

City of Seattle

Introduction to Wayfinding



Seamless Seattle

Seamless Seattle is a wayfinding project by the City that forms part of its Pedestrian Master Plan.

The project aims to use information design to encourage people to walk more and further.

By the summer of 2019, the City aims to produce city-wide planning guidelines, design standards and two pilot projects.



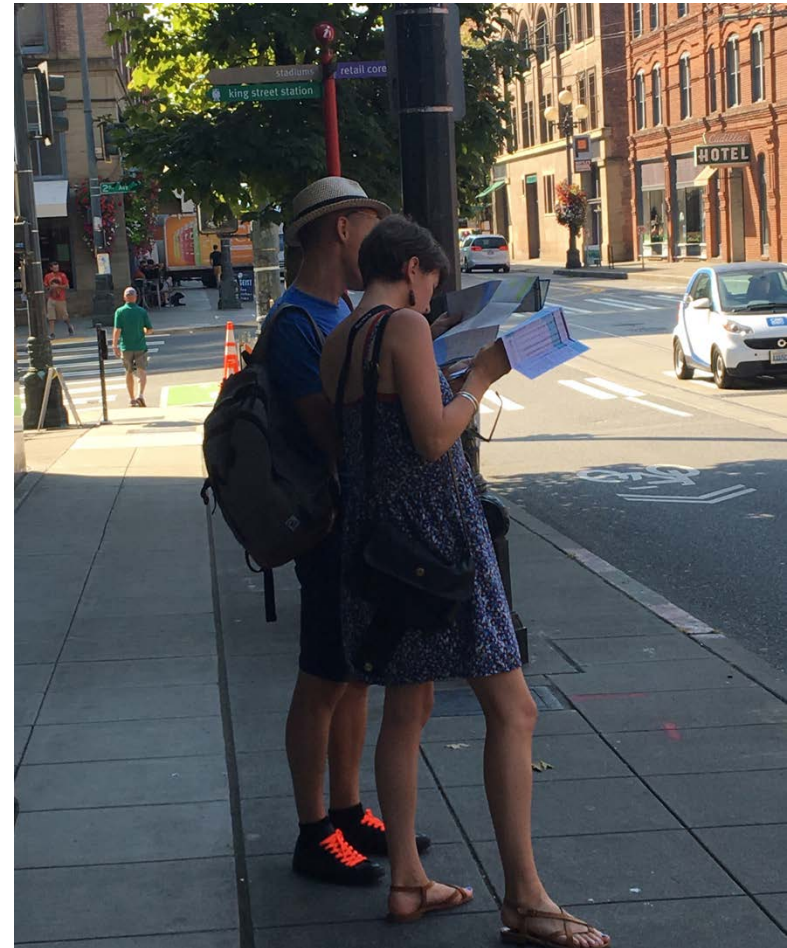
What is wayfinding?

Wayfinding is about how we navigate places.

Wayfinding projects create information to help people navigate cities more easily.

But every city is different and everyone uses different wayfinding strategies.

To design signs, maps and other tools for wayfinding we need to understand the city, movement and its people.

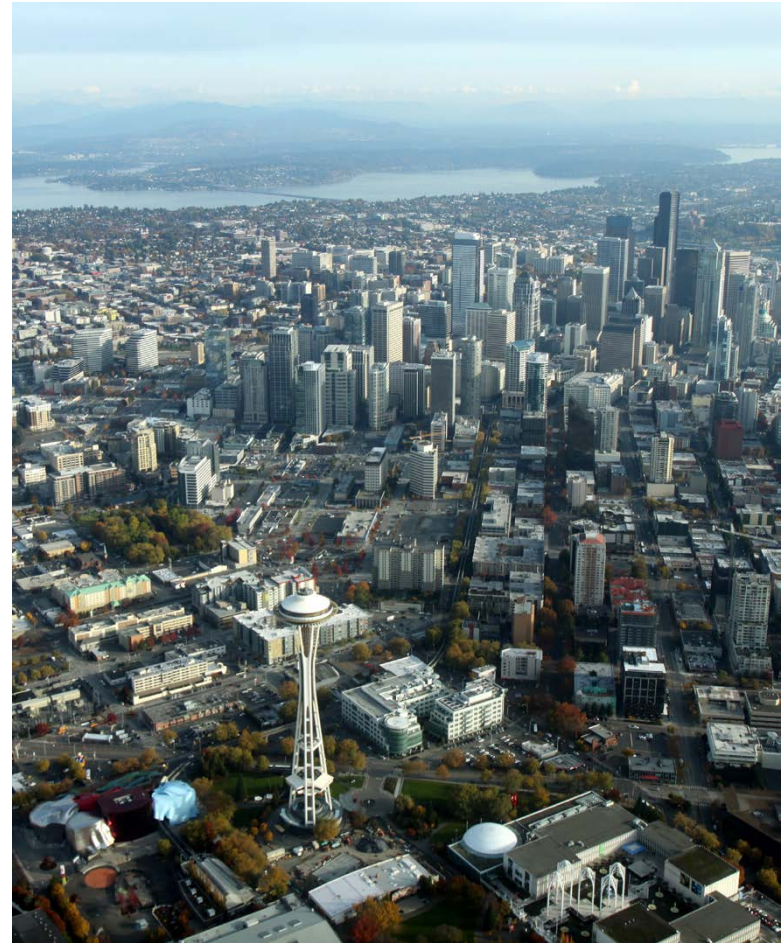


Understanding cities

When we navigate we notice the character of the place - its landmarks and neighborhoods.

We also notice the routes through it - the paths, natural barriers and points where paths cross.

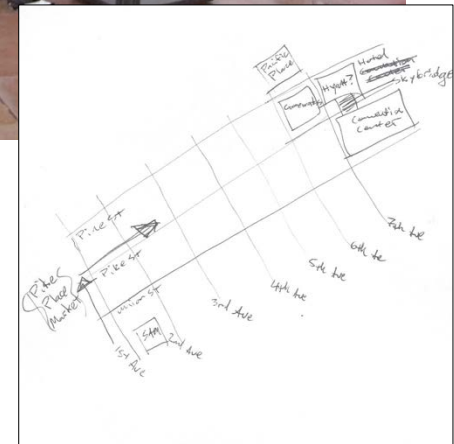
The more complicated these factors are, the more information may be needed to explain them.



Understanding movement

Then way we travel, the routes we prefer and the places we avoid provide clues to a hidden structure of movement.

We observe people and ask them to draw maps to work out where decisions are made and which routes to show in directions.



Understanding cities

People have different wayfinding requirements depending on how familiar they are with a place, the journey they are making, and their personal needs.

We need to ensure information is simple, reliable and consistent so it can be used by everyone.



Project steps 1. Planning

Wayfinding projects start with planning.

We undertake research to create an understanding of how easy the city is to navigate, the routes people use, the places they go to, and the names people use to describe them.

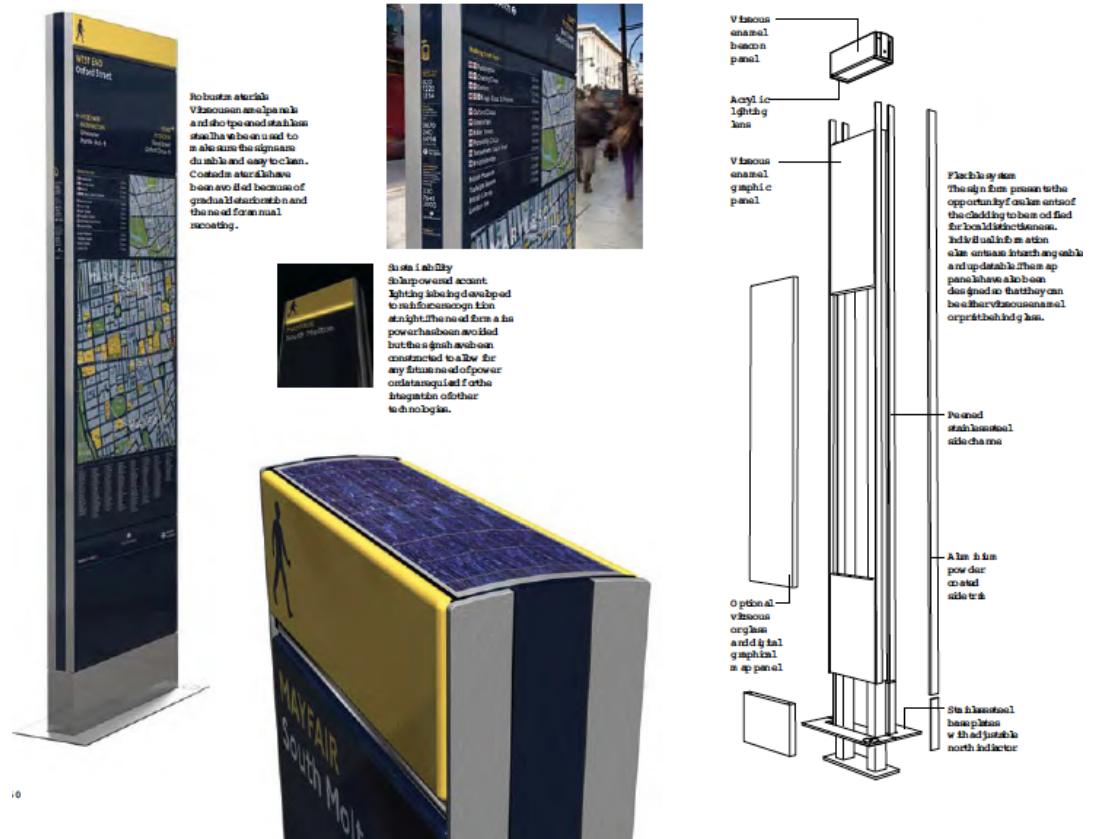
This data is used to create rules and guidelines for how wayfinding should work.



Project steps 2. Design

The design process takes the planning guidelines and combines it with a design approach that includes local identity, landmarks, history and other aspects gained from consultation.

The design process goes through concepts, finalization and detailing and so the final products are unique to each city.



Project steps 3. Management

The final step is to create the plan for how all the pieces of information are produced, installed and kept up to date by everyone who is responsible.

The management plan is essential to make sure the wayfinding system lasts and remains useful.

