



2021 PROGRESS  
REPORT

# *CONTINUING THE MOMENTUM*



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

**When we couldn't all be together again in 2021, there was still an intense and pent-up hunger to connect, learn and do business. And to put it simply, we didn't waste any time getting down to business – virtually.**

The sign and graphics industry jumped into virtual events and resources with perhaps some unexpected benefits: geographically-broadened connections, cost efficiencies and time savings. These new virtual events and resources included the unprecedented ISA International Sign Expo 2021 – Virtual as well as a range of ISA's *THE LINK™* virtual business events.

And the industry's need for reasonable and enforceable sign codes for all communities didn't take a pandemic hiatus either. ISA's work on behalf of the industry was stronger than ever. Not only did ISA's advocacy team help convince America's second largest city to significantly streamline their permitting process, ISA's legal briefings also caught the (favorable) attention of the U.S. Supreme Court.

As we reconnect in-person at ISA International Sign Expo in 2022 for the first time in three years and return to a greater sense of "normal," we couldn't be more proud of how our industry transitioned to do business, learn and ultimately drive our industry toward greater success regardless of whatever challenge we faced.

From advocacy to education to networking, ISA will steadfastly continue to build on this momentum and move this industry forward.



**JOHN YARGER**  
North American Signs  
2021 ISA Chair of the Board



**LORI ANDERSON**  
International Sign Association  
President & CEO

# STAYING CONNECTED

Connection has never been more important to the growth of our industry and individual businesses. Virtual events helped us remain connected while receiving the very latest information and resources to grow.

## ISA International Sign Expo 2021 – Virtual

7,500+ industry professionals from 120+ countries were inspired by fresh ideas and the hottest new products to grow their business - all from the comfort of their home office. Thought leaders and futurists helped attendees get a look at what is ahead for the industry while speakeasy breakout sessions brought together market segments and niche groups to connect and brainstorm.



## THE LINK™...INSTALL

Many local and national companies rely on connections made at the in-person National and Custom/Install Networking Reception to find new install connections and grow their business. When the 2020 event was canceled, *THE LINK™...INSTALL* was born. This powerful virtual, one-on-one matchmaking event connected nearly 200 local and national sign and installation companies during three *THE LINK™...INSTALL* virtual events in 2021.



## What's Ahead: *THE LINK™...INSTALL* Events in 2022

More employees can take advantage of ISA's events in 2022, both in-person and virtual.

May 2022

at ISA Sign Expo  
(In-Person)

August 2022

Virtual

November 2022

Virtual



## THE LINK™...Digital Signage Workshop

**53** sign companies learned how to take advantage of the latest in outdoor digital trends and how to get into the interior digital market.

**What's Ahead:** Two more digital signage workshops are planned for 2022.

[signs.org/THELINK](https://signs.org/THELINK)



## The Wrap Experience™ 2021

**205** participants from **12 countries** found solutions to supply chain challenges and explored technology that improves productivity and profitability at TWETM 2021, in conjunction with The Wrap Institute.

**What's Ahead:** Two Events Planned in 2022: May (at ISA Sign Expo 2022) and December.

## What's Ahead: Atlanta, Here We Come!

ISA International Sign Expo® 2022 is IN-PERSON in Atlanta, GA, May 4-6, 2022, celebrating 75 years as the leading tradeshow in the sign and graphics industry. Hundreds of exhibitors are demonstrating the newest innovations in electrical and digital signage, wide format printing, lighting, software, and so much more.



# IMPROVING SIGN CODES

From the U.S. Supreme Court to local sign regulations, ISA's advocacy work on behalf of the industry continued to guide reasonable and beneficial sign codes for all communities.

## SUPREME STRATEGY, SUPREME IMPACT:

Amicus Briefs Urged the Supreme Court of the United States to Keep the On-Premises vs. Off-Premises Sign Distinction

- ▶ ISA urged the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the *Austin v. Reagan* case, which could determine whether on- and off-premises sign distinctions are constitutional, by submitting legal arguments, called amicus briefs.
- ▶ ISA joined a coalition consisting of chambers of commerce, non-profits, and other groups to file a joint amicus brief reinforcing the argument why keeping the distinction between on-premises and off-premises signs is important.
- ▶ The Supreme Court heard arguments in Fall 2021. ISA's amicus brief was referenced favorably by the U.S. Solicitor General during oral arguments!

**What's Ahead:** ISA continues to keep the industry aware and involved with what is happening. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision is expected in Spring/Summer 2022.

## "Signs of Change" Sign Ordinance Improvements Ease Headaches for Sign Companies

### "Signs of Change" Coalition (Formed in 2015)

International Sign Association | Illinois Sign Association | Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC) | Chicago-area Chambers of Commerce

### CHICAGO SIGN PERMITTING PROCESS

#### Pre-Coalition Efforts:

The "Chicago Way" applied to the city's sign approval process

10-12 hours to file a sign permit

90-150 days to get sign permit approval, sometimes up to 1 year

#### After-Coalition Efforts:

New Chicago mayor elected after promising to support permit reform

Immediate sign permit approval for code-compliant applications

Up to 60 days of waiting for sign permit approval eliminated

**What's Ahead:** Work remains to be done in Chicago to ensure that sign and graphics companies can get their customers the signs they need and deserve, and the Coalition will continue to pursue such developments.

## Sign Industry Has a Say in Changes to MUTCD

With a new edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) due soon, ISA was part of a panel arguing for specific changes that would better allow sign and graphics companies to do their jobs and deliver powerful signs for customers.

**11** specific changes to the community wayfinding signage section of the MUTCD

**4** changes to existing language of the MUTCD

**What's Ahead:** Final version expected to be released in 2022.

## LOCAL SIGN CODES IMPROVED BY EDUCATING PLANNERS

**270+**

planners from 15 states learned how to create reasonable sign codes at in-person ISA educational presentations at three local American Planning Association (APA) conferences.

**6,500+**

planners trained since 2015

**What's Ahead:** New resources developed by ISA and the Sign Research Foundation (SRF) on sign lighting, historic signs and the latest legal developments will be released in 2022 to help the sign and graphics industry influence local sign code decision makers across the country.

## Saving and Creating Revenue for Sign and Graphics Companies through Sign Code Assistance

**35**

local sign codes developed with ISA expertise

**43**

sign companies provided with one-on-one assistance

If your community is considering sign code changes, visit [Signs.org/SignCodeHelp](https://Signs.org/SignCodeHelp) for free resources that you can share.

"I was very pleased with the assistance that the ISA Advocacy team provided when I needed help convincing local authorities to accept a sign lighting proposal. They did a great job following up with me and helping me through a difficult sign ordinance."

Bill Reason  
Certified Lighting  
Chattanooga, TN

"On several occasions I've leaned on the experts at the ISA to provide assistance in advocating for my clients. As a member of ISA, I have free access to expert advice that has been instrumental in changing codes and obtaining approved variances. The feedback and input that comes from ISA is an invaluable tool to the sign and graphics industry."

Tracey Diehl  
Expedite The Diehl  
Columbus, OH



# TRAINING WORKERS

Sign and graphics companies took advantage of online training opportunities for staff, investing in their continued success. And many employees took advantage of these opportunities, participating in free member webinars, downloading business resources and earning a remarkable number of Sign Industry Professional digital badges.

## The Most Applicable Industry Education Available through ISA Sign Expo 2021- Virtual Education Sessions

**1900+**

Individual Participants for ISA Sign Expo Virtual Education

**60+**

Virtual Education Sessions

**154**

On-Demand Sessions Taken Post-Event

[signs.org/expo21](https://signs.org/expo21)

**615** Research Publications and White Papers Downloaded

## DIGITAL BADGES: EMPLOYEES DISPLAY THEIR SKILLS AND LEARNING

**1,903**

Digital Badges Earned

Earn a digital badge upon completion of an online learning course to show your proficiency on your resume or social profiles.



**7** Sign Industry Professional Badges Earned

Complete 70% of online learning courses to receive the "Sign Industry Professional" badge, which shows comprehensive learning and an understanding of the broad skills needed within the sign, graphics and visual communications industry!

## Companies Turn to ISA Online Learning Courses for Team Trainings

**73** Company Packages

**705** Employee Participants

**80** Online Learning Courses Available

## ISA ONLINE LEARNING COMPANY PACKAGE

ISA's online learning company package provides unlimited, on-demand access to the best training and education in the industry.

[signs.org/online](https://signs.org/online)

“

The ISA Online Learning courses allow me to truly understand the basics of signs: to uncovering all areas within the process from the first initial call, to installation and completion. The Sign Industry Professional badge represents the next chapter in my career and expansion into the whole industry.”

Robert Harris,  
Allen Industries, Greensboro, NC

“

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Brad Turpin, Jr. Ruggles Sign, Versailles, KY

## LEADING EXPERTS ADDRESSED INDUSTRY-WIDE CHALLENGES

**23**

Webinars Delve into Complex Industry Challenges

**64**

Participants on Average for Each Webinar

**211**

Recorded Webinars Purchased

[signs.org/webinars](https://signs.org/webinars)



**Sales Strategies | Four Innovative Lead Sources**

Oct. 13 | 2:00 pm ET

Presented by  
Bill Farquharson  
Aspire For

**Supreme Court Decision for Sign Companies: What Does It Mean for Your Business?**

**Dec. 8**

ISA  
INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION



# SHARING INSIGHTS

## Sign MFG Day

**70** Companies Recruited the Next Generation of Workers Resulting in:

- ▶ Direct hires after graduation
- ▶ Internships
- ▶ Apprenticeship programs
- ▶ Long-term relationships with local educators and schools



NEW DIGITAL TOOLKIT OF SIGN MFG DAY RESOURCES DEVELOPED



INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION

**SIGN MFG DAY**  
[signs.org/mfgday](https://signs.org/mfgday)



## MEMBERS RELY ON EACH OTHER FOR INSIGHT INTO PRESSING ISSUES

**60** members came together to discuss sign codes and training at two ISA Member Roundtable Forums. Discussions covered:

**Alternative materials for supply chain shortages**

**More efficient workflows**

**Effective strategies to recruit and retain employees**

## BOB MATTATALL RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Robert "Bob" Mattatall, founder of Mattatall Signs in Nova Scotia, Canada, was named the recipient of the 2021 Kirk L. Brimley Distinguished Service Award. ISA presents the award each year to a leader who has made significant contributions to the sign and graphics industry. Bob has truly made an impact through his mentorship of young professionals, his strategic leadership serving on committees and boards of both ISA and the Sign Association of Canada. Even in semi-retirement, Bob continues his work to build a strong and sustaining sign and graphics industry.



Take advantage of the connections and resources available to members.  
[signs.org/join](https://signs.org/join)

## 17 ISA Affiliated Associations Connect Members on a National, Regional and State Level



NORTHEAST STATES SIGN ASSOCIATION





INTERNATIONAL SIGN ASSOCIATION



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