



Accessibility Improvement Grant Program Guidelines

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City of Owen Sound
Community Services Department
Planning & Heritage Division

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1.0 Program Goals & Purpose

The City of Owen Sound is committed to being a welcoming, safe, supportive community that is equitable in providing for the needs of all its residents and visitors, including persons with disabilities.

The City has a distinct leadership role to play in the planning, design and construction of new city-owned facilities, or for the redevelopment of existing spaces owned, leased or operated by the City, in providing a range of opportunities that optimize independent access and improves accessibility for all users.

In its leadership capacity, the City can also encourage the private sector to provide a range of opportunities that optimize independent access and improves accessibility for all users.

The purpose of the Accessibility Improvement Grant Program is to promote improvements to properties for the purposes of enhancing accessibility in the built environment. It is intended that any improvements considered under this program will meet or exceed the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the Ontario Building Code (OBC).

Designing for accessibility has several benefits for business owners:

1. It is Good for Business

People with disabilities will choose a business where they feel welcomed, and where they can easily get the products and services they want. By learning how to serve people with disabilities, businesses may attract more customers, building customer loyalty, and improve their services for everyone.

2. It Benefits Everyone

Designing for accessibility not only helps people with disabilities, it also improves access for several others including seniors, families travelling with young children, delivery drivers, and patrons.

3. It is the Right Thing to Do

Beyond being good for business and promoting inclusivity, designing with accessibility in mind **is just the right thing to do.**

2.0 Legislative Background

The following federal and provincial statutes are applicable to the planning, design and construction of accessibility improvements.

2.1.1 The Ontario Human Rights Code

The Ontario Human Rights Code (“the Code”) protects all Ontario residents from discrimination and harassment in specific areas including services, housing, contractors and employment. Under the Code, every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods, and facilities, without discrimination because of disability, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, same-sex partnership status, and family status.

Service providers and others have a duty to consider the needs of people with disabilities. This can include ways to apply the principles of universal design for the construction or renovation of building and facilities. If systems, facilities or other elements of the building environment or people’s attitudes create discriminatory barrier, than they must be removed or changed.

2.1.2 The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (“the AODA”), came into effect on June 13, 2005 with the overarching goal of making Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by the year 2025. Under the AODA, accessibility is to be achieved through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards.

Standards have been enacted in the areas of Customer Service, Information and Communications, Transportation, Employment, and the Design of Public Spaces (the Built Environment).

Accessibility standards for customer service are regulated by Ontario Regulation 429/07. The remaining four accessibility standards have been combined under one regulation, the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR).

2.1.2.1 Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces

The Accessibility Standard for the Design of Public Spaces (“the Standard”) enacted under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR), strives to ensure that new and redeveloped public spaces appropriately serve the needs of all users, including children, seniors, parents with strollers, and people with a wide variety of disabilities.

The Standard primarily regulates accessibility features in the exterior environment including accessible paths of travel and accessible parking. In some cases, these areas of the exterior public realm may also be regulated by the Ontario Building Code (see Section 2.1.5).

2.1.3 The Ontario Planning Act

The Ontario Planning Act (“the Act”) provides the legislative framework for land use planning in Ontario. It is the basis for the provincial interests relative to municipal land use planning, the preparation of planning policies, and the public’s right to participate in the planning process, among other matters.

Section 2: Provincial Interests

Section 2 of the Planning Act requires planning authorities to have regard to accessibility for persons with disabilities for all facilities, services and matters to which the Act applies.

Section 41: Site Plan Control

Section 41 of the Planning Act has provisions for accessibility for persons with disabilities as part of the site plan process and when employed properly, is a tool that helps facilitate universal accessibility to buildings and the spaces surrounding them. Through these provisions, the City may request plans, drawings and elevations that display any proposed buildings and their relationship to adjacent buildings, streets and exterior areas accessible by members of the public; the provision of interior walkways, stairs, elevators and escalators, facilities designed to have regard for accessibility for persons with disabilities, among other matters.

Section 51 & Section 53: Plans of Subdivision and Consent

When considering a draft plan of subdivision under Section 51 of the Planning Act or when reviewing a consent application under Section 53 of the Act, planning authorities must have regard to accessibility for persons with disabilities.

2.1.4 The Provincial Policy Statement

The 2020 Provincial Policy Statement (“PPS”) identifies the importance of creating and sustaining healthy, livable and safe communities by improving accessibility for persons with disabilities and older persons by addressing land use barriers which restrict their full participation in society. All decisions made by municipalities must be consistent with the PPS.

2.1.5 The Ontario Building Code

Accessibility amendments to the Ontario Building Code (“OBC”) came into force on January 1, 2015. The accessibility requirements, or “barrier-free design” requirements as they are referred to in the OBC (Section 3.8), are generally recognized as representing a minimum standard for accessibility.

Jurisdiction of the OBC is different from the Standard. For example, the OBC regulates the construction of buildings, and includes requirements for barrier-free paths of travel from accessible entrances to parking lots. The accessibility of most elements on the interior of buildings is primarily regulated by the OBC.

3.0 Program Area

The Program Area establishes the boundaries for which the Accessibility Improvement Grant Program applies. These boundaries are set by the City's Community Improvement Plan, which establishes a framework for the City's support and implementation of programs to encourage private investment and implement functional and aesthetic improvements to properties.

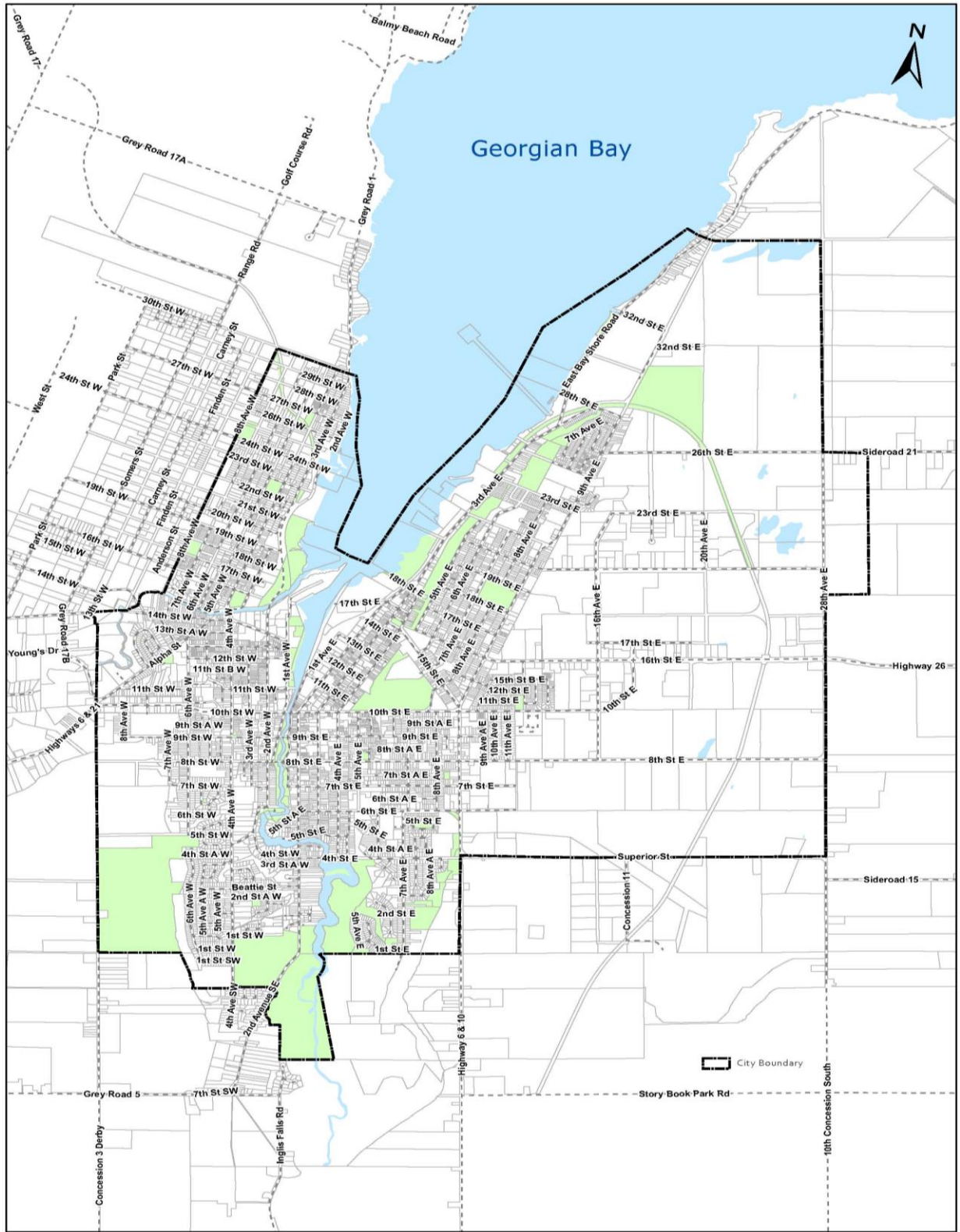
For the purposes of this program, all lands within the municipal boundary of the City of Owen Sound, as shown in Section 3.1, are considered to be within the Program Area.

In addition, the City believes that buildings within the River District and all heritage properties within the City boundaries may benefit from both interior and exterior accessibility improvements. For the purpose of these Program Guidelines, a "heritage property" includes properties listed on the City's Register of Properties of Cultural Heritage Value or Interest and designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

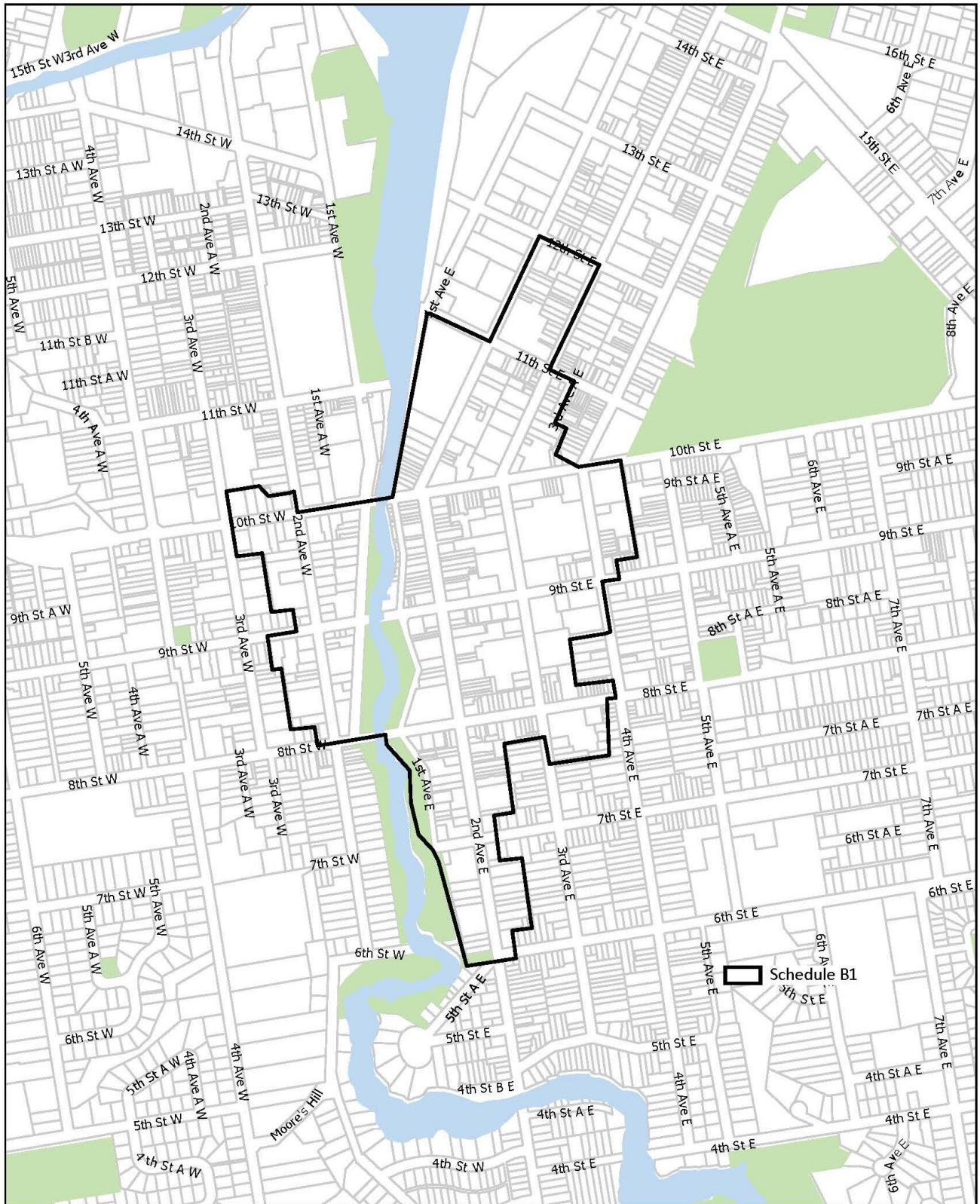
The age of the City's cultural heritage resources pre-dates current accessibility standards. Heritage properties and buildings within the River District are often over 100 years old and are typical of mid- to late-19th century and early 20th century architectural design preferences. Most often these buildings have not been designed with accessibility in mind.

Accordingly, the City, at its sole discretion, may fund eligible accessibility improvements on the interior of buildings that are listed on the City's Heritage Register, designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, and/or are within the River District, as shown in Section 3.2 and Schedule 'B' of the City's Official Plan.

3.1 Map of the Program Area



3.2 Map of the River District



4.0 Program Incentives

The Accessibility Improvement Grant program provides a capital grant equal to 50 percent (50%) of eligible costs, to a maximum of \$10,000 (per project, per year), whichever is less.

Applications to the Accessibility Improvement Grant Program are processed on a first come, first serve basis. Projects must have a minimum cost of \$5,000 in order to be considered eligible.

5.0 Who is eligible?

Property owners and authorized tenants of **commercial, industrial, institutional, mixed-use and multi-unit residential properties**, as defined by the City's Community Improvement Plan are eligible to apply to receive grant funding under this program. In addition, all heritage properties within the City boundaries are eligible for incentives under this program.

For clarity, single-detached dwellings and other residences are ineligible.

6.0 What is eligible?

The following types of projects that undertake eligible exterior and interior accessibility improvements may receive grant funding under this program:

1. The change of use (e.g., institutional to commercial) or the adaptive reuse of an existing building.
2. Accessibility retrofits to existing commercial, industrial, institutional, mixed-use and multi-unit residential buildings.
3. New infill mixed-use and multi-unit residential development that satisfies the definition of **Affordable/Attainable Housing**, as defined by the City's Community Improvement Plan.
4. The redevelopment or remediation of a **Brownfield or Greyfield** property, as defined by the City's Community Improvement Plan.

In all cases, development of a **Greenfield** property as defined by the City's Community Improvement Plan, is ineligible to receive grant funding.

All accessibility improvements undertaken under this grant program must conform to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and Ontario Building Code (OBC) requirements and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application. A Building Permit from the City's Building Division is a requirement for all projects.

Alterations to properties that are designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act require a Heritage Permit from the City's Heritage Coordinator, in addition to a Building Permit. In all cases, accessibility improvements to heritage properties must be sympathetic to identified heritage attributes. Improvements should employ cultural resource management best practices including, but not limited to, the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

For clarity, projects that propose the demolition or removal of heritage attributes will not be considered eligible. The City may require the provision of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for alterations on or in proximity to a designated heritage property.

6.1 Exterior Accessibility Improvements

The following exterior accessibility improvements will be considered eligible to receive funding under this program. Projects that undertake improvements to existing exterior accessibility features, or that propose to implement new exterior accessibility improvements are both considered eligible.

6.1.1 Exterior Paths of Travel

Exterior paths of travel typically refers to pedestrian routes (e.g., sidewalks and walkways) that serve as connections to a building entrance or exit. An exterior path of travel may lead from a city sidewalk or street, or from a parking area serving a building. Exterior paths of travel may encompass curb ramps and depressed curbs (Section 6.1.2), tactile walking surface indicators (Section 6.1.3), and ramps (Section 6.1.4).

General Requirements:

- Ground surfaces must be firm, stable and slip-resistant.
- There must be adequate drainage provided to prevent safety hazards due to potential water, snow and ice accumulation within the accessible path of travel.
- Exterior lighting in accordance with Section 5.18 of these program guidelines shall be provided where appropriate to illuminate pathways and entryways.
- High tonal or textural contrast on ground surfaces shall be provided where appropriate to help define primary accessible routes and assist with wayfinding.

- Where a pedestrian route crosses or joins a vehicular route and the walking surfaces are not separated by curbs, railing or other elements between the pedestrian and vehicular areas, tactile walking surface indicators, in accordance with Section 5.1.3 of these program guidelines, shall be provided.



Image 1: A pedestrian pathway at the Owen Sound harbour.

The detailed design and installation of exterior paths of travel including, but not limited to, headroom clearance, clear pathway widths, running slopes, and changes in level shall conform to AODA, OBC and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application.

6.1.2 Curb Ramps and Depressed Curbs

A **curb ramp**, also known as a **curb cut**, is a solid ramp graded down from the top surface of a sidewalk to the surface of an adjoining street.

A **depressed curb** is a continuous length of curb along a pedestrian route that is lowered to the level of an adjacent roadway.

Curb ramps and depressed curbs help people with disabilities safely and independently negotiate level changes on public sidewalks and other pedestrian routes. They are required when there is a change in level between an exterior path of travel and adjacent vehicular route.

The provision of curb ramps and depressed curbs ensures a continuous accessible path of travel between vehicular and pedestrian routes, for the following typical locations:

- Pedestrian crossings at intersections;
- Parking spaces, passenger loading zones, and related access aisles; and,
- Any other exterior pedestrian route where there are elevation changes.

The choice between providing a curb ramp or a depressed curb depends on physical characteristics, volume of pedestrian traffic, and space availability. Projects that propose to implement new curb ramps or depressed curbs should consult with the City's Planning & Heritage Division or Engineering Services Division prior to submitting a program application.

General Requirements:

- Curb surfaces must be stable, firm and slip-resistant;
- The curb ramp or depressed curb must be aligned with the direction of travel and the curb ramp or depressed curb on the opposite side of the roadway to help users orient themselves and allow someone to maintain a straight line of travel;
- There must be adequate drainage provided to prevent safety hazards due to potential water, snow and ice accumulation within the accessible path of travel;
- Gratings and other openings shall not be placed on curb ramps, depressed curbs or within pedestrian crossings;

- Tactile walking surface indicators in accordance with Section 5.1.3 of these program guidelines, are required to warn people with visual disabilities that they are entering a potentially hazardous area.

The detailed design and installation of curb ramps or depressed curbs including but not limited to: width, slopes, landings, and tactile walking surface indicators must conform to the AODA, OBC and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application.

Examples of Curb Ramps & Depressed Curbs



6.1.3 Tactile Walking Surface Indicators

A tactile walking surface indicator (“TWSI”) means a standardized surface, detectable underfoot or by a long white cane, to assist people with low vision or blindness by alerting or guiding them. Typical locations where TWSIs are required include: at curb ramps and depressed curbs, where walking surfaces between pedestrian and vehicular areas are not separated by curbs, and at stairs.

Both cast in place (e.g., embedded within concrete) and surface applied TWSI systems are available for new construction and retrofits depending on the mounting surface and application.

General Requirements:

- TWSIs shall have a raised tactile profile with truncated domes (e.g. circular and flat-topped domes) and a slip-resistant, non-glare surface.
- There must be a high tonal contrast between the TWSI and the adjacent surface.
- Edges should be beveled or level with surrounding surface to prevent tripping hazards.



Image 2: A tactile walking surface indicator.

The detailed design and installation of TWSIs including, but not limited to truncated dome specifications, material, and colour, must conform to AODA, OBC and City standards at the time of program application.

6.1.4 Ramps

Where steps cannot be avoided or slopes cannot be made less steep, ramps improve access for people using mobility aids, or pushing delivery carts or strollers. Elements such as steepness of the ramp, space for turning at landings, and handrail design are important safety and function considerations in the installation of a ramp.

The detailed design of ramps including, but not limited to: clear width, slopes, landings, guards and handrails, must conform to the AODA, OBC and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application.



Image 3: Exterior entryway ramp.

6.1.5 Stairs

The use of stairs is not recommended as part of an exterior path of travel, but only as an alternate means of negotiating level changes where wheelchair access is already provided. Projects that propose to only implement new stairways or to level existing staircases without addressing wheelchair access will not be considered eligible.

The requirements for stairs are intended to improve safety and accessibility for all stair users, including people with disabilities. Stairs may not be an option for people using wheeled mobility aids, but they will be used by many people with different types of abilities and users of a facility. In some instances, a person may prefer to climb a short set of stairs instead of using a long and circuitous ramp.

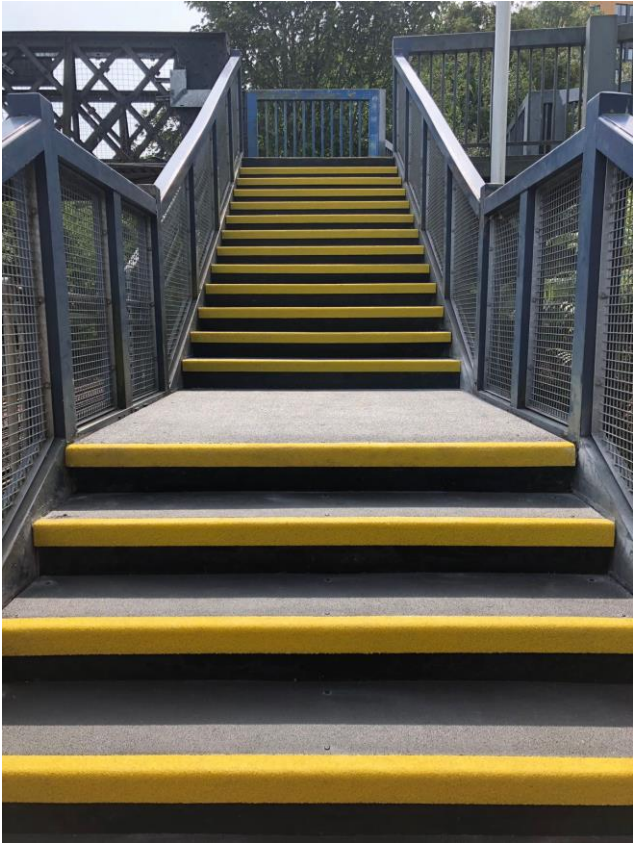
The safety and usability of stairs will depend on key technical requirements such as the dimensions of each step, the use of tactile walking surface indicators, and the appropriate design of handrails and guards.

The detailed design and installation of stairs including, but not limited to: treads and risers, nosings, tactile walking surface indicators, guards and handrails, must conform to the AODA, OBC and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application.



Image 4: Exterior staircase.

Examples of Exterior Stairs



6.1.6 Guards and Handrails

Guards and handrails are typically found at ramps, stairs, terraces and elevated viewing platforms in both interior and exterior environments.

The provision of handrails are a key element in the usability and safety of ramps and stairs. They provide secure handhold and are especially important for those with stamina issues or poor balance. They also provide an important orientation cue. For example, horizontal handrails at the tops of ramps give notice of an upcoming change in level and offer stability before using it.

General Requirements:

- Ensure handrails are continuous with grasping surface, uninterrupted by mounting brackets, newel posts, or any other construction elements.
- Provide rounded edges, free of abrasive elements.
- Handrails and guards should be provided on both sides of ramps and stairs, including at landings.



Image 5: Ramp guard & handrail.

The detailed design and installation of guards and handrails including, but not limited to diameter size, clearance between grasping surfaces, and loading values, must conform to the AODA, OBC and City standards in force and effect at the time of program application.

Examples of Guards & Handrails



6.1.7 Doors and Doorways

The provision of accessible doors as part of an accessible route is an important consideration for all users of a facility. Projects that propose to widen doorways to provide for an accessible entrance and/or install automatic or power-assisted doors will be considered eligible for grant funding under this program.

Automatic doors are generally considered to be doors that open automatically when activated by a motion detector or sensor. Power-assisted doors are opened manually by pushing a control button.

Doors that open automatically are considered a preferred option where possible, since they do not require manual activation and address the needs of a wide range of users. This recognizes that manual power-assist controls may be difficult to locate and activate for people with limited vision, strength, or manual dexterity.

General Requirements:

- High tonal contrast to differentiate doors and/or door frames from the surrounding environment should be provided.
- Frameless and fully glazed doors should not be used.
- Where automatic doors are provided ensure that sensors are suitably placed to detect users approaching and ensure timing allows for safe passage through doorways.
- Power door operators may be vertical or circular plates.

The detailed design and installation of accessible doors and doorways including, but not limited to: clearance width, opening force, thresholds, hardware, and installation and placement of accessible power operators must conform to AODA, OBC and City standards at the time of program application.

Examples of Accessible Power Door Operators



6.1.8 Exterior Lighting

Adequate exterior lighting is an important consideration in maintaining and improving the safety and usability of outdoor spaces for persons of all abilities. When implementing new exterior site lighting, reference should be made to the OBC and the City's Site Development Standards.

General Requirements:

- Ensure lighting sources are located at or beside all ramps, steps and stairs to illuminate and identify surfaces, treads, risers, nosings and handrails.
- Ensure all lighting over exterior paths of travel is evenly distributed and provides a reasonable colour spectrum while minimizing any shadows casted.
- Supplementary lighting to highlight wayfinding signage should be provided where appropriate.
- Lighting fixtures or posts must not encroach onto accessible paths of travel.
- Ensure low-level lighting standards are mounted high enough to clear normal snow accumulation heights during the winter months.

The detailed design and installation of exterior lighting must conform to AODA, OBC and City standards at the time of program application.



Image 6: Illuminated pedestrian pathway at night.

6.1.9 Parking

The availability of sufficient, appropriately-configured accessible parking spaces is important to ensure people of all abilities can continue to navigate the City.

The AODA and the City's Zoning By-law have minimum requirements for accessible off-street parking stalls including minimum requirements for the number and type of accessible spaces, and detailed dimensional and configuration criteria.

Two types of accessible parking spaces are required; identified as Type 'A' and Type 'B' spaces:

Type A spaces are wider spaces, primarily intended to accommodate a person who uses a vehicle equipped with a mechanical lift or wheelchair ramp. They incorporate space beside the parking vehicle for the deployment of the lift or ramp and must be marked as "Van Accessible".

Type B spaces are standard parking spaces, primarily intended for people who use wheelchairs, canes, crutches or walkers but who do not require extra space for a lift or ramp.

The detailed design and installation of accessible parking spaces must conform to AODA, OBC and City standards at the time of program application. Accessible parking spaces should be located as close as possible to the accessible entry points of the facility they serve.

Examples of Accessible Parking Stalls



6.2 Interior Accessibility Improvements

The following interior accessibility improvements will be considered eligible to receive funding under this program.

6.2.1 Elevating Devices

Elevating devices are used to provide access between levels within a facility. For the purposes of this program, elevating devices may include elevators, platform lifts and inclined lifts. All elevating devices provided in multi-storey facilities must comply with the OBC and other applicable requirements identified in the most up-to-date versions of:

- CAN / CSA B44: Safety Code for Elevators and Escalators.
- CAN / CSA B355: Lifts for Persons with Physical Disabilities.
- CAN / CSA B651: Accessible Design for the Built Environment.

When retrofitting elevating devices in existing buildings, the City will review options on a case by case basis, recognizing there may be other factors to consider, including physical or structural constraints.

The detailed design and installation of elevating devices including, but not limited to: elevator car dimensions, door width, clear floor space, visual and audible signals and controls must comply with the OBC and CSA Group requirements at the time of program application.

6.2.2 Washrooms

Accessible washrooms better accommodate the needs of all users of a facility. They promote inclusivity for people with disabilities and families while also providing increased privacy and safety. Universal washrooms for example, include a larger floor space for people who require assistance and may be accompanied by a caregiver or companion.

The installation of new universal washrooms, or the retrofitting of multiple occupancy washrooms with accessible water closets are both considered eligible interior accessibility improvements under this program. All accessible washrooms must have a Building Permit issued by the City's Building Division.

General Requirements:

- Accessible washrooms should be located centrally within a facility along an accessible route, within 45 metres (maximum) of regular washrooms (if applicable).
- Where washrooms are not accessible, directional signage to indicate the location of nearest accessible washroom on the same floor shall be provided.
- Floor surfaces of accessible washrooms shall be firm, stable and slip-resistant.
- Drains shall be installed out of the accessible path of travel.

The detailed design and installation of accessible washrooms, including but not limited to: turning radius, clear floor space, accessible stall width (where applicable), fixture type, height and location, and requirements for changing stations, audible and visual fire and emergency call systems must conform to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and the Ontario Building Code requirements at the time of program application.

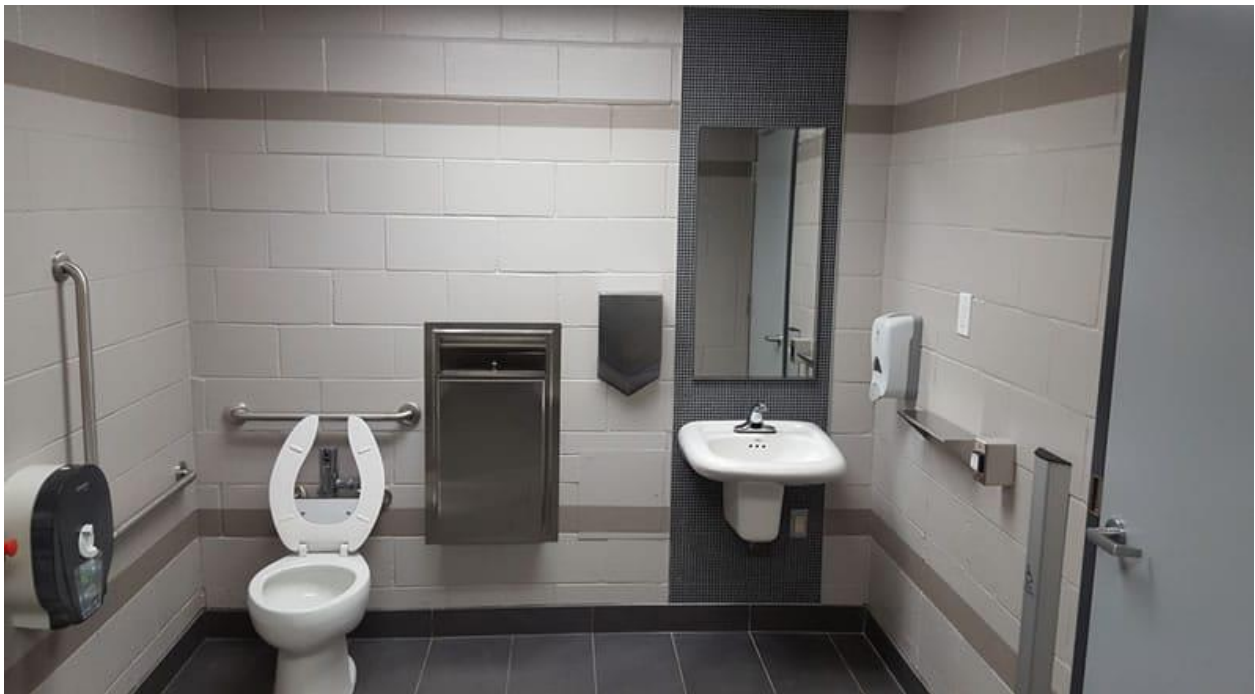


Image 7: A universal washroom.

6.3 Construction Drawings

All accessibility improvements under this program must have a Building Permit issued by the City's Building Division. A Building Permit Application, complete with appropriate construction drawings, are a requirement for any submission. Alterations to designated heritage properties require a Heritage Permit from the City's Heritage Coordinator, in addition to a Building Permit.

It is highly recommended, and in some cases may be required, that construction drawings be prepared by a qualified person (e.g., professional engineer or architect). The City may require the provision of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for alterations on or in proximity to a designated heritage property.

Costs incurred for retaining a qualified person for the preparation of professional plans and studies will be considered eligible costs under this program.

7.0 Contact Information

For further information on the Accessibility Improvement Grant Program or to discuss your project with a City staff member, please contact:

**Community Services Department
Planning & Heritage Division**

808 2nd Avenue East
Owen Sound, ON N4K 2H5
Phone: 519-376-4440 ext. 1250
Email: planning@owensound.ca

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