Private Entrance Ramps on Sidewalks

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

September 27th 2017
Background

• Many businesses in Toronto are located in buildings where the entrances are not completely level with the adjacent sidewalks.

• To provide access for customers with disabilities, some businesses have placed ramps on the sidewalk.

• The majority of these ramps are constructed out of wood.
Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 743
Use of Streets and Sidewalks

• The current process to place a private ramp on public right-of-way is to submit an application to Transportation Services for an encroachment.

• Staff would review the application and, if deemed appropriate, issue a permit for the ramp.

• However, most of these ad-hoc ramps have *not* gone through the permitting process.
Benefits

The ramps provide access for people who would otherwise be prevented from visiting businesses with stepped entrances.
Challenges: Location

• These ramps are located in public right-of-way and encroach on the sidewalk.

• In some cases, they reduce pedestrian clearways and may become tripping hazards.
Challenges: Safety

• Many ramps are not constructed to standards or codes
  – minimum widths, slopes, requirements for handrails, etc.

• The City does not know:
  – how long each ramp has been in place
  – the loading that they can sustain
  – how they are being maintained
  – the duration for which they are fit for use
Ontario Building Code

• For many of these buildings, there is no short or medium term plan to retrofit the entrances within private property

• The Ontario Building Code is a go-forward regulation and generally does not apply to the maintenance or retrofit of existing buildings

• New requirements apply only to the new construction, change of use and extensive renovation of existing buildings

• The City cannot force additional requirements for private properties over and above the Ontario Building Code
Resolving stepped entrances on sidewalks
To Date:

- The City has **not** removed small wooden ramps used to address modest, one-step level changes:
  - they are a convenient and inexpensive option for businesses to provide better access
  - they can be easily moved
  - they do not intrude into the pedestrian clearway
Feedback

How should the City address larger ramps, or those that extend significantly into the pedestrian clearway?