



HONOR AWARDS

MegaFaces Pavilion

City of Bath Information System

***Victoria Revealed* Exhibit**

Brisbane Multilingual Pedestrian Signage

Rebranding the Museum of the City of New York

Boy Scouts of America Sustainability Treehouse Exhibit

Seattle Children's Research Institute Neighborhood Visibility

HONOR AWARD

Information System

City of Bath

Bath, England

Design

PearsonLloyd *product design, FW Design wayfinding strategy, graphic design, City ID wayfinding strategy, digital strategy*

Design Team

PearsonLloyd: Tom Lloyd
director
FW Design: Roger Crabtree
director
City ID: Mike Rawlinson
director

Fabrication

Wood & Wood *signage manufacturer, AJ Wells vitreous enamel maps*

Consultants

City ID *wayfinding client adviser, Rhodri Samuel client at BANES Council*

Photos

Ed Reeve © PearsonLloyd



▲
The new wayfinding system in Bath, England, was designed to help tourists experience the most of the historic city. Nine 2.3-meter-high, 900-mm-wide monoliths in the city center feature bespoke heads-up maps that provide 360-degree views of the city.

Bath to Basics

A new wayfinding system for the thousand-year-old city of Bath, England, focuses on the visitor experience, revealing its hidden gems with a contemporary design inspired by its Roman and medieval roots.

By Jenny S. Reising

Seventeen smaller 1.8-meter-high, 500-millimeter-wide monoliths supplement the city-center system with more detailed localized mapping showing close-by attractions and walking distance.



AT 1.6 SQUARE MILES, the City of Bath is a compact, scenic urban village situated in a valley with a river running through it. Originally a walled Roman and then medieval city, it lost most of its walls in the 18th century as part of the great Georgian expansion and reinvention. Today, 90,000 people call Bath home but upwards of 4 million tourists visit the city annually. Bath is one of the few cities in the world identified as a UNESCO World Heritage site due to “human creative genius” for shaping a beautiful city that seamlessly integrates landscape, urban design, and architecture.

As with any city whose primary industry is tourism, getting people to visit, see the sights, enjoy their stay, and come back for more is not only good for business, it’s the key to survival. Unfortunately, little attention had been paid over the years to the visitor experience.

“For a long time, there was no real focus or consciousness of public space, no sense of what the public realm could do for the life of a city,” says Rhodri Samuel, former Regeneration Manager for the City of Bath.

Bristol- and New York-based urban planners CityID had been tapped in 2006 to look at the idea of a legible city project in Bath. But according to CityID Design Director Mike Rawlinson, “There hadn’t been investment in Bath for generations, and it became apparent there was a need for a broader vision for the city.”

In 2008, the city commissioned a public realm and movement strategy for Bath city center, led by CityID, to analyze the legibility of the city across multiple modes of movement from multiple user perspectives. In 2010, CityID published the

results in *Creating the Canvas for Public Life in Bath*, a guidebook that established a framework of place and design values, as well as the principle of “Bathness” (i.e., designing with an understanding of Bath’s unique qualities). The research unveiled some interesting social history about Bath that helped inform a new approach to public spaces and wayfinding.

“In the 18th century, Bath was quite pioneering and radical in its approach to public space,” says Samuel. “The city consciously defined itself with interaction and pleasure in mind by designing streets, parades, and public spaces almost like a stage for social theater. We looked at ways to capture that spirit and reposition the city as a fantastic place for humans to come and interact and feel better about being alive.”

Cautious approach, radical redesign

To ensure the success of the new wayfinding strategy, multiple stakeholders were involved in the process, including a design panel comprising 20 national and international designers from the fields of urban design, landscape design, lighting, theater, and opera set design; and a movement panel consisting of professionals in transportation and movement. CityID was retained as lead design adviser, with FW Design handling graphic design and PearsonLloyd working on product design.

Involving locals in the planning process was important. As Roger Crabtree, managing director of FW Design, explains, “Bath is a desirable destination with people who are precious about the city and cautious about change, so it was important to allow stakeholders to feel engaged with the design process.”



“Such elegant materiality: modern, aged, simple, and timeless, so right for this city. The circular map makes me feel like I can get lost in this city, yet always find my way. This map makes it a joy to explore and plan the day.”
—Jury comment

▲ The information system is augmented by handheld printed maps, which are available at shops, city information points, and hotels. When funding permits, the city will implement a digital wayfinding layer using handheld devices. (Photo: Ed Reeves)

From a wayfinding perspective, Bath was in dire straits. The previous system of cast-iron fingerposts was entirely directional, and many of the directions were inaccurate or ambiguous. Moreover, because fingerposts could be bought by local attractions, some signs had more than 20 fingers on them, making the information almost illegible for the user and overly dominated by destinations with the most money.

“We learned from our research that many of Bath’s visitors were leaving with a very limited mental map of the city and what it offers in terms of attractions, experiences, architecture, and vistas,” Samuel says. “We wanted people to see how compact and walkable Bath is and to have the confidence to explore an expanded central area in a more meaningful and rewarding way.”

The design team agreed that a multimodal journey (integrating pedestrian and transportation information) that uses the same suite of products and services—from online to street—would be the best way to glue the city together visually and communicate what Bath has to offer. CityID recommended a heads-up map-based system that orients visitors to attractions based on the direction in which they are facing.

Less is more

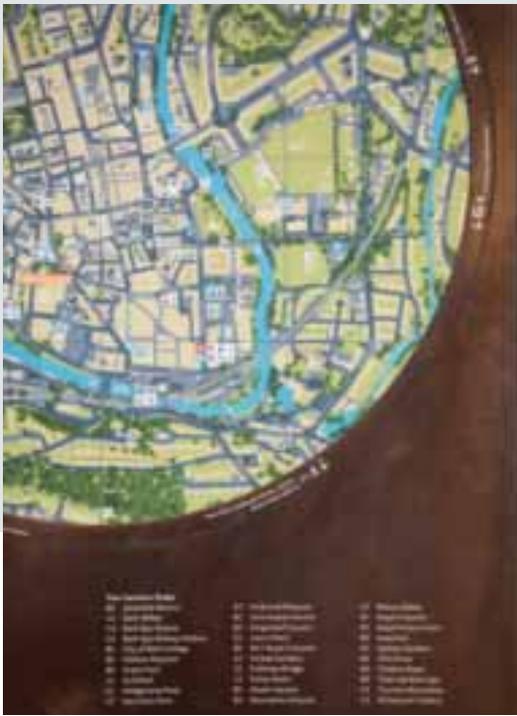
PearsonLloyd settled on a system of two-sided rectangular monoliths in two sizes (2.3-meter-high and 1.8-meter-high sizes) that are substantial enough to withstand parkour (i.e., youths using the built environment to do acrobatics) and the right proportion to display information at a readable height for tall people, short people, and those in wheelchairs. The signs have a galvanized steel frame

clad in brass with an antique finish that resembles bronze at a fraction of the cost. The finish not only references Bath’s local stone and slate roofs, but is also designed to acquire a rich patina over time (going from lighter to darker), making the signs easy to maintain.

The design team agreed early on to take a less-is-more approach to the signage. “We wanted to hit the sweet spot between conveying relevant information in an intuitive way without overembellishing or adding unnecessary fussiness or detail,” explains Rawlinson. So the signs’ informational hierarchy is quite simple: a transport mode icon (for pedestrian signs, a walking person) is etched in the top left corner, a large map of the whole city appears at reading height, directory information etched into the sign with a white infill appears just below the map, and an orange “You are here” locator indicates the pedestrian’s position in relation to the map. The bottom portion of the sign is left entirely blank and there is no visual branding for the City of Bath anywhere on the panel.

“We didn’t want to add a label saying, ‘This is Bath,’” Rawlinson says. “We wanted the materials, color palette, and graphic identity to convey the brand.”

Bath is in a geographic bowl with surrounding hills forming a striking backdrop to the historic city core, so the idea of a circular map, of looking through a lens and seeing a single entity, emerged as a way to visually present the city to visitors. An 800-millimeter-diameter map on the larger monoliths depicts the city core, complete with axonometric drawings and pictograms. The same map appears in a smaller size (500 millimeter diameter) on the smaller monoliths with a



The new multimodal wayfinding system is designed not only to highlight the main attractions, but also to uncover the hidden gems and show how walkable the city is. Pedestrian orientation points etched around the maps reveal interesting sites that aren't on the map but are worth checking out—and how long it will take to get there on foot.

450-millimeter-diameter inset map that zooms in on one area; for example, a cathedral and what's around it.

Designers specified vitreous enamel for the maps, which involved printing 14 separate layers of colors that reflect the Bath color palette and correspond with the landscape. The vitreous enamel finish also provides a durable, vibrant, tactile graphic that is color-safe, won't fade, and can be cleaned aggressively. A bezel around the circular maps acts like a compass, with map markers indicating key attractions and places that are within and beyond the center—destinations that are not on the map but are worth checking out—and how many minutes it will take to walk there.

David Quay was commissioned to create the Bath typeface used throughout the wayfinding system. The primarily sans-serif font (with a serif option) was inspired by the elegance of Bath's incised letterforms and the city's Palladian architecture. Pictograms were also custom-designed based on national and international standards but with a proportion and shape that echo the typeface.

Signs of success

The wayfinding system is designed to be multimodal, with transport information integrated into pedestrian wayfinding elements and vice versa. As part of the pilot program, which was installed in 2012 and funded in part by the European Commission's CIVITAS Initiative, four new bus shelters with graphics were installed along with benches and circular cast-bronze bicycle racks. Future plans call for an expansion of the street furniture program and additional bus shelters.

An important component of the wayfinding system is the use of handheld printed maps, which are available at shops, city information points, and hotels. The map is also available online and there are plans, when funding permits, to augment the on-street, print, and web maps with a digital wayfinding system using handheld devices.

As with any project, there were a few challenges. Namely, some stakeholders were resistant to changing the wayfinding system, particularly those with a previously dominant position on the fingerposts. And with so many stakeholders involved in the project, gaining consensus was not always straightforward. However, since the signage was installed, Samuel says, "The reception from residents has been predominantly positive or silent, and I regard silence as a sign of success and acceptance in Bath, as many city projects have generated a lot of negative noise in the past."

Rawlinson adds that getting buy-in was a lengthy process—the project kicked off eight years before anything was installed—but considering Bath has been around for a thousand-plus years, the project length was relatively fast and the outcome benefited from careful consideration.

"The system sits comfortably in the fabric of the city and is rooted in history but also of today," Rawlinson says. "That's a hard trick to turn. But the client was educated and the team was talented, and that has paid dividends in the quality of the product." ■

Jenny Reising is a Cincinnati-based writer and editor who has written extensively for **eg** magazine. She is the former managing editor of **ID** magazine.