

CITY OF GLENDALE
CITY SIGNAGE ASSESSMENT



PUBLIC SIGNAGE & GRAPHICS
EVALUATION OF EXISTING CONDITIONS
& RECOMMENDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Like all cities, the City of Glendale communicates with drivers and pedestrians by means of signs. Lots of signs. Information in the form of posted signs tells us where to go, how to get there, and what we can and can't do. Signs show us where to park, how much to pay, and what will happen to us if we don't pay. Signs both encourage and restrict behavior.

Posted information about what, when and how is primary to accessing the City's environments and services. However, over the years, signage in and around Glendale has become cumbersome, mismatched and even degrading to Glendale's image. In some places there is too much signage; in other critical areas, not enough signs exist to facilitate circulation, parking, and walking to destinations.

But taken together, these many signs have an effect beyond information giving – their collective presence plays a major role in the visual environment. Over the years, several 'sets' of signs and hundreds of individual signs have been deployed in Glendale. These signs, while individually 'functional' do not work as a system of organized communication. Multiple signs appear at nearly every city intersection and mid-block on downtown streets. They often seem to dominate the street scene, distracting from otherwise attractive landscaping and scenic views. The result is a cityscape of sign clutter.

GOALS OF THE REPORT

Clearly, a substantial upgrade of public signage and related elements is needed. This report is the first step toward improving signage and graphics in and around Glendale. Specific goals of the work under this report are:

- Review and analyze existing signage conditions throughout the City.
- Make broad recommendations for improvements.
- Define a process for implementation of the recommendations.

Following the review of this report, design guidelines will be established for all public signage, with specific design and layout standards for each category of signage. Then individual across-the-board sign replacement projects may be undertaken. Such work will include programming, design, documentation, fabrication and construction.

BENEFITS OF NEW AND CONSISTENT SIGNAGE

New signage in Glendale will have many benefits, including:

1. Providing more effective and efficient wayfinding to destinations.
2. Improving use of public parking facilities.
3. Presenting a stronger sense of arrival for drivers and pedestrians at points of entry.
4. Improving expression of city affiliation at parking facilities.
5. Facilitating circulation to secondary destinations.
6. Encouraging pedestrian activity.
7. Encouraging longer stays and more retail sales.
8. Reducing sign clutter.
9. Contributing to the City's image.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on focused and detailed visits to Glendale and coordination with city staff. Included in the multiple-day effort were:

- Discussions of signage, identity and visitor understanding.
- Vehicular 'tours' of all approach highways and surface streets.
- Thorough on-foot visits to and from surrounding areas and pedestrian approaches.
- Thorough in-car and on-foot coverage of representative areas.
- Observation of visitor behavior in all areas.
- Extensive site and adjacent area photography.

The report is a written summary of the observations and recommendations of the consultant, Hunt Design, and is further informed by:

- The consultant's experience preparing public sign programs in over twenty-five cities.
- The consultant's experience planning signage for a wide range of national and international visitor and tourist destinations.
- The consultant's experience with local and state departments of transportation and their standard practices regarding signage.
- The consultant's awareness of state-of-the-art best practices in urban wayfinding signage.

AREAS OF STUDY

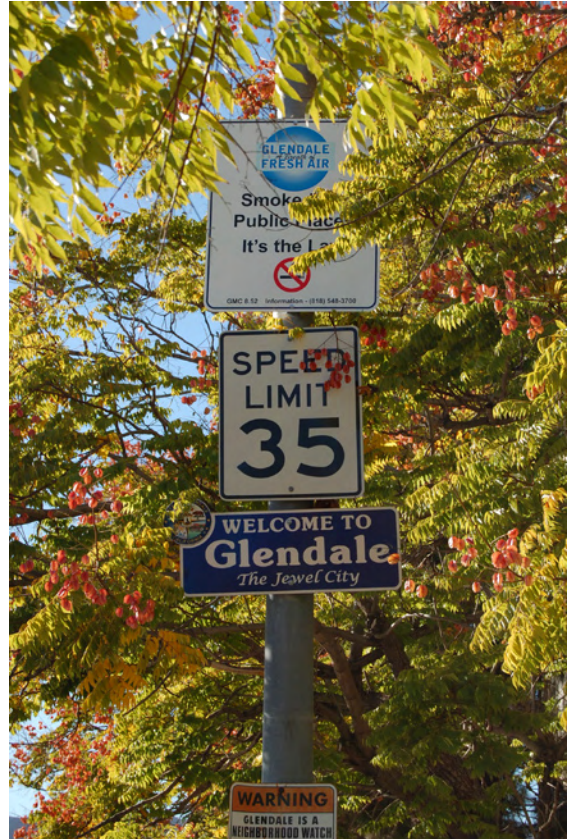
For purposes of evaluation and recommended improvements, signage in Glendale has been organized into distinct, but relating categories. These areas of study represent potential discreet opportunities to improve visitor understanding, circulation, and ultimately, the image of Glendale.

1. City 'Gateway' and Identity Signs
2. Vehicular Wayfinding
3. Parking Signage
4. Pedestrian Wayfinding
5. Parks Signage
6. Informational & Regulatory Signage
7. Bicycle Signage
8. Neighborhood Business District and Residential District Identity Signage
9. Brand Boulevard of Cars

A typical visit to Glendale engages the visitor in several of the above groups and type of signage. Each of these categories of signs and messages play important roles in positive visitor experiences. Conversely, shortfalls in execution of any one category can detract from the visit.



This highly thematic sign greets visitors on Glenoaks Boulevard. Replacement with a more contemporary sign should be considered.



This modest welcome sign shouldn't have to share 'billing' with other signs.



Some identity is provided by the headers on directional signs, but the design is ineffective for motorists.



A lot of information for a small sign.



This formal welcome monument makes a good impression.

CITY 'GATEWAY' AND CITY IDENTITY SIGNS

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

Glendale does not have effective or appropriate signs to greet visitors and present a positive image of the City. Distinctions from neighboring cities are vague.

1. Existing gateway signs are mismatched.
2. Several major gateways into the City do not have welcome signs of any kind.
3. The few small metal identification signs are substandard and share poles with other unrelated signs.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create a standardized 'set' of City gateway monuments and signs in different sizes and formats.

Examples of Effective 'Gateway' signs.





Mismatched, but official looking 'Caltrans-style' guide signs are seen throughout Glendale.



Sign format used around California for directions to historic sites. These destinations should be included in a citywide wayfinding program.



Mismatched directional signs – seen throughout the City.



Directional signs should not share poles with traffic control signs.



Signs from this thematically designed program are difficult for drivers to read.



A good start to providing clarity through good sign layout.



Private signs in the public right-of-way add to the sign clutter.



Temporary digital signs are effective, but unsightly.

VEHICULAR WAYFINDING

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

Signs directing drivers through the city and to important destinations can have a major effect on not just circulation, but on the city's image. In Glendale several ineffective directional sign systems co-exist, providing neither good directions nor a cohesive image. In addition, dozens of individual directional signs designed in various 'official' or CalTrans formats are mixed in, further complicating direction giving for drivers.

1. Many directional signs are of standard and mixed highway-sign design and technology. Each is independently 'correct' and problem solving, but together they lack cohesive a program and visual continuity.
2. The City has implemented some effective signs directing to area freeways.
3. The 'Art Deco' directional sign program was implemented with the best of intentions, but the system falls short on legibility and sign placement. While the program does project a specific image, that image may not be right for Glendale.
4. Many directional signs share poles, creating a sense of sign clutter.
5. Too many minor destinations have signs on city streets.
6. Some lengthy destination names take up disproportionate space on the signs.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create a unified directional sign program for vehicles using common design and format elements.
2. Establish criteria for listing destinations on signs.
3. Set standards for sign installation and co-display on poles.
4. Distinguish via design format and details the public directional signs from official 'CalTrans' traffic control signs.
5. Remove all or most existing directional signs.

Examples of Effective Vehicular Wayfinding.





Signs directing drivers to parking seem to be everywhere. A new and unified approach is needed.



Not the best welcome to Downtown Glendale.

The need to direct drivers to parking has led to sign 'layering' and visual clutter.

PARKING SIGNAGE – STREETS AND LOTS

Signs about parking seem to dominate the streets of downtown Glendale. The locations of the three-city garages one street away from Brand Boulevard have led to parking directional signs at many downtown intersections. Because of competition with private parking operators, the City has deployed parking directional signs throughout the downtown.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. A wide range of signs in different formats and designs direct to downtown parking choices.
2. Differing layouts, wording and design results in a cluttered look on many Glendale streets.
3. Some parking directional signs are located in otherwise scenic landscaped areas.
4. Some signs are inappropriately mounted to overhead lighting mast-arms.
5. The installation of pay-station type meters has resulted in additional signs on each downtown block.
6. Indication of city affiliation is weak on most signs.
7. Signs promoting private parking facilities add to the parking sign clutter.
8. Identification of surface parking lots is inconsistent.
9. Pay-station operation of the many surface parking lots necessitates many signs in each lot.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Establish a new unified sign program for parking-related signs.
2. Limit and edit promotional information on parking directional signs.
3. Set standards to limit the quantity of parking signs.
4. Work toward consistent sign wording.
5. Avoid placing signs in landscaped medians.
6. Avoid installing parking signs on mast arms.
7. Remove all or most existing parking directional signs.

Examples of Effective Parking Signage.





Garage entrances have a variety of sign formats, none of which indicate city ownership or operation.



The projecting identity sign, left, is needed, but this elevation needs stronger signage.



Internal pedestrian signs are of mixed quality and condition. Redesign and replacement is needed.



This tenant sign inadvertently identifies the entire parking structure as a private enterprise. The City should have top billing.



Too high and too small.



This directory is 'trying' to do too much. It is difficult for people to use a map when they are not yet inside the destination.

PARKING STRUCTURE SIGNS

Parking structures are often a 'gateway' to experiencing a place, and as such they can convey negative or positive 'messages' about the City. Visitors to Glendale need to park, either in one of the many city lots or structures or at a privately run facility. Glendale's three city-owned parking structures are not inefficient to use, but over the years, signage in each has become cluttered, and in some cases degraded.

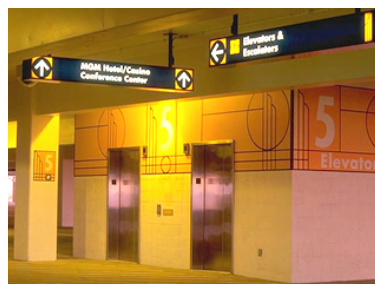
Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. The three city-operated parking structures have inconsistent street entry signage.
2. City identity is weak at critical entry points.
3. It is difficult to recognize from even close by that the Orange Street Garage is a public parking opportunity.
4. Each City garage has a different 'look,' colors, sign formats and wording.
5. Mismatched signs present operations and circulation information.
6. Parking floor or level indications are inconsistent.
7. The Marketplace Garage has ineffective signs that attempt to direct pedestrians to stores within the Marketplace.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create new large identity signs at each garage that coordinate with on-street directional signs and surface lot signs.
2. Unify sign design throughout all garages.
3. Communicate that these are public parking opportunities.
4. Replace all internal directional/operational signs with a new consistent sign program.
5. Establish standards to set limits on the number of signs.

Examples of Effective Parking Structure Signs.





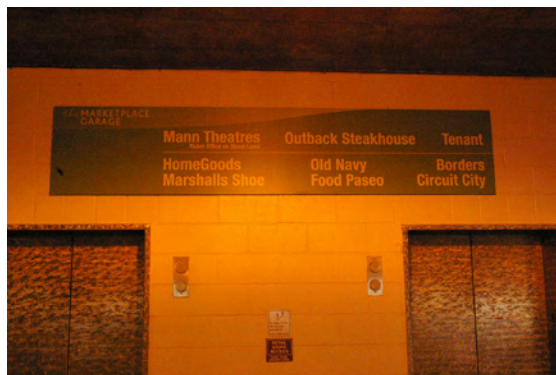
The words **Public Parking** are important to encourage of city parking facilities.



This information is important, but a new layout is needed for quick comprehension by drivers.



Conflicting sign messages confuse drivers.



Listing retail store names within the garage is not effective.



In parking garages signs are needed to separate drivers and pedestrians.



Vehicular directional signs merit study and redesign throughout.

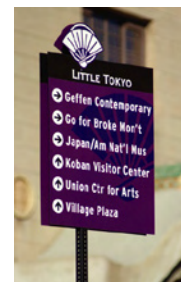
PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING

As a city dependant on the automobile for transportation, the City of Glendale has few signs specifically for walkers. Currently, walking between destinations is not common. While signage alone cannot establish 'walkability,' posted messages about where one can get to on foot builds pedestrian confidence and encourage the 'park once and walk' behavior. Note: no pedestrian-specific signs were observed for this report.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create designs and standards for pedestrian signs either as a stand-alone sign category or sub-parts of other defined categories, such as parking or parks.
2. Consider an approach that consistently provides pedestrian information upon exiting one's parked car.
3. Enhance existing pedestrian linkages between attractions and destinations.

Examples of Effective Pedestrian Wayfinding.





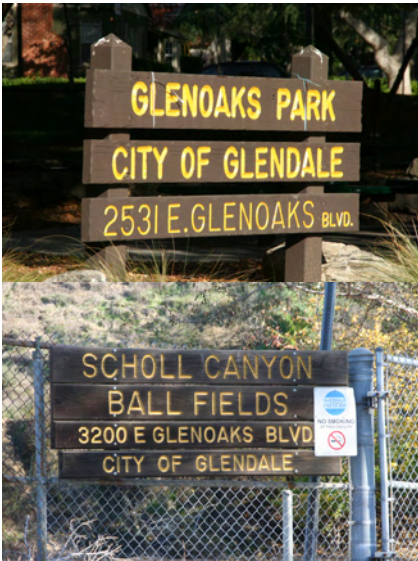
Glendale parks feature a wide range of mismatched and ineffective operational signs.



This well-executed sign is part of a retaining wall.



Signs for pedestrians should not share poles with vehicular signs.



Traditional incised letter park signs, but information is not well organized. Replace with a new park identification sign program.



This creative sign identifies both a park and an emerging city district.

PARKS SIGNAGE

City parks require dozens of operational and regulatory signs to aid in use of the varied facilities – fields, picnic areas, restrooms, parking, etc. Unfortunately, signs in parks are usually installed to limit and regulate behavior – they tell you what you can’t do. In addition, these kinds of signs meet hard use and are often not in good repair. In Glendale, park signage is especially sub-standard.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. Major identification signs are inconsistent in design.
2. City identity is weak in some cases.
3. Too many signs are seen in and around parks.
4. Operational signs are mismatched and in bad repair.
5. As a group, existing operational signs reflect a negative image.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create designs and standards for all park signage.
2. Work to consolidate operational signs.
3. Find ways to more positively present regulatory information.
4. When practical, remove and replace all or most existing signs.

Examples of Effective Parks Signage.





INFORMATIONAL & REGULATORY SIGNAGE

Like all cities, Glendale has many kinds of informational and regulatory signs. While necessary, these signs with their varied formats and designs add to the City's sign clutter. Many informational signs have been simply mounted and installed wherever space permitted.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. Signs are inconsistent in design, wording and installation details.
2. Operational signs are mismatched and in bad repair.
3. As a group, existing informational signs reflect a negative image.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Create designs and standards for informational signage.
2. Establish installation guidelines.
3. When practical, replace all or most existing signs.



Examples of Effective Informational & Regulatory Signage.





Effective signage supporting cycling is rare in Glendale.



BICYCLE SIGNAGE

Few signs exist that support cycling. Those that do tend to be the generic, out-of-the-catalog variety. Cycling-specific signage can encourage the use of bicycles for both recreation and transportation.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Design bicycle-specific signs as a category in the new city sign guidelines program.

Examples of Effective Bicycle Signage.





Signs from a recent neighborhood residential district identification program are effective, but look too institutional. The peacock imagery seems arbitrary.



Neighborhood business district identity is reinforced with these creative elements.



Engaging, appropriate and unique signs welcome visitors at Glendale's neighborhood business districts.



Illustrative banners lend color and provide identity.



Directions to districts from outside of the district should be designed into in new a new citywide directional sign program.

NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS DISTRICT SIGNAGE AND NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT IDENTITY SIGNAGE

Glendale has several vibrant and identifiable districts that lend interest and vitality to the City. Each of the unique areas has an emerging ‘look’ or visual brand. Supporting these unique district identities by means of generous sign approvals is good for the City.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. While not always perfectly designed, the districts have generally good ‘on-site’ signage.
2. “Off-site” directional signs to districts often, and incorrectly, do not match City signs.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Consider establishing broad guidelines for on-site district signage.
2. Off-site district signs should be included in the new city wayfinding program.
3. Display of district identities, colors, fonts, etc., should be limited to on-site or in-district locations.

Examples of District Signs from other Cities.





This gateway sign is effective, but has a dated and institutional appearance. Cosmetic retrofitting is recommended.



Brand name display can be improved.

BRAND BOULEVARD OF CARS

Glendale has done a great job in creating a branded automotive retail district, and the median signage has played a big role in its success. The unique configuration of Brand Boulevard lends itself to gateways at either end and to display of individual dealers on intermediate signs. But over the years, the on-street image presentation expressed by the signs has become dated.

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

1. The gateway sign lacks visual impact.
2. The 'industrial' look of the median signs is of a previous era.
3. Car brand expression is generic.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. Consider a new, similarly scaled sign program.
2. Consider new area entry signage.
3. Consider expressing individual car brands on vertical elements or light poles.

Note: good examples of auto center signage design and graphics were not found.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

As illustrated in the pages of this document, public signage in Glendale is in need of major upgrades. A condition of sign clutter degrades the streets and neighborhoods of the City. Public signage represents an opportunity to project a positive city image to residents, businesses and visitors. Signs reflect the city management – signs are a public voice of a city.

The broad recommendation of this report is to replace as many signs and in as many sign categories as possible with a new citywide, coordinated sign program. This program should establish an organized systematic approach to coordinate the different categories of signs with common design elements where appropriate and with differentiation where justified.

To achieve a coordinated result, a system of sign guidelines should be developed to prescribe and limit design themes, aesthetic details, colors, location standards and installation details. This system should articulate and unify groups of signs into sub-systems, such as parking-related, directional and pedestrian signs. The City may then implement new signage by sign category, geographic area or individually. The guidelines should also provide guidance for future individual signs that may be needed in the future.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Glendale should have a unified 'look' for signs and monuments at defined entrances into the City.
2. Because parking is so important for Glendale, all parking-related signage should share design and aesthetic details and read by drivers as a coherent system.
3. A new program of citywide vehicular wayfinding signs should direct drivers to important destinations.
4. A new system of signs for pedestrians should be developed and deployed as linkage tools between major parking facilities and surrounding destinations.
5. Glendale parks should have a distinctive sign system, but should share elements with the overall city sign program.
6. Signs encouraging bicycle use should be part of the new program.
7. Design and implement all-new signage for Brand Boulevard of Cars.
8. Ensure that digital wayfinding and parking signs are integrated, both visually and functionally with new wayfinding program.