

# Storefront Entry Ramps on the Public Right-of-way

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee  
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# Outline

- Issues Background
- TAAC and Council Motions
- Consultation Process
- Update: permitting process approach
- Update: permitted encroachment and limitations
- Update: best practices
- Next Step

# Defining the Challenge

- Many businesses in Toronto are located in buildings where the entrances are not completely level with the adjacent sidewalks.
- ‘Stepped entrances’ exclude customers who use wheeled mobility devices and inconvenience customers with strollers, shopping carts etc.
- Over 4,200 businesses on main streets are affected.



471 Bloor St. W., west of Spadina

# Location of Storefronts with stepped entrances

Total = 4,261 stepped entrances  
Data validation process  
Originally collected in 2017



# Solving the Challenge - Background

- The full and proper solution should be on the building side of the gap.
- For many of these buildings, there is no short- or medium-term plan to retrofit the entrances within private property.
- The City cannot force Ontario Building Code design standards unless major renovation / construction work is being undertaken.
- To provide access for customers with disabilities, some businesses have placed ramps on the sidewalk.
- Some ramps protrude into the pedestrian clearway and impact shorelining.

# Ramps and Permits

- The current process to place a permanent private ramp on the public right-of-way is to submit an application to Transportation Services for an encroachment pending a building permit.
  - Staff would review the application and, if deemed appropriate, issue a permit for the ramp.
- However, temporary ramps do not have a permitting process.
  - Enforcement is generally on a complaint-only basis.

# Council Direction 2017

City Council on November 7, 8 and 9, 2017, adopted the following:

4. City Council direct the General Manager, Transportation Services to investigate the feasibility of establishing guidelines to permit private ramps on the public right-of-way, conduct stakeholder consultations, to report on the results to the appropriate Committee in the second quarter of 2018 and to provide an update to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee.

[Agenda Item History - 2017.DI16.3 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

Findings from this investigation concluded that design guidelines for temporary ramps are NOT feasible. Placement guidelines are the recommended approach for temporary ramps in the public right-of-way.

# Infrastructure and Environment Committee Decision

The Infrastructure and Environment Committee Decision July 7<sup>th</sup> 2022:

- The General Manager, Transportation Services report back to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee in the first quarter of 2023 with an update on the development of placement guidelines for interim private storefront ramps on the public right-of-way; such an update is to include the following:
  - a summary of the draft guidelines with a full draft document included with the item;
  - a summary of the consultation process for developing the guidelines;
  - a description of how the guidelines will be incorporated into the permitting process; and
  - the limits of the guidelines, including situations that cannot be accommodated under them.

[Agenda Item History - 2022.IE31.23 \(toronto.ca\)](#)

# Consultation Process

- Consulted with City of Toronto staff across various divisions, TABIA and StopGap Foundation. Consultation included discussion of:
  - Issues around Storefront Entry Ramps on the Public Right-of-way for the business community and the public, specifically the accessibility community.
  - Potential permitting process and the impact on businesses.
  - Benefits and risks associated with the use and application of temporary ramps.
  - Best practices related to the use and application of temporary ramps.

# Update: Permitting Process

- Introducing a permitting process would create additional barriers for business owners
  - Need to navigate a new process to obtain a permit.
  - Incur a fee to obtain a permit.
- Not equitable to new applications to the permitting process as some storefronts across the City already make use of these ramps.
- **Propose approach to allow temporary ramps to be permitted in the public right-of-way as a permitted encroachment.**
  - Removes the process and fees for obtaining a permit.
  - More equitable approach to storefronts which do not already make use of a temporary ramp.
  - Increased likelihood that stores will make use of temporary ramps, moving closer to increased accessibility in the city.

# Update: Guidelines

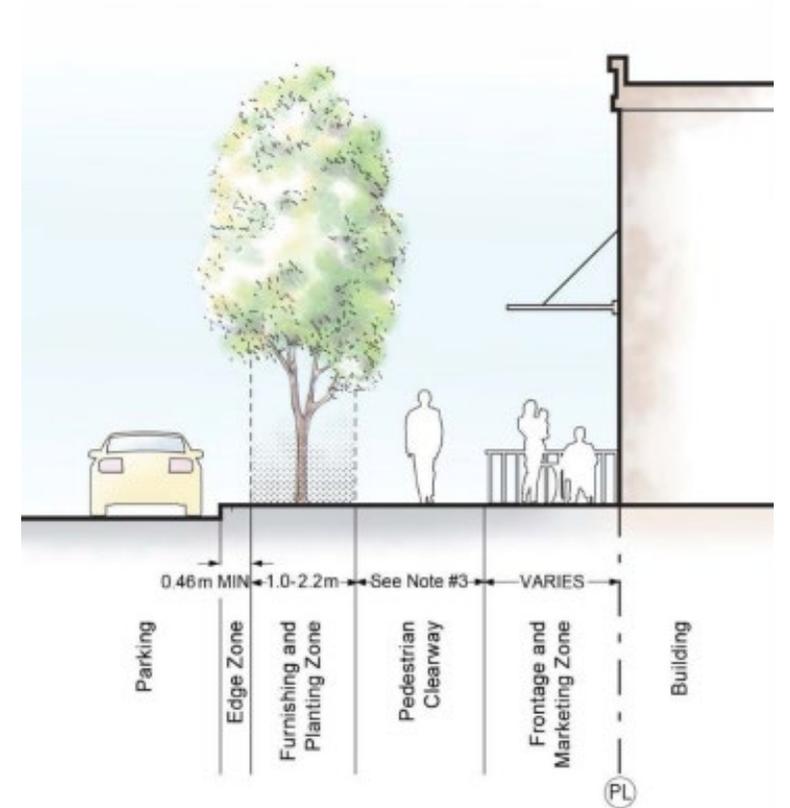
Placement Guidelines for temporary ramps in the public right-of-way:

Ramps only permitted where the ramp can be deployed without encroaching on the minimum pedestrian clearway widths of:

- 2.1 metres on Major and Minor Roads
- 1.8 metres on Local Roads

The ramp should:

- be located in the Frontage and Marketing Zone
- not obstruct neighbouring storefronts and entryways
- not be affixed to the sidewalk, curb edge or roadways by screws, bolts or any other materials
- only be out during operating business hours unless it has cane detectable features on either side of the temporary ramp



# Update: Guideline Limitations

- To ensure the protection of the pedestrian clearway and to minimize additional barriers on public city sidewalks, the use of temporary storefront ramps would NOT be permitted:
  - Where the minimum pedestrian clearway of 2.1m on major and minor roads cannot be protected.
  - Where the minimum pedestrian clearway of 1.8m on local roads cannot be protected.
- The Guideline has no authority over the design of the ramps, it simply protects the pedestrian clearway.
  - Temporary ramps are not required to meet AODA standards, and are the responsibility of the business owner.



558 Yonge Street, south of Wellesley St

*This image shows the impact of a temporary ramp on the pedestrian clearway in the red arrows. With the ramp, the clearway was narrowed to less than 2.1m*

# Update: Best Practices

The guidelines outline suggested best practices for the design and use of temporary ramps, for when a storefront with a stepped entrance chooses to use a temporary ramp.

- Temporary ramps are encouraged to be:
  - at least 1m wide
  - slip-proof material
  - stable so they do not shift or move when used
  - cleared of debris both under and on top
  - high colour contrast to increase visual detection
  - put away during off hours of the storefront business if there are no cane detectible features (such as planters) protecting them



628 College Street, west of Bathurst St.

# Next Step: Communications Strategy

- Given there is no legal requirements to make stepped entrance storefronts accessible unless a renovation or redevelopment takes place, the use of temporary ramps is discretionary.
- Encourage temporary ramps where possible and take an educational approach. Storefront businesses that make use of a temporary ramp will be responsible for the correct use and maintenance, based on the guidelines.
  - Communications strategy targeted to the Businesses and BIAs would take an educational approach to promote participation and compliance.
  - Anticipate rolling out a communications strategy in 2024.

# Thank You

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