This publication was downloaded from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center’s website (www.nadtc.org). It was developed by Easter Seals Project ACTION, a technical assistance center operated by Easter Seals, Inc. through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration.
How well does your community help you find your way? Are there services you would like to use, like public transit, but find it hard to figure out how to access them? Do you avoid places because the route to those places is difficult to navigate?

By learning more about wayfinding and transportation connections, you can help your community leaders make good choices for spending local dollars on signs and strategies to help you and others find the way to places in your community you would like to reach!

Neighborhood Wayfinding Assessment

How does a wayfinding assessment work?

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Think how changes would affect your own transportation decisions. If walkways were in better condition or better marked, would you be more likely to walk to the supermarket? If you use a wheelchair or other mobility device, would you use walkways more often if curb cuts were present?

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Introduction

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What is wayfinding?

Wayfinding is the process that people use to navigate within their communities as they move from place to place. Relying on cues and information about the environment, wayfinding allows people to know where they are, determine where they want to go and develop a plan to take them from their current location to their destination. Wayfinding cues include:

- Signs and maps
- Marked pathways
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Wayfinding Checklist*

Determine which area of your community or neighborhood you want to survey. In addition to a street name, a boundary may be a physical feature like a river or railroad track.

North boundary:
- East boundary:
- South boundary:
- West boundary:

You may do an individual assessment for each block or an overall assessment for the entire area. Record where you find problems. Mark all boxes that apply to conditions in your survey area.

1. What type of street signs are posted?
- None
- All intersecting streets named and posted
- One or more street name missing
- Signs visible from both directions of pedestrian travel

2. Are there problems with existing street signs?
- Dirty or faded
- Poorly lighted
- No block number on signs
- Inconsistent or poor placement

3. Are there other aids to support wayfinding?
- Directional sign or marker
- Landmark (e.g., —statue, unique building)
- Open or green space
- Orientation map/kiosk
- "You are here" aids
- Text and icons on signs or pavement (e.g., hospitals, schools)
- Visual or audible aids for people with disabilities

4. Are there problems with wayfinding aids described in Question 3?
- Poor or inconsistent location
- Text too small for easy reading
- Dirty, faded or obstructed
- Poorly lighted

5. Are street lights installed?
- None
- Some (overhead street lights on utility poles with wide spacing)
- Ample (regularly spaced pedestrian lampposts)

6. What comfort/security features are present?
- Trees that offer shade
- Benches & places to rest
- Bicycle racks
- Handrails on stairs & ramps
- Restrooms open & accessible
- Working drinking fountains
- Working public phones or call boxes

7. What problems do you see with walkways?
- Do not continue from one block to next
- Are too narrow or are blocked
- Are in poor condition
- Are not level across driveways/alleys
- No pedestrian pathway markings
- No railings or fences at steep drop offs
- Curb ramps missing or in poor condition

8. Does the area present barriers or hazards for people with disabilities?

9. What intersection features are present?
- None
- Yields/Flashings yellow
- Stop signs/Flash red light
- Traffic signal
- Signals that have green arrows for dedicated vehicle turns
- Traffic circle, roundabout

10. If pedestrian signals are present, what type are they?
- Pedestrian "walk" signals
- Pedestrian push buttons
- Pedestrian push button accessible for people with disabilities
- Audible walk signal present
- Countdown signal present

11. Check crossing times at intersections by crossing at a pace similar to that used by a person using a manual wheelchair or a walker. If countdown signals are present, identify whether the number of seconds to cross is adequate. Length of crossing time includes white "walk" time and flashing "don’t walk" time.

12. What is the overall crossing risk for walkers with any functional limitations (e.g. vision, memory or mobility problems)?
- Low (barriers/hazards exist that can be easily avoided)
- Moderate (barriers/hazards that can be avoided but with difficulty)
- Severe (barriers/hazards that make crossing inaccessible or extremely dangerous)

13. If there is a transit stop, what features are present?
- Stop is clearly marked with a sign
- Stop is accessible for people using wheelchairs or mobility devices
- Route information is available

Notes:

* Assessment checklist adapted from the CDC-HAN Environmental Audit Tool. See Guide to Community Wayfinding Assessment, www.prc-han.org, to learn more about the assessment and see illustrations of checklist items.

Whether you are interested in supporting a comprehensive wayfinding program or having better sidewalk connections on the block near your home, understanding what wayfinding is and how it affects your daily travel decisions is important for staying connected to your neighbors, family, friends and the greater community.