



# Supplemental Wayfinding Cues

## Creative Techniques to Improve Navigation

### What is Wayfinding?

Wayfinding refers to the process of ascertaining one's current position, planning the route, and then pursuing that path to reach a destination. Following a map in pursuit of buried treasure is a perfect metaphor for the challenges individuals often face when navigating an unfamiliar space. The keys to a successful journey in both situations are well-identified key decision points, clear critical paths, and visible destination markers.

Primary wayfinding tools, such as directional, identification, and informational signage, support the ability to navigate a space confidently and are crucial to developing a solid wayfinding and navigation program for healthcare and senior living environments.

Supplemental cues work alongside primary wayfinding to support a seamless journey and help make unfamiliar environments less intimidating and more navigable. This guide will explore creative supplementary wayfinding cues that think outside traditional methods and incorporate artwork, graphics, and decorative signage into your wayfinding plan to help improve navigation.





### **DID YOU KNOW?**

*Navigating healthcare and senior living settings can often be overwhelming. Clear wayfinding cues can help reduce anxiety by providing a sense of reassurance.*

## **Highlight Key Decision Points**

When someone is in a hurry or running late, the situation is already stressful enough. But this feeling only worsens when they begin to doubt whether they are going in the right direction toward their destination. Incorporating creative landmarks as visual cues at key decision points, such as elevator banks or entryways, not only beautifies a space but also becomes a point of reference.

Creative landmarks encourage navigators to associate specific imagery with a specific location, helping individuals remember their paths, establish a sense of direction, and instill confidence, reducing unnecessary stress and confusion along the way.



*Pictured: Elevator banks in a multi-floor healthcare center feature distinctly different wall graphics so navigators can associate the image with the correct floor.*

## Decorative Floor Numbers

Decorative floor numbers add a creative twist to required signage by combining important information with the artwork. The supporting cues are easy-to-read and can be designed to complement the surrounding interior.

These large, definitive numbers are visually appealing, and emphasize key decision points for navigators.



### TIP

*Establish unique and recognizable landmarks at key decision points. This helps people mentally map the area and provides reference points when they are trying to navigate.*



*Pictured: Attractive dimensional signage and a memorable creative landmark are displayed in a hospital elevator bank.*



*Pictured: Custom artwork displays the corresponding floor number in the elevator lobby of a senior living community.*

## Wayfinding Graphics

Large, prominently displayed graphics can identify or direct navigators to essential areas, such as exits, elevators, or key departments. Custom graphics can also incorporate themes or imagery unique to a particular area to support environmental differentiation, which we'll discuss in the next section.



*Pictured: This wall graphic identifies the floor number and department name using color-coding and themed imagery.*

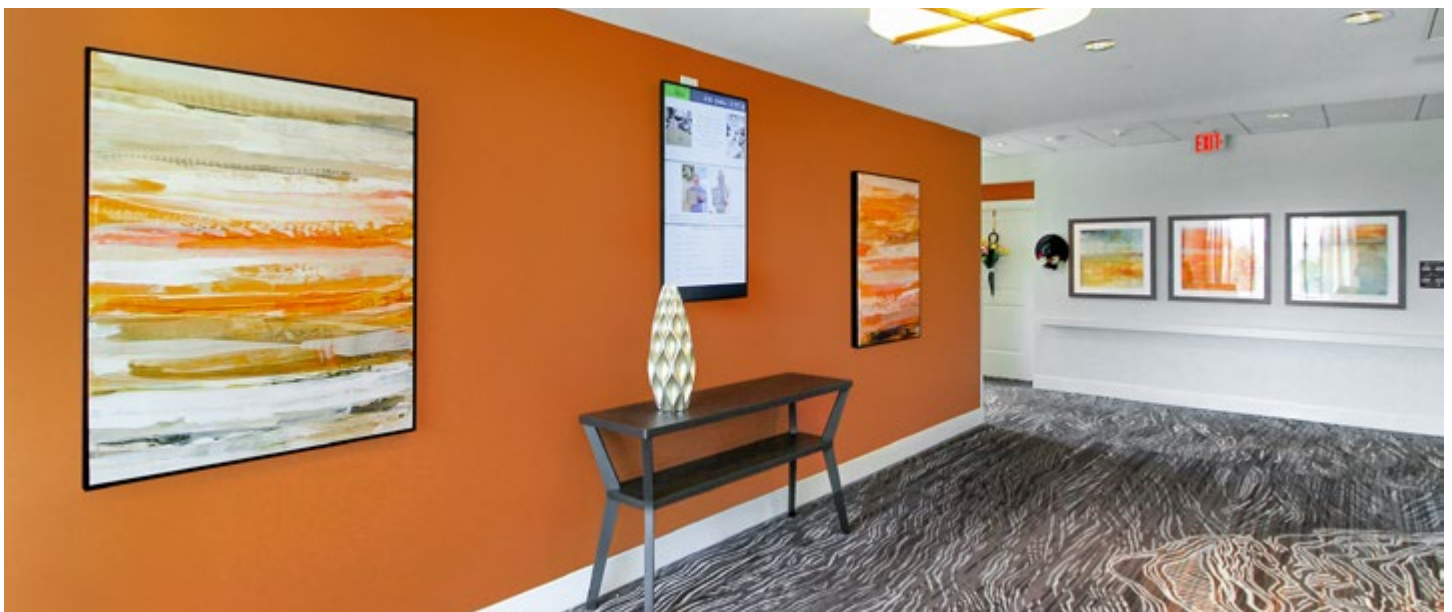


## Create Distinct Zones

Distinct zones provide navigators with an immersive wayfinding experience using visual cues to help make spatial connections and categorize surroundings based on a familiar theme. This is more commonly referred to as environmental differentiation. These captivating approaches help create memorable spaces and promote better visual organization, understanding, and confidence.

## Color Coding

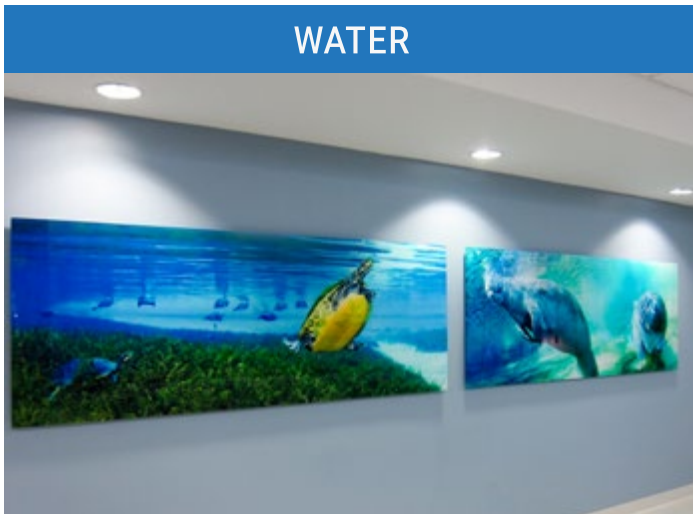
Color coding spaces is an easy-to-achieve yet powerful method for environmental differentiation. It can help people find their way and create a more pleasant, less stressful environment for those who live, work, and visit. Different colors coordinated into an accent wall, artwork, and more can determine a location change, making the environmental shift easier to comprehend.



*Pictured: Each floor of this senior living residence features a bold color scheme with coordinating artwork to create distinct spaces and simplify navigation for residents.*

# Themed Environments

Themed environments maintain consistency and can tie different areas together in a way that makes sense to its intended audience, often drawing on everyday experiences or knowledge. Designs for themed environments are limitless as long as they stay relevant to the audience and are easily recognizable. The theme gives the zone a distinct identity, which aids in wayfinding and enhances the overall user experience.



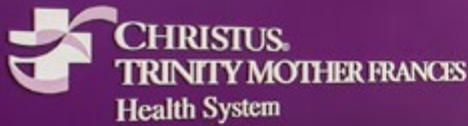
*Pictured: This Florida pediatric hospital created themed environments inspired by natural elements like water and sun. Each floor includes vibrant colors with matching imagery to create visually engaging spaces.*



## TIP

Use symbolic artwork to represent the function of an area. For example, display artwork with images of hearts in a cardiology department.





*Pictured: This history wall guides individuals along a critical hallway while highlighting the organization's timeline, brand, and core values.*

## Emphasize Critical Paths

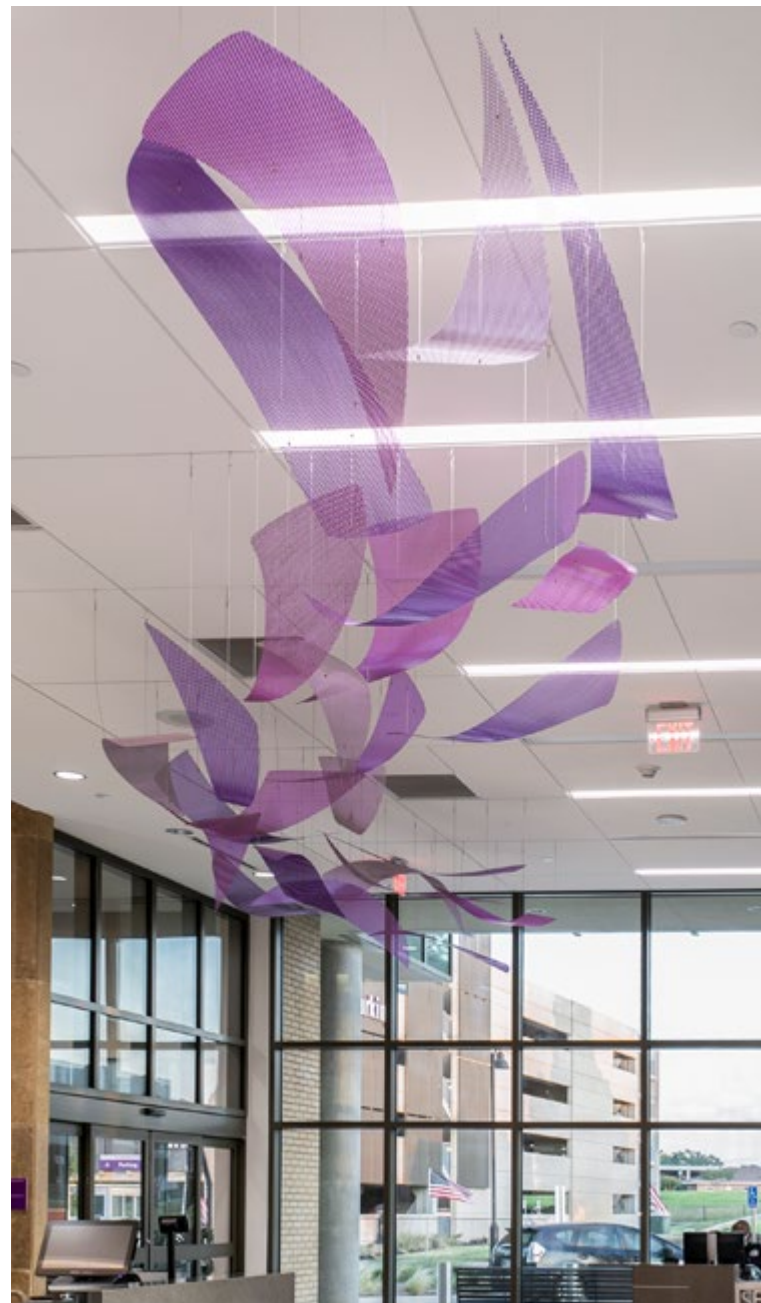
Critical paths in healthcare or senior living facilities are the most important and frequently used routes connecting key areas. These paths must be clearly marked, logically connected, and easy to follow—just like the dotted line on a treasure map. They should help individuals avoid getting lost or overwhelmed while safely and independently navigating their surroundings.

There are many creative ways to emphasize critical paths, such as adhesive floor graphics or a series of dimensional art that directs individuals along a commonly traveled route. Integrating supplemental cues help establish safe passage from one location to another and back again, benefiting navigators and enhancing the overall atmosphere.



### TIP

*Ensure all signage and path markings are accessible to people of all abilities and support seamless communication to individuals of all ages and linguistic backgrounds.*



*Pictured: This river-like sculpture flows from the hospital entrance and into the main corridor.*

## Dimensional Directionals

Dimensional directionals are eye-catching three-dimensional creative landmarks commonly used in healthcare spaces and effortlessly guides individuals through the facility. The clearly defined routes help create a visual map so individuals can confidently navigate the space.



*Pictured: White orbs with gold leaf embellishments are used to identify the path between a seating area and the elevators in this healthcare facility.*



### TIP

*When mapping out critical paths, consider the most common areas navigators will need to reach, such as elevators or reception areas.*



*Pictured: Floor striping designates a visual step-by-step path for individuals to follow to their intended destination.*

## Adhesive Floor Graphics

Adhesive floor graphics are great for seasonal or temporary needs, such as directions to a blood drive or flu vaccination station. For more permanent markings, we recommend working with a flooring company to integrate the design into the floor to reduce excessive wear and tear.



## Incorporate Destination Markers

Once the best route is determined, navigators can confidently move from point A to point B. But what if they cannot recall the specific room or apartment number? Connecting visual cues to a destination is an easy way to reassure individuals that they have arrived. Key imagery and prominent landmarks, such as an eye-catching wall graphic outside the dining room, are distinct points of reference to help identify they have successfully completed their journey.



*Pictured: This patient room features a wall graphic matching the image on the room ID sign.*

## Matching Imagery

In healthcare spaces, consider supplementing room ID signage with room-specific imagery to show a visual link to the destination. This approach allows for a more memorable association than relying solely on a name or a string of numbers or letters.



### TIP

*Be mindful of your target audience when planning supplemental cues.*





*Pictured: Memory boxes outside residents' apartments spark familiarity, helping reassure them they've arrived at their room.*

## Memory Boxes

In senior living communities, most apartment doors all look the same. Visual cues, such as memory boxes, can serve as reminders and assist residents in identifying their living space. Memory boxes display personal keepsakes, mementos, or photographs outside an apartment, offering residents a familiar visual marker to identify their room.

## Familiar Wall Graphics

Distinctive and memorable wall graphics can serve as clear visual cues by providing residents with a recognizable landmark to help them identify their surroundings. Associating the graphic with positive experiences, such as engaging activities and social interactions, can strengthen memory recall and reinforce the room's purpose.



*Pictured: Senior living residents remember this wall graphic and associate it with the space where they spend quality time with friends to paint, play games, and more.*

## Conclusion

Whether you are designing navigation plans for healthcare or senior living, the types of creative supplemental wayfinding cues and support are endless. These clever and imaginative techniques can enhance your interior design while employing navigators to move independently through a space, ultimately reducing anxiety and providing a seamless wayfinding experience for those who visit, work, and live in these environments.



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