

# *Points of Departure*

by Scott Oliver

## **REVISED ART PROPOSAL for the MASONIC AVE. STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

At the intersection of two of the city's busiest transportation corridors, the Masonic Avenue Plaza is defined more by the transience of its users than by any tangible sense of place. Here, people seem only to be on their way somewhere else. "Points of Departure" is a project that celebrates this condition by heightening the "in-betweenness" of the plaza, giving material form to what is usually only in the minds of people passing through it: the places they are headed, the places they were born, and the places they would like to one day visit.

While "Points of Departure" can only be a static sculpture, the clusters of place names it displays will inevitably intersect with the lives of future visitors to the site, suggesting an expanded sense of community and place that has as much to do with time, memory, and imagination as it does with the site itself.

### **Description of the Artwork**

"Points of Departure" consists of three signposts loosely arrayed in the new Masonic Avenue Plaza redesign. The basic form is familiar: arrows pointing in all directions with place names and distances inscribed on them. But the arrows on these signposts differ from the standard in significant ways. Most importantly, individuals using the plaza will generate the place names. These will be gathered through the use of a questionnaire distributed to pedestrians passing through the plaza and at the adjacent bus stops on Masonic and Geary.

The resulting list will contain places both familiar and exotic, but also unusually specific—places that reflect the idiosyncrasy of individuals. (For instance, not simply "Cambridge, MA," but "The Glass Flowers at Harvard.") These will be curated and organized into arrows arrayed on each of the three posts.

Each signpost will contain multiple responses to a single question. The question will be engraved into the post, running vertically at eye height. The three questions are as follows: Post 1) *Where are you going right now?*; Post 2) *Where were you born, and when?*; Post 3) *Where do you want to go that you have never been?*

In general the posts will be 4" to 5" diameter steel tubes embedded in concrete piers below the surface of the plaza. There will be no visible hardware at this connection. The arrows will begin at 10 feet above grade. They will be laser or water-jet cut from 3/8" aluminum. The typography will be laser etched or machined into the surface of the arrows. They will be painted with a durable, colorfast, exterior finish such as Tnemec paint with the typography backfilled in white or black. And the method of attaching each

row of arrows to a sleeve that stacks over an interior tube extending from the base post will be consistent. But the overall appearance of each signpost will be unique, corresponding to the nature of the question and responses it represents and being distinguished from its neighbors.

**Post 1** (*Where are you going right now?*) uses the prosaic form of typical signposts: black type on a white background of uniform arrows. On this post there will be 5 rows of arrows with 5 arrows in each row for a total of 25 arrows/place names. Each arrow is 6" in height and 36" long, attached to an 8" sleeve. The overall height of this signpost is 13'-4".

**Post 2** (*Where were you born, and when?*) is inspired by plant forms. The arrows on this post vary in both form and color. There are 8 rows of arrows with seven arrows in the first two rows, 6 arrows in rows 3 and 4, 5 arrows in rows 5 and 6 and 4 arrows in rows 7 and 8, for a total of 44 arrows/place names. The height of the arrows diminishes gradually over the height of the post, from 9" to 5 ½" (11" to 7 ½" sleeves). Similarly the color gradates from a vibrant dark green to a pale green (8 shades). The lengths of the arrows also vary based on the distance to the place it points to, from 30" to 42". Lastly, there is the element of time. The most recent birthplaces will be displayed nearest to the ground with the earliest birth dates at the top. The white typography on this signpost becomes less contrasting with the background color over the height of the signpost. The overall height of this signpost is 16'-2".

**Post 3** (*Where do you want to go that you have never been?*) is the most visually expressive and dense. There are 7 rows of arrows with 6 arrows in each row for a total of 42 arrows/place names. Each of the arrow forms is totally unique. But the height and length of each arrow will be determined by the distance to the place it points to. The arrows will vary in height, from 5" to 8", and in length, from 33" to 42". The largest arrows will be in the central row tapering to smaller arrows arranged at top and bottom. The color palette for this signpost will be a spectrum with 15 to 20 unique hues, possibly corresponding to color coding for geographical regions. The overall height of this signpost is 14'-10".

### **Collecting Place Names**

I will work with a number of assistants on the site to engage people using the plaza and adjacent bus stops about the project and ask them to respond to a short questionnaire. To ensure that we can reach the greatest diversity of respondents possible we will set up a small table in the plaza to provide more information about the overall project, offering translations of the project description and questionnaire in 3 to 4 languages in addition to English. Additionally I will hire assistants that can speak these other languages to better engage non-English speakers. I hope to collect no fewer than 500 completed questionnaires from which the final 111 place names will be selected and featured on the arrows. I plan to be on site, collecting responses, for a period of one week in the spring of 2015. The participants will remain anonymous.

## **Maintenance Requirements**

I anticipate the maintenance requirements for the signposts will be minimal. Both steel and aluminum hold up well in long-term exterior applications especially when coated with durable paint finishes. We have discussed the possibility of using CorTen or weathering steel for the base post, but will need to test the material for rust staining on concrete and response to graffiti removal. The alternate will be a galvanized post with a paint finish. All painted surfaces will be treated with a graffiti-resistant clear coating. The arrows will be out-of-reach at 10 feet from grade, but also firmly attached to the sleeve with inaccessible machine screws. Adjacent dissimilar metals will either have a paint buffer or be checked to ensure that they are compatible on the galvanic index.

## **Artist's Role**

I will be the lead artist and designer on this project. I will be closely involved in all phases of the project, from design and prototyping through installation.

This role will require hiring and coordinating assistants and doing on-site engagement to solicit responses for the project (as well as raising awareness of the project). The next step will be editing the collected responses into a list of place names that can be both interesting and fit together on the posts. The final list will then be turned into a set of design specification for the fabricator. The distance and bearing of each place needs to be calculated from the plaza then treated graphically (i.e. turned into an arrow: color, typography, length and position).

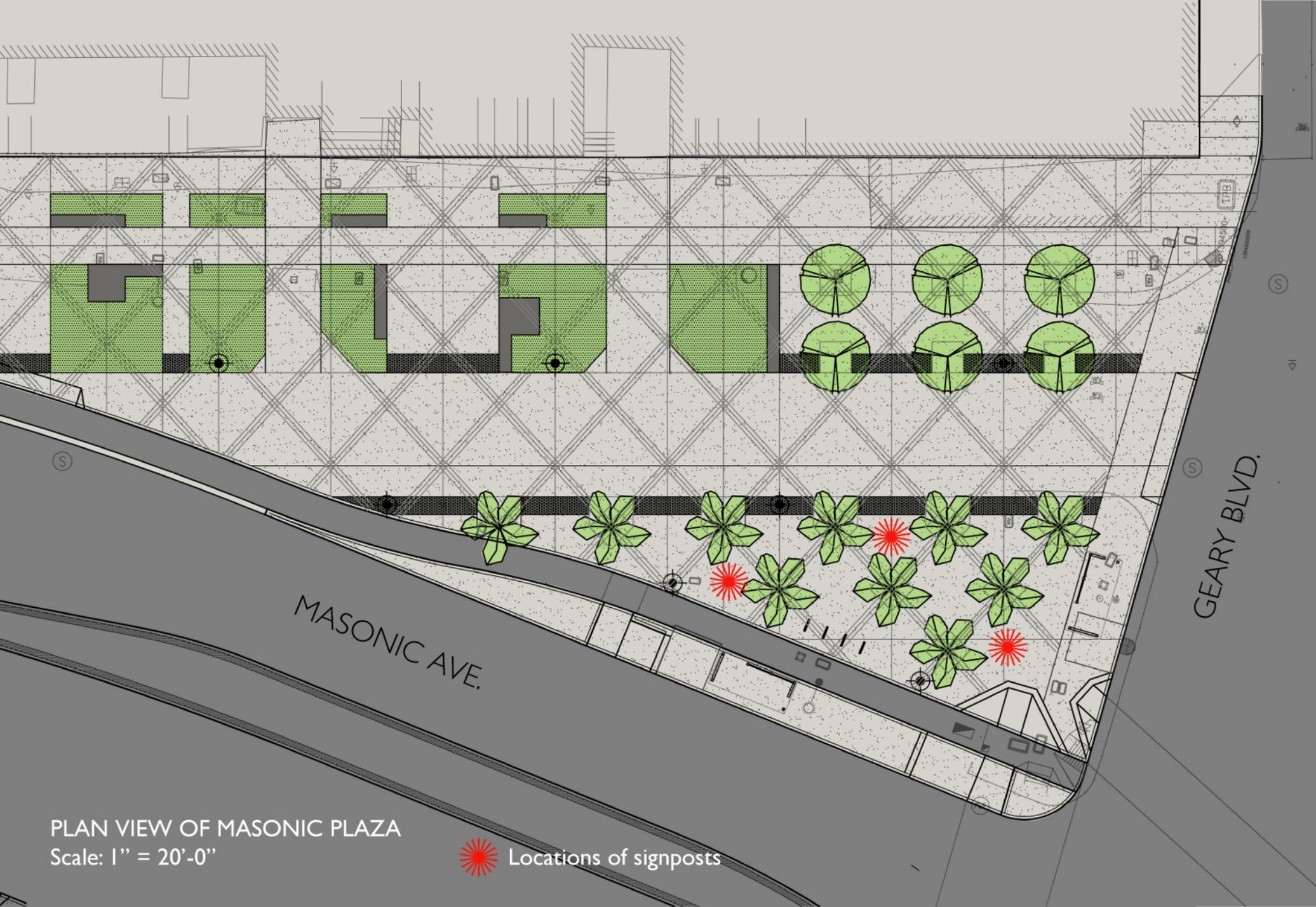
I will also be working with the fabricator to oversee prototyping, incorporating fabrication and engineering constraints into the overall design. I have identified Mark Sabatino (mark@gizmosf.com) of Gizmo (1315 Egbert Ave, San Francisco, CA 94124) as an ideal fabricator for this project and expect to work closely with him throughout the project. Gizmo can handle all aspects of the project: engineering, prototyping, delivery and installation. They have a track record of successful art fabrication and installation projects including public projects, notably Mike Arcega's "Valencia Street Posts."

I will be the main contact for the City and Arts Commission in regard to this project, coordinating with the fabricator for scheduling, responses to queries, necessary approvals, and otherwise ensuring a smooth flow of information amongst all the interested parties.

## **Preliminary Project Schedule**

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| Sep. 2014     | Enter into full contract with Arts Commission.  |
| Oct. 30, 2014 | Produce engineering spec's and locations (drawings) for concrete footings for posts (to be folded into construction documents for plaza). |

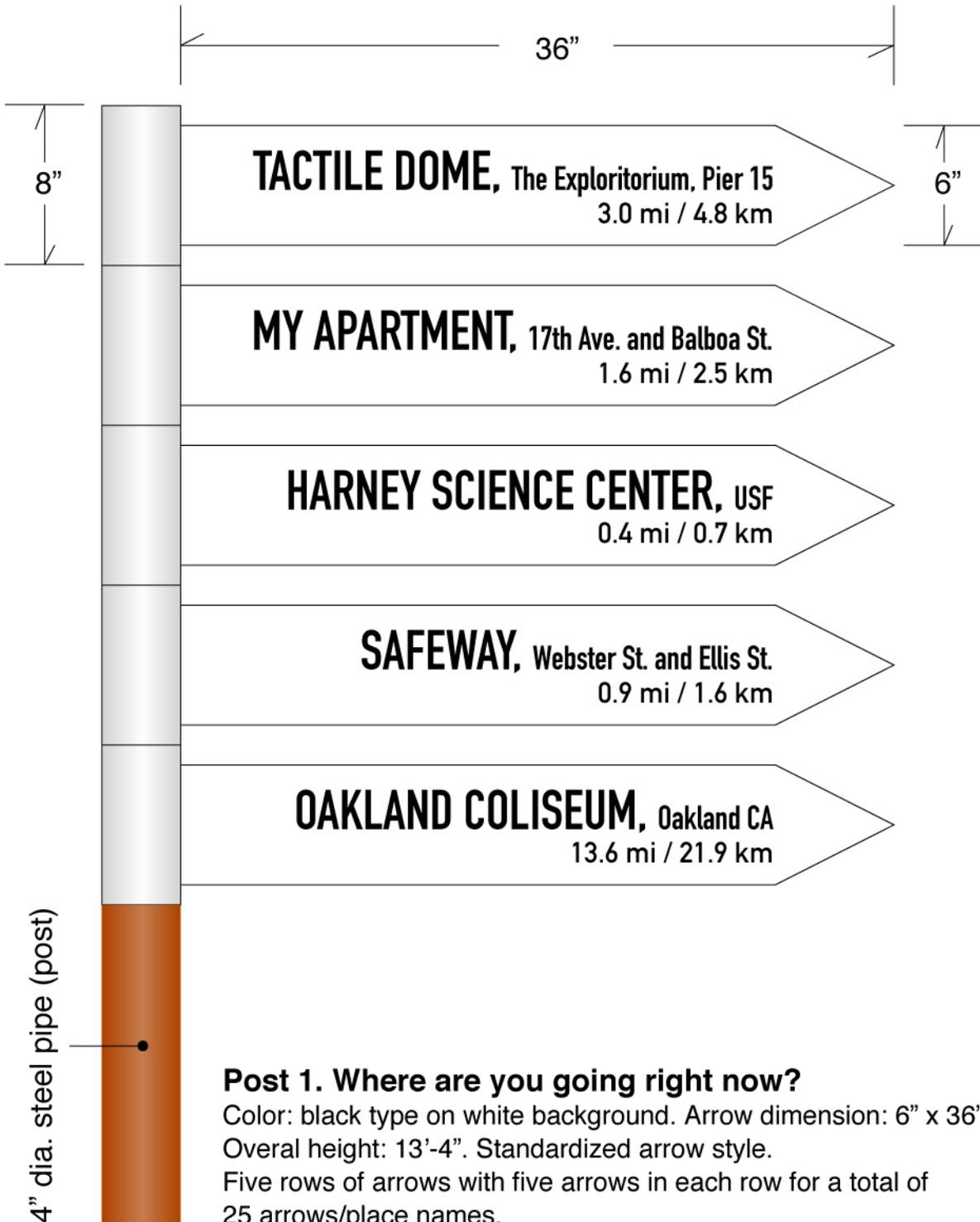
- Nov. 2014-Jan. 2015 Produce engineering spec's (drawings) for arrows & prototyping; work with fabricator to test materials and fabrication techniques; Produce full-scale mock up.
- Jan.-Jun. 2015 Hire assistants; generate materials for public engagement, including translations of project description and questionnaire; work on-site collecting responses; edit responses to generate list of place names for each signpost.
- Jun.-Sep. 2015 Design each signpost's arrows; create production files with specifications for color, typography, position and length of each arrow; oversee placement of concrete footings for posts (dependant on plaza construction schedule).
- Oct. 2015-Apr. 2016 Fabrication of all components for signposts.
- May 2016 Installation of signposts.

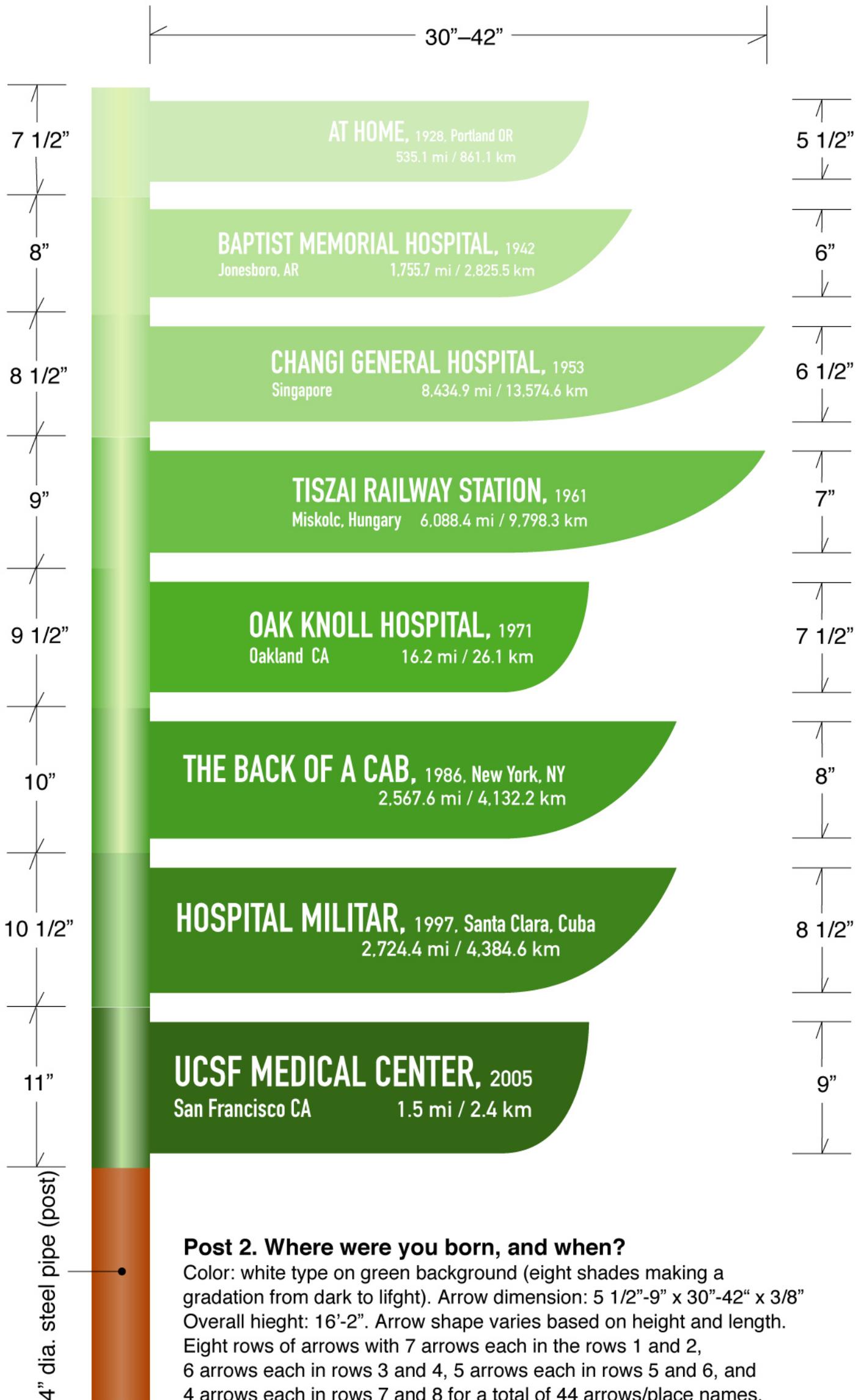


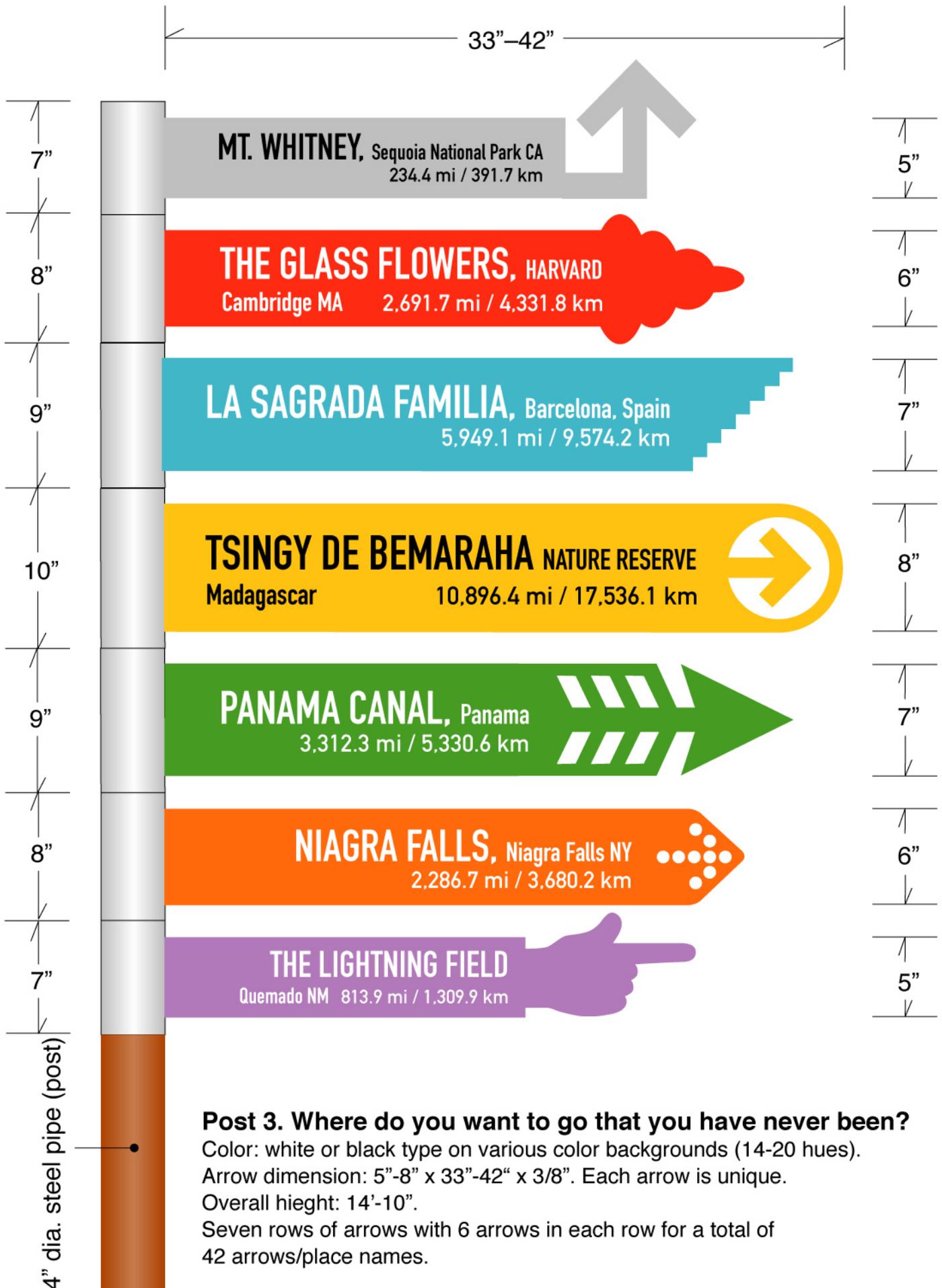
PLAN VIEW OF MASONIC PLAZA

Scale: 1" = 20'-0"

 Locations of signposts







**Post 3. Where do you want to go that you have never been?**

Color: white or black type on various color backgrounds (14-20 hues).

Arrow dimension: 5"-8" x 33"-42" x 3/8". Each arrow is unique.

Overall height: 14'-10".

Seven rows of arrows with 6 arrows in each row for a total of 42 arrows/place names.

Where were you born, and when?



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