



SIGNAGE & WAYFINDING

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PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS

Navigating Downtown. Many people who visit the Downtown may not be familiar with all that it has to offer. In spite of large numbers of signs, many destinations remain difficult to find. Necessary signage is either missing, poorly located, or difficult to understand. “Wayfinding” signage helps visitors – and anyone who is less familiar with Downtown -- find major destinations, parking garages, and places of interest. At a minimum, wayfinding signage should clearly communicate Downtown’s street network and principle paths. To be most effective, wayfinding signage should be:

- legible – signs should be easy to understand;
- consistent – sign types should be limited and communicate information in simple ways,
- logical – sign placement and content should be meaningful and sequential.

Accumulated Complexity. Signage systems support multiple transportation, economic, social, and environmental goals. Through a process of “accumulated complexity,” Downtown has acquired an enormous variety of sign types and numerous applications. Signs have a wide range of shapes, heights, and styles, which gives a sense of visual dissonance or

“clutter.” For example, there are four graphic conventions for bicyclists, and five for motorists. In addition, abutting signs are mounted on separate posts, and signs often hide other signs. As a consequence, signs often make navigating Downtown confusing rather than welcoming and accessible.

User Groups. People arrive with different itineraries and needs, but can be thought of falling into a few simple categories. Wayfinding signage should serve:

- a. visitors to Berkeley (retail & restaurant patrons, theatre & cinema goers, farmers market shoppers, tourists, business people, etc.);
- b. visitors to UC Berkeley (event-goers, academics, parents, potential students, etc.);
- c. students attending a range of institutions (UCB, BCC, and the many other significant institutions in Downtown);
- d. Downtown’s residents and workforce (all types); and
- e. Berkeleyans who might like to become more familiar with Downtown (all Berkeley residents but especially parents, children, and seniors).

Placemaking. Signs can give deeper understanding and appreciation for Downtown, and can be used to reveal Downtown’s heritage and Berkeley’s commitment to sustainability and social equity.

International Icons. Signs can use simple icons (i.e. symbolic images) rather than words. Icons overcome language barriers and are used throughout the world, both of which make



Figure k.1. Clear Information. A simple and legible palette of signs can help people navigate urban areas more easily. Color and icons can be used to communicate information without words.

Facing Page: Wayfinding Signage at BART. Wayfinding signs offer maps and directions on how to get somewhere – as is illustrated by a visitor-oriented sign in BART Plaza.

icons appropriate to Downtown. Icons also take up less space.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Policy 8.1, Finding Destinations & Points of Interest. Signs should make the essential geography of Downtown more obvious, by guiding pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users to major destinations, parking garages, points of interest, and transit nodes. In addition, signs should highlight community assets and values, such as Berkeley's history, educational institutions, and commitment to environmental sustainability. Signage should help people find special Downtown subdistricts, such as the Arts District, the cinema district, and the Civic Center district. Different sidewalk treatments can be used for people with vision impairments help find destinations and navigate Downtown.

- a. Meet with Downtown stakeholders to identify simple ways to improve signage in the near term, such as by identifying the location of confusing or missing signage – especially as it relates to parking. Make such improvements, and continue to evaluate signage needs.
- b. Work with Downtown stakeholders to identify destinations (like museums) and places of interest (like Strawberry Creek). Also work with UC Berkeley to make connections between “town and gown” more transparent, not only within Downtown but also on the UC Campus.
- c. Downtown maps should appear more frequently, especially where pedestrians often have to make decisions on “how to get there,” such as near transit stops, parking

garages, and the bike station. Target these same decision-making locations for wayfinding signage. Signage should address all travel modes.

- d. Use signage to encourage drivers to park in parking garages, and to experience Downtown on foot. Make signage to find Downtown parking easy to see and understand. Encourage dynamic signs for parking facilities that announce how many parking spaces remain in a parking garage and, if fully occupied, direct motorists to other alternatives.
- e. Near BART and other major arrival points, consider using electronic signs and free-standing kiosks with dynamic presentations. Monitors might be placed in vacant storefronts or be incorporated into public art.
- f. Develop a consistent, legible and logical palette of directional signs and icons to provide ways to find major destinations more easily. Develop wayfinding for people of all abilities, including people with limited eyesight.
- g. Consider alternatives to conventional signs, such as metal plaques, sidewalk metal inlays, and terrazzo designs to describe Downtown destinations, historic resources, notable geographic features, and other community assets. Such features should reinforce Downtown's identity as a center for culture and the arts.
- h. Where possible, take advantage of vistas or “directed views” by placing signs along common paths of travel.



Figure k.2. Transit Information. Route, schedule, and fare information promote transit use, and should be provided near BART and well-used bus stops.



Figure k.3. Parking Facilities. Some Downtown parking garages are under-used. Signs should guide motorists and encourage the use of garages – and help make on-street parking more available.

- i. Create a prominent visitors information center in or near BART Plaza, and possibly near the east end of University Avenue because of its direct access to Interstate 80 and the UC campus.
- j. Work with Downtown organizations to develop walking tours and maps that describe places of interest.

Policy 8.2, Visual Harmony. Signage should be aesthetically consistent maintain visual harmony, to the extent possible.

- a. Develop a consistent palette for signage and consolidate signage by using fewer signs and using the same post/pole to mount multiple signs. Develop the consistent palette through a collaborative process that involves City departments, the Downtown Berkeley Association, interested Commissions, and other interested parties. Categories of signs include:
 - Traffic & parking operations;
 - Transit signs (BART, buses, shuttles);
 - Bicycle network;
 - Destination & information for all modes;
 - Public services (e.g., restrooms);
 - Banners; and
 - Historic and other interpretive signage.
- b. Signage should be easy to understand. When taken as a whole, information should not exceed users' capacity to absorb it.

- c. Consider a "hierarchy" of sign size and treatments that correspond with the relative importance of information being communicated. Use color to differentiate different types of information. Limit signage sizes and shapes.
- d. Use international icons to the extent possible, because Berkeley is an international city in many respects.
- e. In unique locations, consider incorporating one-of-a-kind signs within public art.

Policy 8.3, Placement & Visibility. Signs should be easy to see and should be positioned to promote safety.

- a. Signs should meet the requirements of the Municipal Code. These requirements should be reviewed from the perspective of the SOSIP to identify beneficial revisions.
- b. Signs should be well-lighted. External sources of light should generally be used, and internally illuminated signs should be avoided because of their visual intensity.

Policy 8.4, Maintaining Quality. Signs should be long-lasting and well maintained.

- a. Material and paint selections should be durable and graffiti resistant.
- b. Where information may change over time, give consideration to how signs might be updated.
- c. Provide adequate resources for the on-going management and maintenance of signs (see Financing & Maintenance chapter).



Figure k.4. International Signs. International icons are easy to understand and provide a simple consistent look. Icons are available for almost every application (above), and can be part of directional signs (below).



Figure k.5. Accumulated Complexity. Signs often detract from Downtown's beauty because of too many styles and "visual clutter." Signs can also be needlessly redundant.

Direction	Route	Intersection	Major Destinations
From West	University (from I-80)	Milvia	Theater & Art, civic uses
		Shattuck	Bldv Comml, Theater & Art
		Oxford	UC campus directional sign/map
	Dwight	Shattuck	Bldv, cinema
From East	Bancroft	Shattuck	Bldv, cinema
		Milvia	Civic uses
	Haste	Shattuck	Bldv
From South	Shattuck	Durant	Telegraph Ave., UC Admin, UC Professional Schools
		Allston	Civic
		Addison	Theater & Art
		University	UC, University Visitors Facil.
		Hearst	UC, Northside Euclid District
	MLK	Dwight	Telegraph Ave.
		Allston	Civic
		Addison	Theatre and Art
		University	UC Visitors Facilities, Blvd. Commercial
	From North	Shattuck	Hearst
University			UC Visitors Facilities, University Blvd
Addison			Theatre & Art
Allston			Civic
MLK		Hearst	Northside, UC Engineering
		University	UC Visitors Facilities, University Blvd
		Addison	Theatre & Art
		Allston	Civic
Transit	BART		Multiple Destinations
	Bus Stops		Multiple Destinations

Table k.1. Wayfinding Decision Locations.

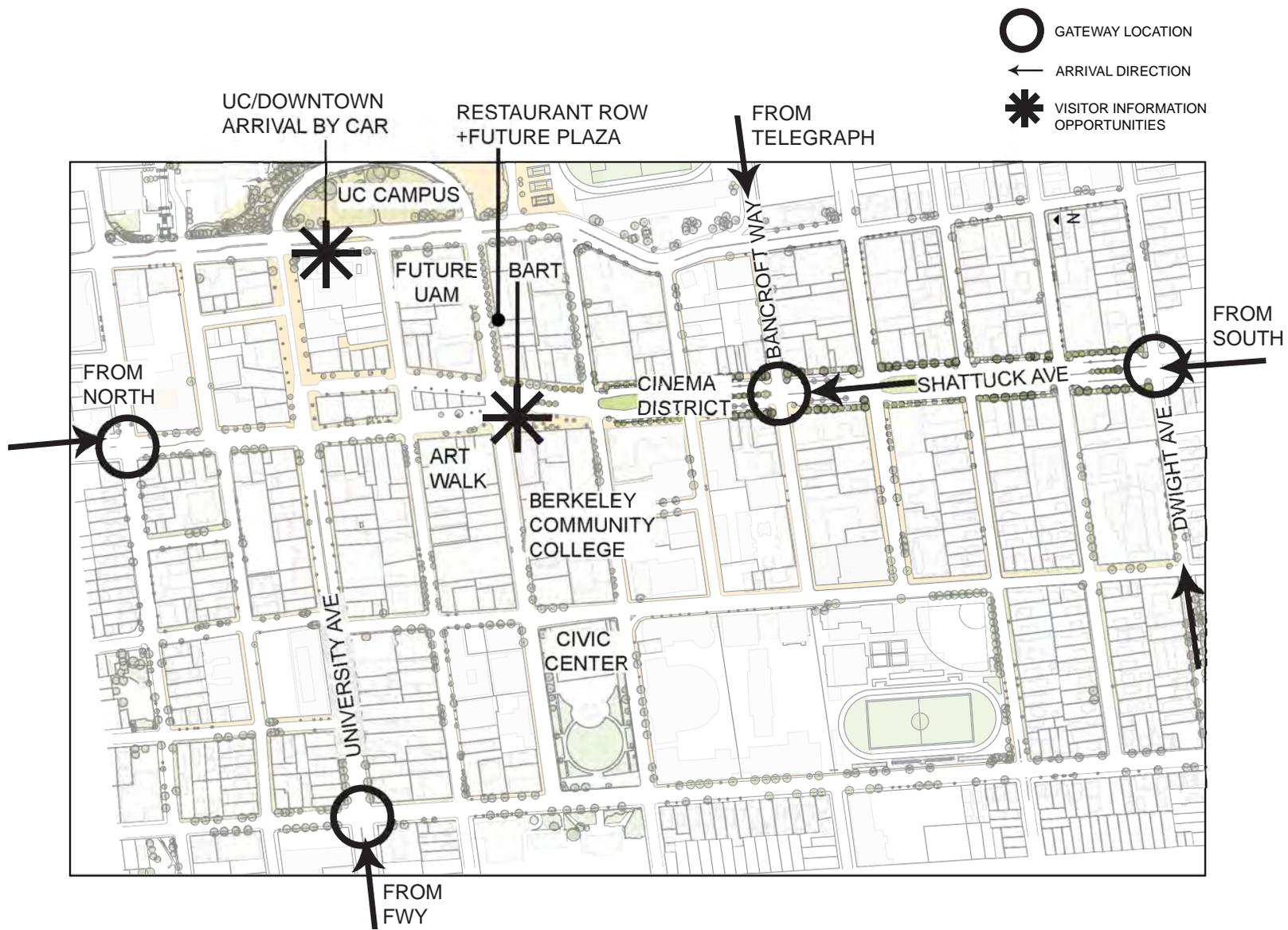


Figure k.6. Major Wayfinding Signage Opportunities. Signage can announce arrival to the Downtown at BART Plaza and along major streets, especially at “gateway” locations where motorists pass and may need guidance.