

Effective Date (10/2022)

Advisory

Landscaping Materials Providing Access to a Building

BUILDING CODE SERVICES



Purpose

This Advisory provides direction for the application of building code and permit requirements relating to landscaping materials providing access to an egress to or from a building of residential occupancy.

References

Ontario Building Code Division A-1.3.1.1. (a)(ii),

Ontario Building Code Division B-4.1.5.14, 4.4.4, 9.8, 9.15.4.2

Definitions

For the purposes of this Advisory:

Landscape materials: means timber, natural stone, concrete, concrete interlocking stone or composite materials that are installed in such a manner to create a structure.

Structure: is any of the following or combination of retaining walls, stairs, landings, or elevated walkways appurtenant to the building.

Limitations and Conditions

- Landscape structures are not to be attached to the building foundation unless designed by a Professional Engineer, licensed to practice in the Province of Ontario.
- Landscape structures greater than 1m (3'-3") in height require a Part 4 design.

Description

A structure constructed with landscaping materials which provides access to an egress and meets the following criteria is required to be constructed under the benefit of a building permit and include a guard, when required, complying to article 9.8 or Part 4:

- Provides access to the building or is serving a required egress,
- Where there is more than 600mm (2'-0") difference in elevation between adjacent surfaces,
- The slope between walking surfaces exceeds 1 in 2 within 1.2m of the building,
- Where the structure would exceed maximum permissible grades (adverse soil) or backfill height against the foundation, or,

- Retaining wall greater than 1m (3'-3") in exposed height and meeting the requirements of a designated structure under the regulation.

The means of egress of a building is to be taken from the exterior door to an open public thoroughfare or to an exterior open space having access to an open public thoroughfare.

When structures are used to tier front, rear and side yards to provide additional useable yard areas but do not affect access to the building, these structures may be reviewed on a case-by-case basis as there may be additional safety or grading implications.

The rise and run of steps, guards, handrails, landing size, walking surfaces etc. are to comply with the provisions of the code regardless of a permit being required.
