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## **Los Angeles Unveils Nation's Most Ambitious Urban Wayfinding Program**

Country's second largest city turns to Michigan-based environmental graphic design experts to provide better navigational cues for drivers and pedestrians

**Traverse City, MI** — The City of Los Angeles recently began installing one of the nation's largest urban wayfinding and signage programs, becoming the latest U.S. city to partner with Michigan-based Corbin Design to improve their visitor experience. Designed to build on the "Downtown renaissance" now under way in Los Angeles, the project offers lessons to other cities seeking to retain and lure more urban residents and visitors.

Known as Downtown LA Walks, the project will help Angelinos and tourists alike better navigate the streets and sidewalks of the nation's second largest city, and will unify the city's downtown core through a system of naming, branding and symbology presented on boundary and district markers, and pedestrian and vehicular signs.

"It is in our cities that we celebrate the diversity of this nation," said Jeffrey Corbin, founder and chairman of Corbin Design. "Wayfinding is one of the most effective ways to increase visitors' sense of security and increase their willingness to explore the many opportunities that our nation's downtowns have to offer."

Currently being installed throughout the city's greater downtown area, Downtown LA Walks encompasses 350 city blocks, 50 streets, over 300 intersections, 30 freeway off ramps, eight Metro stations and hundreds of MTA bus stops. Corbin Design of Traverse City, Michigan, national experts in the field of wayfinding and environmental graphic design, teamed with Hunt Design of Pasadena, CA, a leading graphic designer for buildings, spaces and places, to create the comprehensive wayfinding system. More than 1,300 individual elements make up the system, including 545 vehicular directional signs, 471 pedestrian signs and 285 neighborhood maps.

"The downtown areas of America's cities are undergoing a renaissance as people rediscover these city centers," says Wayne Hunt, founding principal of Hunt Design. "While many factors contribute to the success of a downtown, the role of effective wayfinding signage and graphics should be underestimated."

The wayfinding system identifies thirteen unique districts that comprise Downtown Los Angeles, and directs visitors first to these districts and to major destinations like the Staples Center and Walt Disney Concert Hall before directing them to smaller destinations within each district. Designed to promote walking, the system points drivers to appropriate parking for their destination. When they leave their cars, the system offers more detailed information in the form of pedestrian directional signs to their destinations and neighborhood maps at

every other corner that provide a visual overview of the immediate area. The sequence is this: greet arriving drivers; direct them to districts and major destinations; direct them to other destinations; get people parked; get them walking within a district to their destination; keep them walking by showing other opportunities on block-by-block maps; and support the use of the Metro and MTA buses on signs and maps.

In designing Downtown LA Walks, Corbin and Hunt worked closely with the non-profit Confederation of Downtown Associations, the alliance of nine business improvement districts dedicated to improving access to public transportation and reducing traffic congestion that is spearheaded the project. The Confederation's implementation funding comes from the Metropolitan Transit Authority, City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation, Community Redevelopment Agency and the nine business improvement districts.

"It used to be difficult for people to find their way around downtown Los Angeles," explained Darryl Holter, confederation chairman. "With the launch of L A Walks, we have just made it easier for drivers and pedestrians to find their way around the numerous destinations downtown Los Angeles has to offer."

"Uniting the city core of one of the nation's biggest population centers, with its huge mobile population, complex street system and signage requirements, is a task of Herculean proportions," said Steve Gibson, president of the Urban Place Consulting Group, the urban revitalization consulting firm that is acting as project manager. "The unified visual solution that Corbin and Hunt brought to downtown Los Angeles' signage project is unique to the city, and it reflects the city's rich heritage and cultural diversity."

The Downtown LA Walks project is currently being installed throughout downtown Los Angeles and is scheduled for completion later this year. Visuals are available upon request.

Los Angeles is one of many U.S. cities that have called on Corbin for wayfinding assistance in recent years. Nationally, the firm has designed wayfinding and signage programs for cities including Atlanta, Georgia; Indianapolis, Indiana; Kansas City, Missouri; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. In Michigan alone, the firm has developed wayfinding programs for the cities of Battle Creek, Frankenmuth, Grand Rapids, Holland, Howell, Kalamazoo, Lansing, Royal Oak and Sault Ste. Marie.

Since its founding in 1976, Corbin has established itself as a national leader in the field of environmental graphic design, completing hundreds of wayfinding and signage projects for health care, educational, governmental and corporate clients across the country. A partial list of Corbin's wayfinding clients includes Eli Lilly & Company, General Motors Corporation, Herman Miller, Penn State University, Recreational Equipment Inc., the University of Michigan and Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center. Additional information about the firm can be found online at [www.corbindesign.com](http://www.corbindesign.com)

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