



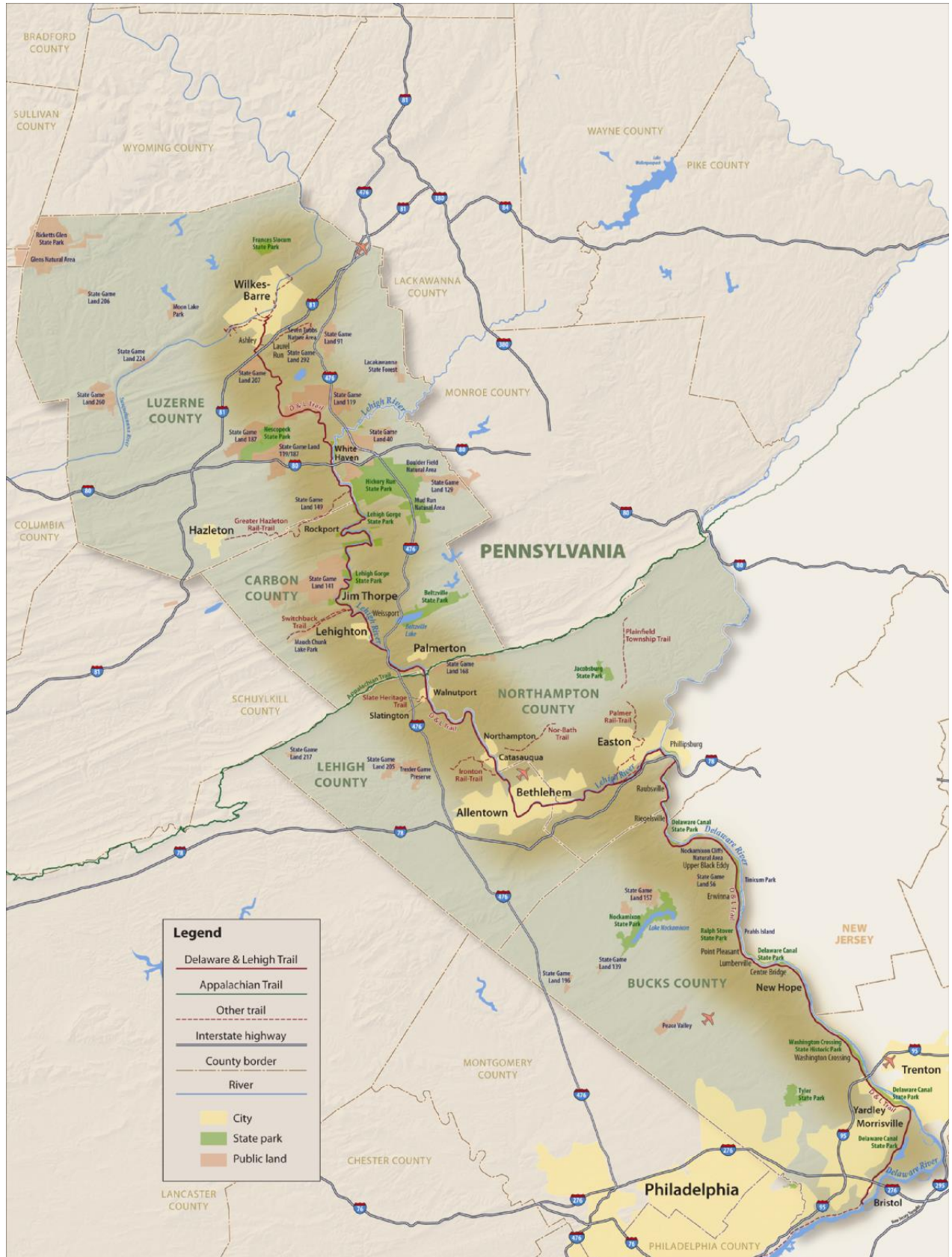
# **Visually Speaking**

***Bring your stories to life***

**A comprehensive guide to sign development  
*within the***

**Delaware & Lehigh  
National Heritage Corridor**

# The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor



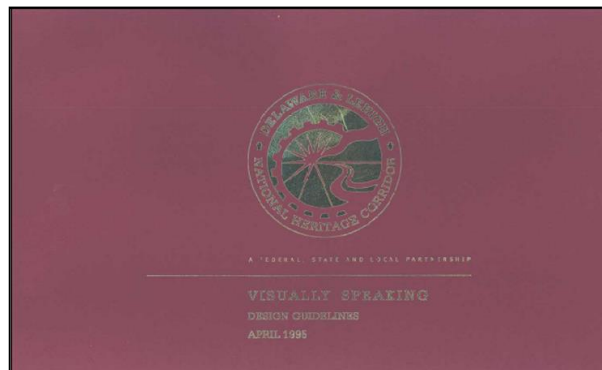
## Introduction

The Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) is a joint effort of private groups and interested citizens, county and municipal governments, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the federal government to conserve cultural and natural resources in the five-county region of Pennsylvania that traverses the historic Delaware and Lehigh Canals (see map on adjacent page). Since the Delaware & Lehigh's designation by Congress in 1988, it has been our mission to restore historic places, conserve green space for public use, and preserve and interpret our heritage to enhance life for generations to come.

One mandate of the D&L is to help visitors and residents navigate the Corridor and better understand its rich and complex history, culture, and landscape. Creating signs that direct travelers, welcome visitors, and interpret sites is an important means of fulfilling that mandate. We hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to enhance your site and the Corridor by adding proper signage.

## *Visually Speaking*

*Visually Speaking* is a set of guidelines for the development of signs throughout the Corridor. The D&L has over 600 signs installed across the Corridor's diverse landscape. The standards set in *Visually Speaking* provide for a unity that links them all together, while allowing each site to tell its unique story.



All signs must conform to the standards found in *Visually Speaking*. Developed exclusively for the D&L by Cloud Gehshan Associates, *Visually Speaking* has set the standard for wayfinding systems across the nation. Copies of the guidelines are available from the D&L office and online at <http://www.delawareandlehigh.org/index.php/documents-resources/>.

## Using this guide: Deciding on a Sign Type

This guide is divided into two parts—Part A and Part B. Part A focuses on the development of interpretive signage, while Part B covers directional and regulatory signage. Determining which types of signs you want is very important to this process because different staff members will help you with different types of signs. The descriptions below will help you decide what type of sign suits your needs.

### Interpretive (Part A)

In *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden defines interpretation as, “An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.” To achieve this, interpretive signage uses images and simple but engaging text. The key point is that interpretation should not come in the form of a bulleted list of facts but as a narrative explanation of the larger meaning and significance of a site. One of the D&L’s historians or environmental specialists will work with you on these types of signs.

Interpretive signage ***should not*** be used to:

- tell visitors what they can and cannot do on a site
- list facts or figures without interpretation
- provide directional information
- provide only a map or only photos without text
- create a bulleted list, like this one

### Directional and Regulatory (Part B)

These signs provide the opportunity to direct visitors to or through a site, welcome visitors, provide maps, and list specific regulations. The text on these signs should be short and simple so that visitors can read them while passing by in a vehicle or on foot. The D&L Trail Steward will work with you on these types of signs.

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# Sign Types

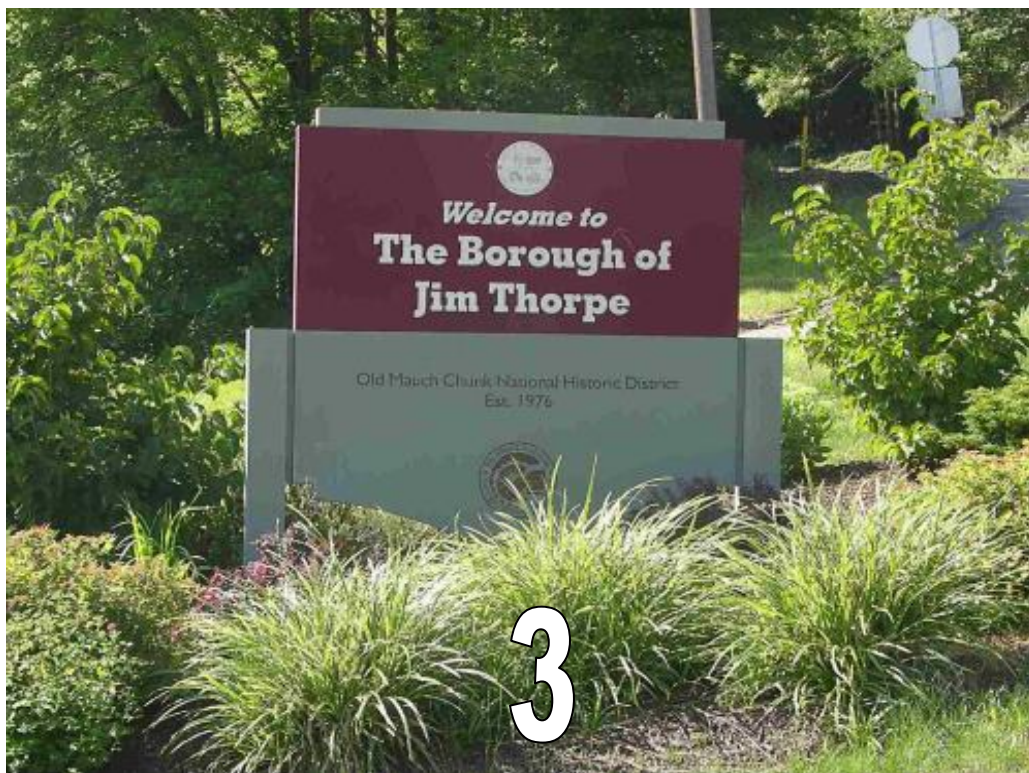
The D&L produces three main types of signs: **interpretive (1), directional/regulatory (2), and directional (3).**



1



**Clockwise from top:**  
an interpretive display;  
a directional sign with  
regulatory symbols; a  
directional entrance  
sign



3

## Part A: Developing Interpretive Signs

Interpretive and directional signs, or “waysides,” can be a cost-effective means of communicating your story to the public. Waysides are used to add meaning to visitor experiences by providing directions, additional information, an introduction to an otherwise hidden story, or explanations regarding regions, towns, or sites.

Developing effective signage requires a good deal of vision, organization, and design work but can be a rewarding experience. In order to ease the process and keep signage consistent, the D&L staff compiled this booklet to assist with your efforts. This booklet provides basic information to help you work with a D&L representative to complete your new signs. Because interpretive signs require a keen sense of design and writing, they will be the subject of much of this pamphlet.

### What is interpretive signage?

In *Interpreting Our Heritage*, Freeman Tilden defines interpretation as, “**An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.**”

To achieve this, interpretive signage uses images and simple but engaging text. The key point is that interpretation should not come in the form of a bulleted list of facts but as a narrative explanation of the larger meaning and significance of a site. One of the D&L’s historians or environmental specialists will work with you on these types of signs.

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# Interpretive Signs



**Interpretive signs** consist of a fiberglass panel set into a thick-cast aluminum base (see the examples below). These signs contain additional information, interesting stories, and explanations that will improve visitors' experiences and understanding of a site.

The D&L can help design all three types of designs to suit your specific needs. This booklet, however, is primarily devoted to the development of **interpretive signs**. For the development of other sign types, please contact the appropriate staff member listed on the back of this booklet.



**Low-Profile Interpretive Panel and Base**



**High-Profile Interpretive Panel and Base**

## Interpretive Panels: High-Profile or Low-Profile?

There are two types of interpretive waysides: **low-profile** and **high-profile**.

- **Low-profile** wayside panels are either 24" x 18" or 36" x 24" and are mounted at waist height for reading from above.
- **High-profile** wayside panels are 36" x 48" and are mounted upright (like a poster).

Each type of sign is intended to serve a specific purpose:

- **Low-profile** signs are placed directly on location, so the user can look at the "real thing" and the sign at the same time.
- **High-profile** signs provide information in areas where they do not compete with the "real thing." They can also represent a greater amount of information than low profiles.



**Low-profile wayside**  
(24" x 18" or 36" x 24")



**High-profile wayside**  
(36" x 48")



## Low-Profile Arrangements

Low-profile signs are always stand-alone units that may be installed near other low-profile signs but are never connected to them.

## High-Profile Arrangements

High-profile signs can be arranged in a variety of patterns. Several arrangements are pictured below. Please discuss arrangement options with a D&L staff member.



**Stand Alone High-Profile Sign**

**Three High-Profile Signs Side by Side**



**Three-Sided High-Profile Kiosk**

## Using Outdoor Exhibits Effectively

Before designing and writing your sign, consider the following issues.

*What role will your sign play?*

Sites with few staff members will use signs as a substitute for active interpretation. Sites with on-site staff will use signs to supplement their existing programs or as a means of appealing to visitors in off-peak hours. Signs can be used to meet a variety of site needs, but each site should consider the role of the sign before they begin design.

*Where is the best location?*

Next to writing successful text, your biggest challenge is selecting the wayside's location.

Consider the following tips:

- Never allow a wayside to block a view.
- Let the site speak for itself.
- Use the sign to supplement the natural view.
- Place the panel so the reader can glance from the sign to the place it discusses.
- Consider visitors' safety. Be sure readers have a safe place to stand while viewing the wayside.
- Make sure you do not overload your site with signs. Too many signs are a distraction.
- Consider future landscape maintenance. Will it be easy to access and maintain the sign in the future?
- If possible, choose locations to minimize vandalism.



**Signs can welcome visitors and interpret history in a variety of settings.**

## Developing Your Wayside Panels

The design, writing, and production process can take any number of paths. Below is a general outline of the process. Use the attached checklist (pages 15-16) to track your progress.

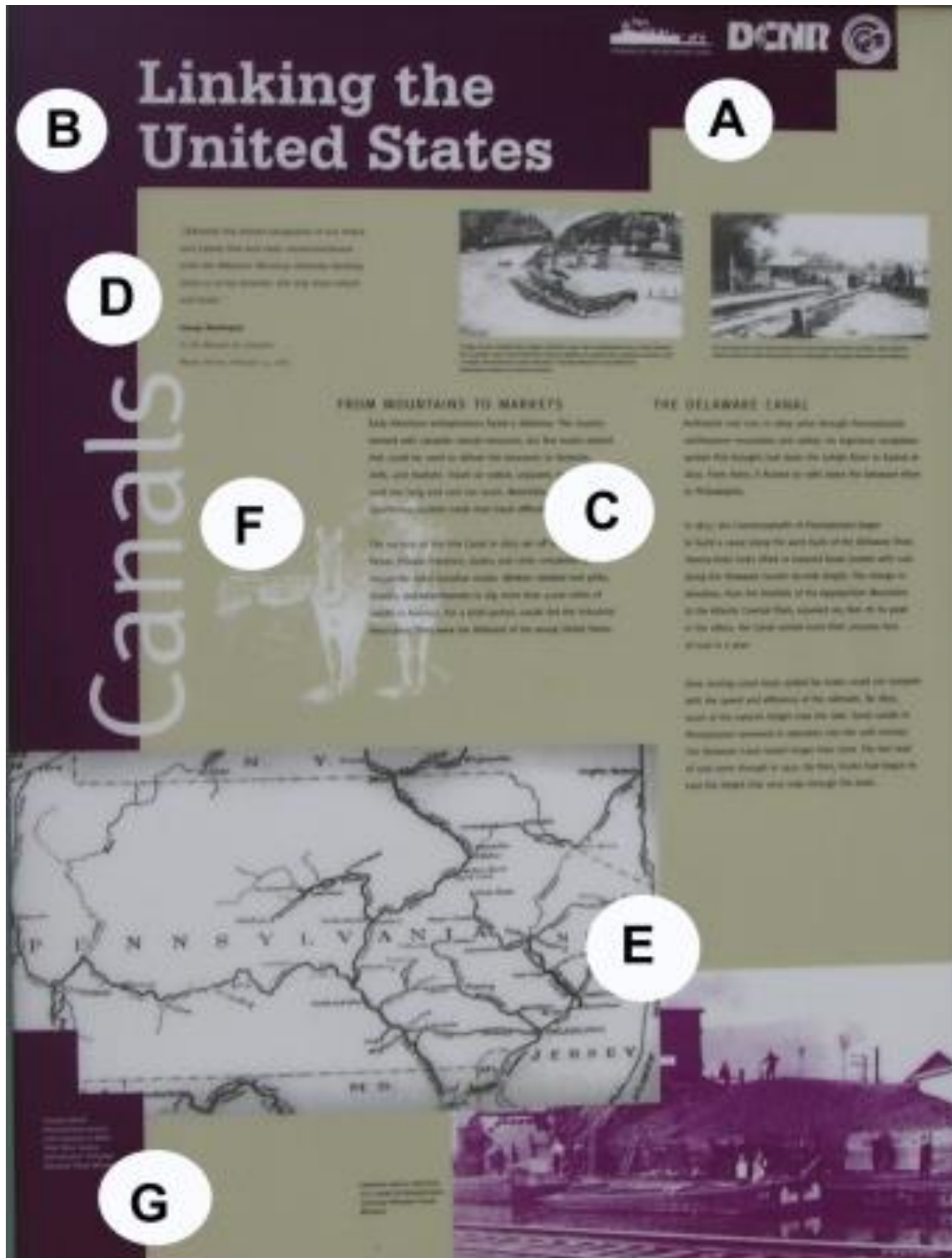
- Brainstorm within your organization. Why do you want or need waysides? What topics would you like to include? Where will they be located? Name a single contact person to communicate with the D&L representative.
- Contact the D&L to arrange a meeting and “walk through” of the process. Discuss possible funding or cost sharing methods.
- Begin assembling material (quotes, text, pictures, etc.) for the sign. Work with the D&L to edit the material.
- Submit a draft of the sign to the D&L to be forwarded to the sign manufacturer for final design and production. Typical production schedules are 6 to 8 weeks but can vary depending on the number of signs ordered and the manufacturer’s workload.
- When your sign order is received, the D&L can offer technical assistance with installation and make recommendations regarding maintenance.
- Because our sign manufacturer produces signs digitally, future editing and reproduction will be relatively quick and less expensive than the initial order.



**A low-profile sign interprets the remains of Lock 21 in Delaware Canal State Park.**

# Elements of an effective sign

Of course every **interpretive** panel tells a different story, but we try to keep some features of each sign consistent. Please refer to the following diagram and list for an explanation of each sign element.



**Use these guidelines and the sign template at the end of this booklet to design each sign:**

**“A” Logos:** Each panel includes logos of the organizations that funded and helped design the sign. The D&L logo is always included and is placed last. Typically a sign will have two to four logos. All logos must be submitted along with the sign draft, in a high-quality electronic format, such as tif. or eps.

**“B” Title:** Create a “catchy” heading for your sign. Examples are: “Going Native” for a sign on invasive and native species; “From Superfund to Super Habitat” for a sign on the restoration of the Lehigh Gap; “It’s a Short Commute” for a sign on locktenders’ homes.

**“C” Text:** The biggest challenge is writing effective wayside text. The text should tell a story, by providing important or interesting information without overburdening the reader. Avoid technical language. Assume your audience is an average high school student.

The text submission must be accurate and factual. This might require historical research into the topic, if it does not already exist.

Word limits are flexible, but keep these guidelines in mind:

- 100-150 words, limit 3 paragraphs = 18” x 24” (low profile)
- 150-200 words, limit 4 paragraphs = 24” x 36” (low profile)
- 250-300 words, limit 5 paragraphs = 36” x 48” (high profile)

**“D” Quote:** Panels may include a quote. This helps give the story a human voice. Consider recognizing an important figure in your organization, a historical celebrity that commented on the site, or a local who knew the site well. The most effective quotes will be the most unique, witty, or colorful. There are many websites that provide quotations. Consider [www.quotationspage.com](http://www.quotationspage.com), [www.quotegarden.com](http://www.quotegarden.com), or [www.quoteland.com](http://www.quoteland.com).

**“E” Pictures and Graphics:** Pictures are the easiest and most effective means of attracting readers. Choose historic photographs or drawings, charts or graphs describing important trends, or diagrams showing how artifacts worked.

The D&L can provide a designer to create an image, graph, chart, or map. These services cost extra and will be incorporated into the final cost of the sign.

When choosing a graphic, consider the quality of the original. When reproduced on a large sign, poor quality files can become discolored and disfigured. Files that are fuzzy or out of focus in the original cannot be used. All photos and graphics must be at least 300 DPI and formatted in RGB color. Please submit photos and graphics on a CD.

**“F” Icons:** Some sign designs include a simple line drawing or icon in the background. One approach is to use the same icon on all signs, tying them together with a common theme. Another approach is to use a unique icon for each sign, relating to that specific sign text. The simplest icons are the most effective, attracting the reader but not distracting them from the main text.

**“G” Captions:** Captions will identify the subject of a graphic and tie it into the main text. Keep in mind that many readers will look only at the graphics and captions and not read the full text, making the captions an important means of telling your story. Make sure that each caption stands alone as a bite size story so that readers leave with at least one message. Keep captions short; aim for one sentence.

## Writing Your Text

### *Topic:*

Review your organization’s mission statement and the D&L’s Interpretive Plan (available on the D&L website: [www.DelawareandLehigh.org](http://www.DelawareandLehigh.org)). Decide how this story fits into both.

### *Consider your audience:*

Try to picture your typical site visitor, and ask these questions: What is the main reason the visitor is at the site? What questions do you hear most often? Are visitors local, regional, or national? How much information will the visitor be willing to read in one place? Generally, assume your visitor has the knowledge and reading skill of the average high school student.

### *Main points:*

Answer the question, “What should the reader know after reading the sign?” Make a list of three or four key points. If you have trouble deciding which points to include, ask yourself the following:

- Is this something that a non-expert, casual reader will care about?
- What makes this point important enough to include it over all others?
- If this point is left out, can the story still be told?
- Am I trying to cram too much into this sign?

### *Writing the text:*

You are now ready to begin the best part of this project, developing the story. Try to write a short paragraph for each point. Low-profile interpretive waysides should have 3 paragraphs. High-profile interpretive waysides should have 3-4 paragraphs. See page 12 for word limits.

### *Editing and design:*

When you feel comfortable with the text, it is time for others to help you edit. Submit your draft to the D&L. Be prepared to make several changes, in order to fit the text into the design and optimize the impact of your sign.

## Part B: Directional and Regulatory Signage

These signs provide the opportunity to direct visitors to or through a site, welcome visitors, provide maps, and list specific regulations. The text on these signs should be short and simple so that visitors can read them while passing by in a vehicle or on foot. The D&L Trail Steward will work with you on these types of signs.

**Directional signage comes in a variety of shapes and sizes, each for a specific purpose:**



**From right to left:** pedestrian directional blade, auto tour directional sign, main entrance sign



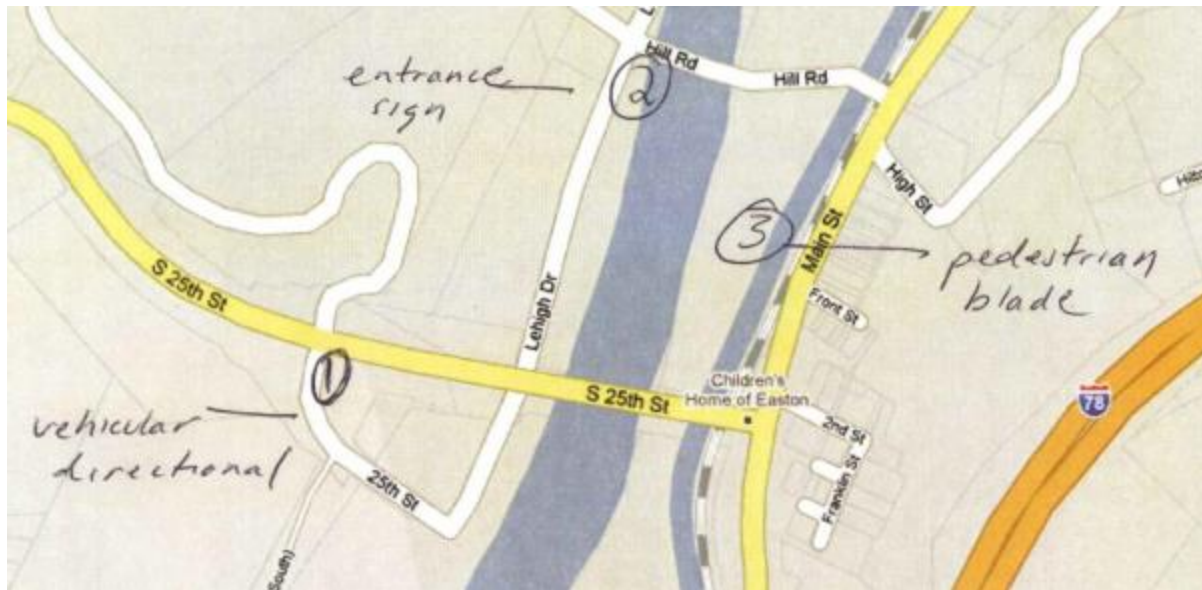
## Developing a directional signage system

You may decide to install just one entrance sign at your site, or you may install dozens of different types. The number and style of signs you use will depend on how you envision visitors coming to and passing through your site.

For example, you might install the following:

- 1) On nearby street: a vehicular directional sign to direct drivers to site entrance
- 2) At site entrance: a large entrance sign intended to welcome visitors
- 3) At site parking lot: a pedestrian directional blade to guide visitors through site

*Create a Map.* Sometimes it is useful to print out a map of your site and sketch out what your signage system might look like. Here is a sketch of the example above:





## Frequently Asked Questions

*Why is the D&L doing this?*

When the United States Congress established the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, it recognized our living landscape as nationally significant. The use of standard signage throughout the 165-mile Corridor conveys a unified image to locals and visitors alike. Your wayside will be a part of this larger project.

*How much do panels typically cost?*

The prices vary based on the number of signs ordered, the complexity of the design, and the size of the panels. A ballpark estimate for **interpretive signs** is:

24" x 18": Low-Profile Panel \$580 + Base \$390 = \$970

36" x 24": Low-Profile Panel \$800 + Base \$400 = \$1,200

36" x 48": High-Profile Panel \$1,300 + Base \$750 = \$2,050

Keep in mind that total prices are subject to cost sharing. In some cases, the total your organization will pay is 50% of the prices listed above.

Each interpretive panel order includes the cost of **two panels**—one for immediate use and one to keep in storage for replacement.

*How soon can we expect our panels?*

Submitting sign orders in batches will lower the overall production cost. The D&L will submit your entire batch of signs for production, as soon as all drafts are finalized. The standard schedule for panel fabrication is approximately six weeks from the time of submission.

*What happens after we receive the signs?*

- Signs will be delivered directly to you. Review the shipment against the final drafts and check for damage. **Report all problems within seven (7) days.**
- Signs should be installed following sign manufacturer and *Visually Speaking* specifications. The D&L can installation specification sketches to assist.
- To maximize the life of your sign, develop a maintenance program. Request a copy of *Projecting Your Image, Protecting Your Investment*, the D&L's sign maintenance brochure.

# Sign Development Checklist

*This checklist will help guide you through the interpretive sign development process. Refer to this booklet, Visually Speaking: Bring your stories to life, for the specifics on each step.*

- Determine how much money you have to spend on signs. Create a budget.
  
- Brainstorm within your organization. Why do you want or need signs? What type of information do you need to communicate to the public? Name a contact person to communicate with the D&L.
  - Name of contact person: \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- Contact the D&L to express your interest in developing signs for your site. Request a *Visually Speaking* sign development booklet and any additional information regarding grants and the sign development process (see pages 2-3).
  
- Review your management plan or mission statement and consult your staff to determine which stories and ideas are most important to your organization. Each story should form the basis of a sign (see page 13).
  - Stories and ideas to include: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Based on how many and what kinds of stories you need to tell, determine what types of signs you need: entrance, directional, or interpretive (see pages 4-6). Will interpretive signs be high-profile or low-profile (see page 7-8)? Consider how many signs you need and where they will be installed.
  - Number of signs:
    - Entrance: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Directional: \_\_\_\_\_
    - Interpretive: \_\_\_\_\_
      - High-Profile: \_\_\_\_\_
      - Low-Profile: \_\_\_\_\_

- Assemble the materials for each sign (see pages 11-13).
  - Logos (note specific format on page 12)
  - Quotes
  - Pictures, Graphics, and Icons (note specific format on page 12)
  - Text
  
- Submit all materials to the D&L for editing and design. The D&L will submit a draft to the sign manufacturer. It may take several weeks for the manufacturer to convert the draft into a proof.
  
- Review proofs (typically via email or in electronic format), make corrections or changes, and resubmit to the D&L. This process will continue until the proofs have been finalized and approved by the partner and the D&L.
  
- The D&L will submit the finalized proof to the sign manufacturer for production. Production can take from 6 to 8 weeks.
  
- Receive the shipment of signs and bases.
  - Review the panels *within seven (7) days* to confirm that they are undamaged and all text and graphics match the final, approved proofs.
  - Properly store the extra replacement panel in a safe location.
  
- Install the signs. Signs should be installed following sign manufacturer and *Visually Speaking* specifications. The D&L can provide free technical assistance or can help arrange installation through a contractor for a fee.
  
- Refer to the D&L's sign maintenance guidelines for suggestions on ways to create an inventory of your signs and provide for their regular maintenance. This is essential to prolonging the lifetime of the signs and protecting your investment.
  
- Enjoy sharing your stories with the public!

# Sign Template

[Download this template: [http://www.delawareandlehigh.org/images/library/Sign\\_Template.doc](http://www.delawareandlehigh.org/images/library/Sign_Template.doc)]

*Create a template for each sign and submit to the D&L. Use the example below as a guide.*

**HIGH PROFILE OR LOW PROFILE?:** low profile

**LOGOS:** Lehigh Gap Nature Center, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, DCNR, D&L

**TITLE:** Crossroads at the Gap

**QUOTE:** “The ideal mountain trail is that which has no end.” Imer Adams, *Walking in the Clouds*, 1939

**SIDEBAR DATE OR TEXT:** 1923 - 1975

**ICON OR WATERMARK:** watermark of hiking boot print

**GRAPHICS:** trail map, photo of hikers on mountain, inset photos of wildlife

**CAPTION:** Ospreys, Baltimore Orioles, and Common Mergansers (above, left to right) can be seen at Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

**TEXT:**

Hike it! Bike it! Boat it!

The Lehigh Gap is a crossroads of recreational and educational opportunities. Two historic trails, the Appalachian Trail and the D&L Trail, intersect here, providing a network of hiking trails along with Lehigh River Water Trail boat access, opportunities for fishing, and world-class bird watching.

The Hiker’s High Way

The Appalachian Trail follows the ridge on both sides of the Lehigh Gap, running 1,245 miles south to Georgia and 930 miles north to Maine, from where you are standing. The Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club of Reading and the since-vanished Blue Mountain Club of Easton blazed the Lehigh Gap section of the AT during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Currently, the Philadelphia Trail Club maintains the section, which features summit views, scrub habitat, and lush forests.

The Hawk Highway

The Lehigh Gap is part of the Kittatinny Ridge “Important Bird Area,” an Audubon Society designation that recognizes the importance of this area as a crossroads for migratory and local birds. The ridge serves as the Northeast’s primary corridor for migratory hawks, kestrels, and other raptors, and hosts over 140 other species of birds. The Lehigh Gap Nature Center is the perfect spot to take in all of the action.

◆ PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM, PHOTOCOPY, AND SEND COPY TO D&L STAFF CONTACT ◆

FORM "A"

Project Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**LETTER OF COMMITMENT: Implementation of "Visually Speaking"**

I. **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

II. Please indicate the number of signs or brochures requested to complete the proposed project:

_____ Low profile Wayside (Small)	_____ Entrance Sign
_____ Low Profile Wayside (Large)	_____ Pedestrian Historical Marker
_____ High Profile Wayside	_____ Site Brochure
_____ Kiosk	_____ Activity Brochure

III. A. \_\_\_\_\_ Estimated Total Cost of Project (if known)  
B. \_\_\_\_\_ Local Cash Match (will be at least 50% of Total Project Cost)  
Source of Match \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_ Corridor Grant Requested (Subtract B from A)

IV. Please Indicate the following (use additional sheet, if necessary):

A. Describe the signs/brochures to be developed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Define the story and Corridor theme to be addressed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Describe your routine maintenance and replacement plan.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

V. Are graphics necessary? \_\_\_\_\_ Do you have the graphics? \_\_\_\_\_  
Is text already written? \_\_\_\_\_ Is research necessary for text? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have a descriptive quote? (required for Waysides) \_\_\_\_\_

**AGREEMENT:** I (we) agree that our organization will work with the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor staff to develop *Visually Speaking* elements to meet the quality standards required. I (we) agree to establish a routine maintenance/replacement plan to continue meeting the Corridor's standards set in *Visually Speaking*.

Signature

Organization

Date

*Please mail photocopy of completed form with original signature to:  
Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, 2750 Hugh Moore Park Rd., Easton, PA 18042*

*Notes:*

*Notes:*

We hope this pamphlet has provided a quick introduction to the sign process. Of course, D&L staff members are always available to assist you with any aspect of the sign process. Feel free to contact the following staff members.

*Interpretive Signage:*

**Martha Capwell Fox**

610-923-3548 (ext.237)

archives@delawareandlehigh.org

*Directional and Entrance Signage:*

**Scott Everett**

610-923-3548 (ext.232)

Scott@delawareandlehigh.org

## **Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor**

2750 Hugh Moore Park Road

Easton, Pennsylvania 18042

610-923-3548

[www.delawareandlehigh.org](http://www.delawareandlehigh.org)



Edited by Silas Chamberlin: 3/10/11