

New Downtown Signs to Help Navigation, Reduce Visual Clutter

Anticipate seeing new, more attractive and more functional signs in downtown Knoxville, starting this summer.

While helping a visitor find parking and iconic landmarks, the Wayfinding signage project also will reduce the overall number of signs downtown by about 150 signs.

The Tennessee Department of Transportation has given the City the Notice to Proceed to Construction on the estimated \$1 million Wayfinding project, which is 80 percent federally funded through TDOT.

A mandatory pre-bid meeting with contractors interested in making and installing the 247 signs is scheduled for 10 a.m. Monday at the City's Public Works Complex, 1400 Loraine St.

There are three main goals of the project, said Project Manager Anne Wallace with the City's Office of Redevelopment:

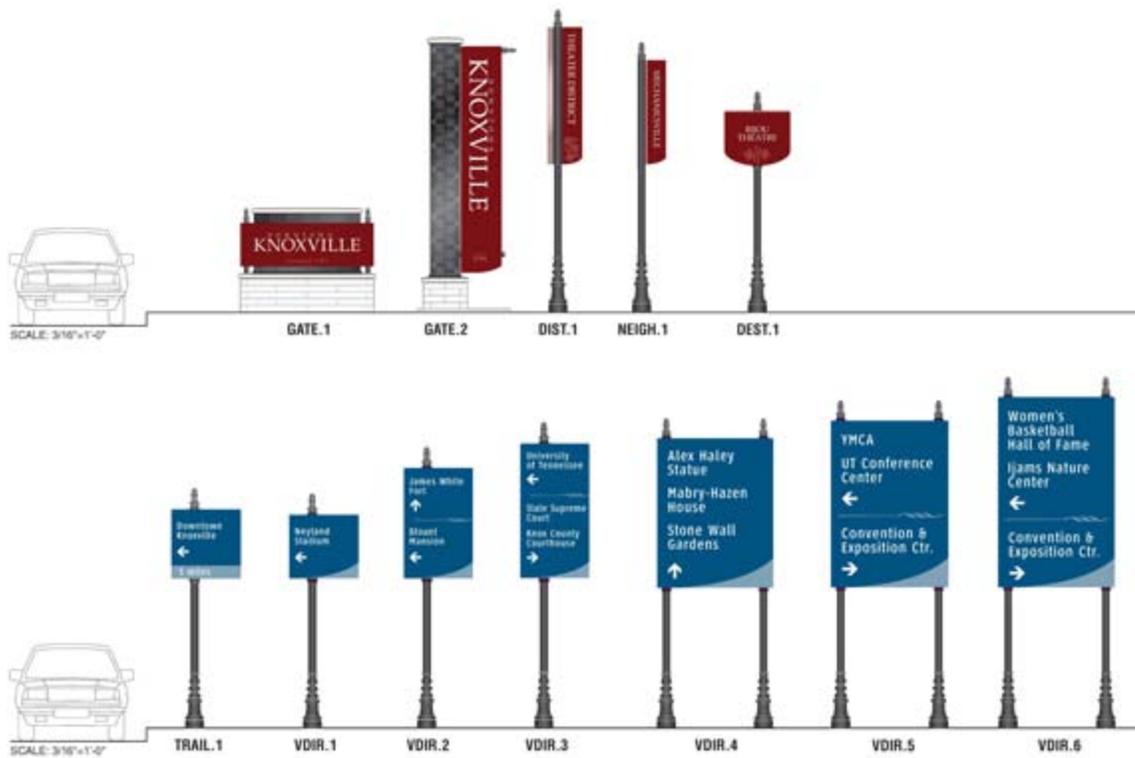


- **Navigation.** Wayfinding aims to assist both locals and visitors as they explore downtown - motorists as well as pedestrians. That includes directions to and improved signage at garages, and even electronic messaging at City garages that helps people find alternative parking if that particular garage is full.
- **Economic development.** Tourists are likely to extend their stay if they find out about secondary points of interest once they're downtown, and easy-to-read signage is an effective way to tell people about what downtown offers, Wallace said.
- **Branding.** Giving downtown a "unique look" is intentional, according to Wallace. Aesthetically, the new signs carry color schemes and motifs inspired by downtown's architecture and history.

"The signs relay the message, 'This is an energetic, vibrant area,' and they acknowledge the cultural aspects and natural history of Knoxville," Wallace said.

City officials invited the public to a half-dozen meetings to determine objectives and plan details of the Wayfinding project, which then went before the Downtown Design Review Board and to City Council for approval.

Drawing from extensive input from downtown stakeholders, the signs won't direct people to specific businesses but will focus on helping visitors locate parking, historical sites, cultural attractions, districts such as the Old City, recreation opportunities, government buildings, hospitals and transportation options.

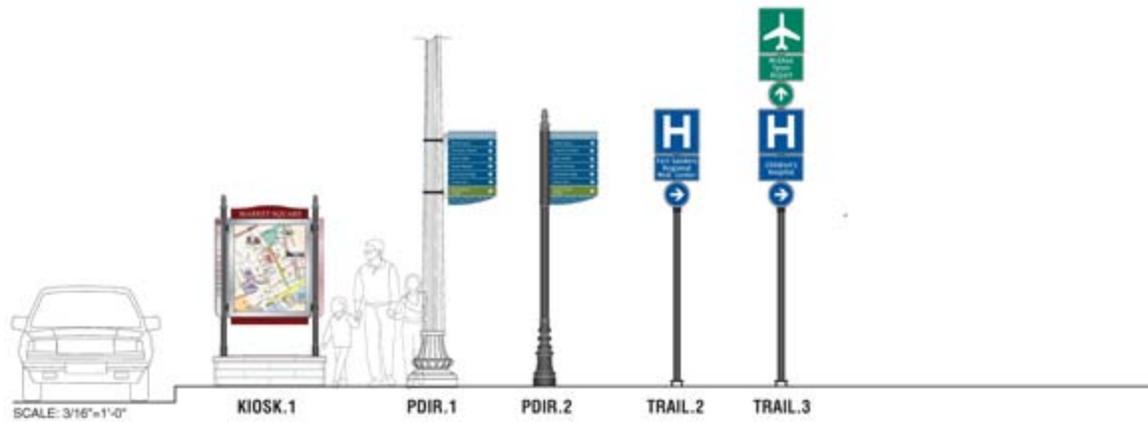
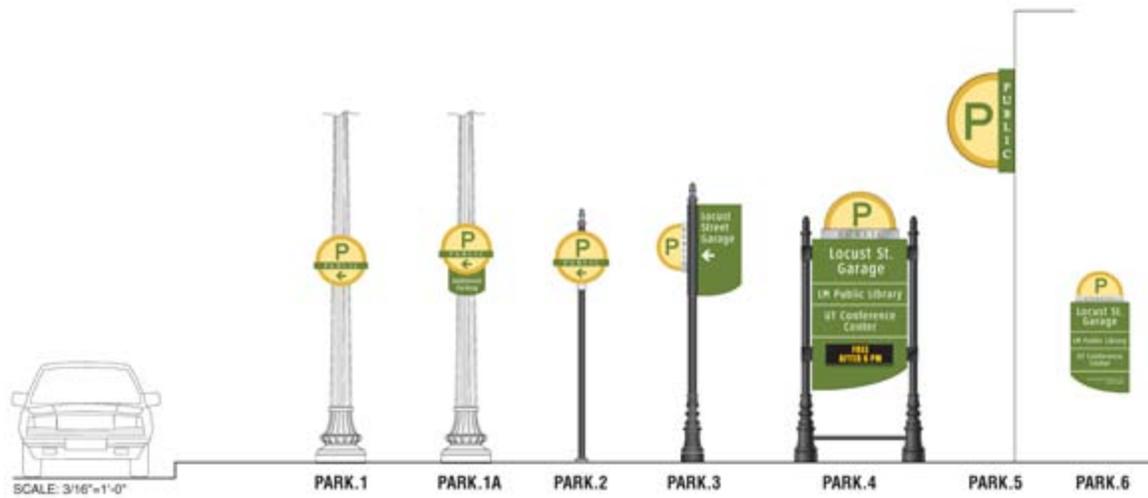


Some of the prototypes for the new downtown signs.

The project also will alleviate visual clutter. While 247 new signs will be erected, roughly 400 existing signs will be removed.

"I'm looking forward to seeing these eye-catching images start to appear on signs around downtown," Wallace said. "There will be a dogwood motif on the gateway signs, for example. There's a motif that mirrors the wrought iron architectural details downtown.

"Investing in Wayfinding yields additional visits and longer stays by visitors, so this is good for the downtown businesses and attractions.



Some of the prototypes for the new downtown signs.

"And fundamentally, this will help as motorists get their bearings and locate convenient parking, then transition to being pedestrians and easily finding their destinations. And when they've finished exploring downtown, this signage will help make it easier for visitors to return to their starting point - either their vehicle or hotel room or the convention center."