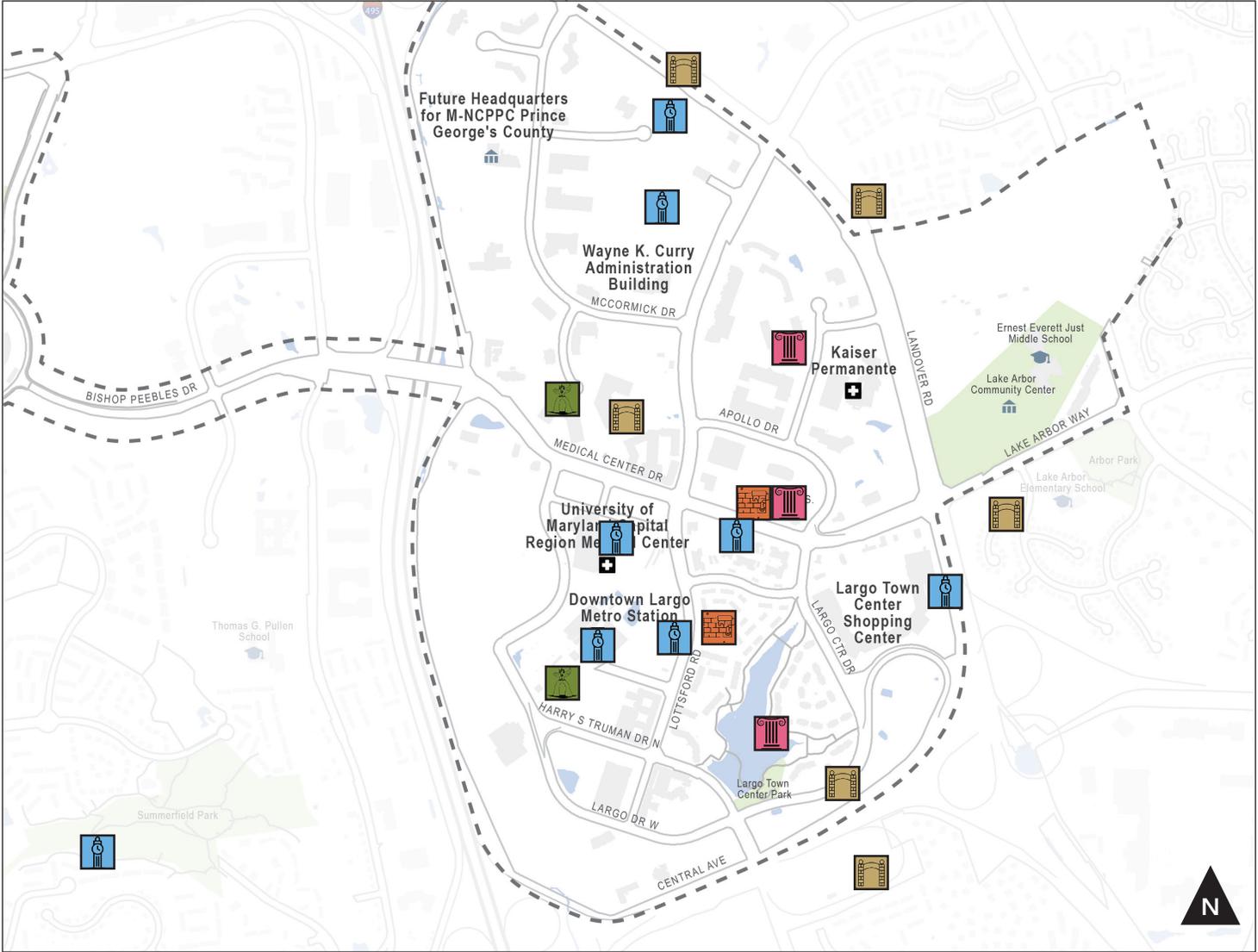
GATEWAY FEATURES

These are key thresholds into and out of downtown Largo, that should be marked by unique design features—wayfinding elements, public art, temporary installations.

PUBLIC ART FEATURES

These indicate special locations, such as Beltway bridges, for public art features. Other opportunities identified as "moments" could also be public art features.

Future Headquarters
for M-NCPPC Prince
George's County

Wayne K. Curry
Administration
Building

MCCORMICK DR

Kaiser
Permanente

Ernest Everett Just
Middle School

BISHOP PEEBLES DR

Lake Arbor
Community Center

APOLLO DR

MEDICAL CENTER DR

LAKE ARBOR WAY

Arbor Park

Lake Arbor
Elementary School

University of
Maryland Capital
Region Medical Center

Downtown Largo
Metro Station

Thomas G. Pullen
School

Largo Town
Center
Shopping
Center

HARRY S TRUMAN DR N

LOTTSFORD RD

LARGO CTR DR

Largo Town
Center Park

LANDOVER RD

Summerfield Park

LARGO DR W

CENTRAL AVE

N

Case Study: Game-Day Pop-Up Promenade

GAME DAYS

The days when FedEx Field hosts a Washington Commanders game or the Prince George's Classic, are special in Downtown Largo. The surrounding area could better capitalize on this resource if more people used the Largo Metrorail station to access the stadium and if the game-day experience included the walk between the station and the stadium

A **game-day pop-up promenade** would draw on numerous traditions and precedents to create a whole new placemaking experience in Downtown Largo. The promenade could combine the excitement of a carnival, the camaraderie of tailgating, the casualness of a street fair, and the destination feeling of urban stadiums and arenas. The experience would be an event for game attendees and for anyone else wanting to join in the game-day festivities.

The game-day pop-up promenade would require significant coordination and collaboration between the sports, retail, and restaurant entities along the route. The pop-up promenade could begin as a prototype executed once or twice in the same season. The prototyped versions could be used to test different activities and determine how logistics could be managed before becoming an ongoing tradition.

Special game-day **Wayfinding Features**, such as gateway markers and directional signage, will identify the route of the pop-up promenade and its features. Wayfinding could be supplemented by web- or app-based resources as well.

Corridor Features will help define the route of the promenade for pedestrians. These would include day-of event banners, street closures through the Carillon area, and vinyl street markers.

Pop-Up Activities will occur along the way, particularly in the "gateway" and "midway" points along the route (e.g., Carillon). These would include games, food, souvenirs, entertainment, and sports-related video feeds.

Visitor Services such as parking, Wi-Fi, and restrooms provide amenities for people visiting.

The public spaces and shopping areas along the promenade route could be activated with planned and impromptu activities. The route could be marked with bright banners and fabric installations. Along the way, there could be eating areas (from outdoor restaurants to food truck rodeos), play areas (carnival rides, inflatable play areas), performance spaces (stages), spin-off events (Largo bike races), and yes, places to park and tailgate.
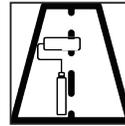
WAYFINDING FEATURES

Route Markers
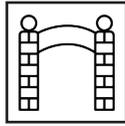
Gateways

CORRIDOR FEATURES

Banners

No Parking Zones

Street Painting

VISITOR SERVICES

Free WiFi

Restrooms

Parking

GAME-DAY POP-UP ACTIVITIES

Rides

Games
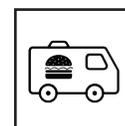
Food Trucks

Sports Screens
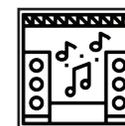
Music Stages

Souvenir Stands

FedEx Field

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building

MCCORMICK DR

MEDICAL CENTER GATEWAY

BISHOP PEEBLES DR

BELTWAY MIDWAY

MEDICAL CENTER DR

STADIUM GATEWAY

GARRETT A MORGAN BLVD

University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center

CARRILLON MIDWAY

Thomas G. Pullen School

Downtown Largo Metro Station

METRO GATEWAY

HARRY S TRUMAN DR N

LOTTSFORD

N

A Placemaking Toolkit for Largo

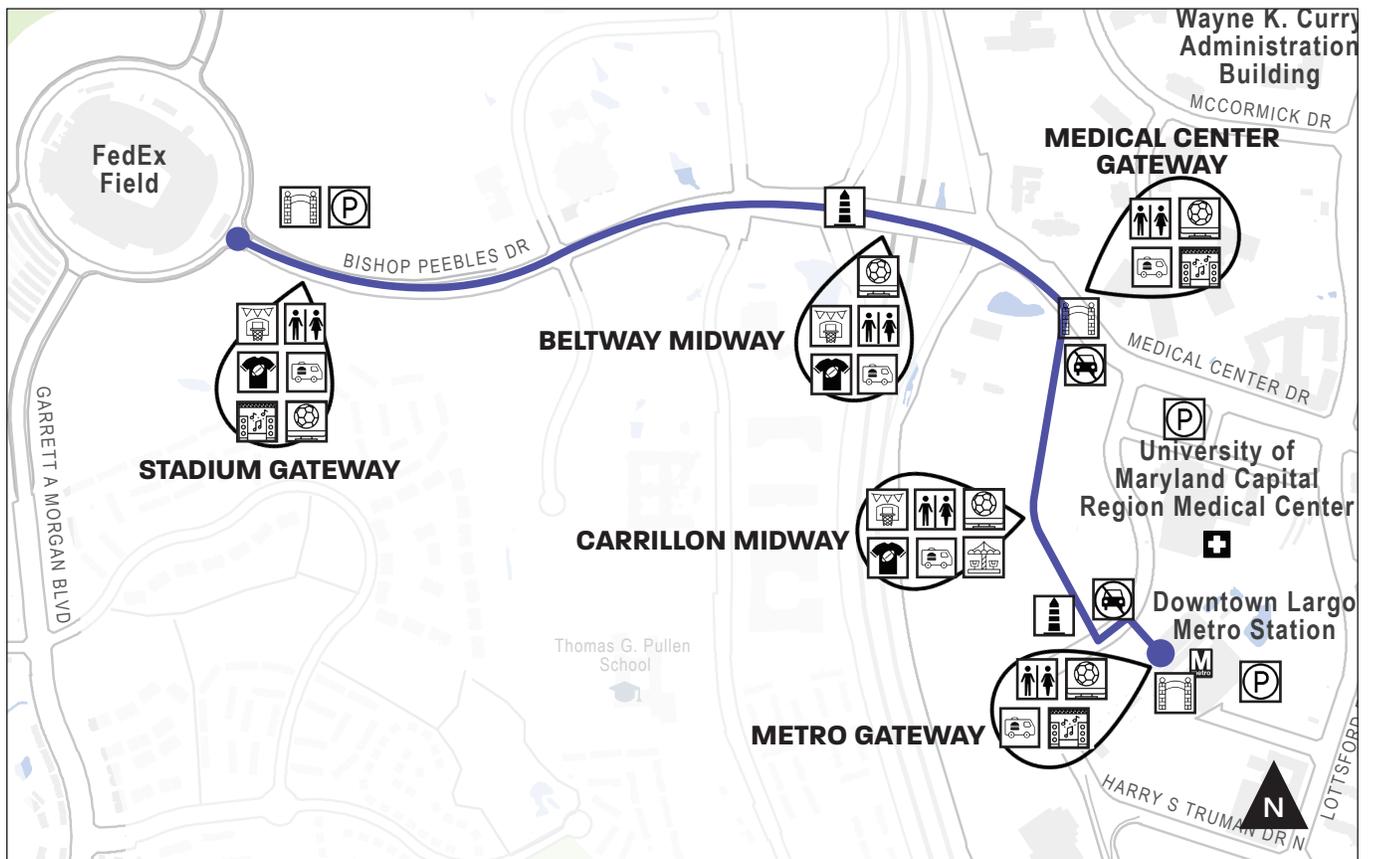This section outlines strategies and tactics for implementing placemaking in Downtown Largo. While many of these tactics will seem familiar, they build on opportunities and resources present in Downtown Largo and reflect the aspirations expressed through the community engagement process undertaken for this project.

Placemaking is opportunistic, but a clear set of strategies can improve the successful outcome of the event. This toolkit is organized around phased strategies that can be implemented in the short term or longer term as funding, capacity and capital investment grows.

Immediate/Temporary tactics can be accomplished in the short term, without much additional planning, expense, or prerequisite actions. These tactics send early signals that something new and exciting is happening. They can test ideas while being temporary, inexpensive, and experimental.

Strategic Prototype projects involve cultivating a partnership with a key entity in Downtown Largo. They are a bit more ambitious. Their goals are to test new ideas for public spaces and explore how a relationship with a placemaking partner might work.

Public Realm projects involve coordination with County construction projects, such as road infrastructure, parks and public amenities. The placemaking approach would integrate design features into the public construction process. As such, the timing of these projects may depend on when public investments are being made and would require coordination with County agencies.

Private Development projects involve coordination with private developers and/or landowners. These types of placemaking projects would be discussed with developers at the earliest stages of their development review process and would require coordination with The M-NCPPC.

Largo Town Center Park
Credit: M-NCPPC; Parks and Recreation, Cassi Hayden

Placemaking Tactics: Immediate / Temporary

Immediate Temporary Tactics

Placemaking begins by seeking opportunities to improve public spaces. It requires imagination and innovation inspired by the strategy of "lighter, quicker, cheaper." This strategy can apply to improvisational ideas, pilot programs, or permanent interventions. Largo currently has many opportunities to execute placemaking strategies.

TEMPORARY GATEWAY INSTALLATIONS

Temporary art installations can provide markers for key gateway and landmark locations, before permanent artwork or design features are added. They also can be an early signifier of Downtown Largo's new brand.

Potential partners: Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council (PGCAHC); Prince George's County Revenue Authority (PGCRA), Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

BANNER INSTALLATIONS

Banners are a common way to bring color, life and individuality to a streetscape. They also serve as conspicuous markers for important routes and areas. There are several opportunities for banner installations throughout Largo:

- Marking key roadways, such as Lottsford Road and Medical Center Drive
- Marking key paths, such as the route from the Metro station to the County office campus
- Marking key districts, such as the medical center, civic center or restaurant areas
- Marking event-based routes, such as the game-day walk from the Largo Metro station to FedEx Field.

Potential partners: PGCAHC, Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), Washington Commanders

Street banners featuring prominent Durham residents
Durham, NC

Denver's Blue Bear peering into the Convention Center
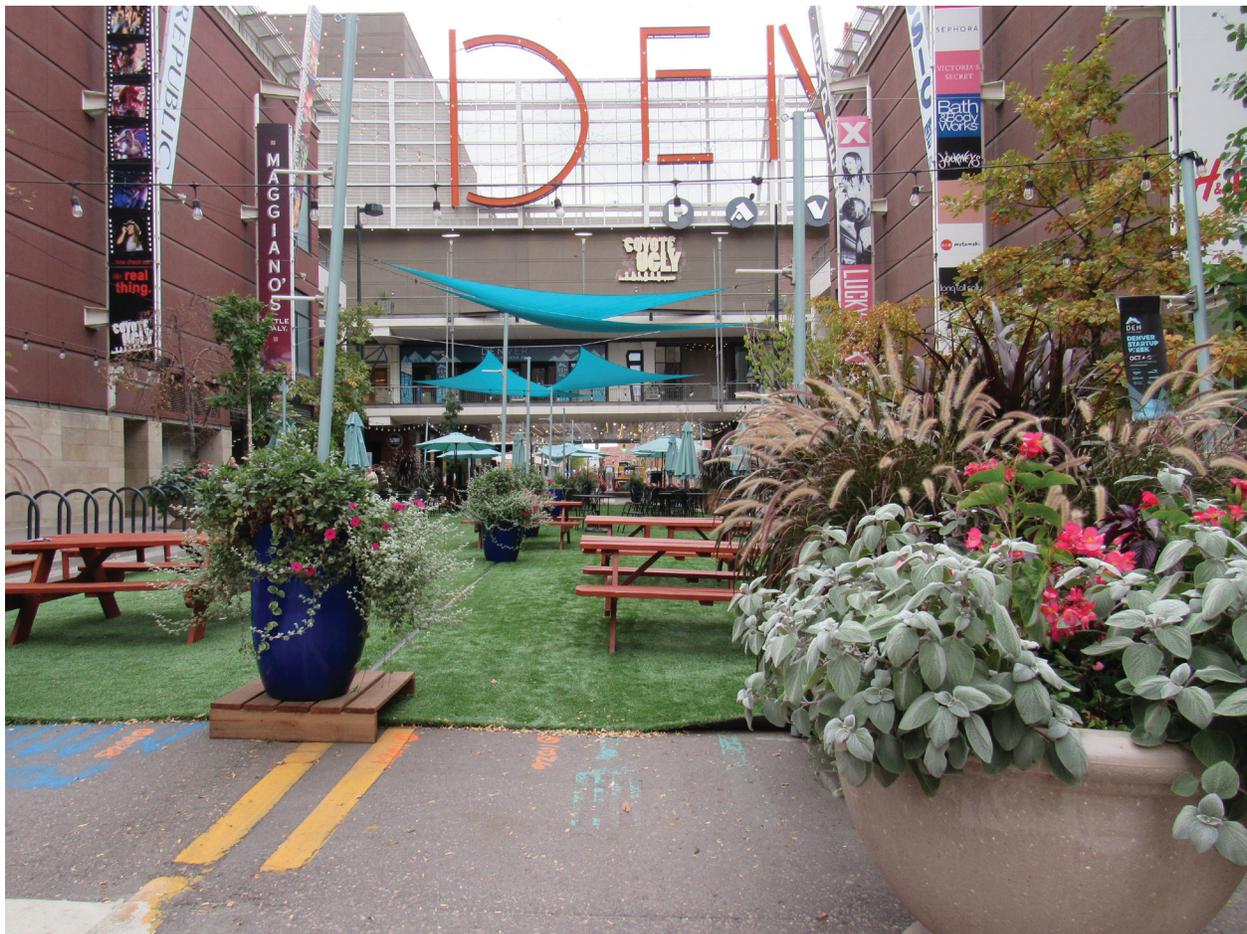Denver, CO

POP-UP PUBLIC SPACES

The Prince George's County Planning Department, County agencies, municipalities, and non-profits believe temporary place activation and pilot projects are a ways of demonstrating the potential for new public spaces and understanding how people will use them. Underutilized spaces such as parking lots, extra-wide streets, and undeveloped parcels of land can be transformed for short-term interventions. Communities can host events and entertainment, mobile food vendors, grass-roots arts and cultural activities, games, and even dog parks in these spaces. The Better Block program is one tool to test ideas in public spaces in Downtown Largo to find out what kinds of activities people are interested in and what fits best in different locations.

Potential partners: County Executive, PGCAHC, DPW&T, PGCRA

PARK(ing) Day Installation; 2018, Troy, NY
Credit: Corianne Setzer

Pop-up Park on the 16th Street Mall at Glenarm Place, Denver, CO

LIGHT TOUCH LANDSCAPING

Bursts of greenery and color in the streetscape and pedestrian realm can soften the built aspects of Largo, add visual detail and interest that changes throughout the year, and even support natural habitat and pollinator pathways. These are steps that any property owner can take without much expense by putting out planters at building entrances and street corners and planting wildflowers in undeveloped lots. Wildflowers can also be planted in medians and streetscapes, an increasingly common practice for public agencies across the country.

Potential partners: Property owners, Prince George's County Department of the Environment, DPW&T

Green infrastructure on the Low Line Trail, Richmond, VA

CONSTRUCTION MITIGATION

Construction projects can be disruptive but can provide opportunities for creative activations. Construction art can touch the street or the sky and be both visual and performative..

Potential partner: Developers, IUOE Local 99, Prince George's County Department of Permitting. Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE)

Artists painting fence wrap aroud construction site, 2022
Upper Marlboro, MD
Credit: M-NCPPC

Placemaking Tactics: Strategic Prototypes

Placemaking Tactics: Strategic Prototypes

In Downtown Largo, placemaking is not only about improving visual appearance and activating the public realm but also about encouraging the civic, government, commercial and institutional partners to embrace and invest in placemaking. These prototype project ideas describe some of the available opportunities.

ACTIVATE METRO PLAZA

The plaza at the Largo Metro station is a major entry point into Downtown Largo. Strategic actions that could have an outsized impact on this space include consistent maintenance of the plaza, establishing a wayfinding hub, enhancing the garage facade with a mural or other artwork, and providing regular pop-up programming. This space will play a key role in other projects, such as the Game Day Pop-Up Promenade. *Potential partners: WMATA, PGCAHC*

FREE WI-FI ACCESS

Internet access is a ubiquitous need in public spaces. Free Wi-Fi access is an amenity that encourages people to come to a public space and stay there and can make people feel welcome regardless of their affiliation with organizations that provide private Wi-Fi services. Build a public Wi-Fi network, starting with places where you would like people to gather, and expand it outwards from there. *Potential partners: Cellular and cable carriers, EDC*

ARTFUL PLACES

Temporary arts events and performances require mobile infrastructure such as stages, sound, seating, and storage. Some of this infrastructure can be creatively designed to add to the excitement and send signals that something interesting is happening. Consider creating an artist-designed mobile bandshell, stage and screen; decorate the vehicles that drive this equipment around with playful designs and markings. *Potential partners: PGCAHC, M-NCPPC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR)*

Exercise as part of a community open streets event Milwaukee, WI

High school band plays for *Bike to Work Day* participants, West Street, Falls Church, VA

Audience at evening concert in downtown Cape Charles, VA

GAME-DAY "POP-UP" PROMENADE

Several times a year, the nearby football stadium hosts games and other events that attract up to 80,000 people. The expectation is that the Largo Metro station, about a mile away, will serve as a major access point for event attendees. The connection between the station and the stadium can be turned into a festive game-day procession that attracts game attendees as well as fans who would like to come together but are not going to the stadium – a linear tailgate party. The route could be lined with features such as pop-up screens, music, food options and games that could provide fun activities for all ages.
Potential partners: Carrillon, Washington Commanders

WELLNESS PROGRAMMING

Largo's brand may be built around health and wellness: an idea that could be promoted through formal and informal programming in open spaces. Programming could be promoted through partnerships among community, health and parks organizations. Promotions could include yoga, tai-chi, powerwalking, or other activities that don't require special equipment. Activities could be rotated among different locations in Largo, from parks to pop-up spaces.
Potential Partners: University of Maryland Health System, DPR , Homeowner's Associations (HOA)

POP UP PLAYTIME

Largo's potential brand of health and wellness could also be expanded to include the idea of play as part of a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages. Pop-up play areas can support people's well-being and create intergenerational social gathering opportunities. Specific places can be designated for play and low-cost equipment for staging outdoor games (cornhole, croquet, ping pong, chess).
 Potential Partners: University of Maryland Health System, DPR, HOA

ROAD DIETS

Transportation agencies are increasingly using pilots or temporary installations to test out new road configurations before building them permanently. This gives the community a chance to be involved in the final design decisions, As Largo streets are changed to incorporate Complete Streets designs, road diets and traffic calming, it is possible to implement short-term temporary test Complete Streets.
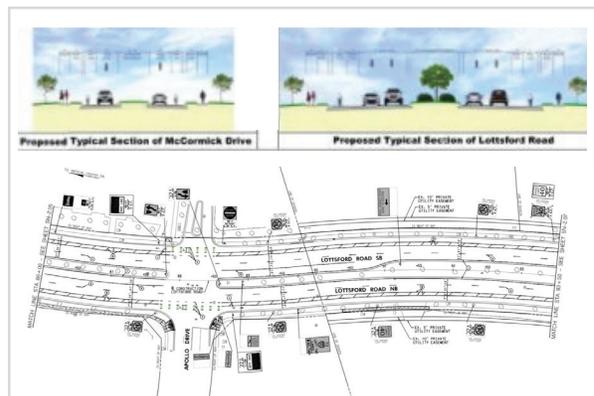*Potential Partner: PGCAHC, DPW&T. Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT)*

Westlake Park, public space downtown Seatttle, WA

Shared Street demonstration project
Montgomery County, MD. MCDOT

Pop-up event to test street design changes
Milwaukee, WI

Road diet proposed for Lottsford Road in Downtown Largo

Placemaking event, Burtonsville, MD
Hosted by Montgomery County Planning Department and Better Block Foundation

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND LANDSCAPES

The ordinary suburban landscapes that characterize Downtown Largo can be redesigned using sustainability principles to improve environmental systems such as habitat, stormwater management, and urban heat islands. Parking lots, stream corridors, mowed lawns, and similar spaces can be retrofitted to demonstrate green infrastructure practices and contribute to Largo's environmental resiliency and beauty.

*Potential Partners: DPR, DPW&T, MDOT, Environmental organizations, large landowners*

GARAGE FAÇADE ENHANCEMENTS

As Downtown Largo continues to evolve and grow, large parking structures will become more conspicuous. Largo's sector plan emphasizes that garages should have ground-level features that strengthen the streetscape. However, there is less guidance for upper-level facades and side walls, which currently dominate many viewscapes in Largo. These walls should also be a priority for architectural facades, screens, and art features.

Potential Partners: PGCRA, PGCAHC, WMATA, Developers

19th Street Rain Gardens, Washington, DC

Decorated beehives in downtown Richmond, VA
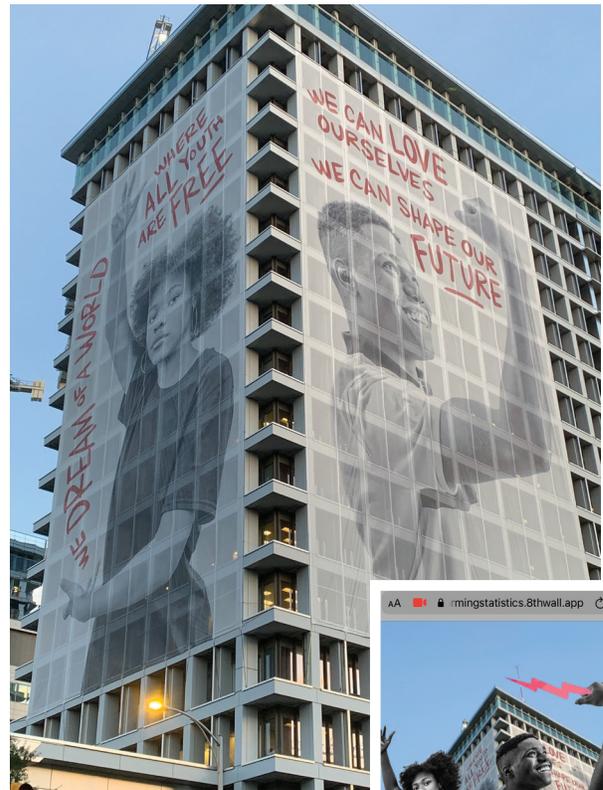
City Hall building wrap comes to life with mobile phone app Richmond, VA
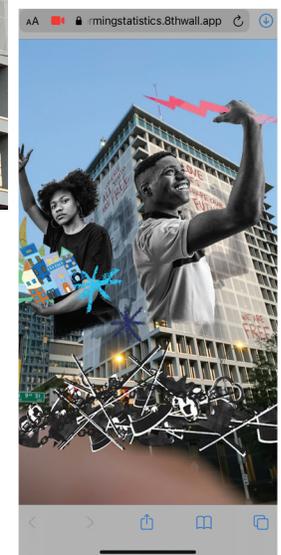
In-app animation of building wrap

Placemaking Tactics: Public Realm

Civic Infrastructure

Consistent, quality public realm design is an essential foundation for a long-term placemaking framework. Public streets, sidewalks, open spaces, and multi-model transportation infrastructure can convey a sense of care and catalyze private investment. Downtown Largo's civic infrastructure can take advantage of the opportunity for melding greenery and urbanism and support its identity as a place where life, health, and wellness come together.

STREETSCAPE AND OPEN SPACE FEATURES

Downtown Largo's streets and urban spaces can be gracious transitions between the area's lush green landscape and its urban character. A consistent palette of trees, landscaping, and civic features helps establish a sense of public purpose, provide shade, and add ever-changing color. The materials, colors and design elements found in the civic features in Town Center Park, such as sitting areas, paths, and pavilions, provide a cohesive visual language that successfully bridges the natural and urban environments. These elements can extended into the design of streetscapes, new public spaces, and other civic features elsewhere in Downtown Largo.
Potential partners: DPW&T, The M-NCPPC

TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE

Downtown Largo is currently served by Metrorail and Metrobus lines. In the future, a downtown circulator could be organized to transport people between Metro and Downtown Largo's various destination centers. Local transit stops and vehicles will have to stand out in the landscape so that people are encouraged to access the network. Eye-catching artistic features spark interest, promote ridership and inform users about their transit options.
Potential partners: DPW&T, TheBus

Streetscape on Largo Center Drive, Downtown Largo

Largo Town Center Park

Bus Shelter, Providence, RI

MULTI-USE TRAIL INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the goals of Downtown Largo is to be more bike and pedestrian friendly. Largo will be a key destination on the Central Avenue Connector Trail, a major trail (or "spine" facility) within a comprehensive countywide trail network. This network should include wayfinding features that make it easier for everyone to get around and features that support bicycle use, such as bike racks and bike repair stations.
Potential partners: PGCRA, EDC, DPW&T, M-NCPPC

WAYFINDING FEATURES

A comprehensive wayfinding system is a key component of civic infrastructure. While Largo's wayfinding system will have its own hierarchy of signs, many of the other long-term civic infrastructure investments recommended here will reinforce people's understanding of street hierarchies, common routes and key destinations.
Potential partners: PGCRA, EDC, DPW&T

BRIDGE ENHANCEMENTS

There are several proposals to improve pedestrian and bicycle connections over the Beltway. One proposal is widening the Medical Center Drive bridge to improve the pedestrian environment. Another proposal is creating a new bridge to carry the Central Avenue Connector Trail from the Morgan Boulevard Metro station area to the Downtown Largo Metro station area. Both bridge projects are opportunities to create innovative, iconic design features that can make an impression on Beltway drivers and people using the new bridges.
Potential partners: DPW&T, MDOT

The planned Central Avenue Connector Trail serves Downtown Largo

Rendering of Largo wayfinding signs

Relief sculptures on trail bridge in Northampton, MA

Placemaking Tactics: Private Development

Private Development

Architectural features and public art strategically integrated into new development can support placemaking goals. They can relate to the visual legibility and identity of Downtown Largo. These ideas can build on the design guidelines in the sector plan and be integrated into the land development process. Key opportunities to consider include the following strategies.

GATEWAY FEATURES

In the future, Downtown Largo may evolve with distinct neighborhoods and areas, such as a retail/entertainment district, a medical district, a civic district, and a residential district. Developers of properties near thresholds into these areas should be encouraged to include gateway elements.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Some of the area's most important visual moments and wayfinding reference points are at the intersections of major arterial streets (such as Lottsford Road, Harry S. Truman Drive and Medical Center Drive). The buildings at the intersections of these streets should incorporate architectural, urban design features and public art that give those intersections a unique identity and memorable quality.

PUBLIC ART LANDMARKS

Each of Downtown Largo's distinct areas will have an identity of its own. In addition to gateways that mark the threshold into a district, each district should have a landmark design feature, such as public art, that conveys a sense of arrival and underscores the identity of that district. This could be accomplished by strategically creating a landmark that serves as a centering feature for each district located in a public space or along a view corridor.

PEDESTRIAN STREETSCAPES

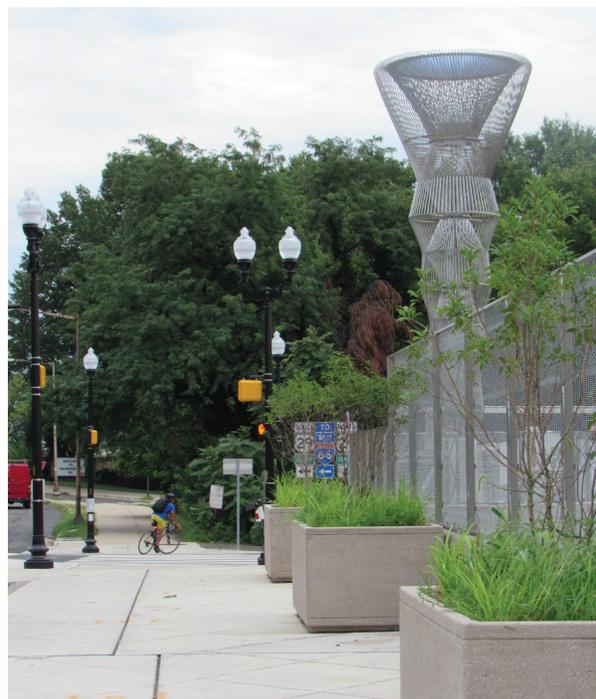Ground-level design features can have an outsized impact on people's experience of an area. Developers can incorporate artist-designed features such as canopies, railings, seating, and walls to help distinguish their properties and create interesting walking experiences.

Largo Station, Downtown Largo, MD

Big Flower Wind Vane, Largo, MD
Credit: M-NCPPC

Sculpture and gateway feature, Curtis Trail, Rosslyn, VA

How Does Placemaking Happen?

At its best, placemaking is inspired from the ground up, and driven by the unique creative resources found in a community. These conditions lead to authentic placemaking, embraced by the community, and become a building block for future accomplishments.

Placemaking is also strategic. Successful interventions are deliberate and thoughtfully organized to address the challenges and embrace opportunities in a community. They engage stakeholders who are vested in the future of a place. Their success helps attract additional resources to placemaking projects and helps build a community's capacity and resiliency. The most successful placemaking initiatives have several common characteristics:

- Strong, visionary leadership
- Creative and thoughtful
- Plays to the strengths of the community
- A sustainable framework of support

A placemaking strategy is currently in place for the Largo project under the direction of M-NCPPC.   The organization will continue its role while the community develops its own leadership.

These are the key roles that M-NCPPC can play:

CONVENE, CONNECT AND CATALYZE

The first step should be to continue the process of bringing organizational and community stakeholders together in Largo to catalyze action. Using this study, M-NCPPC can continue to justify the value of placemaking in Downtown Largo. It can also identify opportunities for future projects and cultivate leadership for placemaking activities.

PROTOTYPE, PROMOTE

M-NCPPC's second step should be to support demonstration projects, such as those outlined in the "temporary" and "prototype" section of this study, in collaboration with other county agencies and non-profit organizations. Two possible demonstration projects have been identified – a pop-up public space in the County Government center and temporary public art projects funded by the Prince George's County Arts and Humanities Council through its "Destination Prince George's" initiative

M-NCPPC can work with the sponsors of demonstration projects to help expand partnerships (community, business, government and creative); to identify solutions to common challenges, such as funding, permissions and promotion; to obtain support from public agencies and officials; and promote public engagement and participation. M-NCPPC's endorsement of projects as part of its placemaking initiative should help address these challenges.

EVALUATE

M-NCPPC can lead the evaluation of demonstration projects to inform future projects, public realm policies, and plans. It can also lead in the collection and analysis of evaluation data. Evaluation considerations could include:

- Factors that helped or hindered implementation (funding, permissions, promotion, project leadership, access to volunteers.)
- Level of community involvement
- Measure impact on future placemaking, planning or project development.

ADVOCATE

As demonstration projects are completed and evaluated, it will become clearer which policy actions could support further placemaking projects in Downtown Largo. These could include:

- County funding for future placemaking projects or programs
- Strengthened development guidelines or conditions that would encourage developers to include placemaking features in their projects (architectural elements, public art, or creative spaces)
- Strengthened design standards for the public realm in Largo, especially streets, boulevards, multi-use trails, and parks
- Support for non-governmental organizations to coordinate placemaking in Largo in the future
- Demonstrate how the community was involved with the project
- What impact might the project have on future placemaking, planning or project development

NOW: Temporary

» Temporary art installations to provide early markers for long-term placemaking goals, such as gateway and landmark locations

» Banners and visual art along key corridors

» Pop-up public space activities such as food events, grass-roots art projects, pack-and-play games, bike rides, etc.

» Light Touch Landscaping

» Construction Art Projects

NEXT: Prototype Projects

» Activate Metro Plaza

» Wi-Fi Wherever

» Artful Places

» Game-day "pop-up" promenade

» Wellness Programming

» Pop-Up Playtime

» Road Diets

» Construction Projects

» Biophilic Landscapes

» Garage Facade Enhancements

Credit: M-NCPPC

WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT:
Civic Infrastructure

- » Streetscape and Open Space Features
- » Transit infrastructure
- » Multi-Use Trail Infrastructure
- » Wayfinding Features
- » Bridge Enhancements

WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT:
Private Development

- » Gateway Features
- » Architectural Features
- » Public Art Landmarks
- » Pedestrian Streetscapes

Section 4

Branding

Branding Goals

WHAT DOES BRANDING MEAN?

Meaning. Experience. Vision Values.

Branding is often described as a value proposition: What does a place offer to residents, businesses, and workers? And in turn, how can people help strengthen those assets of a place?

While branding can be physical assets like logos, graphic design, and slogans, it can also be embedded into other approaches when designing a place. It can be integrated into urban design, landscape architecture, historic preservation, public art, and events and activities. These also fall under the umbrella of placemaking.

When branding a place like Downtown Largo, the goal is to express the intangible aspects of the place people know to be true, and communicate a vision for a place that people can build a future around.

WHAT CAN BRANDING ACCOMPLISH FOR LARGO?

Branding can have many specific goals, including supporting an infrastructure system like transit or wayfinding, supporting economic development activities, and differentiating a place from others as a destination for visitors.

During the outreach and engagement process, key stakeholders discussed numerous goals for branding the study area of Downtown Largo. Their conversations coalesced around the idea that the brand should be the foundation of an effective, qualitative connection for people who live, work, and do business in Downtown Largo.

RTD light rail vehicle with a promotional wrap, Denver, CO

Bus wrap with safety message, Des Moines, IA
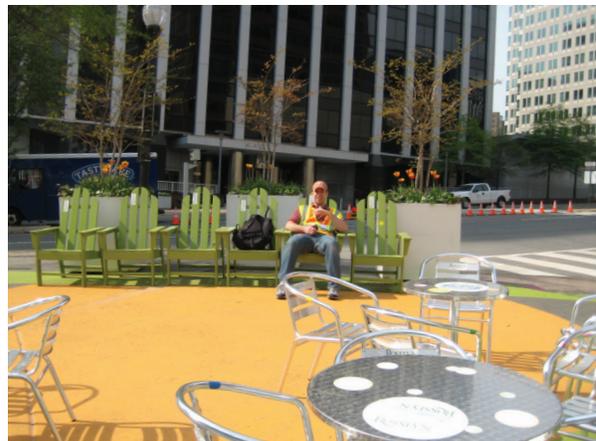
Branded street furniture in Rosslyn, VA

Branding for Downtown Largo
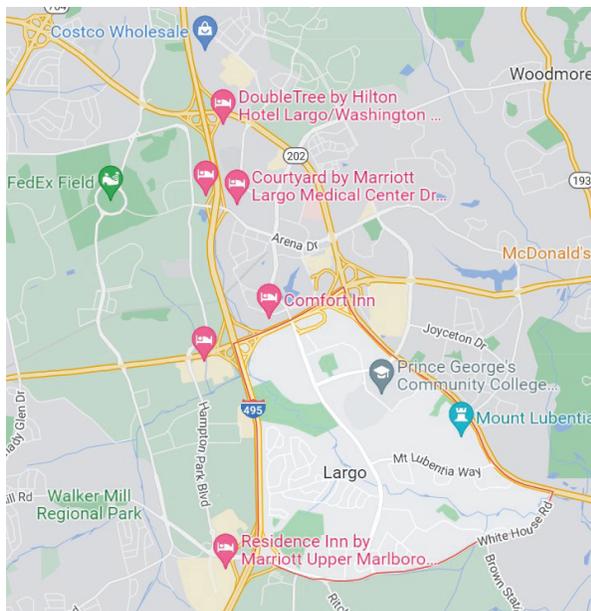
CHALLENGES FOR BRANDING DOWNTOWN LARGO

There are several significant challenges in establishing a recognizable and authentic brand for Downtown Largo. As mentioned in the introduction, there are multiple official names already associated with the area.

Largo Town Center. This was the name of the metro Station until September 2022 and has been used for prior planning documents, but it is also the name of one specific shopping center in the area.

Largo. This is how many local people refer to the area, but technically Largo is a Census Designated Place stretching two miles south of MD 214 between I-495 and MD 202, outside the study area.

Upper Marlboro. Many of the local mailing addresses in the study area are Upper Marlboro, although the Town of that name is some 10 miles away. The Post Office in the study area uses an Upper Marlboro zip code.

Downtown Largo. This name reflects the establishment of this area as one of the County's downtowns.

Stakeholder and public input into the process revealed the challenges associated with the area being unincorporated: there is no directly elected local body with oversight responsibility for the development of the area. In addition, a significant number of people refer to the area in the context of landmarks such as the Capital Center and Boulevard at Cap Center that no longer exist.

In the absence of a coherent existing brand, development of the area has resulted in a confusing array of names for buildings, developments, and key landmarks in the community.

Google map search for "Largo" identifies an area outside the study area

Signs displaying the Largo Town Center name throughout Downtown Largo

WHAT SHOULD BE DOWNTOWN LARGO'S BRAND?

The development of this strategy did not include the creation and testing of a specific brand identity for the study area. However, some powerful themes emerged about Downtown Largo that a more formal and extensive branding exercise should consider. These include:

- The designation of Largo as a major health sciences and wellness center for Prince George's County and the development of the University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center
- Conversations during a community workshop that focused on the idea of living in and loving Largo
- Responses from a community survey indicated people value walking and biking in Downtown Largo for recreational and fitness purposes
- The centrality of Town Center Park and Watkins Park as community spaces
- The idea that Downtown Largo is a healthy, holistic place to be

POTENTIAL BRAND COMPONENTS

Slogan or catchphrase

An authentic brand is captured in a slogan or phrase that immediately links an idea or concept to the place. For example, the community-generated concept that Largo is a place where people love living could be captured in a phrase such as Living Largo.

Building on this idea, the phrase Living Largo could be the core of a slogan with a dual meaning: Downtown Largo is a living place, and the people there are living a Largo lifestyle. This phrase could be developed further with variants that could be used in different circumstances to expand on the idea of Living Largo. Living Loving Largo captures both elements and suggests that people love living in Largo for everything it has to offer.

This pattern of alliteration would allow for inventive reuse of the brand by various entities as additional concepts and ideas emerge. Each successive variant would strengthen the connection with the brand while connecting its meaning to specific needs of a particular location, campaign, or activity related to the brand.

Color Palette

In addition to the slogan or catchphrase, a detailed branding initiative will recommend a strong, identifiable color palette to be used for all Downtown Largo branding.

Continuing with the example of Living Largo, the brand might be built around a color palette that conveys a healthy, livable lifestyle. As an example, M-NCPPC has a secondary color palette for graphics and publications that is composed of natural tones that reflect the intersection of nature and urban life. Using colors from the palette would effectively reinforce the Living Largo brand. In addition, the selection of a color palette such as this would avoid reference to the color palettes of the commercial, institutional, and sports entities in Downtown Largo and the immediate vicinity.

Living Largo
Living Loving Largo
Living Thriving Largo
Living Laughing Largo
Living Larger Largo

BRANDING CASE STUDIES
River Arts District, Asheville, NC

The River Arts District sits between Downtown Asheville, NC, and the French Broad River. The district is an extensive collection of renovated warehouses and industrial sites now housing a thriving arts community. In addition to artist studios, the area has a strong visual brand and wayfinding system that connects the different buildings and sites, making it easy for visitors and residents to navigate.

Clockwise from top left: Map showing color-coded sub-districts, main attractions; Wayfinding with color-coding to art studio district; Public art incorporating the branding creates a highly-visible gateway; Wayfinding and streetscape elements encourage walking, and biking; Bridge pillar used as a billboard for trail updates, map; Branded wayfinding helps parking; River Arts District, Asheville, NC. Visual Case Study

Tysons, VA

For long-time residents of the Washington DC metropolitan area, Tysons Corner is synonymous with a regional shopping center and bad traffic. It was the quintessential 1980's-era edge city, a rapidly growing suburban retail and office center located just outside the Capital Beltway.
In the intervening decades, the area has undergone a transformation. The area is now served by four Silver Line Metro stations. There is a rapidly increasing residential population and a commitment to developing a more walkable, bike-friendly community that supports and compliments improved transit service.

In 2021, the Tysons Partnership announced the adoption of a new brand for Tysons, complete with a detailed brand manual[1] that describes the philosophy behind the new name and guidelines for using the new name.

Tysons Partnership Brand Guidelines, 1.0

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1   Tysons Partnership Tysons-Brand-Guide_v1.0.pdf

Branding Next Steps

M-NCPPC should work with the County to engage a branding firm to develop a more definitive logo or graphic representation of a concept that builds on the initial Living Largo idea.

Credit: M-NCPPC

Section 5
Wayfinding

Wayfinding Best Practices

Wayfinding uses visual and sensory cues to help navigation. As such, it is influenced by many factors in the built environment, including architecture, road layout, landscapes, transportation, lighting conditions, signage, and the presence of people. The greater the complexity of the built environment, the more signage and other tools are needed to guide people on their journeys.

Downtown Largo Wayfinding Goals

Modal integration: Wayfinding information should help connect people walking and biking to transit services and key destinations. It should also help pedestrians and drivers navigate busy intersections safely and efficiently.

Local distinctiveness: Development of a single wayfinding standard will mean directional information is provided in a consistent manner, while allowing for customized local content.

Design for all: Wayfinding should indicate clearly the availability of accessible, comfortable, and safe walking routes for people of all ages and abilities. The wayfinding system should reflect principles of inclusive design so that it is fully accessible.

Systemization: Design standards for the wayfinding system should be built around simple, modular planning and design elements so that individual signs within the system can be updated as efficiently as possible. The wayfinding system should be supported by consistent content mapping run by the county and/or its partners to ensure system integrity, especially during periods of change.

Why Wayfinding Matters

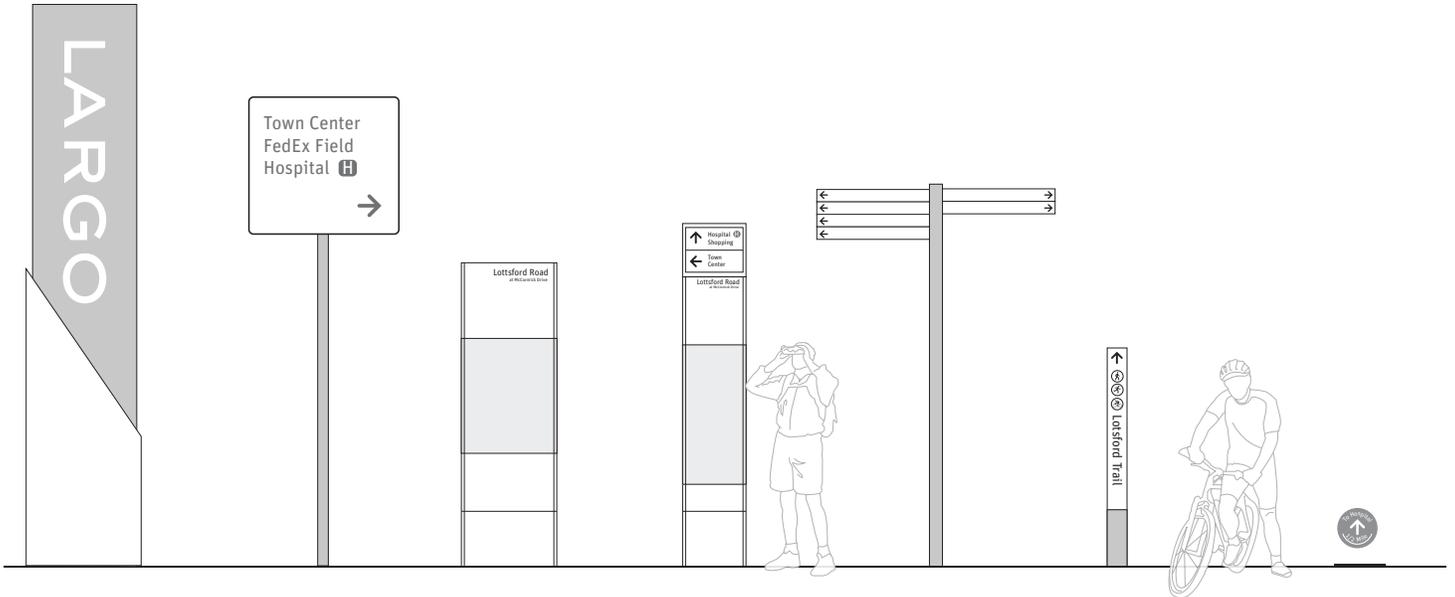Effective wayfinding enhances a person's entire journey, instilling confidence that a trip can be made safely, conveniently, and efficiently. This encourages repeat visits and strengthens the reputation of Downtown Largo as an attractive destination. The diagram below illustrates some of the wider benefits of good wayfinding.
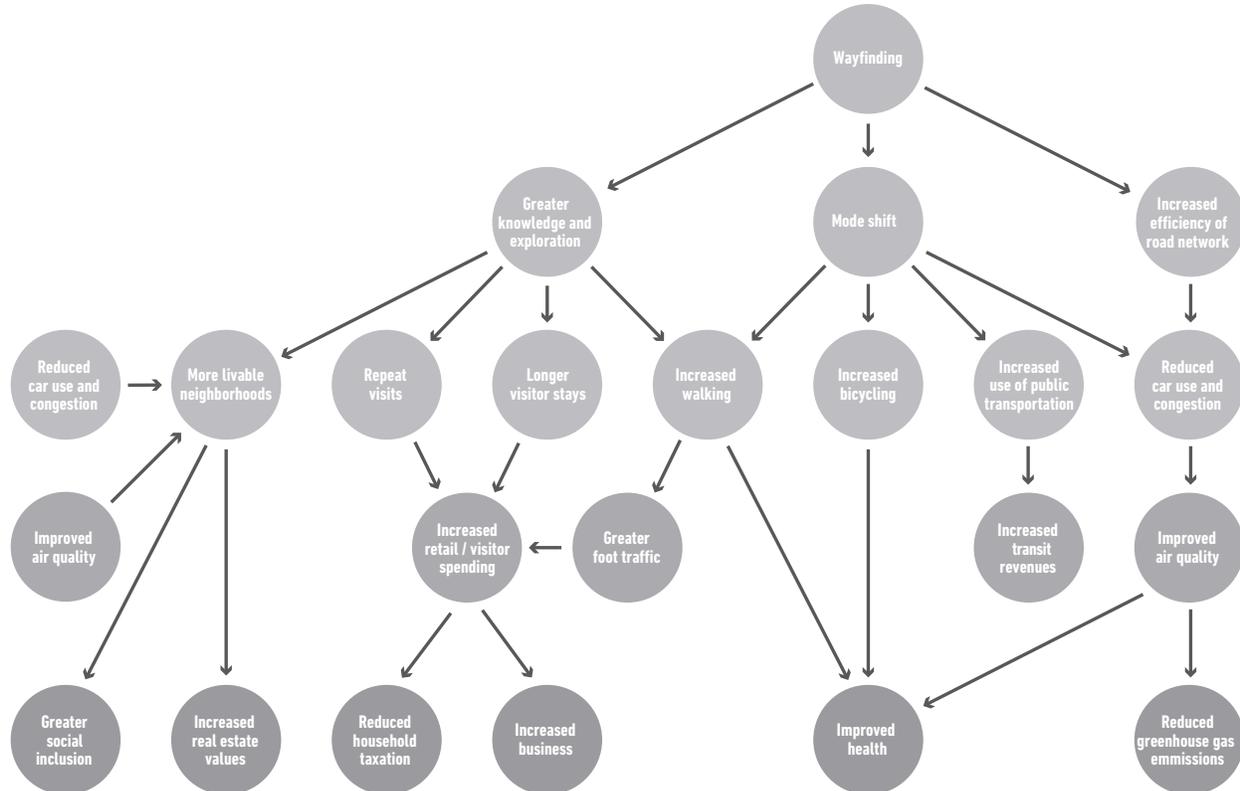
Source: Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding Strategy (Page 11), 2019. City of Seattle.

Wayfinding Sign Typology

The Downtown Largo Wayfinding System includes several different types of signs, each with a unique function. The schematic below explains the different sign functions and where each type is typically used.
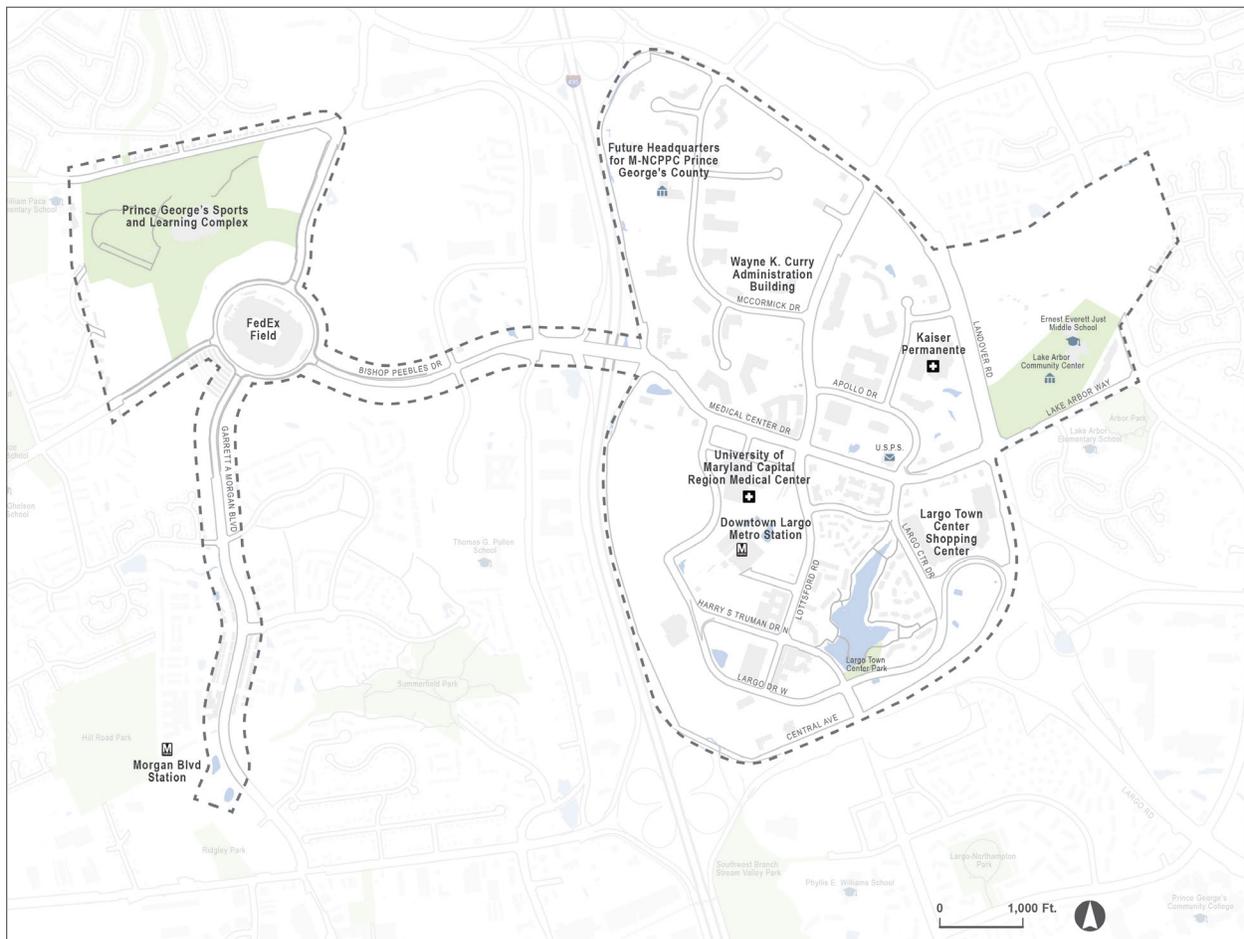

Gateway

Provides awareness and confirmation of arrival to Downtown Largo

Vehicular Directional

Provides confirmation of arrival and direction-giving to destinations and parking

Info Hub

Large format pedestrian directional sign located at welcome and arrival nodes along pathways. Displays regional map, directional information.

Info Pylon

Local format pedestrian directional sign for reorientation and decision points along pedestrian paths, transit, & parking nodes. Displays local area & map information focused on destinations and intersections.

Directional

Directional sign occurs at interstitial decision points at junctions where limited information is required. Sign points to destinations and lists distances.

Trail Marker

Provides trail identification and confirmation, distance traveled, and amenity icons.

Pavement Marker

Provides route identification and confirmation

Wayfinding Destinations

Several destinations in Downtown Largo were identified during meetings with stakeholders and the public in the early stages of the study. As with any growing place, destinations in Downtown Largo will change and this list should evolve to remain relevant.

Metro stations

Movie Theater

Shopping

Restaurants

Parking

Woodmore Town Center

Kaiser Permanente Medical Center

Post Office

Carillon

University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center

FedEx Field

Wegmans

Prince George's Community College

Hotels

Wayne K Curry Building

Giant Foods

Largo-Kettering Branch Library

Largo Town Center Shopping Center

Largo Town Center Park

Destination Hierarchy and Signing Distance

Downtown Largo encompasses a large area containing diverse destinations. Organizing destinations using a hierarchical system determines which destinations to include when there are too many possible destinations. This system allows information to be layered through a series of decision points as visitors enter Downtown Largo and navigate to their destination. The concept is simple—communicating the correct information at the right time.

Regional Destinations are fewest in number, but they are of primary importance. They are signed from a large radius. They serve as "pull through" destinations because they draw visitors from longer distances.

Area Destinations are greater in number and are of major importance. These destinations provide a finer grain of navigational information by directing users to recognizable shopping districts, transit stations, and cultural districts. They are signed from a smaller radius, often from the decision point closest to the destination.

Local Destinations are greatest in number and include destinations of local or neighborhood interest. They typically occur on signs in low density areas where few other destinations are present or along pathways not connecting higher priority destinations.

Regional Destinations

1–2 miles

- » FedEx Field
- » UM Medical Center

Area Destinations

1/2 mile

- » Largo Town Center Metro
- » Morgan Boulevard Station Metro
- » Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex
- » Wayne K. Curry Administration Center
- » Magic Johnson Theater
- » Largo Town Center Park
- » Kaiser Permanente
- » Prince George's Community College
- » Woodmore Town Center
- » Future Headquarters for M-NCPPC Prince George's County
- » Largo Town Center Shopping Center

Local Destinations

1/4 mile

- » William Paca Elementary School
- » Nailey Road Park
- » Cora L. Rice Elementary School
- » G. James Gholson Middle School
- » Thomas G. Pullen School
- » Largo-Kettering Branch Library
- » Hill Road Park
- » Rigley Park
- » Summerfield Park
- » Thomas G. Pullen School
- » Southwest Branch Stream Valley Park
- » Phyllis E Williams Elementary School
- » Largo-Northhamton Park
- » Lake Arbor Elementary School
- » Arbor Park

Rendering of proposed wayfinding pylon

Wayfinding Design Concept

Key Design Features

Three key design features have been built into the wayfinding design concepts, based on the successful Legible London[1] model that was recently adapted for use in the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding system.

1. "Heads-up mapping on street signs to help the user quickly orient themselves in reference to their immediate surroundings

2. Use of appropriate contrast for legibility, optimization for color blindness, large type sizes, careful balance of content, and simplification of topography for accessibility

3. Recognizable product design, tested through rapid prototyping, predictably deployed across different areas to maximize system legibility so users know where to go for information."[2]

A	B	C-1	C-2	D	E
Gateway	Vehicular Directional	Pedestrian Directional Static	Pedestrian Directional Dynamic	Finger Post Sign	Bike Parking Sign

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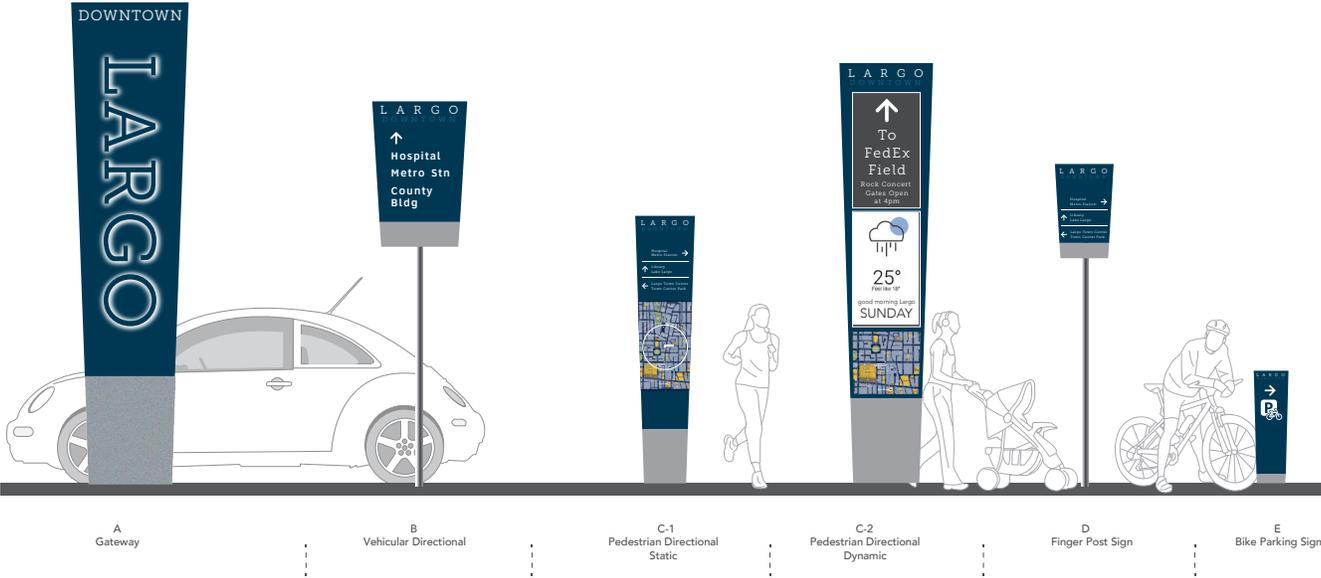
1   Transport for London, https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/boroughs-and-communities/legible-london

2   City of Seattle, WA https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/urban-design-program/pedestrian-wayfinding

Gateway

These entry features provide a welcome to Downtown Largo. Primary opportunities include road network edges entering Downtown Largo (e.g., turning onto McCormick Drive from MD 202), division areas between districts (e.g., after crossing I-495 coming from FedEx Field, and points of arrival from multi-modal transportation (e.g., at the Metro stations in the study area). Where possible, boundary signs should function for both pedestrian and vehicular users.

The four-sided pylon can display Downtown Largo identification on all sides. Alternately, the secondary sides may serve as a pedestrian directional map, a dynamic display with event information, or an opportunity for public art.

Pedestrian Directional

These pylons are located at major destinations and nodes. They may be static (left) or dynamic (right). The heads-up finder map orients the user by showing them their immediate surroundings at the level of detail appropriate for a person on foot. They are scaled to show the area that is within a five-minute walk from the location of the sign. They may include icons and labels for key buildings, amenities, and building numbers to help navigate to addresses in the area.

Proposed map content:

- Local landmarks
- Road names
- Walkable areas
- Local trails

Vehicular Directional

These signs provide directional information along major road routes into, through, and around Downtown Largo. Progressive disclosure is of primary importance to provide the right information at the right time.

These signs follow the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Community Wayfinding standards for the number and order of destinations, color, contrast, type size, and reflectivity.

Finger Post Sign

These pedestrian and bicycle route signs provide directional information at decision points between destinations. These signs are essential for identifying priority destinations, providing confirmation that the user is on the correct route, and reflecting scale of the walkable/bikeable area.

The signs are placed and sized to avoid confusion with vehicular directional signs.

Bike Parking Sign

Provides direction and identification of bicycle parking facilities within Downtown Largo and along nearby trail/pathway facilities.

LARGO
DOWNTOWN

↑
Hospital
Metro Stn
County
Bldg

LARGO
DOWNTOWN

Hospital
Metro Station →

↑ Library
Lake Largo

← Largo Town Center
Town Center Park

LARGO
DOWNTOWN

→
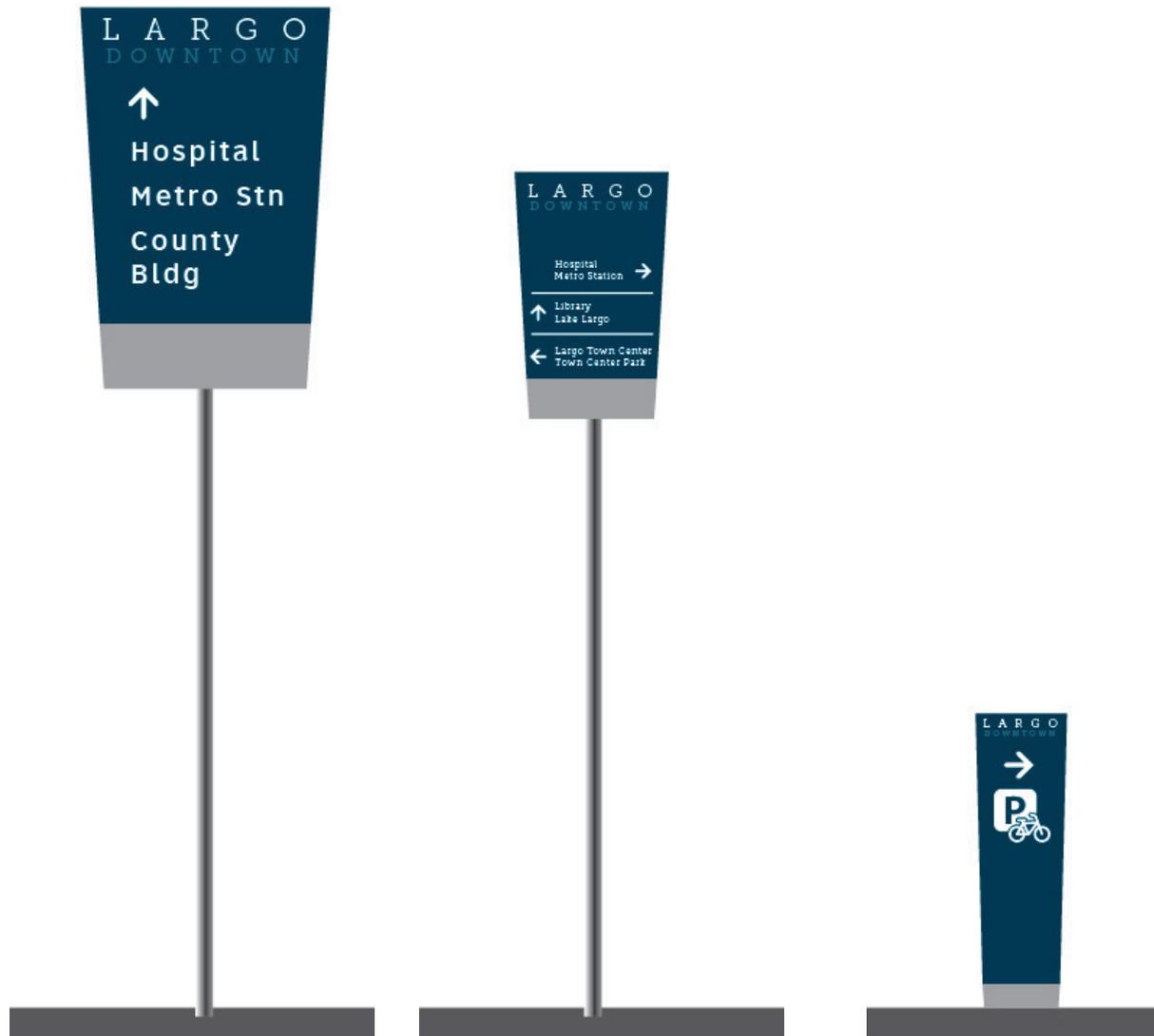
Wayfinding Along a Sample Pedestrian Journey

This example illustrates wayfinding signs for programming along the pedestrian route from the Downtown Largo Metro Station to FedEx Field. The map symbols are keyed to the wayfinding sign types below:
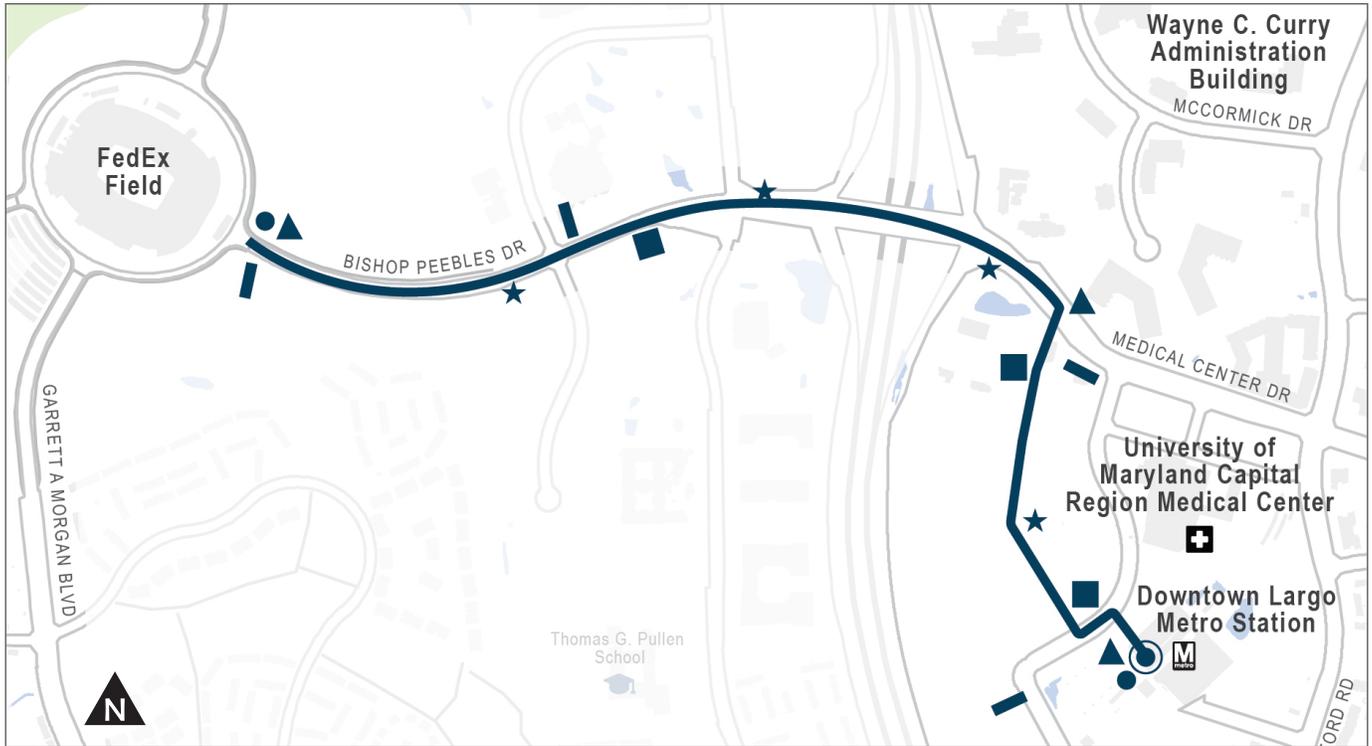
| A | B | C-1 | C-2 | D | E |
| Gateway | Vehicular Directional | Pedestrian Directional Static | Pedestrian Directional Dynamic | Finger Post Sign | Bike Parking Sign |

Wayfinding Next Steps

The following is a high-level overview of the steps necessary to implement and coordinate the Downtown Largo Wayfinding System.

Planning Process

REFINE THE LIST OF DESTINATIONS AND NODES OF ACCESS

A preliminary list of key destinations—identified through site evaluations and input from stakeholders and the public—is listed in the previous chapter. This list should be refined prior to establishing a finalized hierarchy of destinations.

To the extent possible, permanent or long-term destinations should be selected for signage. Otherwise, signs will need replacing frequently or will become redundant or incorrect. For example, individual businesses are more likely to change rather than shopping centers or major landmarks, so the latter should be prioritized as part of the list of destinations for wayfinding.

It will also be important to identify key nodes of access to Downtown Largo, such as transit hubs, intersections, and points at which adjacent communities connect to the study area.

ESTABLISH A HIERARCHY OF DESTINATIONS

After a list of key destinations in Downtown Largo is finalized, it will be important to organize them into a hierarchy of Regional, Area, and Local destinations. The North Central Texas Council of Governments (2019)[1] distinguished the levels this way:

- **Regional Destinations** are of primary importance and receive directional information to their locations on directional signs from a large radius.
- **Area Destinations** are of major importance and receive directional information to their locations on signs from a smaller radius surrounding their locations.
- **Local Destinations** include community centers, schools, and local parks that should be signposted from local streets and pathways (e.g., those that do not connect to regional or area destinations) from a block or two away.

Wayfinding studies and implementation plans, such as the Kansas City Guidebook, confirm that "wayfinding relies on the clear communication of destination names that are consistent, recognizable, and legible." A system of progressive disclosure should be used to gradually present information to users as it becomes more relevant.

The Kansas City Guidebook also states "destinations will be signed at differing intervals for bicyclists and pedestrians because bicyclists travel greater distances at higher speeds and pedestrians travel at lower speeds and may stop more frequently to read detailed signs or maps. All destinations that are proposed to be signed should be open and accessible to the public."

ENSURE CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS, GUIDES, AND STANDARDS

This stage of the planning process should be used to ensure consistency with the recently adopted Countywide Wayfinding Strategy as well as other local initiatives to identify and brand buildings and destinations in the area (e.g., the Capital Region Medical Center).

The appendices of this report contain information related to specific design requirements of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the Americans with Disabilities Act as they relate to wayfinding.

Design Process:

The Kansas City Regional Wayfinding Study recommends a series of steps to move from a strategy or plan to implementation. The relevant steps for Downtown Largo are:

DEVELOP PRODUCTION-READY GRAPHICS

Develop detailed sign artwork and maps for each specific sign. This artwork should be created by a professional graphic designer to ensure legibility and accuracy of information.

ESTABLISH ROUTES AND PLACEMENT PLANS

Establish the primary travel routes to these destinations, based on the newly established hierarchy, for people traveling by foot, bike, transit, and motor vehicle.

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1   https://www.nctcog.org/nctcg/media/Transportation/DocsMaps/Plan/Bike/NCTCOG_BestPractices_Wayfinding.pdf

Develop a sign placement plan for each route that corresponds to the destinations.

DEVELOP DETAILED SIGN LOCATION PLANS

Plot specific sign locations on a scaled map and verify approvals from appropriate State, County, and local agencies. The location plan is typically provided in a graphic or geo-referenced mapping program to confirm specific sign location and orientation. Each sign should have a unique identification number.

DEVELOP A SIGN REMOVAL PLAN

Whenever new signs and signage systems are installed, there should be a detailed plan for removal of old signs that are being replaced or superseded.

ACQUIRE COST ESTIMATES AND ESTABLISH BUDGETS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

After destinations, routes, and a sign placement plan have been created, determine the budget needed for implementation. Estimates will need to be obtained from multiple vendor types, such as a graphic designer for sign artwork layout, an engineer for any structural design required, a fabricator for the physical fabrication of the signs, and a general contractor for installation.

FINALIZE MESSAGE SCHEDULE

A Sign Message Schedule should be created to align specific sign content and messaging with the Sign Location Plan. The message schedule should include instructions for graphics such as arrows, symbols, or icons on each sign.

ENGINEERING/SITE ANALYSIS

Engineering drawings for the larger signs, pylons, and kiosks must be designed and built to meet the specific structural requirements to ensure longevity and durability.

FABRICATION

Sign fabrication should be sourced to an in-house sign shop or external vendor with experience making similar sign systems.

CONSTRUCTION ADMINISTRATION

Strict quality control measures should be applied to ensure final sign fabrication conforms to the layout proofs for color, accuracy, messaging etc. Sign installation should also be monitored to ensure accuracy.

Maintenance Process:

ASSET MANAGEMENT

Develop an asset management system, maintenance plan, and budget to manage the wayfinding program. The asset inventory system needs to be updated with the addition of new signs, as well as the removal or replacement of outdated/incorrect signs. To develop a sign inventory, the following information should be gathered for each sign:

- Unique ID number
- Location
- Sign type (e.g., gateway, bicycle directional, etc.)
- Size
- Materials—substrate and sign face (as applicable), anti-graffiti coatings, retro-reflectivity, etc.
- Sign assembly and mounting style—single/double- sided, steel post-mounted, wood post mounted, etc.
- Installation date
- Cost—design and fabrication labor, materials, shipping, etc.
- Last maintenance date, cost of maintenance—labor and materials
- Current condition

MAINTENANCE PLAN

A maintenance plan should be developed for regular assessment of signs, with a focus on damage, visibility, legibility, and appearance.

Section 6

Conclusion and Next Steps

Conclusion and Immediate Next Steps

Downtown Largo holds a special place in the heart of many Prince George's County residents. Older members of the community remember the excitement of going to a concert or sporting event at the state-of-the-art (for 1972) Capital Centre until it closed in 1998. Replaced by The Boulevard at the Capital Centre (2003) and bolstered by the arrival of the Downtown Largo Metro Station (2004), the area carried the aspirations of the increasingly affluent, middle-class Black population that had long lived in the shadow of wealthier suburban communities surrounding Washington D.C.

Today, the skyline of Downtown Largo is alive with construction cranes and recently completed buildings that are defining the next stage in the evolution of the community. The University of Maryland Capital Region Medical Center opened in 2021, and the mixed-use Carillon development is emerging on the site of The Boulevard at Capital Center. Modern apartment buildings occupy prime sites near the Metro station, and the County Administration has moved its operations to anchor economic growth and activity in the area.

The bright future of the area is inextricably linked to its past. The presence of nearby FedEx Field and the Prince George's Sports and Learning Complex offers continuity with the sporting legacy of years past. The Medical Center is attracting significant investment in the health and wellness business sector, and substantial government investment in office buildings and entertainment facilities is catalyzing private development along one of the least-developed Metro line corridors in the region. The presence of the Metro station is also a major draw for people looking for moderately priced housing with quick and easy access to Washington DC and the broader metropolitan region. This convergence of people wanting to live in Downtown Largo with its past and future connection to sports, health, and wellness, inspired the potential Living Largo branding slogan.

The legacy of the Capital Centre remains in more than just spirit. The wide roads and high capacity interchanges and intersections designed to move 20,000 arena-goers in and out of the area every night have created a suburban, automobile-dominated landscape that is struggling to establish a "sense of place." Similarly, the ever-changing name of the area is a source of confusion and contributes to a lack of identity. Mailing addresses reflect several names and census-designated places that have been used over time including Largo, Lake Arbor, Upper Marlboro, Landover, and Mitchellville.

Placemaking, branding, and wayfinding are three very different but inter-related ways in which the area can solidify and celebrate its identity and establish an authentic sense of place. Connecting people to each other, and linking people to places within the community, are fundamental to each element of the strategy. There are several immediate next steps for M-NCPPC to take to begin implementing this strategy. Some of these are the primary responsibility of M-NCPPC and others are identified as being the responsibility of others, with the assistance of the M-NCPPC.

Placemaking: The Commission should convene a task force of current and potential placemaking organizations and individuals in the area. They should develop a calendar of events and activities for the coming year that will celebrate people and places in the community, help people connect, and help them reimagine the public realm.

One or more of the dates on the calendar should be a public forum with a guest speaker(s) who has created great places elsewhere – from peer locations such as the Mosaic District in Fairfax County, VA, and the River Arts District in Asheville, NC.

The Commission should also actively engage with all new developments (e.g., Carillon), especially County projects (e.g., the complete streets project on Lottsford Road), to ensure they incorporate placemaking and wayfinding elements outlined in the strategy and take advantage of opportunities to temporarily activate spaces during construction.

Branding: The Commission should engage a branding firm or expert to develop a more definitive logo or graphic representation of a concept that builds on the initial Living Largo concept.

Wayfinding: The Commission should finalize the design of the wayfinding system (in conjunction with the branding process) and complete the list and prioritization of destinations in the area.

Implementing the Placemaking, Branding and Wayfinding Strategy will enable Downtown Largo to grow deliberately and thoughtfully during a defining period for the County and the region, establish an identity, and gain recognition as a place of character, community, and connections.
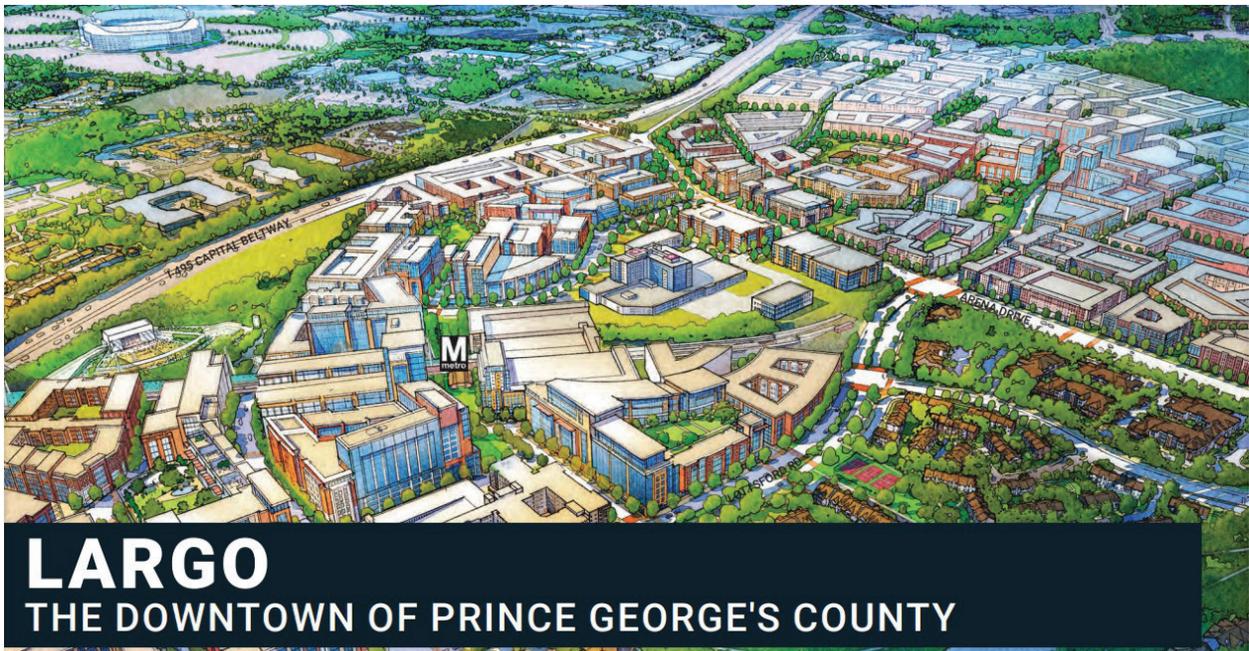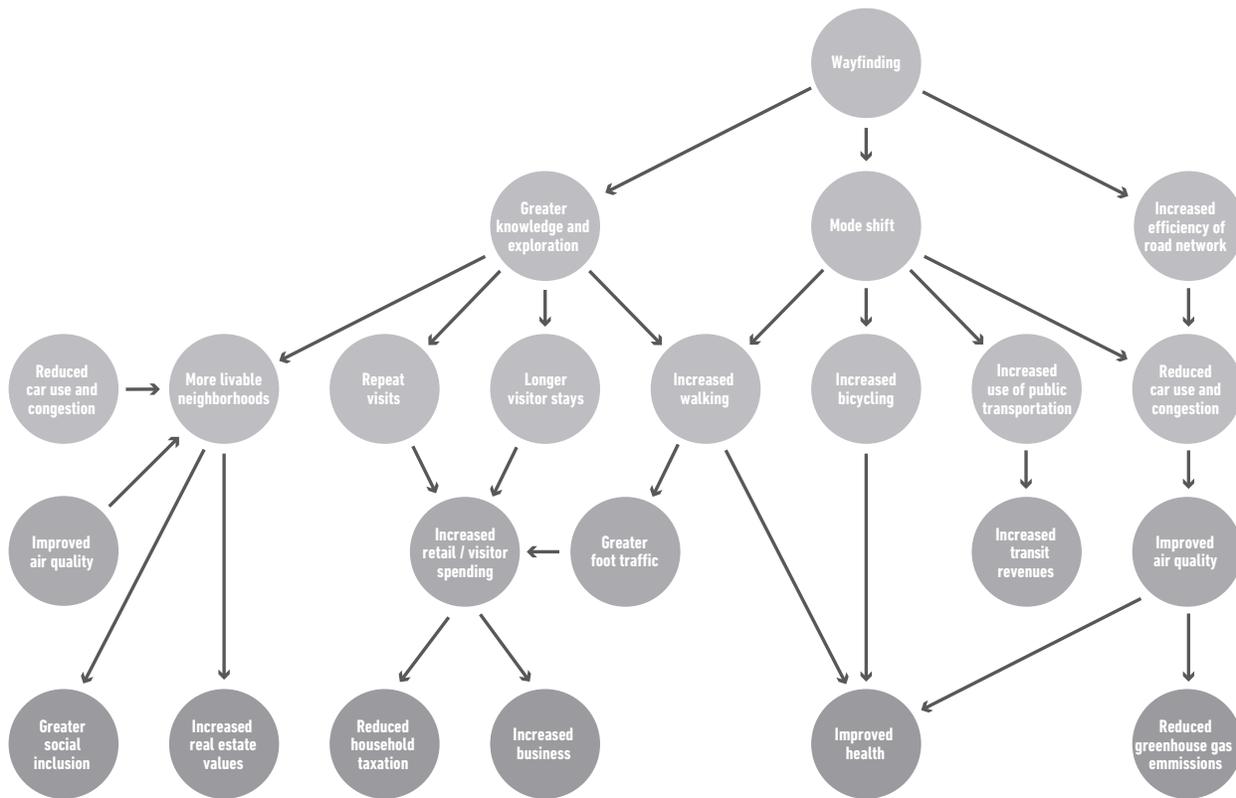

Prince George's County Economic Development Platform, June 2021

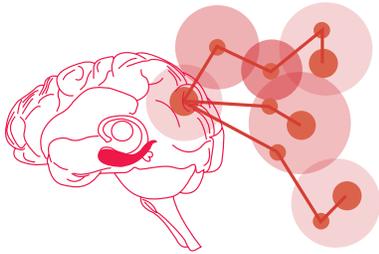# Appendices

Appendix 1: Wayfinding

Benefits of good wayfinding
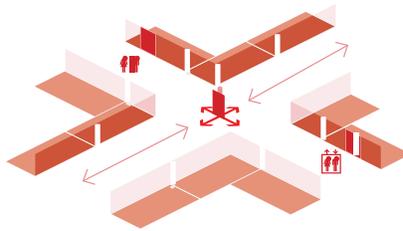
Key Approaches to Wayfinding

1

Understand human location-based cognition

An understanding of how people perceive their environment, create memory, and learn about places provides vital clues in decoding environments and determining what is significant during the design and planning process.

2

Convey the right information at the right time

Placement planning provides a rationale for the optimization of information points in key locations within centers.

3

Design for differing user types

Familiar with area

Time-poor Strider — 2 — 4 — Time-rich Stroller

1 — 3

Unfamiliar with area
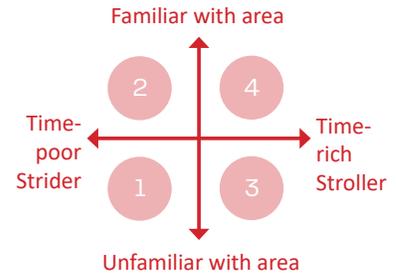
Different users have different needs. While some users need minimal information to orient themselves, others may be first-time visitors who need navigation guidance. Some visitors may need just enough information to allow them to wander without getting lost.

4

Adopt a connected and consistent set of design principles
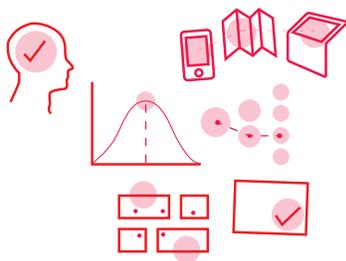
A set of fundamental design principles are needed to create a connected wayfinding system, ensuring all modes and communications speak with one voice.

5

Codify and use terminology consistently

3rd floor
2nd floor
1st floor
2nd floor
1st floor
Ground floor

Left
Right
Ahead
1-mile
2-miles
3-miles

Consistent naming of places and landmarks throughout downtown helps people to communicate the locations of those places and landmarks. Coding provides a shortcut for memory and simplifies complex information.

6

Reach a quality of design threshold

Quality

Quality threshold

Effort

High-quality design and attention to detail make information more legible and places easier to understand and navigate.

Convey the Right Information at the Right Time

A family of different sign types can/should be strategically placed to avoid adding clutter to the environment. The method begins by distilling the downtown into its constituent parts—its entry points, route structure, landmarks, and destinations—as a series of welcome points, arrival points, decision points, and reorientation points, connected by links.
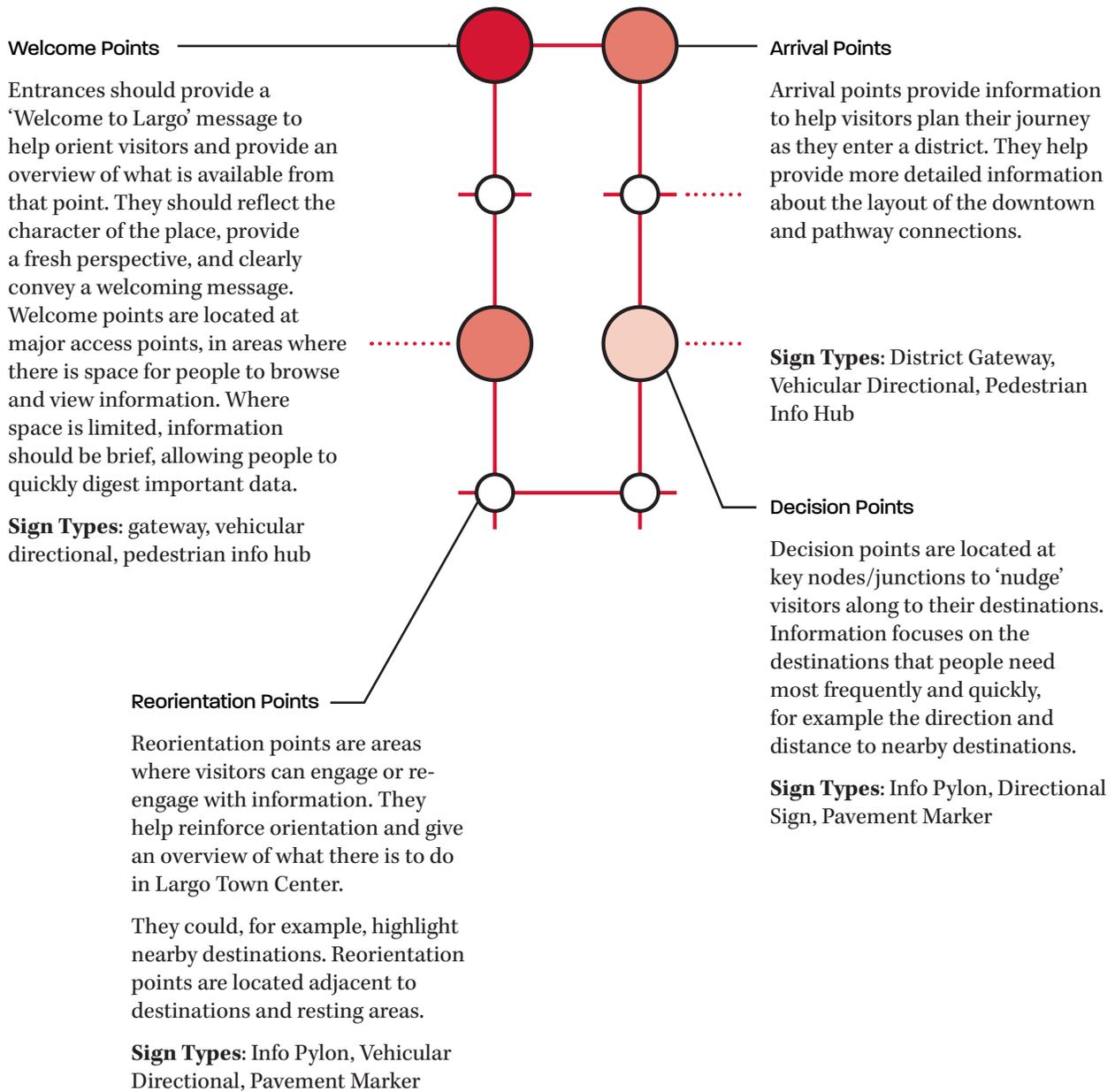
Welcome Points

Entrances should provide a 'Welcome to Largo' message to help orient visitors and provide an overview of what is available from that point. They should reflect the character of the place, provide a fresh perspective, and clearly convey a welcoming message. Welcome points are located at major access points, in areas where there is space for people to browse and view information. Where space is limited, information should be brief, allowing people to quickly digest important data.

Sign Types: gateway, vehicular directional, pedestrian info hub

Arrival Points

Arrival points provide information to help visitors plan their journey as they enter a district. They help provide more detailed information about the layout of the downtown and pathway connections.

Sign Types: District Gateway, Vehicular Directional, Pedestrian Info Hub

Decision Points

Decision points are located at key nodes/junctions to 'nudge' visitors along to their destinations. Information focuses on the destinations that people need most frequently and quickly, for example the direction and distance to nearby destinations.

Sign Types: Info Pylon, Directional Sign, Pavement Marker

Reorientation Points

Reorientation points are areas where visitors can engage or re-engage with information. They help reinforce orientation and give an overview of what there is to do in Largo Town Center.

They could, for example, highlight nearby destinations. Reorientation points are located adjacent to destinations and resting areas.

Sign Types: Info Pylon, Vehicular Directional, Pavement Marker

Provide Wayfinding for the Full Journey Lifecycle

The journey to and within Downtown Largo should be considered through all modes which include pre-journey planning through the visit and returning home. By making a consistent set of information from graphics, mapping, content, and naming a visitor will have ease of access and a connected journey. This includes web, mobile, print, signs, landmarks, art, and people. This will span the entire journey from arrival, getting around Downtown Largo, and finding and enjoying the journey and destination.
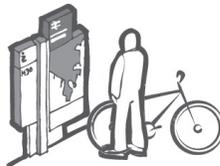
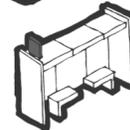| **Pre-Journey** Planning	**Arrival** Orientation	**Getting Around** Direction	**Interchange** Planning	**Destinations** Finding
Where is the Town Center? How do I get there? Where can I park? Can I get there by bike?	Where Am I? Where's my destination? How far is it? Where can I get information? Which way from here?	Which way now? What's the quickest way? Is this the right route? How long will it take if I walk?	Can I catch the Metro from here? When will it arrive? How long will it take? Is there a bus station? When is the next one?	What is nearby? How old is that building? Where is the Hospital? Is there a water fountain? Can I get a meal?
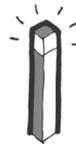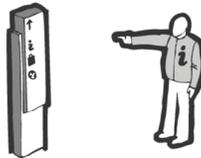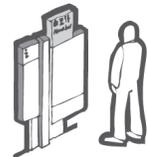
Appendix 2: Wayfinding Sign Materials and Design

Materials

The material selection for the wayfinding system must match the environmental conditions in which they will exist. Specifications of durable materials for the sign program take into account the environment, temperatures, and climate in Downtown Largo. In all cases, manufacturer specifications and fabricator guidance will be the primary references for material suitability. Materials may be exposed to the following conditions:

- UV radiation from sun exposure
- High temperature fluctuation
- High wind and rain
- Snow and ice
- Vandalism

Painted and direct-print graphic applications on pedestrian wayfinding systems prevent vandalism where pedestrian sign programs are in secluded or less populated areas and prone to damage.

Vehicular directional signs are typically pole mounted and fabricated with sheet aluminum covered with direct print retroreflective graphics. The longevity of these signs is 7–15 years, depending on color and sun exposure.

Other durable surfaces for pedestrian-level graphics include digital high-pressure laminate and porcelain graphic panels. The National Park Service specifies these sign types in their *UniGuide Sign Standards Manual* for areas prone to high volumes of hands-on touching by visitors.

Materials Applicability for Exterior Use in the Downtown Largo Environment

Vehicular	Pedestrian	Material
●	●	Metal
◐	◕	Painted Surfaces
●	◔	Powder Coat Paint Surface
◕	◔	Vinyl Surfaces
◐	●	High Pressure Laminate
◐	●	Porcelain Enamel

● Excellent ◕ Good ◐ Medium ◔ Poor

Accessibility in Sign Design

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) STANDARDS

The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design provides specific guidance for the design of communication elements, including signs. The following standards from Section 703.5—Visual Characters should be considered when designing wayfinding signs for outdoor use.

Finish and Contrast

Signs are more legible for persons with low vision, as well as persons with color vision deficiency (i.e., colorblindness) when the value contrast (light vs. dark) between the characters and the background is kept high. This may be achieved by using light characters on a dark background or dark characters on a light background.

Visual characters and their background should both have a non-glare finish. Consider additional factors that affect the ease with which the text can be distinguished from its background including shadows cast by lighting sources, surface glare, and the uniformity of the text and its background colors and textures.

Character Properties

Case

Uppercase, lowercase or a combination

FOX ✓ correct   fox ✓ correct   Fox ✓ correct

Style

conventional forms; Not italic, script, or decorative

Fox ✓ correct   Fox ✓ correct   *Fox* ✗ incorrect

Proportion

Letter width 55% to 110% of letter height

ABC ✓ correct   ABC ✗ too wide   ABC ✗ too narrow

Weight

Stroke thickness 10% to 30% of letter height

ABC ✓ correct   **ABC** ✗ too heavy   ABC ✗ too thin

Character Height

Visual character and size requirements for legibility

Height to Finish Floor or Ground From Baseline of Character	Horizontal Viewing Distance	Minimum Character Height
40 inches (1015 mm) to less than or equal to 70 inches (1780 mm)	less than 72 inches (1830 mm)	5/8 inch (16 mm)
40 inches (1015 mm) to less than or equal to 70 inches (1780 mm)	72 inches (1830 mm) and greater	5/8 inch (16 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) of viewing distance above 72 inches (1830 mm)
Greater than 70 inches (1780 mm) to less than or equal to 120 inches (3050 mm)	less than 180 inches (4570 mm)	2 inches (51 mm)
Greater than 70 inches (1780 mm) to less than or equal to 120 inches (3050 mm)	180 inches (4570 mm) and greater	2 inches (51 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) of viewing distance above 180 inches (4570 mm)
greater than 120 inches (3050 mm)	less than 21 feet (6400 mm)	3 inches (75 mm)
greater than 120 inches (3050 mm)	21 feet (6400 mm) and greater	3 inches (75 mm), plus 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) per foot (305 mm) of viewing distance above 21 feet (6400 mm)

MUTCD CHAPTER 9 GUIDANCE

The Federal Highway Administration's MUTCD specifies the standard for all wayfinding signs installed on any street, highway, bikeway, or private road open to public travel. Commonly referred to as "on-street" signs, the MUTCD states these signs should be designed so that:

- Legibility and size combine with placement to permit adequate time for response
- Uniformity, size, legibility, and reasonableness of the message combine to command respect

The MUTCD also recommends the arrangement and amount of text for on-street wayfinding signs:

Approved Fonts
FHWA Series
Standard Alphabets for Highway Signs
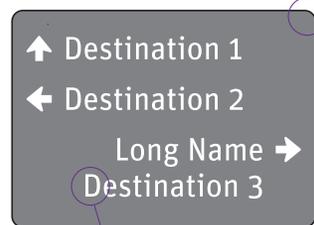Highway Gothic
Interstate

Destination Name
including Spaces
18-Character Limit

Radius Corners
to prevent injury

Destination Limit
no more than 3

Destination Order
and Arrow Placement
⬆ Ahead
⬅ Left
Right ➡

Grouping
within Destination Order
⬆ Nearest
to Farthest

⬆ Destination 1
⬅ Destination 2
Long Name ➡
Destination 3

Contrast
at least 70%

Community Wayfinding Standards

Wayfinding signs may allow for an expression of community identity, reflect local character, and provide more information than signs which strictly follow the basic guidance of Part 9 in the MUTCD. Section 2D.50 of the MUTCD describes community wayfinding signs as follows:

1. Community wayfinding guide signs are part of a coordinated and continuous system of signs that direct tourists and other users to key civic, cultural, visitor, and recreational attractions and other destinations within a city or a local urbanized or downtown area.

2. Community wayfinding guide signs are a type of destination guide sign with a common color and/or identification enhancement marker for destinations within an overall wayfinding guide sign plan for an area.

Colors

Per the community wayfinding standards, color coding may be used on wayfinding guide signs to help users distinguish between multiple potentially confusing traffic generator destinations located in different neighborhoods or subareas within a community or area. Community wayfinding guide signs may use background colors other than green in order to provide a color identification for the wayfinding destinations by geographical area within the overall wayfinding guide signing system.

The MUTCD prohibits the use of some background colors, known as "assigned colors," for community wayfinding signs in order to minimize possible confusion with critical, higher-priority regulatory and warning sign color meanings readily understood by road users. "Assigned colors" consist of the standard colors of red, orange, yellow, purple, or the fluorescent versions thereof, fluorescent yellow-green, and fluorescent pink. Green is the standard color for guide signs. Blue and brown are also used for traveler information including destination and street name signs. The remaining colors are eligible for use on community wayfinding signs provided they are sufficiently different from "assigned colors."

Green, blue and brown are approved for use on traveler information signs and have been accepted by some DOTs for wayfinding signs. The remaining colors not having restricted uses are appropriate for wayfinding signs per the community wayfinding standards.

Restricted

Allowed
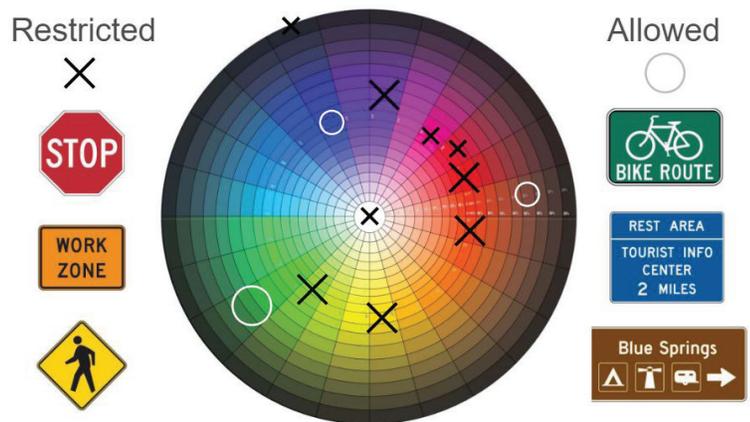
MUTCD color standards

Abbreviations

The use of abbreviations should be kept to a minimum when placing destination names on signs. When insufficient space is available for full wording, abbreviations may be used. MUTCD accepted abbreviations are included in the table below. Unless necessary to avoid confusion, periods, commas, apostrophes, question marks, ampersands, and other punctuation marks or characters that are not letters or numerals should be avoided.

MUTCD Compliant Abbreviations

Message	Abbreviation	Message	Abbreviation
Alternate	ALT	Miles Per Hour	MPH
Avenue	AVE	Minute(s)	MIN
Bicycle	BIKE	Mount	MT
Boulevard	BLVD	Mountain	MTN
Bridge	BR	National	NATL
Center (as part of a place name)	CTR	North	N
Circle	CIR	Parkway	PKWY
Court	CT	Pedestrian	PED
Crossing (other than highway)	X-ING	Place	PL
Drive	DR	Road	RD
East	E	South	S
Hospital	HOSP	Street	ST
Information	INFO	Telephone	PHONE
International	INTL	Terrace	TER
Junction / Intersection	JCT	Trail	TR
Mile(s)	MI	West	W

Emerging Technologies to Enhance Accessibility

The integration of digital technology into everyday lives has created enhanced opportunities for accessible wayfinding strategies. Accessible audio based navigation tools can communicate turn-by-turn wayfinding guidance to users through their smartphones, thus creating inclusive experiences and promoting independent navigation for blind and vision impaired persons. Though this technology has primarily been deployed to date in indoor environments, it is beginning to be tested and implemented for use in public transit systems:

- A 2019 trial commissioned by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit Authority, which employed open standard audio based wayfinding technology found that 95% of the study participants would be more likely to use public transit if the technology were deployed on a permanent basis.[1]

- Sound Transit in the Puget Sound region of Washington State is currently pursuing an Accessible Mobility on Demand grant from the Federal Transit Administration to implement an audio navigation system to enhance access both to and through transit stations.

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1   http://www.wayfindr.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Wayfindr-LA-Metro-Trial-Report.pdf

Appendix 3: National Wayfinding Guidance

Consistent and appropriate placement of wayfinding elements helps to provide a legible wayfinding system while ensuring the signage elements do not create undue safety hazards. Many communities find that implementing a wayfinding system as a component of a pedestrian, bicycle and transit network enhances other encouragement efforts by providing a visible invitation to new users, while also encouraging current or experienced users to explore new destinations. General guidance by the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) regarding sign placement includes:

- Guide signs may be used to designate continuous routes that may be composed of a variety of facility types and settings.
- Wayfinding guidance may be used to provide connectivity between two or more major facilities, such as a street with bike lanes and/or sidewalks and a shared-use path.
- Wayfinding may be used to provide guidance and continuity in a gap between existing sections of a facility, such as a bike lane or shared-use path.
- Road/path name signs should be placed at all path-roadway crossings to help users track their locations.
- Reference location signs (mile markers) assist path users in estimating their progress, provide a means for identifying the location of emergency incidents, and are beneficial during maintenance activities.
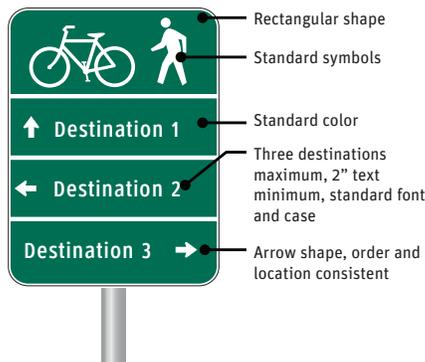
Fundamental Navigational Elements

Fundamental navigational elements are the foundation of a wayfinding system to guide bicyclists and pedestrians to their destinations while traveling along designated facilities. These fundamental elements include decision signs, confirmation signs, and turn signs. The MUTCD (Section 9B.20) provides standards relating directly to on-street bicycle networks, but the same sign types and placement considerations apply to off-street shared-use paths. Design of fundamental navigational elements may differ from on-street, MUTCD-regulated facilities in that they may consider other modes beyond bicycles (e.g., pedestrians, skateboards, scooters, etc.), and opportunities exist for more flexible sign design and branding.

Decision   Confirmation   Turn
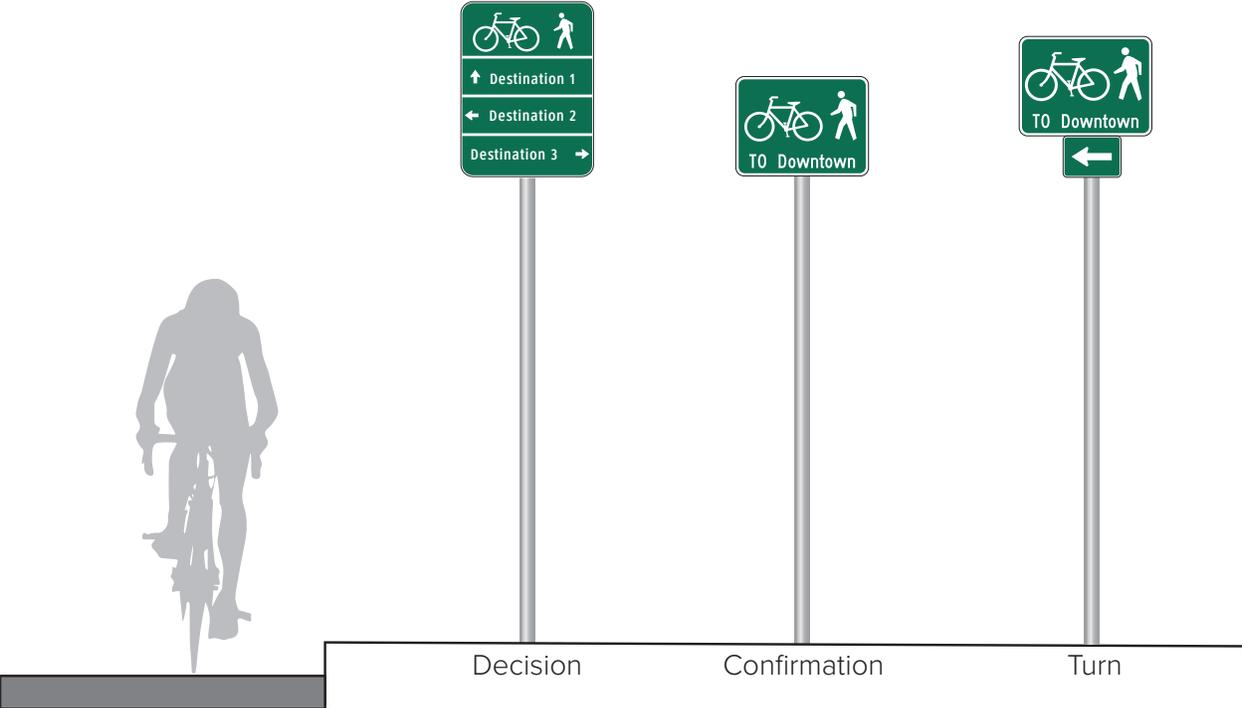
DECISION SIGNS

Decision signs mark and are placed prior to the junction of two or more routes. These signs also inform users how to access nearby destinations. These signs include destinations that can be paired with distances in time and/or mileage, and arrows. Users can orient themselves within the network based on key destinations including culturally significant landmarks, shopping districts, and other recreational facilities. To maintain simplicity, decision sign assemblies should not display more than three destinations.

Rectangular shape

Standard symbols

Standard color

Three destinations maximum, 2" text minimum, standard font and case

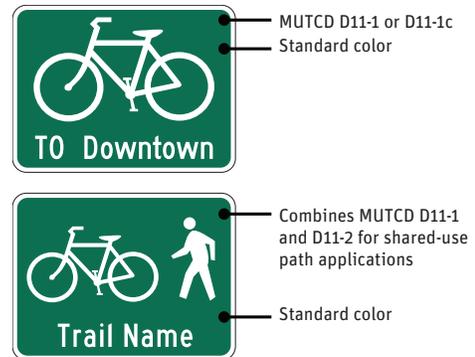Arrow shape, order and location consistent

Function and Content

- Mark the junction of two or more routes
- Inform users of designated routes to access key destinations
- Maximum of three destinations
- Provide direction and distance to destinations
- May include travel times to destinations

Placement

- For on-street applications, place 50–100 feet before a decision point; for off-street: 25–50 feet. These are adequate distances for bicyclists and pedestrians to see and respond to sign messaging. Exact distances will vary depending on the context
- Place at key junctions alongside a designated route to indicate nearby destinations
- Left turns for bicyclists require special consideration. The decision sign should be placed at a distance before the intersection based on the number of turn lanes the bicyclist needs to merge across to make a legal left turn:
- Zero lane merge: 50 feet
- One-lane merge: 100 feet
- Two-lane merge: 200 feet

CONFIRMATION SIGNS

Confirmation signs identify designated routes. They build confidence by confirming that the user is on the correct path or route, especially after turns. In on-street applications, these signs increase awareness of bicyclists by informing motorists of their presence. Confirmation signs are an integral component of any trail or bike route network that crosses roads, changes direction, and has intermediate access points between trail or route beginning or end.

MUTCD D11-1 or D11-1c
Standard color

Combines MUTCD D11-1 and D11-2 for shared-use path applications

Standard color

Function and Content

- Placed after access points along a trail or bike route network, as well as after decision or turn signs
- Spaced periodically along a trail or bike route network to maintain a consistent level of confidence that users are still traveling along the same route
- Do not indicate a change in direction
- May have informational or branding content such as the name of the route
- May include up to one directional destination

Placement

- After decision signs and decision points
- Locations where a designated route is not linear as well as after complex intersections (e.g. intersections with more than four approaches, roundabouts, or indirect routing)
- In off-street applications, approximately every ¼ to ½ mile unless another type of wayfinding sign or pavement marking is present within the interval
- In on-street applications, 50–100 feet immediately following turns to confirm designated route
- If the signed route is approaching a turn, turn

signs or decision signs should be used instead of confirmation signs

TURN SIGNS

Turn signs indicate where a designated route turns from one street or trail onto another. Turn signs are at

MUTCD D11-1 or D11-1c
Standard color
MUTCD M6-1
MUTCD D1-1b or D1-1c
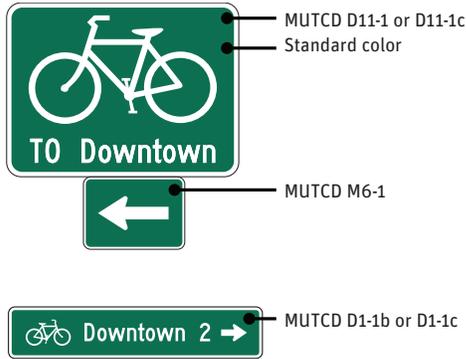
key points of navigation for bikeway users. Turn signs direct bicyclists and pedestrians where to turn to remain on the designated route.

Function and Content

- Clear direction for bicyclists and pedestrians to turn when a route transitions from one roadway or trail to another
- May be a combination of a confirmation sign (MUTCD D11-1) and directional arrow (MUTCD M6-1) or a stand-alone decision plaque (MUTCD D1-1, D1-1b)
- May include travel distance to destination (MUTCD D1-1a, D1-1c)

Placement

- In on-street applications, 50-100 feet in advance of the turn
- In off-street applications, 25-50 feet in advance of the turn
- Left turns for bicyclists require special consideration. The turn sign should be placed at a distance before the intersection based on the number of turn lanes the bicyclist needs to merge across to make a legal left turn:
- Zero lane merge: 50 feet
- One lane merge: 100 feet
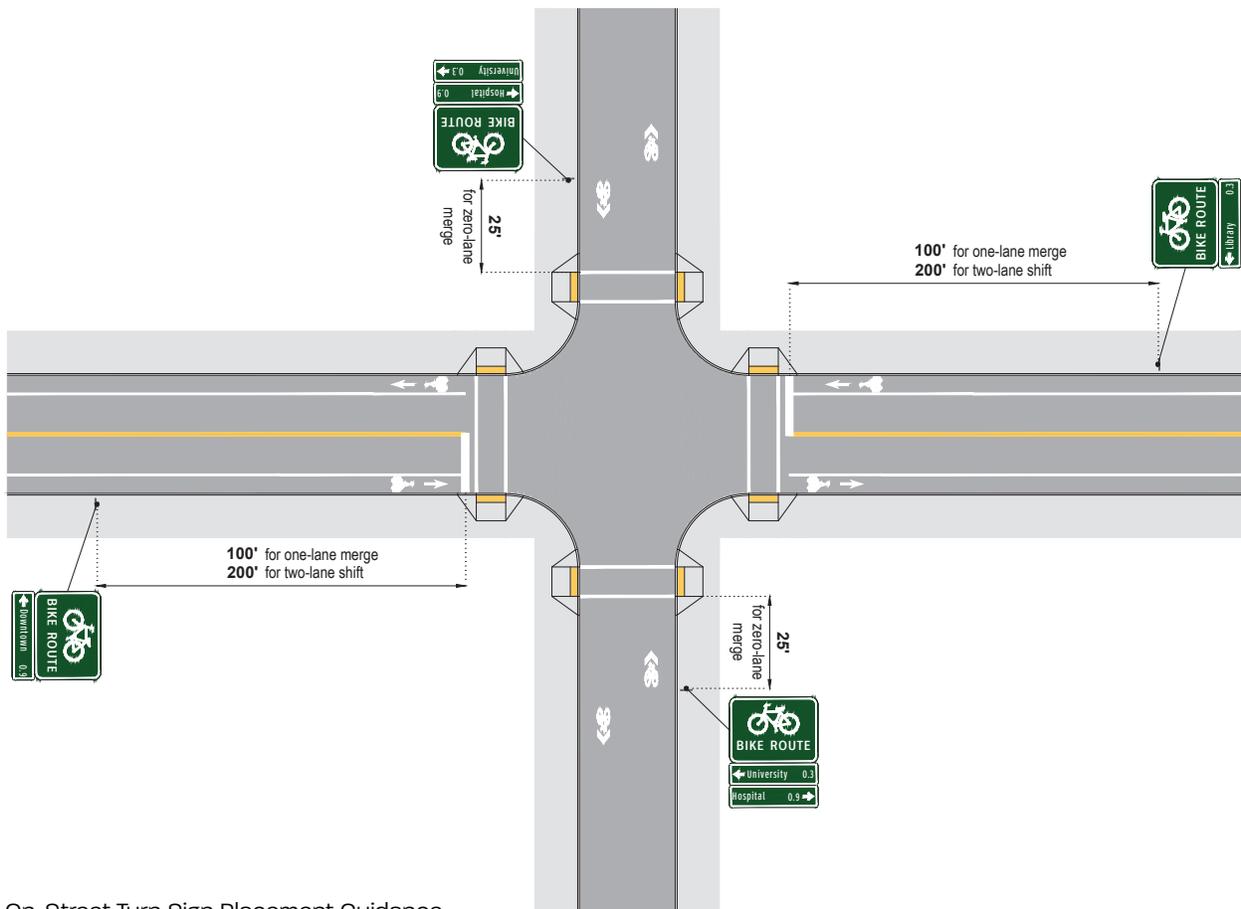
On-Street Turn Sign Placement Guidance

- Two lane merge: 200 feet
- In locations where there are two or more intersecting trails or bike routes, a decision sign should be used

VERTICAL AND LATERAL CLEARANCE

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board and the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities provide guidance for safe and accessible design for the built environment. The following are standards that should be considered when placing wayfinding signs.

Vertical Clearance

On-Street: Vertical clearance shall be a minimum of 84 inches when adjacent to a sidewalk or on-street environment.

Off-Street: Vertical clearance shall be 96 inches high maximum (when overhanging the path), or 48 inches minimum from the grade of the path to the bottom of the sign and 24 inches from the edge of the path tread to the edge of the sign when the sign is mounted adjacent to the trail.

Lateral Clearance

Lateral clearance shall be a minimum of 24 inches from edge of path or curb

PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING

Wayfinding systems often relate to accessible routes beyond the designated shared-use paths and facilities addressed by MUTCD and AASHTO guidance. It is therefore important to consider technical guidance from the ADA in order to implement wayfinding signs and other elements that do not impede travel or create unsafe situations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and/or those with disabilities.

Post-Mounted Objects

Where a sign or other obstruction is mounted between posts or pylons and the clear distance between the posts or pylons is greater than 12 inches, the lowest edge of such sign or obstruction shall be 27 inches minimum or 80 inches maximum above the finished floor or ground.

Protruding Objects

Objects with leading edges more than 27 inches and not more than 80 inches above the finished floor or ground shall protrude 4 inches maximum horizontally into the circulation path.

Required Clear Width

Protruding objects may not, in any case, reduce the clear width required for accessible routes. Generally, this requirement is met by maintaining 4 feet minimum clear width for people maneuvering mobility devices. This requirement applies to sidewalks and other pedestrian circulation paths.
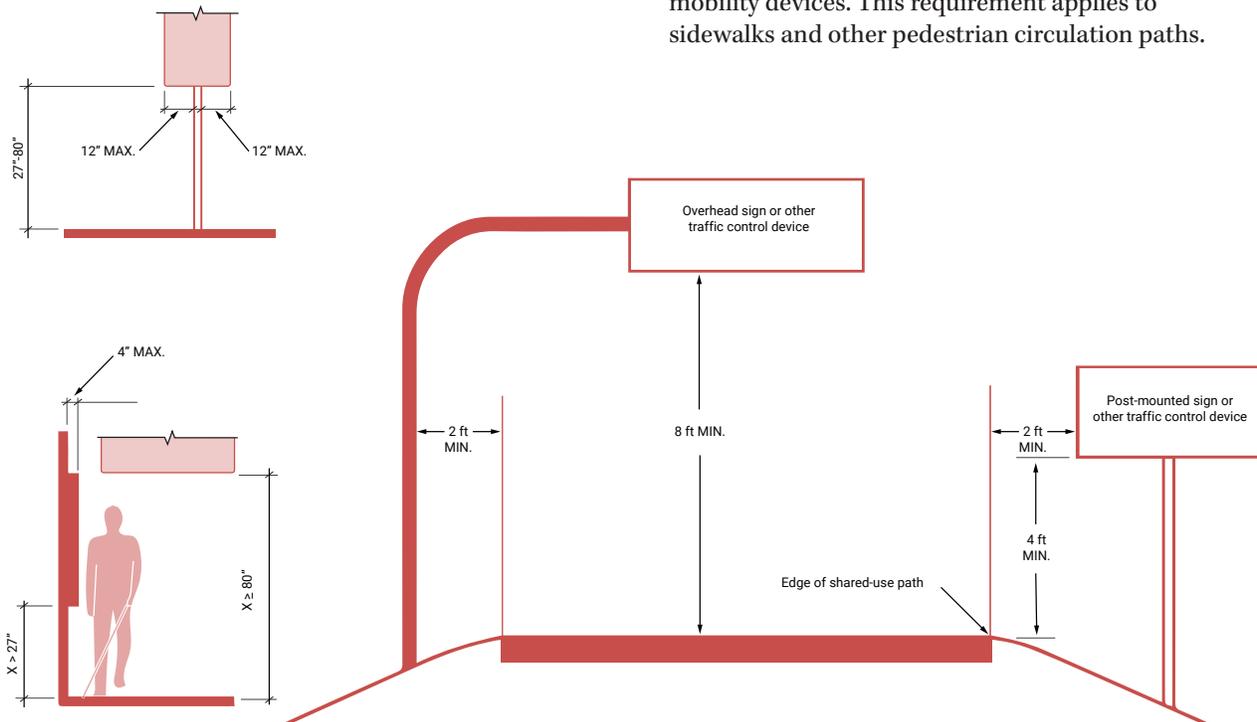
AASHTO and ADA guidance for sign placement

Acknowledgments

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