



**Society for Environmental Graphic Design**

The global community of people working at the intersection of communication design and the built environment.

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## **SEGD Helps Guide the City of Charlotte through Successful Wayfinding Program**

*WASHINGTON, DC* — In the latest of its advocacy initiatives around urban wayfinding, SEGD has helped the City of Charlotte, North Carolina, navigate the approval process for an integrated vehicular, pedestrian, and parking signage system that will direct visitors from the interstate system to the city's Uptown core.

The City of Charlotte (under the leadership of the Charlotte Department of Transportation), Charlotte Center City Partners, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation are partnering on an integrated, and possibly unique, system that routes visitors as efficiently as possible from the I-77/I-277 interstate loop to Uptown destinations.

“A hodgepodge of freeway signs installed ad hoc over the past three decades aren't legible and don't direct visitors to take the most efficient routes,” says Jim Kimbler, Uptown transportation planner. The approved new system will save 1.7 million miles per year. “Besides saving fuel and reducing the number of vehicles on the street, air quality is expected to improve significantly.”

A typical hurdle for local municipalities adopting new signage programs is clearing their concepts with the state department of transportation. SEGD assisted Charlotte by presenting best practices adopted by other cities linking interstate systems with their urban centers. SEGD also helped Charlotte gain approval to use unique colors and a distinct crown emblem on its new signage, updating NCDOT on changes to federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidelines that now allow use of colors and symbols.

“Basically, SEGD helped us do our homework so we could effectively present our concepts to NCDOT,” says Kimbler. “The process went smoothly because we had the advantage of showing what had been done elsewhere.”

The I-77/I-277 system and an Uptown City Street vehicular and parking wayfinding system is currently in final design review and will be installed in the first quarter of 2010. A pedestrian wayfinding system, which has been installed in two phases since 2007, will also be updated by April 2010. This comprehensive “freeway-to-pedestrian” system is aimed at providing people with easy orientation and identifying amenities, destinations, and transit choices in the growing Uptown area.



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The multiple components of the system were planned and designed by a team including two SEGD member firms. Two Twelve/Harakawa Inc. (New York) led the design team in development of the vehicular and pedestrian programs. DAWA Inc. (Charlotte) was responsible for planning, analysis, and sign message scheduling and routing for the integrated system. Another local design firm, Brinkley Design, has contributed to map development and local coordination. Engineering firms HNTB Corp. and Kimley-Horn Associates are also on the team, while Howard M. Landers Consulting (Charlotte) is providing overall project management assistance.

SEGD is a long-time advocate for effective urban wayfinding systems. “SEGD has worked extensively with the USDOT’s Federal Highway Administration on modifications to the federal MUTCD, which defines the standard for installing and maintaining signs and traffic control devices on streets and highways,” says Craig Berger, SEGD’s director of education. In 2007 and 2008, SEGD and the Pennsylvania Transportation Institute successfully advocated for changes that would make MUTCD guidelines more sensitive to the complexities of urban sign systems.

At the state level, SEGD has advocated for changes making it easier to develop sign systems for urban environments. SEGD advocated for the national MUTCD guidelines to be integrated into state DOT practices, first in Florida, then in North Carolina.

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### **About SEGD**

SEGD, founded in 1973, is the global community of people working at the intersection of communication design and the built environment. Through educational programs, research, and publications, SEGD’s mission is to increase awareness of the environmental graphic design community, promote the importance of the discipline in establishing place, and continue to refine standards of practice for the field.