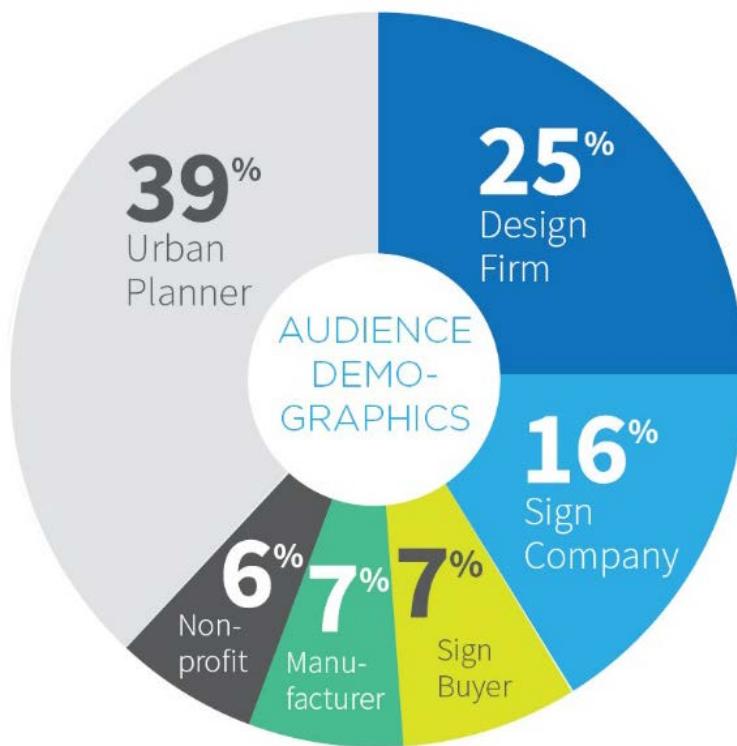


## 2018 National Sign Research and Education Conference (NSREC) Wrap Up

The 2018 National Sign Research & Education Conference (NSREC) took place on March 21 and was co-located with the ISA International Sign Expo in Orlando, Florida. We welcomed 150 people from diverse backgrounds and professional practices, including the 50 students and planners who were accepted into our 2018 SRF Scholarship Program.



### Synopsis

NSREC was envisioned as the first multi-disciplinary conference focused on signage. For years, the Sign Research Foundation has worked with academics, graduate students, and subject matter experts in design, architecture, urban planning, engineering, law, business, and construction. We quickly realized the hunger for knowledge within these disciplines and the desire to understand how signage linked to all their chosen professions.

As a result, in 2017, SRF created the Scholars Program and partnered with ISA's XDP (Experiential Design Program) to sponsor 85 architects, designers and urban planners to attend SRF's National Sign Research & Education Conference where they learned about effective signage alongside 65 professionals from the sign industry. This year's conference focused on the topics of wayfinding, urban media, and the branding of a community.

## Speaker Presentations

Please click the link within the title to download



wide range of examples from cities throughout the world including (*Presentation will be uploaded shortly*)

### **WTF – Wayfinding the Future – Cliff Selbert, Selbert-Perkins**

Cliff Selbert, with Selbert-Perkins Design, gave an entertaining overview of the past, present and future of wayfinding technologies, with a focus on digital integration, revenue generation and the evolution of sign codes in the urban environment. He introduced attendees to new digital wayfinding technologies and the exciting and profitable potential of integrating digital wayfinding and advertising into urban environments. His presentation included a



### **Designing for Communities within the Public Process – Jen Bressler, Hunt Design**

Jen Bressler, Principal of Hunt Design, spoke about how communities with a strong sense of place have evolved through the passionate engagement of individuals working for a common goal. She went into detail on city and community signage projects that succeeded due to a shared vision and collaborative process. Jen touched on how planners, public works managers, community stakeholders, city managers, GIS managers,

architects, designers – all play a key role in placemaking and wayfinding projects. She explained how incorporating all of the new technology, material advancements, and engineering specifications makes for a complex process. Jen used examples from Westwood Village, Pasadena, and Santa Barbara to convey that designing for the good of the community within the public process is a matter of understanding human nature, the needs of the “users”, and respectful dialogue.



### [Activating the Urban Environment District: Signage in American Cities – Pete Scantland, Orange Barrel Media & David Ehrlich, Urban Activation Institute](#)

Pete Scantland with Orange Barrel Media and David Ehrlich with the Urban Activation Institute presented on how signs are a barometer of the health of cities. They showed the ability of on premise signs to direct traffic to private business, allow for construction and renovation of buildings, support local programming, fund neighborhood revitalization, enable city

services and engagement, be both art and content, and to tell a city's unique story with examples from Las Vegas, NV, Los Angeles, CA, Columbus, OH, Boston, MA, and Denver, CO..

Signs are design elements and can contribute to the aesthetic character and vibrancy of an urban landscape. Using examples from Picadilly Circus in London, Shibuya Square in Tokyo, and the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles, they showed places that developed unique sign regulations, with the intent of creating a specific sense of place. They concluded their presentation with a list twelve things to consider when writing sign codes/regulations.

## Working Roundtables



For the roundtable exercise, all NSREC attendees were split up into 8 different teams. The goal of the exercise was for each team to work together and brainstorm some ideas to one central scenario, namely how autonomous cars may change signage and wayfinding. The focused question for the working groups was “assuming autonomous vehicles will dominate the roadways in 20 years, how will this change signage and wayfinding?”

Teams were specifically asked to think about answering one of the following questions:

1. Will an autonomous vehicle look like a car? What might it look like to provide the most benefit to the passenger? How would this affect street signage?
2. How might an increase in pedestrian environments affect the development of signage?

3. Mobile technology has increased the ability to obtain goods and services quickly and effectively. People already search for businesses using mobile apps designed to understand their personal preferences. If they are always a passenger, not a driver, how might they interact with the outside environment?

Once the teams chose their question of focus, they were asked to create a vision of the future and document their ideas for the evolution of signage and wayfinding. Teams were encouraged to adopt a multidisciplinary perspective, leveraging the different professional practices represented within their team.

### *Conclusions*



Team 1 chose to answer Question #1 and they concluded that the driverless cars of the future would be pod shaped cars controlled by computers. They believed that the interior of the vehicle would be designed for comfort and convenience for the passenger. Lastly, they concluded that street signs would now be pedestrian focused and technologically advanced enough to send wayfinding signals directly to the pod car.

Team 2 chose to answer Question #1 and they concluded that the driverless cars of the future would have their own informational content with a screen that replaces the windshield. They believed that, in order to benefit the passenger, the interior screen would have AR/VR capability and themed experiences for each ride of the passenger's choosing (such as meditative, immersive, chaotic, etc.). Finally they thought that wayfinding signage would be pedestrian focused and would no longer be for drivers.

Team 3 chose to answer Question #1 and they believed that driverless cars of the future would be "smart car" sized and be made of augmented glass with no windows. They concluded that the car would include safety elements/anti-crash measurements and include a customizable experience to benefit the passenger. Lastly they believed that street sign regulations would become more flexible and the number of signs would increase.

Team 4 chose to answer Question #2 and they concluded that an increase in pedestrian environments would lead to a car-free city with wayfinding integrated into wearable tech for pedestrians. They believed that signage would provide relevant, real time, customizable information about the surrounding environment to pedestrians.

Team 5 chose to answer Question #3 and they believed that passengers would interact with the outside environment through geofencing or using GPS to create a virtual geographic boundary enabling software to trigger a response. They concluded that they could accomplish this by using the car as a kiosk and having it provide information through digital screens which would include marketed enhances, an audible experience, and an AI component. Finally they believed that they could integrate static and digital but using smartphone technology with beacons in the living environment to enhance the user experience, track interest, and form a streetscape signage communication system.

Team 6 chose to answer Question #2 they concluded that an increase in pedestrian environments would lead to richer and more personalized information on a different scale than auto-oriented signage. They believed that signage would adapt to user interests and preferences with more targeted content. Finally they concluded that the signage would be more architecturally integrated and would increase environmental engagement by encouraging people to look at their surroundings instead of at their phones.

Team 7 chose to answer Question #2 they concluded that an increase in pedestrian environments would lead to signage being much more interactive and located on the ground to adapt to where people are already looking, down at their phones. They believed that this change would leave more room for integrated artistic/structural pieces, brighter colors, and auditory signs. Finally they concluded that this new environment would allow for signage to create conversation between people as well as include projections on the ground with programmable wayfinding elements.

Team 8 chose to answer Question #1 and they concluded that the driverless cars of the future would be less "car-like" and would more closely resemble mass transit. They believed that these cars would allow people to have more interactivity with their environment because of the more walkable urban fabric. Finally they concluded that with autonomous cars pushing more people to use mass transit and becoming pedestrians, that crowd sourcing mass transit would eventually lead to a higher quality of life.

## What do Attendees Say?

"I'm very glad that ISA introduced me to the Sign Research Foundation. They are a critical resource for anyone who wants their signage and placemaking tools to be more effective."

- Jessica R. Finch, Boston Children's Hospital

"As a transportation planner, we never studied wayfinding, even though it's extremely important in making transit easier to use. People need to know where to go to catch their train or bus, but also where to go after they get to their stop. Seeing how wayfinding can also present an income-generating opportunity is especially appealing."

- Jesse Barrack Schofield, Transportation Planner, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency



"The program did a great job of exploring the convergence between the sign industry, design and urban planning. It raised thought provoking issues."

- Richard Rogers, Principal, Urban Vantage LLC

"As a planner, it was valuable to hear the perspective of sign manufacturers/fabricators, designers and business owners. Understanding the different professional obligations and expectations is incredibly valuable in developing policy and regulations."

- Kyle Shiel, Senior Planner, Town of Manchester, CT

"This program was outstanding in the way it brought design professionals from many fields together and showed each of us how we can all work together in designing signs and sign Ordinances that promote the public good."

- Kevin O'Brien AICP, Planner, City of Rahway, NJ

"I have a new appreciation for the signage industry as it intersects design, law, and other civic considerations. As a student planner I have not yet been exposed to the nuance in regulation or the potential innovation in implementation and feel like through the NSREC program I have been given an awesome crash course. One of the best things about the Conference is the assortment of diverse thinkers and the interesting conversations I was able to have. I would definitely do this again, and fully recommend!"

- Wisnerson Benoit, Graduate Student-Urban Planning, Florida State University

"I enjoyed learning more about sign research and all the executive reports available. I found many of them very informative and have an interest in learning more about the foundation. The NSREC speakers were knowledgeable and informative."

- Mary Hester, Creative Director, Carolina Pride Carwash

*Thank you to the generous donors who sponsored the 2018 SRF Scholars Program:*

