WAUSAU

Wayfinding Program

The City of Wausau, Wisconsin has retained Corbin Design to develop a wayfinding analysis. The purpose of this is to evaluate how people find their way to destinations both within downtown and throughout the region. From August 17-19, 2015, Corbin Design toured the area and met with local stakeholders to better understand how people find their way and how it can be improved.

The recommendations in this document will focus on two objectives. First, to simplify direction-giving and provide tools to help visitors navigate. Second, and equally important, is building an awareness of all that Wausau has to offer to both visitors and residents.

The report is the first step in the process. Based on this foundation, future project phases can focus on the design and locations of wayfinding signage and other tools to improve visitor experiences throughout the region.

corbindesign

Jeff Frank, Senior Designer
Moira O'Polka, Project Manager

The foundation of Wausau's wayfinding program is the **wayfinding logic** that determines the appropriate messaging across all navigation tools. The goal of the program is to determine the most intuitive way to help first-time visitors understand and navigate Downtown Wausau.

The **wayfinding logic** is a series of strategies and recommendations that outlines the overall plan to inform and direct first-time visitors along predetermined routes to districts, public parking and destinations.

Q: What is wayfinding?
A: Direction for people in motion.
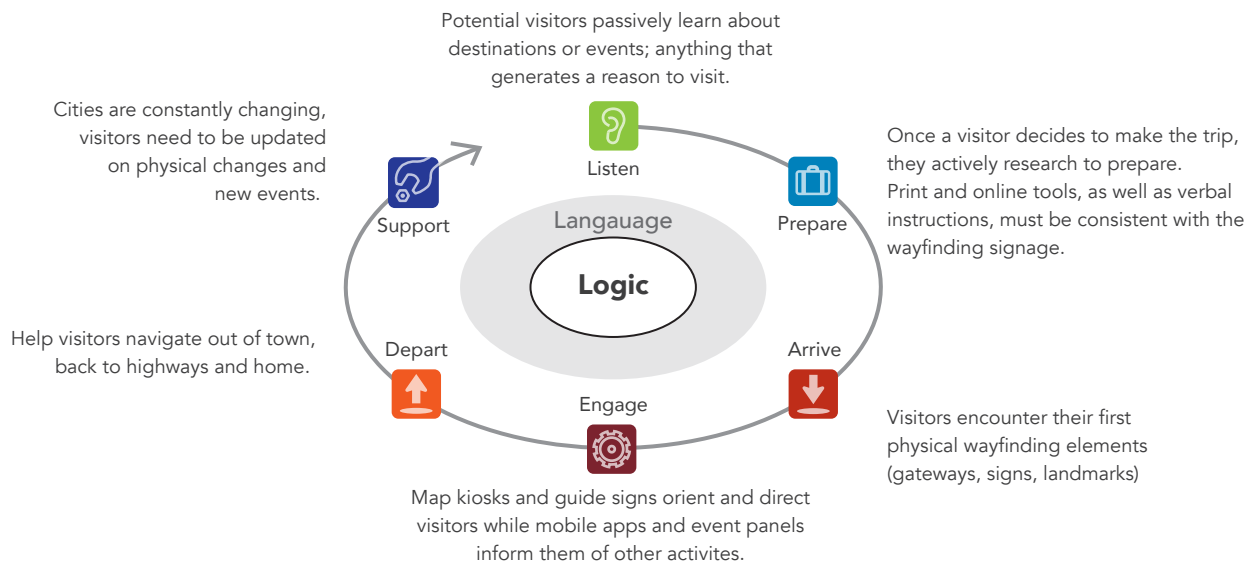
Wayfinding is unique among public "utilities" because it has an opportunity not only to move people through space to their intended destination, but also to carry brand elements.

Wayfinding is much more than attractive signs. The program must build upon a logical progression of orderly information which becomes more detailed as visitors approach their destination. In order to accomplish this, a wayfinding system must be simple, clear and effective for residents and visitors.

The accompanying graphic depicts each potential point of contact with a given visitor. In order for a wayfinding system to be most effective, the visitor must be able to create a picture of the physical environment "in their mind's eye" prior to arrival. In this way, the signs in the environment reinforce what they already know about the area.

We know that a diverse audience uses many different tools to navigate an environment, so communication via Web, mobile, print and signage elements must be consistent.

Educated, empowered visitors will feel confident and capable as they navigate Wausau, and are made aware of other opportunities once the initial reason for their visit is completed.

Potential visitors passively learn about destinations or events; anything that generates a reason to visit.

Cities are constantly changing, visitors need to be updated on physical changes and new events.

Help visitors navigate out of town, back to highways and home.

Once a visitor decides to make the trip, they actively research to prepare. Print and online tools, as well as verbal instructions, must be consistent with the wayfinding signage.

Visitors encounter their first physical wayfinding elements (gateways, signs, landmarks)

Map kiosks and guide signs orient and direct visitors while mobile apps and event panels inform them of other activites.

Listen

Support

Langauage

Logic

Prepare

Depart

Arrive

Engage

"Wayfinding is really important in Wausau. We take for granted everything we know about our community. People who live and work in the downtown area know everything that is happening here. When a visitor comes to town, you want them to feel welcomed."

- Jamie Schaefer, chief operating officer, Ruder Ware Law

70% of visitors would consider extending their trip if new, additional destinations were discovered

Asheville NC Convention and Visitor's Bureau
Survey of 4076 people

+30%
Camden, New Jersey Waterfront
30% increase in visitation since installation of their wayfinding program.

+10%
Lancaster, Pennsylvania
10% increase in visitation in the first year of the wayfinding program.

+18%
Norristown, Pennsylvania
18% increase in visitation in the first year and 8% the following year.

Return on Investment

In November 2008, the International Downtown Association submitted wayfinding to the Obama Transition Team as one of its top 10 economic initiatives for America's downtowns.

Results of Asheville NC Survey by Convention and Visitor's Bureau of 4076 people surveyed:

87%
Would explore further if signage and kiosks provided direction to additional attractions

11%
Would definitely extend their trip by one additional overnight stay, if new or additional destinations were discovered

11% of visitors =
85,241
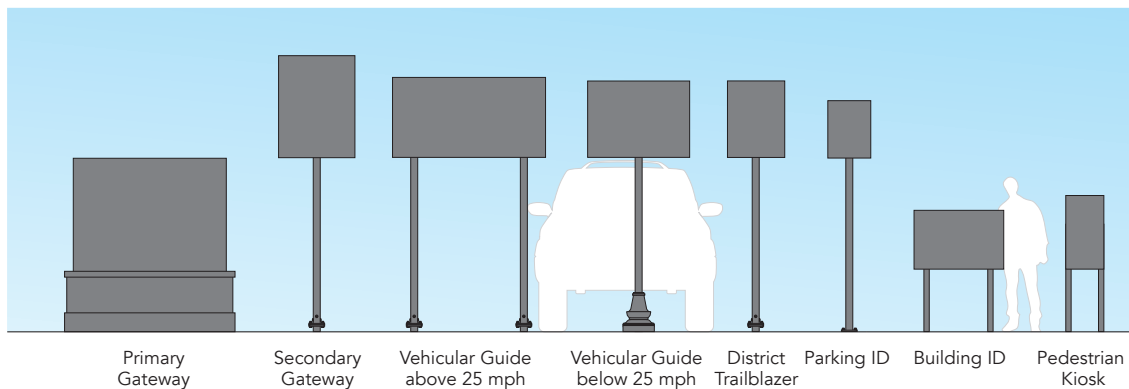**additional overnight stays**
in a three year period

Increase in Tourism
Wayfinding creates "repeat visitation" by increasing awareness of the depth of destinations.

"Wausau has the ability to direct people downtown but where do they go from there? It's important to give (visitors) a sense of direction and security to take a path less traveled. "

- Beth Hinner, co-owner at Thrive Foodery

Sample Sign Type Array

| Primary Gateway | Secondary Gateway | Vehicular Guide above 25 mph | Vehicular Guide below 25 mph | District Trailblazer | Parking ID | Building ID | Pedestrian Kiosk |

Note that these sign silhouettes represent sign types only, not design, and are approximate in size.

Elements of a Successful Wayfinding Program

Design for the first-time visitor. Repeat visitors will rely more on their own experience. The simplest route between two points may not be a straight line, particularly for a visitor who is unfamiliar with the city. Our goal will be to help design and direct that first experience, assuring a positive experience and future return visits.

Structure information. Tools designed to support a visitor's journey must provide the proper information at key decision points to keep visitors moving toward their destination. We call this concept "Progressive Disclosure," carefully planning the information provided at each decision point. The challenge, then, is to verbally and visually simplify the information in the system. Consistency is the key to success.

Support intuition. Wayfinding systems work best when they build upon routes that are intuitive to first-time visitors. Wayfinding cues should come as much as possible from the environment itself. Each destination is distinct and we will take advantage of the verbal and visual cues already familiar to most downtown residents. This way everyday people can help support consistent wayfinding if asked for directions.

Design the system for easy updating. The need to change a single message should not require the replacement of an entire sign structure.

Northwest Marathon

Northeast Marathon

Wausau

Brokaw

Marathon City

Central Marathon

Schofield

Weston

Rib Mountain

Rothschild

Southwest Marathon

Kronenwetter

Mosinee

Southeast Marathon

Marathon County — Central Marathon — Wausau

Marathon County Regional Wayfinding

The County is divided into five distinct zones based on natural geographical divisions (Wisconsin River-North/South, Eau Claire River-to East, Big Rib River-to West) and the primary roadways (Interstate 39/Route 51-North/South and Highway 29-East/West).
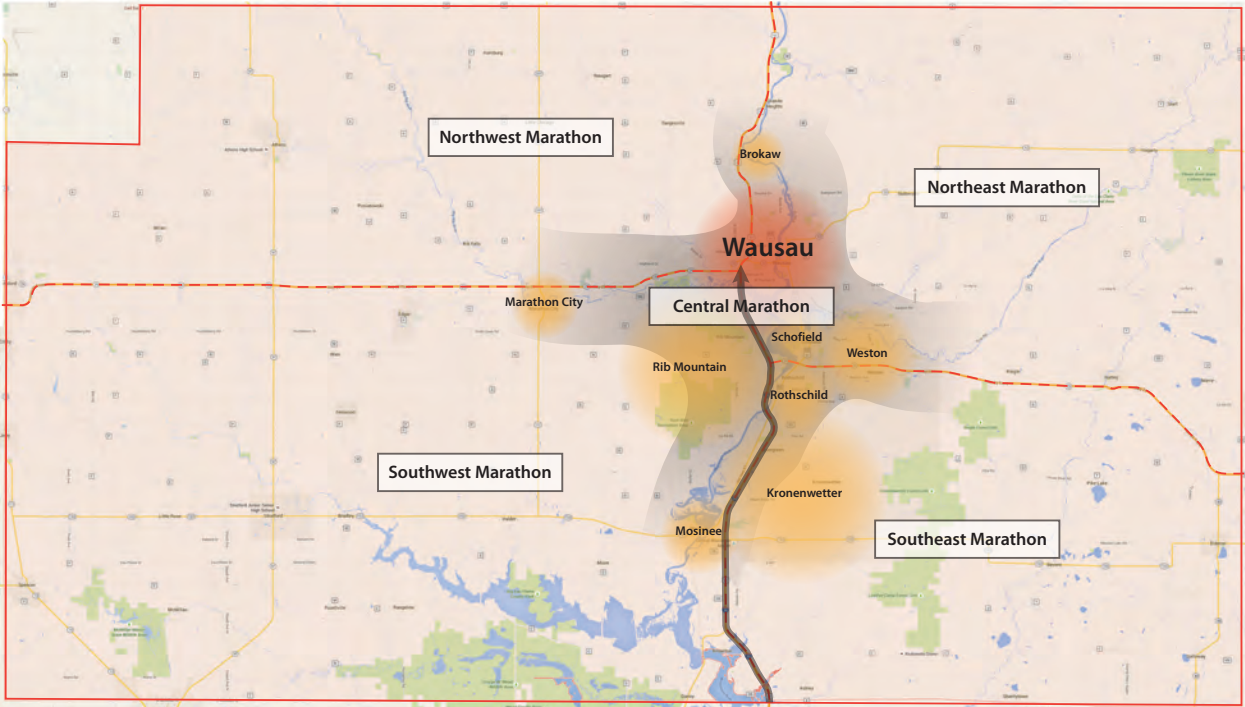
MARATHON COUNTY

County Region:

Central Marathon
Northwest Marathon
Northeast Marathon
Southwest Marathon
Southeast Marathon
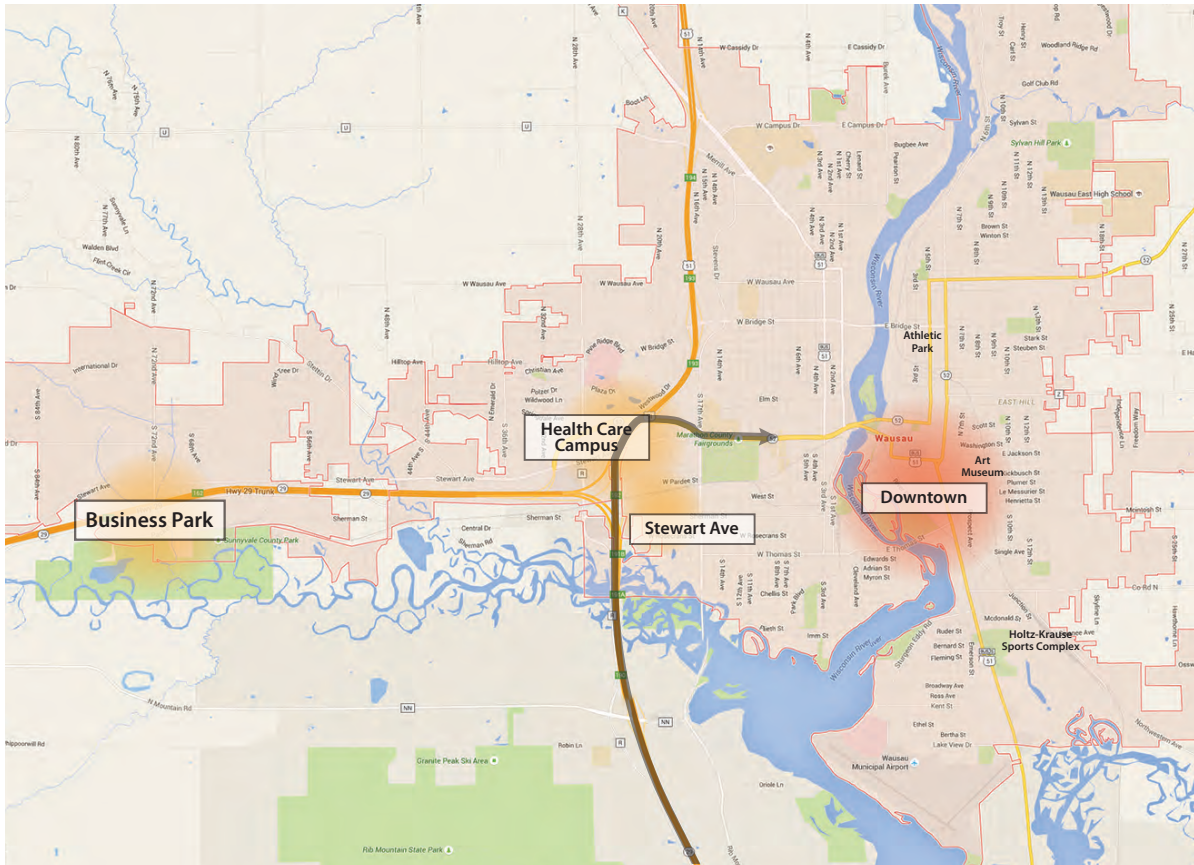
Wausau Municipal Districts

The City of Wausau has four distinct centers of activity between which visitors can be directed. Steward Avenue poses a unique challenge: when visitors exit the highway, they may confuse Stewart Avenue for Downtown. This can be resolved by modifying the exisiting gateway sign at Steward Avenue and 17th, and providing additional guide signs directing vehicular traffic to Downtown.
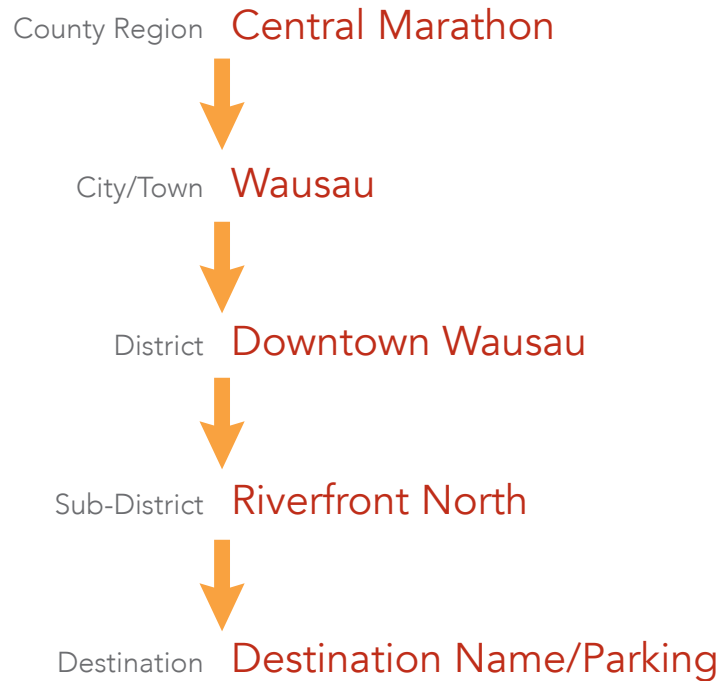
Districts Names

DOWNTOWN

Stewart Ave District

Health Care Campus

Business Park

Future Districts
Westown (West of Downtown)
Health Care Campus

The progressive disclosure technique for displaying information willbe structured like this:

County Region — Central Marathon

↓

City/Town — Wausau

↓

District — Downtown Wausau

↓

Sub-District — Riverfront North

↓

Destination — Destination Name/Parking

Progressive disclosure is an interaction design technique often used to help maintain the focus of a user's attention by reducing clutter, confusion, and cognitive workload. This improves usability by presenting only the minimum information required for the task at hand. In this case, deciding whether to turn your vehicle.

Promote Centers of Activity

County/Region
City/Town
District
Wayfinding District
Districts are large sections of the city with their own individual identity.

Guidelines for district naming:

Names should be neutral since areas may be multi-use.

Names and boundaries must allow for growth.

Use of districts is beneficial to both primary and secondary destinations.

Colors and branding can be used to differentiate the districts.

Provide direction to any primary destination that lies outside of a district using its proper name.

Map labels: Athletic Park, Riverfront North, River Edge Parkway destination within the district, Health Care Campus, Future District: Westown or Westside, Downtown Riverfront, Downtown, Stewart Ave District, Riverfront South

Diagram labels: Highway, Stewart Ave District, Future Westown District, Riverfront North, Riverfront South, Downtown

Wausau Downtown Districts

Once drivers approach Downtown, additional guide signs will direct them to its associated districts. The Riverfront and future Westown district should always use Downtown as the central orientation point.

Districts Names

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Riverfront

Riverfront NORTH

Riverfront SOUTH

Stewart Ave District

Future District:
Westown (West of Downtown)

A business development district is not the same as a wayfinding district.

Alternate
"Gateway District"
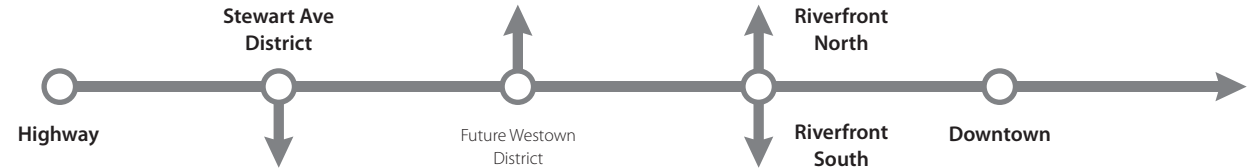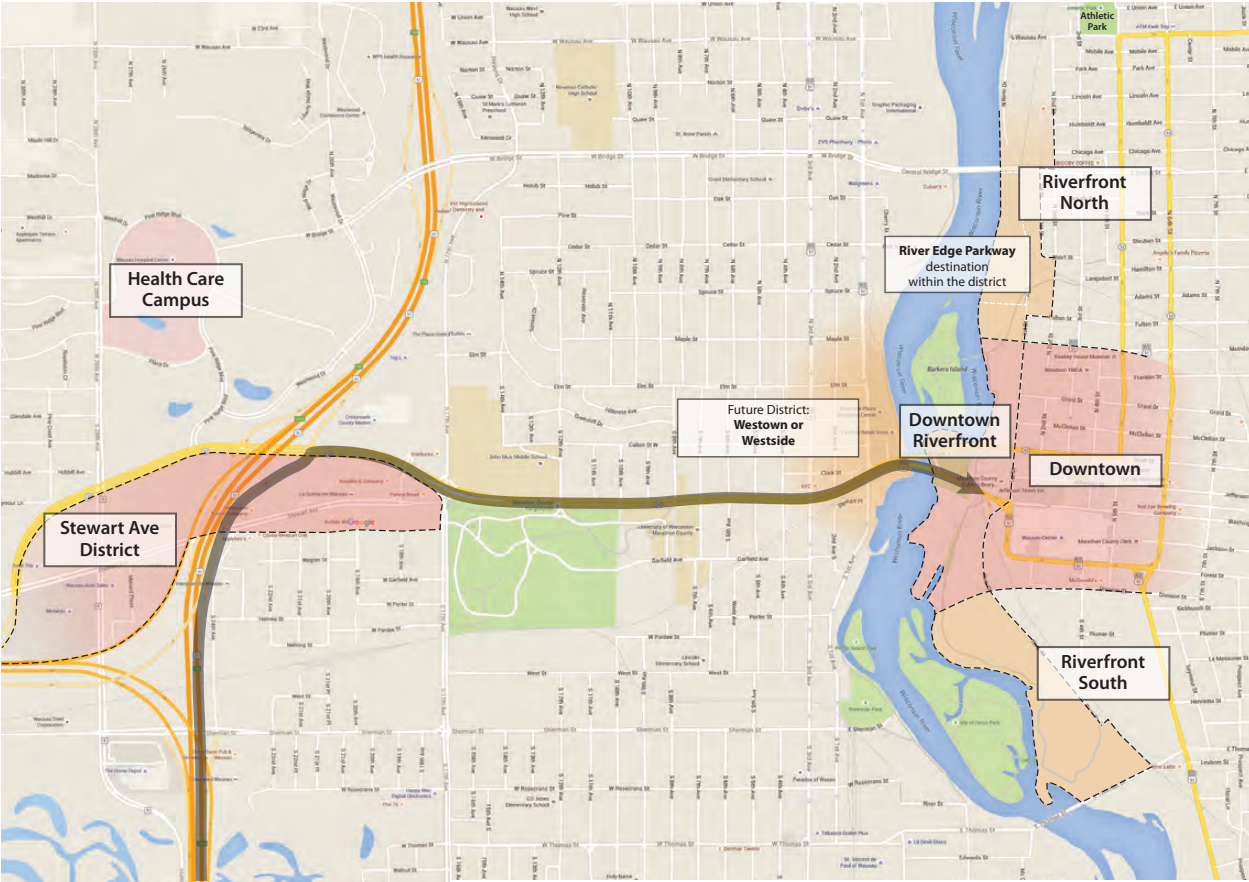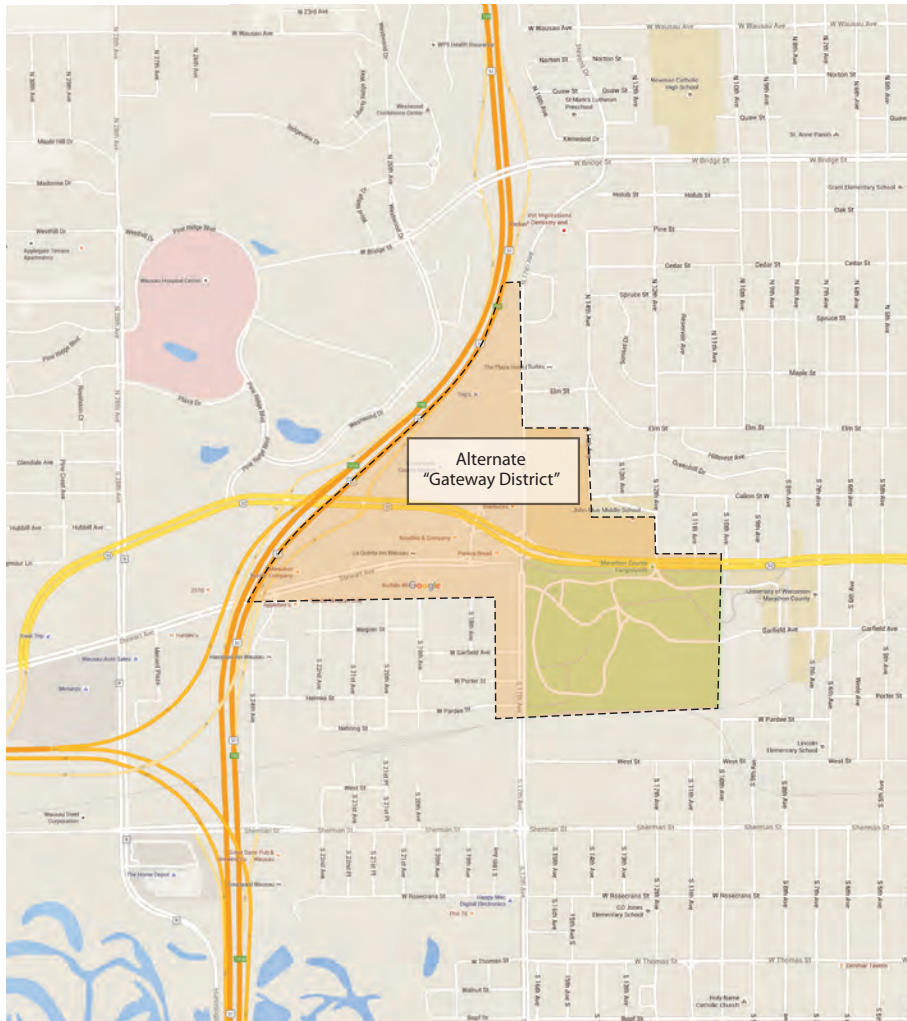
Alternate District Boundary

The Stewart Avenue area could be expanded to include businesses north of Stewart Aveune and the Marathon County Fairgrounds.

Potential Names:

Gateway District
Stewart Corridor

It is important to identify Wausau's top destinations for **first-time** visitors.

Destination Naming and Inclusion

A wayfinding program is only as good as the information it contains. It is important to consider destination names that are included on wayfinding signage for consistency, clarity and fit.

Wausau should establish a local criteria for destinations' inclusion on Wayfinding Signage. The City criteria should comply with WisDOT standards. Because the DOT will only allow three destinations on a vehicular guide sign, space on vehicular guide signs is limited. Destinations that do not meet criteria for vehicular guide signs can be included on pedestrian level signage.

Guidelines need to be established for documentation and implementation of vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding systems. Guidelines should provide a precedent and provide a logical framework for future destination additions and removals.

Establish a wayfinding group to meet and review wayfinding requests. A wayfinding system will evolve over time and should be designed to grow and change. Visitors need updated and accurate information so they know they can trust the signage.

Destination	Suggested Name for Signage	District	Priority
400 Block	400 Block Park	Downtown	Primary
Andrew Warren Historic District East Hill Historic District	Historic Districts		Secondary
Athletic Park			Primary
Barker Stewart Island Park			Secondary
Big Bull Falls Park			Secondary
Business Park		Business Park	
Center for the Visual Arts		Downtown	Secondary
City Hall		Downtown	
County Courthouse	Courthouse	Downtown	
Fern Island Park/Oak Island Park	Fern/Oak Island		Secondary
Grand Theater		Downtown	Primary
Eastbay Soccer Complex	Soccer Complex		Secondary
Jefferson Street Inn		Downtown	Secondary
Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum	Art Museum		Primary
Marathon County Public Library	Public Library	Downtown Riverfront	
Marathon Park			Primary
Riverside Park			Secondary
Riverwalk			
Robert W. Monk Gardens	Monk Gardens		Secondary
Sunny Vale Park			Secondary
Sylvan Hill			Secondary
Visitor Center		Downtown	Primary
Wausau Center		Downtown	
Wausau Curling Center	Curling Center		Secondary
Wausau Center Mall	*TBD*	Downtown	Primary
Wausau Whitewater Kayak Course	Kayak Course	Downtown Riverfront	Primary
Yawkey House Museum	Historical Museum		Primary

Riverfront North ↑ ○———○———Ⓟ━━━○━━━━○━━━━○
Riverfront South ↓

Downtown   Jefferson Ramp   Visitor Center   400 Block Park   Grand Theater

Downtown Circulation Plan

It is important to understand the pattern of movement that characterizes a place in order to develop the best wayfinding logic.

Defining routes that visually invite the visitor, avoid congestion, lead to easy parking and establish safe pedestrian routes will enhance visitors' experience of Wausau.

Gateways are important first impressions that provide the first hint about the character and quality of the community. They should create a sense of arrival and make the visitor want to stop. Consider them an investment with a tremendous potential for return.

Pedestrian routes should be supported with guide signs and kiosks. Kiosks should be located in areas with high levels of visitor foot traffic, appropriate for people to gather around the sign without blocking the sidewalk. Additional guide signs can be place at intersections directing to shopping and dining oppor-tunities that may be off the primary paths.

Guide signs can also be used to direct visitors to and from parking. Public parking areas should have distinctive names to make them easier for visitors to remember. The simplest and most reliable logic used for naming public parking is to use the street name or street address. This allows the parking lots to be search by GPS enabled devices.
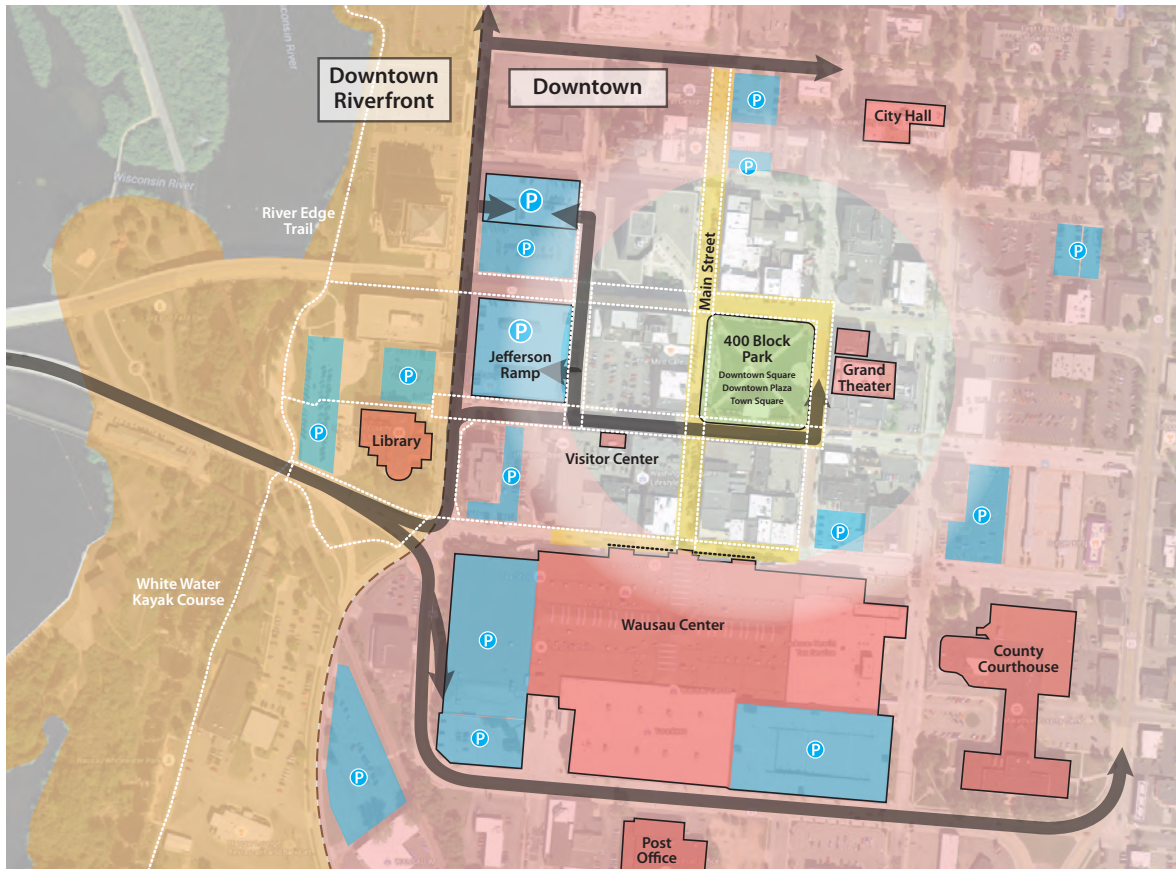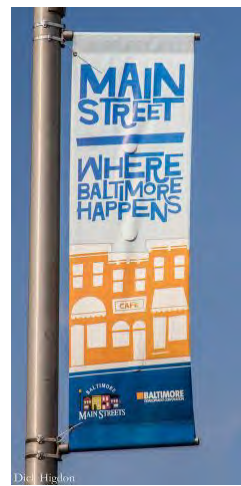
Beyond Signage

A successful wayfinding program is based on much more than signage. The basis of this program is the logic and language set forth in this document. Applying this foundation to multiple wayfinding tools will help strengthen the program and improve the overall visitor experience.

Landmarks

Landmarks can be used to help make places easier to understand and navigate. A landmark should be visible, speakable, memorable and unique. We recommend highlighting the following landmarks: bird sculpture on Stewart Avenue, Wisconsin River, 400 Block Park. Consider adding mural landmarks on visible building fronts throughout the downtown area.

Banners

Banners can be used to help define city/district boundaries. They can help visitors understand when they are transitioning from one area to the next. Banners are also a way to involve the local community. Other cities have seen success in asking local artists to submit entries in the form of photographs, drawings, paintings or other visual arts to be recreated on the banners.

Other Wayfinding Tools

Kiosk Information
On static kiosks, provide web address or QR code to direct visitors to more information.
$

Mobile Enabled Website
Optimize websites to work efficiently on multiple platforms and devices.
$

Visit Wausau App
Develop web-based app for retail, dining, business and key attractions. App can also be used to promote upcoming events.
$$

Near Field Communications
Smartphones equipped with NFC can be paired with NFC Tags or stickers on physical signs which can launch an app, or prompt the user to accept wayfinding/navigation data. This passive technology is more effective than a QR code.
$$

Bluetooth Beacons
Like NFC technology, this passive resource sends a location-specific message to a smartphone app.
$$$

Interactive Kiosks
Provide visitors with the opportunity to explore Wausau website and apps through the use of tablets at the Visitors Center and River District office. If successful, consider transitioning to larger interactive screen display over time.
$$$

Interactive LED Guide Sign
Programable LED sign blades that change messages depending on the time of day or for special events.
$$$$

Parking Meter App and Digital Meters
Though there is ample public parking downtown, providing visitors the opportunity to pay for parking via credit card or mobile phone makes downtown more convenient and accessible.
$$$$

Technology
We know that visitors to Wausau will use multiple tools to navigate in the region. Once the foundational logic and tools are established, consider the following tools to support and enhance the information in the environment.
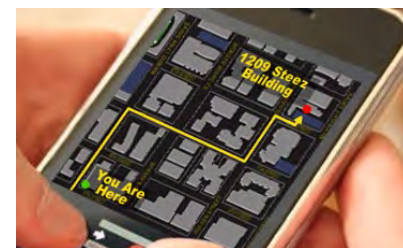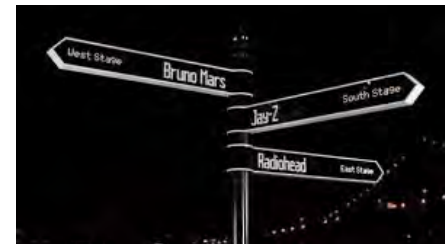
Design Considerations
Wausau is considered by many as the "Gateway to the Northwoods." It prides itself on the Northwoods feel as a hub of arts and recreation activities.

Next Steps
City to approve circulation plan and Wayfinding Recommendations Summary.

Corbin Design to prepare two initial design concepts and present onsite.

Develop selected concept into full sign type array.

Develop budgetary estimate based upon approved designs.

Create sign location plans and sign message schedule.

Prepare bid-ready design intent drawings that will include sign specifications.

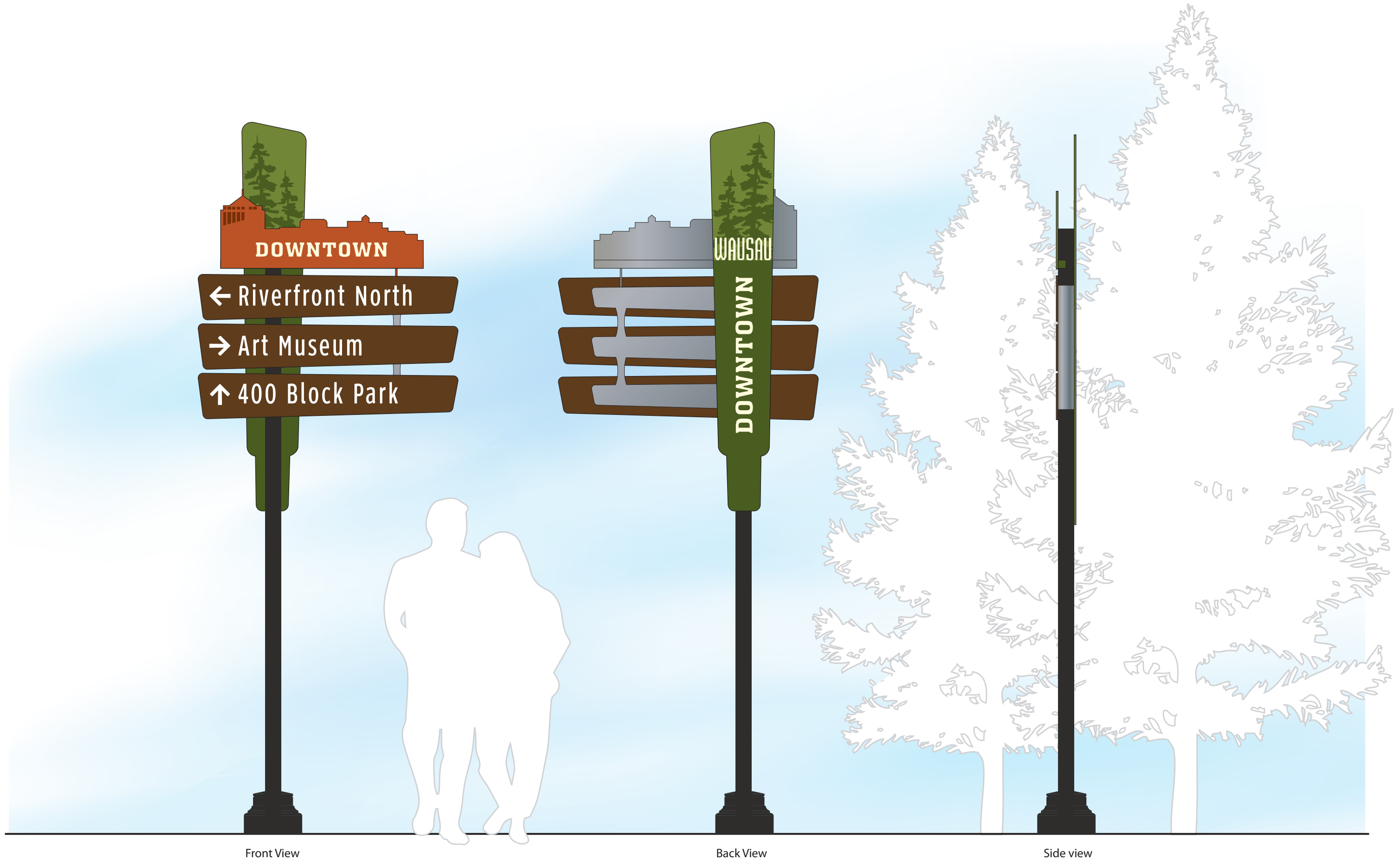Create Wayfinding Master Plan that will include phasing recommendations.

Wausau Wisconsin
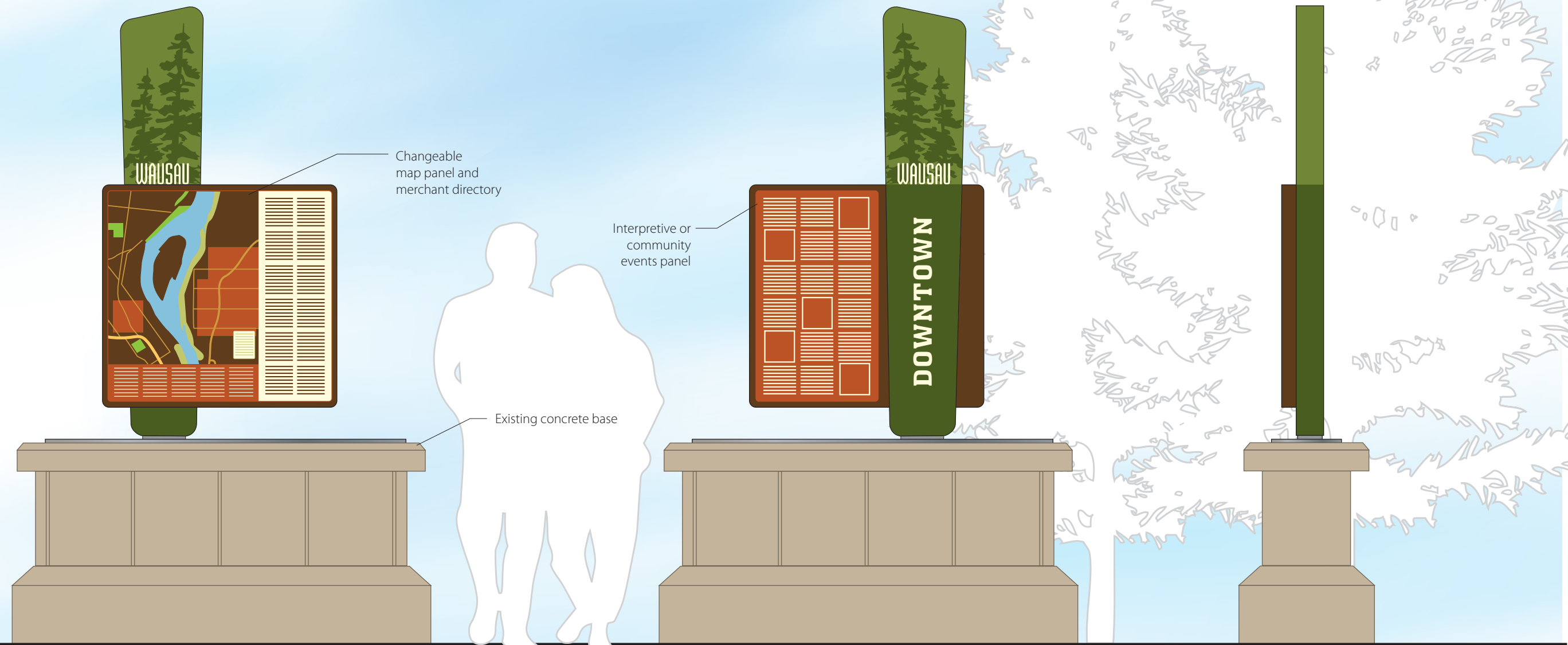# Wayfinding Signage
DESIGN CONCEPTS

10.27.15

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DOWNTOWN

← Riverfront North

→ Art Museum

↑ 400 Block Park

WAUSAU

DOWNTOWN

Front View

Back View

Side view

Concept 1 Vehicular Guide

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Changeable map panel and merchant directory

Interpretive or community events panel

Existing concrete base

Front View

Back View

Side View

Concept 1 Pedestrian Kiosk

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DOWNTOWN
← Riverfront North
→ Art Museum
↑ 400 Block Park

WAUSAU
DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN
← Riverfront North
→ Art Museum
↑ 400 Block Park

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↑ 400 Block Park

WAUSAU
DOWNTOWN

DOWNTOWN
← Riverfront North
→ Art Museum
↑ 400 Block Park

WAUSAU
DOWNTOWN

Option 1 (with optional bracket detail)

Option 2

Option 3

Option 4 (with optional bracket detail)

Concept 1 Optional Color Schemes

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Preliminary Phase 1 Sign Location Plan

Scale

NTS
(on an 8.5 x 11 sheet)

Symbols

Gx-1	Large Vehicular Guide	
Ix-1	Gateway ID (Not shown on map; to be located near highway exit)	
Px-1	Pedestrian Kiosk, new base	
Px-1a	Pedestrian Kiosk, existing base	

Notes

This location plan is preliminary in nature and is not intended for use in fabrication or installation.

All locations to be verified onsite by selected fabricator and client.

Date	Description
10.27.15	Preliminary Phase 1 Sign Location Plan

Client

WAUSAU
WISCONSIN

>

corbindesign

109 East Front Suite 304
Traverse City, MI 49684

231 947.1236

Map labels:

Downtown Riverfront

Downtown

City Hall

Wisconsin River

River Edge Trail

Downtown Center

400 Block Park
Downtown Square
Downtown Plaza
Town Square

Grand Theater

Jefferson Ramp

Library

Visitor Center

White Water Kayak Course

Wausau Center

County Courthouse

Post Office