



Sign Ordinance Compliance, Zoning, & Research

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Project Background

Client information

- Mid-Michigan townships—Delhi Charter and Watertown Charter Township—initiated this project to assist them in identifying appropriate updates to their existing sign regulations within their Zoning Ordinances
- The townships secured a team to conduct a synthesis of relevant research and best practices, and to develop a Bold & Strikethrough document outlining recommended amendments to each ordinance



Key Findings

Court Case Decision Findings

- Reed v. Town of Gilbert, Arizona (2015)**
 - Content-based sign regulations violate the First Amendment, meaning restrictions must be content-neutral and focus on physical attributes rather than the message.
- Reagan National v. Austin, Texas (2022)**
 - On- and off-premise distinctions are affirmed as content-neutral, and supports the need for location based signage and limitation to digital billboards.
- Adams Outdoor Advertising v. East Lansing, Michigan (2000)**
 - Enforcement of timely removal of non-compliant signs, including holding businesses accountable is constitutional.
- International Outdoor v. Troy, Michigan (2023)**
 - Importance of including severability clauses within zoning ordinances & application of Michigan law for sign compliance.

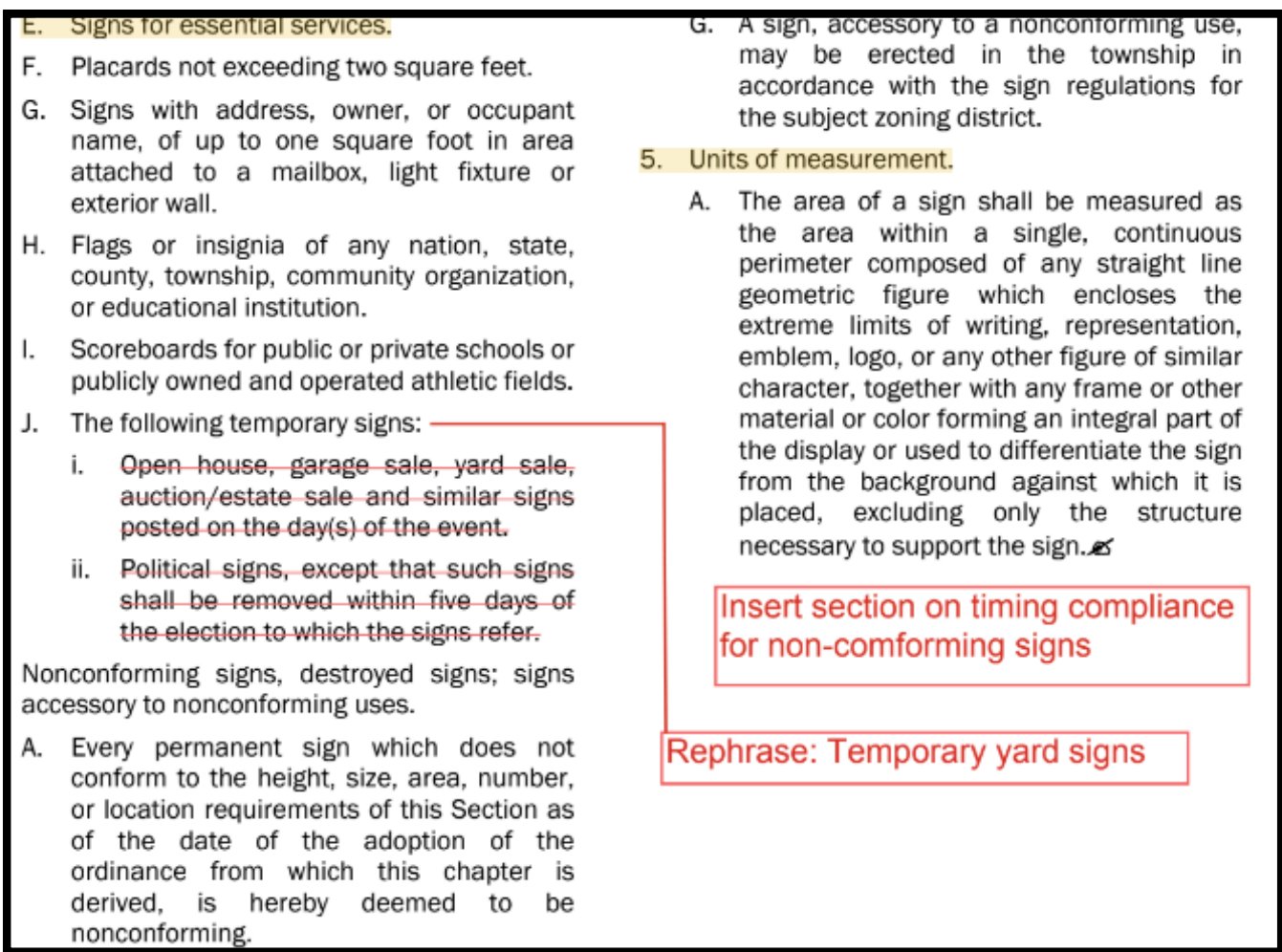
Case Study Findings

- Meridian Township (Ingham County)**
 - Regulates signage primarily by location and physical characteristics.
- DeWitt Township (Clinton County)**
 - Emphasizes routine maintenance and compliance, helping prevent visual degradation through permitting process.
- Garfield Township (Grand Traverse County)**
 - Prioritizes aesthetic preservation and public safety through strict rules on physical attributes.
- Orion Township (Oakland County)**
 - Content based exceptions within ordinances are unconstitutional unless narrowly defined.
 - Severability clauses ensure the constitutional section can be removed while keeping the rest of the ordinance intact.

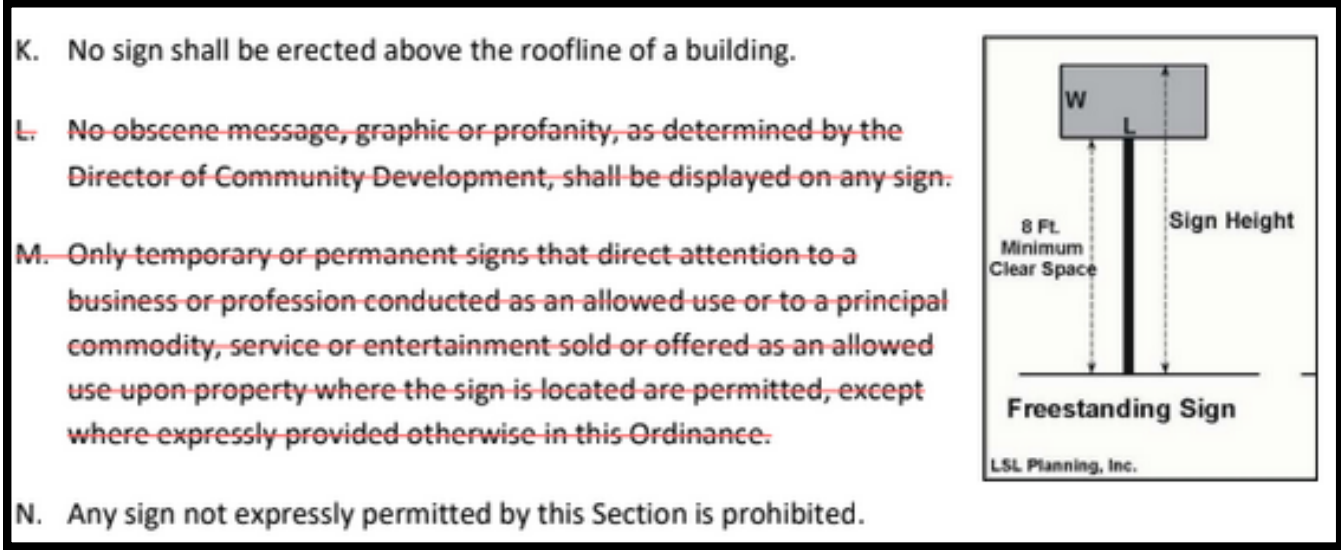
Best Practices

- Purpose
- Definition of Signs
- Severability & Substitution Clauses
- Measurement Standards
- Prohibited & Exempt Signs
- Zoning District Standards & Categories
- Special Cases

Bold & Strikethrough



Watertown Sign Ordinance



Delhi Sign Ordinance

Recommendations

Recommendations are based on best practices which have been informed by thorough research of case studies and key court decisions.



Eliminate content based language



Structure ordinance by content neutral categories



Delete content based definitions



Clear Enforcement and Compliance Standards



Elevate Illuminated Sign Provisions

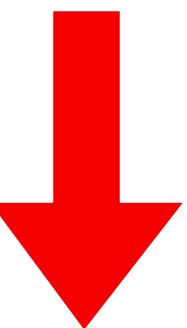


Inclusion of Severability Clause

Community Overview

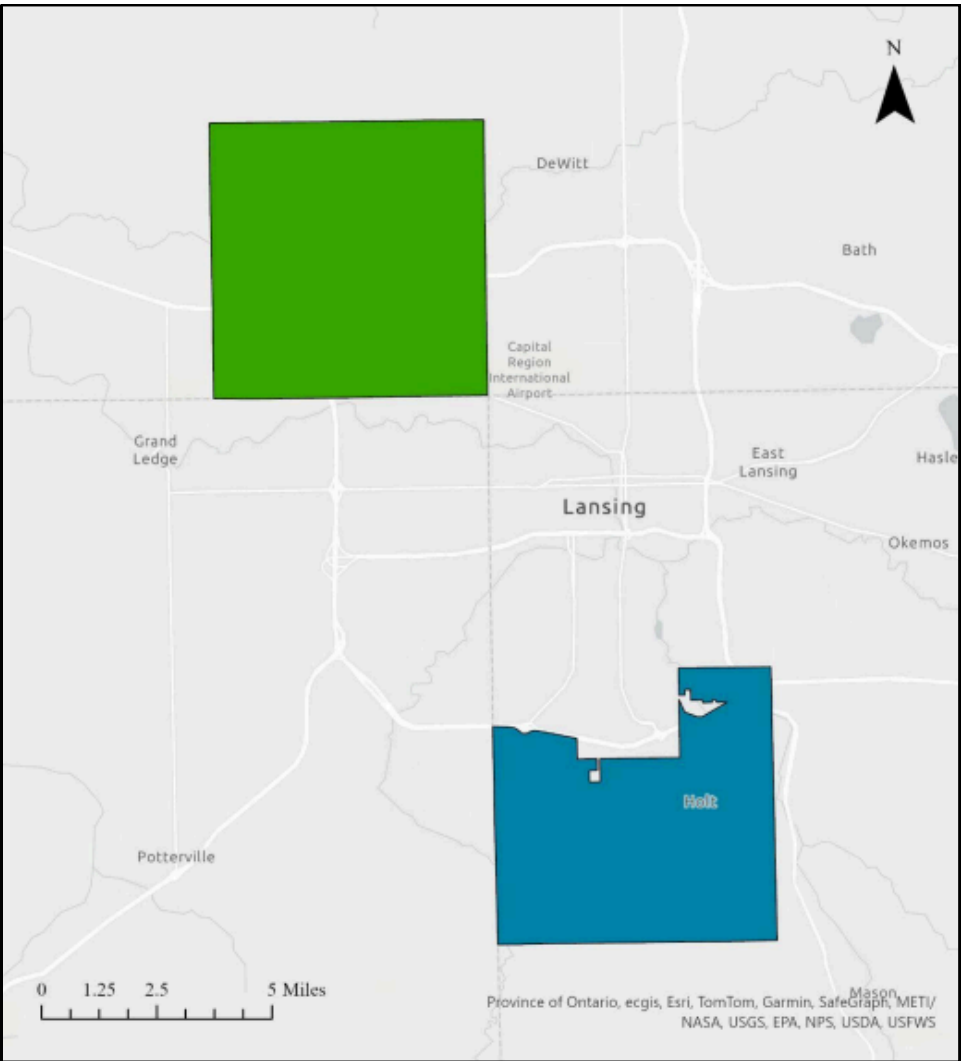
Delhi Charter Township

- Southern suburb of Lansing
 - Ingham County
- Population of 27,710 at 2020 Census
- Anchored by community of Holt (91% of township's population)
- Home to busy I-96/I-496/US 127 interchange
- Cedar Street is the main commercial corridor of the township, facilitating access north into Lansing, south to Mason
- “Transitional zone” – industrial, commercial, and high- and moderate-density residential uses as well as rural and agricultural areas
- Township goals include business-oriented developments and smart growth



Watertown Charter Township

- Northern exurb of Lansing
 - Clinton County
- Population of 5,563 at 2020 Census
- Access to Lansing through Grand River Ave., to Flint via I-69, and to Grand Rapids and Detroit through I-96
- Strong Agricultural presence, growing mostly corn and soybeans, as well as raising livestock
- Growing developments near DeWitt and in Wacousta
- Township goals include planning for continued growth, environmental preservation, and maintaining a high quality of life for residents.



Legend
■ Watertown Charter Township
■ Delhi Charter Township



Royal Scot Bowling & Golf, Watertown Township



Cedar Green, Delhi Charter Township



Capital Area Humane Society, Watertown Charter Township