

# ***Signage + Way Finding*** **Analysis/ Recommendations** **and** **BRC Alignment**

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**SAINT PAUL**  
MINNESOTA

# **CULTURAL DESTINATION AREA STUDY**

*Enhancing Inclusivity and Economic Growth in Saint Paul, MN*



Presented by:



June 30, 2023



- **Cultural Destination Leaders**

- Asian Economic Development Center
- African Economic Development Solutions
- Downtown Alliance
- Indigenous Roots
- Latino Economic Development Center
- ReConnect Rondo
- Rondo Community Land Trust
- West Side Community Organization

- **Chambers & Associations**

- East Side Area Business Association
- Hmong American Partnership
- Hmong Chamber
- Midway Chamber
- Saint Paul Chamber

- **Tourism Agencies**

- Visit Saint Paul
- Explore Minnesota

- **City of Saint Paul Departments**

- Mayor's Office
- Planning & Economic Development
- Public Safety & Inspections
- Office of Neighborhood Safety

## The Cultural Destination Areas





## FUNDING GAPS

CDAs struggle with funding shortages, impacting their economic potential. Addressing these gaps is crucial.



## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

CDAs need tailored technical support for local businesses, recognizing cultural nuances to help them thrive.



## SIGNAGE BARRIERS

Existing ordinances limit cultural markers, affecting visitor experiences. Revising these regulations is necessary.



## WAYFINDING ISSUES

Inadequate wayfinding frustrates visitors and harms the economy. Enhancements can improve experiences and local economies.



## TOURISM ECONOMICS

Collaborations between local businesses and tourism can boost economic benefits. Allocating tourism taxes to CDAs can support growth.



## SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

Stakeholders advocate for eco-friendly initiatives to protect cultural heritage and reduce environmental impact.

# Shared Findings on *Signage & Wayfinding*

Theme	What the CDA study emphasizes	What the Barriers to Way Finding study found	Why this matters
Insufficient & inconsistent signage	A coordinated, creative wayfinding system is needed.	Not enough signs and they don't work as a system.	Visitors miss destinations; businesses lose visibility.
Skyway confusion	Use signage solutions so access is clear and welcoming.	Entrances are hard to find; interior signs are mismatched/outdated.	Fixing skyway legibility improves access and foot traffic.
Complex, restrictive sign rules	Update ordinances to reduce barriers and allow cultural markers.	Process is cumbersome; many businesses forgo signage.	Rules should enable visibility while protecting public purposes.
Equity & inclusion	Support immigrant/refugee-owned businesses; multilingual/cultural signage.	Need accessible, culturally relevant information.	Inclusive, multilingual guidance makes corridors welcoming.
Digital + physical layer	Pair physical signage with walking tours and "buy local" tools.	Integrate skyways and routes into mobile maps.	"Click-to-curb" guidance helps visitors navigate in real time.

# Shared Recommendations on *Signage & Wayfinding*

Shared Goal of CDA, Barriers to Way Finding, and SPAC	CDA-Led Recommendation (what districts need on the ground)	Barriers to Way Finding Recommendations	SPAC recommendations (practical policy levers the private sector supports.)	BRC and "Where's the Donut Shop Committee" Action (Council charter: review, recommend, and coordinate.)	Ordinance / Admin Change (where change is needed (code vs. process))
Help people find businesses	Allow simple, readable, multilingual door/window signs (hours, arrows, pop-ups) without permits.	Not enough signage; many owners skip signage due to permit burden.	Exempt basic signs: under 8 sq ft; interior/window; temporary up to 12 sq ft and 6 ft tall.	Review regulations; recommend targeted legislative changes; advise Council on business impacts.	Amend Sign Code to expand exemptions.
Make corridors visible from the street	Use corridor-branded projecting blades (icons/colors/languages) readable down the block.	Signs are inconsistent and not legible to pedestrians; distance cues missing.	Allow projecting signs up to 48 sq ft by-right; 8-ft projection in pedestrian areas.	Review proposed legislative changes; recommend approval/implementation.	Update Sign Code standards for projecting signs in commercial/CDA districts.
Reduce confusion for businesses	Provide clear, translated one-pagers for CDAs showing what's allowed (storefronts, vendors, events).	Process feels subjective and confusing.	Publish plain-language guidance and a cross-department exemptions checklist.	Increase inter-agency coordination; review procedures; recommend improvements.	Administrative: guidance, reviewer training, consistent interpretations.
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Speed up event/seasonal signage	Prioritize CDA festival/market signage so events aren't delayed.	Permitting is slow/unpredictable; owners avoid signage due to time/effort.	Set service-level goals: 10 business days (simple); 30 days (historic reviews).	Review procedural changes; recommend SLAs and oversight reporting.	Administrative SLA policy with quarterly reporting.

# Shared Recommendations on Signage & Wayfinding + BRC ALIGNMENT

Shared Goal of CDA, Barriers to Way Finding, and SPAC	CDA-Led Recommendation (what districts need on the ground)	Barriers to Way Finding Recommendations	SPAC recommendations (practical policy levers the private sector supports.)	BRC and "Where's the Donut Shop Committee" Action (Council charter: review, recommend, and coordinate.)	Ordinance / Admin Change (where change is needed (code vs. process))
Protect cultural expression	Allow cultural symbols, scripts, and colors via objective, content-neutral standards.	Reviews feel subjective; rules overly strict.	Remove vague terms; use measurable criteria.	Review business-related regulations; recommend clarity while maintaining essential protections.	Amend Sign Code for clarity and objectivity.
Right-size signs for small storefronts	Set simple size caps so narrow storefronts stay readable.	Current formulas produce signs too small to read.	Replace frontage formulas with clear square-footage caps by district.	Recommend legislative changes to simplify rules and improve visibility.	Amend Sign Code measurement method.
Support historic and CDA buildings	Use pre-approved design menus (materials/illumination/mounting) for same-day admin approvals.	Historic/design review can be lengthy and subjective.	Codify standards; delegate approvals to staff when compliant.	Increase coordination among review bodies; recommend procedural updates.	Amend Sign Code and historic procedures to enable administrative approvals.
Fix skyway access to businesses	Mark entrances, routes, maps, posted hours; add to mobile maps, align with CDA branding when applicable	Skyways are a top pain point: entrances hard to find; interior signs inconsistent/outdated.	Create standards for skyway and CDA signage; coordinate with owners via MOUs.	Increase coordination across agencies/owners; recommend a 90-day pilot and digital updates.	Reference standards in Sign Code; execute MOUs; publish a digital skyway layer.
Show CDA identity consistently	Use district colors, icons, and languages across signs and maps via a city toolkit.	Inconsistent signage; limited cultural relevance/accessibility.	Allow district-based, multilingual signage (content-neutral) in designated areas.	Review corridor-affecting regulations; recommend code clarifications to elected leadership.	Amend Sign Code to permit cultural/multilingual panels.
Guide visitors during big events	Permit time-bound event/directional signage in/near CDAs during peaks.	Lack of clear temporary/event wayfinding; strict definitions limit directions.	Allow time-limited, location-controlled event tools in business districts.	Review proposed legislative changes; recommend adoption based on business impact.	Amend Sign Code temporary/event provisions.