

The Ramp Project Handbook

First Edition -© July 2012

Introduction

All of us at StopGap are incredibly grateful for your interest in taking on this exciting project in your community. With your participation you are helping create a world where every person can access every space. At the time of the publication of this first edition of The Ramp Project Handbook there are approximately 60 ramps being used in 4 different communities in Southern Ontario.

With help from community hardware stores and help from volunteers businesses with single stepped storefronts are invited to participate and have a custom ramp made at no cost. The brightly coloured ramps do not present a perfect solution to the problem however they create curiosity and get people talking about this huge design issue while still getting people in the door. The project will introduce many to the human right to equal access and will broaden the conversation on this topic.

The Ramp Project has been successful at highlighting how a simple ramp can make life easier for everyone. Participants have shared that a ramped storefront is more inviting. Parents pushing strollers, couriers using dollies to handle heavy packages and people using mobility aides all benefit from a barrier free storefront. The project has also proved that business owners are able to increase their customer base by providing a storefront that everyone can enter and exit. Supporters of the initiative hope that through these types of projects communities will create legislation of their own instead of waiting until the projected due date outlined in the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) – that being 2025.

The temporary ramps are to be presented to businesses with a single step with the intent that business owners offer the use of the ramp to customers whenever there is a need. Business owners are encouraged to display the “Access Ramp Available upon Request” sticker in a highly visible location in their storefront window such that customers can be easily informed about the availability of an access ramp.

Congratulations on being a part of a very exciting initiative, good luck and most importantly have fun!

Getting Started

Informing your community Business Improvement Association and Accessibility Committee is an important first step to getting a Ramp Project off the ground. Approval from one or all of these organizations will greatly assist in engaging businesses to participate. From our experience it is possible that these organizations may prefer not to be associated with The Ramp Project despite your attempts at educating them about the details. Please don't let their negative response dissuade you from forging ahead!

In order to offer the ramps to businesses at no cost your role as a Ramp Project Team Leader is to engage a community hardware store who will donate all of the required building materials. Included in the Ramp Project kit is a Participation Request Letter that is to be customized and addressed to the appropriate person at the prospective hardware store. Some stores have their own community project programming such as The Home Depot's Team Depot program. StopGap has established a strong relationship with The Home Depot through their support of all four completed projects, they are very aware of The Ramp Project at their Canadian headquarters.

The Home Depot has a manager assigned to their Team Depot program, this is the person who the Participation Request Letter should be addressed to. Although Canadian headquarters is supportive of The Ramp Project it is ultimately up to the manager of the Team Depot program as to their decision to participate or not. Again, don't let a negative response distract you -forge ahead and approach other hardware stores!

The Ramp Project Brochure is also included in the Ramp Project kit. The brochure is to be customized to include the names of all participating community organizations, hardware stores and must include the contact information for the Ramp Project Team Leader. The Ramp Project Brochure will be handed out to businesses during the community survey; it will assist in educating business owners about the project and help in collecting committed participants.

- The Ramp Project Kit contains electronic copies of the following:
- Participation Request Letter
- The Ramp Project Brochure
- Measurement Calculator Spreadsheet
- The How to Build a StopGap Ramp video
- StopGap stencil
- StopGap Ramp Tag
- The Ramp Project Handbook

Engaging local schools is a great way to enhance the community nature of the project. Together with the StopGap school program elementary school students are introduced to the concept of accessibility and physical barriers in our built environment. Depending on the age group their participation can range from being involved in the community survey to actual ramp construction and painting. Younger students enjoy the inclusion of The Ramp Man storybook into the curriculum. We can gladly arrange for a copy of The

Ramp Man storybook to be delivered to you should you be interested in involving students at the elementary school level. Similarly, high school students benefit from being involved in The Ramp Project by gaining community hours as well as seeing firsthand how their newly learned woodworking skills have a direct positive impact on the community.

Community Survey

Armed with the approval of community organizations and commitment from hardware stores it's time to hit the pavement! Approach businesses with a single stepped storefront by first introducing yourself and the project. Present the manager on staff with a copy of The Ramp Project Brochure and answer any questions they may have. Should you not know an answer to one of their questions simply let them know that you will get back to them with an appropriate answer as soon as you can. It's important not to guess at an answer and risk giving false information, honesty is the best policy in this situation. We are always available to answer any questions you may have!

Often times the person who makes the decisions at the business will not be present. Have the employee give the information to the business owner or manager, before leaving take down their information and let them know that you will be anticipating their call or e-mail. Should you not hear from them in a few days follow-up with a phone call or e-mail message. Upon a businesses approval to participate, have the manager or storeowner fill out a StopGap Ramp Tag and ensure that they sign the bottom of the backside of the tag.

Measure the height of the left and right side of the step to the closest 1/4 inch and record the measurements on the Ramp Tag. For both left and right locations it's best to take the measurement of the closest 1/4 inch below the top of the step. Going with the closest 1/4 inch below the top of the step helps prevent a tripping hazard and helps prevent the wheel of a mobility device from pushing the ramp away from the step while exiting the store. Measuring just below the top of the step also helps account for movement of the sidewalk due to winter frost heave. Tear the tag along the perforated line and give the business owner the half which explains the project, you keep the half with all of the information and signature.

Volunteers

The saying "many hands make light work" definitely applies when it comes to ramp construction. Assign specific duties to people with matching skills and interests. Depending on the number of ramps involved in the project will dictate how many volunteers will be needed. Should the project be supported by The Home Depot you will need to coordinate volunteer help with the Team Depot manager. The Home Depot may have employees that are inspired by the project and are willing to volunteer their help if the build day coincides with their day off. It's important to get firm commitments from Home Depot volunteers as well as your own friends and family, there is nothing worse

than being left with a whole lot of work and not enough people to complete it. As a general rule one reasonably skilled person can expect to spend one working day constructing a dozen ramps and one working day painting them. Use this general rule as a gauge to estimate how many volunteers you will need to get a project done within a certain amount of time.

Construction

The participating hardware store will be interested in knowing all of the different materials needed. The following is a list of everything required to build a StopGap ramp:

- 4ft x 8ft -5/8" Douglas Fir plywood sheets with one good finished side. Three sheets of plywood can accommodate the construction of approximately 12 moderately sized ramps.
- Tape measure
- Drill
- #6 – 1 5/8" paintable wood deck screws. One 100 count box should accommodate 12 moderately sized ramps
- Circular saw with adjustable base.
- Drywall T-square
- Wood glue
- Sharp pencil and pencil sharpener
- One spool of 1/2" diameter twisted nylon rope
- Primer, yellow, red and green floor paint with brushes, rollers and paint trays.
- 85 g bags of silica sand, one for each colour of floor paint
- 5/8" diameter furniture cushion glides by Shepard Hardware Products Model 9445, minimum 4 per ramp
- 9/16" wood drill bit
- Appropriate Robertson drill bit to accommodate wood deck screws
- 1/8" drill bit for predrilling

The Measurement Calculator Spreadsheet must be used to determine all of the specific measurements for each ramp component. The Measurement Calculator has been designed such that all you need to do is simply enter the step height into the step height column, the calculator does the rest! Enter the smallest measurement of the left and right side step measurements taken during the survey. Be sure to transfer all of the businesses information taken down during the community survey from the ramp tags including the businesses name and address. Having all of this information on the spreadsheet and labeling each part as it is prepared is an important step to make sure none of the parts get mixed up. Print off a number of these sheets and have them float around the construction site so that everyone has easy access to them.

The “How to Build a StopGap Ramp” video meticulously outlines the construction of a StopGap ramp. The video must be shown to all volunteers before construction gets underway. The video should be easily accessible during construction as it is essentially the instruction manual. Set up a laptop in a safe place near the construction site with the video uploaded for all to access whenever needed. Be sure to hook up external speakers to the laptop as construction sites are typically noisy!

Be sure that all volunteers have appropriate safety gear including safety glasses, ear protection and close toed shoes!

Handbook downloaded from: <http://stopgapblog.blogspot.ca/p/community-ramp-project.html>

Reformatted for accessibility (B.Lee, Equity, Diversity and Human Rights)