

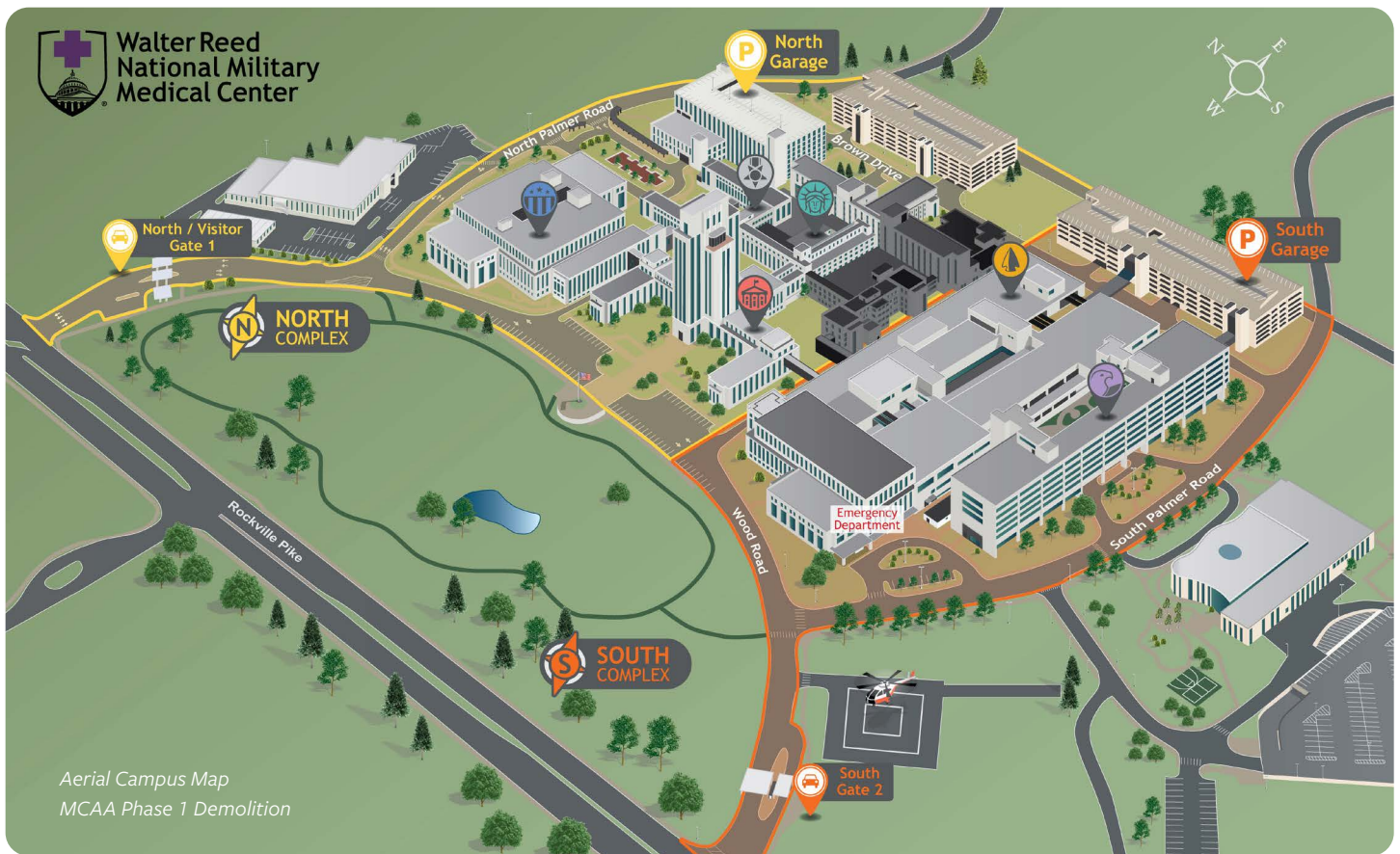
The Liberty to Find Your Way

Wayfinding Master Plan & Interior Sign Program



Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), in Bethesda, Maryland, is the nation's premier military medical center and the primary hospital for the President. Established in 2011 through the merger of the historic Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center, it serves all branches of the U.S. military, their families, and retirees. Today, WRNMMC blends a proud heritage of military medicine with a culture of excellence, readiness, and patient-centered care.

Through a multi-phase engagement spanning several years, Creative has served as a trusted partner in advancing WRNMMC's long-term vision for a clear, cohesive, and welcoming wayfinding experience. Collaborating with diverse stakeholder groups—including FMD, NAVFAC, and DHA—Creative led the development of a comprehensive master plan for the entire medical complex, modernizing zone branding, standardizing a cohesive family of sign components, and refining information hierarchy and nomenclature. Implementation has included high-profile installations such as the Pedestrian Connector and MCAA South, with planning underway for MCAA North.

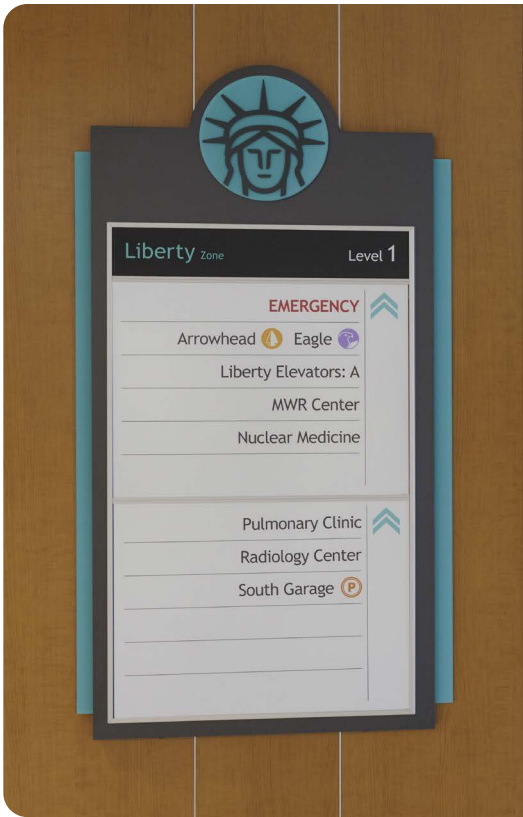


An Evolving Institution

The Wayfinding Master Plan at WRNMMC was developed as part of the Medical Center Additions and Alterations (MCAA) initiative — a multi-phase, decade-long modernization program replacing outdated infrastructure with state-of-the-art facilities. The core of this plan is the demolition of several outdated buildings and the construction of a new, 532,000-square-foot addition—referred to as Building 39, to be rolled out in two primary phases. The demolition and construction phases essentially bisect the medical complex into two regions. To allow for continued travel between North and South ends of the complex, an underground tunnel named the Pedestrian Connector was built to link the two waypoints. Creative’s challenge was to develop a master plan that anticipated and adapted to the drastic impact to patient routes during the project’s evolving footprint at each phase.

Multi-Phase Scenario Planning

Faced with uncertain funding timelines for a full wayfinding system overhaul, Creative developed a flexible master plan with scenarios for each stage of demolition and construction. The plan began with the opening of the Pedestrian Connector tunnel which—due to funding and construction delays—required a coordinated rollout of permanent tunnel signage along with temporary directional signs guiding patients and visitors to Level B entrances via the nearest elevators. The next phase coincided with the activation of MCAA South and the demolition of two additional central buildings, adding new destinations, closing others, and significantly altering patient routes. The final scenario anticipates the activation of MCAA North, unifying the medical complex in its long-term configuration. At every stage, Creative delivered optimal wayfinding solutions to keep navigation clear and consistent amid constant change.



Built for the Future

For a high-profile, high-traffic facility like WRNMMC, the sign system must embody the institution's prestige while standing up to years of constant use. Creative addressed this need by pairing a timeless, distinct design aesthetic with materials and construction built for longevity. The system features resilient, textured finishes that resist wear and maintain their appearance over time, combined with the sleek and easily updatable Continuum frame system to accommodate future changes without costly replacements. The decorative backplate and accent details pay homage to the Art Deco architecture of Building 1 (President Zone), tying modern functionality to the facility's historic character. The result is a signage program that not only guides with clarity but also complements the facility's character.

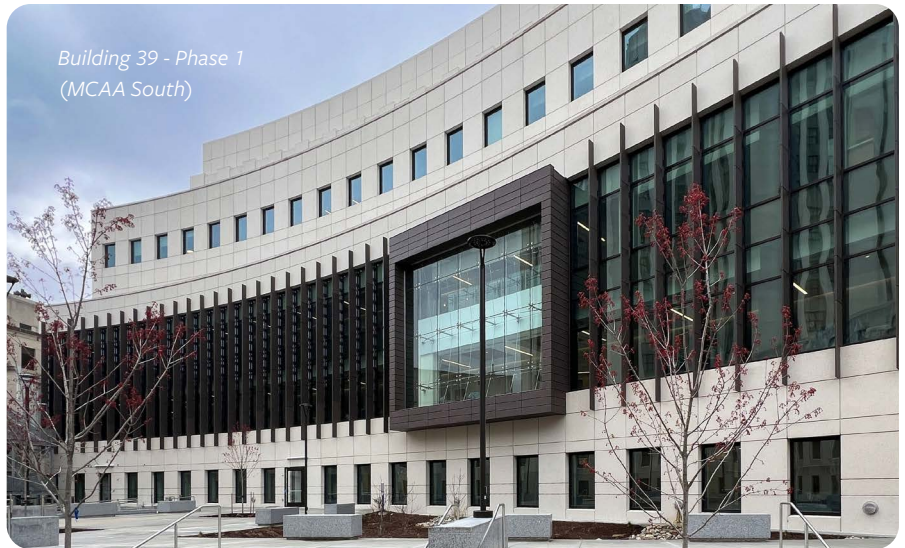
Modernized Zone Branding

Beyond the MCAA, the patchwork architecture of over a dozen buildings, constructed at different times spanning more than 80 years, presented other challenges. Six zones were branded in the past as an attempt to address the issue and simplify the space, but building thresholds were poorly defined, making transitions confusing. In addition to inconsistent use and placement of the iconography, the artwork was overly detailed and multi-tonal which did not translate well to other applications. To reflect the prestige of the institution, Creative redesigned and modernized icons and respective colors for each of the six zones as well as new icons for the North and South Complexes and Pedestrian Connector. The distinct colors and versatile icon designs can be repeated across signs, graphics, maps, and digital displays to reinforce zone branding and support navigation.



Bringing It All Together

Leading up to the activation of MCAA South, Creative's project management, design, and install teams worked closely with construction, fit-out, and facility planning teams to phase signage installation in step with shifting construction schedules. Creative's proactive communication and detailed planning helped keep the project on track for the building's activation date in Spring of 2025. That same collaborative approach continues with MCAA North, currently in progress and set to open in 2028.



Serving America's Institutions

In healthcare facilities, where every decision impacts patient experience and operational flow, signage is more than a finishing touch — it's critical infrastructure. Effective wayfinding not only supports a facility's identity, but also improves operational efficiency by guiding people with clarity and confidence. Creative is the signage and wayfinding partner that understands the unique needs of America's institutions and the priorities of healthcare designers. We collaborate to deliver solutions that align with your vision, meet compliance requirements, and elevate the daily experience for patients, visitors, and staff.