

DESIGNING A WAYFINDING SYSTEM FOR DOWNTOWN SAINT PAUL

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES PROJECT

About the Partner

Capitol River District Council (CRC) is one of the seventeen district councils for the City of Saint Paul. CRC is a non-profit organization that seeks to engage residents, business owners, workers, and property owners in issues and projects that affect downtown Saint Paul and the Capitol area.



Project Description

CRC staff have received feedback from cultural institutions, businesses, visitors, and residents that there are several challenges to wayfinding in the downtown Saint Paul and Capitol area.

First-time visitors to museums or entertainment venues sometimes struggle to figure out their route through the skyways or streets to their destination and zoning requirements that prevent exterior signage can make parts of Downtown seem confusing and desolate. Downtown Saint Paul has several one-way streets, transit stations, and other challenges to navigation for people who are driving, walking or biking. For transit users, it can be difficult to decide which stops are the closest to your desired destination. The skyway system adds another element of complexity, especially related to mobile apps that are only designed for street use.

This project will involve assessing the overall look and feel of Downtown Saint Paul, and developing design concepts and recommendations to overcome challenges related to wayfinding. An essential goal is to develop design strategies that will help people find museums and other arts and cultural amenities.

This project aims to contribute to City goals that seek to:

- Activate streetscapes with active first floor uses, street trees, public art, outdoor commercial uses and other uses that contribute to a vibrant street life
- Build and expand neighborhood economic and cultural assets and connect them to one another and the Mississippi River
- Make walking safe and comfortable
- Strengthen Downtown as a residential neighborhood that provides services and amenities to people of all ages
- Promote a broad mix of uses that attract greater numbers of people and employers to ensure Downtown's vitality as the civic, cultural, and employment center of the East Metro

Key Issues, Questions, and Ideas to Explore

1. How should Downtown organizations and City planners create a wayfinding system that takes into account the full range of ways that people get into and out of Downtown, and find their way around Downtown?
2. How can street-level and skyway wayfinding be designed in an integrated way?
3. How can a wayfinding system for Downtown be designed to benefit from its various neighborhood identities? Is there a need or opportunity to strengthen neighborhood boundaries to help people better understand their location and how to access their destination? If yes, how?
4. How can wayfinding be designed to benefit multiple transportation modes including walking, biking, transit, or driving personal vehicles?
5. Should an app, or other technology, be incorporated into the wayfinding design of Downtown Saint Paul? How are other cities incorporating technology into their wayfinding?

How Student Work Will Be Used to Build Community Resilience

- To help make Downtown Saint Paul more vibrant and connected and to improve economic resilience

Potential Community Partners or Stakeholders

- Saint Paul's Downtown Alliance
- Visit Saint Paul
- Building Owners and Managers Association
- Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
- City of St. Paul:
 - Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED)
 - Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI)
 - Heritage Preservation Commission
 - Department of Public Works

Existing Plans & Reports

- City of Saint Paul: Pedestrian Plan
- Greater Lowertown Master Plan
- River Balcony Master Plan
- Downtown Vitality Report
- Capitol City Bikeway
- 4th Street Market District
- Central Station Block Design Guidelines
- CRC Community Engagement

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