



signage foundation, inc.

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## **2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

Creating safe, livable, thriving communities  
through signage education and research.

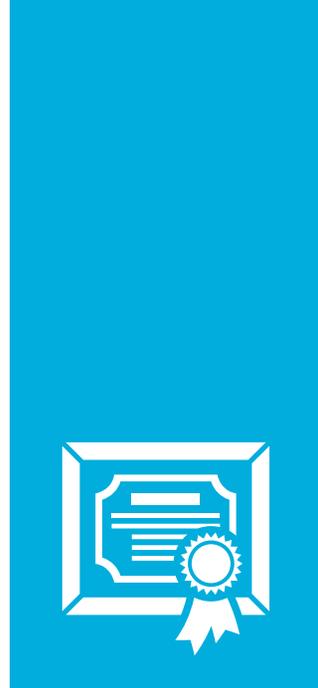
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## RESEARCH



## EDUCATION



## COMMUNITY

The Signage Foundation, Inc. (SFI) promotes and supports multi-disciplinary sign education and research for the betterment of communities and society.

“

I am finding your [SFI] research extremely helpful. I gained knowledge both for my role within Downtown Ottawa's Business Improvement Association and to share with our local businesses.

**JASNA JENNINGS**  
Ottawa Business Improvement Areas

”

“

I invited some planners that I work with to attend a Planning for Sign Code Success™ training in Orlando. The information was extremely helpful and I know that when it's time for them to make changes to their sign codes, they'll have a better understanding of how signs work. This is an important bridge to build and I'm grateful for help in doing so.

**FRANCES BAKER**  
Permit Specialist,  
Dixie Signs (FL)

”



# BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Dear Signage Foundation Supporter:

Credit for the Signage Foundation's success throughout 2015 is due to you. Your support and dedication has helped SFI successfully fund research reports written by diverse groups of academics and researchers specializing in design, art, architecture, urban planning, engineering, marketing and law.

These unique and timely reports were used to promote and support appropriate sign code legislation and regulations, guide communities in drafting new sign codes, help plan and implement city-wide wayfinding systems, and educate urban planners on a variety of sign-related issues and best practices.

SFI's success comes through the involvement of supporters like you who provide monetary contributions, in-kind donations, connections and time. We are pleased to present the Signage Foundation's Annual Report 2015 to help you see the results of your generosity:

**New research published proves** signs are necessary for vibrant communities

**Sign industry education provided** to thousands of urban planners and local officials

**Multi-disciplinary relationships created** with leaders in academia who incorporate signage education into curricula

**Powerful partnerships forged** with key organizations such as the Academic Advisory Council for Signage Research and Education, American Institute of Architects, American Planning Association, International Downtown Association, International Sign Association, Society for Experiential Graphic Design, United States Sign Council and more

We are proud to serve you and grateful for the leadership of our board, committees and donors who have made the sign and graphics industry a vital part of the economy. Together, we will continue to grow the understanding of a sign's importance to businesses and communities. On behalf of the SFI Board of Directors, we extend our deepest appreciation.

We look forward to even more outstanding progress in 2016 and beyond.

Sincerely,



**Duane Laska**  
President



**Sapna Budev**  
Executive Director

# WHO WE ARE



signage foundation, inc.

Established in 2006 as a tax-deductible 501(c)(3) corporation, the Signage Foundation works for the public good to provide evidence-based research and education on issues such as sign codes, traffic safety, best practices in sign design, wayfinding guidelines, and economic growth and vitality. The Foundation is supported by the generosity of the sign and graphics industry, corporate sponsors and private contributors who are united by the belief that education and research improve and advance the safety, livability, and prosperity of communities and cities. To learn more about the good works of SFI, visit [www.thesignagefoundation.org](http://www.thesignagefoundation.org).

## WHERE WE ARE GOING

In 2015, with the prominence of the Foundation growing and an increased demand for research and education, the SFI Board of Directors retained a full-time executive director, Sapna Budev, and a part-time program assistant, Emmalee Denkler. Sapna and Emmalee are charged with advancing the Foundation through a robust research agenda, collaborative relationships and curriculum advancement within academia.

**SFI couldn't be in a stronger position to drive the industry forward and forge new partnerships for growth!**



**Sapna Budev, SFI Executive Director**

Sapna Budev is already deeply engrained in the mission of SFI with a passion and background in collaborative, evidence-based research for the sign and graphics industry.

She brings more than a decade of work in the sign and graphics industry as the former director of strategic initiatives for International Sign Association. And in recent years, she worked in collaboration with the Signage Foundation to spearhead the development of the *Urban Wayfinding Planning and Implementation Manual*, the *History and Evolution of Typography*, and *Signs and the Downtown Experience*. Her outreach has resulted in the education of over 5,000 architects, urban planners, experiential graphic designers and downtown developers.

To contribute ideas to our research agenda, volunteer your service or to contribute financially to support SFI's valuable programs, please contact Sapna at [sapna@thesignagefoundation.org](mailto:sapna@thesignagefoundation.org) or (703) 778-8095.

## SIGNAGE FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Sapna Budev**

## Hello.

You've probably noticed that this page looks different from all the others. We realized that sometimes the best thing for a simple message is simplicity.

And the message on this page is as simple as it is important.

## Support the Signage Foundation, please.

Because sometimes these things just need to be said. No elaborate design cues. No gentle hints. Just a polite, genuine and justified "ask."

Your support will help the Signage Foundation to do all it can do, every day, to create safe, livable, thriving communities through sign education and research. We know that \$10,000 donations can fund research that will dramatically improve sign codes throughout the country, greatly expand research facilities and create dozens of new education programs. Needless to say, we encourage and welcome that level of philanthropy.

But flip ahead to the last page and you can see our thank you to all our contributors, of any amount. Every single donation helps us, and we are grateful for every one. Every donation received, whether it's \$50 or \$500 or \$50,000, takes us one step closer to creating an environment where businesses grow and communities thrive through optimal sign practices.

Matching grants often help to double or triple your donation. A regular, monthly donation gives us a solid baseline income for costs such as outreach materials. And it's not just that many small donations quickly start to add up. Putting them to use raises our profile and attracts even more funding.

## Please donate at [www.givetoSFI.org](http://www.givetoSFI.org).

Thank you, on behalf of everyone at the Signage Foundation.

# REALIZING PROGRESS THROUGH RESEARCH

Research is vital in conveying the symbiotic relationship of good signs and thriving communities to planners and local officials. The data and findings in SFI research are used every day to combat uninformed sign regulation.

The work conducted in 2015 further builds the library of research that has improved the safety, economic prosperity and attractiveness of hundreds of communities. Such landmark research includes: the epic *Economic Value of Signs*, the groundbreaking *Urban Wayfinding Planning and Implementation Manual*, the unmatched *Signs and the Downtown Experience*, and the illuminating EMC brightness studies, amongst many other reports on consumer perception, sign placement and conspicuity, brand identity, sign codes and much more.

SFI worked hard in 2015 to analyze and communicate the benefits of signage through the development of several key research initiatives:

## Best Practices in Regulating Temporary Signage

The guide, developed by prominent planner Wendy Moeller, in collaboration with Cleveland State University, offers tips on creating codes that balance the importance of temporary signs to businesses and community groups while maintaining aesthetics.

## Illuminated vs. Non-Illuminated Signage: Economic Impact of Illumination

This research, conducted by Villanova University, examines the business impact of lighted signs as compared to unlit signs. Businesses were found to rely on illuminated signage for branding, advertising and communication — even when the store itself is closed.

## Signs and the Downtown Experience

This research, conducted by the Fashion Institute of Technology, found a greater reception for sign size, diversity and messaging in urban areas and an acceptance of digital signs that conveyed clear, legible information and important content, and were architecturally integrated.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2016

SFI is already working on important research that will be released throughout 2016, including:



Digital Print Trends & Technologies



Retail Signage: Practices to Increase Return on Investment



Retail Wayfinding



Urban Sign Codes

### BY THE NUMBERS...

 **2.5 MILLION**

people represented by the more than 4,000 planners trained using SFI resources

 **150**

cities that have adopted portions of SFI's "Night-Time Brightness Recommendations" as part of their codes

# SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

When the U.S. Supreme Court issued its first sign code ruling in two decades, *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, many communities had to make changes to become compliant. SFI developed a number of resources to help these communities understand more about the ruling and the importance of developing reasonable sign codes.

The 2015 release of SFI's *Best Practices in Regulating Temporary Signage* was updated to include the current ruling. SFI partnered with the International Sign Association to work with APA chapters throughout the country, hosting webinars and local workshops to help planners understand *Reed's* implications on current codes and ensuring they had the right information to react to the ruling.



**1,300  
PLANNERS**

educated on *Reed* in person or via webinars in 2015



**4,612 PLANNERS  
AND LOCAL OFFICIALS**

received SFI-produced materials on the *Reed* ruling

## LOOKING AHEAD...

The *Reed* case will continue to be the focus of SFI-sponsored planner education and trainings throughout 2016, including a session at the APA National Conference where SFI board member Wendy Moeller will be a key presenter.

“

I found the research and webinar on *Reed* to be very helpful in distinguishing what should and should not be in the sign code for the city I work for. Due to this information, I was able to determine many areas that could be challenged and now feel as though I have the information to make the changes that get the same result the city would like without the potential challenges.

**BRETT ANGELL**  
City of Andover, MN

”

“

The city planners and council took an absolute 180-degree reversal on their push for no more pole signs and restrictions on electronics and are now looking for ways to make their sign code much more flexible and supportive of business. If I hadn't been there myself, I wouldn't have believed it.

**JEFF YOUNG**  
YESCO (UT)

”



# FORGING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

No organization is an island and SFI is no exception. As successful as we are in research and education efforts, the power of partnerships has exponentially expanded our reach to groups we might not have otherwise been able to instruct and influence.

One of our most valuable and successful services involves growing and improving relationships with planner communities. Our sign code strategy has evolved considerably in recent years to find common ground and increase collaboration, resulting in a more positive relationship with the planner community and measurable changes in the perception of how sign codes are impacting small business and the vitality of local communities.

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**The following are just some of the partners SFI is working with to create prosperous communities:**

## ACADEMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR SIGNAGE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION (AACSRE)



SFI has worked for seven years to build a comprehensive, collaborative network within academia. This coalesced with the formal establishment of AACSRE.

AACSRE encourages and facilitates cross-disciplinary dialogue on signage research needs. AACSRE is made up of 17 leading academic institutions who help guide the SFI research agenda and introduce sign-related graduate programs within colleges of design, art, architecture, engineering, business and law. The council is chaired by Dr. Dawn Jourdan (University of Oklahoma) and vice-chair Dr. Gene Hawkins (Texas A&M and TTI).

## AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (AIA)



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

The AIA represents 83,000 architects. SFI has worked closely with AIA as well as its state affiliates to present current research on ADA codes, wayfinding, brand identity and retail signage. Renowned architect Martin Treu presented at the SFI annual academic conference saying, “It is time to reconsider on-premise signs not as boorish intruders in the commercial landscape, but as essential contributors.”

## AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION (APA)

The APA represents more than 35,000 planners. Planners attending local/state/regional meetings of the APA learned valuable information about signs and how to craft sign codes in meaningful ways that contribute to thriving communities. In 2015, these presentations were made to planners in Arizona, Ohio, Georgia, Maine, Idaho and Michigan, and to the regional chapters serving Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, as well as Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

## INTERNATIONAL DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION (IDA)



SFI’s development of *Signs and the Downtown Experience* opened the door for a partnership with the International Downtown Association. IDA is a world leader and champion for vital and livable urban centers, and SFI’s research is used by its network of diverse practitioners to foster community building. In November 2015, SFI’s Executive Director was appointed as Co-Chair of IDA’s Top Issues Research Council – a position awarded to only 12 IDA thought leaders.

## INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION (ISA) AND ITS AFFILIATED ASSOCIATIONS



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

SFI has always had the committed support of ISA and its Affiliated Associations. This

partnership is a synergistic relationship that has made significant progress in improving the regulatory environment for on-premise signage. ISA is able to use the research developed by SFI and its academic partners to prove the economic value of signage and help local officials understand key technologies, which are often over regulated.

The jointly sponsored Planning for Sign Code Success™ workshops are proof that education works. The 2015 day-long training sessions took place in seven cities throughout North America – the planners attending these events represent communities with a total population of over 100 million.

## SOCIETY FOR EXPERIENTIAL GRAPHIC DESIGN (SEGD)



SEGD members develop static and digital wayfinding systems, signage, environmental graphics, exhibition content, multimedia installations, public art, user interfaces and branded/corporate environments. The

foundation has a long, mutually beneficial relationship with SEG D and its members. The first collaborative effort of the two organizations resulted in the *Urban Wayfinding Manual*, which remains the single most downloaded piece of research in SFI’s extensive library. SEG D members often serve on research advisory councils and contribute case studies to supplement SFI’s findings.

# FIGHTING STOPS

## SFI MODEL SIGN CODES IN NEWPORT NEWS

There is nothing like the confidence that comes from going into a dispute knowing that the facts are on your side. When Mike Burnett, estimator and former owner of SignMedia Inc. in Hampton, VA, heard that the city of Newport News was considering significant sign code changes, he immediately began gathering the facts. With a meeting scheduled for the next morning, he contacted ISA's Kenny Peskin, manager, state and local affairs, who began helping Mike identify fact-based research from the Signage Foundation that would alleviate many of the planning commission's concerns.

"When I presented a copy of the two SFI model codes, I asked if they were aware of all the resources that SFI had available. Just before the official meeting, one of the zoning staff pulled Mike aside and told him that they had made significant revisions to the working draft to incorporate the research Mike had shared.

Despite his long history in the sign and graphics industry, being able to make his arguments supported by credible research gave him confidence to take on the fight. This victory saved at least \$100,000 worth of business for Mike. Imagine if every community took a similar approach and sought the input of experts who work nationwide on sign codes.

The stakes are high: signs build businesses, which lead to stronger, more vibrant communities. So there is little doubt it's a battle worth fighting.

**MIKE BURNETT**  
SignMedia (VA)

# 2015 NATIONAL SIGNAGE RESEARCH & EDUCATION CONFERENCE

## NSREC 2015 HIGHLIGHTS BETTER SIGN CODES IN URBAN AREAS

The 2015 National Signage Research & Education Conference (NSREC) focused on how signage impacts the urban experience, with presentations providing information to help better understand the importance – and potential – of urban signs to a community's vitality.

The conference, held October 2015 at the University of Oklahoma, is one of the Signage Foundation's signature events. Now in its seventh year, NSREC brings together academics, planners, consultants and designers to discuss issues related to on-premise signage.

Registrations for NSREC reflected faculty and students from various academic institutions, including University of Oklahoma, University of Cincinnati, Texas A&M, Michigan State University, Penn State, Ohio State University, Villanova University School of Business, University of New Mexico and the University of Arkansas. In addition, planners, business leaders, downtown officials, designers, architects, and sign and graphics industry representatives rounded out those in attendance.

NSREC is the one event that brings together everyone interested in building vibrant communities through good sign practices into one place for education, dialogue and debate.

## NSREC 2015 ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

- ✓ **BEST EVER**
- ✓ **TOPICS VERY FOCUSED**
- ✓ **STRONG CONTENT/PRESENTATIONS**
- ✓ **TREMENDOUS TAKE-AWAY VALUE**
- ✓ **NICE BALANCE IN CONTENT**
- ✓ **COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH**
- ✓ **ENGAGING SPEAKERS**



**OVER 90%**

OF NSREC 2015  
attendee survey respondents would  
recommend the event to a friend.



# THANK YOU

SFI would like to thank the following companies and organizations for their generous support.

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Gene Russell, by Tri-State Sign Association Members  
Maurice Poyant, by Richard Poyant of Poyant Signs



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**DONATE**

Consider being a part of those supporting SFI, visit [www.givetoSFI.org](http://www.givetoSFI.org) to make a donation this year.



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The Signage Foundation  
1001 N. Fairfax Street, Suite 301  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
(703) 836-4071

[info@thesignagefoundation.org](mailto:info@thesignagefoundation.org)

For more information on the Signage  
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