

Step by Step Guide to Curb Cuts



City of Cambridge

A Word from Robert W. Healy *Cambridge City Manager*

The City of Cambridge is dedicated to maintaining its competitiveness and desirability as *the* place to live, work, and do business. Cambridge's continual growth and development depend, in part, upon the quality and timeliness of the information and services delivered by the City. This pamphlet has been prepared to assist residents, businesses, and developers in moving through the City's regulatory processes as easily as possible, by removing unnecessary confusion, delays, and costs. This pamphlet is one in a series, and is part of the City's ongoing effort to sustain livable neighborhoods and a positive business climate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert W. Healy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert W. Healy,
City Manager

This brochure explains who needs a curb cut and how to apply for one. Please read this entire brochure before applying for a curb cut permit.

Who needs a Curb Cut Permit?

Anyone wanting to make or change a cut in the curb of the street, such as in constructing, moving or removing a driveway must first obtain a permit from the City of Cambridge. The placement of curb cuts can have significant impacts on the safety and quality of life of the surrounding neighborhood. The City will review each permit application with due consideration to the applicant's desire for the curb cut and public welfare.

What requirements must a curb cut meet?

Zoning requirements for curb cuts are detailed in Section 6.40 of the Zoning Ordinance. One of the more significant requirements is that a curb cut cannot be located closer than 25 feet to a street intersection or within 15 feet of a crosswalk.

What steps are in the curb cut permit process?

1. **The Application.** Obtain an Application for Opening and Closing Curb Cuts at the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). The contact information for ISD and all other City departments involved in the curb cut permit process is provided at the end of the brochure.
2. **Complete and submit the application**, including:
 - a. A plot plan drawn to scale which illustrates the curb cut and if applicable, the layout of the driveway and parking area.
 - b. Forms signed by abutter to the front, side, rear, and across the street from the property where the curb cut is to be made expressing approval or disapproval of the curb cut. If the applicant is unable to obtain these signatures, he/she must include a statement with the application which describes the notice given to the specific abutters, attempts made to secure the required signatures, and reason why it was not possible to obtain the signatures.
3. **Zoning Compliance.** Return application to ISD to review for completeness and compliance with the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, and to ensure that coordination with abutters as outlined in 2b above, is taking place. ISD will send a copy to City Clerk's Office who will then send a review form to the applicable neighborhood association with instructions to return the form within 21 days. The association may make a written request for an additional week of review time. The application will go before the City Council either 21 days after the neighborhood letter is sent or after the neighborhood association has sent its review form to the City Clerk, whichever occurs first. *The neighborhood association can take up to a month to review the application, so applicants are advised to contact the neighborhood organization early in their review process to prevent any delay.*

If ISD determines that the curb cut is not in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, the applicant can (1) discontinue the application process, (2) modify the application to bring it into compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, (3) appeal the ISD decision to the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), or (4) request from the BZA a variance from the Zoning Ordinance.

4. ***Traffic and Transportation Review.*** If ISD approves the application, it will then be sent to the Department of Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TPT) for traffic and safety impact evaluation. A refusal at this juncture may be appealed to the City Council.
5. ***Historical Commission Review.*** Once TPT approves the permit application, it is sent to the Historical Commission to review whether or not the proposed curb cut is on the premises of a protected property. If yes, further review by the Historical Commission may be required. Contact the Historical Commission for an estimated length of review time.
6. ***Department of Public Works Review.*** Upon Historical Commission's approval, the application will be reviewed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) to identify the curb cut's minimum/maximum width requirements and or any conflicts with existing trees, catch basin, or utility structures/poles. It should be noted that a City tree cannot be removed without approval of the City Arborist. The applicant may request relocation of catch basins or utility structures, but would be responsible for the relocation cost if determined feasible.
7. ***City Council Vote.*** Once DPW's review is completed, the application is forwarded to the City Clerk's Office to be placed on the next City Council meeting agenda. The City Council meets every Monday, except holidays, from the first Monday after Labor Day to the end of June. There is only one City Council meeting during the summer recess in July and August. *Applicants are strongly advised not to spend money on any modification before obtaining City Council approval.*
8. ***Construction.*** The City Clerk will notify the applicant of the City Council's decision and send the application back to DPW. Upon City Council's approval, the applicant has the option of hiring a private contractor or requesting DPW to install the curb cut.
 - The applicant is encouraged to have the curb cut installed by a private contractor, in which case the contractor is required to post a bond and obtain other necessary permits such as an obstruction permit. The DPW Inspector will inspect the curb cut installation for compliance with the City standards before releasing the bond.
 - If the applicant chooses to have the curb cut installed by DPW, the curb cut cost will be calculated and the applicant will be notified. Payment must be received in full before the cut can be scheduled. Weather permitting, the installation will take place within two to three weeks of scheduling.

What about projects which also require a building permit?

When a project requires both a building permit and a curb cut permit, the City Council must first approve the curb cut before a building permit can be issued. In extraordinary cases, a building permit may be issued if the following criteria are met:

- a. The application has been initiated with ISD;
- b. Letter of support for or opposition to the curb cut have been obtained from abutters;
- c. The application complies with the zoning ordinance;
- d. A hardship is demonstrated; and
- e. The applicant certifies that he/she is proceeding at his/her own risk.

How long does the curb cut permit process take?

Assuming that the curb cut permit process proceeds through the approval process smoothly, and that the City Council is not in recess, the application process usually takes approximately four to six weeks.

Who can answer specific questions regarding the curb cut permit process?

INSPECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (ISD)

Hours: 8:00AM - 5:00PM

Lombardi Building, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, 1st Floor - ISD Clerk

Phone: (617)349-6100; Fax (617)349-6132; TYY: (617)349-6112

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW)

Hours: Mon. 8:30am -8:00pm, Tues.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00pm, Fri. 8:30am-12:00 noon
147 Hampshire Street - Bill Dwyer

Phone: (617) 349-4851; Fax (617) 349-4814; TTY: (617) 349-4805

CITY CLERK

Hours: Mon. 8:30am -8:00pm, Tues.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00pm, Fri. 8:30am-12:00 noon
City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, 1st Floor - Marybeth Cosgrove

Phone: (617) 349-4260; Fax (617) 349-4307; TTY: (617) 349-4242

DEPARTMENT OF TRAFFIC, PARKING & TRANSPORTATION (TPT)

Hours: Mon. 8:30am -8:00pm, Tues.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00pm, Fri. 8:30am-12:00 noon
City Hall Annex, 344 Broadway, 1st Floor - Jeff Parenti

Phone: (617) 349-4712; Fax: (617) 349-4733; TTY (617) 492-0235

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Hours: Mon. 8:30am -8:00pm, Tues.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00pm, Fri. 8:30am-12:00 noon
Lombardi Building, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, 2nd Floor - Paul Trudeau

Phone: (617) 349-4687; Fax (617) 349-3116; TTY: (617) 492-6112

CITY ARBORIST

Hours: Mon. 8:30am -8:00pm, Tues.-Thurs. 8:30am-5:00pm, Fri. 8:30am-12:00 noon
147 Hampshire Street - Kelly Writer

Phone: (617) 349-6433; Fax (617) 349-4868; TTY: (617) 349-4805

The Community Development Department of the City of Cambridge has prepared a Guide to City Offices and Permitting, a city-wide map of all permit issuing agencies, their contact information, and comprehensive listing of permits issued by various City departments. If you would like to receive a copy, please call (617) 349-4600, or check CDD's website at: www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/ed.

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Robert W. Healy

Deputy City Manager

Richard C. Rossi

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Councillor Minka vanBeuzekom

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