

Making It Even Easier To Find Parking And Major Downtown Attractions

Early in 2009, the Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board (DIB) started exploring ways to assist visitors and other users of downtown in easily locating the off-street public parking locations and the major attractions found in the downtown area – regardless of the direction from which they were entering the area. Towards that end, a team of experienced consultants were engaged to research how other cities accomplished such tasks, to evaluate the existing directional signage, and to develop recommendations for an integrated wayfinding signage system to be used by both drivers of vehicles and pedestrians. Throughout calendar year 2009 and into the early months of 2010, dozens of meetings were held with several DIB committees, focus groups, constituent groups, the TACC, the ARB, and representatives of major downtown attractions to identify the elements of such a system: destinations, messages, design, and locations for signage.

Once the DIB committees had received all of the feedback from the groups identified above and reached agreement on how the new directional signage system should function and what it should look like, they recommended moving the new wayfinding system into implementation as a project of the Downtown Parking Management District. At its regular monthly meeting in April, the DIB unanimously adopted the proposal for implementation of the new wayfinding signage system to assist those unfamiliar with the many public parking options and the major attractions in the downtown area find them.

Through this new wayfinding signage system, a matrix of signage will guide drivers to all sixteen off-street public parking venues as well as to seven distinct districts (Belmont-DeVilliers, Business, Civic Center, Historic, Governmental Center, Museum/Arts, and Waterfront) within downtown. All public parking facilities will also be signed with the same type (graphics, colors, and fonts) of identification to highlight the name and location of the facility. Additionally, a “You are here” type map will be posted near each pedestrian exit from the facility to help guide visitors and other infrequent users onto their final destination and/or into the pedestrian wayfinding system – which starts up just outside each of the sixteen public parking facilities in downtown.

The pedestrian wayfinding portion of this new integrated signage system leads or directs users to twenty-five “super attractions” or destinations as identified by the various groups that helped design the new signage and identification system over the last fifteen months. Each of the twenty-five pedestrian destinations is located within one of the seven defined districts of downtown. Each district has been assigned a specific color; and those colors are used to help the new or infrequent user know which district holds the destination they seek. The maps posted in each of the public parking facilities will also use the same color coding to identify the distinct districts of downtown.

In addition to making it much easier to navigate the downtown area by car and on foot; the new Wayfinding Signage System will also help guide tourists and visitors by automobile between each of the following tourist destinations in Escambia County: Downtown, The

Pensacola Gulf Coast Regional Airport, Pensacola Beach, the Naval Aviation Museum, and Perdido Key.

Wayfinding signage systems of this type should be expected to last between ten and fifteen years before having to be replaced. The primary funding for this undertaking will be revenues from the Downtown Parking Management District during FY11. If all goes as currently planned, the manufacturing of the new wayfinding signage should go to bid in late July of this year with installation beginning during January 2011. Getting around in the greater Pensacola area should become much easier for visitors very soon; and thereby make it much more likely that tourists will visit more than one of our major destinations while in our community.

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Pensacola Downtown Improvement Board