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CITY OF PITTSBURGH
DEPARTMENT OF MOBILITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Department of Mobility and Infrastructure Order No: 20-0003

SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF CURB CUTS FOR OFF-STREET PARKING

I. Overview

A curb cut is an opening in the curb that allows vehicular access to private property from the public right-of-way for purposes such as off-street parking and loading/unloading. For the purposes of this document, the term “curb cut” applies even if no sidewalk is present, the sidewalk lacks a curb, or there is little to no curb reveal. Although all curb cuts – regardless of their purpose – require permits from the City of Pittsburgh, this document focuses specifically on curb cuts requested for vehicular access to off-street parking.

A curb cut introduces a conflict zone in the public right-of-way between vehicular uses and other right-of-way uses such as sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and transit lanes or stops. It also prevents flexible and publicly accessible uses such as street parking for the length of the curb cut. Curb cuts must be located and designed so that they do not detrimentally impact the safety and operations of the public right-of-way. As such, the City of Pittsburgh has specifications and standards dictating the location, dimensions, and design of curb cuts in Pittsburgh.

These specifications and standards intend to preserve the safety of:

- Sidewalk users crossing the curb cut, especially those with disabilities or limited mobility;
- Bicyclists using adjacent bicycle facilities;
- Public transportation users whose stop is near a curb cut or whose bus route travels past a curb cut;
- Vehicle operators entering/exiting off-street parking or traveling along the roadway adjacent to the curb cut.

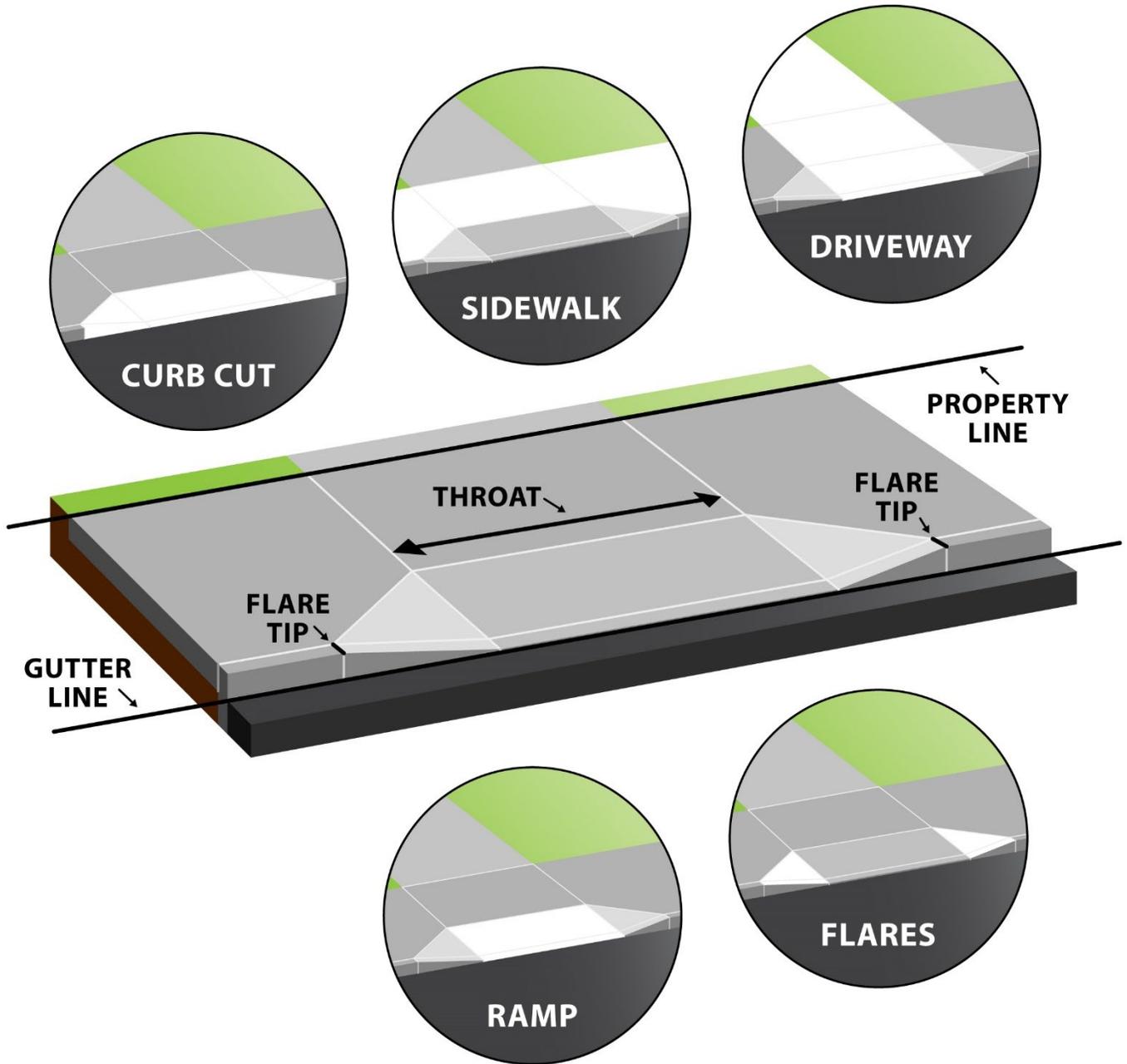
All curb cuts for off-street parking must adhere to the specifications and standards outlined in this document.

Curb cuts may be either residential or commercial. To align with Pennsylvania’s Uniform Construction Code, the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) defines residential curb cuts as those providing access to one- and two-family dwellings no more than three stories in height. Residential and commercial curb cuts are subject to different permit fees, have different allowable dimensions, and must follow different design standards.

No curb cut shall be installed until a Curb Cut Permit application has been submitted by an applicant and approved by DOMI.

II. Helpful Terminology

A curb cut's dimensions extend from flare tip to flare tip and include the flares and ramp, as illustrated below. The following illustration highlights the key terms referenced in this document and the Curb Cut Permit application. *Note:* this illustration is not drawn to scale.



III. Curb Cut Permits

A. When to Apply for a Curb Cut Permit

The City of Pittsburgh requires an application for a Curb Cut Permit under the following circumstances:

- **New Curb Cuts:** A Curb Cut Permit application must be submitted for all new curb cuts. This includes but is not limited to curb cuts for off-street parking such as driveways, residential garages, parking pads, parking lots, and commercial garages.
- **Existing Curb Cuts:** A Curb Cut Permit application may be required for an existing curb cut when:
 - no Curb Cut Permit application is on file,
 - the parcel's use ([§ 911.02](#)) changes or a valid Certificate of Occupancy is required (see <https://pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/occupancy>),
 - the number of parking spaces being served increases,
 - the property owner proposes to modify the curb cut, such as increasing the width of the throat or flare,
 - a new garage is proposed, or
 - the curb cut requires repair or reconstruction (Pittsburgh Code of Ordinances [§ 413.02](#)).

B. Conditions of a Curb Cut Permit

Any Curb Cut Permit issued by the City is subject to the terms and conditions of the permit, City Code, and other applicable law.

The Director of DOMI shall have the right to revoke any Curb Cut Permit for non-compliance with the terms and conditions of the permit or for other reasons as delineated in Pittsburgh Code [§ 411.01.b](#).

When a Curb Cut Permit is revoked, the requirements under *Section III.C*, in addition to any applicable law, apply.

C. Closure of Curb Cuts and Restoration to City Standards

The Director of DOMI may order the closure of a curb cut, permitted or not, in accordance with applicable law, for considerations including but not limited to public health, safety, and welfare, particularly in relation to the operations of the right-of-way. In all curb cut closures, the curb and sidewalk must be restored to City standard, and all applicable permits must be obtained for the work.

The following examples are meant to illuminate some of the instances when the Director may order a closure and who is responsible for restoration:

- An existing curb cut is obsolete and no longer provides vehicular access to a property. When DOMI orders the closure of this curb cut, the property owner must remove the curb cut and restore the curb and sidewalk.
- Multiple curb cuts exist on a parcel, and the property owner applies for one or more Curb Cut Permits for any reason. The Director may not approve a Curb Cut Permit for every existing curb cut. The property owner must remove the curb cuts that were denied a permit and restore the curb and sidewalk. The property owner also must bring the curb cuts that received a permit to current City standard.
- An existing curb cut was never permitted. As stated in *Section III.A*, DOMI requires an application for a Curb Cut Permit for this category of curb cut. If after reviewing the application DOMI determines that the existing curb cut does not meet the City's specifications and standards, the property owner will be

Curb Cut Specifications

required to make any changes necessary to comply. If the curb cut is not permissible at all, the property owner must remove the curb cut and restore the curb and sidewalk.

- A public improvement project by the City or other governmental authority requires the removal of existing curb cuts from properties that have or could have other vehicular access points to off-street parking. In these cases, the lead government entity (the City or other authority) will remove the curb cuts and perform the restoration work as part of the roadway project.
- An existing curb cut presents a public safety hazard. DOMI staff will work with the property owner to determine if there are ways to mitigate the risk. If the only option is closure of the curb cut, the property owner must remove the curb cut and restore the curb and sidewalk.

IV. Location, Dimensions, and Design of Curb Cuts

Curb cuts should be constructed to limit or mitigate to the extent practicable, at the discretion of DOMI, any detrimental impacts on the public right-of-way. When reviewing curb cut applications, DOMI considers the following elements to ensure that vehicles entering and exiting off-street parking do not impact the safety, operations, or circulation patterns of the roadway and other parts of the public right-of-way:

- Location;
- Dimensions; and
- Design.

An applicant must meet the requirements set forth by DOMI under each of these three elements (see subsections below).

The following subsections reference the City's street hierarchy:

- The term “**alley**”, as used in this document, refers to a public right-of-way that is less than 33 feet wide ([Pennsylvania 1933 Act 69, Article XXIII, Section 2306](#)) and typically provides access or service to the rear of building parcels. *Note:* Pittsburgh streets with the suffix “alley” or “way” do not automatically meet this definition.
- When this document refers to the “**lowest order street**”, it follows the street hierarchy (from lowest order to highest): alleys, local streets, collectors, and arterials. DOMI refers to every street that is not an alley as a “**higher order street**”. Generally speaking, the wider the public right-of-way, the higher the order of street.

A. Location

Curb cuts in Pittsburgh may not be permissible on all streets. The following sections clarify where curb cuts are restricted and where they may be permissible. To see in which Zoning District a parcel is located, go to <https://gis.pittsburghpa.gov/pghzoning/>.

1. Zoning Districts with Restrictions

Curb cuts in the following zoning districts and subdistricts (as defined in Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 902.01.A](#)) shall be restricted to **alleys** in order to preserve the qualities of the built environment and minimize disruption to pedestrians and on-street parking:

- Local Neighborhood Commercial (LNC),
- Urban Neighborhood Commercial (UNC),
- Golden Triangle (GT),

Curb Cut Specifications

- Riverfront (RIV),
- Residential High-Density (H), and
- Residential Very High-Density (VH).

A curb cut may be permissible on an **alley** in these districts or subdistricts if the following location requirements apply. DOMI measures distance from the proposed curb cut's flare tip (see the illustration in *Section II*).

- The curb cut provides access or service to the rear of the parcel.
- The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from an intersecting street's right-of-way, unless it provides access to a parking garage and/or parking area containing more than five spaces, other commercial parking, a car wash, or a service station. In those instances, the curb cut must be installed at least 60 feet from an intersecting street's right-of-way (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) and [§ 914.09](#)).
- Some specific uses such as commercial parking, parking structures, and service stations – as defined in Zoning Code [§ 911.02](#) – also require that a curb cut must be 60 feet from other curb cuts (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) for details).
- The curb cut must be installed at least 6 feet from other curb cuts (flare tip of one cut to flare tip of other). This ensures compliance with Pittsburgh Code [§ 541.02.B.1](#) by requiring 3 feet of restricted parking from the flare tip of each curb cut.
- The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from the edge of any crosswalk, marked or unmarked, to comply with Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 75, Chapter 33, [Subchapter E § 3353.a.2.b](#).

DOMI reserves the right to request additional information to review the Curb Cut Permit application and to consider other roadway, land use, and design characteristics in the approval or denial of the request.

If a curb cut on an alley is not feasible in these zoning districts with restrictions, the applicant must follow the exception process outlined in *Section V*.

2. All Other Zoning Districts

In all other zoning districts and subdistricts (as defined in Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 902.01.A](#)), a curb cut may be permissible on the **lowest order street** abutting the property if the following location requirements apply. DOMI measures distance from the proposed curb cut's flare tip (see the illustration in *Section II*).

- a. If a parcel abuts an alley, a curb cut may be permissible on the **alley** if the following location requirements apply:
 - The curb cut provides access or service to the rear of the parcel.
 - The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from an intersecting street's right-of-way, unless it provides access to a parking garage and/or parking area containing more than five spaces, other commercial parking, a car wash, or a service station. In those instances, the curb cut must be installed at least 60 feet from an intersecting street's right-of-way (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) and [§ 914.09](#)).
 - Some specific uses such as commercial parking, parking structures, and service stations also require that a curb cut must be 60 feet from other curb cuts (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) for details).
 - The curb cut must be installed at least 6 feet from other curb cuts (flare tip of one cut to flare tip of other). This ensures compliance with Pittsburgh Code [§ 541.02.B.1](#) by requiring 3 feet of restricted parking from the flare tip of each curb cut.

Curb Cut Specifications

- The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from the edge of any crosswalk, marked or unmarked, to comply with Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 75, Chapter 33, [Subchapter E § 3353.a.2.b.](#)
- b. If a parcel does not abut an alley, a curb cut may be permissible on the **lowest order street adjoining the parcel** if the following location requirements apply.
- The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from an intersecting street’s right-of-way unless it provides access to a parking garage and/or parking area containing more than five spaces, other commercial parking, a car wash, or a service station. In those instances, the curb cut must be installed at least 60 feet from an intersecting street’s right-of-way (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) and [§ 914.09](#)).
 - Some specific uses such as commercial parking, parking structures, and service stations also require that a curb cut must be 60 feet from other curb cuts (see Pittsburgh Zoning Code [§ 911.04.A](#) for details).
 - The curb cut must be installed at least 6 feet from other curb cuts (flare tip of one cut to flare tip of other). This ensures compliance with Pittsburgh Code [§ 541.02.B.1](#) by requiring 3 feet of restricted parking from the flare tip of each curb cut.
 - The curb cut must be installed at least 20 feet from the edge of any crosswalk, marked or unmarked, to comply with Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Title 75, Chapter 33, [Subchapter E § 3353.a.2.b.](#)
 - The curb cut must be installed at least 15 feet from any transit stop on the same side of the street to comply with Pittsburgh Code [§ 541.02.A.12](#).
 - The curb cut must be installed on street frontage that does not have existing or planned dedicated transit lanes or bike facilities. For the purposes of this document, DOMI defines “planned” as being listed in an official plan by the City of Pittsburgh, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, or PennDOT, or as having preliminary design work completed as part of a project undertaken by those same entities.

B. Dimensions

Once the location of a permissible curb cut has been determined based on *Section IV.A*, the next step is to identify the maximum allowable size, which depends on whether the proposed curb cut opens onto an alley or a higher order street.

In all cases, the entire curb cut (flare tip to flare tip) must fall within the applicant’s parcel, except for instances of shared curb cuts.

1. On Alleys

The maximum throat length dimensions for curb cuts on alleys are shown in *Table 1*.

Table 1. Maximum Throat Length (in feet) for Curb Cuts on Alley

ALLEY		
Residential, 1 space	Residential, 2+ spaces	Commercial
10	20	10 (per travel lane)*

* If the applicant can demonstrate valid site constraints or design needs, DOMI may consider a larger curb cut.

2. On Higher Order Streets

If a proposed curb cut is on a street other than an alley, DOMI must determine if the parcel is large enough to accommodate the curb cut. Some parcels in Pittsburgh are simply too narrow to have a curb cut on a higher order street, even if the proposed curb cut meets the *Location* requirements from *Section IV.A*. DOMI uses an applicable formula from *Table 2* to determine if a parcel is large enough to have a curb cut.

In *Table 2*'s formulas, *parcel frontage* is defined as the length (in feet) of the parcel's boundary abutting the street where the curb cut is proposed.

Table 2. DOMI Formulas for Determining Parcel's Dimension Eligibility

HIGHER ORDER STREETS				
Residential, 1 space	Residential, 2 spaces (tandem or turnaround)	Residential, 2 spaces (side-by-side)	Residential, 3-4 spaces	Commercial
$(0.4)(\text{parcel frontage}) \geq 8 \text{ ft}$	$(0.4)(\text{parcel frontage}) \geq 8 \text{ ft}$	$(0.4)(\text{parcel frontage}) \geq 16 \text{ ft}$	$(0.4)(\text{parcel frontage}) \geq 8 \text{ ft}$	$(0.4)(\text{parcel frontage}) \geq 24 \text{ ft}$

For parcels that meet DOMI's dimension eligibility, the following maximum throat lengths apply (*Table 3*). Cells in black indicate when a curb cut would not be permissible because the property frontage is too small.

Table 3. Maximum Throat Length (in feet) for Curb Cuts on Higher Order Streets

Parcel Frontage	HIGHER ORDER STREETS				
	Residential, 1 space	Residential, 2 spaces (tandem or turnaround)	Residential, 2 spaces (side-by-side)	Residential, 3-4 spaces	Commercial
15					
20	8	8		8	
25	8	8		8	
30	8	8		8	
35	8	8		8	
40	8	8	16	8	24
45	8	8	16	8	24
50	8	8	16	8	24

C. Design

All curb cuts must be constructed to the City's design standard for residential ([SC-600](#)) or commercial ([SC-601](#)) curb cuts as directed by DOMI staff. As a reminder, DOMI defines residential curb cuts as those providing access to one- and two-family dwellings no more than three stories in height. All other curb cuts should be constructed using the commercial curb cut design standard.

In addition, DOMI has design principles that apply to all curb cuts and some that are specific to townhouses on abutting parcels and commercial developments.

1. Design Principles for All Curb Cuts

The following design principles must be followed for all curb cuts in Pittsburgh:

- Curb cuts for off-street parking shall be constructed perpendicular to the gutter line across the entire width of the sidewalk.
- Driveway crossings must meet all Standards under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- The grade of the driveway as it approaches the sidewalk shall be no greater than 10%. Driveways with grades steeper than 10% must include at least 15 feet of <10% grade to transition to the sidewalk.
- Ramped entrances and exits to parking garages must include a level landing of at least 10 feet as the driveway approaches the sidewalk.
- Once vehicles are parked in off-street parking spaces, no part of the vehicles shall encroach upon the public right-of-way.
- No landscaping and/or screening taller than 24 inches may be located within a driveway's sight triangle, which is the space in which a driver has an unobstructed view of the intersection with the sidewalk and street.
- To ensure that pedestrians are clearly visible before a vehicle enters the public right-of-way, curb cuts shall not be installed if the driveway does not provide sufficient sight distance to pedestrians. Sight distance calculations must be provided to DOMI for all commercial curb cuts providing access to five or more parking spaces and may be requested by the department for other curb cuts. Applicants may use PennDOT's M-950S form: <https://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Forms/M-950S.pdf>

Where sight distance is limited for drivers exiting driveways, the applicant may be required to install stop signs, mirrors, tactile warning surfaces, cautionary signs, and other safety features on his or her property to protect users of the public right-of-way.

If these safety features must be installed in the right-of-way, then the applicant may need to apply to DOMI for additional permits.

2. Additional Design Principles for Commercial Developments or Townhouses on Abutting Parcels

To limit the impact that multiple driveways and access points have on all users of the public right-of-way, DOMI requires commercial developments or townhouses on abutting parcels to adhere to the following additional design principles:

- The applicant must make every reasonable effort to include a shared private road, street, or alley in the design to provide vehicular access to the right-of-way from multiple parcels.
- The applicant must demonstrate in writing to DOMI that a private road, street, or alley cannot be built as part of the design due to physical constraints such as topography.
- If DOMI determines that the applicant's assertion is reasonable and that a shared private road, street, or alley is not possible due to physical constraints, shared curb cuts are encouraged to limit the impact on the public right-of-way and ensure that pedestrian refuge is provided.

V. Requesting an Exception

Anyone proposing a curb cut that does not adhere to the City's specifications and standards must request an exception from DOMI. This includes but is not limited to special use or non-standard curb cuts such as drive-thrus, car washes, governor's drives, on-site pick-up or drop-off areas, as well as to any curb cuts that do not meet the location, dimension, and/or design specifications in this document. DOMI will review exception requests on a case-by-case basis. Exception requests will be subject to additional review and may be granted at DOMI's discretion. **Note:** DOMI provides no guarantee that an exception will be allowed.

To provide applicants with a way to see if a proposed curb cut either may not be permissible at all or will require a request for an exception, DOMI has created a checklist for them to complete prior to applying for a Zoning and Development Review (ZDR) and Curb Cut Permit. The checklist includes a section in which the applicant should provide justification for why the specifications and standards outlined in this document cannot be met as well as a proposal for how all detrimental impacts of the proposed curb cut will be mitigated.

If the applicant believes that an exception will be required based on the results of the checklist, he or she must submit a copy of the completed checklist through OneStopPGH when applying for a ZDR

(<https://onestoppgh.pittsburghpa.gov/pghprod/pub/lms/Login.aspx>).

During DOMI Site Plan Review, a step in the ZDR process, DOMI staff will review the proposed curb cut and the documents submitted by the applicant. If additional materials or reviews are needed or changes need to be made to the proposed curb cut, DOMI will notify the applicant. Additional materials or reviews requested may include but are not limited to:

- A formal letter to the Director of DOMI requesting an exception;
- Proof of Zoning Code parking requirements for the parcel;
- A Transportation Impact Study (TIS) or memo to demonstrate need or site constraints including turn templates, loading analysis, etc.;
- A Right-of-Way Improvement Plan;
- An identification of mitigation strategies to offset the negative impact.

Failure to submit the proper documentation may result in delays to the review process.

If an exception request is denied, the applicant may appeal to the Director of DOMI in writing.

Once DOMI has completed all transportation reviews required for the project and granted an exception, the applicant may apply for a Curb Cut Permit. For more details on how to apply for a Curb Cut Permit, please visit DOMI's Right-of-Way Applicant Guidance webpage at <https://pittsburghpa.gov/domi/row-info>.

VI. Illegally Installing a Curb Cut

Property owners and contractors who illegally install a curb cut are in violation of Pittsburgh Code [§ 413.02.a](#), which states that, "no person shall construct, reconstruct, repair, cut, alter or grade any sidewalk, curb or driveway in the public right-of-way without first obtaining a permit from the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure."

A person who installs a curb cut without a permit faces fines and other penalties. If construction is underway, it must immediately cease until the property owner or contractor applies for a Curb Cut Permit and DOMI has granted the permit. While DOMI reviews the permit application, the property owner must construct and maintain a safe and ADA-compliant pedestrian path through the affected sidewalk. This path must meet DOMI specifications.

Curb Cut Specifications

If a Curb Cut Permit is granted after work has been done illegally, the permittee must ensure that the curb cut is installed according to the City's specifications and standards and must make any necessary corrections to the existing work to achieve this end. If a Curb Cut Permit is denied after work has been done illegally, the contractor and property owner are responsible for restoring the sidewalk and curb to the City standard.

The City of Pittsburgh's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure reserves the right to amend this policy at any time. Any revisions to this policy shall take effect immediately upon posting of the revised policy.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a vertical line on the left and a large, sweeping loop that extends to the right and then curves back down to the left, crossing the vertical line.

(signature)

Effective Date: August 6, 2020 _____

Amendment Date(s): _____

Superseded By: _____

Supersession Date: _____