



Wayfinding System Master Plan

La Grange, Texas



Foreword

This planning document presents the wayfinding system plan for La Grange, Texas. This document was developed by Texas Target Communities (TTC) in partnership with the City of La Grange. The City of La Grange collaborated with Texas Target Communities in summer of 2017 through the spring of 2018.

Background of Texas Target Communities

The Texas Target Communities program is a high-impact service learning and community outreach program within Texas A&M University's Public Partnership and Outreach department of the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President. TTC partners with small communities across Texas to assist them with needs that would otherwise go unmet. TTC also serves as a "real world" learning laboratory for undergraduate and graduate students who collect data, provide analysis and recommendations. Since its inception, TTC has worked with over 50 communities to incorporate sustainable planning and design practices. TTC worked with the City, community stakeholders, and students on campus to develop a wayfinding system master plan.

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1. Introduction

The Wayfinding System Master Plan directs and attracts the flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic to city assets. The purpose is to provide a hierarchical wayfinding system which is uniform, representing the city's unique character, and coordinated, fostering a sense of place. This document includes maps, signage locations, and designs. Key elements of the system include:

- Identification of existing historical and city assets
- Flexible for future development
- Hierarchical to improve wayfinding

2. History

In 1826, John Henry Moore constructed a twin blockhouse which acted as a fort in current day La Grange. In 1837, John Henry Moore, Albert C. Horton, William M. Eastland, and John Rice Jones began selling parcels of land. By 1839, there were roughly 100 residents. La Grange was incorporated in 1850 and, by then, had a post office, a newspaper, a female institute, and Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In 1855, the La Grange Academy, the La Grange Male and Female Seminary and Boarding Schools were established.

The buildings and structures in La Grange reflect the rich historic culture of the city. Signage and wayfinding elements that reflect and celebrate this history and culture can help visitors to see the uniqueness of La Grange instead of simply being directed to a location.

Around this time, many Germans and Czechs immigrated to the area. The population of La Grange began to grow and in 1860, one of the state's first commercial breweries opened. In 1891, the historic 3-story stone courthouse that was built with electricity and water. By 1900, La Grange had a population of 2,392 with 5 churches, 4 schools, 3 banks, an opera house, 3 gristmills, a cotton gin, and 3 newspapers. One school became Casino Hall and later renovated to house the Fire Department and City Hall. Two bridges were built over the Colorado River as well.

The Great Depression affected local businesses and the number of businesses in La Grange decreased from 130 to 75 by the end of 1933. By 1940, the population of La Grange decreased to 1,665.

Between 1940 and 1960, La Grange experienced economic growth with a mattress factory, furniture manufacturing plant, two banks, two cotton gins, three hatcheries, seven feed mills, and more than 100 retail establishments. La Grange created its first comprehensive plan in 1969. The Casino Hall became home to the La Grange Visitor Bureau in 2014 and serves as a performing arts center and space for the La Grange Economic Development Corporation.

Today, the City of La Grange has an area of about 5.0 sq. miles and a population of about 5,000.

3. Background

Highway 71, which connects Houston and Austin, bisects the city of La Grange. Business Highway 71 E or West Travis Road is the primary arterial road. The city seeks to capture travelers along this route with an inviting aesthetic character. Other highways like Highway 77 and Highway 159 also intersect the city.

One strategy the city has employed to preserve and enhance the aesthetic character, is through the La Grange Historic City Design Guidelines, which are specifically set for the historic downtown. Currently, the city primarily utilizes TxDOT signage. While important for traffic orientation, TxDOT signs do not represent the unique character of the city. Current signage could improve orienting visitors, citizens, and users to primary community amenities. Through a visually appealing wayfinding system, the city aims to enhance a sense of place, aid community access, and foster tourism to support local businesses.

La Grange is located at a critical location between the metropolitan cities of Houston and Austin. Many travellers pass by La Grange enroute to one of these cities. Distinctive and welcoming signage that showcases La Grange's unique history as a part of a visual theme is introduced to draw the attention of these passing motorists.

4. Objectives

The main objective of proposed wayfinding system is to reflect and emphasize the character of the city at the pedestrian and vehicular levels to increase access to community assets. The proposed wayfinding system supports existing historical features and future development and changes in the city.

Additionally, the wayfinding system aims to attract and celebrate the historic character of the city by inviting visitors and citizens to the Historic Courthouse Downtown and encouraging public participation in the various events and activities in the city.

5. Design Consideration

The wayfinding system in the city of La Grange will follow the following design criteria:

- **Strategic orientation:** Signs are located for easy identification to direct users to desired locations.
- **User-friendly:** The text size is readable from an average viewing distance.
- **Unique character:** The design reflects the character of the city.
- **Aesthetically appealing:** Colors and materials represent the city's character.

As per the Sign Legibility Rules by the United States Sign Council (USSC)*, perpendicular signs that directly face oncoming traffic fall within the driver's "cone of vision". The cone of vision extends 10 degrees to the right and left of driver. These guidelines determine the placement of signs with respect to the property lines and road boundaries.

Additionally, USSC and TxDOT establish guidelines for the scale and size of signage. For example, a vehicle driving at:

- 80mph requires a sign to be 1200 ft away and with a text height of 1'6";
- 50 mph requires a sign to be 600 ft away and with a text height of minimum 4"
- 25 mph requires a sign to be 250 ft away and with a text height between 2.5" to 4"



Strategic Location & Orientation:

Signages should be located to be easily identified and direct the user to the desired location.



Clear and Consistent:

Signage system should not be confusing. It should be easy to understand not only while driving but also while walking.



User Friendly:

The text and direction signs should be readable from an average viewing distance.



Unique Character:

Should reflect the character of the city and should be inclusive of the new developments.



Vandal resistant:

The signage design and materials should have no scope for crimes.

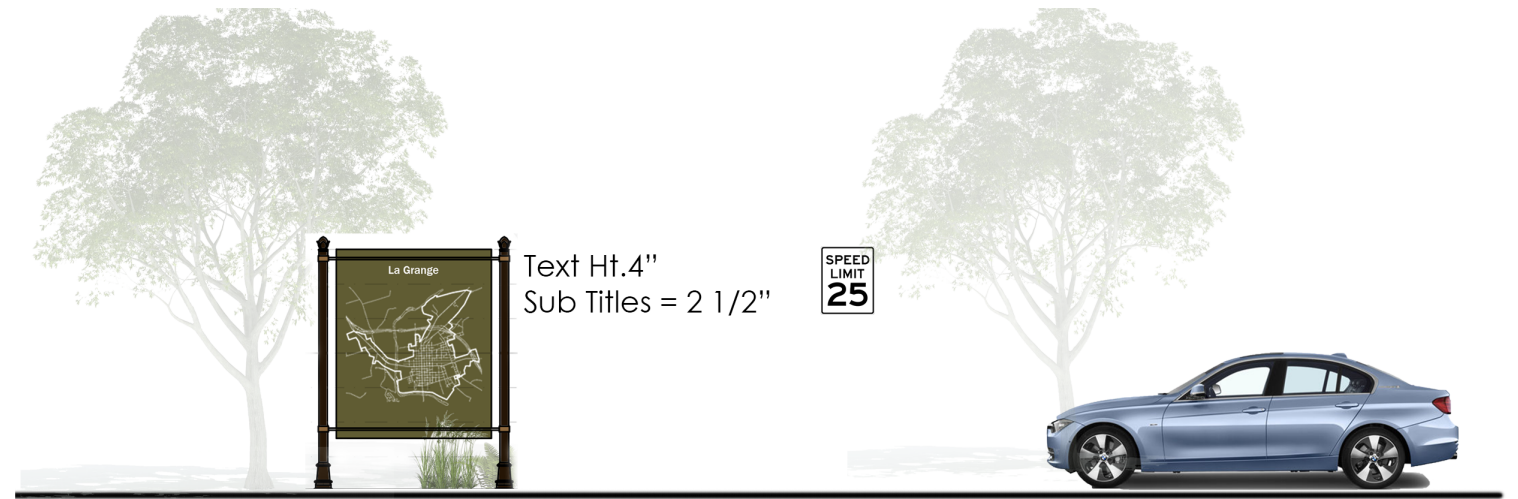


Aesthetically Appealing:

Colors and Materials used should blend in the character of the city.



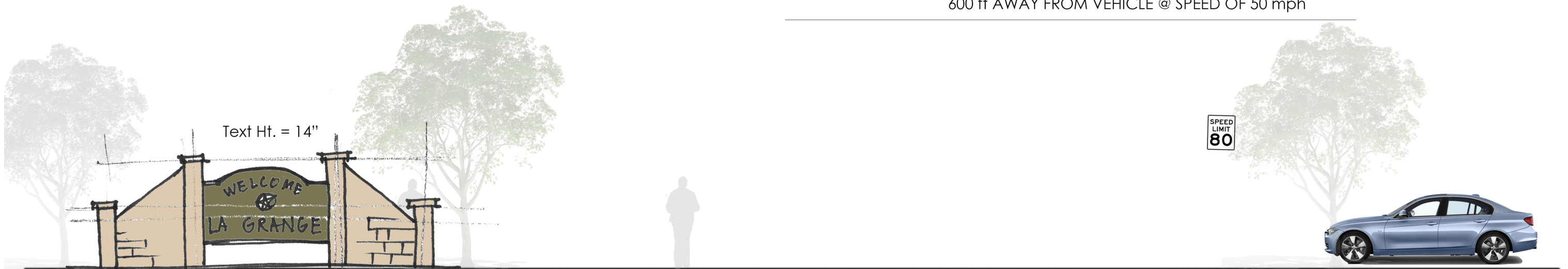
The existing entry signs in the North and East have traffic approaching at a speed of about 50mph; letters 12" high are readable at this speed. The proposed entry signs in the South and the West will have oncoming traffic at a higher speed of about 80mph; hence the proposed entry signs, have similar aesthetics and design but are of larger scale and the text height is 14" to be legible at a higher speed.



250 ft AWAY FROM VEHICLE @ SPEED OF 25



600 ft AWAY FROM VEHICLE @ SPEED OF 50 mph



1200 ft AWAY FROM VEHICLE @ SPEED OF 80mph

6. Concept

As one approaches the city along Highway 71 and 77, the speed limit gradually decreases. The master plan concept uses this decrease in speed to locate signs at strategic locations. As one moves toward the historic downtown, pedestrian considerations are needed. The signs are designed in such a way to adapt the smooth transition from vehicular to pedestrian traffic.

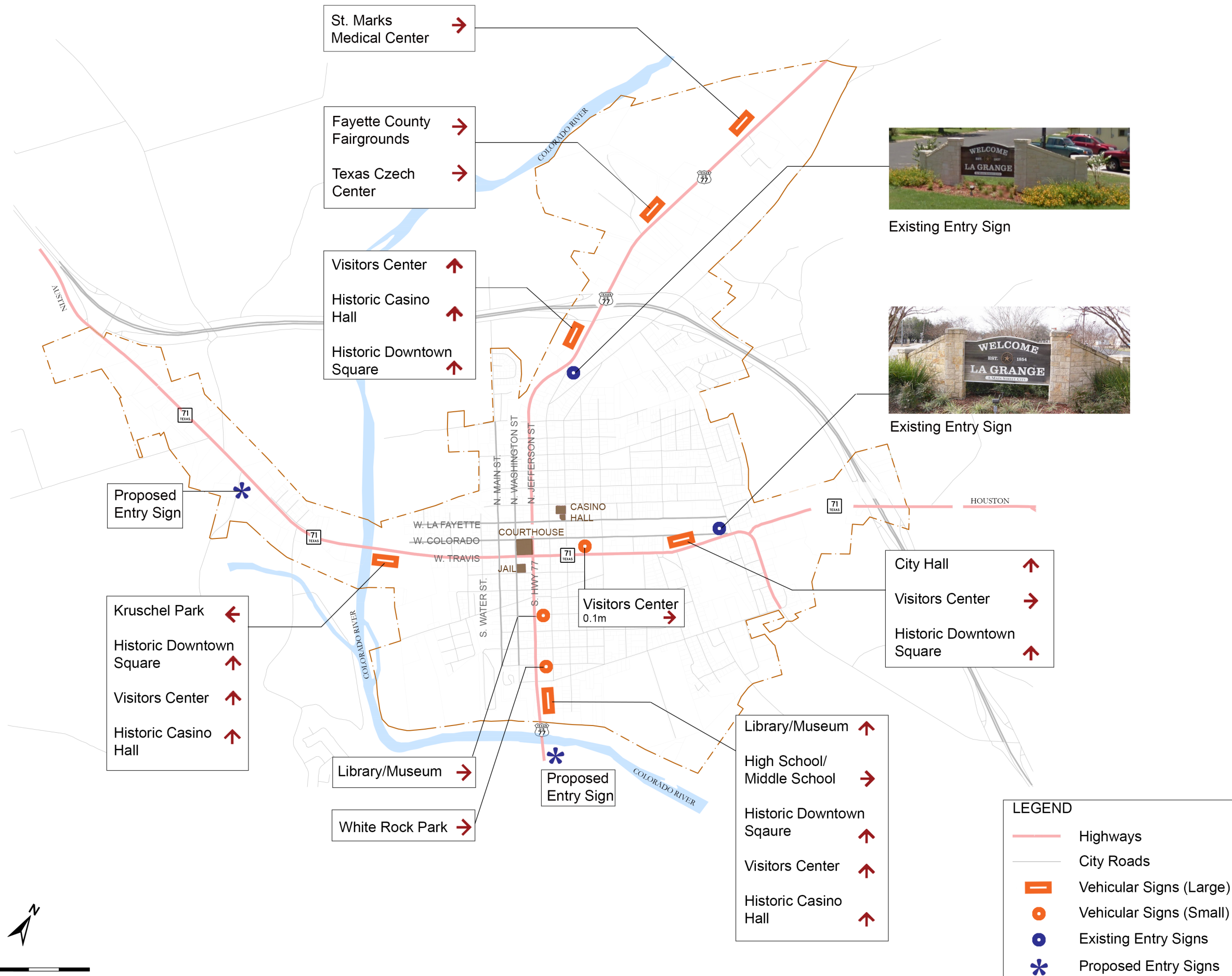
Currently, there are existing entry signs from the north at Highway 77 and from the east at Highway 71. The plan recommends new entry signs, similar in style, on the south and west sides along the respective highways. The Wayfinding System Master plan map shows the tentative locations of vehicular signage so that the driver is consistently reminded of important destinations.

Additionally, the design features of the wayfinding system include the following:

- The poles selected are traditional in design to reflect the city's history.
- The colors used are contemporary and attractive to the eye, yet not "out-of-place".
- The subtle patterns on the back and borders of signs reflect the cultural history of La Grange for example, the quilt pattern on the back of the vehicular sign relates directly to Czech and German heritage.
- The text heights on vehicular and pedestrian signs are according to the design guidelines with relation to the speed on vehicles driving on the adjacent roads.

The following series of graphics shows the overall hierarchy of signs and discusses the individual signage type in brief.

Wayfinding System Master Plan



Signage Hierarchy

R=230, G=196, B=156

R=97, G=92, B=51



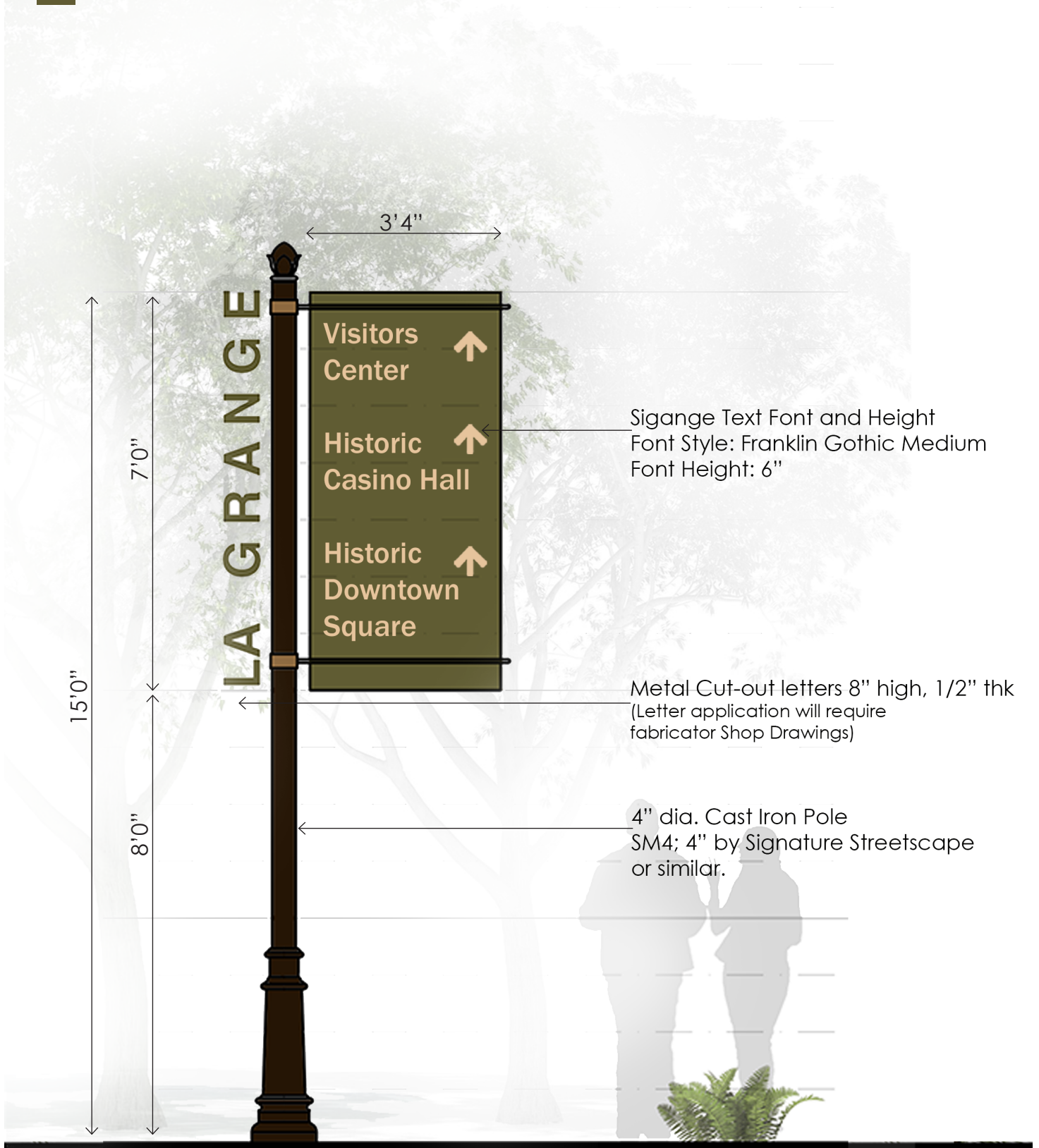
Vehicular Signage

Pedestrian Signage

Vehicular Signage

■ R=230, G=196, B=156

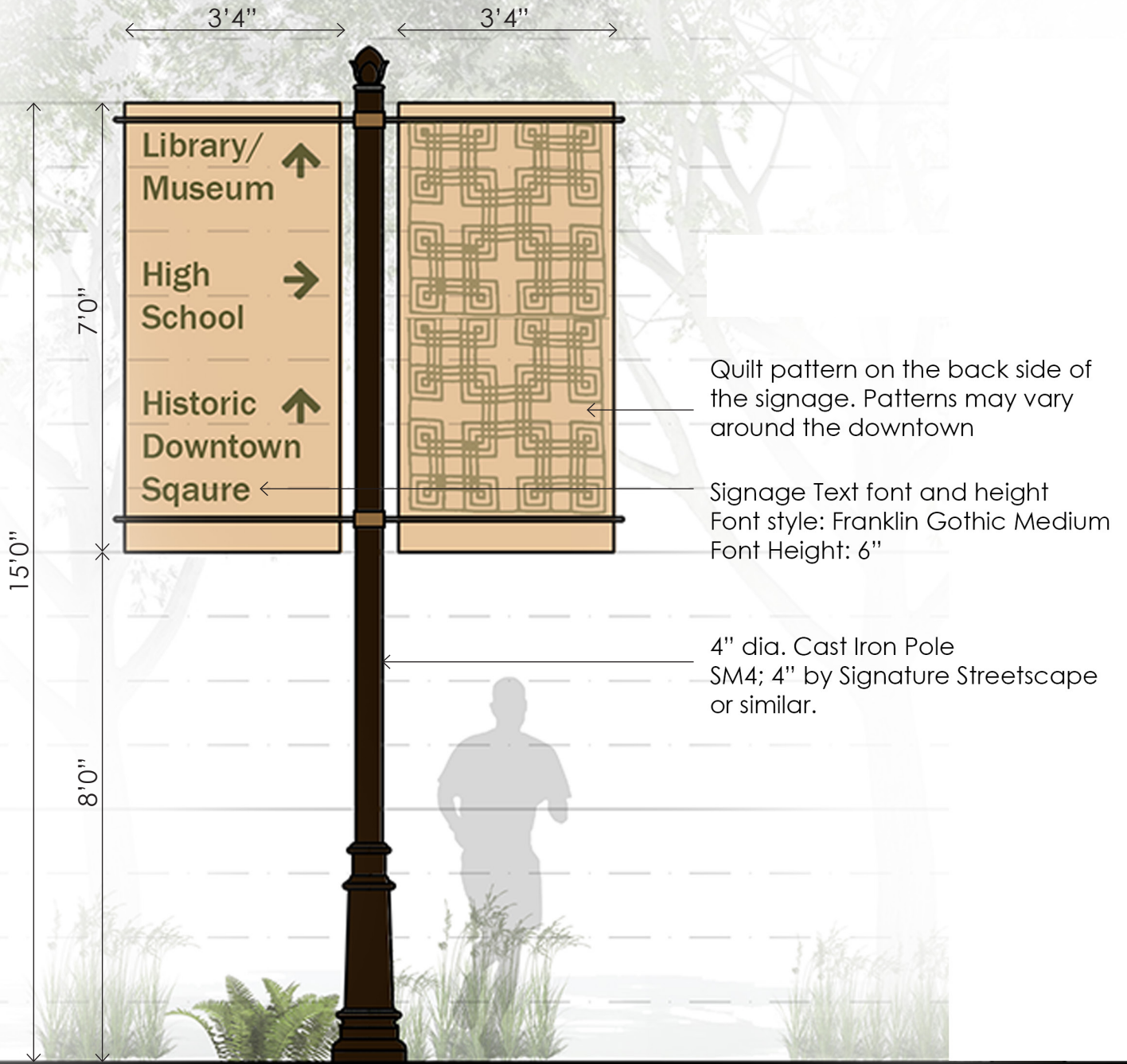
■ R=97, G=92, B=51



Vehicular Signage

■ R=230, G=196, B=156

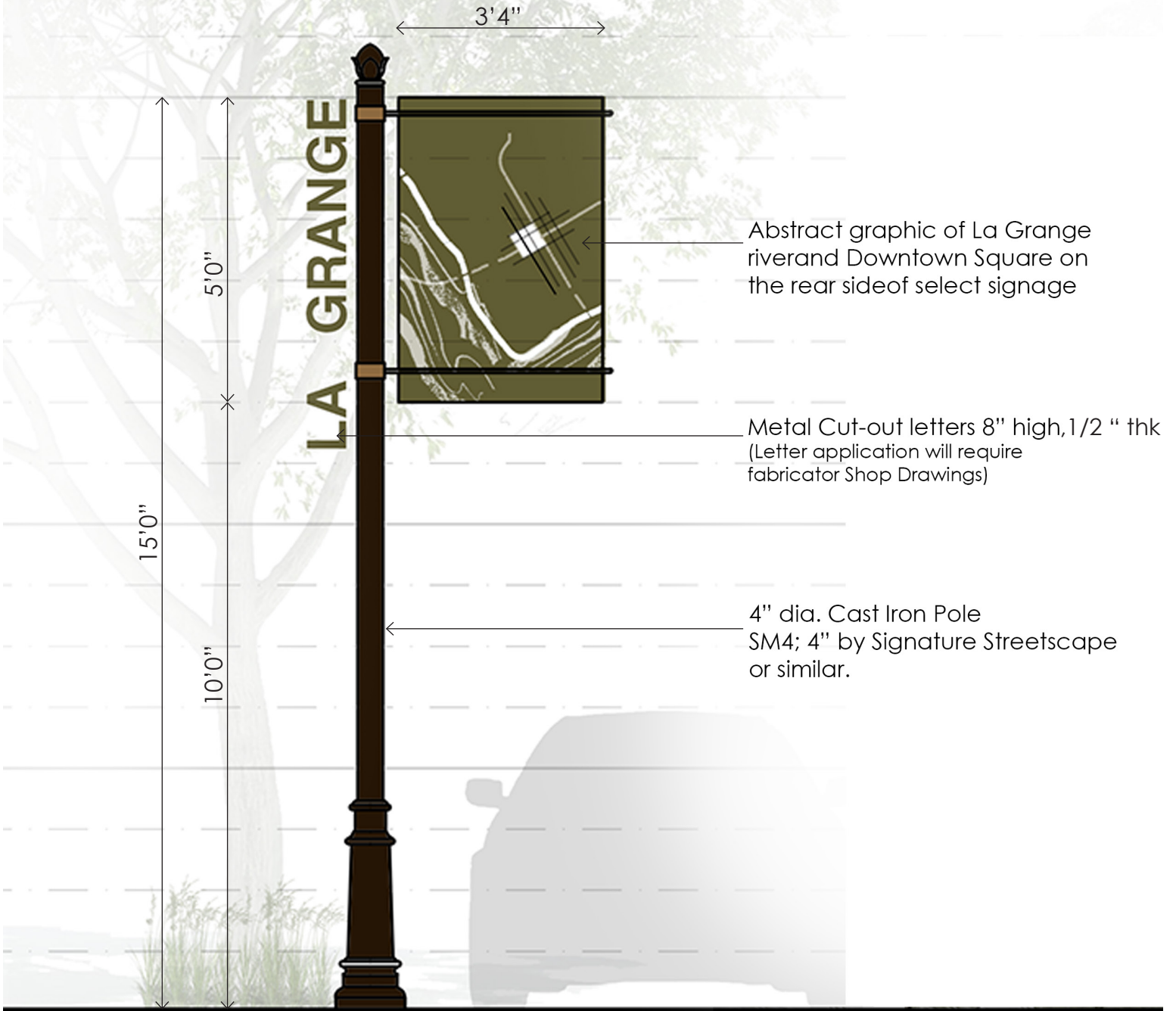
■ R=97, G=92, B=51



Vehicular Signage

■ R=230, G=196, B=156

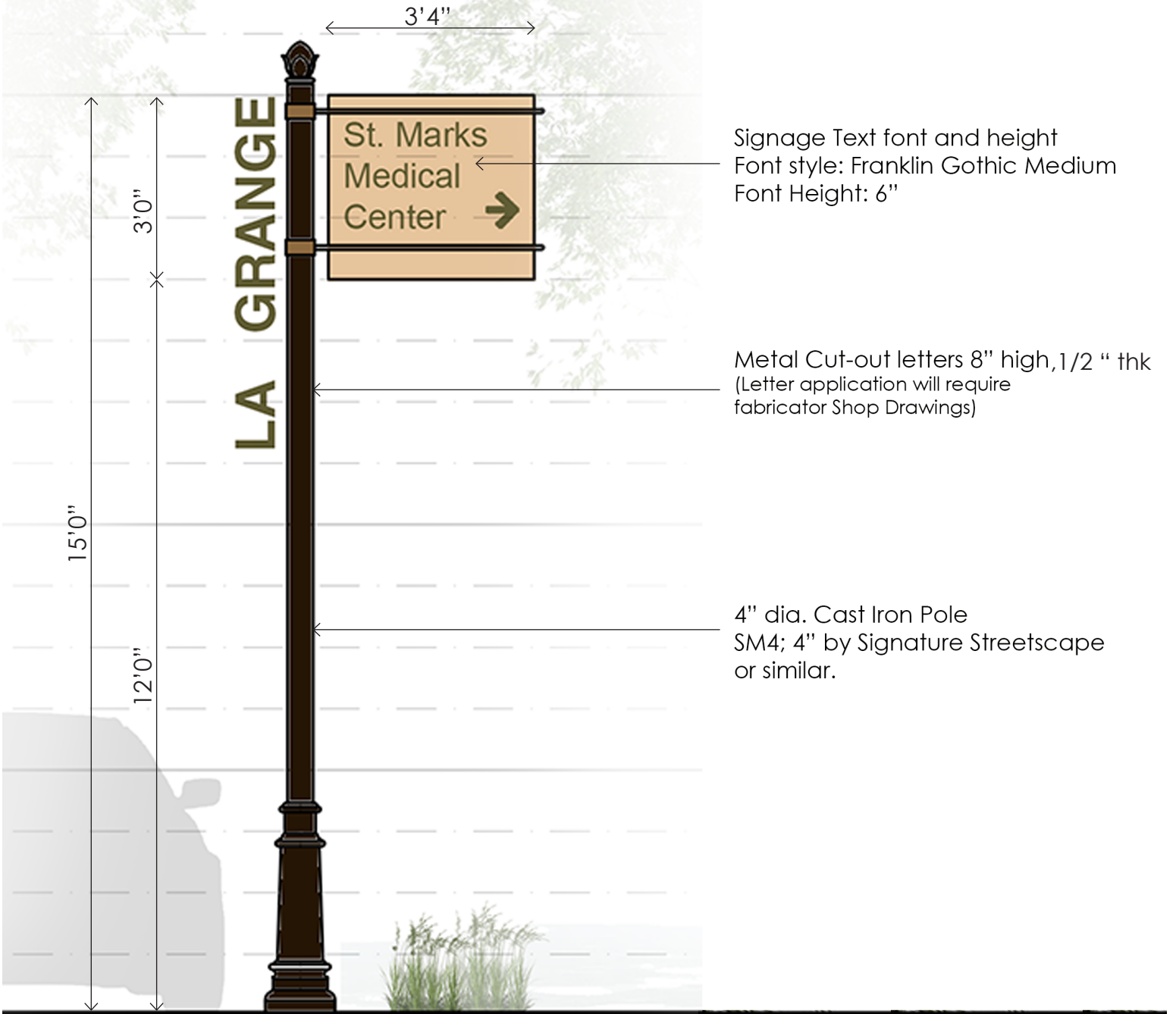
■ R=97, G=92, B=51



Vehicular Signage

■ R=230, G=196, B=156

■ R=97, G=92, B=51



Pedestrian Signage

■ R=230, G=196, B=156

■ R=97, G=92, B=51


Signage Text font and height
Font style: Franklin Gothic Medium
Font Height: 4"

Contents and specific locations on the
Square and throughout the
community for pedestrian
signage will be determined
by the City.

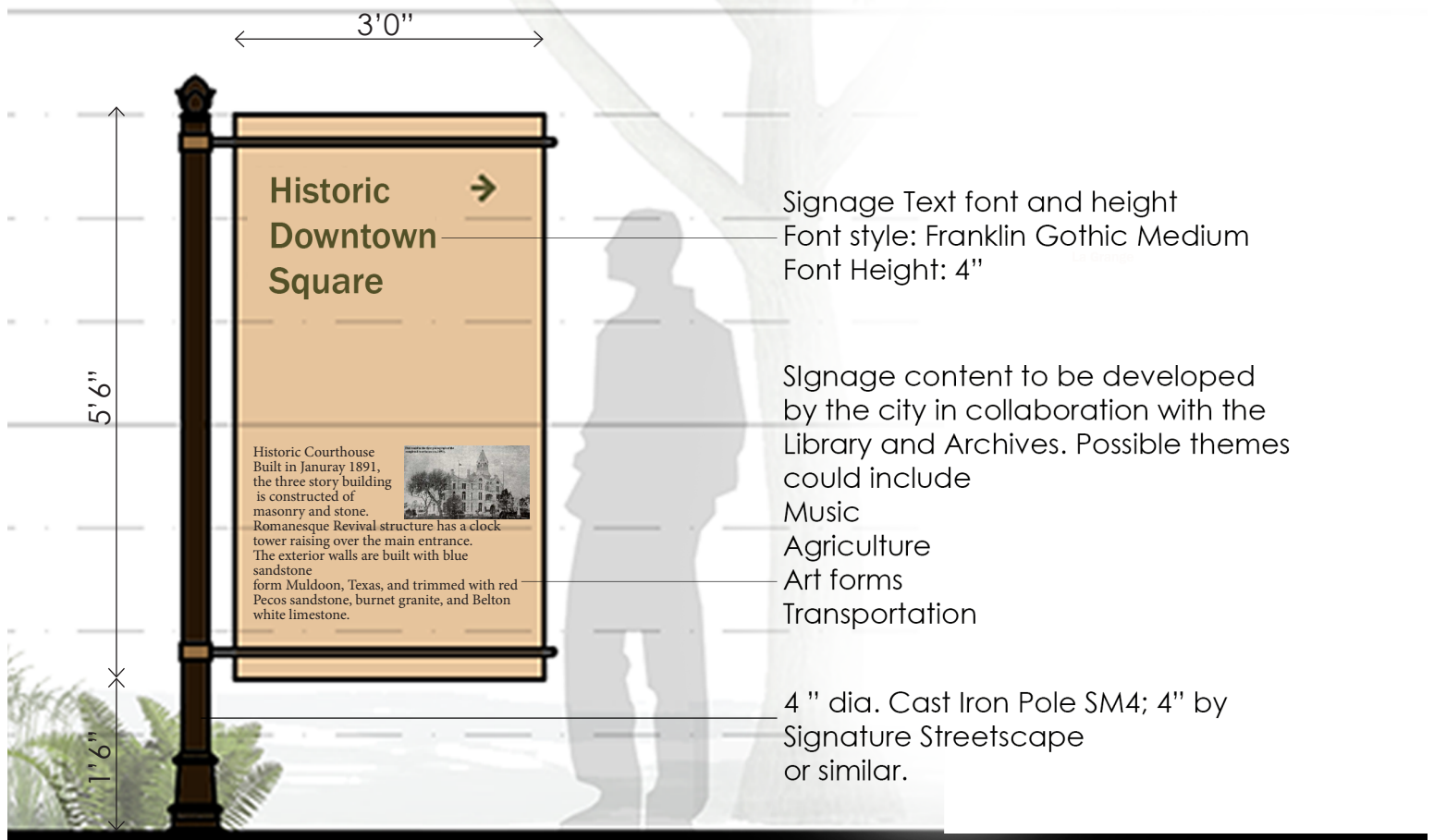
4 " dia. Cast Iron Pole SM4; 4" by
Signature Streetscape
or similar.



Pedestrian Signage

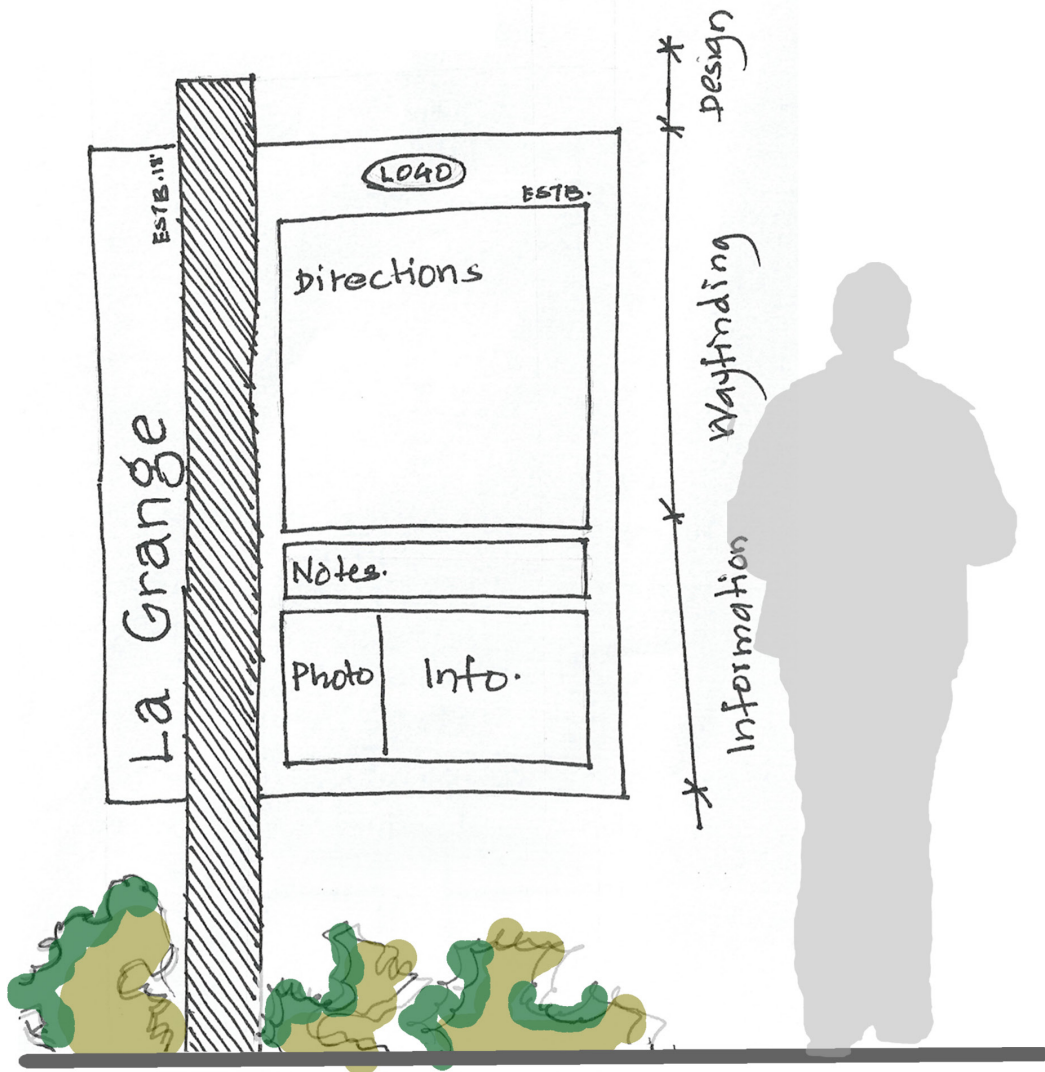
 R=230, G=196, B=156

 R=97, G=92, B=51



9. Appendix

Following appendix contains design concepts, materials, colors and other background data used during the process of designing the new Wayfinding System for the city of La Grange



COLOR PALETTE



WARM GREENS

MATERIAL PALETTE



PINE

CEDAR

OAK

METALS

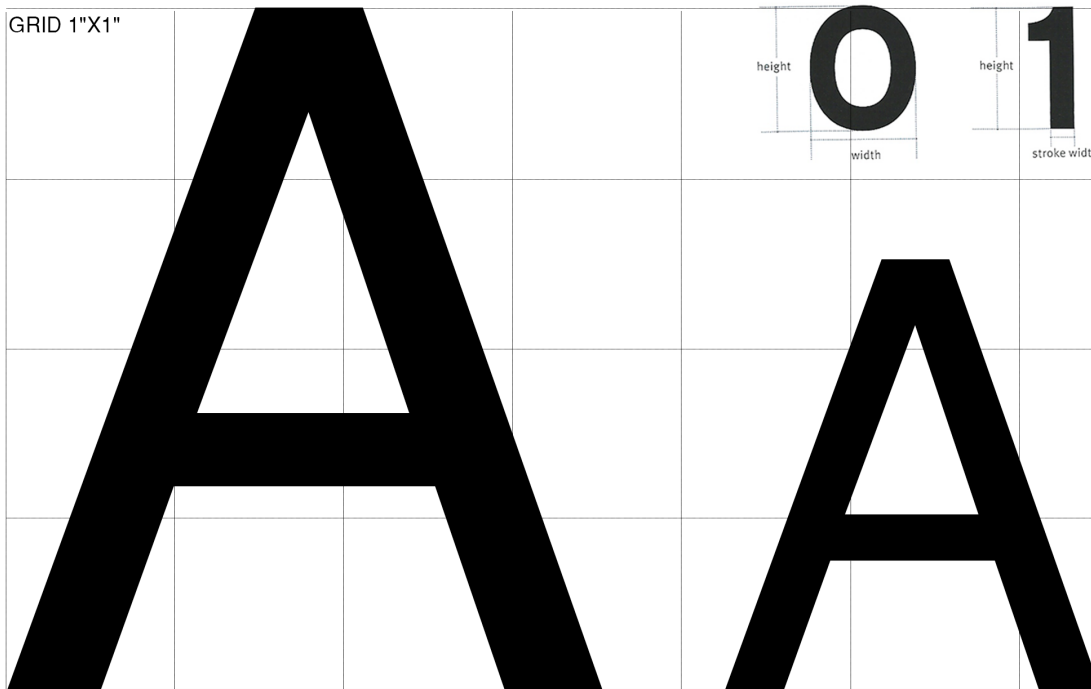


DISTRESSED
BRASS

CORTEN
STEEL

PATINA
FINISH AL.

WARM BROWNS



GARAMOND 012345

TRAJAN 012345

MS SERIF REFERENCE 012345

MS SANS SERIF 012345

FRANKLIN GOTHIC MEDIUM 012345

Potential locations for new signage (no existing sigange)



Existing examples of signage throughout the city

