Polling Place Signage Update

City of Kalamazoo, Michigan

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City of Kalamazoo – Polling Place Signage Update

In 2007, the City of Kalamazoo Election Division implemented a program called the “Inspector Integrity Initiative” or Private I’s for short. This program has voters evaluating their polling location and the poll workers they encounter on Election Day in secret. Results from this program continually showed voters had a difficult time locating their polling location throughout the process. Knowing this was a weakness in our system and the first impression a voter had of the polling place, it was easy to conclude changes were necessary.

The polling place signage being utilized in 2007 was a hodge podge of products from various vendors. The signs did not match or coordinate. What was seen at the road was different than what was at the door and what was in the hallway and inside the voting room was different yet. It was necessary to start from scratch and develop signage that was noticeable, intuitive, and consistent throughout the voter’s experience.

Using Design for Democracy’s election design guidelines, new lawn signs were ordered ($481.62 for 100), existing sandwich board signs were refurbished ($1885.20 for 60), and new paper signage used throughout the polling location was created (6 cents per color copy). The color, symbols, and fonts were the same throughout the polling location. What was seen at the road was seen in a familiar format at the door, throughout the hallways and inside the polling room giving voters a notable sense of navigation.

The Design for Democracy guidelines provide election officials with tools to make low cost, do-it-yourself changes. For less than $100 per precinct, the City of Kalamazoo was able to invest in a high impact polling location change that provides a positive experience to the voter the instant they arrive at the polling location.
The old signage was outdated and visually unappealing. In addition, it violated all ten of the Design for Democracy’s election design guidelines.

The redesign followed Design for Democracy’s 10 election design guidelines:

1. Use lower case letters
2. Avoid centered type
3. Use big enough type
4. Pick one sans-serif font
5. Support process & navigation
6. Use clear, simple language
7. Use accurate instructional illustrations
8. Use informational icons (only)
9. Use contrast & color functionally
10. Decide what’s most important
Check-in

A–G

(last name)
Vote for One Party!

This is a Primary election. You may vote for candidates in the Republican column or Democratic column as well as the non-partisan section. If you vote in more than one party section, your ballot will be rejected. If you have questions or need a new ballot, please talk to an election inspector.

Public Area

The Public Area is open to observers and poll watchers. Please do not:

- Approach or assist voters
- Touch materials used by inspectors
- Display the name of your organization or candidate
- Campaign
- Pass out literature
- Be disruptive to the voting process