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“Innovative Workplaces, Historic Spaces: Modernizing the House Office Buildings”

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Good morning, Chairman Kilmer, Vice Chair Timmons, and members of the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. My name is Patrick Wand, and I am the Senior Manager of the Project Management Office at Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota.

For those who have never visited Mall of America, it is the nation's largest shopping, dining, and attraction destination. Currently, we are welcoming roughly 32 million guests per year – which is 80% of our historic average of 40 million annual visitors. And we have up to 500 tenants which includes more than 60 places to dine and two dozen attractions. With more than 10,000 employees and the busiest transit hub in Minnesota, Mall of America is a welcoming place, a busy place, and it can be a challenging place to navigate.

I would like to thank the committee for inviting me to share insights we have learned at Mall of America over the past eight years that will be relevant to your work. Myself and my colleagues have had video conferencing meetings with your staff on the topic of wayfinding.

### **Our wayfinding journey**

During our first two decades, Mall of America relied on traditional static directories placed throughout the property – much like the rest of the industry.

Our journey to create a better wayfinding system began in earnest in 2014 by trying to understand and identify what our primary challenges were, and which objectives and goals would be most successful. These challenges and goals are critical to understand early in the process.

We began by doing a competitive analysis, holding focus groups, identifying guest needs and frustrations. This included viewing wayfinding systems in other industries and in our competitors. It involved talking to key constituents and wayfinding experts. And it also was accomplished by observing our guests use of our outdated wayfinding system, talking to them, understanding what they wanted. We listened carefully to what our guests were saying, and we did this without bias or preconceived solutions.

One of our primary tools when identifying problems and solutions is to think of the process as an hourglass. Once we identified the problem – that our guests were frustrated with our wayfinding – we began to look for solutions. Just like an hourglass with a wide opening at the top, we throw all ideas in for consideration. Nothing is off the table. This creative approach inevitably leads to a successful result. Then we funnel those ideas through the hourglass, refining them along the way.

### **Laying the foundation**

Using this thorough process, we were able to identify the key building blocks to create a successful wayfinding solution for our guests, tenants, employees, and partners. Before we could build the solution, an elemental foundation was needed – the installation of a comprehensive Wi-Fi system throughout our 5.6 million square foot property. Without this critical infrastructure we wouldn't be able to implement the solutions necessary.

With layers of concrete, hundreds of shops and restaurants, and millions of annual guests you can imagine it was a monumental task – and a significant investment. Our first step was to convince our

owners to invest in this technology. To do that, we created a short video that showcased what the future could look like at Mall of America in a 'connected world' environment. Our owners are entrepreneurs and visionaries, and they quickly understood the importance of the investment. Our extensive Wi-Fi installation project was completed in July of 2015, and we were ready for the next step.

### **Learning and adjusting**

Our first iteration was a large screen vertical format directory in 2016 – and we completely missed the mark. Customer feedback and data collected from these new directories was not positive. Rather than create a solution that worked for our guest, we went with a 'shiny object', and it just didn't work.

We pivoted and created what is essentially large iPad-looking screens that offer privacy to the user as well as the functionality they were comfortable with. This new system included blue-dot navigation, and the directories understand the guest orientation to the mall. These new, more consumer-friendly wayfinding directories went live in May of 2017.

Since then, we have continued to grow the system to more than 100 digital directories that are now in place throughout Mall of America. And we continue to learn and improve this system. With millions of guests who speak languages other than English, our directories now feature the nine most frequently spoken languages in addition to English.

Our digital directories also consider accessibility and family issues. For those guests using a wheelchair, stroller, or other device, it will adjust the route to the nearest elevators and show the travel time and distance. Likewise, it can help identify nearby family restrooms and nursing areas.

### **Create an encompassing solution**

While our digital directories are the foundation of our wayfinding program. Over the years we have created an ecosystem that assists with wayfinding from before a guest ever leaves their home, navigating the drive to Mall of America, finding convenient parking, and traversing the Mall.

This ecosystem includes digital guest service to help plan your trip prior to leaving home, digital wayfinding signage on the freeway and highway system and the city streets surrounding the Mall, and technology in our two massive parking ramps that show parking space availability.

Once guests exit their car, bus or light rail train, there is ample, easy-to-understand digital and static directional signage helping them navigate Mall entrances. Once inside, digital directories, guest service personnel, static signage, our App, and social media platforms help create a seamless experience.

### **Conclusion**

All the steps that I have shared about our wayfinding journey help to illustrate that it is not just about which 'tool' will be best for the solution. To be successful, it is important to understand the entire road map before beginning the journey.

One final note of advice from our team. Don't bite off more than you can chew. Take one step at a time. And never forget to celebrate your wins along the way.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.