

CHAPTER 24 SIGNS

SECTION 24.10 INTENT

A. INTENT

The intent of this chapter is to:

1. Protect free speech and balance the individual rights of property owners to communicate their message with the public's right to be free of unreasonable distractions and aesthetic intrusions.
2. Minimize and eliminate visual clutter and protect commercial, business, office, and industrial districts and areas from visual chaos and clutter.
3. Direct commercial and customer traffic to commercial areas of the Township and protect the public's ability to identify establishments and premises.
4. Preserve rural character and protect the natural beauty and distinctive character of the Township.
5. Protect, promote, and further the public peace, health, and safety of residents, property owners, and visitors.
6. Prevent, eliminate, or minimize traffic hazards and pedestrian accidents caused by signage that obstructs vision or views, distracts or confuses motorists, or is improperly secured or constructed.
7. Provide an environment that fosters the reasonable growth and development of business and commerce.
8. Protect and enhance property values.

B. CONTENT NEUTRALITY AND FREE EXPRESSION

Regarding content neutrality and constitutionally protected free expression, the Township finds that:

1. Content neutrality, viewpoint neutrality, and fundamental fairness in regulation and review are essential to ensuring an appropriate balance between the important, substantial, and compelling interests set out in this section and the constitutionally protected right to free expression.
2. The regulations set out in this chapter are unrelated to the suppression of constitutionally protected free expression, do not relate to the content of protected messages that may be displayed on signs, and do not relate to the viewpoint of individual speakers.
3. Notwithstanding the above, certain classifications of speech are not constitutionally protected due to the harm they cause to individuals or the community.
4. Sign restrictions are based on compelling public interests and regulation of the location, number, materials, height, and size. The duration of the display of temporary signs is essential to preventing visual clutter and ensuring safe conditions in the Township.
5. Temporary signs are not constructed to withstand long-term exposure to severe weather conditions or other physically damaging events and can result in safety and aesthetic concerns if not replaced or removed.

SECTION 24.20 APPLICABILITY

A. APPLICABILITY

All signs in the Township shall be constructed, placed, replaced, attached, structurally altered, or added in accordance with this chapter.

B. GOVERNMENTAL AND REGULATORY SIGNS

Government and regulatory signs are not subject to the requirements of this chapter.

C. RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

Religious symbols are not considered signs and are not subject to the requirements of this chapter. Religious symbolism incorporated into signs is not exempt.

D. PERMITTING

1. **Permits Required.** No sign shall be constructed, placed, replaced, attached, expanded, moved, structurally altered, or added without first obtaining a permit unless specifically exempted by this chapter. Sign permits are reviewed administratively as zoning permits, per Section 25.40 C.2.
2. **Exempt from Permitting.** Permits are not required for the following:
 - a. **Maintenance.** Painting, repainting, cleaning, maintenance, repair, and change of a sign face, message, or graphics shall not be considered an activity that requires the issuance of a sign permit, provided that no structural alterations or additions to the display area are made.
 - b. **Re-lettering and Rewording Changeable Copy Signs.** Changing the copy or message of signs that are specifically designed for a changeable copy shall not require a permit.
 - c. **Exempt Sign Types.** See Section 24.60.

E. PLANS

Sign plans shall include the checklist requirements included in Section 36.20.

SECTION 24.30 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

A. NON-COMMERCIAL MESSAGES

Any sign authorized to be displayed by this chapter may contain a non-commercial message.

B. SIGN PLACEMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

1. **Unsafe Placement.** Signs shall not interfere with, obstruct the view of, or be confused with any authorized traffic sign, signal, or device; constitute a nuisance; or cause a hazard to vehicle or pedestrian traffic.
2. **Durability.** Signs shall be constructed to withstand all wind and vibration forces that can normally be expected to occur.
3. **Maintenance.**
 - a. Signs and sign structures shall remain structurally safe and shall not constitute a hazard to safety or health.
 - b. All signs shall be properly and reasonably maintained and shall not be allowed to become unsightly

- through disrepair or because of the effects of the weather.
4. **Right-of-Way and Street Easements.** Signs shall not be placed in, upon, or over any public right-of-way, alley, or other public place except as may be otherwise permitted by the Kent County Road Commission or Michigan Department of Transportation. Signs shall not be placed in, upon, or over any private street easement.
 5. **Obstruction.** Signs shall not obstruct free ingress to or egress from a required door, window, fire escape, or other required exit way.

C. CHANGEABLE COPY

All permanent signs may have manual changeable copy.

D. SETBACKS

1. **Measurement.** Sign setbacks shall be measured in accordance with Section 3.40 A and shall comply with the minimum setbacks required by this Chapter.
2. **Lot Line Adjustment.** Adjustment of lot lines that will cause a sign to become nonconforming is prohibited.
3. **Clear Vision Area.** Sign placement shall conform to Section 3.40 C.

E. MEASUREMENT AND PLACEMENT

1. **Sign Area.** The area of a sign shall be measured as the area within a single, continuous perimeter composed of any straight-line geometric figure with right angles that 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.
2. **Freestanding Signs.**
 - a. **Sign Structure.**
 - i. The structure necessary to support the sign may include a framework, bracing, poles, posts, masonry base, wall, or comparable materials. Although the structure necessary to support the sign is excluded from the maximum sign area, the square footage shall not exceed 100 percent of the measured sign area.
 - ii. If the characters/text are affixed to a freestanding wall or architectural feature and that wall conforms to fence/wall requirements, the wall face is not restricted in area. However, the wall must be constructed of materials commonly used in decorative wall construction.
 - b. **Double-Faced Sign.** The area of freestanding signs that have two (2) or more faces shall be measured by including the area of all sign faces, except if two (2) faces are placed back-to-back and are no more than three (3) feet apart at any point, the area of only one (1) face shall be counted toward the maximum size requirement. In this case, if the two (2) back-to-back faces are of unequal size, the larger of the two (2) sign faces shall be counted as one (1) face.
 - c. **Height.**
 - i. The height of a sign shall be computed as the distance from the base of the sign at normal grade to the top of the highest attached component of the sign. For the purpose of this definition, normal grade shall be defined as either:
 - (a) The existing grade prior to construction, or

- (b) the newly established grade after construction, exclusive of any filling, berming, mounding, or excavating solely for the purpose of locating the sign.
- ii. If the normal grade cannot reasonably be determined, sign height shall be computed on the assumption that the elevation of the normal grade at the base of the sign is equal to the elevation of the nearest point of the crown of a public street or the grade of the land at the principal entrance to the principal structure on the lot, whichever is lower.
- iii. If the sign site is significantly lower than the street, the height can be increased administratively but shall not exceed the maximum height measured from the elevation of the crown of the street.

3. Wall Signs.

- a. Multi-Tenant Building Sign Area. For buildings with multiple tenants, the sign area for wall, projecting, canopy, or awning signs shall be determined by taking that portion of the front wall of the building applicable to each tenant and computing the sign requirements for that portion of the total wall.
- b. Wall signs shall not extend past the edge of the wall to which it is affixed.
- c. Wall signs shall not extend above the eave of a building with a pitched roof or above the top of a flat roof building
- d. Wall signs shall be mounted flat on the wall surface and shall be no more than one (1) foot in depth.
- e. Wall signs shall only face streets and parking areas.

F. LAWFUL NONCONFORMING SIGNS

See Section 33.60.

SECTION 24.40 ILLUMINATION

A. GENERAL

The illumination of permanent signs shall only be done through external or internal light sources or electronic changeable message systems. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.

B. EXTERNAL ILLUMINATION

- 1. **Intensity and Spillover.** Sign lighting shall be of low intensity with effective provisions made to minimize spillover of light beyond the actual sign face.
- 2. **Shielding.** The light source shall be enclosed and directed to prevent light from shining directly onto traffic or neighboring property.

C. INTERNAL ILLUMINATION

Sign faces shall be opaque so that individual lamps are muted and cannot be distinguished behind the sign face.

D. ELECTRONIC CHANGEABLE MESSAGES

Where allowable, as noted in this chapter, electronic changeable message signs are subject to the following:

1. **Sign Type.** Electronic changeable messages (ECM) are only permitted on freestanding signs.
2. **Size.** No more than 40 percent of the area of the sign may be dedicated to an ECM display. The remainder of the sign shall consist of a static sign face.
3. **Images and Transition.**
 - a. Each image shall be static and shall not move, flash, or otherwise be animated.
 - b. Each message shall be displayed for a period of no less than eight (8) seconds.
 - c. Transitions between images shall be instantaneous and shall not scroll, fade, or otherwise be animated.
4. **Hours.** In residential zoning districts, ECM signs shall be shut off between 10 pm and 7 am.
5. **Brightness.**
 - a. An electronic display sign shall be equipped with automatic dimming technology to adjust the brightness of the sign relative to ambient light conditions.
 - b. All electronic messaging centers shall be equipped with an ambient light meter to adjust the brightness level of the sign face based on the ambient light conditions and shall not exceed a brightness level of 0.3 foot candles above ambient light as measured using a foot candle (Lux) meter at a preset distance depending on the sign area.
 - c. Brightness of electronic messaging centers shall be measured as follows:
 - i. At least 30 minutes following sunset, a foot candle meter shall be used to obtain an ambient light reading for the location. This is done while the EMC is off or displaying black copy. The reading shall be made with the meter aimed directly at the center of the sign area from a distance determined with the following formula: The square root of the product of the sign area multiplied by 100.
 - ii. Example using a 12 square foot sign:
 - (a) Measurement Distance = $\sqrt{12 \text{ Sq. Ft.} \times 100} = 34.6 \text{ ft.}$ as the determined setback from which the measurement will be taken.
 - (b) The sign shall then be turned on to full white copy to take another reading with the meter at the same location.
 - (c) If the difference between the readings is 0.3 foot candles or less, the brightness is properly adjusted and the sign is in compliance.
6. **Conformance.** A nonconforming freestanding sign may not be altered to include an ECM display sign unless it is first made conforming to all requirements of this chapter.
7. **Distance from Dwelling Units.** ECM components are not permitted within 200 feet of any dwelling unit except in those instances where dwelling units are located on the same lot as an office or commercial use.

SECTION 24.50 PROHIBITED SIGNS

A. PERMISSIVE REGULATION

Any sign that is not expressly allowed by the Ordinance is prohibited.

B. PROHIBITED SIGNS AND SIGN CHARACTERISTICS

1. Signs with moving parts, inflatable signs, banners, and balloons, as well as feather flag signs.
2. Signs with flashing, animation, moving, oscillating, blinking, intermittent illumination, or variable intensity light.
3. Signs that are held by or supported by a person for commercial advertising purposes.
4. Signs mounted on roofs.
5. Signs mounted on vehicles parked in a location for the primary purpose of advertising.
6. Signs attached to a utility pole, street sign, traffic control device, or other similar object.
7. Signs that are attached to any natural growth, such as trees, shrubs, or other natural foliage.

C. THREATENING, SEXUALLY EXPLICIT, OR PROFANE MESSAGING

No sign shall be prohibited based on the content or message it displays, except that threatening, sexually explicit, or profane signs are prohibited. The Zoning Administrator shall also consider the following criteria when providing a determination:

1. An average person, applying contemporary community standards, must find that the material, as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest, threatens the safety of a person or group of people, is offensive or profane, or the material depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable law; and
2. The material, taken as a whole, must lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

SECTION 24.60 SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMITTING

The following signs are exempt from permitting requirements but must comply with the requirements of Table 24.60.

TABLE 24.60: SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMITTING		
Type	Requirements	
Address Sign	Zoning District	All
	Other Requirements	Text height shall be no greater than six (6) inches for residences and 18 inches for businesses and other nonresidential uses.
Device Sign	Zoning District	Commercial and mixed-use districts and industrial districts
	Maximum Size	2 s.f.
Flags	In residential zoning districts, commercial messages are not permitted. See Section 17.50 for flagpole regulations.	
Nameplates Sign	Maximum Size	2 s.f.
Painted Signs	Zoning District	Commercial and mixed-use districts and industrial districts
	Maximum Size	No maximum

TABLE 24.60: SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMITTING

TABLE 24.60: SIGNS EXEMPT FROM PERMITTING		
	Other Requirements	Painted signs are restricted to the sides of buildings and shall not contain any words, logos, product, or service representations (otherwise considered a wall sign).
Sandwich Board Signs	Zoning District	Commercial and mixed-use districts and industrial districts
	Maximum Number	1 per tenant space
	Maximum Size	6 s.f.
	Maximum Height	4 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Not permitted.
	Other	The sign shall not interfere with or obstruct pedestrian or vehicular traffic; provided, at least 5 feet of passage shall be maintained on the sidewalk between the street and the sign. Windblown devices, including balloons, shall not be attached or otherwise made part of the sign. Signs shall be removed at the end of the business day and only be displayed during regular business hours. Sandwich boards must be weighted down or removed if winds gust to 20 m.p.h.
Small Freestanding Signs	Zoning District	Commercial and mixed-use districts and industrial districts
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Size	2 s.f.
	Maximum Height	3 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Not permitted
Temporary Yard Signs	Zoning District	All
	Maximum Number	Outside of election season: 2
		Election season (45 days before an election to 10 days after an election): no limit
	Maximum Size	16 s.f. of total sign area
	Maximum Height	4 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Not permitted
Other	On residential zoned lots, off-premise commercial advertising signs are prohibited as temporary yard signs	
Window Signs	Zoning district	Commercial and mixed-use districts and industrial districts
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Size	The total area of all signs within a foot of the window shall not obscure more than 25 percent of the window area
	Illumination	Neon or internal, no more than 4 s.f., no more than 1 building tenant space

SECTION 24.70 TEMPORARY SIGNS- PERMITS REQUIRED

The following temporary signs may be permitted for limited time frames but must comply with all applicable requirements of Table 24.70 and this chapter.

TABLE 24.70: TEMPORARY SIGNS- PERMITS REQUIRED		
Type	Requirements	
Temporary Event- Banner Sign or Portable Sign	Zoning District	All districts for non-residential uses only
	Maximum Number	1 per lot
	Maximum Size	32 s.f.
	Maximum Height	6 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Not permitted
	Other Requirements	One permit per calendar year up to 21 days
Temporary Use- Banner Sign or Portable Sign	Zoning District	All districts but see “other requirements” below
	Maximum Number	1 per lot
	Maximum Size	32 s.f.
	Maximum Height	6 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Not permitted
	Other Requirements	Only authorized for approved temporary land uses in accordance with Section 18.300. Timeframe is tied to the temporary use permit validity.

SECTION 24.80 PERMANENT SIGNS- RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS- PERMITS REQUIRED

All permanent signs in ARR, RS, VR, and MFR, shall comply with the requirements of Table 24.80 and all other requirements of this chapter.

TABLE 24.80: PERMANENT SIGNS- RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS		
Type	Requirements	
Freestanding Sign: Ground Sign for Non-Residential Uses or Bed and Breakfasts	Zoning District	All residential districts
	Maximum Number	1 per lot
	Maximum Size	16 s.f. for bed and breakfasts 32 s.f. for all other uses
	Maximum Height	6 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 feet from any front lot line 20 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	External- for bed and breakfasts Internal and external (permitted) and ECM (special land use)- all other non-residential uses
Freestanding Sign: Ground Sign for Residential	Zoning District	All residential districts
	Maximum Number	1 per entry
	Maximum Size	48 s.f.
	Maximum Height	6
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines

TABLE 24.80: PERMANENT SIGNS- RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICTS

Development Entry Point	Illumination	External
Wall Sign: for Non-Residential Uses, Bed and Breakfasts, or Major Home Occupations	Zoning District	All residential districts
	Maximum Number	1 per building
	Maximum Size	8 s.f. for bed and breakfasts and major home occupations 32 s.f. for all other non-residential uses
	Illumination	External

SECTION 24.90 PERMANENT SIGNS- COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE ZONING DISTRICTS- PERMITS REQUIRED

All permanent signs in NC, GC, and OS shall comply with the requirements of Table 24.90 and all other requirements of this chapter.

TABLE 24.90: PERMANENT SIGNS- COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Type	Requirements	
Access Point Sign	Zoning Districts	All commercial and mixed-use districts
	Maximum Number	1 per driveway access
	Maximum Size	NC: 3 s.f. GC: 4 s.f. OS: 4 s.f.
	Maximum Height	Subject to clear vision corner height limitation (Section 3.40 C) If outside of clear height area, 4 ft. max.
	Minimum Setbacks	2 feet from any front lot line 10 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	Internal or external
Freestanding Sign: Ground Sign	Zoning Districts	All commercial and mixed-use districts
	Maximum Number	1 freestanding ground sign or pylon sign per lot, or 1 per street frontage
	Maximum Size	NC: 48 s.f. GC: 64 s.f. OS: 64 s.f.
	Maximum Height	NC: 6 ft. GC: 8 ft. OS: 8 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 feet from any front lot line 20 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	NC: Internal or external GC: Internal, external, or ECM OS: Internal, external, or ECM
Freestanding Sign: Pylon Sign	Zoning District	GC
	Maximum Number	1 freestanding ground sign or pylon sign per lot
	Maximum Size	No more than 1.5 s.f. per linear foot of lot frontage but no more than 100 s.f. max.
	Maximum Height	20 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 ft. from all property lines
	Illumination	Internal, external, or ECM

TABLE 24.90: PERMANENT SIGNS- COMMERCIAL AND MIXED-USE DISTRICTS		
Interior Site Signs	Zoning District	All commercial and mixed-use districts
	Maximum Size	NC: 4 s.f. GC: 12 s.f. OS: 8 s.f.
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Height	5 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	25 ft. from all property lines, 10 ft. if not visible from residential zoned property
	Illumination	Internal or external
Wall Sign	Zoning District	All commercial and mixed-use districts
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Size	No more than 1.5 s.f. per linear foot per building frontage allowable for placement, but no more than 100 s.f. max. per individual sign For wall signs 100 ft. or more from a public street right-of-way or private street easement an extra 50 s.f. is allowed as well as 50 s.f. for every 50 ft. beyond 100 ft. from the public street right-of-way or private street easement. However no individual sign shall exceed 500 s.f.
	Illumination	Internal or external

SECTION 24.100 PERMANENT SIGNS- INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS- PERMITS REQUIRED

All permanent signs in MB, LI, and HI, shall comply with the requirements of Table 24.100 and all other requirements of this chapter.

TABLE 24.100: PERMANENT SIGNS- INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS		
Type	Requirements	
Access Point Sign	Zoning Districts	All industrial districts
	Maximum Number	1 per driveway access
	Maximum Size	4 s.f.
	Maximum Height	Subject to clear vision corner height limitation (Section 3.40 C) If outside of clear height area, 4 ft. max.
	Minimum Setbacks	2 feet from any front lot line 10 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	Internal or external
Freestanding Sign: Ground Sign for Industrial Park Entry Point	Zoning Districts	All industrial districts
	Maximum Number	1 per park entry, 2 max.
	Maximum Size	64 s.f.
	Maximum Height	8 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 feet from any front lot line 20 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	Internal, external, or ECM
Freestanding Sign: Ground Sign	Zoning Districts	All industrial districts
	Maximum Number	1
	Maximum Size	64 s.f.

TABLE 24.100: PERMANENT SIGNS- INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

	Maximum Height	8 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	10 feet from any front lot line 20 feet from all other property lines
	Illumination	Internal, external, or ECM
Interior Site Signs	Zoning District	All industrial districts
	Maximum Size	12 s.f.
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Height	5 ft.
	Minimum Setbacks	25 ft. from all property lines, 10 ft. if not visible from residential zoned property
	Illumination	Internal or external
Wall Sign	Zoning District	All industrial districts
	Maximum Number	No limit
	Maximum Size	No more than 1.5 s.f. per linear foot per building frontage allowable for placement, but no more than 100 s.f. max. per individual sign For wall signs 100 ft. or more from a public street right-of-way or private street easement an extra 50 s.f. is allowed as well as 50 s.f. for every 50 ft. beyond 100 ft. from the public street right-of-way or private street easement. However no individual sign shall exceed 500 s.f.
	Illumination	Internal or external

SECTION 24.110 BILLBOARDS- PERMITS REQUIRED

A. REQUIREMENTS

All billboards shall comply with the requirements of Table 24.110 A and all other requirements of this chapter except otherwise noted.

TABLE 24.110 A: BILLBOARDS

Type	Requirements	
Billboards	Zoning Districts	LI, HI on lots with frontage on M-6
	Maximum Number	No more than 6 billboards are permitted in the Township
	Maximum Size	672 s.f.
	Maximum Height	45 ft.
	Setbacks	Max. from the M-6 right-of-way: 100 ft. Min. from the M-6 right-of-way: 10 ft. Min. from any other property line: 50 ft.
	Minimum Separation	Min. separation between billboards: See the Highway Advertising Act of 1972. Min. distance from any existing dwelling units: 300 ft. without ECM display. Min. distance from any existing dwelling units: 750 ft. with ECM display
	Construction	Monopole structures are permitted. No other structure type is permitted.

TABLE 24.110 A: BILLBOARDS		
	Illumination	Internal, external, or ECM. Of the 6 allowable billboards, no more than 2 shall include ECM displays. ECM displays are subject to all requirements of Section 24.40 D except that the proportion of ECM display is not limited to a percentage of the total sign area.

B. BILLBOARD AND STRUCTURE DESIGN

1. **Shape.** A billboard sign face shall be a standard quadrilateral shape with four right angles, such as a square or rectangle, with the bottom edge being level with the street.
2. **Configuration.** Billboard configurations shall be limited to single-face, V-type, or back-to-back configurations. Stacked or staggered-height billboard sign faces are prohibited. The angle of a V-type billboard sign face configuration shall not exceed 75 degrees.
3. **Placement.**
 - a. A billboard sign face shall be perpendicular to, or angled toward, the highway right of way.
 - b. On a billboard structure with two billboard sign faces, no more than one sign face shall be oriented toward the same direction of motor vehicle traffic.
4. **Extensions.**
 - a. A billboard sign face extension may project no more than five (5) feet from the top and no more than two (2) feet from either side of the billboard sign face, and no more than two (2) feet from the bottom of the billboard sign face.
 - b. The total area of a billboard sign face extension shall be not greater than 50 square feet.
 - c. The area and height of any lawful extension shall not be included in the maximum permitted sign face area or the maximum permitted billboard structure height.
 - d. A billboard sign face extension shall be temporary only; it shall be removed when the advertising copy on the billboard is changed, and shall not become a permanent modification of the billboard structure.
 - e. A permit is not required for a billboard sign face extension.