



Sign Ordinance Compliance, Zoning, & Research

Delhi and Watertown Townships Practicum 2025

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Executive Summary

Sign Ordinance Compliance, Zoning, and Research is a student-led project responsible for examining and enhancing the sign regulations within the Zoning Ordinances of Delhi Charter Township and Watertown Charter Township. This project was led by a team of Michigan State University's Urban and Regional Planning Program students as part of the Spring 2025 Planning Practicum course. Planning Practicum is a service-learning capstone course that engages students in real-world urban and regional planning projects in collaboration with community partners to provide students with practical experience through applied research, outreach, and hands-on problem solving. The course allows students to apply classroom knowledge to planning challenges while developing professional skills.

While both townships seek to update their zoning ordinances, each community presented challenges that required analyses and recommendations to address specific legal compliance, resulting from the landmark Supreme Court decision *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona* (2015). In this case, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of petitioner Pastor Clyde Reed, holding that the town of Gilbert's sign ordinance, which imposed restrictions on signs based on their message, violated the First Amendment. This case clarified the standard for evaluating sign regulations and the level of constitutional scrutiny that may be applied, reinforcing the principle that regulations must be content-neutral. Content-neutrality refers to

regulations that treat all expressions equally regardless of the message or content. It set the bar for government regulations and significantly impacted local sign ordinances across the nation.

This project was completed in two primary sections: research phase and recommendations. Research included field observations along with an in-depth review of relevant court cases and legal precedents to identify legal vulnerabilities. Legal frameworks, particularly those dealing with the First Amendment and Michigan decisions, were reviewed to assess compliance. In addition to *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona*, the team examined three other decisions to gain a better understanding of how *Reed* has been interpreted and applied in real-world scenarios since the decision.

In *Adams Outdoor Advertising v. City of East Lansing* (2000), if an owner of a sign does not bring said sign into compliance within a timely manner, the municipality may remove the sign with no consequence. This local Michigan case sets the precedent and provides guidance on how to enforce the removal of non-compliant signage by setting a timeline for the enforcement of new sign ordinances.

In *Austin, Texas v. Reagan National Advertising* (2022), the Supreme Court clarified the meaning of content-neutrality in the context of on/off premise distinctions. The court ruled that the requirement to read the sign does not inherently trigger strict scrutiny, rejecting the so-called "read-the-

sign rule,” shifting the legal landscape and offering some flexibility for municipalities. This case serves as a guide for the limitations of regulating signage while upholding content-neutrality.

Finally, *International Outdoor v. City of Troy* (2023) provided guidance on local government permitting systems. The decision gives municipalities the jurisdiction to sever content-based exceptions to permit requirements; and provides insights into the regulations regarding billboard advertising.

The team drew additional insights from other Michigan communities, including Meridian Township, DeWitt Township, Garfield Township, and Orion Township, and from the Michigan Municipal League Capital Sign Conference in 2016. All research done contributes to the following components of best practices: clear purpose alignment, content-neutral definitions, clear severability & substitution clauses, clear standards for measuring sign dimensions, clear prohibited and exempt signs, broad content-neutral categories organized within zoning districts, and special concerns around digital signs and recent case laws.

In Delhi Charter Township, the sign ordinance was found to contain limited content-based definitions, content-based regulations, and formatting inconsistencies. Recommendations to mitigate noncompliance consisted of transitioning to content-neutral language, eliminating and simplifying content-based definitions, and structuring the ordinance by physical attributes (e.g., permanent, freestanding, wall-mounted, ground signs). In addition, severability and substitution clauses could be added. Both clauses will ensure that the ordinance has continued validity, even if some provisions are considered invalid by a court.

In Watertown Charter Township, officials

expressed concerns about digital signage and the impact of illumination. The ordinance is structurally consistent, organized primarily by physical characteristics, with temporary signs governed by more strict provisions that could be perceived as overly restrictive. To mitigate potential issues and enhance clarity, it is recommended the township introduce a new section on illumination. This section would provide for more detail on physical criteria, such as brightness, display duration, motion, flashing, etc., tailored to zoning districts. Next, extra care should be taken into consideration with temporary signage and this category should communicate necessary regulations without prioritizing certain signs based on their content.

The Sign Ordinance Compliance, Zoning, and Research report provided both Delhi Charter Township and Watertown Charter Township with tools to improve their signage section within their Zoning Ordinance. The resulting “Bold & Strikethrough” drafts offer a revised, and enforceable framework for sign regulation. A key component of this effort involved the elimination of content-based language that was replaced with content-neutral language focused on physical attributes such as location. For example, one definition that was removed read: “Political signs: A temporary sign used in connection with an official city, village, township, school district, county, state, or federal election, referendum, or public issue.” By grounding recommendations in physical attributes, both townships are equipped to better manage signage to promote safety, aesthetics, and address local concerns.

Funding Acknowledgement

Planning Practicum receives support from our community clients. It is financially aided by the generous contributions from Michigan State University Extension and the Regional Economic Initiative grant provided by the United States Department of Commerce-Economic Development Administration, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. The opinions expressed in the statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are the authors' sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the views of Michigan State University or any federal or state agency.



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1. Project Overview

Sign Ordinance Compliance, Zoning, and Research is a collaborative initiative aimed at reviewing and modernizing the sign ordinances for Delhi Charter Township and Watertown Charter Township, Michigan. This effort is led by a team from Michigan State University's School of Planning, Design, and Construction as part of the Spring 2025 UP 494/894 Planning Practicum course. Planning Practicum is a service-learning course that engages students in real-world urban and regional planning projects in collaboration with community partners. It integrates research, outreach, and hands-on problem-solving, allowing students to apply classroom knowledge to practical planning challenges while developing professional skills in data collection, analysis, stakeholder engagement, and report writing.

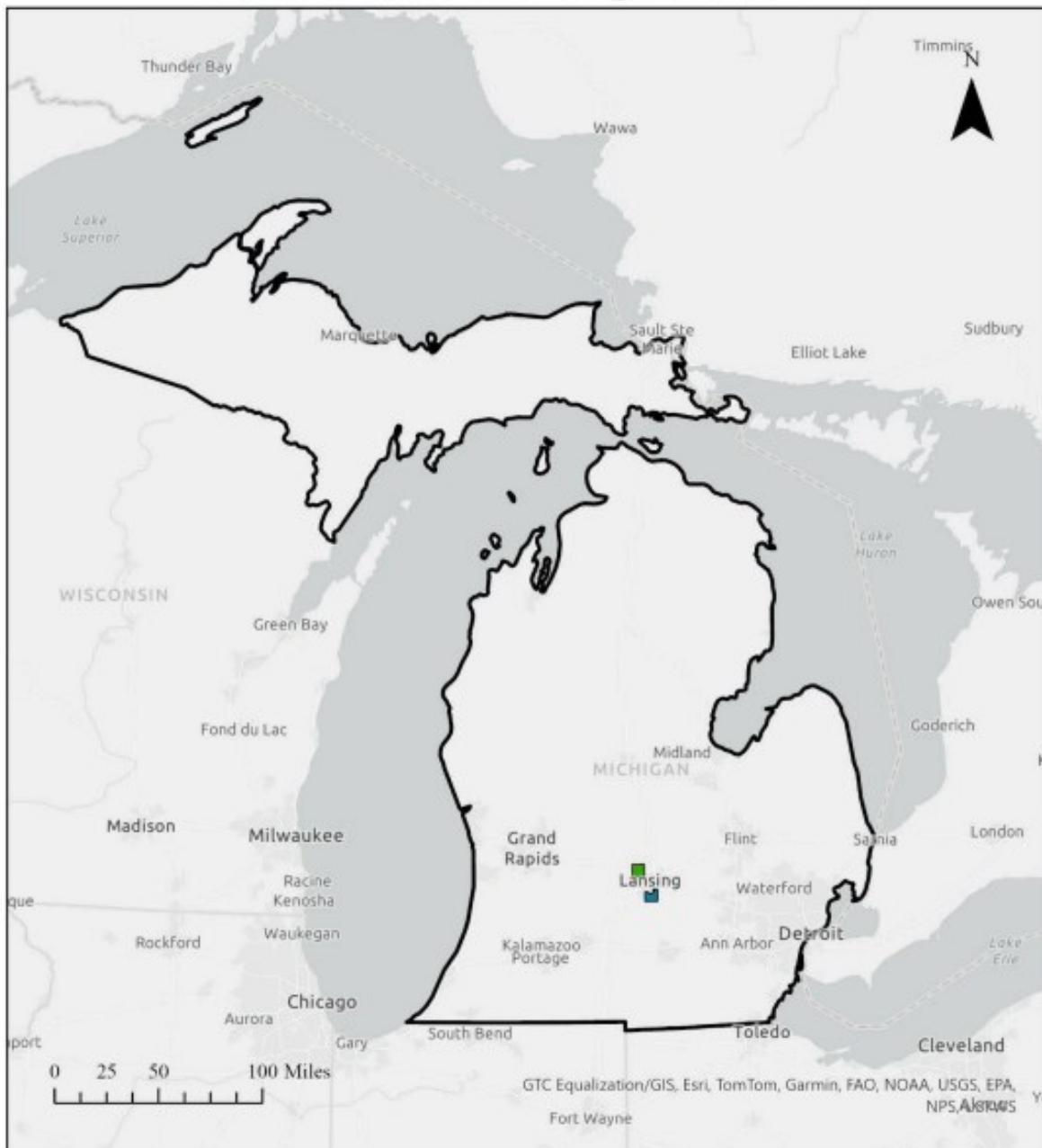
This project seeks to evaluate and update the sign ordinances of both townships to ensure compliance with the *Reed v. Town of Gilbert (2015)* Supreme Court ruling and other relevant legal precedents. Through

comprehensive research and analysis, the team will provide recommendations that align with best practices while maintaining each township's character and supporting local businesses.

The scope of this project includes reviewing existing sign regulations, researching relevant federal and state court cases, and assessing best practices from comparable Michigan townships. The team will conduct field observations, meet with township officials, and create a revised sign ordinance for each township using a "Bold & Strikethrough" format to highlight necessary changes. The final deliverables will include updated ordinances, a summary of existing factors and key legal considerations, and a final presentation detailing the findings and recommendations. This project will provide Delhi and Watertown Townships with legally sound, modernized sign regulations that balance economic development, aesthetic concerns, and constitutional requirements.



Watertown Charter Township and Delhi Charter Township Location

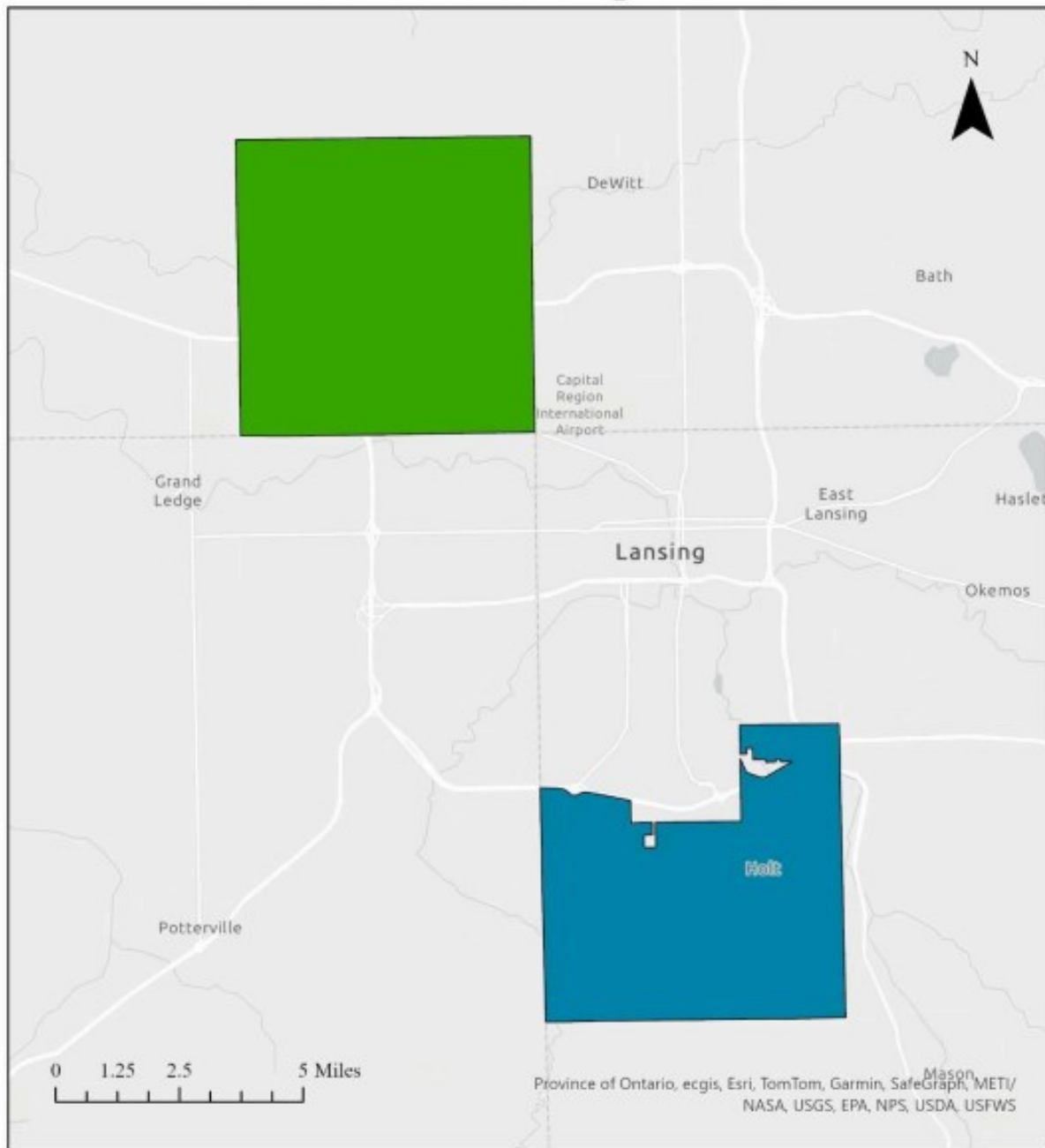


Legend

- State of Michigan
- Watertown Charter Township
- Delhi Charter Township

Figure 1. Location of Delhi & Watertown Charter Townships in Michigan.

Watertown Charter Township and Delhi Charter Township Location



Legend

- Watertown Charter Township
- Delhi Charter Township

Figure 2. Location of Delhi & Watertown Charter Townships in Michigan, zoomed.

2. Community Overview

2.1 Delhi Charter Township

Delhi Charter Township is in western Ingham County and is immediately south of Lansing, Michigan's capital and sixth-largest city. With 27,710 residents as of the 2020 U.S. Census, Delhi Township has experienced significant growth due to its proximity to Lansing and its balance of residential, commercial, and natural spaces. The township includes the unincorporated community of Holt, which had 25,625 residents as of the 2020 Census and serves as the economic hub of the township. The city of Mason, the county seat, is located just southeast of the township.

Delhi Township's land use is diverse, featuring a mix of suburban neighborhoods, commercial corridors, industrial parks, and preserved natural areas. Residential development has expanded in recent years, with a mix of single-family homes and multi-family units. The township has actively pursued smart growth strategies, emphasizing walkability, mixed-use development, and green infrastructure. Economic development efforts focus on supporting small businesses, attracting new industries, and revitalizing the township's commercial corridors, particularly along Cedar Street. The local economy is driven by retail, manufacturing, healthcare, and professional services, with many residents commuting to Lansing for employment.

Transportation infrastructure in Delhi Township is well-developed, with nearby access to major highways, including Interstates 96 and 496 and U.S. Route 127,

which interchange within the township. Public transportation is available through the Capital Area Transportation Authority, offering routes connecting residents to Lansing and elsewhere within the Lansing-East Lansing metropolitan area. The township continues to expand non-motorized transportation options, including bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly pathways.

Delhi Township is committed to environmental sustainability and outdoor recreation, maintaining a significant park system with over 200 acres of green space,



Figure 3. Cedar Green Pylon Sign,
Delhi Charter Township

trails, and recreational facilities. The Grand River and Sycamore Creek provide natural scenery and opportunities for conservation and outdoor activities.

2.2 Watertown Charter Township

Watertown Charter Township is in southern Clinton County. The township is primarily rural, although it maintains a balance between its agricultural heritage, suburban developments, and a robust commercial/industrial corridor along Grand River Avenue. Like Delhi Township, Watertown Township is within the Lansing-East Lansing Metropolitan area, although it maintains a more exurban character than its counterpart. The township has 5,563 residents, as of the 2020 Census, and has experienced steady growth, attracting newer suburban commuters and maintaining its long-time rural families and character. The community has a strong local identity, and emphasizes preserving its rural charm.

The township's land use is dominated by agricultural fields, open spaces, and low-density residential development, with zoning ordinances designed to support farmland preservation while accommodating controlled growth. Agriculture remains a key industry, with corn, soybeans, and livestock farming serving as a primary economic driver. Small businesses and service-oriented industries contribute to local employment, while many residents commute elsewhere within the metropolitan area for work.

Watertown Township benefits from well-connected transportation infrastructure, including access to Interstates 69 and 96 as well as Grand River Avenue, facilitating commuter travel and freight movement. Capital Region International Airport is located immediately adjacent to the township, enabling access to the nation and abroad.

However, public transportation within the township remains limited, and most residents rely on private vehicles.

Watertown Township also prioritizes environmental conservation by protecting natural landscapes such as wetlands, woodlands, agricultural fields, and the Looking Glass River, a tributary of the Grand River. Efforts are in place to protect local water resources and maintain ecological balance.



*Figure 4. Flying J Gas Station & IHOP Sign.,
Watertown Charter Township*

3. Socioeconomic Profile

A Socioeconomic Profile (SEP) gives insight into the characteristics of a community through data exploration which helps to give further context. SEPs contain data ranging from age and gender to educational attainment, and economic factors. While many of these factors are not directly related to the regulation of signage, they give us a broader understanding of both Delhi and Watertown Townships. This allows us to compare sign ordinances created by communities with similar demographics. Data regarding

transportation also gives us insight into how residents view signs and helps guide us reworking both communities' sign ordinances. Data on the number and types of businesses in the Townships can allow us to consider what regulations are most pertinent. The majority of the data gathered for this SEP comes from the US Census Bureau's 2020 Decennial Census and the 2023 5-Year American Community Survey. The remaining data was collected using the Business Analyst Online tool from ESRI.



Figure 5, Capital Area Humane Society Sign, Watertown Charter Township

3.1 Delhi Charter Township

3.1.1 Demographics

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Delhi Township has grown throughout the last four decades. The 2020 Decennial Census reported that the township's population was 27,710, an increase of seven percent from the 2010 census, as seen in *Figure 6*. Compared to Ingham County, which only grew by about 1.4 percent between the 2010 and 2020 census, Delhi Township's growth has grown faster. However, ESRI Business Analyst data predicts that the Township's population will decrease by approximately three percent by 2029, which indicates that the population is stabilizing.

Figure 7 displays a population pyramid for Delhi Township. The population pyramid is stationary, meaning that most age groups are of similar size. The only outlier is the 20-24 age group, which is a half percent smaller than the surrounding age groups for both the male and female cohorts. Several factors could contribute to this discrepancy, namely that the age group

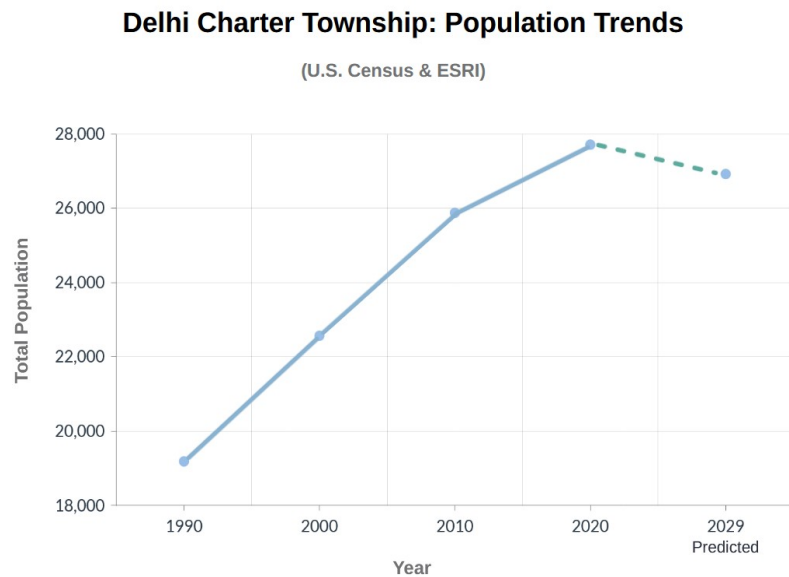


Figure 6. Total Population in Delhi Charter Township 1990-2029.

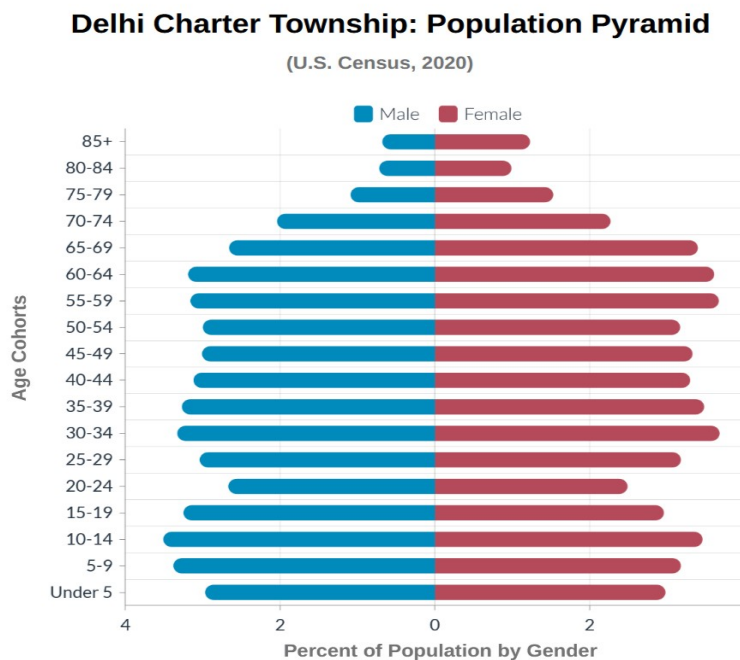


Figure 7. Delhi Charter Township Population Pyramid.

members attend higher education institutions outside of Delhi Township. Delhi Township has a median age of 41.8, much higher than Ingham County's median age of 33.0, which is skewed due to Michigan State University's student population, and closer to the median age of Michigan at 40.5.

3.1.2 Education

Delhi Township's education attainment rate is similar to Ingham County, as shown in *Table 1*. However, the Township's educational attainment rate is higher than the Michigan average for bachelor's and graduate or professional degrees. This indicates that Delhi Township attracts residents with higher education levels, although not by enough to have a significantly higher educational attainment rate than Ingham County.

Educational Attainment	Delhi Township	Ingham County	Michigan
Less than a high school diploma	6%	6%	8%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	21%	21%	28%
Some College or Associate's Degree	32%	32%	32%
Bachelor's Degree	24%	22%	20%
Graduate or Professional Degree	18%	19%	13%

Table 1. Educational Attainment Rate in Delhi Township, Ingham County, and Michigan. (US Census Bureau 2023 5-Year ACS).

3.1.3 Housing

Delhi Township has a diverse range of housing types, ranging from single-family homes to apartment complexes of twenty or more units. Single-family homes still dominate the housing market in Delhi Township, with single-family homes making

up nearly 68 percent of the total housing units, as shown in *Figure 8*. However, several smaller five to twenty Unit apartments make up over thirteen percent of the housing units in the Township. In Delhi Township, there are 11,199 housing units; of those housing units, 68 percent are owner-occupied, and 32 percent are renter-occupied. The Median home price in Delhi Township is \$219,200, 14.8 percent higher than Ingham County

Delhi Charter Township: Housing Unit Types

(U.S. Census, 2023)

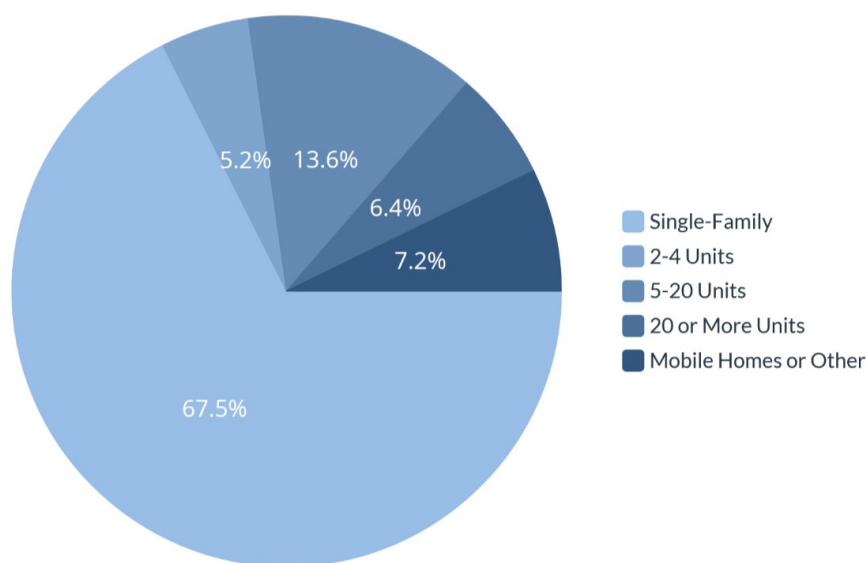


Figure 8. Delhi Township Percentage of Total Housing Units by Type.

but 7.7 percent lower than the median Michigan home price. Renting in Delhi Township is comparatively more expensive, with a median monthly rent of \$1,323, 25 percent higher than the median monthly rent in Ingham County. This data shows us that housing in Delhi Township is more expensive than in surrounding communities but is still comparable to the state-level housing cost.

3.1.4 Income and Employment

Delhi Township has a higher household income than its county and state counterparts. According to the US Census Bureau, Delhi Township has a median household income of \$89,908, compared to \$62,998 for Ingham County. Delhi Township's median household

income is 43 percent higher. As shown in *Figure 9*, Delhi Township has a higher share of household incomes above \$100,000 than Ingham County and Michigan, especially in the \$100,00 to \$149,999 income range. Delhi Township has a slightly higher unemployment rate of 4.4 percent compared to Ingham County's unemployment rate of 3.8 percent. This discrepancy could possibly be explained by a difference in age demographics between Delhi Township and Ingham County. However, the difference is not large enough for a single factor to be determinative, as there are many factors that play into unemployment.

Delhi Charter Township, Ingham County, and Michigan Income Ranges
(U.S. Census, 2023)

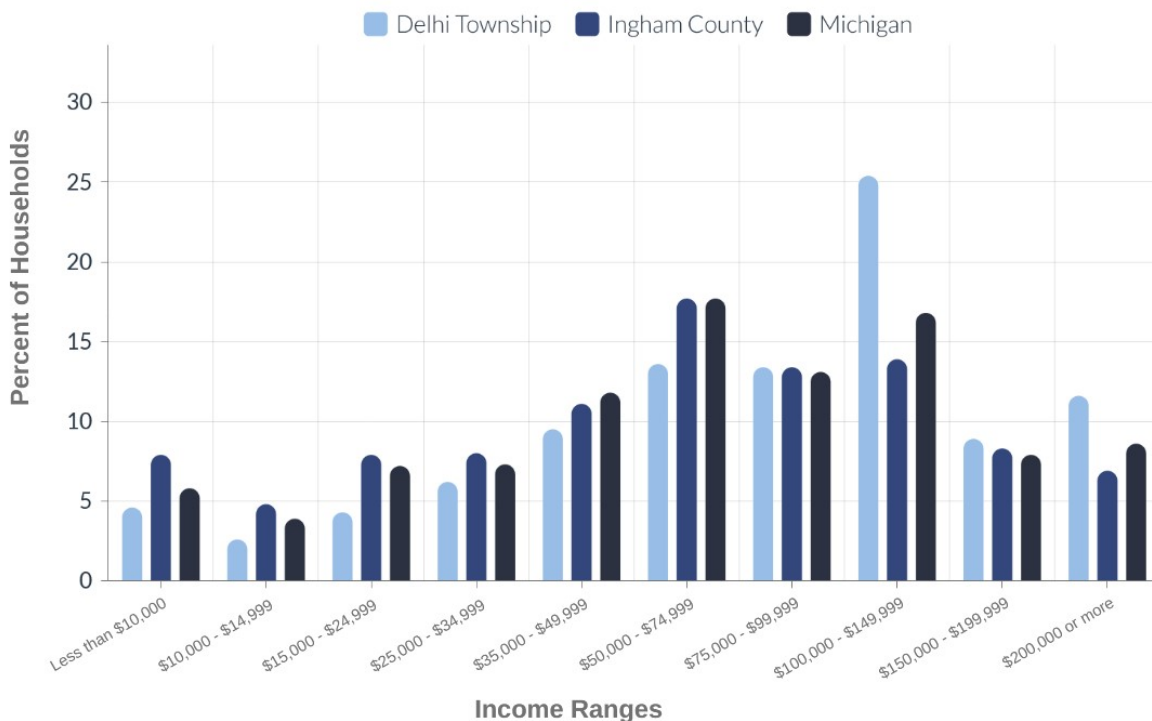


Figure 9. Household Income in Delhi Charter Township, Ingham County, and Michigan.

3.1.5 Transportation

Transportation can play an important role when considering regulations regarding signage. According to the International Sign Association, when private individuals, businesses, and other organizations undergo the sign designing process, they must consider how their signs are being read to maximize readability. If most people passing by their business location are traveling by car, they will want their sign to be designed so that drivers can easily read and comprehend the signage.

The US Census Bureau, as part of the American Community Survey (ACS), collects data concerning how people get to their places of work. According to the most recent ACS 5-year estimates, most Delhi Township residents

drive to work. As shown in *Figure 10*, 73 percent of residents drive to work, and another 9.5 percent carpool to work. The next highest category at 14.4 percent is residents who work from home and do not commute at all. Walking, biking, or other means of transportation make up the remaining 3.2 percent. This shows that most residents in Delhi Township are driving most of the time, which should be considered when reworking the sign ordinance.

3.1.6 Economy

Economic information is also an important factor when considering regulations regarding signage. Some users may desire certain types of signage, for example an industrial establishment may only need simple signage to direct incoming and outgoing freight, while

Delhi Charter Township: Means of Transportation to Work

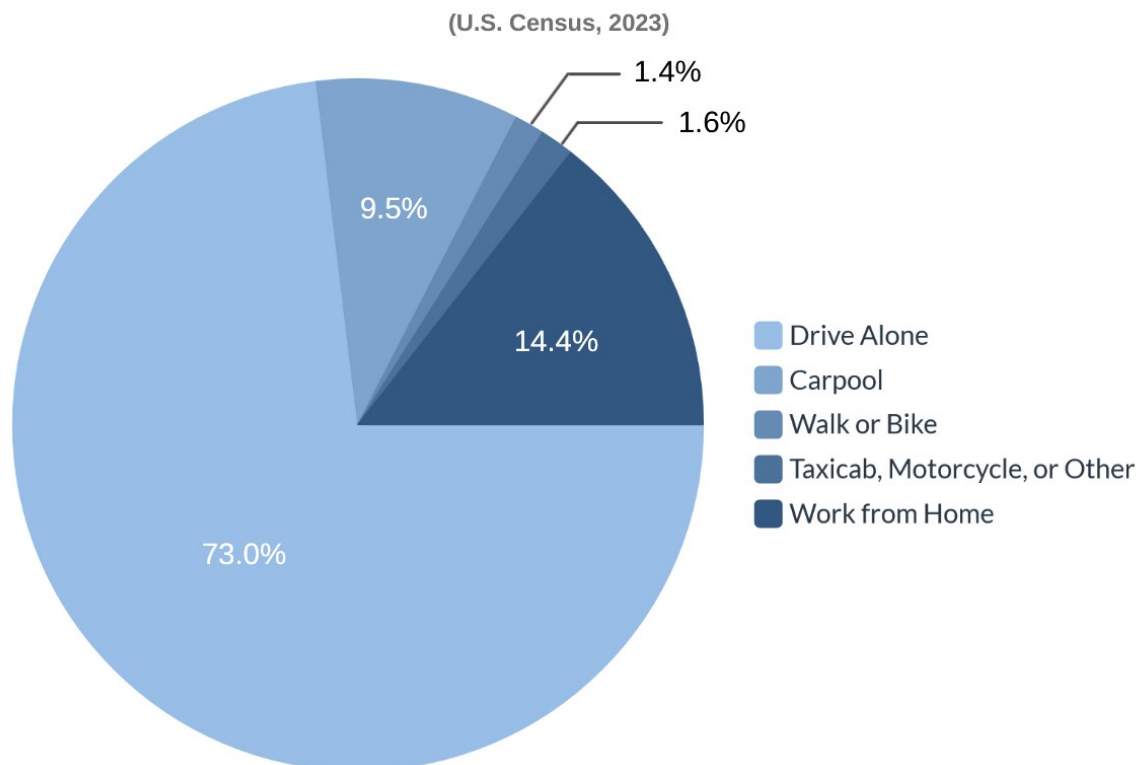


Figure 10. Delhi Township Means of Transportation to Work.

Industry	Businesses	Percent of Businesses
Health Care & Social Assistance	152	18.0%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	128	15.1%
Retail Trade	80	9.5%
Construction	77	9.1%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	75	8.9%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	36	4.3%
Accommodation & Food Services	36	4.3%
Manufacturing	35	4.1%
Unclassified Establishments	33	3.9%
Wholesale Trade	32	3.8%
Finance & Insurance	31	3.7%
Administrative, Support & Waste Management Services	30	3.5%
Educational Services	25	3.0%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	22	2.6%
Information	20	2.4%
Public Administration	18	2.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	11	1.3%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	2	0.2%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	2	0.2%
Mining	1	0.1%
Utilities	1	0.1%

*Table 2. Delhi Township Number of Businesses by Industry Sector.
(ESRI Business Analyst)*

a fast-food restaurant may want a larger sign that attracts the attention of passersby. As shown in *Table 2*, the sector with the largest number of businesses and employees in Delhi Township is the health care and social assistance industry, which makes up just under eighteen percent of businesses. The next largest sector by number of businesses is other services, which makes up 15.1 percent of businesses in the Township. Overall, Delhi Township has a diverse number of industries, with health care and social assistance providing the plurality of both businesses and employees.

3.2 Watertown Charter Township

3.2.1 Demographics

Since 1990, Watertown Township has seen continuous growth from just over 3,700 to over 5,500 in the 2020 Decennial Census, as shown in *Figure 11*. Between the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, the population of Watertown Township increased by fifteen percent. Comparatively, Clinton County has only grown five percent in the same period. Watertown Township is expected to continue this growth trend in the coming years. ESRI Business Analyst predicts that the population will continue to grow by approximately three percent by 2029.

Figure 12 displays a population pyramid of Watertown Township. The Township's population pyramid is slightly constrictive, meaning that the elderly population is larger than the youth population. Watertown Township has a large anomaly in the 20-29 year-old age groups for both males and females. Those age groups make up approximately one percent less of the population than their surrounding cohorts,

Watertown Charter Township: Population Trends

(U.S. Census & ESRI)

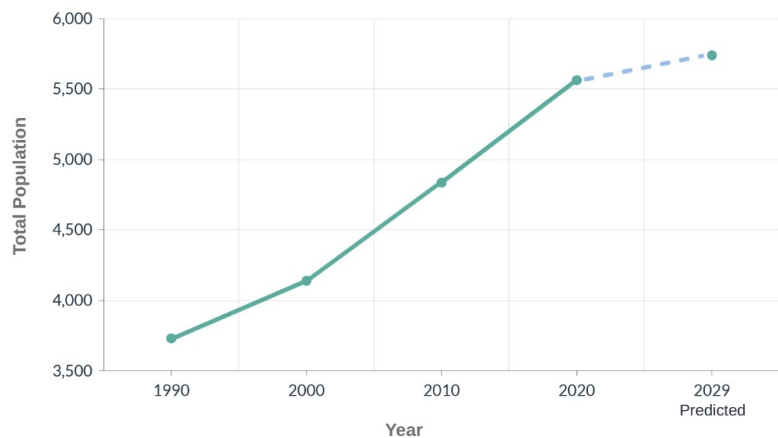


Figure 11. Total Population in Watertown Charter Township 1990-2029.

Watertown Charter Township: Population Pyramid

(U.S. Census, 2020)



Figure 12. Watertown Charter Township Population Pyramid.

which indicates that people in the 20-29 age group are not choosing to live in Watertown Township. This could be explained by the housing stock in Watertown Township, which is mostly single-family. Trends have shown that many younger people prefer to live in more dense urban areas or are unable to afford single-family housing.

3.2.2 Education

Watertown Township has similar education attainment rates for all education types compared to Clinton County, as seen in Table 3. However, compared to Michigan, Watertown Township has a high attainment rate for some college or associate's degrees, bachelor's degrees, and graduate or professional degrees. Conversely, Watertown Township has a smaller population without a high school diploma or an equivalent. This indicates that Watertown Township attracts residents with higher education levels compared to the state at large. Watertown Township may attract higher educated individuals because of the proximity to jobs that require post-secondary education. The two largest employers in the region, the State of Michigan and Michigan State University, are both employers that attract a large and highly educated workforce.

Housing Type	Units
Single-Family	2,215
2 or More Units	71
Mobile Home or Other	40

Table 4. Watertown Township Housing Units by Type. (US Census Bureau 2023 5-Year ACS)

Educational Attainment	Watertown Township	Clinton County	Michigan
Less than a high school diploma	2.1%	4.4%	8.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	18.3%	20.3%	27.7%
Some College or Associate's Degree	36.2%	34.7%	31.6%
Bachelor's Degree	25.5%	25.3%	19.9%
Graduate or Professional Degree	17.8%	15.3%	12.8%

Table 3. Educational Attainment Rate in Watertown Township, Clinton County, and Michigan. (US Census Bureau 2023 5-Year ACS)

3.2.3 Housing

Single-family homes dominate Watertown Township's housing stock. Of the 2,326 housing units in Watertown Township, more than 95 percent of the total housing units are single-family homes. With over 90 percent of housing units being owner-occupied, Watertown Township has a high homeownership rate. Watertown Township generally has higher housing costs than the state of Michigan. The median home price in Watertown Township is \$281,000, only two percent greater than the County median, but nearly twenty percent higher than the median Michigan home price. Renter-occupied housing is even more expensive, with the median monthly rent in Watertown Township being \$1,974, 90 percent higher than the median monthly rent in Clinton County.

3.2.4 Income and Employment

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Watertown Township has a higher household income than Clinton County and Michigan. With a household median income of \$112,044, Watertown Township's median household income is nearly \$20,000 greater than Clinton County's median household income and over \$21,000 greater than the median household income of Michigan. As shown in *Figure 13*, the share of households in Watertown Township with a household income of less than \$35,000 is much lower compared to Clinton County and Michigan. Conversely, the share of households with a household income of \$75,000 to \$149,000 is substantially higher than Michigan's. Watertown Township's higher income may

be explained by the fact that the township has a higher percentage of individuals with post-secondary education. Individuals with post-secondary education often have higher incomes than people with no post-secondary education. Higher income could also be caused by a high unionization rate among workers in the Township. The unemployment rate in Watertown Township is comparatively lower at 1.2 percent compared to Clinton County at 2.4 percent and Michigan at 3.6 percent. Watertown's lower unemployment rate may be in relation to its high educational attainment. Individuals with post-secondary education are more likely to be employed than individuals who have not received any post-secondary education. The low unemployment rate could also be a result of most of the housing in Watertown Township.

Watertown Charter Township, Clinton County, and Michigan Income Ranges
(U.S. Census, 2023)

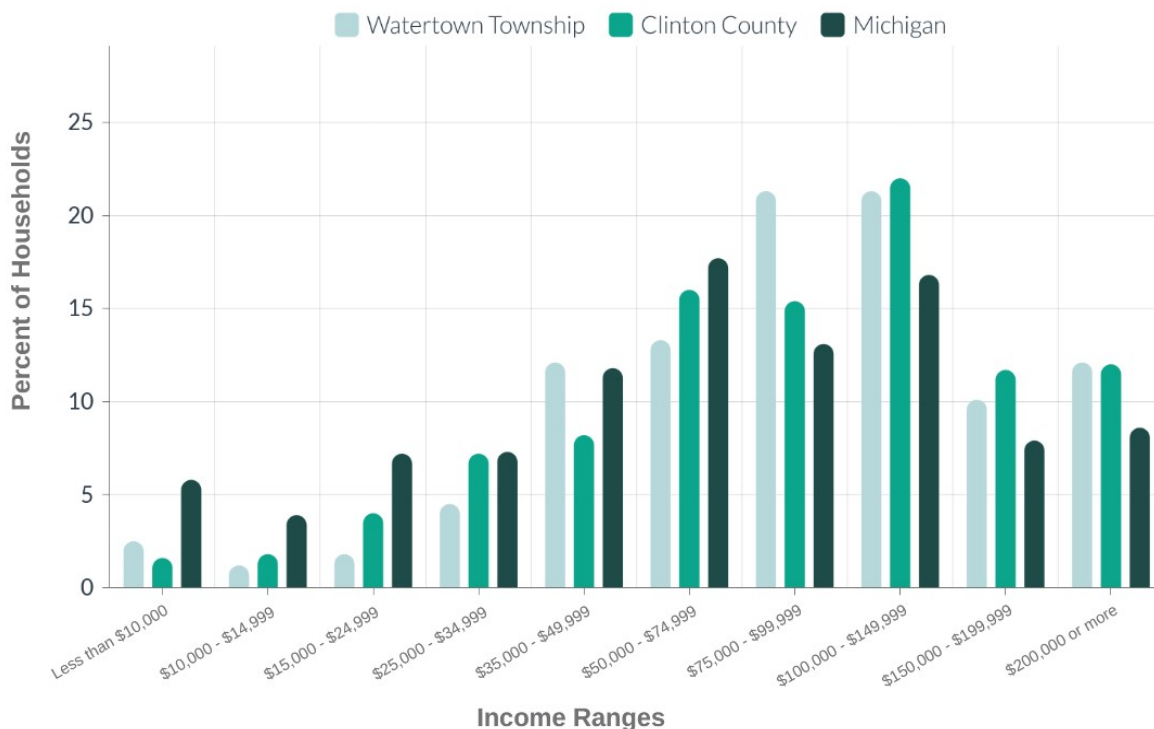


Figure 13. Household Income in Watertown Charter Township, Clinton County, and Michigan.

With the overwhelming majority of housing being owner-occupied, residents are more likely to be employed as most individuals facing unemployment cannot afford to purchase a home and live in renter-occupied housing or no housing at all.

3.2.5 Transportation

Transportation can be an important aspect to consider when determining how signage should be regulated. How the majority of people perceive signs may have an impact on the design wishes of the sign owner. As a part of the American Community Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau data is collected on how people transport to their places of work. Transportation in Watertown

Township is dominated by driving. As shown in *Figure 14*, 79.8 percent of residents drive to work alone, and 3.1 percent carpool. Walking makes up a miniscule share of the transportation at 0.3 percent while working from home has the second largest share at 13.8 percent. This data indicates that the vast majority of residents in Watertown Township are driving places and that other forms of transportation are not utilized to the same extent.

3.2.6 Economy

Local industry data can play an important role in determining what, if any, businesses need special consideration when reviewing Watertown Township's sign

Watertown Charter Township: Means of Transportation to Work

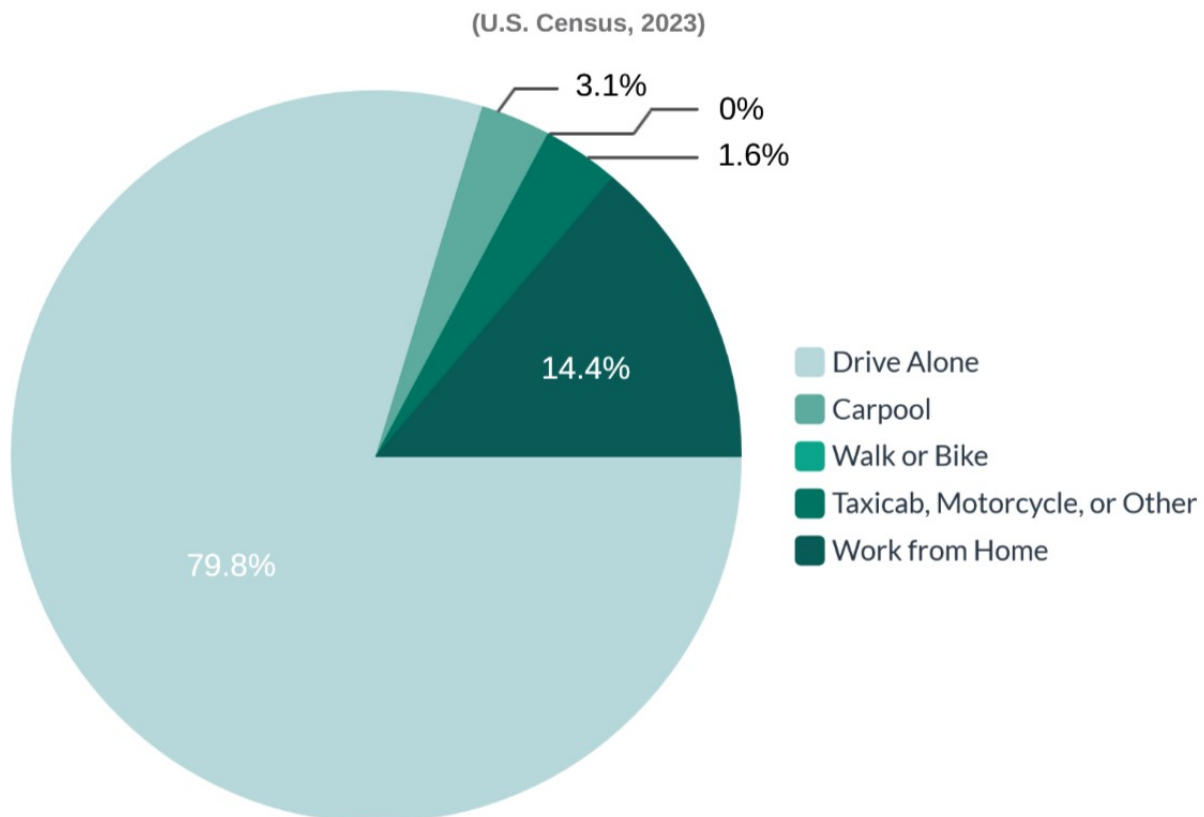


Figure 14. Watertown Charter Township Means of Transportation to Work.

Industry	Businesses	Percent of Businesses
Construction	25	13.1%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	24	12.6%
Manufacturing	19	10.0%
Retail Trade	19	10.0%
Administrative, Support & Waste Management Services	17	8.9%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	16	8.4%
Wholesale Trade	15	7.9%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	11	5.8%
Transportation & Warehousing	8	4.2%
Finance & Insurance	6	3.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	6	3.1%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	5	2.6%
Accommodation & Food Services	5	2.6%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4	2.1%
Information	4	2.1%
Unclassified Establishments	3	1.6%
Mining	2	1.1%
Public Administration	2	1.05%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	2	0.2%
Mining	1	0.1%
Utilities	1	0.1%

*Table 5. Watertown Township Number of Businesses by Industry Sector.
(ESRI Business Analyst).*

ordinance. Businesses in the construction industry make up most businesses in Water-town Township at over thirteen percent, as shown in *Table 5*. The next largest industry sectors by numbers of businesses are other services, manufacturing, and retail services. Overall, Watertown Township has a diverse economic base and is not dominated by one singular industry.

4. Relevant Court Cases

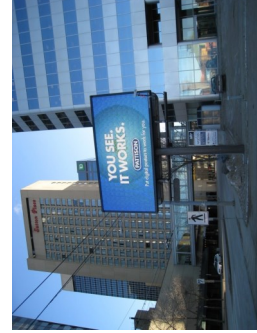
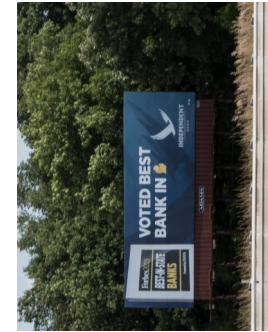
When updating a sign ordinance, it is important to ensure regulations achieve the community's goals but also comply with the Constitution, particularly the First Amendment. Landmark court decisions at the local, state, and federal level have been examined, along with the precedents these cases have established to give a comprehensive legal perspective. Key rulings address issues such as content-based versus content-neutral regulations—the core principle for compliance—balancing of aesthetics and public safety, and the limits to which these may be enforced. The following section outlines these court cases, specifically *Adams Outdoor Advertising v. City of East Lansing, Austin, Tx v. Reagan National Advertising, International Outdoor v. City of Troy, & Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Az.*

These court cases were selected because they demonstrate the set legal precedent that impacts how municipalities can regulate signage, directly addressing foundational principles of constitutional law. Content neutrality, which means not regulating based on the message of the sign, is the basis of these cases and shapes the legal framework for all research outlined in this document. Using these cases as guides, townships can craft clear, enforceable, and legally sound sign regulations that serve businesses, patrons, and residents. Main takeaways from the four cases include content-based distinctions for sign regulation, the importance of severability clauses within sign codes, the timing of the removal of noncompliant signage after ordinance updates, and differentiations of on-/off-premise signs.

Relevant Court Cases

Court Case	Adams Outdoor Advertising v. City of East Lansing, Michigan Supreme Court (2000)	Austin, Tx v. Reagan National Advertising, U.S. Supreme Court (2022)	International Outdoor v. City of Troy, U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals (2023)	Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Az, U.S. Supreme Court (2015)
Case Overview	<p>In the State of Michigan, any city government could remove a sign or billboard if it did not comply with their ordinances within a timely manner.</p> <p>If the owner of said sign or billboard did not change their signs or remove them by a deadline, the city government could remove it with no consequence.</p>	<p>The City of Austin recently updated its sign ordinance, which prohibited the construction of new off-premise signs, clearly differentiating between on-/off-premise signs, with existing signs being exempted from the rule. The sign code prohibited digitization of new off-premise signs.</p> <p>The key issue in the case was whether or not the differentiation between on-/off- premise signs was content-based, requiring strict scrutiny—the highest form of judicial review, requiring proof that a law furthers some governmental interest.</p>	<p>International Outdoor sued the City based on an invalid prior restraint in the City Sign Ordinance. They argued that the sign ordinance lacked narrow, objective, and definite standards and that because some of the permit exceptions were content-based, the entire Ordinance was unconstitutional.</p> <p>The City of Troy had indicated its intention to sever unconstitutional provisions of the Ordinance by including a severability clause in the original ordinance.</p>	<p>The issue in this case was whether Gilbert's sign codes, which posed different restrictions on different categories (such as ideological, political, and temporary signs) violated the First Amendment.</p> <p>These restrictions were deemed as content-based by the Supreme Court because they subjected different signs to different rules regarding size, placement, and duration. For example, the town of Gilbert's ordinance imposed far more restrictions on temporary directional signs than ideological or political signs.</p>

Relevance	<p>A local Michigan case from Ingham county, has greater applications to our clients, as both townships are within Ingham county.</p> <p>Updates to sign ordinances and timeline for which non-compliant signage must be removed. Gives the townships guidance on how to enforce the removal of non-compliant signage.</p>	<p>This case clarified the meaning of a content based regulation, rejecting the read-the-sign rule, and it further supports on-/off- premise sign distinctions, especially in ongoing efforts to protect aesthetics and reflect community values.</p>	<p>The City of Troy updated sign ordinances within the time-frame of this case, amending the unconstitutional ordinance. Within this case is the application of <i>Reed v. Town of Gilbert</i> to a Michigan city sign ordinance, along with the application of other signage laws throughout the state.</p>	<p>The ruling emphasizes that sign laws must be content-neutral, focusing on elements such as size, location, or materials. This case set the precedent for strict scrutiny on content-based signage, impacting municipal sign ordinances nationwide, as well as other free speech regulations</p>
Applications	<p>Both Delhi and Watertown Townships have signs that would become non-compliant with updates to signage ordinances, <i>Adams Outdoor Advertising v. City of East Lansing</i> sets a precedent that would set a timeline for enforcement of new sign ordinances of enforcing new signage ordinances in a timely manner.</p>	<p>Challenges present in both townships are the distinction between on- vs off-premise signage, and how it should be enforced. <i>Austin, Tx v. Reagan National Advertising</i> guides us in a direction to regulate this type of signage while upholding content neutrality.</p>	<p><i>International Outdoor Advertising v. The City of Troy</i> gives the city the jurisdiction to sever content-based exceptions to permit requirements, which will be of importance when rewriting sign ordinances to possibly include a severability clause.</p> <p>This case also provides some insight into the laws and regulations regarding billboard advertising, which can be applied to both Delhi and Watertown Townships.</p>	<p><i>Reed v. Town of Gilbert</i> is the case that set the precedent for many cities to update their sign ordinances to ensure content neutrality, and the basis of our project.</p> <p>When updating sign codes, it is important for us to ensure content neutrality and protect First Amendment rights.</p>



5. Relevant Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how valuable insights into effective sign regulations and legal compliance. The case studies provide valuable examples for similar municipalities in Michigan have updated their sign ordinances to align with the court cases mentioned above. Identifying comparable townships with exemplary sign ordinances or clearly documented best practices proved challenging. As a result, many of the selected case studies do not align perfectly with the desired demographic or structural characteristics of either respective township. However, these municipalities share key elements and planning considerations relevant to the revisions both townships are pursuing. While they may differ in specific demographic factors, they still provide

valuable insights into effective sign regulations and legal compliance. The case studies provide valuable examples for comparable townships with exemplary sign ordinances or clearly documented best practices proved challenging. As a result, many of the selected case studies do not align perfectly with the desired demographic or structural characteristics of either respective township. However, these municipalities share key elements and planning considerations relevant to the revisions both townships are pursuing. While they may differ in specific demographic factors, they still provide

recommendations and best practices to update sign regulations to balance business needs, aesthetics, and legal considerations. Each ordinance provides unique strategies to address concerns such as content-neutrality, illumination, zoning, and on-going compliance. Integrating elements from all examples noted can help highlight successes and challenges experienced by other municipalities, offering a variety of approaches and lessons learned.

Relevant Case Studies

Study Area	Meridian Township	DeWitt Township	Garfield Township	Orion Township
Key Takeaways	<p>The sign ordinance is formatted with location-based section headers, where sign categories are regulated primarily on content-neutral categories.</p> <p>Additionally, flexible provisions and largely lenient standards make the ordinance a seemingly pro-sign ordinance, supporting the strong retail sector.</p>	<p>Clear enforcement and compliance standards require regular maintenance of signs to ensure they remain in good condition and compliance with current regulations, helping prevent visual degradation. In addition, off-premise sign restrictions reduce clutter in non-designated areas.</p>	<p>Prioritization of aesthetic preservation, public safety, and controlled commercial signage by implementing strict size, placement, and illumination restrictions, particularly in residential and agricultural areas. Enforcement of clear nonconforming sign regulations, ensuring the removal of outdated or damaged signs to maintain visual consistency.</p>	<p>Reader-friendly with clear and well-defined details of measurements and location of signs. The ordinance is mostly focused on location and size rather than content but still has some content restrictions, like an emphasis on traffic buzzwords to prevent hazards on the road. Major emphasis on the betterment of public health, safety, and welfare.</p>
Relevance	<p>Content-neutral categories, such as on-/off-premise signs, ensures townships avoid potential legal challenges, while maintaining flexibility to promote specific needs in certain districts.</p>	<p>The emphasis on visual clarity through the restriction of off-premise signs, and clear maintenance requirements is relevant to controlling sign clutter and creating a visually cohesive environment.</p>	<p>By restricting digital billboards and ensuring signage blends with community aesthetics, the township provides a model for prioritizing the balance of business visibility with natural and built environment preservation.</p>	<p>With minimal content-based restrictions, it prevents the township from facing problematic legal challenges, while ensuring that its businesses thrive.</p>

Study Area	Meridian Township	DeWitt Township	Garfield Township	Orion Township
Application	<p>Content-neutral approach can be applied to sign ordinance updates without the risk of discriminatory regulations.</p> <p>Additionally, formatting the ordinance based on location and categories may make navigating the sign ordinance easier for patrons/businesses.</p>	<p>Off-premise restrictions have been affirmed as constitutional.</p> <p>Implementing similar provisions ensures the balance of aesthetics and public safety.</p>	<p>Strict limitations on digital billboards and illuminated signs help municipalities preserve scenic integrity while mitigating light pollution. Clear nonconforming sign regulations ensure outdated or damaged signs are systematically removed, maintaining aesthetic consistency and public safety.</p>	<p>Neutrality of content on signs can be implemented in ordinances with a low risk of regulations that may affect the community negatively.</p>

6. Best Practices

The following are best practices and guidelines for revising a sign ordinance in accordance with the Reed ruling in 2015. These best practices are sourced from a presentation by McKenna Associates, Dalton & Tomich, and the International Sign Association gave at the 2016 Michigan Municipal League Capital Conference. Reference of these best practices will be integral to the review and revision of both Delhi and Watertown Township sign ordinances. The review of both ordinances will primarily cover the legal viability of the provisions. This section will serve as a guiding document for both townships should they choose to update their ordinances further.

Purpose

A primary issue with a sign ordinance is how clear the overall purpose of the ordinance is and how appropriately the regulations within it address the purpose. For example, one purpose of the ordinance is to prevent excessive clutter, then the regulations should accurately reflect that purpose. If any regulations seem to lack clear purpose or if the restrictions are unclear or cross content-

neutrality guidelines, this may indicate an issue with the regulation that needs to be reviewed for concurrence with the purpose and intent. A review and revision of both township sign ordinances should assess whether the regulation is reasonable and if it achieves the purpose and goals of the ordinance. In addition, review of the regulations should ascertain clarity and determine if there are regulations that require revision or removal.

Definitions of Signs

To maintain compliance with the Reed ruling about content neutrality, the regulations in the sign ordinance and the definitions of signs should be based purely on the physical characteristics of the signs. Any reference to content should be carefully reviewed and checked against relevant case studies and preferably excluded from regulation. Physical characteristics may include the size, material, illumination, and/or location of the sign. Definitions of these signs should be clear and accurately reflect the purpose of the regulation.

Severability and Substitution Clauses

A severability clause is an important

inclusion in a sign ordinance. It prevents the entire ordinance from being voided in the case that a legal issue is found by the courts within part of the document. A severability clause holds that if there is a provision deemed illegal to enforce, that provision can be severed from the document and the remaining provisions remain enforceable.

A substitution clause prevents assumptions of favorability of commercial signs over noncommercial signs and prevents allegations of discrimination. The clause, required by *Metromedia, Inc. v. City of San Diego* (1981), should dictate that a noncommercial message may be legally substituted and vice versa for any



Figure 15, Delphi Glass Creativity Studio, Delhi Charter Township.

commercial sign.

Both township sign ordinances should be evaluated for the presence of these clauses. If the language is unclear or if the clauses are not present, these should be drafted and reviewed for legal viability.

Measurement Standards

Establishing the method of measuring a sign is important for general limitations, but also in the case that a sign may be abstractly shaped. Measurement standards have a direct effect on the size limits of a sign and will be the first hurdle to cross when applying for a permit. Measurement standards may be set up in various ways: some reference the length and width of the sign, regardless of shape; some are defined by the area of multiple sign faces. Additionally, it is critical to define what factors are included in sign measurements, such as wall space and height from the ground.

Prohibited and Exempt Signs

Another subject within a sign ordinance is what types of signs should be exempt from the permitting process, and which are explicitly prohibited. Exempt sign sections usually cover temporary signs, such as political signs or garage sale signs. Limiting the types of exempt signs can be one way to prevent clutter and provide more control over the amount of signage in a community. However, with these limitations, great care

must be taken so that content is not involved in the process of defining exempt and non-exempt signs. Prohibited sign sections often cover signs that are safety hazards or erected in unauthorized areas like the public right-of-way. There must be clear reasoning as to why such signs are prohibited. A sign may be deemed unsafe because of excessive flashing lights or because it blocks sightlines while driving, or a sign may cause confusion among drivers because it is too similar to traffic control signs.

Zoning District Standards and Categories

Establishing zoning district standards and sign categories will be another focus of the revision process. In the case of an ordinance like Delhi Township's, the sign code is difficult to navigate and the categories are often unclear. There does not seem to be a cohesive structure to the ordinance that would provide easy navigation to the appropriate regulation. The description of the physical limitations of certain signs are separately listed from the general provisions and exemptions in a table at the end of the document. On the other hand, Watertown Township's ordinance has more structure and provides clear imagery of elements such as their measurement standards.

Within the zoning district standards, care should be taken to limit to the number of categories into which a sign could be classified. Some sign ordinances fall into the

trap of classifying every type of sign, from industrial park ground sign to freestanding changeable message signs. Many of these smaller categories could be organized under a much broader category with general requirements. This could place the freestanding changeable sign under a broader category of commercial signs. While some subcategories may be necessary to address specific signs, each type should be evaluated to determine if they could be classified into a broader category.

Special Cases: Digital Signs, Compliance

In addition to bringing their sign ordinances into compliance with Reed, the Townships have asked us to review language



Figure 16. Abandoned Tim Horton's Sign, Delhi Charter Township.

surrounding certain types of signage. Watertown Township has concerns regarding illuminated signs, specifically digital displays. Digital signs can potentially be more distracting to drivers than a typical illuminated sign. The goal during the revision process is to address these issues without completely prohibiting digital signage. Delhi Township is concerned with the legal compliance of their sign ordinance. They have expressed that much of the code is outdated and they would like it to be updated to ensure compliance with recent and relevant case studies such as Reed v. Town of Gilbert.



Figure 17. Royal Scot Digital Sign, Watertown Charter Township.

7. Evaluation of Ordinances

As we evaluate Delhi and Watertown Townships' ordinances, it is essential to identify and address any potential legal challenges that could undermine their enforceability. The following assessments are based on the previously outlined research, with a particular focus on compliance with landmark court cases that present the greatest legal concerns. Content-based regulations, which distinguish between signs based on their content or message, can pose significant legal issues, especially in relation to *Reed v. Town of Gilbert, AZ*. Addressing these legal concerns is critical to ensuring the ordinances are revised effectively. Once these legal considerations are resolved, we can then proceed to focus on formatting and structural improvements.

7.1 Delhi Township

The Delhi Township sign ordinance currently categorizes the limited number of signs by type—defining them based on their content—each subject to varying size and length of display standards on each type of signage.

These provisions may be viewed as content-based, triggering strict scrutiny—the

highest form of judicial review requiring the ordinance to prove it is furthering a significant governmental interest—as it applies stricter regulations on different types of signage. This may be perceived as favoring one type of speech over another. While this is limited, the goal is to eliminate this as thoroughly as possible.

To mitigate the risk of legal challenges, the township may find it useful to use broader, content-neutral distinctions like on-premise vs. off-premise, temporary vs. permanent, or freestanding vs. ground signs to apply different regulations on, keeping in mind distinctions such as these have been affirmed by *Austin, Tx v. Reagan National*. This can minimize any seeming favorability between different kinds of signage, like favoring commercial over non-commercial speech or vice versa. Rather than regulating Political signs or Real Estate signs specifically, the Township may regulate all temporary signage under uniform size and length regulations, regardless of specific content/type or allow a wide range for patrons/businesses to choose which works for them. For example, similar to the Meridian Township sign ordinance, instead of singling

out Political Signs to a certain length, the ordinance may say something along the lines of “All temporary signs shall be removed thirty (30) days after completion of the event or sale...” or “All temporary signs shall not exceed 30 sq. ft....”. A range for size and display eliminates legal noncompliance, but may encourage flexibility for patrons and businesses if regulations seem too restrictive or uniform.

Figure 18 is an example of signage on Delhi’s main road. Most existing signs are already compliant and do not pose an immediate issue. Since current signage in



Figure 18. Kroger Strip Mall Pylon Sign, Delhi Charter Township

Delhi is already within the township's visual and functional standards, revising the ordinance’s language would primarily serve to clarify and modernize regulations, rather than drastically alter current signage.

7.2 Watertown Township

The Watertown Township sign ordinance primarily categorizes signs by their physical aspects with the exception of specific types listed under the exempt signs category. Under the exempt category, temporary signage contains additional restrictions that may be viewed as content-based. In addition to the legal challenges of the ordinance, there exist provisions regarding illuminated signs that are restrictive and provisions banning all animated elements of signs.

To eliminate the conflict between the ordinance and the Reed ruling, extra care should be taken to identify how the temporary sign category should communicate the necessary regulations without prioritizing certain types of signs based on their content. Additionally, The Township could consider elevating the general provision regarding animated and illuminated signs to a new sign category, to place specific regulations on the signage instead of banning their usage entirely. This will allow more control by the township of digital signage by placing specific restrictions on their physical aspects and in which Zoning Districts they could be permitted.

8. Delhi Charter Township

Ordinance Review and Comments

The sign ordinance has been annotated with the following markup language: Highlighted and colored text represent “bolded” sections in the ordinance. These are points that need review of language or additions to the document. Strikeouts in the document indicate sections that should be removed. The comments below further explain the reasoning for each mark.

Section 6.9.1 - Intent and Purpose

- ◆ Sub-section B seems to restate the information in sub-section A. Consider revision or combination.

Section 6.9.2 - Definitions

- ◆ Generally, it would be best to define sign types by physical characteristics. The following sub-sections have content-based definitions and should be struck from the document:
 - ◇ E, G, J, K, L, O, Y, CC, HH.
- ◆ Organization: Current sign definitions are for highly specific types of signs. It would be better practice to categorize these individual signs under broader categories such as on- or off-premise, ground signs, freestanding signs, wall signs, permanent, and temporary signs.
 - ◇ A definition for temporary and on- and off- premise signs should be included.
 - ◇ Temporary signs may be defined as: A sign that is installed for a limited period of time and intended to be removed within a time period as specified herein – Or – A sign that is not a permanent sign
 - ◇ On-premise signs: A sign that displays a message directing attention to a business, product, service, profession, commodity, activity, event, person, institution or other commercial message which is generally conducted, sold, manufactured, produced, offered, or occurs on the premises where the sign is located.
 - ◇ Off-premise signs: A sign that displays a message directing attention to a business, product, service, profession, commodity, activity, event, person, institution or other commercial message which is generally conducted, sold, manufactured, produced, offered, or occurs elsewhere than on the premises where the sign is located.

- ◆ Included images - there images describing how to measure signs in this section. Many are hard to read or due for update. Although they relate to the specific signs mentioned in the definitions section, the images could be moved to section 6.9.7 which outlines the measurement guidelines.

Section 6.9.3 - General Sign Provisions

- ◆ Severability Clause: Document does not contain a severability clause and should draft one similar to the following example. Inclusion of the clause maintains the legal viability of the sign ordinance. If a severability clause already exists as part of the zoning ordinance, the clause should be duplicated in the Sign Ordinance.
 - ◇ Example: “If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Sign Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Sign Ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted the Sign Ordinance in each section, subsection, sentence, or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid.”
As provided by the League of Minnesota Cities.

Business Event Signs

- ◆ Section appears to refer to the use of special signs during a specific event that requires a permit/special agreement. This section may have better use in the document outlining that agreement.

Section 6.9.5 - Prohibited Signs

- ◆ Sub-section C: Includes content-based definitions and should be struck from the document.

Section 6.9.6 - Non-conforming Signs

- ◆ Section is well done and has appropriate definitions and regulations.

Section 6.9.8 - Permits Required

- ◆ Sub-section C: All are appropriate signs for exemption. Category is simple and does not contain too many exemptions.

Section 6.9.9 Signs Permitted by Zoning District

- ◆ Length of Display in the following Sections:
 - ◇ Business Event Signs.
 - ◇ Construction Signs.
 - ◇ Contractor Sign.
 - ◇ Grand Opening Sign.
 - ◇ Special Event Signs.
 - ◇ Strikes: Whole section.
- ◆ Political Signs: Strike the entire section.

SECTION 6.9 SIGNS AND ADVERTISING STRUCTURES

SECTION 6.9.1 INTENT AND PURPOSE

- A. The intent of this Section is to regulate the location, size, construction, and manner of display of signs and outdoor advertising in order to minimize their harmful effects on the public health, safety and welfare. While this Section recognizes that signs and outdoor advertising are necessary to promote commerce and public information, failure to regulate them may lead to poor identification of individual businesses, deterioration and blight of the business and residential areas of the township, conflicts between different types of land use, and reduction in traffic safety to pedestrians and motorists.
- B. The regulations contained in this Section involve a recognition that the individual user's right to convey a message must be balanced against the public's right to be free of signs which unreasonably compete, distract drivers and pedestrians, and produce confusion. In balancing the individual user's desire to attract attention with the citizens' right to be free of unreasonable distractions, it is recognized that sign regulations provide business with equal opportunity to attract the public. However, oversized, projecting or crowded signs can lead to pedestrian and driver confusion and distraction, and endanger the public health, safety and welfare.
- C. In addition to the above purposes:
 - 1. Signs should be able to reasonably convey their message;
 - 2. Users of property should have reasonable freedom to determine the placement, construction, size, and design of signs; and
 - 3. Sign needs may vary based on zoning districts.
- D. Regulations for signs, especially those related to number, size and placement, are desirable in order to:
 - 1. Prevent or limit traffic or pedestrian accidents, injuries, deaths, and property damages resulting from obstructed vision, distraction or confusion to the public or to emergency safety personnel;
 - 2. Minimize the risk of damage and injuries from signs that are dilapidated, wind blown, electric shock hazards, etc.;
 - 3. Achieve some uniformity in the size, number and placement of signs;
 - 4. Enhance the aesthetics of the community;
 - 5. Prevent blight;
 - 6. Encourage equality among business and property, and;
 - 7. Otherwise protect the public health, safety, peace and general welfare.

6.9.2 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions pertain to signs that are either allowed or prohibited. Additional definitions related to this Section may be found in Article X.

- A. Awning: A retractable or fixed shelter constructed of non-rigid materials on a supporting framework that projects from the exterior wall of a building.
- B. Awning Sign: A sign affixed flat against the surface of an awning.
- C. Balloon sign: A sign composed of a non-porous bag of material filled with air or gas.
- D. Banner sign: A fabric, plastic, or other sign made of non-rigid material without an enclosing structural framework.
- ~~E. Billboard: A sign which relates to or advertises an establishment, product, merchandise, good, service or entertainment which is not located, sold, offered, produced, manufactured or furnished at the property on which the sign is located.~~
- F. Business Center Sign: Any three (3) or more businesses which meet at least one (1) of the following:
 - 1. Are located on a single parcel of property.
 - 2. Are connected by common walls, partitions, canopies, or other structural members to form a continuous building or group of buildings.
 - 3. Are under one (1) common ownership or management and have a common arrangement for the maintenance of the grounds.
 - 4. Share a common parking area.
 - 5. Otherwise present the appearance of a single, contiguous business area.
- ~~G. Business Event Sign: A sign that relates to or advertises a special event sponsored by a retail, business, institutional or industrial establishment.~~
- H. Canopy: A freestanding roof-like structure built on one (1) or more support posts designed to offer protection from the weather.
- I. Canopy Sign: A sign painted or attached directly to and parallel to the exterior face of a canopy roof.
- ~~J. Construction Sign: A sign that identifies the owners, financiers, contractors, architects, and/or engineers of a project under construction.~~
- ~~K. Contractor Sign: A sign that advertises a contractor performing work on site.~~
- ~~L. Development Entry Sign: A permanent sign identifying or otherwise stating the name of a subdivision, site condominium development, apartment complex, manufactured housing community, business or industrial park, or other similar development.~~

M. Directional Sign: A permanent sign that gives directions, instructions, or facility information for the use on the lot on which the sign is located, such as a parking, or exit and entrance sign.

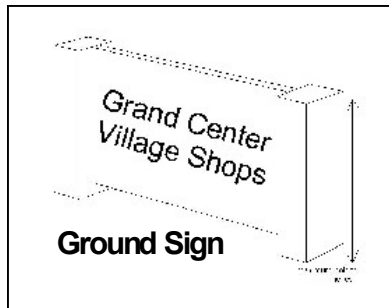
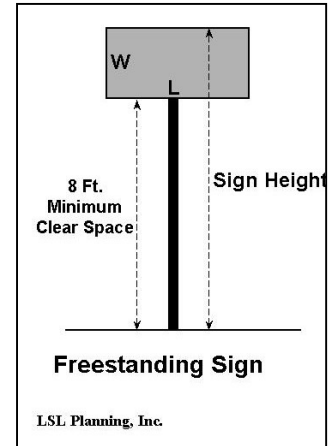
N. Electronic Changeable Message Sign: A sign capable of changing messages electronically by remote or automatic means.

→ Define on- / off-premise signs

O. Freestanding Sign: A sign supported on poles not attached to a building or wall.

P. Government Sign: A temporary or permanent sign erected by Delhi Charter Township, state or federal government or other appropriate governmental agencies.

~~Q. Grand Opening Sign: A sign intended to advertise or draw attention to a business that is new to a particular location.~~



R. Ground Sign: A sign resting directly on the ground or supported by short poles not attached to a building or wall.

S. Identification Sign: A sign located on premises, giving the name or address, or both, of the owner or occupant of a building or premises.

T. Incidental Sign: A sign that identifies street address, entrances and exits, safety precautions, identifying logos without text, and other such incidental information, and which sets forth no other advertisement intended to be read from the street.

U. Institutional Sign: A sign upon which is displayed the name of a church, school, library, community center or similar public or quasi-public institution located on the property to announce its services, events, or activities.

V. Memorial Sign: A non-illuminated sign, tablet, or plaque commemorating an historical or significant person, event, structure, or site.

W. Mural: A design or representation painted or drawn on a wall that does not advertise an establishment, product, service, or activity.

X. Placard: A sign, which provides notices of a public nature, such as "No Trespassing" or "No Hunting" signs.

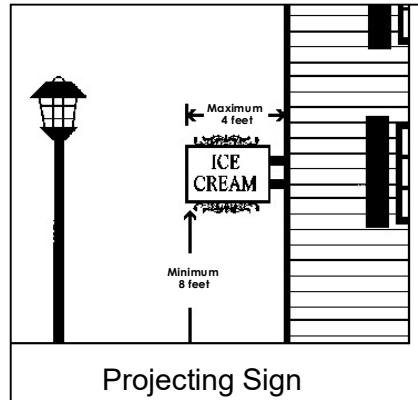
~~Y. Political Sign: A temporary sign used in connection with an official city, village, township, school district, county, state, or federal election, referendum, or public issue.~~

Z. Portable Sign: A sign designed to be moved easily and not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or a building.

AA. Projecting Sign: A double-faced sign attached to a building or wall that extends from the face of the building or wall.

BB. Reader Board: A portion of a sign on which copy is changed electronically or manually.

~~CC. Real Estate Sign: A sign advertising the real estate upon which the sign is located as being for sale, rent, or lease.~~



DD. Roof Line: The top edge of a roof or parapet wall, whichever is higher, but excluding any cupolas, chimneys, or other minor projections.

EE. Roof Sign: A sign erected above the roofline of a building.

FF. Sign: A device, structure, fixture, or placard that may use graphics, symbols, and/or written copy designed specifically for the purpose of advertising or identifying an establishment, product, service, or activity.

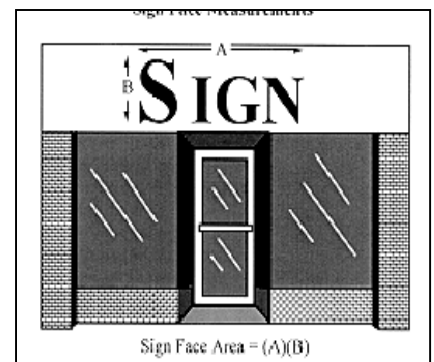
GG. Sign Frame: the structural members of a sign.

~~HH. Special Event Sign: Temporary and portable signs containing public messages concerning special events sponsored and run solely by governmental agencies or non-profit organizations.~~

II. Subdivision Signs: A temporary sign advertising a recorded residential subdivision, residential condominium or residential development.

JJ. Temporary Sign: A sign not permanently attached to the ground, a structure, or a building. Temporary signs may include banners, portable signs, and any other sign displayed for a limited period of time.

KK. Trailer Mounted Business Event Sign: A sign that is permanently affixed to a mechanism that is intended to provide mobility to the sign, typically to enable the sign to be towed by a vehicle from one location to another. This sign may or may not have wheels, legs or stabilizers.



LL. Wall Signs: A sign painted on, or attached directly to an exterior wall, parallel to and extending no greater than twelve (12) inches from the face of the wall to which it is attached.

MM. Window Sign: A sign affixed to a window and intended to be viewed from the outside.

SECTION 6.9.3 GENERAL SIGN PROVISIONS

Add: Severability Clause

- A. No person shall erect, alter, place or allow to be placed, or replace or any sign without first obtaining a building permit, except as otherwise noted in this Section. Major repairs may also require a building permit if repair work is necessary on the sign structure/frame or electrical elements.
- B. Signs, sign supports, braces, guys and anchors shall be maintained free of peeling paint or paper, fading, staining, rust, or other conditions that impairs legibility or intelligibility or any condition that may cause a hazard. Broken or damaged signs or parts of signs shall be repaired or made safe immediately after the damage occurs.
- C. Illumination
 - 1. Signs may be internally or externally illuminated, except for wall signs for home occupations *and business event signs*, which shall not be illuminated. Illumination shall be only by steady, stationary, shielded light sources using approved electrical devices directed solely at the sign, or internal to it. Use of glaring undiffused lights or bulbs shall be prohibited.
 - 2. Lights shall be directed, shaded and/or shielded downward so as not to project onto adjoining properties or streets.
 - 3. The provisions listed in 6.9.3(C) (1) & (2) shall not be construed to prohibit the use of Electronic Changeable Message Signs, provided such signs meet the criteria of Section 6.9.3(R).
 - 4. Sign illumination that could distract motorists or otherwise create a traffic hazard shall be prohibited.
 - 5. Illumination by bare bulbs or flames is prohibited.
 - 6. Underground wiring shall be required for all illuminated signs not attached to a building.
- D. No sign shall be erected, relocated or maintained so as to obstruct or prevent free access to any door, window or fire escape.
- E. No sign shall be placed in, upon or over any public right-of-way, or other public place, except as may be otherwise permitted by this Section, or placed so as to interfere with the visibility or effectiveness of any official traffic sign or signal; driver vision at any access point or intersection; or, pedestrian movement on any public sidewalk.
- F. No light pole, utility pole, or other supporting member shall be used for the placement of any sign unless specifically designed and approved for that use.
- G. No sign shall be erected in any place where it may, by reason of its position, shape, color, or other characteristic, interfere with, obstruct the view of, or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device, or constitute a nuisance per se.

- H. Vehicles, which, in the opinion of the Director of Community Development, have the intended function of acting as signs, shall only be parked in approved parking areas in accordance with the requirements of Article VII.
- I. Except as to Electronic Changeable Message Signs, no sign shall contain any moving or animated parts nor have the appearance of having any moving or animated parts. No sign shall employ any flashing, moving, oscillating, blinking, or variable intensity light. However, Electronic Changeable Message Signs may be permitted, provided that the requirements of Section 6.9.3(R) are met.

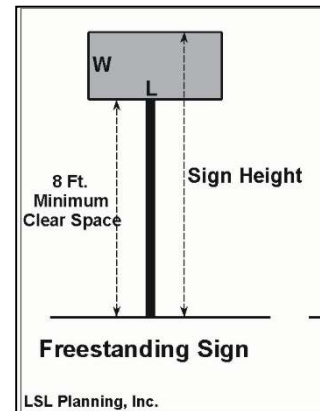
J. Wall Signs

1. No wall sign shall be erected to extend above the top of the wall to which it is attached, nor extend beyond the ends of the wall to which it is attached.
2. Signs erected on the vertical portion of a mansard roof are considered to be wall signs.
3. All wall signs shall be safely and securely attached to the building by means of metal anchors, bolts, or expansion screws. In no case shall any wall sign be secured with wire, strips of wood or nails.

- K. No sign shall be erected above the roofline of a building.

- ~~L. No obscene message, graphic or profanity, as determined by the Director of Community Development, shall be displayed on any sign.~~

- ~~M. Only temporary or permanent signs that direct attention to a business or profession conducted as an allowed use or to a principal commodity, service or entertainment sold or offered as an allowed use upon property where the sign is located are permitted, except where expressly provided otherwise in this Ordinance.~~



- N. Any sign not expressly permitted by this Section is prohibited.

O. Projecting Signs

1. Projecting signs must clear sidewalks by at least eight (8) feet and project no more than four (4) feet from the building or one-third (1/3) the width of the sidewalk, whichever is less.
2. Except for awnings or canopies, projecting signs must be pinned away from the wall at least six (6) inches.
3. Projecting signs are not permitted at the intersection of corners except at right angles to a building front. When a building faces two (2) streets, then one (1) sign per side may be allowed.
4. Projecting signs may extend to the bottom of the eaves of a building.
5. Projecting signs may not extend above the second story.

6. No projecting sign may be displayed unless the building to which it is attached is twenty (20) feet or more in width and no projecting sign may be closer than fifty (50) feet to any other projecting sign.
 7. Projecting signs must project at a ninety-degree (90⁰) angle to the building surface to which it is attached.
 8. Projecting signs shall be attached directly to a building by means of building mounts or having a mast arm. These support members may also include decorative appurtenances, but external bracing such as guy wires and metal framework shall be prohibited.
- P. Canopy signs shall be mounted flat against the canopy face used to calculate allowable area.
- Q. Electronic Changeable Message Signs and Reader Boards shall conform to the following provisions:
1. All ground, wall and freestanding signs may include an Electronic Changeable Message Sign or Reader Board.
 - ~~2. Except for governmental signs, the message which appears on the sign shall advertise only the activity conducted on the property where the sign is located.~~
 3. For Electronic Changeable Message Signs, the message shall change at a time interval that permits a person to view the entire message during the time available to do so compatible with safe motor vehicle operation.
 4. All Electronic Changeable Message Signs shall be equipped with a dimmer to reduce the amount of light emitted. Signs shall be dimmed from dusk to dawn.
 5. No graphics shall be displayed on the sign that replicate or are similar to the lights used by emergency vehicles, traffic control signals or any other words or graphics that in the sole discretion of the Director of Community Development create a potential hazard to drivers, pedestrians or others.
 6. Size, height and location provisions shall be according to the provisions of Section 6.9.9 for the sign type and zoning district.

All ground, wall and freestanding signs may include reader boards.

Business Event Signs

1. Business event signs shall be obtained by a business from a sign company who has entered into a Business Event Sign Agreement with the Township. A list of sign companies who meet this requirement shall be available from the Community Development Department staff upon request.
2. Sign companies who desire to provide business event signs within Delhi Charter Township shall execute a Business Event Sign Agreement with the Township. The Agreement shall include at least the following provisions:
 - a. The type, dimensions and other specifications of the signs that the sign company proposes to provide and an approval of these specific signs by the Township.
 - b. Acceptance by the sign company of the responsibility for timely removal of the sign and ensuring that the sign is in compliance with all applicable sections of this Ordinance and that any enforcement actions pertaining to the business event sign will be taken by the Township against the provider of the sign.
 - c. Acceptance by the sign company that more than five violations of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to the businesses event signs shall result in the termination of the Business Event Sign Agreement between the sign company and the Township for a period of at least one (1) year and as many as five (5) years, as determined by the Director Community Development. This determination shall be based on the following set of criteria:
 - i. The number of violations during the Business Event Sign Agreement period:
 1. Five (5) violations may result in a suspension of at least one year.
 2. Six (6) violations may result in a suspension of at least two years.
 3. Seven (7) violations may result in a suspension of at least three years.
 4. Eight (8) violations may result in a suspension of at least four years.
 5. More than eight (8) violations may result in a suspension of five years.
 - ii. The extent of the violations in terms of the number of days that the sign company permitted the violation to exist after having been notified by the Community Development Director, or their designee, of the violation.
 1. That the sign company understands that the Township shall not be limited as to the number of Business Event Sign Agreements that it can enter into and that the Business Event Sign Agreement shall in no way be seen as a mechanism for limiting the number of companies that are able to provide the business event signs within the Township.
 2. The Agreement shall outline the responsibilities of the Township pertaining to the process for obtaining building permits for the placement of the business event signs.

3. In general, a business event sign shall be setback a minimum of ten (10) feet from any property line. However, in circumstances where this setback would effectively eliminate the ability of the business to reasonably display a business event sign, the Community Development Director may permit reductions in the setback requirement to the extent necessary to enable the effective use of the business event sign, provided that no other section of this Ordinance is negatively affected.
4. In general, a business event signs shall not be permitted to be placed within a parking area. However, in circumstances where this requirement, taken together with Section 6.9.3 (S) (3) above, would effectively eliminate the ability of the business to reasonably display a business event sign, the Community Development Director may permit the use of no more than one parking space within the parking area for the display of a business event sign, provided that no other section of this Ordinance is negatively affected.
5. All business event signs must be no closer than twenty (20) feet to any adjacent business event sign on the same property. The Community Development Director may permit a reduction in this spacing if the requirement can not be complied with without impeding safety or circulation on a property or if the property is configured in such a way as to unreasonably limit the ability to comply with the spacing requirement. The Community Development Director will not reduce the spacing requirement if the sole purpose is to permit more signs in an area that would ordinarily fit taking the spacing requirement into account. The business event sign that received a permit first shall set the precedent for the calculation of the spacing requirement for subsequent signs and shall not be required to relocate.

One business event sign per business is permitted. Business event signs may be displayed for no more than fifteen (15) days every three months. The calculation of the three month time period shall begin on the day after the last day of the preceding permit period for a specific business and end ninety-one (91) days later.

SECTION 6.9.4 EXEMPTED SIGNS

The following signs shall be exempt from the provisions of the Delhi Charter Township Zoning Ordinance.

- A. Flags or insignia of any nation, state, county, community organization, or educational institution (if not more than three (3) such flags are located on the same property), provided that the flags are displayed on a flag pole which does not exceed thirty-five feet in height and is permanently anchored to the ground or a permanent structure.
- B. Government signs.
- C. Historical markers.
- D. Memorial signs, memorial flags or tablets.

E. Murals.

Add: Political signs

F. Placards.

G. Signs for essential services.

H. Signs not visible from any street or adjacent property.

I. Signs on a residence with address, owner, or occupant name of up to two (2) square feet in area attached to a mailbox, light fixture or exterior wall.

J. Window signs not visible from the street or adjacent property.

K. Signs for garage, yard, basement, and estate sales, or other similar activities in Residential Districts, provided that any such signs shall not be placed in such a manner as to interfere with the visibility or effectiveness of any official traffic sign or signal; driver vision at any access point or intersection; or, pedestrian movement on any public sidewalk.

SECTION 6.9.5 PROHIBITED SIGNS

The following signs and devices shall be prohibited.

A. Roof signs.

B. Signs that displays a message on road furniture, such as benches, pedestrian lights, and decorative trash receptacles.

~~C. Banner signs (unless part of and counted toward the area and number of allowed permanent signs), flags (except as otherwise permitted by Section 6.9.4), strings of lights and other similar decorations, unless part of a holiday decoration not associated with any commercial use. Holiday decorations may be displayed for a period not to exceed sixty 60 days.~~

D. Balloon signs.

E. Spotlights, searchlights, blinking lights, flashing lights and other similar lighting.

F. Portable and/or temporary signs not otherwise permitted by Section 6.9.

G. Pennants, spinner, streamers and other similar devices.

H. Any sign not expressly permitted by Section 6.9.

SECTION 6.9.6 NON-CONFORMING SIGNS, ILLEGAL SIGNS, AND SIGNS ACCESSORY TO NON-CONFORMING USES

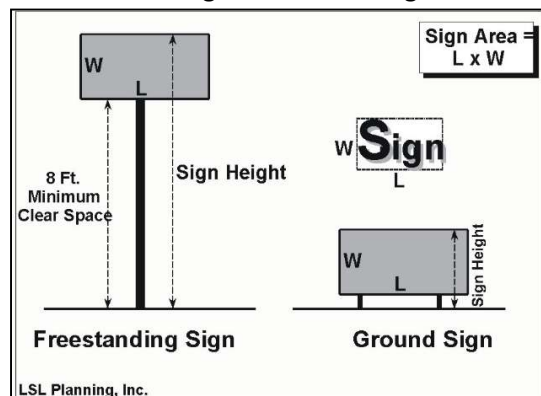
- A. Every permanent sign that does not conform to the height, size, area, or location requirements of this Section as of the date of the adoption of this Ordinance, is hereby deemed to be non-conforming.
- B. Except as noted in C, below, non-conforming signs may not be altered, expanded, enlarged, or extended; however, non-conforming signs may be maintained and repaired so as to continue the useful life of the sign.
- C. A non-conforming sign may be altered without change to its nonconforming status, provided that the sign replacing the original non-conforming sign results in a sign with a size, setback or dimension that is at least thirty percent (30%) less than the original amount of nonconformity of the sign when it became non-conforming.
- D. The copy of the sign may be amended or changed without jeopardizing the privilege of non-conforming sign as long as no part of the frame or other supporting structure is altered or replaced.
- E. Any non-conforming sign destroyed by fire or other casualty loss shall not be restored or rebuilt if reconstruction will constitute more than fifty percent (50%) of the value of the sign on the date of loss.
- F. Any sign, including non-conforming signs, which for a period of six (6) months or more no longer advertises a bona fide business conducted or product sold shall be removed by the owner of the building, structure, or property upon which the sign is located.

SECTION 6.9.7 SIGN UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

A. Area:

The area of a sign shall be expressed in square feet within a single continuous perimeter of straight lines enclosing the extreme limits of a single advertising message of writing, representations, emblems or figures of a similar character, together with all material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the background against which it is placed.

- 1. If a sign has only one (1) exterior face, the surface display area of that face shall not exceed the specified maximum. If a sign has two (2) exterior faces, the surface display area of each face shall not exceed the specified maximum. If a sign has more than two (2) exterior faces, the sum of the surface area of all the faces shall not exceed twice the specified maximum.



2. The supports, uprights or structure, including decorative elements, such as pillars, brick supports, and other similar structures on which any sign is supported shall not be included in determining the surface display area unless such supports, uprights, structure or decorative elements are designed in such a manner as to form an integral background of the display.
3. The areas of lamps, neon tubing or artificial illumination on walls of any structure shall be counted as part of the total allowable sign area.
4. Only the vertical, flat spaces of a canopy structure (excluding supports) shall be used to calculate total sign area permitted for canopy signs.

B. Height:

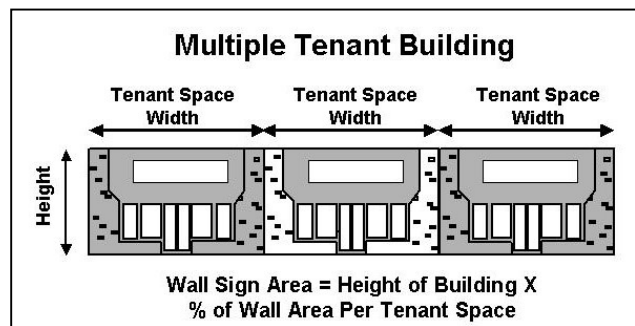
1. The height of a sign shall be measured as the vertical distance from the highest point of the sign to the grade of the adjacent street or the average grade of the ground immediately beneath the sign, whichever is lower.
2. Berms or other supporting measures used to increase the height of the sign shall be included in the computation of sign height.

C. Grades:

1. For purposes of this Section, average grade shall mean the ground elevation established for the purpose of regulating the height of the sign.
2. The average grade shall be the level of the ground adjacent to the base of the sign if the finished grade is level or the grade of the adjacent street, whichever is lower. If the ground is not entirely level, the average grade shall be determined by averaging the elevation of the ground within ten (10) feet of the base of the sign.

D. Multiple Tenant Buildings:

1. For buildings with multiple tenants requiring individual signs, the sign areas for wall signs, projecting signs, and awning signs shall be determined by taking that portion of the front wall of the building, applicable to each tenant space, and computing sign requirements for that portion of the total wall.
2. In the case of a corner lot, the wall area adjacent to the tenant space on the second street frontage shall be used to calculate the sign area for a second wall sign, awning sign, or projecting sign.
3. Each sign shall be attached to the same wall used to determine its size.



SECTION 6.9.8 PERMITS REQUIRED

- A. It shall be unlawful to display, erect, relocate, or alter any sign without obtaining a sign permit. The Department of Community Development shall issue a permit only if the proposed sign meets all requirements of the Ordinance.
- B. All signs shall be designed to comply with minimum wind pressure and other requirements set forth in the adopted Building Code. Signs with electrical connections shall comply with Electrical Code requirements, including the application, inspection, and approval of an electrical permit.
- C. The following signs shall not require a sign permit:
 - 1. Directional signs.
 - 2. Placards.
 - 3. Government signs.
 - 4. Political signs.
 - 5. Special event signs.
 - 6. Window signs.
- D. It shall be unlawful to change, modify, alter, or otherwise deviate from the terms or conditions of a sign permit issued by the Township without prior approval of the Department of Community Development. A written record of this approval shall be entered upon the original permit application and maintained in the files of the Township.
- E. The owner or tenant of the property on which the sign is to be located, or his authorized agent, or a sign contractor shall make application for a sign permit. Applications shall be made in writing on forms furnished by the Township and shall be signed by the applicant. The application shall be accompanied by the following plans and other information:
 - 1. The name, address, and telephone number of the owner or persons entitled to possession of the sign and of the sign contractor or erector.
 - 2. The location by street address of the proposed sign structure.
 - 3. A site plan, elevation drawings and caption of the proposed sign.
 - 4. Plans indicating the scope and structural detail of the work to be done, including details of all connections, guy lines, supports and footings and materials.
 - 5. Application for and required information for the application, an electrical permit for all signs requiring an electrical connection.
 - 6. A statement of valuation.

SECTION 6.9.9 SIGNS PERMITTED BY ZONING DISTRICT

A. Signs Permitted in All Districts		
Business Event Signs		
Number	1 sign (not permitted in residential zoning districts) per business.	
Length of Display	A Business Event sign shall not be displayed for longer than 15 calendar days per event and no more often than once every three months as outlined in Section 6.9.3(S)(6).	
Size	Trailer Mounted Business Event Sign <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Size of trailer and sign frame shall not exceed 7’ tall and 8 1/2’ wide.b. Two display faces only.c. Each display face is limited to 35 square feet Other Business Event Signs <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Maximum height of sign, including frame, shall be 4’ tall measured from the ground to the top of the sign.b. Display area, including the frame, shall not exceed 24 square feet on one display face or 12 square feet per side if there are two display faces. Two display faces only.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line; see Section 6.9.3 (s)(3) for additional information.	
Construction Signs		
Number	1 per frontage on site	Signs shall not be erected until a building permit has been issued
		Signs shall be removed immediately after 12 months or upon the issuance of any Occupancy Permit or completion of work, whichever occurs first, for the building, structure, or project that is the subject of the construction sign.
Size	Maximum of 32 square feet.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line and 5 ft. from any sidewalk	
Height	8 ft.	
Contractor Sign		
Number	1 per site (1 per frontage on corner lots) – per contractor	
Length of Display	The sign shall not be displayed until work commences and shall be removed within seven (7) calendar days of the completion of the work	
Size	6 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line	
Height	3 ft.	
Directional Signs		
Number	2 per driveway	

Size	3 sq. ft.	Up to fifty percent (50%) of the area of a directional sign may contain a logo of an on-premise establishment, but no advertising copy, and shall otherwise be limited to traffic control functions only.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from street right-of-way	
Height	3 ft.	
Grand Opening Sign		
Number	One sign per event (prohibited for home occupations)	Temporary grand opening signs may be permitted for a period not to exceed 15 calendar days. Wind blown devices such as pennants, flags, spinners, and streamers are also permitted. Must be requested in writing.
Size	No larger than 35 sq. ft. in surface display area per side	
Location	Grand opening signs must be located on the same premises as the business. A minimum of 10 ft. from the property line and a minimum of 5 ft. from any sidewalk.	
Placard		
Number	Minimum separation of 200 feet on site	
Size	Two (2) square feet	
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line	
Political Signs		
Number	1 per candidate or issue	A corner lot is permitted 1 sign per candidate or issue placed on each street frontage
Size	8 sq. ft.	
Location	5 ft. from any property line	Political signs shall be removed within ten (10) days after the official election or referendum to which the sign pertains.
Height	4 ft.	
Real Estate Signs		
Number	1 per lot located on the lot which is the subject of the sign	Real estate signs shall be removed within five (5) days after completion of the sale or lease of the property. A corner lot or through lot is permitted 1 sign placed on each street frontage
A. Size	Residential and multi-family land uses in all districts	9 sq. ft.
	Non-residential land uses in all districts	16 sq. ft.
Location	A minimum of 5 ft. from any property line and/or road right-of-way line.	
Height	8 ft.	
Special Event Signs		

Number	5 per event	The display of the signs shall be limited to the twenty-one (21) days immediately preceding the event and be removed within forty-eight (48) hours of the conclusion of the event that is being advertised.
Size	Ground sign shall not exceed 35 sq. ft. and banners erected over the road shall not exceed 75 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line.	
Height	5 ft.	

B. A-1, PP, R-1A thru R-1E, RM, R-M1 & RM-2 Districts		
Agricultural Signs (Agriculturally Zoned Properties Only)		
Number	1 per site	
Size	A maximum of 32 sq. ft. The dimension of all signs for special uses in the A-1 district shall not exceed the sign limitation in the C-2 zoning district.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	5 ft.	
Development entry signs for residential subdivisions, site condominiums, manufactured home communities, multiple family complexes, other permitted non-residential uses (except institutional signs)		
Number	B. 1 per major entrance	
C. Size	32 sq. ft.	
D. Location	E. A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	5 ft.	
Institutional Signs		
Number	1 per site	
Size	32 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	5 ft.	
Subdivision Signs		
Number	1 per entrance (on site)	A building permit is required and authorizes use for 4 years or until 90% of lots are sold which ever occurs first.
Size	A maximum of 50 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	Not exceeding 20 ft above ground level	
Wall Signs (Home Occupations) (See also Section 6.9.3, K)		

Number	1 per main building
Size	4 sq. ft.
Location	On wall facing street
Height	N/A
Wall Signs (Other Uses) (See also Section 6.9.3, K)	
Number	1 per main building (except as permitted in Section 6.9.7, D)
Size	10% of the wall area to which it is attached but not exceeding 2 sq. ft. of sign area per each lineal foot of building wall length
Location	On wall facing street
Height	N/A

C. C-1, TC Districts		
Canopy Signs		
Number	1 per main building (except as permitted in Section 6.9.7, D)	
Size	20% of the canopy area to which it is attached	
Location	On canopy sign facing street	
Height	Signs shall not extend above or below the surface of the canopy to which they are attached.	
Ground Signs		
Number	1 per lot	1 sign is permitted for each frontage on a corner lot property, provided that the signs are separated by at least 300 ft., as measured along the front property lines.
		No more than 2 signs are permitted for lots with multiple frontages
F. Size	C-1 District	32 sq. ft.
	TC District	25 sq. ft.
Location	Minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	4 ft.	If set back more than 20 ft. from the street right-of-way line, height may increase to up to 8 ft.
Projecting Signs (if no wall sign is present) (See also Section 6.9.3, P)		
Number	1 per main building	
Size	10% of the wall area to which it is attached, not to exceed 20 sq. ft.	
Location	Extending from wall facing street & Section 6.9.3, P.	
Height	See Section 6.9.3, P	
Wall or Awning Signs (if no projecting sign is present) (See also Section 6.9.3, K)		
Number	1 per main building (except as permitted in Section 6.9.7, D)	
Size	10% of the wall area to which it is attached but not exceeding 25 square feet	

Location	On wall facing street and off-street parking area designated for that building
Height	N/A
Reader Boards	
Number	1 per site
Size	20 square feet as part of a permitted Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign
Electronic Changeable Message Signs	
Number	1 per site
Size	May be all or part of any Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign and is subject to the total size requirements for that type of sign within the zoning district.
Hours	Hours of business operation. Light intensity shall be dimmed between dusk and dawn if the sign is in operation during those times.

D. C-2, C-3 Districts		
Business Center Signs (unless a freestanding sign or ground sign is located on the same property)		
Number	1 per lot	1 sign is permitted for each frontage on a corner lot property, provided that the signs are separated by at least 300 ft., as measured along the front property lines. No more than 2 signs are permitted for lots with multiple frontages.
Size	Business center GFA up to 25,000 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft.
	Business center GFA more than 25,000 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft. <u>plus</u> 2 sq. ft. for each full 1,000 sq. ft. of GFA above 25,000 sq. ft., not to exceed 150 sq. ft.
	Business center GFA more than 50,000 sq. ft.	100 sq. ft. <u>plus</u> 50 sq. ft. for each full 25,000 sq. ft. of GFA above 50,000 sq. ft., not to exceed 300 sq. ft.
Location	Minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	If a clear space of 8 ft. or greater is not maintained between the bottom of the sign and the ground, the setback shall be increased to 20 ft.
Height	24 ft.	
Canopy Signs		
Number	1 per main building	
Size	20% of the canopy area to which it is attached	
Location	On canopy side facing street	
Height	Signs shall not extend above or below the surface of the canopy to which they are attached.	

Freestanding Signs (unless a business center sign or ground sign is located on the same property)		
Number	1 per lot	1 sign is permitted for each frontage on a corner lot property, provided that the signs are separated by at least 300 ft., as measured along the front property lines.
		No more than 1 sign per frontage is permitted for lots with multiple frontages.
		The second sign shall not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the area allowed for the first sign.
Size	66 ft. or less street frontage	32 sq. ft.
	More than 66 ft. street frontage	32 sq. ft. plus 1 sq. ft. for each lineal foot of street frontage in excess of 66 ft., not to exceed 100 sq. ft.
Location	Minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	If a clear space of 8 ft. or greater is not maintained between the bottom of the sign and the ground, the setback shall be increased to 20 ft.
Height	18 feet (Except Business Center Sign over 100 Square feet – 24 ft High)	
Ground Signs (unless a business center sign or freestanding sign is located on the same property)		
Number	1 per lot	1 sign is permitted for each frontage on a corner lot property, provided that the signs are separated by at least 300 ft., as measured along the front property lines. No more than 1 sign is permitted per frontage for lots with multiple frontages.
Size	G. Same as freestanding sign	
Location	Minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	
Height	4 ft.	If set back more than 20 ft. from the street right-of-way line, height may increase to up to 8 ft.
Projecting Signs (if no wall sign is present) (See also Section 6.9.3, P)		
Number	1 per main building	
Size	10% of the wall area to which it is attached but not exceeding 32 square feet	
Location	On wall facing street	
Height	N/A	
Reader Boards		
Number	1 per site	
Size	20 square feet as part of a permitted Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign	
Wall or Awning Signs (if no projecting sign is present) (See also Section 6.9.3, K)		
Number	1 per main building (except as permitted in Section 6.9.7, D)	
Size	10% of the wall area to which it is attached but not exceeding 32 square feet	

Location	On wall facing street and off-street parking area designated for that building
Height	N/A
Electronic Changeable Message Signs	
Number	1 per site
Size	May be all or part of any Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign and is subject to the total size requirements for that type of sign within the zoning district.
Hours	Hours of business operation. Light intensity shall be dimmed between dusk and dawn if the sign is in operation during those times.

E. IW, IR, IA, IM, IP Districts		
Ground Sign or Free-Standing Sign		
Number	1 per site	
Size	100 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 10 ft. from any property line	If setback is increased to 20 ft., ground sign may be increased to 8 ft.’ and free-standing signs may have less than 8 ft. of clear space
Height	4 feet for ground signs and 24 ft. for free-standing signs with 8 ft. of free space	
Wall Signs (See also Section 6.9.3, K)		
Number	1 per main building (except as permitted in Section 6.9.7, D)	
Size	20% of the wall area to which it is attached but not exceeding 2 sq. ft. per each lineal foot of building wall length, but in no case exceeding 100 sq. ft.	
Location	On wall facing street	
Height	N/A	
Industrial Park Development Sign		
Number	1 per entrance	
Size	50 sq. ft.	
Location	A minimum of 20 feet from any property line	
Height	8 ft.	
Reader Boards		
Number	1 per site	
Size	20 square feet as part of a permitted Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign	
Electronic Changeable Message Signs		
Number	1 per site	
Size	May be all or part of any Freestanding, Ground or Wall Sign and is subject to the total size requirements for that type of sign within the zoning district.	
Hours	Hours of business operation. Light intensity shall be dimmed between dusk and dawn if the sign is in operation during those times.	

F. PUD & PD Districts

Signs in the PUD District shall adhere to the requirements of the District in which the use to which the sign is referring would first be permitted either as a Use Permitted by Right, Use Permitted Under Special Conditions, or A Use Permitted by Special Use Permit.

SECTION 6.9.10 SIGN VARIANCES

- A. The provisions of Article IV, Sections 4.2 and 4.4.3, 3) Rules, apply to requests for sign variances.
- B. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not consider any request that would authorize any sign, sign structure, or other sign-related activity other than those permitted by this Ordinance;
- C. The Zoning Board of Appeals shall not grant a variance related to any sign allowed by this Section unless it makes findings based upon evidence presented to it that all of the following standards are satisfied or found not to be applicable:
 - 1. The particular physical surrounding shape, topographical, or location conditions of the specific property or structure involved results in an inability to comply with the Ordinance if the strict application of this Section was carried out, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience;
 - 2. That any increased costs associated with maintaining compliance with the Ordinance are not considered as a basis for granting a variance;
 - 3. The need for the variance has not been created by any person having an interest in the sign, sign structure, or property;
 - 4. Construction of a permitted sign would require removal or severe alteration to natural features on the parcel, such as but not limited to: removal of trees, alteration of the natural topography, or obstruction of a natural drainage course.
- D. In addition to the required standards of C, above, the Zoning Board of Appeals may consider any of the following and make findings based upon evidence presented to it when reviewing a sign variance:
 - 1. The conditions upon which the petition for a variance is based would not be applicable, generally, to any other property, or structure in the same general area;
 - 2. The variance is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the land, building, or structure for sign purposes;
 - 3. The granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property or improvements in the area which the sign is located or otherwise endanger the public safety, or substantially diminish or impair property values within the area.
 - 4. The permitted signs could not be easily seen by those for whom it is intended due to the configuration of existing buildings, trees, or other obstructions.
 - 5. A sign that exceeds the allowable height or area requirements of the Ordinance would be more appropriate in scale because of the unusually large size or frontage of the premises or building.

9. Watertown Charter Township

Ordinance Review and Comments

The sign ordinance has been annotated with the following markup language: Highlighted and colored text represent “bolded” sections in the ordinance. These are points that need review of language or additions to the document. Strikeouts in the document indicate sections that should be removed. The comments below further explain the reasoning for each mark.

Section 28-5.21 - Signs

- ◆ 2. General Sign Provisions
 - ◇ Sub-section D: Removal of restriction regarding illuminated signs. Opportunity to add a section on illumination standards regarding the time signs can be illuminated if the wish is to keep this language - OR - Eliminate the language that allows for illumination.
 - ◇ Sub-section I: Removal of restriction regarding moving and animated sign parts. Similar to above, can regulate the time frame that these types of signs are allowed to be on or regulate the district they can be displayed in. However, we recommend removing the allowance of these types of signs based on the wishes regarding protections based on light pollution.
 - ◇ Severability Clause: Document does not contain a severability clause and should draft one similar to the following example. Inclusion of the clause maintains the legal viability of the sign ordinance. If a severability clause already exists as part of the zoning ordinance, the clause should be duplicated in the Sign Ordinance.
 - Example: “If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this Sign Ordinance is for any reason held to be invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Sign Ordinance. The City Council hereby declares that it would have adopted the Sign Ordinance in each section, subsection, sentence, or phrase thereof, irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases be declared invalid.”
As provided by the League of Minnesota Cities.
- ◆ 3. Exempted Signs
 - ◇ Sub-section E: Include definition of what an ‘essential service’ is considered.
 - ◇ Sub-section J: Section I & II: Strike or rephrase as temporary yard signs in its own section, not under exempted signs. Based upon *Adams Outdoor Advertising v. City of East Lansing (2000)*.

- ◆ 4. Nonconforming Signs
 - ◇ Insert section outlining the timeline for which nonconforming signs are required to come into compliance.
- ◆ 5. Units of Measurement
 - ◇ Good section.
- ◆ 6. Sign regulations for all zoning districts
 - ◇ Sub-section E: Can be seen as regulations based upon content - Strike. Opportunity to regulate timing of signs with a section addition to permitted signs 28-5.21.7 adding a column defined as timing.
 - ◇ Subsection F: Strike - Opportunity to add a section based on temporary signs and regulate construction signs within it.
 - ◇ Subsection G: See above - define as temporary signs.

Section 28-5.21.7 - Permitted Signs

- ◆ Political Signs: Strike the entire section.
- ◆ Real Estate Signs: Strike the entire section.
 - ◇ Define as temporary signage - list use as political and real estate.

28-5.19 JUNK & JUNK MOTOR VEHICLES

No person shall store, place, abandon, or allow to be stored, placed, abandoned, or allowed to remain, on property in his ownership or control, material defined as junk, or junk motor vehicles, except as otherwise permitted in this chapter or, in the case of junk motor vehicles, when stored within a fully enclosed building.

28-5.20 EARTH CHANGES

The final grade surface of ground areas remaining after the construction of a building or structure, and any earth changes made in connection with use of the land, shall be designed to avoid any adverse effect on the neighboring properties or public storm drainage systems.

28-5.21 SIGNS

1. Intent. This Section is intended to protect and further the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the township; to maintain and improve the appearance of the township; to conserve community character; to prevent traffic hazards; to provide safer conditions for pedestrians; and to promote economic development by regulating the construction, alteration, repair, maintenance, size, location, and number of signs.
2. General sign provisions.
 - A. No person shall erect, alter, place or permit to be placed, or replace any sign without first obtaining a building permit. The following signs shall not require a building permit:
 - i. Directional signs of six square feet or less in area.
 - ii. Government signs.
 - iii. Placards.
 - iv. Temporary signs of four square feet or less in area.
 - v. Window signs.
 - vi. Political signs.
 - B. Signs shall be maintained free of peeling paint or paper, fading, staining, rust, or other condition which impairs legibility or intelligibility.
 - C. Sign supports, braces, guys and anchors shall be maintained in such a manner as not to cause a hazard.

Add: Severability Clause

- D. ~~Signs may be internally illuminated or externally illuminated, except for home occupation signs which shall not be illuminated. However, all lighting shall comply with the intent and general standards of Section 28-5.18.~~
- E. No sign shall be placed in, upon or over any public right-of-way, alley, or other public place, except as may be otherwise permitted by this Section.
- F. No light pole, utility pole, or other supporting member shall be used for the placement of any sign unless specifically designed and approved for such use.
- G. No sign shall be erected in any place where it may, by reason of its position, shape, color, or other characteristic, interfere with, obstruct the view of, or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device, or constitute a nuisance per se.
- H. No commercial vehicle, which in the opinion of the zoning administrator has the intended function of acting as a sign, shall be parked in any area abutting the street, unless no other parking area is available.
- I. ~~No sign shall contain any moving or animated parts or have the appearance of having any moving or animated parts.~~
- J. No wall sign shall extend beyond the edge of the wall to which it is affixed, and no wall sign shall extend above the roof line of a building.
- K. No sign shall be erected above the roof line of a building, or on the roof of a building.
- L. No existing billboard or any off premises sign shall permit the advertising or other display of tobacco or alcohol products within 1,500 feet of any residential district or use, or any lot containing a church or school. The purpose of this provision is to promote the welfare and temperance of minors exposed to advertisements for alcoholic liquor by banning such advertisements in particular areas where children may be reasonably expected to walk to school, attend religious services, or play in their neighborhood.
- M. Except as otherwise permitted by this chapter, no off-premises sign shall be permitted.
3. Exempted signs. The following signs shall be exempt from the provisions of the township zoning ordinance, except for the provisions of **Section 28-5.21.7:**

- A. Government signs.
 - B. Historical markers.
 - C. Memorial signs or tablets.
 - D. Signs not visible from any street.
 - E. Signs for essential services.
 - F. Placards not exceeding two square feet.
 - G. Signs with address, owner, or occupant name, of up to one square foot in area attached to a mailbox, light fixture or exterior wall.
 - H. Flags or insignia of any nation, state, county, township, community organization, or educational institution.
 - I. Scoreboards for public or private schools or publicly owned and operated athletic fields.
 - J. The following temporary signs:
 - i. ~~Open house, garage sale, yard sale, auction/estate sale and similar signs posted on the day(s) of the event.~~
 - ii. ~~Political signs, except that such signs shall be removed within five days of the election to which the signs refer.~~
4. Nonconforming signs, destroyed signs; signs accessory to nonconforming uses.
- A. Every permanent sign which does not conform to the height, size, area, number, or location requirements of this Section as of the date of the adoption of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived, is hereby deemed to be nonconforming.
 - B. Nonconforming signs may not be altered, expanded, enlarged, or extended; however, nonconforming signs may be maintained and repaired so as to continue the useful life of the sign.
 - C. If a sign is nonconforming in its setback, this Section shall not apply, and the sign may not be replaced.
 - D. For purposes of this Section, a nonconforming sign may be diminished in size or dimension or the copy of the sign amended or changed without jeopardizing the privilege of nonconforming use.
 - E. Any nonconforming sign destroyed by fire or other casualty loss shall not be restored or rebuilt if reconstruction will constitute more than 50 percent of the value of the sign on the date of loss.
 - F. Any sign which for a period of one year or more no longer advertises a bona fide

business conducted or product sold, shall be removed by the owner of the building, structure, or property upon which such sign is located, within 30 days of receipt of written notice by the zoning administrator.

- G. A sign, accessory to a nonconforming use, may be erected in the township in accordance with the sign regulations for the subject zoning district.

5. Units of measurement.

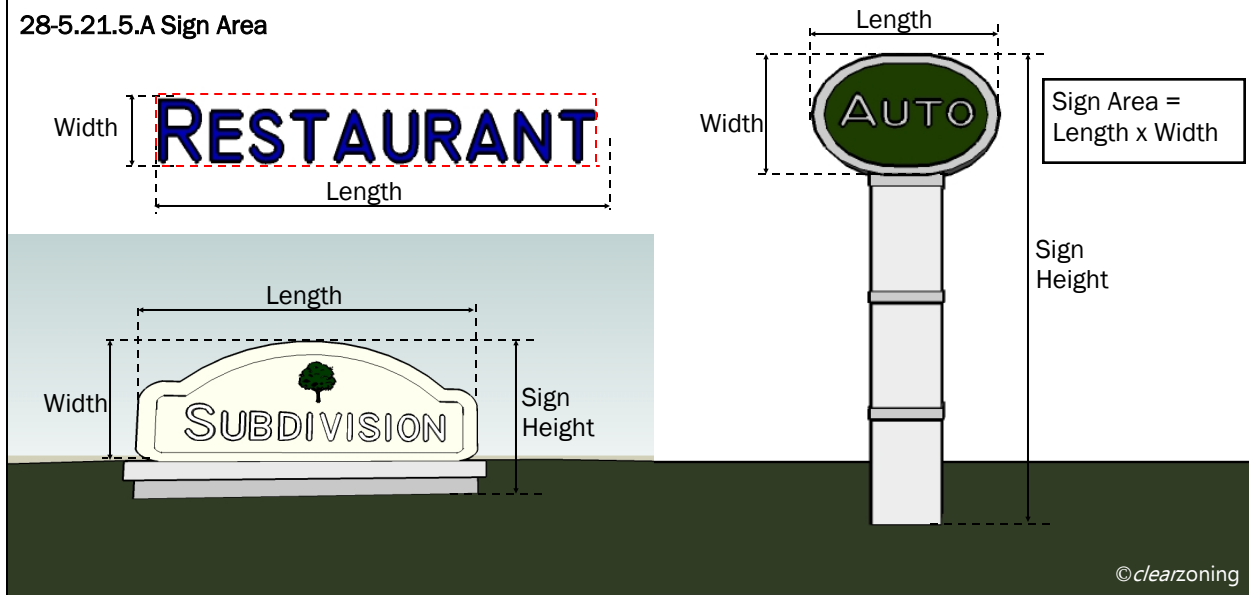
- A. The area of a sign shall be measured as the area within a single, continuous perimeter composed of any straight line geometric figure which encloses the extreme limits of writing, representation, emblem, logo, or any other figure of similar character, together with any frame or other material or color forming an integral part of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the background against which it is placed, excluding only the structure necessary to support the sign.

Insert section on timing compliance for non-conforming signs

Rephrase: Temporary yard signs

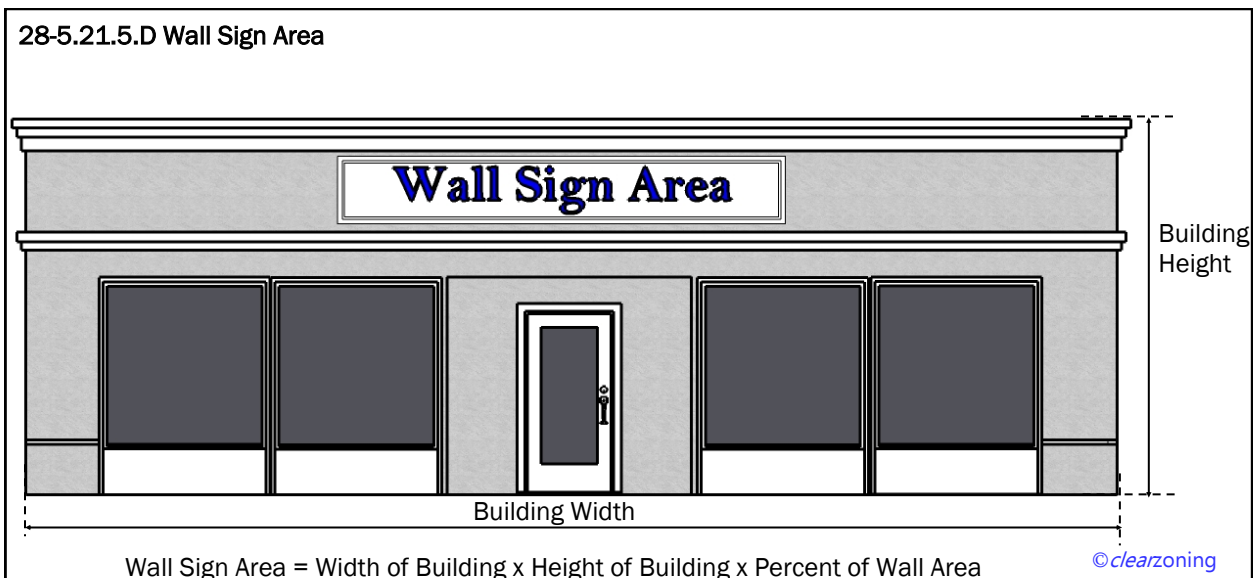


28-5.21.5.A Sign Area



- B. The area of a freestanding, ground, or projecting sign that has two or more faces shall be measured by including the area of all sign faces, except if two such faces are placed back-to-back and are of equal size, the area of the two back-to-back faces shall be counted as one face. If the two back-to-back faces are of unequal size, the larger of the two sign faces shall be counted as the one face.
- C. The height of a sign shall be measured as the vertical distance from the highest point of the sign to the grade of the adjacent street or the average grade of the ground immediately beneath the sign, whichever is less.
- D. For buildings with multiple tenants, the sign areas for wall signs, projecting signs, and awning signs shall be determined by taking that portion of the front wall of the building, applicable to each tenant space, and computing sign requirements for that portion of the total wall. In the case of a corner lot, the wall area adjacent to the tenant space on the second street frontage shall be used to calculate the sign area for a second wall sign, awning sign, or projecting sign. Each sign shall be attached to the same wall which is used to determine its size. ✍

28-5.21.5.D Wall Sign Area



6. Sign regulations applicable to all zoning districts.

- A. Billboards, portable signs and temporary signs are prohibited, except as otherwise permitted by this Section.
- B. All ground, wall, projecting, and freestanding signs may include reader boards.
- C. Any sign, including awnings to which signs are affixed or displayed, not resting directly on the ground shall maintain a minimum clear space of eight feet from the bottom of the sign to the ground.
- D. Balloons, strings of lightbulbs, pennants, streamers, or flags (other than those of a governmental nature not used for the purpose of commercial advertisement or attraction) hung overhead to draw attention to a business or its merchandise on display, shall be prohibited.
- E. ~~Real estate signs shall be removed within seven days after completion of the sale or lease of the property.~~
- F. ~~Construction signs are permitted within any zoning district, subject to the following restrictions:~~
 - i. ~~One sign may be placed on the lot where the construction is taking place, each of which shall be no larger than 32 square feet in area, and not exceed eight feet in height.~~
 - ii. ~~Construction signs shall not be erected until a building permit has been issued for the project which is the subject of the proposed sign and construction activity has begun.~~
 - iii. ~~Signs must be set back at least 15 feet from the front property line.~~
 - iv. ~~Construction signs shall be removed within 15 days of the issuance of any occupancy permit for the building or structure which is the subject of the construction sign.~~
- G. ~~Special event signs, including temporary and banner signs, are permitted in any zoning district, subject to the following restrictions:~~
 - i. ~~No more than five such signs shall be displayed for each special event. Such signs may be located either on or off the lot on which the special event is held.~~

ii. ~~The display of such signs shall be limited to the ten days immediately preceding the special event which is being advertised.~~

iii. ~~Such signs shall have a maximum size of 32 square feet in area, and a maximum height of eight feet and shall be set back from any side or rear property line a minimum of 15 feet.~~

iv. ~~A banner over a public right of way may be installed only after the applicant has received approval from the township board, the county road commission, and the state department of transportation, if applicable. Banners over streets are not limited to the 32 square foot area maximum or the setback requirement.~~

v. ~~Such signs shall be removed within 48 hours of the conclusion of the special event which is being advertised.~~

H. Directional signs where permitted are subject to the following restrictions:

- i. A directional sign may contain a logo of an on-premises establishment, but no advertising copy.
- ii. No such sign shall exceed six square feet in area or four feet in height.
- iii. Directional signs shall be limited to traffic control functions.

28-5.21.6.H Directional Signs



- I. Incidental signs pertaining to any conforming accessory activity being conducted on the premises are permitted in any district, subject to the following restrictions:
 - i. No individual sign shall exceed three square feet in area.

- ii. Only those signs which, in the opinion of the zoning administrator, are necessary to indicate entrances, exits, safety precautions, including identifying logos without text, and other such incidental language shall be permitted.

7. Schedule of sign regulations. Signs in each zoning district shall be subject to the following regulations:

28-5.21.7 Permitted Signs					
Permitted Signs	District or Use	Number	Size	Location	Height
Ground Sign					
	Residential subdivisions, agricultural operations, manufactured home parks, multiple-family complexes, schools, or non residential uses allowed in the district	1 per major entrance	32 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from any property line	6 ft max.
	VSC and B-1 districts	One Per Lot or Parcel	32 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from side or rear property lines	6 ft max.
	B-2 district	One per lot or parcel (may only have one ground or freestanding sign)	32 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from any property line	6 ft max.
	LI district	One per parcel	32 sq ft max.	5 ft from front property line 14 ft from all others	6 ft max.
Home Occupation Sign (see 28-569)					
	AP, AG, RR, R-1, R-2, R-3, and MHP districts	One per lot	6 sq ft max.	Mounted flat on wall of house facing street or placed in any yard. 5 ft min. from any side lot line	3 ft max.
Wall Sign					
	Nonresidential Uses in the AP, AG, RR, R-1, R-2, R-3, and MHP districts	One per street frontage	10% max. of wall area	Mounted flat on wall of building facing street	None specified
	VSC and B-1 districts	One per street frontage plus one for each wall facing a parking lot to identify the location of any public entrance	Street frontage - 10% max. of wall area Parking lot frontage - 5% max. of wall area	On wall of building facing street and wall facing public or private parking area	None specified



28-5.21.7 Permitted Signs (continued)					
Permitted Signs	District or Use	Number	Size	Location	Height
Wall Sign (cont.)					
	B-2 district	One per street frontage	15% max. of wall area	On wall of building facing street	None specified
	LI district	One per street frontage	5% max. of wall area	On wall of building facing street	None specified
Projection Sign					
	VSC and B-1 districts	One per street frontage plus one for each wall facing a parking lot to identify the location of any public entrance	Street frontage - 10% max. of wall area Parking lot frontage - 5% max. of wall area	On wall of building facing street and wall facing public or private parking area	7 ft min. clearance from bottom of sign
Awning Sign					
	VSC, B-1, B-2, and LI districts	One per awning face	30% max. of awning face	On face of awning	8 ft min. clearance from bottom of awning
Political Sign					
	AP, AG, RR, R 1, R 2, R 3, MHP, B-2 districts	One per issue or candidate	6 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from any side or rear property line	6 ft max.
	VSC and B-1 districts	One per issue or candidate	6 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from any property line	6 ft max.
	LI district	One per issue or candidate	6 sq ft max.	5 ft min. from front property line 15 ft min. from all other property lines	6 ft max.



28-5.21.7 Permitted Signs (continued)

Permitted Signs	District or Use	Number	Size	Location	Height
Freestanding Sign					
	B-2 district	One per lot or parcel (may only have one ground or freestanding sign)	100 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from side or rear property line	30 ft max. 8 ft min. clearance from bottom of sign
Secondary Freestanding Sign					
	B-2 district	One per lot that abuts a limited access highway Lot must have min. frontage on said highway required by the district in which the lot is located	100 sq ft max.	Rear yard only 12 ft min. and 30 ft max. from rear lot line	30 ft max. 8 ft min. clearance from bottom of sign
Real Estate Sign					
	AP, AG, RR, R 1, R 2, R 3, and MHP districts	One per lot or parcel	6 sq ft max. on lots less than 1 acre 32 sq ft max. on lots over 1 acre	15 ft min. from side or rear lot line	6 ft max.
	VSC, B 1, and B 2 districts	One per lot or parcel	16 sq ft max.	15 ft min. from side or rear lot line	6 ft max.
	L	One per lot or parcel	16 sq ft max.	5 ft min. from front lot line 15 ft min. from all others	6 ft max.



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