



News & Updates

"DE-'CODING' THE VISUAL LANDSCAPE: MUNICIPAL SIGN ORDINANCES, MURALS, AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT," IMLA MUNICIPAL LAWYER

"Murals or other works of creative expression on public walls can be classified as signs, artwork, or both, presenting challenges for municipal lawmakers and counsel," partner Shannon T. O'Connor writes in *Municipal Lawyer*, a publication of the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA).

In her article, Shannon examines several cases of litigation between municipalities and local business owners who commissioned murals for their commercial property, running afoul of sign ordinances — and in the process exposing contradictions and unsolved questions relating to First Amendment rights and the shifting demarcations between commercial and artistic expression.

"[M]urals have become increasingly popular and various, and business owners responding to this trend and commissioning murals on their property can often make credible claims to artistic or non-commercial expression, even when such a commission likely has some commercial motivation," Shannon writes, and concludes by offering advice to municipalities and municipal lawyers looking to update sign ordinances and avoid future legal disputes.

Shannon, practicing out of the firm's Syracuse office, focuses her practice on municipal and governmental liability, general liability, and matters involving employment and labor. She is a Local Government Fellow of the IMLA, and also serves as the organization's New York State co-chair.

Read the article:

"De-'coding' the Visual Landscape: Municipal Sign Ordinances, Murals, and the First Amendment," IMLA *Municipal Lawyer*, January / February 2018

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