

The New Official Plan introduces new policies related to sidewalks and driveways. Curb cuts, also known as “private approaches”, is the planning term used to describe the space created to let cars from the street onto a property. Curb cuts may seem unimportant, but having too many curb cuts can lead to problems for which there is no solution. For example:

### Pedestrian safety

The more curb cuts there are on a block, the more cars there are travelling across the sidewalk. Pedestrians, especially children, and cyclists have more potential conflict points to contend with. As a result, even the sidewalk starts to lose its appeal for walking.

### Curbside capacity

A curb cut guarantees access and parking to the person who has it. However, that person’s gain is other people’s loss, because each curb cut for a private driveway results in fewer on-street parking spaces and fewer options for curbside uses on the street overall. The result is that parking is more difficult for everyone else on the block, including visitors, contractors, home deliveries and ride-sharing. With the rise of online shopping, curbside capacity becomes a key factor for neighbourhood liveability. Also, the more curb cuts there are on a block, the more snow there is from all those driveways and the less space there is to pile it. As a result, more snow ends up on the street, putting severe pressure on snow removal operators and budgets.

### Tree retention and green front yards

Every curb cut means more pavement, which contributes to rising temperatures in the city (urban heat island). Even if it were permeable, pavement does not replace a green front yard. More driveways also mean less space for street trees, which play an important role in stormwater management, provide shade and make sidewalks appealing.

The New Official Plan introduces a policy that calls for no new curb cuts to be created in the Downtown Core Transect and all areas within the Transforming Overlay. In those areas, new development (regardless of the number of units or the number of lots created) will have to use existing curb cuts only. Those can be moved along the frontage of a lot, but no new ones can be created. The draft policy does account for rare exceptions where new curb cuts will be permitted.

In areas within the Evolving Overlay, the policy will call for the strict minimum of new curb cuts to be created and require scrutiny on circumstances where combined accesses would be a better option.

